

Tent Peg

Park and Recreation Management

Spring 2012

Edited By Jessica Russo & Carson Pope

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Great Smoky Mountains Search

By Dr. Ben Tholkes

Looking at the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains around us, we sometimes forget that the mountains can be dangerous and even deadly. I spent the last week (March 20 – 24) assisting with a search for a missing young man in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Derek Lueking (24) was last seen in Cherokee, North Carolina on Saturday morning March, 17th. That same day, his car was found at Newfound Gap in the national park. There was no indication of what direction Derek had traveled, so a massive search of the park began. It always amazes me to see a park service search build from an empty parking lot (at Newfound Gap) to a complete search command center. Search teams from across the area, plus search dogs and helicopters were called in to assist with the search for Derek. We would begin each day with an 8:00 am briefing at the Newfound Gap command center. At that meeting, we would receive information concerning the previous days search, weather conditions, a safety talk and our assignments for the day.

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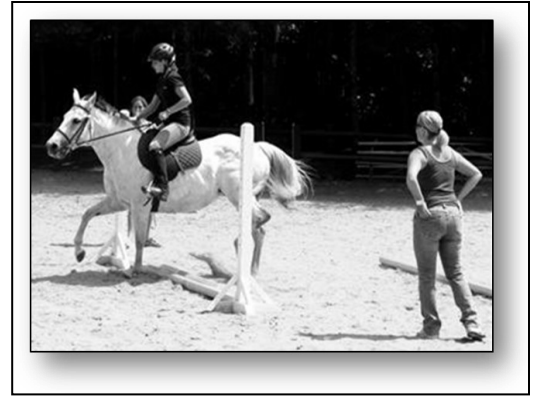


Derek Lueking (24)

Be a Beginner

By Autumn Wheeler

Being a beginner is tough! Sometimes it's simply easier to stick to what you know, what is easy, comfortable, and safe. Wow! That sounds horribly boring, though, doesn't it? Easy, comfortable, safe, what's the point? Life is too short, and this world is far too big to sit in a corner and watch it pass you by. Yet, we're all guilty of doing it. In fact, the average person in the U.S. spends 62% of leisure time watching TV or on the computer. Why not? It's simple, safe, effortless, and reduces any potential for failure. I've been there! However, I finally found that Mark Twain was right when he said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do, than by the ones you did do." So, finally, I decided it was time to push myself out of my comfort zone and start trying new adventures beginning with horseback riding and whitewater rafting.



Horseback Riding

Summer 2008, I stared clueless at the large circle of dust in front of my face, with my butt plopped lazily in the saddle and my stirrups dangling well below my feet, I restlessly pondered my next move. Only three weeks ago I had never touched a horse in my life. Yet, there I was, sitting on the back of an animal weighing approximately 1,200 lbs and having the ability to throw me off and stomp me into the dust if it were ever inclined to do so.

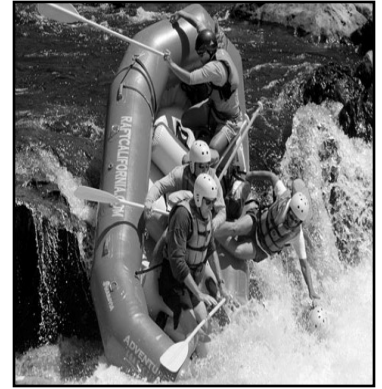


"Ridiculous!" I thought, as the 6-8 year old kids surrounding me trotted around the ring effortlessly. Intimidating? I sure thought so! But, this is what I signed up for. This is why I was willing to shovel horse manure for minimum wage. I wanted to learn how to ride! So there I was, trying to remain focused, listening to my boss as she guided me step by step. As usual, I concentrated far too much on the task at hand. Nonetheless, slowly but surely, I started to get the hang of it.

As a result, here I am 4 years later, taking a trip down memory lane, remembering my summer as a horseback riding instructor, teaching students in the same position that I had been in only one year before. Leading group trail rides around camp unsupervised, I was no longer intimidated! And, of course I can't forget the infamous staff trail rides, galloping around camp like maniacs on horseback: past the lake, past the archery range, up steep and winding trails, dodging branches left and right, holding on for dear life, and doing everything within my power to stay OFF the ground! Wow! What an experience. Not only was I not intimidated anymore, I had become a risk taker! Leader of the pack! And, I never would've had such a memorable experience if it weren't for that first summer when I forced myself to get uncomfortable in the saddle.

Whitewater Rafting

It was 5:00am in the morning. I packed up my little black bag and wondered off to the campus recreation center for a two day rafting trip. I expected to be met by a group of at least a few beginners like myself. But, boy was I wrong! I was the only beginner among a group of eight participants. “What did I sign up for?” I thought. This was going to be interesting to say the least. Having never picked up a paddle in my life, I joined the rest of the crew packing food and supplies. The music on the van managed to calm my nerves during the two hour drive to our



departing point, until finally; my feet were met by an icy cold river, flowing vigorously through the trees. My heart was racing as I hopped into the raft, and before I knew it, we were floating down the river. I somehow managed to keep up for a little while, falling out of the raft only once when I decided to lean a little bit too far over the side. But, those who know me would agree, that's pretty typical! Nevertheless, approximately two hours later the trip took a slightly different turn when we decided to paddle into an eddy to scout the rapids.

