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MONTANA WOMEN'S RESOURCE

Women in the Wilderness

Summer 1979

Vol. 3

No. 4

BACKPACKING; THEORY AND PRACTICE

by
Kathleen Coyne

(a note on the process of writing this article: I originally intended to write one article on the politics and practicalities of getting started in backpacking. Instead, I ended up with the two following articles, one on the politics and another on the practicalities of backpacking.)

Backpacking is one of the most accessible sports I know. By accessible I mean that it requires a minimum of equipment and can be very low-cost. Getting started may seem confusing at first, but the following are practical hints based on my own experiences.

The best and most primary source of information is other backpackers. What do they take with them? What are their favorite trails? Most backpackers are more than willing to tell you their favorite "tricks" for successful trips. Generally clerks in stores which sell equipment can be invaluable resources, not only for information on equipment, but also on trails, food, and weather.

Books are another source of information. Many are available at public libraries, as well as bookstores. My advice

is to use books cautiously. Some are excellent, some mediocre, and others are downright dangerous. Always keep in mind that information has to work for YOU and look for the type of information and ideas to fit YOUR needs. For example: I wanted a backpacking cookbook recently. After looking in bookstores at many books I found one with recipes that used the sorts of foods I like to eat.

Another source of information is the Forest Service. The regional office, located behind the old post office on Broadway, has maps, pamphlets, recreational guides and information on forest regulations for all the National Forests in this region. Local ranger districts also have local maps and more specific local information.

Basic equipment for backpacking may seem expensive,

particularly if you are looking at mountaineering stores. Shopping for sales can reduce the price of equipment as can buying used equipment. Talk to experienced backpackers to find out what priorities they see for equipment. For example, I recommend investing in a really good pair of boots first. Equipment can also often be rented either from college recreation depts. by students or even from sporting goods stores or other outfitters. Also, friends may loan you some equipment. A sewing machine can allow you to make your own equipment from kits. I have found kits to be high quality at reasonable prices, also kits allow you to build in custom features.

Food is another problem area for many novices. I had a difficult time figuring out

cont't page 2



alternatives to the expensive and (to me) unappealing foods commercially available. There are many good backpacking cookbooks. Spend some time looking through them for one to fit your needs. Remember, if you won't eat it at home, you probably won't eat it in the woods.

Trail information is available at local ranger stations. Maps are often inaccurate or out of date, so it is a good idea to check, especially if you are in a new area.

Wilderness Guards can provide the most accurate information on wilderness trails, including degree of difficulty, how well the trail has been maintained, and water. Trail crews can also provide information, or ask for the Forest Resource Ranger. A word of caution; some trails are being allowed to "die a natural death", and may not even exist any longer, so try to get up-to-date information.

Experience is the best way to learn to backpack. If you are not sure about undertaking a long trip, just plan some day-hikes or car camping. With minimal equipment and transportation to the trailhead, all of the wilderness areas are waiting for you.

Backpacking, like almost all outdoor sports, until recently was a male domain. Advertisements and outdoor magazines showed us large, hearty men in plaid wool shirts, who were out "conquering the wilderness". My brother's Boy Scout Handbook was full of information on outdoor skills while my Campfire Girl Book focused much more on the traditional feminine skills.

Yet, a growing number of women are spending time in the

wilderness. Many of these women are discovering the positive aspects of developing and sharing wilderness skills with other women. Why go backpacking (or canoeing or bicycle touring) with other women? The simplest explanation I know is that offered by the woman who introduced me to the great outdoors. "The thing about camping with men is that they never let you do any of the fun stuff, like building fires."

I enjoy spending time outdoors; hiking in the summer and ski-ing in the winter. An observation that never fails to strike me is how few women I meet compared to the number of men, and how rarely I meet women traveling just with other women. There seems to be a feeling that we need to take along men, that somehow women cannot cope alone in the woods. An all too common scenario is the woman who is having a terrible time because her male companion is hiking too far, too fast for her and then being pushy because she can't keep up. I often wonder if these women will ever know how wonderful being outdoors can be.

While the need for women to learn day to day survival skills such as home maintenance is readily apparent, outdoor skills may seem to be less important, or even frivolous. Yet for me, learning to live in


the woods has been a valuable experience. In the wilderness, I have learned the meaning of self-sufficiency. To me it is a marvel that everything I need, food, shelter, and clothing can be carried on my back. That I can be very comfortable without much of modern technology. It is a wonderful feeling to know where my physical limits are, to know I can hike all day, to find myself in some beautiful place. Many of the skills I have learned in the woods also serve me in town; learning to take time to really look at the world around me, learning to appreciate and listen to my body, learning just how much I can do. I like to think that women have an attitude of kinship with nature, rather than the prevalent patriarchal attitude of conquering and controlling nature.

