

Long Trail NEWS



Quarterly of the Green Mountain Club

SPRING 2022

**Thru-Hiking the Long Trail
with Three Kids**

Poems from the Trail

Be a Citizen Scientist



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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Contributions of manuscripts, photos, illustrations, and news are welcome from members and nonmembers.

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FRONT COVER: GMC Caretakers take part in alpine zone training on Mt. Mansfield with State Botanist Bob Popp, May 2021. Photo by Angela Hilsman.

CONTENTS

SPRING 2022, Volume 82, No. 1



Cindy Griffith and Ira Sollace explored new-to-them trails in 2021 via the NEK Mountain Challenge, including Gore Mountain. "Gore is a wooded summit, but there is a window view just after you descend."

FEATURES

6 › THRU-HIKING THE LONG TRAIL WITH TREE KIDS

by Matt, Charlie, Ruth and Joe Krebs

10 › POEMS FROM THE TRAIL

Selected by Sean Prentiss

14 › EXPLORING NEW TRAILS WITH THE NEK MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE

by Cindy Griffith

21 › IN MEMORIAM: KIMBALL "KIM" SIMPSON

22 › BE A CITIZEN SCIENTIST!

by Nigel Bates

DEPARTMENTS

3 › From the President

5 › Sections

18 › Land Stewardship

4 › Mountain Views

16 › Field Notes



From the President

As I travel around the state (virtually) this winter attending GMC sections' annual meetings from my home computer, I am once again struck by the resiliency and determination of our staff, volunteers and members! Field staff completed one of the busiest seasons on record and are poised for another full season in 2022. Trail and shelter adopters set a record for number of hours volunteered during the 2021 field season, along with leading hikes and work trips, staffing the volunteer-run Barnes Camp visitor center, and more. The GMC's cooperative management model continues to work extremely well, and I thank you all for everything you do for the Long Trail System!

The Long Trail is the people's trail and is open to everyone. The Club is committed to ensuring that its staff, volunteers and hikers have a positive experience on the trail and at our facilities. To carry out our mission, the GMC strives to uphold its core values of professionalism, inclusivity, and respect for others and for the environment.

The Long Trail System's users, including staff and volunteers, reflect the general public, and unfortunately some of those users do not always uphold GMC's mission to keep the trails open and welcoming to all those who wish to use them. In 2021 a thankfully small number of incidents of hate-speech, harassment,

expressions of bias, or offensive behavior were reported by staff and volunteers and there are likely many more that go unreported. While that is a tiny sliver of all of the thousands of interactions between GMC volunteers, staff, and the hiking public each year, the impact of these incidents can be significant.

Partner organizations such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and Appalachian Trail Conservancy have recently embarked on a concerted effort to create and embrace opportunities to be inclusive, kind, and equitable. This includes development of codes of conduct to help guide and inspire behavior that creates a welcoming community.

I recently put pen to paper and took a stab at a first draft GMC Code of Conduct representing the following values:

- Represent the GMC mission and maintain a Long Trail community built on professionalism, respect and courtesy.
- Model Leave No Trace principles on the trail and at GMC facilities.
- Encourage use of the trail and its facilities by persons from all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, ages, and abilities.
- Prioritize safety when conducting and participating in GMC-sponsored activities and events.

The GMC Code of Conduct is intended to be a simple and



Howard VanBenthuyzen

straightforward policy statement of GMC's commitment to strive for a trail system free of bias and discrimination and welcoming to all. The statement will include standards of conduct, examples of misconduct, and mechanisms for reporting issues. We know that we cannot banish discrimination from the trail with a simple policy statement, but nevertheless this is one step to underscore the club's strong position that offensive conduct is incompatible with our values and the finest traditions of the Green Mountain Club, and will not be tolerated. I am hopeful you all will join me in moving the club and the Vermont hiking community forward as we continue to educate and address how we can make the Club and Trail more welcoming to all!

At the time of writing this, the draft code of conduct is under consideration by the Trail Management Committee, and should be put before the board of directors for discussion once the proposed code has been reviewed by them, staff and our partner agencies. When final, all GMC staff and volunteers will be provided with a copy and committed to upholding its principles.

I am looking forward to an extremely busy and productive 2022 field season. GMC has a record number of projects ready to go once hiring and training are complete, and I know that all of you are also ready, willing and chomping at the bit to get out there to set another record for volunteer hours dedicated to the Long Trail System! Thanks for all you do and I'll see you out on the trail!

—HOWARD VANBENTHUYSEN
GMC BOARD PRESIDENT



Staff and volunteers will be asked to uphold the principles of GMC's forthcoming Code of Conduct.

PHOTO BY SHERI LARSEN



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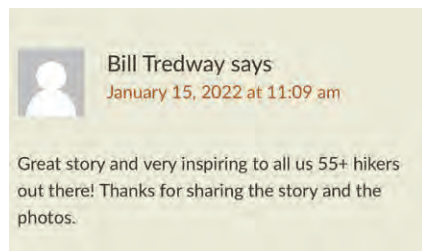
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Readers Respond on GMC's Blog and Social Media

In response to "The Miles that Matter" by Kara Richardson Whitely

I stumbled across you as I am wanting to section hike the AT. I am also plus-sized and trying to find appropriate shoes and such. Even things like lightweight trekking poles might not be supportive enough. Of course, lightweight stuff weighs less but ounces aren't that important. Ready to hike my own hike and enjoy the scenery. You are an inspiration. Thank you.

Winter Inspiration – Sue Johnston's Adventure



Snowshoe Art by John Predom

Incredible work! It makes me glad I saved my old wooden snowshoes. Maybe I can try.

