

LEWIS AND CLARK AT THE TOWER CREEK “PIRIMIDS”

August 31, 1805

Tower Creek Pyramids

“... *Encamped in Some old lodjes at the place the road leaves the Creek and assends the high Countrey... passed remarkable rock resembling Pirimids on the Left Side...*”

WILLIAM CLARK

August 31, 1805—After satisfying themselves that they would be unable to follow a route along the Salmon River to reach the Pacific Ocean, the expedition headed up Tower Creek to Lost Trail Pass on the way to the Bitterroot Valley. Along the Salmon River and its tributary streams the Captains noted a variety of plants, including red hawthorn, several willows, Oregon grape, Rocky Mountain honeysuckle, Cascade mountain-ash, and Lyell’s angelica. Both Lewis and Clark observed that the Lemhi Shoshone Indians displayed a great reliance on roots, tubers and berries.

Native Plant Species

Yampah	Dusky willow	Syringa
height: 32 inches habitat: open forest, grassy slope, mid-elevation meadow	height: 15 to 20 feet habitat: stream banks, flood plain	height: up to 12 feet habitat: open forest, forest edge, seasonally moist draw
Clark observed “...the Indian women collecting the root of a species of fennel which grows in the moist ground and feeding their poor starving children...; the flavor of this root is not unlike that of anniseed.”	The lodges Lewis, Clark, and their men stayed in on Tower Creek were likely made of woven willow. While not specifically detailed by Clark, lodges were probably similar to the “small” conic lodge formed with willow brush” Lewis mentions on August 12.	Syringa is also known as Lewis’s Mock Orange. Syringa is Idaho’s state flower. It has fragrant, showy white flowers. The strong, hard branches were used by native Americans for bows and arrows and infant cradles.



Perideridia gairdneri

Salix exigua

Philadelphus lewisii



Idaho artist Barbara Peets portrays Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and interpreter George Drouillard as they came upon Tower Creek “Pirimids” on August 31, 1805. The Corps of Discovery camped about a mile north of the pyramids that evening.

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The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail weed education project was initiated and developed in 1997 by Montana’s Statewide Noxious Weed Awareness and Education Campaign Task Force. The project grew to eleven locations by 2003 with the addition of Tower Creek Pyramids site cooperating with Idaho’s Weed Awareness Campaign. By 2008 collaboration increased to the diverse entities shown on the reverse side of this sheet.

Today — As you travel up the Tower Creek drainage, you will observe invading species like spotted knapweed, leafy spurge and rush skeletonweed that were not in Idaho when Lewis and Clark passed through this country in 1805. The non-native plant species we find today at many locations in Lemhi County were spread by unsuspecting travelers along waterways, roads, and hiking trails. Wildlife, livestock, and pets transport seeds on their coats. People carry them on their clothing, shoe treads, boat bottoms, and vehicle undercarriages and tires.

Once introduced, invading species thrive in Idaho’s climate. Spotted knapweed invades disturbed sites and releases chemical substances that inhibit other plant growth. Leafy spurge adapts to many habitats, and spreads by seed dispersal and its long-reaching root system. Both leafy spurge and rush skeletonweed produce a milky latex that is an irritant to people and animals. Invasive plants out-compete native plants and reduce wildlife habitat. You can help protect pristine areas from invading species by not walking or driving through infestations and by washing your clothing, gear, and vehicles between site visits.

Invasive Plant Species

Knapweed	Skeletonweed	Leafy spurge
height: 1 to 4 feet habitat: variety	height: 1 to 4 feet habitat: very dry to wet sites	height: up to 3 feet habitat: rangeland and pasture
Spotted knapweed plants can produce up to 1,000 seeds that may remain viable for longer than 8 years. Uncommon in Lemhi County prior to 1980, today, in spite of costly control efforts, knapweed is spreading rapidly.	Rush skeletonweed appears leafless at a distance. The seed bears a soft white plume and is wind dispersed. Small yellow flowers are scattered among the branches from mid-summer to fall. It is a recent invader in Lemhi County.	Its yellow-green color makes this plant easy to spot in the spring and summer. Ripe seed capsules rupture when touched, throwing seeds as far as 15 feet. Introduced insect predators are proving helpful in the control of dense infestations.



Centaurea maculosa

Chondrilla juncea

Euphorbia esula