

The Tent Peg

Fall 2014

Debby's Top
10 Hikes

PRM @ WCU
Welcomes a new
Professor

Letter from the Editors

This year's Tent Peg brings forth a variety of student and faculty experiences all brought together into one publication. It is our hope that you as the reader will take these various events and receive the motivation to get out and create your own adventures.

Many thanks to the authors and you, the readers!
Spencer Williams & Katie Reid



Table of Contents

Articles	Page
Debby's Top 10 Hikes (or Adventures in Hiking)	4
PRM Accomplishments	8
A New Adventure	9
Phased Retirement	10
My Trip to Schoolhouse Falls	11
Who is Pulling the Bowstring Harder? A Look at the True Spiritual Connection of the Outdoors	12
Pinnacle Peak	13
Not A Typical Job For A 20 Year Old	13
A Mountainous Climb	14
The Best Job a Soccer Fan Could Ask For	15
My trip to the Boundary Waters	15
Playing in the Mud	16
Every Fish Is A Blessing: Big Or Small	17
Disc Golf In The Great Smoky Mountains	17
Breaking The Ice	17
Opening Day in Mississippi	18
A Look at the Transformative Power of Wilderness Therapy	19
Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System Review	20
Bear lake	20
A Day in the Life of Thomas Graham at Mount Hood, Oregon	21
Strength and Conditioning	21
Adventure Education Conference	22
Special Thanks	23

Debby's Top 10 Hikes (or Adventures in Hiking)

David Letterman and I have a few things in common. Both of our first names begin with the letter "D". He once worked as a weatherman with an off beat humorous take on reporting the weather and I like to talk about the weather in my weekly class announcements and I have a fascination with large snowstorms. We both like really stupid jokes, puns, and seemingly unconnected, yet funny activities. And finally, Mr. Letterman likes to present a recurring Top 10 List on his late night show. I like lists too! Most of my syllabi include at least one or two. So, knowing that I have the potential to create lists in an offbeat, adventurous manner, the staff of this semester's *Tent Peg* have asked me to create another one. Here you go...

Top 10 Local Hikes

Enjoy the outdoors around Cullowhee! Increase your fitness level! Burn some calories! Commune with nature! Take awesome Instagram photos and selfies! These hikes vary from easy to thigh burning difficult; the top of peaks to the rush of rivers; and very short to take the day in length.

10. Waterrock Knob, Blue Ridge Parkway:

(Moderate, less than 2 miles) Approximately 1.5 miles round trip, located off of the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 415.2 at over 6,000 feet in elevation. It's the ideal spot for watching a sunrise, sunset, or my personal favorite, a moonrise. The parking lot is paved and large with a visitor center and bathrooms. The trail is paved for the first section and then turns to dirt/gravel. Be aware that it climbs very steeply, yet it is doable with short rest breaks. When you get to the top, follow the trail down towards a rock outcropping to enjoy views of the parkway and all the way to the WHEE! Hike back down and enjoy a picnic in the grassy area. (see photo below)



(photo of Waterrock Knob, Blue Ridge Parkway)

9. Big Creek, Great Smoky Mountains National Park: (Moderate, various distances) Located on the north side of the GSMNP off of I-40, exit 451 in Tennessee. The trailhead is tucked away on the NC side of the park, near the intersection with the Mt. Sterling Gap trail. You can choose your distance on this hike from a short jaunt up to Midnight Hole (primo swimming spot) to a round trip of 11 miles which would take you up to Walnut Bottoms and back, crossing Big Creek several times. This hike is known for its swimming spots and fly fishing. There is a backcountry campsite at Walnut Bottoms and you can use this as a staging spot to bag Mt. Sterling or Mt. Crammerer. Overall it is a gradual climb, which you don't really notice until you head back down the trail to the parking lot.

8. Siler Bald, off of the Appalachian Trail, Macon County:

(Easy with one steep section, 4 miles) The trailhead is about a 45 minute drive from Cullowhee. Take US 441 to Franklin, follow 441 South to US Hwy 64 westbound. Turn on Old Murphy Road, follow to Wayah Road, then continue for about 9 miles to the trailhead on your left. The hike follows the Appalachian Trail (AT) for most of the distance, but to access the bald, turn onto a side trail when you reach a clearing just below the bald and ascend about 1/3 of a mile through the grass to the summit. It's steep. Once at the top, the elevation is 5,220 feet with a 360 degree view of the surrounding area. Overall it is a fairly easy hike (except for the last bit to the bald) with a round trip mileage of about 4 miles. (see photo below)

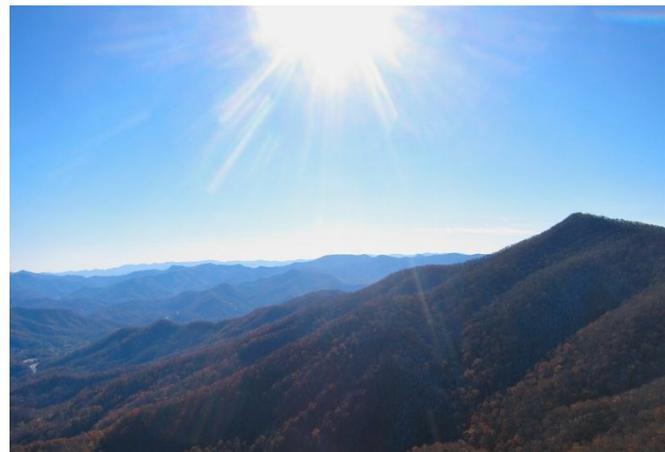


(photo of Silver Bald, Macon County)

7. The Pinnacle, Sylva, NC: (Strenuous, over 7 miles) Everyone is doing the Pinnacle hike! It's a must photo op for your social media accounts. Why? Because it is a heck of a climb. Over 830 feet per mile in about 3.5 miles, so I rate this one as "thigh burning difficult". To access the trail, drive to Nick and Nate's in Sylva (if you sit on their deck you can have a view of the Pinnacle), turn left at the stoplight and drive past the hospital. Take a right onto Skyland Drive, then a left onto Fisher Creek Road. The parking lot is at the end of Fisher Creek Road. To access the top, take the West Fork Trail, which is an old roadbed, so it is wide, yet rocky. You will pass Split Rock about 1/2 mile in, great place to take photos (there is a trail behind the rock so you can access the top). About 2/3rds of the way up, there is a trail to the left, follow that to access the Pinnacle. From the split, it's about 1 mile to the Pinnacle. Once there, you will find yourself in a clearing with a fire ring, look to your left for a faint trail going down through the rhodo, this is the trail out to the rocks known as the Pinnacle. Be careful out there, the drop offs are not forgiving. The view is about 340 degrees spanning from the Blue Ridge Parkway to Cullowhee and Sylva to Cowee Mountain and back towards Clingman's Dome in the GSMNP. The total hike is about 7.5 miles and the elevation at the top is around 5200 feet. See how many landmarks you can name from the top. (see photo below)



(Photo of Dupont State Forest, Brevard, NC)



(Photo of the Pinnacle, Sylva, NC)



(photo of Hooker Falls, Dupont State Forest, Brevard, NC)

6. Dupont State Forest, Transylvania County, Brevard, NC: (Easy to moderate, various distances) This hike is the longest drive away from Cullowhee, approximately 1.5 to 2 hours depending upon your route. If you haven't kept up with popular young adult fiction or action packed heroine movies lately, you might not have realized that Dupont State Forest was used to shoot many of the scenes from *The Hunger Games*. The scenes featuring a camouflaged Peeta, a running through the forest from fire balls Katniss, or the swimming through water to stay alive Katniss, were all filmed along one of the most popular hikes. There are a lot of options in Dupont, my favorite is to park at the Buck Forest Gate parking area and do a loop that includes High Falls, Triple Falls and Hooker Falls and then back up through a lesser known forest trail (film location of fire balls). This entire hike can vary from 5-9 miles depending upon which trails you choose. If you want to go visit another film location, check out Bridal Veil Falls (4.6 miles round trip from Buck Forest Gate lot). Bridal Veils was used in the film, *Last of the Mohicans*. Dupont also allows mountain biking and camping, so make it a multi-sport outing! (see photo on next column)

5. Art Loeb Trail, Section 3, Blue Ridge Parkway: (Moderate, various distances) The Art Loeb trail is actually 30 miles long and starts near the Davidson River Campground, climbs to Cedar Rock Mountain, to Black Balsam, through the Shining Rock Wilderness and then ending at the Daniel Boone Boy Scout Camp on the Little East Fork of the Pigeon River. The most popular and accessible site is off of the parkway on Black Balsam Road. From the parking lot follow the trail to Black Balsam Knob, the trail's high point at 6,214 feet. Awesome 360 degree views, but it can be crowded with lots of like minded view seekers. You can make a 5 mile loop hike out of it by following the Ivestor Gap Trail back to the parking lot. Because of the open vistas on this section of the trail, this is an excellent hike during a full moon. You can also extend the hike for a multi-day backpacking trip into the Shining Rock Wilderness area.

