



# GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK CAMP AND PADDLE, 2021

By Sue Hughes

RMKSC did this trip in 2015; it was remembered fondly and people were ready to go again in 2021. It began with the same design: a group campsite for a dozen people with whole-group paddles, or maybe two paddles, happening each day. [Read about it in issue 23-2b of the *Mountain Paddler*.]

But by 2021, GTNP had changed their group camping reservation system (not easier, just different) and the campsite we could reserve required a minimum of 18 people! After worrying about what seemed like a huge group, I had a reassuring Zoom conversation with Clark Strickland and George Ottenhoff, who said, "It seems too large and will definitely be something new, but I think we should do it."

Initially the participants were dubious, but when the 20 of us arrived we found that Group Site 1 was perfect. It provided plenty of room to spread out, with ample parking, but we were close enough to gather for visiting and planning the daily paddles, and all for just \$13 per person a night...reservations already arranged.

Each evening we talked about possible paddles, people decided where they'd like to go and how early they'd have to leave to be assured of parking at the put-in, and signed themselves onto the trip rosters.

The end result? Everyone agreed that having lots of people with a range of paddling abilities and interests meant a wide variety of different possibilities with small enough groups to make "staying together" a non-issue.

## THE STATISTICS:

- The number of trips, over five days, was 27. That's because many of the popular paddles were done multiple times.
- The number of trips a day ranged from two to six, with an average of four.
- The number of people on a trip ranged from two to ten, with the average being only three!

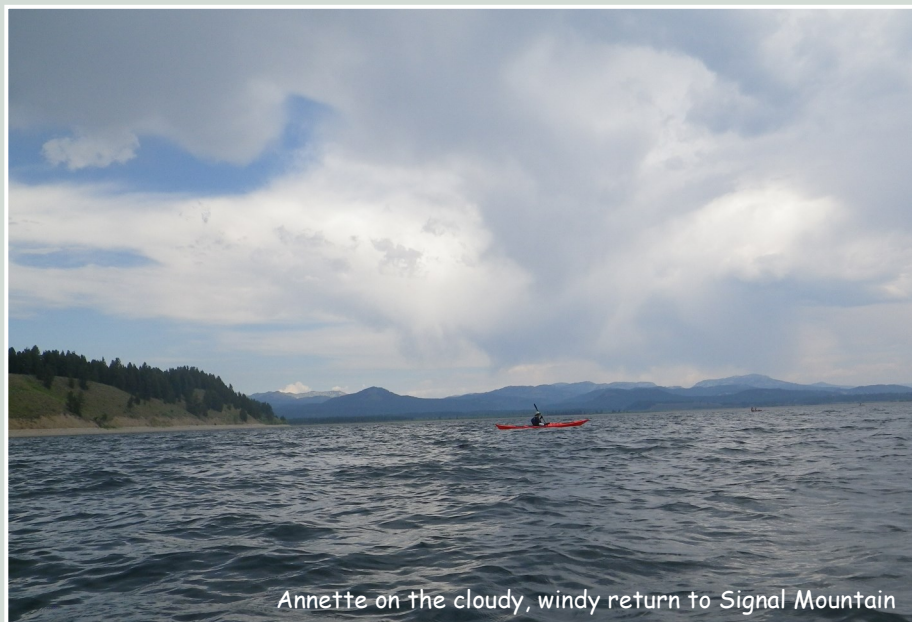
## THE MOST POPULAR TRIPS WERE ONES WE DID IN 2015:

- Jackson Lake, from Coulter Bay in different directions at differing speeds (four trips; at least 18 paddlers total)
- Jenny Lake, with a hike to Inspiration Point...or not (three trips; 15 paddlers total)
- String Lake to Leigh Lake (three trips; 13 people total)
- The Snake River, Jackson Dam through the Oxbow to the Pacific Creek take-out (one trip with 10 paddlers)



