

The SOLAR Ray

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A monthly publication of the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation (SOLAR)

October 2009

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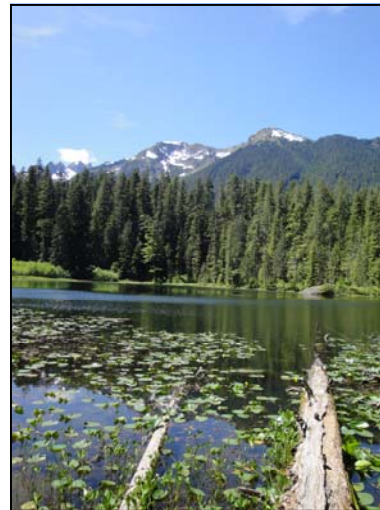
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Ain't No Mountain High Enough

By Tom Black

The peak of Mount Olympus stood before us. Its summit was a steeple-shaped jagged rock of shale and sandstone protruding from the surrounding glaciers. Although Mount Olympus is the tallest and most prominent mountain in the Olympic National Park, it has eluded some, for it cannot be seen from lower elevations, and has been missed by others who have been confused by the nearby false summit. Four hours ago, we left our Snow Dome base camp and are now in awe as we mill around the base of this crown jewel of western Washington, awaiting our lasting rewards of the challenge to climb the final 70 feet.

At 7,965 feet tall, Mount Olympus is not the tallest mountain in the state and is not a "trophy climb" to some, but it is also not a summit which can be climbed in a single day. Conquering the mountain required a 20-mile, three-day



approach while lugging sixty pounds of climbing and backpacking gear, but these obstacles could not diminish our determination to be the first SOLAR group to reach the summit. The first day we hiked through the Hoh Rain Forest, one of the last remaining true old growth rainforests in the continental United States. The combination of Giant Cedars, Douglas Firs, and Sitka Spruces towering over thousands of species of plants was our welcome mat to the snow, ice, and glaciers we were anticipating in days to come. The Hoh Rain Forest, with its proximity to the Pacific Ocean, is usually one of the wettest places on earth. But on that day, this excursion for us was sun and blue skies, the perfect weather to enjoy and savor the lushness surrounding the trails.

The next two days we hiked through Lewis Meadows, Elk Lake Camp and Glacier Meadows and descended the new



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rope ladders at Avalanche Chute. The third day we maneuvered the scree and loose rock of the moraine as we approached the Olympus Base Camp at the base of Snow Dome. At this change in terrain, we opened our packs to pull out climbing harnesses, prusiks, carabiners, and other essential equipment we had used in our training for roping up the snow fields and crevasses. The scene was full of smiles as we finally unpacked the tools of the trade of mountaineering from our backpacks, unwrapping each item carefully as if it was a multi-student birthday celebration.

Once upon the Snow Dome we built a small village of tents, vestibules, and platforms, along with a kitchen and a latrine. We were up early the next morning to begin our trek to a successful summit of Mount Olympus.



The planning for this trip started more than six months ago with the first meeting of the Basic Mountaineering and Safety Skills Class. The class was organized and presented by lead instructor Lou Szakal. The syllabus included six classroom-style sessions, two three-day practical trainings, and a dozen 12-18 mile hikes. As a way to test our reading and comprehension of the textbook and the binder filled with information, we took seven graded quizzes. The seriousness of the class was quickly noted by reading the first page of the first

chapter of the binder. It was a report of British expeditions titled "Deaths During Mountaineering at Extreme Altitude" and quickly established the need for preparedness and safety precautions.

The class covered a wide range of information and was presented by a number of assistant instructors, including Dave Dahl, Tim Davis, Tom Hayes, Pete Lamb, Larry Mergentime, Chris Myers, Judy Petrella, Sharon Smelter, Pam Szakal, Gary Wilkinson, and Don Wold. The experiences and skills they shared with the class were tremendously helpful in understanding the various and precise parcels of information and developing the wide range of knowledge necessary for mountaineering. Our successes on Mount Olympus and Mount Rainier were keenly tied to this great wealth of insight they shared with us. For the six students who were accompanied by five instructors on this 16-day trip, the class prepared us for the various, and at times difficult, situations we encountered.



The 2009 Basic Mountaineering and Safety Skills Class included Charlie Belinsky, Brian Emerson, Willi Gutmann, Charity Loring, Bill Lynch, Marie Martinko, Mike Pniewski, Mike Schick, Paul Williford, and myself. Our class ratio of instructors to students was greater than one teacher per student. Where else but SOLAR could one get such great personalized attention in learning?

After gathering at the trailhead at the end of our Mount Olympus journey, we returned to the hostel for warm showers, dinner, and a good night's sleep. A free day was on the schedule, it was time to buy food, see the July Fourth fireworks in the nearby town of Forks, relax and prepare for the second part of our trip. Filled with a new sense of self-confidence and a few days of rest, the flagstaff monument called Mount Rainier was awaiting for us to conquer.

