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Keri Bolluyt

Iowa State University

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Fall Camp Journal
1999
Andalusia, Alabama

chronicled by Keri Bolluyt
Monday, October 18

Today was our introduction to camp at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center. We had our first of many awesome camp meals and headed to the classroom. We broke out those classic giant post-it notes and wrote up what we thought were some important camp rules, such as Wednesday is bowling night, and things like that. Dale "Flip" Pancake took us out to tour the grounds and explain some of their management techniques. We saw a burn site off of Commode Road and the Baldcypress pond was very cool. We also got our first taste of longleaf pine management and the red-cockaded woodpecker, not yet aware of how often we would be hearing of these two.

Tuesday, October 19

Ron Jackson introduced us to Urban Forestry practices in Mobile, Alabama. It was interesting to learn about people-oriented urban forestry and how the needs of the trees have to be balanced with those of the community. The trees we saw were not only a beautiful addition to the city, but also important reminders of our history, as many of them were over 100 years old. We even had a chance to visit the biggest and oldest live oak in Mobile - a perfect junglegym.

Wednesday, October 20

Horseshoe Bend National Park was an awe-inspiring place to visit. Not only did we get to learn how the National Park system manages many different areas such as Native American habitats, historical areas or places of natural beauty, but we also got to tour the park and see first hand how they interpret this historic battlefield for visitors.
Saturday, October 23

At the beginning, we weren’t all sure about holding class on Saturday morning, but today hardly constituted as “class”, and it was a day I can’t wait to tell everyone back home about. The Solon Dixon staff had created a strategic burn plan for a two-acre stand of longleaf pine and they wanted us to help so that we could learn about fire as a management tool. Using drip torches that held a mixture of gasoline and diesel, we set fire to the stand in order to reduce hardwood competition, improve wildlife habitat and reduce fuel load. We sat in awe as flame swept through the woods knowing that this was actually good for the forest. So far, this was the favorite day.

Ryan “Hat” Elliott & T.J. Mathis

Sunday, October 24

“To the beach!”

Monday, October 25

Today was a unique day as far as staying clean goes... It was supposed to be a wetland tour day, but the first few sites could hardly be described as ‘wet’ land. We toured four types of wetlands: a blackwater slew swamp, a depression, an alluvial wetland, and finally a shrub wetland. When we got to the final stop, Kathryn Flynn told us that we should leave everything behind and we weren’t actually required to go into this wetland. That’s all the warning we received, but I wasn’t going to believe her and then I stepped through the bushes - into black, muddy water over my knees. And then it got deeper. By the end, we were up to our chests in mud - that’s what I call fun! It definitely made up for the rest of the dry lands. Amazingly enough, we even got the vans clean again...


front- Luke Smith, Keri Bollayt, Jessica Grell, Stacy Wickman, Kendra Pinkerton, Zack Ludwig, back - Dave Connelly, Greg Carpenter, Adam Luhman, T.J. Mathis, Jan Thompson

Kathryn Flynn, Jan Thompson, Steve Jungst
Wednesday, October 27
Structural Wood Systems in Greenville, Alabama make the most impressive and beautiful pieces of structural lumber. The company creates custom pieces by cutting finger joints in lumber and then gluing these pieces into huge beams. It was amazing to see through their product testing that the adhesive joints were actually stronger than the plain lumber.

Thursday, October 28
Today was another enlightening day through the woods. Last Thursday we developed a more coherent picture of the entire forest ecosystem by learning about soils and ecosystem gradients and some southern dendrology. Today we got to practice some forest management practices by performing a mock crop tree release and basal area thinning.

Friday, October 29
Visiting Blackwater River State Park in Florida today, it was interesting to see the difference in management strategies between the state and the US Forest Service who we toured with last Friday. While both places are concerned with managing their timber land, the USFS is very concerned with multiple use, such as wood, recreation, wildlife, water, and range. The State Park is working for some timber harvest, but is very concerned with working with the public. We were given so much information on tree and wildlife management that will be very useful in our futures.

Saturday, October 30
We held an academic controversy today about listing the red-cockaded woodpecker on the Endangered Species List. We were all assigned roles; based on the people we had met on previous camp days and the information they had given us. It was actually fun to have permission to argue within our groups, but the process was very structured so we all learned a lot about working with different people with varying opinions and backgrounds.
Monday, November 1
The Smurfit Stone Container Corporation is actually comprised of three different places: the nursery, the chip mill, and the pulp mill. We got to see the whole process of creating those simple whiteboard boxes in which we buy toothpaste and videos. It was interesting to hear the opinion (finally!) of people who don’t like longleaf pine. It made us realize how complex management really is.

Tuesday, November 2
The Crocodile Hunter was successful when he visited Eglin Air Force Base three weeks before us, but no alligator sightings for us. We had to settle for the good old red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). Instead of using artificial cavities like we’d seen other places, the managers actually drill holes for the RCWs. Though the many places we visited were very impressive, especially the old growth forest, four-wheel-drive vehicles would have been nice . . .

Wednesday, November 3
It was our last day to pile in the vans, don our hard-hats and earplugs, and tour a mill hoping to catch at least one thing the guide was saying. We watched the process of creating particleboard at Temple-Inland and saw plywood made at Georgia Pacific. We would have liked to have pictures, but then our cameras wouldn’t have made it home. It was also the last day to visit our new friends at the bowling alley.
Thursday, November 4

We've spent the last three weeks in a completely different climate, studying forestry practices first hand. We've learned how important it is to think critically about management techniques and how you have to consider many different opinions about what is best for the area. We've enjoyed the sites of the area as well as just sitting around on porchswings. So how do 29 forestry students go about reviewing their three-week camp in a single afternoon? Start with a good dose of "...And the fire went wild," add in a few good 'Bama jokes, a talkshow janitor, and a newly transplanted longleaf pine tree and you have a good idea.

Friday, November 5

8:30 am we were all out of the cabins for the last time and taking our final test. Once we handed those in along with our beloved camp journals in which we had all diligently kept notes, it was time to throw everything into the trailers, enjoy one final camp meal, and say good-bye to Rhett, Daryl, and all the great kitchen staff. We were ready to say goodbye to the southern pine forests and greet the expansive farm fields of home.