

SOLAR's Annual Photo Contest

January 26, 2016 at the SOLAR Meeting

It's that time of year again! Time for SOLAR's amateur photographers to brag about their trips and show off their great pics. So dig out those photographs from the year 2015 and enter them into this year's photo contest!

Action	Humor
Animals	People
Black and White	Plants/Flowers
Digitally Enhanced	Special Category, Water
Scenery	Best Overall



Category Explanations

Digitally Enhanced: Digital cameras and software now make it easy to make slight exposure shifts, slight color shifts, crop photos, change the brightness and contrast. Since these features are now easily available to all photographers, for the sake of the SOLAR photo contest this will not be considered digitally enhanced. The SOLAR photo contest category of digitally enhanced will include photos that have been cut and pasted, have had extreme exposure or color changes, "stitched" photos, and photos that were developed in a dark room using "dodge & burn".

Annual "Special" Category: In order to change things up a bit we're creating a new category every year. The special category for 2016 will be WATER. Feel free to enter your finest photographs of water scenes.

Photo-Pro: The photo-pro category has been eliminated. It has become increasingly difficult to enforce and will allow all members to participate in all categories.

Official Rules

You must be a SOLAR member to enter the photo contest.

- Photos must have been taken between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015.
- Standard photos must be no larger than 8x10 and panoramic no larger than 8x18.
- Mats on photos should be no larger than 11x14 on standard photos and 11x21 on panoramic photos. Mats not required.
- Photos must have been taken by the person entering them.
- One photo entry per person per category.
- Prizes will be awarded to the first place winner in each category and to the Best Overall.
- Photos will be voted on by SOLAR members who attend the January 26, 2016 meeting and winners will be announced that evening.

Your Adventure Awaits! *by Ati Tislerics*

Highlights from the SOLAR November Meeting Your Adventure Awaits! By Ati Tislerics

I think the hardest part of planning a trip is just getting started. Finding people to share your adventure with can also be a challenge, even in SOLAR. This was basically the premise behind the program I moderated at the November meeting, which I called "Choose Your Own Adventure 2016". But first, some background.

Over the past few years I've occasionally heard Bill Halvangis, one of SOLAR's founding members, remark on how trips used to come about. He and others have said that when the world was young and SOLAR was small, it was typical for someone to stand up at a meeting and say something like "I want to go backpacking in the Porkies – who wants to join me?" That kind of thing is rare now, but that's understandable, and maybe inevitable. I may be idealizing a bit, but I assume that in the much smaller SOLAR of the 1980s, people pretty much knew everybody else, and there was a narrower range of abilities and interests. Also, more members came to the meetings, because we weren't so geographically spread out and there were fewer other ways to find out what was going on and get in on the action. So, if you stuck your neck out and made an announcement like that, you could expect to get takers, and you had a pretty decent idea what kind of group you were likely to end up with.

Fast forward to today – SOLAR has more than 400 members, maybe half of whom could be considered active. The average age has certainly gone up, some of us have health problems and physical limitations, and the range of interests has become more diverse.

Who even heard of Adventure Racing 30 years ago? Paddleboarding? Human nature being what it is, I think people are less willing to stick their necks out when the outcome is much less predictable.

I started thinking about how we could recreate that dynamic atmosphere that existed at early SOLAR meetings, at least for an evening. I figured if we put people with similar interests together and got them talking, trips would magically hatch, right? But, how to figure out who has shared interests? Well, we could try asking...

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Your Adventure Awaits! *by Ati Tislerics*

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As the program began, I asked those present to think about what kind of outdoor adventure they most wanted to have in the next year, focusing primarily on what they wanted to do, rather than on details of where, when, etc. This is obviously an oversimplification of the process that actually happens in our heads, but it seemed helpful to keep the proceedings (sort of) organized.

Then the attendees began to share their goals, and my lovely assistant typed them into a Powerpoint slide projected on the screen. Of course, we accumulated quite a list. To make it more manageable, some similar ideas got combined, and some got set aside if they didn't seem to have much interest, or if they were local activities and thus wouldn't require much planning. Narrowing down the list was kind of a messy process, and the proceedings started to bog down. We ended up with things like weekend and extended backpacking, whitewater rafting, bike touring and multi-day paddling.

My original plan was to have poster-board signs so that people who were interested in, say, bike touring could easily find each other, but we were running short on time. Instead, we identified a person to represent each idea, often the person who originally proposed it, and then I got out of the way.

People moved around, and talked, and hopefully planned, and hopefully exchanged contact information so the planning could continue once the meeting adjourned. Activities Chairperson Kim Bartell had prepared a one-page "next steps" handout to help participants continue planning their adventures. In the last few minutes, we regrouped and shared some of the ideas that had started to take shape, including a trip to one of Michigan's "dark sky" parks and a whitewater rafting trip to West Virginia's New River.