(Continued on page 3)

We traveled east from Forks to Tacoma to our lodge for the night, the RMI (Whittaker) Bunkhouse. All along the trip to Tacoma we could see our prize, Mount Rainier, towering above all else. At 14,410 feet, it is the highest volcano and largest glaciated mountain in the contiguous United States. Mount Rainier serves as a training ground for the Seven Summits and offers a variety of climbs to accommodate mountaineers of all skill levels.

We repacked our gear, divvied up shared equipment, received our rope team assignments, and then we were on the snow trail climbing one of America's most historic and distinguished climbs.

On summit day, we went to bed at 5:00 p.m. and woke at 10:30 p.m. for our overnight climb. With midnight drawing nearer, we were tied together to form two rope teams as we continued on a path lit only by the lights on our helmets and the stars above. Starting the night at an elevation of 11,000 feet we climbed for three miles, encountering a few problems along the way as ropes occasionally got entangled, small rocks stuck in our crampons, and boots required tightening after thawing out from a night outside the tent, but we quickly solved these problems and continued onward and upward. Digging steps into the steep snow as we climbed, our group trudged full steam ahead. After side-stepping narrow trail routes and seven hours of strenuous work, we were rewarded by summing Mount Rainier.

The Basic Mountaineering & Safety Skills Class has mandatory prerequisites, including Basic Backpacking, Basic Land Navigation, Backpacking & Winter Skills Class (Enjoying Michigan Winters), and Rock Climbing (or a belay card). These SOLAR classes and many more like them are taught by dozens of selfless individuals who share their knowledge, experience, and passions. The classes include some of the widest ranges of interest you will find in any outdoor group in America.



The mountaineering class we took is the culmination of many SOLAR classes taken to develop the needed skills, test our knowledge of advanced winter travel requirements for a safe trip and to manage our risks. Whether you want



to learn to identify an avalanche or how to identify poison ivy, there is a SOLAR class for you. And whether you are a new SOLAR member enrolling in your first class or a seasoned lifetime member, you can always learn new techniques, share your favorite camping tips, develop new friendships or reconnect with old friends. There is an abundance of events and classes awaiting your participation. So step up to the

table, enroll in a class, and get ready for a lifetime of adventures.

Mountaineering Trip Statistics:

<i>MT. OLYMPUS</i>	<i>SUMMIT</i>	<i>MT. RAINIER</i>	<i>SUMMIT</i>
Lou Szakal	NO	Lou Szakal	NO*
Gary Wilkinson	YES	Gary Wilkinson	YES
Dave Dahl	YES	Dave Dahl	YES
Chris Myers	NO*	Chris Myers	YES
Mike Pniewski	YES	Mike Pniewski	YES
Marie Martinko	YES	Marie Martinko	YES
Mike Schick	NO*	Brian Emerson	NO*
Brian Emerson	NO*	Tom Black	YES
Tom Black	YES	Bill Lynch	NO*
Bill Lynch	YES	Don Wold	YES
Don Wold	YES		

****Did not attempt summit***

87.5% success on Olympus

100% success on Rainier

Members of the Olympus/Rainier trip will give a presentation of the trip after the SOLAR business meeting on Tuesday, October 6th. There will also be a presentation by members who were on the Glacier National Park trip.

More photos from the Mt. Olympus/Mt. Rainier trip



More photos from the Mt. Olympus/Mt. Rainier trip



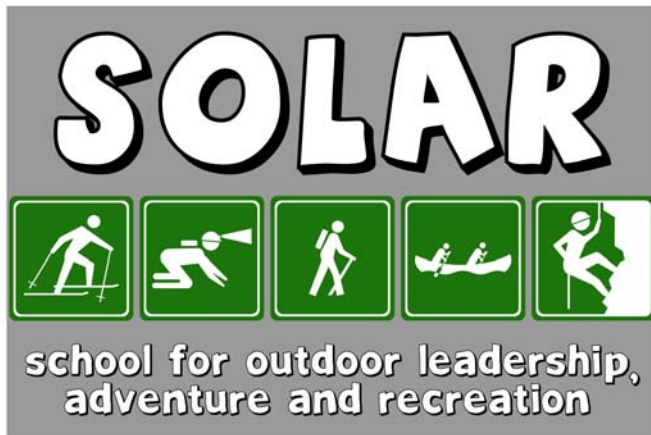
Get your SOLAR wear!

We are now taking pre-orders for SOLAR shirts to be delivered in November. These shirts will contain Rebecca Sweeton's winning graphic from the SOLAR T-shirt design contest on the front. A small SOLAR logo will be located on the back of the shirt, or in the case of the hooded sweatshirt, on one of the shoulders.

The graphics will be silk screened onto the shirt. These are not vinyl or plastic transfers.

There are four styles of shirt to choose from: short sleeve wicking unisex, short sleeve wicking women's v-neck, long sleeve wicking unisex, and a long sleeve hooded sweatshirt made of 50/50 cotton/polyester. Colors vary for each style.

Prices are \$31.98 - \$39.98 depending on the style. Please contact the SOLAR public relations chair at SolarPublicRelations@SolarOutdoors.org for exact pricing and color availability. You can also check out samples and place your order at the next SOLAR meeting on Tuesday, October 6th.



