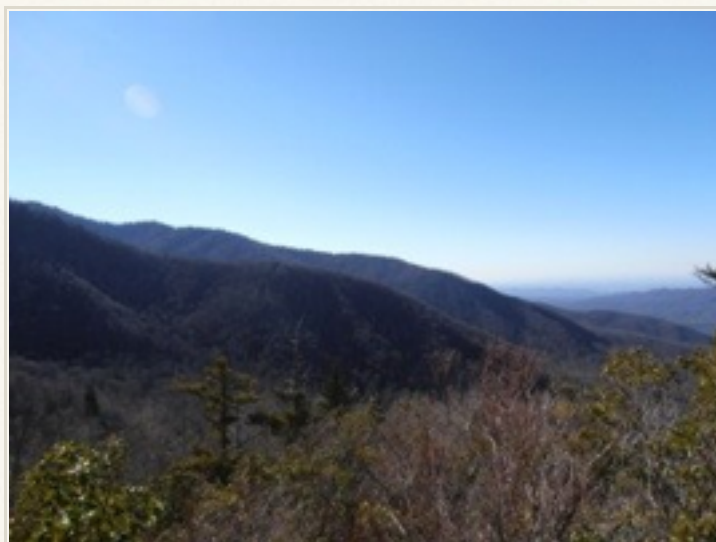




WMS Elective 2014

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*Great Smoky
Mountain National
Park*

Backpack Report from Lindsey and Lauren

February 27, 2014

Team Members: Jim Schultz, Lauren Cardella, Patricia Feeney, Ronnie Milam, Shaun Smith, Lindsey Roessler

After polishing off some breakfast at Tipton, our group set out on our hour-long drive to meet the Maddron Bald Trail head in the Northeast section of the park. We made it as far as Gatlinburg before our caffeine addictions kicked in and we had to stop at McDonald's for that one last decent cup o' joe before hitting the trails. Finally satisfied, we continued along our journey and reached our destination around 11 am. Lauren, Lindsey, and Jim unloaded the packs and stayed with one car at the trailhead while the other car continued to the ranger station, about a half hour away, to drop the second car at the finish. With the second car safely at the finish, the whole group was together again at the start by noon.



With 7 miles and 2,000 feet of elevation change ahead until our first campsite, we began

our trek with enthusiasm and excitement. An hour into our hike, our enthusiasm vanished and we found ourselves cursing out Ranger Chuck for recommending such a grueling first day. With no downhill sections and a steady incline to campsite 29, we found that frequent breaks to shed layers were our best way to attack the day. Despite the steady climb, the hike was still enjoyable because of the beautiful scenery that surrounded us. An extra mile loop to Albright Grove occurred mid-afternoon so that we could get a glimpse of climax forest. We carried on after the loop and made it to camp by around 5 pm. Tents were set up, a fire was started, and dinner preparations began. As Lauren, Tricia, Lindsey, and Jim nibbled on traditional backpacking food, Ronnie and Shaun unloaded tinfoil packets of steak, chicken, potatoes, and corn on the cob and threw them on the coals. Though it took a long time to heat up and added about 5 lbs to their packs, it is safe to say that the rest of us were pretty jealous as we sat and watched them eat like kings. After dinner was cleaned up, we retired to our tents for our first night of sleep.

Tuesday morning we awoke surprised and impressed that it was 9 am. We had all managed to sleep for an impressive 12 hours, except for poor Jim who was still on San Diego time and didn't fall asleep until 6 am. After some luke warm coffee we devoured some oatmeal, yogurt, and Clif bars and set out on our second day. Today's trails took us onto the AT where we experienced some of the best views we had the entire trip. We traveled along a ridge for about 3 miles and stopped and enjoyed lunch at a beautiful site that overlooked the Blue Mountains. We all resisted leaving such a gorgeous spot, but eventually we got up from lunch and continued on our way. One of the highlights of the day was discovering old pieces of plane wreckage from the 60's, all thanks to Jim's keen observational skills. We rolled into Cosby Knob shelter around 5 pm surprised to see another backpacker's equipment already there. Jim set out to collect some firewood and found another gentleman, Bob, also collecting firewood a few hundred yards away from the site. On first impression we all had our guard up about Bob, there was something just a little fishy about him. We tried to keep him in conversation and feel him out a bit more and eventually we all decided that he was an ok guy and we didn't have to worry about sharing space with him. Ironically, he probably thought we were the crazy ones after hearing us carry on around the campfire all night with our ridiculous stories. The night spent in the shelter was decent, definitely colder than the first night, and full of loud snoring.



Wednesday we woke up but remained in our sleeping bags in an attempt to stay warm for as long as possible. With the current temperature being 23° F, we found it slightly difficult to stay hydrated because all of our drinking water was frozen. In the morning before leaving camp we collectively decided that we would finish our hike out instead of spending the night at the next shelter we had reserved. We were all pretty miserable as we attempted to pack up our things with half frozen fingers and toes and since the temperature was supposed to be even colder for the night, we decided a longer day hiking was worth the bed and warmth that would await back at Camp Wesley Woods. With a new itinerary, we also decided to change up our route to the car. Instead of staying up on the ridge, we headed down toward the creek and waterfalls. Eventually the snow stopped falling and the skies turned blue. We enjoyed a 7-mile hike out that

mostly took place along the creek and finished the day off with a gorgeous waterfall. However, the true highlight of our last day occurred when Shaun was positive that he lost his wedding ring somewhere along the trail where we had stopped to shed layers. He assured us that he checked his pockets over and over again and the ring was nowhere to be found. With our newly acquired search and rescue skills, the 6 of us set out on the trail and hiked back about a mile to do a hasty search of the trail. After 2 hours of searching, we headed back towards our packs with heavy hearts and no ring. In a last ditch effort to find his ring, Jim picked up a map that had been folded up in Shaun's pocket. Feeling along the creases, it took him about .5 second to find the ring folded up within the map. With a few swift punches to the deltoid and many "Shaun, I'm going to kill you" quotes from the group, we were able to continue along on our hike with a little pep in our step knowing that the first round at the bar was now on Shaun.

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