



# The SOLAR Ray

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

March 2008

## A PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE TO ACTIVITIES

by Kevin Cotter

A unique feature of SOLAR is that our activities and classes are led by volunteers who want to share their knowledge and experience of the outdoors with others. This gives our members access to trips that are far more affordable than those run by outfitters, and helps members develop and practice skills by taking an active role in trip duties rather than relying on paid staff. At the same time, SOLAR trip leaders are not professionals, and represent a variety of experience levels, styles, and objectives.

Most people choose a trip based on the destination and the time frame involved. It is just as important to make sure the trip itself, and its leader, are suited to your own objectives, style, and level of experience. Some trips are relatively easy and laid back while others are challenging and difficult. Choosing a trip that is too difficult, or does not suit one's style or skill level, can result in frustration and regret, or in extreme cases, can lead to injury or put the entire group at risk. Choosing an appropriate trip can lead to a rewarding experience and fond memories, and benefits everyone else going on that trip.

So how do you choose an appropriate trip? The most important thing you can do is ask questions and do research.

A trip leader should provide the following information when announcing a trip. If some of this information is not provided, then ask the trip leader. If the trip leader doesn't give satisfactory answers, ask another club member or the Activities Chair. Some of questions that should be answered to your satisfaction include the following:

- What is the background of the trip leader? In particular, what trips has he/she led, what relevant classes (e.g., Wilderness First Aid, Intermediate Backpacking, Land Navigation) has he/she taken? Has he/she gone on trips similar to the one being led?
- If the trip leader has led other trips, then check with people who went on those trips to learn about their experiences. The trip leader should be willing to provide

you with names; if not, you can ask the Activities Chair for names.

- What skills or level of training is required? A trip of 40 miles through mountains or canyons requires far more training than 40 miles over flat terrain. High elevations present another challenge; some people get altitude sickness at 8000 feet, and almost anyone has increased difficulty hiking at altitudes above 10000 feet. Anything that requires carrying extra weight will also make the trip more difficult. For example, hiking through a desert with little or no water requires carrying extra water, which weighs 2.2 pounds per liter. Hiking through bear country may involve carrying a 3 pound bear canister. Weather is also a factor. Hikers in mountain ranges such as the Rockies, Cascades, or Sierra Nevadas may encounter sub-freezing temperatures and snow, even in summer, so winter camping experience such as the Enjoying Michigan Winters class would be needed for such trips.

- What is the trip leader's style? Some leaders operate by consensus, encouraging everyone to participate in trip planning, while others prefer to lay out exactly what is expected. Find out as much as you can about the leader's style, this will also give you some idea of how he/she will handle an unexpected situation or an emergency. There is no "right" or "wrong" style in leading a trip; what's important is that it suits your own expectations.

Here are two other suggestions for successful participation:

- NEVER allow yourself to be talked into anything you are not comfortable with. If the trip involves hiking along a 3000 foot ledge and you are afraid of heights, then the trip may not be suitable for you. There is no shame in admitting you are not up to something; every human being has strengths and weaknesses.
- ALWAYS communicate any problems that come up either before or during the trip. Blisters, dehydration, pulled muscles, or exhaustion can be dealt with more easily with early warning. Allowing problems to fester just makes them worse and puts the entire team at risk.

# THE BEST OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

by Kevin Cotter



You all have seen the Ansel Adams photograph “Moon and Half Dome”. This trip won’t go as far as the moon, but we will hike to the top of Half Dome on this scenic and challenging backpacking trip. This is coordinated with the Best of the JMT trip offered by Dave and Maureen DeFrance, so those of you with the time and stamina can go on both trips (as I am), or you can choose to go home afterwards.

There are two parts to this trip. The first part is base camping in Yosemite Valley from Wednesday, August 6 through Sunday, August 10. You may join us any time. We will be day hiking while visiting most of the major sights in Yosemite Valley. If interest warrants, we will also go on an overnight backpacking trip along the North Rim of Yosemite Valley, visiting the top of El Capitan, Eagle Point and Upper Yosemite Falls while avoiding the weekend crowds below. We may also take a bus to Glacier Point and hike the Panorama Trail down to Yosemite Valley. This is probably the best day hike in the park.

On Monday, August 11, we will depart Yosemite Valley on the beginning of the John Muir Trail. We will pass Vernal and Nevada Falls the first day, then camp at Little Yosemite Valley. On Day 2, we will continue on the JMT, making a side trip to the top of Half Dome. This very challenging and popular hike requires the use of the steel cables and posts that are built into the last 400 feet of the trail. At the top, we will enjoy a spectacular view of Yosemite Valley and congratulate ourselves on climbing 4800 feet in a day and a half. After descending Half Dome, we will continue on the JMT to another backcountry camp.

On Day 3, we will take a detour to climb to the top of Clouds Rest, another dome 1000 feet higher than Half Dome, with even better views of the surrounding area. We will then rejoin the JMT and continue to Sunrise Mountain. As the name suggests, this area offers a spectacular sunrise for us to enjoy at the beginning of Day 4. We will then follow the JMT to Lower Cathedral Lake, one of the most scenic lakes in Yosemite. It is relatively shallow and therefore warm enough for a well-deserved swim. After playing and having a leisurely lunch, we will continue on the JMT to Tuolumne Meadows, completing our backpacking trip on Thursday, August 14.

Once at Tuolumne Meadows, we have two full days before the beginning of the JMT trip. We can use the time for a relatively easy day hike to Lembert Dome and Dog Lake, or a challenging hike to the top of Mt. Dana (elev. 13,050 feet). Those continuing on the JMT will have a chance to rest, resupply, and acclimate, while those ending their trip can take public transportation back to Sacramento, then fly home.

This is a SOLAR trip, you must be a current member to participate. Participants must have beginning backpacking or substantial backpacking experience, be very strong hikers (we will have days climbing 3000 feet), and not be afraid of heights. This trip is not kid-friendly, and pets are not allowed.