Rebecca Sweeton's winning t-shirt design

Basic Land Navigation

When/Where:

Wednesday, October 14, 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM - Berkley Community Center

Wednesday, October 21, 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM - Berkley Community Center

Saturday, October 24 (9 AM - 7 PM) & Sunday, October 25 (9 AM - 4 PM) - Waterloo Recreation Area

The class includes:

- Map reading
- Taking & plotting compass bearings
- The 3 norths & Declination
- Navigation strategies
- Primitive navigation
- Terrain recognition exercise
- Cross-country route-finding exercise



This class is a prerequisite for the Advanced Land Navigation class, which focuses on GPS. GPS is not covered in this class.

Class fee:

\$45. Includes book, maps, handouts, overnight accommodations at Burns Cabin for the practical.

To sign up, or for more information, contact:

- Brian Andrews, briangandrews@comcast.net, 248-224-1067
- Ati Tislerics, atisleri@umich.edu, 313-794-0164

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Gloria Fontaine,
SOLAR PR Chairperson

How long have you been a member of SOLAR?

I've been a member for about 12 years.

How did you learn of SOLAR in the first place?

I read about a backpacking class being offered at SOLAR in the *Observer* newspaper. I thought backpacking sounded like fun, so I went to the next meeting.

What are some outdoorsy activities you enjoy?

I enjoy hiking, kayaking and just being outdoors enjoying nature. I especially enjoy being around water.

What has been your favorite trip/activity so far?

My favorite trip was the trip Pete Lamb led to Italy. This was not your typical SOLAR trip because it was full of museums, art, small villages with narrow streets and lots of red wine! After spending two weeks in Tuscany some of the group headed for other adventures in Italy, some went home and Cindy Taylor and I went to Rome, Pompeii and Capri. It was an amazing trip!

What would your ideal trip be like?

All of the trips I have taken with SOLAR have been fabulous adventures! The SOLAR friends I've made and the places we've experienced together make for some very special memories.

Which SOLAR classes have you taken?

I have taken Beginning Backpacking, Enjoying Michigan Winters, Search and Rescue, Basic Kayaking Skills and Land Navigation (3 times).

Do you have any pets? Kids? Significant Other?

I have three grown sons, two beautiful daughters-in-law and four fabulous grandchildren! SOLAR member Don Jones and I have been sharing a lot of quality time together for almost a year now.

What inspired you to run for a Steering Committee position?

I recently started a business and through that experience realized I enjoyed promoting what I believed in. SOLAR is a great group of people who enjoy sharing outdoor adventures together. I have gained many beautiful memories through activities with this wonderful group of outdoor enthusiasts and I just wanted to give back a bit.

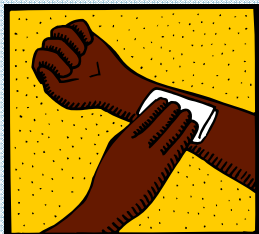


Please send suggestions of SOLARites we should shine the spotlight on to:

SOLARrayeditor@solaroutdoors.org

WILDERNESS FIRST AID

Fall 2009



Classes:

Thurs. Nov. 12th, 6-10pm

Sat. Nov. 14th, 9-5pm

Sun. Nov. 15th, 9-4pm

Held at Mike Malon's home:

25228 Maplebrooke Dr.
Southfield, MI 48033

Cost: \$120

Includes class, books, lunch on Saturday
and

Red Cross Certification for 3 years

Call or email Mike Malon

248-352-4019

mmalon@comcast.net

SOLAR/Proud Lake Moonlight Canoeing 2009

This popular event is great for the experienced paddler as well as the novice. Come to Proud Lake and paddle either a canoe or kayak into the setting sun, then return by paddling back into the moonrise. When you return to the canoe livery, a bonfire will be awaiting you. Each evening will include pizza dinner. No partner necessary, all skill levels are welcome. Dress for the weather, including headlamps and water bottles.



Who: All are welcome. Child and dog friendly.

Where: Heavner Canoe Rental,
2775 Garden Road, Milford,
Michigan 48381

When:

Saturday, October 3: 5:30
dinner, 6:30-9:00 paddle

Sunday, November 1: 4:15
dinner, 5:00-8:00 paddle



Cost:

Canoe or Kayak \$30 per person. Includes pizza dinner, boat rental (canoe or kayak), bonfire

Boat rental only (no dinner) \$25 per person

Dinner only (bring your own boat) \$15 per person

Bonfire only (no dinner, bring your own boat) \$5 per person

Preregister by calling
Heavner Canoe Rental at
(248) 685-2379.

Please call in your
reservation AT LEAST
twenty-four hours
before the event.

Dinner will not be
available for those who do
not preregister.

For more information call
Margaret at 734-721-2821
or email her at
mpluscat@yahoo.com.