## NEW PADDLES IN 2021:

- Two Oceans Lake, with a hike to the top of the ridge or maybe not (Two trips, seven paddlers total)
- Signal Mountain put-in on Lake Jackson (Three trips with only a couple people each time)
- Spalding Bay put-in on Jackson Lake to Moran Bay (One trip; three hearty paddlers. Check with Annabel Saunders, John Anderson or Tim Fletcher)
- The first and second section of the Snake, from the dam past Pacific Creek to Dead Man's Bar (One trip, with 7 paddlers in helmets ready for rougher water)
- Leek's Marina (Check with Gail Denton or Dan Downs for details)
- Lizard Creek (Check with Anne Fiore or Gary Cage for details)





String Lake is placid in the early morning

**String Lake to Leigh Lake** was always an early start to get a parking spot.

Some groups had trouble with the portage up the hill and down the steps to Leigh Lake.

Another group got flustered finding the take-out on the return trip, and then rain-soaked.

**Two Oceans Lake** doesn't have the jagged mountain scenery that other places in the park do, but it's a sweet paddle with a trail three-quarters of the way around that will get you to Grand View Point.

At 7823 feet it was an uphill climb that only some of the paddlers did.



Sue, Ken and Patrick on Leigh Lake



Two Oceans Lake



The trail was hard to find and the signs were confusing



Smokey view from the top of the trail

Photos in this article were taken by Karen Amundson, Sue Hughes, Ken Kloppenborg and Patrick Reardon.

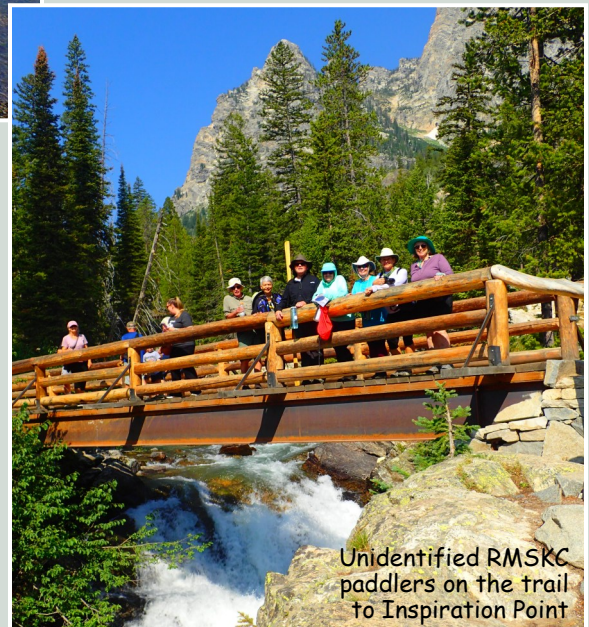


Leslie Taylor and Linda Davis at the put-in

**Jenny Lake** is pure Teton loveliness, and the Park Service has done an excellent job of enabling people of all abilities to enjoy it, but that does make it busy!

The groups who paddled there arrived early and had no trouble with parking. They did have to watch for the ferries zipping back and forth every few minutes, but early in the morning there weren't many other boats on the lake.

One of the groups hiked up to Inspiration Point; another group said that the size of the crowds inspired them not to.



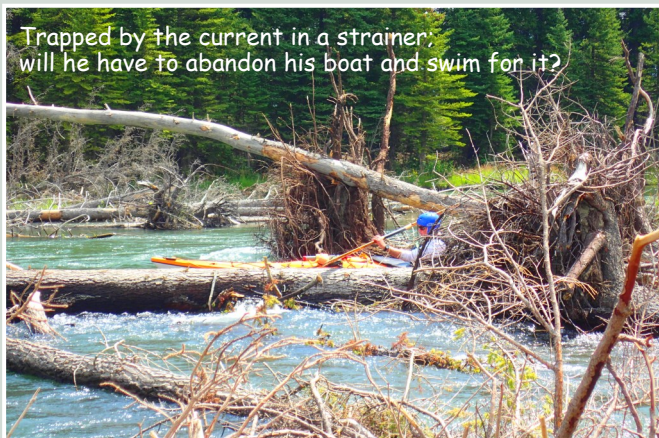
Unidentified RMSKC paddlers on the trail to Inspiration Point



Dick Dieckman looking at a bear

The paddle on the **Snake River, through the Oxbow**, wasn't as serpentine as it seemed in 2015, but we had a nice large-group paddle, the people who designed the shuttle did a great job and we hit the take-out without problems. Everyone had a good time but no one sent in photos.

