



# The SOLAR Ray

A Monthly Publication of the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure, and Recreation (SOLAR)

April 2008

## CHOCPAW DOG SLEDDING EXPEDITION

by Sara Cockrell

This was my first SOLAR trip (friend of Carolyn Francis, new member for 2008), and it was a very challenging and rewarding weekend, shared with Larry Mergentime, our organizer, Susan Woelke, Karen Kish, Amy Fedor, Chuck Svalya, Mike Pniewski and Scott Elliott from the Detroit area, and Lis Kroepel from OH.

I drove 7 hours from Traverse City to Sudbury, Ontario on Thursday afternoon, then 2 hours Friday morning to the Spirit Point Wilderness Lodge, east of Trout Creek. It is a gorgeous off-grid facility, complete with all amenities. ([www.chocpaw.com/spirit-point.html](http://www.chocpaw.com/spirit-point.html)) While I waited for the others to arrive from Toronto, I enjoyed XC skiing and snowshoeing around the lake's inlets and island. It was the purr-fect way to stretch after the long drive, in the 15-degree sunshine.

After a delicious dinner, a guide from our outfitter, Chocpaw Expeditions, demonstrated how to handle the dogs, sled, and what to expect at our overnight in the prospector's tent in Algonquin Provincial Park.



*Dogs harnessed to packed sleds*

Saturday morning, we had a carb-loading breakfast before we drove to the dog yard in South River to meet our guides: Luke, a 24 year old adventurer from New Zealand, and Liz, 8 years with Chocpaw, and 300 dogs; all barking, ready to go for a run, not wanting to be left behind. So, we packed our sleds with our duffel bags, wrapped with tarps, tied

down, and then the REAL work began; getting the dogs, 2-wheeling them on hind legs to harness and hook up to the tug lines.

Since Susan and I are both going on SOLAR's Grand Canyon and John Muir Trail trips, we decided to share a sled. We were assigned 6 dogs, 2 lead dogs, Whiskey and frisky Connie, 2 point dogs, Twin and Palmer, and 2 wheel dogs, ultra strong, Leroy, and harness-chewing, Pascale. Our group would get dogs for each sled, while one waited at the lead, until all teams were ready. Chocpaw's owner, Paul, accompanied us in his pick-up truck until we got off the roads and into the park, as we mushed, gee'd and haw'd our way around the bends.



*Algonquin Provincial Park singletrack trail in winter*

It was exhilarating, gliding through the woods on snowmobile-groomed trails, weighting a runner to take a turn, like an iceboat, watching the tugline to make sure it was tight, and the behavior of the dogs, barking, whining and howling in their different voices, when we'd stop, and looking back to see if you were paying attraction to them. In one section, we were sailing through the woods on a narrow singletrack, twisting and turning between the trees. When we didn't have to ride the brake, Connie and Whiskey would get into a lope, pacing together, and it was like taking part in a well-orchestrated symphony.

After arriving at camp and getting the dogs hooked onto



*Packing up, dogs howling ready*

the chain, Chuck cooked dinner while the group gathered firewood for the stoves, retrieved water from the pond, and cared for the dogs. We slept well on a raised platform, 6 on one side, 5 on the other, side-by-side, listening to the dogs through the night. Once in a while, one would get unhooked, and the others would tattle on them. The wood stove kept us so warm, it was refreshing to get up in the morning, until we had to pack up and head back, way too soon!

On our return, it began to mist, then a light rain, until we got back to the dogyard. The country roads were ice-skating rinks back to town, so after lunch, I decided to check out the highway. If it was clear, I would head home, before it got icy. I ended up driving until midnight in rain and slush back to Sault Ste. Marie, then snow-covered ice home. It was a long night, but it was good to get unpacked and showered, in my own bed safely, without any mishaps on the trail or roads. Another spectacular adventure, shared with my new 50ish friends! YEE-HAW!



*Prospector tent & SOLAR mushing dog sled team*

*L to R top: Larry, Amy, Susan, Sara & Scott  
bottom: Mike, Karen, Lis & Chuck*

## poetic nature

by Elizabeth Schwab

Although this poem is about the Porkies, one of my favorite places, I think it applies to countless other areas.

### Lake of the Clouds--Porcupine Mountains

by Leroy A. Winters

Tell me lake where clouds lie dreaming  
Little lake of beauty, meet me,  
I thy lover, come to greet thee,  
Come to woo and sing my praises,  
Bring thee gifts of rose and daisies.  
Tell me lake where clouds lie dreaming,  
Lake with mirrored sunlight gleaming,  
Hidden deep in mountains fastness,  
Hermit jewel, this I ask you--  
If thy hermit life brings gladness  
Why those mists and veils of sadness?  
Lake where cloud loves hover near thee,  
Playing harps of winds to cheer thee,  
Tell us--we who wish thee gladness--  
Why those mists and veils of sadness?  
As I listened, very softly  
Came a murmur o'er the water.  
Came a whisper soft and soothing,  
Like a mating dove's soft cooing,  
Like a whisper to my bosom.  
See the fogbanks in my valley,  
See the mists and veils of sadness?  
They are souvenirs I gathered  
From the hearts of men who came here.  
'Tis my joy when men come laden  
With the care of life's great burdens,  
Just to take their load of sadness  
And restore their hearts to gladness.  
Poet as to dove mate's cooing  
I am tender to the wooing,  
Charmed, yet not to my undoing,  
For your love songs I am grateful,  
You must go--still leaving here  
One more sorrow souvenir.  
Then I felt my burdens lifted  
And my heart beats prance and rally,  
As the mists of sorrow left me  
And descended down the valley.

If you have a favorite poem relating to the outdoors that you have read or have written yourself that you would like to see here in a future editoin of the SOLAR Ray, send it to Elizabeth Schwab by email at: [qes1339@yahoo.com](mailto:qes1339@yahoo.com). Include the source you obtained it from.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP PROMOTE SOLAR

by Heather Hall

- SOLAR is participating in the annual Brighton Spring Fling on Sunday, May 4 at Brighton Recreation Area. More than 30 outdoor organizations will have tents and displays set up for the public to browse, as well as ongoing activities throughout the day.
- SOLAR will have a booth with information on our classes and activities, and also hosting a "Basics of Day Hiking" workshop in the afternoon. We need volunteers to help staff the booth and talk to the public about all that SOLAR offers.
- If you are interested in helping staff the booth, please contact me directly at [pr@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:pr@solaroutdoors.org) with your name, email and time you are available - time slots are listed below. Feel free to volunteer for one or multiple slots.
  - 10:00 AM-Noon (set up): 2 volunteers needed
  - 12:00 PM-2:00 PM: 1 volunteer
  - 2:00 PM-4:00 PM: 3 volunteers
  - 4:00 PM-5:30 PM (includes break down): 2 volunteers
- Many organizations will be participating in this event, providing a wonderful opportunity for the public to discover the outdoor activities available in SE Michigan. Whether you enjoy hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, horseback riding or a variety of other outdoor activities, you and your family can explore it all at this event.
- The event runs from Noon-5:00 PM and is free, but a 2008 state park permit is required for park entry. For more information on the event, please contact the park directly at (810) 229-6566.

