

Volume LIII, Issue IV October to December 2021 Fred Clark, Editor

President's Message Fall 2021

Kid Gore Shelter Reconstruction Update

As mentioned in the Summer *Trail Talk*, the GMC 2021 major construction plans included a significant structural renovation, roof replacement and a new privy at Kid Gore Shelter. The GMC's contracted helicopter service completed the material airlifts to the site during the week of July 19, but the timing for start of the actual construction work isn't fixed yet. GMC Director of Field Programs Keegan Tierney recently advised that, due to the shelter's age, a preservation review to comply with Vermont statutes is required and may take some time to complete. The construction crew is focusing on significant Stratton Pond area work this Fall so there's a possibility that the Kid Gore work (and a few other construction projects on the Long Trail in southern Vermont) may be pushed into 2022. The GMC staff reiterated that there will be a need for our volunteer labor at some point. Please stay tuned!

Trail Magic on the Stratton-Arlington Road

After a hiatus in 2020 due to COVID-19, the Connecticut Section was back at the Long Trail crossing on the Stratton-Arlington Road to provide trail magic to hikers on August 7. Thanks to Dennis Himes for organizing the event again. We had a good mix of Appalachian Trail thru-hikers, Long Trail End-to-Enders and section hikers (and a few good-natured dogs) stop by to chat and enjoy some food and drinks. It's always interesting to hear stories of the trail and to get first-hand reports from the north-bounders of our section of trail that they've just traversed. Thanks to Dennis and participants and contributors Maure Briggs, Kevin Burke, John Folsom, Linda and Don Hagstrom, and Jim Moore.

End-to-Ending

Andy Hood, our Director to the GMC Board, is attempting to hike the entire Long Trail this year. Andy started north from the southern terminus in mid-June and had reached US Route 4/Maine Junction when a death in his family required him to leave the trail. Andy reports that he plans to resume his trek from the Canada border around September 5, heading southbound to Route 4. We wish him well!

See you on the trail,

Jim Robertson

<image>

Shendandoah campers at Big Meadow Campground – see page 3

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INQUIRIES: Please direct all inquiries regarding the Connecticut Section to the President.

NEW MEMBERS: The Connecticut Section welcomes these new members who recently joined:

Nicole Morson

We look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events.

Wood turtle – see page 5

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE: Trail Talk is

published four times a year in March, June, September, and December. Articles and activity reports must be emailed 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)	\$25.00
or Limited Income	
Sponsor (Individual/Family)	\$75.00

Send annual dues to: Green Mountain Club 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road Waterbury Center, VT 05677-9904

You may also join or renew online at: <u>https://www.greenmountainclub.org/</u>

SPECIAL THANKS to member Charlotte Hitchcock. Each issue Charlotte facilitates the emailing of *Trail Talk* by formatting the layout and reducing the file size.

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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.

Calendar of Events: Upcoming events are listed here:

http://www.conngmc.com/newwiki/doku.php?id=start



Trail Talk, October - December 2021

Shenandoah National Park Hiking, Camping and Backpacking April 23-29, 2021 by Jim Robertson

We had a great multi-generational turnout of 16 — Mandy Brink, Jim Robertson, Don and Linda Hagstrom, Tom and Patty Adams, Mark Stone, Rob and Marianne Valley, Dan Zelterman, Jon Conville, Jonah Conville, Ben Conville, Dave Schmidt, Dan Stone, and Tshepang Stone — for this week-long trip to Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, that included hiking, base camping and backpacking. Something for everyone's tastes. I had never visited the park or the Shenandoah River valley so this turned out to be an especially rewarding trip for me. Don and Linda Hagstrom had provided the spark by recommending this trip, following a similar excursion to the Shenandoah a few years ago. Mandy, as usual, took the idea and ran with the planning and organization from there.

The campgrounds within the park operate on a firstcome, first-served basis until early May, so Don and Linda drove down early to stake a claim on a site at Big Meadows Campground, which is the largest in the park and located about midway along the 108 miles of Appalachian Trail within the park boundaries and near the midpoint of the famed Skyline Drive. Tom and Patty Adams arrived a few days later after visiting with their daughter's family near Charlottesville. The New England contingent met up in PA at Mark and Laurie Stone's house for an evening of great food and accommodations then caravanned south to Big Meadows the next day. More of the Stone-Conville clan arrived in their van (packed to the gills) late that evening, completing our contingent.

