

TROOP 8

CATSKILL MOUNTAINS BACKPACKING TRIP AUGUST 12-16, 2010

Little Pond Campground to Margaretville

1. Summary:

An excellent introductory backpacking trip covering approximately 24 miles completed over 3 full days and 4 nights camping. The route can also be easily extended if need be taking in other trails. Scouts can achieve the 1,000 Foot elevation and 10 mile hike requirements. This part of the Catskills is not heavily used (off grid for cell phones and blackberry's too) and in parts the trail is both fairly steep and rocky, so a 1 mile per hour hike speed is a reasonable planning assumption with scouts carrying +/- 35 lb packs. Deemed to be a good training hike for those going to Philmont .

2. Participants:

ASM's Ed Mostert, Jim Wyse, Glenn Corbitt, Mark Twentyman

Scouts 10 Scouts ages 13 to 15 years old

3. Itinerary:

Day 1 – Departed from Ogden at 4pm. Arrived at Little Pond State Park Campground 7pm. (need to book camp sites beforehand with campground – 2 tents per site, with sites 70-75 on lake).

Day 2 – distance 6 miles - Little Pond to Alder Lake – 7.5 hours. Prepared for trail and shuttled cars to the end of the trail in Margaretville (park in designated area next to Food Store car park), returned in one car to little pond where we left it in the camp \$6 per night). Left little Pond (**2,000 feet**) about 10.30am via the red route out the western end of the camp ground and over the hill to Big Pond where we arrived about 2 pm and had lunch. Left at 3pm for Alder Lake (where we found a great campsite at the eastern end by taking the red route south of the lake – arrived here around 6pm (a little late to get everything done before dark). Boys swam in lake to cool off – great fun.

Day 3 – distance 10.5 miles - Alder Lake to Shelter - 10 hours. Took the Alder Lake/Mill Brook Ridge Trail (mostly uphill and steep in parts) to the fire tower on Balsam Lake Mountain (**3,730 Feet**) where we had lunch and took in the views from the Tower. Then we took the Dry Brook Ridge trail (DBRT) down to the Road (can't rely on the water spring shown on the map, about half way) where we knocked on a door to a nearby house to get water. We then continued up the same trail about 1.5 miles (uphill mostly) to the shelter (**2,700 feet**) where we camped (boys all slept in shelter) and replenished water supplies from the nearby stream. There is a house about 100 yards away so need to keep noise level reasonable.

Day 4 – distance 6.5 miles – Shelter to Off trail campsite above Margaretville – 7 hours. Continued on the DBRT toward Margaretville and found a great off trail campsite (2,500 feet), which is not marked on any map, with view point and fire ring about ½ mile past the junction of DBRT with the German hollow trail – the site is on the western side of the trail on the last flat piece of ground before a decent starts with a switchback to the right and then left. 2 adults went down to Margaretville about 4pm to then go collect the car left at Little Pond campground – returned about 8pm with soda and apple pies.

Day 5 – distance 1.5 miles - campsite – Margaretville – 1,5 hours On the trail by 7.30pm and got into Margaretville (downhill all the way!!) by 8.30 for a great breakfast in the local Diner in town. Left Margaretville at 9.30am and arrived back at Ogden around 12.30pm.

Administrative:

Need to Book camp sites in Little Pond Campground beforehand – note that canoes are for hire here if you wanted to include another activity. Please call the camp at 845-439-5480 or see more information at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24478.html> Reservations can be made at <http://www.reserveamerica.com> or by calling 1-877-444-6777 (preferred)

You also need to secure a **Backcountry Camping Permit** for parties of 10 or more. For more information see <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/56001.html>. Please call the Forest Ranger at 518-357-2047 to request the permit. Permits are free.

Maps : AMC Catskill Mountains Trail Map (Larger scale), Catskill Forest Preserve, Catskill Trails maps published by the NY/NJ Trail Conference (<http://www.nynjtc.org/>).

Lessons Learnt/Taught:

- Packing backpack correctly
- Caterpillaring
- Order of march (slowest not at back)
- Use of different rest options
- Adjusting footwear/clothes appropriately
- Bear-muda triangle concept
- Water purifying using filter pumps/tablets/uv sticks
- Cooking with whitegas stoves
- Bear bagging
- Use of trekking poles (or not)
- Pack it in pack it out
- Hygiene and cathole use
- Boot laces tied properly
- Everything can fit into a 48 liter backpack, if packed correctly