



KANSAS PRAIRIE PACKERS BASECAMP NEWSLETTER

BASECAMP is published by the Kansas Prairie Packers Association, Inc., at Topeka, KS. Membership in Prairie Packers is open to individuals and families interested in hiking, backpacking, canoeing, bicycling, cross-country skiing and other outdoor activities.

www.prairiepackers.org

JUNE, 2009

MONTHLY MEETING

WHEN: JUNE 10, 2009; 6:30 PM

WHERE: Shelter House #5 at Lake Shawnee, located on the Tin Man Circle, just north of Reynolds Lodge. , Topeka, KS

ACTIVITIES

June 6-- First Saturday Walk – Kansas City walk—Tina Yochum 379.0863

I am scheduling a hike on the date of June 6, 2009 to the Arboretum & Botanical Gardens in Overland Park, Kansas.

We can carpool if you desire by meeting at my house at 2521 SE Faxon Drive, which is east of Lake Shawnee. Call me at 379-0863 if desiring carpooling and leave a message if I am not there. Planned leaving time is from my place is 9 a.m.

The hike has nearly six miles of paved and wood chip hiking trails winding their way through the Arboretum & Botanical Gardens and across two 75-foot bridges that span Wolf Creek.

A major tributary of the Blue River, Wolf Creek bisects the Arboretum & Botanical Gardens.

Trails become more challenging along the limestone bluffs, which rise high above the southern banks. Their new rocky ridge trail takes you to the prairie and through a cedar forest and hickory grove. For those less adventuresome, a half-mile asphalt "country road" trail is available for an easy saunter.

June 10—Annual potluck picnic and gear exchange, Lake Shawnee

This is our monthly meeting but a special one. It will be held at Shelter House #5 at Lake Shawnee, located on the Tin Man Circle, just north of Reynolds Lodge.

Eating time is 6:30. Bring your own entrée, table service, and a covered dish to share. There will be grills available to grill your entrée. If your last name begins with A-J, please bring a dessert; K-R, a vegetable dish; and S-Z, a salad.

Activities

If you have any gear you would like to sell, price it and bring it along. If you have something really neat that you just want to show or demonstrate, bring it along too.

June 6-15--Canoe the Kansas River-Russell Gray – 234.8102.

June Canoe in Colorado has been canceled.

June 13—14th Annual Wilson County Wildflower Tour

For a sign up sheet call 620.378.2866 or gina.thompson@ks.nacdn.net (not a PP event)

July 8—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

July 11-- Saturday Walk – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

Shawnee Lake full moon hike at 8:45 pm swim beach parking lot.

July 18-27--Summer backpack – Dave Dunford 234.4667

Pecos Wilderness, Santa Fe, NM area. Call Dave if interested.

July 25-26—The Flint Hills Death Ride has been scheduled for either Saturday or Sunday, July 25-26. The actual date is not too clear at this point. It usually runs about 70-80 miles of gravel roads in the Flint Hills with a cut-off ride of 40-60 miles. (not a PP event)

August 1--Hike & swim - Denise Myers 785.806.5666. Melvern Lake

August 8--Konza moonlight hike-Richard Johnson – 587.8731.

August 12—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

August 22-24--Car camp – Mike & Shari LaRue – 836.3167.

September 5-- First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

September 9—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

September 26-October 5--Fall backpack - Need a Leader!

October 3-- First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

October 14—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

October 17-18--Canoe Kansas River, DeSoto to Kaw point - John Stambaugh 862.6621.

November 7-- First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

November 11—6:00 PM board meeting; 7:00 PM monthly meeting, Pizza Hut, 10th & Topeka Blvd, Topeka.

November 14--Soup hike - Rick & Trudy Racine 484.2108.

December 5-- First Saturday Walk – 10:00 am – Denise Myers 785.806.5666.

December 9—Annual Holiday potluck and election of officers, Lake Shawnee.

January 1, 2010—NewYear's Day hike - Jon & Rosemary Ware 266.2144.

Trip Reports

Ozark Highland Trail ,March 9-15, 2009
By Todd Osborn

On the third morning of the trip we woke up to a heavy patter on our tents and it wasn't rain, it was freezing rain and sleet. I could feel a really cold breeze coming in through the front of my tent and it felt like it had dropped into the 20s overnight. I stuck my head out into the vestibule and peered out of my tent at the falling sleet and I can now relate to my hunting dogs when they peer out of their doghouses on a rough wintry day. I had no inclination to get out into this mess.

We all hunkered down in our tents until about mid morning when Dave gave a shout and requested we all rally and hit the trail in short order. More grumbles and groans, but we began the process of stuffing and shoving required for packing up for the trail.

Hiking in the cool of the storm wasn't too bad and we started clicking off the miles. At one point about midday though, it started coming down harder. It had turned colder and the sleet was now mixed with some giant snowflakes. Dave turned to me and asked, "Whose idea was this?" We chuckled and kept plodding on.

