

The Connecticut Section of the Green Mountain Club

THE TRAIL TALK

July 2010



Mt Moosilauke Trip, New Hampshire January 29-31, 2010

On Friday afternoon, we met at the John Rand Cabin service road where we loaded up the sleds with our packs and equipment. Dick brought a nifty waist belt that attached to the sleds which made pulling them easier. The belt worked well until the buckle broke. We managed to jerry rig the belt and transport the packs and equipment up the three-mile road to the cabin. Of course, the most important items were our 40 pounds of supper stew and the Outdoor Trivia game.

Upon our arrival, our first order of business was to get the stove going and get some warmth in the cabin. Even though there was less snow than last year, it was a lot colder. According to thermometer on the deck, the temperature that night was -18 °F. That made for a cold trip to the outhouse. Speaking of which, the



It reads -18 °F!

outhouse at the John Rand Cabin is adorable. It's a little yellow A-frame with a window for a view. Cute, as outhouses go. We finally managed to elevate the cabin temperature to a toasty 30 °F. After dinner, we settled in for a competitive girls-versus-boys game of Outdoor Trivia. The boys were victorious.

On Saturday morning, we headed out. On this sunny day with blue skies, we made our way up the Gorge Brook Trail. Because the trail was well-trodden, we decided to take off the snow shoes. We had beautiful views of the Mount Lafayette Range on our hike up

Mount Moosilauke. As with last year, it was a winter wonderland. We all made our way to the Mount Moosilauke summit, which is 4802 feet high. It was not as windy as last year. We were actually able to enjoy spending a little bit of time at the summit. On our way down, we took our time, just enjoying the beauty of the snow and ice on the trees. It truly is serene and beautiful there in the winter.

We arrived back at the cabin late afternoon. The little hill leading up to the cabin at the end of the hike seemed more tiring than the peak we had just climbed. We reheated the cabin and settled in for dinner and more Trivial Pursuit. The boys tromped the girls at yet another game. After a great day out, we settled into our bunks for sleep. There was one somber moment that evening: the death of a mouse. Grace had discovered it by Dick's bed in the lower bunk. Sleeping in the top bunks somehow made the girls feel safer from the mice although I'm sure they could easily die in those beds, too. The top bunk had a nice balmy airflow through the window that night, which is always refreshing when the temperature outside is 50 °F below freezing.

On Sunday morning, we cleaned up the cabin, restocked the wood, and packed up to head home. The hike out was a piece of cake because it was all downhill. Afterwards, we sadly departed for home. It's always hard to go home after a great hike and a fun weekend.

Participants: Mandy Brink, Grace King, Mike Shan, Jim Moore
Leader: Dick Hart
Author: Mandy Brink



Wheeler Pond Camps February 26-28, 2010

Once again, a group of us went up to the GMC camps (cabins) at Wheeler Pond in Barton, Vermont, for a snowshoe-camping trip. This year, we stayed at Beaver Dam Cabin. It is a larger cabin than its neighbor, Hadsel-Mares Cabin, that we had used last year.

Friday, after driving up to Vermont, we trekked up Moose Mountain, which is 2339 feet high. It was a

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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
Waterbury Center, VT 05677-9904
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Connecticut Section of the GMC

Post & Receive Messages, Photos, Other Activities

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

3.2-mile round trip from the cabin. After a having dinner, we had some heated games of acey deucey with Mandy ruling the night.

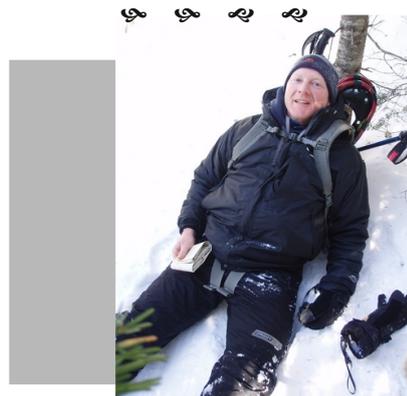
On Saturday, we trekked up Wheeler Mountain, which is 2371 feet high. This was a 4.6-mile round trip from the cabin. We also included the spur path to Eagle's Cliff from which we could see much of Lake Willoughby. We heard the eerie and forlorn croaking of a raven near the peak – proof we were up north. After descending, the snow started falling quite steadily. Nevertheless, we 'shoed further away from the cabin to Boiling Spring to see the water bubbling up through the snow. After another big repast there was more card playing. Though Mike gave her a run for the money, Mandy again won all the acey deucey games that night. Tired from the exercise, clear air, full stomachs and anticipating more snowshoeing and the ride home, we all turned in to catch some Z's.

While eating breakfast Sunday morning, Dave suggested we climb Haystack Mountain before leaving for home. He didn't really need much of a sales job to get 100% concurrence from the rest of us. To get there we had to drive around Lake Willoughby, a 308-foot deep lake that is frequently compared to Switzerland's Lake Lucerne because of the sheer walls of Mount Hor and Mount Pisgah. Haystack is 2712 feet high; this hike was a two-mile round trip from where we had parked the cars. The dead end road was too slippery for a drive to the trailhead, so we had to hoof it for an additional 1/2 mile each way. The trail up the north slope was quite steep. There was as much slithering and sliding as there was stepping on the top half of the trail.

