

Annual Turkey Trot, McLean Refuge

Saturday, November 25, 2017

It was a lovely autumn day. The first time I led a hike here, in November 2011, we were on the Horse Trail when suddenly, in front of us, was a gaggle of turkeys, probably 15 to 20, crossed the trail. Since then, the hike has been named the Turkey Trot.

Our group entered the Refuge and started our hike on the Blue Loop Trail which winds itself along a stream. We had gone only a short distance when diggings were sighted around a tree. They were identified by Dave Wells as the work of a male turkey. So now we had our heads down looking for more diggings and we found the pattern of a female turkey. Now does everyone remember what they looked like? Winter birds sang in the pine trees which were playing their own symphony. We left the Blue Trail and went onto a trail which would lead us to the Barndoor Hills Summit. Darry found us a lovely peaceful spot for lunch on some rocks overlooking the horse farm. Today we even saw a rider and a few horses. After lunch we hiked down a trail which was very rocky and steep and which led us to the Violet Trail back to the Trout Pond Trail and Senator McLean Cabin. Next time you are there, take time to look inside and see the old cast iron stove, table, and chairs from years past. When we reached the parking lot, Dave and Darry left for home. The rest of our group visited Dunkin Donuts for a hot beverage and some friendly conversation. Thanks for a great day! Hope to see you next year!
Leader. Carol A. Langley. Hikers: Leslie and Richard Chandler, Holly and Andy Hood, Darry K. Ruiter, and Dave Wells

New Year's Day Hike, Rocky Neck State Park

Monday, January 1, 2018

A cold 4-degree winter day with bright sunshine greeted Jim Robertson and me. After getting into our cold weather layers of clothing, off we went for our 6.3 miles trek. The sun was warm on our faces, and a gentle breeze greeted us as we crossed the parking lot just before we entered the woods. We followed the White Trail alongside the tidal marsh area. By the time we reached the kiosk board at Route 156, it was time for a break and to shed a layer. We then followed the Four Mile River Trail and were able to hear the river groaning as the ice was moving from the tide going out the full moon. There were a few icy spots that we had

to go around but no slipping and sliding. Reaching the pavilion area, we took advantage of the winter sunshine and had lunch at a picnic table. After lunch we greeted the New Year with chocolate nippers filled with whiskey and anisette. Then we decided to walk the board walk along Long Island Sound because it was such a pleasant day. Before we knew it, it was 12:45 and we were done. Thanks, Jim for joining me. I have lead this hike since 1991, and Jim has attended more New Year's Day hikes with me than any other GMC member. Maybe Jim will take over this hike when this OLD HEN can no longer drag her tail feathers out on a cold winter day. See you next year!
Leader: Carol A. Langley. Hiker: Jim Robertson

Savin Rock Super Moon Walk and Dinner

Monday, January 1, 2018

I had no one join me for this very special full moon. The last time we had two full moons in January was 150 years ago. As I arrived just around 4:00 p.m., the sun was starting to set. Soon beautiful shadows of pink and gray were cast upon the pools of water left in the New Haven Harbor. There were many sand bars because it was low tide with a Super Full Moon. As the sun sunk lower, the pearl gray clouds were outlined with a rim of crimson pink. It was spectacular! I continued walking on the boardwalk until the end point. As I returned, there was still a pale pink in the western sky. Reaching the hill by Jimmie's Restaurant, I turned around and saw the Super Full Moon rising in the east. I have never seen a moon this huge or so pink. As the moon rose, the night sky turned first peachy and then the golden yellow that we usually see. What a way to end the day! When I went into Jimmie's for dinner, I continued to enjoy the beautiful full moon from my window seat. Missed seeing you there!
Carol A. Langley

Hell Hollow to Pachaug Youth Area Hike

Saturday, December 2, 2017

It felt like a typical fall day as we headed out from Hell Hollow Rd. This section includes one of my favorite stretches in Pachaug: along Lowden Brook. The brook did not disappoint as it babbled and sang as we walked along its banks. We chatted along the way and, I must say, I was surprised at how quickly the mileage went by. According to the Blue Book, adding the section to the Youth Area should have clocked us in at around 6 miles but most of those with trackers clocked us in

around 5 miles. Either way, it was a very enjoyable amble through the forest.