“What! We are going over that?” I said hesitantly, but despite my uncertainty ten minutes later we were soaring over a class four rapid in which only one person managed to stay in the boat. Needless to say, I was not that person. I was the one flying through the air, into the river, and over the rocks, with my nose and toes as high above the water as I could possibly manage. But, I survived, and four hours later I was thankful to arrive at our camp site, throw off my wet suit, and jump into a hot shower. What a relief to be sitting by a warm campfire, listening to the river flow by, and talking about the highlights of our trip: my favorite of course being the class four rapid which sent me flying through the air. The moment was priceless! The next morning we woke up, made campfire oatmeal, and my personal favorite, cowboy coffee, and we were off again! And, I couldn't have been more excited, this time jumping into single person rafts, and kicking it solo! Yet again, I managed to survive, and looking back now I get excited every time I re-tell the story of my first white water rafting trip when I forced myself to get uncomfortable as a beginner.

Since my whitewater rafting trip I have also learned how to scuba dive, shoot a gun, snow board, and belay. In addition, I have recently picked up guitar and line dancing. I love it! They are all so different, but yet, in some ways they are related simply because it is through these adventures that I force myself out of my comfort zone, in decided to try something new. Walt Disney once said, “The best way to get started is to stop talking and start doing.” So now it's your turn. Do it! Get out of your dorm or your apartment, or wherever it is you sleep at night, and step away from the TV slowly with your hands up. Go outside! Do something different. “Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.” (Jillian Michaels) You only live once so get out there and live! Do you really want to look back and tell your grandkids about how you spent four years in college watching TV, playing video games and beer pong? Or, would you rather tell them about your days spent adventuring in the great outdoors of Western N.C.? It sounds exciting doesn't it?!

Deso & Grey Canyons

By Ben David Jacob

Why all PRM students should go on an Expedition!



As park and recreation majors we all must deal with the outdoors, whether it be taking individuals outside, teaching people how to act outdoors, or supervising others to do these tasks. Inevitably we will all deal with an over night trip at some point, and trips that are more than 3 days take a lot more preparation and planning. I had the privilege of participating in a multi-day expedition down the Green River in Utah during 2010. The course of this trip took us 5 days on the water, and months of planning.

The planning process for a 5-day, 15 person expedition is HUGE. When planning for an expedition like this, you must look at every aspect of

risk management, how to plan food and meals for groups or individuals, how much gear will be needed, and how to transport everything from home to the put-in on the river; all while still dealing with getting the vehicles to where your trip will end. Beyond all of this are the little things too; food and other allergies, and every other minor need that must be taken care of when you are away from civilization for more than a week. For instance there are no bathrooms or trash containers, and all waste must be carried out and not left behind. Thankfully for us, we were able to secure a place on a friend's trip to access this river, and only had to help with logistics, not plan the entire process on our own.



So why do I think we should all do this? Multi-day expeditions are some of the most memorable trips I have ever been a part of. During all of the expeditions I have had the privilege to be part of, I have made lifetime friends and seen some of the most amazing places, which most folks may never get to see. I was challenged physically and mentally yet, always felt up to the challenge to overcome the adversity that seemed so huge during the trip. I feel an expedition greater than 3 days should be a required independent study for all PRM students, especially those of us who are studying Outdoor Leadership.

Over the course of the trip down the Green River, we sliced through Desolation and Grey

Canyons, fought bent tent poles, and endured blistered hands from rowing. We pushed through fierce headwinds, sandstorms, and snow; yet we saw gorgeous terrain rivaling the Grand Canyon. We enjoyed the company of lifetime friends, slept hard, saw more stars than ever before, and explored little pieces of early pioneer history.

All of these experiences are the type of thing many of us “outdoors type” seek. For this reason, I feel that we should all have adventures like this as part of our outdoor resume from PRM. Not only does it allow us to be better rounded, but it also puts us out of our comfort zone, and into the shoes many of our perspective clients may be in.

Roof Rack with Multiple Oar Rig Rafts strapped down for off-road

Trailer Packed to the brim with coolers of food and gear.

4-Wheel Drive Shuttle Vehicle



While the weather is nice now, it can change at any moment, you must bring all the appropriate equipment.

Miles/Days from anywhere on 4x4 roads you must be ready for any problems that arise.