Twelve Years Ago Seems Almost Like Yesterday

By Debbie Rodriguez

Luck (the good kind) led me back to Aries Grotto, aka “Colony Hall,” for the August and September SOLAR meetings. In the Twentieth Century I had been a SOLAR member for a year or so before Life (with a capital L) intervened. While I could excuse my hiatus for job-related or other reasons, in being honest I would have to cite personal responsibility and character-that-needs-building as the reason for abandoning my earlier backpacking self.

It was good to see some people I remembered, although I somewhat feared the “cringe-worthy” reception that I might have experienced if they had been small-minded. I was not the best at campcraft nor group dynamics in my previous incarnation. Thankfully, some people feigned amnesia and I could start anew. Now, 12 years later (and a bit heavier) I was going to see if I could hang with hikers again.

I eagerly signed up for a SOLAR membership and not one but three classes. Beginning Backpacking is as fun as I remember and I am still positively challenged by getting re-outfitted and re-oriented. True, the head-to-toe purple outfit that matched my Kelty Nomad external pack was no longer in vogue (it really wasn’t that chic in the ‘90s, either). True, I didn’t know exactly where in the storage shed (I am not a native Michigander so didn’t have the tribal knowledge that one should never buy a house without a basement) my old gear was, but lo and behold, an MSR Whisperlite was there, along with a whitegas canister, which I think is forbidden in the storage facility.

As my gear was old, it was time to do some tent seam-sealing. The one-person Kelty Zen tent was no longer a product offering of the manufacturer so I purchased not

one but three tubes of Sil-Net for the rain fly and bottom. I went outside and as the instructions stated, seamed up, carefully brushing as the manufacturer said.

Too bad for me, the seam sealant was the wrong kind for polyurethane. My so-last-century tent required the other “Sil-Gear” product, hence I had to peel it all off and start again... At least I haven’t been rained on (yet) and the tent itself was fine and mildew-free.

My old boots were too small - the source of my blister problem - so this year I did the right thing and purchased properly fitted boots. And since I’m not getting any younger, those previously dorky-looking trekking poles are now a must-have rather than a “nice to have.”

Like in college, I went to the library and got every book on backpacking written. I shouldn’t have bothered. Leslie and Carol have most of it summarized neatly.

Finally, my most important “gear upgrade” will be an attitude adjustment. Stuff will happen out there so I need to be kinder to myself (not to mention the group) and not moan and complain when the inevitable happens: Getting lost, teammates getting lost, traffic delays causing us not to show up at the trailhead within the half-hour window I thought to be a generous cushion. New attitude: No big deal, I think I’ll take a break and look at that deer!

I’m finding I am a better- although still not great- listener. Listening to the wise ones who mentioned the axiomatic laws, “Personal gear 1st, group gear 2nd,” and the ever important axiom, “Sometimes you have to do things for the good of the group.” So what if I have to carry a piece of group gear - everyone else is. So what if I’m getting bitten by ‘skeeters - so is everyone else. So what if I am calorically restricted but am on a team with healthy, fit, not overweight folk who will presumably need to eat well? I can deal with the differences and similarities. The SOLAR journey has begun anew...

The Other Ten Essentials: Lessons Marcia and Marie Learned (Again) on Isle Royale

*By Marcia Murphy and
Marie Takemoto*

1. Mileage is easier at your kitchen table than on the trail.
2. Topo maps don’t indicate terrain.
3. Just because it’s in a book doesn’t make it true.
4. Read trail signs carefully, and check against map, compass, and common sense.
5. A closed cell sleeping pad will be marginally more bearable with strategically placed stuff sacks.
6. Shelters are a gift when you’re bushed and it’s raining.
7. Use legal drugs - ibuprofen is your friend.
8. Know your equipment: check it out before the trip and know how to repair it in the field.
9. Bring extra food - you might just find a worm in your packaged meal!
10. Attitude is everything. (It’s all good!)

Soggy Isle Royale

by Ken Lemieux

As I sat there buck naked and shivering in my tent on Friday morning, the last hiking day of our trip, I dreaded the task ahead but knew it was necessary. Even though it was the third week of August, the possibility of hypothermia was very real. It had begun raining two nights ago and we had no idea how much longer it would last. With the temperature hovering around 50 degrees and only one set of dry clothing left, putting on the wet, cold, disgusting gear I hiked in the previous day was my only option; getting my dry clothing wet could cause the situation to get much worse.



I took a deep breath and slipped into my nasty clothes and sodden raingear as fast as I could. By the time we finished packing up our site, I was still wet, but warm enough not to be miserable. Later that morning the rain finally subsided, but not until it had soaked Isle Royale for 38 straight hours. We still had a nearly 13 mile hike to Windigo ahead of us but felt relief that the deluge was finally over. The storm also brought gale force winds to Lake Superior that resulted in the three ferries that service Isle Royale being canceled for the first time in two seasons. This led to a whole other string of challenges for everyone on the island.