— KARIN GOTTLIEB

Check out John's 2022 creations on his Facebook page: Snowshoe Art by Snowdog



We Welcome Your Comments!

gmc@greenmountainclub.org OR
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, GMC
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
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Section Trip Reports



Spruce Peak Shelter

BRATTLEBORO

Ringing in the New Year with a Woodstove and Some Blowdowns

December 31, 2021

Unless I am mistaken, Spruce Peak shelter is the only enclosed shelter on the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail in Vermont with a wood stove. For as long as I can remember, I have led an overnight trip to Spruce Peak shelter on New Year's Eve. While it has been crowded some years, on others I have been by myself. This year I convinced my friend Shaun to join me.

There were a number of wind storms late last fall, so we decided to clear the five blowdowns between the parking lot and the shelter with my chainsaw. We arrived as it was getting dark, so we made it a priority to gather firewood. There was none left in the shelter. All of the dead trees outside were covered with a thin layer of ice. I had brought a large handful of fatwood and some newspaper, and told Shaun I thought we had a 50/50 chance of getting a fire going in the stove. We succeeded, and this made for a more comfortable night.

Because we had been running out of daylight on the way in, and I had not brought any extra fuel for my chainsaw, Shaun and I left a tangled blowdown between the shelter and Spruce Peak. We tackled it on our way out. I was concerned about running out of gas, so I chose my cuts carefully. I ran out just as I was finishing the last cut. Shaun had brought a large Silky folding handsaw, so we were able to complete the job.

This event is on the Brattleboro Section's outings schedule every year. Please let me know shortly before New Year's if you can join me next December.

— JOE COOK
GMC BRATTLEBORO SECTION SECRETARY



Burlington Section at Harrington's View

BURLINGTON

Harrington's View (Almost)

January 9, 2022

Hearty hikers braved freezing rain (well, at Richmond Park and Ride at least) and carpooled to the junction of the old LT on Notch Road to take the Duck Brook trail up, up, up to the LT and headed north towards Canada. We left our snowshoes in the car, and were surprised at how much snow we encountered as we continued up the trail. Just before reaching their destination (not Canada – we were headed to Harrington's View) we made the collective decision to turn around. The View from Harrington could wait for another day – there would have been zero view anyhow. Plus, we were chilly from standing in the rain in the parking lot. It was a good reminder that sometimes even the most experienced hikers have to change course and know when to turn around! Several hikers were treated to Bambi Pierpont's famous hand knit hats which are soooo toasty.

— TED ALBERS,
BURLINGTON SECTION TRIP LEADER

MONTPELIER

Pivoting Due to Weather

February 16, 2022

February was a frustrating time for winter lovers, with repeated thaw-rain-freeze cycles that left many trails an icy or bare mess. This trip was originally intended to be a cross country ski jaunt down the telephone line trail near New Discovery State Park in Groton. However, very warm weather followed by freezing cold made the trails very bad for skiing. But, they were very good for hiking with Microspikes. We started out

from New Discovery Park, went down to the large shelter on the shore of Osmore Pond, and then looped around the pond and back to our starting point. By the time we finished it had warmed up to a balmy 25 degrees. The eight of us enjoyed some afternoon sunshine as we finished up.

— STEVE AND HEATHER BAILEY

STERLING

A Brisk Snowshoe and Business Meeting

February 5, 2022

The Sterling Section got creative with their annual meeting this year, conducting the business meeting in-person, but outdoors. 18 section members attended and enjoyed hot cider and donuts. Section President Kevin Hudnell led a group Nordic ski up to Beaver Meadow Lodge, where the group admired the new windows that Kevin and Elisabeth Fenn had installed over Thanksgiving weekend. Jim Pease, the Whiteface Shelter adopter, led another group on snowshoes around the Morristown Trails. The day was clear and cold, and ski conditions were great after a blanket of fresh snow the day before.

— ELISABETH FENN, STERLING SECTION
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE GMC BOARD



Hillary Warner skiing up to Beaver Meadow Lodge

Despite the ongoing pandemic and helter-skelter weather of early winter 2022, many sections still made time for memorable outings. We love hearing about your hikes, adventures and misadventures alike. Send trip reports to Chloe Miller, cmiller@greenmountainclub.org, for inclusion in an upcoming Long Trail News or GMC blog or social media post.

PHOTO BY ELISABETH FENN

Thru-Hiking the Long Trail with Three Kids

The Krebs Family Adventure

Where did the idea of attempting the Long Trail with three kids come from?

In 2002 I met my wife, Alyssa, while thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. That year a family of four thru-hiked the trail with us. We dreamed of hiking the AT as a family too, and when Charlie was eight and Ruth was six, we were close to planning an attempt. Then we learned Alyssa was pregnant with Joe.

Fast forward to early 2021. The global pandemic was in full swing, Charlie was 16, busy with high school sports, and I knew this might be our last chance for a family hiking adventure. Schedule conflicts kept Alyssa from joining us, but she offered to be our support.

So we all sat down to decide whether a Long Trail thru-hike was an option. The kids knew it would involve sacrifice, but I was not surprised they were game. Alyssa and I always made it a priority to be active outside with our kids. And every adventure had two rules. One: Everyone had to join the adventure willingly. Two: We celebrate at the end, usually with ice cream. We never wanted to force our kids into activities they did not like. This is the most important reason our Long Trail hike was a success.

We tested food, checked gear, planned logistics, and trained for five months before setting off in mid-July — one of the rainiest months on record.

Even though our kids had done a lot of backpacking, this would be their longest trip by far. Charlie and Ruth (14) were in great condition from sports. However, Joe (8) and I (48) needed to prepare for the trail.