Ben David

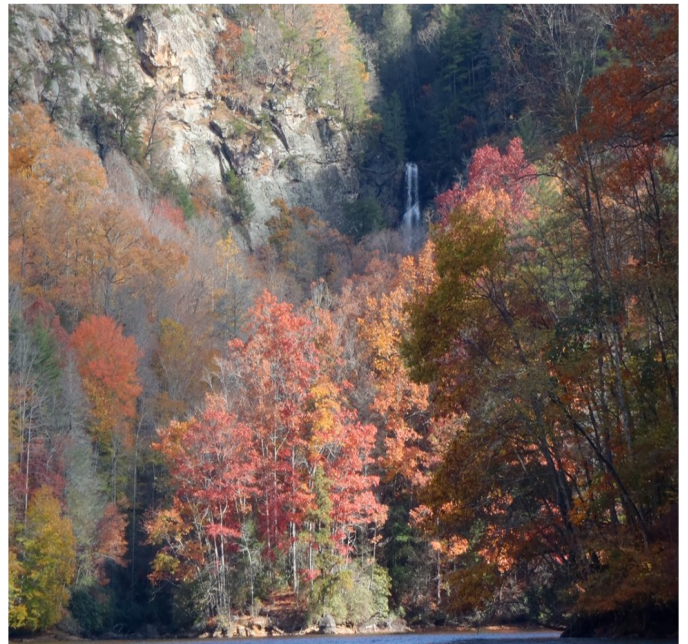


Sol's Creek Paddle

By James Houtzer

On a chilly morning in late October, the boats landed at the mouth of Sol's Creek. The paddlers had enjoyed a gentle wind pushing them towards their destination past the spectacular display scarlets, bronzes, oranges, and brilliant yellows mirrored in the otherwise placid blue that was the surface of Bear Creek Lake. Our explorers had piloted canoes and kayaks the few miles from the dock around several points until at last they beheld the spectacular deluge that was Sol's Creek Falls cascading from the high rocky walls typical of that region's character. Even from a half mile away the cascade's magnificence was apparent to the adventurers who, after a short, but treacherous walk to the base of the falls, discovered the full beauty of the 120 foot deluge.

This expedition was not just any adventure of a few friends. No, the afore-scribed site was the destination of the inaugural trip of the newly formed Smoky Mountains Paddling Club (SMPC). Organized last fall (2011) by three students of the Parks and Recreation Management Program at WCU on the request and encouragement of an official from Duke Energy, the club aims to include and network paddling enthusiasts of all kinds from Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties. It is hoped that the SMPC will become a frequently used tool in the introduction of new paddling enthusiasts to that field of recreation and allow more experienced paddlers to share knowledge and experiences with one another regarding the area's rivers and lakes. Although specifically designed to include members of the community besides college students, the club is open to WCU students. Interested persons should be aware that the club is a home for both flat-water and white-water adventurers.



Great Smoky Mountains Search (continued)

By Dr. Ben Tholkes

My search area was around the Clingman's Dome area of the park. Throughout the day, I would show visitor's the information sheet on Derek, interview hikers on the Appalachian Trail and work the trail looking for clues. Unfortunately after an intensive search and a lot of hard work by all involved, no sign of Derek was found. Currently, the park has officially



Derek Leuking
Still missing
As of
April 2012

suspended the search for Derek. It is always difficult to leave a search unresolved, but after an extended search resources and searchers can be used up. At this point, park personnel will review the search effort and make sure that all clues have been examined. Unless new clues or information come up, the case of Derek Leuking will remain another Great Smoky Mountains mystery.

Ski School

By Kim Miller

Winter has never been a season I favor. That is, until I learned to ski! Now, I have a new love for the cold weather months. Now, I have a reason for snow and low temperatures. Now, I love winter.

Every spring WCU offers a class where you too, can become a fan of winter, while learning to ski at Cataloochee. You can spend five Tuesday nights sliding down a mountain at high speeds. If you're anything like me, you can transform from scared novice, to proficient skier in a short period of time while having a blast, making friends, and learning a sport you can enjoy for a lifetime.

You won't regret it. But you must sign up fast! Spots classes fill nearly immediately every spring semester. Search for HPE 204-70 in the class catalogue. I was lucky enough to snag the last open space this year. And now, I have a reason for winter.



Valuing Mini-Internships

By Jessica Russo

Being a parks and recreation management major at Western Carolina University, I am required to complete three mini-internships of fifty hours each. For my first two mini-internships, I coached cheerleading at Smoky Mountain High School in Jackson County, North Carolina. The opportunity was far more than I expected.

I went into my internship expecting to coach a few high school cheerleaders new cheers, stunts, and maybe tumbling skills, depending on their abilities. Deeper into my internship, I started realizing coaching fourteen to sixteen year old girls was much more difficult than I ever thought it would be. From the sass and attitude that comes along with any teenage girl, I learned my work would be cut out for me. This was where my true abilities to teach others came in.

I had to quickly learn new discipline techniques I did not want to use and innovate ways to keep talkative girls' attention. It was not so much minding the talking, but safety while cheering is a large issue. Having multiple girls talking and not paying attention while there are other girls in the air is a big concern.



All in all, now that the season is winding down, I have learned so much more than expected. I have learned how to lead one of the most difficult ages to lead, I have gained new skills in being responsible for others, and one of the most important pieces of knowledge gained is how to work in a community setting with both children and their parents. Not only did I gain new experiences, but I learned how to do all these things while having fun and bonding with a wonderful group of girls. After accomplishing all I did with my last two mini-internships, I have no fear that I can accomplish whatever else is thrown my way next!

A Refreshing Day

By Rachel Freitag

Silence was all we heard besides the loose rocks and dirt beneath our feet crunched as we continued down the trail. The bright sun shone above the tree canopy as we listened quietly for the sound of rushing water. It almost sounded like the wind rushing through the leaves of the trees, but we really knew what it was, it was the rushing water we were hiking to. Our pace picked up more and more as the sounds of the rushing water became louder and louder. We soon saw the opening in the tree line as you would see the end of a tunnel. Reaching the end of the tree line, we looked upon the beautiful waterfall we had come to see, feeling the light mist come up and touch our faces. Western North Carolina offers so many waterfalls for people to find and enjoy. Luckily at the waterfall my friends and I were at, we were able to swim around in the pools by the falling water. Sometimes there is added fun, and at this particular waterfall, there was an area to climb up and jump off of. Not being the daring person like a few of my friends, I watched as they climbed up the side of the rock face, and made their way over to the edge. I continued watch-

ing as one of my friends jumped, screaming and falling until she disappeared under the water. Popping up, the smile on her face was as wide as I imagined it could ever get. Looking back up my other friend still stood a few feet from the edge and the three of us watching her knew she had gotten herself overly anxious. Yelling encouraging words for over half an hour, we all finally watched as she screamed and jumped to the cooling waters below. The feel of the cold water is still to this day the best relief from the hot, humid days during the summer. To this day we still hike after morning church in search of waterfalls and any new adventure we can find.