TIPS FOR OUTDOORS

In the years past we spoke of wilderness survival as the ability of people to survive the wilderness. Now we speak of wilderness survival as the land's capability of surviving people.

What can we all do to be sure the wilderness will survive our use? Here are a few suggestions:

- Avoid crowded dates and places
- Take a litterbag to carry out all refuse
- Buy only gear in subdued forest colors
- Stay on the main trail even if wet or snow-covered
- Seek ridgetop or timbered campsites
- Never cut standing trees
- Make camp 100 ft. from shore areas
- Use lightweight, soft shoes. Avoid trampling vegetation



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Wash 100 ft. away from
water source
Leave radios at home
Look for signs of my
passing. Did I leave a
trace?

Taken from: WITHOUT A TRACE
Forest Service
USDA

BEAR COUNTRY

Grizzly bears live in
Yellowstone and Glacier Nat.
Parks and portions of the sur-
rounding National forests in
Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.
Remember, there are no hard and
fast rules to insure protection
from a bear. Bear behavior
differs under different con-
ditions.

Traveling alone in grizzly
bear country is not recommended.
When in grizzly country, make
your presence known. Many
experienced hikers wear bells,
dangle a can of rattling pebbles
or whistle, talk loudly, or
sing, although noise is not a
foolproof way of avoiding
bears.

Should a bear charge at
you, head for the nearest
tree tall enough to get you
out of reach. Most adult
grizzlies cannot climb trees.
If you are caught by a bear,
try playing dead, lying on
your stomach or side with your
legs drawn up to your chest.
Bears have passed by people
like this without harming
them. Don't run blindly down
the trail or into the brush.
Bears can easily outrun humans.
BEARPROOF YOUR CAMP

Pitch your tent at least
125 ft. upwind from your
cooking area and your food and
garbage. Try to place it's
door near climbable trees.
Suspend food and garbage in
sealed plastic bags at least
10 ft. above the ground, five
to ten ft. from the tree trunk
and three to six feet below
the limb on which they hang.

A clean campsite without tempt-
ing or strange odors will best
insure a night's sleep un-
troubled by bear visits.

Taken from: BACKPACKING
Forest Service
USDA
TRAILS

BITTERROOT NAT'L FOREST

Como Lake Loop Trail
15 miles S. Hamilton MT.
Trail route offers fishing,
swimming, camping and scenic moun-
tain viewing. N. shore restric-
ted to hiking only, otherwise
suitable for hiking, horseback,
cross-country skiing, and snow-
shoes.

FLATHEAD NAT'L FOREST

Griffin Creek Trail #287
32 miles W. Kalispell MT.
Trail closely follows Griffin
Creek; cross-country skiing is
popular along this trail during
the winter, also suitable for
hiking and horseback.

GALLATIN NAT'L FOREST

Palisade Falls Trail
16 miles S.E. Bozeman MT.
Trail suitable for use of blind
with aid of sighted companion;
interpretive exhibits in Braille
and English. Features a 98'
waterfall. Hiking only.

Bridger Mountain Trail
3½ miles N.E. Bozeman MT.
Wide variety of habitat types;
numerous campsites make side-
trips possible; outstanding
scenic views. Suitable for
hiking and horseback.

HELENA NAT'L FOREST

Hanging Valley Trail #247
and
Vigilante Trail #248
28 miles E. Helena MT.
Trail winds through variety of
geographic features. Trail
con't page 6

"WOMEN AND NATURE
the roaring inside her"
by
Susan Griffin

The following excerpt is
from the Prologue of Ms.
Griffin's book:

"He says that woman speaks
with nature. That she hears
voices from under the earth.
That wind blows in her ears
and trees whisper to her. That
the dead sing through her mouth
and the cries of infants are
clear to her. But for him this
dialogue is over. He says he is
not part of this world, that
he was set upon this world as a
stranger. He sets himself
apart from women and nature.
.....We are the bird's eggs.
Bird's eggs, flowers, butter-
flies, rabbits, cows, sheep;
we are caterpillars; we are
leaves of ivy and sprigs of
wallflower. We are women. We
rise from the wave. We are
gazelle and doe, elephant and
whale, lilies and roses and
peach, we are air, we are
flame, we are oyster and pearl,
we are girls. We are women
and nature. And he says he
cannot hear us speak.
But we hear."