I did not know whether Joe could manage 10 miles a day for four weeks. He and I hiked in spring and early summer, talking about how the trail was going to be physically and mentally hard but that didn't mean we couldn't do it. Our favorite saying was "How do you climb a mountain? One step at a time."

The mental challenge of hiking the LT is sometimes bigger than the physical. This made planning our itinerary the hardest part for me. I had different concerns for each kid. I thought the length could be challenging for Joe, the monotony of unvarying routine could be difficult for Ruth, and I was not sure whether the trip would be physically challenging enough for Charlie.

Despite all the planning, one important fact of long-distance hiking presented itself right away. You never know what will happen once you step on the trail. We began with a night hike on our first day, trail magic the second, and heavy rain on the third. During the deluge Ruth became upset that we were missing out on the experience of the trail. This was when the kids began to realize that the essence of a long-distance hike is the combination of experiences over time, not just one moment.

I wanted to give my kids the chance to experience life in a different way; to feel the hardships and triumphs that the trail brings; and to realize they could overcome challenges in life just as they had on the trail. And, hopefully, to gain the confidence to take risks to pursue their dreams.

— MATT KREBS, GMC OPERATIONS MANAGER



For me, our trip as a whole was a rollercoaster: it had its ups and downs, but it was fun in the end. We started with super muddy, foggy, and rainy conditions which were all mostly new to me. While they all wore on me after a while, it was super exciting to be out there in the middle of the woods, stomping through puddles up to fire towers that we would climb to look out into the seemingly endless white fog. Even in the soggiess, it was memorable.

This weather kept up for a good portion of our first week out, with frequent rainstorms that caused raging rivers and muddy trails. At Hell Hollow Brook, the water was flowing super-fast and a couple of the rocks that would be used to cross were submerged. Because of this, we decided to pick Joe up and pass him across, me to Ruth to Papa. We started by passing Joe's backpack across to Ruth, who had hopped across the river. Next, we lined up with Ruth and Papa on each bank and I stood in the middle. Everything was going well, but when I was just passing him off, I slipped off the rock and my whole foot went straight in the river. It seemed bad at first, but thinking back on it, I realized how moments like this made our trip what it was.

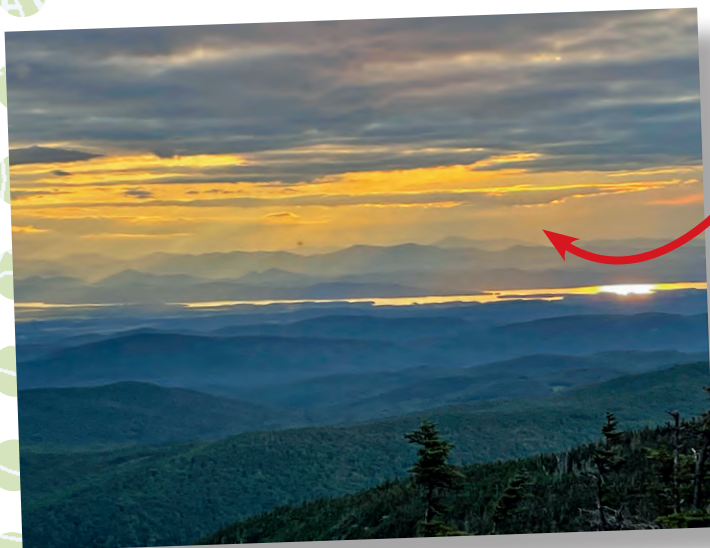
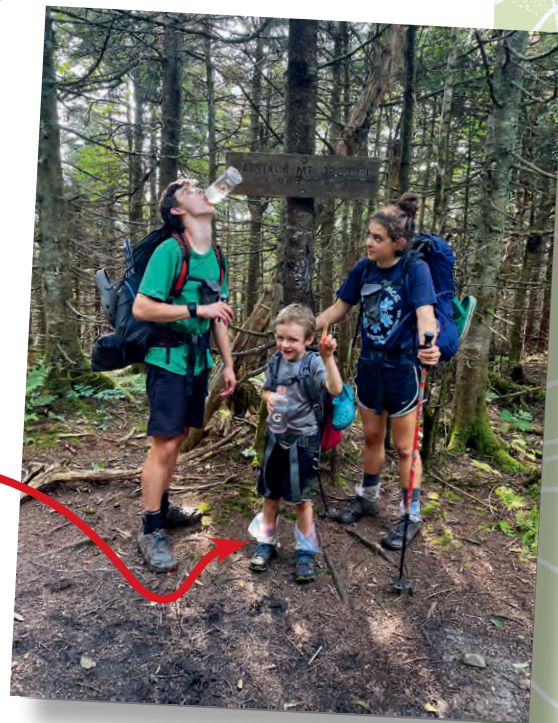
As the rainy weather continued, we realized that something needed to be done about our wet feet. At first, we put gallon-size plastic bags in Joe's shoes, over his socks, to keep his feet dry. But we quickly requested more plastic bags at our next food drop so we could all do that. These helped our efficiency hiking, as instead of jumping around puddles we would walk right through them and kept us more comfortable.

As the trip progressed, we entered a period where the initial excitement was wearing off and the hiking was beginning to feel hard and repetitive. To get through these, one of my main motivating factors was food. We brought freeze-dried ice cream with us and sometimes got surprise treats, like when Mom met us with a box of donuts.

Another motivating factor was trail magic. My favorite was when we hiked out of the woods in Mad Tom Notch to see a small sign pointing us to the parking lot right around the corner. We found hotdogs, fried eggs, treats, drinks, and anything else you could want. A hiker named "Gravy Train" had just completed the trail a few weeks earlier and wanted to come back and give out food to other hikers. It was a cool way to experience the hiking community come together.

