TrailGroove®

Issue 16

Contents

Issue 16

A special thank you to our contributors for this issue: Ted Ehrlich, David Cobb, Paul Magnanti, Sean Sparbanie, Cinny Green, John Riha, Clayton Mauritzen, and Sarah Tiedemann.

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Editor’s Note

Canvas to cuben fiber. Canned goods to freeze dried meals. An analog compass to digital, solar powered ABC wrist watch gadgets.

Recently I sat at home, preparing for an upcoming trip with 2 compasses in hand. On my left a beat up 25 year old relic complete with leather lanyard, now mostly retired, and on my right my new digital, solar-powered version of more recent times. Using the old compass which never fails to point to magnetic north, I calibrated the new device over the next few minutes. I thought back to all the trips that old compass had been on. While fun to recount, it dawned on me that not much had changed. The gear has changed, the planning is (Usually) a little better, and the company has changed over the years as well. But in the end the burger at the end of a trip still tastes just as great, the stars just as vivid, (Well, depending on where you go) and no matter where I am, it doesn’t seem like the trail has changed either. The trail is different for all of us, but with summer now in full swing and the days now actually slowly getting shorter, the rush of another summer season is on, and if you’re like me, the trail is usually fairly reliable at pointing in the right direction.

In this issue we’ll check out a scenic loop hike in the Smokies, an interesting hike in Hawaii, and review a new lightweight summer bag from Sea To Summit. We’ll also take a look at 50 years of designated wilderness, technology on the trail, Tenkara on in the backcountry, and much more. Thanks for reading and keep an eye out for Issue 17, due out in August.

- Aaron Zagrodnick

Contribute

Interested in contributing to the magazine? Please email us at **info@TrailGroove.com** with your idea. We're always on the lookout for quality content, and compensation is offered for quality submissions. Our list of requirements isn't too long, but please keep the subject focused towards backpacking or hiking. However, submissions related to other outdoor activities will be considered. (Backcountry fishing or wilderness photography, for example). Page through our magazine for the general idea of what we're all about, but even if you have something you haven't yet seen in an issue our ears are open. Please send us a note with a broad overview and sample of your idea, as well as an approximate word and picture count. Original and factual material is a requirement. Once received, we'll evaluate your submission and contact you for further discussion. Questions before you start? Just let us know.

A few examples of what we're looking for:

Destinations	Art / Illustration
Gear Reviews (Objective)	Short Stories
Photography	Interviews
Video	Backcountry Cuisine
Skill & Technique	Your New Idea

TrailGroove Magazine
Review Policy

The products we review are obtained via normal consumer retail channels. We do not ask for or accept review samples from manufacturers, and we do not obtain the products we review under the TrailGroove Magazine name. As such, we're reviewing the same products that you would obtain - Not hand-picked review samples. Even though we like free gear as much as the next person, we won't bend on this rule! As a result of this philosophy, we are also able to experience and comment on the same level of customer service that the typical consumer would receive.

Note that this policy does not apply to any pre-release products that we're able to obtain prior to market release for review. In such cases, we will clearly state that the product was obtained from the manufacturer for a sneakpeak, pre-release evaluation in the review.

We use a 5-star rating scale for our reviews:

★★★★★	Excellent
★★★★☆	Very Good
★★★☆☆	Good
★★☆☆☆	Average
★☆☆☆☆	Poor

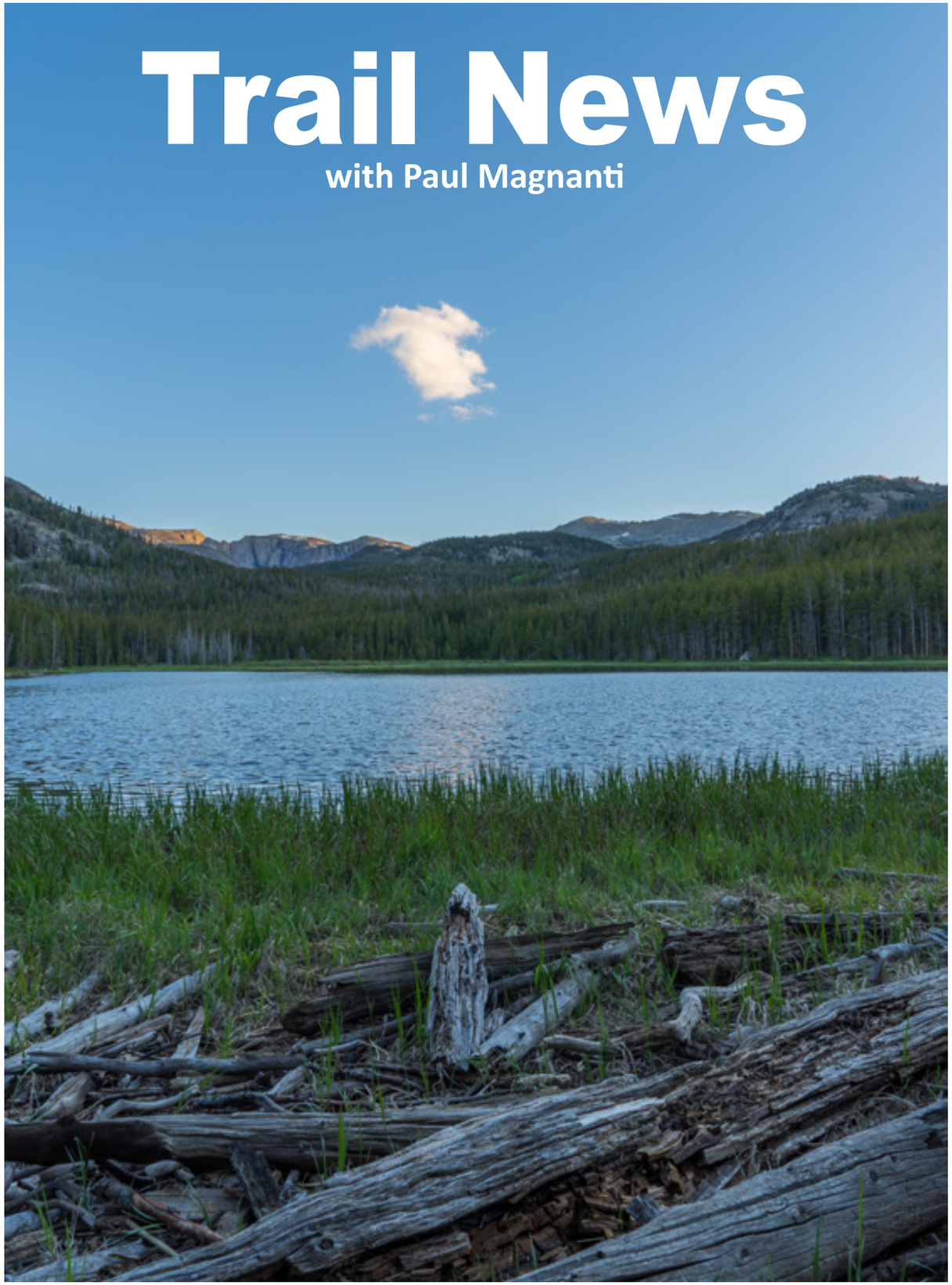
Jargon: Crux

Used frequently in climbing and mountaineering circles, crux is also quite applicable to backpacking and hiking and is a term that can often be heard in such environments. Crux refers to the most difficult and decisive part of a trip, pass, ascent/descent, climb, etc.

"The south side of the pass should be easy, but we'll likely encounter snow and talus on the north side. It will definitely be the crux of the trip."

Trail News

with Paul Magnanti



In this issue of TrailGroove, we discuss a situation that may be poo-pooed in some circles, an organization is reborn and a backpacker utilizes a cell phone correctly but perhaps not a map, a compass and other planning material…

Some citizens in the town of Kent, CT have put forth the idea to install Porta-Potties for the Appalachian Trail hikers coming through this posh town. In previous years, the citizens of Kent have often looked at the annual summer arrival of thru-hikers as the same way the Romans viewed the Visigoths: A rampaging tribe coming over the hills that signals the end of civilization.

The thru-hikers hygiene habits may be a tad worse than the barbarian tribes and the citizens of Kent may prefer L.L. Bean clothing versus a freshly pressed toga, but the overall reaction seems to be similar. Last summer, a laundromat in Kent banned hikers for example. No word yet if Kent will attempt to keep thru-hikers out of town with an offering of a long-lost cache of king sized Snicker bars.

Out of the ashes of one organization, the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) has risen to coordinate efforts on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. On May 21st, the paperwork was signed that makes the CDTC an official partner with the US Forest Service. The CDTC is now on the same tier as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Pacific Crest Trail Alliance as an umbrella organization for helping to coordinate efforts on a national scenic trail. Appropriately enough for the Rockies-based grass roots organization, the paper work was signed at a local craft brewer. A few cheers were given and a few pints were raised to celebrate this great occasion.

Finally, a gentleman hiking the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail ran out of food and water while backpacking in the Black Range of New Mexico. The backpacker may have been out of food and water, but still had a charged battery on his phone and was able to make a call. The Grant County Search and Rescue met the hiker on the trail and was able to rehydrate and feed him. The hiker was then able to hike out to Emory Pass on his own. The backpacker was later transported to Silver City, NM where he was able to recover.

TRAIL TIP 16:
Considerations for Trip Planning

When planning a trip, there are lots of things that come to mind to make a trip more optimal for whatever activity you're planning. For me, these are the considerations I make while planning a trip, and why.

1. **Season –** Season dictates a lot about a hike. Seasons hit different areas at different times. The further south you are, the earlier spring and summer come around. April might be prime season for southern areas like the Grand Canyon, where Northern areas like Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks are still shut down and snowed in. Likewise, July might be prime season for northern areas, where southern areas are dangerously hot for higher output activities.

2. **Weather Trends –** Weather trends tend to be seasonal, as well as regional. In the mountain west that I'm familiar with, spring tends to bring wet and unstable weather, but is ideal for the Colorado plateau where it's the only season with stable water. Summer tends to be drier and warmer, melting out the high country but with threat of afternoon thunderstorms. Fall tends to be mild, warm, and ideal for hiking, but getting a bit colder at night. Winter brings snow, however in-between storms, high pressure ridges allow for great mild weather. Study the regional weather patterns for your area before your trip to understand what to expect.

3. **Water Availability** – Water availability is a localized factor. Are there streams, lakes, or springs in the area you're traveling to? Are they seasonal? What is the quality of the water source(s)? Are you going to be camping near water, or dry camping and carrying your water to camp? How often will you find water sources? These will dictate the capacity of water you will need to be able to carry to keep yourself hydrated, and the type of water treatment you will want.

4. **Popularity of Route** – This is more of a preference I have because I would prefer routes that aren't so popular. Popular routes might not see much traffic "out of season" or have similar routes near the popular section that are less traveled. For some people, being on the popular route in season means they have an additional safety net and get to enjoy the social aspect of hiking with people with common interest, so it can go both ways.

5. **Permits (and Availability)** – Permits, if required, can sometimes be a make or break issue for a trip. Some places just require you to sign a trail head register to keep track of use, some require free permits that require you to register at a visitor center. Some you have to pay for (cash, check, or charge?), and some you have to apply for months in advance, sometimes through a lottery. Sometimes permits are only required within certain boundaries, so planning your trip to camp outside of those boundaries may eliminate the permits needed.

6. **Shuttles (if needed)** – unless you are doing an out and back or a loop hike, the hike will require a shuttle of some sort. You can self-shuttle with a bike, or by bringing a second car and leaving one at each end. Sometimes buses/vans are available, or taxis will service the area. Researching these options before the trip will save you time and give you a better understanding of the feasibility. If a shuttle isn't really workable, maybe changing your route to allow one or making it a loop or out and back hike is a better option.

7. **Day length and Moon Phase** – I find the website sunrisesunset.com is a great resource for this. Finding out the day length and twilight times will give you an idea when the lighting conditions will change so you don't get caught hiking through the night on accident. Also, finding out the moon phase (and its rise/set time) will give you a good idea if you will be using your headlamp more or less. On some full moon nights, it's so bright that a headlamp is barely needed.

8. **Declination** – This should be found before any hike for accurate use of a compass. This will vary depending on where you are hiking. This is sometimes shown on maps, but is rarely accurate as it is changing slowly and will vary year to year. Magnetic-declination.com has an integrated google map that will tell you the current declination for any area on earth. Figure out how to adjust your compass to account for the declination prior to your trip.

9. **Insects, Flora, and Fauna** – Determining what insects will be out, and how many, during the trip will save you a lot of grief by allowing you to bring appropriate clothing, netting, and/or bug spray. What kind of flora (plants) will be prevalent will also determine clothing choices. If there are a lot of cactus and poisonous plants, long pants and sturdy shoes will be necessary. Will the wildflowers be out? Fauna (animals) will determine if you need to bring bear spray, or be more cautious around newborn animals with protective parents or animals in rut protecting their territory. At any time of year, don't approach wildlife more than you need to, but during certain periods they are likely to be more territorial and aggressive.

10. **Snow and River Levels** – Snow levels can vary regionally, and can make or break a fun trip if you end up postholing through rotten snow that could have potentially be melted out in a few weeks. Similarly, if you are hiking above snow levels, trails may be hidden, requiring different route finding. River levels can also make or break a fun trip if you are stranded on one side of a cold snowmelt river, with no bridge to get across. The rule of thumb is to never cross a river that's deeper than your shins, as foot entrapment can cause you to drown in relatively shallow water. Water can be deceptively cold and swift, so planning a trip that requires multiple river crossings during spring runoff or periods of flooding may not be a good idea.