4. Max Patch, Nantahala National Forest: (Moderate, 3 or 5 miles depending upon loop) So far you can probably guess that I enjoy “hikes with a view”, this is another gem. Located in the Nantahala National Forest, off of I-40. Take exit 7 Harmon Den, then turn right onto Cold Springs Road. Follow this road for about 6 miles (it’s a gravel, forest service road) to Max Patch Road (gravel again). Follow Max Patch Road for 1.5 miles to the parking area. The short loop trail starts at the parking lot and you climb up to intersect with the Appalachian Trail, which you follow north to the top of Max Patch Mountain, elevation 4,629 feet. This is a fairly moderate trail, about 1.4 miles long one way. You can also do a longer loop if you follow the Long Loop trail through a forested area, down the meadow. Both trails are well marked. Believe or not, Max Patch is often referred to as the “crown jewel of the Appalachian Trail”. The 360 degree views feature Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Mitchell (on clear days). During freaky snowstorms, this area can receive the perfect amount for sledding or backcountry skiing. The open meadow is also great for kite flying and picnics (sorry, there are no trees on the top for hammocking).



(photo of Max Patch, Nantahala National Forest)

3. Appalachian Trail, Newfound Gap to Charlies Bunion, Great Smoky Mountains National Park:

(Strenuous, over 8 miles) If you have read these descriptions in order and your bucket list includes section hiking the Appalachian Trail, this is the 3rd section of the AT so far! Side note here, I have lived in 3 states on the east coast, all within a few miles of the Appalachian Trail, so I have hiked many sections and it is one of my favorite trails. Back to the AT and Charlies Bunion. But first...Quick history about the name, it seems that Charlie Conner went hiking one day with Horace Kephart (you should know who this is if you are a PRM major, if not, google him) and they paused for a rest on the rocks. Charlie took off his boots and socks and exposed a rather gnarly bunion which looked just like the rocks around them. Kephart remarked, “Charlie, I’m going to get this place put on a government map for you.” And he did. Now back to the trail description... Take 441 through the GSMNP to the Newfound Gap parking lot. Follow the AT north, and although you are on a ridge, this trail climbs, steeply, so be prepared. You will follow the AT, past incredible high altitude views and through high altitude forests because you are at a high altitude. The trail will intersect with several other trails along the way.

When you get to Icewater Spring shelter, keep following the AT. About 4 miles from the trailhead (back at Newfound Gap) you will see a short spur trail to your left, take this out to the rock outcroppings known as Charlies Bunion. The views are pretty spectacular with Mt. Kephart and the Jump Off to the west and Mt. Guyot to the east. Watch your footing here, the drop offs are VERY steep. Since this is an out and back hike of over 8 miles, be prepared. During the summer, thunderstorms can move in and during the fall and early spring, you may experience snow and sleet. This is a strenuous hike, but it is definitely worth the view. This hike can also be combined with an overnight at the Icewater Spring Shelter or a multi-day backpacking trip to include Kephart Prong trail, Mt. Leconte, Mt. Crammerer or even Mt. Sterling.

2. Waterfall Loop, Panthertown, Nantahala National Forest:

(Moderate, about 6.5 miles) Every PRM major (okay, almost everyone) should experience Panthertown, the Yosemite of the East. Whether you participate in a Base Camp Cullowhee trip, or one of PRM’s expedition based classes, Panthertown has to be on your top 10 list. To get to Panthertown from Cullowhee, follow 107 to Glenville, turn left onto Bee Tree Road, 0.4 miles to Cedar Creek Road on the right, then take Cedar Creek Road for 3.1 miles to Breedlove Road on the left, then follow it to the end where the parking lot for Salt Rock trailhead is located. With trails that follow old logging roads to crossing the headwaters of the Tuckaseegee to crawling through rhodo, it’s an incredible place. My favorite loop can be a moderate hike to 2 waterfalls and a view, or a moderate hike with one “jungle gym” section that adds another waterfall. The easier of my two favorite loops begins at Salt Rock trailhead and proceeds downhill to the Salt Rock Gap overlook. Continue downhill to an intersection, turn right onto Mac’s Gap Trail. After a clearing where lots of folks camp, look for a side trail on the right to Granny Burrell Falls, a good place to swim and hang out on a hot day. Continuing on Mac’s Gap Trail, proceed to the intersection with Little Green Trail and ascend (the most strenuous part of the hike, there are stairs) to the top of Little Green Mtn. There will be nice views and a good place for lunch, but watch the drop off. From the top, find the blazes hidden on the rock and trees to find the trail and descend down Little Green Trail to School House Falls. (photo below) Probably the most popular spot on the trail. Spend time here for lunch, swimming, walk behind the falls, take some selfies, then follow the trail out to a junction with the Panthertown Valley Trail. From here it is a straight shot back up the valley to Salt Rock and then the trailhead. Remember you descended the trail into the valley, so you have to climb back up to the parking lot. Note, if you are feeling adventurous, get a map of Panthertown (Burt Kornegay’s map is the best, you can purchase it at the WCU Bookstore or City Lights in Sylva) and explore some more. The “red dot” trails are some of my favorites, but make sure you have a compass handy and you know how to read a map!



1. Mt. Leconte, Alum Cave Trail, Great Smoky

Mountains National Park: (Moderate to Hard, 11+ miles) Guess what? Another hike with an awesome view! The first time I hiked this trail I actually ran it. No kidding, I was training for a long distance trail run that included quite a bit of elevation gain, so this looked like a good practice run. Needless to say, fellow hikers on the trail thought my husband and I were crazy. But I keep coming back to this trail; it is a challenge, yet doable, with incredible scenery and history. To get there, take 441 through the GSMNP to the Alum Cave Bluffs trailhead parking lot, about 5 miles from Newfound Gap on the Tennessee side. The parking lot can be very crowded on the weekends (so can the trail), so get there early or go mid-week. The total round trip distance if you go to the Mt. Leconte Lodge and Cliff Tops is 11 miles. Elevation at the summit is 6,593 feet with an elevation gain of 512 feet per mile. From the parking lot, the trail climbs steadily; there are stone steps, an arched rock (cool photo op), stream crossing on footbridges, and exposed steep drop off areas where you can use a cable to assist you on the trail. Alum Cave is a great rest spot, watch for icicles falling during the winter months (ask my former students about the one that almost made me a permanent fixture there). From Alum Cave, there is still about 3 miles of hiking left to get to the top. Once you reach the lodge at the top, stop in to buy a t-shirt (only available there), get some hot chocolate and a cookie (bring money), check out the llamas (they pack in the supplies to the lodge), or just sit around the stove and chat with fellow hikers. From the lodge, Cliff Tops is about .4 of a mile away. The views will feature Clingman's Dome and Newfound Gap. If you want views to the north and east, leave Cliff Tops and hike north on the Boulevard Trail for about a 1/2 mile to Myrtle Point. This is the best location for sunrises (if you stay at the lodge or backcountry shelter near by) with a 360 degree view of the area. Once you are done geeking at the views, start heading back down the trail. This is an all day hike, so plan accordingly. The weather at the top can be 20 degrees colder than Cullowhee with snow and ice fog even in the early fall and late spring. Sometimes the trail is closed unless you have traction devices and trekking poles to navigate the ice and snow. A good resource is the *High on Leconte* Blog, which is maintained by the caretakers of the lodge, year round. (<http://www.highonleconte.com/>) They provide daily posts regarding trail conditions and weather updates. If you have some extra spending money, save up for a night at the Leconte Lodge. It's not cheap and it sells out every year. Reservations open on October 1 for the next year, so call or email that day. I have hiked this trail at least once a year (if not pregnant or suffering from a broken bone of some sort) since I moved to North Carolina in 1990. Now I drag (okay, they don't mind hiking that much) my kids up there. You can also do some loops that include backcountry shelters and campsites.

