

# A Buckhorn Wilderness Hike

September 10-12, 2005 (about 20 miles and 2800 ft elevation gain)

Ron had some available time when I could break away, so we planned a trip into the Olympic Mountains. Wanting to see some country that we had not visited in the past, we chose a walk in the Buckhorn Wilderness, a plot of land just to the east of Olympic National Park. The location should provide excellent views of some of the park regions where we have hiked in the past.

The hike begins in woods, often lined with rhododendron. After a few miles of gradual climbing on a well graded trail, we broke out onto a slope that must have been wonderful with flowers earlier in the year. We found only a few remnants hanging on.



Trail

through meadow with the twin summits of Buckhorn Mountain in the distance.

We continued to climb through similar meadows to 5300 ft where we took a side trail down to to Buckhorn Lake, a small, drab puddle that could not be seen from the main trail.



Buckhorn

## Lake

The level was especially low this year, owing to the lack of snowfall last winter. There was no obvious outlet to the lake. The inlet creek seemed to come from a collection of springs.

Our camp was above the lake next to the inlet creek. We used a tarp for shelter, fortified with bivouac bags. The evenings were surprisingly cool.





Our tarp

shelter.

We got up the second morning and, after a quick breakfast, headed up the hill toward Buckhorn and Marmot Passes.



Buckhorn

Peak in the morning light. The broad ridge on the right is Buckhorn Pass.

The views are quite dramatic when one reaches the Pass.



The peaks



from the pass include, from the left, Mt. Deception, The Needles with Mt. Clark, and Mt. Walkinshaw in the background. The dominant peak in the foreground is probably 6900 ft Petunia Peak.



Ron

photographs the valley of the Dungeness River, some 4000 ft below.



He now

moves his concentration to the Royal Basin peaks.

We continue hiking, now moving up and to the south toward Marmot Pass. This lets us view the peaks from a different angle, bringing other country into view.



Views of the peaks at the south end of Royal Basin. These include, from the left: Mt. Mystery, Mt. Fricaba, Mt. Deception, and the Needles.

Marmot Pass is a junction where several trails meet. One is that from Copper Creek and Buckhorn Pass that we have just hiked. Also included is the trail down the Big Quilcene River as well as that dropping to Boulder Camp and on into the Dungeness.





The trail

down the Big Quilcene from Marmot Pass.





The trail to

Boulder Camp.

After reaching Marmot Pass (where we did indeed see marmots!) we climbed a rise just to the south. This provided super views of numerous additional peaks.



The summit partially hidden in the clouds is Mt. Constance. I think the double summit to the right are the twin peaks of Warrior Peak. Further to the west is a massif called Inner Constance.





A shot of

Ron on the summit of the little rise that we climbed. The broad ridge on the left side of the picture is Constance Pass.

We continued south for a while, dropping slightly from our high point. This provided some additional interesting views, including one directly down to Boulder Shelter. A way trail seems to run the ridge toward Warrior Peak and the surrounding country.



Where does this trail go? Deer, goat, mountaineer?

After a wonderful day in the high country, spent staring at some of those peaks we had enjoyed in years past, we dropped back down to Marmot Pass and then hiked out to our camp at Buckhorn Lake. We got up the next morning for an uneventful hike out.





A final look at Buckhorn's Twin Peaks.