

## Jarbidge Wilderness Area

Jarbidge is the oldest wilderness area in Nevada. It was created with the original Wilderness Act of 1964. Its beauty and importance were recognized early, yet it is one of the least visited wilderness areas in Nevada. Part of the reason is its access. You have to travel 73 miles north of Elko on Highway 225, then take a long, dusty, grueling drive on county road 748 towards Jarbidge, Idaho. I didn't make it to that town just over the state line as I chose the Camp Draw Trailhead (turn off of 748 at Lat 41.759, Long -115.457). But I hear the town provides some of the camping necessities, as well as a few places to wet your whistle.

The wilderness area is in the very northeast corner of the state and benefits somewhat from remains of moisture traveling from the south, particularly in the summer. It, and some of the neighboring mountain ranges, hold the only populations of subalpine fir in the state. It also sports a few other conifers - common juniper, Rocky Mountain juniper, whitebark pine, and limber pine. I was the very lucky recipient of a very wet spring, and though it was July, I was greeted with an abundance of flowers, especially sunflowers, and a lot more snow still remained on the ground in some places.



*Approach from the west a few miles from the trailhead*

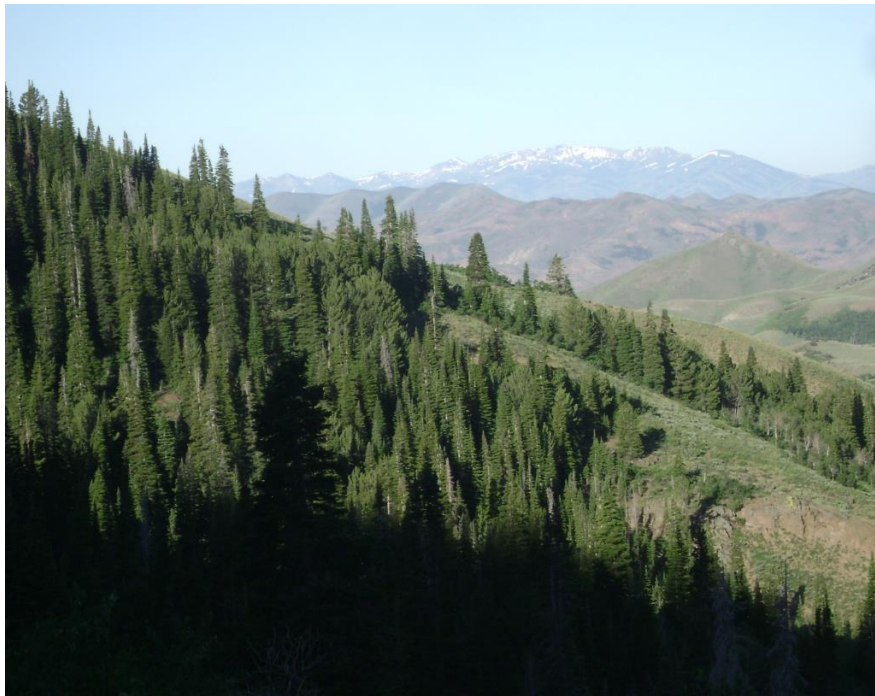


*Nearing the trailhead. Notice the lush, tall sunflowers!*



*Sunflowers and Lupine among Quaking Aspen at the Camp Draw Trailhead*

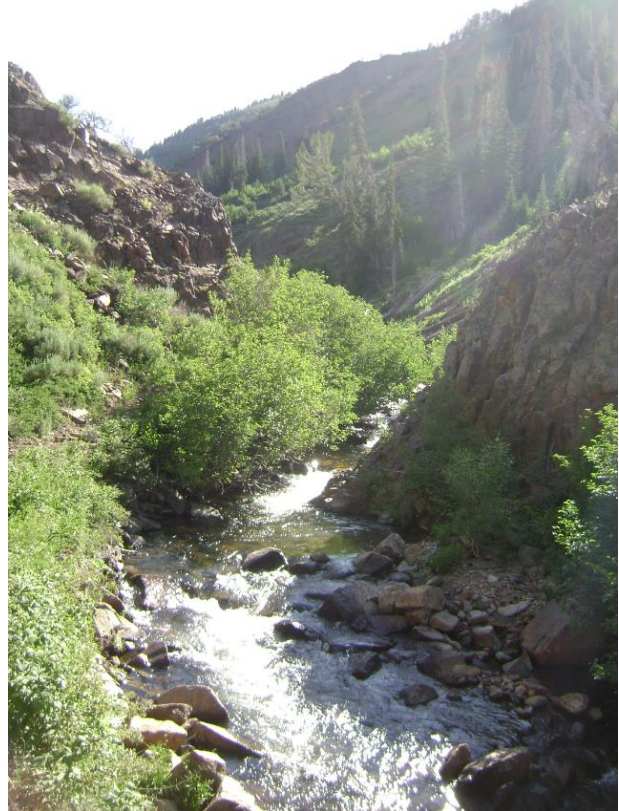
The trail began at 7600 feet and climbed quickly to a notch in the ridge to the east at 8100 feet. It dropped into the Camp Draw canyon then met up with the West Mary's River. I hiked upstream until I met an unnamed creek joining the river at about 7600 feet elevation where I camped for the night.



*Looking back at the trailhead from the first ridge*



*View of whitebark pine and slender subalpine fir from camp*



*Looking upstream at West Mary's River*

The next morning I headed up West Mary's River where I aimed toward Jarbidge Lake on a hefty set of switchbacks. I set up camp at the lake at about 9400 feet elevation. The lake looked pretty lifeless. The next day I headed over the ridge to the east to Emerald Lake. That lake wasn't so lifeless – it supplied me with a nice dinner of two trout! Both of these lakes, although little, were testament to the action of past glaciers, scouring out the cirques where the lakes lie. The mountain range was also different from most of the other Nevada ranges, that had a mostly north-south orientation. These mountains appeared to me to be more of a hodge-podge of formations.



*Jarbidge Lake*



*My camp at Jarbidge Lake. Quite a bit of snow for July!*



*A population of mostly whitebark pine. Many of the trees show evidence of bark beetle infestation*



*Emerald Lake*



*The ubiquitous common juniper*



*West Mary's River watershed. Note the lush growth on the north slope vs the south! This is often the case in semi-dry areas. The northern side benefitting from less sun exposure.*

My plan was to stop in at the town of Jarbidge at the very north part of the Wilderness Area and taste some of their brews before trying to hitch back to my car. However, I met the only person I saw on the trip and he had a harrowing story of crossing the Jarbidge River which was necessary to get to the town of Jarbidge. The wet spring and snow melt had flooded the Jarbidge River. He recommended that I didn't try it, and the look in his face convinced me to heed his word. So I turned around and chose a bypass (as noted on map) back to the Camp Draw Trail. I camped in a nice meadow in the bypass trail and was rewarded with a herd of deer eating their way through the tall meadow grass. After joining back up with the West Mary's trail, I hiked back over the ridge to my car.