As I tell many of my students, "you can hike a different trail every weekend during your four years at WCU and never do the same one twice", of course there will be some that you keep repeating because they are so awesome. So get out there, explore, enjoy the experience, make some memories and take some awesome photos.

See you on the trail!



(photo from Mt. Leconte, GSMNP)

Other Photos From Top Ten Hikes



(photo Little Green, Panthertown)



(photo of Silver Bald)

PRM Accomplishments

By Dr. Ben Tholkes

At our recent Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) all majors meeting, I shared a portion of the accomplishments of our PRM faculty and students. Sometimes we are so busy that we forget to look back at the things we have accomplished, so I would like to share a few with you. First, we need to remember that PRM was selected as one of only eight WCU programs as Category I programs designated to receive additional resources. We have received some added equipment thanks to this designation, but we still hope to receive added resources as funding becomes available. If nothing else, we appreciate the fact that our program is highly valued at Western Carolina University. Another area of recognition was the recent designation of WCU as the top outdoor university by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine. PRM and our respective courses played a large part in getting WCU this recognition.

Some other PRM accomplishments were thanks to the hard work and effort of our students and faculty. Sam Fowlkes was recently recognized for his contributions in the area of swift water rescue training. Sam has taught our PRM 426 Water-based class for a number of years, and we are fortunate to have him on our faculty. PRM student Jennifer Stogner-Lee received the City of Jacksonville-Onslow County and the City of Morganton scholarship from the NCRPA Scholarship Foundations. We would like to see more PRM students apply for these scholarships. Four PRM students just joined the National Ski Patrol and attended the Cataloochee refresher. Congratulations to Kayla, Jordan, Tayler and Bailey. Additionally, we have a group of four students (Alex, Lauren, Josh and Myranda) preparing a presentation for the annual Adventure Education conference.

Our PRM faculty have also been busy and have accomplished some good things. Debby obtained her L1L2 Stand Up Paddleboarding instructor certification from ACA this summer and will be offering a SUP class next summer. Our newest faculty member, Dr. Andrew Bobilya, presented a workshop at the Wilderness Risk Management conference in Atlanta. Andrew also presented a research paper and workshop at the Association for Experiential Education international conference in Chattanooga. Andrew is also the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership. Needless to say we are very proud of the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and program.



(photo of PRM and HPE faculty doing trail maintenance in the Great Smokey Mountain National Park)

A New Adventure

By Dr. Andrew Bobilya

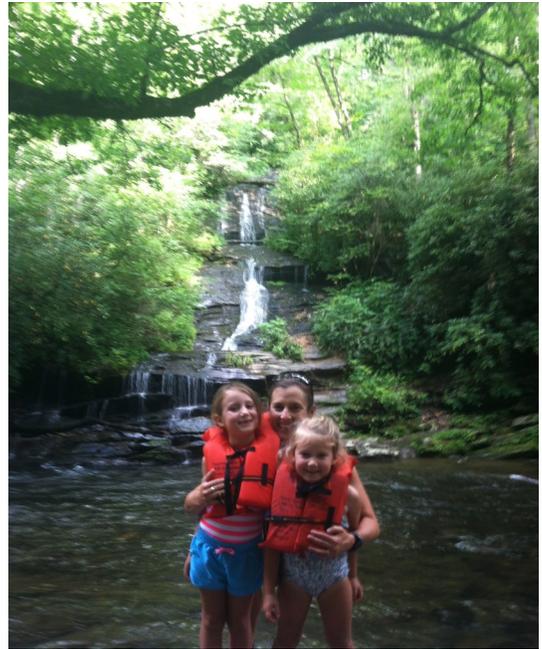
As I write this brief reflection, I cannot believe that it is November, and we have almost completed the fall semester! As I consider my transition to joining the faculty in the Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) program at WCU, I am reminded of the similarities between this kind of professional transition and embarking on a wilderness expedition to a new area with a new group.



(photo of Andrew paddle boarding with PRM 254)

These first few months as a faculty member in the PRM program have been challenging and rewarding. I find myself challenged in a good way as I acclimatize to the WCU culture, its students, and the role of the PRM program within the academic and social structure of the university. These challenges, which again are not negative but come with learning a new “expedition course area,” have allowed me rich opportunities to connect with students, faculty, and staff as I learn about WCU and how I can best contribute. Prior to arriving at WCU, I knew of the PRM program and its faculty for many years. The program is well-respected for its contributions to the field and, as you know, has received recent affirmation externally by being named the top outdoor school by *Blue Ridge Outdoors* magazine and internally by receiving the designation of a *Category 1* program indicating its valuable contribution to the WCU academic offerings. This fall semester has allowed me a wonderful opportunity to get to know the people who make up the PRM program. I have been very encouraged by the support of the full-time faculty (Ben, Debby and Maurice) and adjunct instructors as well as the students in my classes, my advisees and others who have stopped by my office.

I pursued graduate studies fifteen years ago because of my interest in working with college and university students, and I’m now honored to be a part of their personal and professional growth at WCU. Just like a new expedition, there will be surprises around the bend, but that is what attracts me to adventure in the wilderness and similarly to the challenges of beginning a new professional chapter as a faculty member at WCU. I look forward to contributing to the current course offerings in the PRM program and looking for new opportunities to add to the training and development of our students. The most significant new (or renewed) opportunity will be offered this coming May through a 10-day wilderness expedition focused on training outdoor leaders through the Wilderness Education Association. I am excited to be able to offer these and other courses to complement what the program is already doing. I look forward to continuing to get to know



(photo of Kirsten, Lilyanne and Anika Bobilya)

the program and its students and welcome any opportunities for you to get to know me and my family. My family includes daughters, Lilyanne (7 yrs) and Anika (5 yrs), wife Kirsten and pug Melvwyk.

We value spending time together and embarking on our own adventures as a family! This picture is from our first time tubing down Deep Creek in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park as a part of a family picnic hosted by the PRM and Health and PE programs at WCU. I encourage you to think about what adventure might be around the bend in your own life. I have found that I learn best when placed in unfamiliar situations and coming to WCU is the latest adventure in my own journey.

Phased Retirement

By Dr. Maurice Phipps



How's it going, you say?

Well, I am not writing a list of work "to do" items every morning like I used to, but I do check my emails as there are still many things I am helping with during the transition. You may have seen me in Reid now and again pottering around. I have missed having a captive audience for my bad jokes but do enjoy catching up with everyone.

Since May, I have been getting out and about a lot on my bike and in my kayak. In fact, I just purchased a new mountain bike and a new kayak. So, I have been exploring the mountain bike trails at Tsali, Jackrabbit and Pumpkintown. My wife Cindy has got into the mountain biking too, so we can be doing activities together (she got a new bike too!). I got to also paddle the Ocoee, Nolichucky, Chattooga, Nantahala, the lower part of the West Fork, the WW Center in Charlotte, and of course, the Tuck. In fact I will be heading to the slab after I complete this writing. We went with Burt Kornegay's crowd, who are mainly canoeists, on a surfing weekend down in Charleston. I was kayaking and watching the canoeists enjoy their masochism coping with their open boats in the surf.

We spent some time in DC over the summer helping my youngest daughter Chelsea move apartments. She works for NRDC. We had dropped her off last summer with some rent money to find a job. Luckily, she found a job and is enjoying the city life. We visited my eldest daughter, Stephanie, as well in Charlotte. She works for the World Affairs Council there and also the White Water Center as a kayak instructor on weekends.



I have been working on finalizing my book on Outdoor Instruction and so haven't abandoned all academic endeavors. My daughters are helping edit the book as they enjoy writing (surprise eh!). They also know about Nick the Greek and charts; they may not say favorable things about either of those though. Even now, I tell them to always take Nick the Greek along!

So, it has been pretty relaxing, but as Arnold says, "I'll be back". I look forward to seeing you in January if you are in my classes or just hanging out in the Green Room.



My Trip to Schoolhouse Falls

By Amanda Salvo

I had never been to Schoolhouse Falls before, let alone Panthertown Valley. After seeing photos of the falls, I knew it would be an amazing place for my boyfriend, Josh, and I to visit. With directions already set in our phones and lunch packed, we headed out to Schoolhouse Falls. The drive did not go as well as we hoped. Within a half hour, the car started making a weird, nails on a chalkboard, sound. We pulled over to the side and checked for problems. We didn't find any but we did clean some gravel out of the bumper hoping that would help. We got back in the car and drove off without the sound following us.

