

The SOLAR Report

THE SCHOOL FOR OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP, ADVENTURE AND RECREATION

Equipment Review

I Fell In Love With A Walrus

By Eric Braun

Back packing used to be confined to the hearty few who could tolerate carrying 50 pounds plus gear on their back. I will be the first and probably among the few males to admit that I couldn't do. At very least without enjoying myself. Today, thanks to tremendous improvements in equipment, anyone can enjoy the great outdoors and even bring their TV with them.

However, there is a price to pay when jumping on the ultra light band wagon. Durability, long life and the ability to tackle anything mother nature has to offer. A tent is your only shelter against the elements. Great consideration should be made before hand when deciding on which tent to buy. What season or seasons will you be using it in primarily and in how remote a location. If you are going to Antarctica for a month, more power to you. I'm not crazy.

My primary reason for buying my Swift Walrus single person 3-season tent was the unbelievable deal of \$112 (normally \$145) through Sierra Trading Post, a mail order catalog. Once I finally received it I was amazed at how great a quality tent it is for the price. None of the big popular name brands could compare. With additional tie downs and stakes it could even go into the winter season



which the trip to Nordhouse Dunes proved. All the seams were factory sealed after sewing. The tempered aluminum poles were actually anodized and not painted. Included are over-sized aluminum stakes that one could drive through limerock without bending them. The tent is made of heavier weight nylon than most. Also, there is a non-slip coating applied to the floor. No detail was missed. Two equipment compartments are located conveniently inside. There are also two loops to attach a drying line to. With all these features it is still relatively light at 3 pounds 4 ounces.

In selecting any equipment functionality and practicality should be looked at on top of brand reputation. Quality is quality and not only a name. Yes it will generally cost more. But, it should not be overwhelming. If so it may be way more equipment than you currently need. However, it may be something you can grow into and be worth the initial investment once you pass it on to your grand children. That is if they are still doing this sort of thing by then.

Next Ray "Me And My Wiggy's"

PS: The walrus log is cool also.

NCT Effort Update

With the completion of trail sections in the Manistee National Forest, SOLAR has completed 351 miles of the North Country Trail in Michigan.

Miles Completed

351

Miles to Go

521

Section Coordinators

Southern L.P. (113)

Marco Scarpetta (313) 823-8564

Central L.P. (72)

Mike Banks (313) 425-4169

Northern L.P. (16)

Leslie Cordova (810) 547-5626

Eastern U.P. (75)

Steve Gardner (810) 547-4998

Central U.P. (55)

Carol McCrie (810) 229-5232

Western U.P. (20)

Bob Graham (313) 453-7313

Mystery Solution

From page 7

Adapted from "Five Minute Mysteries" by Ken Weber. (Though the names have been changed to play with the innocent.)

Okay, here's the solution: In the country around Lake Erie no one would be able to sit out in their front yard in June at dusk during warm weather if they lived anywhere near a swamp. They would simply be eaten alive by mosquitoes. The witnesses, with swamp on both sides of their front yard, were certainly not likely to have been where they say they were.

People

Congratulations to **Linda Horner** and **Marco Scarpetta** on the announcement of their engagement!

After years of carrying their yurt around on their backs, **Mike Mannebach** and **Karen Sinclair-Smith** have finally settled into an abode of their own. No more address changes in your book (for a while).

Mike Mannebach and **Karen Sinclair-Smith**
6484 Lechaven Lane
Waterford Twp., MI
48327

(810) 682-3955

We hope to be having an open house party some time in the future and will certainly get the word out to our SOLAR friends when that happens.

Upcoming Event Caving in Kentucky

Well, you asked for more caving and you got it. I just got word that the annual Carter Caves Crawl-a-thon is scheduled for January 24-26, 1997!

The plan is to drive down to Olive Hill, KY on Friday and stay at Carroll's Inn Motel. I have reserved five rooms under my name. The cost will be \$30 for 2 nights lodging and will be first paid, first go. I will be supplying the entry forms for the Crawl-a-thon itself sometime in December. You can sign up for as many caving tours as you'd like on Saturday and/or Sunday. The cost is \$15 for two days of guided caving, and you will receive a free T shirt. You must send this form to Carter Caves State Resort Park yourself, but don't delay as the trips do fill up quickly.