Landmarks or prominent places also helped keep us going and led to some of my favorite moments along the trail. When we spent the night at the top of General Stark Mountain, we got a spectacular sunset, and then decided we would wake up early to watch the sunrise as well. This was such a peaceful and pleasant day that it is what really epitomized my trip as a whole. We had a long, hard day to get there, but we were rewarded with an awesome crowd of people to hang out with, some great views, and a nice relaxing time out in nature.

— CHARLIE KREBS, 16



My most memorable moments on the trail were the moments of kindness we saw from other hikers and the community, like trail magic and treats. These moments really boosted our spirits.

One day, we decided to get off the trail a day early to rest, and my mom met us at Sunset Ledge so we could all hike down together. We got big creemeees before dinner and burritos at Mad Taco — a great way to end the day. When the routine did get monotonous, I stayed motivated by thinking about when our next food drop would be or when our next rest day would be. Dividing up the hike into manageable chunks in my brain made it feel not so long.

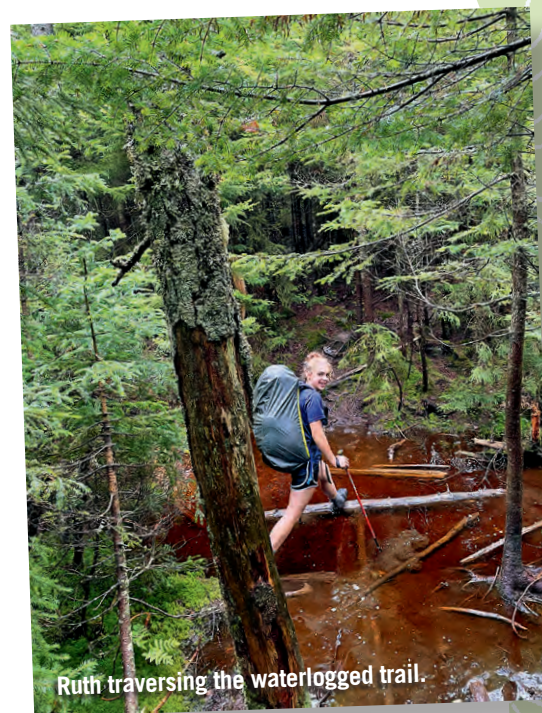
Aside from the day-to-day, there were a few moments and peaks that stood out. The first day we ended up night hiking trying to find a place to camp, which was a little scary.

The day we were starting to hike up Killington, it was pouring rain and we had just arrived at a packed Governor Clement shelter to make breakfast where it was dry. A couple of minutes after we had arrived somebody found out it was Joe's eighth birthday and the twenty or so people in the shelter all sang Happy Birthday to him. It was a really cool moment.

We hiked up Camel's Hump on a sunny and clear day. Despite the weather and the trail's popularity, there was nobody on the summit so we could enjoy it quietly. We were so high up, we could see the mountains we were going to climb over the next few days.

Papa spilled dinner twice while we were on the trail. At Kid Gore he spilled freeze-dried lasagna all over the ground right in front of the shelter we were sleeping in that night. It happened at the end of a long day, and we were all tired and hungry, and we were worried about coming up with a whole new dinner and if it would attract animals to the shelter. We cleaned it up as well as we could and then it started raining, washing away the rest of the food residue. It was stressful at the moment but looking back it was kind of funny.

On our last day on the trail, we woke up early, ate a quick breakfast, and hiked in silence to the border swath. It was sinking in that we were about to finish the whole Long Trail! When we arrived at the boundary marker our mom met us with chocolate milk. We all hiked to the car together and got amazing milkshakes as a celebration.



Ruth traversing the waterlogged trail.

A big takeaway from the trip for me was knowing that the world keeps going on even when you are walking in the woods for days. At the start of the trip, I was worried I would be missing out on things back home. But as the trip went on I just appreciated being able to hike and disconnect from my devices. I couldn't constantly check my email, see what my friends were doing or what was going on in the world. Instead of the Internet, I painted watercolors and kept a journal along the trail. I love to do art, and this was a way to take a little time to myself and relax while being with my family all the time. It helped me document the trip and see the journey in a different way.

—RUTH KREBS, age 14



When I started the Long Trail, it was hard to leave my mom. My family and I stayed in an Airbnb for a night before we went to the trailhead. The day we got to the trailhead I did not want my mom to leave. After one day I forgot about my mom. The first day was a long day. We hiked 13 miles, all the way to Congdon shelter. It was a good night. The next night it poured on us. At the end of every week, we would stay at an inn, somebody else's house, or our own house.

When we stayed at somebody else's house it was a little different than our own house. It was not our stuff, but it was cozy. My mom brought us donuts and some cards from my friend, Finn. There were also some cookies with the cards. It was also going to be my birthday soon.



Next, we stayed at the Swanson Inn. We had pie that night, chocolate cream and maple walnut. My favorite was the chocolate cream pie. However, the bottom was hard, and it was hard to bite into. My mom came again and played checkers with me. I had a good night's sleep that night. We went back on the trail after we stayed at the Swanson Inn and stayed in our tent.

The next day I had to get off the trail because my ankle hurt. I stayed home for a couple of days, but once my ankle was feeling better, I met up with my family again. Two weeks later we finished the Long Trail. Those couple of weeks were hard. I think we climbed Mount Mansfield during those two weeks. Sometimes, we got on each other's nerves, but overall, I liked being together with my family for a full month. The Long trail was hard but very fun.