We drove for about another hour when we finally realized that the GPS was taking us on a road that became a dead end. We turned around and asked a driver for directions. He told us that all we had to do was follow a road to the end to reach the trails. We followed his directions, not realizing that it was taking us to the West side of the valley. Because of my knee, we needed to go to the East side of the valley for the shorter and easier trail, so we drove back to highway 107 and stopped at a travelers shop to ask how to get to the East side.

It was now three o'clock and we had been on the road for over three hours. We followed the directions the men in the shop gave us which lead to the right place, only we didn't realize that at the time. We came to a dead end and had no idea where to go from there. We saw a sign that pointed to Panthertown Valley, so we followed it all the way to a park. We got out of our car to look for a map, but found nothing. We walked around some more looking for something that would help us when we met a couple taking their son to the park. We asked if they knew how to get to the falls, but they had no idea. The man looked directions up on his phone and told us completely wrong info.



We were on the road for close to another hour and a half when we started wanting to give up. The directions that the man gave us lead all the way back to the fire station that we turned at the first time. It was five o'clock now, the sun was going down, the temperature was becoming too cold to go swimming in the falls, and we were both getting frustrated. We had been driving for about five hours now without a clue on how to get to the falls. I looked up the directions one more time on my phone and told Josh to follow them to the end of the road again.

We followed my directions back to the dead end and up the road pointing to Panthertown Valley. Only this time we saw a small hidden driveway in the middle of the road and decided to turn down it. When we reached the end, we both became really excited. We have finally found the East entrance of the valley. With only a 20-minute hike ahead of us, we wasted no time in finding the correct route and headed down the trail.

By the time we reached Schoolhouse Falls, it was around 5:45 and there was no sun left to shine on the water. That still did not stop the beauty I saw in my eyes. The way the water fell over the top, how it moved along the rocks, fish jumping in the swimming area to catch their dinner, and how the trees surrounded the fall as if it were a wall, all meant that no picture could fully capture the beauty of this area.

We sat down on a set of rocks to eat our lunch, which became our dinner. Just looking at the fall was mesmerizing to us. We could not take our eyes off of it as we ate. When we finished, we decided to skip rocks while we stood in the water to get use to the temperature. It was freezing cold but we eventually got use to it and tried to go deeper into the water. That did not happen though. The water was so cold that we couldn't even force ourselves to go farther than our thighs. Because we didn't want to go any deeper, we decided to walk along the rocks to get behind the waterfall.

Looking out from behind the fall was absolutely an amazing experience. It is something that I would recommend others to do if they were to ever go to this waterfall. It would have been a better site if the sun were shining on the water, making it glow, but it was still an amazing view. Although we had some rough parts along the trip, we still had an amazing time together. Seeing the beauty of the area, along with a couple of bears, was absolutely the most unforgettable trip I will ever have. I highly recommend others to go and experience the beauty of nature of this area, but around the midday part where the sun is shining on the water and it is warm enough to swim in.

Who is Pulling the Bowstring Harder? A Look at the True Spiritual Connection of the Outdoors

By Brandon Watson

Bow hunting is the literal ability to play the hand of God with just the pluck of a string. This is the realization I had learned long before my peers. The majestic flight of the arrow is why we still exist. This is a reality many fail to grasp. However, I have found a spiritual connection with being in the outdoors with these creatures that are equally as beautiful as the scenery they inhabit. Feeling the natural euphoria of the wilderness, while respecting the land and its heart-beating animals, while carrying a stick and string, is the epitome of being a complete human being. Unfortunately, this enlightening experience is a dying breed.

The intent of this piece is not to spew the need for hunting or changing one's perspective on hunting. The intent is to pay respect to the animal- the living, eye blinking, playful, truly free organism on the other side of the compound bow. I found my respect for the magnificent creatures I harvested at an early age. I wrote about teary-eyed experiences in the woods over hunting as a youth, and won writing contests. However, one encounter brought me full circle.

Like many October mornings on top of Wayah Bald, the water was confused to either be icy on the leaves or to provide hunters and game a quiet passage as dew. I was eighteen, and in my first semester of college. I felt like a true adult ready to conquer the world. I was with my father trekking up the side of the mountain with my new Bowtech bow in hand while pouring sweat. Like always, my father and I separated to hunt different locations.

There I sat, in the dark, freezing, with a signal less cell phone in hand, and a mind full of jealousy for the teenagers that got to sleep in. But for some reason I felt deserving of a "kill." A deer or boar's life was to be mine, and soon.

After what felt like two days of waiting, my father came back to meet me for us to walk around and scout for the next trip. We walked around a few ridges and hollers to a place that I wasn't fond of. I griped about how if I shot a deer in such a cliffy-looking place, I'd pay someone to help me drag it out. Then I turned around. There it stood.

Before me was a mature doe. Dad drew back and I thought, "What the hell? He's shot dozens! Let me shoot!" The infamous "durnk" noise sounded and the arrow flew with 3 blades of titanium razors looking for its prey. It was just a ten yard shot. The arrow hit a branch and vanished hundreds of yards away. I drew back quickly. The deer was breathing heavily and so was I. I put all three of my sight's pins on its side and let it rip. There it went, a 300 foot-per-second death-bolt. The deer managed to "jump the string." The deer was blinking fast; its breath was vaporizing in the cool air. Here I was re-nocking my bow, desperately trying to finish what I started. The beautiful whitetail had pranced to about sixty yards away, equivalent to a football Hail Mary considering I didn't have a pin for such a distance.

With careful consideration, I shot once more with my 40-yard pin above its back. The fancy man-made Bowtech sounded and sent its arrow on an arching journey on top of the cliffy-ridge. My first kill was official! Right? For the third time the deer escaped its fate. I, a competitive archer, missed! The vanes of my arrows flew within four inches of its heart giving its sternum the slightest of grazing. I gave up. We stood there dumfounded and staring at the doe well out of range of us. Its nostrils flared, eyes wide open, lungs fighting cardiac arrest, and soul intact. "My" doe lived and in return I was spiritually touched for once again realizing the soul of an animal.

When looking at bow hunting in general, it is important to note that the activity is on the decline due to how expensive it has become and the mixed feelings nationwide on hunting. A respectful hunter, one that cares for the animal and its ecosystem, is a true conservationist at heart. More people should realize this reality and how sincere of a "sport" hunting is. What I took from this day was that God arm-wrestled my father and I that day, and dominated three times, while making me become a better man.

Pinnacle Peak

By Caitlin Morgan

Recently, through a friend, I discovered the Pinnacle Peak hiking trail. It is in Sylva, past the Sylva Fire Department, and down a few small back roads, fairly easy to find. Living here in Cullowhee for two years now I had thought I knew of most or all trails around these areas, but obviously I didn't. So I, with a couple of friends, brought my camera, not knowing what I was in for. We get there, start heading towards the trail, and I notice that the incline is pretty steep. I ask my friend who had been here before if it is like that the whole way, and to my unpleasant surprise she says, yes. Hearing that as a very out of shape 20 year old, it is not something that I was looking forward to for the next hour and a half.

Heading up West Fork Trail, we make the seemingly endless journey to the summit of Pinnacle, which is about three miles long. I do have to admit that I was mainly the reason we took as long as we did to get to our destination because of how out of shape I was. We had to stop about every mile or so. Closer to the top of the mountain, was where the natural flora of the area flourished, and was a beautiful sight for a photographer. Naturally, I had to stop and take a few, if not hundreds, of photos of flowers and trees. Half a mile later, we finally reached the top of the Pinnacle summit! It is incredible how good it feels to sit down after that sort of hike.

After a short rest, I returned to my post of taking pictures of everything I see, and the view is absolutely breathtaking. I've been hiking plenty of times before, but I have never really seen this view. It was a clear day so who knows how far I could see, and the beauty was so incredible that a camera would not do it justice. We rested for just a bit longer to eat a snack, and we were off again.

Going down the mountain was tricky. It's not easy on the knees, so it wasn't the easiest part of the hike. We seemed to hike down in record time; maybe it is because I didn't need to stop every five seconds. Reaching the end of the trail meant the end of an adventure, one that I would not soon do again. Nonetheless, it was a memorable one. It still amazes me just how lucky and privileged we are to live in a place like North Carolina with all of the natural beauty there is to be shared. I hope that everyone else has the ability to be able to experience it just once in his or her life.