Our group met and became friends in the Spring 2008 Backpacking course. Other than a smattering of classes and a few weekend trips, we were pretty much rookies. Jeff & Jennifer McWilliams, Krisanne Schmidt, and Jackie Ostrosky were all making their first major trips while this was the second

journey into the wild for Glenn Schultz and myself. We had driven to Copper Harbor on Saturday, August 15, and hopped the ferry the next day. Until the rain began Wednesday night, everything had gone pretty well. The group may have been inexperienced, but we were mentally and physically prepared and had decided to hike the Minong Ridge Trail, the one author Jim DuFresne considers "the hardest hike in Michigan."

In the book, *Deep Survival*, which three of us had read, author Laurence Gonzales emphasizes that the best way to survive a bad situation is to remain calm and composed. I tried to keep this in mind as conditions continued to deteriorate. At least in my case, I really think the lessons in that book made a difference. I recommend all SOLAR members read this book.



Thursday morning, in the driving rain, we hiked from the campground at Little Todd Harbor to the one at North Desor. Although only 5.7 miles, it was over the hardest section of the Minong and wrought with steep climbs and descents.

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The saturated conditions made the trail slick in spots; it was a slow and plodding day that included a few bruising falls. Around 10:30 the rain suddenly subsided, the sun poked through, and a rainbow



appeared. Whether or not it was the eye of the storm or just a small opening is debatable. What is not debatable is that it would continue to rain for an entire day thereafter.

Our jubilation at finally arriving at North Desor was quickly squashed when we discovered the situation at the campground. North Desor has three sites, each with two pads (a pad being a relatively flat, somewhat rock-free piece of ground; ironically there is no padding involved). Site 3 had a nice couple on it whom we had run into a few other times on the trail. Site 2 had four guys staying in four tents. These same guys had apparently once seen an episode of *Survivorman* and decided to build a massive A-frame shelter on site 1, leaving insufficient room for our party. After some heated arguments with these young men, they finally agreed to move their tents from site 2 to 1, the one with their not very Leave No Trace shelter (and yes, they left some of their garbage behind when they moved). After what seemed like an eternity, site 2 was finally vacated. By that point all of us except Jackie, who must be smarter or have better gear than the rest of us, were soaking wet. Thursday was by just about any measure a lousy day.

Nevertheless the group remained surprisingly upbeat. I know my fellow hikers certainly buoyed my spirits. I will never forget when everyone except Glenn was hunkered in their tents trying to stay dry and he announced, "Well, believe it or not I'm going down to the lake to get some water." It's

moments like that that help you realize everything is going to be OK.

Although the Minong and Mother Nature gave us her best shot, it was still a great trip. Some of the things I will fondly remember are the friendly euchre games; exploring the mine ruins; watching the incredible sunsets; jumping off the McCargoe Cove dock; the seaplane ride; stargazing; clever shelter graffiti; friendly hikers/canoeists/kayakers; the hamburger at the lodge that brought tears of happiness to my eyes; picking fresh blueberries, raspberries, and the ever so abundant thimbleberries. But most of all I will always treasure the companionship and camaraderie of six SOLAR backpackers making their way across the amazing national park that is Isle Royale.

And if you get a chance, ask Glenn how it feels to be "committed."



For further information on this trip:

Jeff's Isle Royale Journal: <http://www.clanmcwilliams.com/serendipity/>

Ken's Isle Royale Pictures: <http://bit.ly/1aEHtf>

Photos from a separate Isle Royale trip
taken by Grey Ivanov and Howard Weiss



Photos from a separate Isle Royale trip
taken by Grey Ivanov and Howard Weiss



Trip to Glacier National Park

by Kevin Cotter

Glacier National Park, in the Rocky Mountains of northwest Montana, is a popular life list destination for hikers and backpackers, and with good reason. Even though the glaciers for which the park is named are quickly disappearing, they left behind one of the finest mountain landscapes anywhere. The park also has an abundance of wildlife, including the largest population of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states. There are also historic buildings from the early 20th Century, when the Great Northern Railway promoted Glacier as the “crown jewel of the continent” destination on their Empire Builder train. Finally, the Going-to-the-Sun Road, which cuts through the park’s mountainous interior, is both a scenic attraction and an engineering marvel.

Glacier was certainly on the life list of Bill Ahlstrom, Sara Cockrell, Bert Courson, Maria Edwards, Carolyn Francis and Kevin Cotter, who paid a visit in late July. We had the good fortune to secure a permit for a 7 day, 6 night, 70 mile loop around the northern half of the park, as well as a couple of permits for overnight trips before and after the main hike. Bill, Sara, and Kevin arrived first, in time for an overnight trip along the Gunsight Pass trail. This 20 mile trail runs east to west across the Continental Divide in the center of the park. We set out at the east trailhead, where we were greeted by a black bear that quickly disappeared into the thick vegetation nearly covering the trail. This reminded us to continually warn bears of our presence by yelling “hey bear” or singing Beach Boys songs along the trail. After plowing through shoulder-high underbrush for several miles, we finally reached Gunsight



