

M. R. Hyker's Latest Adventure



05/15 to 18/2010, Car Camping and Hiking in The Ricketts Glen Area, PA: I really want to start talking about these new hike Jeff Mitchell, author of "Hiking the Endless Mountains" and other fine PA hiking guides, has shown me so I'll quickly summarize the camping part by saying it was great. The campground is meticulously maintained and I don't think there is such a thing as a "bad" campsite, just varying degrees of "good". The weather was cool but sunny during the day and ... cooler at night ... great weather for camping.

Hike #1: I had originally planned to do the Bulldozer Road-Falls Trail Loop described on my site. At my age I am not a big fan of repetition especially if I have to drive 3.5 miles one way and camp to do the hike. Fortunately two weeks ago Jeff posted a thread on Backpacker.com describing "The Secret Side of Ricketts Glen". He mailed me a map with key waypoints and I immediately decided I would integrate the best parts of his hike with the best part of mine. The Mad Hatter, Precious and I started at the Lake Rose Trailhead around 9:30. We followed the Highland Trails through the Midway Crevice and past the blown out dam of now dry Lake Leigh to the Cherry Ridge trail. This is a lightly used grassy haul road. As we approached the hidden trail that Jeff talked about I watched my GPS unit carefully. Just as we hit the waypoint we saw it to our right. We followed the main trail for a few yards just to make sure we were at the right junction and then backtracked and headed down the new trail. There is now a small carin and log marking the junction. For the most part the trail was pretty easy to follow except where it passes through a huge Hemlock glen. (I'm not sure if this is "The Hall of Hemlocks" but it definitely works for me.) At one point the trail seemed to abruptly stop but after checking out the area we realized that it made a sharp left hand turn. The trail gradually descended and followed a small stream for a few steps before climbing back up to an old haul road. At the edge of the ridge the trail made a right hand turn onto an old RR grade that went on for quite a distance, passing through alternating beech and Hemlock forests as it went.

It was as straight as a yard stick until the trail left it and switchbacked back up to the top of the ridge. We began our descent toward Cherry Run and ran into a mountain biker. It was Wayne, the dentist from Dallas, who had shown Jeff the same hike a mere two weeks ago. We introduced ourselves and chatted for a while before continuing on our separate ways. The hike down the run was as described by Jeff. The rocky gorge was lined with Hemlocks and full of gurgling rapids and mini-falls. We had it all to ourselves to enjoy. Precious found the cool, clear water particularly refreshing.

The adventure part of the hike ended after we crossed Bowmans Run and joined the Mountain Spring trail which in turn joins the Bulldozer Road. We retraced our earlier steps of the morning and added the Ricketts Glen Waterfall hike to the trek. I had hiked Ganoga Glen before but not Glen Leigh. Although it was quite crowded the falls were pretty much at their prime. I was able to snag a pretty novel photo at one of the bride's veil falls. We took a brief rest at Waters Meet before climbing the Ganoga Glen. At ninety-four feet, the namesake falls did not disappoint. After climbing above that giant waterwork the rest of the trek was a casual stroll back to the truck. We had hiked 13.2 miles, climbed 1700 feet and visited twenty waterfalls in about seven hours.

Hike #2: Jeff had volunteered to lead us on his famous Waterfall Wonderland Hike in State Game Lands 13. Due to its ruggedness Precious sat this one out. This place is truly remarkable. It is a miniature Ricketts Glen but w/o all of the people. It is also a very hard and dangerous trail not for the beginner or faint of heart. Some warnings must be heeded before beginning this trek. First, except for a brief plateau walk, there are no trails. For a large portion of the time you will either be walking on rocks along the streams or in the streams themselves. Sturdy hiking boots are required for this one but don't for a minute think you are going to keep them dry. The sooner you get them wet the sooner you'll get used to hiking in wet boots. Second, Needless to say the hiking is very slow but quite enjoyable. Except for the plateau walk don't expect to go faster than about 1 mph most of the time. On the upstream portion of the hike (Heberly Run) you will have to climb steeply over the cliffs that form each of the falls. On the Sullivan Branch (downstream) part of the hike you will slide down steep hills, holding on to any sapling that will lend itself in breaking your fall, walk across the tops of water falls, the bottoms of water falls and, yes, the middle of water falls like this one.

I was already thoroughly impressed by the time we reached the second falls. After exploring all of the falls on Heberly Run we began the climb up an old haul road toward the top of the plateau. Part way up Jeff led us on a bushwhack down to a special lunch spot at the confluence of Quinn and Shanty Runs, each with their own waterfall. After eating a Snickers bar I laid with my head on my pack with the sounds of Quinn Run in my right ear and those of Shanty Run in my left ear. It was quite the trip.

The Plateau walk was mostly in a hardwood forest but did pass through some nice Hemlocks. The trail once again became a haul road as it descended to Sullivan Branch. After visiting a small falls we were treated to a walk "in" a mini-chasm. If your boots weren't wet by this point they were now. We took a brief break at a fern field before descending down the side of a falls and then crossing it at its midpoint. I could feel my eyes grow in my head. (Janet would not believe I was doing this!) We all successfully completed the waterwhack and climbed up to a grade which in turn leads out to the forest road we were parked on. Before returning to our vehicles Jeff

took us down a real trail to visit the very impressive Sullivan Falls. Although today's trip was 5 miles shorter than the previous hike it took us about the same amount of time to complete it. I am still dumbfounded.