Not A Typical Job For A 20 Year Old

By Katie Reid

At the age of 16, I find that most teenagers have no idea what they want to do for the rest of their lives. For me, that is when I got hired at The Morganton Parks and Recreation Center. Even though most people laugh when I tell them my major is Parks and Recreation, they do not quite understand how great of a job that this major provides.

After working there for two years, I was chosen to be the Assistant General Manager of the Morganton Aggies college boy's summer league baseball team. The summer that I turned 20, I became the General Manager of the team, and loved every minute of it. Within the league that my team played, every other General Manager was 45 years old and up, so to be only 20 and working at this level was a fantastic experience. I went to league meetings and helped decide on the game schedules; I even helped choose what players from the other teams would play in the annual All-Star game in front of Major League Baseball scouts. After 3 years with this team, I actually was on a first-name basis with some of those designated recruiters. My last summer with the Aggies, the Southern Collegiate Baseball League nominated me to be the General Manager of the North All-Star team.

During the summer season, which is roughly late May



through early August, I would travel with my team to all of their away games. When they were at home, I would keep the official scorebook, run sound, handle the announcing, and set up the systems for the broadcasters. After games and behind the scenes I had the "fantastic" job of doing the teams laundry. My point in all of this is that you can find a job that you love even when you're young and make a career at it, even if it seems impossible when you first begin. When I started there at 16, I never thought I would have the job I do today. By finding the Parks and Recreation Management major here at Western, my dream job will become a reality with a full time position with fantastic benefits.

A Mountainous Climb

By Carlton Bennett

I had just finished a few long months of school over in Ireland, and let me tell you, sitting in a classroom with only the rain to look at from the windows can put a lot of constraint on someone who enjoys hiking over sitting. The lecturer finally let up, and released us from the confines of the room to be let back out into the world. I was free, and only had one thing left on my mind, getting packed for my trip to Mt. Snowdon. Once packed, it was a restless night, for I knew that travel from Ireland to Wales was going to be quite the adventure. I awoke, with as little sleep as I could get, to my roommate banging around the kitchen making us a quick breakfast before we set off to meet the crew we were attending with at the school. A few laughs were shared, names quickly passed around, and everything was packed before we piled into the van and headed off to the ferry in Dublin. Four hours of driving, a fancy red-eyed ferry ride with drinks and jokes, and another two hours of driving brought us to our hostel just twenty minutes from the trailhead we were going to follow.

The next morning we found ourselves geared up, packed together in the tight van, and bustling down the street to the start of the expedition of the day. What lay ahead of us was an eight hour hike, climbing up some thousand meters to reach a closed down train station at the top so that we could get a view from the tallest point in Wales. Now, I had never attempted something like this before, having only done some local trails and nothing higher than a couple hundred feet from the starting point. This was my challenge, to complete it, in its entirety. As we started the trail, we stopped a couple of times to learn about the multiple slate mines that used to be mined in the area, large gaping holes in the ground that were cut away so slate could be used for roofing for many of the homes in the country.

From there we had to push through some muddy terrain to get ourselves onto more of the frozen ground which was stable to walk on. As we continued to climb, the sun broke out from between the clouds to expose some of the beauty that this country had to offer. Valleys that settled into lakes, which were bathed by beams from the sun, peaks that would glisten with ice and snow as the heat and light bounced off of their chilled forms.

The hike only got colder as we climbed, with the sun coming out less and less as a storm started to brew over us. Just as we reached the peak, after working around some sketchy locations and narrow paths with a great fall awaiting you on each side if you slipped, we ran into someone who had been making this exact hike every other day for the last thirty five years. This man was a retired ranger for the land, and was more than willing to share a few stories with us. Once he had departed, we all finished our lunches and started heading back down the other side of the mountain.

This time the weather grew warmer with each step and layers of protection were taken off as they became too much for us to need or want, meaning our packs grew heavier as our descent finished. We ran across some local volunteers setting up pilgrimage trails and stone heads so that priests and religious folks could walk along and say prayers when they needed or wanted to. After eight hours we all finally arrived at the van, and hustled on into town to eat and return to the hostel before starting the next day's adventure.

I was tired, sore, beaten up by some tumbles, and ready for bed... and while I couldn't move the next day due to my inexperience I was proud of myself for completing such a task at that point in my life. I learned that it's important to sometimes just jump at something you've never done before and let people help and guide you forward. You just might find something that you'd never have seen otherwise. Travel, study abroad, go out there and experience the world and what it has to offer for you. You never know what you might find out there.

The Best Job a Soccer Fan Could Ask For

By Drew Briggs

Before I started the fall of 2014 semester as a Parks and Recreation major, I began to think what in the world can I do as an internship? Mostly because I have never really had an internship, I mean, I have had multiple jobs in my life but never in the field of Parks and Recreation. So I figured I would just keep on looking and researching and eventually I would get one. Well, that's not always a good plan for me because when I say that to myself, I procrastinate like crazy! So, days went on and I couldn't really find anything that would interest me or anything within the field of Parks and Rec. One day I am minding my own business, doing my homework, procrastinating... Again... I come across an email that Dr. Andrew Bobilya, a professor here at WCU in the Parks and Rec. Department, sends me. So I read it and what do you know? A position for an assistant soccer field supervisor opened up in Waynesville, NC. I thought to myself how perfect and awesome that would be for me considering I have played soccer all my life.

It made me think of the memories shared with some of my best friends from when I was in high school. These memories I know will last me a lifetime because when I played soccer in high school, I think of the best time of my life. It made me happy to know that there was something out there that would benefit me towards graduating with a Bachelor of Science from WCU. I would be the only one in my family to complete it. Nevertheless, I apply for the position and I get it because of my experience as a referee for soccer, as well as, a coach for little league. I couldn't believe that this miracle happened to me, because with my luck....Pshhh... "Forget about it!"

Enthusiastic and relieved, my first day started on September 14th and I couldn't be any happier because I am getting my hours in for my PRM 383 class and things are looking good in life. Also, did I mention that I get paid? Yep! 10 dollars an hour! It is so awesome because we are doing all these cool things like spraying the lines with these super-awesome, push-moving crates that shower accurate white paint for the dimensions of the soccer field. We also take care of and position all the equipment in the appropriate spots of the field like the corner flags, the actual soccer goals, soccer balls, weights for the soccer goals and chairs for people to sit on. We also have to get the roster of each team to sign up before they play to make sure we have proper documentation for the liability forms and waiver sheets.

I still work as an assistant soccer field supervisor for Haywood Parks and Recreation in Waynesville and we are coming up on our big playoff tournament that we are hosting for all the teams. Claire Carleton is a miracle-worker. She is the one who hired me, and I thank her every day for it. Also, thanks to Dr. Bobilya for introducing me to this flawless position because without him I may have never found it in the first place. I love what I do on that soccer field, and I finally get the practical experience that I have been praying for to get my "foot in the door" for my future career path. I can't think of anything else that I'd like to do in life than to follow my passion, and I am doing that today.

My trip to the Boundary Waters

By J.B. Powell

This past summer I had the chance to go on a canoe trip in Minnesota near the Canadian border. It was a weeklong trip, and we had to take everything in the canoe from tents to food. The first day was kind of bad because it rained with some wind but the days after were just an unbelievable sight to see. Clear blue sky's and open water with islands as far as you could see, and at night it was equally as beautiful. With no neon glow, you could only be amazed at the number



stars. Every morning I would wake up and make some hot chocolate, then everyone else would get up and we would have breakfast, which was normally oatmeal. What really was so good was that we had fresh blueberries and raspberries that we would pick from the area around us. Lunch consisted of jerky or sausage with some other stuff, but we had fresh berries with that too since berries were growing all over. Dinner was always great. It was filled with spices and peppers, but dessert was the best because we would put the berries in that too. To me, one of the best moments was when I would see a bald eagle flying high in the sky that looked so peaceful just floating in the air. We saw or heard them everyday too. You can look up Northern Tier for more information; it is a BSA High Adventure Base.

Playing in the Mud

By Erin Kears

It was a crisp, fall morning when I woke up from an awful night's sleep. I was so nervous but yet still anxious to see what all the hype was all about. I walked into the kitchen where I was greeted by three of my closest friends who were also nervous, but I could still sense the excitement in all of us. We all tried to eat something for breakfast, but the butterflies in our stomach kept us from filling up. We all hoped this day would turn out to be one of our favorites. This was the day of our first ever mud run.