A \$20 payment (cash or check made payable to SOLAR) is required to sign up. Additional payment will depend on what kind of accommodations we get in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows and how much time you spend with our group. You will be responsible for all other expenses, including your own food and transportation. Estimated transportation costs from Detroit to Yosemite Valley is \$500 round trip. Since I must apply for wilderness permits very soon, please sign up as soon as possible, preferably by February 20.

If you have questions or want to sign up, email me at [solar@wowway.com](mailto:solar@wowway.com).



## 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.



# **A JANUARY SNOWSHOE AND SLEDGE EXPLORATION**

*of the U.P.s Delirium Wilderness Tract with the Michigan Bush Rats and Michael Neiger*  
by Mary Powell

## **Preface**

From my perspective at least, the January trips have always seemed disproportionately difficult. Perhaps it is because it's normally the first winter trip of the season, necessitating a change in equipment and organization.

Perhaps we've drawn harsh weather cards...or maybe the body just wants to hibernate...

History notwithstanding though, this trip was looking pretty appealing. We'd already done a sledge trip in December, so the equipment was ready.

The forecast was for intermittent snow, with highs in the twenties and lows around -15F. The itinerary called for cruising through frozen wetlands and low hills.

## **Day 1—Friday: Soft, silvery snow and trees silhouetted in moonlight**

We met at Roxane's diner in Strong's, Michigan for a pre trip breakfast and the ritual signing of waivers, which relieve the leader of any responsibility for damage to one's person that might result from participating in such an adventure.

Cathy and I had carpooled from troll land and spent the night in a local motel. Michael had slept in his van nearby. MaryAnn and Josh had been driven from the Canadian Soo that morning by her husband, Dave, who joined us for breakfast before heading back home.

The diner is decorated with wasp-waisted Coke bottles and chrome in a style reminiscent of the middle of the last century. The coffee was strong, the food good and the waitress cheerful.

When MaryAnn inquired whether hot chocolate would be refilled like coffee, she said, 'No,' but proceeded to bring her a gigantic cup which achieved the same purpose, providing all the cocoa one could reasonably drink.

After a pleasant meal, we headed to Racoon where the trip was to start. Michael had gotten permission to leave a car at the Racoon Lodge and as we were unloading equipment in the parking lot, the owner, Kim, came over to chat, prefacing his remarks with, 'Well, this must be the Delirium Expedition...'

He was very friendly, giving us permission to cross his land in our travels. Cathy and Michael went to spot his van at the planned trip end, the Sullivan Fish Hatchery.

The rest of us waited in the crisp sunny air. Josh did some last minute modification of his sled, adding lacing to the front to keep it from catching in the brush. Snowmobilers came and went along the trail back of the lodge.

When the two returned, we carried our sleds across the

highway, donned our snowshoes and followed an unplowed road into the backcountry.

Once past the private property we cut an azimuth to the south across what the topo showed as low hills. The forest on the hills, however, was brushy and each little valley seemed to contain a stream so travel was rather slow—but definitely more interesting than on the road.

When we came across the road again, we had lunch in an open area alongside it.

In the afternoon Cathy took the point and we started out along a ridge in hardwood forest. It wasn't long however, till the forest became a swamp and the travel became more difficult. The point person could usually get across a wet area without encountering slush, but those who followed had to fill in the wicking areas with fresh snow before proceeding.

We stopped repeatedly to break ice off our shoes and scrape our sleds which, as Michael says, feel like a friend has jumped on when they become coated with ice.

On this particular evening we had an objective to reach, a snowmobile trail where a couple of friends had said they might join our encampment.



One of them, Chris, had not been able to get time off from work to start the day with us. The other, Dennis, was spending the weekend in the area, dogsledding and winter camping and thought he might be able to visit us.

We were strung out quite away from the repeated stopping to scrape sleds and darkness had fallen by the time we got to the appointed area and found some ground high enough to camp on. We set up our shelters and collected firewood to cook the evening meal.

A nearly full moon illuminated these activities and the sky was very full of stars. Soon the hobos glowed with warm light too and our little village looked cozy. The temperature dropped steadily into the single digits and we definitely savored our layers of insulation.

We stayed up fairly late, but neither Dennis nor Chris made it into camp.

As we were settling into our bags a snowmobiler passed on the trail, then turned abruptly and came back, apparently curious as to who would be spending the night out there. I fell asleep contemplating the beauty of trees silhouetted in the moonlight and the soft silvery sparkle of the snow.

## **Day 2—Saturday: Apple spice cake topped with Cool Whip**

When I opened my eyes to the morning twilight, the tarp was only a couple inches from my face—bowed down a bit by the weight of new snow. It was colder too, Michael reported it had gotten down at least to 2F during the night.

I brushed the snow from my tarp and gathered some dead evergreen boughs to start a fire: coffee and food were definitely the first order of business. By the time we'd had our meal, packed, made some last minute equipment adjustments and put together a plan of travel for the day, it was 10AM, rather a late start.

We cruised down the snowmobile trail to a road that runs along the north edge of the wilderness tract, then along that road to a gated trail running into the tract itself. We stopped there for a snack and Michael announced now that we'd reached the end of the road, the trip would be starting...

Once on the trail it was very clear that it was an old RR grade, raised and straight as an arrow. It was beautiful too—like a tunnel with walls of dark green cedar trees decorated with snow.

Michael's plan called for traveling along Sylvester Creek and the ponds that it ran through. We soon left the grade for an overgrown two-track that headed in that direction. Travel there involved climbing over numerous windfalls and threading through brush.

By lunchtime we had made it to the first pond. Looking across it from the bank didn't tell us whether travel on the ice was feasible, so Michael decided to drop down for a closer look before eating.



He was soon closer than he wanted to be: up to his knees in the icy water. He scrambled out quickly and knocked most of the wet snow from his snowshoes, leaving only a thin coating of ice and very damp boots. We ate contemplating our options.