Moose grazing in Kootenai Lake

Lake and headed up the 2000 foot high cirque (semicircle of mountains surrounding the lake) toward Gunsight Pass. The elevation gain gave us

a clear view of the blue-green waters of the lake below. It also brought us to several snowfields which had to be crossed at a fairly steep angle. Marmots roamed the area; one was briefly taken for a bear, with an ensuing moment of panic. As we reached the pass we were greeted by a family of friendly mountain goats who either had a fascination for humans or hoped to get some of our food. We then made the steep descent toward Lake Ellen Wilson along a series of steep rocky switchbacks, finally reaching our campground next to the lake. Like all backcountry campgrounds in Glacier, this had designated tent pads, a device for hanging food, a designated kitchen area, and an outhouse. This kitchen area was sheltered by a huge erratic (a boulder pushed into place by a glacier) about 25 feet in diameter. It gave us an opportunity to have dinner with other backpackers who were camping there. In spite of the

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weather forecast promising clear skies for the next five days, we woke up the next morning to pouring rain. Since we were due to meet the rest of our group flying in that day, we went ahead and broke camp in the rain, with a farewell from the same family of mountain goats. We noticed some bizarre weather as we hiked up and away from the campground. Low clouds were flying toward the east over Gunsight Pass away from us, while the waves on Lake Ellen Wilson were moving toward the west, in the opposite direction. Thankfully, the weather cleared up to give us smooth sailing for our hurried trek to meet the rest of the group. We took a few minutes to visit Sperry Chalet along the trail, one of two backcountry chalets remaining from the early days of the park when the only access to the interior was on foot or



Highline Trail near Logan Pass

horseback. The visit was worthwhile since the chalet had an ample and affordable supply of Snickers bars. Fueled by sugar, chocolate and peanuts, we hurried to our cars at Lake MacDonald Lodge and then headed off to meet Maria, Carolyn and Bert in West Glacier. The entire group spent the next day acclimating with a couple of day hikes to a beautiful lake and a series of waterfalls. We encountered another mountain goat near Logan Pass, the main center of activity in the interior of the park. This goat also seemed very comfortable around people, content to lounge on a snow field just off the trail in spite of the crowds in that area.

Our main hike began on Sunday, July 26 at Logan Pass along the Highline Trail. The first part of the trail, heavily used by day hikers, is on a narrow ledge along a mountainside. There is even a cable handhold for the acrophobe and the unsteady hiker. As we headed north the busy Going-to-the-Sun Road dropped out of sight below and was replaced with exquisite views of the surrounding mountains. Motor traffic was replaced with animal traffic, with marmots sniffing around for leftover food and another mountain goat sauntering right down the middle of the trail. We finally reached our first campground at Granite Park, with barely enough time to set up camp and have dinner before being chased into our tents by more rain. The next morning we were greeted by a mule deer and her two nursing fawns. We stopped for a quick visit on our way out at Granite Park Chalet, the other surviving chalet from the park's early days. Getting a bed here (\$70 a night, no electricity or water, bring your own stove and fuel) is like winning the lottery. The views out the front porch are stunning, and there are trails leading to overlooks near the park's main glaciers. We headed east over Swiftcurrent Pass and down the valley toward our next campground at Many

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Glacier. Near the end of the hike we spotted a grizzly bear just off the trail that had the good sense to hide from us. Camping at Many Glacier allowed us to get hot showers, restaurant meals, and a visit to the historic Many Glacier Hotel, where we encountered another grizzly lurking nearby.

The following day we headed north toward Ptarmigan Tunnel, another engineering marvel from the early days of the park. We reached Ptarmigan Lake and headed up the cirque toward the tunnel, about 200 feet below the top. This narrow tunnel had a thick steel gate reminiscent of the entrance to Mordor from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. To add to the image of impending doom, the weather had turned menacing again, with clouds blowing through the tunnel and out the entrance. We reached the other side to find thick fog and ground consisting of crushed red gravel, which looked like a set from a low budget sci-fi movie. Visibility gradually improved as we descended toward our next campground at Elizabeth Lake. Again, we had just enough time to set up and eat dinner before the rain set in.

We had to make a decision the next day regarding our route. The shortest way to our next campground at Glennis Lake would include an unbridged river crossing. Given the cold weather and chilly water temperatures, we were uncertain how safe the crossing would be. The alternate route bypassing the crossing would add two miles to our hike. When another group of hikers at Elizabeth Lake told us the crossing was about waist deep, we decided to take the long route. To our chagrin, we found when we reached the far side of the crossing that the water was less than a foot deep and the bottom a combination of small rocks and gravel.

All of us agreed that Glennis Lake was our favorite backcountry campground. We pitched our tents near the water and hung everything out to dry in the sunshine. The brave among us went for a swim, or two, or three in the very cold and clear water. Unlike most backcountry campgrounds in Glacier, campfires were permitted here, so we enjoyed one while listening to the loons. We continued west the next day toward Stoney Indian Pass, along a trail of false cirques. We hiked to the lake at



*Wildflowers in alpine meadow, Fifty Mountain area
— photo by Bert Courson*

the first cirque and followed the trail to the top, only to find another lake and cirque. The top of the second cirque led to a third cirque, this time with the pass at the top. Not that we were complaining; this hike was the most scenic part of our trip. In front of us were waterfalls cascading over the cirque (one even sported a rainbow) and blue-green lakes, behind us

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

were views of the lakes we had just passed: Mokawanis, Glennis and Cosley. After crossing the pass we descended into Waterton Valley and its thick vegetation which blocked our view of the trail. We reached our destination at Kootenai Lake to find a group of resident moose grazing at the bottom of the shallow lake. One particularly large male even wandered right between our flimsy ultralight silnylon tents. We were lucky the moose left our tents intact, since the pattern of rain on alternate nights continued to prevail.