— JOE KREBS, age 8

Want to go backpacking with kids? Try these tips:

- **Start small, and keep it interesting.** Try to avoid forcing your kid to hike. For younger kids, pick day hikes with lots of distracting features like bridges, water features, or stairs. Keep them occupied by asking if they can find the next blaze or a cool leaf.
- **Always pack plenty of snacks.** As you can see in each Krebs kid's reflections, food is a motivator on any hike! Keep a special snack or treat for the way down a mountain or for arrival at the car. On longer hikes, make sure your kids are eating enough to match their energy output.
- Once your kids are ready for overnights, **make sure they are not carrying too much.** Ten to 20 percent of their body weight is a recommended maximum. Eight-year-old Joe's pack weighed around 10 pounds, while Ruth and Charlie carried 30 pounds each.
- **Be flexible and have a back-up plan (or three).** The Krebs dealt with soggy blistered feet and a sore ankle. On your first overnight, know the options for closer campsites or bailing out.

For more detail on getting started at any age, go to greenmountainclub.org/how-to-hike-with-infants-toddlers-kids/

Poems from the Trail

THIS WINTER, to lighten the January chill just slightly, GMC ran its first official poetry contest in advance of Sean Prentiss's presentation to the club. Sean, a poet, author, professor, and former trail builder, worked leading trail crews with the Northwest Youth Corps in the Pacific Northwest in the late 90s and early 2000s. His experiences are captured in the volume *Crosscut: Poems*, a memoir-in-poems. Sean generously offered to judge GMC's nature poetry contest.

"We had about 75 entries, and I sat on my couch for the better part of a day reading them. I culled it down to 10. And if someone else was judging it, they'd probably come up with a different 10...There were so many wonderful poems," said Sean. A selection of winning poems and other favorites that stood out from the submissions are printed here.

It may be mud season while you read this, so peruse these poems and dream of the hikes to come. Submit your own poem or let us know your favorites:

gmc@greenmountainclub.org, Subject: GMC Poetry Contest

First, a poem from Sean. Sean currently resides in Vermont and is section hiking the Long Trail with his uncle-in-law Barry. His next work will be a collection of poems inspired by the Long Trail. Here is a preview:

These Old Poles

BY SEAN PRENTISS

As we prepare to take our first step
from Barry's truck, I cradle
Sarah's Leki Makalu's, which are
black and grey and chipped
from when she hiked this trail
in 2002. These poles
have plunged into every puddle of
Long Trail mud, then, never
done, Sarah and these poles hiked
the Appalachian and John
Muir Trails. This time, Sarah stays
home to watch Little Girl
while I hike to see what she saw.
These poles connect us.
I slide wrists through straps, grab
hand grips, almost as if I am
holding Sarah's hands, as if we hike
this trail together, as if she is
pointing a pole off trail, saying, *Look
at that beautiful trillium*, or
as if she is pointing at the trail, saying,
Time for you two to start hiking,
so we do, letting Sarah's poles guide us.



PHOTO BY BAILEY BELTRAMO

Sean and Little Girl

Untitled

BY CLAIRE CHOMENTOWSKI

Grand Prize Winner

it couldn't have been less than fatal,
the collision involving my windshield
and a butterfly,
an event i'd never have guessed at,
except for when the sun smacks the glass
just so.

and then i am awestruck,
hardly seeing the road before me,
my eye drawn instead to that
smudge of incandescence -
stuck in my line of vision -
thin and gauzy, like a skin graft
from a rainbow,
trailed by a streak of
something
white.

they say comets are nothing
more than a patchwork of dirt and debris
gleaned as they streak past the stars
and so i contemplate
the symbiotic relationship
that beauty bears
to dust.

Comment from Sean: "Claire mailed this poem to me, it was the very first poem I read and it ended up being my favorite."

7:15 a.m., third floor, making copies

BY MITCHELL NOBIS

2ND Place Winner

I stand in the company of
clicks and
whirrs,
knocks and
hums,
waiting for a machine
to warm up,
waiting for my head
to clear the dense weight
of slow morning.
I watch a panicked moth fluttering
at the window.
It bumps the glass
over and again,
trying to get out.
The endless tangle
of electrical wires
& phone lines. The mass of treetops
so many miles
off in the distance.

Blaze

BY ELISE BARRY

I caress the faint streak of white on an ancient maple to see if fingertips
will find
the roughness of paint
Or the soft spring of lichen
A blaze left by humans or hope?
But I smile, knowing before fingers find the answer that my resolve will be
unfazed
That my feet will continue to be amazed - as they carry me forward surely
Unhurriedly -
That they know this path already
That the steady thrum of heartbeats and sapbeats all around me
Pound a rhythm that my body has long known the moves to
And through
With a path of white marking the dance floor

And I think back as I was about to close the door before leaving when
they asked me how I would find the way
Worried creases on foreheads mirroring the map in my mind of trails long
trodden
“What if you get lost?” they would say
A daughter, a friend, a sister, off to roam a long and languid trail
I remember smiling and I am smiling now
For how can I be lost when I am already home?

Leaving You at the Start of the Long Trail

BY ELIZABETH MACALASTER

Honorable Mention

You were just on your way
again,
your smile
crooked
as the branches
haloed around your head,
your eyes
gold
like the canopy fanned behind,
your flesh and blood
exchanged
for sun and shadow—
so that when I turned to look
one last time,
you were gone.



PHOTO BY KRISTIN MCLEANE

A Winter Ski

BY LORNA CHERITON

We push our skis
over the blank snow.

Our tracks join
the scriptures in snow
that I long to interpret —

the phrase made by two tiny legs that leaped,
dragging a tail between them,
looks like a white on white drawing
of miniature horseshoe crabs,
ancient creatures from the ocean
in single file across frozen water.