My Haiti Trip

By Tim Pyrant

As I sat in the plane waiting to go into the airport, I slowly started to realize what people meant when they told me that I needed to drink plenty of water. While beads of sweat dripped down my face, I finally believed that Haiti was not only a third world country, but that it was also very hot. In Summer 2007, I agreed to go to Haiti along with my church for a mission trip to help with construction and medical help. Little did I know that this particular trip would end up being the number one life changing experience that I have ever had.

After going through customs and getting through the airport, our group was finally in Port Au Prince: the capital of Haiti. While standing in the street, mobs of Haitians rushed to us just to see if we could spare some change, so much that it got to the point where the United Nations had to come and escort us to our destination. We were heading to a medical clinic that was used for all medical purposes ranging from eyes to dentistry. Once we had arrived, it was very apparent that we were in for one long week.

When my group got to the clinic we got to work at once. With it being well over one hundred degrees, we started to help out patients. We fed them, gave them glasses, and even showed them how to clip their own finger nails. Until this trip I had never realized how fortunate I am to live in a country where it is so easy to come across simple necessities. In America we have everything, and can sometimes forget those less fortunate than us.

A few days had past and my body was running low on energy. After landing in Haiti I knew that it would be a hard week with the heat, but never imagined that it would be so bad to the point that I couldn't even move. Still, I had to do what I had come for, and that was to help the people of Haiti. During the second half of the week our team turned its focus to construction. The medical clinic where we were staying needed a new roof, and we were to help build it. It took us 3 days to complete the roof, and with hard work we got it done. The Haitians were so thankful, and tried to pay us, when really it should have been us paying them. The gratitude that was expressed gave us a spark of energy, and I believe that is what got us through the rest of the week.

After finishing the roof it came time for us to leave Haiti. We were sad to leave, but at the same time were happy to finally come home. For me the plane ride home was very intense. I used an oxygen mask to help me breathe because the heat caused me pure exhaustion. When we finally reached home I slowly walked to the car, finally ending my journey to Haiti. I now consider it a privilege having gone to Haiti because I was able to see what life is like for people who are less fortunate than I am. I now look at life in a different way, and appreciate everything that I have. I hope to return to Haiti one day to once again help the people, and to be able to give them something that they might appreciate as well.

AASI Level 1

By Michael Kahn

This winter season is my first working as a snowboard instructor. I had heard about the job through friends that work at Cata-

loochee Skil Area teaching snowboarding. Since I love to snowboard, I figured teaching others to ride would also be fun. It turns out it's a pretty awesome job. I get to teach people to do something I love while getting paid. The free season pass is also a huge perk! I also get a mini-internship out of it!

As the season progressed, Cataloochee offered to reimburse their employees who wanted to take the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) Level 1 exam. In order to receive reimbursement, the employee must pass the exam. I decided that I would give it a shot because I thought this would be a great certification to have under my belt. This is a great certification to have especially since I plan on spending a few snow seasons out west, therefore making it much easier for me to pick up some seasonal work. In preparing for the exam, I went to a few training clinics which focused on bringing our individual snowboarding abilities up. We worked a lot on our riding technique and even had a video taken of us as we came down the mountain so we could see ourselves ride, therefore seeing first hand how we can improve our riding. As the exam drew near, I began to get nervous. I knew I had the skills to pass but sometimes I don't ride as well under pressure.

On the first of the two-day exam we arrived at 8 am to Cataloochee to sign in and meet our examiner. I was still a little nervous, so I really wanted to start the exam. Once we met our examiner, who had been flown in from Maine, I started to feel better. He said we should not think of this as an exam but more as an evaluated clinic. He told us what we would be doing and told us that most importantly he wanted us to have fun and try and learn as much as possible. I began to feel excited. As soon as we got on the snow, I became relaxed and started to have a good time. In the first part of the day we worked on movement analysis, which is basically how your body affects your board and vice versa. This is extremely important to understand the body and board relationship when teaching because a majority of a lesson is teaching body position in order to get the desired performance out of the board. Then, we moved to steeper terrain to work on our own riding ability. After lunch we went through a beginner lesson step by step in order to see the most effective learning progression. After that we called it a day.

On the second day, we warmed up and went through some carving drills on steep terrain. Following that, we were presented with our final task, which would take the remainder of the day. We each were to give a five to ten minute teaching segment to the other participants in the exam. This could be teaching any task related to snowboarding. People in the group taught everything from tail presses to simple carving drills. When it came to my turn, I led a 180 drill I had learned from another instructor. It went smoothly, and I was satisfied with my segment. It was actually awesome learning from the other instructor's lessons; I learned a lot over the course of the day. Following all of the teaching segments the examiner went inside to do all of the individual grading. We had to wait an hour to receive our results.

While waiting patiently up in the lodge we all talked about the past two days and what we had learned. When the examiner returned with the grades, he happily informed us that all 12 of us were now certified AASI Level 1 instructors. He then presented us with our certificates and our pin to attach to our jackets. I am glad that I chose to take this certification. I learned so much through the clinics and through the exam itself. I know it will be extremely valuable when teaching

“ARE YOU READY?!”