## SOLAR-ITES JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL MICHIGANDER 2008

by Caroline Kudwa

*Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance annual  
fund raiser, The Michigander Bicycle Tour*

- 6-Days starting July 13 - 18, 2008 with an option of 7-Days starting July 12, 2008
- Both Experienced and Beginner Cyclists 35 to 60 miles a day allows time to enjoy the countryside
- Two meals a days, breakfast and dinner, camping, shuttle service and rest stops are provided, cost is \$298.00. To be shuttled to the start point the cost is \$50 per person. Due date for payment is April 24. There is a late fee after May 1, 2008.
- All paved route for Road Bikes with a Single Track option for Mountain Bikes.
- 6-Day route starts in Muskegon, you take the Musketawa Trail to Rockford and pick up the White Pine Trail, then on the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail up to Edmore, then back to the White Pine Trail on to Cadillac with an over night stay in Big Rapids. From Cadillac we will be taking back roads to the Tart Trail in Traverse City, the final ending point. On the last day of the weeklong trip you have three choices: (1) a loop on the Tart and Leelanau Trail to Suttons Bay (2) on the Vasa Trail for the Single Track riders (3) a chance to just stay put and enjoy Grand Travers Bay.

## 17 SOLARITES TO HIKE THE BEST OF THE JMT

by Dave DeFrance

The John Muir Trail passes through what many backpackers say is the finest mountain scenery in the United States. This is a land of 13,000-foot and 14,000-foot peaks, of lakes in the thousands, and of canyons and granite cliffs. It's also a land blessed with the mildest, sunniest climate of any major mountain range in the world.

The JMT runs through 3 National Parks: Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia. When not within a National Park, it runs through Forest Serviceland, including the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness areas. The trail also passes through the Devils Postpile National Monument near Red's Meadow.

This is the hook that lured in 17 hikers. We are doing the first 90 miles, which I claim is the best part.

We had to close the trip so we can start with the arrangements, group training/bonding and travel logistics. This is a serious backpacking trip with some daily elevation gains of 3000 feet and much of the trail over 10000 ft. The trail time will run from August 17 to Aug 29. We plan to take our time and get 2 re-supplies and forego tents to lighten our loads. I know this trip will run again, so stay tuned for articles and photos in September and make your plans to get out to the Sierra-Nevadas.

## SOMETHING TO PONDER

by Karen Bates

I am your constant companion.  
I am your greatest helper or your heaviest burden.  
I will push you onward or drag you down to failure.  
I am completely at your command.  
Half the things you do, you might just as well turn over to  
Me, and I will be able to do them quickly and correctly.  
I am easily managed; you must merely be firm with me.  
Show me exactly how you want something done, and after  
A few lessons I will do it automatically.  
I am the servant of all great people, and alas, of all failures as well.  
Those who are great, I have made great. Those who are failures, I have made failures.  
I am not a machine, though I work with all the precision of a machine, plus, the intelligence of a person.  
You may run me for profit, or run me for ruin; it makes no difference to me.  
Take me, train me, be firm with me and I will put the world at your feet.  
Be easy with me, and I will destroy you.  
Who am I?  
I am a HABIT!



## CAESAR CREEK STATE PARK

by Leslie Cordova

Come join us as we celebrate the July 4th holiday (July 3-6, 2008). This kid and dog friendly outing is close to home, only about a 4 hour drive, basically just South of Dayton Ohio.

Caesar Creek State Park is highlighted by clear blue waters, scattered woodlands, meadows and steep ravines. The park offers some of the finest outdoor recreation in Southwest Ohio including boating, hiking, camping and fishing.

There are 43 miles of hiking trails, 8.5 miles of mountain biking trails, a lake with a 1,300 foot beach and fossil hunting. Nearby is the Little Miami paved bike trail system with over 150 miles of trails.

There is also a bike rental, ice cream store and winery nearby. We are going to canoe or kayak the Little Miami River on Sunday and have a traditional potluck dinner on Friday night.

We will be camping at the Wellman Group Camp within the park. We will have the entire camp to ourselves. There are flush toilets, a picnic shelter and showers nearby (8 miles) at the main campground. Weather permitting there will be a campfire each night.

Cost:

- Camp and canoe \$40/adult
- Camp and kayak \$45/adult
- Camp only \$20/adult

If you are interested please contact Leslie Cordova at (248) 547-5626 or [lesliegene@aol.com](mailto:lesliegene@aol.com).

## MICHIGAN MUSHROOM WEEKEND AND CAMP OUT

by Jim Coe

Let's get together May 10th-11th for a camp out in the Huron Manistee National Forest near Luzerne, Michigan. We will do day hikes in and around the area of our camp. We will be looking for and identifying different mushroom species with Morels as a main focus.

No experience necessary, but good map and compass and/or GPS skills are a good idea.

Only costs will be for the campsite, which is usually around \$16.00 per night. Contact Jim Coe at [jimc36@comcast.net](mailto:jimc36@comcast.net) for more information or to sign up.

I know it's Mother's Day that Sunday, but you came come home early and have dinner with Mom!



## SOLAR PROGRAM SCHEDULE

by Allen Duncan

### April 1: SOLAR Annual Business Meeting

SOLAR Steering Committee Members will update the members on the current state of financial affairs, critical business items and plans for the future.

#### Upcoming Programs:

- May: SOLAR Officer Elections
- June: "Outdoor Weather Safety," Richard Pollman, National Weather Service
- July: Annual Gear Swap and Bar-B-Que!
- August: Oakland Land Conservancy, Donna Folland, Executive Director
- September: Successful Eco-system Management in the Serengeti, William Cowger
- October 7: "National Trail System," Derek Blount

**NOTE:** All programs take place at Colony Hall immediately following the SOLAR business meeting.

Do you have an idea or suggestion for a SOLAR Program? Please e-mail me: [programs@SOLAROutdoors.org](mailto:programs@SOLAROutdoors.org).