We had signed up for this race a couple of months in advance. We knew there was no backing out now. We arrived at the race about an hour before the start time. We went to get in line for check in, and while we stood in line, we were all just taking in everything. There was a lot of nervous laughter and small talk trying to keep our minds off what we were about to be doing. We had seen advertisements for mud runs before but they were always the Marine mud runs, the Tough Mudder, and Spartan races, where elite athletes are pushed to extremes. That was what each of us was picturing as what we were about to get into. We kept eyeing up the other competitors trying to determine if we were in better physical shape than them. We all took a sigh of relief after seeing team after team of female competitors show up in tutu's and snorkels. Maybe this wouldn't be too bad after all.



Once we got checked in, we got into our starting place in line. The time had come. This was it. The first team was off. Every thirty seconds, the next team would take off. It wasn't long before the four of us were staring at the start line, waiting on the 3,2,1, go countdown, and then we were off. We ran about 100 yards then got to our first obstacle, a giant mud pit in front of a bank. We jumped in one by one. Trudging through the mud pit, suddenly I had piled up on top of two of my friends. They were stuck in the mud. We helped to pull them out, only to find out, that their shoes had gotten suctioned into the bottom of the mud pit.

We offered to help look for them but they insisted we continue on and they would run the race barefoot, so we began running again. We would usually go about 100 yards then there would be another obstacle. After a couple mud pits, hurdles, and tunnels, we came to a river. We ran through the freezing cold water to the other side of the river only to find out we would be running through a corn field. At this point, I had forgotten that two of my team members were barefoot!

I felt so bad for them having to run through the cornfield without shoes! We finally made it through the cornfield and crossed back across the river. We ran through some hills, several more obstacles, passed some teams, and even got passed by some teams, but we were having a blast! We were joking and carrying on conversations the whole time. We came to some obstacles that required teamwork to get around, like a giant wall that we had to lift each other up over. We came up to one obstacle though, that I didn't know if I would be able to complete or not.

It was a huge mound of manure. You could smell it as you approached it. They had barricades blocking off the sides so the only way past was to go over it. So reluctantly, we climbed the giant hill of manure. I tried to run up it without putting my hands in it but I started sliding so instead of my whole body going into it, I had to put my hands in it to keep myself upright. After being totally grossed out by that, we were ready to be done with the race. We continued running only to realize that they had saved the best obstacle for last! We had trekked up what seemed like a mountain, then there it was, the longest slip and slide you have ever seen. It was awesome! After that, we all linked arms and crossed the finish line together. We had just completed our first ever mud run!

I have never had so much fun running a race as I did that day. The obstacles were fun and broke the running up. Doing this with my friends was also a great experience and we made memories that will last forever. Since then, I have competed in other mud runs, color runs, and non-traditional races. All of these races are hands down better than traditional 5k's. If you ever have the opportunity to participate in a run like this, I highly recommend it to anyone in reasonable physical shape. There were people who sprinted the race trying to beat everyone there, and there were people who walked the whole race and were just there to have a good time. No matter what your motivation is, it is totally worth it, just make sure your shoes are tied tight!!

Every Fish Is A Blessing; Big Or Small

By Molly Fagan



Have you every found yourself sitting in the middle of a body of water with a rod in your hand imagining yourself casting the perfect cast and catching the fish of the day? Have you ever looked out from your boat and thought about what that catch really symbolizes and means to you? I have, and to me its more than just the size of the fish, it's the fact that I myself just caught a dream catch.. I may not be the best fisherwoman in the world, but I would bet you that I treat every fish like it's the first place prize at a fishing tournament; not like I would ever win with some of the fish I catch, but hey, who cares? Every time I cast, I get a feeling of excitement that never fails. The joy and peace that I receive from taking a trip out on to the lakes in Western North Carolina (Lake Fontana, Bear Lake, Lake Glenville) is something that I can't even explain. The beauty that surrounds me while I'm casting one cast after the next is absolutely mind blowing and exhilarating. This is why I don't feel like the size of the fish really matters at all. To me it is the feeling I get from connecting with God's creation and using the simple act of fishing as a metaphor to my real purpose in life, being a fisher of men. Fishing is so much more than just a causal day on the clear waters; it's a dream that is coming true. I am an observer that learns by doing, so it only makes sense that I look at fishing as more than just a simple act of casting out some line and reeling it in with the hopes of a monster fish latched on to the other end. The size of the fish doesn't matter to me. Every fish in the water surrounding my boat is special, has unique characteristics, and lives its life completely different than the rest—just like us. We are all unique and have been creatively created to be different to make a cast that will change a life forever.

So, ask yourself, is it just a fish or is it more? I will leave that up to you.

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew 4:18-22

Disc Golf In The Great Smoky Mountains

By Dillon Freeman

Dealing with all of life's stressors soon became too much for me to handle. I had no direction in life as to where I was going or how I was going to get there. I had no choice but to find a hobby to take all of this away and allow me to be at peace. This is when I discovered the game of Disc Golf, which is similar to regular golf except instead of using a club and a golf ball, you throw a specially designed Frisbee from the tee to the hole.

I will admit that at first I was absolutely horrible at the game, but after a couple rounds I got the hang of it. The feeling I got playing, the feeling of nothing else around matters, is most rewarding to me. Still to this day, whenever I find myself distraught about harsh reality, I put down anything and everything, grab my disc and proceed to the course to relieve all of my worries. There are a few places to play in Cullowhee. There is a course at the local Jackson County Recreation center and also here on campus, starting on the marching band's practice field going along through the village and up next to the track field. If you wanted to get a more intense experience, there are plenty of courses throughout Asheville and Waynesville. Western has as club team and also offers a disc golf class. Feel free to search the schools website for more information.

Breaking the Ice

By Bailey Gordon

Roughly three years ago, I went camping in December. Not your ordinary trip; a canoe camping trip. Any sane person would go ahead and question an annual canoe trip taken in late December, but there we are every year in the Roanoke River basin. Upon arrival, at the put-in point, we discovered it had iced over. Turn back you say? That was the feeling of a few, but in the end, we set out to find another put-in point. With the next point clear of all signs of ice, it was boats away! It was clear paddling all day with a clear night. The second morning, disaster struck! The river had frozen over, and we were iced in. With no other way out than to paddle for it, we had a struggle ahead. Once the boats were freed, we were ready for "war". We found a rhythm; the old men go first, and we follow. To shouts of "push harder", "it's an eagle", "shut up", "this is stupid", songs about hips not lying, and "break on through", we made finally made it. Now we get to go home right? Wrong. We had one more night to go, and one more day of yelling at one another. In the end we lost two paddles, but we broke the ice and made it through.

Opening Day in Mississippi

By Jonathan Waszak

Living here in Western North Carolina you get use to winters being cold and having enormous amounts of snow. Come February thirteenth, we were faced with right around six inches of snow on the ground and completely covering Hennon Stadium. This meant we would not be able to play our opening series against Ohio University. Coach Moranda had us rolling snow balls and shoveling snow for close to five hours trying to get the field somewhat playable, but it just wasn't going to happen. That's when he started making phone calls to teams further south that needed someone to play. He eventually got a call back from Mississippi State asking us to come down there and play. Evidently Hofstra was scheduled to play them but couldn't get down due to snow problems. So we found out that we would be opening up the season with the number two team in the nation. They had just gone to the national championship last year, so it was incredibly exciting.

We all packed our bags and were ready to go within the next two hours. Later on we found out that our athletic director was not going to allow us to leave that late. The whole team went back to bed and got some sleep. I woke up at six o'clock and headed to get on the bus. As soon as all of us got on the bus, we were headed to Starkville, Mississippi. It was tough to sleep on the bus just because we all knew that the season was starting and we were playing the number two team in the nation. It was just amazing.

After being on the road for what felt like an eternity, we finally arrived at our hotel and dropped everything off and got ready for the game. As I was putting on my uniform in the hotel, it really set in what we were about to do. I realized that this was going to be one of the biggest games and series of our careers. I knew that we were going to shock the nation and beat the team that nobody thought we could beat.

As we arrived at the field we were all astonished at the facilities and field that we were playing at. Dudy Noble field was an incredible ballpark, it seats over 15,000 and down there they take their baseball seriously. People were already piling in and tailgating. You could just smell the sweet aroma of hotdogs and hamburgers. It was basically like a dream come true. You grow up dreaming to play college baseball at a stadium like this. Playing in recreation leagues you play your heart out and enjoy the game, it's the same way when opening up another college season. We took batting practice, got loose, stretched out, and were ready to play.