The squirrel's tracks,
embossed in snow,
are a sentence
beginning at one tree
ending at another.

The otter's groove
through snow,
accented with occasional footprint,
slips into dark river.

Deep holes
punctuate the snow
where a moose wrote
and moved on.

Many-lobed paw prints
circle and twist.

The writers of these words
are hidden.



PHOTO BY JACK MARKOSKI

Jack Markoski spent the summer of 2013 on trail crews in Central Idaho.

Worth Mountain

BY ILANA COPEL

some places are eternal
they are white rock tower fallen forest creations
untroubled by the passing-by of passers-by
mist drifting down from the clouds
wind love-kissing the tops of trees
these are the new old-places
other-worlds sprung from the silence of mountain-tops
moose and moss alike making their place in microcosms
glimpsed only briefly by hurried observers

The Water Reflects

BY GEORGE LONGENECKER

If water could wonder
it might ponder the silence
on the trail that parallels
its bed down the mountain,
no footsteps but an occasional moose.
The brook has been flowing
off the mountain since the last glaciers,
now each year snows melt sooner,
some summers the stream runs almost dry,
and now this silence on the trail,
except for white-throated sparrows
singing high on the ridge,
but the water has known many seasons,
and next year will flow by the trail again.



PHOTO BY RUTH PENFIELD

View from the Long Trail to Worth Mountain.

Summer of '13

BY JACK MARKOSKI

Runner Up

The smell of fresh cut fir
is the quickest way back
to those slopes:

pulling saws and swinging tools
above our heads. Stomachs
never quite full

in the early morning light
that carried our shadows,
tall and frail.

I wonder if my hands
were ever fully cleaned
of all that pitch

that helped me hold the axe
and the illusion that I had finally
become a man.

– it's not all that different,
you know? That place
from this one.

I'm sure it's the same sun –
but perhaps a new
kind of dawn.



PHOTO BY CHLOE MILLER

Trail crews pour mineral soil over a new
rock trail-hardening structure.

Burial and Becoming

BY EMERSON "TORCH" ROBERTS

Hiking trails don't build themselves. Wet socks and muddy boots go into it. Heavy tools, polished each week. A daily commute of a couple miles, carrying those 80 pound tools on your back like a pack mule. Beans and rice and vegetables that we all cook communally. Sticky pine fingers. Fog so thick you can't find your tent. A fire to warm the toes and soul. Word games and jokes to keep spirits high.

Not many people get paid to go camping for a living. I am lucky enough to be one of the stubborn few, spending two seasons professionally building hiking trails on the Long Trail of Vermont.

And on top of every glorious rock staircase and every shiny new section of trail we build, we pour hundreds of pounds of dirt.

It is one of the most counterintuitive things I have ever done. Right when I think a project is complete, hours are spent burying it.

It is very humbling to hold soil in your hands, to know that it exists on a timeline vastly different than your own. All parts of the forest work together to create the dark, crumbly lifeblood that keeps everything alive.

The act of burying something is ancient and holy. Humans have always offered gifts to the earth and buried lost loved ones with the hopes of protection and salvation. We plant seeds, knowing they will bring us food. We leave behind time capsules for future generations to find.

Things that are buried do not disappear. They are not simply covered and forgotten. They sit, they fester. In time they gain strength and meaning: physically, spiritually, both.

It is hard to bury a new trail. It is hard to spend a week digging, whacking, moving, hammering, slicing, and hauling the forest in a pool of sweat only to turn around and make it look like I was never there.

But that is where the beauty lies. Hikers do not hike for me. They hike for the woods. If they knew they were climbing a brand new staircase, it would take away the magic of the trail. My job is to remain unnoticed.

So I bury my trails. I bury the rock structures. I cover up the old entrances. I drag fallen pines to make it all look natural. It is my offering to the world. The new trails will age and quickly look as battered as the old. By the time the dirt washes away, the rocks won't be so shiny and the turns won't be so abrupt.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In many New England trail building projects, crews finalize their rock work by surfacing the tread with **inorganic mineral soil**. Mineral soil is resistant to water absorption, doesn't decompose like organic (surface) soil, and is able to be compacted by foot traffic. Its use is designed to provide an ideal walking surface that keeps people on the trail and reduce erosion, and to help rock structures blend seamlessly into the existing environment. The author, Emerson "Torch" Roberts, served on Long Trail Crews in 2018 and 2019. 🐾

Exploring New Trails with the NEK Mountain Challenge



PHOTO BY CINDY GRIFFITH

Owl's Head

Who likes lists?

My husband, Ira Sollace, and I have always been list people, often planning our hiking adventures around various mountain checklists:

- ✓ **The Long Trail by Divisions**
- ✓ **The NE67**, a list of 4,000 footers in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine
- ✓ **LT Side-to-Side Trails List** (88 side trails that intersect the Long Trail)
- ✓ **New England 100 Highest** (we've done 95).

We pecked our way through these lists as our lives progressed, hiking anytime we could. We stayed busy driving nearly every back road in Vermont and much of New England reaching trailheads.

After finishing the Long Trail Side-to-Side Trails in 2020, we asked ourselves what was next. We wanted something in Vermont, given pandemic-

related travel restrictions in effect then. So I started searching online. I came across a Facebook page called the NEK Mountain Challenge, managed by the NorthWoods Stewardship Center, an educational, research and conservation organization serving communities in northern Vermont and New Hampshire. We noticed folks were hiking mountains we had never heard of. Cow Mountain? Never heard of it!

