



Connecticut Section of the Green Mountain Club

Volume LIII, Issue I January to March 2021 Fred Clark, Editor

President's Message Winter 2020

A unique and challenging year is coming to a close. While COVID-19 and the attendant health precautions required modification or curtailment of some of our Connecticut Section GMC activities, including the unfortunate cancellation of all of our Long Trail maintenance work, there have been a few aspects of the year that provide some reason for optimism.

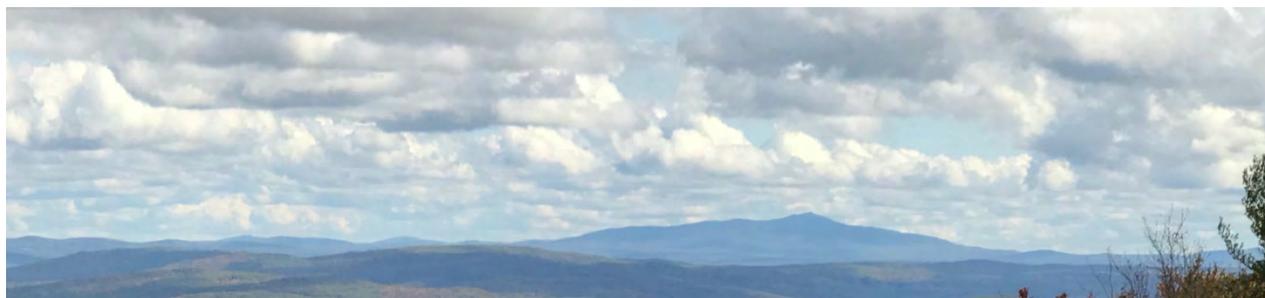
It's been widely noted in the press that when countries essentially shut down their economies earlier in 2020 to slow the spread of the virus, the quality of the air improved. Greatly reduced emissions from transportation and electrical generation allowed the atmosphere to clear. I'm not sure if we've seen a real air quality improvement in Connecticut this year, or whether I've gained a greater appreciation of just looking up at the heavens, but it seems that our night sky has been especially bright and vivid. A few of us have wandered out to the western part of our state for overnight campouts this Fall and have been rewarded with some brilliant celestial viewing, especially from open eastern-facing AT camping areas at Silver Hill, Ten Mile River and Riga Shelter. Those areas plus the many hiking trails in state parks and local preserves are a great reminder that we have special outdoor resources within a short distance from the places we live. As the COVID-related interstate travel constraints continue, we'll make full use of our Connecticut resources into 2021.

At this point, we don't know where or how we'll hold our Annual Meeting and Dinner that we normally convene in March. We may attempt an outdoor venue if it's safe or we may hold a virtual meeting via Zoom or some other videoconferencing software. Other GMC sections have held their annual meetings similarly with reasonable success. Stay tuned for postal and email communications in the coming months.

I sincerely hope that you and your families have not been impacted greatly by the ongoing pandemic. If you have, hopefully you're finding strength and support from those people closest to you. It looks to be a long haul, but we'll all get through this together.

Stay safe and see you on the trail,

Jim Robertson



View of Mt. Monadnock – see page 5

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PUBLICATION SCHEDULE: *Trail Talk* is published four times a year in March, June, September, and December. Articles and activity reports must be e-mailed to the editor no later than the fifth day of the month of the publication. Articles and activity reports must be sent in a Word Document in Times New Roman, font size 10. Reports sent from phones or tablets will be returned.

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MEMBERSHIP: When filling out an application to join or renew your membership in the Green Mountain Club, circle **Connecticut Section** on the application. You will receive, at no extra charge, the Connecticut Section's newsletter

DUES:

Individual Adult	\$45.00
Family	\$60.00
Senior (70 or older) or Limited Income	\$25.00
Sponsor (Individual/Family)	\$75.00

Send annual dues to:

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WANT TO HELP THE CONNECTICUT SECTION REDUCE EXPENSES AND SAVE TREES?

Just send an e-mail to the Editor, requesting that you be e-mailed *Trail Talk*, rather than having it printed and mailed. You'll receive *Trail Talk* sooner, too.