"Women and Nature
The Roaring inside
Her"
Susan Griffin
Harper and Row
Publishers
New York
Copyright 1978

MUSIC
MAGIC
RECORDS &
TAPES
10153rdw 542-5921

WILDERNESS; WHAT'S IN IT FOR WOMEN

Lost in the woods, the Wilderness Ranger criticized herself for neglecting to use her map and compass. She climbed to the top of the highest ridge, pulling her pack up behind her. Finally getting her bearings, she felt the familiar feeling of confidence surge through her. She smiled to herself as she surveyed the beautiful surroundings.

It seems to be fundamental for women to be able to rely on themselves. Total self-sufficiency produces an attitude of confidence and independence that is unmatched. Experiencing the outdoors on its own terms can provoke such feelings. The knowledge that one can escape from society for awhile and return refreshed and proud of the ability to survive would necessarily elicit feelings of freedom and accomplishment.

Backpacking in the wilderness is one way to return to life's basics. On top of a mountain, or in a valley, there is but one person to rely on. Only one person is responsible for your well being and survival. You. Everything and nothing is within your control. We are one with the earth, it is not a separate entity. Time spent in the wilderness only serves to increase awareness of this concept.

The skills used in backpacking are survival skills. The ability to survive alone, with no house, no supermarket, not even a street sign, is a satisfying prospect. Satisfying and terrifying at the same time. Yet, as the survival skills are learned and firmly committed to memory, the world becomes less foreboding and more enticing. To know your limitations, your capabilities, to know yourself; this is the

foundation of all learning.

The ability to navigate by use of a compass is critical. The knowledge of edible wild plants, of building fires and shelters to withstand any and all of nature's furies is imperative. These skills are the key to life at its most basic.

As awareness of the outdoors increases, so does your closeness and involvement with wilderness issues. Political consciousness may be raised giving invaluable experience, knowledge, and involvement with the government, state and local.

There is much to be gained from an involvement with the world around us. Much more than just a sound mind and fit body. Though, that in itself isn't such a bad deal.

BACKPACK CHECK LIST

Compiled by Myra Bair

TENT	PACK	SLEEPING BAG
AIR MATTRESS or	RUBBER PAD	BOOTS
SOCKS	MOCCASINS	STAFF
RUBBING ALCOHOL	MOLESKINS	SCISSORS
FLASHLIGHT	SPARE BULB	MAPS & MAPCASE
COMPASS	TOWEL & WASHCLOTH	SOAP
LIP SALVE	SUNTAN LOTION	TOILET ROLL
MATCHSAFE	NEEDLE AND THREAD	ROPE
NYLON CORD	RIP-STOP TAPE	METAL MIRROR
TOILET ARTICLES	SPARE PACK PARTS	SUNGLASSES
COOKING POTS	FRYING PAN & SPATULA,	CUPS,POT SCRAPER
CANTEEN	GRILL	SHEATH KNIFE
FOOD	CAN-OPENER	MATCHES
STOVE	MATCHES	GAS FUNNEL
LONG JOHNS	UNDERWEAR	NIGHT SHIRT
LONG PANTS (2 pair)	SHORT PANTS	GLOVES
PARKA	PONCHO	HAT
BALACLAVA	BANDANA	SCARF
binoculars	camera	film
reading material	playing cards	paper
pencil	fishing tackle	fly dope
wallet	dime	car key
FIRST AID KIT:		
	roll 1" adhesive	
	roll 3" gauze	
	12 bandaids	
	½ oz. tube bacitracin	
	6 headache tablets	

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Now, you should be
ready to brave the
deep, dark woods!

HERBS

by
G. Caroline Brand

What is an herb? This is difficult to define because it can be a plant which dies down at the end of summer; it might also be a perennial; perhaps a shrub or a tree; or, it can also be one of the weeds that you feel spoils the appearance of your lawn, like dandelions or plantain.

The earliest written record of the medicinal uses of herbs can be found in the *Nei Ching*, the Classic of Internal Medicine, attributed to Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor when he ascended the throne of China in the year 2698 B.C.

In early days of the Christian church, knowledge of herbs was considered pagan, hence, many herbal manuscripts were destroyed by war-like leaders because of the mystical rites associated with their use. During the late middle ages, monks and nuns cultivated herbs in what were called physic gardens and kept careful notes which they passed on, to other cloisters. The members of their flock knew of these gardens and would ask the priests for the right herb for their health problem.