Leader: Mandy Brink. Hikers Tom and Patty Adams, Mike Shaw, George Jackson, Gary Griffin, Don Hagstrom and Jim Robertson. Our four-legged hikers: Arlo and Mulson.

Adirondacks Trip: How Cold Is Too Cold?

Friday to Sunday, January 5-7, 2018

Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful. Sound familiar? It started with the drive through the back roads to the Heart Lake LOJ, where the winds were blowing. We pulled up and quickly unloaded the gear as it was about minus 15 degrees outside. Boy, was the stone fireplace with the fire glowing so inviting!

This was our first time staying at the Heart Lake LOJ which is run by the Adirondack Mountain Club. It was a wonderful place to stay. Some of us nestled in the bunk rooms while others headed for the loft. We got a good night sleep knowing the next day would be a challenging hike. We were undecided whether to stick with the original plan to hike upwards since we heard the temps were minus 60 with the wind chill factor. In the morning we decided over breakfast to go as far as we could and if we had to turn around, so be it. We bundled up and I mean really bundled up because when we left for the trail head in the morning, it was minus 24 degrees.

It was a nice warm up with a bit of flat hiking before we started the slow and steady hike up. We were a large group and we divided into two so that no one was in a situation of having to stay still too long waiting for anyone. At about 4000 feet, it was starting to get a bit tricky with the ice. The faster group headed to the summit of Wright Mt at 4587 ft. Scott was half way to the summit when he had equipment failure and had to turn around. The rest of us settled on getting to a trail junction at the tree line, which is at about 4100 feet. We were torn on whether or not to continue, as we were slowing down and it was getting later in the day. We decided we were happy with our hike at 4100 feet and headed back down. The summit group eventually caught up to us and we all headed back to the LOJ. The trip down is always fun on snow shoes. Getting back over a few stretches of ice was as interesting as getting through them on the hike up.

This is when one is glad for the extra Christmas cookies. It gives one the extra cushioning on the butt for the slide down. There were several times when we did just that. Sat down, planted our snowshoes in the upright position and went for a slide.

Everyone was glad to arrive back. The hike had been between 6 and 7 miles, pretty decent when you consider the elevation and the temperature. It was minus 13 when we got back at 3:45pm. We had a hearty dinner, prepared by the staff at the LOJ. We had a lovely evening in the common room where we had a small song fest of folk music with two gals who played a fiddle and ukulele. We talked about a hike on Sunday but it was equally as cold. Our cars had dead batteries so we just decided to relax by the fire a bit, load up the cars, jump start the batteries, and head out. It was a blast of a weekend. Thanks for coming!

Peakbaggers: Mark Stone, Sarah and Jon Conville and Mike Shaw. Junction baggers: Mandy Brink, Timothy Brink, Laura Mooney, Scott Black, and Mark Russell

Catskills Weekend

Friday to Sunday, January 26-28, 2018

Many of the usual fun group gathered on Friday night at the old farm house in Beartown, NY. We had dinner together. Then did what we usually do on a Friday night: we dug out the maps and studied them. It was decided that we would hike Panther Mt. with the option to transverse to Fox Hollow.

After a hearty breakfast we were off to stage cars and get started. The temps were to get to the mid 40's, quite the contrast from our Adirondack weekend. There wasn't enough snow for snowshoes but certainly enough ice patches to make it slick. We divided up so that the transverse hikers could keep a good pace as they were hiking a few extra miles. There were enough small frozen ice falls on the trail that eventually we dug out our ice stabilizers. We ascended carefully and eventually made it to the summit of Panther at 3742 feet. There were some good views on the way on some rock outlooks although the summit was still in the tree line. After some rest, food and drink, those of us doing a loop turned around and headed back down the icy trail. It was slow and steady. The loop group did about 6.5 miles for the day and the traverse group did 9 miles.