Before getting on the highway, we made the requisite stop at the Miss Lyndonville Diner for brunch. We finished up the meal by taking advantage of their President's Day tradition of homemade cherry pie at 5 cents a slice.

Snowshoe camping trips don't get any better than those up here.

*Participants: Mandy Brink, Dave Chatel,
Jim Moore, and Mike Shaw*
Leader: Dick Hart



Yale Forest section of the Nipmuck Trail April 3, 2010

We envisioned having Bigelow Hollow State Park to ourselves on this warm April day. Boy, were we wrong. Little did we know that this was the day for the Nipmuck Trail Race. The race route was the same as our hike route, which meant that we had to share the trail with 120 runners! We were much happier to be hikers and not runners.

This hike was one of the more educational hikes that our club has had. For example, we learned that Jim should probably have led the hike because, while Mandy was busy talking, he was the one who first suggested that we were going the wrong direction on the trail. Sure enough, he was right; so we turned around and deemed that portion of the trail our “warm up”. Later, when we stopped for a snack, Lenny learned that his Luna bar snack was made for women. For a brief moment, we thought his voice was changing. Deciding he could only eat manly bars, he quickly tossed the rest to Mandy to finish. While hiking along, Ron taught us about “Monkey Butt”; and we learned at lunch that Jon has a broken picker outer.

The Yale Forest section is owned by Yale University and is used by the School of Forestry. It is a nice trail with gentle ups and downs. Because there were so many roots and rocks, we were glad that we weren't running. Once we started to encounter a lot of runners on their return trip, we decided to break for lunch and become spectators. One runner, who was walking by



with a bright red shirt, told us that if anyone asks about him, we should say that he was the “Red Streak” who ran so fast that we barely saw him.

We had the perfect ending for a hot day. At the end of the trail on Eastford Road, there was a tent with ice, drinks, pretzels, and candy. It was all just waiting for us! Well, not really. They were leftovers from the race and free for the taking, so we all enjoyed a cold drink. Including our warm up section of the hike, we trekked about 10 miles that day.

*Hikers: Jim Fritz, Lenny Kochanowski, Ron Sang
and Jon Burnham*

Leader: Mandy Brink



Cockaponset Trail Saturday, April 10, 2010

Don Hagstrom, Henry Smith, and I arrived at the parking lot off of Filley Road around 9:15 am. Peter and Nancy Finch arrived soon after. As we awaited the appearance of other hikers, a large trail crew arrived with chainsaws, hoes, shovels, and a few dogs. Not wanting to be on the trail where they had planned to work, I inquired as to which way they were going. I wanted us to have a peaceful hike. They went south; and when no one else arrived, we headed north.

Henry and Don took off like rockets. The rest of us hiked leisurely along, enjoying the day. The blue trail on which we hiked was in great condition. As we reached a brook, we saw the blue with a red, which we had expected; but then saw a yellow with a blue, which had not been mentioned in the book. The decision was made to follow the blue/red as planned, and we soon looped around and were hiking along the west side of the Pataconk Reservoir. Our silence was broken when a train of noisy people, 32 to be exact, and several dogs passed us on the trail.

After they had passed, we were again able to enjoy the sound of the wind in the trees and the warblers and finches singing in the branches. Woodpeckers were busy drumming away. This was the sound of nature at its finest. We reached a sandy beach with white capped waves. After collecting redeemable bottles and trash from the beach, we returned to the parking lot. Because of an afternoon commitment, Nancy and Peter left.

Three of us remained to finish the hike. It was around noon. It was a challenge to find a good place to sit and have lunch. We had probably hiked a mile or more before we found a suitable spot. It was really lovely. Our chosen location had a babbling brook as well as a hill with large rocks on which to sit. After lunch, we resumed our hike, passed through a tunnel of bushes,

and reached Filley Road. I decided to take the road back to the parking lot. Don and Henry took the trail, which they later reported provided a tough and rocky ending to the hike.

Just as we were about to leave, a gentlemen approached me with an extended hand. "I bet I know who you are," he says. We discovered that this smiling person is one of our new members, Lenny Kochanowski. He missed us at the beginning of the hike, but Lenny hiked anyway in the chance that he might still encounter us when we finished. I'm sorry that you didn't find us at the beginning of the hike, Lenny, but I am happy that you took the time to come over and introduce yourself.

Hikers: Don Hagstrom, Henry Smith, Peter & Nancy Finch, Lenny Kochanowski.

Leader: Carol A. Langley



Nipmuck Trail Tuesday, April 13, 2010

It was the usual cast of characters who gathered together for another midweek hike on the Nipmuck Trail. Meeting where we had left off the last time on Old Turnpike Road, we drove along scenic backroads through Mansfield, eventually locating the Mansfield Historical Society where we parked. We stepped onto the West Branch of the Nipmuck Trail, followed an old logging road, and soon found ourselves at the North/South junction of the East and West Branches of the Nipmuck. In less than a mile we arrived at the Fenton River. From here the trail hugged the river's edge as we hiked north.

We kept our eyes trained on the river, watching for a glacial pothole. The pothole's history and general location were described in the Connecticut Walk Book. After two miles and no success in locating it, we thought that the pothole might be found during a dryer season when the water level is lower. No matter really, for there were other sights to behold. The spring wildflowers that were identified included the Marsh Marigold, Trout Lily, Purple Trillium, and Wood Anemone. A Great Blue Heron was glimpsed as it took flight and disappeared upstream. A lone turkey was also seen; and she, too, took to her wing as we disturbed her peace.