Great Smoky Mountain Adventures: The Tremont Lollipop Hike

Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

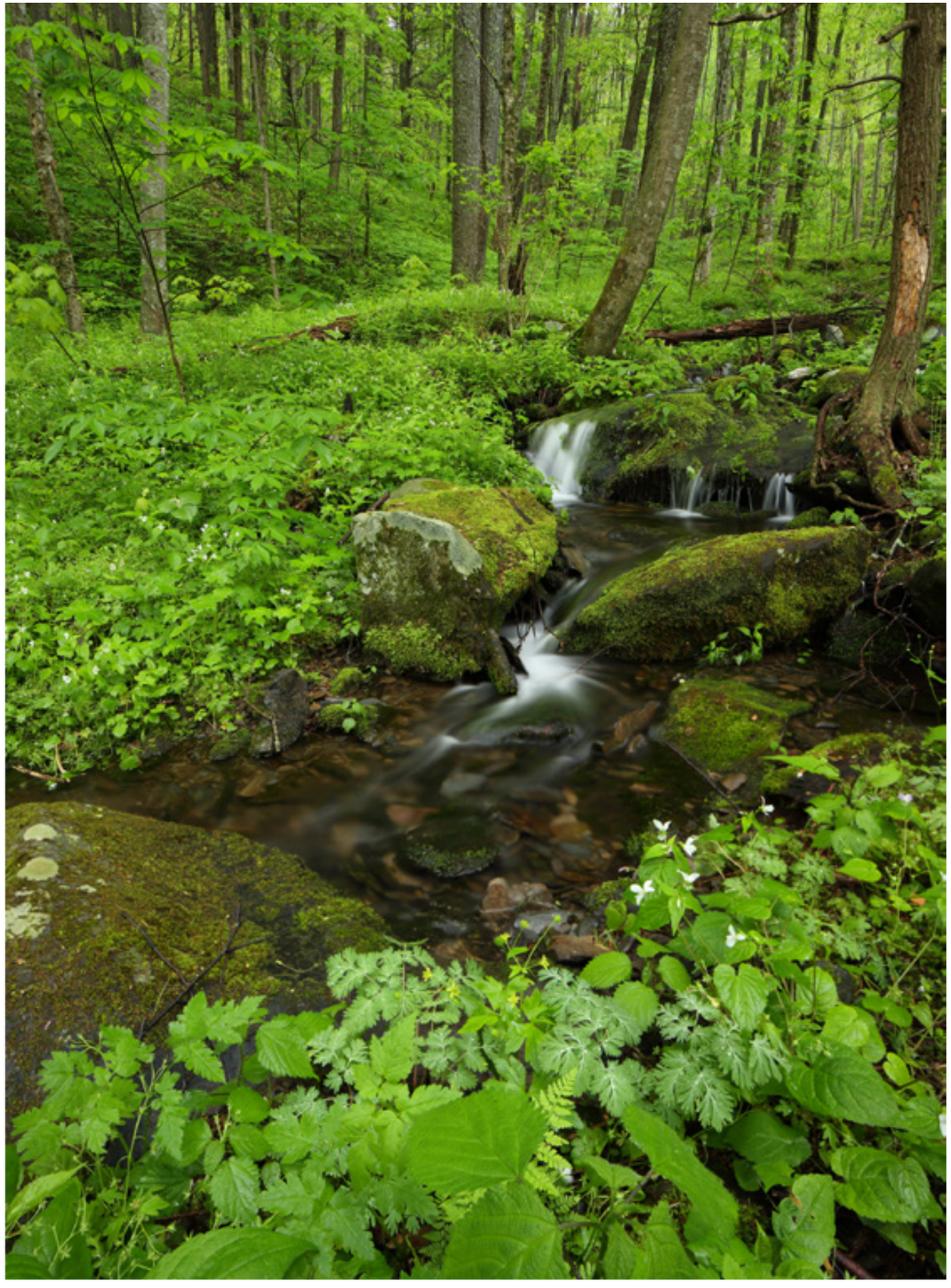
By Sean Sparbanie

The Smoky Mountains contain many remarkable places. Some areas convey rugged grandeur, others ancient elegance and beauty. This hike provides tastes of those things, but more significant than any of those features, it's one of the most calming, peaceful hikes I've enjoyed anywhere in the region. It may not be the most photogenic trail, but something about it draws me back again and again. I hike this trail more frequently than any other in the park, and I always leave wanting more. The soothing sound of the creek echoing through the trees, the songbirds and owls calling throughout the day, the lush forest completely saturated with all shades of green...it's pure Appalachian beauty. Although this is an outstanding hike for any time of year, I'm particularly fond of it in mid to late spring. This is what's called a lollipop hike, as the first and last sections are the same trail. It's a very goofy looking lollipop, but you get the idea…

As always, make sure you're well prepared for a hike with this sort of mileage. Not only is it lengthy for a day hike, you're also not likely to encounter many people. A decent first-aid kit is a necessity. In addition to proper water-wicking hiking clothes and a good set of boots, I typically bring 100 ounces of water in a Camelbak, lots of trail food, full rain gear, a camp towel for drying off after creek fords, bear repellent (either pepper spray or an airhorn), bug spray, sunscreen, and a spare set of quality socks.

A very important note: To complete the full hike, you will have to ford the Lynn Camp Prong. There is no bridge at the intersection with the Panther Creek trail. In some seasons, this is a wide, deep, and powerful creek. If there's just been a lot of heavy rain, you probably don't want to risk it. On an average early spring day, you can count on the water being at least up to your knees with a strong current over slippery rocks. If you're carrying camera equipment like I do, cross this at your own risk. If you have any doubts, don't risk it. A soaked camera bag can be a very, very expensive problem. Otherwise, prepare for some cold feet and legs! Just take your sweet time and step deliberately. I usually bring a pair of Teva sandals with decent tread for creek crossings like this. They're fairly lightweight, and they'll give you some protection and grip in the creek. You can still have a great out-and-back hike if the water is too high. If you're unsure, toss a stick in the creek. If it's moving faster than you're able to walk, your best bet is to stay out of the water.

Before the national park was established, this area was heavily logged. In fact, you may find many remnants of its industrial past lying in the forest if you stray from the trail. Old leather boots, rusted out food tins, tractor parts...all manner of relics for the observant adventurer. Although you won't find much in the way of magnificent old-growth forests, this area has had around 75 years to recover from logging. I can assure you, it's a very beautiful place.



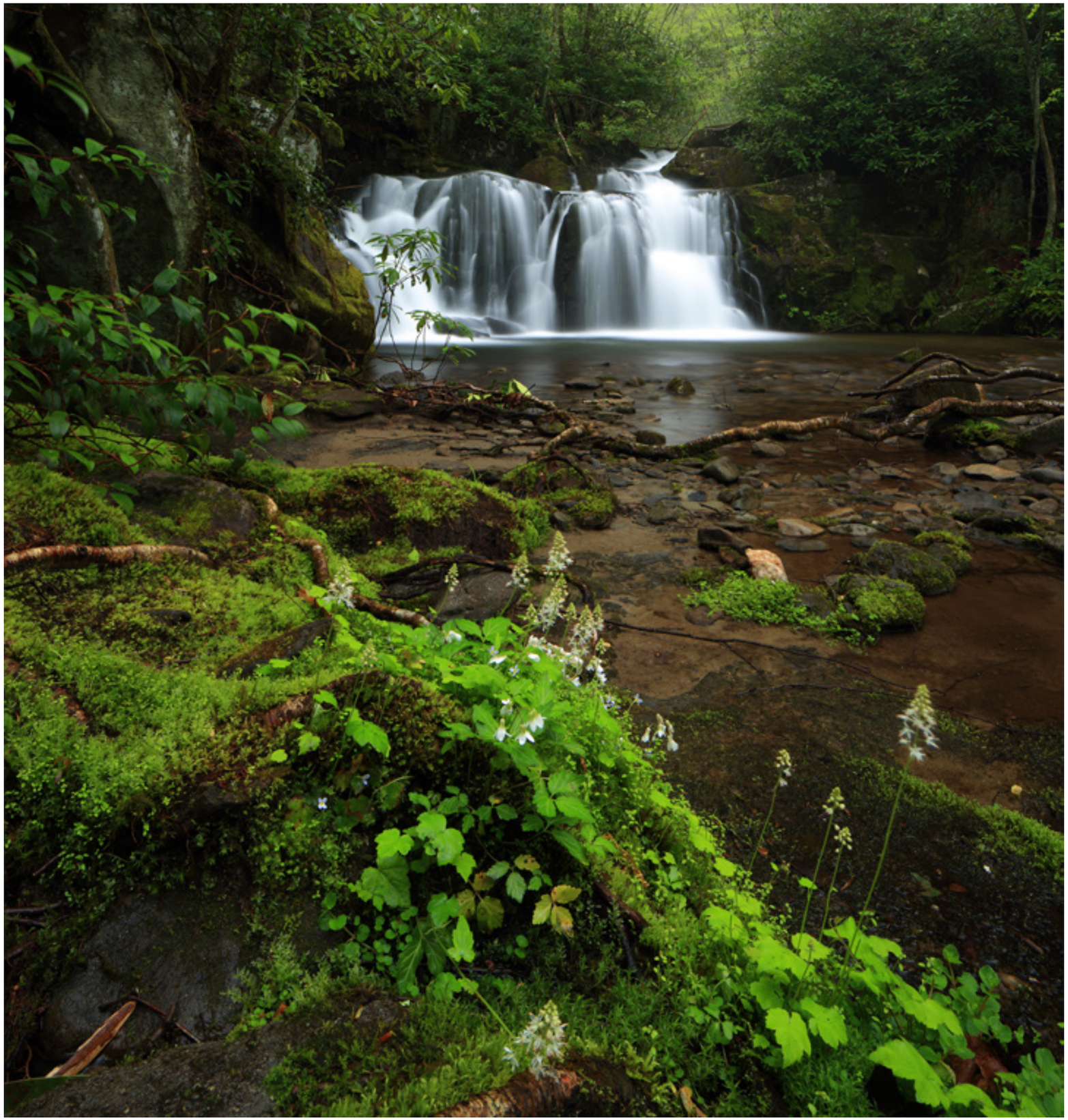
Right: Spring Understory. **Previous Page:** Lynn Camp Prong just after a thunderstorm.

Left: Middle Prong Trail.
Previous Page: Bend in the Lynn Camp Prong.

The trailhead can be found at the end of the gravel road past the ranger station and the Tremont Research Institute. Your hike begins at an old steel bridge high above Lynn Camp Prong. There's a beautiful cascade here just before its confluence with Thunderhead Prong. After the bridge, take the Middle Prong Trail to the left. The right-hand path has been abandoned and is no longer maintained by the park. It dead-ends at a bend in the Thunderhead Prong after about 3/4ths of a mile. After a little less than a half mile, you'll pass several beautiful cascades on your left. The largest is a 30-foot slide that is commonly called Lower Lynn Camp Falls. More interestingly, I've heard it referred to as "Kick Yer Dog Falls". I wish I knew the origins of that name! White-water boaters will occasionally take on this beast when the water is up. Slightly less adventurous folks such as myself can make their way down the rocks to the creekside for a closer look at this raging cascade.

The vast majority of this trail keeps you close to the creek, which makes for many beautiful views. It's also popular among horse riders, so keep your eyes peeled for "landmines". Another noteworthy feature of the Middle Prong trail is its width. Many sections are wide enough to host two full car lanes. Although somewhat rocky in sections, this makes for an easy trek. Right around two miles in, keep an eye out for a little path often marked by a small cairn. Follow this up the berm to see the rusted remains of a 1920's Cadillac, presumably belonging to someone from the long-vanished logging camp. Another mile down the trail reveals another relic: The remains of a brick fireplace previously attached to a homestead. Most of the column had fallen sometime in recent years, but it's still an interesting sight. You may also occasionally find railroad tracks popping up in a few places near here. This was the means of lumber conveyance back in the day.

Just shy of 4 miles, the trail leaves the creek and begins up via several switchbacks. Right around 4 miles, you'll notice a narrow footpath to your right. Follow this a short distance and you'll find yourself at the lovely Indian Flat Falls. This is a beautiful spot to relax and grab a snack, or if you're anything like me, take a whole bunch of pictures. Again, spring is my favorite time to take in this waterfall.



Left: Indian Flats Falls.
Above: Butterly on Foamflower.

Above: Footbridge on the Middle Prong trail

There are sometimes wildflowers to be seen sprouting up in the small patches of dirt between the pooling water and the smooth granite. If you're here in the winter, be extra mindful of your step. The rocks can develop a thin layer of black ice and send you flying. There's a significant drop (and another waterfall) at the far end of the flat, and you're likely to end up a permanent resident if you fall here. Once you're gotten your fill of the waterfall, head back up the trail until you reach a 3-way intersection. Take the path on the left called Lynn Camp Prong.

I love this trail in the spring. The brilliant green understory here is simply magnificent. There are several springs and runoff streams that flow throughout, and they make the ground explode with spring growth. It's also a great spot for wildflowers if you time it correctly. The first section of this trail is a very easy stroll, being nearly flat in some places. After a mile and a half, you'll come to another intersection. This isn't another trail, but the short path to the backcountry campsite. Number 28, to be precise. You can hitch your horses if you brought them, or just set up a tent for the night. Like other backcountry sites, the only amenities provided are fire rings, a nearby (usually within a few hundred yards) water source, and rope/pulley systems for hanging food out of reach of bears and other hungry critters. If you're interested in staying the night, check out the park's reservations page for more info. http://smokiespermits.nps.gov/

To continue hiking the Lynn Camp Prong trail, hang a right at the trail marker for the last 2.7 miles. I'm tempted to say this section is the most challenging of the hike. You could certainly do a lot worse in this park, but it's a pretty good workout. You'll notice a significant change right away; it's no longer a wide, easy, well-packed trail, but much more steep, rocky, muddy, and narrow. This is where it starts to feel like a proper hike in mountains. In late April, you're likely to see loads of white Trillium flowers lining the forest floor along with beautiful, fresh green foliage and unraveling ferns. This area is not often disturbed, so you're more likely to encounter wildlife. You're also likely to have it all to yourself. I've hiked this trail twice on beautiful, comfortable spring weekends, and not encountered a single other human over the entire 15 mile stretch. That is pretty amazing considering Great Smoky Mountains National Park has the most annual visitors of all parks. While the rest of them are choking on diesel fumes driving around Cades Cove, you'll be enjoying a pristine mountain all to yourself.

