

HOLLY LAKE, GRAND TETONS NATIONAL PARK

Holly Lake, located in Paintbrush Canyon, is fastest accessed from the String Lake trailhead of Grand Tetons National Park. It is 1.6 miles to the junction with the trail from Leigh Lake (which is also 1.6 miles but supposedly has a steeper incline than the trail from String Lake). It is then an additional 4.9 miles to Holly Lake, making the round-trip distance 13 miles total. The trailhead is located at an elevation of 6,880 ft, and the lake is located at 9,450 ft. The trail is quite easy to find and is well-travelled, though we did not encounter many hikers on the trail. Note that it is not safe to begin this hike late in the day!

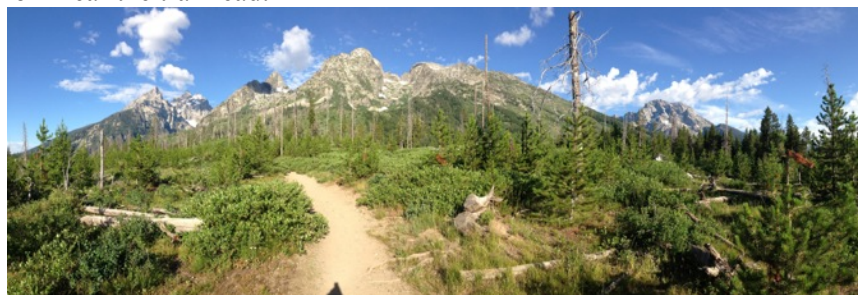
On our drive in to Wilson, WY the previous day, we drove the Teton Scenic Byway and stopped to take a photo of this sign:



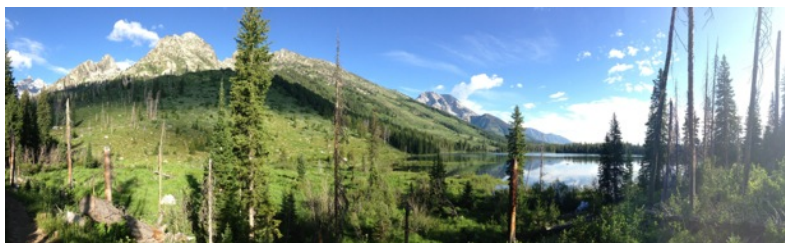
Parking for the Holly Lake hike at the String Lake trailhead; if you arrive at the trailhead "early", ~8:00 am, there are very few vehicles (mainly those from hikers staying overnight), and can have a good selection of parking spaces; however, arriving later in the day (for a shorter hike, for example), parking would be difficult:



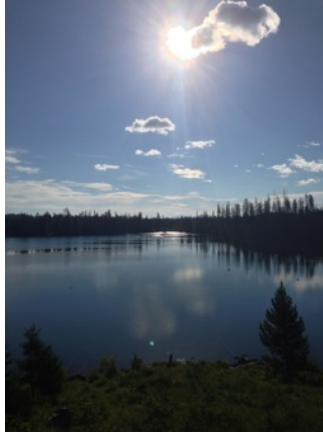
Panorama of the tetons from near the trailhead:



Panorama of Leigh Lake:



Leigh Lake:



Another panorama from the trail along the western rim of Leigh Lake:



The trail leaves the rim of Leigh Lake near the northern end of the lake and ascends through some short trees:



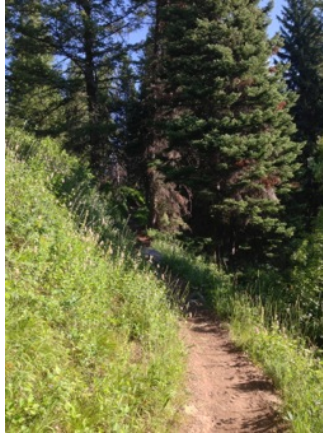
This may be a potential route to Rockchuck Peak, as we saw a hiker leave the trail near here who appeared to ascend towards the distant mountain seen in the photo; there are also some elk in the center of this photo (which cannot be seen as the resolution of my iPhone camera is not sufficient):