This riparian ramble took a short detour on Stone Mill Road, where we paused briefly to admire the historic Gurleyville Grist Mill. While not open today, the 18th century structure is open for visiting on Sunday afternoons from May to October. This five-mile section of the Nipmuck Trail is generally flat and is an easy woodland walk. For certain it is one of the sweetest springtime sections of trail in Connecticut.

Hikers: Bill Falconer, Bill Heath, Don Hagstrom, George Jackson

Leader: Sarah O'Hare



Cathedral Pines—Mohawk Mountain Sunday, April 18, 2010

Despite the forecasts of bad weather, today turned out to be a very beautiful day. The sky was overcast; but instead of a flat, dull, gray cloud cover, the clouds were low and puffy which gave the sky texture. Forsythia, daffodil, dogwood, and tulips were also in bloom. Leaves were emerging from their buds.

Our trip actually started at the Dunkin' Donuts here in East Hartford. The coffee fired me up. I manically talked for about two hours, which made the drive out to Cornwall much more interesting—at least for me anyway.

Of course, we hoped that we would have a day of lovely scenery and interesting animal sightings, but

our day also offered other riches. Our arrival at the topographic zenith of our hike was accompanied by a reflection on how the failure to accept the true nature of a thing can lead to unfortunate results. This was followed by a misdirection, which re-emphasized the importance of



preparedness.

The hike started through Cathedral Pines, a small section of forest populated by Hemlock and White Pine. Many of the trees are blown down. We saw a boulder that was still within the grips of a downed tree's root system, which testified to the force of the wind. Not only did the wind knock the tree over, it wrenched a boulder about three feet out of the ground. Of course, the tall tree also served as a lever, which amplified the force of the wind.

Shortly after passing through Cathedral Pines, we were faced with a short road walk. The Cornwall area is a lovely part of the state that offers beautiful New England rural views. After the road walk, the hike passes through a farm where we saw our first animal sightings, both domestic and wild. We saw goats and sheep with their kids and lamb as well as belted cattle in the next pasture. We also saw wild turkey.

The Cathedral Pines-Mohawk Mountain hike isn't characterized by an undulating trail but has a nearly continuous uphill grade. Jim commented that it was more like Vermont than Connecticut. I found the unrelenting climb heartening. There were only a couple of short downhill on the way out, which meant fewer uphill on the way back.

After the farm, the longest ascent of the hike commences. We hiked along and over a babbling brook. We also saw a Mohawk Mountain ski trail lined with snow making sprayers that were protected by yellow insulating barrels. Up, up we went until we reached the Stone Tower. It's a cylindrical structure that was built in the 1940's. The second and third floors are gone, but the walls remain.

Our hike continued upward to The Pinnacle from which you can see the peak of Mohawk Mountain, our turn-around point. It looked very far away. Sometimes seeing things worse than they are can result in a positive experience later. Upon our arrival atop of Mohawk Mountain, to our delight, we realized that it was not as far from The Pinnacle as it had looked.

The Mohawk Mountain peak is adorned with various communications towers. I commented that I never found the sight of communications towers offensive; I find their clean, geometric shapes appealing. Then Jim and I agreed that cell phone towers that are disguised to look like trees are infinitely more offensive. I'm sure you've seen cell towers that look like mutant conifers that loom a good thirty feet above the surrounding flora. What's up with that? Ugly. My favorite was the



cell tower in Las Vegas that looked like a palm tree that might have co-evolved in the universe of Ted Chiang's "Exhalation." "Exhalation" is a short story about a race of pneumatic androids in an inorganic world. In their attempt to discover why their clocks are running faster, they make a sobering discovery about their own existence.

Anyway, back to (my version of) reality; it was during the ensuing descent from Mohawk Mountain that an important moral was to be learned. Because of my failure to carefully read an outdated trail description book, we ended up hiking down the mountain in the wrong direction; however, Jim was able to steer us in the right direction using his I-phone with a USGS application. (Jim is developing quite a reputation for his navigational prowess.) My misstep added an extra mile to our hike; further, just when I thought all the major uphill were done and over with, there was another. The moral of this story: get an I-phone with a USGS application.

The hike back was uneventful although the belted cows stood in a row at attention as we passed by them again. These timid cows who had backed away from us on our way up were now very interested in us. They were probably hoping that we had a feed bag. It's amazing how bold an empty stomach will make you.

Speaking of empty stomachs, despite my feasting on cold pizza on the way up the mountain (hey, at least it wasn't a cold MacDonald's hamburger), after our final descent down to the car, Jim and I went out for pizza. Afterwards, as we made our way homeward, the final part of our trek was punctuated by a very beat up white sedan that threatened to pull out in front of us. No harm done. The coffee crash notwithstanding, the startle helped me to stay awake for the rest of the ride home.