Back at the farmhouse, we had a wonderful dinner. Joe made a fantastic soup and there was lasagna among other good foods. Dave and Erica K had come down from Weston, MA to hike Slide Mt and Hunter MT. They joined us at the farmhouse on Saturday evening. Dennis and Dave supplied us with a very ample supply of cookies to devour. We settled in for a rousing game of Smart Ass. After the game, everyone was pooped out and headed to bed.

On Sunday we decided to do a smaller hike before heading home. We hiked the Escarpment Trail to Inspiration Point with a side trail to view the Upper Kaaterskill Falls. Again, there were some icy patches so the ice stabilizers were on and off throughout the hike. Inspiration Point offers a nice view and we also passed a monument erected to a firefighter who had lost his life in the area fighting a forest fire. We hiked about 4 miles and then it was back to the cars. We stopped for lunch in Ville, the home of Rip Van Winkle, before we all departed for home. Thanks to everyone for good hiking and lots of laughs.

Hikers: Jim Moore, Mandy Brink, Mark Stone, Matt Pfliger, Joe Cocani, Kevin Burke, Mike Shaw, Dick Hart, Carol Langley, Dennis Himes, Brian Mooney, Dave Kwiatkowski, Erica Kwiatkowski

Chatfield Hollow Day Hike February 3, 2018

There were just three of us this year for this great hike. As we discovered last year, Chatfield Hollow offers a more challenging hike than one would think. There is a decent amount of up and down as well as some challenging rock formations to skirt around, over and under. I decided to repeat the hike because it was so warm last year with no snow. There wasn't a whole lot of snow this year but there was enough snow and ice to make it a totally different hike. It was slick with lots of ice coating the trail and rocks. There were plenty of icicles hanging from the rock formations.

We hiked out to the Deer Lake Boy Scout camp where we stopped for lunch. Unlike last year, there were no mice running out of the outhouse. It was cold enough to be bundled up and keep the mice in their nests. On our way back to the car we ran upon a large group from the AMC. We took the shorter trail out to the car which put our mileage at about 6 miles for the day. Jim sent me a picture after the hike of a very tired

puppy sacked out on the chair. It had been a successful hiking day for everyone included our doggie hiker.

Hikers: Mandy Brink, Don Hagstrom, Jim Robertson and Molson.

Northwest Park, Windsor Sunday, January 21, 2018

Another beautiful winter day. 35 degrees when we started and 50 degrees when we finished. Much warmer than the last two winter hikes here. Darry, Sarah, and I started by crossing a field leading us to the Pond Trail. Then we connected to the Hemlock Trail which had several ups and downs. This connected to the Rainbow Reservoir Trail which meandered along the reservoir where there were scattered pine trees. A bench by a put-in and small beach looked like a good spot to refuel. Darry tested the ice going out just a short distance. The sun was warm on the ice causing shifting which resulted in the ice groaning.

After lunch we continued on, connecting with the Woody Succession Trail. Just a short distance in, we heard the cry of the Sharp Shinned Hawk that was being taunted by crows and blue jays. Even in the wild, creatures are not safe from others picking on them. Moving on to the Softwood Forest Trail, we came upon several boardwalks which had ice and snow and in some places called for some fancy foot work.

On our way returning to the main park, we came upon a viewing stand but nothing was out there to view, just more ice under foot. Soon the Red Barn appeared and we knew the day was ending. Sarah and Darry, hope you enjoyed the day as much as I did. Darry's calculation was 6.5 miles

Leader: Carol A. Langley Hikers: Darry K Ruiter and Sarah O'Hare

White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield Sunday, January 14, 2018

