

The Trail Talk

April 2002

President's Message...

The annual dinner was held March 9th. Those in attendance were treated to a great meal and an entertaining slide presentation and a short business meeting. I once again want to thank Sarah O'Hare for all her efforts in the planning of the annual meeting and dinner. I also want to extend thanks to Dave Hardy, field director for the GMC, for his presentation of 50 walks in Connecticut.

After what passed for winter in these parts I am not sure what to make of spring so far. I know that by the time this issue of the Trail Talk reaches you however, spring will have finally made it's appearance. Also re appearing this April is the start of daylight savings time. Many activities are planned for the next quarter as always, check the schedule and join us for a hike.

Ken

**Wadsworth Falls State Park
January 12**

This activity was supposed to be a cross-country ski outing. Our mild winter turned it into a hike instead, attracting a crowd of hikers to explore the trails of the park. We began our hike by following the Bridge Trail, taking us to the remains of a mill on the river. The children, Drew, Olivia and Jimmy, descended the steep, slippery river bank to explore the old building. Not to be left out, the adults all followed, not a one felt a wet foot in crossing the stream.

Connecticut Section of the Green Mountain Club

Continuing along, we picked up the yellow-blazed Laurel Brook Trail and at its end turned onto the White Birch Trail. The youngsters, finding small patches of snow, attempted making snowballs. Some of the "older kids" did, too. Our plan was to hike the outer trails of the park. We connected with the red-blazed Cedar Loop Trail, only to come to a dilemma. The trail, being a loop, split into two trails, to link up together a short distance away. It was decided that the men take one way, the ladies the other. The men arrived at the junction first and with a wilder story of what they saw on their trail. We ladies believed nary a word.

Our destination was the falls. We picked up the orange-blazed Main Trail, which follows alongside the railroad tracks. Here we met up with Leslie and Richard, who began the hike at another spot. We all arrived at the falls, a little hungry and much deserving of a rest. The ice on the Coginchaug River was the focus of much attention and here, as before, no one earned a wet boot in playing on the ice on the river. Brownies were shared to bribe the group into posing for a picture. The goodies didn't dull our appetites, as after the hike we went for pizza, the usual post-hike treat.

Hikers: Jack Sanga, daughter Olivia, son Drew, Jim Robertson, son Jimmy, David and Regina Chatel, Viesha Chatel, Jeff Szymczyk, Ken Williamson, Richard and Leslie Chandler, Sarah O'Hare

**Freedom Trail, Boston
January 26**

We met on Boston Common, across from the State House to begin our walk along the freedom trail. Since this is a "linear trail" rather than a loop Grace suggested that we walk the back streets of Boston to begin the Freedom Trail at Bunker Hill. It was a windy but sunny and unseasonably warm day.

At Bunker Hill we visited the museum then climbed the 294 steps to the top of the monument to be rewarded with a 360-degree view of the city. After Bunker Hill we went to the USS Consti-

tution for a tour. With the post 9-11 security in full swing it took 25 minutes to pass through security. Of course, since this is a GMC "outdoor" outing, several members were packing pocketknives. Knives are important because one never knows when a fish might need skinning or a campfire needs to be started. Unfortunately since campfires and fishing are not allowed on the USS Constitution, neither are knives. Rather than having the knives confiscated as well as having spent enough time on Navy ships I elected to forgo the tour and hold the knives. Also ended up with all the purses and backpacks too.

Following the ships tour we dined at a North End institution "Regina Pizza". The place definitely earned the CT GMC seal of approval with cold beer and great pizza. Full as we were Jodi "with an i" led us around the corner to a Italian bakery. I was glad we had some walking (in my case waddling) to do because I was stuffed

Heading back towards the common we stopped at the Old North Church, Paul Revers house and checked out a graveyard or two. The only shopping stop was at Hilton's Tent City and it's 5 floors of goodies. Bob negotiated with the owner who gave anyone with a GMC member card a 10% discount.

We ended our hike with a walk through Beacon Hill and across the Common as the sun set. Grace took us into Chinatown and to an exceptional Chinese restaurant. We left the ordering up to her and were rewarded with many exceptional dishes served family style from a large lazy Susan in the middle of the table.

A different kind of outing and great fun!!

Hikers: Regina and David Chatel, Allen Freeman, Grace King, Sarah O'Hare, Bob Schoff, Jodi Silver, Ken Williamson



**Bigelow Hollow State Park
January 27**

John and I took a leisurely Sunday hike at Bigelow Hollow. The hike took a little over two hours. We decided not to take the five-mile loop since there were intermittent patches of slick ice (and we didn't have cleats). It was nice to take a break and get out to enjoy the fabulous weather. The temperature was about 40 degree F, and it was calm and mostly sunny. During the hike, we felt warm air currents alternating with cold air currents. Afterwards, we had dinner at Reins Deli in Vernon. We had pickles, soup, and knishes (aptly described as 'potato things' by John). Fun was had by all (two).