We headed south toward Flattop Mountain early the next morning, since this was to be our longest day at 14.7 miles and an elevation gain of 2900 feet. We climbed out of Waterton Valley into the highlands of the Fifty Mountain area, crossing an alpine meadow with a spectacular blanket of multicolored wildflowers that could have inspired Monet. After stopping for pictures and lunch, we continued toward Flattop and camped there for our final night as a group in the backcountry. Our last day was a 5 mile hike through a thick grove of ripe thimbleberries, many of which were picked and eaten by members of our group. No doubt there were grizzlies nearby taking notes and getting descriptions. About one mile from the end, Sara and Kevin headed to their cars at The Loop on the Going-to-the-Sun Road while the rest of the group hiked to Packer's Roost to wait to be picked up. While driving from The Loop to Packer's Roost, Sara and Kevin were stopped by a pair of grizzly cubs sitting in the road. We waited for them to move off the road, and then drove by mama bear giving us threatening glances to make sure we moved on. After picking up the rest of the group, we celebrated with a hot lunch, hot showers and genuine motel beds.

The next morning, Maria, Carolyn, and Bert headed to the airport while Bill, Sara, and Kevin drove to Two Medicine on the east side of the park where we would make one last overnight hike. Before setting out on the Pitamakan Trail toward Oldman Lake on our 16 mile loop, we heard about a mother grizzly with two cubs wandering around the area and approaching hikers. The trail just north of our hiking route was closed as a result, so we were especially cautious. That night Kevin kept hearing an animal moving around near the tent, causing him to jump and reach for his bear pepper spray. Sara heard the same sound but thought it was Kevin walking around camp. The mystery was solved the next morning when we spotted a lame elk with an injured leg hobbling around the tent area. We headed out on our last day across Pitamakan Pass to a narrow and scenic trail on the edge of a steep hill along the Continental Divide. This rocky trail gave us some difficulty and, as if to drive the point home, we spotted a bighorn sheep and her kid nimbly walking around the mountainside above us. We finally reached Dawson Pass and descended to Two Medicine Lake with the ferry taking us back to our cars. We then parted company, with Bill flying home, Sara continuing on to Canada, and Kevin driving the 1800 miles back to Michigan.

Public Relations and SOLAR

By Gloria Fontaine

This is the fifth of a continuing series of articles on SOLAR Steering Committee positions.

I have been fortunate enough to hold the Public Relations position on the SOLAR Steering Committee for the past five months. Working on Public Relations events for SOLAR is the perfect opportunity to interact with both current club members and prospective members.

Since May we've promoted SOLAR at the Brighton Spring Fling, the Brighton Trail Days, the Troy Campout and the REI Promotional Event/Sale Days.

Most of these events require several volunteers to get involved, mostly talking about why they enjoy being active in a great club like SOLAR and the classes and trips run through SOLAR. We have all found wonderful new friends and enjoyed great classes and experiences as SOLAR members. If you're interested in helping out at a PR event and sharing some of your memories with prospective new members, I would love to have your help. Please put your name on the interest sign-up sheet at the general membership meeting. When the next promotional event rolls around I'll give you a call!

Come, Sit

*The four of us sit
At the end of the pier
The kayaks before us
Ready to steer*

*Adirondack morning
The sun's on the rise
The fog lifting softly
In front of our eyes*

*Autumn leaves color
In red, orange and brown
Our spot on this lake
Where we like to lounge*

*Reclining peaceful
At the end of the dock
Water reflective
Combed beach, sand
and rocks*

*No need to say much
Our surroundings do that
What a wonderful setting
Right here in our laps*

*Each season we watch
This lake, our retreat
Come, sit, here with us
Take the weight off your feet*



*Poem© by Glenn Schultz
Photo© by Linda Ringlein
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SOLAR OCTOBER 2009 CALENDAR

www.SolarOutdoors.org

OCTOBER ACTIVITIES

10/3	Sat	Moonlight Paddle	Proud Lake Rec Area	Margaret Martin	mpluscat@yahoo.com
10/3	Sat	Canoe in Color	Holly, MI	Willi Gutmann	willi_h2o@yahoo.com
10/4-10	Multi	Week in the Adirondacks	Lake Placid, NY	Don Wold	dwold12972@aol.com
10/6	Tues	Monthly Meeting 7:30pm	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
10/6	Tues	Program- A Tale of 2 Trips: Glacier National Park & Mt. Rainier	Colony Hall	Debbie Zuchlewski	SolarPrograms@SolarOutdoors.org
10/15	Thurs	November SOLAR Ray Deadline		Jennifer Tislerics	SOLARayeditor@SolarOutdoors.org
10/16-18	Wknd	Indoor Campout	Bald Mountain, MI	Darrell Ahlberg	dahlberg7@comcast.net
10/17	Sat	Octoberfest Party	Howell, MI	Carol McCrie	cmccrie@sbcglobal.net
10/18	Sun	Horseback Riding/Picnic/Hiking	Brighton Rec Stables	Debbie Zuchlewski	debz6178@yahoo.com