Fans were already heckling us and talking so much trash it was literally like a big league baseball game. I was very nervous at this point. I didn't really think I would be, but it changes when the lights come on and play ball is yelled. Our starting pitcher made it through 8 innings; he threw one heck of a game. We had a 3-0 lead going into the ninth and that is when we brought in a new pitcher. He was just as nervous as all of us. He walked the first batter he faced on four pitches. That's when I got the call from coach saying I was going in. I had been in the bullpen since the seventh inning. Warming up and throwing constantly waiting to go in. The bullpen was in the far right field corner and right next to a lot of their student fans. While we were throwing they were just heckling us non-stop. I think I learned a new vocabulary of curse words while I was in that bullpen and to top it all off I had a tomato thrown at me.

So you can obviously guess that my energy was through the roof, and I was nervous. Well, when I got the call to come in I settled down a bit once I got to the mound. I warmed up and got ready to go, but that's when I realized what I was currently doing. I looked around the stadium before I toed the rubber and just looked and listened to 14,000 fans clapping and cheering their team on in the bottom of the ninth inning. I finally stepped up and was facing my first batter. It was there clean-up hitter, a big kid that was one of their best batters. I got strike one on him and was feeling all of the hype. I then threw a fastball right in his joy zone and he absolutely crushed it back at me and almost took my head off. He legged out a double and they now had runners on second and third. I thought through my head that I was going to blow the game for us but I knew I had to battle and get the next 3 guys out.

I found myself in a tight spot and the next batter hit a single that scored both runners to make the game 3-2. This was incredible; I was about to blow the game. I then got two straight outs and then there was a lefty up and coach brought in our lefty to finish the game out, and he did. We won opening night against the number two team in the nation. We then lost the next two games and lost the series. I have to say though; this experience was everything I had ever dreamed it was. I was able to pitch against one of the best teams in the nation in front of an incredible crowd and in a superb environment. It was what I had imagined it would be like when I was playing ball as a little kid. Plus, to be honest with you, it was just like playing in front of family and friends in my recreation league a long time ago. I use to think that those crowds were huge. Who would have ever thought I would be throwing in front of that many people. It was the experience of a lifetime and I'm glad that I was able to be a part of it.

A Look at the Transformative Power of Wilderness Therapy

By Seth O'Shields

Walking back roads and peering through the wooded fields of McDowell County, NC looking for a runaway teenager is not how I had planned to spend an evening after a long day at work, but like pretty much every situation that had been thrown at me that summer, I took stock of the situation, grabbed my gear and headed to where I was needed. Having never been part of a "stakeout", I was apprehensive about sitting still for the next few hours waiting for any sign of the student. Luckily, I was joined by a colleague who sat with me during the long wait. After a couple of hours had passed we got word that the missing student had appeared back at base camp after realizing that running away wasn't a good option for his future in our program. It seemed he had tired of hiding in the swamp on the outskirts of the property. Aside from ripping his shirt and getting covered in pond slime, he was no worse for the wear. This was the first and the last time I had to deal with a runaway student during my time as a Wilderness Therapy instructor; it was just enough for me to get a sense of the chaos that can potentially happen during one of these programs.

Trying something different was my main goal for the summer of 2012. I had just started spending a lot of time pursuing my new hobby of whitewater canoeing, which brought with it the high learning curve common to adventure sports. I knew that the job was going to be a challenge equal to or greater than my new hobby; I didn't however foresee myself being brought to tears on the job because of my failure to get a bow-drill fire, or from hearing the life story of a fourteen year old heroin addict. With all the life changing experiences that both my students and I had, none of us will likely ever forget the moments and the rapport that we shared with each other. "You don't truly know someone until you have spent a good amount of time backpacking in the woods with them" is a statement that I hear often from others in the outdoor industry, and my time at SUWS put this belief at the forefront of my own evolving philosophy. I was privileged to witness so much personal growth in my short time there. I hope to convey the value of these types of programs with my fellow students that may be considering giving this line of work a try. I know I am a much better person for having witnessed the power that wilderness has to affect change in people that have had traumatic life experiences.

For those readers that are unfamiliar with the concept of Wilderness Therapy, let me first explain what Wilderness Therapy isn't. It isn't a punishment for the participant. If run by professionals that follow industry standards of care, it isn't boot camp.

It isn't a place where students can just coast through till they graduate. It isn't a first option for students having typical teenage angst, and it isn't right for every student. It is a privilege, and although most students would never admit this at first, the majority of them I worked with conceded that after their experience they were glad they went through it. Usually Wilderness Therapy is used as a "last chance" effort to rehabilitate teenagers (and sometimes young adults) that have had so many run-ins with authority that, barring their successful completion of an intensive program they will be sent to prison. Occasionally a student that has not yet become involved in the justice system, but is at-risk of becoming another juvenile statistic will be enrolled in a Wilderness Therapy program in an attempt to head off any potential legal troubles that their guardians may anticipate based on their current path in life. Many students I worked with at SUWS had been through every type of rehab and social program available to them; others were surprised and confused as to why they were there at all.

The core curriculum of programs like SUWS consists of spending the majority of the time backpacking out in the forest with a group of students that are all facing similar struggles. Meals, sleeping, and group discussions are all carried out under the forest canopy. As most of our students come from urban areas, and are from very wealthy families, this style of living is totally unknown to them when they are first enrolled. Most become seasoned wilderness dwellers that are comfortable living with less by the end of their stay. Traditional therapy sessions, both individually and in a group, are conducted throughout the week in the field by a NC State Licensed Therapist. To make good use of the time spent in the wilderness, the industry has an extensive system of education for our students that complements their new lifestyle. Traditional living skills such as quartz-steel and bow-drill fire making, figure-four deadfall trap construction, and making natural cordage. The purpose behind these activities may not be obvious on the surface, but they are wonderful methods to teach coping skills in dealing with frustrating tasks. Value added components such as equine therapy, neurofeedback, challenge courses, Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous, yoga, and therapeutic drumming further separate these programs from other run-of-the-mill therapeutic programs and add variety to a process that is for some the most trying times of their lives.

If you are looking for a possible career that will simultaneously be the most challenging, memorable, and rewarding job you could possibly tackle, then look into the various possibilities that Wilderness Therapy has to offer. To get a more detailed narrative of what you can expect working in this field, I recommend reading *Shouting at the Sky* by Gary Ferguson. Programs are available nationwide, and for those looking to stay close to home, there are many options in Western North Carolina for you to consider.

Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System Review

By Thomas Farmery

I have been using my Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System for three years now. I have taken it to filter my water on every backpacking and camping trip that I have been on since I purchased the system, and to this day the Sawyer is still working for me. The water filter, in my opinion, is the simplest filter that I have ever used.

All you have to do is bring the water pouch to your

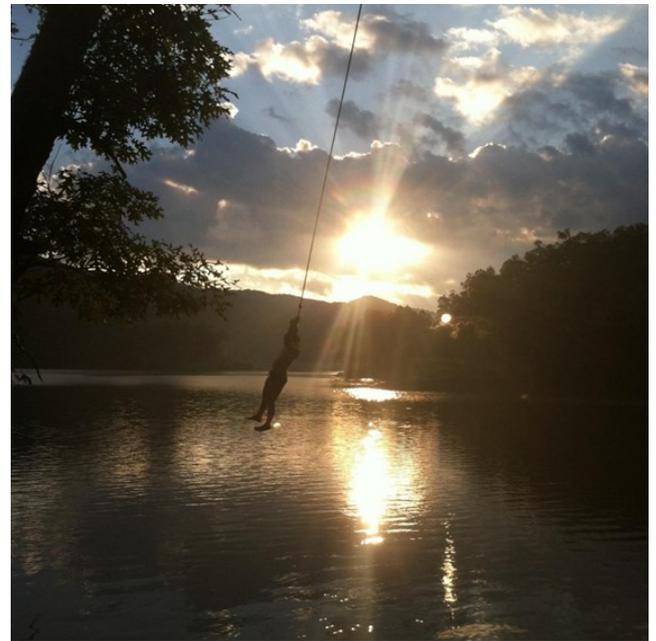


desired water source and fill it up. It does not matter if it is a spring, waterfall, puddle, lake, river, or just a drip off the side of a rock face, any water source will work. Once the pouch is filled, all you have to do is screw the filter onto the pouch. Next, you point the filter either into your mouth via the pop up drinking spout or into a water bottle and begin to squeeze the water pouch. You will begin to notice a steady flow of water coming out of the filter that is 99.999% free of all protozoa, such as giardia and cryptosporidium, as well as, free of sediment and other contaminants. Once you are satisfied with the amount of water you have collected, simply unscrew the filter from the water pouch. The water pouch can then be dumped out or you can screw on the pouch's cap to save the left over unfiltered water to be filtered at a later time.