By Trent Rogers

“ARE YOU READY?!” screams my tandem instructor. I snap out of a trance and take a brief look out the door and windows to gain my bearings. Then the realization that I am moments away from jumping 13,000 feet above sea level, free falling at a speed of 120 mph for 60 seconds, then opening the parachute and gracefully falling for eight minutes hits me. “ARE YOU READY?!” he screams again. My nerves are shooting off like the Fourth of July fireworks; adrenaline is coursing through my body as it stiffens in shock and awe. Ignoring my instincts and the stomach in the back of my throat, I manage to give the okay nod. The instructor pulls us into position to jump at this point there is no turning back. I have to mentally prepare myself but how?

While trying to answer this question I drew a blank. I was speechless as I watched the first person jump from the airplane and disappear into the blue. After his departure the line moved forward and the instructor inched me closer, in sync with the other instructors. One person after the other would jump out into the vast blue openness and the line would move forward and in a flash I had reached the door and still found no answer. I watched in



awe as the videographer walked out the side door, grabbed the overhead bar and turned towards me. It was my turn. With wide struck eyes I peered out into the void and saw a sight that I had never known existed. The Blue Ridge Mountains were majestically standing tall over the valley off the horizon, hundreds of miles could be seen at once, the sky had a snow globe effect to it, and civilization looked like a colony of ants spread out across the landscape. All of a sudden pure bliss had swept over me, all anxiety and stress that had worried me was gone, I was freed from all emotional and mental worries as I stopped restraining and allowed myself to be absorbed in the moment.

The instructor begins the countdown. One, we lean forward and I am hanging out the airplane, I freeze in place. Two, I am pulled back in and take one last deep breath as I tighten my grip. Three, in one graceful push I am launched out from the airplane and thrown into the sky. My heart skips a beat and I scream bloody murder as I try to figure out which way is up and which way is down. After what seems to be a life time, we level out and the instructor pulls on my hands to tell me to let go of my death grip and extend my arms. I do and focus my attention on specific objects as they slowly move closer, but there is so much to see and take in. It is overwhelming. While expressing my excitement a couple of phrases were the only thing I could say. I know in the back of my mind that I am falling but it doesn't feel like I am; it was calm, peaceful, and relaxing. The videographer glides his way beside me with a big smile and waves a hello, even when falling from 13,000 ft., smiles are contagious. I feel myself start to grin from ear to ear as I am flooded with a sense of excitement and happiness. A couple of seconds later the videographer waves a hello again as I feel a slight vertical jerk, my feet coming flying underneath me and we begin to decelerate. In one swift moment I had gone from falling to flying.

Suspended in the air at 6,000 ft. I bask in the ambience. After eight life-long minutes my feet touch the ground again and I relish the fact of stable ground. I give the most grateful thank you I have ever given to the instructor for not only keeping me alive, but for throwing me into an uncomfortable situation where I learned more about myself than I have ever known. I learned that true belief resides in true trust, which creates hope and inspires exploration through which we gain personal value. Leonardo Da Vinci said "Once you have tasted flights, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you always long to return." What this quote means to me is that when you look back up at the sky, it has a different characteristic to it, you remember your thoughts and emotions from those experiences and the impact it had on your life. You see a different perspective, and that remembrance can compel some to go again. My advice for anyone able to is to go skydiving, it is absolutely amazing and will become one of the best life memories. Yes it seems scary and to some, but this is always true of the unknown, we arise to situations where we have to make a choice. This may not always be an easy choice but you have to believe in yourself, for when you believe in yourself, you will be able to accomplish anything you set your mind to.



My Mount LeConte Day

By Lindsey Bonsall

It all started for me earlier in the fall 2011 semester when I agreed to be one of Debby Singleton's teaching assistants for her hiking class. The class goal, she said, was to hike Mt LeConte. I wasn't worried. Even though I had never hiked Mt LeConte (or had even heard of it before) Mt LeConte didn't seem like a big deal to me. What did seem like a big deal was getting up at five in the morning to go hike eleven miles which would take us all day.



I was worried going to bed the night before. Had I packed everything I would need? I knew that it would be extremely cold the next day. Did I pack enough food and water? These worries were only multiplied by the fact that I needed to take medication every couple of hours. Was my body going to let me do this? However, waking up the morning of I was ready to go.

I got up feeling good. Despite griping to myself about the cold and the early hour, I made it to the meeting spot behind Reid. The group that greeted me there was lively and

psyched but the hour plus car trip to the trailhead was silent. Most people in the van were sleeping, and even though I wasn't fully awake I couldn't go back to sleep. From what I could see out the window, the streams toward Cherokee were the cleanest and clearest I could remember, thanks to their protected headwaters and feeding streams. The drivers pulled over at a lookout so that we could watch the sunrise come up over the mountains. Once at the trailhead, I was given a map, a compass and a group. We started off, winding through the rhododendron and beside the streams, and carefully passing over the small footbridges we feared for our necks. All the footbridges were wet, and the higher up they got, the more of a risk there became of ice as well. At our first water break I pulled out my mason jar which I had filled with water, because it was clean and I didn't have two water bottles. "Our leader knows what she's doing!" my group laughed. The long climb to the top was just beginning.

