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FALL FORESTRY CAMP - 1993

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The first Fall Forestry Camp was held from September 25 through October 16, 1993 at Topton, North Carolina. Thirty-two forestry students and two instructors “did the first fall camp” and enjoyed the experience. The shift from summer camp to fall camp went smoothly. And, based on student response, it seems to be achieving the goal of integrating many forestry topics such as forest biology/ecology, forest measurements (menso, growth and yield), forest policy and administration, forest economics and decision-making, and harvesting and wood products. Fall Forestry Camp is a fast-paced educational experience. We build on topics, concepts, and techniques covered earlier in the semester. After Fall Camp we then use the information, data, and knowledge gained from the full immersion in a particular forest environment (biotic, abiotic and social) to support additional learning in the other five sophomore-level integrated courses.

Our departure from Ames early on Saturday morning Sep. 25 ("before time" as one student called it) was wet and, of course, filled with excitement. It was especially exciting for a student who overslept and after being awakened by my telephone call managed to get ready in 10 minutes. We traveled in a three van-one car caravan all the way to North Carolina. We rode all the way to Land Between the Lakes (LBL) in western Kentucky/Tennessee in monsoon rain. This wet travel was typical of our crazy 1993 weather. Fortunately once at camp in western North Carolina we encountered rain only twice during the daytime. Back to our trek to camp. Somewhere in Illinois we discovered that the doors on the two enclosed trailers leaked, big time! We had to unpack, repack, and seal the doors with plastic to prevent further wetting of sleeping bags, food stuff, and personal gear. What a mess! But, it worked out and we got to our overnight location without any further problems.

At LBL we stayed at a beautiful lakeside campground. At 8 a.m. on Sunday, Sep 26th, (yes there are public foresters willing to give tours and do out-reach programs on the weekend) we were hosted by a TVA forester of a tour of the on-going forestry operations and recreation management in LBL. We left LBL around noon and pulled into Topton, NC around 8 p.m. the same night.

The facilities at Topton are part of a business catering to people rafting on the famous Nantahala river. Guided and unguided raft trips are arranged by this firm. Our accommodations were nestled in a typical deep cove at the head of the Nantahala gorge. Twenty-nine men (27 male students) shared a large three bedroom, large screened porch house. The seven women shared “the palatial palace” referred to by the owner of the rafting business as “the apartment.” It was really more like a bunkhouse. Overall the housing facilities were cozy yet functional for our troupe of 34 Iowans. Except for the evening meal which we had prepared by a local restaurant, we prepared our breakfast and lunch meals ourselves. Traditionally at summer camp we would make a sack lunch, so having to do this during the fall camp was not new. What was new (at least based on my knowledge of summer camps in the last 15 years) was having to make breakfast for 34 people in a 10 x 10 ft kitchen and make lunches on a small coffee table. With teamwork and patience it worked rather well.

The weather was typical of western North Carolina during the fall. We had many sunny, warm days with cool to cold nights. We ate our evening meal most of the time out-of-doors on picnic tables. Thus, over the three weeks, a progression of beautiful, brilliant fall colors greeted us every day.

Now to the activities of the educational program itself. Dick Schultz and I worked as a instructional team throughout camp. We were involved with each day’s teaching/tour activities. This helped to provide an integrated viewpoint on all topics. We followed a schedule of subjects and tours, but were flexible when new opportunities and the situation warranted change.

We had many integrated field exercises for the students. They were designed to demonstrate to the students their observational and decision making skills
by requiring them to measure various forest components (species, tree height, age, basal area, The first Fall Forestry Camp was held from September 25 through October 16, 1993 at Topton, North Carolina. Thirty-two forestry students and two instructors “did the first fall camp” and enjoyed the experience. The shift from summer camp to fall camp went smoothly. And, based on student response, it seems to be achieving the goal of integrating many forestry topics such as forest biology/ecology, forest measurements (menso, growth and yield), forest policy and administration, forest economics and decision-making, and harvesting and wood products. Fall Forestry Camp is a fast-paced educational experience. We build on topics, concepts, and techniques covered earlier in the semester. After Fall Camp we then use the information, data, and knowledge gained from the full immersion in a particular forest environment (biotic, abiotic and social) to support additional learning in the other five sophomore-level integrated courses.

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Other scheduled educational opportunities included visits to seven different wood product facilities (Drexel furniture, Broyhill particleboard mill, Davis Wood Products-molded hardwood plywood, Champion International coated paperboard plant, one small hardwood sawmill, one large chipping mill, and a chipping/sawmill operation). Also, we had a day-long harvesting/silviculture tour with Champion International -Timberlands Division, a visit to the Cradle of Forestry in Brevard, visits to Forest Service Research Stations at Bent Creek and Coweeta (Hydrologic Lab), a Saturday raft trip down the Nantahala river (Schultz’s riparian ecosystem and hydrology adventure), and two other activities with the Cheoah Ranger District personnel dealing with timber harvesting, silviculture, ecosystem management, recreational use, and wilderness management. Because only a few students had ever been in a Wilderness area we had an over-night camping trip into the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area. If anyone thinks that the eastern wilderness areas are not rugged, just ask the students or better yet plan a fall visit for wilderness camping in the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness Area! You will encounter a beautiful, rugged forest ecosystem.

The 1993 Fall Forestry Camp was a success. The students were great, the weather was fantastic, and the various forestry hosts were super! We learned a lot about running and teaching a three-week fall camp. The 32 forestry students who attended have provided us with excellent feedback and suggestions as to improvements in the next fall camp. Again, as with the summer camp experience there was a strong sense of camaraderie. We worked hard and had fun learning about all aspects of modern day forestry in an integrated field camp setting. Well it looks as if this Fall Forestry Camp is history . . . with a long road ahead of it.

Joe Colletti