If you look to your left while hiking up this slice of green paradise, you may observe a rather tall mountain looming in the distance. That's Miry Ridge, and you'll be there soon enough. I'll admit it's a bit intimidating to see your path high above you and far across the valley, but it's also fun to know you'll soon conquer it. After a good amount of climbing, you'll reach the Lynn Camp Prong Trail terminus at the intersection with Miry Ridge Trail. As the name suggests, you'll be following a ridgeline. More wildflowers can be found here, with a particularly beautiful combination of Fringed Phacelia and White Trilium to be seen shortly after you begin the trail, assuming you're there in late April/early May. There are also begin the trail, assuming you're there in late April/early May. There are also stretches of soft, bright green grasses that flank your path. Since this trail is not frequently used, it can become over-grown at times. While this doesn't get bad enough to obscure the trail, the grasses can be saturated from morning dew or rain. I recommend employing some gaiters or rain pants here to keep your socks dry. Waterproof boots are useless when your socks get wet and wick water down to your feet!

The trend of steady ascent continues for about another mile and a half. The first section gradually transitions from a somewhat sheltered and lush forest to a more rugged ridgeline appearance, with less grasses and flowers and more wind and weather-enduring flora. After you crest the summit, the rest of the day is mercifully downhill. Soon you'll pass next to another backcountry campsite, #26. Passing through another blanket of green beauty, you'll arrive at the next intersection. The Miry Ridge Trail terminates here, and leaves you with two options; Jakes Creek to the right or Panther Creek to the left. Hang a left and begin your descent.

The upper section of this trail is somewhat unremarkable. It's rocky, steep, and perhaps a little boring, but that changes after about a mile. Once you begin hearing the return of flowing water, the forest makes a gradual transition to the lush, green appearance of the lower elevations. Panther Creek is considerably smaller than Lynn Camp Prong, and you don't hike right next to it very often, but you can almost always hear it. The forest here has an open feel to it. Huge thickets of Mountain Laurel and Rhododendron tangle over the creek and provide a marked contrast in color to the canopy foliage towering high overhead. There are a few smaller creek crossings, and the final is easily the most beautiful. Brilliantly colored moss covers nearly all of the surrounding rocks, and a pair of small three-foot waterfalls provide a saturated area for all manner of plants to flourish. This is a great spot to have a break and just absorb all the sights and sounds of the forest. The crossing here can be a little soggy, and the creek tries to take over the trail for 50 feet or so. Last time, I put my sandals on here and wore them until the last crossing was complete.

Speaking of which, it's a short trek til we return to the intersection with the Middle Prong trail, and you'll need to prepare to ford the Lynn Camp Prong. In dryer seasons, this is really a non-issue. You can even rock-hop it sometimes. In my experience, though, it's been a little more challenging than that. The great part about doing this as a photographer is that you're already going to get wet, so why not queue up the tripod for some unique shots? As long the current isn't strong enough to vibrate the tripod, you can capture some very unique perspectives. Wade upstream a short distance, and you'll be at a particularly scenic bend in the creek. As long as you exercise caution and common sense, you'll be in good shape.

When you're ready to hit the last stretch, head back to the junction with the Middle Prong trail, dry off, and hang a right. Since I'm a leisurely hiker, it's typically late afternoon by the time I'm heading out. There's a way the sunlight hits the sides of the trees in this area that seems to be unique. Maybe it's just my affinity for the park, but it has a golden glow that I haven't noticed elsewhere. Combined with the fresh green and the deep Tiger's Eye shades of brown in the creek bed, it's about as pretty as a mountain forest can be. It's very difficult to capture all the nuances of light and color gradients on film, so I usually just stroll by and enjoy it as I finish out my day. The creek will serenade you all the way out. If you're anything like me, you'll be reluctant to leave it behind.

Above: Foliage on the Panther Creek trail.

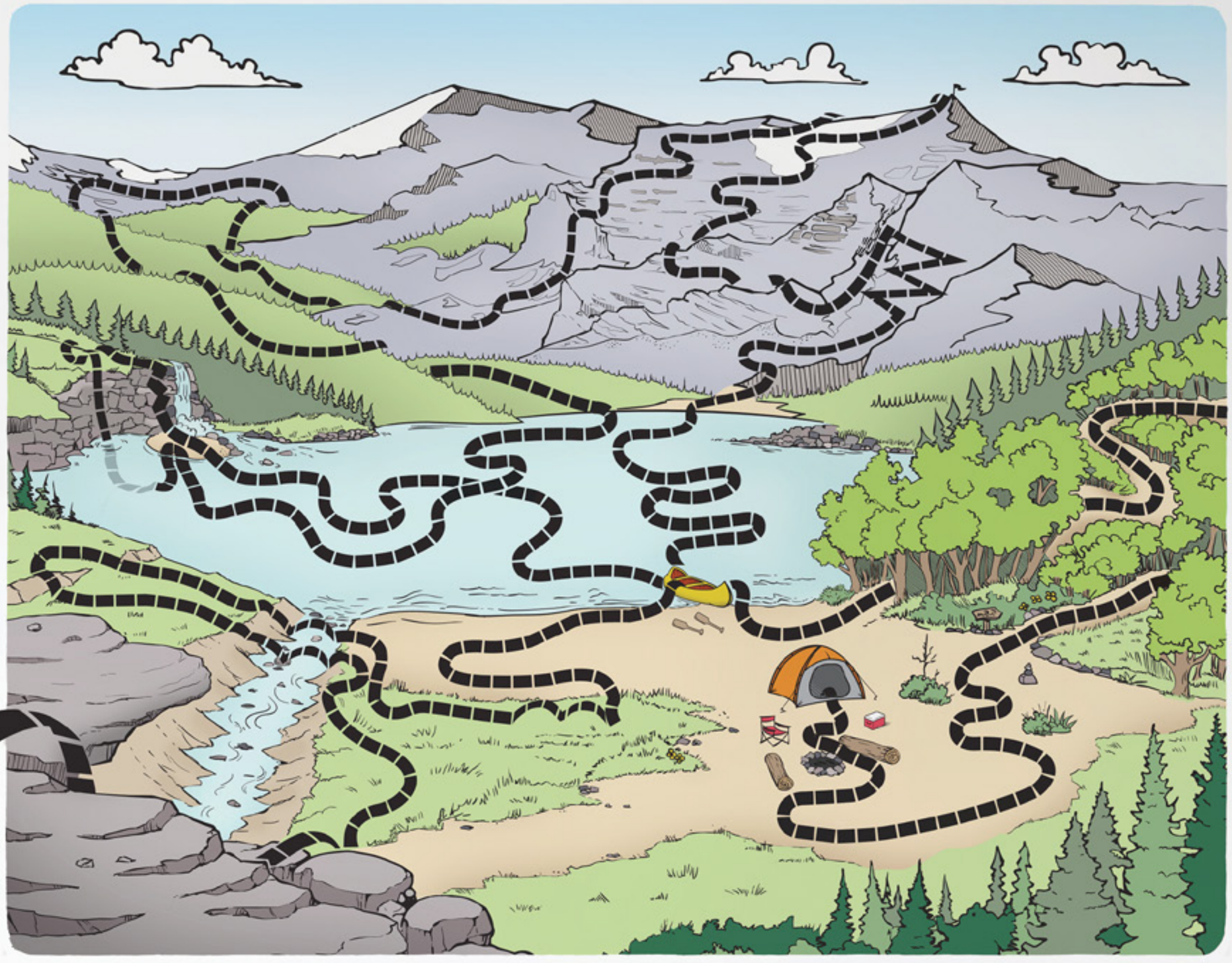
Above: Along to the Upper Tremont Road.
Pages 29-30: Miry Ridge Trail.
Pages 31-32: Lower Lynn Camp Falls.
Pages 33-34: Cascades in winter.
Pages 35-36: Spring Growth on Lynn Camp Prong Trail.

Getting There: From the Townsend, TN "Y" intersection, turn right on to Laurel Creek Road. after about a quarter mile, turn left to Tremont Road. Pass the ranger station and Tremont Institute after 2 miles, and continue the last 3.1 miles on the gravel Upper Tremont Road to the parking area.

Books: Hiking Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Maps: Trails Illustrated Great Smoky Mountains National Park

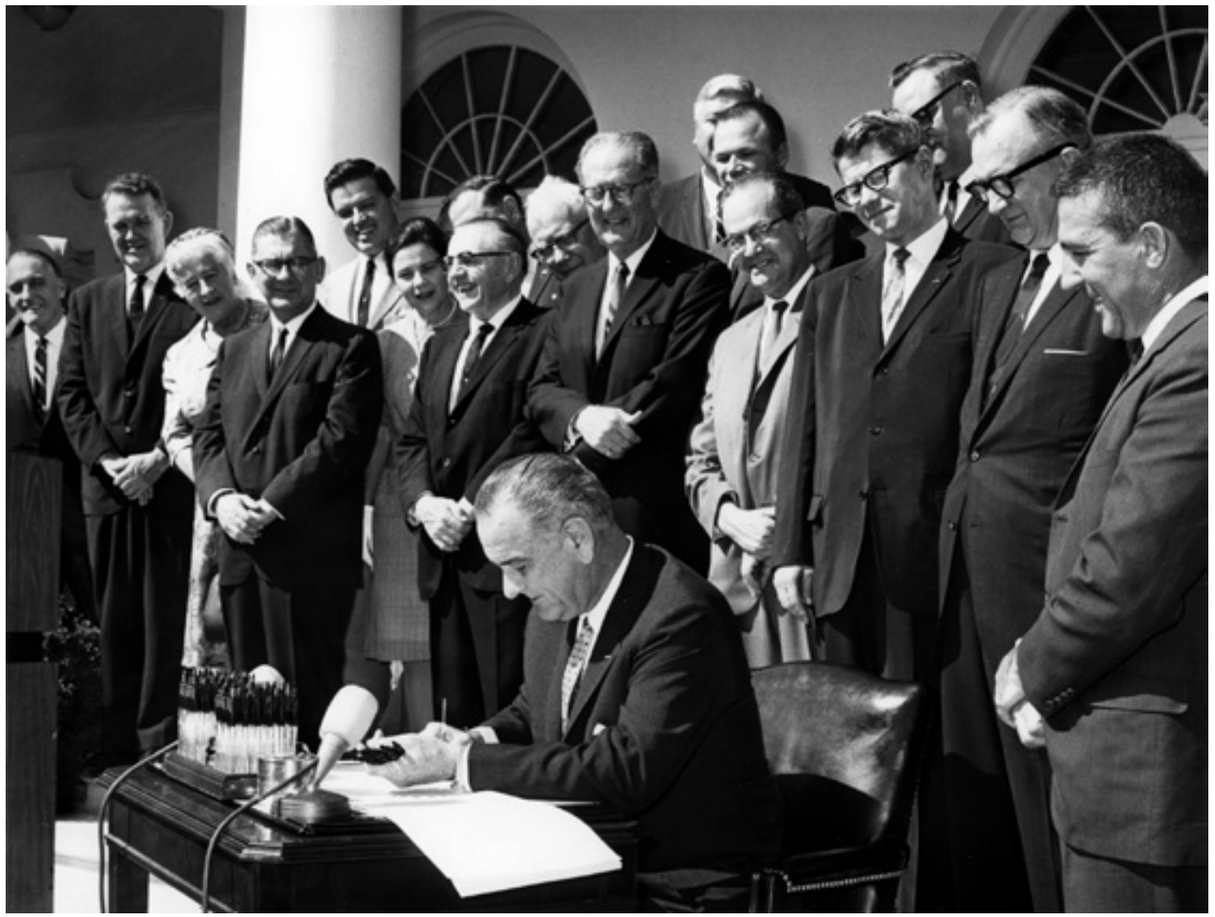
Best time to go: Late March through Late May, or Late October/Early November for autumn colors.



The Wilderness Act of 1964

A stellar environmental law shines brightly on its 50th anniversary

By John Riha



Next time you're hiking or backpacking in a gorgeous, pristine wilderness area, take a moment to give thanks to Howard Zahniser.

Bespectacled, lumpy, dressed in a tie, wearing a voluminous overcoat and carrying a small suitcase, Howard Zahniser looked every bit like a 1940s door-to-door salesman.

In fact, he was a fierce champion of the early environmental movement. That suitcase was filled with scientific journals and the scholarly writings of Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall, and even his overcoat was specially tailored with huge interior pockets to carry the overflow of books and educational materials needed to support his dream of wilderness protection.

An employee of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Zahniser left his federal job in 1945 to become the executive secretary of The Wilderness Society. At the time this was an extraordinary leap of faith—being an environmental activist in the 1940s was a fringe activity, and a not-so-great paying one at that.

But Zahniser had a vision, a determination to protect the nation's last remaining wild places from unchecked development and exploitation. He knew that meaningful protections—those with real teeth in them—would only come from a federal law passed by Congress and signed by the president. And he knew passing such a bill wouldn't be easy.