## SOLAR HIKE SCHEDULE

by Matt Dalton



Hike with the SOLAR! Lead a hike or post your own hike! It's all about getting out, exercising and enjoying Michigan's Great Outdoors. Everyone is welcome: members & non-members. Hikes start at 9:30 AM. Hike Coordinator: Matt Dalton: [mdalton@ameritech.net](mailto:mdalton@ameritech.net)

April 6, 2008, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Maybury State Park: Meet at the parking lot north of 8 Mile Rd. and west of Beck Rd. Several other popular hiking groups hike this park. Hikers should call me or send a message on Solar Yahoo site to coordinate. Hike leader and sweep needed. 5-6 mile hike. Go out for lunch after.

April 12, 2008, Saturday- 9:30 AM, Proud Lake State Park, Milford, Meet behind the Park Headquarters for a slow to moderate paced 5-6 mile hike, approx. 2 hours through level terrain. Hike leader and sweep needed. Optional restaurant stop after. See Solar Yahoo site for current hiker information.

April 20, 2008, Sunday- 9:30 AM, Maybury State Park: Meet at the parking lot north of 8 Mile Rd. & west of Beck Rd. Several other popular hiking groups hike this park. Please call me or send message to Solar Yahoo site to coordinate hike. Hike leader and sweep needed. 5-6 mile hike. Lunch stop possible.

April 26, 2008, Saturday: Kensington Metro Park, Milford, MI. Meet at the Nature Center for a slow paced hike I-96 and Kensington Road exit. Optional restaurant stop after the hike. Hike leader and sweep needed.

May 4th, 2008, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Brighton State Recreation Area, Brighton MI., Be part of the Spring Fling with over 30 outdoor groups. Hike, bike, paddle, volunteer at the Solar Club table. Go out for dinner after. See Solar Yahoo site for additional information for a full day of activities.

**Come hike with us!**

# FUN IN THE SNOW - QUEBEC CITY 2008

by Joanne Sarrasin

Take 6 people who don't much about each other except that they have a passion for the outdoors; give them skis and a little snow (actually a bunch of snow!); a little wine; good food and voilà. A week to remember!

Carolyn Francis, Don Wold, Bill Lynch, Mike Morse, and myself spent 8 days this February experiencing the old world charm of Quebec City and revelling in the record snowfall that the locals are fed up of shovelling.

Five of us (Carolyn was the smart one and flew to Quebec City) took two cars loaded with all the accoutrements necessary for a week of fun in the snow; and gamely made the long, long drive on snow-covered roads.

The first morning after our arrival saw us a little tired from the long drive but eager to do some sightseeing. It was a cold, snowy day (it was cold and snowy just about every day we were there); but we're for the most part dressed for the weather.

We visited the ice castle and ice sculptures; tasted a little caribou (strong liquor served warm) while waiting for our photo op with Bonhomme Carnaval, the mascot of the Quebec Carnival. I don't think anyone quite understood why I was so excited about that. He is an icon from my childhood; not everyone gets their picture taken with Bonhomme Carnaval! Sadly, it will only be a memory since the picture did not survive the cold weather - it was very exciting - for me anyway. (It was quite cold throughout the week so our digital cameras didn't always work properly.)

We went on to visit old Quebec City entering through Portes St Jean, took in the view of the St Lawrence River (quite narrow at this part of the river; and much less ice-bound than expected considering the cold weather), and played tourist for several hours. By late afternoon we made our way an hour north east of the city to our home for the next 7 days - situated in a little town called St-Ferreol-les-Neiges, at the foot of the Mont Ste-Anne ski resort.

We were all delighted with the house. It had a large mud room with lots of space for everybody's boots, skis, snowshoes, coats. Every house should have a mud room. We went out to get our groceries for the week - mostly for breakfast and



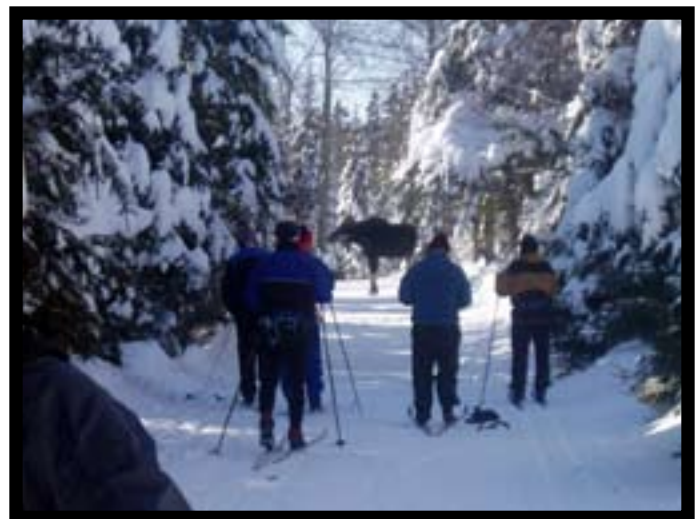
lunch and settled in for the week. Pizza was ordered and I don't remember who opened the first bottle of wine; but we ended playing euchre till quite late especially considering that we hadn't fully recovered from the long drive the day before.

I guess that's why we started out a little late the next day for our first day of cross-country skiing. We found the beginning of the trails about a

half a mile from the house. About 6 inches of fresh snow had fallen overnight. The scenery was magical with the trees laden with fresh snow and clear blue skies. The air was crisp but we were well-protected from the wind.

Our days we made up of such activities the whole week. Camaraderie quickly developed between everyone. We pretty much hung out together the whole week - skiing or snow shoeing and sometimes both on the same day. Bill Morse and I visited the Civilization Museum one day, spending most of our time visiting the displays covering the 400 years of history since the founding of Quebec City. The evenings were filled with various board games and card games; usually accompanied by red wine.

On one of our outings, we quickly discovered that the deep skiing tracks freshly set by the grooming machine had been partially obliterated by large animal tracks. Whatever it was, it wasn't a deer. The tracks were much too big. After



much speculation, we eventually came upon our answer. A moose (that is one big animal up close like that!) was parked right in the middle of the trail. The growing number of skiers had no choice but wait till it was ready to leave. Hopefully, in the opposite direction! The next day, Bill Lynch, Don and Mike came upon a cow moose with her calf on a different trail. This time it wasn't going anywhere, so they had to change directions and find a different trail to follow.

