

Long Trail NEWS



Quarterly of the Green Mountain Club

WINTER 2021



Inside a Fastest Known Time Attempt | Kara Richardson Whitely Hikes Her Own Hike | A Winter End-to-End

Long Trail

NEWS

The mission of the Green Mountain Club is to make the Vermont mountains play a larger part in the life of the people by protecting and maintaining the Long Trail System and fostering, through education, the stewardship of Vermont's hiking trails and mountains.

Quarterly of the Green Mountain Club

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FRONT COVER: First Light on Camel's Hump, New Year's Day 2021, by Dann Van Der Vliet

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Author, speaker, and body positivity advocate Kara Richardson Whitely section hiked 100 miles of the Long Trail in summer 2020. Read about her journey on page 8.

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From the President

As newly elected president, my summer section hikes have taken on new meaning as I keep a closer eye on conditions in the field and take stock of how hikers are responding to our work. This summer, I had a pleasant journey on the Long Trail from Route 140 to Route 11 and 30, passing through Little Rock Pond, the Big Branch Wilderness area, and Bromley Mountain, where I saw firsthand the new erosion-curbing measures installed by the Long Trail Patrol this summer.

To that end, the club has wrapped up one of the most ambitious – and productive — field seasons in recent history.

We look forward to another equally busy and successful field season for 2022, planning for which will get underway in earnest in January. While I remain quite optimistic about the future of the club and the Long Trail system, there are some headwinds which we will have to face going forward in the new year.

Covid continues to delay our return to in-person events and meetings. Gratefully, we are able to conduct outdoor hikes and trail work parties with some precautions in place.

Another challenge going forward will be navigating a perplexing and

difficult employment environment. Thus far, GMC has been very successful in recruiting and retaining top quality folks for our 40-strong seasonal ranks. But GMC does not exist in a vacuum, and so we anticipate increased challenges in 2022 to attract, hire, and retain new seasonal staffers.

Finally, overflowing parking lots at trailheads and ever-widening treadways tell the story of increased use on the trail. We continue to make our best efforts to match seasonal staffing and infrastructure projects to those areas which are experiencing the highest and most concentrated usage. At Stratton Pond, the most popular overnight site GMC manages, crews built a second privy, new tent platforms, and poured the foundation for a new shelter to add capacity at the site.

Lots of exciting opportunities present in 2022, including a full slate of important trail and infrastructure projects, to include a new tower at the summit of Bromley Mountain, a continuing push to improve the quality of the northern Long Trail, construction of a new GMC Headquarters office building to replace the aging and unsafe Herrick building, and exploration of overnight opportunities on the Kingdom Heritage



Howard VanBenthuyzen

Trails. Finally, GMC will, with your help, continue to embrace every opportunity to bring under protection the remaining unprotected 5 miles of the Long Trail.

Your ongoing support will allow us to undertake these critical projects and continue day-to-day operations of the club and stewardship of the mountains. Together we will have another record year of preserving, protecting and enjoying the Long Trail in 2022.

Winter is upon us, and whether you enjoy subzero summits or prefer to hibernate through the “off-season,” one thing is for sure – I will see you on the trail!

—HOWARD VANBENTHUYSEN
GMC BOARD PRESIDENT



PHOTO BY DAVID HATHAWAY

New Deck for Taft Lodge

I spent a hardworking day with the Burlington section in October rebuilding the deck at Taft Lodge on Mt. Mansfield. Six of us removed the old decking, shored up the joists underneath, and replaced the old planks. It was a valuable reminder of the integration between the volunteers and professional staff that GMC has excelled at perfecting throughout its history.



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Jack and his mom Mary

PHOTO BY BETSY DONAHUE

Local Pickup Makes Hikes More Memorable

Hi Maggie and team [at the Visitor Center], I just wanted to reach out with a huge THANK YOU for pulling this order together and setting it aside. The note and little details were so thoughtful. We had a great hike up Mozdebiwajo [Mt. Mansfield] on Wednesday - it was a pretty special way to celebrate his 10th birthday for Jack (above is a picture of him, his mom Mary, and their pup Cooper) and the weather was absolutely perfect.

—BETSY DONAHUE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our visitor center staff can pull together orders for local pick-up at our Waterbury Center Headquarters Monday through Friday. Betsy purchased a Long Trail map along with a GMC membership for aspiring hiker Jack.

To Camel's Hump Caretaker Kate Songer

Earlier this [summer] I hiked Camel's Hump with my nephews and as we were just about to leave, I benefitted from your knowledge and thoughtful approach to the mountains and the flora and to the visitors who were streaming up the path.

On the way down, we told a few folks who were climbing up to seek you out and learn about the sedges and grasses and birds catching the pollinators. I hope they did—talking with you helped me learn more about the flora up there than I have in 30 years of living in Vermont. What a gift.

—ALLISON CLEARY

Quips from Long Trail Hikers

Between hiking sections of the Long Trail this past summer and volunteering at Barnes Camp, I have spoken briefly with a number of Long Trail through hikers. These are a few of my favorite quotes I heard this season:

At Barnes Camp: "People told me hiking the Long Trail was 80% mental and 20% physical. They were right."

North of Middlebury Gap: "I hiked the Appalachian Trail seventeen years ago and I thought it was time I finished the Long Trail."

North of Jay Peak on the first day of a Southbound hike: "It's hard."

—MARY LOU RECOR

We Welcome Your Comments!
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Field Work, for the Future

Your support today will serve hikers for decades to come

While completing my third End-to-End hike of the Long Trail this summer, I was lucky enough to see much of the work performed by GMC staff and volunteers during the 2021 field season.

The work completed this year not only address current needs, such as the increased popularity of hiking, but is an investment in the future as these projects are set to have lasting benefits for decades. As I visited the recently reconstructed Emily Proctor Shelter, I thought of all the hikers that will end their day here for the next 50 years. Each of the seven new privies will be in service for more than 30 years. And some of the new trail

hardening infrastructure that I walked on, north of Route 242 on my way to Jay Peak, should last 20 years or more.

It takes careful, advanced planning for us to complete any project in the field, and we can't do it without your support. In July, we airlifted more than 18 tons of construction material into five different backcountry sites to be turned into new privies, shelters, and tent platforms at Stratton Pond, Kid Gore, Melville Nauheim, and Seth Warner sites. Currently, neat stacks of materials sit dormant in the woods, waiting for next year's professional crews and volunteers to turn them into new backcountry facilities. A new, fully accessible privy

in the backcountry typically requires a combination of professional staff and volunteers to bring the materials to the site and build the structure over the course of several planned workdays.

As we move into 2022, we will continue investing in the future of the Long Trail; we have more work on the northern Long Trail to complete, a new shelter slated for Stratton Pond, and additional privies to convert. To make this happen, we need financial support from donors like you. I hope you can help us complete this important work by making a year-end donation.

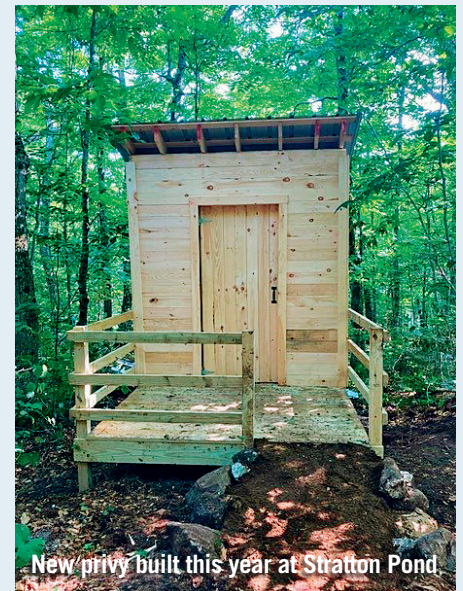
—MIKE DeBONIS

GMC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Caretakers stack and cover airlifted materials for next field season

PHOTO BY KATI CHRISTOFFEL



New privy built this year at Stratton Pond

You can make a year-end gift
using the enclosed envelope
or visiting us online at
greenmountainclub.org/donate

The Long Trail in Less Than a Week

Inside the Mindset of a Fastest Known Time Record Holder

BY MIKAELA OSLER



When I finally removed my socks at the end of the 20-hour hiking day, my feet were a waxy grey-white. My skin was grotesquely wrinkled and loose at the heels. When I ran my thumb across my sole I felt a jolting, ticklish sensation I later learned meant I had nerve damage.