Hiker: Jim Fritz

Leader: Mary O'Neill



New York Appalachian Trail April 23 - 25, 2010

This weekend's trek on the New York AT began with much excitement and anticipation as the six of us arrived at the Elk Pen Parking Area in Arden, well before our arranged afternoon meeting time. The Greenwood Lake Taxi arrived to transport us to our southern starting point at the Greenwood Lake Marina. Kim, our driver, talked about the wildlife we might observe on our trek: eagles, pileated woodpeckers, coyotes, bobcats and bears. Bears! It would be great to see a bear! Once dropped off at our destination we began our hike up the State Line Trail. This blue-blazed trail follows the New York-New Jersey state line and connects with the AT after a 1.2-mile climb. Allen, still sporting his "trail legs" after completing his 2009 through hike, bounded ahead as the rest of us adjusted to our heavy packs for our first overnigher of the season. At the trail's junction with the white-blazed AT, we found Allen sitting with a through hiker, sharing stories and generously offering to him his dinner. This hiker reported that he was out in front of all the other through hikers thus far. It wasn't long before we reached Prospect Rock at 1433 feet. There were fine views of Greenwood Lake and the mountains beyond. We could actually see New York City from our vantage point. From here the trail continued along a ridge where there were frequent views of the lake.

Our objective this afternoon was to find a place to camp. The first option was at Furnace Brook. Here we found an acceptable place to set up our five tents and one hammock. After settling in, we gathered for dinner and a bit of socializing. As the temperature

The Trail Talk

dropped and daylight faded into the shadows, we began to prepare for the night. Out of the quiet, Joe called out, "Bear!" Sure enough, a black bear, just a short distance away, was sniffing the air and sizing up his opportunity for a good meal. The scent of Joe's sardines must have lured him to our campsite. We all just stared, except for Dan who wouldn't come out of his tent. We were taken by surprise at this magnificent beast's presence. Aware that this situation could condition the bear to equate people with food and thus become a nuisance bear, I took it upon myself to attempt to scare him away. Shouting and hitting branches on a tree had him running but just for a few feet. He was back in a blink. More shouting and arm flailing - where were all my companions to help run him off? Success at last! I saw him turn and run. Hanging our food bags more securely was now of the utmost importance. However, this bear was a determined bear. He approached again, this time from the north end of camp where we had hung our food. There was mutual effort to run him off on this occasion, and the bear disappeared.

As we began to retire for the evening, Woody and Joe decided to watch over the camp for a few hours. At 11:00 pm, Woody attempted to get Don and me to take our turn at the watch. Woody commented that the bear hadn't been seen in awhile, so we presumed that our food was probably safe for the night; and so it was left at that, with no one on watch. The night passed rather quietly, Furnace Brook babbling as brooks do and some reported hearing coyotes in the distance.

In the morning, the silent scene showed that there had been a party going on in the wee hours of the morning. A party of one. No hats, balloons or a keg, but Woody's plastic grocery bag pinata had been an easy target. One swipe of the bear's paw and his prizes burst in all directions. He ate his fill: beef jerky, corn muffins, hard boiled eggs (leaving the shells behind!), chocolate covered coffee beans and several chocolate bars. The one thing he damaged but didn't eat was a package of a Lipton Side Dish. (One can make their own conclusion about that). Joe had to go look for his food bag. Missing were three bagels and four energy bars. The remainder of Joe's food was intact, even the empty can of sardines, not even licked clean! Can anyone see the irony in that the watchmen were the only ones who lost food? There was quite a mess to be cleaned up. Apparently our bear was unfamiliar with the GMC ethic of Leave No Trace. Now, with two full days and 17 miles ahead of us, Woody had no food. None. Feeling a pang of guilt for not taking my turn at guarding the food, I gave Woody some snacks to get through the day and planned on sharing my meals and tomorrow's snacks and lunch, too. Some donated energy bars. Since Woody and I were on half rations, we had to make the best of it. As we packed up our gear, Allen discovered where the bear had lay in wait,

a mere 20 feet from his hammock! He had been here all along, sitting smugly in our midst!

With the bear caper behind us, we stepped onto the trail for our first full day of hiking. Allen remembered that there was an ice cream shop on New York Route 17A, which we were to reach in about 4.5 miles. Ice cream became our focus for the morning as we climbed steeply, following a ridge overlooking the lake. Blueberry bushes were in full bloom, their dainty and fragrant flowers promising a bountiful harvest for hikers, and bears! The sun warmed us as we watched for our road crossing. At last, turning west on Route 17A, the Bellvale Farms Creamery was in sight. With a mere 20 minutes until opening time at noon, we sat at the picnic tables, had lunch and enjoyed the pastoral view to the west. The ice cream was a perfect treat this beautiful day. Woody ordered a second milkshake and tucked it securely in an open pocket on his pack. He had to tread very carefully for the rest of the day lest he lose his coveted meal supplement.

The trail continued to be rugged; it was most strenuous. In particular, steep climbs brought us to the top of Eastern Pinnacles and to Cat Rocks. At times an alternate blue-blazed trail was available to avoid the steepest sections. Woody made use of these "bad weather" trails to ensure the safety of his milkshake. Soon after, these challenging yet fun climbs were behind us; and we reached Wildcat Shelter, our night's destination. The campground was swarming with young scouts. The shelter was fully occupied; huge tents were everywhere and the young boys were doing what youngsters do, running around, making noise and blowing whistles. After weighing our options, we decided to move on another two miles. With rain expected that night and the next, we decided to shorten the upcoming ten-mile day to eight miles. Upon crossing Lakes Road, we found ourselves in a hemlock grove with Trout Brook flowing alongside. Here we made camp and had supper. Allen shared a special libation, warming us mentally and physically.

