

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



**07-12 to 13-2008 – Dolly Sods North Backpack:** This was supposed to be a three day circumnavigation of Dolly Sods North and the Wilderness Area but due to several health reasons I won't discuss here we had to limit our trek to a two day circumnavigation of Dolly Sods North. It ended up being a good move.

I was joined by Hard Core, Treebeard IM, Doc and Bubbles. The skies were pretty clear both days although it was a bit cooler with a slight breeze on the second day. We took several breaks to take in the views along Raven Ridge and Rocky Ridge before descending on the Harmon Knob and Blackbird Knob Trails to our secret camp in the Red Spruce grove along the Left Fork of Red Run. Treebeard was in the lead for most of the trip and surprise a pretty long Milk Snake sunning itself on the trail. We had the best campsite all to ourselves but another crew of backpackers came in at dusk and set up camp across the creek from us. We all went to bed by 9:30.

The decision to cut the trip was made the next morning after everyone had eaten breakfast. From that point back to the cars was a relative easy route compared to what remained of the original itinerary. We were on the trail by 8:30 determined to "beat the heat" and to out-run a line of thunderstorms that were scheduled to roll through that afternoon. As was stated earlier we had substantially cooler temps than the previous day and a pretty constant breeze to keep us cool except for the few times we found ourselves in hollows below the wind. The portions of the Blackbird Knob Trail that went through meadows were lined with Dogbane, a delicate pink flower. In about an hour we hooked up with what was to be the final four miles of the third day of the original trip. We took our time getting back to the cars as we enjoyed the views from the Upper Red Creek, the lower part of Raven Ridge and the unofficial Dobbin Grade By-pass Trails. As we rejoined the Bear Rocks Trail we could hear thunder off to our west. We still had clear skies above us and a bit more than a mile to go. We were off of the trail by 1:00 o'clock. As we drove through Petersburg we looked back at the Allegheny Front and could tell the Sods were catching hell big time! Cutting the trip short ended up being the right decision.