The odds were stacked against him. His efforts were pitted against huge timber, mining, and agricultural interests who were loathe to have any natural resources placed beyond their reach. Even the U.S. Forest Service balked at the idea of relinquishing control over the nation's public lands.

He might have been facing headwinds, but Zahniser had the dogged perseverance of a true believer—and he was convinced that the nation's moral fortitude was to be found in its wild places.

"To know the wilderness is to know a profound humility," wrote Zahniser in 1956, "to recognize one's littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness, and responsibility."

Left: President Lyndon Johnson signing the Wilderness Act into law.
Below: Howard Zahniser.

To know the wilderness is to know a profound humility, to recognize one's littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness, and responsibility.

- Harold Zahniser

Zahniser drafted some 65 versions of a comprehensive wilderness bill over a period of nine long years, artfully crafting the language to make the bill palatable to senators and representatives of every party, and personally lobbying every member of Congress to vote for it. Eventually, they did, with the House passing the measure 373 to 1 in a display of bi-partisanship that's stunning by today's contentious standards.

With legalese that was both simple and elegant, Zahniser's bill described wilderness as "...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man..."

In September of 1964 President Lyndon Johnson signed The Wilderness Act into law while seated outside in the sunny Rose Garden. The bill, said Johnson during the signing ceremony, "...is in the highest tradition of our heritage as conservators as well as users of America's bountiful natural endowments."

Ironically, Howard Zahniser never lived to see the signing—he died four months before the bill was signed.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 is an extraordinary document that to this day is the inspirational bedrock of environmental legislation. It was the first law of its kind in the world to specifically describe and protect wilderness, and since its inception has served as the model for other nations to create legal protections for rare, virginal landscapes.

The original bill set aside 9.1 million acres of wild and scenic land in 13 states, and included some of our most-cherished wilderness areas: The Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, the Boundary

Left: John Riha, Trinity Alps.

areas. Over the past 50 years, grassroots advocacy groups have used the Wilderness Act to shepherd an additional 100 million acres into the NWPS.

"Its an incredibly important tool that enables people to participate in the democratic process," says Michael Matz, Director of U.S. Public Lands for the Pew Charitable Trusts, an arm of the Pew organization that helps citizen groups put wilderness proposals before Congress.

"These days people feel that government only serves the special interests, but through the Wilderness Act we have the ability to make democracy work for us," says Matz. "People can rally around places that are special to them, build local support among city councils, county commissioners, and various businesses, and ultimately we can protect those places permanently."

Today the National Wilderness Preservation System includes 758 individual wilderness areas that range in size from Florida's Pelican Island (5.5 acres) to Alaska's mammoth Wrangell-Saint Elias Wilderness—a protected area of more than 9 million acres that's the largest official wilderness in the U.S.

Wilderness areas offer spectacular opportunities for hiking and backpacking in some of the nation's most primitive, original ecosystems—some have remained unchanged for millions of years. Rare

Waters Canoe Area in Minnesota, and the Ansel Adams Wilderness in California.

The protections were some of the strongest ever written: motorized and mechanized vehicles of any kind were forbidden, as were logging operations, new grazing and mining activities, road building, and any kind of development. Wilderness would remain wild and unfettered in perpetuity for future generations to explore and enjoy.

The heart and soul of the Act was the formation of the National Wilderness Preservation System, a management plan that provided a way for citizens to identify, recommend, and eventually place before Congress proposals for new wilderness

animal and plant species can be found, as can some of North America's purest rivers and streams. The nation's most famous hiking trails route through many wilderness areas: The Appalachian Trail traverses 25 wilderness areas; the Continental Divide Trail winds through 26; and the Pacific Crest crosses a soul-satisfying 48.

Over the last several decades, however, wilderness designations have slowed considerably as issues and politics become more complex and consensus harder to come by. The Omnibus Public Land Management Act signed into law by President Obama in 2009 added another 2 million acres in nine states into the NWPS, the biggest expansion of wilderness in 25 years.

Currently, 19 wilderness bills are pending before Congress. In a sign of hope that the Congressional logjam is easing, the 32,557-acre Sleeping Bear Dunes Wilderness in Michigan was just added to the NWPS in March of this year.

But ensuring that the last remaining wild areas are given their due protection is a never-ending battle. Currently in Congress are no less than seven bills that aim to reduce or strip away protections for millions of acres of federal lands, such as allowing drilling in the Artic National Wildlife Refuge and opening up wilderness areas to road building for "recreational" purposes.

Add the fact that some 100 million acres of public lands under federal oversight currently do not have meaningful protections and are coveted by developers, gas and oil drillers, fracking companies, and timber corporations.

"It's becoming increasingly obvious that protecting wilderness for the next 50 years requires us to go beyond setting aside the most beautiful or pristine remote places," says Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. "We've discovered how important it is to keep complete, functioning ecosystems viable. It's impossible to make a wilderness area too large, but all too easy to create one that is too small.

"The hard work and dedication of so many people over the past 50 years to protect wild places gives me confidence that we can meet the challenges of the coming decades and secure the legacy of the Wilderness Act for generations to come."

Howard Zahniser would certainly agree. In the essay "Wilderness Forever," he wrote: "We are not fighting progress. We are making it. We are not dealing with a vanishing wilderness. We are working for a wilderness forever."

WILDERNESS RESOURCES:

Wilderness50th.org
A site devoted to celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of The Wilderness Act, and an information clearinghouse for The National Wilderness Conference, Oct. 15-19, Albuquerque, NM.

The Wilderness Society
An American conservation organization dedicated to raising awareness, highlighting important legislation, and encouraging stewardship and restoration of public lands and wilderness areas.

Wilderness.net
A site sponsored by the University of Montana that provides educational materials and interagency news for the federal offices that oversee wilderness areas (U.S. Forest Service; National Park Service; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management).

The Wilderness Institute
An organization that provides teambuilding and leadership programs through outdoor adventure experiences, and specializes in events and programs for wheelchair participants and wounded veterans.

The Wilderness Land Trust
Helps protect wilderness areas by acquiring private lands that are within wilderness designations and transferring those lands to the Wilderness Protection System.

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The Antiquities Act

Wilderness areas are the gold standard of protection under federal law, but there are various other types of protections for public lands, including national parks, national wildlife refuges, and national monuments like California's Giant Sequoia National Park and the Statue of Liberty.

Designating national monuments is a special power granted to the President via the Antiquities Act of 1909. If Congress becomes gridlocked over a wilderness designation or is simply too bogged down to act on anything, the President can sidestep the legislative branch to designate an area or specific treasure as a national monument. The Antiquities Act is a right exercised by every U.S. president over the past 100 years with the exception of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush.

The first use of the Act was by President Teddy Roosevelt, who in 1906 declared Devil's Tower in Wyoming a National Monument. More recently, President Obama designated the Chimney Rock National Monument in Colorado and Cesar E. Chavez National Monument in California.

Bills that would eliminate the Antiquities Act and the President's ability to designate monuments are constantly introduced to Congress. Opponents of the Act challenge the idea that the President can step outside the bounds of Congressional approval to protect certain areas. Over the years, the Antiquities Act has acquired a reputation as a political hot potato, but the chances of the Act ever being repealed are slim.

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Technology on the Trail

By Paul Magnanti

Sunscreen. Duct tape. Extra food and water. Some warm clothing. Rain gear.

Some of the typical gear and equipment suggested for most hikers and backpackers.

And in the early 21st century, another item to bring and suggested by many? Interactive technology: Be it mobile devices, a SPOT or similar.

Technology has always been with us in the backcountry: Nylon tents weigh a fraction of the canvas tents used at an earlier time, shirts wick away sweat and help keep us dry and warm and small stoves heat up our hot chocolate rather quickly and with a lot less fuss than a campfire ever could.

Interactive technology in the backcountry is a relatively new concept.

With a five ounce or so device, a backpacker can make a phone call, check the weather, post photos live on Facebook, get GPS coordinates and look at maps.

But interactive technology is changing the view of wilderness and how we enjoy it.

The changes are perhaps neither good nor bad. They are simply changes.

But the changes are different.

The Gear

Interactive technological devices are becoming de facto mandatory gear.

In many reasons it is easy to see why: They are light, functional and reasonably affordable.

On longer journeys especially, they are a way to stay connected easily in town.

Pay phones have joined the California Condors on the endangered species list and are almost as rare as a Sasquatch sighting. And emailing, posting updates to family and friends and correspondence in general is much easier with a personal smart device than waiting in queue for limited time at a library.

But more gear means more complexity and weight.

Want to communicate more so than just in town? More batteries are needed. Solar panels may be brought to charge up your devices while in the backcountry. Time is spent looking for an electric outlet at the out-of-the-way hunter's camp in Montana. And more can go wrong with the equipment.

The adage of *"Simplify. Simplify. Simplify."* is turned on its head.

Finding the balance between enough gear to perform a task and taking too much that the gear becomes a burden is the quandary all backcountry travelers face.

Deciding the how much to take in the form of electronics is no different.

The Backcountry Experience

Looking at a map, taking a compass bearing and plotting a course. Hallmarks of a proficient backcountry navigator.

Even on something such as the well-marked Appalachian Trail, being able to read a map or consult a data book to see what is up the trail is something a competent outdoors person would do.

Or used to be.

Electronics has changed the nature of the trail experience in many ways. Following a pre-defined set of waypoints on a GPS or using app on an iPhone with pre-loaded maps and data points is how many of the trails are experienced.

Easier to navigate, but perhaps more of a pre-defined paint-by-the-numbers experience.

Where hiking a trail or route is more about ticking off goals and less about seeing what may be "beyond that next turning of the canyon walls."

These tools are useful. And I've certainly used a form of data points in some of my wilderness travels.

But should a pre-defined path exclusively be the path everyone follows?

Impact upon others

The choices people make to bring interactive electronics into the backcountry can have an effect upon others too.

Take an off-trail route to an obscure alpine lake. Bask in the beauty of the mountains above and the valley below. And hear the chatter of a person saying "Guess where I am?!?!?!?"

A scenario that happens fairly often now.

A choice to stay connected is a choice made by people. But their choice should not imposed upon others as well.

Interactive electronics are going to be in the backcountry. But perhaps it is time to set some standards and etiquette around their use.

If a person decided they want to make a phone call, treating it like going to the bathroom may be a very good form of etiquette: Discreetly, quietly and off to the side where people cannot see you.

Societal Expectations

With the increased ubiquity of technology, and corresponding accessibility, there is a societal expectation that a 24/7 connection is a given. Where a person can be reached at all times.

In corporate America, the line between work time and leisure time is blurred. Nearly half of all adults in check their email while on vacation. There is an expectation that someone will check in with the office even on their free time.

In other words, merely being out in a canyon or in the mountains is not a reason to be off the grid.

As accessibility and connectivity increases in the years ahead, a person may be in the wilderness, but not experiencing, as Thoreau phrased it, "wildness".

Calling in for a team meeting while on the banks of Lost Lake is something that may seem amusing at first but will probably be more common.

Continuous connectivity will change, for many people, the backcountry experience more into something resembling an outing at the local park. Lovely and pretty but not exactly wild.

And for those want to experience a bit of wildness? A person may have to make the choice between earning a paycheck or being disconnected. Enjoying Lost Lake in solitude or while hearing about quarterly goals.

And it is not just in the business world. There is an undercurrent of being foolhardy if a person decides to not be connected. The person is irresponsible, selfish, and reckless. If a person does not decide to check in every day are they now, or will be, considered an irresponsible adult?

If being able to check in with the spouse, family or friends allows a person give the people back home a sense of well-being, and allows for backpacking regularly, that is a good thing.

But should it become a societal expectation for everyone?

Final Words

Interactive technology in the backcountry is here. It is not going away. A person cannot wish interactive technology to disappear no more than we can easily have pristine wilderness everywhere again.

What we can do is decide how we use, implement and expect technology to function in the backcountry.

Do we want to use technology as an adjunct to our experience? Another tool to perhaps make the journey easier?

Or rather than an adjunct, is technology to decide the experience itself? Rather than a way to enjoy the wild, the outdoors becomes merely another item on our daily to-do list. Go grocery shopping, attend a company meeting and bag that peak. All while still being able to function in our modern, urban environment.

Technology is a tool. And like all tools we must decide wisely how we wish to use it.

A final thought: This comic was drawn in 1997, but is perhaps more prescient now.

Happy Trails!

Lost and Found on the Kalalau Trail

Location: Kauai, Hawai'i

by Sarah D. Tiedemann

I pride myself on being overly prepared. I know I can't prepare for everything, but I certainly try to. I thought I was prepared for the Kalalau Trail in Kauai. I screwed up big time.

I lived in Hawai'i for many years and my husband Nick has never been. As soon as we were able, we booked our trip. Upon researching possible destinations and hikes, Nick set his hooks into the Kalalau Trail. It's a life list hike – you're rewarded with amazing views and the ocean by your side. The trail climbs 11 miles in and out of valleys, eventually ending at an inaccessible (to most) beach. Nick and I have hiked upwards of 15 miles in one day, but those 11 miles were said to be grueling. This would be my first overnight trip and the destination seemed perfect.

I tore through our gear closet, searching for everything we would need to complete the hike. I purchased some things, adding to the gear pile for months before our trip. I thought of every contingency: I read a ton of trip reports, looked at countless maps, and knew where we could find water. I knew the dangers of the trail: no cell phone service and steep drop-offs (there is even a portion of trail called "crawlers ledge"). I went as far as purchasing a personal locator beacon for emergencies. I mailed food and camping gear to our accommodations so we didn't have to travel with everything. I was hesitant, but I chalked it up to inexperience. I was certain I had thought of everything.