I was at Rolston Rest Shelter at 12:30 am during an FKT, or Fastest Known Time, attempt on the Long Trail. I had trench foot.

It's easy to describe the proximate cause of the trench foot: it had been raining almost 24 hours. I'd been moving since 3 a.m., when I awoke from a three-hour nap, packed by headlamp, and started walking. Obsessing over miles, I hadn't allowed myself breaks to dry out.

But in the shelter, fog swirling outside, I didn't think about proximate causes. I thought of quitting, and wondered why I was hiking at night in the rain in the first place. Why was I trying to do the Long Trail in six days? What on earth had possessed me?

FKT Basics

FKTs are verified through GPS recordings and trip reports, and are published on fastestknowntime.com, which started as a humble internet forum in the early 2000s.

FKTs may be unsupported, self-supported, or supported. An unsupported athlete carries from start to finish all the food and supplies they'll need. Self-supported FKTs are similar to other thru-hikes: athletes may cache, mail or buy supplies, and may accept favors from strangers, but they don't arrange aid or hitchhike. Supported

athletes can have any help short of being carried.

These guidelines are inflexible. Last year Joe McConaughy completed the LT unsupported in under five days, breaking the record by more than 24 hours. However, in a sleep-deprived, dehydrated delirium he accepted a sip of water from another hiker. So, his effort is recorded as self-supported.

The sport has recently exploded in popularity; 2020 saw a 350 percent increase in FKT submissions over 2019. The Long Trail is no exception: at least 12 attempts were made on the LT FKT this year. Estimates of past years are in the low single digits—three, four, maybe five.

Turning the LT into a Race Track?

"Can we please stop celebrating these things?" reads a comment on the GMC Instagram post about my FKT. "It's not in the spirit of the Long Trail to turn in (sic) into a race track or an ego filled competition. It sickens and saddens me."

In other words, not everybody is happy about the growing popularity of FKTs. Usually my reaction to such criticism is righteous anger: hike your own hike, dude! But to be honest, the criticism is partly true. My ego is involved. I'd love to say I was on the trail purely for personal challenge, but at Rolston Rest, contemplating my wrecked feet, I thought a lot about how other people perceived my hike. I had wanted to quit before, but didn't have a good reason. Now, I could post the nasty photos and nobody would blame me for bailing. I could go home and rest with vanity intact.

But the next morning I awoke urgently needing the privy. I dashed from the shelter. Halfway there I realized I could walk.

Oh no, I thought. I couldn't leave the trail knowing I hadn't given it my full effort.

Something other than ego was driving me, but I'm still puzzled by what. Luckily, I know many people who've attempted Long Trail FKTs, and I asked them to help work it out. Why do we do this? Is it really just vanity?

Ben Feinson, who recently broke the men's supported record, rephrased my question: "Is it possible to connect to the rhythms of nature and the flow of the trail while simultaneously struggling physically and pushing yourself to the limit?" The answer seems to be yes. Most people recounted transcendent experiences in nature. Ben remembers sobbing as he ran across Mount Mansfield. RJ Thompson, who made unsupported attempts in 2021 and 2011, described hiking the Monroe Skyline at sunset, shadows playing tricks on his eyes. Joe McCounaghy recalled Camel's Hump at midnight in 40-mile-per-hour winds. Nika Meyers, whose unsupported record I was attempting to break, connected to the tiniest details of the trail: "I think less about huge views and vistas than tiny trickles across the trail, these micro-landscapes...I feel so small on an FKT. I'm part of this big picture and I can relate to so many things. I can see the connection between this root and this rock."

FKT attempts also offer the opportunity to connect to your body and mind. It's human nature to forget pain, and we often struggle to articulate the appeal of such physically intense experiences. An FKT requires immense focus and awareness. And sleep deprivation, hunger, and prolonged solitude can produce bizarre mental experiences. Jeremy Howard, who attempted the unsupported record this year, described an hours-long out-of-body experience: "It was the most tranquil and peaceful I've ever been in my entire life." On the last night of my FKT, Nika texted me the story of a conversation she had with a newt on her last night.

A Sacred Trail

Everyone I talked to felt a profound connection to the Long Trail. Many of us consider Vermont our home, or one of our homes. Nika worked for the GMC for years before her FKT, and recalled how her hike allowed her to connect with people and places that had been "incredibly transformative," including some who had passed away. Joe, who got married in Vermont, did his FKT shortly before moving from Boston to the West Coast. Many called the LT "perfect."

Some attempt Long Trail FKTs without setting foot on the trail in advance, and many fail. The athletes I talked to had spent countless days hiking, running, camping, and working on the LT, and saw a speed attempt as one among many equally valid ways of experiencing the trail. Ben said, "Everyone is allowed to have the experience that is meaningful to them, in life, and especially on a trail as sacred as the Long Trail."

Like my fellow speed demons, my connections to the trail go much deeper than an FKT attempt. I grew up in the shadow of Bolton Mountain; the Long Trail traverses the horizon of my childhood world. My first hikes in preschool and kindergarten were to Butler and Taylor Lodges. I chose to attempt an FKT to challenge myself, and yes, I even chose to do it partly out of vanity. But mostly I wanted to deepen the connection I already felt to the Green Mountains. I wanted to access that ineffable mental state that

comes with extreme exertion, immersed in a landscape that has always nurtured me. For me, the Long Trail could never just be a race track.

The morning before I got trench foot, I reached an outcropping at a pause in the showers, and looked across the Green Mountains. Wisps of fog rose from the valleys. The sky was a flat mass of clouds except for one perfect, tiny circle of sun. Glacier-carved ridges, lush forest, schist under my feet worn smooth by generations of hikers: the view elicited something deep within me, a profound recognition and comfort. I was home.

At Rolston Rest, sleep deprived and starving, feet a mess, I remembered that view. I thought of how much I had left to learn about my body and mind, how much the Long Trail still had to teach me. Like any other Long Trail user, I made the choice meaningful to me at the time. I kept hiking. 🐌

Mikaela finished the LT in six days, 11 hours, 33 minutes, setting a women's unsupported record. Originally from Jericho, she lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she is writing a memoir.

Only two of 12 or more FKT attempts on the Long Trail this summer succeeded (Mikaela, and Ben Feinson, who set a men's supported record). Most halted when weather, injury, or logistical factors intervened.

EDITOR'S NOTE: GMC does not track or recognize speed attempts on the Long Trail. Our mission is to protect and maintain the Long Trail, so that it may be open and accessible for everyone to enjoy as they wish.



Mikaela nurses her feet after successfully completing her FKT attempt.

PHOTO BY TROY ALLEN

The Miles



On a sullen, rainy quarantine day in April 2020, I listened in to my friend Mirna Valerio's "Fat Girl Running" webinar in my "bat cave" attic office – my hideout from my kids. I wasn't an ultramarathon runner like Mirna, but we had a lot in common as plus-size adventurers taking on trails few people expect us to. We both believe passionately in hiking our own hikes. Doing what makes us feel joy. And at our own pace.

I pulled out my well-worn copy of the *Long Trail Guide*, and began charting distances of the 272-mile path between road crossings on a Google spreadsheet. Was it desperation or distraction, I wondered, as I focused on numbers other than the nation's coronavirus death toll, then barreling toward 100,000 after just a month of the new reality. That toll is now more than seven times as high.

Each day was filled with so many numbers — 16 deaths so far in my hometown of Summit, New Jersey; 11,770 in my state. We didn't want to be the next ones. I knew I had good lungs — I had climbed 19,343-foot Kilimanjaro three times. But I was troubled by reports of Covid-19 hitting those with obesity harder; even more troubled by reports of respirators and refrigerated trucks.

I wanted to think of something else. I wanted to feel one morsel of control in a world that had been pulled out from under me. So I put a different set of numbers on a chart.

