

## INTRODUCTION

The Uinta Mountains of northeastern Utah are unique in that they are the highest mountain range in Utah and the only major range of mountains in the contiguous United States to lie in an east and west direction. Kings Peak, Utah's tallest point of land, standing at 13,528 feet, is hard to distinguish from its sister peaks, all of which stand over 13,000 feet in elevation. This is a country of snow-capped mountains, large alpine basins dotted with lakes, steep rocky slopes, green meadows and tall trees. Four of Utah's major rivers, the Duchesne, Provo, Weber and Bear, originate in the snowfields of these mountains. There are well over 1,000 natural lakes in the headwater regions of the Uinta Mountains, and more than 650 of these lakes support populations of game fish.

Although a number of these lakes and basins have been investigated from time to time over the years, the first comprehensive lake study undertaken by the Utah Department of Fish and Game began in the summer of 1955. Much of the information gathered during that study is now outdated. The physical, chemical and biological features of each lake may change from year to year; therefore, management schemes must also change. A second comprehensive lake study was initiated by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in 1971 to evaluate past management efforts and stocking programs to recommend appropriate changes. This booklet contains information from studies completed on the Smiths Fork, Henrys Fork and Beaver Creek Drainages between 1983 and 1985. No attempt was made to list all the lakes in the respective drainages for this publication. Only those which were found to support populations of game fish are included. In some cases fishless lakes are incorporated on maps to serve as landmarks or orientation points.

In early days, the use of pack animals for stocking mountain lakes meant that only a few lakes could be planted each year. Since 1955, aircraft have been used for planting these remote lakes, greatly increasing the number of waters stocked each year. Brook and cutthroat trout are the predominant species stocked as they have demonstrated an ability to grow and survive well in these alpine lakes. However, rainbow and golden trout, as well as arctic grayling, can also be found in several Uinta Lakes, adding variety and beauty to the fisherman's experience.

Aerial stocking is designed to replenish populations or introduce fish into lakes that Division surveys have found suitable to receive experimental stocking. Care is taken not to overstock these lakes because it usually results in small, poorly developed fish. Because the optimum growing season for trout at this elevation is very short (June through August), growth is relatively slow and trout will reach only 8 to 12 inches by the third year of life. The more inaccessible lakes are stocked on a 3-to-5-year cycle to encourage growth, and the heavily fished lakes are planted on a 1-to-2-year cycle to maintain population levels.

A trip into the High Uintas can be very enjoyable, but may also be uncomfortable or hazardous to unprepared travelers. As most of the lakes lie in remote basins, it is recommended that trips be well planned and adequate preparations made beforehand. Always leave word with a friend or relative on your approximate destination and when you plan to return. Most of these lakes can be accessed on well marked U.S. Forest Service trails. Other lakes can only be reached by going cross-country. However, cross-country travel should be avoided unless the user is familiar with this type of travel. While the trails have been updated in this booklet, it is a good idea to carry a topographical map for reference. These can be purchased from the U.S. Geological Survey. Ordinarily trips up to 5 miles can be made on foot when the fisherman plans to spend only one day on the lake and return home that evening. However, backpackers who wish to stay overnight can easily reach the more remote lakes. Those wishing to use horses in the Uintas should study available pastures and plan their trip accordingly. Information concerning the availability of horse rentals may be obtained from Division offices, conservation officers or forest rangers. Reservations should be made well in advance.

Because of the altitude and unpredictable weather of the Uintas, users should take steps to prevent possible hypothermia. Warm clothing (layered wool and down) and good rain gear should be carried at all times. Remember that snow showers are common all season at these high elevations, and the temperature can drop 20 to 30 degrees in a matter of minutes. Carry instant energy food, such as candy and fruit, and avoid exhaustion. If you get hot, ventilate to dispel body heat and moisture. Avoid drinking large quantities of cold water when chilled. Be sure to carry plenty of insect repellent for camp and horse, at least until mid-August.

You may also wish to bring suntan lotion and lip balm to protect the skin from the intense sunshine of high elevation. Users should be cautioned that drinking untreated water in backcountry areas may cause giardia, a parasitic infection which can make you very ill. Symptoms, which include chronic diarrhea, abdominal cramps, bloating, fatigue and weight loss may not appear until 2 to 3 weeks after contact. Recent studies have shown that water purifiers will not kill the parasite. As a safeguard against giardia, boil all drinking water 3 to 5 minutes before using it.

Of major concern is maintaining the aesthetic beauty and wilderness appeal of the Uinta Mountains. Since the second study began, camping, hiking and fishing use appears to be increasing. Excessive recreational pressure can quickly damage this alpine habitat if conscious efforts are not made to preserve its beauty. Those entering the High Uinta country should minimize their impact and leave these mountains the way they would like to find them when they return. Remember to burn all combustible material and pack out everything that is nonburnable. **DO NOT** bury any litter. Pack out refuse left by those less courteous than yourself. Dump waste water a minimum of 150 feet from springs, lakes and streams and use biodegradable soap. Select a campsite carefully and avoid clearing the vegetation or ditching around a tent. It is a good idea to utilize previously constructed fire rings whenever possible. Avoid camping in one spot longer than 5 days. Horse packers should carefully select suitable pasture away from lakes and streams, avoiding wet and boggy areas. It is recommended that horses be hobbled or picketed during the evening to allow grazing over a large area. Picketed animals should be moved frequently to prevent trampling and beat-out circles in meadows. A good wilderness toilet is made by digging a "CAT HOLE" no deeper than 8 to 10 inches and at least 200 feet from water sources. Cover human waste with 4 to 6 inches of lightly compacted topsoil.

Large groups encroach upon the solitude of others and have a greater impact upon the wilderness environment than the same number of users scattered among several parties. In an effort to control this problem, the forest supervisors for the Ashley and Wasatch national forests have implemented group size restrictions. Parties using the Wilderness Area are not to exceed 15 people and 20 horses, and smaller group restrictions are being considered. Boy Scout and other leaders should remember to check with U.S. Forest Service officials for guidelines and helpful suggestions. Scout groups may wish to take part in the "Leave No Trace" wilderness training programs offered by their local Boy Scout councils.

Fishing is unpredictable, especially in the High Uintas. If one lake fails to produce fish, try another; there is usually one nearby. If the lakes are slow, try fly fishing the numerous streams. If you like elbow room to camp and fish, and enjoy discovering new scenic wonders, let us recommend the High Uintas.