

## 59 JURAK LAKE OR MANSON COL

*Twice we had been rained out of the Jurak Lake hike. The day we finally made it, the sunlight was competing with fast-moving clouds, so I had to act fast to capture the fleeting light on film. If it is raining or snowing (even in summer) anywhere in this region, it is likely occurring in the St. Mary's area. High snow or rainfall can be expected year round.*

Jurak Lake is a half a kilometre-round lake, surrounded by high-elevation spruce and fir forest. Meadows dotted with wildflowers contrast the open rocky slopes above. The subalpine lake is a good day hike destination, but routefinding is necessary. A topo map is useful on this hike.

Although the lake may be the main objective of this hike, I find the most interesting part to be the green meadows and tarns above the lake to the southwest. The rims of the spongy ponds are dimpled by many animal tracks marking earlier



Carol at alpine tarns above Jurak Lake.

**Rating** moderate

**Time** each separate hike is a day hike

**Distance** 2.5 km Jurak Lake  
2.5 km Manson Col

**Elevation gain** 244 m (800 ft.) up to Jurak Pass  
274 m (900 ft.) down to lake  
Jurak Lake 2100 m (6900 ft.)  
Manson Pass 2410 m (7920 ft.)

**Trail** Jurak Lake—routefinding up rocky slope to pass above subalpine lake, then down to lake

Manson Col—some trail, some bushwhacking up to alpine ridge

**Map** 82F/16 Dewar Creek

**Trail map** page 187

### Drive

**Road** rocky and steep, 4x4 truck with high clearance

**Road map** page 180

Take St. Mary Lake Road west (see page 182) to the signed Dewar Creek Road and turn right (north) at kilometre 38.1 (49-km sign). This intersection lies about 500 m beyond the prominent White Creek bridge. (Avoid the left turn left on to signed West Fork St. Mary River Road.)

- 0 km Head north on Dewar Creek Road from St. Mary Lake Road.
- 7.8 km (Eight-kilometre sign) turn right and uphill onto a steep side road (heading approximately northeast)—the start of this rough 4x4 exploration road. Large, sharp rocks and deep waterbars encourage slow going.
- 9.5 km Take the left fork
- 12.9 km Road forks in a large subalpine basin. Park off the road at the fork. Hike the right fork for **Jurak Lake** (uphill), traversing the broken talus of the hillside across a rock slide to a landing near the avalanche run-out zone. Hike the left fork (downhill) for **Manson Col**.

journeys into this basin, and undulating hills offer intriguing exploration potential as new ponds are found nestled between the curved hills.

With the help of a good 4x4, this hike can start almost at tree line, so the route itself does not climb much in elevation. Without a suitable vehicle, most of the day will be spent hiking up the rocky road on loose, sharp and broken rocks.

Almost east from the landing at the road's end, choose the first avalanche path on the right of the cliff bands that looks climbable. The slope leads up to Jurak Pass, at 2377 m (7800 ft.), between White Creek tributaries and Dewar Creek tributaries. The trail runs up through the treed area between two prominent avalanche paths. You may not find the trail right away. But, if you climb up the avalanche slope and hike left into the trees, the trail zigzags up this treed strip between two avalanche swaths, heading east or northeast to the pass. This is the steepest part of the hike. The basin appears more accessible and free of cliffs as you swing around to the left.

The trail near the top of the slope begins to hike to the right (southeast) toward the pass above Jurak Lake. As you enter the White Creek headwaters, locate landmarks that will help you routefind on the way out. From the White Creek side, many passes and ridges in the Jurak Lake basin look similar.

Cross over the pass and hike down 91 m (300 ft.), descending the eastern slope to the tarns. Jurak Lake is 274 m (900 ft.) below the pass. Some routefinding is required, but the landmarks and route are clearly visible from the pass.

It took us three hours of slow travel and frequent photo stops to reach the lake. This is a popular hike as the distances are not long, although the terrain is steep.

## **Manson Col**

The climb to Manson Col and Mount Manson also begins at the Jurak Lake parking spot. At 12.9 km the 4x4 road forks in a large subalpine basin. Park at this fork, at 1970 m (6460 ft.). (The right fork leads to the pass above Jurak Lake.) For Manson Col, hike along the left fork. This hike has some trail and some bushwhacking to the alpine Manson Pass and ridge above St. Mary's Alpine Provincial Park. It gains 445 m (1460 ft.) in about 2.5 km. Some of the route is steep, especially from the subalpine up to the ridge.

Begin the hike from the left road fork and head downhill. Follow the road for about 1 km toward the dense forest and a park registration box.

Cross a tiny creek and bushwhack straight ahead (northwest), staying about the same elevation toward a lush meadow beside the main creek on your left. Follow up the trail by the steepening mountain stream. After hiking beside a sloping ramp of a waterfall, cross the creek above the waterfall and follow orange ribbons. Cross the creek again and stay to a trail leading to the subalpine. No bridges assist the hiker across this unimproved, unmaintained trail. The creeks are small in mid-summer and are comfortably stepped across.

A small tarn rests in the Manson Col subalpine basin. From the subalpine meadows, routefind up to the rocky boulder pass at 2410 m (7920 ft.). St. Mary's Alpine Park is north of the pass. Many subalpine lakes dot the landscape and the panoramic views are rewarding. To overlook Jurak Lake to the east, climb up from the pass on the narrow ridge over boulders, bedrock and between gnarly alpine trees.

The hike to Manson Col offers grand overviews of the rugged topography of St. Mary's Alpine Provincial Park and the southern Purcell Mountains.