No bears arrived this night, but the rain did. Only Don felt like cooking breakfast in the early morning rain, so we packed up quickly and moved on. Allen had a head start, as previously planned. So now we were a group of five. The trail continued to be rocky and arduous, so many ups and downs and very little level terrain. We were somewhat misled by the map and elevation profile for on paper the ups and downs looked rather gentle, not the constant rock scrambling. It was reminiscent of some parts of the northern section of Vermont's Long Trail. Due to the drizzle and mist, there were no views from Mombasha High Point, Buchanan Mountain or Arden Mountain. The final descent was called Agony Grind, a 600-foot vertical descent to New York Route 17 and the New York Thruway. Although the name gave us pause, it wasn't

particularly difficult compared with the rest of the trail. Reaching the bottom and walking the 0.3 mile road walk to our cars had us with mixed emotions, both happy and sad that the hike was over; and not quite ready to go our separate ways, we had an early dinner together at a local diner. For a 21-mile trek, this hike packed a lot of punch! A great time was had by all!

*Hikers: Dan Zelterman, Allen Freeman, Don Hagstrom,
Donald "Woody" Woodbridge, Joe Kekacs*
Leader: Sarah O'Hare



New York Appalachian Trail April 23 - 24, 2010

Hungry. Hungry!! Ever since I woke up after that long winter's nap, all I can think about is food. Grubs and roots can only get a bear so far. Sweet berries will not come until later in the summer. HUNGRY! Uh-oh. Here come people. Loud people. Many people. Always loud. Sometime so loud that I am afraid and will run away. Not now. Loud. But not too loud. I can wait until they become quiet. There. See? Dark. Quiet. Let me walk around quietly and see what they brought me. Yummy eggs. I can peel these. Candy in foil is also very good. I unwrap these. Quietly. Do people really eat those crunchy ramen noodles? Yuck. There are things that even a bear won't eat. I also like to eat toothpaste after a good meal. Mmm. Minty fresh!

-the bear- Ghostwriter: Dan Z



Nipmuck Trail Tuesday, May 4, 2010

This 5.5 mile section of the Nipmuck Trail in Ashford began at the Eastford Road trail crossing. Following the gentle path through the Natchaug State Forest, we soon passed the junction with the northern terminus of the Natchaug Trail. A point of interest to watch for in this area is a glacial erratic known as Ladies Room Rock. Ideas were tossed around on how it was named. The most plausible possible explanation was that this erratic bordered the "Great Trail," a road that once connected Hartford and Boston; and this was where a coach or wagon may have stopped for the sake of the ladies' comfort.

A short side trail brought us to Pixie Falls, a shady and peaceful spot. Its name aptly descriptive. Here we paused for a snack break until the gnats urged us onward. Then what we thought were smelter ruins caught our attention. Stone-walled cellar holes and what looked like a large oven situated at the end of Iron Mine Lane provided support to our conclusion of

what this once was. A large patch of Jack-in-the-Pulpits lined the stone wall bordering Iron Mine Lane as we followed it briefly. Crossing Route 89 and onto Oakes Road, we road walked a half mile through a heavily wooded neighborhood before turning south onto our path once again. Here we came to a corral with a llama and a pony. The pony was enjoying his lunch of lush grass and dandelions until we approached. He then trotted over for a bit of attention. Leaving him behind, we continued on with the objective of finding our own lunch spot. A long log provided us a seat upon which we rested. During the last two miles we found three Eastern Ribbon snakes. Bill's keen eye and naturalist skills identified many, many varieties of wildflowers. As we crossed a small footbridge, we all recognized a skunk cabbage, even in its prehistoric proportion. It was the largest specimen any of us had ever seen.

These midweek hikes on the Nipmuck have been quite enjoyable. And this section today was no exception. Just as Ann stated, this was a superb hike!

*Hikers: George Jackson; Bill Falconer;
Bill Heath; Don Hagstrom; Ann Gurske and
her pup, Sinai*
Leader: Sarah O'Hare



Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania, Little Gap to Route 309 May 7-9, 2010

Evaluations: how do they work? After our trip, I asked the group about their opinion of this weekend.

When I think about the answers that they gave me, I realize that it's all in how you ask the questions. For instance, I wouldn't have gotten a very favorable response if I had simply asked the group if they had a blast of a good time; however, if I instead asked the gang if there were times when they wanted to string the leader up by her toes, the answers would be 100% to the affirmative. If I asked the gang if the

experience allowed them the opportunity to do a midnight hike over a boulder field or the occasion to climb down a cliff in 50-mile-an-hour winds, the answers, once again, would be 100%. I think I'm doing pretty well. It's all in how you ask the questions.

Friday night started out well enough. We all met at the cabin at 6 pm and had a nice dinner together. Dinner was followed by a lazy fire in the fireplace and the cooking of some s'mores. The evening finale was a boys-against-the-girls game of trivial pursuit. The boys were the victors. Afterwards, we turned in to bed.