Over the ages, as people travelled from one part of the world to another, they carefully carried seeds of plants known to correct health problems and would exchange their seeds for some native to their new location. Because this exchange has been going on so long, you can depend on an herbal remedy in any country. However, because of the difference in soil of two separate countries, you may not achieve the same results from the one herb found growing in both countries.

Two hundred years ago, the housewife kept an herb garden

outside her kitchen door and collected what she called pot-herbs for the family meal. Today, we buy our pot-herbs at the supermarket and call them vegetables.

You have many things in your pantry, to solve health problems; Blackberry Brandy (2 or 3 tablespoons) for loose bowels or diarrhea; it has a very astringent action and is a very old remedy. Asparagus, cucumber or watermelon cause a better flow of urine. Make a point of eating that sprig of parsley that restaurants use as a garnish - it's good for the heart.

Boil 3 carrots in a pint of water - eat the carrots and drink all the juice to help the eyes. You can make a tea from the herb *Eyebright Euphrasia officinalis*, save a little to strain through a filter so you can use it as an eyewash. "If more people knew about Eyebright, it would put oculists out of business." Gerard.

REVIEW

WOMEN IN THE WILDERNESS is an excellent publication about women and the wilderness. It is a newsletter that contains a lot of information, containing an extensive list of camping, canoeing, mountaineering, hiking, and backpacking trips for women, men and children.

This newsletter also lists organizations that are headed by women, and does a profile of these women.

Your ideas for future trips are welcome, and for a small fee, your organization and events will be included in their listings.

Information is offered on different aspects of women and wilderness, including fire-fighting and rock-climbing.

The publication offices are located in:
San Francisco Ecology Ctr
13 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA. 94111

WILDERNESS AND CIVILIZATION

The Wilderness Institute is sponsoring a special course offering "Wilderness and Civilization", Fall Quarter, 1979.

The program focuses on understanding wildland in itself and in relationship to contemporary American Society.

Students are cautioned that the program is designed to be academically and physically demanding.

For more information contact:

Wilderness Institute
School of Forestry
University of Montana
Missoula, MT, 59812
(1-406-243-5361)

GOINGS ON

HEADWATERS ALLIANCE presents
Bonnie Raitt at the U of M
campus in September

BROWNBAGS AND WORKSHOPS
will be announced soon for the fall. Check with the Women's Resource Center for information.

ROCKY MOUNTAINEER upcoming trips

- AUG 11-12 Family overnigher.
For details call;
Jim Lynk 721-4892
- AUG 11 Moderate to difficult
day-hike to Lappi
Lake in Bitterroots.
For details call:
C. Hanna 549-0463
- AUG 18-19 Car camping and hiking near Libby.
For details call:
A. Easterling 728-5145
- AUG 26 Start Mountain day-hike. "Eat your way up the mountain with Kim Williams".
For details call:
543-8598

#247 leads to overlook of limestone cliffs. Hiking, horseback, cross-country skiing and snow-shoe.

IDAHO PANHANDLE NAT'L FOREST

Hanna Flat Trail

80 miles N.E. Spokane WA. Trail loops through a grove of western redcedars; interpretive exhibits describe vegetation. Trail is available for handicapped with limited assistance. Hiking only.

LOLO NAT'L FOREST

Blue Mountain Nature Trail

15 miles S.W. Missoula, MT. Trail's vista point provides view of Missoula area. Hiking only.

Rattlesnake

Missoula area
Trail follows Rattlesnake Creek; eventually connects with Bob Marshall Wilderness.

NEZPERCE NAT'L FOREST

Heaven's Gate Scenic Trail

15 miles W. Riggins, ID.
On a clear day, one views four states from the 8,400' overlook. Hiking only.

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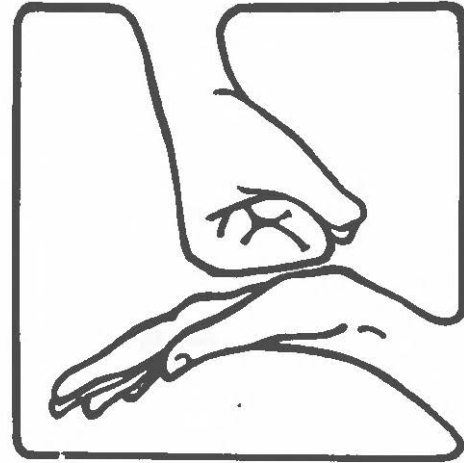
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