After lunch we got back on what was left of the two track. It was thickly overgrown in many places though, and the afternoon was rapidly waning. The road finally petered out completely and we looked for a place to camp.

Our settlement that night was somewhat dispersed, shelters tucked into little pockets of open space in the swampy brush. My home had an arched sapling that served as both a doorway and pot crane. Michael found a really nice nook that enclosed his explorer shelter while providing an awesome view of the rising moon.

With the clear skies the temp dropped as the evening progressed till the thermometer read zero by bedtime. The night's open-fire baking experiment turned out a fairly edible version of apple spice cake. Of course, any dessert topped with Cool Whip and eaten around a campfire goes down pretty well.

## **Day 3—Sunday: Snowmobile wreck**

Since our road had disappeared and there was no way we could travel through that swampy country fast enough to reach Sullivan Fish Hatchery as planned, we turned and followed the road back to the RR grade and backtracked on that to the snowmobile trail.

*Continued on page 6*



Josh was contemplating leaving at that point as his boots and sleeping bag were not really doing the job—he was spending a lot of time uncomfortably chilly since the temperature had dropped to -15F earlier in the day. We encouraged him to stick with it though, promising to help him stay warm with a fire and a loan of boot liners so he could get his dry.

As we stood outside the wilderness area gate, preparing to head north on the snowmo trail, a group of machines came around the curve and a young man toward the back lost control of his machine in attempting to avoid hitting the one ahead of him as it slowed for the turn.

We were very lucky that he ended up in the ditch, as opposed to plowing into our group. Fortunately, he was also lucky, narrowly missing a tree and coming to a halt in the deep snow with minimal damage to the machine and none to himself.

Michael assisted them in getting the snowmobile back on the road and asked their thoughts on the safest way for us to travel along the trail—facing the traffic or with it. The consensus was that facing traffic was safer: at least you'd have a chance to take evasive action if needed...

We went only short distance on the trail, then headed west into the woods on another old RR grade. That worked for awhile, but this one too faded to extinction in a swampy area. We continued bushwhacking till twilight, when we found an acceptable spot and set up camp.

It was a peaceful evening, but cold, with the thermometer dipping into negative numbers.

#### **Day 4—Monday: Caramelized cinnamon rolls with icing**

The morning brought intermittent sunshine with resultant slightly warmer temps.

By the time breakfast was over we had a plan: we would work our way northwest, cross M-28 west of Racó and range about in the hills up there—presumably for a change from the swamp.

We cut a series of azimuths and used short stretches of back roads to accomplish this and by afternoon found ourselves carrying our sleds across the highway.

Josh had had a good night and was happy about dry feet. The group as a whole was relaxed and cheerful. Not far north of the road we encountered some inquisitive chickadees flitting about in the jack pines. Always pleasant company, they were about the first wildlife we'd seen other than a few crows and a couple of hawks gliding over distant trees.

After traveling north away from the road, we headed east along a ridge. The vegetation alternated between stretches of hardwood and swaths of grass dotted with scrub oaks and jack pines.

We came upon a fenced depression and Michael moved in to investigate. It turned out to be a Forest Service waste water treatment area...what an anticlimax!

We camped fairly early, having found a depression that shielded us somewhat from the steady breeze that had come up. There was no shortage of firewood in the jack pines and I collected quite a bit as the plan was to try baking cinnamon rolls—definitely a long shot since yeast don't care to be chilly and the cinnamon-sugar mix is easy to burn.

Again it was a peaceful and pleasant evening. The moon rose creamy and very bright in a steel blue sky, fading the stars into the background.

After dinner Josh came over to share the fire and supervise the baking. We got very lucky, ending up with a near perfect pan of rolls with the sugar, as he noted, 'caramelized but not burned.' Either the fire or the smell of cinnamon brought the others over. We drizzled on the icing and enjoyed the sticky results before turning in for the night.

#### **Day 5—Tuesday: Mary Ann guides the crew home**

Next morning the sun shone bright. We were packed up at a decent hour (practice makes perfect) and headed in the direction of the Racó Lodge.

MaryAnn took the point and did an excellent job along with breaking trail. There were some minor evasive maneuvers necessitated by private property, but we were soon back to the parking lot and Cathy's car.

She and Michael retrieved his van and we loaded our sleds.

The customary post trip meal was back at Roxane's diner. Our timing was impeccable—they were closing early and had we been half an hour later we would have had to find another place.

Being the Bush Rats, the main topic of conversation was the upcoming Canadian Expedition and returning to the bush.



## SOLAR PROGRAM SCHEDULE

by Allen Duncan

March 4: Author Jim Dufresne, Presenting his New book "Backpacking Michigan"  
Jim will present and discuss the book. Copies will be available for sale.

### Upcoming Programs:

- April: SOLAR Annual Business Meeting
- 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

**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)

Post a message on the SOLAR Yahoo site, discuss car pooling/ride sharing, obtain a list of other hikers, and obtain additional details or directions for the hike.

Make plans for an after hike restaurant stop.

March 2, 2008, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Brighton State Recreation Area, Meet at the Bishop Lake beach parking lot. Park is south west of Grand River Avenue and Brighton Rd., west of Hwy 23 and south of Hwy 96. Optional restaurant after, plenty of choices in downtown Brighton.

March 8, 2008, Saturday- 9:30 AM, Proud Lake State Park, Milford, Meet behind the Park Headquarters for a slow to moderate paced through level terrain. Hike or cross country ski. "You may be able to rent some skies from Heavner's Canoe/Kayak and Ski Headquarters." Optional restaurant stop after.

March 16, 2008 Sunday - 9:30 AM, Pontiac Lake State Park, M-59 and Williams Lake Rd. Meet at the beach parking lot, NW corner were the mountain bikers/hikers meet. (There will not be a lot of mountain bikers). Hike for 2 hours 5-6 miles. Possible restaurant stop after TBD by hikers.

