

THE SOLAR PICNIC Great Food, Great Fun!

Article and photos by: Rosemarie Attilio



On July 11, 2015 over 100 SOLARites attended the SOLAR picnic at Island Lake Recreation Area. The weather was sunny and perfect. The day started out at with our president, Jennifer Tislerics leading the monthly meeting. We welcomed many old and new attendees and future members.

This was followed by an abundant potluck that kept everyone well fed all day. Bruce Coppola and others kept the grill hot and many different kinds of hotdogs, hamburgers, steak, chicken and kabobs were soon cooking away, leaving savory smells and taste buds watering.

People kept pouring in, many with children, dogs, and new friends. Some members decided to bike the park, others hiked, or kayaked in the lake. People excitedly saw many SOLARites they had not seen in a long time. There were many stories of past and future SOLAR trips and

Games of bocce ball and frisbee began. Jim Gilfix brought many smiles to children and adults alike with his amazing balloon animals and hats.

Late in the afternoon, a gear swap began. Mike Hobig gave gear away and started a gear giving frenzy.

The flow of music, conversation, food and fun was quite a memorable experience. Be sure to put this day on your calendar next year. It is definitely not a picnic to miss.





On The North Country Trail With SOLAR *by Jim Kadlubowski*

We had a successful hike on the North Country Trail (NCT) the first weekend of this past June (June 5 – 7, 2015). The hike was a loop around a section of the Manistee River west of Cadillac in the northwest part of the Lower Peninsula. We started by driving to the US Forest Service Seaton Creek campground near the Hodenpyl Dam on Friday night, June 5. We camped there in one of the organizational campgrounds with a group of surprisingly quiet Boy Scouts in the other one.

On Saturday we left the cars there and started on foot, crossing a pedestrian suspension bridge over to the west side of the river where a spur trail leads to the NCT.



Despite having a map from the NCT headquarters that they claimed was the “latest and greatest”, we got a bit lost there with multiple spur trails connecting a parking area, the bridge, and fishing areas along the bank that were not depicted well on the map (as leader of the trip I retain the right to blame any confusion on the map!).

After about a two mile hike in the correct south direction along several trails and an access road, we worked our way up onto the NCT for the remainder of the hike that day down to Red Bridge, along the Coates Highway. Depending on the map used the NCT down this side of the river is between 11 and 12 miles long.

This section of the NCT is extremely hilly and tested all of us in our hiking ability. But the weather was perfect, the companionship enjoyable, and despite the fatigue it was a rewarding day for all involved.



At Red Bridge there is a parking lot with a boat ramp and a small camping area of only four or five spots. We managed to beat some of the other hikers off the trails that day despite having hiked the longest side of the river and had to decide whether to grab the last spot there to camp. Other hikers had described the camping area there dismissively as “just a parking lot”. But the vibe there was good, the sites shaded and inviting, and balancing our fatigue from the day against an uncertain idea of dispersed camping further along the return trail, we grabbed the last spot. Since there was no limit posted of the number of tents you could put in a campsite we filled all the space there with ours, creating SOLARVille. We spent that evening cooking and eating, walking on the bridge to view the scenery, and wading at the boat ramp to soak our tired feet in the cool water of the Manistee.



On The North Country Trail With SOLAR *Continued*

We left early Sunday morning hiking back north along the Manistee River Trail which runs along the east side of the river. The east side trail is just about 10 miles long and flatter than the west side although it still has some hills, especially at the south end. We hoped to make it back to the cars before the rainstorm forecast for mid-day. We were still about an hour short of the end when the rain hit. Still, the best scenery of the trip is along this side since the trail there is often right along the river bank. This side of the river is also the most popular for campers with many drive-in access points. We saw more people there than on the previous day's hike.



Despite the rain, finishing with Sunday's hike up the east side of the river was easier than our first day's hike down the west side. Changing into whatever dry clothes we had back at the parking lot, we started our return to Detroit with a stop at a restaurant in Cadillac to celebrate.

