

Rough road to No Name Lake

By Craig Eisenbeis
Correspondent

I always thought No Name Lake was not very well known. In fact, it didn't even come to my attention until about 12 years ago, when I spotted it from the slopes of Broken Hand. I noticed a picturesque little lake at the snout of a small glacier on the east side of Broken Top. I decided that it merited a visit and resolved to investigate.

As it turned out, the trail to the lake is a pretty easy hike; but getting to the trailhead is another issue altogether. The trail can be accessed from either the north or south on the 370 road, which runs from the vicinity of Three Creek Lake all the way to Century Drive.

Although the lake itself is not in the Sisters Ranger District, we started from the Three Creek end, which is. Sisters District Ranger, Ian Reid, said "That is a maintenance-level 2 road for high-clearance vehicles only." At about the six-mile point, a roadside sign belatedly announced, "Not maintained for passenger cars." No kidding.

After another 5.5 miles of punishing 4x4-only road and turning onto the 380 road, we arrived at the Broken Top Trailhead and discovered a nice, and surprisingly crowded, parking lot. We learned that all the other cars had come in from Century Drive, and I began to wonder if the 50-mile route through Bend might have been a better choice. I was told, however, that the road in from the south was "really awful," too.

The Broken Top Trailhead is an alternate route to enter the Green Lakes Basin from the east. The trail takes off over the open alpine country, with spectacular views of Broken Top and the surrounding countryside. The trail is well worn and easy to follow. It's only a couple of miles; and, as the trail approaches the lake, there is more than one track. Generally, it is better to stick to the higher ground to avoid damaging fragile habitat that is only exposed to the sun for a few short weeks in the summer.

Therein lies another

problem with the current hiker assault on the area. According to Jean Nelson-Dean, public affairs officer for the Deschutes National Forest, a sensitive plant species grows in the area.

"Newberry knotweed is a perennial plant that only grows at higher elevations, and we're seeing some damage to the plants," she said.

Despite the suspicious sound of its name, Nelson-Dean says it's a "good" plant and an important feature of this high mountain habitat. It is a low-growing herb with oval, pointy leaves that are yellowish, pale green. Its small flowers can be yellow, green or purple tinted. Stems have a reddish appearance.

The lake itself is not visible from any point along the trail; so, it is necessary to follow the gash in the moraine up a rocky path to reach the lake. The eye-popping view from the lake's outlet up to Broken Top is totally unexpected and is reminiscent of the view from Moraine Lake in Canada's Banff National Park. Yes, there are fewer peaks here and the scale is smaller, but you're also a lot closer. This is a top-notch Oregon viewpoint, right here in our own backyard.

The fragment of Bend Glacier terminates right in the glacial silt-colored lake, and ice breaks off into the water, creating a continually changing variety of floes. Typically, fresh glacier ice can be seen floating on the lake throughout the summer, which it will continue to do until the lake freezes up again in a few weeks. A trail around the east side of the lake ascends a ridge to the north.

Once atop the 8,300 foot-high ridge above the lake, views unfold endlessly. With Park Meadow and the eastern headwaters of Whychus Creek far below in the near foreground, Cascade views stretch out for hundreds of miles. We took a slightly different route back by skirting the outer edge of the moraine rather than retracing our route through the lake's outlet. Round trip, including the ridgetop, this hike is only about six miles.

The Forest Service, however, has plans to make

access to the area a little more difficult by closing the 380 road and moving the trailhead back to the 370 road. This would add about three miles to this round-trip hike. Nelson-Dean said, however, that a timetable for this change has not been established.



PHOTO BY CRAIG EISENBEIS
This road warning sign on the way to No Name Lake should be taken seriously.



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