

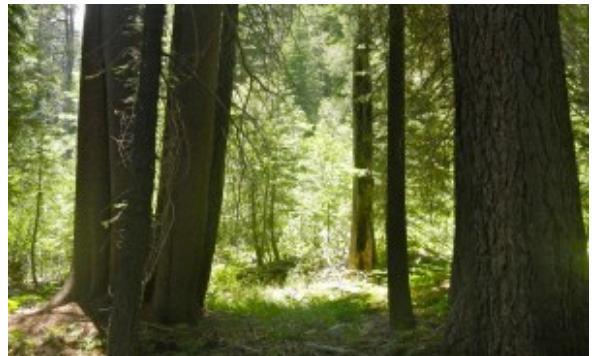
# Lost Lake remains a hidden wonder for at least 2 hikers

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOMA – Lost Lake is appropriately named. We never found it.

Still, the trek along General Creek provided stunning scenery and a chance to explore some terrain that was new to us.

Two winters ago Sue and I cross country skied on the trails at Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore. These trails are where Olympians raced in the 1960 Games hosted by Squaw Valley. We said at the time it would be great to come back to explore the trails on foot.



Lush, green foliage is everywhere.



Indian paintbrush fills part of the General Creek trail.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

When we went back a little more than a week ago we said it would be great to come back with mountain bikes. Plenty of tracks and a lone cyclist proved our point.

That's the thing about this state park – it has something for most recreationists. Because where we were playing is also the General Creek Campground most people not staying the night tend to drive by instead of venturing past the attendant at the shack taking money.

Although the park's employee gave us a map on an 8½ by 11 inch sheet of paper, it is not the most defined trail system. We didn't let that bother us. We also didn't let it faze us that another employee was not clear on how to get to Lost Lake and said it had been quite some time since he'd been there.

Maybe some of the \$54 million surplus the parks department has could be put into maps and signage.

After parking in the day use lot, we followed the trail that skirts the campground until we hit a trail the width of a road. From there we headed left into Sugar Pine's network of trails. The red trail is a loop. Going either way gets you to a sign that says Lily Pond. That's how we went.



Ferns dot the landscape.

For the majority of the 10-mile roundtrip trek we were able to look up because the ground is free of rocks. Oftentimes we were able to walk side-by-side. But off the loop we walk single file.

An abundance of Indian paintbrush covers the landscape in a vibrant glow of red. A field of skunk cabbage is flowering. Lupine adds a shot of purple to the palette. Other wildflowers are out.

But what is most striking is the plethora of ferns. It reminds us both of the Tahoe-Yosemite trail, which as the crow flies, is close by, and runs somewhat parallel to the General Creek trail.

We were on this hike before the recent rains and still some of the terrain was so lush that "tropical" is the word that comes to mind to describe it.

As we start to climb, a wall of granite is to our right and the creek to our left. Eventually we have to cross the creek to stay on the trail, but the water is low and rocks easy to scamper over.

Various pools of water look inviting to swim in – if one likes cold water. Fish dart back and forth – some 6-inches in length.

We get high enough that when we turn around Lake Tahoe is in the distance.

Up we go, hoping around each bend we will find Lost Lake.



General Creek is close by most of the hike.

We hit a marker that says Lost Lake to the left, Rubicon to the right. Right would have us on the Rubicon-McKinney trail. With the Jeep back at the campground lot, it wasn't going to do us any good to get on a 4-wheel drive trail. We head up a ways toward Lost Lake. It's not there.

A guy off trail checking out the scenery doesn't know where it is either.

The heat is getting to me. Sue is struggling with recovering from a cold. We turn around.

Lost Lake remains lost.

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**Getting there:**

From South Lake Tahoe, go north on Highway 89, around Emerald Bay and past Meeks Bay.

Before hitting Tahoma, on the right will be a sign for the Ehrman Mansion.

In less than one mile make the left turn into the Sugar Pine Point Campground.

Parking is \$10.

Dogs are not allowed.