It did lighten up as the afternoon wore on and as we neared the eight-mile mark around Lynn

Hollow we were on the hunt for a good campsite. No one was looking forward to pitching their wet frozen tents on the ice-covered ground. As the trail rounded a corner and hit the hollow, we discovered this incredibly perfect overhanging cliff, forming a cave complete with a fire pit, some stone benches and even a stash of dry firewood.

Everyone pulled up and dropped their packs. We then commenced to get in touch with our ancestral caveman survival instincts. Such things as building a big fire, drying out shoes and socks and all the wet gear we had accumulated, and hot meals. We each found plenty of dry ground under the overhang to stretch out our sleeping bags for the night. The warm fire was greatly appreciated by all so we made sure we replenished the firewood supply in the morning.

Our roughly 50 mile trip on the Ozark Highland Trail began on Monday night when six of us arrived at the Cherry Bend trailhead: Russell Gray, Mel Heflin, Weldon Hyde, Ray Jordan, Dave Dunford and Todd Osborn.

A few steps from the parking lot we found what looked like park service tent pads; elevated rectangular plots framed up with some nice stonework. We pitched our tents there,

but later we learned these “tent pads” had been built for a different purpose.

A local pulled up in the parking lot and came over to jaw with our group. He said he had heard in church that week the forest service had closed parts of the trail because of the ice storm and had been ticketing any hikers they found. He said he wasn't sure if this was true so he called the local district office in order to clear the matter up. It turned out our trail information had been correct. The volunteer trail crews had cleared out most of the bad ice storm damage, but there were still a few sections of the trail the forest service was simply advising people to avoid.

Our local guide informed us he lived in the valley below and in fact his family had homesteaded there back in 1840. He was obviously Indian so my guess was his family might have been part of the Cherokee Trail of Tears. He said in the summers he worked as a guide for herbalist tours of the woods identifying local plants like ginseng, goldenseal and sassafras for paying clientele. These items weren't visible this time of the year, but he did point out there were two different kinds of hickory trees in our immediate surroundings.

He told us the rock structures we had pitched our tents on were remnants of a former state park that had been at Cherry Bend. He said back in the 60s a biker gang came in and tore up the facilities so the state had pulled everything out. Above us on the bluff across the highway was a stone house that had been built under a rock ledge by the engineer overseeing construction of the highway back in 1923. According to his story, the engineer housed his family there during the construction of the road. The views from this high perch on the mountain must have been impressive before all the trees had grown up around it.

As he was briefing us with all this background information, a shuttle vehicle pulled up and two young ladies hopped out with backpacks and hiked up the hill towards the stone house. It turned out they were part of

a group of students from Virginia Tech that had come out on their spring break to hike the OHT. These two had slipped off to town to requisition some libations and had been dropped off to rendezvous and spend the night with their group at the stone house.

Our night at Cherry Bend turned out to be a rather noisy one. We listened to trucks grinding their way up the mountain and those that were cautiously crawling down it made just as much noise. At 5:30 in the morning, one of them spied our tents and let out a blast of his horn to make sure we were awake. We were glad to hit the trail in the morning and put some distance between the noisy highway and us.

We shared the trail that day with the Virginia Tech contingent. We all lunched at Hare Mountain, a camping area where the OHT association has their annual rendezvous. One member of their group was a graduate student in forestry, which explained their interest in hiking the woods over the usual spring break at the beaches. He was a veteran through hiker of the Appalachian Trail and our group found his account of hiking it from north to south quite intriguing.

This was the second year in a row we had met contingents from back east on the Ozark trails. Serious hikers from afar have been discovering the early season potential of the Ozarks.

We covered over ten miles of trail that first day and ended up at a superb campsite at Herrods Creek. Someone had gone to great pains to build large lounge chairs with backrests out of stone around the fire pit. We found their work at many of the campsites throughout the rest of our trip. However, we didn't get to build a campfire that night because as soon as we had finished our dinner the pitter-patter of rain drove us into our tents.

The next day we hiked down the ridge along the very scenic Indian Creek and eventually crossed it. Soon afterwards we passed through the Marinoni Scenic Area, named after

a friend of Tim Ernst. The trail was built right up through a canyon of moss-covered boulders and dripping waterfall hollows. It was a short segment, but certainly one of the more scenic stretches of the trail.

Once we hit the Lick Branch trailhead Russell informed us he felt a medical condition coming on that would only be aggravated by more climbing. His plan was to turn back and take the trail to the Redding campground. Once he hit the roads he would prefer taking their gradual graded climbs to climbing back up over Hare Mountain again. He would pick up our vehicle at Cherry Bend and rendezvous with us at the Ozone trailhead later.

Not to be criticized for abandoning one of our fellow hikers, I would point out Russell was pretty much a self-contained unit and quite capable of looking out for himself. His plan of avoiding the big climbs of the OHT was good one because in short order we crossed Mulberry Creek and began a steep climb up the ridge on the other side.

