Introduction to Backpacking

Presenters:
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Agenda

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Introductions

• YOU – Our participants
• Berkshire Chapter: Christine Fogarty
• Worcester Chapter: Charlie Arsenault – Mike Jones - Gary Fitzgerald
Why a Workshop on Backpacking?

- Introduce people to the joys of backpacking
- Help you find your comfort level
- Help you find the balance between comfort and weight
- Support you in increasing your skills and abilities
- Enjoyment of remote places
- Awareness of Leave No Trace (LNT) practices
- Provide info on gear and AMC practices
- Offer safe and enjoyable volunteer-led backpacking opportunities
Intro. to Backpacking Series

• One backpack weekend every ~6 weeks
• Graduated for increased difficulty with each trip
• Limited to 8 participants per trip
• Provide the opportunity to acquire proper gear and an environment to use it
Intro. to Backpacking Series (cont’d)

• Preference will be given to participants of this workshop
• Others may participate on a “space available” basis
• Homogenous groups
• Search for trips using the online trip listing, searching for “Backpacking Series”
Clothing and Equipment

• Preparing for the worst weather- dressing in layers
  – **Base Layer:** non-irritating, non-constricting, wicking synthetic or wool material
  – **Insulation layer:** synthetic or wool material that can be added or removed as needed
  – **Environmental layer:** these protect against wind, rain, snow, sun, etc. Should be lightweight, durable, loose-fitting, water resistant, brightly colored and easy to vent excess moisture buildup from the base and insulation layers

• Boots – broken in and waterproof/breathable
  – Never wear new hiking boots into the backcountry! You will get blisters and be sorry.
  – Polyester or smart wool moisture wicking socks are essential to your hiking comfort. Your feet sweat up to ½ cup a day. Always bring 2 extra pairs.

• Rain gear – dry = warm, warm = 98.6
  – Most rain gear keeps water out! Sounds great, right? Not if it keeps water in too!
Clothing and Equipment (cont’d)

• Hat, sun glasses, sun screen, bug repellent – sun and bugs can ruin your day
  – Protect yourself from the sun with a minimum of 15spf sun block, polarizing sun glasses, and light weight hat or bandana (multiple use item)
  – Protect against biting/stinging bugs with something that really works, and nothing works like Deet

• Trekking poles – a little help along the way
  – Trekking poles can provide stability, and transfer approx 20% of your effort to the upper body, helping you to go further, easier. (multi-use item)

• Water bottles/bags, filtration/purification – clean, refreshing hydration
  – Personal preferences: bottles or hydration packs
Potable Water

• 3 ways to produce potable water
  – Filters (Giardia, Cryptosporidium)
  – Purifiers (UV, SteriPen (Ultraviolet (UV-C) MIOX)
  – Iodine tablets
  – Chlorine dioxide
Backpack

- Internal frame – External frame
- Gender specific – fits properly
- Comfortable padded hip belts
- Multiple adjustment points
- Is gear readily accessible?
- Zippered pockets and compartments
- Hip belt pockets
- Water bottle pocket – hydration bladder
- Exterior tie downs and daisy chains
- Distribute weight properly
- Interior waterproof bags
- Pack cover
Camping Equipment

- Tent and rain fly
- Sleeping bag/ sleeping pad
- Bear bag/ multifunction rope
- Cat hole shovel (Leave No Trace)
- Space blanket
- Spare rainfly
- Keeping it all dry
Personal Hygiene

• Build a mini-kit – a smaller version of “your stuff”

• Baby Wipes
• Dr. Bonner’s soap
• Hand Sanitizer
• Nail File/ Clippers
• Dental Care

• Plastic Mirror (used for emergencies too)
• Spare Zip Bags
• Feminine Issues
• Small Microfiber Camp Towel
Cooking Equipment

- Individual or group gear— it’s all up to you
- Group gear can include:
  - Food
  - Cooking system
  - Pot/Pans/Utensils
  - Tent(s)
  - Other items that can be shared?
- Everyone carries their own, or everyone carries some group gear
- Group gear can lighten the load on longer trips
Cooking Equipment (cont’d)

