

Trail Advocates

of the Clackamas River Ranger District of the Mount Hood National Forest

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Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails

Topic: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails

Author: Rob Williams

Topic Started: 10/22/2006; 6:33:13 PM

Last Posted: 10/29/2006; 9:00:40 PM

Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails

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Rob Williams : 10/22/2006; 5:33:13 PM

Reads: 76, Responses: 13 ([view responses to this item](#))

I hiked most of the Thunder mountain (all of it except the last bit to the top) and the skookum lake trails today. I had forgotten I had hiked the Thunder mountain trail before, but after getting there, realized things looked familiar. Anyway, a short trail report:

- Thunder mountain trail is in really good shape. There are no trees across the trail, and the tread is in really good shape. I didn't see the last little bit (from where skookum lake splits off-I ran out of time), but the rest of it was in great shape. For those that haven't hiked it, it is a really nice hike, with a lot of variety of scenery, and some good viewpoints.
- Skookum lake trail is in pretty tough shape in a lot of spots. The fire damage was pretty severe towards the beginning of the trail, and it gets hard to tell where the actual trail is in many spots, since there are other trails that were made by the fire crews. Keeping watch for the tree blazes, the map, and generally where you should be going will keep you going in the right direction. There are also some spots where it looks like erosion has wiped out most of the trail tread, and the sidehill is pretty steep. The fire damage looks to be limited to the beginning of the trail, and it was pretty limited.

All in all, a fun day, and BEAUTIFUL weather!. I just wish I didn't have to get home as early as I did, so I could have made the summit. Last time I did the trail, I did the summit, but not the lake, so when I knew I didn't have enough time to do both, I chose the lake.....I can see why people say that lake could get spooky when it is "sombre" outside.

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**Robert Koscik** : 10/23/2006; 9:09:03 AMReads: 77, Responses: 12 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

You're a busy man, Rob. Thanks for the update, I was wondering how bad the fire damage was. Word has it that the FS will repair the damage, but time will tell. Well, fire is a natural part of NW forests, so it will be interesting to see the area recover naturally. I'd rather have fire than clearcuts any day!

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/23/2006; 9:56:47 AMReads: 72, Responses: 6 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

I'm not as busy (hiking) as I'd like to be! Just too much "life" gets in the way. I just couldn't pass up a hike on such a beautiful day, though! I had to get back home to spend some time with my wife yesterday afternoon, though. A good compromise.

The area was interesting....you can still smell the charred trees, etc. The affected area is pretty narrow, but long. It kind of looked like it might have been a lightning strike that caused the fire, although it could have started somewhere else and this was the end of the fire. I'd rather have fires than clearcuts, too!

I even saw two 5 gallon boxes of water that were left there by some firefighters (I'm assuming). You should check out the trail, it is a very interesting trip.....

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**Robert Koscik** : 10/23/2006; 11:40:05 AMReads: 77, Responses: 5 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

I was on that trail a couple years ago, but have not been back since. It is a relative sanctuary in a heavily impacted land...

Life, huh? It does get in th' way, last weekend was my first time out in a month. I'm taking this forest ecology class at PCC which is very interesting, but hasn't allowed me much free time. Man, science sure takes a weird look at forests, all that counting and categorization.

I would like to take 1 more camp trip before it gets all cold and rainy, but we'll see.

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/23/2006; 1:34:43 PMReads: 73, Responses: 4 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

So where did you hike? Inquiring minds want to know.....

I'd like to get out (just day hiking) at least once more before the cold/rain/snow hits. I'm thinking about old baldy, as that is one I haven't done before, and it sounds really interesting. It also sounds like you could do that even if the snow started falling, since the first trail access is at a lower elevation. It would make for a long day hike, though, as it sounds like about a 14 mile round trip from the lowest trailhead.

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**Zack Byerly** : 10/23/2006; 11:02:11 PMReads: 75, Responses: 4 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

I was able to get out to Thunder Mtn., Skookum Lake, and Baty Butte, twice last month. Took down yards of 'fire escape route' flagging that followed the 542 trail down to Skookum lake. The trail that heads east to Baty Butte off of 542 is in excellent shape. The 545 trail is practically untouched except for a narrow fireline that was cut at about the point that the trail tops out right below Baty Butte. The line is well established and heads right up to the top of Baty. I decided to scramble up the steep slope and check out the view; which wasn't much, mostly limited to the SW. My next trip was an adventurous bushwhack to the Camelback and Surprise Lake. This is definitely one my favorite areas in the district and I'm looking forward to exploring it more next season.

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails****Robert Koscik** : 10/24/2006; 6:24:50 AMReads: 71, Responses: 3 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

Old Baldy is pretty cool, goes thru a noble fir forest. It's a very old trail, not as evenly graded as the "newer" ones. The view is better at Squaw Mountain. There's also a trail that drops down into Salmon Huckleberry but I've yet to check it out.

Last weekend worked some more on Rho Creek. A couple chainsaws went thru the lower area as well. It's now very easy to follow to Tumble Creek.

There's quite a few low elevation trails that stay clear most of the winter. It's how I avoid going more crazy...good raincoat and rainpants and you don't even get wet.