March 22, 2008, Saturday - 9:30 AM, Kensington Metro Park, Milford, MI. I-96 and Kensington Road exit, meet at the Nature Center for a slow paced hike or X-C Ski. Optional restaurant stop after the hike.

March 30, 2008, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Highland State Recreation Area, White Lake, MI., east of Milford, enter the park from M-59 Highland Rd, meet at Haverhill Parking Lot. Volunteer hike leader requested.

**Come hike with us!**

## 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.





## MARATHON MORSELS

by Lou Szakal

These delicious cookies are high in fiber and flavor, kids of all ages love them!

- 1 cup graham flour or wheat pastry flour
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup oat bran
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 1 ½ cups old fashioned oat meal
- 3 egg whites
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup pecans, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup ground pecans
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ¾ cup golden raisins
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 cup dark raisins

NUTRITION (for 1 cookie)	Calcium: 8mg
Calories: 65	Iron .05mg
Protein: 1g	
Fat: 2g, 29% fat (3% saturated fat)	EXCHANGES
Carbohydrates: 11g	Bread ½
Dietary Fiber: 1g	Fat ½
Cholesterol 0mg	Fruit ½
Sodium 22mg	Not recommended for diabetics

In a large mixing bowl, combine the first 5 ingredients plus half of the total raisins and set aside

In a food processor or blender, combine the brown sugar, oil and remaining raisins, puree. Add egg whites, vanilla and baking soda, puree just to combine.

By hand, combine the liquid ingredients with the dry, mix well to incorporate. This makes a fairly stiff dough.

You can do this two different ways, 1. Spoon onto lightly oiled cookie sheets, press pecan pieces into the middle of each cookie; or 2. Spread out entire contents evenly on a cookie sheet, spread out the pecan pieces on top and bake in a preheated 375 degree oven for 8-12 minutes until lightly golden. Let cool completely before removing or cut into squares.

Makes about 4 dozen cookies or 2 ½ dozen squares (depending on size)

Variations: Substitute almonds or walnuts instead of pecans. Use chopped dried apricots, prunes, dates or a combination mixed fruit instead of raisins.

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

by Mike Malon

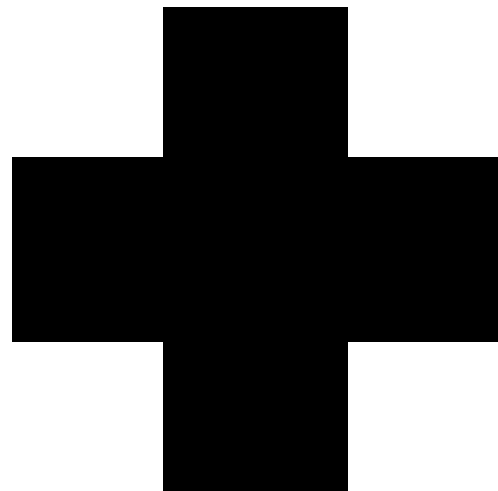
To All SOLAR Instructors,

Please schedule yourselves for the CPR and WFA classes so that you will meet the requirements as instructors.

If your WFA certification ended in 2007 or 2008 you can take the recertification class on Saturday, March 29. CPR class will be provided on Wednesday, March 12.

And there will be a full WFA class offered in April. Please be ready to pay at the next SOLAR meeting.

Thank you.



*Come ride America's Top (of-the-world) Mountain Bike Trek:*

## **SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS HUT-TO-HUT ADVENTURE**

by Sara "Energizer" Cockrell

Come share miles of jaw-dropping vistas, with vast lines of sight, up to 190 miles. The 14,000 ft snow-capped peaks of the San Juans and the famous Lizard Head spire. Last Dollar Road to the 11,000 ft pass, one of the most scenic and photographed backroads, with panoramic views. Hastings and Horsefly Mesas. The 100-mile Uncompahgre Plateau, 6,000 ft above the surrounding canyon and valley floors, and its former chuckwagon trail along Divide Road's ridge. A turn-of-the-century, working cattle ranch and hot shower at Graham Ranch Hut on the 4th day. A shelf trail above the awe-inspiring canyons of the Dolores River Valley, to the tiny town of Gateway, for a cold beer on day #5. The rugged La Sal Mountains, rising high above the surreal, redrock palisades, canyons, mesas and deserts of the Mountain bike 'Mecca', Moab. An odyssey of geologic and geographic diversity!

Imagine combining all the excitement of a multi-day mountain biking trip with the luxury of spending each night in a rustic, alpine paradise, stocked with assorted amenities. Hut-to-hut pedaling lets you ride longer and stronger, without wasting your energy or knees on the weight of six days' worth of food and drink.

San Juan Hut Systems operates two 215-mile mountain bike routes, from Telluride, CO to Moab, UT (us), and from Durango, CO to Moab, UT. The 6 huts are approximately 35 miles apart, and are fully equipped with food (3 meals/day), drinking water, propane cook stove, propane light, wood stove, and kitchen facilities, in addition to padded bunks and sleeping bags for a max of 8 riders each night.

This route follows US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management dirt roads, with "alternate" singletrack routes between some huts. The route is designed for intermediate riders in good physical condition, able to ride 3-5 hrs/day. The riding is not technically difficult, but the routes are remote, at an average elevation of 9,000 ft. It will test your stamina more than your skills. All riders must possess basic bike maintenance and repair skills, carry necessary tools for repairs, and also know basic first aid and survival skills. San Juan Hut Systems does not allow vehicle support while using the huts. Within the total 7 days of riding, there is 16,300 ft of ascent and 21,050 ft of descent. See route info on the website for each day's elevation changes and mileages.

I hope you will join me in the San Juan Mountains for some spectacular scenery, lasting friendships, and way too much fun! I would expect all who come along to be able, willing and ready for this unforgettable adventure. This is a non-SOLAR, self-guided trip. Obviously, there are necessary logistics to get bikes, vehicles and other gear shuttled between hotels in Telluride and Moab. Acclimation to altitude and increased hydration is recommended for a few days in advance, if possible.

