

The Catfish Lake-Strawberry Hike

This is a fairly easy hike with several possible variations. All variations start and end in Pinecrest. These variations are shown in the map below.

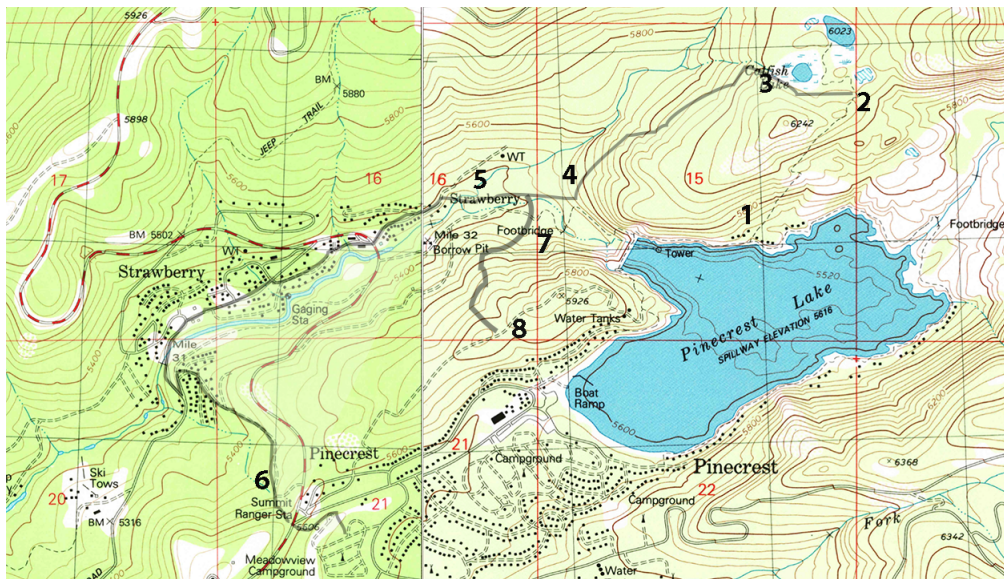


Figure 1: Catfish Lake and Strawberry.

We describe this hike in the counter-clockwise direction but it can be traversed in either direction. The hike begins at the Pinecrest Marina. One hikes along the lakeshore trail to the dam. At the east end of the dam, one has a choice. If one turns to the left, there is a trail that goes directly to Strawberry; it is shown on the map. The trail from Catfish Lake to Strawberry joins this trail at mark 4. If instead, one continues around the lake at the east end of the dam, then after a half-mile, one encounters some cabins. Within 50 yards of the first of these cabins, a trail leaves the Pinecrest Lake trail to the left (mark 1). This trail is marked with a small sign at ground level that says “Catfish Lake”. The trail winds through the cabins and then starts up towards the top of the ridge. After about a mile of steady climbing, the first lake is reached, at mark 2. The trail splits here. If one continues to the right around this first lake, one can continue upwards to Frankenstein’s Bluff and Pinecrest Peak. If one goes to the left as soon as this first lake is spotted, then after a short while, one comes across a much larger lake. One should continue around this lake on the left-hand side, reaching its outflow at mark 3. The trail continues to the

west until the Stanislaus river below Pinecrest Dam is reached at mark 4.

We note that although a footbridge across the Stanislaus is marked on the map, this footbridge no longer exists. Nevertheless, just below mark 4 on the river, one can safely cross on a very large fallen tree. We will return to this possibility below. If one does not cross the river, then one should continue on the trail down the north side of the river. Within a few hundred yards of mark 4, the trail leaves the river and goes into the forest for a short distance, until it reaches Herring Creek. Figure 2 shows the log across this river at mark 5; the crossing is easy.



Figure 2: The Log Across Herring Creek.

After crossing Herring Creek, the trail continues towards Strawberry, which is quickly reached. One should (carefully) cross Highway 108 in Strawberry, staying on the north side of the river. One can walk just to the right of the restaurant on the west side of 108 and walk west through the rental cabins. By continuing on the roads and keeping the river in view, one eventually reaches a bridge across the river. After crossing this bridge, one should walk about 200 yards along the road, and then make a sharp left onto a road that goes into a set of cabins. This road bends to the right and very soon, a dirt road called Pine Avenue splits off to the left. One should walk up Pine Avenue to mark 6, which is just across 108 from the Pinecrest Ranger Station. At this point, one can either continue to the end of Pine Avenue and cross 108, or else go directly south and cross 108 just to the west of the Pinecrest junction. If one does the

latter, then one can avoid walking on the Pinecrest entrance road; instead, one walks through the forest for about 100 yards until Meadowview Campground is encountered. At this point, one can walk through the campground, cross the Dodge Ridge Road, and head towards the lake in innumerable ways.

We noted above that just below mark 4 on the river, one can cross the river on a large log. If one does this, then one can walk south through the forest until the hill separating Pinecrest and Strawberry is reached. It is fairly easy to walk up this hill to the top, where one encounters the water tank access road at mark 8. Here one can either turn left or right. If one turns left, one eventually reaches three water tanks at the east end of the hill. The access road continues to the dam; below the tanks one can leave the road and head to the right to get back to Pinecrest Marina.

If one turns right at mark 8, then one can follow the access road all the way to Pinecrest Avenue. One can then walk east on this road to the Pinecrest Marina.