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/24/2006; 7:24:38 AMReads: 68, Responses: 2 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

What other low elevation trails are there? The following are listed as low elevation trails on the about page:

Clackamas River Trail 715, Riverside Trail 723, Dry Ridge Trail 518, Hillockburn Trail 516, Cripple Creek Trail 703, Alder Flat Trail 574, and Bagby Trail 544.

I've done 715, 723, 703, 574 and 544, and none of them are my cup of tea. 544 is a nicely maintained trail, and is very pretty, but I don't like all the vandalism, etc at Bagby. 574 is too short for me, although it is pretty. 715 is nice, but I don't like all the car noise from 224 you hear (although it is better in the winter). 723 is nice, but you can only do it so many times before getting bored :). So that leaves 518 and 516 that I haven't hiked yet. 516 looks interesting, although short. 518 looks pretty grueling from the lower end, but it doesn't look like there is much of interest along the way.

I have to say, I really enjoyed exploring along fish creek, where the old road used to go. I had a lot more fun there than some of the other winter trails. I'd really like to get my mountain bike to get a lot further up the trail on a day hike. I think that road went up 10-15 miles, but I've only make it about 6.

Anyone have any input on trails 516 or 518?

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**Robert Koscik** : 10/24/2006; 10:57:53 AMReads: 69, Responses: 1 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

Hillockburn is a nice one, and it continues up the other side, although abandoned. Creek waters are high in winter.

I like Cripple Creek, very beautiful country and nice views. One of my favorites.

Dry Ridge is very grueling, but it gets pretty wild up there....

There's also Eagle Creek trail up in Salmon Huckleberry, but it's sort of hard to find. Worth the effort though.

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails**[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/24/2006; 1:51:40 PMReads: 64, Responses: 0 ([↩](#) view responses to this item)

Maybe I didn't make it far enough up Cripple Creek. I went there a year or so ago with my daughter (in January, when there was snow). It was a pretty cold day, and with the snow and cold, we probably only hiked a mile or two up the trail and turned around and came back. Maybe I should try it when it is warmer....<G>

So many trails, so little time.....

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/25/2006; 6:23:08 AMReads: 74, Responses: 3 ([view responses to this item](#))

There was still a little bit of the "escape route" flagging in places. It looked like areas that would be relatively safe from fire if it got out of hand (low lying rocky areas, mostly). I'd be interested in learning more about the Baty Butte trail. I saw the cutoff for it, but that has got to be a pretty tough hike. You go up 1000' or so to get to the junction with Skookum lake trail, then take the trail down again (700-800'), then have to go back up again to Baty Butte. Lots of up and down on some tough trail....Is it worth it?

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails****Zack Byerly** : 10/26/2006; 8:22:23 PMReads: 64, Responses: 2 ([view responses to this item](#))

When I hiked the trail in September the road to the trailhead was still technically closed. So I think I was the first person to get in there after the fires. As soon as I hit the junction with the skookum lake trail the pink flagging showed up. They had the trail flagged about every fifty feet, sometimes much less, all the way down to skookum lake and the old 350 road. My pockets were loaded with the stuff by the time I got back to the car. Y'know Baty butte itself is not an ideal destination, but you can make a good loop out of it if you first hike to skookum lake, then drop down to the old 350 road and head west until you get to the baty butte trail. Where the butte trail begins there is a decent meadow and some nice views to the south. I thought it made a good lunch spot. Then coming back you would leave the 350 road at the, 'baty butte cutoff?' that begins at the old 400 road and heads east to the skookum lake trail. The cutoff trail is well graded and offers plenty of flora and springs to observe. Overall, the loops a little short for a day hike but there are plenty of areas you can burn daylight exploring; or in my case fishing...

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Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails[Edit this Page](#)**Rob Williams** : 10/27/2006; 6:31:12 AMReads: 74, Responses: 1 ([view responses to this item](#))

Are there fish in skookum lake? It looked a little shallow (and a little small) to support many fish. I was pleasantly surprised at Big Slide lake that it has a fair population of fish, since it has one deep part in the lake. The fish weren't big, but they were fun to catch...

I saw what looked like an old road just downhill from the one campsite I saw (with the picnic table) as well as ATV tracks in the campsite, so the road must go somewhere.

Although it is a short hike, I find it is a pretty strenuous hike, since you do lots of up and down.

Thanks for the info. Yet more places to explore, and put on my list of "things to do". I could spend years exploring this area, and still not see the same thing twice!

[Discuss this message.](#)**Re: Thunder mountain and skookum lake trails****Zack Byerly** : 10/29/2006; 8:00:40 PMReads: 70, Responses: 0 ([view responses to this item](#))

Yeah, Skookum lake has a good population of brookies. Unfortunately, they are not as easy to target as the fish at Big Slide. I have bushwhacked to the far side of Skookum Lake and had some good luck fishing the shaded, shoal areas. Though, all the thick vegetation makes it hard to backcast, and the muddy bottom doesn't allow any significant wading into the water. It's even more of a challenge to fish when the bugs are thick in the early season. Still, it's a good opportunity to catch lots of small brookies.

The road that is downhill from the campsite is the old 350 road that I described in previous posts. It heads west towards Baty Butte.

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