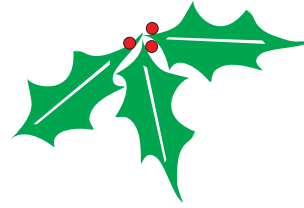
I came away from this program thinking that it went pretty well but would probably have been more valuable with more people there, especially more newer members. Not surprisingly, this meeting (two days before Thanksgiving) was lightly attended, with mostly long-term members, not exactly my target audience. But, the smaller group did take some pressure off me, too! If this experiment gets repeated we'll have to think about timing, and how to keep it from bogging down from the sheer number of adventurous goals. Because I also saw that there's no shortage of adventurousness in SOLAR, nor a lack of creative ideas. We also learned that Heidi wants to do everything!

Afterward, Bill Halvangis sent me an email in which he offered a perspective that hadn't occurred to me. He commented, "Most of us are prone to come in, sit back and let the programs and events come to us. We shop and pick and choose which event appeals to us or fits our schedule. The responsibility for creating and selling ideas falls on the "leadership" people. This program put the focus back on us, the membership, to come up with ideas."

We are SOLAR, the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation. There are hundreds of us. If there's an adventure that interests you, or me, chances are we're not alone. All we need to do is get the ball rolling. If you were at the November meeting and want to follow up on an idea that interested you, or you weren't there and want company for an adventure, you can start that ball rolling with an email to the Yahoo group – solaroutdoors@yahoogroups.com. If you have a plan taking shape and you're ready to put it on the SOLAR calendar and Meetup site, and start talking it up and taking signups at meetings, contact Activities Chair Kim Bartell at solaractivities@solaroutdoors.org. Adventure awaits!

The SOLAR Winter Party

Many SOLAR-Rites enjoyed a night of great food and fun at the SOLAR winter party. A DJ played music for dancing and merriment. Tables full of food kept many going back for seconds and thirds. Conversation and laughter filled the room. Be sure not to miss this fun SOLAR event next year on December 9, 2016.



Visit to the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center *by Jessica Wayne*

On Saturday, November 21 an intrepid group of SOLAR members ventured out in the cold and snowy day to visit the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit. We were greeted by the DNR staff who gave us the history of the Globe building; built in 1892, it started its life as the Dry Dock Engine Works and provided Detroit's bustling industry with first wooden, and then modern, ships.

Adults and children alike delighted in the sights, sounds, and tactile experiences at the Adventure Center. And what an adventure it was! We fished, canoed, biked, hiked, soared and snowmobiled through Michigan's diverse ecosystems. Many enjoyed trying to hook a salmon in the interactive fishing exhibit.

The Adventure Center is home to dozens of taxidermied animals that can be found in Michigan, including a bald eagle, mink, beaver, fox and many more. One of the best exhibits we saw included animal pelts for touching, and representations of the respective tracks, skulls and scat of the pelt-owners.

We soared like eagles over the building, climbed a giant tree, and slept in a bear's den. And if you go, make sure to pull the silver spike in the mine exhibit!

Carol led us to Batch Brewing for beer, lunch and homemade soda afterwards (great choice, Carol)! I think we would all agree, make this new brewery in Corktown a stop on your trip to the Adventure Center. The pretzels are not to be missed.

Everyone left feeling inspired to plan their next real outdoor Michigan adventure!



More photos of the DNR Outdoor Adventure Center *by Mark Carson*



Geared Up for a Full Recovery *by Ati Tislerics*

As some of you know, I broke my left fibula while orienteering last fall. I'm not badly hurt (thank you for your concern!); by the time you read this I should be rid of my plastic boot and crutches and I expect to make a speedy and full recovery. But, this has been a new experience for me. To my surprise and amusement, with the crutches and boot has come a new appreciation for some of my outdoor gear.

For example, my typical khakis don't fit over the bulky plastic boot; that's why there are zip-offs! Stretchy running pants with zippers up the side of the leg work great, too. Within the first 24 hours on the crutches I started to get bruises and blisters on my hands. Perfect solution: padded cycling gloves. I even had a brand new non-sweaty pair in the closet. A few days after my injury I noticed that my right foot and ankle were getting sore because they were doing most of the work. It didn't help that, with the thick-soled orthopedic boot, my left leg was significantly longer than my right. A hiking boot on my right foot fixed the height disparity and provided ankle support, and the problem went away. Fortunately, at my workplace a broken leg gets you excused from the usual office dress code.

Rain gear has come in handy, too – I normally don't think much about the weather when I'm just going to work, but have you ever tried to hold an umbrella while using crutches? For that matter, have you ever tried carrying anything while using crutches? My backpack and I have become even more inseparable than we were before. Even RidgeRest pads have been helpful for kneeling on a chair when I couldn't stand any longer, or just lying around with my foot elevated.

I've gotten more use out of some of my outdoor gear since my injury than I did in the previous year! I wonder if REI has considered targeting the convalescent market?

