

As I hang my "Born to Fish...Forced to Work" plaque on my wall, I am reminded of the great time I had at the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) weekend. I first learned about BOW last year from my friend Maureen. When we got home from the weekend we told Wendy and Cheryl how much fun we had and all the neat things we learned. This year they signed up to come as well. We picked up our registration and now was the hard part---what workshops should we take this year? Last year was Rifle Marksmanship, Shotgun, Get Your Bearings, and Survival Skills. After consulting with my friends and going over the options a number of times, I finally decided...Fishing (Basic and Advanced), Reading the Woods and Black Powder shooting. Now to pack.....

I was prepared for hot and cold as well as rainy weather, but even more important I must be prepared for the woodticks! Last year I was a tick magnet. This year I'm ready for them. I'll duct tape my socks to my pants and wear flea and tick collars on both ankles. That should keep them away (it works for cats and dogs). I'm ready to go – only a week left.

Friday finally arrived and the weather was great . We checked into our bunkhouse. Last year we did it up all the way and stayed in a covered wagon. This year we felt we could boast and earned a bunkhouse. Oh yeah, Darlene, one of the coordinators, asked if two of us wouldn't mind the top bunkbeds. After I volunteered Wendy and myself, Darlene mentioned that the top bunks hung from the ceiling on chains! Thank goodness Wendy is such a good sport. Now that we were settled in, it was time for lunch.

The meals are always great and so much to eat! It was nice to see familiar faces as well as new ones. We met women from all walks of life and from different countries. One lady was from Mexico and some were from the States. We will have more time to chat later. It's time for my first workshop, "Reading the Woods".

With duct tape and tick collars in place, I was ready. Our instructor was great!! He took us "up the creek", so to speak, to retrieve a number of water insects. We found marshflies, damselflies, beetles, etc. I retrieved my first woodtick!! So much for flea and tick collars. Our instructor was very helpful. While I was wishing these creatures never existed and wondering what their purpose in this world was, he asked me if it was a male or a female. Like I really cared? He proceeded to show me that females had a white semi circle on the top of their bodies that resembled an apron and males just had stripes. I had found a female. But not to worry, my instructor said, "she just wants to feed and lay her eggs". That's just great! I need a coffee.

That evening, after a roast beef dinner, my friends went for a trail ride. They were having some impromptu sessions—build a birdhouse or learn fly tying. Fly-tying it is. I was hooked (no, not literally!) This is great--I made three Woolly Buggers! Wait 'til I get home and show Rich. Well, time for a snack and hear the tales of the day. It is amazing how much fresh air can tire me; bed cannot come soon enough. One challenge still faces me, I have to get into that top bunk. How hard could it be, up and over the ladder. No problem. Here I go. First run -- ouch! the ladder came off the bed. Here I go again--first rung, second, third. Great , now just over the ladder

and try to miss the chain. I'm 5"1" I could use a fourth rung. Over I go. All right! I made it! I just hope I don't have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

Saturday and another beautiful day. This morning it's fishing at Jackson Lake. We did some casting and trolling. Tracey caught the first jack! It was a good size too. I didn't catch anything but enjoyed myself out in the boat. Later that day Dallas showed us how to fillet fish and offered anyone to give it a try. The worse part is hanging onto them.

"Black Powder Basics" was my experience for the afternoon. I must admit I thought muzzleloaders were a thing of the past. Pat, our instructor, informed me that they are one of the fastest growing recreations in America. We learned about black powder and smokeless propellants and how to measure it as well as different projectiles that are available. By the end of the afternoon, I was able to load and shoot a muzzleloader. Unfortunately, my aim needs a lot of work.

This evening is the raffle draw and snacks. Tonight the women who took Camp Cooking are letting us try some of their culinary delights. Spiced moose, deer, goose, wild rice and some stir-fry. I'm not sure which one I enjoyed the most. Next year I'll have to take this workshop.

I hope to win something in the raffle draw this year. Last year I had to work for a prize. There are draws for every workshop for the day as well as the Saturday evening rainbow raffle. Some women took home 2 gifts! A new friend that I made last year was in the same boat. We both lost out on a gift.... we had a plan. We offered to sing Sunday morning in return for a prize. Come Sunday morning we were in good voice and did our little ditty. Darlene gave us wonderful "parting gifts". I was willing to do the same this year. Darlene wasn't as eager--apparently my voice is a little hard on the ears. Only three draws left, Darlene has all her digits crossed and little beads of sweat are forming on her forehead. Finally, my name is called!! I won!!! Darlene was relieved and I was happy to win a book on Muzzleloaders. Time for bed. Maureen was gracious enough to offer to sleep on the top tonight -- something to do with my waking everyone up at 3 a.m. to visit the john and my awkward descent from the top bunk. It's great to have tall friends.

Sunday came much too fast. The weather was great all weekend but it is time for my last workshop...Advanced Fishing. Dallas gave us a lot of tips on how to catch the "big one". We learned how to tie our lures, how to hold a fishing rod properly and about the lateral line of a fish. Just wait 'til I tell Rich, he'll be impressed. Another year has come and gone and only one woodtick. Maybe the duct tape and tick collars worked after all? I'm already planning my itinerary for next year.

Electronic gizmos.....

NOTE: I didn't want to ruin the illusion for Gloria (she is such a good sport!), but I must reveal the truth. Even though she thought her luck had changed, through the generosity of our sponsors we made sure everyone got a "prize" this year. We desperately wanted to avoid a repeat of the infamous Sunday morning serenade-- think about nails on a blackboard. -- Darlene