SPECIAL THANKS to member Charlotte Hitchcock. Each issue Charlotte facilitates the e-mailing of *Trail Talk* by formatting the layout and reducing the file size of the email version.



ACTIVITY REPORTS

Cranberry Bog Hike October 7, 2020 by Mandy Brink

Tom and Patty Adams, Holly Hood, Ellie Morano and I met at the Rockville Management parking lot with buckets in tow. It was a gorgeous fall day. We were a little worried that the drought of the summer might affect the cranberry crop. We hiked about a mile into the bog and we were not disappointed. We no sooner stepped off the trail and into the bog and there was the first green plant full of red cranberries. We spent the next hour moving our way along the edge of the bog and picked till our bags were full. **Arlo** and **Bella**, our canine friends, slopped in the mud or waited patiently while we picked. It is hard to stop picking. The whole way back to the trail we were noticing cranberries that were ready for picking but we had run out of containers. On our way back to the cars there was a pretty snake across the trail. He must have been enjoying sunning himself because he didn't budge as we walked. He just gave us a "I'm not moving" look. Hopefully everyone gets some yummy breads and sauces for their effort.

Nipmuck Trail September 27, 2020 by Sarah O'Hare

This early autumn hike brought together five GMC hikers, two members and one guest of the GMCC (Green Mountain Canine Club) to Mansfield for a hike on the East Branch of the Nipmuck Trail. **George Jackson, Patty and Tom Adams, Jim Robertson** and I met at the parking area on Rte. 89. **Molson**, the Alpha Dog, had some competition for who was going to be in the lead so our brisk pace never slowed. This section of the Nipmuck Trail follows the Fenton River much of the way. The summer's drought found the river at a very low level, so low we wondered how it could possibly support the water needs of nearby UCONN. After crossing Iron Bridge (south), we hiked along a glacial esker, with the river below to the left and a marsh to the right. At the end of the esker we crossed Iron Bridge (north) and continued along the river. Delicate white and purple asters lent pastel hues in vivid contrast to the gray, overcast day. And a lone, late-blooming scarlet flower hung on to what may be the last of warm days before frost.

Heading away from the river, the next feature was 50-foot Rock. A marble bench had been placed there in remembrance of a man who died at age 21, long before his time. The view was peaceful, with the foliage beginning its change in the distant hills. Upon reaching the N/S junction where the Nipmuck Trail's East Branch and West Branch converge, mileage was checked. Finding we'd hiked only 2.5 miles, we continued on, the

mill ruins at the Fenton River to be our turn around point. An old and rocky woods road, flanked with stone walls, led downhill into an open area where Jim remembered an old Chrysler Cordoba wreck from years ago. Alas, it was there no longer, much to Jim and George's disappointment.

We turned back, retracing our steps to Iron Bridge (north). With **Molson** tiring, **Arlo** began making his move to take the lead. Newcomer **Albus**, while still a young pup, just didn't have a chance against the two older trail-savvy dogs. Now following the Fenton River Trail, Jim noticed that the trail had been relocated. The former path was still slightly noticeable, as nature had not yet reclaimed it entirely. Once back at our cars and finding that we had hiked seven miles, we weighed the option of going to the UCONN Dairy Bar. Unfortunately, because of COVID, ice cream orders had to be taken ahead of time and we would have to allow for a long wait. It was decided to forego the treats and visit there another time.

Connecticut AT/Riga Shelter Backpack October 1-2, 2020 by Jim Robertson

We can thank **Don Hagstrom** for suggesting the destination and Mandy Brink for organizing this overnight Full Moon backpack, but a twist of fate knocked Mandy out of the trip due to some family health concerns.

