My Monumental Journey From Georgia to Maine

By Jenna Cruite

When I first heard about the epic 2,176 miles of the Appalachian Trail and its extraordinary community, I knew that it was going to take a mighty obstacle to keep me from graduating to the standing of an “A.T. thru-hiker”. The idea of having everything that I needed strapped to my back as I walk through the woods from Georgia to Maine was just what I was looking for. I was a freshman Outdoor Leadership Major with a very short history of outdoor adventures; so you could say that I wanted to make up for lost time. It wasn’t long until I met with my advisor to plan out the rest of my college career in order to take a semester off and still graduate on time. By taking eighteen credits every semester and receiving four credits for my “Independent Study of Thru-Hiking the A.T.”, it would be challenging possible.

After researching, interviewing, and planning for two years I was ready and eager to get on the trail. I had read and heard that this six-month-long trek was going to be a life-changing experience, but it wasn’t until a few months after completing the hike that I really began to grasp the disequilibrium and resulting growth that I had the privilege of obtaining. It was a deafening struggle to re-enter society; I was overwhelmed by my newly formed outlook of the pavement, the chaos, the abundance of material possessions, and the inexcusable prejudices and acts of violence. But with the help of friends, mentors, and time I was able to learn how to perceive my thru-hike as a tool rather than an encumbrance. I soon realized that I have the ability to use my compassion for the Earth and all of its creatures in order to act upon my disallowance of society’s faults.

My mind, body, and spirit progressed as I went from Georgia to Maine, which enables me to be more of a contributing member of society—whether this is within my circle of friends, as a leader in an adventure program, or a political movement. The lessons that I learned during this journey have no limits, because I have continuously expanded and adapted them into other aspects of my life and my being. I owe a great deal of my current well-being to the countless surreal occurrences that I encountered in and around the Appalachian Trail—picking wild edibles from along the trail, guiltlessly eating king-sized candy bars everyday, contentedly walking and sitting in silence day after day, being treated like royalty in the homes of “strangers”, having profoundly honest conversations with newly-made life-long friends...

Needless to say, I encourage everyone and anyone to consider thru-hiking the A.T., or submerge into any wilderness, in order to create their own enhanced perception of our world. Some of the many thru-hikers include an eight year old girl, an eight-one year old man, and a man who is blind; it’s amazing how far hope, humor, and motivation can get you.
Student-Run Garden Event with Asheville Seniors

By Vanessa Emery

On the first day of the class “Methods and Materials in Environmental Education,” professor Mallory Mcduff announced, “This class will be run as a non-profit and I’ve contracted us to do five events (in eight weeks).”

For one such event, we partnered with the Council on Aging and Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) to have seniors from Asheville’s Battery Park and Vanderbuilt apartments come for an afternoon of educational activities in the college garden. We were handed a date for the event, but all other details and logistics were left to the students. In as little as one class period we had to decide essential questions, such as: what would we teach? What groups would we be in? What roles would we take? How would the participants rotate through the teaching stations? We settled on four lessons, including: transplanting native plants, wildflower pressing, riverside relaxation games, and cooking with local foods.

On the day of the event, the elders were eager in transplanting native partridge peas, cooking devilled farm eggs, and playing awareness games. A celebration of rhubarb crisp and tours of the chickens and herb garden concluded the event. The outcome was a mutually beneficial and downright fun learning experience. Our class got to use environmental education in a hands-on way with an elderly demographic, and participant feedback showed gratitude for getting to leave the city and to interact with college students.

Wild Women Spring Update

By Emily Shanblatt

After resurrecting the Wild Women program in the Fall of 2008, despite nearly a decade of extinction, the group is back in full force with lots of opportunities for women’s’ specific outdoor trips. Monthly trips to Climbax gym in Asheville have provided those wanting to improve their climbing skills an excellent venue. The gym hosts a women’s only night the first Monday of each month, and has recently expanded to the third Monday as well, due to high demand by the local lady climbers. This night offers an impeccable setting of support, encouragement, non-judgmental, technique over muscle, laid-back fun! Climbers of all abilities are present, and I’d suspect nearly every women in the gym would say they appreciate the “non-brofest” atmosphere.