To get better acquainted with this adventure, visit the website at [www.sanjuanhuts.com/](http://www.sanjuanhuts.com/)

You should check out the National Geographic photos and trip details, in addition to the Mountain Bike Adventure Photo Album, FAQs, Food and Reservations. The Biker's Bible is a "must" read, all 26 pages, which includes transportation, lodging, health, first aid kit, water treatment, clothing, bike gear, weather and hut use.

Our departure on Wednesday, June 25 will be sold out before the end of February, so you need to make your reservation by calling (970) 626-3033 ASAP, if you want to join our group. As of 2/4/08, Jeff Peregrine has one reservation, and I have made 3, one for me and 2 others, the 4th FREE. We will share the discount among the first 4 who reserve space. Numbers on the SJHS calendar indicate the number of bikers booked for that start date. Reservations: A deposit of 50% of total cost, or \$375, is required for confirmation and is non-refundable. Visa or Mastercard are accepted. There are no refunds due to weather or other complications. The remaining 50%, or cancellation, is due 30 days before departure.

After we depart Telluride on June 25, we must progress to the next hut each night and will be with the same group for the duration of the trip. We will arrive in Moab on Tuesday, July 1. Unfortunately, this trip will not work for a one-week vacation schedule, since there will be at least 2 days of travel and 7 days of Mountain bike riding. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I can be reached in Traverse City at [sarac369@charter.net](mailto:sarac369@charter.net) or (231) 620-3543.

Kevin Cotter suggested I introduce myself as your Trip Coordinator. I am a new member of SOLAR. I am an experienced mountain biker, ex-racer and age class winner of the Iceman 1994 -2003, Ore-to-Shore 2000-2003, and Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival 2001.

Since I retired early from my career and racing (XC skiing and canoeing, too), I have been visiting the national parks. I attended National Outdoor Leadership School's (NOLS) "Light and Fast Backpacking" class last summer in WY's Absaroka Wilderness, hiking 116 miles in 12 days with a 27 lb pack. I will have also completed my Wilderness First Aid certification before this trip, and a Bike Maintenance and Repair class.

I did my first week-long backpacking trip to Isle Royale solo in August '06, my first group trek at Pictured Rocks in September '06, another week-long group journey on the Appalachian Trail in Georgia in April '07, and led a 3-day Pictured Rocks trip in October '07, camping next to SOLAR at the Mosquito campsite.

Comments from my friend, Betty Gardiner:

"The San Juan Hut tour was probably one of the best trips

we ever took. It was very challenging, but we had a blast. We had a group of eight who started out in Telluride. We did the trip the last week of July. We had great weather, except it was 105 in Moab when we finished the ride. We rode our mountain bikes with panniers and that worked out well. Take a Camelback for water, and a water purifier. The huts were nice and stocked with sleeping bags (you have to carry a liner), food and water. We recommend it, but it was one of the hardest trips we have ever done. Arrive in CO at least a few days early, to get used to the altitude.”

## BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

by Carol McCririe

### Between A Rock and A Hard Place

By Aron Ralston

Astria Books (2004), 342 pages

\$14.00

On a Saturday morning in April 2003, Aron Ralston parked his truck at the Horseshoe Canyon Trailhead and biked over ten miles, where he left his bike to hike into the Blue John Canyon. His plan was to hike the length of the Blue John Canyon which feeds into Horseshoe Canyon in Canyonlands National Park in Utah. He was carrying 25 pounds of rappelling gear and harnesses, as well as food and water. The entire 30 mile circuit of biking and hiking the canyon would take him the entire day. He begins the hike down into the Canyon just before noon.

At 2:41 pm, as he is standing on a ledge, a large boulder falls toward his head. As he ducks and pulls back his left hand to safety, the boulder crushes his right hand and pins his right arm against the canyon wall. He uses his climbing gear to attempt to move the rock to no avail. Aron spends the longest six days of his life, stuck in the canyon, exploring his options for escape with only a gallon of water, a few chocolate bars, a couple burritos, and a muffin. He regresses and tells stories of his childhood trips, his short-lived career as an engineer (he retired at 26), and of the many foolish escapades that all of us can relate to, ones in which he lost friends with his carelessness and ones to which you will laugh out loud. Most of all his writing made everything so real you'll feel like you are right there in the canyon with him.

If you have heard the story (it was in the news at the time), you know the end of the story and his eventual escape. But his telling of the hike, his ordeal, and his rescue and recovery fascinated me and all I could wonder was how I would react in the same situation. He had told no one where he was going and while he discarded escape options one by one, he videotaped goodbyes to his family and friends. It seemed to me that he had incredible insight for a 27 year old - his evaluation of his options, his realization that by the time anyone missed him or against the odds found him, that he wouldn't survive, and his review of his own life's accomplishments.

This is a book too good to miss, told by a man in his own words, about an ordeal that not many people could survive.

## poetic nature

by Elizabeth Schwab

### The Michigan Dunelands in March

by Eva Rode

The family went for a walk this March day  
In the dunes along Lake Michigan way.

The green moss was soft beneath their feet,  
The ice and snow being in retreat.

Each duneland root was beginning to move  
Enlarging the scope of its winter groove,

But dominating this early spring view  
The lake was reflecting the sky's deep blue.

The visitors—captives in this duneland  
Of blue water, evergreens, and gold sand—

Were reluctant to leave at the hour of five,  
But they returned home feeling very alive.

Aware of the varied beauty that lies  
In a Michigan duneland Paradise.

From: Forty Salutes to Michigan Poets.

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. Include the source you obtained it from.

## SPRING BACKPACKING COURSE

by Mike Banks

### SCHEDULE:

- Evening Classes: Thursday April 3, 10 & 17; May 8
- Field Day: Saturday, April 19
- Practical #1: May 3 & 4
- Practical #2: May 16-18 (Friday, May 16 is optional)

Contact Michael Banks at slywolfe52@yahoo.com for more information or to register. The class costs \$100.