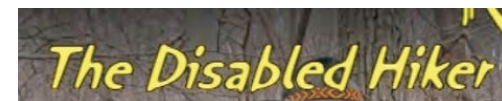


A properly equipped convalescent

Here are websites for ideas, equipment, and tips for hiking and outdoor activities for disabled individuals.



www.discovermymobility.com/s



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The Historian Corner (A Blast from SOLAR past) *By Karen Haroutunian*

From the July 1988 SOLAR Ray. SOLARites go to some of the most fascinating places and meet the most exciting people.

WHITE WATER WOMEN submitted by Debby Campbell

Fighting a blinding snowstorm most of the drive, a group of eight S.O.L.A.R. women set out on a whitewater trip for Beckley, W. Va. on April 15-17. After a short night's rest, Debby Campbell, Joan Hettinger, Marilyn Larkin, Rachel Limkemann, Laura Matheys, Josetta Mushaka, Lee Williams and her friend from Washington, D.C., Helen, arose at 7:30 sharp to begin their adventure down the New River.

Though six of the eight had never seen a whitewater raft, they vowed to remain together till the end. Cries of, "Oh, my God!" and "Can we go back now?" arose as the crew hit the first #1 rapid (on a scale of 1-6, with 6 being most difficult) but quickly gave way to shrieks of, "Oh, come on! Just turn around and hit that one again the tough way!" on #5 water. Though thoroughly drenched inside and outside their wet suits, not a solitary regret was noted.

After the rafting, three of the group were adventuresome enough to stick around Fayetteville on the way home, despite a recruiting march through town by the KKK. While bartering for photographs of the parade, one local resident informed the group that some of the world's best rockclimbing was just around the corner at the Gauley Bridge. Perhaps a Rattlesnake type weekend in West Virginia might be a new temptation this year for some of the braver S.O.L.A.R. souls. (Maybe some of the male members would be interested this time around!)

Save the Date! SOLAR 40th Anniversary Campout • June 10-12, 2016

SOLAR is celebrating 40 years of outdoor leadership, adventure and recreation this year!

In honor of this grand occasion we are planning a weekend of fun and games on June 10-12, 2016.

We have reserved campsites at the Proud Lake State Recreation Area's modern campground, and will make them available to SOLAR members on a first-come, first-served basis.

A group of fun-loving SOLARites are working on all sorts of activities for the weekend, from paddling to trail running to games to eating, and much more! (You knew there'd be lots of eating at a SOLAR gathering, right?!)

Campsites will be available for \$60 for the weekend (2 nights). Each campsite is allowed up to 6 people in up to 2 tents. We encourage you to split a site with SOLAR friends.

To eliminate the need to cut your outdoor adventures short on Saturday to prepare for a potluck meal, we will have a catered BBQ dinner Saturday night! Those joining us for the day Saturday (not camping) are also welcome to join in the catered dinner. The dinner will cost \$10/person (13 and older). Ages 12 and under are free.

You can reserve a campsite and dinner plate online (<http://www.meetup.com/SOLAR-Outdoors>) or by cash/check at SOLAR's monthly meetings (<http://www.solaroutdoors.org/About/Meetings.aspx>).

Watch for updates on the 40th Anniversary Celebration plans in the Ray, on the Yahoo Group and at upcoming SOLAR meetings!

Don't miss this event! Celebrate the 40 years of adventures, classes, trips, friends and fun.



SOLAR CALENDAR www.solaroutdoors.org

Jan 26	Tue	Monthly Meeting	St. Paul's, Livonia	SOLAR	www.solaroutdoors.org
Feb 5-7	Fri-Sun	Winter Weekend on Higgins Lake	MacMullan Conference Center Roscommon, MI	Bill Morse	billc095@yahoo.com
Feb 11	Thur	Chinese New Year Dinner Year of the Monkey	New Peking Restaurant 29105 Ford Rd, Garden City	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com
Feb 19-21	Fri-Sun	Hartwick Pines Ski and Snowshoe (full)	Hartwick Pines	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com
Feb 23	Tue	Monthly Meeting	St. Paul's, Livonia	SOLAR	www.solaroutdoors.org
Feb 27	Sat	Day of Winter Fun at Proud Lake	Proud Lake Recreation Area	Bill Morse	billc095@yahoo.com
Feb 28	Sun	Fight For Air Stair Climb	Detroit Ren Cen	Mary Donahue	mldonahue824@gmail.com
Mar 5	Sat	2016 Quiet Water Symposium	East Lansing	Bill Morse	billc095@yahoo.com
May 27-30	Fri to Mon	South Manitou Island	Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	Leslie Cordova	lesliegene@aol.com
June 10-12	Fri to Sun	40th Anniversary Camping Weekend	Proud Lake	Karen Haroutunian	solarhistorian@solaroutdoors.org

SOLAR MEETINGS

SOLAR holds monthly meetings on the **LAST** Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm.

Meetings are held at:

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