The snowshoeing at Mont Ste Anne was wonderful and challenging, but I was keen on exploring some snowshoeing trails a few miles away at Sentiers des Caps. On our last day, five of us left early and snow shoed the trail to the Cap Brule look out. That was a workout! And Don Wold did it without his snowshoes! One of his straps broke early on and he decided to keep going anyway. Did a mention, how cold it was that day? You know when your nose hairs tingle? It was that cold! The lookout over the St Lawrence River provided the reward we deserved. Although we were only about 40 miles north of Quebec City, the river is at least 3 or 4 times wider at this point.

Our last day was jam-packed. After returning from our snow-shoeing excursion, we packed our stuff since we had an early start the next morning. We then made our way to Quebec City for the Winter Carnaval parade. Although everyone enjoyed themselves, it was particularly special for me - it had been over 30 years since I had been to the Carnaval parade. Carnaval, mardi-gras, Carnaval, à Québec c'est tout un festival ... hearing the theme song for the Carnaval brought back many memories from long ago.

We ended our evening with a wonderful meal at a restaurant that served meals typical of french Canadian cuisine; which usually involves three or more courses. Many opted to try "fondue chinoise" for their main meal and we were treated to some great red wine by Bill Lynch. Bill Morse and Mike made sure there was no chocolate left of the chocolate fondue! It was a great way to end our week together.

With an early morning start, we said our good-byes to Carolyn at the airport, and started on the long drive home. This was my first experience leading a trip for SOLAR and it was a very gratifying experience.

Merci à mes compagnons de voyage pour une semaine inoubliable!



## SOLAR BOOK CLUB

by Vida Ruggero

The next meeting will be before the May SOLAR meeting at 6 p.m. at Chipolte on Evergreen, just a few miles north of Colony Hall. Join us to discuss the next book, "A Leaky Tent is a Piece of Paradise." I enjoyed the variety of short stories about the outdoors and it reminded me of a childhood camping experience in a storm when we woke up in the middle of the night floating around the tent on our air mattresses! The book club list is growing every month. Contact me at [rageti@hotmail.com](mailto:rageti@hotmail.com) to get on it!

A Leaky Tent is a Piece of Paradise

By Bonnie Tsui

Amazon New: \$13.57, used from \$12.89

### From Publishers Weekly

Former magazine editor Tsui asked 20 writers aged 30 and under to reflect on ways in which they have connected with nature, and in this collection presents their original, often humorous answers. In the essay that inspired the book's title, Tim Neville tells how he spent his senior year in high school living in a tent in his parents' suburban yard, imagining he was having a Thoreau-like experience. Some of the writers tried to emulate explorers of the past. Sam Moulton and three friends, for example, made a three-month-long canoe trip to the Arctic Circle with little know-how and ridiculously inappropriate supplies. Thoughts of Ernest Shackleton inspired Traci Joan Macnamara to take a disillusioning job at McMurdo Station in Antarctica. Others fulfilled their need for nature in unlikely places—Adam Baer on an outdoor tennis court, Christine DeLucia in Massachusetts's Mount Auburn Cemetery, Liesl Schwabe in a Brooklyn, N.Y., greenmarket. No matter what the approach, all the essays are imaginative and unusual, harbingers of what we may expect from nature writing as the last truly wild places disappear, and people have to take nature wherever they can find it.



## BOOK REVIEW

by Pete Lamb

### Three Cups of Tea

By Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

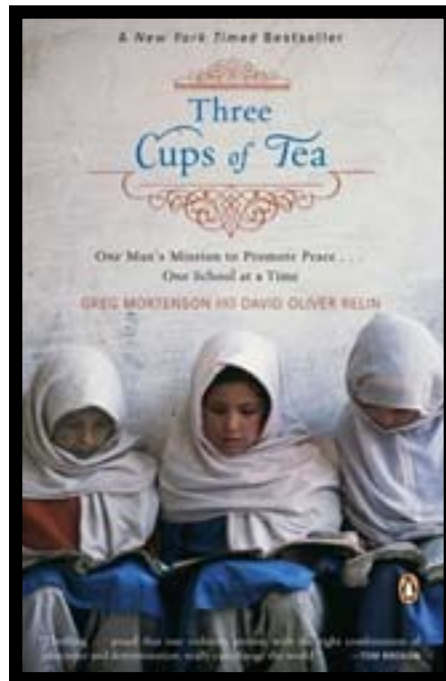
Penguin Books, 2007, 331 pages.

\$15.00

Have you ever picked up a book, knowing nothing about it and after the first half page you know what you will be doing for the next couple of days until its finished. "Three Cups of Tea" is that kind of book and its about a real person making a real difference in the world right now and he is doing it in a part of the world that is in the news quite a bit, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

David Relin is a journalist who interviewed and wrote an autobiography about Greg Mortenson and he did a fine job despite Greg's loose grasp on time. The writing is clear with out frills, and griping. When Greg gets into trouble with the Taliban you can taste the fear and excitement. You can feel his frustration as he struggles to accomplish the goals he has set himself and you realize he has become obsessed and is losing himself in the project

Greg Mortenson, the son of missionary parents, was born in Africa, he is an ex-military medic, part time emergency room nurse, itinerant climber, living in the back seat of a Buick. With these vast resources behind him he decides he is going to build schools in Pakistan to pay a debt to the people who nursed him back to health, schools that educate boys and girls and we know how the Taliban feel about that.



With no money and initially knowing no one, he does more good for American foreign policy than the entire State Department and the CIA combined and wins us more friends in that troubled area than our government could ever muster.

vNow this is not a story about politics, yet it is, and its not a story about building, yet it is. It is a story about a failed climb on the hardest mountain in the Himalayas, K2, a high altitude rescue. A sick and exhausted climber, lost, not far from death. Villagers with very little, giving what they did have with no expectation of repayment. It is a story of parents who want better for their children, of the eagerness of children to learn. Ultimately it is the story of one mans determination and drive to accomplish a goal that on the face of it is ridiculous. Its about his ability to win loyal friends and get many others to trust him and help him make things better for people in remote areas of Pakistan, areas that would be under the sway of the Taliban and their Madrasa schools without Greg's efforts. As a final stamp of approval of Greg's straight forward dealings the Grand lattola in Iran rules in his favor in a dispute with a corrupt religious leader.