## 20 REASONS TO SIGN-UP FOR SPRING BACKPACKING

by Mike Banks

- #20 You think 'Leave No Trace' is impossible (Now that you've watched 'CSI')
- #19 Your bear bag was 100% effective (Too bad you were in raccoon country)
- #18 You think cat holes should only be a veterinarian's concern
- #17 You think an internal backpack would be hard to swallow
- #16 You think white gas is racist flatulence
- #15 You believe throwing plastic into a campfire turns it into organic fertilizer
- #14 All you know about the outdoors comes from watching 'Survivor'
- #13 You think you're too cool to learn a square knot (Wow! You really have dated yourself!)
- #12 You blush when someone says 'beaver fever'
- #11 The last time you went backpacking you were wearing bell bottoms
- #10 You want to know more than your daughter (for once) when you help with her Girl Scout troop
- #9 Your '5 Essentials' are Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, American Express and Discover
- #8 You believe 'Gorp' was a character played by Robin Williams
- #7 You can't remember the last time you went 3 days without hearing about Paris, Britney or Lindsey
- #6 You acknowledge you can still learn, even though you know everything
- #5 Your comfort zone swirls inside porcelain
- #4 You may need some basic skills before you go to Everest
- #3 You were hospitalized when your 'Crackberry' crashed
- #2 You want to meet interesting people in the outdoors that don't play banjos

**The #1 reasons to sign-up for spring backpacking...**

**YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THE PREVIOUS 19 REASONS**

# 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).**

# INSIGHTS FROM MICHIGAN WINTERS AND THE CLASS

by Tom Swigart

For you Jack London fans, the morning we left the Pigeon River campsite, at the close of Tom's second Winter class practical, was not the sort of day when "spit crackles" but close, certainly the coldest I have seen in a while. The drive home started on windy, icy roads with the occasional whiteout.

My Focus wagon was crammed with gear and a teammate from the trip. South of Grayling, the skies cleared and the roads went from ice to clear and Garmin gave us an ETA that held for the rest of the trip. The chat with my teammate made the miles pass quickly. We covered snippets from the past few days but we also traded reflections on the peaks and valleys of our lives, some past, some present. Topics included significant others past and present, career, interests, aspirations. These are the experiences and encounters that define, shape and make our lives special and unique.



On arrival, my significant other and Bernie, my canine soul mate, were waiting and welcoming. After a warm and wonderful shower, we (sans Bernie) met another friend for a little dinner and some very good conversation.

As I was waking up this morning, the crunching sound of a car driving by said, "It's really cold out there". I was especially grateful for my warm bed. My head was also asking if we could have done more for a friend in the group who lost a wallet. I have been Search and Rescue trained by one of the best. A person, a wallet, same rules apply.



So, what's the point? In the past few days I had been stretched and challenged and otherwise yanked from my normal life. I had been cold, tired and sore. I had slept in an igloo and sat in a pit toilet at near zero degrees. But these experiences break the normal routine and put you in touch in a lot of ways. You appreciate more and see things a little differently.

The snow in the woods, the stars away from city lights and pollution, the trees and the river seemed more special. Even cold takes on new meaning.

I appreciated my two special teammates. Each gave to me according to their own personalities and strengths. Sometimes it was food others it was equipment or muscle or encouraging comments or a bit of boiling water.

Every one of the instructors was special. These knowledgeable and gentle (or not) souls are passionate about what we were doing and more than willing to donate their time and energy for our benefit. Many times, it was the little bits of wisdom shared that made the difference.

And to Tom O, who organized the academic content and the practicals, I feel I have learned a lot of the winter camping basics. Stay dry on the inside and wet on the outside (or is it the other way around?). Don't eat yellow snow, it's probably a teammate's. Equipment melts when it's too near the fire. Big feet are not as good as real snowshoes. All good stuff. Thanks Tom.

Anyway, if you want to find more of yourself in the snow, take the class.

Photos by Willi Gutmann



## SPOTLIGHT ON LARRY MERGENTIME

by Rebecca Sweeton



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

I joined SOLAR in 1999 six months after the passing of my wife.

### HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH SOLAR?

At the time I was 48 years old and had spent much of my adult life pursuing outdoor back-country activities solo. My family and friends had little interest in the outdoors, and besides; I was more at ease on my job dealing with hexadecimal registers than I was with relationships and the messy business of people's emotions. I was a happy iconoclast.

However with maturity and the passage of time, my marriage and my children, I had become more at ease with myself and others and was feeling a wish to be more involved with people. My lonely trips to unnamed peaks and back-country campsites started leaving me empty – sitting alone at silent campfires and no one to share those shaggy tales of gore and glory.

In 1999 I decided to take a solo backpacking trip to the Porcupine Mountains. My kids were grown and out on their own. I was still dealing with the loss of my wife and thought that another solo trip was just what the doctor ordered. It was a kind of pilgrimage in a way.

On my way north I stopped at exit 202 on I-75. In those days exit 202 was known as "the beef jerky exit" because it was one of the few places you could buy real home-made jerky. That was before all these Jerky Outlet stores started springing up at every gas station from Detroit to Mackinac. I pulled up to a gas pump and noticed a truck next to mine. It was loaded to the gills with backpacking gear and what appeared to be

three homeless people.

One of the homeless (an amiable fellow named Tom O. —last name withheld to protect the innocent) told me about the club. As he spoke I looked at that rough-and-tumble, unshaved (but not un-bathed) group inside the truck. I knew I wanted to be with folks like these. Folks with whom I could share my interests and enjoy this great green Earth's great outdoors. I felt more lonely than ever as I continued north on my pilgrimage.

A few months later I attended a meeting at Colony Hall and joined the club.

### HOW DID YOU START BACKPACKING?

I owe my appreciation and love of the outdoors to my father. He was a great outdoors-man. He loved to camp and was especially fond of fly-fishing secret streams at the end of interminable hikes upon off-beaten paths through scarcely visited forests.