My favorite part of the Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System is the fact that it can be used for filtering up to 1,000,000 gallons of water. It does not matter if you are on an AT Thru-Hike or if you are lost in the Amazon River, you never have to worry about your Sawyer filter going bad. You can view the filter as a lifetime of clean water right in your hands, and it only weighs about 3 ounces. The Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System also comes with three different size pouches (64 oz., 32 oz., and 16 oz.) leaving it up to you which water pouch to bring on your trip. With everything about the Sawyer Squeeze Water Filtration System in mind, I give the filter a 5/5 rating based on

Bear lake By Tanner Deninger

If you're new here at Western Carolina University, I advise you to check out all of the local lakes. One in particular would be Bear Lake, which is just right down the road from Western Carolina University. If you love to recreate around water, Bear Lake would be the place. Whether it is fishing, swimming, rope swinging, or even jet skiing, you can do all of these and many more. Although the popular rope swing was just recently taking down for construction purposes, I would encourage you to find the next hot spot for another. These things may be dangerous, so I would advise you to use quality judgment before doing any activity in or around water. Be aware of your surroundings, and use appropriate gear such as life jackets, helmets, etc. With this being said, I hope you take your adventure beyond campus and check out all the outdoor activities that surround us here in Cullowhee!



A day in the life of Thomas Graham at Mt. Hood, Oregon—By Thomas Graham



Over 2,500 miles away from Western North Carolina lies a volcano in the Cascade mountain range. This massive volcano is Mt. Hood, Oregon. It reaches a summit elevation of 11,250 feet and has 12 glaciers located on the mountain. The most commonly used glacier is the Palmer Glacier. It is the only lift access glacier in America during summer months, which makes it the most popular location for winter athletes to train and most importantly to have fun during the off-season. This is where parts of Timberline Ski Area are located. I have been fortunate enough to spend a few summers there and began going to Mt. Hood as a camper at Mt. Hood Summer Ski Camp. I was able to make enough friends and connections in order to come back summer after summer.

My typical summer workday on Mt. Hood goes like this: My brutal cell phone alarm goes off at 5:51am, I manage to roll out of bed and wake up, as well as my other two friends who I also work with. At 6:00am we leave our house and drive five miles to where the camp lodge is located. We eat breakfast and make our bagged lunch in time to drive back to our house at 6:30am. At 7:00am we have packed our backpacks for the day, and head up the mountain to Timberline Lodge. Around 7:20am we are in the lodge and have all applied sunscreen and laced our boots up ready to head to the lift. At 7:45am we unload from the top of Palmer chairlift and take a second to soak in the view to remind ourselves why we snowboard everyday. We strap our bindings in and start the 1-mile ride down the mountain to our terrain park, Mt. Hood Summer Ski Camp. I have contacted the snow cat operator about our set up for the week. I send him drawings of the terrain park that we design and he then replicates. At 8:00am we are ready to begin work for the morning. Reshaping all the features, setting up new features, salting the jump line, and salting all the ramps and landings to the rails. Around 10:00am we have finished setting up the terrain park and campers start arriving. From 10:00am-2:00pm we are able to snowboard and enjoy our park, as well as, ride the rest of the mountain. At 2:00pm the chairlifts close for the day. We reshape the jumps and throw extra salt to help the snow from melting as much during the late afternoon.

Between 2:30pm-3:00pm we drive down the mountain and back to our house to take all our gear off. From 3:00pm-6:00pm we hang out and enjoy some of the many summer activities Oregon has to offer like swimming in lakes, hiking, and skateboarding. 6:00pm we drive back to the camp lodge for dinner and maybe a few games of basketball knockout with other staff and campers. Once dinner is over, we drive back home. It's now time to relax and get ready for another day in paradise on Mt. Hood.

Strength and Conditioning

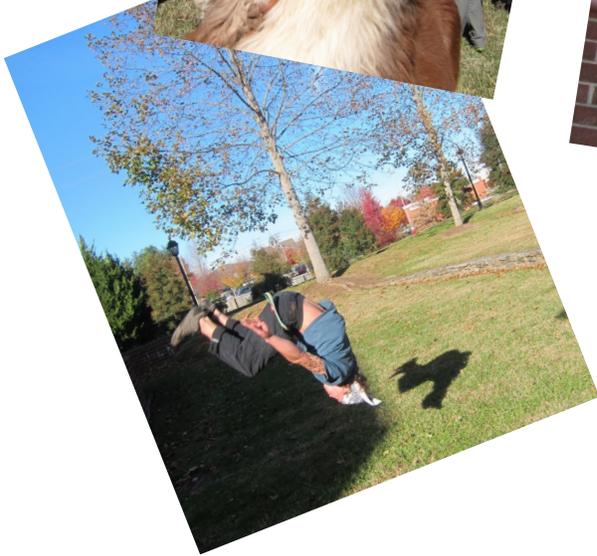
By Seth Roberts

Throughout the years I have been involved in numerous sports and outdoor activities. All of which required a high amount of physical fitness and muscle endurance. I feel as if being raised to be active in sports and outdoor activities has steered me toward the field I am doing my best to have a career in today. With the knowledge I have obtained over the years from hands on experience, as well as learning from various classes such as anatomy and physiology taken in college, I plan to build my career around the aspect of strength and conditioning, outdoor activity, and personal training.

Being a Parks and Recreation Management major I do realize that my degree is not exactly focused on the field of strength and conditioning/personal training, but I plan on getting the necessary certifications through companies such as NASM(National Academy of Sports Medicine), and CSCCA(Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association). By obtaining these I hope to be able to do seasonal PRM work such as ski patrol or being a raft guide, as well as training people on the side as well as in the off season. This way I would be able to combine my two favorite things and turn them into successful jobs. Also, If it turned out to be too much at once, I would have the certifications to fall back on to personal training, or go the seasonal job route.

This semester I was lucky enough to land a full internship with WCU Athletics as an assistant strength and conditioning coach. In this internship, so far I have been able to assist, supervise, and even design workouts for various sports such as softball, football, golf, and others. As I only needed fifty hours for the PRM 383 class I have well surpassed those hours, but I enjoy it enough to continue gaining experience and professional contacts in the field of collegiate level strength and conditioning. Coach Barr is an awesome person and boss to work under, and has obviously done WCU some good being the head strength coach for our athletes. Working under him allows me to learn from expert observation as well as short lectures and discussions throughout the weeks. I plan to continue expanding my skill sets throughout the remainder of the semester, hopefully setting up some job opportunities in the future. With hard work and determination I think we can all achieve our desired career paths, and not have to work a job that we do not enjoy.

Adventure Education Conference at Brevard College, NC



Special Thanks!

Seth O'Shields, Tayler Hasbrouck, Dr. Andrew Bobilya, the PRM faculty and the PRM Club for your contribution in making this publication a reality.





Summer PRM Course Offerings

Consider registering for summer courses in the PRM major or elsewhere on campus. Stay tuned for more information about PRM offerings including Stand Up Paddle Boarding, Wilderness First Aid, Kayaking and more!

The PRM program is pleased to bring back the wilderness expedition course this May similar to the courses offered for over 25 years at WCU. See below for more information and note that registration information will be available in late November. Now is the time to consider this course. Deposits are due in January, 2015.

PRM 427 Wilderness Education (3 credits)

This is an expedition style course taught in a wilderness environment in western North Carolina. Expedition skills are taught experientially to enable students to lead others safely using minimum impact techniques that preserve the environment. The course will involve 11 days of expedition travel in the backcountry. The course may include backpacking, rock climbing and canoeing. National certification as an Outdoor Leader is possible through the Wilderness Education Association. No previous experience required. Students must have the necessary personal clothing (e.g. Suitable hiking boots, headlamp, etc.) and be in good physical condition. All group gear, food, transportation and permits are included in the course fee.

Dates: May 11-20, 2015 plus required pre-trip meetings in April

Cost: Approximately \$1,200.00 (includes: course credit, group gear, food, transportation, international certification)

To Find Out More Information: Contact Dr. Andrew Bobilya at: ajbobilya@wcu.edu or 828-227-3326

Space is Limited to 10 students! Contact Dr. Bobilya for registration materials.