OCTOBER CLASSES

10/2-4	Wknd	Beginning Backpacking (continued)	Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore	Carol McCrie	cmccrie@sbcglobal.net
10/7, 13, 20, 23-25	Weds Tues, Wknd	Search and Rescue	Eastpointe, MI/ D-Bar-A Camp	Tom Hayes	sarcaptain@yahoo.com
10/14, 21, 24-25	Weds, Wknd	Basic Land Navigation	Berkley Community Center, Waterloo Recreation Area	Brian Andrews	briangandrews@comcast.net

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES

11/1	Sun	Moonlight Paddle	Proud Lake Rec Area	Margaret Martin	mpluscat@yahoo.com
11/3	Tues	Monthly Meeting 7:30pm	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
11/3	Tues	Program- TBA	Colony Hall	Debbie Zuchlewski	SolarPrograms@SolarOutdoors.org
11/20	Fri	Lights Before Christmas	Toledo Zoo	Debbie Zuchlewski	debz6178@yahoo.com

NOVEMBER CLASSES

11/12, 11/14-15	Thurs, Wknd	Wilderness First Aid (Re-certification option available)	TBA	Mike Malon	mmalon@comcast.net
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DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

12/1	Tues	Monthly Meeting 7:30pm	Colony Hall	Cindy Taylor	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
12/1	Tues	Program- Winter Gear Swap	Southfield, MI	Debbie Zuchlewski	SolarPrograms@SolarOutdoors.org
12/4	Fri	SOLAR Holiday Party	Colony Hall	Debbie Zuchlewski	SolarPrograms@SolarOutdoors.org
12/5	Sat	Holiday Movie at the Redford Theater	Redford, MI	Darrell Ahlberg	dahlberg7@comcast.net

DECEMBER CLASSES

12/2,9,16	Weds	Enjoying Michigan Winters	TBA	Allen Duncan/ George Zapp	aduncan85@gmail.com gzapp@comcast.net
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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

1/30 – 2/6	Multi	Western Swing Ski Trip	Breckenridge, CO	Darrell Ahlberg	dahlberg7@comcast.net
2/19-21	Wknd	Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe	Lake Ann, MI	Darrell Ahlberg	dahlberg7@comcast.net
Fall 2010	Multi	Gaelic Adventure	Ireland/Scotland	Jim Gessner	gessnerj@comcast.net

UPCOMING CLASSES

1/6,16-17,20,27 2/5-7	Weds & Wknd	Enjoying Michigan Winters	TBA	Allen Duncan/ George Zapp	aduncan85@gmail.com gzapp@comcast.net
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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, Marie Martinko, 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.



WHAT IS SOLAR?

SOLAR is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization with 400-plus members who enjoy the outdoors. Members share their knowledge and experience with each other by leading classes and coordinating activities/trips.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is only \$40 a year per person (\$55 per family) and includes free access to most 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, deep 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 Colony Hall, 21780 Evergreen (between 8 Mile & 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 SOLARmembership@solaroutdoors.org.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for the *SOLAR Ray* are due on the Thursday three weeks prior to the monthly Membership meeting. Articles, poems, recipes, etc. should be submitted in electronic format, preferably in Microsoft Word. Please attach images separately. If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Tislerics at SOLARrayeditor@solaroutdoors.org.

STEERING COMMITTEE

President: Cindy Taylor	Activities: Samantha Schafer	Bylaws: Allen Duncan
Vice President: Carol McCririe	Education: Marie Martinko	Equipment: Laura Buhl
Secretary: Samantha Mozdzierz	Historian: Chuck Smith	Membership: Mary Price
Treasurer: Mary Donahue	Programs: Debbie Zuchlewski	Public Relations: Gloria Fontaine
	Ray Editor: Jennifer Tislerics	Webmaster: Jeff McWilliams

PRESIDENTS AT LARGE

Mike Banks | Leslie Cordova | Al Fylak | Steve Gardner | Bill Halvingis | Cindy Harrison-Felix
Tom Hayes | Joan Hettinger | Doug Lanyk | Larry Martin | 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 SOLARpresident@solaroutdoors.org.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SOLAR RAY ASSISTANT EDITORS

Laura Buhl, Winnie Chrzanowski, Sheila Hardy, Jennifer Hill, Ken Lemieux,
Pamela Schmelzer-Anzicek, Elizabeth Schwab, Rebecca Sweeton and Ati Tislerics.

MORE INFORMATION

Please visit our website at www.solaroutdoors.org.

SOLAR

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

Visit our website: www.solaroutdoors.org

