



The

SOLAR RAY

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

February 2009

Last Day in GTNP

By Ken Lemieux



Cascade Creek

8/21/08. This is the final day of my first “real” backpacking trip after completing the SOLAR Beginner Backpacking class. A five day hike through Grand Teton National Park has tested me but I find that I’m well prepared. Last night we camped in the highest spot up the North Fork of Cascade Canyon (8,800 feet). The canyon is about 3 miles long by half a mile wide with walls on three sides of us; Grand Teton Mountain constitutes the remaining side. The walls of the canyon are about a half mile high. Because of a record snowfall this year, the creeks and streams are flowing heavy and cold. Our site is close to a couple of waterfalls and a boulder the size of a bungalow. Above us, just out of site, is a glacier contributing to the runoff. The beauty of the canyon is amazing. I wonder what it looks like in winter. If it wasn’t for the advent of digital cameras, I’d have used several rolls of film in this spot alone. As the sun set, Grand Teton changed colors continuously. Who needs reality TV?

Yesterday was our longest hike so far (11 miles) with lots of elevation changes. My right knee locked up a couple dozen times and I have a decision to make today. Climb with Ted and Mark 2.5 miles to go up over Paintbrush Divide (10,700 feet) and then take Paintbrush Canyon

downhill another 10 miles to the parking lot or go downhill with Brian the whole way, an easier, shorter hike.

08:35 - While eating breakfast (oatmeal yet again) a park ranger visits to check our permit. Although friendly, he is all business. Ted, ever the chatty fellow, pries a weather forecast out of him. He says today’s weather will be clear but tomorrow there’s a chance of snow up here in the mountains. There are a few clouds right now but mostly blue skies.

09:14 - We hike 15 minutes to aptly named Lake Solitude (9035 feet). It’s a pretty little lake about 1,500 feet across, with a couple of islands but no camping allowed. We are at the far end of the canyon and it is decision time. Since I may never be here again and my knee feels OK, I decide to go for it. We wish Brian well and arm him with bear spray. He heads down the trail, we head up. The route Brian is taking is fairly busy, at least by back country standards. Still I wonder, is splitting up the group like this a good idea. The plan is to meet at Ted’s Durango at 16:00.

09:47 - We can still faintly make out Brian’s blue shirt on the other side of the canyon. He’s a good 1,000 feet lower than us. We try yelling to him but can’t tell if he reacts or not.

10:08 - Dark clouds have been moving in and the wind is picking up. The temperature is dropping - fast. Thanks for the forecast Mr. Ranger!

10:16 - Time for a 200 calorie power bar while on the move. This portion of the trail is very steep and strenuous. The clouds, wind, and lower temperature combine to make our exertion seem less so than if the sun was beating down. As we look across the canyon, we can see a glacier on the other side, slightly below our current height. Our campsite is still visible but looks very far away. The trail is pretty narrow here and I make sure to stay on the mountain side of it.

11:06 - We’ve made it to Paintbrush Divide. No trees up this high, it looks quite inhospitable, all barren rock. The wind is “hold on to your hats” strong; I’m guessing 40 MPH and we really have to shout to be heard. It is

cold but I don't want to take the time to stop and dig my fleece out. As this is day five, I'm now well acquainted with the location of every item in my pack. Funny how that works; on day one it seemed like I had a hard time finding anything. Now I can describe to my buddies exactly where something is in my pack and have them retrieve it for me. Taking off your pack to look for something is wasted time and energy.

As we cross the divide, a strong gust of wind causes Mark to briefly lose his balance. If he'd have gone over the side, he'd have rolled a long, long way. I wouldn't want to have to explain that one to Brian (Mark's brother). I cross the divide as quickly as I can in a crouch.

11:12 - Wow, what a difference. We're protected by the mountain now and the wind has dropped to almost nil. As we climb over all kinds of boulders and loose rocks, we feel pretty tough.



Crossing a snowfield

11:19 - We encounter a friendly 50ish local woman wearing a day pack and heading in the opposite direction. She nonchalantly says she's doing a quick 19 mile loop around Paintbrush and Cascade Canyons. We flatlanders (as the locals call the non-natives) don't feel so tough anymore.

11:22 - Another 200 calorie power bar as we continue our brutal pace. We have a 7 PM reservation at Burke's Steakhouse in Jackson, Ted's favorite, and don't want to miss it. Ted says Dick Cheney sometimes eats there. When we flew in six days ago, Air Force Two was parked at the airport. I wonder if we'll run into Cheney.

11:31 - Across the last of the major snow fields we go. This one's got a steep slope, gotta be careful. When we called the ranger station a few weeks ago, they said as late as mid-July parts of the trail were impassable without ice axes and crampons. At the time, that statement surprised me. No longer.

