

Turkey Pen Gap Backpacking
BSA Troop 116
November 12-13, 2011

Troop 116's November backpacking trip in 2011 was to Turkey Pen Gap, a region of Pisgah National Forest. The drive from St. John's to the Turkey Pen Gap trailhead took about three hours. The parking was somewhat scarce, as the park is primarily for horse riders, and a large portion of the parking area is designated to horse trailers.

After arriving at the parking lot and having a quick formation, we split into a group of younger/less experienced hikers and older/stronger hikers. The stronger group hiked a longer, more strenuous route while the younger group took a flatter, more direct path. The longer hike had constantly changing elevation and was sufficiently difficult, while the shorter hike was mostly flat and easy. The trails were well kept and enjoyable to hike on, despite being somewhat muddy from their adjacency to the river.

The younger group arrived at the campsite about thirty minutes before the older group. Setting up camp was pretty simple. There was very minor vegetation on the ground, but after a few minutes of landscaping the campsites were perfect for setting up tents. The ground was pleasantly soft; stakes drove through the soil like knives through butter. After setting up camp, we gathered massive bounties of firewood before sitting down to enjoy the scenery. We camped next to a river that produced the soothing sound of flowing water. The rest of the day will filled with relaxation.

Night was equally enjoyable; the adults, venture Scouts, and other Scouts each built fires and sat around them sharing stories until bedtime. Once the sun went down, it became chilly and dark, but the fires provided sufficient warmth and light to counteract the night. We had expected the temperature to be much lower, so we were thankful that nature was forgiving. After we'd had enough time around the campfire, we went to bed happily on the soft, comfortable ground.

The following morning was of normal procedure, we cooked breakfast, packed up, held a devotion, swept the camp, and hiked out. Everything went according to plan, and a good time was had by all.

-Dan McFalls, Historian