On Thursday the 1st, after a storm had dumped up to four inches of rain in northwest Connecticut, we took advantage of clear skies to hike up to Riga Shelter on the AT in Salisbury. **Linda Hagstrom** took the Lion's Head Trail up from Bunker Hill Road to the AT while "**Turbo**" **Jim Fritz, Don** and the leader took the Undermountain Trail from Route 41. **Kevin Burke** would join us later via the AT from Salisbury after an interesting encounter described below. Linda arrived at the shelter first and scouted the tent sites and platforms. After the other three of us got in, we set up tents and broke out our gear. Jim Fritz had not hiked on the trails in the Salisbury area so we decided to take the 3/4-mile walk to Lion's Head. Jim and I told Don we'd meet him at the junction of the AT and the shelter side trail. As we neared the junction, Don reported that some "crazy" backpacker had gone through, speaking in a foreign tongue and gesturing as if he were looking for his hiking friends. Don, not understanding the gentleman, waved him along the AT. After a pleasant walk to and from Lion's Head, enjoying great panoramic views, we returned to the shelter to find Linda and Kevin laughing at the picnic table. Turns out that the crazy foreign gent was Kevin, who had greeted Don with a hearty "bonjour, mon ami" but the two of them had been several yards apart and had not recognized each other.

Kevin, thinking he hadn't reached the Riga Shelter side trail yet, continued another half mile to the Ball Brook Campsite until he realized he'd gone too far. We all enjoyed the resulting merriment.

The night sky did not disappoint. Don had noted that the autumn moon rises almost directly in front of the shelter, which has a nicely cleared vista overlooking Twin Lakes and Canaan Mountain beyond. The moon rose, pink at first in the dwindling daylight then yellow then white as it climbed in dark sky. Sarah O'Hare had advised us that Saturn and Jupiter would be visible in the evening sky, and we also spotted a very bright reddish Mars, nearer to Earth than it will be for another 15 years, and a faint Neptune. At Kevin's suggestion, Jim Fritz pulled up a stargazing app on his phone to help with identification of other celestial bodies.

Light rain began just before daylight and continued as we packed. Two other hikers were sleeping in the shelter so we decided to hike a mile to Brassie Brook Shelter for breakfast. Two hikers were also asleep there, so the group humored the leader by waiting while he boiled water for the all-important coffee/caffeine fix at Brassie Brook before we walked down the Undermountain Trail to the parking lot. Kevin and I stayed to have a pleasant chat with John Hicks, a long-time AMC trail maintainer and former GMC member, who had stopped by to check the supply of maps in the box at the trail head.

Windsor Locks Canal State Park Trail November 11, 2020 by Mandy Brink

Carol Langley, Jim Robertson, Dick Hart, and I met at the northern end to start our hike. The paved towpath is a 3.5 linear walk, although, to respect COVID regulations, we hiked 3.5 miles and then turned around and hiked back for a 7-mile total. At the start, there is a fence with many locks attached. Carol told us it is a tradition for couples to put a lock there when they are about to commit to a relationship. It is a cute idea. The towpath parallels the Connecticut River. It was a cloudy day with rain threatening to start at any time although it was kind enough to wait until we finished our walk. There was only duck and geese activity on the river. We noticed some fresh beaver activity on some trees along the path. Our furry friends, **Bella** and **Molson** got to say hello to several doggy friends out for a walk. We had lunch under the train trestle and Carol was excited when a train passed overhead. We stopped to view the Stony Aqueduct, built for the Windsor Locks Canal Company which is sadly riddled with graffiti. It is amazing how quickly 7 miles passes when you are going flat with no hills to contend with. Before we knew, we were back to the decorated gate and our cars. It would be fun to go back again sometime with a bicycle.

Shenipsit Trail Part 1 October 18, 2020 by Sarah O'Hare

Today's hike on the Shenipsit Trail was the first in a series to complete the entire 50 miles. Beginning in Cobalt, the trail extends north into West Stafford. With COVID keeping us from staging cars, our section hikes are to be out-and-back. And so, it appears that our endeavor will ultimately find us hiking the entire trail twice! **Tom** and **Patty Adams** with pup **Arlo**, **George Jackson**, **Don Hagstrom**, **Jim Robertson** with **Molson**, and I started the hike at the southernmost trailhead on Gadpouch Road.

The hike immediately made a steep climb up to the ridge of Great Hill. A short spur trail led to a vista overlooking the Connecticut River, Middletown and the hills beyond. Low lying clouds marked the course of the river, enhancing our view of autumnal glory. Hiking by an old quarry and uncertain what was mined for, a few of us picked through the pile of rubble for just the right souvenir. The rocks were oh-so-white with black mica striations.

