



Wolf Pack Track 2009

Eight days and seven nights in the wilderness of Värmland. (This article is a summary of the Swedish version.)

Last week of April 2009, after months of preparing animals, equipment and food the SMM was finally ready to hit the trail. Our plan was to ride from Råby (a few miles south of Torsby) to Packstation Högfäll during seven days in the saddle and one days rest.

Friday April 24.

The whole bunch gathered at Charlie's place for some last preparations for the trail. We examined the gear, looked over the animals and enjoyed the sunny weather. As always, we traded gifts and had a shot of two of whisky. Richard, who is an experienced woodsman but new to fur trade re-enactment was given his first flint and striker. A few minutes later his first fire was blazing. Convinced of their superiority he threw away his matches, never to be used again.

Saturday April 25

We left Charlie's ranch early in the morning. A few hours past midday and a brand new bruise on Char's thigh we were finally ready to hit the trail. It felt great to finally be out in the wilderness. Camp was made on the edge of an old clearing. Dinner consisted pemmican boiled in brown water from a nearby bog.

Sunday April 26

A few slices of smoked pork, a cup of coffee and we were once more heading north. We got our first taste of the beautiful landscape as we climbed Gräsberget to our planned camp site. Daisy, the mule, kept our spirits high by acting out the feelings we all had after a few wrong turns on the steep trail. She simply laid down...

We finally made camp close to a small lake where Char kept his earlier made promise and plunged into the ice cold water.

At evening, Charlie, Mike and Char made a trek up the mountain side to enjoy the view. As darkness closed in, we all joined by the fire for a game of cards. The fire kept us warm as we discussed the existence of what is called a "shit stick", a phenomena claimed superior to all other toilet paper substitutes by Richard. No conclusion was made.

Monday April 27

Richard and Charlie woke up early after a turbulent night. In the middle of night Daisy the mule tore loose from her picket line, and in search of her master ended up standing on top of him. Kent and Char helped the bruised and confused Charlie with Daisy and went back to sleep.

After eating and packing our animals we made a short ride down the mountain where Kent and Åsa left us to head back to civilization. The remaining four re-tied a sliding pack and continued the journey.

After a rough climb in deep mud we hit a track named Hovfjällsleden. Here we noticed how



Daisys crupper had started to tear through her skin. So we decided to improvise a britchen made from Charlie's belt and straps from a well smoked moccasin hide. Satisfied with the breaching we let the animals and ourselves have a noon rest . After watering the animals we all fell asleep and felt very refreshed as we rode on. Bog after bog kept us from our planned trail, and after spending three hours carrying our packs and walking our horses around one of the same we concluded that we would not reach our cache as planned. The evening turned into night before we tied up the animals, and with a mouthful of pemmican crawled into our bedrolls. This Monday would be remember as "Hell ride", and proofed how well our humble party worked in stressed and toilsome situations. Wet or dry, we still kept focused and worked together without any shouting or bad temper!

Tuesday April 28

Rick was up early reconnoitering the surroundings and had what we called a "tingeling moment", which is a special occasion where you either enjoy your own company on a beautiful spot, or have a drink from the barrel. In this case Richard spent some time on a rock watching as a beaver did what beavers do in a nearby lake.

When he returned to camp the rest of us were busy packing, and he told us we were only about a mile or two from yesterdays cache. An hour or two later, the horses were feeding, and the four of us were watching as the contents in our sheet iron kettle was boiling. It was soon devoured and with bellies full of rice and pemmican we filled our pipes and enjoyed the stuffed feeling.

The rest of the day was just a smooth ride with the exception of a few sliding packs. We hobbled our friends on a small grassy field and performed the usual camp chores. After some pork and rice seasoned with mustard and pepper sauce we tied the animals to their picket lines and covered up in our blankets and robes.

Wednesday April 29

Char's mare Panchito kept interrupting our sleep during the night by kicking and digging. We still got up early, had some breakfast consisting of pork and dried apple fried in the bacon grease.

This was the coldest day so far, and as we rode along the shore of a lake the low temperature combined with the moist air stiffened our limbs. After a few hours in the saddle we tried to pass a creek full of "sign" but had to use the modern trail to pass. Soon after we arrived at a great camp spot. A river named Manglidsälven was running within a hundred yards, and between us and the river was a small creek with clear ice cold water.

Richard and Char worked up a large pile of pitch pine, Charlie prepared our dinner, and Mike took care of our gear. As it was getting cloudy and drops started falling we decided to make use of our tarps and erected two shelters. Just as we threw our gear under cover the rain started to pour down. Luckily dinner was ready and we enjoyed our moose stew without getting wet.

The rain only lasted for a moment, so Mike, Charlie and Char threw some traps over their shoulders and headed towards the "sign". The traps were set and darkness soon fell.

Thursday April 30

Mike and Char went to check the traps while Charlie cooked a delicious breakfast. We had discovered how two frying pans could make an excellent oven which turned the biscuits into a sexual experience. Blaming other hunters and trap shy beavers the two trappers returned



empty handed. After breakfast all four of us made a trek to the nearby cache and carried a few bales of hay and barley to our friends. We had decided to let the animals rest, which meant we had to do the carrying for once.

Back in camp we all separated for personal projects such as cleaning in the nearby river, mending gear or just relaxing. Char decided to make use of his skills as a carpenter and made a beaver tail paddle from a large pitch pine log and Richard made his first pare of side seam moccasins while Mike mended his pare.

By evening Richard guided Nisse, a local outfitter, to camp. After all had enjoyed the stew and biscuits the three SMM members decided to invite a fourth member to the group. Richard, a hard working farmer and experienced woodsman and horseman has now struck the path of the mountain men of the Rocky Mountains.

Friday May 1

After a cold night with ice in the kettles we hit the trail early. The sun was shining and our knowledgeable guide Nisse took us across a magnificent landscape on small trails. We met a Dutch whom to our surprise knew that we were dressed as trappers which is seldom guessed by others in Sweden. "Injun?" perhaps, never "Trapper?".

Camp was stuck close to a fine lake where the two dirty trappers Mike and Char tried to wash away the worst trail dust. We all felt a bit sad knowing this would be our last night under the stars for long time. Civilization was closing in on us whether we liked it or not.

In the middle of night we all heard the sound of strange horses. It proved to be Peter, another outfitter and good friend that would guide us to his place a days ride from where we were. Night was cold and kept some of us close to the fire.

Saturday May 2

Another cold morning in the saddle. A sad day, it was hard to enjoy the scenery as we were all starting our inner journey from the 1830s back to 2009. Small rocky trails and narrow passages through the wood brought us to Peters place; Packstation Högfäll, where he and his family served us sweets and a delicious pot of chili.

This was the end of Wolf Pack Track, the greatest adventure in the short history of the SMM. So far!