Two weeks before our departure, I realized that we didn't have permits. We were so busy preparing for the rest of the trip that we overlooked it. This is a popular trail with limited permits available, so I knew we might not be successful. Our inter-island flights were already booked and as such we had a specific window of time in which we could hike. We ended up changing our inter-island flights to accommodate permit availability. Our first mistake was forgetting the permits and our second mistake quickly followed – the only permits that were available had us hiking a mere day and a half after an 11 hour flight.

We made it to Kauai without a problem. We were having a difficult time adjusting to the time difference and exhausted from traveling so we didn't set out for the trailhead until about noon. There is a campsite, Hanakoa, about 6 miles in. We figured we'd make it there before nightfall without issue and hike the rest of the way the following day. Two nights at Kalalau Beach still sounded amazing.

We reached the trailhead, our backs heavy with roughly 30 pounds apiece. About a quarter of a mile in, as promised, there were already spectacular views. The beach was to the right, the great Pacific Ocean in front, and the valleys we'd be required to traverse lay out before us. To say we were in awe would be an understatement.

While reading about the trail, people complained about the humidity again and again. I thought hikers were exaggerating, but they unfortunately weren't. The

Above: All smiles at the quarter mile marker.
Previous Page: The valleys laid out before you.

humidity was horrendous and sucked the energy right out of you. The times of shade were few and far between. I was hot and uncomfortable and I knew the day would be long and arduous.

The contrast between the red soil of the trail, the lush, green valleys, and deep blue ocean was magnificent. The first two miles of the trail were steep, only leveling out occasionally to give your calves a break. Along the trail there were numerous helicopter landing sites, a reminder of how dangerous it can be (and how strict they are about permits – we've heard many stories of rangers being brought onto the trail via helicopter to give people tickets). Our first stream crossing was a blessing – I took a much needed break to cool off.

We passed many people on the trail, but once we hit Hanakāpī'ai Beach at mile 2 it was apparent how popular the path was. It was here that I started getting cold feet about the whole thing. I had never been out on an overnight before, I was run ragged from all of the traveling, and I wasn't feeling confident. Nick and I had a bit of a spat as we continued on the trail – I wanted to turn back and he wanted to continue. The trail was a lot more challenging than I had imaged, and something just didn't feel right. I felt as if I shouldn't be there. The discussion continued as we started following a stream bed. I had reserved to suck it up and continue on. As I'm telling myself "you've got this", I slipped and twisted my ankle.

Above: The crowd at Hanakapi'ai Beach.
Right: The contrasts seem otherworldly.

I could walk on it, but it was painful. At this point, we were roughly four miles in, with another two to go until we reached the campsite. We would continue on – the hardest part of the trail was behind us, we were passed the halfway point, and if we turned around we'd be hiking in the dark. We figured if my ankle was bad in the morning we could flag down a passing boat (the Nāpali coastline is very popular for sightseeing) and hitch a ride out. It was slow going, but we were making progress.

Nick started breaking down. He was upset with himself for not listening to me and turning around when I asked. As my husband, of course, he felt the responsibility of getting me safely to our destination and he was overwhelmed. He was shutting down and becoming agitated – his first mistake. We crossed streams numerous times, not stopping to collect our thoughts or have a bite to eat. We were feeling vulnerable in a strange place 5,000 miles away from home. We had to make it to the campsite before dark.

We then walked up to a 300 foot waterfall. There was no longer a discernible trail. This is the stuff that movies are made of – here we are, dwarfed by this massive waterfall, any thoughts or vocalizations drowned out by the sound of water gushing from its top. Nick frantically ran around looking for the trail, but I stayed put. It was obvious to me that there was

A reminder to watch your footing


Hanakapi’ai Beach


Hanakapi’ai falls, our dead end

no trail. We were at a dead end. Over and over I told Nick there was no trail – partly to have Nick stop wasting time, partly to allow myself to come to terms with what was happening. Right on cue, it started raining. There was nowhere to camp. The bulk of the trail was stream (the area is notorious for flash floods) and cliff side. There was no way I was camping on the beach we passed – it didn't seem safe to me. It was 5:30 in the evening, there was no campground, and we were (to put it lightly) screwed.

We saw a group of three people and Nick asked them where the Kalalau Trail was. One pointed behind us and responded "a few miles that way." I couldn't believe it – after all the research I had done, all of the maps I had studied – we missed the trail junction. In the midst of our disagreement, we didn't realize we weren't supposed to be following a stream, we were supposed to be cliff side. It never occurred to us that when hikers we passed said "You're almost at the falls!" that we were on the wrong trail. I thought they were confused.

I'm unsure of what number mistake I'm on here, but we made the worst mistake possible – we started panicking. Nick never panics and I knew we were in over our heads. I'm not sure I've ever been so frightened – I knew we'd be hiking in the dark on the most gnarly part of the trail. The group we had met was long gone and we were on our own. In my panic, I started making mistakes. Stream crossings were no longer calculated but increasingly sloppy. I fell many times, taking blows to my shins and countless baths I hadn't intended on taking. At one crossing, I couldn't move; I was paralyzed with fear. Nick was pleading with me to get up and I snapped out of it, all the while begging him to call ahead to the group and ask them to wait for us. Within a few moments, Nick fell. I instinctually screamed. If Nick couldn't handle this, how on earth could I? Our fellow trail companions didn't respond to the blood curling scream I let out. We were truly alone.

We ended up catching up to the group at another stream crossing. I was so relieved – I was going to follow them the whole way back. We told them our situation and they waited for us at every turn. They assisted Nick getting me over numerous stream crossings, stopping my fall more than once.

We soon learned their names – Casey, who seemed to have lived a thousand different lives and bore an uncanny resemblance in demeanor to Nick's cousin Drew; Yukiah, a woman from South Africa; and Olivier, a man from the Alps. When Nick and I realized we didn't have to do this on our own, our nerves were instantly soothed. The duty was now shared – it was everyone's responsibility to look out for the group's safety. Casey noticed my fear and said something that really helped: in situations like these, people panic but fail to realize that nothing has changed. Only the goal and your perception has changed. I should mention here that Casey was wearing a Jurassic Park tee shirt, and I instantly liked him. They all lived in Kilauea, literally on the same street as

Above: Yukiah and Olivier taking a break.

where we were staying. They'd hiked the trail numerous times so we felt as though we were in good hands. We spoke on so many topics, some incredibly personal, and definitely connected with the group on a level we never thought was possible on the trail. Who knows where the fear would have lead us if we hadn't met them. We recognize that we might not have such a benign story to tell.

When we reached the beach, Nick tried to persuade me to set up camp, gently asking if we could hike the rest of the way the next day. There was no way – I felt every inch of my being screaming to get the hell out of there. He would have continued but I didn't have it in me. I felt as though it just wasn't meant to be and we were lucky to have even made it to this point relatively unscathed.

The group began searching for another member of their party. As it turns out, we passed a man on our way in (with him on his way out) matching his description. We pressed on and found Scott (who we would later call the mad scientist – he at one time worked for NASA) and continued together.

Night fell and we pulled out our headlamps. They had one between the four of them and Nick and I each had our own. We divvied them up and walked single file in the dark. Yukiah and I pressed ahead and led the group – we both wanted out. I was feeling incredibly queasy

because we hadn't eaten since breakfast. Every time we saw a trail marker we rejoiced. We walked for over an hour in the dark until we finally emerged from the woods. I wanted to kiss the ground – we made it out! Their night wasn't over and we were invited, but we were spent. We needed food immediately and a shower was long overdue. At the end of the day, we ended up hiking about 9.5 miles. The entire trail was 11. I know the mistakes we made and I trust we won't be making them again. Most importantly, I learned of the kindness of strangers.

Of Casey, Yukiah, Olivier, and Scott: When I think of the Kalalau, I won't think of failure or a lost opportunity, but of them. The hike was a disaster but they were the silver lining. I feel as though we shared an experience so great that we've found lifelong friends. I know our chance meeting was meant to be and I look forward to our paths crossing again. We'll be telling our children someday about the four strangers that looked out for us on one of the most dangerous trails in the country. Thank you guys for the most memorable hike I've ever had.

Left: Casey asked us to take this picture so he could send it to his mom so she knew he was okay.
Below: Olivier, Scott, Yukiah, and Casey at the falls. Photo courtesy of Scott Brown.

The sun setting on our day

An infrequent shady area

Like a scene from Jurassic Park

The stream leading to the ocean at Hanakapi'ai Beach

Like a scene from Jurassic Park

Best Time to Go: It tends to rain here a lot. The really rainy season is November- February, so it's best to avoid that time frame.

Getting There: On the island of Kauai, take highway 560 west until the highway ends at the trailhead.

Information: It is imperative to plan ahead- permits go fast, sometimes a year in advance. Be aware of flash flooding and steep drop offs. There are numerous stream crossings that can become impassable during rain. Leptospirosis can be present in the water- filter everything and do not swim with open cuts.

Maps: Official Map and Brochure

Books: Hiking Kauai, the Garden Isle by Robert Smith

Sea To Summit
Spark SPI Sleeping Bag

Review by Ted Ehrlich

As the summer season gets into full swing, I start whittling down my shoulder season gear weight and swapping in my lighter summer gear. After a few years of trial and error, I feel like most of my gear is right on what I need. However, there's always something newer and better out there, and this year, Sea To Summit put out a new line of ultralight bags. The Spark line of bags combines some of the newest materials currently being used in the industry to create one of the lightest bags on the market, yet the series is still sized to fit the average user.

In the past, I've been very skeptical of some ultralight bags. Most of the time, the lightness is achieved by not living up to their warmth ratings and/or being cut too slim for a comfortable night's sleep unless you're small. I'm not considered overweight, but I normally struggle to find lightweight bags that fit my shoulder girth and my legs. Sea To Summit has found the perfect cut for me with the Spark series. While still being a little less roomy than some other mummy bags I've used in the past, it doesn't feel like the bag is too tight to be able to easily get in/out, or shift around at night if needed. I found it very comparable to the regular cut of my Feathered Friends Osprey, and roomier than my older Golite Adrenaline bags. The other worry was that the temperature range wasn't accurate, but the Spark sleeping bags, along with all of Sea To Summit's bags, are EN rated, which ensures that bags are rated to similar standards, with a

Pros: Very light, water resistant down, water resistant Pertex shell , sized well.

Cons: Temperature range of the SPI is limited. (SPII and SPIII are warmer if you need it) Shorter zipper makes getting in and out a little more difficult than bags with a full-length zipper, but it's still manageable. Price.

Rating: ★★★★½

comfort level temp, a lower limit temp, and an extreme temp. These have been adopted from European standards, citing the comfort rating as the temperature at which a standard woman can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed manner. The Lower Limit is the temperature at which a standard man can sleep for eight hours in a curled position without waking. Lastly the Extreme is the minimum temperature at which a standard woman can remain for six hours without risk of death.

The Spark line consists of 3 models; the SPI (46°), SPII (35°), and the SPIII (25°). I decided since I already had a bag that covered the ~30 degree temperature range, and I was interested in getting my pack size and weight down as much as possible for warmer summer trips, I'd go for the Spark SPI, the lightest bag of the series. With a comfort rating of 54°, a lower limit of 46°, and an extreme limit of 23°, it's made for warm weather trips and it is extremely light. At 14.8 ounces for the long in its stuff sack, it's legitimately under a pound, which is remarkable. 7 ounces of that weight is just the down fill, which is on par with other bags in the same temperature

range. I found that the bag I used was at Sea To Summit's claimed weight without the stuff sack. (Measured weight: 13.8 ounces, size long)The other thing that is remarkable is its packed size after it's stuffed into its specially made compression sack. It's the same size as a Nalgene bottle, which is much smaller than my standard summer sleeping bag. The bag is available in both regular (Fits to 6') and long (Fits to 6'7") versions. The listed weight for the regular size Spark SPI is 12.3 ounces.

For testing, I took the bag on two trips to the desert environment of the Colorado Plateau, and several trips in the Rocky Mountains at high elevation.

In Bryce Canyon, I was camped at nearly 8500 feet above sea level on a plateau overlooking the Paria watershed. The weather was nice enough for me to warrant using my Mountain Laurel Designs ultralight bivy sack instead of a tent, and I used a regular size Therm-a-Rest Xlite pad as my sleeping pad (R-value of 3.2). The wind picked up a little that night, but I stayed warm with the help of the bivy sack and a jacket as the temps dropped to the upper 30's. The next night on that trip, I stayed lower at around ~5500 feet at the mouth of long canyon along the burr trail. That night was even calmer and warmer, and I stayed warm without the jacket as temps dipped to the lower 40's. After testing

on two more trips, I found that my lower limit where I became uncomfortable was around 40° or so without the bivy sack around the sleeping bag. With the bivy sack and a light fleece jacket, the bag could be pushed to the mid 30's before becoming uncomfortable. All of the testing was done while sleeping on my Therm-a-Rest Xlite. If I was to use a warmer sleeping pad, I might be able to push it a little more, but the Xlite is a good all-around 3 season pad. The sewn through construction will result in cold spots, especially when pushed to its lower limits, and camping with a bivy sack or a lightweight silk liner may help alleviate this.

One of the best features of the bag is the 850 fill power Ultra-Dry Down. This is a process where down has a permanent coating applied to it to help resist moisture, where untreated down will usually absorb water readily and ball up once wet, reducing the warmth of the bag significantly. Even in very dry conditions, sweat while sleeping can still be absorbed by the down, decreasing the warmth slightly. Before the introduction of water resistant down, the waterproofness of the shell material was your only guard against a wet (and cold) bag, but now the shell material doesn't have to be waterproof to keep the down dry, allowing a lighter material to be used with no impact on the usefulness of the bag.

