

Troop 116, Charlotte NC
Swamp Fox Trail Backpacking 2012

On the second weekend of February, 2012, scouts from Troop 116 headed near Charleston, South Carolina to the Swamp Fox Trail in the Frances Marion National Forest, a historic area home to a unique history and ecosystem. The drive to the trailhead from Charlotte takes about four hours. Before going on the trail, we stopped by the Seewee Visitor Center to learn a little bit about the history and environment of where we would be hiking. We looked around at a small exhibit and watched a short film about the variety of animal and plant life, including several endangered species and the rare carnivorous "pitcher plant", and the area's ties to the Revolutionary War and Francis Marion, the general known as "swamp fox," from whom the trail gets its name. After sufficient indulgence in learning, we drove a short distance to the trailhead, where we ate lunch and prepared for the trail. The hike was six miles through flat, forest terrain. The scenery on the hike was a bit blander than the movie presentation at the visitor center had made it out to be, but it did pass through a forest that had been exposed to "controlled burning" to keep it functioning, which was an interesting sight to see. The hike was not too difficult, and was a good way for the newest scouts to get a taste of real backpacking without having too much difficulty.

After reaching the camp, the rest of the day was filled with relaxation and enjoyable weather. That is, until night came around. Once the sun went down, the temperatures plummeted fast, and it only got colder as the night progressed. Sleeping was not too interrupted by the chilling cold, but getting up was most straining. It was COLD. Luckily, we got a chance to sleep in a little later than usually, since we were able to bring the cars near our campsite after the hike in, preventing us from needing to hike out. Taking down camp took a little longer than usual due to the cold weather slowing us down, but eventually we were packed up and ready to head home to warm houses and hot showers. On our drive out, we drove past a large collection of vehicles, ATV's, police cars, crime scene investigators, and many people on the side of the road. We slowed down to inquire, and were told nonchalantly by an officer that they were "just doing a search", as if it were a normal, everyday activity. After the fact, we learned that we had been camping in proximity of a murderer (who later committed suicide) and the location where he burned his victim's car and buried her. The full story in detail appeared on the front page of the news days later.