

The Connecticut Section of the Green Mountain Club

THE TRAIL TALK

January 2011



President's Message January 2011

I would like to thank all board members, hike leaders and members of the Connecticut Section of the Green Mountain Club for their time and hard work in making 2010 a great year for all. 2011 promises to be another good year for our section. Please check out our list of activities for the months of February through April. Have you been thinking of leading an activity but don't know where to start? Please contact me with any questions that you may have.

Activity leaders, as we go out into the woods, are we really prepared for the unexpected? These are some items that should be in your pack: EXTRA hand, foot and body heat packs; a small blanket; a ground cloth; a first aid kit; mittens; and a hat and scarf. These items can and will make a difference to an injured person who is waiting for emergency personnel to arrive.

Sometimes weather conditions can make it necessary to cancel or change the location of the activity. Don't be afraid to make this decision. You are responsible for everyone who joins your activity. I experienced this first hand this past fall. With snow and ice on the trail to Skyline Lodge, we had to leave the next day for safety reasons.

Members or guests who show up for any activity and are not prepared with proper attire or equipment can be denied participation by the activity leader. We all want to enjoy the day or weekend, but the safety of all participants is the club's main concern.

Let's all get out there and enjoy the trails.

Carol A. Langley, President



Wachusett Meadow and Mountain Hike Princeton, Massachusetts October 3, 2010

The designated meeting place to the share-a-ride lot was in Southbridge, Massachusetts. George and Sarah were early to meet Bill on a fine sunny morn'. The half hour ride to Princeton was filled with hike chatter and turkey sightings. The trail head at Wachusett Meadow Sanctuary is at a converted farm house with an office and facilities for hikers. A number of wildlife trails radiate from here in the sanctuary.

Our hike started in an upland meadow and soon entered the woods at the Chapman Trail. The Midstate Trail coincided with trails to the summit. The next mile was slightly uphill through mixed forest and ferns. Crossing a dirt road at the boundary we followed the Dickens Trail by a waterway to a paved road. The trail name changed to Harrington, and the Princeton Municipal Wind Farm came into view. Here, a large bird flew into the tree tops.

After some bushwacking, we were at the feet of the giant windmills. Back on the trail, we crossed some cart paths and intersections of side trails just below the final ascent. A number of hikers going in various directions were taking advantage of the day. Here the trail was boulder-littered and steep. The summit views of Mount Monadnock, New Hampshire; Mount Tom, Massachusetts; and Boston were clear, but landmarks in Rhode Island and Connecticut were dim.

A brisk breeze blew, and we started our decent on Mountain House Trail to find a sheltered lunch break. George delighted with Halloween donuts. The Link Trail returned us to Harrington and Midstate. Back in the Sanctuary, we returned on the West Border to the Glacial Rock trails. The Glacial Rock was huge. The North Meadow trail had great views of the sanctuary and farm buildings and ponds. It was a slightly colorful autumn day but a joy nevertheless. The woods were carpeted with early falling leaves, which cushioned the 8½ miles of trails and gave an eerie quietness to the venture. It was agreed that this was a hike with everything a hiker could ask for.

Hikers: Sarah O'Hare, George Jackson

Leader: Bill Falconer



Mohawk Trail October 16, 2010

We met at the Cathedral Pines parking area in Cornwall Bridge. It was a windy day with the threat of rain. It was a 'no coffee' day for me, and I was feeling a bit hazy. As we were donning our hiking boots and jackets, Jim asked if we were doing a loop hike or if we needed to stage cars. That pesky Jim, always worried about minutia such as staging cars or if we're going in the right direction or not. After being reminded of this little detail, we hopped in my car and drove to the trailhead on Route 43 where we started our hike.

CLUB INFORMATION

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Articles

The Trail Talk is published four times a year in January, April, July and October. Activity schedules are included in each issue. Reports of activities and articles must be sent to the editor no later than the tenth day of the month of the publication. Send articles to:

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Membership

When filling out the form to join or renew, circle the Connecticut Section on the application to receive, at no extra charge, the Connecticut Section's newsletter and activity schedule.

Dues:

Individual Adult	\$ 40.00
Family	\$ 50.00
Senior (70 or older) or Limited Income	\$ 22.00
Nonprofit or Youth Group	\$ 50.00
Business or Corporation	\$150.00

Send annual dues to (can also pay online):

The Green Mountain Club
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
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Connecticut Section of the GMC

Post & Receive Messages, Photos, Other Activities

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ct_green_mountain_club/

After a short road trek, the trail took us up a steep, upward incline. Carol was in good shape from her trip out west. Don said that he was out-of-shape, but we couldn't tell.