Soon after we passed through Arch Rock the trail became narrow and steep. Often times along the trail, the trail itself was so narrow and close to the cliff face that cables had been driven into the rock to provide a handrail. We took another break at Inspiration Point that gave us amazing 300 degree views. As we joked, stripped off layers and hydrated, I had a debate with Troy Adams (another teaching assistant) on the worst possible jelly bean flavors.



As we approached Alum Cave, it was getting close to lunch time. Once used for mining salt pewter, the fifty foot high bluff, Alum Cave gave us an awesome place to once again rest and hydrate. Then we were off again thinking only of the top. As the trail climbed higher and higher, the more we saw snow patches and were on the lookout for icy spots. The closer to the top, the more I was asked the question: “How much further?”

Walking along the ridge through the pines couldn't have come soon enough. Greeted by a layer of snow, we knew we were so close to the lodge, and hurried forward. Once we saw sight of the lodge we knew that we had done it! We had climbed 6,593 feet! I, after having pulled close to the heater in the lodge warming my hands, was reminded that we still had 6,593 feet to go before we could go home! Fortunately, the trip down took far less time, and we managed not to lose anyone in the process.

By the time we got back to the vans, the sun had slipped away, leaving only the tiniest amount of light for us to go by. While waiting for the last group to catch up to us we had a dance party. Despite the cold, we had kicked off our hiking boots and were dancing to music from someone's car. What an amazing way to end the day!



An Everlasting Mystery Lying in Our Rivers

By Miller Watson

Throughout my life I feel I've lived by the quote, “Find what you love and love what you find”, but it wasn't until I moved to Cullowhee, NC where I found my love for the rivers of western North Carolina and what lies within these rivers. The moving waters and surrounding landscapes of the various natural flowing ecosystems pulled me in as if I were called to learn about them. My love for what swims within these rivers came during my first mini internship as a raft guide at Carolina Outfitters. It was here on the river that I truly began to understand the statement, “Find what you love and love what you find”, after taking never ending trips down the Nantahala and Ocoee, camping out on the side of HWY 23, and meeting new people everyday on my own terms. I've always searched for new hobbies to try and new concepts to grasp, but nothing has moved me like the river life has.

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Working on the Nantahala and the Ocoee was only the introduction to what I consider to be the greatest invention in the world, trout fishing. Every day I'd float down the Nantahala and see the same boats anchored down in the same places pulling out beautiful brown, rainbow, and brook trout of all shapes and sizes out of the forty five degree water. I never understood the lust for trout fishing until I slipped on my first pair of waders and walked out into the clear waters of the Tuckasegee River to lose my first trout. After cast-



ing my line for two more hours and losing two more fish I left the Tuck with determination to come back and catch my first trout. I didn't realize at this time that the small hunger and determination I had to catch a trout was about to turn into the next activity I found to love. After returning to the river, day after day, and catching onto the hobby of trout fishing, as well as, starting to catch trout, I started understanding the beauty of trout fishing.

To me, rivers hold unrevealed mysteries. For every mile on the Tuck there are around 1,000 fish, a small portion of these fish are amazing native brook, brown, and rainbow trout that have lived in these waters for years and gained age spots and parr marks unlike any other Trout. I've learned catching one of these amazing native species is equivalent to unraveling a mystery. This is why fishermen anchor up day after day on the Nantahala. Most fishermen are lucky to land one of these beautiful species once in their life. I have been fortunate to catch some of these beautiful large and native trout right here in our very own Tuckasegee River.

The Tuckasegee has shown me rivers hold never ending fun and exploration. This is why I will forever seek the next amazing bigger mystery lying in the depths of our beautiful rivers.



Mt. Washington

By Richard Brule

When I was 12 years old, my dad told my cousins and me we could go on a hiking trip with him and his friends to New Hampshire. My dad was planning on hiking to the top of Mt. Washington, which stands 6,288 ft within the Presidential Mountain Range. At the time, I lived in Swansea,

Massachusetts, a small coastal town about an hour from Boston, so it was a reasonable four hour drive. I told my dad I wanted to go, and I did not give without a second thought.

Several weeks later we left for the trip and after passing the New Hampshire state line, it didn't take long until I could see the snow topped peaks of the Presidential Mountain Range. This was a pretty amazing sight considering I had never seen mountains that size before and snow in July, even in New Hampshire, is a rare sight. We camped in our pop-up trailer that night and the next morning we headed out early to begin our hike.

That day we had perfect weather conditions allowing our group to make it to the summit in about 6 hours. On the way we encountered waterfalls, deep forest, steep climbs, and snow hiking near the top. It was a great experience and one of the first real outdoor adventures I have ever been on. At the top is a weather observatory, as well as, a restaurant and a gift shop, serving all of those who venture to the top of the mountain by either hiking, driving, or riding the Mt. Washington Cog Railway. Anywhere you stand on the top of Mt. Washington, you get to enjoy an unbelievable view of the surrounding mountains and huge clouds passing under you in the valleys below. I couldn't believe how peaceful it was that day since it so easily could not have been.

Sometime after the hike that day I found out that the beautiful mountain we hiked wasn't as innocent as we had thought. It turns out that Mount Washington is one of the most feared small mountains in the world, with freezing temperatures, deep snow, the most sporadic weather you will ever encounter every season of the year, and 137 recorded fatalities. Also, Mt. Washington still holds the record for having the highest wind velocity ever recorded on the earth's surface, at 231 mph.

