

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure(s)



05-02 to 03-2009 - Mount Rogers Backpack (Aborted): Hardcore, Treebeard, Pathfinder and myself went backpacking in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. We tried to make a go of it even though the weather forecast changed overnight to a 60% chance of rain on Saturday and 80% on Sunday. Monday was more promising. Most of the 6 hour drive was in the rain. By the time we got there there was only a light sprinkle. We parked at the Mount Rogers Trailhead and started a long, gradual climb toward the highlands. Halfway up the rain ceased so we removed our rain gear. At around mile 3.4 we caught a heavy musky odor like a strong man's cologne. We spotted what appeared to be a cave in some rocks and wondered if bears have such a sent. I've had several black bear encounters but don't ever remember smelling them. The climb got steeper and rockier as we joined the AT. At about mile 4 the trail jogged hard to the left, giving us our first view of the highlands. In another mile, just before the junction with the Mt. Rogers summit trail, the view broke wide open offering a panorama unlike any I've ever seen in the Mid-Atlantic region. I'm not sure but I think the big prominent ridge in many of my photos is Wilburn Ridge. Tell me if I'm right or wrong.

We had already decided we would make the summit the next day sans packs so proceeded to check out Thomas Knob Shelter and spring. The shelter was nice but already occupied by 2 backpackers. We found the spring surrounded by a corral OK. It was flowing but very shallow. There is a great view directly behind the shelter. We decided to camp in a grove of spruce we passed on the way to the shelter. The wind was picking up and even more clouds were rolling in. We hastily set up camp and prepared our evening meal. Almost as if on cue we were joined by 5 wild ponies and a colt as sort of a visual desert. By this time the wind was buffeting me so hard I couldn't hold my camera still for a good shot. The weather was disintegrating so quickly we had our bear bags hung and had ourselves in our sleeping bags by 7:00. I would never think a person could sleep well for 12 hours in a tent but that night I did. I guess foul weather can drive the

strength from your body.

We awoke to total white out conditions, sustained wind speeds of over 50 mph and a driving rain. It took me about one second to make the decision to sound retreat and head back to the truck the way we came. After we dropped down a couple of hundred feet in elevation all we had to contend with was some light rain. We took our time over the rockier sections since they were pretty slick. We were pretty disappointed when we reached the truck and found a window broken, the cap pried open and \$2,000.00 worth of gear stolen. We made it home OK but we all learned a valuable lesson about trailhead security.