Saturday, we headed out a wee bit later than I had hoped and headed to Little Gap to stage our cars. Unfortunately, I made the exact same mistake as last year despite my carefully written out instructions. Deep into analyzing my Dan Fogelberg music, I whizzed right on by Route 33. The others in the group were smart enough to follow Joe who knew exactly where to go. It was raining when we left the cabin; but with the delay, the sun had come out by the time we reached the trailhead. I rejoined the group at the Little Gap parking lot; and we staged our cars and commenced on the trail with a late start time of noon.

Now, Joe was the smart one of the bunch. He had come down the day before and hiked the first five miles; so we dropped him off at the beginning of Section 3. We made plans to meet with him at the Oven Knob Shelter later in the day. Our journey sans Joe began with a hike up over Blue Mountain, which started off well enough until we arrived at the cliff that leads down into the Lehigh Gap. The winds were gusting at about 50 miles per hour; so it was a real challenge, but it was a fun one, in the opinion of some. Once we had all gathered safely to the bottom, we headed out, concerned because it was getting late in the day. We still had many miles to go.

We stopped at the Outerbridge Shelter at 6:30 pm. We had seen a sign a half a mile earlier that stated our chosen shelter for the night, Oven Knob Shelter, was still 8.4 miles away. We rested, had a snack, and contemplated on what to do. Some were very tired, but staying at the Outerbridge Shelter meant hiking 12 miles the next day; plus Joe was waiting for us at the other shelter. We decided to keep hiking until we couldn't anymore. We had just a sprinkle of rain, hardly worth putting on rain gear but enough to give us a beautiful rainbow. We thought maybe it was a good sign that the rest of the trip would go well. We thought wrong.

We had only managed to hike half of the eight miles before darkness descended, but somehow our hiking four miles made the remaining four miles seem attainable. Yeah, that was crazy thinking. Little did we know that we would be entering a horrible stretch of the rocks that Pennsylvania is so well known for. Hiking by headlamps, our pace grew slower as we carefully made our way over the large rock fields by the meager lighting. The wind picked up, and it was cold and windy in some of the open spots around the power lines. I'm sure at this point everyone was thinking this could be labeled a Saturday night death march.

We could see a twinkle of lights that made us think we were close to the shelter, but that was deceiving. We were hiking the ridge line, which enabled us to see lights from a great distance. After some time, the next

question became *does the shelter even exist*? After hiking what seemed to be far more than four miles, the first of the group arrived at the Oven Knob Shelter at midnight. The last arrived around 1:30 am. Exhausted and relieved, we all fumbled into our sleeping bags after a warm cup of soup that Neil had prepared.

The next morning, we did not get up very early. Actually, for backpacking, it was quite late. We crawled out of the shelter at 9 am. Over breakfast, we chatted with a through hiker who had stopped for a snack. His name was Frisbee, and he had started from Georgia in March. We then packed up and hit the trail, starting with a hike over Oven Knob. This was a ridge line, as well; so there were pretty views most of the day. We stopped at Bear Rocks, which is listed as one of the prettiest spots in Pennsylvania. It was cool, and we spent some time climbing and playing in the boulders. We then continued hiking over the cliffs called the Knife Edge, which is over yet more boulders. We plugged along on this sunny but windy day. We got out of the woods later than we had hoped, but we were all very proud of completing our hike. Certainly we burned enough calories to eat a few extra donuts in the upcoming week. Miles hiked for the weekend totaled 19.

Now, for the final question on our evaluation: how many of you who are reading this are glad that you didn't sign up for this trip? I bet the answer is 100%.

Hikers: Mike, Adam and Lauren Shaw; Neil and Shelby Caron; Sandra Hussan; Joe Kekacs; and Cooper, the hiking bound

Leader: Mandy Brink



Cape Cod Bike and Hike Weekend May 14 - 16, 2010

The challenges for this event were met and conquered. The Hostels and motels that were considered do not open until early June. The hike was scheduled for May to be ahead of the tourist and sunny days. One campground in North Truro was open, and they offered off-season rates. This wooded camp is about six miles from Provincetown and is on a bus route.

We arrived at the camp site on Friday afternoon and set up for the stay. Jack was in his pop-up trailer; and Bill, in his Big Red van. Grace opted to tent in the pines. Before dinner, Bill played tour guide with side trips to Truro Harbor, Wellfleet Bay and Newcomb hollow Beach on the Atlantic. About four miles of beach walking resulted in the acquisition of Sea Glass and a large variety of shells including Horse-shoe crab. Back at camp a finger food cocktail hour replaced the scheduled restaurant trip. Jack just had to see the Bruins get beat, so a trip to a local sports bar finished the evening.

The Saturday bike-hike started well until a strong headwind was encountered along six miles of open Bay. Bill's bike was not shifting properly, and the chain finally came off. Jack to the rescue with his elaborate tool kit. A tour of Provincetown harbor led to a 300-foot climb of Pilgrim Monument. A stop at Pilgrims First Landing, then onto Herring Cove Beach for a three-mile hike to Race Point Light. The Cape Cod National Seashore Bike Trail was next to be navigated. This paved, winding and hilly trail managed to separate us for a few hours. Bill hailed a ranger and some bicyclist to watch our progress. All ended well, and we returned to camp. After 30 miles of biking and hiking, the evening meal was held at the campsite.

On Sunday morning, well rested, we set out on a four and half-mile roundtrip wooded hike to the Atlantic Ocean. This was followed by a tour of Cape Cod Lighthouse, which provided excellent viewing of the Cape.