The shell of the bag is also great, using an extremely light and strong 10 denier Pertex Quantum shell that is treated with a DWR (durable water repellant). This is to keep the shell of the bag dryer on the off chance it gets wet, allowing the water to bead up and roll off the bag. The liner is a 15 denier nylon, and I found it to be comfortable against the skin overnight, which is the primary concern for the inner shell. I don't normally camp in wet conditions, but the shell's DWR treatment resists water well. One issue that ultralight fabrics suffer is down shedding, and I have found this to be a non-issue with this bag.

The inner dimensions for the long size bag (60" around the shoulders, 52" around the waist, & 37" around the feet) is slightly skinner than my Feathered Friends Osprey in the hips, but wasn't noticeable in use. For comparison, my shoulder girth is around 54 inches lying flat and was the only dimension that was close on me. However, I still had room for a light layer or two like the 100 weight fleece I used on the windy night in Bryce Canyon. The regular length Spark SPI features a slightly tighter fit compared to the long, with the shoulder / hip / foot measurements coming in at 57"/ 50"/ 35".

Because this is a minimalist bag, it features a 1/3 length zipper and no draft tube. However, Sea To Summit gave the bag a very efficient hood design that cinches up well to help seal out drafts and keep your heat in. A jacket can always be used in a pinch for a makeshift draft tube, although wearing the jacket will probably keep you warmer and less drafty than using it as a draft tube. The 1/3 length zipper makes it a little harder to get into, but not overly so, and actually helps the bag stay a little warmer since the longer the zipper, the larger a cold spot is potentially there along your side unless you have a zipper draft tube, which this bag does not.


Spark
850+ Loft


Spark SP1


Spark SP1
EN13537 Temperature Rating
12°C | 54°F
comfort
8°C | 46°F
lower limit
-5°C | 23°F
extreme
Designed by Sea to Summit in Perth, Australia
Made in China
ASP1-L200L-UD

Conclusion

The bag works very well for a warm weather bag, and as long as you are within the specified temperature rating, it does the job of keeping you warm with a very minimal weight and size penalty. The Ultra-Dry Down is a great safety feature in case the bag gets dropped in the stream or your shelter lets some rain in. The only real con I found was the price. I got it on sale for $256, which is a bit on the high side for a warm weather bag, but only because of the high end materials used in the construction. In comparison, the price is on par or below other sleeping bags with similar construction from Western Mountaineering, Feathered Friends, Brooks Range, and Sierra Designs.

Overall: ★★★★½ – Very Good

The Sea To Summit Spark SPI Retails for about $300. You can check it out Here at Backcountry, REI, and at CampSaver.

A Season with Tenkara

by Clayton Mauritzen

In the summer of 2013, I stood along the bank of the White River, deep in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, with a broken rod in my hands. Too new to tenkara, I spent the day-and-a-half since the trailhead untying bewilderingly complex wind knots and watching as my line stalled in the air. Then on the White River, in a burst of frustrated optimism, I finally resolved my problems with sharp, whip-like cast. It at last achieved some degree of accuracy and distance – until, moments later, the flection of the rod caused one of its middle sections to snap with a soft crack.

I was introduced to fly fishing nearly a decade ago, but until the previous spring, I had not fished seriously for many years. In the intervening time, my outdoor pursuits became preoccupied with backcountry travel, and in an effort to merge backpacking and fly fishing, I began researching tenkara.

Intrigued by the concept of fishing a rig closer to Izaak Walton than Norman Maclean, the simplicity of the approach appealed to my sensibilities for backcountry travel. My focus for the last several years had been speed and distance, but I soon found myself disenchanted with merely viewing majestic scenery as I passed on. Tenkara – simple and light – promised an opportunity to add to those experiences without any serious penalty in weight gained or mileage lost.

So, I bought an Ayu Series II from TenkaraUSA and committed myself to using nothing but tenkara for the rest of the season. I wanted to understand the benefits and the limits of the approach.

With the addition of some level line and a minimalist fly box, the entire rig weighed less than my digital camera. By then, it was July and only a few days before my first extended trip of the summer through the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. A major deadline for work had consumed my time, and I was forced to learn the new casting rhythm on the trip itself. Thus, a day-and-a-half later, I stood along the bank of the White River with my palms upturned, as if in supplication, staring dumbly at a broken rod.

By the time we arrived at the South Fork of the Flathead River the following day, I had moved from cursing and blame to acceptance. Then, my fishing buddy offered an old trick for a field repair – cut green, flexible willow sections and splint the rod, wrapping them tightly across the break. The result was more care on my part and a wounded rod that actually fished. In the next two days, my rhythm and timing improved so that, lopsided though it was, I caught more fish on the South Fork and its tributaries than I had any right to catch.

Left: Headwaters of the White River
Previous Page: Northern Glacier National Park Lake.

Far Left: South Fork of the Flathead
Left: Field Repair of the Ayu II .

> The main advantage is its simplicity. But, the benefits of tenkara go well beyond simple: delicate presentations with the light line, ability to hold the line off the water and a fly in place over difficult currents, precise casting, and greater control of the fly just to name a few. (Tenkara USA)

Indeed, an afternoon on one of those tributaries continues to shine in memory. It was a moment of convergence: my cast achieved a more delicate rhythm; the complex progressions of pools, runs, and riffles cohered within my mind; twelve- and fourteen-inch westslope cutthroat fought more vigorously than twenty-inch rainbows; and the evening sun gilded the trees above the canyon.

The afternoon was an abrogation of the fishless days that began the trip. As we slowly worked the water, the wounded rod pulsed in my hand, casting dries to native cutthroat. In memory, I have often returned to the tranquil excitement of that afternoon, to wild trout rolling on the surface of the waters.

After that defining moment of the summer, I made backcountry fishing my priority among outdoor pursuits. By the last days of September, I had fished swiftwater and stillwater in Glacier National Park, the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, the lakes on the Beartooth Plateau, small creeks and big rivers in Yellowstone National Park, stillwater in Jasper, the Gardner and the Gallatin, the Spotted Bear, and the South Fork again.

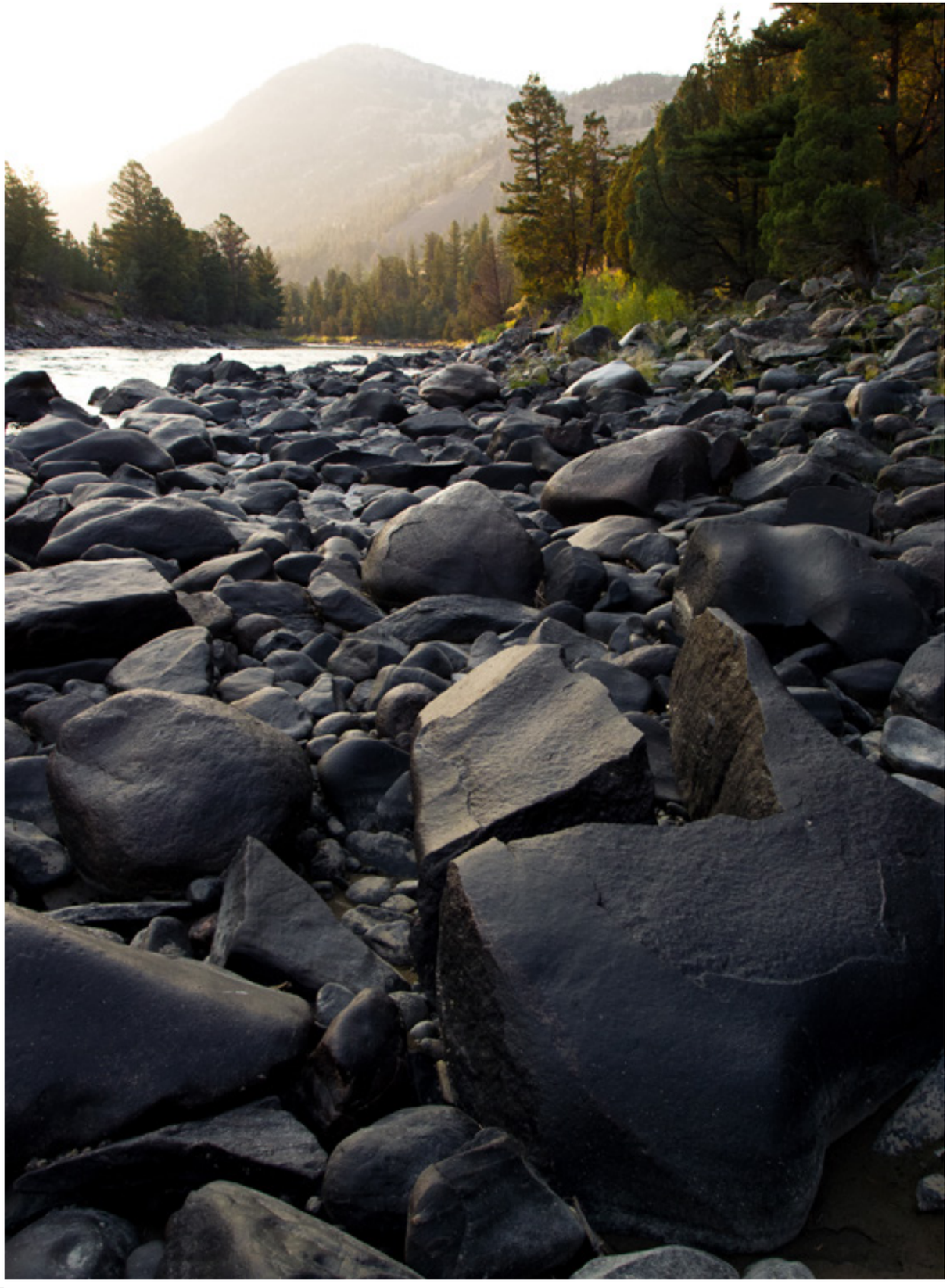
Always, I fished tenkara. I began the season with the Tenkara USA Ayu II – chosen for its capacity to handle big water and big fish without sacrificing utility in smaller pursuits. In September, frustrated with the Ayu's performance in windy conditions – common to rivers and lakes in the West – and its inability to effectively cast larger terrestrials and weighted nymphs, I purchased a Daiwa Kiyose 43MF (technically a keiryu rod, though the distinction is of little significance for the Western backcountry) with the hope that the extended zoom and faster action of the rod would resolve such issues.

After a season in the backcountry with tenkara, I have caught big fish, and I have caught small fish. I have fished small streams and big rivers. I have had days of failure and of success, of joy and of frustration. With it, I have caught brookies, browns, bows, and cutts from less than three inches to more than sixteen. Playing all but the smallest trout delivered quick excitement, and on more than a few occasions my hand shook as I released a big one back into the water.

Brown Trout in Yellowstone National Park - Over 16 In. - Biggest Caught on Tenkara

Fishing a River in Northern Glacier National Park

Yellowstone River in Yellowstone National Park



More than that, though, backcountry fishing has demanded that I rethink my methods and purposes for traveling through wild places. I am no longer obsessed with only accomplishing miles on the trail – though, some days I still am – but I have learned to slow down and understand the smaller, more intimate pieces that accumulate and cohere into the larger whole. Were it not for tenkara, my goals and purposes in the backcountry would have remained overly simple.

Clearly, then, tenkara has value for the backcountry traveler. Yet, (the question I found myself asking throughout the season) what is the length of its utility, especially in comparison to its chief competitor – the four-piece Western rod with a reel and weighted line?

The chief advantage touted by advocates of tenkara is its simplicity. TenkaraUSA, responsible for introducing Japanese fly fishing to the U.S., succinctly expresses this line of reasoning:

> *The main advantage is its simplicity. But, the benefits of tenkara go well beyond simple: delicate presentations with the light line, ability to hold the line off the water and a fly in place over difficult currents, precise casting, and greater control of the fly just to name a few. (Tenkara USA)*

In other words, the simplicity of tenkara is a means to a more enjoyable, more successful fishing experience. Modern fly rigs, so the commentary goes, suffer from an overabundance of equipment. Between the reel (spring-pawl or disc drag?), the line (weight forward, sink-tip, or full-sink?), and fly choices (caddis, stoneflies, mayflies, or terrestrials?), Western fly fishing has become entangled in its own excess. Some tenkara advocates take simplicity so far as to fish only one fly in a handful of variations, relying on presentation and technique to entice fish.

I find two areas wherein this simplicity provides distinct advantages for backcountry travelers. First, reducing fly fishing to only the rod, line, and fly makes it an excellent tool for the emerging angler. It is more than merely removing the reel from the picture. Within Western fly fishing, the reel represents a host of complex tasks such as line management, casting length (which, for the new fly fisher, should rarely extend beyond tenkara's reach anyway), mending, and so forth.

Tenkara, however, dramatically reduces the number of tasks that the beginning angler must simultaneously manage. Instead of asking a beginning fly fisher to do six, seven, or eight tasks at once with relative proficiency, the simplicity of tenkara decreases those demands to three or four. Novices are able to focus on the more productive skills such as casting rhythm and reading water. Thus, as a learning tool, tenkara's simplicity is both elegant and effective. No doubt,

this ease of access accounts in part for tenkara's rapid rise in popularity – and with good reason.

The second distinct advantage of tenkara is for those whose time in the backcountry is focused on considerations other than fishing – high mileage days, packrafting, and other pursuits which make weight a primary consideration. Here, too, tenkara shines. Simplicity directly transfers to lighter weight. Indeed, with a rod, some level line, tippet, and a modestly-stocked fly box, an entire tenkara rig usually weighs less than a lined reel, and the rivers and creeks in many wilderness areas support such a bounty of fish and see so little pressure that one could easily supplement food carried with fresh trout. When fishing one evening on the Beartooth Plateau, for example, I easily caught twenty brook trout in as many minutes. These nonnatives breed so profusely that the limited yearly take of backpackers has no effect on their long-term population.