The next day we started out in a thick mist over Hightop Mountain but as we approached Swift Run Gap the skies cleared. The best part of the Gap, though, was that the Adamses and Hagstroms met us there and took our packs (or most of the contents) so we could slack pack the next eight miles to the next campground. I like slackpacking, especially on a day like this one that would total 12-13 miles. The kids seemed to race up the next hill, fueled by candy, snacks and boundless energy. We cruised along pleasant terrain to Lewis Mountain Campground, where our mobile support crew met us and where Dan, Jon, Dave and the youngsters had staged their van to finish up. After goodbyes, Mark, Mandy, Dan, Rob, Marianne and I continued on with our full packs to Bearfence Mountain Shelter where we set up our tents for the evening and watched a nice sunset. One Day 3 we had some ups and downs over Bearfence and Hazeltop Mountains, but the trails are wonderfully graded and present much easier hiking than in New England. Eight miles later we strolled back into Big Meadows Campground. Don, Linda, Patty and Tom had found some interesting trails (Shenandoah has over 500 miles of walking trails) for day hikes.

After a night of "glamping," the backpacking crew, including Tom, headed up Skyline Drive to the Pinnacles Picnic Area, where we started south. This section of the AT offered some fantastic views from Little Stony Man, Stony Man and Hawksbill mountains. A park ranger was stationed atop Stony Man, pointing out raptors – falcons I think – soaring in the updraft from the valley below us. As the mountain names would suggest, this is a fairly rocky

A backpacking crew of 12 headed out the next morning, hitting the AT northbound at Simmons Gap. Skies were overcast but we hiked six miles to Hightop Hut in dry conditions. Fortunately, we were able to get our tents set up and gear stored before rain moved in. At night it poured, but this would be the only significant precipitation for the whole week. Backpackers at Simmons Gap trailhead



section of trail. The flank of Hawksbill had some rockslides reminiscent of the AT in Maine. Temperatures soared into the 80s which was a bit too warm for comfortable hiking. We pulled into the Skyland tourist area and fueled up on cold drinks and premade sandwiches, enjoying lunch at outside picnic tables. After nine miles we arrived at Rock Spring Hut for the night, along with several AT thruhikers, some of whom didn't arrive until well after dark.

An easy four mile walk back to our Big Meadows base camp completed the trek, and the base crew spoiled us with grilled cheeseburgers, corn and salads. A great way to finish after about 40 trail miles.

Overall, it was a great time for walking and sightseeing in the Shenandoah. Crowds were reasonable so the campgrounds, trails and roads were not congested. Foliage wasn't really leafed out yet, especially at elevations above 3,000 feet so the views were great. But many early Spring wildflowers were in bloom including bird foot violet, the star chickweed, blood root, trillium, wild ginger and anemone. And there were several varieties of songbirds, including some we couldn't identify until later, like an Eastern towhee who serenaded us at one rest stop. We hope to schedule another Shenandoah trip in an upcoming year, focusing on the north or south section of the Park.

Mattabesett and Mica Ledges Trails June 2, 2021 by Jocelyn Linnekin

On a near-perfect day I was joined by **Sarah O'Hare, Marianne Valley**, and **Rob Valley** for a 9mile "lollipop" shaped hike through this scenic, rocky area. The Mattabesett Trail in Durham was recently relocated to avoid the road walk on Old Blue Hills Road. Our hike started at Dead Hill Road and followed the relocation west and north for a mile and a half on a mountain bike trail, part of a popular biking trail network known as Northern Exposure.

You can even navigate to the spacious parking area at the trailhead by typing "Northern Exposure parking" into your GPS app. The short segment of the old Mattabesett Trail from Pisgah Road is now a red-and-blue-blazed connector. The parking is a huge



improvement over the Pisgah Road trailhead, which only has narrow roadside parking for a couple of cars. I have done this hike a few times now, on weekdays, and only encountered a few bikers later in the day. I suspect that the area sees more traffic on weekends. On this Wednesday morning, we did not meet a single biker.