Hikers: John O'Neill and Mary Horne

**Hammonasset State Park
February 2**

Not being a sports fan I didn't realize what an inappropriate weekend I chose for my hike. Only one person, member Lesley Doig of Hartford showed up. Lesley is a very interesting person, a native of Scotland here for three years on a work visa. The day was bitterly cold and the wind from the west was so fierce we had to turn our backs and walk to Meigs Point. Afterwards we did cedat and Willards Islands. The walk back was a little calmer.

Hikers: Lesley Doig and Marge Hackbarth

**PRE-SUPER BOWL HIKE: DEVIL'S HOPYARD
February 3**

We had a total of 10 hikers for this enjoyable walk through Devil's Hopyard, a 3 mile loop around the Vista Trail. The Chapman Falls were edged with ice, the result of overnight temperatures in the teens. Kerry, Jimmy and I had made a reconnaissance trip to the park the day before, and had found some items of interest: beaver activity, mountain laurel thickets, ice, etc., that the kids were eager to show to the rest of the group. Every small stream on the trail brought out multiple methods of crossing. An unidentified forest creature, sounding somewhat

like a crow, turkey, and partridge, baffled us. At the southern vista, we stopped for a break featuring Sarah's homemade chocolate chip cookies and Jack's hot chocolate.

The trail back down towards Eight Mile River passes through stands of large blighted hemlocks. Jack's father and I observed that the hillside would be nearly barren in another decade or so. The kids, however, found hidden treasures: large icicles hanging from the rock ledges. They broke off several, which they tried to alternately carry (wet and cold!) and lick (forming sharp end points) down the slope. Our walk back up the river through the forest was a sharp contrast to the openness on the ridge.

Postscript - The Super Bowl: In keeping with an annual tradition, Mr. Williamson and I wagered a box of Pop-Tarts on the game's outcome. And it's not just the Pop-Tarts; the loser must carry the box on a GMC-sanctioned overnight backpacking trip for presentation to the winner. Although I was rooting for the Patriots, I trusted the oddsmakers and bet on the Rams. Of course, the Patriots and Ken won (for at least the fifth (?) year in a row). I will be packing Pop-Tarts into Stratton Pond Shelter in late February.

Hikers: Three Robertsons: Jim, Kerry and Jimmy; Five Sangas: Jack, his parents Jack and Laura and his kids Olivia and Drew, Sarah O'Hare, and Ken "Vegas" Williamson.

**Chatfield Hollow State Park
February 16**

Neglecting to locate the map's designated trailhead, our group road-walked nearly a mile around Schreeder Pond before locating the orange-blazed Deep Woods Trail. The road walk was pleasant and gave us an overview of the swimming and picnic areas, anticipating a return visit in the warmer months. The trail quickly turned into an uphill climb on a rocky slope to some ledges. Mountain Laurel lined the trail. we followed this section for about two miles where we came out at a dammed pool. A waterwheel sat where the water flowed from the pool. It was agreed that there should be no mention of Ken and his fascination with this waterwheel. Another diversion, a covered

bridge, deserved our attention, also.

The forecast for the day was rain and snowshowers. Instead, the sun broke through and warmed the day. It had become a perfect day for being on the trail. We picked up the red-blazed Ridge Trail, one that wound and twisted through picturesque areas, climbing steeply in some areas. Our trail, coming to its end, descended a steep staircase which brought us down to the road and then back to the parking area. We ended our outing at Dino's Pizza where we feasted on pizza and was entertained by Richard with his much coveted side order of anchovies.

Hikers: Marge Hackbarth, Ken Williamson, Leslie and Richard Chandler, Ginny Waller, Sam Prevatte, Sarah O'Hare



**Stratton Pond Backpack
February 23-24**

Ideal winter camping conditions! Comfortable temperatures (mid-30s during the days, low teens at night) with only moderate wind on Saturday, clear blue skies, and a night with a three-quarter moon and super star-gazing. And, yes, despite the dry winter in Connecticut, there was snow in Vermont - a decent snow pack of maybe six inches at the Arlington-West Wardsboro Road and one to two feet around Stratton Pond and on the mountain. Bill Brodnitzki and his son Bill, Jr., joined me.

The trip started out in a somewhat lousy fashion, however. When I arrived at the parking area on the West Wardsboro Road at the LT/AT crossing, the lot was full with vehicles from a combination of hikers and snowmobilers, so I turned around and attempted to park on the roadside. Unfortunately, I tried to get too far off the road and got TOO close to the ditch, sinking my front left tire in packed snow down to the axle. Well, shifting my truck into four-wheel drive got me moving, but my back end slid into a position with my wheel well over the front bumper of a parked van. Decision time: floor it and

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let the van suffer the consequences, or do the rational thing and get towed out. Hmmmm...When Bill arrived, he drove me back to the West Wardsboro Store to call a tow truck. Within an hour, the truck had been pulled free of the ditch and van (by a very friendly guy from Mount Snow Motors - he knew some folks from here in Glastonbury) and parked on terra firmae, and I was humbled but ready to get going. Both Bills waited very patiently for me.