12:30 - Near tiny Holly Lake we stop for a 15 minute lunch break, which in my case, is a 400 calorie power bar. I vow to never, ever, eat another date-based product again. As we descend through the valley, the

trees and vegetation are becoming more frequent. We're at about 9,000 feet now.

13:33 - During a break near a roaring creek we chat with a German family. In their month of vacation, they've visited more national parks than most Americans probably do in their lifetimes. Come to think of it, we've talked to a lot of foreigners. Why there aren't more Americans out here is a question that has been bugging me the whole trip.

There've been so many creeks in the last hour we don't even bother to check our water supplies. Surely there will be plenty available whenever we need it. We're definitely in the woods now; the terrain is completely different than it was a few hours ago. Ted's hands appear stained from all the berries he's been picking. The thought that grizzly bears like berries as well has crossed my mind more than once. I try not to be overly trail-focused and take the time to look around every so often. The ecological diversity is amazing.

15:04 - As we come upon the intersection of the Paintbrush and String Lake trails, we've all run out of water and are extremely parched. Surprise, we haven't seen any water since our last break. The pace we've kept today has caused my whole body to swell; my wedding band, which normally moves freely, won't budge at all.

15:16 - Although we are close to the parking lot, we elect to stop and filter water at a bridge going over a section between Leigh Lake (big) and String Lake (small). We can tell we're close because of the number of day hikers we see (and mock). Hey tourist fella in the Levi's, cotton kills!

16:05 - We find Brian waiting at the car, relaxing under a tree, reading a book, and looking well rested. Closer inspection reveals a wet head - yes, indeed, he just got back from a swim. All my worrying was for naught. Time to drop off the bear canisters (mandatory in GTNP) and get beer containers. Cheers to a great trip!



Paintbrush Divide

SOLAR FEBUARY 2009 CALENDAR

WWW.SOLAROUTDOORS.ORG

FEBUARY ACTIVITIES					
2	Sun	Super Bowl Party	Howell, MI	Carol McCrie	cmccrie@sbcglobal.net
2/1-28	Multi	Kayak Building	Mt. Clemens, MI	Chuck Smith	cbryansmit@aol
2/3	Tues	Monthly Meeting	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
2/3	Tues	Six Rivers Land Conservancy	Colony Hall	Janet Duncan	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
2/6-8	Wknd	Hartwick Pines	Grayling, MI	Kevin Cotter	kdcotter@wowway.com
2/7-22	Multi	Arctic Ocean Expedition (James Bay) (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Moose River, Ontario	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
2/7-22	Multi	Costa Rica Adventure	Costa Rica	Maureen DeFrance	moelifeisgood@lavebit.com
2/13-15	Wknd	Winter Weekend at Boyne Valley Lodge	Boyne Falls, MI	Elizabeth Schwab / Mary Dunn	ges1339@yahoo.com / mjd7bc@msn.com
2/20-22	Wknd	Cross Country Ski and Shoeshoe	Lake Ann, MI	Darrell Ahlberg	dahlberg7@comcast.net
FEBUARY CLASSES					
(con't) 2/6-8	Multi	Mountaineering	TBD	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
2/25	Wedi	Adventure Racing	TBD	Pamela Riehl	pariehl@gmail.com
MARCH ACTIVITIES					
1	Tues	Monthly Meeting	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
1	Tues	Tee Shirt Artwork Contest	Colony Hall	Janet Duncan	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
3/8	Sun	American Lung Assoc. of MI Climb Detroit	Detroit Renaissance Center	Lisa Boose	elbows6000@att.net
1/7	Sat	Hoedown	Livonia, MI	Margaret Martin	mpluscat@hotmail.com
MARCH CLASSES					
(con't) 3/11, 25	Wedi	Adventure Racing	TBD	Pamela Riehl	pariehl@gmail.com
APRIL ACTIVITIES					
4/7	Tues	Monthly Meeting	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
4/7	Tues	TBD	Colony Hall	Janet Duncan	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
4/5-12	Multi	Return to St John USVI	Maho Bay Camps, St. John, USVI	Jim Gessner	gessnerj@comcast.net
APRIL CLASSES					
(con't) 4, 8, 19	Multi	Adventure Racing	TBD	Pamela Riehl	pariehl@gmail.com
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES					
5/1-3	Wknd	Wildflower Weekend	Metamora, MI	Margaret Martin	mpluscat@hotmail.com
5/23-6/1	Multi	Off-trail Canadian Backpacking Expedition (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Lake Superior Provincial Park	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com

UPCOMING CLASSES					
(con't) 5/9, 30	Sat	Adventure Racing	TBD	Pamela Riehl	pariehl@gmail.com
5/28, 6/4, 11, 18, 25	Sat	Open Water Kayak Skills	TBD	Chuck Smith	cbryansmit@aol.com

If you would like to plan/lead a SOLAR activity, contact our Activities Chairperson, Samantha Schafer, at SolarActivities@SolarOutdoors.org.