I now think that the danger of the mountain is worth the risk considering how wild and scenic it was, although I always keep in mind how quickly weather can change at higher elevations. I would love to go back someday and hike the ridgeline trail to the top and I also recommend it to any experienced hikers looking to travel that way.



It's Not Just Coaching

By Luke Dotson

There is nothing quite like being in a high stress situation, and having the chance to prove yourself, not only to yourself, but to others. In a big game there are tremendous opportunities to do just that. In baseball, you're in the ninth inning down by one run and you're up to bat with a chance to win the game. In basketball, you're down by two points in the fourth quarter with ten seconds left. In football, you're down by a field goal in the fourth quarter with two minutes left on the clock and you have to score a touchdown to win the game. All of these examples among many others present great opportunities for you to show exactly what you are capable of doing. Everyone wants to feel important and sports are a great recreational tool to help someone gain that feeling, and that confidence.



As an avid sports fan and lifetime athlete, it has always been a dream of mine to work in a sports related profession. In the spring semester of 2012, I got the chance to start my career as a coach. I was a coach for the Smoky Mountain High School baseball team. I have always seen sports as a great motivator for our youth to succeed in life and being a part of that, to me, brings a great sense of pride. As their coach, it was my job to motivate them to perform well on the field but off of it as well. Recreation is an essential part of our culture and I think that there are numerous benefits that coincide with participation in recreation. Those benefits include: personal health, mental health, friendship, personal development, an expansion in social skills, and many others. As I found myself coaching these kids, I saw these things happening right in front of me and it made me proud to be a leader to them, and to expose them to these things. Recreational sports are a great way to develop life skills and to carry them into your careers later in life. Even if you look at our own school, Western Carolina University, you can see the beneficial effects of participation in sports. Our student-athletes have a higher GPA than our regular student body. They also have a higher graduation rate. Sports instill in our youth the fact that winning is a good thing.

That being said, it is important that I, as a coach, and all other leaders of recreational activities don't emphasize that winning is most important. On the other hand, if we instill in our participant's minds that winning gives you a sense of pride and accomplishment, they will want to continue that winning tradition in their personal life as well. As a coach at Smoky Mountain High, I worked hard to emphasize that personal battles and overcoming adversity are more important than winning a game. You can only play sports for so long and when you're done, no matter how much you won, it's not important anymore. What is important is how you handle adversity in real life and how you carry yourself. The keys to dealing with these problems are learned through recreation. If you accomplish personal goals and team goals, you will carry yourself as a confident person and will welcome any opportunity you encounter that presents a challenge. Recreational sports are a great way to learn these important life lessons, and have fun while you're doing it.

Through recreation, many things can be accomplished. I have mentioned a few in this article, but there are countless others that haven't been mentioned. Recreation is crucial today to stay healthy and happy. If you are not involved in any recreational activity, I would strongly encourage you to participate in something. Life is about experience and an extremely successful coach, Lou Holtz, once said, "Be a participant in life, not a spectator." There are numerous opportunities that you may be missing.



“What is there to do around here?”

By Robyn Tetterton

these activities have little or no cost! In this article, I will be detailing some local destinations that are great places to visit.

If you are looking for a less strenuous start to your outdoor experience, look no further than the nearby town of Franklin. Only 15 miles from campus, the Little Tennessee River Greenway is a four mile path that runs through Franklin and parallels the Little Tennessee River. You can walk, bike or even run this scenic trail. There are several access points including NE Main Street, Wells Grove Road, or Ulco Drive.

What is there to do around here?” is a question I hear from many WCU students. We are located in the heart of the mountains. There are many locations nearby that provide different activities. Most of



Great Smoky Mountains National Park is at our back door. Located near Cherokee, the park is the largest protected land mass east of the Rocky Mountains. It is home to an assortment of plant and animal life. There are many recreational opportunities, hiking and cultural history available within the park. Historical European settlement structures are also located in the park. The public is able to view these structures and learn about the history of mountain settlers. Park admission is free. If you would like to camp or enjoy select activities, a modest fee is charged.

The next location is 35 miles from Cullowhee in Asheville. The North Carolina Arboretum is a picturesque destination for a day trip. It has 65 acres of cultivated gardens and 10 miles of hiking and biking trails. There is also an indoor exhibit center as well as outdoor exhibits. The Arboretum is home to one of the finest bonsai collections in the United States. The Arboretum is open seven days a week from 8am to 9pm. The exhibits and Bonsai Garden are open from 9am to 5pm. There is a minimal parking fee charged. However, parking is free on the first Tuesday of every month.

These are only a few of the many locations available to visit. Gather up a group of friends and go for a drive. Take a hike in Franklin, learn the history of the Great Smoky Mountains, or view the Arboretum's bonsai collection. Go out and explore!



Rumbling Bald: The Backyard Crag of a Lifetime

By Nick Marino

It is 8 o'clock am as I roll out of bed, which to some outdoor enthusiasts may be on the late side, but seeing as I am a college student who has little time for sleep, 8 is early enough. After rallying the roommates from their peaceful rest we are out the door by nine. Besides the crucial stop at Bojangles, we hit the road to Lake Lure and more specifically, Rumbling Bald. Arriving by 11 we have the rest of the day to pull until our tendons and hands are begging for no more.