## GET YOUR REAR IN GEAR ON THE HART-MONTAGUE BIKE TRAIL

by Dave DeFrance

When: April 25-27. We'll bike on Sat. April 26.

Accommodations: Trailway Campground Tel: 231.894.4903  
Email: trailwaycampgr@aol.com Web: trailwaycampground.com

The Hart-Montague Trail State Park is a paved, 22-mile trail (rails to trails pathway) passing through rural, forested lands. Scenic overlooks and picnic areas are located along the route. Small towns with shops and excellent restaurants abound.

Follow this link for map and directions: <http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/ParksandTrailsInfo.aspx?id=452>

The plan: Arrive Friday night, set up and enjoy the campfire.

Saturday: We will start about 9 a.m. with 22 miles and lunch in Hart. Return and get ready for the standard pot luck at night.

Sunday:

- head back OR
- get a group together and bike the trail again or out to breakfast. There's more in the other direction OR
- lounge around and explore the lake shore and Montague.

Costs:

- \$30 per person for 2 nights of camping (we'll share sites)
- \$3 per person to use the trail-collected on the trail (no one monitoring last year)

Sign up at the April meeting or send \$30 c/o me.

Dave De France  
2692 Court Lane North  
Howell, MI 48843  
517-294-2333  
[defranceomnex@comcast.net](mailto:defranceomnex@comcast.net)



## SAN JUAN HUT-TO-HUT MOUNTAIN BIKE ADVENTURE

by Sara Cockrell

**Last \$562.50 Reservation for 6/25-7/1**

4 out of the 8 hut-to-hut reservations have been made, so there is only one space left at \$562.50, with the remaining 3 at \$750.

For more info on this 215-mile mountain bike ride from Telluride CO to Moab UT from 6/25-7/1, see [www.sanjuanhuts.com/](http://www.sanjuanhuts.com/). Or, contact me at [sarac369@charter.net](mailto:sarac369@charter.net), or (231) 620-3543. I can also email you a 2-page Word Document with more details.

If you are interested in sharing this trip's memories with Jeff Peregrine, Tom Mayhew & me, sign-up SOON! Jeff & I will be driving out separately in advance. No other plans have been made yet. We're waiting to see who #4 will be. Will it be YOU?



## The SOLAR Ray wants YOU to be the Editor!

If you are interested in running for Steering Committee, think about running as the SOLAR Ray Editor.

If you have any questions on what the job entails, please email Rebecca Sweeton at [rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org).

# WHEN CAN WE GO BACK TO COSTA RICA ?

by Jim (Jeemie) Gessner

## Getting There

The 16 day adventure traversed Costa Rica from Nicaragua to Panama and from the Caribbean to the Pacific Ocean; traveling by boat, horseback, foot, 4 wheeled drive “monster” tractor, van and bus. We traveled rivers, volcanoes, rainforests and cloud forests.

February is the driest month of the year; yet, we were surprised at the dry weather we experienced everywhere even in the rain forests. The insects were almost non existent. We experienced only a few mosquito bites. We came ready for the worst and put aside our head nets and DEET after a few days.

The temperatures were mostly in the 80s but plummeted to the low 70s at the higher elevations. The common lament was “what, no snow?” We got no sympathy from native Costa Ricans who had never seen snow and who donned zipped up jackets and long pants whenever the temperature dipped below 80.



## The Dangers, a Third of the Group Felled, but Undaunted

Why would you ever want to go to Costa Rica? Falling out of a raft could put you face to face with man-eating crocodiles. Hiking through a rain forest, you can be bit by the extremely aggressive Fer-de-Lance (whose venom kills in seconds making it the most deadly of 17 venomous snakes in Costa Rica). The manzanillo tree has leaves, bark or sap which causes blindness. There are plants that harbor flesh eating bacteria. Of course, you also run the risk of attack of killer bees, soldier ants, scorpions and numerous

predators such as jaguars. I don't even want to think of the effect of equipment failure when zipping hundreds of feet above the ground while soaring through the clouds or when rappelling a 200 foot waterfall.

Ironically, it was not one of the more visible risks but rather an unseen peril that cut deeply, felling a third of the group in the first two days. On the third day, armed with Cipro, Immodium and Pepto Bismal, the ailing group faced its greatest challenge, a 4 hour non-stop river cruise without any onboard facility. “Just hang over the side,” the cheerful unaffected captain humorously (not to those afflicted) advised. The precarious option served to tighten the groups resolve and bowels when the river trip highlighted the many caiman (alligator family) who would welcome us if we leaned too far over the side.

However, 16 intrepid adventurers thrived on the danger and summed up the trip with the words “Pura vida, when are we going back?”

## Fearless, Romantic, Somewhat Decadent, Fun-loving People

We started (and ended) the trip with 16 intrepid adventurers: Pete (sensitivity mentor/trainer) Lamb, Darrell (sensitivity trainee) Ahlberg, Marie (game for every new adventure) Harrington, Cheryl (salsa all night) Szyniszewski, Brian (pro bird spotter and diehard snorkeller) Emerson, Debbie (accidental groper) Devore, John (knows every TV theme song) Wade, Harvey (knows the location of every post office and mailbox in Costa Rica) Terkel, Jennifer (born to swim) Zunker, Debbie (swims wearing backpack) Ross, Sharon (lives to rappel) Smelter, Winnie (WEENIE) and Al (Weenie's boytoy) Chrzanowski, Carolyn (the equestrian) Ludwig and Jim (Jungle Jeemie) Gessner and Johan (Yo the GAP leader) Fernandez.

Love blossomed. It took the form of early bloom for two SOLARITES; a fully blossomed “accepted” marriage proposal by Yo, our GAP leader. After a lunch at Freddo Fresas restaurant (decorated for a wedding of the owner's son) even Winnie and Al were smitten. At various times during the trip, group members were momentarily in love with the “20 year old hunks” serving as guides/escorts at rappelling and zip lining.

The evenings were filled with delicious dinners, Salsa dancing (Cheryl demonstrated great stamina outlasting the group and all the local dancers) and enjoying the tropical fruit and the local beverage, guaro, known as “wata.” One evening we decadently relaxed in the 20 hot spring pools heated by the nearby Arenal volcano after we were thrilled by a non-stop explosion of lava from the Arenal volcano. We ended the trip with our very own swimming pool and swim up bar which served to revitalize the group weary from two weeks of adventure. (poor babies)

## Adventures

Soaring through the clouds, gliding on the tarzan swing, rappelling down a 200 foot waterfall, bouncing out of a raft in class five water, and exploring Rara Avis were among the most memorable adventures.