It had been a very long day, but we were making this climb because it was reported there was an excellent campsite with a view near the top. Eventually we reached a rocky ledge outcropping we knew signified the area we were looking for. We had covered over twelve miles that day and it necessitated hustling to make camp so we didn't get much time to enjoy the scenic views up or down the valley from the ledge. This campsite, situated high on the ridge without much cover, was quite exposed to the weather and this was where we found ourselves the morning of the ice storm.

The morning after the ice storm and the cave camp we crossed the Arbaugh Road trailhead. It was at this point we ran into some of the first major ice storm damage that hadn't been cleared by the trail crews. The ice storm, being an elevation related phenomena, hit hardest on the ridge tops. There would have been rain in the lower valleys, ice accumulating on the ridge tops and had the mountains

been higher there would have been snow further up.

In this mixed forest, the oaks and beach trees retained their leaves over winter and this turned out to be a fatal mistake for many of them. The leaves collected the ice and all of this weight brought the giants down. Even the hickories succumbed because there just wasn't much support for their roots in this rocky soil.

We snaked our way around the fallen trees and eventually made it down the ridge to where we found the trail much clearer. We hiked along side another very scenic creek, Prong Creek, and had lunch on a gravel bar just before we crossed it. We then made our way up the waterfall-less Waterfall Hollow Creek until we hit the worst ice storm damaged area of the trail, Moonhull Mountain.

The canyon walls were steep as the trail snaked its way in and out of each narrow hollow. Giant hickory and beech trees lay strewn all about. We were lucky the trail crew had made it through here with their chain saws or we might never have made it out this end of the trail. Once we dropped off the ridge we made our way down to a campsite at Lignite Creek. We had covered eleven miles and bushwhacking through the ice fallen trees near Arbaugh had slowed us down considerably.

We built a large campfire that evening and enjoyed a really comfortable night out in the woods. The next morning everyone began the final preparations for packing up and heading out. Just about the time we were set to go the pitter-patter of rain started in again. Rain on the morning out is always good motivator for getting to the trailhead.

We hopped the next ridge, aptly named Brushy Ridge as it was covered with more downfalls from the ice storm. It was slow going at first because we had to snake our way around the deadfalls in the narrow canyon of upper Boomer Branch creek. Eventually we hit a bench where it broadened out and we began to make faster headway. Once we dropped off the ridge and out of the ice storm damage it

became a simple matter of heading for the barn – everyone was motivated to get to the trail-head.

We made it there about noon and Russell was waiting for us with his camera for documentation. He had discovered some excellent food at the Oark General Store the day before so we headed there for our first meal of civilization.

Listed in the register of historical places in Arkansas, it is credited with being the oldest store in continuous operation in Arkansas. www.oarkgeneralstore.com/store This place had no qualms about feeding a bunch of over-ripe hikers. We fit right in with the motley 4-wheeler crowd that frequented the place, and the food was excellent.



After hiking most of the day in a sleet storm we came across a cave and decided to settle in and get back to our roots. Ozark Highland Trail - March 2009



Prairie Packers in the Salt Mine in Hutchinson with hard hats and respirators and lots of salt. This was just one of the many activities planned by Judy and enjoyed by all who went. Some of us are still stuffed from the good food.

Thanks to Judy for a great trip.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurers Report for Apr. 09

Income:

Dues \$50.00

Paid out:

Newsletter \$25.36

Print checks \$27.75

Balance in checking 4/28/09 \$1,464.35

Membership

70—Paid members

53—Emailed newsletters

17—Mailed newsletters

11—Comps

The Membership Committee would like to challenge you to contact 5 or more people to inform them of the benefits of belonging to the Prairie Packers. Tell them the reasons they should join—love of the outdoors, health reasons, social connections, being around a great group of people! Use email, telephone, word of mouth, cards, etc. to spread the news to all your contacts!

There will be a fabulous prize at the end of the year for the current member that has recruited the most new members. Be sure to tell your recruits when they pay their membership dues to let Dave Dunford know who referred them to join.

Editor's Note

There was not room for all the trip reports in this issue. Maybe next time. Look forward to a great report by Gerald Reichenberger and others..

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Jan & Terese Hamilton
Teresa Stambaugh

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Due to a vacation the July newsletter will be early. If you have information, submit it as soon as possible.

Deadline for July newsletter submissions—**22 June.**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
E-mail _____
Phone (H) _____ (W) _____
Outdoor Interests _____

Circle your membership level and send check to:

Dave Dunford
2115 Harrison St
Topeka, KS 66611-1127

Join the Prairie Packer listserve? Yes No

Referred by: _____

Membership levels:

New members joining Jan thru Jun:

\$25.00 for mailed newsletter

\$20.00 for e-mailed newsletter

New member joining Jul thru Dec:

\$12.50 for mailed newsletter

\$10.00 for e-mailed newsletter

Renewals due **prior** to January 1.

\$25.00 for mailed newsletter

\$20.00 for e-mailed newsletter

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