

Dun Magazine
Breathe In

My family lives and breathes fly fishing. When it comes to breathing fly fishing, you might say I have asthma.

Spring 2019 - Motivation

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photo by Ben Mellon

When my parents mentioned going to Trout Adventure Camp in Tremont's Great Smoky Mountains National Park, I was not convinced it was what I wanted to do for a week over my precious summer break. Here's the kicker though—I went and I had a blast!

Trout Adventure Camp is a five-day summer camp where you spend the week learning all about fly fishing and everything that comes with it. The camp is run by Trout Unlimited, an organization that focuses on trout, nature, and keeping it protected and just as beautiful as it is now for generations to come. During the camp you learn everything you could ever need to know about the water you're fishing and everything around it. There are multiple camps around the country, but the one I stayed at was in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. We stayed in a "tent village" with a small group of kids our age. Obviously, the same gender kids stayed in each tent. There were between 5 and 10 tents that each had four sets of bunk beds in them, and our camp only took up three of them.



photo by - Ben Mellon

There were 14 campers between the ages of 12 and 15. There were 10 boys and, well, you can do the math, four girls including me. It was a great group, and the other girls and I became like one single unit. The only bad thing about it was that us girls had cameras in our faces all week because we were the largest group of girls ever to be at our local trout camp. So, if you're a teenage girl and you are

interested in this camp, you need to look up Trout Adventure Camp and see if there is one near you, or you can come to mine! If you're a teenage girl and you're a little hesitant about camp, you should keep reading. Maybe you'll change your mind. I mean, come on, we can't let the boys completely take over the river!

The Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont was where the camp took place, and I'm not sure there could be a better spot for Trout Adventure Camp. The food was great, the people were great, and the location couldn't be better. Everything there taught us about what our awesome National Park holds. There was a classroom we used to compare our flies with the bugs we were mimicking. There were a few streams out behind the main building where we caught fish, bugs, crawdads, and salamanders. You name it! The staff was also really cool! After the first night of camp, the overnight

counselor for the girls got sick and had to leave. Fortunately, one of the Tremont Staff girls stayed with us instead.



photo by - Trout Adventure Camp

Everyday there were one or two main events throughout the day, and trust me when I say, all of them were very exciting! On our first full day of camp, we had a fly casting demonstration. We immediately tried out our new casting skills in the stream right behind where we were practicing. After that, we tried to cast our fly in a soup bowl or a large frisbee. On my favorite day of camp, we got to snorkel in what everyone calls "The

Y". This is a spot where two major forks of the river join into one larger stream. A "Y", get it?

To be clear, I have spent most of my 13 years on Earth in the river, messing with the creatures in it, but I have never seen crawdads as big as I did that day. There were an abundance of tangerine darters, salamanders, crawdads, and many other little fish. That morning, we spent time monitoring the river with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Fisheries Biologists. Later that afternoon, after all the excitement, the weather gave up on us. Rain was coming down in sheets and wouldn't stop. What we ended up doing was playing this game that was a cross between "Trivial Pursuit" and "Monopoly," but all the questions had to do with bugs and aquatic life. Another thing we got to do was learn

how to tie flies every night. During the week we also got two days with a volunteer/guide on the water. Our first day with a guide was on Norton Creek, which is on private property and is dotted with original art from one of the owners. On our last full day of camp, we spent the day in the National Park with a guide. That day I got one fish and my fellow camper that went with me got four, but that wasn't because my fishing was bad. It was because of my fishing asthma.



photo by - Trout Adventure Camp

Almost every night we had a different guest speaker before or after tying flies. One night we had a man come in who talked about all the different types of bugs! His presentation was really cool. He compared actual bugs to the flies we were making because, of course, we were learning how to tie the flies. Up to that point, we hadn't considered what we were trying to mimic. After the presentation, he took us outside where he had a white curtain over a bright light. He showed us how he took pictures of the bugs, and how we could do the same thing at home.

The funniest part of the whole thing was seeing the boys' reactions when they tried to mess with our small group of girls. All the guys at camp were really into all the insects, while all the girls, except me, were really not. They would throw a bug at us and the other girls would flip out, while I would just chuckle and watch it crawl and be like, "Hey there, little buddy!" Bugs have never really phased me. Except spiders. I do not like spiders. Anyway, after that, I had a few allies that helped me get rid of the overabundance of bug spray. That night is what became for the rest of the week as "The Spider Holocaust". The girls sprayed so much bug spray there was no way it was safe to breathe in our tent. We ended up leaving the bug net closed on our tent, but left the doors and windows open. It was so bad we had to leave the tent, and go to the main building to take a shower, and play cards with the other campers.

One day, after a long day of fishing, I had a long conversation about my favorite Vines with Emma, a 15-year-old camper. No, not a long crawling plant, but seven-second viral videos. In the mix of the conversation, a vine that involves a Shakira impression was brought up. That was when I realized that not everyone can make a noise in the back of their throat, that sounds a lot like Shakira, but I can.

Now, I promise I didn't just tell you some weird random talent I discovered, and a bug killing spree at my camp to take up space in a magazine. I wrote this to promote that Trout Adventure Camp isn't just Trout Adventure Camp. Yes, you learn about fishing and the nature that surrounds you, but you also make some awesome friends and memories you will never forget. And when I say that, I'm not just saying that so you can imagine



some picture-perfect summer camp right out of a Disney movie. I'm saying that because I truly mean it. For example, I forgot to bring my neoprene booties to camp for wet wading and one other girl had too, so what the other two girls did was wear their waders so we wouldn't have to struggle in the heat by ourselves. When we were first asked why we were wearing our waders instead of

photo by - Ben Mellon

wet wading when it was 80 degrees outside, the other two girls brushed it off and said, "It's a fashion statement!" It was a joke at first, and we eventually got booties to wear instead of the heavy waders, but it was really helpful for me and the other girl, and really showed us that we didn't need to worry about getting along!

I know I wasn't the only one who enjoyed camp, because I asked a few other campers what their favorite part of camp was, and these were their responses.

"I liked getting to know different people while learning something completely new!" —Renee Wilson

"I liked getting to fish with my guide on Friday!" —Ivan Whitus

"I made friends that live in other states than me, and learned about a new type of fishing than what I am used to." —Emma Clegg

What this really shows is that it doesn't take a person to be constantly outside to appreciate the outdoors. Yes, I've been raised outside, and I wouldn't trade it for anything, but I'm not the only kid out there who loves the outdoors. Camps like this really help keep kids in nature and teach them to keep it clean. This is a long-term goal for Trout Unlimited. They want to make sure that in 20 years, or so, kids that go to Trout Adventure Camp will take their kids to rivers and streams, and continue this legacy. So, go to TnTroutAdventure.org to discover your Shakira impressions, insectophobia, and of course, to get a fly rod in your hand!