We flew through the cloud forest of Monteverde on 12 ziplines hanging precariously from a cable with only a gloved hand as a brake. We seemed to soar into the clouds on one zipline and narrowly miss tree branches on another. The wet cable complicated stopping and at a few stations, our stop was as breathtaking as the ride.

The Tarzan Swing involved jumping from a platform trusting that a cable attached to a tree branch a 100 meters away was just the right length to keep you from being crushed by the impact with the ground. It resulted in a thrilling pendulum swing through the forest.

The canyoneering and rappelling trip provided the thrills of rappelling 10 waterfalls, the tallest almost 200 feet. You could be escorted down the waterfall if you needed help or the extra thrill of being wrapped in the muscular arms of the 20 year old guides

While all the rafters enjoyed the challenge of class 5 rapids, Pete experience the additional thrill of narrowly being rescued twice from the frothing rapids.



Rara Avis is a remote, pristine forest preserve which was a former prison colony. Its inaccessibility, beauty and abundant wildlife distinguished it as the “must see” spot of the trip. After traveling by boat and van most of the day, we then boarded a 4 wheel drive “monster” tractor for a 4 hour ride on a virtually impassable road (the ruts were 3 foot deep, the rocks were 6 feet tall and we had to get off numerous times to allow the monster tractor to get traction ). Rara Avis has no lights/electricity in the lodging section but has a friendly talented staff. The food was excellent. The creative staff uses nature to address problems. One evening I spotted a large rodent luxuriating in my bathroom sink. When I inquired, I was informed the staff had been using a large boa in the walls to curb the problem but recently removed it when it made some guests skittish.

Individuals in the group also sited the Canal and the

Sarapiquí river trips, swimming in a pool at the base of a waterfall, the 4 hour “20 minute hike”, eating marlin and watching the sunset on the catamaran, snorkeling, swimming in a deserted bay, out-singing the other group on the bus, the hot springs, the coffee plantation tour, the Poas and Arenal volcanoes, the all metal church in Grecia, the world’s largest oxcart in Sarchi, the Jade, Gold and National museums in San Jose and the many bird sightings as some of the memories that made the trip special for them.

## Wonders of Nature

In retrospect, we ventured too close to the venomous Eyelash palm pit vipers and voracious 15 foot crocodiles. On one hike we were surprised by an eyelash pit viper at rest on a tree that was a natural “hiker” resting spot. On another hike one of our adventurers leisurely waded waist deep in a pond and rapidly exited it when sighting the warning “crocodile sanctuary” sign.

We were startled by the loud bellicose howler monkeys, and kept guard over our food to keep it safe from raiding capuchin monkeys.



The Coati, agouti, bats, iguana, basilisk and poison dart frogs were photographed frequently on the trip.

Even though there were birds everywhere we went, we were still in awe of the many beautiful birds especially the rare Resplendent Quetzal, Toucans, Parrots, Heron, Macaw, Parrot, Anhinga, Ibis, Vultures, Hawk. At last count we spotted a hundred species

However, not the entire group was enthralled with all of the nature. Marie thought both the two toed and three toed sloth were ugly and Pete bore a long term grudge against horses. He called his steed “horse radish” and threatened to eat him if he failed to heed his commands.

## What we bring back to SOLAR

I apologize to the many SOLARITES who wished to go but were unable to take the time off work. In response to their situation, I scouted out the possibilities for a shorter adventure-filled trip (Saturday through Sunday-9days) which I’ll offer in 2010.

You must experience Costa Rica. Words fail to deliver the exhilaration of exploring this country which has made nature its highest priority. The adventurers’ common comment is “Pura Vida, when are we going back?”



## SPOTLIGHT ON GREY IVANOV

by Rebecca Sweeton



### HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF SOLAR?

From 2001

### HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH SOLAR?

After unsuccessful attempt to arrange backpacking club at my work place I was looking for something that already existed. First I found Sierra club website. Went to their meeting and did not find a single backpacking trip to go. Next website in Yahoo search was SOLAR. I was rather impressed by the people at the meeting and joined.

### HOW DID YOU START BACKPACKING?

We all played a game called "Zarnitsa" (remote lightning, nothing to do with thundercommand) at school. It included backpacking and surviving skills. Similar to the Boy Scouts in the US. My high school also had backpacking group lead by sport instructors. My first backpacking trip was in the mountains of Caucasus when I was 14 years old.

### WHAT HAS YOUR FAVORITE TRIP BEEN SO FAR?

My favorite trip was to the Cascades in Washington state. We did the Northern loop. It had scenic views, warm weather and almost no people around. We had every campsite completely to ourselves. The terrain was different every day. From a trail through a rainforest to a narrow pass under a glacier. The scale of rock formations, rivers and valleys is tremendous there.

### WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM TRIP BE?

The best dream is one you can make real. I dreamed to cross Grand Canyon from Desert View to North rim. We will do it almost all the way this spring. I also dream about Montana mountains and invite everybody to make it real. As a lifetime adventure I think about mountains in Peru.

### WHAT CLASSES WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD TO SOLAR'S CURRICULUM?

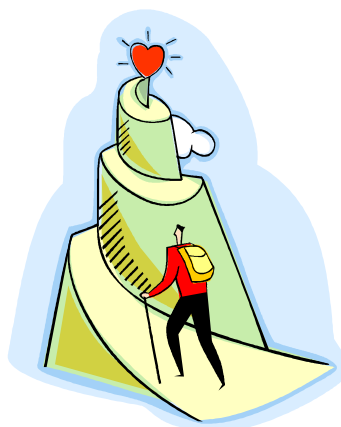
SOLAR offers such a wide variety that you can hardly suggest an addition. The one thing that missing is endurance training. I go for it with Northville running group. Would prefer to have such opportunity with SOLAR. I also enjoyed sailing class with University of Michigan. Why can not we have the same?

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE IN SOLAR?