Grace left for another event while Jack and Bill toured about in Wellfleet and P-Town for souvenirs before returning home.

Bikers/bikers: Jack Sanga and Grace King
Leader: Bill Falconer



*The three wisemen on the Taconic Crest Trail
 May 22-23, 2010*



Bantam River Paddle May 29, 2010

The weather was perfect for the first paddle of the season. Doreen Scott, Henry Smith and I launched at the Whites Woods Road bridge. Because the water level was so high from the spring rain, we decided to paddle upriver to Little Pond. We were able to float over some of the beaver dams that normally blocked passage on the now bloated waterway.

Spring was in full bloom. Yellow and purple Iris dotted the banks of the river. As we made our way to Little Pond, we spotted a swan with five fluffy cygnets ahead of us. From past experience, we knew that we would need to give the mother a wide berth as we passed her. We continued up the narrow inlet of the river.

We had been following the snaking river as it passed under bridges and along sand bars. The river also delivered us to a length of beaver dams. Henry debarked and pulled his kayak through part of the embankment to see if the river was passable further up. Doreen and I didn't want to sit idle, so we descended into the water; and within minutes, we had cleared a passage through the dam. We cleared as much as we could until we could go no further without the aid of dynamite or, at least, a chain saw.

As we continued our approach to Little Pond, we saw the swan and her family again; however, they were further away on another piece of land, and our path across the pond was clear. It was now lunch time. After we passed another bridge, we pulled the kayaks out of the water and found a stone sitting area. Just as we were finishing our meal, we heard a cry in the sky – two bald eagles were circling overhead. What a great sight that was! Afterwards, we returned to our aquatic journey. As we neared the mouth of river, the noise from the speed boats made our approach sound as if we were making our way up an Interstate ramp; so we knew it was time to turn around and head back.

The marsh was alive with songs from the Veery Chestnut Sided Warbler, Yellow Warblers, Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Kingbirds, Cat Birds and several other birds. We also recognized two painted turtles. Other kayakers reported seeing a beaver as well as a mink.

Around three o'clock, our full day of paddling ended as we arrived back at the launch site. Because of all the traffic and the other paddlers, we weren't able to leave until an hour later.

Thanks, Doreen and Henry, for joining me. I hope you enjoyed the day!!

Paddlers: Doreen Scott, Henry Smith
Leader: Carol A. Langley

The Ives Trail June 5, 2010

The Ives Trail is a multi-town trail in western Connecticut with an approximate length of 15 miles.

Back in February when I submitted this hike as an event for National Trails Day, I had assumed that the Ives Trail would be finished in time. We had relocated the trail from its original path; and at the time of the event, several easements were still needed. Also, the new trail sections had not been blazed nor otherwise finished; nonetheless, I knew where to go. Ribbon flags were used to mark most, although not all, of the trail. In addition, I had GPS waypoints for critical places.

The trail includes a stream crossing, which will eventually be equipped with a bridge. In the bridge's absence, we were able to cross the stream on rocks and a ladder; but the trail was still swampy on both sides of the stream. Our feet got wet. Our chosen course turned out to be a real bushwhack.

I submitted this event to the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), the GMC, the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK), and the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA). Ten people from the AMC signed up for the hike; however, the forecast was for showers sometime late in the day. Since this trek would have taken about eight hours, which meant possibly getting caught in the showers, four of the ten people chose not to come.

We met at the appointed time and drove to the start of the hike. The first part passes through Bennett's Pond State Park in Ridgefield. The land was once part of a fancy resort. It was then converted to a nursery, sold to IBM who had had planned to construct a conference center, and finally bought by a developer who proposed to construct hundreds of homes. The residents of Ridgefield opposed this last idea, and Ridgefield purchased the land and then turned it over to the State. This area is a pretty place with an open meadow that serves as a home to some specimen trees from the previous nursery. There are also nice views from the location of the inn as well as from around the pond. Along the inlet stream to the pond, we saw a very cooperative male Scarlet Tanager, who let us take his picture.

The trail then enters into a Ridgefield open space area and steeply up to a viewpoint, which was the site of a cabin (really more of a lean-to) where Charles Ives had spent some time. The trail continues down and around through the western side of Wooster Mountain State Park and finally descends to busy Route 7. We crossed Route 7 at a crosswalk; and after about a quarter mile road walk, we reentered the woods on an old wood road that's ironically named 'Old Wood Road'—its

namesake was actually someone named Wood. We then climbed up the western side of Moses Mountain. Moses Mountain is in the eastern section of Wooster Mountain State Park. From here, we traveled down into a gorge that contains the watershed divide between the Still and Saugatuck Rivers. We ascended once again, this time into Tarrywile Park to the viewpoint at Mootry Peak, where we had lunch. After lunch, we hiked down (and up) to Parks Pond in the main area of Tarrywile Park. Here we were met by Sandy Moy and Becky Petro with cold water as well as by Tina Maripuu with brownie and oatmeal cookies! Sandy Moy is a member of the Ives Trail Task Force and the Executive Director of Tarrywile Park and Mansion. Tina Maripuu is the Secretary of the Ives Trail Task Force. We were all very happy to see them, and I heard many comments later on from the other hikers expressing their appreciation.