I wasn't one for spreadsheets, but since my Google calendar had been wiped clean, this exercise in planning was exhilarating. (Even more than my mid-day hill walk between Mirna's sessions.) I had planned a thru hike while my kids were at camp as the best way to tackle it. But when the pandemic started everything was uncertain.

The spreadsheet showed, line by line, that no stretch between roads was longer than 20 miles, with shelters and campsites provided. That meant I could do it bit by bit, mile by mile, trading childcare duties with my husband. I had to erase any notion about my weight, as it had surged over 300 pounds once again. It's a journey, not something that can be neatly sorted into one and done.

It was easy to understand why I had locked into thinking hiking had to be all or nothing. Over the years, I've befriended record-setting

hikers and ultramarathoners. They see the Long Trail as a race to be won, speaking in acronyms like FKT (fastest known time), and telling stories of people who have hiked through the night, spurning sleep for success.

My friend Jennifer Pharr Davis is a legendary distance hiker who completed the Long Trail in seven days in 2007. I'd be lucky to do the LT in the time it took Jennifer to do the entire 2,193-mile Appalachian Trail — 46 days, averaging 47 miles a day. But who's counting.

Record setting wasn't my reality. My training stalled as I juggled homeschooling, online grocery shopping, and closed trails. What was important was that I started.

I called Jennifer for advice. She gave me great tips: take a sleeping quilt instead of a bag, walk backwards down the trickiest slopes, and use poles. But most importantly she reminded me to avoid this mistake: "Most people focus on the miles they didn't do instead of celebrating the ones they did."

The Long Trail fully reopened on May 22, 2020. But it wasn't as simple as that. Social distancing and Covid-19 restrictions were still very much in effect. Shelters were closed. And because of a late snow season, many paths were still packed in ice.

My friend Jennifer Pharr Davis is
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Vermont rental homes were opening up in mid-June, so we planned to park ourselves in Vermont; New Jersey had one of the highest death tolls. Our family could limit exposure by adventuring outdoors, and give our kids and au pair Camille a desperately needed change of scenery when I was on trail.

I would start from Massachusetts and aim for a nice, round 100 miles in 30 days, rather than the daunting length of the state. My friend Allie, already in Vermont, volunteered to come along. The constant tension of fight or flight and the exhaustion I'd developed during the pandemic had already pushed me to my limit, so spending a month going up and down mountains seemed like a breeze.

This wasn't such a crazy idea after all.

The hike started like many others: in fits. Allie and I hiked during the week while my husband worked. I returned home many evenings

that Matter

BY KARA RICHARDSON WHITELY

and weekends to spend time with my family and relieve Camille of child care. We did some overnights and many day hikes, sometimes adding a mile or two of side trails to get back to the main drag each day.

Sometimes Allie and I talked. Other times we would go quiet, zoning in on each step and calming the voices in our minds. I felt only the sweat on my brow, as if trapped in a terrarium: early June was unseasonably hot. In my discomfort, zoning in was soothing. It kept me going.

A few days in we met Double D. He was 260 miles in, a day from finishing. He still had a spring in his step and a smile on his face as he described the rocks and ledges in the north as “slippery but fun.”

As he headed south I shouted, “Hey, congrats in advance for finishing.”

Before he trotted on, he looked back at us with a welcoming smile, “Congratulations to you too. For being here.”

Occasionally I yearned for a glorious view, some payoff for the many, many steps through the forested canopy.

So I was eager to reach Baker Peak, which my Guthook app said was “a rocky outcrop with a good view.” I was unexpectedly challenged by the rock scramble to the top. Steep dropoffs waited on either side should I lose my footing. It was terrifying and difficult, but on that incline there was no way I was turning around and going back down. So often in such moments of struggle my mind fills with contradictory conversations. *I can't do this. Yes, I can.* This mental and emotional vacillation clouds any accomplishment or goal in the midst of it. It wasn't fun, but I faced the uncertainty and made it through.

After making it down Baker, we set up our tents near Big Branch Shelter and soaked our feet in the stream. The sound of rushing water lulled us to sleep.

The following day was a gorgeous hike along the stream and through quiet and magical pine forests. It wasn't until then that I could see how far I had come. In the stillness I saw what an astounding feat I had done overcoming my mind and the mountains.

Jennifer's voice rang in my mind: celebrate the miles you did do, don't dwell on the ones you didn't.

I left the Long Trail with no certificate of completion, but having taken myself farther than I had believed I could go. GMC has preserved this journey for more than 100 years, so I know it will be there for me when I decide to take more footsteps. While the average time for a thru-hike is 23 days, we all have a lifetime to do it.

Driving down Route 7 with my family and a strawberry ice cream after summiting Killington, sunset in the background, I pointed out the ridgeline to my kids. “That's where I left off my hike,” I said.

“You've hiked all of that?” seven-year-old Emily said with disbelief.

“Yes, I did. All the way from Massachusetts,” I said in my own disbelief.

“That's a lot,” she said.

“Yes. Yes, it is,” I said. 🐾



Kara “Mama Kubwa” Richardson Whitely is the author of *Gorge: My Journey Up Kilimanjaro at 300 Pounds*; a motivational speaker; an influencer; and an advisor helping brands connect with the 67 percent of women size 12 and above. Follow her adventures on Instagram @kararichardsonwhitely or on LinkedIn, and tune in for her Taylor Series talk with GMC on January 27.

Hiking End-to-End in Winter

25 Days Over Three Winters

BY ANGIE HILSMAN

Sue Johnston and her husband, Chris Scott, park at the Route 9 trailhead near Bennington. No hikers greet them, nor do they expect any at 3:00 a.m. on a March morning. Chris says goodbye as Sue slips into socks, boots, and Microspikes. She heads northbound with gear for an emergency overnight, two liters of water, snacks, a GPS tracker on her phone, a charger, a map and compass, and snowshoes. After all, a 22.6-mile hike awaits her in the last section of her winter end-to-end hike of the Long Trail. Chris will meet her at the finish line.

That day—March 8, 2021—marks Sue's 25th nonconsecutive day, working toward the goal of completing all 272 miles in winter. It's also her fourth attempt. In December 2013, she set off from Journey's End Road, but retreated because of deep snow and an indiscernible trail. In 2014 she tried twice more with the same results.

"I wasn't accustomed to 'failing' that much," says Sue, already an accomplished hiker and mountaineer with nearly 30 years of winter hiking experience. "I could've bushwhacked, but I wanted to be on the LT proper as much as possible. It was a wake-up call to get my act together and get a GPS tracker."

So in the summer of 2017 Sue tracked the Long Trail herself during her fifth thru-hike. And on her 53rd birthday – December 23, 2018—she again started southbound from Journey's End. "I finally made it from North Jay Pass to Jay Pass, convinced that maybe, just maybe, this was doable after all," she wrote on her blog, *RunSueRun*.

Now 55 and sensing the finish line, Sue climbs the dark, steep 1.6 miles to Melville Nauheim Shelter before donning snowshoes.

She has 21 more miles to go before reaching Kelley Stand Road in Stratton.

"It was the most intimidating day for sure because of the mileage, and it's not very well traveled in winter," recalls Sue.

Sue first considered a winter Long Trail hike after reading about it in *Forest and Crag: A History of Hiking, Trail Blazing, and Adventure in the Northeast Mountains*, by Guy and Laura Waterman. The book includes a profile of Tom and Diane Sawyer,



a couple who completed a winter section hike in the 1980s. Sue was impressed that the Sawyers succeeded with '80s-era gear, and she decided to take up the challenge with more modern technology.

The biggest challenge in winter hiking is finding the trail. With more than a foot of snow, there's no discernible indentation marking the trail, explains Sue. Snow camouflages white blazes, and cold and darkness are real dangers.

"Your margin of error is so thin," says Sue.

"It's really hard to follow the trail in a normal snow year. In a lighter snow year, it would be easier. The snow adds this huge extra challenge." Tracking the footpath boosted Sue's confidence, although she's also handy with a map and compass.