If you would like to teach or suggest a SOLAR class, contact our Education Chairperson, Allen Duncan, at SolarEducation@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

STARVED ROCK AND MATTHIESSEN STATE PARKS MEMORIAL WEEKEND

HIKING AND CAMPING - KID AND DOG FRIENDLY

By Leslie Cordova

Come join us May 22 - 25, 2009. Experience the fun of outdoor adventure at Starved Rock State Park. Whether you enjoy hiking along the nature trails or viewing the spectacular overlooks along the Illinois River, recreational opportunities abound. The backdrop of your activities are 18 canyons formed by glacial melt water and stream erosion. They slice dramatically through tree-covered, sandstone bluffs for four miles at Starved Rock, which is located along the south side of the Illinois River. There are numerous waterfalls found at the head of all 18 canyons.

With 13 miles of hiking trails and another 5 miles at nearby Matthiessen State Park, it is a SOLARite paradise.

The plan is to drive 5 ½ hours on Friday, spend 3 nights camping, and exploring. Saturday night will be a traditional SOLAR potluck. There are 7 individual campsites reserved, in this modern campground with showers and flush toilets.

All this fun can be yours for \$38 per person, and Illinois does not charge a state park entrance fee.

Contact Leslie Cordova to reserve your spot today. lesliegene@aol.com or (248) 547-5626.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE SOLAR SYSTEM GO AROUND

By Cindy Taylor

SOLAR is made up of individuals with a passion for the outdoors and a willingness to share their talents, time and skills in a loosely structured volunteer organization. SOLAR could not exist if it weren't for these individuals.

A lot of time and effort is put into what goes on behind the scenes at SOLAR and there are many opportunities for those who are willing and able to contribute their talents, time, skills, etc. We are always looking for some fresh ideas from members who understand SOLAR's needs and purpose. In the July SOLAR Ray, I wrote that one of the primary areas I would like to focus on during this next year is in opening up and improving communication. There is a need for some more formalized systems for communication. In order to create these types of systems, we need volunteers to help us do so. This is just one of the many areas where you could be of service.

SOLAR and Steering Committee volunteers are all doing what they do in their spare time. For the most part, all of us have jobs, family, and/or other obligations that take precedence over our time. SOLAR is a club that we are passionate about. While we all have some great ideas for improving SOLAR, we are limited by the time and resources needed to implement them. There is much to do. In addition to assisting or leading an activity, workshop or class, there are opportunities for members to be part of committees, represent SOLAR at various events, help with equipment maintenance, etc.

If you are interested in getting more involved in any area of SOLAR, talk to someone on the Steering Committee. If you have a specific interest and think you can add value in a specific area, talk to the Committee Chairperson in that area.

To see a list of SOLAR's standing committees, take a look at our bylaws on SOLAR's website (www.solaroutdoors.org/About/Bylaws.aspx). An overview of each committee can be found in Article IV.

To see the Steering Committee members who fill the role of committee chairpersons, visit our website at www.solaroutdoors.org/About/SteeringCommittee/Biographies.aspx.

Special thanks go out to a couple of our dedicated volunteers (I think you know who you are) for providing an example of the value that can be realized when including volunteers outside the Steering Committee. These individuals have added tremendous value to SOLAR. Their involvement and participation has been the inspiration that helped me see how much value our members can add outside the traditional volunteer roles in SOLAR.

Jim Coe's SOLAR weekend at Lake Ann's Sleeping Bear Resort January 16-18, 2009 *by Sara Cockrell*



Thanks to Jim Coe for organizing another fun weekend at Sleeping Bear Resort for 27 SOLARites! Saturday midday, after negotiating snow covered slipper roads, many challenged the hills at Lake Ann Pathway, climbing up, up & away, then down & out of control, into the deep snow, enjoying the frozen lake, ponds & icy Platte River along the trail. Afterwards, we adjourned back to the lodge to warm-up & energize our bodies, before some of us over-indulged in another XC ski at Lost Lake (Dubonnet). We passed a campfire at the campground, where a group had enjoyed activities outside all day, then continued on along the frozen lake, ponds & creek, finishing at dusk. We arrived back in time to savor one dish at a time, as the Saturday night potluck feast was being prepared, a ham in the Lodge and a turkey in the Bears Den courtesy of Jim all so delicious and enticing. Then we celebrated 3 birthdays, 2-29 & holding, and one 30th, (a loud Ahem) As the midnight hour drew near and passed most retired for the night but the euchre went on and on and on.

