



WMS Elective 2014

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Big Creek Trail,
Great Smoky
Mountains
National Park, TN-
happy to be near
the end of the cold
trail!

Climax Forest - Jim Schultz Backpack Report

March 4, 2014

Trip Report- Climax Forest/ Appalachian Trail

Victims: 5- Shaun Smith, Lauren Cardella, Lindsey Roessler, Tricia Feeney, Ronnnie Milam

Trail: Maddron Bald--> Snake Den Ridge-->Appalachian Trail--> Big Creek/It's Too Cold Bail Out Trail



Elevation Gain: 4200'

Max Elevation: about 6000'

Total Distance: about 24 miles inclusive of the great wedding ring wild goose chase

Ground Covered on the great wedding ring chase: about 2 miles x 15 feet

wide x 2 inches deep

Number of frozen body parts: 3.25

Creepy people we shared a shelter with: 1

Number of trees correctly identified: who can tell? Someone stole all the leaves!

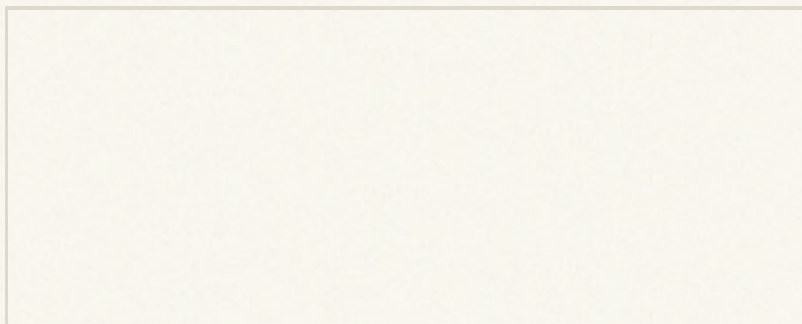
Number of rhododendrons seen: 1.384,294

Number of 6 inch holes dug: 18

Number of fires started using newly-acquired skills (*plus a lighter*): 2



The capstone experience of the WMS Winter Student Elective is a 4 day backpacking trip in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Our group, though devoid of anyone with knowledge of Eastern Forest botany, set off on the Maddron Bald Trail toward the Appalachian Trail through the climax forest. We saw some big trees, some downed trees, some little trees, and lots of moss and rhododendrons. The first day was up, up, up but at a tolerable grade. As we were ascending, Lindsey came down with history's lowest-elevation case of Acute Mountain Sickness and High Altitude Pulmonary and Cerebral Edema. You may have seen her receive her academy award a few days after the course ended, as this was the 'wilderness scenario' for the day. We also discovered the remnants of a jet crash (an F4 fighter in 1984) and ended up on the Appalachian Trail. Most of the trees were dormant and without foliage, but the rhododendrons keep thing looking fairly lush for winter.



We pulled in
and Shaun
out of a bag
night. None



ght after Ronnie
he rest of us ate
owed a bit that
morning.



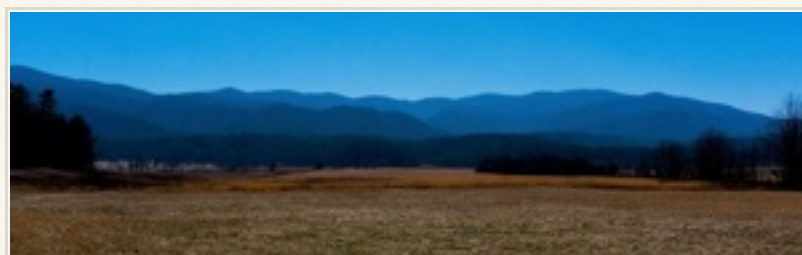
Our second day was along the AT and included some gorgeous classic Smoky Mountain/Blue Ridge views. We spent our second night in the Crosby Shelter, sharing it with a gentleman named Bob from Knoxville. Poor Bob- he was alone in the shelter, went out to gather some wood for the fire, and returned to find the shelter invaded by all of us. We relegated Bob to a small corner in the shelter and to cooking around the side of the shelter. He also had to listen to Shaun's snoring all night, and had to exercise tolerance and patience while Lindsey and Lauren sort of started the fire. The shelter also had a privy- no digging holes! (Alas, the seat was metal. Did you ever put your tongue on a cold metal object? You get the idea). It dropped to 18 degrees F that night. Most of our water containers froze as we neglected to fill them with warm water and keep them close to us at night.