"I don't know how some people before me did it without GPS," she wonders aloud. "I never 100-percent relied on my phone, but thankfully, it never let me down, so I never had to use my compass." A GPS tracker works without cell service, which is unreliable on the LT. But the cold weather drains batteries quickly, which is why Sue was prepared with a backup plan.

The snow presented some enjoyable surprises too, Sue admits. To prepare for steep, scrambly sections and ladders, Sue packed crampons, a rope, and an ice ax. "I was really nervous about the section going south off Mansfield," she says. But upon arriving she found many ladders completely buried.

"It made it much easier, because I could just slide down. It wasn't hard or scary at all. Going up [Mansfield's] Chin is scarier than going down all those ladders," she laughs.

Sue skis and is an avid summer hiker, and winter hiking was a natural extension of those activities. She began winter hiking as a young adult in the early '90s, so she had plenty of experience before her winter Long Trail expedition.

"Back then, it was harder to find people who winter hike, but I got snowshoes and fell in with a group of people who did it," she recalls. Breaking trail in deep snow is difficult, which is why most of the LT – apart from icons like Mt. Abe, Mansfield, and Camel's Hump – remains relatively untouched through winter, even today. "It's

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUE JOHNSTON

Sue Johnston



White blazes are tough to find on snow-covered trees.

difficult to do it solo.”

Her attitude toward planning her trek was relatively nonchalant, apart from the significant project of a summer thru hike to obtain her GPS track. “I already had everything. This was just day hiking,” she says. Winter-specific preparations are “second nature to me.”

Sue dislikes winter camping, thanks to an expedition up Denali, but she still prepared for emergency overnights. She carried a bivy and a foam pad, along with her usual gear: a down jacket designed for mountaineering, insulated pants, a small stove and pot, “monster Black Diamond mittens,” and a thermos of Campbell’s tomato soup. She estimates her daypack weighed 20 to 25 pounds.

She maintained her energy with “whatever looked good that day,” with little care for calories. “In the winter, you have to worry about things freezing. You don’t bring a banana because it will turn black, and you don’t bring something that’ll break your teeth when you bite into it,” she says. She consumed CLIF bars, Snickers, Cabot cheese, bagels, and occasionally salami.

In total Sue hiked about 304 miles, including approach trails and unplowed roads. She was alone for 247 miles of the LT (more than 90 percent). Completion took 25 day hikes during three winters. Now she has many more adventures planned. “I’m a peak bagger, so I’m always working on these obscure lists,” she says.

Last summer she finished Vermont’s 110 three-thousand-footers. She and Chris are working on the Northeast Kingdom’s 100 highest peaks, which require a lot of bushwhacking. But she knows she can do it.

“When I first started hiking, if I lost the trail, I immediately freaked out,” she says, reflecting on her growth. “I’m not like that anymore.”

North of Maple Hill Sue struggles to stay on the trail in open hardwoods, especially around Little Pond Mountain, Glastenbury Mountain, and Kid Gore Shelter. Spruce trees grow densely, so the trail gap is more discernible in a spruce stand. “But oh, what beautiful hardwoods,” she wrote in her blog.

Sue checks her GPS often, and sticks to the trail as closely as she can. At Glastenbury Mountain she unfastens her snowshoes to climb the fire tower and take in the view. She spots snowmobile trails, which she’ll cross as she continues north.

She had followed the trail southbound for most of her hike, but for logistical reasons, she switched the direction of the last few hikes. From Glastenbury’s summit she has 12.2 miles to go. That’s nothing compared to the 150 miles she faced at the start of the season. Between 2018 and 2020 Sue hiked 120 miles of the LT.

“The first winter, I was dabbling, and wasn’t fully sure I could do it,” she says, adding that her mom was also battling Stage 4 cancer and passed away. “The second winter, I got to Lincoln Gap and thought, ‘I can do this. I got the hardest part done.’” By the third season, Sue was eager to finish.

“I don’t mind being alone. I get completely lost in my thoughts, and I’m so interested in my surroundings,” she says. “I wasn’t going to let the lack of a partner keep me from doing this. In the end, it was very satisfying to do it alone.”

When Sue reaches Kelley Stand Road around 4:20 p.m., she becomes the 11th known winter end-to-ender. Chris waits for her at the trailhead, and the two scramble into the car and head back to their Lyndon home. “Whenever I finish something like this, it’s bittersweet,” she says. “I’m happy I did it, but sad it’s over.”



Finish on Kelley Stand Road

Floating on Powder in the Northeast Kingdom

John Predom Delights with Geometric Snowshoe Art

Subzero temperatures last March didn't stop John Predom from carrying an iron rod and a spool of rope out onto his Island Pond field, a 15-acre canvas for his snowshoe art. In the next four hours he created a 100-foot diameter geometric pattern...entirely of snowshoe tracks.

His creations are best viewed from above, so he captured his fifth product of the 2021 season with a DJI Phantom 4 Pro drone. "This is the only one this year I did not preplan," John wrote on his Facebook page, @SnowdogSnowshoeArt. "I relied on step count to get the correct placement, and everything went smoothly."

John had improvised other designs in earlier years, and they've evolved dramatically since he started in 2019. Inspired by Simon Beck, a British snowshoe artist, John's original designs included a freeform flower and two interlocked circles. His art now incorporates intricate patterns of straight lines and circles planned on paper with a protractor and compass. Even the metal rod is an upgrade. He initially used a hiking pole and string but found the combo too flimsy.

His largest project required six hours and 21,200 steps, or 10.1 miles, according to his Fitbit. John anchors the metal rod and

attached rope to make arcs; he walks with the unraveling spool taut and at chest height until the radius of the arc is right. The projects require uninterrupted focus: he counts steps to create symmetrical patterns and counts again as he backtracks along each line.

John was already an avid winter hiker, as his trail name "Snowdog" suggests. Snowshoe art provided a good reason to strap on his wooden teardrop snowshoes – 12 inches wide and 46 inches long—and float atop deep powder each winter.

"I like being outdoors in the wintertime, and the snowshoe art is a great way to get exercise without climbing a mountain," he says. "People have enjoyed it so much, it makes me want to go out there and do it again. It's fun to inspire others to get outside and try it too."

Last year John led a workshop at which GMC members replicated the club's logo. Other groups have asked him to lead such workshops since then.

He'll start his designs again in January, when there's at least a foot of snow. He plans to improve upon previous designs and keep his imagination flowing.

— ANGIE HILSMAN



1



2

- 1 This seven-circle design was John's most enjoyable in production, because friends helped create it. It took four hours, with two hours of help from Susan Winsor and Julie Barr.
- 2 This action shot is a close-up view of the team making the seven-circle design last February.
- 3 In March, 2020, John led Green Mountain Club visitors in creating the club's logo in snowshoe tracks!
- 4 John prefers to etch his designs with wooden teardrop snowshoes, which are 12 inches wide and 46 inches long.
- 5 This freestyle design was more about play and less about geometry. It was John's second effort at snowshoe art, in March 2019.
- 6 This combination of compass points and eighth-circles was the most complex project to date, says John. It required six hours and 21,200 steps!



Follow John's upcoming creations on Facebook
@SnowdogSnowshoeArt



Search Rescue REPORT

There can be no denying that 2021 has been an active year for search and rescue in Vermont. While no database provides exact numbers, there have been an estimated 25 percent more incidents than usual. Let's look at a sample of events from this fall — and see what we can learn for safety on the trail.

Search and Rescue (SAR), a responsibility of the Vermont Department of Public Safety, is a valuable resource when things go wrong in the backcountry, and we are committed to responding to as many incidents as we can. But backcountry search and rescue can be time-consuming, and often imposes risk on rescuers.

Many backcountry emergencies can be avoided or mitigated by careful planning and attention to safety. Consider the tips gleaned from the following situations, and remember these TOP THREE SAFETY TIPS no matter the season or circumstances:

TIP 1 Carry enough equipment, food and water to be self-sufficient for 12 to 24 hours. This includes extra layers of clothes, extra food and water, a headlamp, extra batteries (or an extra headlamp), and a map and the skill to use it. Make sure your phone is fully charged, and keep it on airplane mode to conserve its battery life unless you absolutely need to use it.