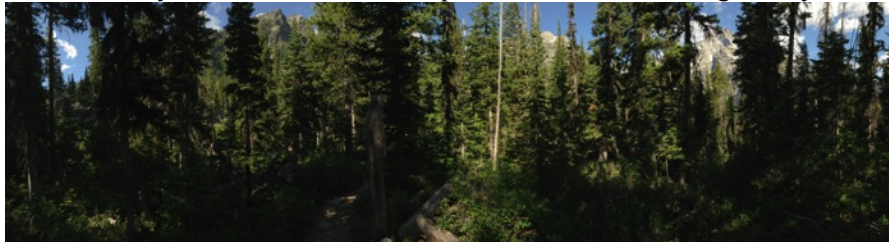
Continuing along the trail, we encountered a very nice collection of wildflowers; looking back through the wildflowers:



The trail enters the trees just before reaching the intersection with the other trail around String Lake:



The trail ascends at a moderate incline through this patch of trees, then enters Paintbrush Canyon; panorama from where we have just entered Paintbrush Canyon but can still see the peak to the north of Leigh Canyon, Mount Moran:



Another photo of Mount Moran, from where it can be seen somewhat clearer through the trees:



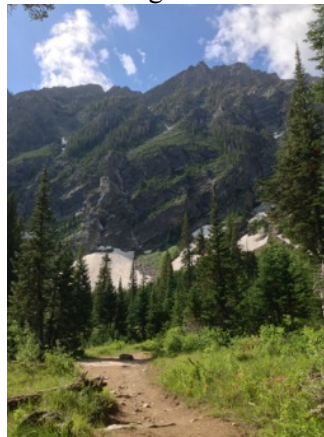
Looking towards Mount Woodring, on the north side of Paintbrush Canyon, from a little further up-canyon:



This nice waterfall is a good place to stop for "second breakfast":



The trail enters the Lower Paintbrush Camping Area and begins to flatten out:



Looking back towards Leigh Lake and Jackson Lake; there are various camping locations in lower Paintbrush Canyon, some of which appear to have spectacular views:



These wildflowers below Mount St. John and Rockchuck Peak are located next to a campsite which is some distance from the trail (though the wildflowers can be seen from the main trail) and has amazing views:



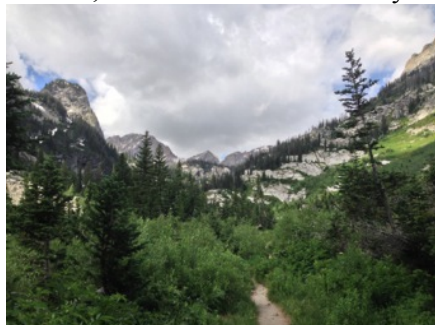
There were many nice wildflowers along the main trail; interestingly, Indian Paintbrushes, for which the canyon was named, were not nearly as prevalent as other flowers:

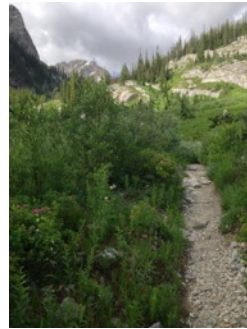


The trail crosses the river for the first time over a nice bridge:



The next six photos show the trail continuing through a meadowy area past the river crossing; this meadow may sometimes have spectacular wildflowers; however, the flowers were not very thick through here when we hiked through:





Looking back down-canyon across a small group of flowers:



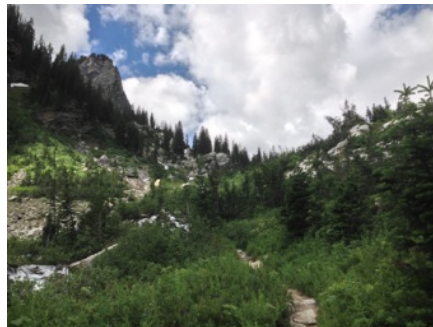
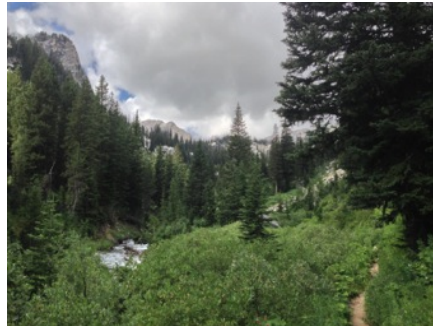
The trail enters a narrower section of the canyon past the open meadow; the trail map which can be found on the national park service website is not clear as to where the trail goes through here—it actually stays on the northwest side of the river and does not have another major river crossing, only crosses the smaller tributaries of the main river (which can be seen on a TOPO map):



Nice wildflowers below another campsite:



The next four photos show the continuation of the trail along the river:



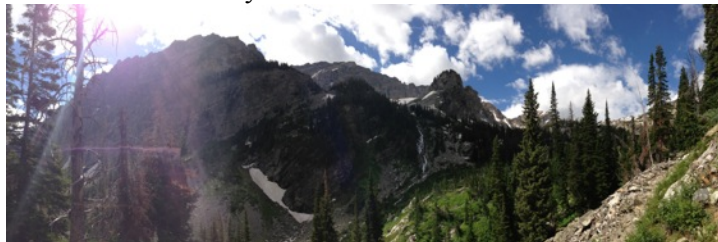
The trail crosses the northernmost of the tributaries first, then switchbacks:



Looking back down-canyon at the corner of the switchback:



Panorama of this middle portion of Paintbrush Canyon:



The trail crosses some rocks here but is very well-defined and makes for easy hiking:



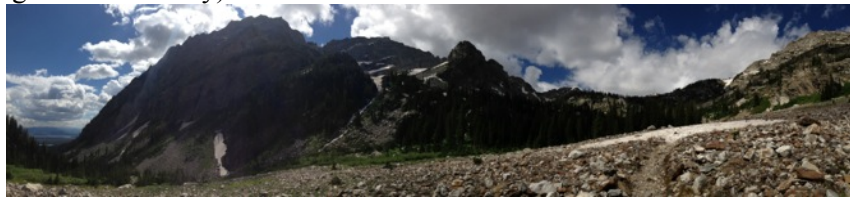
Nice waterfall on the other side of the canyon:



The trail crosses another rocky area:



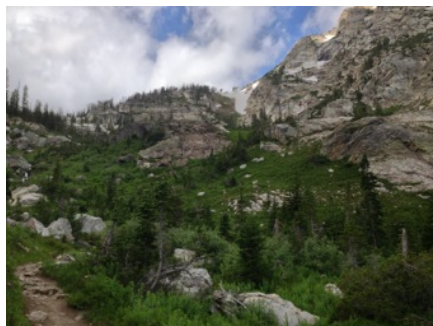
Panorama from this rocky area; the trail crosses a patch of snow, which we bypassed on the hike out but crossed on the way back (as crossing the snow turned out to be easier than scrambling over the loose rocks, though neither was difficult compared to typical hiking in Death Valley):



Looking up towards another nice waterfall (there were many in this area):



Continuing along this very nicely maintained trail:



There is a final stretch of the trail before the lake that appears steep on the maps, but the switchbacks made the ascent seem barely noticeable; the trail goes to the left of the rock pile and cliff in the photo:



Yet another nice wildflower we spotted on the hike up:



Panorama from the cliff shown two photos previously:



Looking down at the trail below, where the switchbacks began:



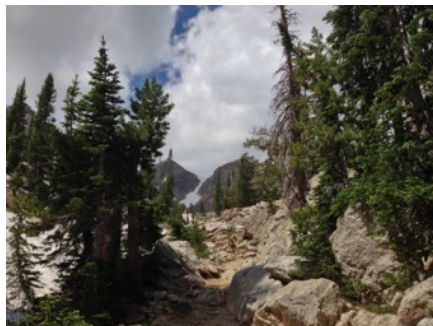
The trail was covered by a bit of snow just past the switchbacks; unfortunately, thunderstorms were predicted for the evening of the day we did this hike, so we were concerned about the snow and nearby rocks becoming slippery on the hike back. Luckily, however, the rain did not begin where we were hiking until we were a half-mile from the parking lot (it did appear to be raining heavily in nearby Cascade Canyon, however):



