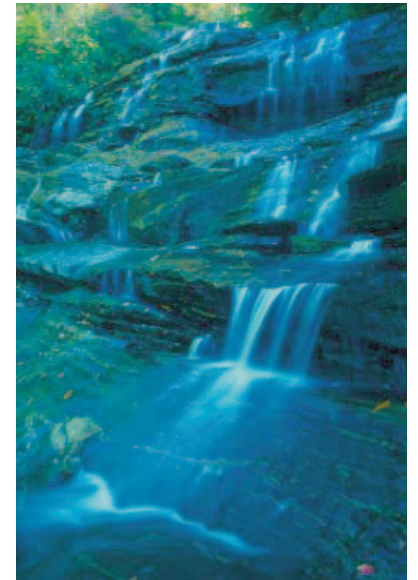


Natural selection

By ARIEL DAVIS



Photo by MICHAEL DUMAS



AP Photo

USA Outdoor Adventures offers a chance to explore Mother Nature and ourselves

Through the University of South Alabama Outdoor Recreation program, students are taking advantage of the region's natural resources through overnight trips and camping excursions. Since January, the group, led by Randy Hunter, provides all the gear and supplies for a low-budget outdoor adventure.

"The outdoor recreation program didn't exist until last year," Hunter said. "The Rec Club did a couple of trips, (then) added me on staff in September."

Hunter plans all of the outdoor adventures and accompanies the students on each trip. He says most trips cost \$40-\$70, and the university provides all of the gear, tents, equipment and cooking supplies for those participating. Non-USA students are also welcome, though they must attend with a friend, spouse or faculty member connected to the school.

"In a technological world filled with iPods, Blackberries and computers, people can very easily forget about the quiet solitude and magnificent beauty of [the] wilderness," Hunter said. "Camping, backpacking, canoeing and kayaking allow us to re-connect with 'the wild' and hopefully give us greater insight into just what is important in life."

Hunter believes his trips help individuals learn unique skills and develop self-confidence by accomplishing difficult tasks like successfully running a white-water rapid or traversing three miles of a difficult mountain trail with a 40-pound pack strapped on.

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