TIP 2 Tell somebody where you are going and when you expect to be back. Keep your contact updated if your plans change, and let them know when your hike is complete.

TIP 3 Research your trip and make sure it is within your ability, and allow plenty of time to finish it before it gets dark. Don't be afraid to turn back early if conditions are not what you expect.

10/17—Sunset Ridge Trail, Mount Mansfield

At about 4:00 p.m. a 911 call was received from a woman who had fallen while descending the Sunset Ridge Trail on Mount Mansfield. After trying to continue down with help from her companion and nearby hikers she fell a second time and could not go on.

Rescuers started arriving about an hour after her call, but given how high on the trail she was it took time for resources to gather with equipment for evacuation back to Underhill State Park. Rescue took about six hours, and heavy rain moved in shortly afterward.

Neil Says: The most common incidents requiring rescue of hikers are lower leg injuries. They are typically not serious in terms of long-term recovery, but a hiker who can't move requires a full rescue effort. In this case nearly 20 people worked for six hours.

TIP

Plan your hikes to finish well before dark. The sun sets early in winter, so a headlamp and extra clothes are a must on any hike. If you need a rescue, or even if your descent just takes longer than planned, you do not want to be stuck without light or warmth.



Stowe Mountain Rescue members package the patient on Sunset Ridge in preparation for evacuation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNDERHILL JERICHO FIRE DEPARTMENT

10/2—Long Trail, Johnson

A 911 call came from a woman who had dropped her husband off at the Long Trail in Johnson the day before, planning to hike to Journey's End in four days. He intended to call each day to report, but his wife had heard nothing, and her calls to him had gone to voicemail.

Search and rescue personnel declined to send searchers, because there was no indication this was anything more than missed phone connections in an area known for poor cell coverage. The caller was advised to call back if she received information indicating an emergency, or if her husband did not show up at his scheduled pick up point at Journey's End. She did not call again.

Neil Says: It is very common for Search and Rescue to receive calls from loved ones who have not heard from a hiker who promised to call and check in. While we understand that this can be worrisome, a missed phone call alone is usually not enough to elicit an emergency response unless there are other risk factors. Remember that cell service is often poor in the backcountry.

+ TIP

If checking in is truly important, hikers should consider buying a satellite communication device, which are generally more reliable (though not completely foolproof, as indicated by the next incident).

10/5—Long Trail, Madonna Mountain

At about 7:00 p.m. an "SOS" call from a SPOT device arrived. These emergency beacons provide a location, but no other information. Responders from the Cambridge Fire Department and Stowe Mountain Rescue started toward the activation spot on the Long Trail near Madonna Mountain. Periodic automatic updates from the SPOT device showed that the subject was still moving north on the trail. These devices are registered to owners, and this one belonged to an LT thru-hiker. Eventually rescuers reached him on his cell phone on his arrival at Whiteface Shelter. All was well – he didn't know how or why the device had activated, but it had not been intentional.

+ TIP

Users of satellite communication devices should be very familiar with their function to avoid inadvertent activation. Some models allow messages about the nature of an emergency. That can be very useful when used properly, and also can provide peace of mind for users and their loved ones.

10/22—Waterbury Trail, Hunger Mountain

Waterbury Backcountry Rescue received a call to respond to Camel's Hump to help a hiker with two dogs that had been quilled by a porcupine. The caller said she couldn't get them to go back to her car. After questioning, the team determined the caller was actually on Hunger Mountain, not Camel's Hump. A vet tech on the rescue team determined the best way to carry the dogs out, and both made a full recovery.

Neil Says: Hiking with dogs is enjoyable, but they are not immune to risk or injury. Not all search and rescue teams have the resources or knowledge for animal rescues, so the subject was very lucky.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WATERBURY BACKCOUNTRY RESCUE TEAM

Waterbury Backcountry Rescue Team members carrying pups Lily and Luna down from Hunger Mountain.

+ TIPS

- Keep your dogs close and under voice command if very well-trained, or leashed if not.
- This incident occurred after dark, when porcupines are more active. Use extra caution after sunset.
- If your pets do have a run-in with a porcupine, seek veterinary care as soon as possible. Trying to remove quills yourself can cause further injury.
- If you have to call for help, listen carefully to questions and provide as much information as you can. Be aware of your surroundings so SAR will know where to find you.

10/9—Skyline Trail, Hunger Mountain

A couple in their late seventies called just after dark to say they had gotten lost descending Hunger Mountain. It was determined they had missed a turn, and were heading north on the Skyline Trail instead of back to their car in Waterbury. Local rescuers attempted to help them out with telephoned instruction, but they continued the wrong way on the Skyline Trail, so a crew responded and helped them back to the trailhead.

Neil Says: Sometimes telephone coaching is enough to get hikers out of a tricky situation. This saves valuable time and resources.

+ TIP

If you get lost, stay calm and stay put. Take a break, consider your options, and make a plan, including calling Search and Rescue if service allows. You may be able to self-extricate by following their directions. Be prepared with emergency supplies like a headlamp and extra food, water and clothing.

Neil Van Dyke is the Search and Rescue Coordinator for the Vermont Department of Public Safety, and he has participated in and coordinated countless backcountry searches and hiker rescues. An avid hiker and longtime GMC member, he provides search and rescue training each spring to the club's field staff.





THE 2021 FIELD SEASON was both the most successful and the most challenging of my time at the Green Mountain Club. We faced a huge slate of projects, due in part to the backlog from the COVID-forced pause in 2020.

We also received an influx of “response funding” due to the huge increase in outdoor recreation stimulated by the pandemic. Response funding often comes with tight timelines, so many projects required extremely quick turnaround.

Every year field staff and volunteers face the typical challenges of trail work: black flies, mosquitos, rain, mud, strenuous physical effort and life in remote backcountry. This year they faced additional challenges: rigid schedules,

and the impacts of Covid isolation made living in the backcountry more challenging for our field staff than past years. Incidents of discrimination and injustice continued, and as usual the field staff was on the front line witnessing and experiencing them, and working through the GMC response.

I thank you for making our work possible. Your support through memberships and donations enabled us to complete one of the busiest field seasons ever. My thanks, and my heartfelt respect, also go to the staff members and volunteers who stepped up to help us meet this year’s challenge, far too numerous to name. Now, on to some of the work these incredible teams accomplished.

Trail Crews

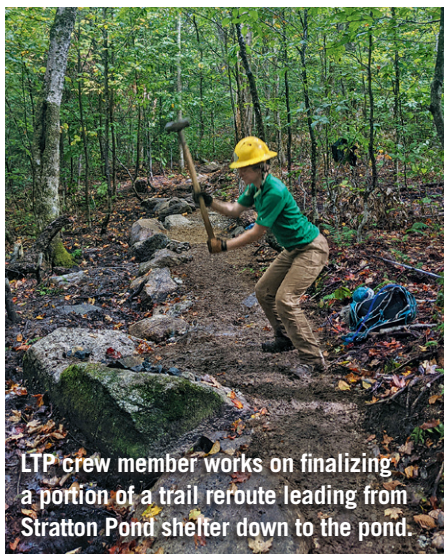
We fielded three trail crews, one generally working in the north, one in southern Vermont, and a roving construction crew.

Field Supervisor Rosalie Sharp spent an epic summer coordinating the crews and managing the back office logistics of getting all the work in place with exceptional skill.