• Stoves – personal preference
  – There are many choices and each depends on personal preference, cost, size, weight, fuel type, and more. Many stores will rent, or let you try one out

• Pot/Pans/Utensils – weight and durability counts
  – The bare basics are all you need out there. Keep it light and minimal

• Go to the stores and get familiar with what’s available. Ask questions, do the research

• Once you buy something, practice outdoors before going into the backcountry. Know how to use your stove. Carry spare parts if needed. You can prevent accidents and eat well if you practice first
Food/Snacks

• 3 Squares – nutrition on the trail
  – Breakfast: Yogurt raisins, long cook oatmeal, dried fruit
  – Lunch: P. Butter, wraps, dried fruit, apples/bananas
  – Dinner: Foil pouch tuna, chicken, whole grain pasta, Knorr dried sauces, dried veg, prepared soup from dried veggie soup mix or bean soup mix, Asian noodles – hot chocolate or tea for dessert

• Snacks – Assortment of nuts, bars, dried fruit

• Don’t diet – eat like a king! You’ve earned it!

• Get food that’s nutritious, that you’ll want to eat not have to eat because there’s nothing else

• Simple and lightweight is best

• Approximately 1 lb/per person/per day
  Variety is the KEY!
Critter Warning!

- Bear Bag – A “secure” place for your stuff
- Hang your food far away from your tent – at least 100 feet – and away from your cooking area
- All food and scented items go in bear bag at night
- Food spills - keep food-soiled clothes with bear bag or wash them
- Keep cooking and eating area at least 100 feet from tent area
Emergency/Medical Equipment

• Get trained! – Carry a kit and know how to use it
• Worcester and Berkshire Chapters offer CPR and Wilderness First Aid classes
• Training & Practice can save your life, or someone else’s
• Carry an emergency medical kit, with things in it that you know how to use
• Hotspots/Blisters – bane of the backpacker
  – Everyone gets blisters, but it doesn’t have to ruin your hike
  – Take care of hot-spots before they become a problem. Athletic tape or duct tape can prevent a hot spot from becoming a blister
  – Always carry mole-skin, second-skin, etc to treat a fluid filled blister after draining it
Emergency/Med. Equipment (cont’d)

- Plastic tarp - multi-purpose and it could save a life
  - The human burrito! Used to wrap up a hypothermia victim
  - The insulator. Used to insulate you from the ground during a lightning storm
  - The water barrier. Under your tent or over you head, it’s there when you need it
Safety/Weather

• Leave your trip plan and estimated arrival time back at your house with someone

• What if I get lost?
  – Retrace steps to last blaze/trail junction
  – Check what time is it? Do you have time to change your trip destination?
  – Stay where you are, find a safe place to spend the night
  – Don’t make your situation worse by taking extra risks

• What to do when encountering wild animals
  – Stay as far away as possible
  – Bears – make yourself as large as possible
Safety/Weather (cont’d)

• Know what kinds of weather conditions you are likely to encounter on the trail – do this while planning your trip
• Check the weather report before you leave the house
• Stormy weather happens early afternoon – though in White Mtns, anytime of the year!
• Take a deep breath - Don’t panic!
Map & Compass

- Never leave home without it – get trained and practice

- *Be Expert with Map and Compass: The Complete Orienteering Handbook* by Bjorn Kjellstrom
Physical Fitness

Training in the margins of a busy life

- Wear your pack and walk around the neighborhood – don’t forget to break in those boots!
- Learn how your pack feels when it’s loaded
- Tweak straps and load to try to feel more comfortable
- In planning a trip, don’t bite off more than you can chew, easy day on first day 3-5 mi. max. if possible
- Gradual increase in distance with each day
Leave No Trace Principles

• Respect the environment – make your campsite look like you were never there
• Stay on durable surfaces when hiking or camping
• Pack In/Pack Out
• Pack out for others
• Stay away from animals – if your presence changes their behavior – you are too close!
Trip Planning

• Plan your trip – you know where you’re going, does someone else know

• Use a check list for every trip!

• Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?
  – **Distance**: How far is it to your planned campsite? How much time do I need to get there? Average hiking speed might be 2mph, but plan to add one hour for every 1000’ of elevation gain
  – **Terrain**: Easy, moderate, difficult? Add to your time estimate for difficult terrain. You’ll go slower if the trail is steep, rough, has rock or water hazards, etc.
  – **Potential Hazards**: are there steam crossings? Above treeline sections? Potential for bad weather?
Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?

- **Water**: Is it available along the way? How far is it between sources? Make sure you carry enough to be safe.
- **Alternate or Bail Out Routes**: be flexible, plan for emergencies. What will you do if you or someone else gets hurt? What will you do if you can’t make it to your destination due to a storm or you’re moving too slow?
- **Time Management**: Includes everything from traveling to your hike, to getting home afterwards. How many hours a day will you spend hiking, resting, preparing meals, setting up camp, on personal hygiene?
- **Emergency Action Plan**: You won’t be calling 911. Know what search and rescue resources are available where you are hiking, and how to contact them.
Trip Planning (cont’d)

• Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?
  – **Regulations, Permits, Reservations**: Do you need permits or reservations to camp where you are going? Do you need a parking permit for your car? Investigate early just in case
  – **Food and Equipment**: Depends on the trip, but plan well and provide for a margin of safety. Carry emergency food and spare parts/repair kits for critical equipment. Don’t carry things you don’t need
  – **Keeping your family informed**: Leave a detailed itinerary with someone at home in case of emergency

• **Use a check list for every trip!**

• **Observe the 7 P’s!** (Proper Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance)
Signing Up for a Trip

- Contact the Registrar for each hike in the series (by phone or email)
- When inquiring about a hike via email
  - Provide your full name
  - Put the hike name/date in the subject line of the e-mail
- Complete screening forms when they are requested
- Respond honestly to screening questions
Signing Up for a Trip (cont’d)

• Purpose of Screening:
  – Safety and fun
  – Ensures that all participants know what to expect on the hike
  – Ensures that all participants are of a similar ability or experience level so that they can stay together as a group to enjoy the activity
Screening Questions might include:

- Have you done any backpacking recently?
- If not, where have you recently hiked?
- How do you feel about hiking in groups?
- What gear would you normally carry on a trip like this?
- What kind of gear do you have?
- What do you do to stay in shape between trips?
- How do you feel about sharing a tent with a member of your own gender?
Our Practices

• Every individual is responsible for having the appropriate skills, physical conditioning, equipment and supplies for the activity in which they’ve chosen to participate

• AMC Volunteer-Led Activities Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks & Release Agreement
  – Every participant signs the Release
  – Protects our volunteer leaders
Our Practices (cont’d)

• The leader and co-leader are in charge; please respect and support their decisions
• Conditions change, and we may need to:
  – Turn back because of weather, elapsed time on the trail, trail conditions, a participant’s physical condition, or other reasons
  – Manage a participant’s fatigue or injury
• Safety comes first! The mountain will be there tomorrow.
Our Practices (cont’d)

• We stay together on the trail
  – We start as a group, we hike as a group, and we finish as a group
  – We hike at the slowest person’s pace
  – We don’t go ahead of the leader, or fall behind the sweep
  – We stop at all trail junctions and wait for the sweep to arrive, then we count heads!
  – We leave no one behind

• Learn more about the inherent risks of hiking and how you can become better prepared before beginning any hike at hikesafe.com/
Our Practices (cont’d)

• Separation break
  - When the genders go different directions to relieve themselves in the woods
  - If you need to make a stop, tell the sweep. If you go into the woods during that stop, leave your pack on the trail
Wrap Up

• It’s a lot to know – Ask lots of questions - Experienced people like to share their knowledge!
• Rent instead of buy – from EMS or REI – find out what you like and what you don’t before spending the money!
• Simple things from Walmart & Target might work – you may already own good substitutes
• There’s no right or wrong – there’s things that work – things that don’t
• There is no bad weather, just poor clothing choices
• Hands on experience is best education

Time to check out the gear!