Later in the week the qualified paddlers did the **Snake below the Pacific Creek take-out**. One of the fellows, an experienced river paddler, got wedged behind a strainer. Gary Cage, with moving water rescue practice, came to his assistance. Everyone thought the retelling that evening was harrowing.



Trapped by the current in a strainer; will he have to abandon his boat and swim for it?

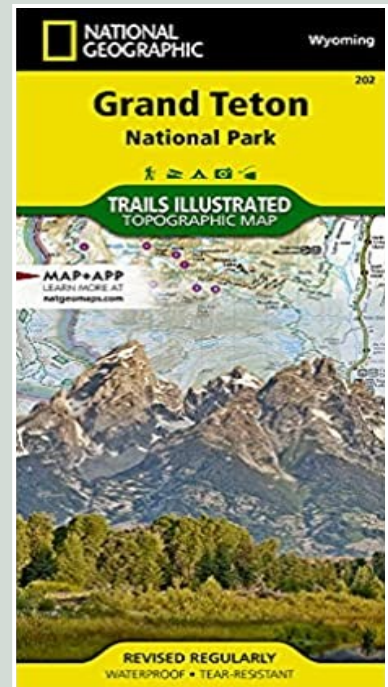
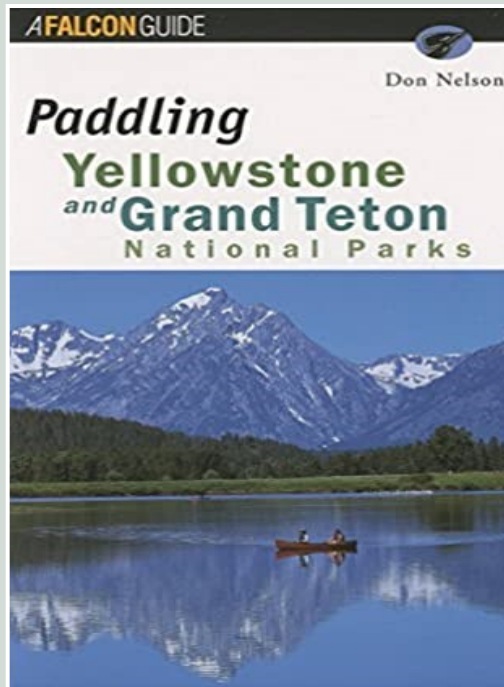


Gary Cage out of his kayak, climbing over the log jam to free the stuck paddler

Participants were: Karen Amundson, John Anderson and Annabel Saunders, Gary Cage and Anne Fiore, Bernie Dahlen, Linda Davis, Gail Denton and Dan Downs, Dick Dieckman, Marsha Dougherty, Tim Fletcher, Brookie Gallagher and Lindsay Meeks, Sue Hughes, Jud Hurd, Ken Kloppenborg, Annette Mascia, Patrick Reardon and Leslie Taylor.

I relied on *Paddling Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park* as a guide. It is out of print but can be bought second-hand from Amazon, although last summer no copies were available. It has information about put-in locations, some of which may be slightly out-of-date.

Another resource several people brought was the topo hiking map from National Geographic. It was useful for evaluating paddles farther away from the ones in the book, and it was waterproof.



There were flash floods on the way to the park the day before the participants arrived, and it was pouring buckets as the group headed home, but the weather for most of the week was dry, although sometimes overcast from smoke.