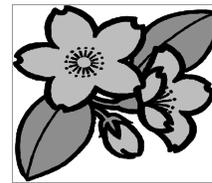
Bill is a veteran Stratton Pond hiker - he said at least nine overnights - so we followed his suggestion to take the Cata-mountain cross-country ski trail to its intersection with the blue-blazed Stratton Pond Trail. Good thing, because the alternative route would require walking over a mile on the road, dodging snowmobiles, to get to the trailhead. Bill, Jr., led the way towing a gear-laden sled in addition to carrying his backpack, with Bill, Sr., attached to the back of the sled as the brakeman. In a few places the ski trail, which follows a logging road, was impassable due to standing or running water, so we had to venture into the woods, where we found "post-holing" an occasional annoyance. We arrived at the splendid Stratton Pond Shelter around 3 PM.

Despite a quick change into dry clothes, we all started to get cold, so we grabbed our snowshoes and ventured around and out across Stratton Pond. Stratton Mountain was particularly picturesque, still frosted by snow and ice from a day-earlier storm. This was actually the only time during the whole week-end when we needed our snow shoes. The main trail surfaces were packed down solid, so only boots were needed.

Joining us later at the shelter were Doug Fish from Middletown - whom we had met at Dick Krompegal's place for a trail meeting in early February - and his friend Steve. After dinner, as the sun was setting and the moon rising high in the blackening sky, we all walked back down to the pond and out onto the ice. Steve is an amateur astronomer who could point out many more than the three constellations I know. Despite the bright moon, the stars were clearer than they are from my backyard in Connecticut. Before long, the cold drove us back to the shelter and to our sleeping bags for the usual winter 7 PM bedtime. Although temperatures dropped to 12 degrees by morning, no one mentioned being cold.

Doug and Steve left early on Sunday morning to meet their ride, while the three of us got a leisurely start just after 9 o'clock. We climbed the Long Trail to the peak of Stratton Mountain, finding super views from the fire tower. The Adirondacks, the Green Mountains north of Killington/Pico, Mt. Monadnock, and Mt. Greylock were all clearly visible. We had lunch, chatted with a group that had snowshoed over from the ski area gondola, and headed down the mountain at a quick pace. The parking area on the West Wardsboro Road had turned to mud and the snowmobilers, who had worn their trails down to gravel, were packing up and claiming to be done for the season. This was probably our last winter blast for this year, too.

Hikers: Jim Robertson, Bill Brodnitzki Sr. & Jr.



Putnam Wolf Den March 30

The morning was cloudy and rain threatened. We took our chances and met for a hike at the Putnam Wolf Den in the Mashamoquet State Park. As we headed toward the trailhead from the parking lot at the campground area, we saw two turkey vultures perched in a tree. They were our first of several wildlife sightings. Our plan was to follow the outer loop of the trail system, to make it a five mile hike. Several points of interest were to be found along the way. The terrain, initially gentle with little elevation change, became a little more challenging as we approached the area of interest.

A side trail brought us to the Table Rock, a giant, flat slab of rock. Further on we came to Wolf Den, a small cave where the last wolf in CT was supposedly shot. Here we paused for refreshment and posed for pictures. Some of us even ventured into the cave but were a little disappointed, as we found it not nearly as deep and excit-

ing as we had imagined. After examining the den, we continued down the trail to a ledge overlook and the Indian Chair, an appropriately shaped boulder. Again we stopped, enjoyed the view from the chair, commenting on numerous stone walls weaving through the woods below.

Skunk Cabbage was just emerging in the wet areas and the leaves of the Spotted Wintergreen were evident in the dry areas. A Mourning Cloak butterfly fluttered nearby, a sure sign of early spring. The woods were alive with birds, nuthatches and woodpeckers in particular, were noticed. Regina found, not just one, but four Eastern Ribbon snakes, each following one another. They weren't in much of a hurry, as we had ample time to observe, comment and take pictures.

As we approached the end of our hike the sun came out briefly and we were spared any rain. Jim, Regina, Ken and Jack departed for pizza and refreshment. Marge and Sarah, who had driven together, elected to go home. Forever the bird watcher, Marge spied a wild turkey on our drive and urged me to turn around for a closer look. Sure enough, we saw a male, in all his feathered glory. After seeing us, he and two others flew off across Rt. 44. We then went along on our way, too.

Hikers: Marge Hackbarth, Jack Sanga, Regina Chatel, Ken Williamson, Jim Robertson, Sarah O'Hare



Upcoming Trail Maintenance Trips

August 23 – 25: Vermont Hiking Trail Maintenance Trip. Set up camp at the Story Spring Shelter then day trips to work, mostly south on the Long Trail / Appalachian Trail. The bridge over Black Brook will be rebuilt this summer so we may participate in the construction. Weather & Interest permitting combine with a hot dog roast, food & drink sharing. Primitive camping, some backpacking experience necessary, plenty of help available. Will set up 1/2 mile from parking. Call or E-mail by 08/21/2002.

Visit our message center for updates -
<http://groups.aol.com/gmct>

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October 4 – 6: Trail Maintenance In Vermont on the Long Trail / Appalachian Trail. Will work on projects to be determined over the summer. Primitive area in the national forest. Must be an experienced backpacker and self sustaining. Call or E-mail by 10/02/2002. Visit our message center for updates -

<http://groups.aol.com/gmct>

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