We checked the NorthWoods website further, and it was true: there really was another list of Vermont mountains and overlooks. The center established the challenge in 1999, and it includes 20 peaks, nearly all of the publicly accessible mountains with trails in the Northeast Kingdom. The center keeps track of NEK Mountain Challenge finishers, much as GMC does for End-to-End and Side-to-Side finishers. They ask for details of each hike, and photos or journal notes. Just a handful of folks have completed the challenge each year, and we were eager to join their ranks. We had a new

NEK Mountain Challenge List

Averill Mountain, Averill
Bald Mountain, Westmore
Belvidere Mountain, Lowell
Big Deer Mountain, Peacham
Bluff Mountain, Island Pond
Brousseau Mountain, Norton
Burke Mountain, Burke
Cow Mountain, Granby
Devil's Hill, Peacham
Gore Mountain, Avery's Gore
Haystack Mountain, Westmore
Jay Peak, Westfield
Middle Mountain, Avery's Gore and
Warren's Gore
Moose Mountain, Sutton
Mount Hor, Westmore
Mount Pisgah, Westmore
Owl's Head, Peacham
Spruce Mountain, Plainfield
Stannard Lookout, Stannard
Wheeler Mountain, Sutton

list and all of 2021 ahead of us.

We copied the list into a spreadsheet and started planning. Two of the mountains on the list, Belvidere and Jay,

are also on the Long Trail, so we had a head start. We tackled Owl's Head in Peacham on January 1, and were off and running.

We were familiar with some Northeast Kingdom trails, thanks to our dear late friend Jean Haigh (a past GMC President), but had not hiked much there. Having a reason to explore new places, even some of the smaller "overlook" hikes, was wonderful. One week we camped at Brighton State Park in Island Pond and tackled three: Averill, Brousseau and Bluff Mountains. We discovered a beautiful gem of protected land when we hiked Gore Mountain from the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge.

Ira and I finished our NEK 20 in October, 2021, with a lovely walk to Stannard Lookout. We submitted our documentation to NorthWoods for a certificate and patch. We extend our gratitude to Northwoods Stewardship Center for offering the challenge and for helping maintain so many miles of trails to these wonderful locations. If you're looking for a new challenge and wish to enjoy some lesser-traveled trails, we highly recommend the NEK 20.

— CINDY GRIFFITH AND IRA SOLLACE

PLEASE NOTE, all trails on the NEK Mountain Challenge list should be avoided until after Mud Season in late May. If you're looking for a Mud Season walk in the area, try Sentinel Rock State Park in Westmore or the Mollie Beattie Bog Accessible Boardwalk at Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge.



Are You a List Person?

Check out these hike lists and more at 4000footers.com

Vermont

- ✓ Side-to-Side List (88)
- ✓ Vermont's 4,000-footers (5)
- ✓ Vermont Fire Tower Challenge (14)

New Hampshire

- ✓ New Hampshire's 4,000-footers (48)
- ✓ The Grid: Hike each of the 48 peaks 12 times (once per month)



Bald Mountain

New England

- ✓ The NE67: All 4,000-footers in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine
- ✓ The New England 100 highest and 100 highest in winter
- ✓ 52 with a View: 52 New England peaks under 4,000 feet

New York

- ✓ Adirondack High Peaks (46)
- ✓ Adirondack/Catskill Fire Tower Challenge (Hike 23 of 28 Towers)

Beyond

- ✓ U.S. Highpoints (51 – the highest point in every state, plus DC)



Stannard Lookout



People often ask: “**What do you do all winter?**”

Aside from postseason reporting, grant writing, and project planning (scheduling; establishing contracts; meeting with land management partners; permitting; recruiting, hiring, orienting and training 45 seasonal staff; and planning and coordinating long-term projects with GMC’s Trail Management and Camps Committees and the Board of Directors), winter is a time for reflection and transition.

Because we hire many young people early in their careers and give them plenty of responsibility, amazing staff members come and go regularly.

On a phone call with **ROSALIE SHARP** after her first season in 2018, we discussed her professional interests and what kind of organization she wanted to work for. I told her I believed GMC has zero tolerance for misogynistic rogue machismo, hate, or irresponsible behavior. That has not always been the reality since then; GMC is a microcosm of the broader populace. But the club has worked for greater equity, and

Rosalie was a major contributor to shifting the needle.

As a trail crew leader and field supervisor, she demonstrated superb technical project skills. She excelled as a trainer, coaching co-workers in better trail skills. Her focus on the health and wellness of her staff kept many returning to the club’s seasonal workforce in the past few years. GMC, and I, are both better thanks to Rosalie’s work and presence. We wish her good luck as she moves on to a fulltime position with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

KATI CHRISTOFFEL piloted the brand-new southern field supervisor role with competence and grace after two years as a caretaker. Her support of field staff members dealing with discrimination and harassment helped the club better understand how racism and antisemitism affect all trail users, and helped us develop better incident response systems for the future. Many compliments from long-term volunteers and U.S. Forest Service staffers underscore Kati’s remarkable performance in the last three

years. Kati, thank you for making the Long Trail more welcoming.

JOHN PLUMMER joined us in 2019 seeking an alternative to his corporate job, first as a caretaker and then as the AmeriCorps Group Outreach and Field Coordinator. He established relationships with land management partners to streamline our group use permit process; tackled back office work; helped develop a Stratton Pond Overnight Site Management Plan; and conducted the third round of alpine plant photo monitoring on Mount Mansfield, a detailed inventory to ensure GMC has useful data on alpine vegetation. Thank you, John, for your time, humor, and amazing ability to adapt corporate skills to trail management. You can read more about John’s work on page 20.