This was the first of what I intend to be a series of hikes on the NCT. The NCT stretches from New York through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and ends in the middle of North Dakota. Plans are to connect its east end with the Appalachian Trail and Vermont's Long Trail, and the west end with the Lewis and Clark Trail. Michigan has the longest stretch of the trail, over 1,000 miles, as it snakes up through the length of the Lower Peninsula (LP) across the Mackinac Bridge and across the Upper Peninsula (UP) from St. Ignace to Ironwood.

I felt that a series of hikes that highlight different sections of the NCT would be the best way to celebrate this great resource. My plan has been to start with several short trips this year then in years to come expand into longer trips both here in Michigan and in neighboring states.

I have recently been in Minnesota checking out where the trail is in the Duluth area. On the way home I stopped in Ironwood where there is currently a gap between Michigan and Wisconsin and talked with one of the local NCT coordinators about plans to fill that gap.

The NCT is also being incorporated into Governor Snyder's plans for the Iron Belle Trail. This would be a two-corridor trail connecting the southeast corner of the state with the northwest corner, running from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood. The corridor that includes the NCT would be for hiking. Since the NCT basically runs up



the west side of the LP and the across north side of the UP the second corridor, which would be for bicycling, will run up the east side of the LP and across the south side of the UP. This ambitious plan will need a spur trail from Belle Isle to somewhere near Hillsdale to connect to the NCT and much coordination with existing bicycle trails that currently are not well connected. My intention is to stick with just hiking for now on the NCT.

The next hike in the series is posted on Meetup and is the Labor Day Bridge Walk across the Mackinac Bridge. This is the only segment of the trail that can be hiked on only one morning of one day of the year. To be recognized by the NCT Association as a thru-hiker of the trail a person must complete the bridge walk as well as prove that they have hiked the other

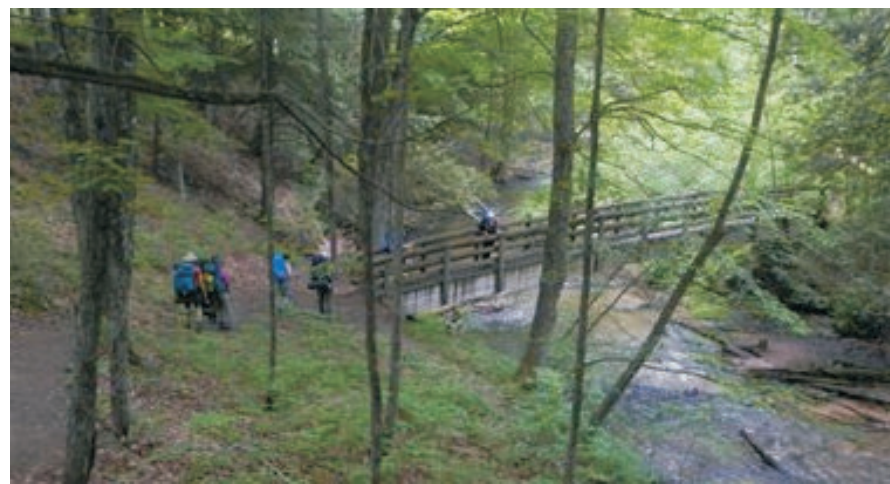


On The North Country Trail With SOLAR *Continued*

4,000+ miles of the trail. I am currently working out the logistics for the third hike in the series, which I intend to be a fall weekend hike through the Sand Lakes Quiet Area west of Kalkaska.

To further highlight the NCT our program speaker for this August's membership meeting at our new location (St. Paul's) is Luke Jordan, one of the few people to have thru-hiked the entire trail. He will give a presentation on what it is like to hike it from end-to-end and answer questions people may have about the NCT and long-distance backpacking in general.

Photos: by Jim Kadlubowski, Kirsten Groppuso, LeeAnn Wang



Team Building and Ropes Course *By Cynthia Balkwell*

On Sunday, July 19 I had the wonderful opportunity to join members of the SOLAR Steering Committee at the Walled Lake Outdoor Education Center for a day of team building challenges. After brief introductions of attendees, the morning session focused on listening and communication skill development through problem solving exercises. We completed 5 different exercises which required effective strategic planning and team communication to successfully complete.

