

Pintlers with the Kids, September 2009



Hardly more than a mile from the car, Mount Howe in the background.

The last weekend of September came up on me quick this year, with Labor Day and bike events filling weekends, my desire to get into the high country didn't get me there until later than I would have liked. And even then, it wasn't until the last minute that I found the motivation to get gear together and get out the door; the weather was just too nice to stick around Missoula and do nothing.

After I made up my mind to go, the next decision was, where? Though there are closer places, I settled on the Pintler Range near Discovery, where we ski in the winter. The reason for this was two-fold: first, I was hankering for that part of Montana – a little drier and more open than the high country around here; and second, I happened upon a no-name lake on the map less than two miles and 1000' of elevation from Storm Lake trailhead. So I picked up topo maps early Saturday morning and we were off before noon.

It turned out to be an excellent choice. There's something about going somewhere that's off the beaten path, away from a maintained trail, devoid of fire rings and footprints. And it's even better when the scenery is spectacular and it's fall so that the subalpine larch are turning orange.

Granted, the kids were hard to convince as we made the elevation to the lake, but once there, they were glad for the opportunity to hang out for a few hours in such a beautiful spot. (They didn't tell me that, I just could tell that's what they were thinking.) We played games, had a fire, told stories, and turned in early as unexpected smoke from a forest fire descended. In the morning, I lay out and watched the sky lighten in the west, and then the kids followed suit a bit later on.

We were loaded up, on the trail, back to the car by 11am and back to Missoula by 1:30pm, after a stop at the candy store in Philipsburg on the way home. It was a successful trip by any measure, but now I find myself desperate for more before the snow descends in earnest. Unfortunately, bad weather is forecasted for this weekend. Say a prayer for me for a little more high country time.



Alex at the no-name lake we camped at.



Ellie at Storm Lake with Little Rainbow (left) and Tiny Mountains (right) in the background.



Mount Howe, which I now long to climb, and me.