Just outside of Asheville and nestled in between Chimney Rock Village and Lake Lure lies this granite playground, a location to appeal to a vast array of climbing appetites. The crew I traveled with planned to enjoy the boulders at the base of the cliff. However, if rope climbing is your thing have no fear there is plenty to keep you occupied. The park is open 7 days a week from sunrise to sunset so the hours will vary depending of the season. An important issue to note is that some cliffs may close due to peregrine falcon nesting, so be sure to check online at the Carolina Climber Coalition (CCC) before embarking on your roped up adventure. Also, the ideal time to climb is from late fall to the new leaf in the spring. The summer time brings many red bugs and leaves of poison ivy. Recently a large portion of cliff line and the boulder next to it was purchased by the CCC and the Access Fund and combined with the section of land the Chimney Rock State Park controls this area of climbing I am happy to say is here to stay for quite some time. The rock style one could expect from "The Bald" ranges from clean break crimps, slopey top outs, jug cities, cracks, all the way to under clinging roofs. With bouldering problems in the hundreds there is a climb for every pebble wrestler to top out on. A copy of the guide book would come in handy to navigate around the vast boulder field. Even on a day where the rock is winning all of the fights, the beautiful view of Lake Lure and the surrounding mountains combined with being amongst friends still makes for a day of enjoyment.

The sun has set behind the mountains as the crew and I head back to the parking lot with tender hands and thoughts of the delicious meal from Cook Out that awaited us. Pausing for a minute I looked back at the boulders and the cliff line behind us, knowing that I am truly lucky to have this place located not too far from where I live. Turning back towards the car I know that it will not be too long before I am back out here again with fresh fingers and dreaming of the boulders left unclimbed. Until next time Rumbling Bald, until next time.



Canoe Camping

By Carson Pope

There are many reasons that canoe camping is one of my favorite ways to enjoy nature. Probably the most important reason is how quiet it can be once you get away from the majority of the population. Then the only sounds you hear are of your boat gliding through the water and the birds and other wildlife. I cannot think of many other times in life that I have been as carefree as the times I have been canoeing on a slow-moving river looking for a campsite. In addition to being able to relax and enjoy nature, canoe camping can be a very good way to grow closer with your friends and loved ones. After all, you do spend a lot of time together in a small boat for several days. Out of the three most popular kinds of camping canoe camping is my favorite for many reasons. Car camping is nice if you just want to get away for the weekend and enjoy nature more than you would have at home. But, you have to not be bothered if there are others around you.



Also, anyone can easily go car camping and it does not require the purchase of much save a tent, sleeping bag, and cooler. Backpacking is another option. Backpacking is great: it is amazing exercise, you get to get away from the majority of the population, and can really get into enjoying nature. Once you get away from your car you are dependent on yourself and your group. In some cases this can be a big trust exercise which can strengthen relationships. However, there are what some may consider major downsides to backpacking such as gear. You will need to purchase possibly dozens of items from a



specialty shop. You could argue that you would have to purchase a canoe, paddles, pfd's and car racks for canoe camping, but (with the exception of the tent, sleeping bag, and stove which you will need for any camping) most of your backpacking gear won't get used for much other than backpacking. Also, you have to walk to where you are going to camp for backpacking, often through rough terrain. So, it's a personnel preference: walk or paddle?

Canoe camping is my favorite choice because it is not only the easiest for me but the most rewarding. Just load the boat on your vehicle, pack a cooler, grab your tent, paddles, pfd's and go. If you want to bring the new camera, fishing gear, or a case of soda no problem. Load everything into your canoe and start your peaceful journey down the river.

Musings from Maurice

By Maurice Phipps

It's been a super busy spring semester for everyone – besides classes and labs, we had good participation in the Undergraduate Research Symposium (10 students) and also several students representing PRM at the QEP Fair during the Chancellor's installation week. QEP examples given were the Whee Brochures, the Cullowhee Canoe Slalom and two examples of the Electronic Briefcase.

Talking to Carson and Michael, who did the Electronic Briefcase demonstration, the Ebriefcase is still a work in progress. Anyone interested in giving it a try in the fall can do so as an independent study.

A hard working group has already started planning for the Adventure Conference in November. This is the 20th anniversary of this conference. PRM started this the first semester I arrived here at Western and it now moves around the regional colleges each year. This year it is our turn and as it is the 20th anniversary, it is a big deal and we are planning on this being a major event. Plan on attending!

Other things that are coming up are Todd's kayak course and Ben's Wilderness First Aid course during the semester. Shortly after we get back in September there is the Old Cullowhee Canoe Slalom, which is a fund-raiser for the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor. Many things are happening behind the scenes down there with planning for the proposed river park. A community meeting was well attended with over a hundred folks to talk about growth in the Cullowhee Valley and how planning could take place. Cullowhee is the largest township in the county and so far there has been little to no planning with all this growth.

Some planning that has taken place by the county though is the Greenway, which is currently surveyed and "staked out" for construction. In the very near future it will be possible to park at Montieth Gap next to the Tuckaseegee and bike or walk down to the Old Jack the Dipper Bridge on 107 (and back as there is no access down there yet). Eventually the plan is to extend the Greenway all the way into Old Cullowhee.

Last but definitely not least in the news was our search for a new faculty member. Thanks to the new Head of Department, the Dean and the WCU Administration, we were given a new position in a time of cutbacks – so we are especially thankful. And we are also very thankful that Cass Morgan accepted the position and will be with us in August.

We have quite a few Capstone Internships this summer and many of you will be working as well as interning. Do enjoy the summer break and come back refreshed for the fall semester. We look forward to hearing about your adventures when we all get back in August.