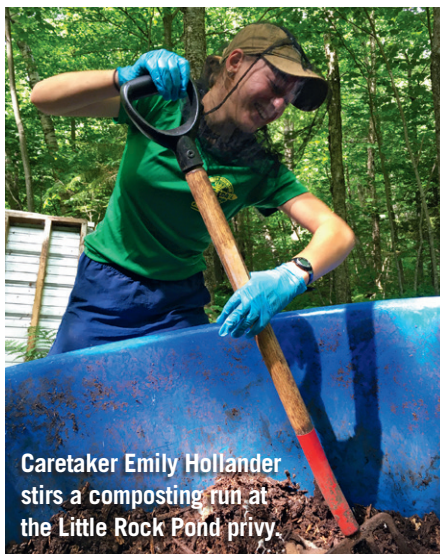
The **Southern Long Trail Patrol**, led by **Myles Lehman** (summer) and **Emma Korowotny** (fall), worked on tread hardening at Bromley Mountain before a whopping 16 weeks on a variety of projects at Stratton Pond: multiple trail relocations, part of our management plan to protect the pond from sediment due to erosion and high use; and two moldering privies — one to add capacity at Stratton Pond Shelter, the busiest overnight site on the LT, and one at Stratton View Tent Site, where a shelter named in memory of the late Dave Hardy, GMC’s long time



Tent platforms were built to increase overnight capacity at GMC’s busiest overnight site, Stratton Pond.



LTP crew member works on finalizing a portion of a trail reroute leading from Stratton Pond shelter down to the pond.



Caretaker Emily Hollander stirs a composting run at the Little Rock Pond privy.



BEFORE: Construction crews stripped the leaky roof at Cooley Glen.



AFTER: Cooley Glen was plumbed and leveled, re-roofed, and the foundation was reset.

director of trail programs, will be built next season.

The **Northern Long Trail Patrol**, led by **Clara Kuhn**, completed six weeks of rockwork on the trail north of Jay Peak, including a 20-step stone staircase to reduce erosion on one of the steepest gullies on the trail. This was the first season of a multi-year plan, funded by the Long Trail Legacy Campaign, to raise the quality of the northern Long Trail to parity with the historically better-funded southern trail. The crew also finished four weeks of trail work at Bolton early in the season, and spent several weeks combined with the southern LTP as a supercrew working on several projects near Stratton Pond, including relocating a spur trail from Stratton Pond Shelter to the pond and more work on the Lye Brook Trail reroute.

The small-yet-mighty **Construction Crew**, led by **Scout Phillips**, helped us through a record number of construction projects. They refurbished and renovated Emily Proctor, Cooley Glen, and Melville Nauheim Shelters. The first two were rebuilt with hand tools only, in compliance with federal wilderness area regulations. They built new ADA-accessible moldering privies at Emily Proctor, Boyce, Kid Gore, Melville Nauheim, and Seth Warner Shelters. With seven new moldering privies built by various crews this year, only five pit privies remain on our trails, and four of those are fully funded for replacement by moldering privies in 2022.

Caretakers

Caretakers were supported by **Field Supervisors Kati Christoffel** in the south and **Nigel Bates** in the north. Caretakers are the front line and public face of the Green Mountain Club around the clock during the hiking season, and they provide our best knowledge of trends on the trail system. They count hikers, gauge human impacts on the environment, and witness the hiking experience firsthand. This year produced significant insights.

The Covid surge in outdoor recreation seems to have subsided. Preliminary hiker counts on popular summits and

backcountry ponds have returned to normal levels. Impacts from the 2020 Covid bump linger, but will be more manageable with use declining.

In addition to encounters with hikers, each caretaker conducted routine maintenance and sewage processing at one or more composting privies; shelter management and inspections; clearance of drains and downed trees on trails; and other regular trail maintenance. A group of Camel's Hump caretakers also moved the Birch Glen moldering privy to a new bin so the slow-composting process could continue.



PHOTO BY SHERI LARSEN

Land Stewardship

GMC's **65 corridor monitor volunteers and GMC staff monitored and maintained more than 100 miles of remote and rugged boundaries** of protected trail lands. That's one-third of the 306 miles of boundary lines GMC is responsible for! In addition, the program monitored the condition of every conserved property, a key aspect of annual stewardship work for all land trust organizations.

GMC stewardship staff controlled invasive species on 8.6 acres of five Appalachian Trail open areas in the Upper Connecticut River Valley, in collaboration with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service. This work provides hikers with vistas, improves wildlife habitat, and suppresses invasive species.

The land conservation program **continues to work with partners to pursue full, legal protection of the Long Trail**, and is beginning a **strategic conservation planning process** to chart the next phase of the GMC Land Protection Campaign.

—MOLLIE KLEPACK FLANIGAN
GMC CONSERVATION MANAGER

Conclusion

As we anticipate 2022, we are preparing for new challenges in the labor market. Retention is always a problem in seasonal jobs, and the cost of living has long been out of balance with our seasonal employment wages. In order to complete our daunting slates of work for 2022 and 2023, we must attract and keep dedicated and qualified staff. This means increasing the field season budget to compete in the current job market, and investing in a sustainable professional field program.

—KEEGAN TIERNEY
DIRECTOR OF FIELD PROGRAMS



Meet the Presidents of GMC's Regional Membership Sections

This year we have profiled the 14 presidents of the Green Mountain Club's sections. These volunteer leaders represent the club in many ways: leading outings and workdays; enjoying a wide range of hiking and other outdoor activities; serving on committees; adopting trails and shelters; and much more.

Below, meet the final three presidents, representing the often rugged and remote northernmost sections. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they all enjoy winter hiking.



BRUCE BUSHEY Laraway Section

Bruce Bushey started hiking as a way to get the best brook trout. As a youth, he and his brother Dan hiked to remote ponds that had minimal fishing pressure.

"I got my appreciation for hiking doing that," says Bruce. Since then his favorite ponds are no longer secret. Bruce's hikes have changed, too.

Now 66, Bruce enjoys the woods best in winter. "March is the best for hiking because a lot of the snow is packed down and it's a lot sunnier," he says, although the weather doesn't usually slow him down. "I do like to be out in a snowstorm every now and then. That's fun."

Increasing traffic on trails inspired Bruce's interest in backpacking. "I wanted to go beyond those peak-bagging areas that day hikers visit. You get a much better appreciation for the Long Trail when you're backpacking," he says. He section hiked the LT between 1996 and 2000.

"I would go out for three or four nights and then return home, which is kind of silly because after three or four nights, you get your trail legs," he laughs. Bruce has lived in his Milton home for 43 years—all of his married life, he notes; he grew up in Essex.

Bruce's backpacking expeditions spurred his involvement with GMC. "Walking through the northern section



of the Long Trail, it was clear it needed more help and more people," he recalls. He became a member in 2000. He volunteered to work on the Laraway Section newsletter, and led the section's Trails and Shelter Committee. He became section president in 2005.

The 60-member Laraway Section is one of the club's smallest, but with Bruce rallying its members, it is a force to be reckoned with. Its dedicated volunteers maintain 21.3 miles of the Long Trail between Lamoille River and Route 118, plus 3.9 miles of side trails and three overnight shelters.

Bruce doesn't build trails with skills he built during his 23 years as an electric supervisor, nor from his 16-years at a computer manufacturer. Rather, his commitment to the backcountry energizes his volunteering. He recalls rebuilding the Laura Woodward Shelter with about a dozen volunteers. "That was memorable: a helicopter flew in all the materials, and we put it together in one day."

When Bruce isn't volunteering with a crew, he seeks solitude in the woods. He has adopted maintenance of the Laraway Mountain section of trail. "To get to the summit, you go through a spruce swamp, which is cool, especially in the winter when there's lots of snow."

And when he needs more of a challenge, you can find Bruce following Sunset Ridge up Mount Mansfield in winter. "Generally, when the snow is coming down very heavy, it's nice," he says.

JOHN PREDOM Northeast Kingdom Section

"All we had for raincoats were Glad bags, so we wore Glad bags," says John Predom, recalling his first big backpacking trip.

It was 1973, and John was 15. He and two friends planned to hike the Long Trail from Route 140, near Wallingford, to the base of Bromley Mountain. His parents were to pick the boys up in five days. They finished a day early, and called on a pay phone for a ride home.

The trip inspired John to hike the whole trail. That took 40 years, in which he faced snakes, storms, nettles, and one bear. He also started a family, introduced his daughter to hiking, and acquired the trail name Snowdog before finishing in 2013.

Now 63, John's president of GMC's Northeast Kingdom Section and still an avid hiker. The 260 section members support and maintain 63 miles of trails in the backcountry around Bald, Haystack, and Wheeler Mountains, Lake Willoughby, and the Kingdom Heritage Lands.