The day was warm but not hot, and the humidity was low. We were surprised, and grateful, that it was not buggy. After about two miles we reached the open ledges of Mount Pisgah (641'), which offered great views and a logical spot for a water break. This portion of the Mattabesett Trail goes through terrain that is typical of Connecticut's rocky uplands, with lots of ups and downs and some fun rock scrambles. Stunted pitch pines growing on the exposed ledges are reminiscent of much higher New England summits. There is so much mica eroding out of the native rock that you can feel as if you are walking on jewels. West of Mount Pisgah, the trail descends and crosses a picturesque stream spanned by a huge flat rock slab (conveniently deposited by nature, not by trail crews). At the northern end of the Mica Ledges ravine looms Pyramid Rock, a huge block fractured from the ridge during the last glaciation (ca. 10,000 years ago). We noted that Pyramid Rock bears a resemblance to Jabba the Hutt. The trail then climbs to the ridge through dead and dving hemlocks killed by the invasive Wooly Adelgid and features more vistas from the exposed granite ledges.

Rob and Sarah provided an enriching historical and naturalist commentary as we hiked. Rob showed us the white Adelgid on the tips of hemlock branches and noted that the chestnut oak, with its deeply furrowed bark, predominates in these rocky areas with thin soil. Sarah identified sassafras and the "Indian cucumber" plant, which Native Americans put to medicinal use, and found a large orange "Chicken of the Woods" fungus (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) growing on a rotted tree. Later I found that this is considered a delicacy ("tastes like chicken"). There are even recipes online.

> Sarah also spotted an intact fourfoot-long snake shed (the skin shed by a snake), complete with head, jaws, and eye films that looked like contact lenses. According to Rob, it was probably from the black rat snake, aka eastern rat snake.

A cairn of Selectman's Stones marks the point where the towns of Durham, Guilford and Madison meet. Passing this on previous hikes, I thought it was just a cairn of rocks, but Rob told us the function of the Selectman's Stones—that the Selectmen had to walk the town boundaries and leave an inscribed rock to prove that they had done their job. On close examination we saw that the "rocks" in the cairn are engraved with initials and some very old dates. It is also clear that the stones were inscribed elsewhere and brought to the site (via the adjacent Selectman's Path trail), because they are different types of rock. One legible set of initials is dated 1906!

A quarter of a mile south of the Selectmen's Stones, the Maria Schmidt Memorial Trail (on Madison Land Conservation Trust property) branches off to the left and connects with the Mica Ledges Trail, forming the "lollipop" portion of the hike and leading back to Pyramid Rock. The return over Mt. Pisgah, a long, steady climb at the end of the day, definitely gets the heart rate up. Nature had one more treat in store for us when we reached the parking area. Marianne spotted a Wood Turtle pulled inside its shell, in a vulnerable place, so Sarah moved it into the brush where it wouldn't be crushed. Thanks to Sarah, Marianne, and Rob, I learned a tremendous amount on this hike and saw things that I would not have noticed on my own once again proving that it's more fun to hike with friends!

Audubon Center Bent of the River, Southbury June 9, 2021 by Jocelyn Linnekin

Despite the 90-degree heat and high humidity, Carol Langley and I hiked 4.3 miles at the National Audubon Society's Bent of the River preserve in Southbury. There are 15 miles of trails on this stunning 700-acre property on the Atlantic Flyway. I had hoped to hike five to six, but we cut it short because of the heat. "Bent of the River" is the 18thcentury name for the village of South Britain (you pass through the historic village before entering the property), so named because the Pomperaug River makes a hairpin turn at this point. There have only been four owners of this land. The original owners, the Pootatuck Indians, sold it to the Mitchell family, who farmed it for over 250 years. The Mitchell heirs sold it to the Clarks in the 1930s, and Althea Clark, a local conservationist, left it to the National Audubon

Society. With other acquisitions Audubon now preserves over a square mile of land and both sides of the Pomperaug River. Audubon aims to keep this mile of the river in a wild state (no fishing is allowed). As a result, muskrat, beaver, otter, mink, and bald eagles have all been found here. We did not see any of those, but we did see two Great Crested Flycatchers, either a breeding pair or an adult and a juvenile, sitting atop a nesting box on the riverbank. I added it to my "life list" of all the bird species that I have ever seen.