One exercise required us to pass a plastic sand bucket to each member while sitting on the floor in a circle. Sounds easy, right? Well, the rules for the exercise said we had to remain seated, could not use our hands or upper body, the bucket could not touch the ground during the exercise and we could not spill the contents. In addition to the rules presented four of our steering committee members, all sitting next to each other in the circle, were blind folded and forbidden to speak during the planning of or execution even though they had to participate in the exercise! The reasoning behind the silence and blind folds was to emphasize the frustration that members can feel when their voice can't be heard, they are not allowed to contribute or trying to participate when they are not fully aware of what of what the rest of the team is doing!

Other morning challenges included putting a puzzle together without being able to touch any piece other than the one assigned to you and moving various round or not so round objects down separate pieces of hand-held track that were not allowed to touch each other. Our most challenging exercise involved moving through a course of large plastic dots that were placed on the floor. Once we entered the course someone had to be touching each dot or it was removed from the course. Wow, what a great exercise to emphasize the challenges that occur when a team enters into gridlock! It sure takes a lot of patience, careful assessment and effective communication to move

After lunch we geared up in helmets and harnesses to head over to the high ropes course. The fun started out with a 30 foot climb up a rope net ladder to the launching platform. From there individuals were able to venture out on the various high rope challenges. Due to foot problems and a poor choice of shoes I wasn't able to handle walking on the cables, but it was great just feeling the breeze in the tree tops from the platform and watching the other SOLAR members as they completed each of the different challenges the course offered. It was very inspiring to see the support and encouragement that members offered to each other as they moved around the course. The afternoon ended with a zip line ride from the skies back to earth from the platform. Wheeeee! If I have the opportunity to try a high ropes course in the future I certainly will accept the offer and come better prepared with thicker and stiffer soled shoes. I hope that if you have the opportunity that you will take it and be able to experience the same team inspiration and support I saw on the course that Sunday!



Photos by Cynthia Balkwell

I was a girl scout for several years and I know how to make a good square knot, but my method for making sure my bike stays attached to the car or my tent stays secure in a strong wind has always been to just tie A LOT of knots. So, when Michael Seng offered a 1 night knot tying class I decided this was a skill I could definitely improve on. The class was small so Michael could give us lots of attention.... And one thing I have found that SOLAR likes is lots of visual aids. He even brought in a kayak rack from his car so we could practice tying things down to it! We each got a little credit card flip chart of 20 knots that could slip easily into a wallet or backpack. The flip chart not only illustrated how to make the knot but also what the knot was good for. I learned a lot about knots, like that a square knot isn't as all-purpose as I thought and some knots can be tightened so far it could crush a canoe! It was a great class and I think he would teach it again if other people were interested and we all harass him. Thanks Michael it was a very good class.

Maybury State Park turns 40 Event

Forty is the magic number! SOLAR has been around 40 years and so has Maybury State Park. The park and Friends of Maybury group are having a 40th Anniversary Celebration on **Sunday, Aug 30th**, and you're invited.

1-3 PM. The park and Friends are setting up cake, ice cream, games , a tour (led by Peg Campbell) and history info.

There will be a SOLAR booth, manned by Jeff Enterkin and Bill Morse. Shortly after 3pm hike on Maybury's forested trails. This will include going to the fishing pond on the other side of the park, and back. Probably about 1.5 hours. All the activities will take place at the 8 Mile entrance Concession Building (aka Trailhead Shelter). As a reminder, since Maybury is a state park, a Recreation Passport is required for your vehicle.

Request for new classes:

From the Education Chair: Is there a class related to outdoor activities that you are interested in? Do you want to learn new skills? Are you very knowledgeable in something and want to teach others? The Education committee is always looking for new ideas for great classes to improve and build on our member's skills. If you do, let's talk! Contact me at solareducation@solaroutdoors.org.

