

# PAYETTE LAKE

## *Love Affair*

Why our beloved  
alpine lake leaves a  
lasting impression.

*by McKenzie Christensen*



Psychologists have long studied the human attraction to water. Studies have shown that exposure to environments with water can improve our mental wellbeing and even improve physical health. But the question remains: why? What makes water, and in McCall's case, Payette Lake, such an attraction?

While we are not able to tackle the universal "why," we do have a few ideas about what makes Payette Lake so special.

First and foremost, Payette Lake is the centerpiece of activity in McCall. Whether you are swimming, sailing, waterskiing, jet skiing, canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding or boating, the lake offers endless activities to keep the family entertained.

Yet despite the limitless recreation offered by the lake, the most memorable attribute of Payette Lake seems to be its beauty. Ray Dupree, long-time owner of former Payette Lake Cruises says, "I have toured people from all over the world and the one thing that they remember from their vacation is the beauty of Payette Lake."

Dupree grew up in Houston, Texas and after graduating from college, spent time in the Marines as a pilot. From there, he transitioned to commercial airlines, flying the Seattle to Tokyo route for American Airlines for many years. Fifteen years ago, he made McCall his home and dedicated his summers to taking tourists and locals alike on scenic cruises around Payette Lake.

During his time on the water, Dupree, an avid historian, gathered stories, tid-bits and local gossip about some of the unique features around the lake to share with his guests. "Everybody loves the lake and the more I can tell them about the history, the more they appreciate it," says Dupree.

Dupree graciously shared some of his favorite Payette Lake lore and landmarks, laughing as he confesses poetic license may have been used in the telling.



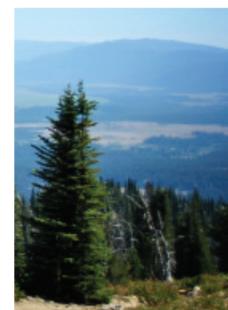


**Statue of Liberty:** Yard art can be seen at many of the homes that border Payette Lake; however, one of the most-loved is the Statue of Liberty. During the Fourth of July, the lakeside home where the statue resides is trimmed with American flags and decorated to the nines in red, white and blue. It has become customary for boats passing by the statue to slow and salute Lady Liberty. *—photo courtesy of Ray Dupree*

**Petrified Crocodile:** One of the most shocking finds in Payette Lake! This petrified crocodile defied nature and made its home in our high altitude alpine lake where water temperatures rarely reach over 70 degrees in the summer and freezes over in the winter. Apparently we aren't the only ones who can resist Payette Lake's beauty. *—photo courtesy of Ray Dupree*



*—courtesy McKenzie Christensen*



**Payette Lake Little Mermaid:** Peter Johnson, considered by many to be the "steward of Payette Lake," was one of the engineers in charge of the Bonneville Dam system. He also happened to be a world-class sculptor. This statue is of his granddaughter when she was eight years old and placed in the exact spot she would stop right before jumping into the water. Johnson created the statue as a tribute to all of the women in his life. *—photo courtesy of Ray Dupree*



**Wildlife:** The crystal clear waters of the lake are a haven for wildlife. It is common to see deer, elk and even moose (along the Upper Payette River near North Beach) by the water's edge. On one boat tour, Dupree and his guests even spotted a black bear swimming in the water by Ponderosa State Park. But perhaps the most common animal to see on Payette Lake is an osprey. These birds of prey mate for life and typically have two chicks per year. If one mate dies, the lone bird does not mate again. Unlike eagles, osprey only eat fresh kill and find most of their food by diving up to three feet into the water.

**Bell Point:** In the heyday of the gold rush, gold ore from Warren was loaded by wagon and transported back to McCall to catch the train, giving the route its name, "Warren Wagon Road." Rumor has it that when the railroad shut down, the president of the railroad took the bell off of the steam engine during its last run. That bell now calls a small point near the Simplot estate home. *— photo courtesy of Ray Dupree*

**Sperm Whale Rock:** Named for its shape, Sperm Whale Rock is a great place to stop and sunbathe or jump into the water on a hot summer day. Find this small island off the tip of Paradise Point near Shellworth Island in Tamarack Bay. *— photo courtesy of Ray Dupree*

While last year marked Mr. Dupree's final lake tour, these special places and stories remain. Coupled with the lake's beauty and recreational amenities, these unique histories, legends and landmarks are the essence of what keeps Payette Lake in our hearts.

# DIVE IN!



– courtesy of McKenzie Christensen

With so many ways to enjoy the water, it's time to jump in, wade in or dive in!



– courtesy of McKenzie Christensen

Sharlie, Payette Lake's resident monster, dates back to the early 1900s. The first reported sighting described a scaly, cylindrical body attached to a stumpy cow-like head hurtling through the frigid waters of Payette Lake. In 1954 after many reports of this mysterious lake creature, The Star-News held a naming contest with a \$40 grand prize. Suggestions came in from across the country and a panel of eight judges, including then-governor Len Jordan, selected "Sharlie."

Regular sightings of Sharlie have been reported over the years, but no official evidence of Sharlie's existence has been offered up. Regardless, the residents of McCall need no proof to know she (yes, Sharlie is a she) is real. Her legend continues to grow, adding imagination and mystery to the area folklore, as an unofficial symbol of McCall.

Have you been lucky enough to see Sharlie?

## THE LEGEND OF



# SHARLIE

-courtesy of Summit Photography



-courtesy of Mile High Marina

Want to get out on the water? Rent jet skis, boats and more from Cheap Thrills Rentals or Mile High Marina. Find a kayak, canoe or SUP for rent at Backwoods Adventures or Gravity Sports (you can also rent SUPs from McCall Sports Exchange). Home Town Sports also rents skis, wakeboards, tubes and more to make your afternoon of boating even better.

Quick Tip: If you are looking for a leisurely cruise around Payette Lake, McCall Lake Cruises is a must! Tour the lake aboard "The Idaho" and sip on a signature "Huckleberry Cruiser" or "Sharlie Temple" (see Sip & Savor on page 16).

Payette Lake is just one way to enjoy the water this summer. The area is home to more than 300 alpine lakes, most accessible by hiking or mountain bike.

Quick Tip: Find our favorite alpine lake trails in the "Hiker's Paradise" and "Mountain Biking Trail Tour" Itineraries at [visitmccall.org](http://visitmccall.org)

Looking to drop a line? We love fishing at Lake Cascade, the fourth largest lake in Idaho. Catch rainbow trout, salmon or small mouth bass. Get the inside scoop on what's biting at Tackle Toms in Cascade.

Quick Tip: Lake Cascade isn't just for fishing. We love Tamarack Resort's waterfront cabana at the Poison Creek recreational unit. Rent a kayak, SUP or boat and enjoy a day on the water.



-courtesy of Tamarack Resort



-courtesy of McCall Area Chamber