Christmas trip to Colorado lead by Laura Albin

### HOW HAS SOLAR CHANGED DURING THE YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN A MEMBER?

SOLAR is in transition from mostly backpacking school to a club with wide variety of activities. We have more choices and new people. However I also see that SOLAR is aging. The meetings in 2001 were more dynamic, more exciting. The forth letter in SOLAR stays for adventure. May be spirit of adventure is not as strong as it used to be?



## BIKING AND HIKING IN CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

by Leslie Cordova

Come join us Memorial Weekend. We are going to Cuyahoga Valley National Park for some hiking, biking, touring and exploring. This is located just South of Cleveland, so only about a 3-hour drive.

There are over 125 miles of hiking and biking trails. The main bike trail, Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath, runs thru the Cuyahoga River Valley and is a 19.5 mile linear crushed stone trail. Other trails include the Bike and Hike Trail, which is a 16 mile linear asphalt trail. If you get tired from biking, you can bike one way and return via the train. Or perhaps you would rather hike to see some waterfalls, gorges or historic homesteads. Let's not forget about the Herons nesting in the trees along the trail, and the great marsh area too!

We will be staying at the Stanford Hostel within the National Park. This is a restored 1830's farmhouse. The hostel is equipped with 33 beds in 9 rooms, 3 bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, dining room, living room, outdoor picnic tables and fire pit.

Cost of all this fun is \$70 for 3 nights lodging. Depending on how many people sign up, we may have the Hostel to ourselves. KID FRIENDLY, NO DOGS

### Sound like something interesting?

Contact Leslie Cordova to sign up. [lesliegene@aol.com](mailto:lesliegene@aol.com) or (248) 547-5626.

## COASTAL KAYAK OPEN WATER SKILLS

by Chuck Smith

*Do you have a sea kayak and want to learn the skills to venture on to bigger water?*

*Do you paddle big water & want to know skills to improve your safety?*

*Are you an intermediate or better paddler & have your own gear?*

**This class is for you.**

**Dates:** Thursday evenings, May 29 to June 26

**Time:** 7:00 PM-9:00 PM

**Class Size:** 5-10 students

**Cost:** \$130

Students should be capable of paddling in winds up to 15 knots, waves to 2', know basic recoveries, and paddling at least 2 miles non-stop.

We will cover assisted and solo rescues, towing, balance, bracing, as well as some weather, navigation, how to dress for the conditions, and more. This class will be mostly practical-based and will be physically intense. We will be out paddling, flipping, swimming, towing, & dealing with the elements, so come prepared!

This is an ACA class and will be taught by certified ACA kayaking instructors. Other experienced kayakers have volunteered to help and act as back-up. Included in the class fee are Sea Kayaker's book, "Handbook of Safety & Rescue", an introductory membership to the ACA, and an ACA course completion card if you pass.

Class starts promptly at 7:00 and we will be leaving the

ramp no later than 7:15 We will meet at the Harley Ensign boat ramp (near Metro Beach) on Lake St Clair 7-9pm Thursdays. A DNR boat ramp pass is required, \$24/year or \$6/day (if the troll is there).

### Required Equipment (checked at first class)

- Sea kayak at least 14' long, with fore & aft bulkheads or float bags
- Spray skirt
- Paddle
- Spare paddle or paddle leash
- Waterproof flashlight, white light
- PFD
- Immersion clothing suitable for the conditions
- Shoes to wear in the water
- Paddle float
- Pump
- Snacks
- Something to drink (no booze)
- Warm clothes to change into

Please contact Chuck Smith at 586-201-6657 or by email at [cbryansmit@aol.com](mailto:cbryansmit@aol.com) for more information or to sign-up.



## ANNUAL SOLAR STEERING COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

For the past 30 years, SOLAR has strived to be a successful organization, school and all around fun place to be. This is your chance to make a difference.

On May 6, 2008, SOLAR will be holding its annual Steering Committee elections. By running for one of the positions, or just by participating in the voting process, you can have a say in which direction SOLAR is heading. All currently paid members are eligible to run and vote. No experience is necessary—just a willingness to make SOLAR the best outdoor club it can be!

In addition to the monthly membership meetings, the Steering Committee holds a club business meeting the last Tuesday of each month in which all committee members are encouraged to attend. As SOLAR is a volunteer organization, all Steering Committee members give their personal time to participate in a larger way for the good of the club.

The Steering Committee is comprised of the following positions:

### OFFICERS

- President—Oversees monthly meetings, fields member questions and concerns
- Vice President—Assists president and steps in for him or her when necessary
- Secretary—Takes minutes at Steering Committee meetings
- Treasurer—Manages club finances, bank account and reimburses members

### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

- Education—Oversees all classes and provides direction to lead instructors
- Membership—Manages membership lists, collects dues and oversees liability release forms
- Activities—Collects, posts and announces monthly activities
- Programs—Organizes all monthly programs held at membership meetings
- Public Relations—Promotes club at local events, in media and organizes members for participation in grassroots event (i.e. National Trails Days)
- SOLAR Ray Editor—Collects and edits articles, formats and prints newsletter
- Equipment—Stores, organizes, distributes, and repairs SOLAR rental equipment
- Historian—Collects and stores information about SOLAR
- By-Laws—Oversees SOLAR by-laws and changes
- Webmaster—Manages, maintains and updates SOLAR's website



If you are interested in running for a position or have any questions, please contact Allen Duncan, Programs Chair, at [programs@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:programs@solaroutdoors.org). You must submit your name and the position by April 7th, 2007 to have your name listed in the May SOLAR Ray.

The final deadline to submit your name in advance of the May meeting is April 11, 2008. After April 11, you may select to be a write-in candidate. All candidates will have an opportunity to introduce themselves before the elections take place at the May general meeting on May 6. All positions are considered open.