I chose this trail because I wanted to check out the backpacking shelters. All three of the shelters are depicted on the "Mohawk campsite map" on the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection website. Because of their experience, Don and Carol were able to provide good insight into the hiking, camping, and parking situation in this area, which enhanced my reconnaissance mission. The first shelter that we encountered was just north of Route 4. I would give this site two and half stars. The shelter was small with an earthen floor that was partially covered with wooden planks. This site didn't have a water supply or a view. Further, Don indicated that because it was so close to the road, this site is used by partiers, which isn't conducive to a good night's sleep or a peace of mind.

The second shelter that we encountered was just south of Route 4 near a picnic area in Mohawk State Forest. I would also give this site two and half stars. Like the first shelter, it was small with an earthen floor; but the floor was covered with a blue, plastic tarp. This site didn't have a water supply or a view, either. It was also close to the road, making it another party destination.



The third shelter was located east of the intersection of Toumey Road and Mohawk Trail. I would give this site three and half stars. Like the others, the shelter was small with an earthen floor, which was covered with fresh hay. It also had a water supply nearby as well as a privy; moreover, because the road that's nearest to this site is gated shut at night, it's not a destination for night-time partiers. However, I didn't give this site four stars because the water supply was from a surface water body nor did it have a view.

The rest of the hike was fairly uneventful but full of interesting conversation and laughs. It never rained.

At the end of the hike, in my caffeine-deprived fog, I forgot to suggest pizza at the end of the hike; nonetheless, it wasn't long before my growling belly reminded me that it needed to be fed. We decided to stop at the Landing Zone Grill in Harwinton. It's a Cajun restaurant that's near a now-

defunct airport. The Landing Zone Grill is actually an inhospitable-looking place that does a good job of presenting an image of a backwater, Cajun establishment. I was actually a little nervous about going in, but something told me that it had awesome food. My stomach always reigns.

Curiously, the place didn't offer Jambalaya or Gumbo, but the ten page menu had all sorts of interesting items such as alligator and frog's legs. Feeling as if I had been adventurous enough for one day, I had the fried whole belly oysters. Jim had a blackened burger. The food seemed pretty decent.

Curiosity and appetites satisfied, we headed home.

*Hikers: Don Hagstrom, Carol Langley, Jim Fritz
Leader: Mary O'Neill*



*Long Trail Hike
October 23, 2010*



Taconic Crest Trail November 6 to 7, 2010

Saturday morning, we all met in New Lebanon, New York, and then proceeded to drop our exit vehicle at the Mattison Hollow Access Trail trailhead. We then drove down to our entry point on Madden Road. We started by climbing up onto the ridge and topping out on Round Top Mountain. From here, we were able to see in all directions. We then continued north another hour or so with one snack stop along the way, finally arriving at a suitable campsite next to a nice stream. We set up our tents and bear bags, had dinner, and then made a fire in order to stay warm and socialize.

Sunday morning, we awoke to a fairly brisk temperature somewhere in the mid-20-degree Fahrenheit range. After a somewhat chilly breakfast and breakdown of camp, we set off northbound along the ridge again. Ice crystals were abundantly growing next to mud puddles. The temperature remained just at or below freezing, and we had a nice

breeze. After a couple of hours of easy and enjoyable packing along the trail, we arrived at our trail's junction with Mattison Hollow Access Trail. Here, we made a left turn westbound and descended down into The Holler. This was 2.6 miles of quite beautiful and enjoyable walking, terminated by the welcomed sight of George's fancy truck. Following our retrieval of the entry vehicles, we met at Pizza Plus Restaurant on Route 22 where we easily consumed two large pizzas before heading out to our respective homes.

*Participants: Mark Blanchard, Don Hagstrom, George Jackson, Sarah O'Hare
Leader: Don Woodbridge*



Chatfield Hollow State Park November 14, 2010

Many people were enjoying this mild November day at Chatfield Hollow State Park. The majority of the families, dog walkers, cyclists and horseback riders kept to the paved park road. Our group, however, chose the paths through the woods. We first explored the eastern side of the park by way of the East Woods and Lookout Trails. Old Mill Pond, at the northern end of the park, was our lunch destination. The Covered Bridge Trail and the Ridge Trail brought us to the picnic tables by the pond. Ducks dabbling in the water and horseback riders slowly walking along the road made for a quiet scene while we rested.