The entire property is managed with an eye to preserving habitats attractive to birds, wildlife, and pollinating insects. Meadows are mowed every other vear. There is a wildflower meadow and an extensive area of mature shrubland mixed with cedar, of a type that is rare in New England today. The trails are mostly easy but there are some steep and rocky sections leading to a couple of overlooks. We hiked to Eagle Overlook, a high bald spot in the middle of dense forest. Because of its location and the mix of meadows, forest, and riverbank, Bent of the River is a bird magnet. Although we hiked to a chorus of bird song, sighting birds is a challenge at this time of year because the trees are leafed out and in high heat even the birds avoid open spaces. We were both wishing that we were better at identifying bird songs.

We started at 9:30 am, which is a bit late for birding in the summer. I was disappointed not to see bluebirds and other species that I had seen on previous visits to Bent of the River. Fortunately, the 19th-century barn that houses a mini-museum has a "bird balcony" overlooking bird feeders. We had a snack there and enjoyed watching the different birds that came to feed, including a female Rose-Breasted Grosbeak and a hummingbird. I had just been on a guided bird walk the previous weekend, and we ran into Glen, the property manager, who had led it. We chatted about bird feeders and bears (who migrate through the property). As we were walking out, a big treat was watching a gorgeous pair of goldfinches at a feeder. We got a long look at the differences between the male and female plumage. Even though we did not see as many birds as I had hoped, when I did the checklist later (for posting to the web site eBird, managed by the Cornell Ornithology Lab), I came up with 21 species, identified either by sight or by song. I thought this was pretty good for a newbie birder on a hot day.

Maine backpacking Trip Route 4 to Caribou Valley Road June 24-27, 2021 by Mandy Brink

We all met for different reasons for this challenging hiking weekend on the Appalachian Trail. **Dennis Himes** is working on completing his NE111 peaks. **Mandy Brink** and **Jim Robertson** completed another section of the Maine AT. **Barb Kelly, Rob and Marianne Valley, Mike Shaw, Jim** and **Mandy** saw it as a good prep hike for the upcoming Wyoming trip. **Sarah O'Hare** wanted very much to visit the last shelter that "Inchworm" had stayed at before becoming lost on the AT in 2013. **Jocelyn Linnekin** joined us for the joy of being out in nature. This section of the AT is considered one of the most difficult, with elevation gains that cross over several 4,000 and 3,000 feet peaks.

After staging our cars, we hiked the 1.8 miles into the Piazza Rock Shelter. After setting up camp, we checked out the Piazza Rock, which was a huge rectangular rock, jutting out into the forest and quite impressive. We explored the rock and nearby caves. We ran into a lot of south bound thru-hikers so the camp area was full this night.

Friday was our toughest day and fortunately our coolest day as it was up and down over several mountains. First, it was up and over Saddleback at 4,120 feet. We passed some small ponds on the way, Eddy Pond and Ethel Pond which were so pretty. There were lots of moose droppings, but no moose were seen. At the top, the views were stunning. For 3 miles, the trail is above tree line and allows for panoramic views in all directions. From Saddleback, it was down and then back up again over the Horn at 4,041 feet. We were still feeling good, but I think our energy levels were beginning to drop as we approached the hike up Saddleback Junior. It was a slow slog up that mountain. It felt every bit as high as the 4000 footers even though it peaked at 3,655 feet. Mike who had driven up to join us on Friday, caught us about half-way up Saddleback Junior. Kudos to him for not only driving the 6 hours up from CT but also then hitting the trail to make up the mileage we had done on Thursday plus the 9 miles we did on Friday. We were so happy to descend into the Poplar Ridge Lean-to. We were beat and it did not take long for everyone to cook dinner and retire to our tents to rest up for the next day.