Since most were driving home Sunday afternoon, we decided to save a trip to Sleeping Bear Dunes when we had more time, and headed to my favorite back country trail at Muncie Lakes Pathway, where some XC skied, others snowshoed south on the North Country Trail, meeting back at Ranch Rudolph. It was warmer & sunny today, and though our bodies were weary, our skis glided more easily on the DNR groomed trail, as we passed along the edges of Muncie Lakes, the snow so undisturbed by any tracks, that our journey could have been in Alaska.

Lake Ann was my first outing as a new to the trip leaders I met there, and in 2008 with me, dog sledding, Canyon & on the John Muir Trail, and Adirondacks, with so many treasured memories. So, it was only befitting that I had this opportunity to give something back, by sharing some of my favorite XC ski trails with those who came Up North. One certainty, SOLAR members know how to "Enjoy Michigan Winters", regardless of the single-digit temps, and snow & ice-covered roads! I have downloaded 15 photos of our weekend XC ski outings on the SOLAR yahoo site, so take a peek of some of those who made the most of the winter wonderland.

SOLAR member last year, so reminded me how grateful I am the many new friends who shared adventures backpacking in the Grand fall in the



A Michigan Winter Poem

It's winter here in Michigan
And the gentle breezes blow
Seventy miles an hour,
At twenty five below.
Oh, how I love ole Michigan
When the snow's up to your butt.
You take a breath of winter
And your nose freezes shut.
Yes, the weather here is wonderful
So I guess I'll hang around.
I could never leave my Michigan
Cause I'm frozen to the ground!

By Anonymous

Have you ever walked in the woods alone -
You an isolate, a contemplative soul,
Divorced from your world?
Yet, you are not alone.

The forest spirit, she that gives
Life-sap to the trees in the spring,
Coaxing them to full leaf in summer,
Reassuring them at fall's colorful pre-deprivation,
Then at winter's denuding for sleep and renewal;
And she, motherly kin of butterflies, birds and
Terrestrial and tree dwelling lives in fur -
She is with you, companionable but silent,
Non-judgmental yet a good listener.
Speak to her candidly of
Your secrets and concerns.

Then visually and tactilely
And too, with receptive ears and nose,
Imbibe in her beauty -
The young robins, net-bound
With chirping, open mouths
As they prod their mother red-breast for food;
Hark to the bubbling, giggling woodland stream,
Its tummy being tickled
By protruding stones in its bed;
Delight in the aroma of trailing arbutus
That hunches and hides its blossoms
In its growth down close to the ground;
Then feel the bared texture
Of the loose, bleached bark of the birch.

Accept the cleared spirit the woodland offers
Then leave the sheltered, shaded woods
And embark into the new sunlight
Of your waiting world,
Now refreshed and absolved of some cares
And confident and assured
That the woodland sprite or spirit
Welcomes your return.

- by EJ Mueller, M.D.

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 edition of the SOLAR
Ray, send it to Elizabeth Schwab by email at: qes339@
yahoo.com. Include the source you obtained it from

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. To receive a copy in the mail, please contact Mary Price at membership@solaroutdoors.org.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for the SOLAR Ray are due on the Friday two weeks prior to the monthly Steering Committee Meeting (June 13 for the July issue). Electronic documents only, Word is preferred and please attach your images. If you have any questions, please contact Pete Lamb at rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org.

STEERING COMMITTEE

President: Cindy Taylor	Vice President: Carol McCririe
Secretary: Sherri Doebel	Treasurer: Michelle Delaporte
Activities: Samantha Schafer	By-Laws: Chuck Smith
Education: Allen Duncan	Equipment: Sherri Doebel
Historian: Debbie Zuchlewski	Membership: Mary Price
Programs: Jan Duncan	Public Relations: Pam Szakal
Ray Editor: Pete Lamb	Webmaster: Willi Gutman

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Mike Banks | Leslie Cordova | Al Fylak | Steve Gardner
Bill Halvingis | Cindy Harrison-Felix | Tom Hayes | Doug Lanyk
Larry Martin | Joan Hettinger | Tom Oloffo | Lou Szakal
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 Cindy Taylor at president@solaroutdoors.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at: www.solaroutdoors.org.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SOLAR RAY ASSISTANT EDITORS

Winnie Chrzanowski, Kathy Drewyore, Sheila Hardy, Pam Schmelzer, Carol McCririe, Elizabeth Schwab.

Visit our website: WWW.SOLAROUTDOORS.ORG

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