This is an annual event put on by the state park, and it is a great way for people to get acquainted with caving as they offer a wide variety of tours ranging from walking tours, a little bit of crawling, a lot of crawling, and vertical caving.

This trip could involve prolonged crawling through small, constricted passages, some of which may contain water. The rewards are a great physical challenge, and you will probably see lots of bats, cave crickets, and interesting formations. You must be in good physical condition to participate in level 3 or 4 caving tours.

Equipment you will need: old coveralls or any type of loose fitting clothing, knee and elbow pads, gloves, boots that cover the ankle, hard hat with chin strap (SOLAR can provide), three light sources with

one that is mounted on your hard hat (duct tape works well); and extra batteries. If you need to borrow a SOLAR club helmet, I will have them at the January meeting. A \$25 refundable deposit is required.

For more information, contact: Leslie Cordova at (810) 547-5626. Note: future caving trip that count in March, 1997!

Notice!

Just a reminder that annual memberships in SOLAR expire in December, so if you haven't already renewed yours by paying your dues, you're not really a member and not entitled to go on trips, classes or get this news letter. So be sure to get your dues in to the membership committee or you may find yourself left out.

Upcoming Event

Expedition '97

Mt. Zirkel Wilderness is the destination for Expedition '97, a mountain backpacking trip departing Saturday, August 2, 1997 and returning on Sunday, August 17, 1997. Participation will be limited to eight hardy souls. You might want to consider this Expedition when making your 1997 vacation plans. For more information, and to sign-up, contact Jim Wright, work: 313-592-2925, home: 313-284-2639.

Mt. Zirkel Wilderness lies astride the Continental Divide within the Routt National Forest in Colorado. Encompassing 139,818 acres of unspoiled alpine terrain, this is big-view country: Open tundra dotted with shimmering turquoise tarns, mountains towering overhead.

Did You Know?

By presenting your membership card at any of the area retailers listed below you will be entitled to special discounts reserved for SOLAR members. These discounts vary from store to store and its always best to check with the manager on duty at the time of purchase. So get out there and get yourself a deal and support these stores, thanking them for supporting the SOLAR Club!

Joe's Army-Navy Surplus.

Royal Oak, Pontiac, and Warren

Moosejaw Outfitters.

Keego Harbor

Surplus City.

Berkley and Westland

Venture Outdoors.

Plymouth

SOLAR on the World Wide Web!

The SOLAR Club has recently added a new communications resource via the World Wide Web on the Internet. Stop in for a look at the latest activities calendar, receive or submit articles for *The SOLAR Ray*, link to other web sites, or exchange E-mail with your electronically compatible friends. The address for *The SOLAR Page* is:

<http://members.tripod.com/~solarclub1>

If you would like your E-mail address to be added to the on-line list of members (not yet active, but I'm planning for it to be soon), you may send an E-mail request to me at efgardner@earthlink.net and give me a day or two to set it up. You can also stop by the site and E-mail me from there. See you on line!

Activities Calendar

January

- 7 Tuesday** General Membership Meeting, Colony Hall, Southfield, Mike Banks (313) 425-5169
- 8,15,22,29 Weds.** Enjoying Michigan Winters, Location TBD
Doug Lanyk (810) 634-4551
- 11 Saturday** XC Ski Clinic, Maybury SP or XC Ski HQ, Mike Mannebach (810) 682-3955
- 11 Saturday** Basic Tracking Workshop, Brighton, MI
Lester Mok, (519) 256-0324, (see page 5)
- 18-19 Weekend** Michigan Winters Practical I, Location TBD
Doug Lanyk (810) 634-4551
- 24-26 Weekend** ** Cawathon - Caving Trip, Olive Hill, KY
Leslie Cordova (810) 547-5626 (see page 2)
- 31-2 Weekend** XC Ski Weekend, Hale, MI
Maureen DeFrance (810) 229-8283
- Tentative** Snowshoe Superior, North Country Trail
Upper Peninsula, Steve Gardner (810) 547-4998

February

- 4 Tuesday** General Membership Meeting, Colony Hall, Southfield, Mike Banks (313) 425-5169
- 5 Wednesday** Enjoying Michigan Winters, Location TBD
Doug Lanyk (810) 634-4551
- 7-9 Weekend** ** Vasa XC Ski Race, Traverse City, MI
Details to be announced
- 15-16 Weekend** Michigan Winters Practical II, Location TBD
Doug Lanyk (810) 634-4551
- 21-23 Weekend** Cabin / XC Ski Weekend, Wilderness SP
Laura Albin (810) 229-8283
- 28-2 Weekend** Downhill and XC Ski Weekend, Searchmont
Stokley, Can. Sharon Broderick (810) 348-9660

March

- 4 Tuesday** General Membership Meeting, Colony Hall, Southfield, Mike Banks (313) 425-5169
- 15 Saturday** Wilderness Leadership and Safety Seminar, Brighton, MI Lester Mok (519) 256-0324
- 21-23 Weekend** Wabos Loppet XC Skiing, Wabos, Canada
Mike Banks (313) 235-8129
- 22-23 Weekend** Land Navigation Course, Waterloo, Rec. Area
Lester Mok (519) 256-0324

** Denotes a Non-SOLAR activity

If you would like to help plan or lead an activity, please contact Leslie Cordova at (810) 547-5626 (H) or (810) 901-1711 (W).

SOLAR has a "No Refund" policy, however, if you are unable to attend an activity, you may "Sell Your Spot" to another SOLAR Club member.

Upcoming Classes

How to Track a Leader without Getting Lost

Well, its hard to explain but you'll figure it out after taking these courses. I would like to have volunteers to share the load on registration and logistics and please remember to pay your 1997 dues before registration. I also need to know where I can borrow an overhead projector for the leadership seminar. Lesler Mok, (519) 256-0324, Windsor.

Basic tracking workshop: January 11, 10 AM to 5 PM. This indoor workshop is intended as an introduction to nature awareness, track identification, interpretation and tracking animals in the snow. The cost is \$10, payable at the December meeting.

Wilderness Leadership Seminar: March 15. This one day seminar is designed to share insights between experienced members and members who want to be part of a safe, successful and enjoyable outing. Tentative topics include leadership qualities and styles, team building and maintenance, expedition behaviors, communication, problem solving risk vs. safety, etc. The cost will be \$10 and an interest sign-up will be taken at the December meeting.

Land Navigation Course: March 22-23. Learn how to use navigation strategies and route finding skills together with your map and compass. This is a comprehensive and intensive course designed to build your confidence on and off trail. Beginners welcome. Cost is \$30. Interest sign up at the December meeting.

Upcoming Class

Cross Country Skiing I - The Diagonal Stride.

Instructor: Michael Mannebach
Assistant: David Bombard

It was great to see so many SOLARres interested in a basic skills X-C ski class. We had 16 people sign up so far! With that kind of enthusiasm, how could we not have a class?

So the class will be for the beginning to intermediate level skier. These individuals will learn the true pleasure of cross country travel over snow with skis by way of the diagonal stride. This technique is the most fundamental for in-track as well as out-of-track skiing and will lead to more advanced techniques such as the double pole and kick-double pole. Also covered are: how to select proper gear; how to hold your poles; how to recover from a fall; how to slow down and speed up on a down hill run, and, how to turn on down hill runs as well as on flats. Armed with these basic skills you will now enjoy endless hours of X-C skiing, in the cold chill of winter, and love every minute of it! Thank God for snow!

The class will be an on-snow clinic, with some handouts including a bibliography of great instructional books. The cost will be \$10.00 a person. It will take place at Maybury State Park for a half day providing good snow conditions, or if not, we will make it a whole day adventure by driving up to The Cross Country Ski Headquarters in North Higgins Lake area (near Roscommon)

Which brings us to When? Well, if we really want to enjoy the ski season fully with our new skills, we should have it early in the season. So, the

day is Saturday, January 11. Time will be 9:00 am at Maybury, or if up north, 11:00 am. Both touring centers rent skis if you don't own a pair yet. Call me if you have concerns about this. For those of you who didn't sign up and would like to, see me at this months meeting. Total space is limited to 20 skiers. You can also contact me at (810) 682-3355

For those few individuals who expressed a desire to learn the advance technique of skating, please see me at the meeting. I will try to accommodate you sometime this season. In the meantime, let it snow!

Ski Stuff For Sale

A sled and harness to be used for winter camping. Ideal for pulling behind skis or snowshoes. Home built, but of reasonably good quality. Asking \$30.

I also have two sets of cross-country skis for sale; Trak and Haga Mountain. The Trak set is wax-less, suitable for groomed trails and mild off-track use. The Haga Mountain set has steel edges, waxable surface, and is wide enough for back-country use. Both sets include bindings and boots (men's size 11). Asking \$80 for the Trak set and \$110 for the Haga Mountain set.

All prices are negotiable. If you are interested, contact Steve Gardner at (810) 547-4998

Wanted Wanted Wanted Wanted

The past and present of SOLAR the first twenty years.

A group of current and past SOLARites has been commissioned to put together a slide show representing the past twenty years SOLAR has been a club.

So open up those boxes of pictures and photo albums that you have gathered over the years and see if you have some shots that can help show who we are and what we like to do as SOLARites.

We can use your Bald Min. Halloween, Winter Camping, backpacking, SOLAR picnics, SOLAR weddings, Rattlesnake, wind surfing, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, SOLAR classes and activities, survival, biking, SOLAR parties, X-skiing, downhill skiing, ballooning, gliding caving, roller blading, and kiting pictures and slides.

All materials will be returned to you after copies have been made.

You can bring your photos or slides to the January 97 SOLAR meeting, or attend our next group review meeting that will be held at Moe Defrances house in Brighton, MI on Monday, January 13, 1997.

Questions can be directed to I'm Stangl at H (810) 474-3242 W (810) 262-5964.

*It's a can
Attitude!*

SOLAR Tip of the Year

By Laura Albin

A or EH??

When going to Canada, and taking verbal directions, make sure you get the letters and expressions straight. If not you may not know whether your on road 9a, or 9 "eh".

On the most recent trip to the Bruce with the Felix's, Cindy, (who was the organizer and navigator) was the one who called and made the arrangements, got the directions and and took care of the maps. As we were driving along, we were looking for the road "Bruce County Road "9a". Cindy had gotten the directions over the phone and wrote them down just as the hotel manager had recited them. We looked for road 9a, passing by 2 other road 9's. Coming up on the third County road 9, we saw the sign pointing to our hotel.

After teasing Cindy for a couple kilometers about her navigational skills, the car fell silent when we all realized the lady at the hotel said, "turn right on Bruce County Road 9, eh".

Indiana Canoe and Camping Trip

By Cindy Dodsworth

Well, I've never been camping in October before, but I would do it again, especially if Jim Gilfix is running the trip. There were candy surprises on the trail, there were ghost stories at night and sparklers by the campfire. Ah yes, the children enjoyed it too! My mouth is still watering from that potluck that

included Jim's famous jambalaya. What is in that recipe anyway?

The canoeing was super, except I want to know who took us on that path through the deadheads? Then we hiked the trails and everyone was given an Indian name, as we amused ourselves along the hike. The fall colors created a fairytale like setting and every once in a while, a leaf would land on your head. What more could you want? It doesn't get any better than that.

Help!

We need your help in locating some misplaced photos that are to be used for the Enjoy Michigan Winters class. These photos were loaned out and have not been returned. If you have any information as to their whereabouts, please contact Doug Lanyk, Dave Jones, or Bob Graham.



Upcoming Event

Vasa Cross-Country Ski Race Weekend

Leader: Debbie Wood, Home Phone (313) 521-2891

Cost: \$35 per person, includes two nights lodging. A \$20 deposit is required at the December SOLAR meeting, and full payment by the January meeting.

Date: Friday, February 7 to Sunday, February 9, 1997

Where: Days Inn, Traverse City

Plan: Arrive Friday evening. The Days Inn has suites that sleep six to a room. Each suite has a refrigerator and a microwave. Continental breakfast is included, between 8 and 10 A.M. and the hotel has an indoor pool, jacuzzi, and a fitness center. If you have a preference of who you room with, state so on the sign up or let Debbie know.

Races: 45K, 27K, 12K start on Saturday between 8:00 and 9:45 A.M. If you are interested in skiing in the race, get a registration form from Debbie.

Saturday evening, we can get together for a group dinner at a local restaurant. There are a lot of options for cross-country / downhill skiing and other activities in the Traverse City area. Maps will be available at the January SOLAR meeting.

Walleyball!!!

Every Monday night, 7-9 p.m. at Bailey Recreation Center, Westland, MI. Contact Margaret Martin at (313) 721-2821 (home) or (313) 722-7620 (work).

The Case of the Slow-Moving Ducks

It was not just the smell of lawyers' offices that bothered him, Jim decided, as he looked around the library. To be honest, there really was no smell anyway; these offices just seemed musty because of all those stacks and stacks of law books. What bothered him, Jim realized, was the overwhelming importance of everything.

Starting with the books. That many books simply looked important. Then there were the secretaries. They always seemed so crispy and efficient. And important. Then there were the lawyers themselves. "They behave like high priests," Jim muttered aloud.

Jim Gilfix, private investigator, had worked himself up to the point of walking out of the library and chucking the whole thing, when the door swung wide at the urgent bidding of Julie Doyle, barrister, solicitor, notary public and senior partner of Doyle, Savarino, and Montyre, located in southern Michigan.

Jim was just beginning to conclude that it was his imagination that had made the door open more majestically, when Doyle spoke. "You're Jim Gilfix then, right?" No hello. No greetings, just a confirmation of identity.

"It was you that called me. My name is in your appointment book."

"Gentlemen, please. It was my request to involve you, Mr. Gilfix. My name is Erin Dugal. I am told you, Mr. Gilfix, are the best in the field. I asked Ms. Doyle to bring you in."

Doyle took a seat and began talking. "Ms. Dugal here is being sued. The case is wrong. It's crooked. It's trivial. It should be thrown out. We just can't find the weak spot in the other side yet. Her father Keith, wants this handled quickly."

"I was rear-ended last spring on a country road, near Temperence," Erin explained in her soft voice. "A young woman on a motorcycle hit me when I slowed to let a duck lead her little ones across the road. The young woman was going very fast. When the bike hit me, she catapulted right over the top of my car. She was hurt very badly."

"Wait a minute." Jim was shaking his head. "If she hit you, shouldn't you be suing her?"

"I've advised my client to countersue," Doyle intervened.

Erin continued, "Mr. Gilfix, you see, I am being sued for a million dollars over and above my insurance coverage. The young woman has two witnesses who will swear that I stopped abruptly and with no reason. That makes me the cause of the accident."

"Well, did you stop that way or not?" Gilfix wanted to know.

Doyle spoke up, "Ms. Dugal slowed because of her commitment to wildlife preservation. She did not stop abruptly."

"The young woman is lying," Erin said, "Her witnesses are lying, too. They are all family. Cousins by marriage."

"Here is the police report," Doyle handed it to him, "you can read it later, it's all there. The only problem is simply the witnesses. If we can shake them..." She frowned in thought. "Remember that hot, muggy spell early

last summer? You see, they were sitting out front. It happened almost in front of them. I've been there. They have a clear view of the road from their little front yard, but only right in front of the place. In fact three seconds earlier or later and they wouldn't be able to claim seeing anything because there's swamp on either side of their farmhouse right up to the road and big willow trees, too."

Gilfix said, "These witnesses are lying, and I can prove it."

What weakness has Jim Gilfix been able to detect in the witnesses' story?

Yes, this is a mystery. Webster defines "mystery as 'anything that arouses curiosity because it is unexplained, inexplicable or secret.' The word "detective" usually brings to mind the image of a Sherlock Holmes character, in a deerstalker hat, an S-curved pipe and an over-sized magnifying glass.

Our detective is a SOLAR member, in a wolf t-shirt, Gore-tex and Rockports. Today's "gumshoe" is just as likely to be Nicole, Debbie, Jeanette, as it is to be Pat Golder, Gene or Leslie Cordova or even Marie Gordon-Gardner. These days anyone can be the solver of mysteries, just as any SOLAR member should be able to detect the weakness above. If you couldn't, don't fret. Come March 1997, this detective will organize, with Mo DeFrance, a solveable mystery. It will be an all day event (a Sunday), a pot-luck for lunch, and you will be required to arrive in costume for the role! You are invited to join us. Details will follow in next month's SOLAR Ray. Turn to page 2 for the answer, but before you do, re-read the above story and think how a SOLAR member would handle this.