Although he never backpacked, his car-camping regimen could nearly rival anything us backpackers can do. He would put chains on the old rusty Rambler, and a two-tracking we would go, whether bumping along over fallen logs or mired axle-deep in mud. He would drag along four grumbling kids and his motel-addicted wife (my mother). I loved every bleeping second of it! When he would get as far and deep as that ole Rambler could get; that's where we camped. I recall those remote car-camps and looking away at distant mountains, longing to go deeper, further, and higher. I bet if it had been just me and him, he might have gone up one of those mountains with me. Those were the times that shaped my love of the outdoors.



So, shortly after leaving home at the tender young age of 19 – full of outdoor memories and experiences – I taught myself how to backpack. That’s when my 29-year solo outdoor career began. Truthfully it was not a pretty sight. I did almost everything wrong and must admit that Lady Luck saved my \_ss on more than one occasion.

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

Peru. Well at least I shot the best pictures I ever managed to fire off while we were there. So if I claim Peru then at least my photos are of interest equal to that claim.

Peru was the right mix of people, on the right itinerary, at the right time. We managed to find a Peruvian guide who had worked for the Ministry of Tourism in Peru who was in Michigan promoting tourism to his country. After Karen, me and some SOLAR friends attended his slide show in Berkeley we invited him to my home to design a tour for us. We ended up designing a customized tour that evening. The result was what I now consider the perfect tour.

We spent a week in the Sacred Valley near Cuzco and then hiked the Inca Trail 4 days and 3 nights from kilometer 88 to Macchu Picchu. We took a private bus tour south over and across the high Eastern Cordillera, ate roast Guinea Pig lunch with our guide’s mother in her home, ate strange potatoes smothered in clay-sauce in the middle of nowhere on the high desert Altiplano at a shaman’s home. We climbed to 13,000 feet over Dead Woman’s pass during a snowstorm, visited the floating reed-villages of Lake Titicaca, stayed with a family on an island in the lake where time was stuck in the 15th century. And so much more. After nearly a month of travel - we wound up in the Amazon jungle where we visited the Jagua people in a remote village that took us all day to get to – just in time for a poison-dart blowgun contest.

#### WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM TRIP BE?

Climbing and trekking in Patagonia. After climbing Aconcagua in 2006 (we didn’t summit) I acquired a fascination and love of Argentina and Patagonia. But if I allow my mind to wander I can easily think of 10 other dream trips I would love to take.

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

Being competitive by nature, it would be fun to lead a SOLAR cross-country ski racing class. Maybe with a goal to participate in a Michigan Cup racing event. The idea would be to teach skiers interested in competition how to train, how to race, and how to get involved in racing events. I have been competing on a ski team in the Michigan Cup race circuit for while now and feel I have something to offer.

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

1. The companionship, life-long friendships, and camaraderie of fellow SOLAR members whom I have gotten to know over the years.
2. The outdoor education can’t be beat. Think of it; We basically have the accumulated wisdom of over 30 some-odd years of outdoor experience from hundreds of members. I learned more about backpacking from SOLAR in one year, than I had managed to teach myself in the previous 29 years of solo backpacking. Well.. OK, maybe a SLIGHT exaggeration, but nonetheless - the education is the best around.

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

Well..,other than a lot of us becoming grayer, and umm err well, how can I say?.. ‘wider’ (sorry) the club has matured in its organizational practices, its class and trip offerings, and its ability to communicate to its membership. I am especially impressed with the current education committee’s serious approach to classes.

I can only look forward to more good things from this outstanding club.



## **SOLAR EQUIPMENT**

Over the years, SOLAR has purchased a full range of gear to help our members enjoy the many classes, trips and activities that we offer. While outdoor fun can be an expensive thrill at times, SOLAR members have access to a wide variety of gear for many activities at minimal or no cost. Members can also borrow equipment for non-SOLAR activities.

### **How do I reserve a piece of equipment?**

Contact the Equipment Manager, Adam Greener, via email at [equipment@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:equipment@solaroutdoors.org) or by telephone at (248) 252-7466. Please read the "Equipment Use Rules" prior to reserving equipment. You can view the rental agreement [here](#).

### **Equipment Use Rules**

- Equipment is for use by current dues-paid members only.
- A deposit of \$250 (in the form of a check payable to SOLAR) is required for the first two items borrowed and \$50 for each additional item, unless otherwise agreed upon by the equipment manager.
- The length of time that equipment will be borrowed is determined by the equipment manager and borrowing member. Generally, the equipment is due by the next monthly SOLAR meeting immediately following the activity, or returned to the equipment manager within 5 days of member's activity. Failure to return equipment in good condition, in a timely manner, or not at all, could result in loss of some or all of the deposit.
- All equipment that SOLAR owns is available to members, with the exception of rock climbing and caving equipment:
  - Rock climbing gear is only available for SOLAR climbing trips or classes.
  - Caving equipment is only available for SOLAR caving trips or classes.
- The member must have completed the Basic Backpacking class or shown proficiency in backpacking activity to borrow backpacking equipment. The equipment manager will determine and/or verify member's qualifications.
- All classes have priority over the equipment while the class is in session.
- Equipment is available on a first come, first serve basis.

### **Equipment Use Procedure**

1. Read and understand the Equipment Use Rules.
2. Read and understand the Equipment Use Agreement.
3. Submit a request for equipment to the Equipment Manager (via email, phone, etc). Please include the date needed and proposed return date.
4. Equipment Manager will supply a copy of the Equipment Use Form with a list of the equipment to be borrowed and the required deposit.
5. Upon equipment pickup, the Equipment Manager will require that the Equipment Use Form be signed and a deposit made.
6. Enjoy using the equipment!

