

Brower's Spring Account by Allen Palmer:

I spent the week up in the Centennial valley pretty much working around the rain, sometimes only showers, that would start up in later morning, early afternoon. Cycled . from Lima to the bridge below Lima Dam on Monday afternoon, walked from Lima Dam down to the bridge and back on Tuesday, went in search of Brower's Spring on Wednesday, cycled the closed part of the refuge from Culver Bridge washout to the headquarters on Thursday, cycled Hell Roaring Creek to Culver and Marsh Campground to HQ on Friday, then finished up Red Rock River on Saturday, paddling Marsh Campground to Lyons Bridge. This last day was tough because of the 19 mile bike shuttle, the longest one for this trip.

The morning looked promising for heading up in search of Brower's Spring. Lot's of clouds but they were scattered enough to give me some confidence that the day might turn out alright for a hike. I started at the old Continental Divide trailhead the Rod Wellington had told me about 6:45am. 4 1/2 miles into Lilian Lake on a well-developed trail. No snow left down this low but the trail was still quite wet and greasy. I got to the first crossing of Hell Roaring Creek and saw it was at a high flow. I pondered wading across knowing that the knee-high depth was going to soak my boots even with gaiters and rain pants on. I really didn't want to have wet feet if I had to cross extensive snow fields with the snow shoes I brought along. So I elected to head up the right side of the canyon and follow game trails around this one hill and still end up at Lilian Lake, thereby avoiding two crossings of the creek. It seemed like a good idea at the time but added quite a bit of elevation gain and some distance. I thought I might be able to stay above Lilian Lake and continue on up the valley without dropping down. It didn't work out that way. Eventually, I got a view of what the right side of the valley looked like, steeply forested hillside with a lot of unmelted snow remaining. I was left with little choice by head down to the valley floor and the lake. I continued on up. Snow had already melted and looking ahead I could see that I may not need the snowshoes after all. I began encountering patches of snow at about the 8,400 foot level, big enough that I couldn't avoid them but yet not so large that snowshoes would help. So postholing was in order. It was a warm enough day that any overnight firmness in the snow was gone. Lot's of elk and moose tracks, some quite fresh. No bear sign though.

I saw in the distance what I took to be Sawtell Peak so I knew I was getting within range. I decide to head up closer to 8,900 feet and try to spot the rock cairn from above, if it was not snow covered. Unfortunately, the snow fields at this elevation were still quite extensive and a couple of feet deep. I circle around for about an hour hoping to spot the top but had no luck. I decided my time would be better spent looking for signs of the spring. Zeroing in with my GPS I finally spotted a tree that looked somewhat familiar. I thought it resembled the knarled, weathered tree that I had seen in the picture of Mark Kalch standing at the top of the spring. I continued on down one side of the drop and spotted a bent General Land Office Survey marker. I didn't remember if anyone had mentioned this so I continued on down below what I thought was the spring. The area looked similar to the photograph. I also saw a significant amount of water gushing out of the hillside. There was also a circular area below the rocks that was surrounded by snow, characteristic of other springs I have seen during winter/spring periods. At this point, I figured this was about as good as it is going to get. It was 3pm and beginning to hail. The skies had been darkening for awhile now. When the snow began to fall, I figured that the

mountain was telling me I had my chance and now it's time to get the hell off. I head on down, back to Lillian Lake. Made good time, hey it was down hill. It's a beautiful area, great scenery, and the wildflowers were in bloom.

Followed the CDT down from Lillian Lake after deciding that I didn't want to overnight it. I reached the lake at 5pm and knew I could make it out to camp before dark. Setting up another camp and then dealing with potential weather issues wasn't all that appealing. The first crossing of Hell Roaring Creek was doable with some downed trees. However, the crossing that I had detoured around coming up did require wading. I found one tree that someone had recently cut down attempting to create a kind of bridge but the creek flow had pushed it away from one bank and was now overflowing the tree. This created a strainer that would cause anyone paddling up this far a bit of a problem. Saw one elk on the way out and then clocked in at camp right about 8pm.

