

Watery, snowy trail make it impossible to find destination

By Kathryn Reed

Snowshoes would have been more useful than hiking boots. Poles really would have been welcome. A trail would have been the best thing to have.

Such are the hazards of hiking in spring in Lake Tahoe. Two weeks ago a jaunt to Lily Lake was interrupted by gobs of snow. So much snow we didn't really know where we were. We knew we were along the Glen Alpine Creek, but that was about it.



Water covers much of the Glen Alpine area.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

A couple with their three dogs was going to backpack over Memorial Day weekend. They didn't really know where they were either as they searched for a safe place to cross the raging water.

I'm not sure there was a safe place. And with the snow melting

rapidly, people in the know are not advising crossing streams, rivers and creeks.

Some guys coming out of Desolation Wilderness with fishing poles said they couldn't make it to the lake – there are several from this trailhead – because of all the snow.

So much for thinking this was going to be one of those lower elevation hikes where snow wouldn't be a problem. Despite the balmy weather of the past few days, this trail that leads to Gilmore and Grass lakes as well at Mount Tallac may not be in much better shape.

An abundance of water made following the trail difficult without waders in late May. Skirting the side and going off trail made it navigable. It's bound to be more flooded now.

The initial marshy area that is a meadow most seasons has a robust eco-system. Geese swim between the blades of grass. Swallows zoom by. The ribbit of frogs sing out, but none is visible.

With all this standing water, mosquito season is bound to be a doozie. Bug repellent will be needed for future hikes now that the temperatures are staying above freezing.

The old buildings of Glen Alpine are worth a visit and an easy trek from the parking lot on the far side of the store at Fallen Leaf Lake. Normally water gurgles from Soda Spring, the one place where it's safe to drink the water.

On this day standing water is everywhere.

Not much farther up and we hit snow. No problem, lots of tracks to follow. But then the tracks go where I know the trail really doesn't go, but I don't want to break trail. We become lemmings.

An expanse of granite unfolds before us. Ah, that famous Sierra silver. Boulders beacon us to sit in the sun and have a

bite to eat.

Onward we forge. I'm sure the lake is not far away. It probably wasn't. But the tracks we chose to follow didn't take us there. Eventually, we knew it was time to turn around.

Despite intentions to backtrack, we instead did a bit of a circuitous route through the snow.

I'll save Glen Alpine for a summer or fall hike in the future.

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