### **Donating Equipment to SOLAR**

If you have some gently-used equipment that you no longer use, please consider donating it to SOLAR for member use. All equipment must be in good condition. Contact the Equipment Manager, Adam Greener, via email at [equipment@solaroutdoors.org](mailto:equipment@solaroutdoors.org) for more information on donating equipment to the organization.

# **SOLAR Wants YOU to be on Steering Committee!**



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).



# NORTH MANITOU ISLAND TRIP

by Mike Banks

Have you ever wanted to spend a weekend alone with a few friends on a wilderness island? Yes? Well then, here's your chance. On the morning of Friday, April 11th, 20 SOLARites will depart the harbor of Leland for the island of North Manitou. We will be the first people to set foot on the island in 2008. No rangers or other park staff will be coming to the island for at least another 2 to 3 weeks. We will have a 22 square mile wilderness island to ourselves. Isn't this what you wanted?

Why go to North Manitou? This island is one of two that belongs to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. While the emphasis on South Manitou is one of historical preservation, this is not the case on the northern sibling. North Manitou is being allowed to revert to wilderness. Outside of the old village, farmhouses and barns, autos and machinery, fenceposts and walls are being retrieved by nature. Here you will find forests of mature hardwoods, sandy beaches, perched dunes and open fields. The trails are as wide as the roads that they were a hundred years ago.

The 20 mile coastline has as many personalities as the rest of the island. Sand, gravel and lake stone pave the shoreline. The interior can be virtually at the same level or perhaps 15 feet above a 50-foot wide swath of white sand. There are also many spots on the island that the beach is just a short strip between the water and a towering bluff.

Why go to North Manitou in April? We all go into the woods for the beauty, the solitude and the nature. However, we need to face one of the other reasons. We go in for the challenge. We want to know our self-reliance isn't misplaced. We want to know that the people we backpack with are capable. Here we go! A snowfall could keep us from moving around the island. High winds could keep our ship from coming in to retrieve us. Windstorms could

mean that the trail is blocked or erased in sections and you have to use your own judgment and navigational skills to find your way. A cold snap could cause you to rethink your sleeping system on an island where fire is forbidden. You could forget something ... like food. These are simple challenges on an island 12 miles from the nearest outside help.

Then again our 3-day weekend could be a lot like last year. Sunshine, blue skies and highs in the 60's defined our days. Trees and bushes had just started to awaken letting light reach all sections of the forest floor. The lack of vegetation allowed us to explore old unmaintained trails to homesteads and orchards. Eagles and kites flew in the sky above us. Life was good.

## THE FACTS:

- \$30 will get you a ticket on the boat.
- We need 20 people minimum to make it go.
- We'll limit it to 30 people maximum.
- All of you must be trained as winter campers. (It was the ranger's rule.)
- There should be no camping fees.
- You need to bring an extra meal in case the boat is delayed a day. (This has happened once to me in 17 years/30 trips.)
- We register at the dock at 09:00 on Friday, April 11.

To register or get more information, please contact Michael Banks at [slywolfe52@yahoo.com](mailto:slywolfe52@yahoo.com).

# SOLAR ROCKS

by Pete Lamb

The rock climbing class will be held this year from Wednesday, April 2 to Wednesday, May 7. The first practical will be on Saturday, April 26 at 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM at Kensington Metro Park.

The second practical will be May 9, 10, 11, at Rattlesnake Provincial Park near Toronto. Yes, I am fully aware that is Mother's Day, but due to scheduling conflicts the only other date is May 24-25 which is Memorial Day. I don't mind having a discussion about that, and move the class forward 2 weeks

The first class on April 2 will be at Planet Rock in Pontiac where you will (hopefully) get a belay card.

The cost will be \$135. For this you get The Mountaineer's Book (can be used for Lou's mountaineering class also) a trip to Planet Rock and a camping weekend at Rattlesnake. Also if it can be worked in a rappelling class at Planet Rock, and of course the knowledge of the best instructors in SOLAR.

You must attend all classes and practical as you will be learning ways to stay alive. There will be a written test given at Rattlesnake.

This class usually generates a lot of interest and will be limited to 22 students.

# SOLAR 2007 CALENDAR

MARCH ACTIVITIES					
3/4	TUE	GENERAL MEETING**	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
3/4	TUE	PROGRAM: Jim Dufresne - Backpacking Michigan**	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
3/7-3/11	MULTI	Winter Camping and Ice Exploration**	Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com http://therucksack.tripod.com
MARCH CLASSES					
3/12, 3/26; 4/5, 4/9, 4/20; 5/10, 5/31; 6/14	WED/ WKND	Introduction to Adventure Racing	TBD	Pam Riehl Szakal	pariehl@gmail.com
3/15 & 6/21	SAT	Tree Identification	Mayburry State Park	Mary Costello	mary.m.costello@att.net
3/29	SAT	Wilderness First Aid - Recertification	Redford Public Library	Mary E. Price	mathildet@sbcglobal.net
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					
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
UPCOMING 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
5/6	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
5/23-5/26	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
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
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	defranceomnex@comcast.net
UPCOMING CLASSES					
5/7, 5/14, 5/17-5/18, 5/21, 5/30 -6/1	WED, WKND	Beginning Car Camping	TBA	Mark Speece	mspeece@med.wayne.edu

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 (March 14 for the April 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).

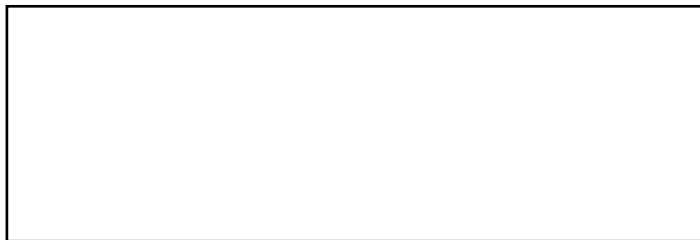
## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

## SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SOLAR RAY ASSISTANT EDITORS

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)



**SOLAR**  
33228 W. 12 Mile Road  
P.O. Box 220  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334