

Big Lou & Big Jim 7763', via Hatchery Creek

Sept 20, 2009

After a good evening BBQ, stuffed with good food, smoked out from the fire... dreaming. Oops! Alarm going off. Very dark out and the Milkyway so in its glory. Stuffed the bag and tent, loaded the car and off for water and cooking breakfast. Met Dicey and Yana at the Hatchery Creek TH. GeoTom showed with Jasper and we were on the trail at 6:50.

The trail heads consistently up switch backing (Over 20) close to 1000' per mile. Even with the dry summer there were plenty of muddy spots on the trail. It was cold and getting colder the higher we went up. Dicey found a small opening with sunshine where we waited and took a break (~2.3m, 1hr).

The trail was drier from here up and the trees opened a little (not as steep either). At 2.7 miles, 5300', 2550' ascent was the trail to Badlands. A little flatter and wider open. The sign is very easy to miss and the trail to Badlands faint. At 3.5 miles the terrain levels off (5850') and opens to a wide broad ridge and burn (3.6m 6000', 1hr 55min). Even with the trees dead and burnt it was a very scenic area. Brown grasses, new tree growth, grey and black snags and a nice trail winding through it. Jasper was full of energy. Running up and then back to Tom and his full speed. The trail entered woods again heading up to Icicle Ridge (trail), it was 9:35 (5.7m, 6700', 2hrs, 45min). There was remnants of last night's snow –brrr. Icicle Ridge is like a broad grassed meadow. From here we descended the trail 450 – 500'. The trail was a trench from all the horse traffic. Up a short bit, near the lake a wet meadow the outlet stream flowed through was trampled, well grazed and a combo of mud mixed with horse road apples. Not very appealing... 50 more and we took a break at the shore of Lake Augusta (10:15a (3hrs25min from TH), 7.5m, 4588 ascent, c6785'). We were on leisure time so relaxed and ate for a half hour.

We headed up to the ridge, connecting to the trail on the south side of the lake heading up and west. 15 minutes from the lake we were on the ridge (7295', 5030'ascent) and followed the ridge south. Over pt 7443 traversing on the east side of the ridge. The going was loose rock. Up a steeper slopes east flank. Dicey worked a south traverse, while Yana and I went up (west) to take photo ops on the top (Point 7770 ?) 9.1miles, 11:50, 1hr5min from the lake, 5880 ascent. There were some interesting rock formations that looked like chunks of stumps. The shadowed areas were white with a thin layer of snow. Followed a cl2 slope down then up a broad mellow cl2 slope to the top of Big Lou. Dicey was there waiting. We'd taken our time playing on the last peak. Big Lou – 7763', 7775ascent, 12:03, 5hr13min from car, 1hr18min from the lake. Compared to yesterday it was nice. Low wind and sun –good for relaxing and lunch and checking out the Re place July 21, 2002 by Johnny Jeans. Eight pages of 81 names, plus five of us for 86. Interesting to see many names I know and Polly's too. Many were fire crew dropped by Helicopter to setup and remove a radio repeater during the fires. We hung out and ate for 40 minutes, then headed north towards Big Jim.

Back over pt7770 for Dicey to tag it. Down the steep (cl3) east flank exiting north and back to the lake trail (11.1miles, 35min from Big Lou). We took the ridge crawling up talus to pt 7571 only 10 minutes from the trail. The ridge was fun cl3. A little up and down then on flatter rocky cl2 gentle slope. Ahead large white quartz looked like goats. A rock formation looked like a hiker... In 1hr25min from Big Lou we were at the Big Jim summit (12.1m, 7763elev, 7331 vert ascent, 7hrs15min from TH). Time for another relaxing break. Jasper settled down and was asleep in no time. No summit cairn and no reg, so I left one. Hope this one lasts a while. After 45 minutes it was time to head home (2:45p).

One option was dropping down talus/scree to the lake and back up the trail. The ridge heading SE looked fun and do-able, so we gave it a go. Working up Point 7616 looked like it'd be an issue. When we got to it there were many options to take all cl3 fun rock scrambling. 20 minutes from Big Jim we were atop 7616 (12.8m). The ridge went well. If it didn't look good on one side we'd cross over and find it good on the other side. On the north side (Big Jim lake side) were larch. On the south (Lake Augusta side) Long needle pines.

We popped through a few small trees and opened to a broad grassed gentle slope (13.7m, 9hrs from car, 1hr10min from Big Jim). Less than 15 minutes we were at the Hatchery Creek trail for another break (14.1m, 4:05p, 1hr20min from Big Jim).

From here we followed the trail back through the trees. At 5 miles from the TH (10 T 665182 5279682, c6330', 3/4 from Icicle Ridge) is a nice campsite with water and a view. Soon out of the wood and onto the broad meadowed burn area. I dropped a glove so did a bit of back tracking and found it. The way down went easily. We thought it'd be getting colder, but as we got lower it got warmer.

At 17.2 miles (5:20) we passed the Badland trail. Then down the switchbacks. Funny how I don't remember it being as steep on the way up as I do on the way down. It'd been a long trip and Jasper was no longer running back and forth.

At 5:24 we hit the TH, 20 miles, 10 ½ easy hours, 7970' ascent, Two "Big" peaks and 4 plus minor bumps. A nice trail despite the horse damage, fun rock scrambling, good weather and great people to hike with.

Crew:

Carla Schauble
Yana Radenska
Tom Nanevicz
Jasper

Gear: Shoes, sunscreen, gloves

Copyright 2011, all rights reserved