Descending into a ravine, there should have been a brook and cascades. After months of drought conditions, a tiny trickle was all the steep, rocky ledge could bring forth. Then not quite sure just where we would turn around and head back, we continued on, thinking that Bald Hill would be just the right place. At a large white rock atop Bald Hill, Patty scraped away the moss so it would be more noticeable on our return in two weeks. It was here where we ended and turned back, stopping in the ravine for lunch. After a quick stop at the vista from Great Hill, we hiked down the steep hill and back to our cars. Out came the phone to check our mileage, the average came to seven miles.

Shenipsit Trail Part 2 November 4, 2020 by Sarah O'Hare

Our second hike of the Shenipsit Series began on the Mott Hill Road Connector Trail. This access trail was not readily known to be the right trail but, thanks to **Jim Robertson's** scouting it out beforehand, we were able to begin our hike with confidence that we were on the right course. Jim brought **Molson**, **Patty** and **Tom Adams** brought **Arlo**, and **Don Hagstrom** and I were present, too. Unfortunately, **George Jackson** was unable to hike with us today, as he was down and out with an injury. However, as he lives nearby, he met up with us in the parking area to wish us well.

The Connector Trail is a 0.7-mile old roadway through the Meshomasic Forest, crossing into East Hampton and ending at the Shenipsit Trail. Here, we turned south and hiked along another old woods road, the Portland

Reservoir Road. Ruins of an old stone foundation caught our attention momentarily. After what seemed like endless road walking, we finally turned onto a real path which took us up Bald Hill. It wasn't long before we found Patty's Rock, the large white rock where she had scraped away the moss on our previous hike. An enormous glacial boulder just off the trail was an additional landmark of our previous hike's turn around spot. We stopped for lunch here and discussed plans for our next Shenipsit adventure. It was decided that we would hold off until George could join us again. Happy that we linked our previous hike with this one, we retraced our steps to the Connector Trail and on to our cars. We had hiked seven miles.

Mansfield Hollow Lake Trail Hike
Nov 18, 2020
by Mandy Brink

Tom and Patty Adams, Dave Chatel, and I met at picnic area at Mansfield Hollow. According to the map that I had studied, it was a loop trail, easy and straight forward, starting with the blue blaze trail. Off we went. We hiked a bit before Tom decided to check our route on the *AllTrails* app and we discovered we were on the wrong trail going the wrong direction. We back tracked back to the picnic area and took the yellow blazed trail. We got down close to the lake and got hit with a strong cold wind. Luckily, that was for only a short distance, then we rounded the bend of the lake, and the wind was not so intense. It was a sunny day but cool with the high only being in the 30s. We hiked with the lake to our left even though at times we were on a mix of blue and yellow blazes. We found a bench with a pretty view right at noon, so we stopped and gave our doggy friends, **Bella** and **Arlo**, a drink and had our lunch. Around the next bend were all kinds of choices: red, white, blue and yellow blazes. We just kept the lake to our left and eventually completed the loop with 7.4 miles under our belts. It was good conversation and a good hike.

McLean Refuge Annual Turkey Trot
November 28, 2020
by Carol A. Langley

On a cloudy cold day **Darry Ruiter** and his dog **Maxwell** joined me for this hike. As we started on the Blue Trail, there was a quiet atmosphere that one can only experience in the world of nature. We took a short water break when we reached the top of the Blue Trail. Looking to my left, I spotted the markings of where a young bear had been clawing the bark. There were even his foot prints. Reaching the old dirt road, we decided to follow it and it wrapped around and brought us back up and over the height of the refuge. We met only two women and three gentlemen hikers for the first hour.

When we reached the Purple Blaze, we followed it to the side trail that would take us to Spring Pond and the cabin.

Another wildlife digging into a tree. This time it was the resident beaver that had his home a short distance down on the water. Reaching the cabin, we decided to enjoy this peaceful spot and sat on a nice log that was in just the right place. It was amazing how soon we felt the coolness of the day once we were not moving. Time to move on.

We followed the old woods road back to the McLean Cabin. A short distance before reaching it, I looked up and saw two holes in a tree that had a good coating from the resident whom we believe was a saw whet owl. Just a little lower was a smaller hole with the same white markings, so I would assume it was a youngster from this year.