We then set out to explore the more rugged western side of the park. Hiking along the Deep Woods Trail found us climbing to the top of a rock ledge. Some rock climbers were enjoying these cliffs in their own adventurous way. Other trails we followed were the Pond Trail, which brought us to a pond overlook; the impressive Paul Widemann Boardwalk through a wetlands area; and the Chimney Trail, taking us along the base of massive rock outcroppings with Indian caves. After a fun and invigorating eight-mile hike we were tired, but all agreed that this park is most worthy of another visit.

*Hikers: Carol Langley, George Jackson, Don Hagstrom, Kevin Vann, Larry Keckler
Leader: Sarah O'Hare*



Ragged Mountain Preserve November 20, 2010

Only one brave and well-prepared hiker showed up for this Full Moon hike: Mary O'Neill.

We started our hike around 12:45 pm. The day was warm and clear. The trail had some re-routes, so I kept thinking, "is this the right way?" We noted one place that was alongside some rocks where, in the spring, there is probably a beautiful waterfall. At a trail intersection, we came upon a group of Boy Scouts who were having a map and compass day. According to their leaders, they were in the right place. Three cheers for these leaders who are teaching young boys not to rely on a cell phone and emergency 9-1-1 if they think they are lost. Instead, these leaders are teaching them basic skills that are necessary to enjoy time in the great outdoors.



At this point, the trail turned to the west, leading to great views of Southington and Bristol. Directly below us was Wassel Reservoir. This ridge walk, with a few up and downs, took us to our destination, the summit of Ragged Mountain where we would watch a sunset and have dinner. At this time, the wind had picked up, so we found a sheltered campsite.

Mary pulled out a down sleeping bag and a down jacket. She got in the bag and opened an MRE. *Did I miss something here? Was this an overnight?* No! Mary was just prepared and wanted to stay warm. She actually relaxed in her bag while I walked around picking up beer bottles and cans to keep my body heat.

Looking up and over the ridge, I saw this bright red fire ball on the horizon. *Mary, Mary get up, or you are going to miss it!* As the sun sunk below the horizon, it cast beautiful colors into the clouds of crimson, pink and purple. This, I must say, was probably one of the best sunsets that I have seen from Ragged Mountain.

We continued on but kept looking back so we wouldn't miss any of the sunset. In the east the full moon was rising. Twilight was upon us, and the lights of the cities in the valley below twinkled. Headlamps on and our pace slow,



we kept stopping to take in the beauty of the night and the shadows of the moon. The branches of the trees were bare, and the light filtered through them down to the trail.

As we passed Hart's Pond, the moonlight shimmered across the water. By the time we reached the last part of the trail, which was on an old woods road, we hiked with only moonlight. This was Mary's first Full Moon hike, and she gave hints of wanting to do one herself. *Thanks for joining me. I look forward to your hike.*

Hiker: Mary O'Neill

Leader: Carol A. Langley



Green Falls State Park November 28, 2010

It was just Sarah and Mandy out for a hike on this day, and what a beautiful, crisp fall day. The sky was as blue as could be with the sun in full shine mode. We met by the Pond and did a brief hike on the Pachaug Trail before turning onto the Laurel Loop Trail. It was an easy, relaxed trail that looped around and brought us onto the Nehantic Trail. We completed that loop which was about seven miles. The day was still young, so we decided to add a hike around Green Falls Pond. We hiked about half way around and then found a perfect spot, down by the water, to have our lunch. The sun glistened on the water. It was quiet and



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peaceful. It reminded us of how nice it is to get away from life's chaos. We continued around the Pond and arrived at our cars around 1:30 pm. Mandy's doggies had come along, and we all felt good with our morning hike that totaled eight miles.

Hiker: Sarah O'Hare

Doggies: Scrappy, Asha and Cooper

Leader: Mandy Brink



Mattabesett Trail Route 66 to Country Club Road December 12, 2010

The interest in this hike had been high. Two days before the hike, the leader had seven people interested in accompanying her. However, the weather forecast had been bad and got worse each day. By Saturday night, the probability of precipitation was up to 90% to 100%, and yours truly was fully prepared to cancel, but Ken "what's a little rain" Williamson kept insisting that it would not be problem.