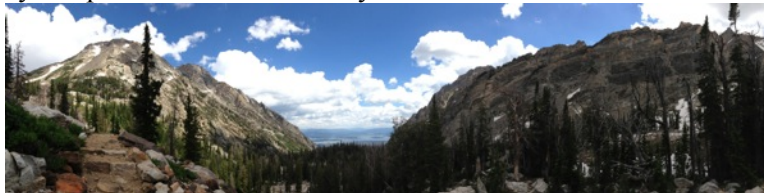
Looking back down the portion of trail which had a bit of snow to cross; fortunately, many hikers had crossed the snow before us, so they had created stable footprints (and shown where a step would break through):



Looking ahead up the trail:



Panorama from the trail junction; the right fork lead to Holly Lake and camping sites, while the left fork is the main route to Paintbrush Divide (someday I hope to be able to do a day-hike of Paintbrush and Cascade Canyons):



There is a small lake which is reached before Holly Lake; panorama of this lake and the surrounding cliffs:



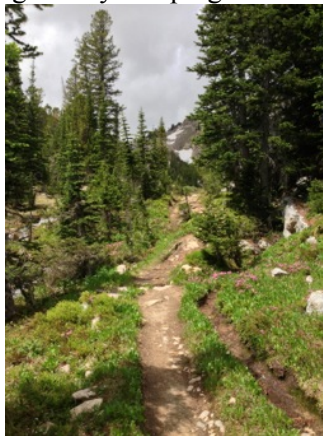
The trail through the first camping area:



Looking through the trees at the nearby cliffs; there were a number of snowpacks scattered throughout this area:



The trail to the lake seems to wind its way through many camping areas before finally reaching the lake:



The lake is just over the rise seen in the middle of this photo:



Panorama of the peaks in this area from the top of the rise; the major peaks are Rockchuck Peak and Mount St. John (left of center), and Mount Woodring (right):



Holly Lake:



There were some nice flowers by the lake, and a sign which requests that hikers stay on designated trails:



Elevation 9,410 ft sign (the 9,450 ft listed by park brochures may be incorrect, as the TOPO map also lists 9,410 ft):



An interesting and longer day-hike might be to try to reach the ridge behind the lake to get a view into Grizzly Bear Lake, though this might be easier from the Paintbrush Divide trail and would require a bit of planning:



It was windy near where the trail first reached the lake, which helped to keep the mosquitoes away:



The trail which continues on to connect with the other trail to Paintbrush Divide:



The local marmot:



Panorama from where most of the campsites were, a short distance from where the main trail reaches the lake (note that this is also where most of the mosquitoes were):



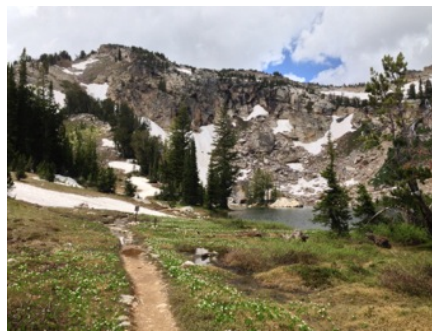
A tree with an amazing-looking-above-ground root system:



Another photo of the marmot:



Looking back at the flowers by the lake:



On the hike back, we found a very nice viewpoint of the lower canyon from the camping area just below the lake; Leigh Lake can be seen in the middle of the photo, with Jackson Lake behind it:



Still another wildflower we saw:



More wildflowers by the main river/creek:



Indian Paintbrush:



Even more wildflowers:



There were only a few of these flowers, which we saw located near the Leigh Lake trail junction:



The lighting for photographing these flowers on the hike back around String Lake was better than the lighting on the way out:



One final photo of the tetons on the drive back to Jackson:

