



Intermediate Backpacking Class

by Elizabeth Schwab

Trip planning was addressed in Beginning Backpacking, but I don't recall paying much attention to it. Frankly I was more concerned with how to pack and carry about 100 lbs of stuff and food in that little backpack and not blowing up that sinister little stove – and myself in the process. Plus, I had grave doubts about the lack of amenities, so I really didn't see myself ever actually doing a trip, let alone planning one. Now fast forward. I've been a backpacker for two whole years now and since I plan on doing this for the next few decades (or until my body gives out) and my "to go" list is getting longer all the time, taking Intermediate Backpacking seemed like a good idea.

It started last May when Carol McCririe, assisted by Leslie Cordova, gave a one evening class on the steps of planning a trip. One choice was to take the info and squirrel it away for a later date. Most of the class, about 16 of us, chose to use the information to start planning a trip right away with Carol and Leslie in the wings. We nominated a leader and a treasurer – Natalie Jewell and Marcia Reinhart. We formed committees for gear, food, trail planning, and lodging. The location we chose was the Red River Gorge in Kentucky. The 6 hour drive was acceptable to all, the scenery was reported to be great, with many trail options and bail out points. The week of Oct 7-11 was when everyone was free.

As with many learning experiences, we learn by what goes wrong as well as what goes right. Looking back, more than once Carol and Leslie diplomatically suggested maybe breaking into at least two groups, since a trip with 16 people would be a little ungainly, but that particular lesson we learned the hard way. Having 16 people researching possible locations, down to the final four was a pretty nice division of labor. Other than that: Yikes! Planning meetings, group gear, food, making any kind of decision – everything was complicated. We never *did* coordinate schedules enough for a shakedown. As planning progressed, the number gradually decreased to six. This was a more manageable size and we got



At the end of the trail - Marsha, Sharon, Elizabeth, Sandy, Natalie

lots of experience with being flexible with the list of group gear, food and responsibilities

Another lesson was the importance of communication. The general attitude among us was the class had been back in May and this was just a trip. More than one of us was dismayed at the final meeting when who was responsible for the adult beverages was being discussed, and we were informed this was a class practical and therefore the "no adult beverages" rule applied. Of course we still had a fine time. Although we couldn't drink, we had

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Intermediate Backpacking Class (cont'd)

several wry jokes about it throughout the week end.

Once in Kentucky, we continued to learn the importance of flexibility. The Final Six were Natalie, Marcia, Sandy, Tuto, Sharon Smelter, Jim Gessner and me. Our instructors were Leslie, Denny, and Tom Hayes. Since the weather was going to be wet the first day, they decided to change the route a bit, eliminating about 2 miles of a more challenging section of the Rough Trail. The trail we did proved to be quite challenging for the majority of our group. This helped me see how a shakedown would have been really helpful for fine tuning the trail plans.

We got camp set up, had a wonderful dinner, compliments of Jim and Sandy, and then the usual gabbing around the fire, which is so incredibly relaxing because there is just nothing else to do. We ran into some bear bag problems, which were really interesting to resolve in the dark. Another lesson learned — find sturdier branches next time and don't overload the bag. We were able to sleep in the next day (some of us later than others!) which was heaven. We day hiked in two different groups and compared notes on the beautiful things we'd seen back at camp. The trees were just starting to turn, but there was the bridge over the gorge, many rock and cave like formations, and trail sections where rhododendron had canopied over like trees. We had another gourmet supper, which was fine until I volunteered for KP and then remembered why I really, really liked dehydrated food. We were a very amiable group and were complemented by Denny on our ability to work together.

We hiked out the next day and, in true SOLARite style, found a great restaurant, purely by accident. Tom Hayes' car was in the lead with instructions to get off the highway ASAP at an exit with pizza (quick and cheap), which he did. That restaurant was closed, but we found Kathy's Country Kitchen in Aiken Kentucky. A jewel. I've been in mucho restaurants, but I have never seen that variety and quantity of side dishes available. I think there were about six courses

for \$8, and it was good. If you're ever out that way, I'd recommend a visit.

Would I return to Red River Gorge? In a New York minute. Would I recommend the Intermediate Backpacking class? Absolutely. The lessons learned will come in handy as I continue this adventure called backpacking.

A big thank you to our instructors Leslie, Tom, Denny, and especially Carol, for their time and dedication to passing on something they love.



Taking a Break



Eating dinner Saturday night, Marsha, Jim, Elizabeth, Sandy & Natalie

Note: The SOLAR Ray is online at www.solaroutdoors.org. . This is the last month the SOLAR Ray will automatically be sent to all members. To receive the SOLAR Ray in print in February, you need to contact Penni Lopaz now, the membership chairperson at Kavekrawle@yahoo.com.

A November Hike in the Dunes

by Dave DeFrance

Three hikers, Joanne Gadbaw, Milton French and Dave De France (and Lucky) spent a weekend of some classic great hiking and camping at Nordhouse Dunes in November.

We started out the trip on Friday night with an all you can eat perch dinner at The Old Hamlin, followed by a warm bed at the newly renovated Nader's motel.

Saturday morning, it was sunny, about 42, brisk winds were blowing off the lake, and bald eagles were patrolling the coast. Then back to The Hamlin for the breakfast buffet. We found out that Milton can sure pack it away. Ludington had gotten about 5 inches of wet snow that made Nurnberg Road into a trail of mud. That snow was doomed to melt over the next couple of days while the sun stayed out and temperatures rose into the 50s. We found a sheltered valley close to the shore (the winds were still fierce), secured our packs, gathered some dry firewood and headed cross country to explore the Ludington State Park. Along the way, we hiked across landscape that looked like the Sahara mixed with Michigan's north country and high ridges that could have been caused by sand spewing volcanoes. We got to Hamlin Lake, went to the dam that held Hamlin Lake from escaping to Lake Michigan, hiked around the trails of the park and then headed back to camp via the beach. It was a long day, and it was dark as we approached camp—or so we thought. An hour of night hiking finally got us to camp. We were wind blown, weary and starving. Not to worry, we had cheese and crackers followed by macaroni with cheese, fresh green beans and tuna, with a side of fresh assorted fruits and liquid grass hoppers for desert. Now we could get down to some serious campfire relaxation. The clouds moved in and threatened precipitation, but we only got a little mist while temperatures never dropped below 40. All slept soundly and toasty at night.

Sunday dawned gloomy. We packed up and hiked our gear to the car, then went on a 4 mile day hike to the old Indian settlement at Porter Creek and followed the Peter's Grade (the logging railroad) past Nordhouse Lake back to the parking lot. Hungry again, we went to the micro brewery for an excellent burger before heading back home.

In small groups, you get to know each other better and learn some lessons. Here is what we learned:

- Take more water. Even though the lake has plenty, it can be a hassle getting it. Give your GPS waypoints meaningful names. 033 looks a lot like 032 and 034.
- Take your headlamp on day hikes. The daylight can get scarce in winter.
- Try to make your own gear. Milton's Siltarp cost about \$18 plus labor.

It just shows that you can't trust Michigan weather. Make the plan, get the gear and JUST DO IT!



Dave at Nordhouse

Come Play in the Winter in Roscommon—January 13 and 14

by Mary Dunn

Opportunities abound for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the Grayling area. Hartwick Pines State Park and Forbush Corners provide rustic to well groomed trails for both sports. The Mason Tract along the Au Sable River is a more natural setting, and Hanson Hills just outside Grayling has trails for the novice and most experienced skier. Many will be taking ski lessons Saturday, January 14 in Roscommon. Join SOLAR members in two cabins with furnished kitchens in Grayling's Woodland Motel. The cost is a total of \$50, including lodging for both Friday and Saturday January 13 and 14. Contact Mary Dunn for more information mjd70tc@msn.com or 248-585-9954.

Wakely Lake Trip

by Doug Lanyk

Perfect was the descriptor for the fall-winter Wakely lake trip. Aside from some bad driving conditions downstate on Friday morning, the weather couldn't have been better. The company was great, and the parks were beautiful. Attendance was a little confusing from a trip leader's standpoint. Thirteen people signed up. Friday we had 3 people, Saturday 7, and were down to 5 by Sunday. The 7 inches of snow went perfectly with the 15-28 degree temperatures. Cool enough to stay dry, yet warm enough that the fire was mostly for camaraderie.

The hike into camp was a very nice mile and a quarter if you didn't take the shortcut across the lake. After bringing in people down the trail, we'd show them the shortcut. We didn't see any critters, but we did see tracks. Saturday we saw deer, rabbit, squirrel, mouse, grouse, mink, and otter tracks. Sunday we came across some extremely fresh cougar tracks while hiking at the Mason Tract.

Woo Hoo! Hiking in to the Mason Tract campground on the South Branch of the Au Sable inspires another winter trip or even a summer one to that location

Will you survive?

by Doug Lanyk

You're out for a light-backpacking trip at Nordhouse. You take a day hike to the lighthouse with the weather starting clear but degenerating into a 30-degree rain. You discover the trail map you have has blown away in the gale force winds, and the trail is getting icy as the temperature plummets. One of your companion just fell and broke his leg. It's getting dark. Now what? Similar events have happened to SOLAR members, but with good foresight they had acquired the skills to deal with the unforeseen. So take SOLAR's Winter Survival Class.

Prerequisites

- Enjoying Michigan Winters without Leaving the State.
- Wilderness First Aid (Strongly Suggested)
- Search and Rescue (Strongly Suggested)
- Land Navigation (Strongly Suggested)
- Top Rope Class (Suggested)
- Advanced Backpacking (Suggested)
- Primitive Skills Workshop (Suggested)
- Edible Plants Course (Suggested)
- Leadership (Suggested)

Class is on all Thursdays in February and the first one in March. Practicals are February 19 and March 3-5. The cost is \$90. I need 12 students to run the class and have an upper limit of 20. I would like full payment in January.

CAVING AND OR HIKING IN KENTUCKY January 27-29, 2006

It's that time of year again — time for the 25th annual Carter Caves Crawl-a-thon. This is an annual event put on by Carter Caves State Park in Olive Hill, Kentucky. It is a great way for people to get acquainted with caving as a wide variety of cave tours are offered, ranging from walking tours, a little bit of crawling, a lot of crawling and vertical caving. They even have trips for kids and seniors!! If you do not like the underground, join us anyway, as there is some great hiking in the area.

We will drive down to the park on Friday and stay right at the Carter Caves Lodge. Reserved lodging is limited. Once it is filled, the nearest lodging is 10–15 miles away. Cost for 2 nights lodging is \$60 per person, payable to SOLAR. Since this trip will fill up, only payments in full will be accepted to hold your spot. We are staying in cottages with 2 bedrooms, 2 beds each, 2 bathrooms, full kitchen and living room.

You will need to download the crawl-a-thon entry and release forms from www.crawlathon.com, or call the park at (606) 286-4411. Then send in both forms with a check for the current fees to Carter Caves. Your fee includes 2 days of guided caving and a T-shirt from the event.

Contact me for equipment you may need. SOLAR has helmets, knee and elbow pads and headlamps that you may borrow. Since I do not have enough equipment for everyone, to be fair, those who have not been on SOLAR caving trips previously will get first dibs on pads and headlamps.

Need more info? Contact Leslie Cordova at (248) 547-5626 or LeslieGene@aol.com.

SOLAR JANUARY 2006 CALENDAR

School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation

www.solaroutdoors.org

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

3	TUE	<u>GENERAL MEETING</u>	<u>COLONY HALL</u>	Tom Hayes	thomashayes@wideopenwest.com
3	TUE	Program: Erik Weißenmayer Documentary		Linda Rodrick	lindamra@aol.com
6-8	WKND	Rafting/Snowshoeing	Jordan River	Vida Ruggero	rageti@hotmail.com
27-29	WKND	Carter Caves Crawlathon	Carter Caves State Park, Kentucky	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com

JANUARY CLASSES

14	SAT	Beginner Cross-Country Ski Class	Cross Country Ski Headquarters, Roscommon	Larry Mergentime	larrymergentime@yahoo.com
21	SAT	Intermediate/Advanced Cross-Country Ski Class	Cross Country Ski Headquarters, Roscommon	Larry Mergentime	larrymergentime@yahoo.com

FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

3-5	WKND	Cross country ski weekend	Lake Ann, Michigan	Jim Coe	jimc36@comcast.net
5	SUN	Super Bowl party**	Howell, Michigan	Dave DeFrance	defranceomnexus@comcast.net
7	TUE	<u>GENERAL MEETING</u>	<u>COLONY HALL</u>	Tom Hayes	thomashayes@wideopenwest.com
7	TUE	Program: Hands-On Massage		Linda Rodrick	lindamra@aol.com
10-12	WKND	Dogsledding	Algonquin Provincial Park	Karen Bates	lady_musher@yahoo.com
17-19	WKND	Cuthouse Race	Caseville, Michigan	Penni Lopez	kavecrawler@yahoo.com
18-25	MULTI	Baja Sea Kayak Trip	Baja, Mexico	Winnie Chrzanowski	wcinro@yahoo.com
19-23	MULTI	Yellowstone Cross Country Ski Trip (FULL)**	Yellowstone National Park	Pete Lamb	petekandu@yahoo.com
Feb 25-Mar 2	MULTI	Berkshire Ski Trip	South Lee, Massachusetts	Dave DeFrance	defranceomnexus@comcast.net

FEBRUARY CLASSES

Feb 2, 9, 16, 19, 23, Mar 4, 5-7	MULTI	Winter Survival	TBA	Doug Lanyk	dslanyk@earthlink.net
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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

April 13-20	MULTI	Caribbean Trip (FULL)**	St. John, Virgin Islands	Jim Gessner	gessnerj@prodigy.net
July 13-Aug 13	MULTI	Extended backpacking trip	John Muir Trail	Dave DeFrance	defranceomnexus@comcast.net

FOR INFORMATION ON JOINING THE SOLAR CLUB, CONTACT PENNI LOPEZ (248) 259-3732, kavecrawler@yahoo.com OR VISIT WWW.SOLAROUTDOORS.ORG

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP PLAN AND/OR LEAD A SOLAR ACTIVITY, CONTACT

KEVIN COTTER (248) 644-9637 OR SEND EMAIL TO ecol@wowway.com

SOLAR HAS A NO-REFUND POLICY. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND AN ACTIVITY YOU MAY "SELL YOUR SPOT" TO ANOTHER CLUB MEMBER

** DENOTES NON-SOLAR ACTIVITY (Solar will not be held responsible for these activities)

SOLAR Program Schedule
From the SOLAR Program Director

Linda Rodrick

JANUARY PROGRAM: "Farther than the Eye can See": A DVD documentary of the first blind climber to summit Mt. Everest

By: Erik Weihermayer



Getting there



At the summit

Three records were set by a group of climbers on Everest in 2002. Erik Weihermayer was the first blind climber to summit the world's tallest mountain! Join us in viewing the documentary of this memorable adventure and discover the other two records set by this group. Perhaps we can all experience the power of not letting others define who we are and what we can accomplish!

UPCOMING SOLAR PROGRAMS

February Program: Massage Therapy...a Hands-On Presentation

By: Karen Kazyak, M.A./M.T.

A Massage Therapist from:

"The Hands-On Mind and Body Wellness Center" in Brighton

Karen will teach the latest in her field and we'll get to practice some techniques we learn. We will learn self and partner massage with special focus on those sore spots hikers and skiers contend with.

March Program: North Central Trails presentation

Please note: All programs take place at Colony Hall immediately following the SOLAR business meeting.

Note: Contact Tom Oloffo at mcmountainman@yahoo.com for access to the SOLARoutdoors website to communicate quickly with other SOLAR members. This website differs from the SOLAR home website and is available only to SOLAR members.

Solar Club Hiking Schedule for January 2006 — HAPPY NEW YEAR !!!!

Commit to Get Fit. Make New Friends. Hike with the Solar Club. Hikes are for members, non-members, children, (dogs allowed in some areas). All hikes start at 9:30 AM, unless a different time is stated. Hike Coordinator: Matt Dalton, 248-360-0031, Phone or mdalton@ameritech.net

Contact Matt to discuss your favorite place to hike, lead a hike or just participate in a few hikes. Contact Matt after you decide to join one of the hikes to discuss, car pooling or ride sharing, obtain a list of other hikers, and obtain additional details or directions for the hike. You may also want to make plans for an after hike restaurant stop.

Hike Schedule:

Saturday, December 31, 30ish Annual Belle Isle Fund Raiser for the Special Olympics:

2:00, 5K Fun Run and 3:00 PM Fitness Walk. \$20 Advanced Fee, \$25 at the event. This is a super child friendly event. All participants will get a t-shirt, snacks and cold -warm drinks and children will receive a trophy. Get home in time to celebrate the New Year.

Sunday, January 1, 2006: Happy New Year !!! Start the New Year off right, take a hike.

Contact Matt Dalton at 248-360-0031 if you're interested in hiking today to confirm hike location and time. Some people may be interested in sleeping in today. Therefore, the hike can start in the afternoon. Choose from any of Solar Club's favorite hiking or cross country skiing destinations: Kensington, Maybury, Independence Oaks, and Proud Lake etc. Also take a look at the Solar Club Yahoo site for potential hiking activities.

Sunday, January 8, 12:00 PM, Noon start time: Winter Wildflowers at Maybury State Park.

Yes, there ARE wildflowers here in January but just the skeletons. We'll look in our favorite summer meadows and see how many we can identify, using a winter wildflower guidebook. It will be a challenge to recognize many without their showy "dresses," but they often have unique and identifiable forms. Dress warmly - we will be walking slowly, stopping to ID plant remains and outside for about two hours. Meet 11:30 AM in Southfield at Tel-12 Mall, S.E. corner of Telegraph and 12 Mile Rd. Park facing Telegraph, S. of the Marathon station or 12:00 noon at Maybury State Park concession building, Eight Mile Rd. entrance, 1-1/2 miles west of Deck Rd. (and Northville), about 5 miles west of I-275. Optional restaurant stop after. Phil Crookshank, 313-562-1873.

(This is a joint hiking activity with the Sierra Club of Southeast Michigan and the Solar Club. Contact Matt Dalton at 248-360-0031 for additional information.)

Saturday, January 14, 2006: 9:30 AM start time: Kensington Metro Park, Milford, MI. Meet at the Nature Center. Park is located south of I-96 and Kensington Exit.

Sunday, January 22, 2006, 9:30 AM, Seven Lakes State Park, Holly, MI. Doug Lanyk is leading this hike and nature walk. Doug will be looking for wildlife, fresh animal tracks and fun people. Exit I-75 at Grange Hall Rd., go 6 miles west to Fish Lake Rd., then north on Fish Lake Rd. 1 mile to park entrance. Follow signs to the boat launch trail head.

Want to continue your Seven Lakes hike, meet more new people, get more exercise or just sleep in and start hiking at 12:45 PM? The Sierra Club has organized one of their weekly hikes at Seven Lakes, starting at the Park contact station. They will hike 6 miles, snow or shine Do both hikes!!!

Saturday, January 28, 2006, 9:30 AM, Highland State Park, northeast of Milford, MI off M-59, 1 mile east of Duck Lake Rd. Go to Haven Hill Lake parking, easy to moderate difficulty, option to hike and or cross country ski *Leader needed*, Check the Solar Yahoo site for additional postings.

Sunday, February 5, 2006, 9:30 AM, Proud Lake State Rec. Area. I-96 to Wixom Rd. Exit 159, north 6 miles to park. Meet in 1st parking lot past Park Headquarters, Wixom Rd./Garden Rd right before Heavner's Canoe Rental. Hiking difficulty: Easy to moderate. (Leader Needed). Another great chance for cross country skiing or hiking.

SOLAR is a non-profit Club with 400-plus members dedicated to the intelligent enjoyment of nature and outdoor pursuits.

Membership is only \$40 a year per person (\$55 per family) and includes discounts to a number of retail outfitters, access to club-owned equipment, a monthly newsletter, and a chance to meet hundreds of other like-minded adventurers drawn together by a common love of pristine lakes, breathtaking vistas, virgin forests and scenic shorelines, and the experiences to be found there.

SOLAR MEETINGS

Are held the first Tuesday of every month in Southfield at the Colony Hall, 21780 Evergreen (between 8 & 9 Mile Roads) at 7:30 p.m. Visitors can come in for free.

SOLAR Steering Committee

President	Tom Hayes	Equipment	Dave DeFrance
Vice President	Lou Szakal	Historian	Dick Ebenhoe
Secretary	Debbie Zuchlewski	Membership	Ferni Lopez
Treasurer	Carol McCririe	Programs	Linda Rodrick
Activities	Kevin Cotter	Pub. Relations	Mary Price
By-Laws	Cindy Taylor	SOLAR RAY	Pete Lamb
Education	Mike Banks	Webmaster	Karl Overheufl
At Large:	Mike Banks • Moe DeFrance • Al Fylak • Steve Gardner • Bill Halvingis • Cindy Harrison-Felix • Doug Lanyk • Larry Martin • Joan Hettinger • Leslie Cordova • Joan & Bob Westbrook • Tom Olofin		

SOLAR Steering Committee Meetings –The Steering Committee meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. These meetings are usually open to the general membership. Anyone who is interested in learning what topics are discussed, the decisions being made, or contemplating running for a position on the Steering Committee, is welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the Steering Committee Meeting, contact Tom Hayes at (586) 778-3589 or thomashayes@wideopenwest.com.

SOLAR RAY is a monthly publication of SOLAR and is available online at the SOLAR home website. For a copy to be mailed to you, contact the membership chairperson, Ferni Lopez at kayekrawler@yahoo.com

Submission Guidelines:

(Submissions are due on the Friday two weeks prior to the monthly Steering Committee Meeting (Jan. 13 for the February issue). Electronic files accessible to Word are required.) Pete Lamb, 409 E. Southlawn, Birmingham, MI 48009 Or call 248-644-5831 E-mail: PeteCandn@yahoo.com

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.SOLAROUTDOORS.ORG

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