John partially credits his love for the outdoors to his upbringing and adventuring with friends on Ludlow's Predom Hill, where generations of Predoms foraged and played in the woods.

"One of my best friends, Steven Scales, introduced me to winter camping in our teens. We set up a tent in the woods behind his house. Our Long Trail adventure was his idea," says John.

In his adult life John continued exploring trails in Vermont and in Virginia, where he worked briefly. In his thirties he started to pay it forward by packing bark mulch to privies on Mount Abraham and Glen Ellen Lodge. He also led hikes for the Bread Loaf Section and donated nature photography to the club. "I became more involved after that," he says.

He adopted the Unknown Pond and Middle Mountain Trail, part of the



GMC-managed Kingdom Heritage Trails. In 2015, John became a life member of the club and moved to the Northeast Kingdom. In April, 2020, he was elected the NEK Section's president – a special challenge, since COVID stay-at-home orders were already in place.

"I had some anxiety, because I didn't want people to lose interest in the club," he recalls. But he found it surprisingly easy to maintain connections he had established on hikes. Volunteers collaborated with the club to establish outing guidelines and organize small outings.

As president, John relies on other members to help fill the section's outing schedule, but leading trips is still a highlight for him: "You find a lot of people wouldn't go into the woods by themselves. It's a good feeling to get others into the woods."

When not leading groups, John seeks the forest solo. "It's my place to center myself. I do that often," he says. He resorted to Mount Abraham after 9/11. Early in the pandemic, when stay-at-home orders confined Vermonters within a 10-mile radius of home, John spent more time around Brighton State Park. "I wasn't climbing mountains, but I was still in a peaceful place," he says.

KEN WHITEHEAD Northern Frontier Section

Year after year Ken Whitehead and Walter Pomroy have left Jay Pass, heading south on the Long Trail seven miles to Hazen's Notch, hauling a chainsaw and fuel to clear blowdowns as they go.

"I've been doing that with Walter since 2010. It's a lot of work," says Ken, president of the Northern Frontier Section. "This year, it was a lot of messy blowdowns."

But the Enosburg resident is accustomed to the outsized challenges of the Long Trail's most remote section. "The trail is a venue for people to get outdoors and experience living outdoors,"



he says. That can't happen without demanding projects and camaraderie among the section's 63 volunteers, who maintain 18.7 miles of trail and six shelters between Hazen's Notch and Canada.

"My favorite part of volunteering is getting together with people who love the outdoors and have a common interest," he says.

He's in the right place for that. As a preteen in southern Indiana, Ken knew he wanted to live in the mountains. In 1975, just after his 20th birthday, Ken helped friends build a house in the Cold Hollow Mountains in Enosburg, and never looked back. He immediately began exploring the mountainous state, met his wife Sharon the following year, and started a family.

As his kids aged, Ken pursued his interest in environmental protection through a degree in environmental science from Johnson State College. And while this interest didn't enhance his 41-year career as an electrician, it did connect him to the Green Mountain Club in 2000.

Since joining the newly established Northern Frontier Section in 2000, Ken has served two terms as president, first from 2008 to 2009, and again in 2018.

Ken cares for Jay Camp and the Jay Loop Trail, a volunteer responsibility he inherited from Don Hill and shares with co-adopter Jane Williams. "Don had done it for years and years, and was passing it off," he says. "One generation passes those responsibilities to the next. That's what must go on for the whole trail system." As Ken anticipates the section's future, he knows it will be challenging to establish the next group of volunteers. "Young people are really busy. It's a really important thing when they can get involved."

In the meantime, he'll keep building camaraderie to rally volunteers. He recalls repairing Jay Camp's stone foundation around 2007, nearly 50 years after it was built. "Between all of us, we got that done, but it was a lot of work and an effort by quite a lot of people."

Rapid Fire Questions

Go-to trail snack?

"Lately it's been a fluffernutter sandwich, but for a snack, I like these Pro Bars."

—Bruce

"I like to take my stove with me. I have these packet gourmet foods that I like doing in the wintertime."

—John

"Clif bars, trail mix, and granola bars."

—Ken

Favoriet outdoor activity?

"Hiking of course. We're also getting into biking on the rail trails, but winter hiking is a favorite."

—Bruce

"I am a winter person, and I love to snowshoe."

—John

"I like hiking up mountains. That's really one of my favorites."

—Ken

Gear you can't live without?

"Nalgene bottle. You have to have water."

—Bruce

"I have to have a good pair of hiking boots. I've been wearing Keen."

—John

"It'd have to be a first aid kit. I have a daypack that I keep packed with essentials—first aid kit, matches, toilet paper, compass, and a sheath knife."

—Ken

Favorite local hike?

"Laraway Mountain. It's fairly strenuous hiking up, but it's nice scenery at the lookout."

—Bruce

"I like the Cow Mountain Trail. There's small views, two ponds. I've done it twice already."

—John

"Belvidere Mountain, on the Long Trail from Route 118. I like the view, especially from the fire tower."

—Ken

For the full section directory and to learn more about joining a section, visit: www.greenmountainclub.org/members/our-sections/ or contact Rick Dugan, Membership Coordinator at rdugan@greenmountainclub.org or (802) 241-8325.

A Half Century of Volunteerism:

ANDREW NUQUIST

If you ask Andrew Nuquist what keeps him volunteering for the Green Mountain Club 50 years after discovering the club in 1970, he says it's a bit of an addiction, of sorts. But more seriously, his answer is simple: "I care about Vermont, and I care about nature. Vermont is my home, and I can't remember a time when I didn't enjoy being out in the woods. I care about making sure we preserve this experience. So, the Green Mountain Club is one of many organizations that do this, but for me it's the most fun."

Andrew and his wife Reidun moved to Montpelier in 1970. Andrew had grown up here and spent 15 years away in Missouri, Ohio and Boston before the return. "Certainly by 1971, we were involved with GMC, we were going on trips and leading trips." In the half century that followed, Andrew and Reidun threw themselves into volunteer leadership. They led volunteer trail work parties and recreational events (more than 400 of them); served on club committees including trail management; and, as Andrew recalls, "I've been elected to quite a few offices" — president of the Montpelier Section, and secretary, vice-president and president of the GMC Board of Directors. "You can be as involved as you want to be — there's something for everyone."

Volunteers at GMC are held to high standards. Andrew recalls cutting some new trail on Camel's Hump under the supervision of the late Dave Hardy, then the club's director of trail programs. Andrew spent hours chopping away at the earth with a hazel hoe to level the trail bed. Upon inspection, Dave thanked Andrew, then demonstrated how the angle needed to be adjusted for better drainage and erosion control. Andrew made the adjustments, which Dave approved. Then Dave identified the next portion to be cut. "I quit!" Andrew said.

"And that's the thing about volunteers — they're allowed to quit. That understanding and balance between the professional trail

crews and volunteers is extremely valuable and important," Andrew observes. He leans on his experience of learning from a professional trail builder when training other volunteers.

Volunteerism ran deep through every phase and element of the club long before Andrew got involved. For many years the

LCC to establish a long-distance paddling route with overnight sites, and to publish an accompanying guidebook.


Andrew and his beloved late wife Reidun, herself a loyalist in the GMC known for her artfully written histories of the club and the mountains, chaired and planned the club's 75th anniversary celebration and annual meeting at Bolton Valley Lodge in 1985.

Andrew is justifiably proud of his role as co-chair of the *Second Century Campaign* with Joe Frank, which raised \$5.25 million dollars between 2005 and 2007 for the club and its projects.

"When I joined in 1970 and looked back at the last 60 years, the Green Mountain Club seemed so well established. But by the time we celebrated the 100th anniversary in 2010, it was surprising to realize how long I'd been volunteering. I'd been feeding my Green Mountain Club addiction for 40 percent of the club's existence. I'd been on the board of directors for one-fifth of its history."

