

## *M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure*



05- 03 and 04-2008: I wanted to do a BP trip in this area. I wanted something a novice could complete but would yet be rewarding for more experienced backpackers who just wanted to get out for the weekend. I chose the [WONRT/North River Gorge Loop](#) for these reasons. It was a long drive and the 70% chance of thunderstorms cast doubt upon my choice of venues but the latter issue threatened but never really developed.

Since the overall trip was going to be short we started late in the day, starting up the forest road at around 3:40. I was joined by Treebeard, Hardcore, Shortstack, Jody, Keli, Ted E. Bear, Everybody Loves Raymond, Brendan, Rebecca and Laura. The last 3 were newbies. I guess more folks are doing this hike since I posted it on my site because the "hard to find trailhead of the decommissioned Bear Draft Trail" was pretty easy to spot this time. The climb up to the ridge was gradual. Once we reached the WONRT a slight mist started to fall. We put our rain flies on and continued on. We hiked about another [1.5 miles on a relatively flat grade](#) before the gradual climb up the back of Lookout Mountain Summit began. Once at the top we regrouped and descended into a saddle than up a [much lesser knob](#) where we caught some [hazy but nice views](#).

It took a while to get everyone off of the mountain but the last of us got into camp around 7:00. We had just enough time to set up our tents and hang the bear bag line. There was one tent already there when we arrived but the site is so large it held us all just fine while giving our neighbors a sense of privacy. I wondered to myself if this could be Xrider and his wife who were to do this trip back in March but postponed because of the flu. I wasn't about to intrude on them since it was obvious that they were in for the night. Some previous campers left a giant pile of firewood for us and Jody commenced to see how much of it she could burn. (BTW, good fire Jody!) As we set around the fire Shortstack noticed that the stars were out. The threat of Thunderstorms was apparently over. We drifted off to our tents one by one. By 10:30 all you could hear were the spring peepers and the North River running

high and strong in the background.

The next morning, as we drank our coffee and ate breakfast our neighbor came by for a visit. It was indeed Xrider and his wife. As I introduced the group to him, many of whom he had read about, I realized that this was a real "Dr. Livingston, I presume!" moment.

As we broke camp I developed a strategy for insuring safe crossings of the [eight fords](#) that would challenge us today. Most of us would hike with wet boots. The 3 strongest and most experienced guys would take up stations across the ford and [the rest of the crew would then cross](#), having us help them as needed. [Ted E. Bear would sweep](#) up any stragglers as we "ford hopped" our way back to the cars. By the middle fords everyone was finding this to be the most fun part of the trip. [The fords at the deepest part of the gorge](#) were the most scenic with rock cliffs towering above the river. There were [rapids](#) either below or above most of the crossings. Each one had to be studied to find the best route across. Invariably, the deepest and swiftest part was close to the opposite bank. (Funny how it always works out that way.) The river was certainly powerful but yet [beautiful](#) this day.

We were out of the woods by 10:30. We got out of our soggy footwear and freshened up before heading to [lunch at T-Bone Tooter](#). I guess Xrider and the missus made it out OK since we didn't see any packs or other hiking gear floating down the river.