Thanks! Ilene Smith

Your 2015-2016 Steering Committee dedicated to keeping SOLAR great.

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SOLAR CALENDAR

SOLAR AUGUST CALENDAR www.solaroutdoors.org

ACTIVITIES

Aug- Sept	Multi	Beginning Backpacking Class	Multi locations, see website	Krisanne Schmidt	KSchmidt@broookskushman.com
August 30	Sun	Maybury State Park 40th	Maybury State Park	Bill Morse	solarpublicrelations@solaroutdoors.org
Sept 6-7	Multi	Labor Day Bridge Walk	Mackinaw City/St. Ingace, MI	Jim Kadlubowski	J.Kadlubowski@att.net
Sept 18-27	Multi	Superior Trail Women's Backpacking trip	Superior Trail	Ann Riley-Gawura	Janagawura@aol.com
Sept 20-26	Multi	Hut to Hut Hiking- FULL	New Hampshire	Moe & Dave DeFrance	moeazdream@gmail.com
Sept 20- Oct 2	Multi	Adirondacks Fall 2015 Trip	Lake Placid, NY	Bruce Coppola	bcoppola@comcast.net
Oct 10	Sat	Point Pelee One Day Trip	Point Pelee Provincial Park Ontario, Canada	Jim Gilfix	unclejimtc@sbcglobal.net
Aug 29, Sept 26, Oct 24, Nov 28	Saturday Reference Meetup for Paddle time	Heavner's Moonlight Paddle	Wixom, MI	Al Heavner	http://Heavnercanoe.com

SOLAR MEETINGS

Beginning in August, SOLAR will hold monthly meetings on the LAST Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm.

Meetings will be held at:

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church • 27475 Five Mile Road, Livonia, MI 48154

August SOLAR Meeting

The August Program: Thru-Hiker's Journey: 2013 thru-hike of the North Country Trail Tuesday, August 25, 2015

SOLAR is proud to announce: Luke Jordan aka "Strider" and A Thru-Hiker's Journey: 2013 thru-hike of the North Country Trail
Description: Come hear a story about a hiker's journey over the nation's longest scenic trail, what he calls the "crown jewel" of the national scenic trail system. It's a story of struggle to overcome obstacles and to continue on in the pursuit of achieving goals and personal growth.

Follow along as he traverses this trail of great diversity from the vast plains of North Dakota to the high peaks of the Adirondacks. Luke Jordan grew up on an old farm in central Minnesota about 30 miles from Minneapolis. During his college years he started getting into backpacking and volunteered on trail construction crews for the Superior Hiking Trail every summer. During a family trip to the Northwest Angle region of Minnesota he even inherited his trail name, when he was asked to slow down because the others could not keep up with his long strides.

In December, 2012 he graduated from St. Cloud State University with a BS degree in Natural Resources. With his college years behind him, he was ready to strap on his pack and pursue a dream of his to attempt a grand adventure over the North Country National Scenic Trail. He succeeded, and became the 4th person to successfully thru-hike the trail.

Website: www.stridernct.com email: stridernct@gmail.com



Upcoming Trips, Events

Heavner's Moonlight Paddle

Aug. 29, Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 28



Beginning Backpacking Class

Class sessions: Thursdays, August 20, 27, September 10, 17, 24, 6:30-9:00 pm

Field Day: Saturday, August 29, Maybury State Park, Northville

Practical 1: Saturday-Sunday, September 12-13, Brighton Recreation Area.

Practical 2: Friday-Sunday, October 2-4, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Maybury State Park 40th Anniv. Event

August 30

Maybury State Park

Labor Day Bridge Walk- Mackinac

Sept. 6-7

An Autumn Week in the Adirondacks- Lake Placid, NY

Sept. 27-Oct. 2

Adirondack Loj



Point Pelee- Monarch Migration and Hiking- Day Trip in Canada

Oct. 10

SOLAR PHOTOS JULY AND AUGUST *By Cynthia Balkwell, Rosemarie Attilio*