On Saturday, the trail descended very steeply down to the Orbeton Stream and then steeply back up to the Lone Mountain at around 3,250 feet. It was a warmer day, and our legs were a bit sore from the day before, so this was a good work out. It was a nice hike into the Spaulding Mountain Lean-to, giving us 8 miles for the day. Dennis took the side trail to bag Mt Abraham at 4,043 feet, adding an extra 3.4 miles to his day. It started to rain shortly before we arrived at the shelter. Again, there were many hikers out for the weekend. We set up our tents in a steady rain, trying to get things up quickly before everything was too wet. We cooked dinner between the breaks from rain and hit the beds early.

Sunday was the hottest day. There were some occasional cooling breezes, but it was pretty hot. From the Lean-to, the day started out with a very steep climb up Spaulding Mt. at 4,237 feet. The trail does not go over the summit, it intersects at 3,988 feet. Jim, Rob and Dennis hopped up the last quarter mile to grab the peak. The rest of us had a snack break and tallied on. We passed a bronze plaque that commemorates the completion of the final link of the AT in 1937. Dennis departed the group to do the side trail for Sugarloaf. The rest of us began the very harrowing descent down to the Carrabassett River. The views were stunning, but this was a rock over rock descent straight down. At one point, the girls of the group were very happy that the guys of the group waited to help us get down a particularly large boulder field where we had to hand our packs down before we could get ourselves down over the next few steps. I also want to mention that on all three days we saw so many beautiful wildflowers. There were many varieties in bloom everywhere and it colored the mountain paths. It was so nice to get down to the river. It was so hot. We stripped off our boots, relaxed and splashed in the water while we waited for Dennis. Sarah played her Indian flute. It had such a calming peaceful feel to the ending of this hard hike. Dennis rejoined us and then the 9 of us hiked the half mile on the Caribou Vallev Road back to the cars. I think one of the most memorable thoughts I will have about this hike was the team support. It was a hard hike, a hike to easily get discouraged but everyone encouraged everyone else along. The support of the 9 as a group was very heartwarming. Thank you to everyone for making this section of trail a fond memory.

North South Trail in Rhode Island July 8, 2021 by Mandy Brink

Tropical storm Elsa was on her way but not due to hit till 4 pm so we decided to get our hike in before the rain. It meant hiking with some gray clouds above, but we were happy to have a break from the sun. Holly and Andy Hood and grandson Peter, age 10, met us at the starting trailhead on Escoheaug Hill Road. Andy was carrying a full pack in preparation to return to the Long Trail in September. After staging cars, Don Hagstrom, Patty Adams and I joined them. Hearing that Peter was coming, Mandy grabbed grandson, Liam Mooney, age 8, to keep Peter company. They hit it off right from the start and we met our youth quota for the hike. We also had Arlo and Bella, our token four legged friends. This is a flat and easy trail. The rain the night before made it a bit muddy but boys and dogs love mud. It also goes along the Fall River. The boys were fun because they explored by the water and in the woods and found some amazing stuff like a totally intact dead roach of some kind, neon orange mushrooms, beaver dams, and trees that beavers had sawed down. They collected sticks and made some makeshift rafts that they sent sailing down the river. There was a lot of Mountain Laurel, already past blooming, but we made a mental note that it might be a hike worth repeating in late spring. There were several bridges built by the AMC in the 1990s and early 2000's. We ran into a few fishermen along the banks. We had a snack at the bridge which crosses the Austin Farm Road. The boys were busy exploring under the bridge, climbing here, there and everywhere. We completed the final stretch to get 5.5 miles for the day. It was such a fun hike, good company and watching the boys having such a good time in the woods was heartwarming.

Enders Island Paddle August 7, 2021 by Mandy Brink

There is nothing like kids to remind you of the magic we sometimes forget as an adult. On this particular trip, **Ben, Mike Shaw**'s 7-year-old grandson, was able to join us for his first kayaking adventure. We tethered him to Mike's kayak so he could practice paddling but was still under the safety of an adult to guide the way. In my kayak was Bella, the kayaking terrier, who was captain of the group. First, we checked out the seawall at Enders Island. It has taken quite a beating. If you have ever visited a Civil War fortress, you will see large holes in the walls where they were struck by cannonballs. That is what this wall looks like except the cannonballs are the ocean waves. It's a pretty wall but had taken a beating over the last decade.