As we walked along, I realized that we did not see one butt, bottle, can or paper on the ground. It appears that those who walk, hike and jog respect the McLean Refuge. Per Darry's GPS, we hiked 7.18 miles and our hiking time was 2:45. Thanks for joining me, Darry.

Putney, Vermont Mountain Hike
October 3, 2020
by Jim Robertson

Sarah O'Hare and **Bob and Mel Michaud** joined this hike which was delayed from May due to the first COVID-19 surge and interstate travel cautions. We arranged to meet at the Putney General Store then caravan together to the Ed Dodd Trailhead, which is a less-used path to access the ridgeline trails between Putney Mountain and the Pinnacle in Westminster. The leader was the last to arrive at the store, learning from Bob that some of the locals across the road had been giving him the "hairy eyeball," presumably after seeing the Connecticut plates on his car (Vermont has been protecting its low case numbers). I thought momentarily about informing the scowling Putney-ites that my grandparents owned the general store in the 1930s and 1940s but decided it would be judicious to just get into our vehicles and head up the road. No other cars were



Putney Mountain hike – view to Mt. Monadnock

parked at the small trailhead lot and we saw no one on the 0.7 mile climb up to the Five Corners, a major trail junction. Despite some hard rain in the previous week, the forest was still full of color, mostly yellows of the birches and maples.

We first headed north to the Sunapee-Monadnock Viewpoint, finding good views to the east despite a lingering overcast, then retraced our way back to the junction and south on the West Cliff Trail. This trail was a bit different than the ridge walk, dropping almost 500 feet in elevation before the inevitable (and fairly steep) climb up to the summit of Putney Mountain. As we entered the cleared area, Bob saw what appeared (to him) to be a shortcut to the top. Sarah, Mel and I waited on the trail for a bit, after which Bob came hurriedly back down wearing a facial expression of embarrassment and surprise. Turns out he had walked up the edge of a cordoned-off area which contained some feisty bird-watchers, who had apparently advised Bob, in a not-so-pleasant tone, that he was off the official trail.

After reforming our full crew, we continued up the *official* trail to the open summit, where we had lunch and were rewarded with great views to the east towards New Hampshire and to the west towards Stratton and Mount Snow. When I was growing up in Brattleboro, my parents and grandmother brought us up Putney Mountain many times, so I feel like the area is part of my roots. We chatted with some of other friendlier birdwatchers and some local hikers before heading down the Ridgeline Trail, which includes a long but pleasant walk along a dirt road, back to the Five Corners and the side trail to our cars. A very pleasant fall hike of about eight miles.

**Heublein Tower Hike
October 31, 2020
by Jim Robertson**

We had a great turnout for this hike, including my family friend **Jennifer Sprague** and her friend **Margie** joining us for the first time. **Patty and Tom Adams, Mandy Brink, Don Hagstrom, George Jackson, Bob and Mel Michaud** and canines **Arlo, Bella and Molson** rounded out the crew. I guess it

shouldn't have been a surprise but, upon arriving at the entrance to West Hartford Reservoir Number 6, we found the road closed to our usual meeting point near the pumping station. After a quick conference, we opted to walk up the Metacomet Trail along the western bank of the reservoir then pick up our usual route on the Metacomet Connector. Despite two inches of new snow, there were only a few wet spots and, overall, the trail was not as muddy as it's been in past years, probably due to the dry conditions in Connecticut through the summer.

The walk up to the ridgeline was very picturesque in the winter wonderland and views to the west were clear. Upon reaching the Heublein Tower, we were disappointed, although not entirely surprised, to find the tower and observation deck are closed due to the COVID pandemic.

After a quick group photo, we continued over to the pavilion to set up lunch, which consisted primarily of the Halloween goodies that people had brought. Winds had blown snow onto the picnic tables so we selected a few to clean off. With the west wind, no one wanted to mill about for long so we started down the Metacomet Trail back to the reservoir. Despite a few extra miles due to the road closure, our annual Tower sojourn turned out to be an enjoyable one. We'll do it again next year.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming events are listed here: <http://www.conngmc.com/newwiki/doku.php?id=start>.