Sarah O'Hare was the only brave soul who joined me on this sunny 12-degree winter day. We started just before 10:00 a.m. on the Yellow Lake Trail, which is usually wetlands, but instead was pools of white ice. Reaching the viewing stand all we saw were brave ice fisherman. The wildlife were all in their homes waiting for a warmer day. We were amazed that Bantam Lake was frozen enough to hold the weight of all the fishing tents we saw. We started back on the trail but soon had to turn back because of ice on both sides of the stone wall where we planned to cross. Oh, well, there were lots of other trails so we moved on and hiked past the camping area and over Windmill Hill on the Yellow Blazed Trail. Passing through the gate we walked the dirt road to the Blue Blazed Mattatuck Trail. There

was a lot of ice on the road, but that did not stop us. We trudged on breaking ice with our boots where we could and straddling alongside the road when we had a grassy patch. The river itself had huge chunks of ice probably 18 – 24 inches long and 3 inches deep. This was quite a sight. We crossed Bissell Rd. The pine forest had covered the ground and trail with pine needles so we moved along. After we crossed Whites Woods Rd., the path again became icy. The Little Pond Trail was not negotiable at either end. Large chunks of ice had broken the board walk. There was a Red Trail which took us to the other side of White Woods Rd. where we were able to hike for a short distance when suddenly what should appear but more ice. We were out for a hike and had no plans to give up. Walking alongside the ice, we were snagged by briars and hit by branches. We persevered and were rewarded with a lovely boardwalk by Little Pond. In the middle of the boardwalk, we saw a beaver lodge with a head peeking out. He soon came out to show us what a big boy he was, sniffed the air, and turned around. After slapping his tail, he said, “You gals are crazy! I will see you in the spring.”

We walked the rest of the boardwalk, reaching the Mattatuck Trail which led us to a picnic table in the sun. Lunch was enjoyed watching a sleepy Barred Owl and other birds darting about from the feeders that are outside the museum. Thanks for joining me, Sarah.
Leader: Carol A. Langley. Hiker: Sarah O’Hare.

Nipmuck Trail February 17, 2018

This section of the Nipmuck Trail includes many points of interest, including old foundation ruins and river walks. No sooner had we started out on our road walk along Old Turnpike Road than we came upon the ruins of the Gurley-Mason Mill on the Fenton River. Used as a saw mill, a blacksmith shop and a grist mill, this multipurpose mill was in use from 1778 to 1938. The site included remains of the dam on the river, the sluiceway and remnant stonewalls of the mill building. And, according to the informative signboard, George Washington rode along here in 1789. Continuing on our hike, we crossed Rt. 44 and turned off into the woods. The trail paralleled the Fenton River, its level high and flowing fast. Just as the Connecticut and Housatonic Rivers had ice jams last month, so too apparently did the Fenton. While the river itself was ice free, enormous slabs of ice covered the river banks, at times encroaching onto the trail. Impressive it was, observing the force of nature. Once the trail veered

away from the river we came upon several side trails. A kiosk with maps showed that these trails made a circuit of 2.5 miles through the Royal Knowlton Preserve, the Talmadge Tract and the UCONN Forest. It had been a long winter and thoughts of spring may have been just wishful thinking, but the birds did seem more vocal this morning. Then when Don and George discovered a few tiny shoots of skunk cabbage we knew that spring was not far off. After about four miles and with Molson bounding ahead, he welcomed our long awaited late comer. Carol had approached from the north and had taken her time on her walk, performing trail maintenance along the way. At the foundation ruins of an old farm house or barn, we stopped to explore the large expanse of stone structures and walls. Carol and Holly stayed behind for a rest, catching up with us at Knowlton Brook. Together we all crossed Rt. 74. With much encouragement, Molson managed the difficult task of crawling under the road’s guard rail. From here it was just a little over a mile to Perry Hill Road, the end of our 6-mile hike. And with UCONN so close by, a few of us stopped at the Dairy Bar for ice cream.

Leader: Sarah O’Hare. Hikers: Mark Blanchard, George Jackson, Holly Hood, Carol Langley, Don Hagstrom, Jim Robertson and his faithful friend, Molson

Spruce Peak Shelter Backpack January 20-21, 2018

The intrepid Four Horsemen of the 2017 Snowpocalypse gathered again for another winter trek into Spruce Peak Shelter on the Long Trail between Stratton and Bromley Mountains. Unlike last year when snowshoes were needed, we were able to walk the trail from the parking lot on Vermont Routes 11 & 30 into the shelter in just our winter boots. Upon our arrival at the shelter in early afternoon, it was obvious that previous visitors had left very little fuel for the wood stove, so we dropped our packs, had a quick snack and spent the next two hours collecting, sawing and splitting firewood.

