

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



10-03 to 05-10-Mid-State Trail Backpack (Blackwell to Little Pine State park): I was joined by Jill, Shortstack, Cognac Jack, Ted E. Bear, Single Malt and Bubbles. We planted two vehicles at Little Pine State Park and drove up to Blackwell just getting the last parking spot at the canoe access area. The lady at the campground gave us a revised 3 day forecast: sunny and cool today and tomorrow with a good chance of rain on the final day. We walked up Rt414 and then Big Run Road to pick up the continuation of the trail. The 900 foot elevation gain was made a bit easier by the cool breeze. Once at Gillespie Point we were rewarded by a fantastic 180 degree view with the Grand Canyon right in front of us. From there we descended to pick up a series of old grades, maintenance roads and foot paths. Some followed pretty streams like Brill Run with its pretty cascades and Big Run while others climbed up and over other lower peaks than Gillespie. At the top of one climb we were rewarded with a nice view. Despite all of the heavy rains the area had received the previous week the stream crossings were all quite manageable. We had a nice surprise as we passed two 10 foot gushing waterfalls on our way to the Trout Run crossing. They were probably mere trickles the week before. I'm not sure but I think I saw my first eastern coyote. In total we managed to climb about 2400 feet in 10 miles before stopping for the night in the vicinity of the Browns Fork hunter's cabin.

The next morning found us following one of the forks for a mile. I was looking for a blaze when one of the group shouted "Bear!" as a cub scurried up the side of the hill. Shortly after that the trail made an abrupt left turn, leaving the drainage, and climbed steeply to another "window" sized vista. We took a break there before proceeding. I don't have my maps here so I might mention some things out of order here. First I must say that the southernmost parcel of SGL75 should be declared, at the least, a wild area and possibly a natural area. The trail follows an old railroad grade high above a beautiful stream. The majority of the forest is pine and hemlock. We also hiked through a gigantic campsite along Silver Run also shaded by large hemlocks. We then hiked through a natural area and crossed Ott Run. Our original plans were to hike another 0.8 miles to Hackett Fork where there were supposed to be "small group campsites" only. Bubbles found a nice spot on a bench right here with a thick matt of pine straw. I felt uneasy about pushing on to an unknown when

we had a very nice spot right at hand so we stopped for the day. The distance for the day was about 9 miles and the E.G. was around 1400 feet. As dusk came upon us and we sipped our coffees a Raven called to us three times. (Seriously, I'm not making this stuff up!) I went to bed smiling, knowing that the B'more Ravens had beaten the Pittsburgh Steelers in their own house.

We arose on the final day to the sound of rain pelting our tents. Single Malt had erected a tarp the night before so we were able to eat and drink our coffee in comfort. By the time we broke camp the drizzle had increased to a constant but light soaker. We climbed out of the drainage and then descended to Hackett Fork to find one small and rocky campsite that you "might" get one two person tent on. We looked around and found nothing else even close to handling our group. We really made the correct decision when we stopped early the day before. From there we made our last gradual climb up to a ridge. From there the hike went pretty fast, slowing down during a couple of steep descents made even trickier by the rain and wet leaves. I had decided before the trip to by-pass the section of the MST that climbed steeply behind the Love Run hunter's cabin and that also turned out to be a good decision. I remember hiking "down" to the cabin a year or two ago. Hiking up from it today would be even less fun. Instead, we stayed on Love Run Road and hiked it out to Little Pine Road which we then took back to the campground. We finished the trip hiking about 6 miles with about 600 feet of E.G. The lady at the campground graciously let us use the bath house to change our clothes before retrieving Ted's van and driving to the Hotel Manor for a great lunch. Even with the rain on the last day I still consider it to be a "classic" Backpack.