We stopped on the island to stretch our legs and enjoy the gardens. The gardens at Enders Island are beautiful and this day was no exception. I was a little envious of the many Black Eyed Susans that were thriving there but have failed to strive in my back vard. There, Ben reminded us of the magic of hopping on big rocks and exploring puddles in the rocks. He walked Bella, played a little soccer, chatted with other visitors to the island and then informed us he was hungry. Back in the kayaks, we went for a paddle back to the Mystic YMCA and ice cream. Ben did a really good job of paddling. Close to shore, he wanted to try on his own without being tethered so we let him free and, with a little coaching, he managed to get his kayak back to shore. A stop at the Sea Swirl on our way out of Mystic was a perfect ending on a hot summer day.

Bigelow Mountain A.T. hike August 13-15, 2021 by Mandy Brink

"Mandy Brink, are you trying to kill me?" asked Jim Fritz. Jim Robertson, remembering a quote from Kevin Burke from a few years back repeats "That's it, my love affair with the AT is over." These were some of the thoughts as we dragged our weary bodies into the Safford Notch Campsite on Saturday night.

It started out well. We decided on this weekend because it looked like it had the better weather. Friday was oppressively hot and humid when we arrived at Route 27. That was okay; we only had to hike in 2 miles to Cranberry Stream campsite. The day cooled down as the stars came up and a bright crescent moon shone through the pine trees. We knew we might have some rain overnight and into the morning, but Saturday was supposed to get better and better. Lucky for us it was early to bed, early to rise and we were all packed up before the rain started.

Saturday started with a steady uphill in the light rain. I do mean steady too because we gained about 1,800 feet over the 3 miles into the Horn Pond Lean-to. There was a beautiful beaver pond on the way up and the Horn Pond was quite pretty. Of note at the Horn Pond area is the two beautiful new privies there. They were quite impressive and the nicest I've seen on the AT. We were just about to leave the Horn Pond Day shelter when the skies opened and it poured down rain. We decided to hang out under the shelter. We were joined by a day hiker from Maine who didn't quite make it and came in dripping wet. He was originally from Denver and made mention of how different the trails are in the east coast. Once the rain slowed down to a tiny drizzle, we headed up and over the South Horn at 3,805 feet. Next was West Peak at 4,145 feet. It was windy up there, almost felt hard to stand at times. There were no views at first but, as we began to head down, the clouds shifted and the beautiful views appeared. It stayed sunny from that point on and, by the time we got to Avery Peak at 4,088 feet, the views of the mountain range and Flagstaff Lake were stunning. The wind had settled so we were able to stay on Avery Peak for a bit just to enjoy. There is a stone foundation there which looks like the base of an old fire tower. Another hiker, who was a SOBO, took a group shot for us. From there it was a painful hike down into the notch, pretty much straight down over rock the whole way. It was a long 1.9 miles and we were awfully happy to find the campsite and collapse. Somewhere we found just enough energy

to put up our tents and cook dinner. We were quite happy to climb into bed.

On Sunday, it was a perfect backpacking day. The sun was shining, there was a slight breeze, and the temps were perfect, between 60 and 70 degrees. It's a pleasant walk over Little Bigelow at 3,040 feet. There were lots of rock ridge walks with beautiful views the whole way across this ridge. We ran into a trail angel who told us he had planted a cooler full of cool drinks at the Bog Bridge Road. He was originally from Kentucky, moved to Maine, fell in love with the area, and was now out helping to support and shuttle hikers. We mentioned that we had not seen a lot of thru hikers and he told us there was a bubble ahead of us and behind us. We had a snack break at the Bigelow Hollow lean-to which is by a nice stream. We sat and enjoyed the peaceful feel of the place before doing a very pleasant 1.5 miles back out to the car. We enjoyed a cool beverage, changed out of our sweaty backpacking clothes and headed for lunch at the White Wolf restaurant in Stratton. It was fun to read the log they had from thru hikers over the years. Hopefully we will fill in a few missing sections in Maine next year before we cross the Maine AT off our list.



Tom & Mark on Hawksbill Mt in Shenandoah National Park – see page 3

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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