Despite our journey thus far, the fun part was only starting. The path continues through Tarrywile Park and then on another old wood road. On this road, the path enters a section of Tarrywile that is not contiguous with the rest of the park. We arrived at the "fish", so called because the property shape resembles a fish tail. At the fish, there was no trail. We traveled between cliffs, following ribbons through a Mountain Laurel thicket. After peaking, we descended down a cliff and out onto a wood road. After another short bushwhack, we emerged onto a wood road called Old Post Road. We followed this road for over a mile to another bushwhack that edged around a swamp. This was where we started to hear the thunder. We donned our raingear and continued. We arrived at another old wood road called Old Starr's Plain Road, which was followed by another bushwhack up a hill. Now raining, we passed through the Land Trust of Danbury (LTD) property, down a hill, and along the edge of a piece of private property where we crossed the bridgeless stream. It was hard to tell whether our feet were wet from the stream or from the rain. We hiked up a hill to Long Ridge Road. At this point, the trail ends but starts again about 0.4 miles further north on Long Ridge Road.

After following an old wood road yet again, we entered onto two more LTD properties and, guided by ribbons, skirted the swamps in each area of land. We emerged onto a cul-de-sac where we followed several roads. The roads led our party into the Redding Bogus Brook open space. At the open space, we traveled through some more swamp and skirted another pond. At the pond, we saw a large bird fly off through the trees. We were not sure if the bird was an owl or a hawk since none of us saw it very clearly. The trail then ended at a railroad track only to magically start again on the other side. Finally, we arrived at a flat section of the trail. Can you believe that? It really was flat. We exited the woods onto Side Cut Road in

Redding, which was about a quarter of a mile from the cars.

We completed the hike in just short of eight hours.

*Hikers: Richard Applegate, Robert Cieri, Bob Cotton,
Roger Hibbert, Keith Wright*

Co leader: Russ Charest

Leader: Mike Cunningham



Hanover, New Hampshire, to Killington, Vermont

June 10 – 15, 2010

A couple of 50- and 60-somethings strapped on packs, took some Ibuprofen, and went off for some rough ‘n’ tumble adventures along the Appalachian Trail. Five days and 46 miles later, some of us were actually planning and looking forward to our next trip, believe it or not. It rained a lot every day, but despite this, we all had a better time than you might imagine. Really.

The following is a summary of the trip categorized by activity type:

Meals. Eating is definitely a high point of any GMC trip, and this was no exception. The night before we began, we all drove into Rutland for steak, seafood, and salad. The morning of our start, we had a mammoth breakfast at the Inn at Long Trail (highly recommended!). On the second day, like a bunch of drowning rats, we hauled out of the pouring rain into the General Store in Hartford, Vermont, and ate pizza. We were drenched, and there was plenty of hot coffee. Along the trail, Steve cooked tortellini dinner in his “pasta pants” in a process that made up for the lack of starch, which the dry cleaners failed to properly apply. Cherries, dried cranberries, and Snickers bars were freely consumed, and in great quantities. Once back at the Inn, there were large, sloppy, greasy, and spicy meals washed down with lots of cold beer. (burp!)

Mud. Sometimes deep enough to swallow a hiker and pack.

Wildlife. A number of wild critters were seen including lizards. Mark wanted to take a photo of each and every one of these cute little orange things. Some of the thru’ hikers looked pretty wild, too. We saw a snake, a fawn, and bugs of all sizes and annoyance factors. (Do cows count under the wildlife category?) Hansel and Grettel were seen at one point. The next night we met the wicked witch, who was hot on their trail.

Overnight accommodations. There was no room service at any of the shelters.

*Hikers: Mike DiZazzo; Mark Schofield; Steven
Schwager, guest*

Leader: Dan Zelerman



5th Annual Farmington River Paddle June 26, 2010

A hot sunny summer day – no better place to be than on the river. The GMC flotilla was in the water and paddling on a very lazy river by 10 o’clock.

Jack hugged the shore line to stay out of the hot sun. Eleanor and Henry glided along in my old canoe, which has been named the Dinosaur. Dave floated down the river listening to Dan Forgarty. Kasidee, my 17 year old granddaughter, just laid back and soaked up the sun in her kayak. Marissa, the 12 year old, was in the inflatable since this was her first time going down the river; so she was paddling.

A female merganser made quite a racket as we approached her territory, but there was no sign of her family of ducklings. King-Fisher yelled above our heads and dove into the river for food. A band of Cedar Wax Wings sang, called to others from the tree tops, and flew across the river. As the river became quiet again, we spotted the family of mergansers on a log sunning themselves. The seven young were with their mom while dad swam around and patrolled the area.

We took out at the Sycamore Tree for lunch in Simsbury. Afterwards, we were back on the lazy river. We floated along until it started to get hot. A mantra started up with the question of how much longer before we reached the take out. We had only paddled 8½ miles; but with the heat and no help from the river, we soon became tired. My answer to the mantra was 10 minutes after the last bridge. We saw the green bridge and knew the end was in sight. We finally reached Curtis Park, but the day wasn’t over. We still had to retrieve vehicles, return to take out location, and load up the kayaks and the canoe.

What a great day with family and friends. See you next year!!!!

*Paddlers: Eleanor Poole; Henry Smith; Jack Sanga;
Dave Koerber; Carol A. Langley’s
granddaughters, Kasidee and Marissa
Drivdahl*

Leader: Carol Langley



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