The morning of the 12th dawned soggy and foggy. Two people, of sounder mind than the leader, called or e-mailed that morning to cancel. Three more had previously been told that "really icky weather" would cancel and assumed, not unreasonably, that 34 degree F, rain, and the threat of high winds constituted really icky weather and that the hike was canceled. This left the small remaining group to carry on and hike.

We met at the park-and-ride at Exit 20 off of I-91. At this point, Ken allowed, as how it was rather cold and rainy, that perhaps we should consider going off for breakfast somewhere. This comment was met with a disapproving scowl from the leader. Once Mary arrived, we left her car at the park-and-ride and drove to the trailhead at Route 66.

When we got to the parking lot, we had to put on proper

wet-weather gear. Ken noted that he had not been able to find his rain pants, at which point Lora noted that she knew exactly where they were and would have been happy to tell him before they left, had he asked. The rain was steady; and, ominously, Mary's poncho had a vertical tear in it before we even started to hike. A little electrical tape provided a temporary fix that soon pulled apart in the gusty winds.

The climb was steep in the early sections of the hike; and the ground was slippery, with occasional small patches of ice. The rain was not terribly heavy, but the fog was tremendous. The beautiful vistas from the slopes of Mount Higby were invisible, and even I-91 was only identifiable by the sound of passing cars. Occasionally the clouds would clear a bit, and we could see ice on something (a pond? a parking lot? who knows?) down below.

As we neared the summit of Mount Higby, we paused for a brief lunch, standing a few feet off the trail away from the winds at the cliff edge. Mary got to try out her new thermos, which had done an admirable job of keeping her tea hot. The rest of us cooled off after that stop; but the rain had mercifully stopped for a bit, and we warmed up as we got going again. The forest was pretty in an autumnal, leafless sort of way; but the low clouds lent an overall darkness to the scene. As we came down from the summit of Higby, there were many fallen trees though we could not tell whether they had come down from wind, ice, or some other



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natural disaster. The terminal mile of the trail was much more level, along an old woods road; and we quickly headed for a warm, dry car.

The leader suggested stopping somewhere for more lunch or coffee, but Ken decided that he was too wet to go out in public and so suggested that the three of us retire to our home for coffee. A brief snack in New Britain warmed us all, and we realized that we had completed another section of the Mattabesett AND acquired a war story along the way. Many thanks to my companions for getting me to go on this hike!

Hikers: Mary O'Neill, Ken Williamson

Leader: Lora Miller



Sleeping Giant State Park December 22, 2010

Snow showers had been predicted, but the day was a beautiful, early winter day with bright sunshine and a cobalt blue, cloudless sky. We started the hike on the Green Trail from the Chestnut Lane parking area. Plans were to try and do a section of each trail, so we spent the day weaving our way around the Giant.

From the Green Trail, we hiked over to the Red Square Trail. From here, we went up the side of the Giant and picked up the White Trail. We then trekked over the Giant's right leg. Afterwards, we then picked up the Yellow-Green Feeder Trail, which took us into the valley between the red rocks. We arrived at the Green Trail. From here, we turned right and took the Red Triangle to the Blue Quinnipiac Trail. Around this time, Don said, "I think we are going the wrong way." *Well, let's look at the map!* No, we were going the right way, so we proceeded to The Tower for brunch.

The sun was warm on our backs as we ate our healthy lunches on the first floor of the tower, but the wind just would not stop blowing. Now, you know you are aging when the lunch topic is long term insurance and social security benefits. With our problems solved, we move onto the top of the Giant to take in a great view of New Haven Harbor. The ocean was sparkling as if diamonds had been scattered over the water.

Down the Blue Trail we went. On slippery leaves, we crept along. *Look, here is the Red Dot Trail. Let's take it.* About this time, I heard Bill Heath huffing and puffing behind me, so I asked, "are you alright?" "Yes," he said, "but this getting OLD really sucks!" After a short pause, my reply to Bill was "yes, it looks like we need to get out more often."

The last trail we hiked was the Yellow Trail, which is pretty easy and just rolls along. Just as Don Hagstrom's truck was in view, he announced that we didn't do the Horse Trail or the Violet Trail, so up the Horse Trail we went with a short bushwhack. We went down and out on the Violet Trail.

What a day! *Oh no, we missed the Red Hexagon Trail. Well, next time.* Good day, guys. Our hike was six miles! Guess we burned up some cholesterol and stabilized our blood sugar levels. Thanks for joining me on this up and down and around hike.

Hikers: Bill Heath, Don Hagstrom

Leader: Carol A. Langley