Yet, as always, simplicity also requires a number of trade-offs. For backcountry fishing in the Northern Rockies, the simplicity of tenkara also means that it has fewer tools available for handling inevitable conditions such as wind, big water and complex currents, and fish holding in deep pools.

Of all my frustrations after a season with tenkara, I found wind to be the most crippling. Wind is, of course, the bane of any fly fisher. Even with heavier lines and faster actions dominating the Western rod market, wind still halts flies and ruins presentations. In the small mountain streams between tight banks – in other words, the circumstances in which tenkara developed in Japan – I rarely had issues, and there tenkara excelled. But often, a typical breeze on an open river or even a small lake meant that I had to work around the wind in ways that limited my opportunities for fish big and small.

In Western rigs, the addition of a reel allows the angler to apply certain techniques, such as sharp stops in the casting rhythm that cause the line to form tighter loops and travel at higher speeds which more effectively resist wind. Conversely, tenkara's casting rhythm relies on larger, more open loops that are slower and far more susceptible to wind. Simply put, tenkara has fewer options in such situations.

Tenkara also faces similar limitations when distance or depth is required. The big waters and large, complex currents in the backcountry of the Northern Rockies require that an angler be able to cast to feeding lanes at close and mid-range. Additionally, fish often hold in deeper, colder water in the high summer – one of the chief seasons for backpacking. In such situations, the casting mechanics of the Western rod with reel have the mechanical advantage.

Brown Trout in Yellowstone National Park

With tenkara, the rod – i.e. its flexible action and leverage – is solely responsible for casting; however, in Western fly fishing, the rod shares this duty by working in tandem with a weighted line. This allows the rod to store energy (called loading) and then transfer it to the line. The application of these forces together is both more complex and more capable of handling the weight required for sinking a fly deeper in the water column. As a result, Western anglers are able to cast split shot, multiple weighted nymphs, and a strike indicator with only a modest degree of difficulty. Yet, casting a typical tenkara rod with anything weighing more than a size 12 beadhead nymph for sinking a fly deep is a significant compromise. Furthermore, these casting dynamics are responsible for the extended reach of Western fly fishing. The loading of the rod by the weighted line enables the caster to strip more line and thus cast farther, whereas tenkara rods simply do not have the reach to cast beyond twenty-five or so feet.

I learned this lesson in physics while fishing the Middle Fork of the Flathead on a warm day. The trout on the near bank were holding deep, but on the far side of the river, below the cliffs where the surface water was cooler, fish were actively rising to feed. Wading was impossible—the water was ten or more feet deep only a few feet from the bank. I needed to be able to cast thirty to forty feet, but with a 13’ rod and a 20’ line, my fly still landed short. In other words, the inherent tradeoffs of tenkara left me skunked.

Simplicity is an elegant – even excellent – goal. However, simplicity for its own sake quickly leads to reductionism. Emphasis on technique and knowledge, over and above equipment, is only pragmatic if such equipment is not necessary for a given situation. What is needed, then, is targeted simplicity. Such simplicity is based upon the goals and purposes of a trip rather than arbitrary metrics of reduction.

For certain fishing conditions, tenkara is ideal. Small streams reduce not only the size of the water, but often the variables as well. In these situations, having less actually allowed me to do more. Similarly, for many backpackers tenkara is ideal. On a thru-hike of the John Muir Trail, for example, a tenkara rod would richly add to the experience with only a small weight penalty.

Yet, for other conditions, the simplicity of tenkara misses the target and becomes reductionist. Simply put, tenkara is poorly matched for the big backcountry waters of the West such as the Yellowstone and the Middle and South Forks of the Flathead. For trips where hours on the water trump miles on the trail, the weight of a fully-rigged rod and reel is well worth the investment in ounces and pounds. Here, though, the Western fly angler would do well to consider the criticisms of the tenkara community. Targeted simplicity may mean carrying additional gear, but it does not justify the majority of what is stocked on the shelves of modern fly shops. As ever, critical simplification is essential.

Thus, at the end of the season, I bought a four-piece, five-weight rod and a spring-pawl reel that will accompany me on future backcountry fishing expeditions. On those trips, the Daiwa Kiyose will come along too – on small streams it provides a compelling complement to the classic five-weight. Even with a spare level line, it adds less than four ounces to my base fishing weight. Moreover, as I plan a traverse of the Continental Divide for late summer – one in which weight and speed are primary considerations – the Kiyose is tentatively on the gear list. We will pass several high mountain lakes stocked with trout, making it possible to supplement our meals with fresh, non-native protein.

Were it not for tenkara, my goals and purposes in the backcountry would have remained overly simple, and I would have missed out on so much of the richness that awaits those who leave the world of asphalt, rubber, and metal for a night in the wilderness. Yet, were I only to fish tenkara on the lakes, rivers, and creeks of the Northern Rockies, my experience as an angler would be overly simplified as well.

The challenge is to find the balance of targeted simplicity, wherein the goals and purposes of a trip define the equipment, rather than the equipment defining those goals and purposes. Nothing more, but nothing less. After a season with tenkara, the balance has clarified, and I have realized a simple truth: Standing along the pristine rivers and streams of the backcountry, dozens of miles from any road and running wild and free, is a grace that does not come easy. There, true simplicity is a world reduced to water, with a fish on the end of a line.

Good Tenkara Water in Yellowstone National Park

GEAR MASH

MSR Insulated Mug

This double-walled mug comes in at just 3.4 ounces and features polypropylene construction with a foam insulating core. 10 ounce capacity and the design ensures easy nesting with most MSR cookware. $10:
Backcountry.com

REI Dash 2 Tent

The lightest 2 person tent in REI's current and all time lineup, the Dash 2 still has 2 doors and 2 vestibules with 29 square feet of interior space. Just under 3lbs and $350:
REI.com

Darn Tough Light Hiker Micro-Crew Sock

A half and half mix of merino wool and nylon with a little Lycra thrown in for a great combination of comfort, dry time, and fit on the trail. Lifetime warranty - $19:
Backcountry.com

GoLite Rush 20L Pack

A multitude of inside and outside storage options for flexibility on your next day hike, with a 3 liter hydration reservoir included. 2 sizes and multiple color options, with 10 liter and 14 liter options also available. 21 ounces & $70:
GoLite.com

Montane Minimus Smock

Protection from rain and wind utilizing waterproof and breathable Pertex Shield+ fabric in a 5 ounce package. Front kangaroo-style pocket, taped seams, and included stuff sack. $200:
CampSaver.com

MSR Alpine Dish Brush & Scraper

This sub 1 ounce tool from MSR keeps your kitchen clean on the trail. Non-stick friendly and a contoured edge for easy access into the corners of your camp cookware. $4:
Amazon.com

Platypus Gravity Works Carbon Element

Add Carbon filtration to your inline or gravity filtration system with this compact solution from Platypus that easily fits in your hand and your pack. Treats up to 300 liters and weighs just over an ounce. $13:
CampSaver.com

Delorme inReach Explorer

Delorme's latest 2-way satellite communicator – Now with stand-alone navigation, waypoint, and routing features. Just under 7 ounces and $380:
REI.com

Sean & Imnaha Canyon Overlook

PHOTO TIPS FROM THE TRAIL

by David Cobb

Since long-distance hiking helped form so much of my photography, here are a few photo tips I picked up from the trail. These tips don't require the use of tripods or fantastic cameras; they are suggestions designed to help improve your composition and use of light, and will affect the overall impact of the photos you take along the trail. I hope you enjoy these tidbits from this ongoing TrailGroove series.

Adding a Person for Scale

Time and again I've watched people return with their images from a backpacking trip and exclaim, "This really doesn't capture how vast this place was." An easy way to capture an area's vastness is to add a living creature. Adding a person (or animal) into the scene gives the viewer a gauge by which to measure the grandeur of a landscape; creating a sense of scale.

When adding a model into the scene, use the "Rule of Thirds" (see the TrailGroove Photo Tip in Issue 10) to frame them in the appropriate area within the setting. The direction the model is looking will create a suggested leading line for the viewer to follow, which can also be used as a compositional tool. Having the model look into the scene or across the frame is usually the best choice compositionally. Also choose your model wisely, if they're wearing a brightly colored jacket like red, yellow, or orange, they'll also stand out more in the frame and have more visual weight to attract the viewer's eye.

By adding a person, the landscape will seem grander and the trees taller; and the viewer's interest will be piqued. They will be able to imagine themselves standing in your image, and that's what ultimately makes for a successful photo.

Above: Smith Rocks Sitting Pose.
Right: Sean Chimneying Tunnel Narrows.
Pages 111-112: Forest Stand.

David Cobb is an avid backpacker and photographer. You can see more of David's images at www.dmcobbphoto.com.

Check out our next issue for more "Photo Tips from the Trail" by David, and be sure to check out previous issues for his other great tips.

Backcountry Cuisine:
Garam Masala Beef Jerky with Lentils

by Cinny Green

Strips of jerky make delicious snacks as well as fabulous stews. Jerky is remarkably simple to create: slice, marinade, and dehydrate strips of meat. The key to texture is in the cut of meat and thickness, and the key to flavor is the marinade. In Backpackers' Ultra Food I have several marinade recipes that are designed to compliment certain ethnic dishes, such as curry, Mexican spice, and Italian red wine. Each jerky can be adapted to more specific tastes. More or less spicy; different dishes; crispy or chewy. However, don't skimp on the quality of meat you purchase. I recommend free-range lean cuts of beef, buffalo, or lamb and cage-free poultry. When you are exercising hard you do not want extra hormones, antibiotics, toxins, and who-knows-what-else in your primary protein. Perhaps call a butcher and see if you can get wild game like venison, elk, or wild turkey.

This jerky recipe is designed to compliment a lentil stew flavored with the Indian spice garam masala, which basically means hot and spicy. For quicker preparation purchase pre-mixed garam masala.

AT HOME: LENTILS

2 cups lentils
1 onion
4-6 garlic cloves
1 lb spinach
1 cup peas
2 cups low-fat chicken broth
2 cups water
1 tbs coconut oil
¾ tsp salt
garam masala seasoning (see below)

Bring lentils, onion, garlic, spinach, peas, broth, water, and oil to a rapid simmer and then reduce the heat to low. Cook 15 minutes. Add onion, garlic, spinach, peas, salt, and garam masala seasoning to taste. Cook another 10 minutes or until lentils are tender. Blend and dehydrate. Remember: Any pureed soup can be dried into "bark" and reconstituted.

AT HOME: GARAM MASALA SEASONING

Combine:
1 tsp chili powder (or to taste)
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp teaspoon ground cumin
1 tsp teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon cayenne (or to taste)
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

It's easy to grind these spices in a coffee grinder and fresh-ground is very aromatic.

AT HOME: GARAM MASALA MARINADE

Combine:
1 small jar red curry paste
1 cup apple cider vinegar
1/2 cup coconut oil
2-inch piece of ginger, chopped
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic, minced
1 small onion, chopped
dash of soy sauce (saltiness to taste)
1 tbs garam masala seasoning (or to taste)

AT HOME: JERKY

2 lbs top round steak

Partially freeze then slice steaks into long, thin strips. Trim and discard all the fat, which can become rancid. If you like a chewy jerky, slice with the grain into 1/4-inch strips. Slice thinner across the grain for a crispier jerky. Place in marinade overnight. The marinade essentially cooks the meat.

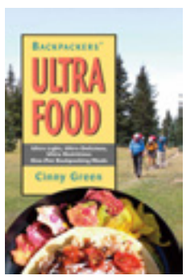
Dehydrate until "cooked" through completely.

ON THE TRAIL

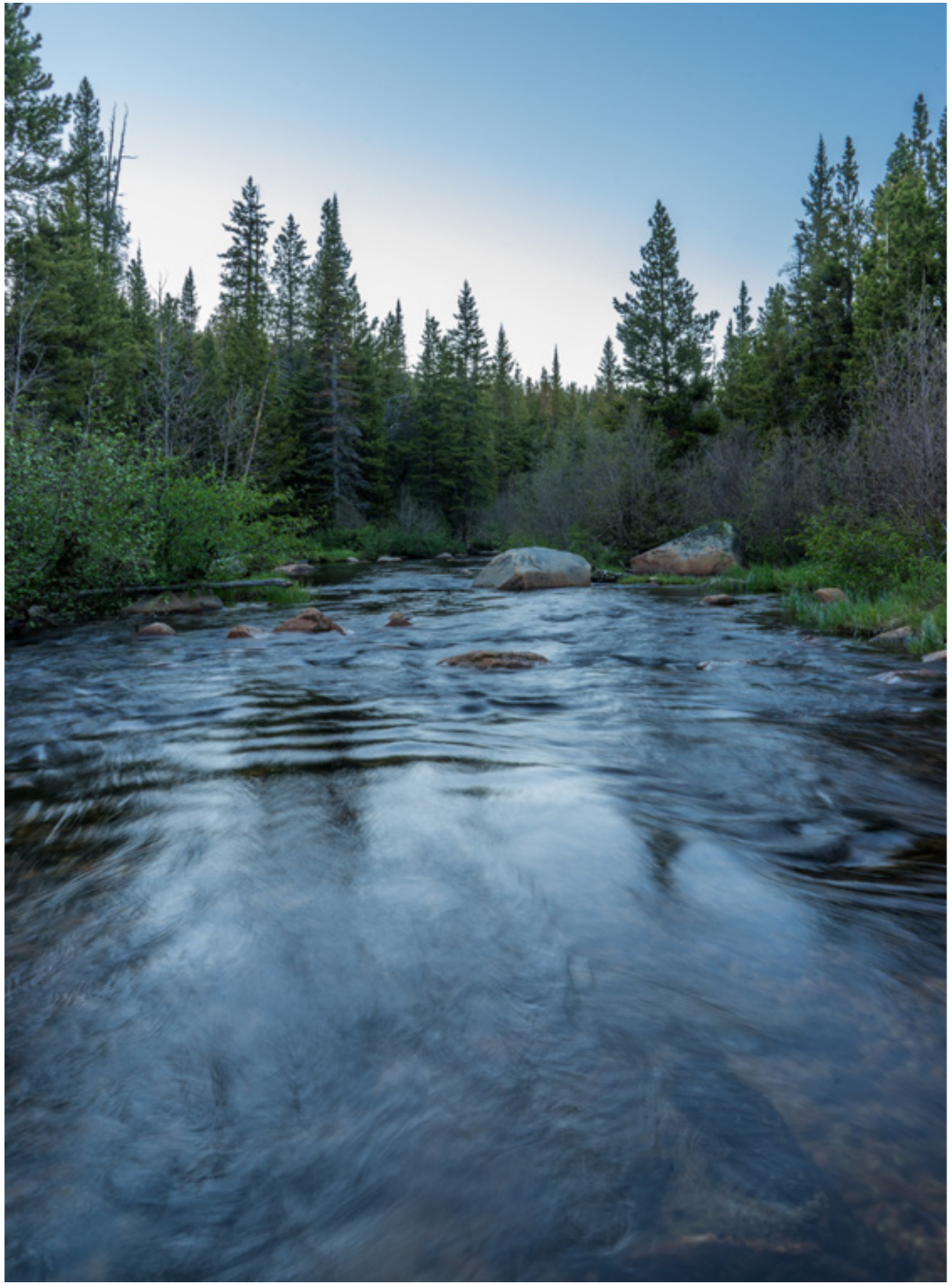
Rehydrate jerky in 2 cups water in a double zip-style baggy during last hour of hiking and/or while you are setting up camp.

