

Desolate snowshoe tests navigation skills



A waterfall along Meeks Creek in Desolation Wilderness.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MEEKS BAY – While there has been more snow than recent years, it still hasn't been normal in Lake Tahoe. A snowshoe in late February put the exclamation point on this statement.

Rarely were the snowshoes even on; part of the time Yak-Tracks were worn and much of the time all that was needed were hiking boots.

Water was in abundance, especially at the start of the route. It was more reminiscent of late April or early May on the West Shore.

The intent of the five people and two dogs was to hike a portion of the Tahoe-Yosemite trail. And while that is exactly

what we did, we never made it to a single lake. Finding the trail became cumbersome, so we turned around.



Yak Tracks help provide stability in slick conditions.

The accumulation of water on the trail was problematic at times – as was having to cross the creek. Once we hit a substantial amount of snow is when we started postholing. That's when the 'shoes came on.

We tried to follow tracks laid by earlier adventurers, but eventually they ran out. Even with a GPS device, we were doing a bit of a zigzag that got tiresome.

When the trail is clear of snow it is a 12-mile round trip with Lake Genevieve, Crag Lake, Hidden Lake, Shadow Lake and Stony Ridge Lake as destinations.

We made it a five-mile adventure.

It didn't matter that we didn't make it to our destination of at least one lake. The scenery was stunning. Being in Desolation Wilderness is always a feast for the senses. It was also one of those rare times where it lived up to its name. Not many people venture out there this time of year, where as when it's just dirt on the ground, it is a popular spot.

Another advantage of going this time of year was seeing a

waterfall that I hadn't seen in drier climate. This is along Meeks Creek, which eventually flows into Lake Tahoe.



Lake Tahoe makes an appearance on the way back to the vehicles.

—

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 89 north to Meeks Bay. Just past the fire station that is on the right, there is parking on the left in the dirt. A small paved lot exists where the actual trailhead starts. Be sure to fill out the free Desolation Wilderness permit.