

Dearborn River Headwaters, Scapegoat Wilderness, August 2008

For some years now, I have wanted to hike into the headwaters of the Dearborn River. This is largely due to the fact that we have some land on its lower reaches, a few miles up from its confluence with the Missouri River, near Craig. But also, I have heard from a couple of different sources that its upper reaches, which are situated in the Scapegoat Wilderness, are amazing and that I should see them.

The opportunity for me to visit arose, finally, last week when, after canceling my last work trip of the summer, I went with the family up to the Dearborn for a five night stay. On nights three and four, I went away on a solo trip up to the headwaters.

And it was no small thing getting there, as in a typical absent-minded, boneheaded maneuver, I forgot my pack and didn't realize it until after driving one hour to the trailhead. So, I had to drive all the way back, get my pack and set out again. I nearly didn't go the second time, but alas, the draw was too strong, and Jen encouraged me to go, because she knew that I had wanted to for some time, so I did, and I'm glad. Also, by this time in my life, I at least have a sense of humor about my shortcomings.

The headwaters begin at the base of Scapegoat Mountain. To get there, you follow the Dearborn River Trail #206 to its end, some twenty miles, one direction. Getting there made for a punishing three day excursion, and by the time I got back to the family camp, my feet were in pretty bad shape. Still, it wetted my appetite for more. Particularly, I wasn't able to summit Scapegoat Mountain. To do that, I'd have to come in from the Northfork of the Blackfoot River—a future fun adventure.

This was also my first trip to the Rocky Mountain Front and its environs for years. This trip really wetted my appetite for more, and made me further appreciate the location of our land on the lower Dearborn—the RMF is so accessible from there. I look forward to much more exploration of this awesome place in the future. A fellow's got to have something healthy to occupy his free time.



The Dearborn on the way in on day 1.



My camp for both nights—functional, but uninteresting.



The Dearborn with Scapegoat Mountain in the distance on day 2.



“The Source” of the Dearborn at the base of Scapegoat Mountain, day 2.



The Upper Dearborn River Valley and the Great Plains beyond (left hand side of picture).