Dennis Sullivan (which may or may not be the witness protection program identity of Kevin Burke) set up his tent outside the shelter while Kevin Breton, Eric and I rolled out our pads and sleeping bags inside. We were soon joined by a group of four current/former

Middlebury College students, one of whom was pulling a sled with bundles of wrapped fire wood from a local store! With all of our kindling and their logs, we had plenty to feed the stove through the night. Two additional hikers, one of whom has done trail work with the Brattleboro Section, and their dog arrived at dusk and set up in the shelter as well. The dog was the quietest of the bunch. It sat quietly inside and didn't make any noise at night

Soon the wood stove was going and our camp stoves were cooking dinner, accompanied by the requisite libations. Discussions centered on past trips and future hiking plans. One of the other occupants insisted on feeding the wood stove frequently during the night, raising the inside temperature to an almost-uncomfortable 50 degrees. My sleeping bag rated for minus-20 F proved to be overkill in that environment. Sunday's hike out included side trips up to the Spruce Peak lookout for a view into Manchester and to the top house of an abandoned ski area (which Mark Blanchard later informed me was the old Snow Valley ski area on the old Vermont Route 30). We said our good-byes and headed south, Kevin Burke and I stopping at Lawrence's Smoke House in Newfane for some smoked sausages and bacon.

Leader: Jim Robertson. Hikers: Kevin Breton, Eric Breton, and Kevin Burke.

Bear Mountain Backpack

March 3-4, 2018

A snow and windstorm cleared out of New England in time for this weekend backpack on the AT in northwestern Connecticut. We met at the Undermountain Trail parking area, left two vehicles, and drove south to the AT parking area. At one point along CT Route 41 the road was down to one lane due to a fallen tree and wires.

Snowfall in March can be very elevation-dependent. While there had been no snow on the ground in most of CT and none along Route 44 until it climbed the hill into Norfolk, there was less than an inch in Salisbury. We would find more as we gained elevation up the trail. Starting out at a good pace, we reached Lion's Head just after 1 o'clock and decided to break for lunch, in spite of a stiff wind. Views were clear despite a mostly cloudy sky. Another hiker snapped a couple of photos of the group with the surrounding valley in

the background. We continued along, stopping for a quick break at Riga Shelter before arriving at Brassie Brook Shelter, our Saturday night destination. Three to four inches of snow covered the ground there. Fortunately, the front of the shelter faces south so the back blocked the north wind. Kevin Burke headed out to find a tent spot while the rest of our crew set up in the shelter and boiled water for hot drinks. Not long after, we were joined by Guillaume, originally from France but now living in the greater Hartford area. He was out testing some newly-purchased equipment and had hiked over Bear Mountain from the Undermountain Trail and Paradise Lane. Initially Guillaume considered joining us in the shelter but, after one look, he grabbed his tent and walked out to look for a remote site. He did come back to the shelter later for dinner and to chat about vehicles (man-mobiles, Rogues, trucks and Subarus), trails, equipment and life in France and to share some of Mr. Sullivan's warmed-up Jameson's.

Sunday morning Guillaume was out by dawn, and we hit the trail at 7:30. We had to plow our way through some bent-over mountain laurel as we climbed Bear Mountain and the snow got deeper, with drifts up to a foot in places. Good views from the ridge and the summit; the trees were still completely frosted from the storm two days earlier. The descent down the steep north side of Bear was a bit slippery as expected but mostly just softening snow – temps had climbed above freezing – and very little ice. We used microspikes on the way down. Paradise Lane featured even more low-bending mountain laurel, creating tunnels in places and making the trail completely impassible in others. Eventually we reached the Undermountain Trail junction and headed down to our cars, completing a 10-mile circuit over the two days.

Learnings for the weekend:

1. Black Barrel Reserve is very good
2. In France, you can get café in a café
3. Love: it's what makes a Subaru a Subaru

Leader: Jim Robertson. Trekkers: Mark Blanchard, Kevin and Eric Breton, and Kevin Burke.