IN CAMP

Rehydrate and simmer lentil bark in 4 cups hot water. Add jerky.
Optional: Add sundried tomatoes or other fried veggies and/or top with sunflower seeds. Enjoy.



Find more cracker recipes in Backpackers' Ultra Food by Cinny Green along with more tips, techniques, and recipes to elevate eating on the trail. You can find the book Here at Amazon.com.



The Drive Home

Choose Your Adventure

by Aaron Zagrodnick

I'd had the route in my mind for a year. Follow the creek and bear southwest at the confluence, ascend to 9800 feet then bear straight west, gently ascending a valley to my final destination. For the first 2 hours, all went as planned. Then…At the confluence where I'd planned to head southwest following the easiest terrain, a trail suddenly appeared. It didn't match what I'd guessed as the best route, but it made a beeline in the right direction. There was no other place it could possibly go, I thought. The decision was made. For the next hour I followed the well-blazed trail, enjoying the easy travel underfoot, steadily pushing forward, each step along the trail saving the time of navigating along my original offtrail map and compass route. The sounds of flowing water slowly disappeared as I followed the trail and ascended into a dry, quiet forest.

At 9200 feet, the blazes I'd been following abruptly ended on my right. I'd been following something of a trail for the last 3 miles, a trail unmarked on any map. 180 degrees to my left, yellow flagging ribbon lay on the ground, still attached to the dead limb it had been attached to…Who knows how long ago? Straight ahead, a cairn could be seen at the top of a rock outcropping. I didn't know if I'd been following a trail in progress, a hunter's personal route to their favorite elk hunting grounds, or if the solution to mystery I was currently experiencing would never be known. I checked each possible route. The blazes stopped to my right, no more flagging existed beyond on my left. The single cairn straight ahead was followed by no others.

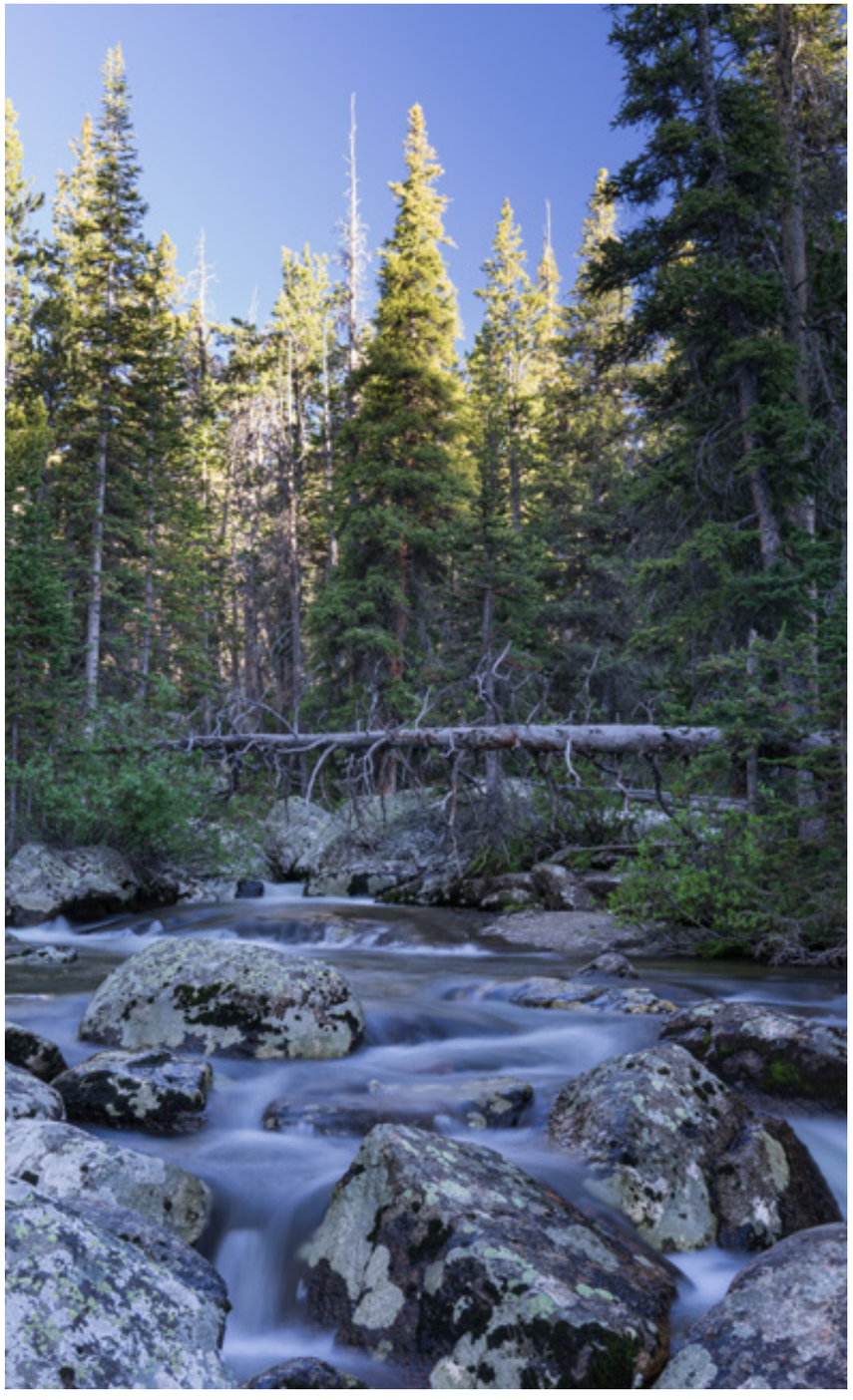
Original route abandoned and found trail now at its end, straight ahead matched the direction of travel I'd need to follow to reach my destination, and according to the map and my own eyes would steeply climb along a boulder-filled and tree-choked ridge. I pushed forward. As I climbed higher the tree cover became sparse, the boulders larger. No signs of anyone ever having been along the ridge were present.

The higher I climbed the less useful my map became – I'd work to orient the map in my direction of travel, but the wind, now just below 11,000 feet wasn't cooperating. The only way my hat would stay on was worn backwards, and I simply headed southwest, picking my way through the boulders and postholing through snow fields that always held firm against each step until you were too far across to turn back. That's when you sank. High altitude sun reflected off the snow at a dizzying level of bright, I could see my forearms darkening and burning before my eyes. My feet just began to start a recognizable protest against the treatment of having not stepped on a flat or level surface for the last several miles.

The method of travel wasn't easy. I began to regret my decision to abandon the route I'd planned, the decision to follow the trail that led to nowhere on the gamble of easy walking. I'd now lost time. The goal of this trip was no longer attainable, at least not today. Regardless, I pushed on to the next highpoint along the ridge, and eventually made it to the top after a few false summits. There I sat on a rock as the wind beat against me. I looked at the pass ahead, the cliffs to my left. At my feet the fresh flowers of early summer at altitude collectively gazed east. No one had ever seen this, these flowers. No tracks existed here in the mud of the melting snowfields, other than what in one spot, appeared to be the weathered tracks of a small black bear. The few trees that now existed had

no blazes, had no perfectly sawed limbs. Fire rings weren't even a possibility. Sure, people have been here before, but in the scheme of history I'm sure it was as rare of an occurrence as myself being here now.

Even only a mile from the trailhead I remembered the 4" brook trout leaping completely out of the stream to chase an unseen insect. Wild. From mile 1 to here. The rolodex of what I'd seen, just on this hike, started looking better. But the hike wasn't over yet. Offtrail travel is especially taxing, and especially rewarding. Usually a means to an end, a means to a destination. This trip I gave up the destination, but the trip couldn't be beat. It was unique. When you head offtrail the trip itself truly becomes the destination, and things not going as planned is the norm. It can be addictive. Summer has just begun.

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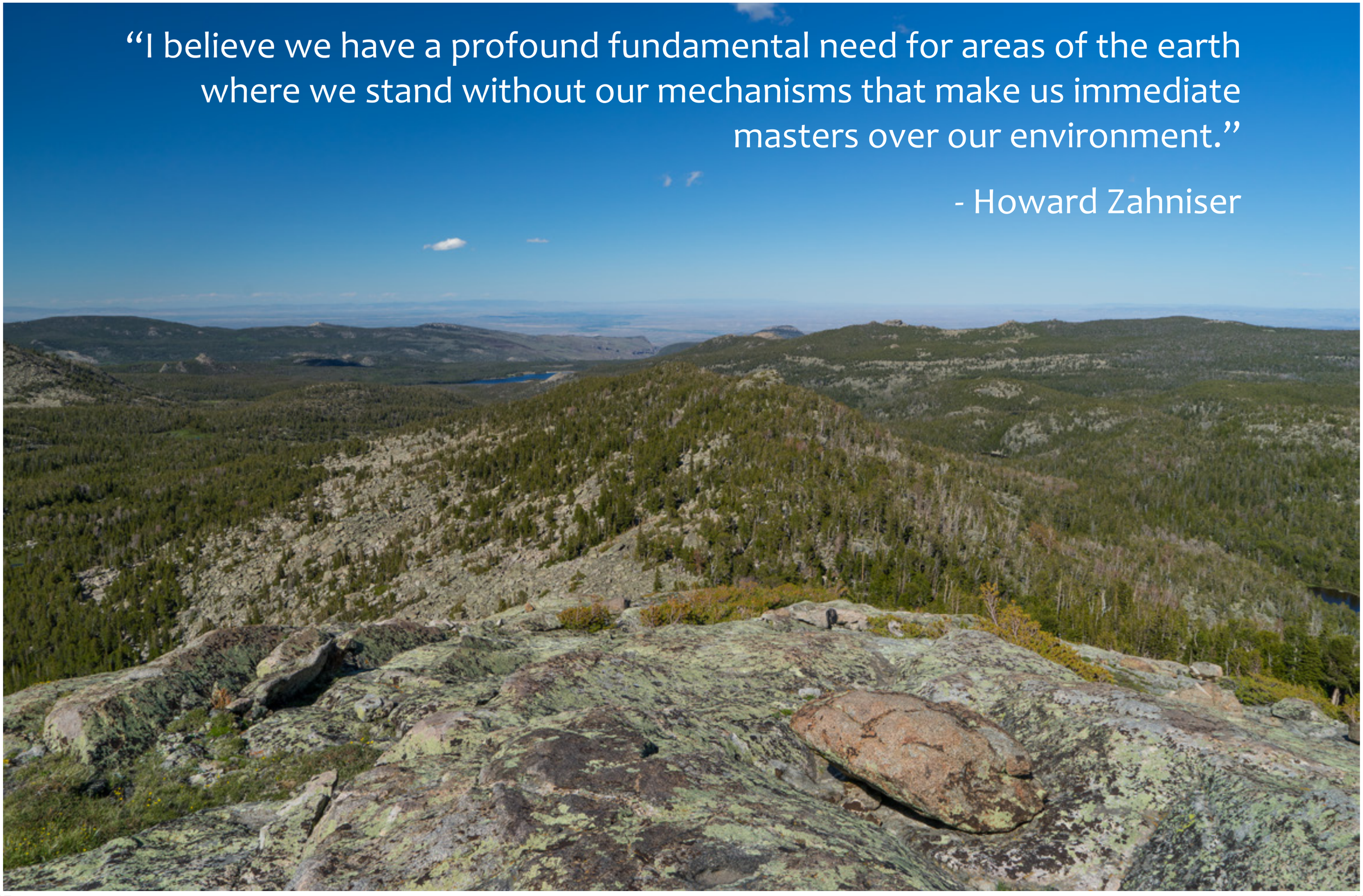
LONE PEAK


“I believe we have a profound fundamental need for areas of the earth where we stand without our mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment.”
- Howard Zahniser

Thanks for Reading Issue 16

Check out our next issue
(Available in August) at:

www.TrailGroove.com