Facing a third night in the wilderness, the group elected to continue on an alternate route over the mountain. Our last day hiking was a success as we learned search techniques and found the missing ring sent us on a wild goose chase. The missing ring may have dropped. The archaeological techniques we learned at the spot of the ring removed the lost ring. After giving up the hike, the ring was discovered. Arrrgghhh!



into single digits, the group elected to continue on one day and to take a break. We did see some! The 'mentees' to practice newly-learned techniques by putting it in a more formal search, the group elected to take a more formal search, (a photo taken at the spot of the ring removed the lost ring, and search for, for the remainder of the hike, the ring was discovered in the same pocket-



It was obvious to me that the students had learned a great deal during the rotation- I was impressed. And to a person, they all told me that this rotation was their favorite of all of their med school rotations. I was envious- I wished this was available during my medical education!

Don't tell the students, but as a backpack mentor I received much more than I gave. I felt privileged to be part of a group with such energy, talent, and enthusiasm. And they hiked fast! Their attitude and approach, their relative freedom from cynicism, their collegiality and support of each other was so refreshing- I came away recharged and hopeful for the future of medicine and of wilderness medicine.

A word to my 'mentees':

Shaun- you are a leader without seeking leadership- people naturally look to you; be aware of that and cultivate it- you are quietly effective (except when dealing with small pieces of jewelry)

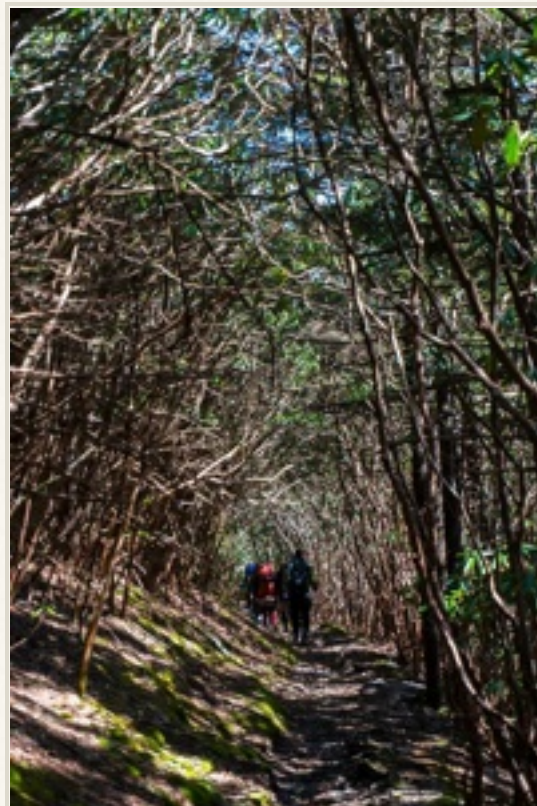
Lauren- a surgeon-to-be with humanity and compassion and positive energy- don't let residency beat those traits out of you; keep that happy heart.

Lindsey- I can tell you are going to be one of those PAs that out-doctors a lot of physicians. You seem to have a thirst for knowledge and a great outlook- keep it up!

Ronnie- you are always looking out for others; a rare super-smart person that is also humble and open to others' ideas. Even though you made me feel old when you kept calling me 'Sir' it was a pleasure to hike with you.

Tricia- a do-everything FP-to-be with a heart for the poor- seems very familiar to me :). Make sure you fence off a life for yourself- you will be in great demand and loved and maybe over-loved by your community. It was great to hang out with a kindred spirit.

WMS and TK- thanks for giving me this opportunity and for putting me with the BEST group to mentor.





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Chief Medical Officer
Neighborhood Healthcare

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