Although our second and third weekend trips were both rained out (hike up Pilot Mountain and climbing in Linville Gorge), we bounced back by offering another climbing trip to the Chimney’s in Linville Gorge. Throughout the semester, I had nearly 30 women express interest in a climbing trip, an eight women-deep sign up list, several other “maybes”, and an email was sent out the all 65 wild women on the list-serve. To the dismay of myself and my co-leader Kaitlin Tripi, only one lone wild women showed up on this beautiful April morning to go climbing. Sea Gisondo is a true wild woman and deserves to be publicly recognized and acknowledged for her interest and dedication to Wild Women. Thank you Sea, for making that day of climbing a success, even with such small numbers.

We headed out none-the-less, and had an incredible day on the rock; enjoying the view, soaking up the sunshine, building passive anchors, and challenging ourselves on various climbs. This low turn out will not damped the future of the Wild Women dream! After all, as our mantra reads, “Wild women don’t worry! Wild women don’t get the blues!”

No worries Wild Women hopefuls! The group will continue in full force next year. If you’d like to be added to the Wild Women email list, please email me at eshanblatt@warren-wilson.edu.

Until then, have a wonderful summer, and keep on adventuring Wild Women!
Dr. Pete Allison visits Warren Wilson

By Kaitlin Tripi

Dr. Pete Allison teaches at the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He came to Warren Wilson in February to give a lecture titled “Education Goes into the Wild: From Scotland to Greenland and the Himalaya”.

Dr. Allison has a wealth of experience in the field of Outdoor Leadership. He has worked for many organizations, including Outward Bound Malaysia and Bradford Woods, an outdoor center at Indiana University. Dr. Allison is currently the director of MSc and PhD programs in Outdoor Education and Experiential Learning at the University of Edinburgh.

While at Warren Wilson, Dr. Allison spoke to the Organization and Administration of Adventure Programming class, gave a public lecture in Canon Lounge, and presented his lecture at the North Carolina Outward Bound School. In his lecture, he discussed the role adventure education plays in the UK and highlighted some of his personal experiences in the field. He also mentioned some challenges this field faces, and how outdoor leaders can help to address them.

Dr. Allison encouraged anyone who wants to study outdoor education and experiential learning further to consider the University of Edinburgh. He noted that in Scotland, the government provides funding for all high school students to spend one week at an outdoor center as part of their school curriculum, so there is frequently work in the field there.

Dr. Allison can be contacted by emailing: peter.allison@ed.ac.uk.

Faculty Publications

Mallory McDuff is writing a book entitled "Saving Creation: How Churches are Working to Save God's Good Earth," for publication by Oxford University Press. Her research for the book has taken her across the country to talk to faith communities that are integrating the environment into their ministries. Some of the places she has encountered in her research include:

• the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, where churches destroyed by Hurricane Katrina are rebuilding with green building techniques
• Seattle, Washington, where a religious environmental nonprofit trains faith members in political advocacy for environmental legislation
• Immokalee, Florida, where churches are working with the Coalition of Immokalee Farmworkers to promote a fair food campaign that supports fair wages for farmworkers and aims to stop modern-day slavery in the fields
• Western North Carolina, where North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light is working to promote green jobs, energy justice, and energy efficiency in churches.


Leading adventure educators from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan were invited to contribute material for the book. The book provides an extensive perspective on teaching adventure theory, philosophy, history, and conceptual models through the use of activity-based learning.

The book introduces core curriculum theories and models of adventure education, including a rationale on why students should know theory and how broader competencies within adventure education often align with colleges’ liberal arts outcomes. It also explores the common pedagogical threads present in effective adventure education teaching processes and discusses the challenges and rewards of teaching adventure education.
Congratulations to the December ’08 and May ’09 Outdoor Leadership and Environmental Studies Graduates!
Keep Exploring!

Outdoor Leadership Graduates:

Hanna Waldman  
Laurel Ady  
Kaitlin Tripi  
Meg Evans  
Kyle Carpenter  
Russel Opatz  
Sam Christopher  
Tyler Parker  
Maxx Cohen  
Jenna Cruite  
Will Golebiewski  
Taylor Hodgkinson  
Mandy Monroe  
Chris Paul  
Chris Sterling  
Mornin Townsend  
Sam Wells

Environmental Studies Graduates:

Erica Helen  
Danielle Martin  
Jake Salt  
Kuenzi Wiswall  
Jenna Anderson  
Kayleigh Burgess  
Amy Woychowski

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