Shopping for New Year Bargains?

Compared to professional courses which cost about \$100 per day, the high quality SOLAR courses are bargains. We don't sell them cheap, they are merely inexpensive. We are now introducing the Tracking Workshop and the Leadership and Safety Seminar, and the popular Land Navigation

course is back in a new and improved version this year. We can keep the cost low because all instructors are volunteers. A 1997 license is required for bargain hunter. Call Lester Mok at (519) 256-0324 (Windsor).

And ... HELP! With these three ongoing projects and more coming, I need helpers at the sign up to rescue me from drowning in checks and money. It's time to do your share and volunteer. Have a Happy New Year and may the bargains be with you. :)



Basic Tracking Workshop: January 11, 10 AM to 5 PM, \$10. Tracking is the ancient way of seeing life on the land using all our senses. It is the highest form of awareness and will empower the tracker with the knowledge of the animal. It is a complex science as well as the ultimate interpretative art. This indoor workshop will introduce you to the basics of nature awareness, track identification and interpretation. A perfect bargain for your inquisitive

mind.

Wilderness Leadership and Safety Seminar: March 15, \$10. This is a one day seminar designed to share insights between experienced members and members who want to be part of a safe, successful, and enjoyable outing. Tentative topics include leadership qualities and styles, group dynamics, and risk management. All levels of outdoor enthusiasts are welcome.

Land Navigation Course: March 22-23, \$30. Learn how to get from here to there safely, intelligently, and have fun at the same time. You will practice navigation strategies and route finding skills using our map and compass. This is an intensive course designed to build your confidence in on-trail hiking and off-trail bushwacking. Bring your compass and a wandering spirit. Beginners welcome. Rustic lodging on Friday and Saturday are included.

Thanks and Until Next Season

In the recent Southern Michigan Orienteering Championships, our Linda Burke finished second in the Intermediate Course, and Lester Mok also finished second in the same course in the men's division. Congratulations to both of them. Lester lost to an orienteering dog by a hair. (No kidding, that's less than 1 second!) Also thanks for coming to all of you who came for lun this year. The basic skill is easy to learn, but orienteering is really 10% skill and 90% judgement and experience. The next orienteering season starts in April and hope to see all of you out there.

Chalk Bag and Deer Legs

Wanted: I keep slipping off the wall at the Rock so I think it's time to have a bag of chalk. The deer legs are not for climbing, but I'm collecting the sinew for cordage making. Call Lester Mok (519) 256-0324.

About the Ray

The Ray is a monthly publication of the SOLAR Club and is provided free of charge to the current dues paid members.

DEADLINE for The Ray is the second Friday after the general meeting for the following month's edition. Contributions in the form of comments, trip reports, recipes, photos or original articles are welcome. Send all contributions to: Steve Gardner, SOLAR Ray Editor, 10024 Borgman, Huntington Woods, MI 48070 or call Steve at (810) 547-4998, or send E-mail to sfgardner@earthlink.net

Meeting Location

The purpose of the SOLAR Club is to promote and advance interest in the outdoors through information and participation. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at the Colony Hall, located at 21780 Evergreen Rd. in Southfield, between 8 & 9 Mile Roads at 7:30 PM SHARP. Membership dues are \$30 individual annually, or \$100 individual lifetime.

For more information about SOLAR call the

SOLAR Club Hotline

24 Hour Voice Mail: (810) 988-6658

STEERING COMMITTEE

President	Mike Banks / (313) 233-8129
Vice-President	Doug Lanyk / (810) 634-4551
Secretary	Cindy Harrison-Felix / (313) 722-3994
Treasurer	Cyndy Erickson / (313) 397-8240
Activities	Leslie Cordova / (810) 547-5626
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Equipment	Mike Felix / (313) 722-3994
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	Mo DeFrance / (810) 229-8263 Larry Martin / (313) 501-3856
	Bill Halvangelis / (810) 669-1911 Al Fylak / 852-7514
	Joan Ryan / (810) 57-DIVE1

If you would like to assist with any of the above positions, call the appropriate committee chairperson.



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