# SOLAR 2008 CALENDAR

APRIL ACTIVITIES					
4/1	TUE	GENERAL MEETING**	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
4/1	TUE	PROGRAM: Annual SOLAR Business Meeting**	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
4/4-4/7	WKND	Off-trail Backpacking**	Pigeon River Country State Forest	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com http://therucksack.tripod.com
4/11-4/13	WKNG	Backpacking Trip	North Manitou Island	Mike Banks	michaelsolar@yahoo.com
APRIL CLASSES					
(cont) 4/5, 4/9, 4/20, 5/10, 5/31, 6/14	MULTI	Introduction to Adventure Racing	Troy	Pam Riehl Szakal	pariehl@gmail.com
4/2, 4/9, 4/16, 4/23, 4/26, 4/30; 5/7, 5/9-5/11	WED/WKND	Rock Climbing	TBD	Pete Lamb	petekandu@yahoo.com
4/3, 4/10, 4/17, 4/19; 5/3-5/4, 5/8, 5/16-5/18	Various	Spring Beginning Backpacking	Royal Oak & Various Locations	Mike Banks	slywolfe52@yahoo.com
4/22	TUE	CPR Certification	TBD	Reggie Hayes	Thomashayes @wideopenwest.com
MAY ACTIVITIES					
5/2-5/4	WKND	Backpacking Beach Clean-up	Nordhouse Dunes	Vida Ruggero	rageti@hotmail.com
5/2-5/5	WKND	Off-trail Backpacking**	Eastern Upper Peninsula	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com http://therucksack.tripod.com
5/2-5/4	WKND	Wildflower Identification Walk	Metamora-Hadley State Park	Margaret Martin	Mpluscat@hotmail.com
5/4	SUN	Brighton Spring Fling **	Brighton State Recreation Area	Heather Hall	hnh912@gmail.com
5/6	TUE	GENERAL MEETING**	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
5/6	TUE	PROGRAM: Steering Committee Elections	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
5/6	TUE	SOLAR Book Club	Chipotle, Southfield	Vida Ruggero	rageti@hotmail.com
5/10-5/17	MULTI	Backpacking Trip**	Grand Canyon National Park	Grey Ivanov	sergey.ivanov@us.bosch.com
5/10-5/11	WKND	Michigan Mushroom Weekend and Campout	Huron-Manistee National Forest	Jim Coe	jimc36@comcast.net
5/18	SUN	Full moon canoe paddle **	Heavner's, Proud Lake State Park	Margaret Martin	Mpluscat@hotmail.com
5/23-5/26	MULTI	Hiking and Biking	Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com
5/24-6/1	MULTI	22nd Annual Canadian Backpacking Expedition**	Lake Superior Provincial Park	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com http://therucksack.tripod.com
MAY CLASSES					
5/7, 5/14, 5/17-5/18, 5/21; 5/30-6/1	WED WKND	Beginning Car Camping	Berkley Community Center & Various	Mark Speece	Mspeece @med.wayne.edu
5/29; 6/5, 6/12, 6/19, 6/26	THR	Costal Kayak Open Water Skills	TBA	Chuck Smith	CBryansmit@aol.com
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES					
6/25 - 7/1	MULTI	San Juan Mountains Hut-to-Hut Adventure**	Telluride, CO	Sara Cockrell	sarac369@charter.net
7/3-7/6	MULTI	Car camping, hiking, biking, etc.	Caesar Creek State Park, Ohio	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com
7/13-7/18	MULTI	Michigander Bike Ride	Muskegon to Traverse City, MI	Caroline Kudwa	Caroline.A.Kudwa@delphi.com
8/15-8/31	Multi	Best of Yosemite Camping and Backpacking	Yosemite National Park	Kevin Cotter	solar@wowway.com
8/15-8/31	MULTI	The Best of the JMT	John Muir Trail, California	Dave DeFrance	defranceomn@comcast.net
8/16	SAT	Full moon canoe paddle **	Heavner's, Proud Lake State Park	Margaret Martin	Mpluscat@hotmail.com
9/13	SAT	Full moon canoe paddle **	Heavner's, Proud Lake State Park	Margaret Martin	Mpluscat@hotmail.com
10/12	SUN	Full moon canoe paddle **	Heavner's, Proud Lake State Park	Margaret Martin	Mpluscat@hotmail.com

All classes and activities are limited to SOLAR members except for non-SOLAR events marked with \*\*. If you would like to help plan and/or lead a SOLAR activity, please contact Kevin Cotter at (248) 544-9637 or activities@solaroutdoors.org. If you would like to help plan and/or teach a SOLAR class, please contact Sarah Kirkish at education@solaroutdoors.org. 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 or non-SOLAR class (SOLAR will not be held responsible for these activities/classes).

WHAT IS SOLAR?

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

MEMBERSHIP

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, scenic shorelines, and the experiences to be found there.

MEETINGS

Our monthly 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 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SOLAR RAY NEWSLETTER

The SOLAR RAY is a monthly publication of SOLAR and is available online at [www.solaroutdoors.org](http://www.solaroutdoors.org). To receive a copy in the mail, please contact Mary Price at [membership@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:membership@solaroutdoors.org).

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for the SOLAR Ray are due on the Friday two weeks prior to the monthly Steering Committee Meeting (April 18 for the May issue). Electronic documents only, Word is preferred and please attach your images. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Sweeton at [rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org).

STEERING COMMITTEE

President: Lou Szakal	Vice President: Cindy Taylor
Secretary: Michelle Delaporte	Treasurer: Carol McCririe
Activities: Kevin Cotter	By-Laws: Chuck Smith
Education: Sarah Kirkish	Equipment: Adam Greener
Historian: Pam Schmelzer	Membership: Mary Price
Programs: Allen Duncan	Public Relations: Heather Hall
Ray Editor: Rebecca Sweeton	Webmaster: Dave Sweeton

PRESIDENTS AT LARGE

Mike Banks | Leslie Cordova | Al Fylak | Steve Gardner  
Bill Halvingis | Cindy Harrison-Felix | Tom Hayes | Doug Lanyk  
Larry Martin | Joan Hettinger | Tom Oloffo  
Joan & Bob Westbrook

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Steering Committee meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:30 pm. 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, please contact Lou Szakal at [president@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:president@solaroutdoors.org).

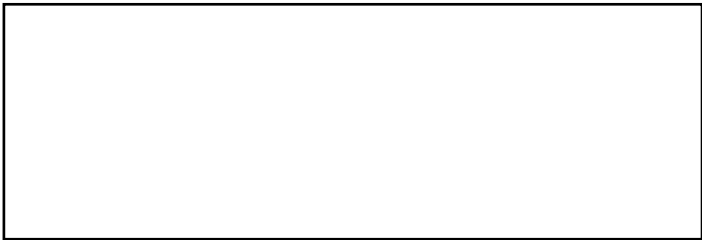
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at: [www.solaroutdoors.org](http://www.solaroutdoors.org).

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Winnie Chrzanowski, Kathy Drewyore, Sheila Hardy, Pam Schmelzer, Carol McCririe, Elizabeth Schwab, and Ati Tislerics

Visit our website: [www.solaroutdoors.org](http://www.solaroutdoors.org)



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