Even after half a century of dedication Andrew continues to leave his mark, though at 85 he's often more comfortable observing. He was reelected to the board of directors in 2021 after a break to grieve the passing of Reidun in 2018. He continued to adopt a mile of the Long Trail from the Winooski footbridge to River Road that he and Reidun had adopted together. This past summer his son Jon joined him on one of his several outings clipping back brush and brambles.

Andrew hopes new members and volunteers realize that "volunteering with GMC is fun, it's important, and the volunteers are appreciated, above all else. There's something for everybody, and there's always need for new volunteers."

"The Long Trail is a gift to the future," he muses. It is indeed, thanks to decades of service and leadership by Andrew and so many others. 



GMC's secretary Minerva Hinchey was the only full-time employee, though by the time Andrew joined, the club also employed an executive director. As GMC grew, its headquarters moved to an office in Rutland in 1970, to Montpelier in 1977, and finally to today's campus in Waterbury Center. Volunteer contributions never waned. During the moves, "volunteers carried all the club's belongings up the stairs, just as we cut the trees and build the shelters."

Andrew doesn't seek recognition or tally his hundreds of accomplishments, of course. "The overall goal is just to contribute to the positive momentum of the club. If anything I do has contributed to that, the specifics pale in comparison." But, when prodded for one example, he fondly recalls forging a partnership with the Lake Champlain Committee in 1988, leading a multi-day canoe trip co-sponsored by GMC. That trip motivated the

2021 Volunteers: Snapshots

A small taste of the hundreds of individual, section, and group volunteers who helped maintain the Long Trail System this year. Volunteer & Education Coordinator Lorne Carrier and Volunteer Program Assistant Miriam Akervall were instrumental in managing and training volunteers to get the work done.



Barnes Camp volunteers greeted more than 6,000 hikers and visitors at Smuggler's Notch.



Sterling College preorientation groups brushed in social trails on the Long Trail over Jay Peak.



Volunteers from Middlebury Congregational Church Youth Group team-carried 800-pound timbers to the Emily Proctor shelter renovation site.

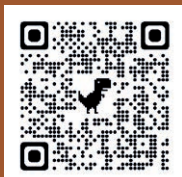


Burlington Section volunteers and UVM Outing Club members ferried materials from Bryant Camp to Puffer Shelter for a full roof replacement.



Employees of Athletic Brewing Company, a Stratton-level corporate sponsor, disassembled old puncheon to make way for an LT/AT reroute at Stratton Pond.

To learn more about GMC Volunteers and the work they completed this season, check out our blog





Winter Trails for All Levels



PHOTO BY JENNY GOYNE

Winter hiking is upon us, and it can be glorious. Conditions can change rapidly this time of year, but in general trails are snowy and exposed summits may be particularly icy. If you're heading out on the trail, be sure to plan ahead and prepare with appropriate traction footwear or snowshoes; plenty of layers; headlamp, food, water, and emergency supplies. Geared up? Check out some of our favorite winter hike destinations for each experience level:

Accessible: Many boardwalks and other trails that are accessible in spring, summer, and fall are not plowed in the winter, but the Burlington Bike Path is typically plowed from North Ave to Oakledge Park. Conditions vary and may be icy.

Easy: Try the short but rugged climb of the Deer Leap Trail in Killington. *2.0 mi round trip, ~500 ft elevation gain*

Moderate: Walk the gently sloping Lake Mansfield Trail near the Trout Club and Nebraska Notch, breaking for lunch at Taylor Lodge. *4.6 mi round trip, ~750 ft elevation gain*

Strenuous: Head north on the Long Trail from Eden's Crossing to summit Mt. Belvidere, which has a fire tower at the top. *5.6 mi round trip, 2,223 ft elevation gain*

More hike recommendations here:



Board Report

We are trying something new and publishing minutes from the quarterly Board of Directors meetings online instead of in the Long Trail News. You can review minutes from the September board meeting by scanning the QR code (at left) with your phone or going to www.greenmountainclub.org/board-notes



JAMES P. TAYLOR Outdoor Adventure Speaker Series Starts January 6!

The Taylor Series will take place over Zoom this year. Join us from the comfort of your couch to hear from authors, filmmakers, and adventurers of all kinds. Highlights this season include:

JANUARY 6

Poems and stories from trail builder and author Sean Prentiss

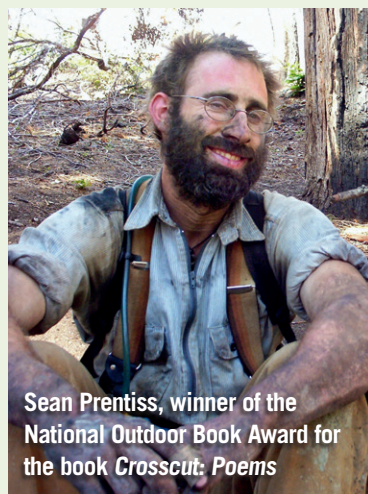


PHOTO COURTESY OF SEAN PRENTISS

Sean Prentiss, winner of the National Outdoor Book Award for the book *Crosscut: Poems*

MARCH 3

A trip through America's national parks with NEK members Jeff Morris, Bob Steinert, and Janet Steinert

MARCH 17

A short film sneak peek chronicling Jordan Rowell's kayak journey of Lake Champlain

Check out the full calendar here:

Trail's End

BY RITA CHARTRAND

My husband, Phil, and teenage daughters, Michele and Camille, and I hiked out that last day, and suddenly it was all over. The Long Trail was behind us.

At first, we felt jaunty and elated. Then we started feeling a sense of loss—we were purposeless now, and hot showers and clean underwear, welcome as they were, didn't quite make up for that. "How was it?" friends asked. "Oh, it was great," we'd say. "Fun, huh?" "Well, no, not fun exactly. Well, it's hard to explain."

It is hard to explain. There was the simple, uncomplicated feeling of having an adventure, a family odyssey. There was the revitalization that came from living outdoors for a month. As Thoreau put it, "We need the tonic of the wilderness."

There were golden moments too: our first view of Indian Pipe pushing up through the leaf-blanketed forest floor, morning mist over Little Rock Pond, the memory of rose-gold sunsets, of round bursts of wild Sarsaparilla and of fern-filled dells, the joyous babble of Big Branch, the peace that comes from hearing only one's own footfall. Golden moments are a notable part of what backpacking is all about.

The remainder is, first of all, satisfaction from physical accomplishment. We had achieved each day's only requirement—to hike to that night's destination through whatever the trail held. After the first few days, hiking north to south, we also managed to get to our objective without dragging through the woods by flashlight, wondering if we would make it. It was a pass/fail test and we passed.

Closely related is the acuteness of the body's response to the fulfilling of elementary physical needs—the fact that water never tasted so good; or the sweetness of resting when you've reached your physical limits, then feeling



Rita, Camille, Phil and Michele at Atlas Shelter, headed south on the Long Trail.

genuinely refreshed; food, let alone hot food, when you are famished at the end of the day. And so on—warmth when you're cold, sleep when you are exhausted, dry socks most anytime. Feelings of ultimate well-being as well as feelings having to do with total exhaustion give the body the exhilarating feeling of having been used to the utmost.

Finally, there is the sense of serenity that comes from reducing life to its simplest elements—from gearing down to become attuned to the infinite beauty of the woods and the mountains. Again, Thoreau said it best: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to confront only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Hear hear. 🐾



Rita and Camille.

Rita, who was born in Vermont, and her family hiked the Long Trail in 1977. Her current interests include writing, piano, swimming, wildflower photography, and Vermont's 251 Club.



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Printed with watercolor artwork of Mount Abraham by artist and former caretaker Kati Christoffel, Buffs are multi-functional headwear that can be worn at least 12 different ways.

Follow Kati's art on Instagram @watercolorwanderer and watercolorwanderer.com

2022 Long Trail Calendar

Featuring inspiring images from our annual photo contest and quotes from Long Trail End-to-Enders. Buy quickly; these sell out!



GMC + Skida Winter Hats

Made in Vermont by Skida, these cozy, fleece-lined hats come in two prints and both adult and kid sizes.

Shop online at store.greenmountainclub.org or in-person at the Visitor Center
Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (call ahead to confirm hours: 802-244-7037)