As some staff leave, others arrive. We welcome **SCOUT PHILLIPS** as a full-time construction field coordinator. Scout led the 2021 GMC Construction Crew through an extraordinarily full schedule. Before that Scout was the caretaker at Battell Shelter, and held various positions with the Student



Rosalie Sharp



Kati Christoffel



Conservation Association, the Southwest Conservation Corp., and Outright Vermont. We count on Scout for guiding the completion of many more construction projects in the next two seasons.

Beyond the back office, seasonal field staff hiring is underway, spearheaded again by **ISAAC ALEXANDRE-LEACH**. We hired a fine field staff in 2021, but changing employment markets are making hiring increasingly difficult, so we are taking steps to ensure we keep hiring well-qualified people.

Seasonal trail workers have traditionally been paid less compared to other front country seasonal jobs, justified industry-wide with the idea that “*You are getting paid to hike.*” That attitude doesn’t help make rent and payments on car and student loans. Nor does it recognize the challenges staff members face: social isolation in the backcountry; rising living costs; the physical demands of the job; and possible discrimination and harassment. Living and working in Vermont’s mountains is appealing, but low wages limit the ability to take these jobs. So we are making some

changes to hopefully increase both access and appeal.

We expect quality skilled work from our employees, but even before I joined the club in 2018 our wages lagged those paid by commercial trail builders, federal trail jobs, and front country construction jobs requiring the same skills. In the last four years we raised wages for entry-level staff from \$11 to \$14.50 an hour, and from \$12.84 to \$18 for field leads. If we value the high-quality work GMC is known for, we must continue to keep pace with industry standards.

We are also critically examining field schedules and expectations for better work-life balance, and to combat the social isolation of backcountry jobs, now exacerbated by the pandemic. We are also looking for avenues to provide backcountry gear such as tents, which in the past staff had to provide on their own and can prove to be another barrier to access to our positions. We are optimistic about these changes, and look forward to a successful 2022 field season.

On that note we have another ambitious season planned, with a 30 percent increase in

work from the 2021 season. A crew will work on the heavily trafficked Burrows Trail on Camel’s Hump for the entire season, and one trail crew each will be assigned to projects in southern and northern Vermont. We plan to complete the long awaited trail realignment and overnight site improvements at Stratton Pond; to replace Beaver Dam Cabin on Wheeler Pond in the Northeast Kingdom; to continue improvement of the northern Long Trail, funded through the Long Trail Legacy Capital Campaign; and to erect a new observation tower on Bromley Mountain.

Field staff are the physical and mental muscle that make major trail improvement projects happen. As we anticipate a future of more hikers and increasingly variable weather, ensuring that we have top quality staff earning a living wage is essential. Combining our professionals with our amazing volunteer force that constitutes the backbone of GMC’s management of the Long Trail System will ensure a sustainable and equitable trail system for the future.

— KEEGAN TIERNEY
DIRECTOR OF FIELD PROGRAMS





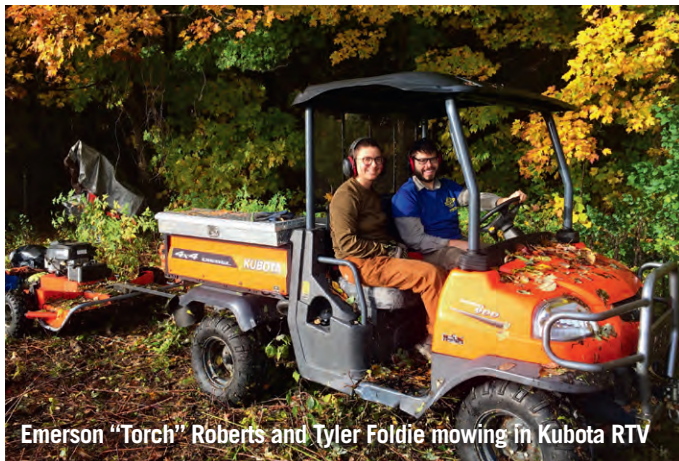
Open Area, Open Questions

A Q&A on the AT Open Areas with GMC Conservation Manager Mollie Flanigan

GMC PARTNERS WITH THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) AND THE US FOREST SERVICE (USFS) to manage 19 fields, or open areas, in the Upper Connecticut River Valley on the Appalachian Trail (AT) corridor between Killington and Norwich. Farmers, volunteers and staff members work together to hay, mow, or otherwise clear fast-growing vegetation, often invasive species, on a rotating basis.

When Mollie Flanigan, GMC's conservation manager, wrote an online article ("Dupuis Hill: A Case Study in Maintaining Appalachian Trail Open Areas Views") in December, it sparked some questions and commentary about the initiative.

Here we describe the history of the program, the reasons for it, the methods and strategies we consider, and the pros and cons of management methods.



Emerson "Torch" Roberts and Tyler Foldie mowing in Kubota RTV

What is the background of the AT Open Areas Initiative?

When the AT was re-routed off roads in the Upper Valley in the 1980s and '90s, it crossed many farm fields which provided the trail sweeping views and connected hikers to the local communities. Many of the hilltop fields were abandoned in the subsequent decades, and the forests vigorously regenerated, adding to the trail's reputation as a "Long Green Tunnel." The hiking community realized what was being lost, and land managers and volunteers worked off-and-on over the years to keep a few fields open.

In 2013, ATC, USFS, and GMC came together to formalize the effort under the Open Areas Initiative. They inventoried the remaining fields, and prioritized which should be kept open for scenery, wildlife habitat and historical significance. Today farmers and volunteers maintain some through permits or agreements, while GMC, ATC, and USFS staff maintain others.

Can you elaborate on the reasoning behind keeping these areas open instead of letting them grow?

The partners' inventory rated the remaining fields on their qualities and risks. Based on the results, we now maintain 19 open areas, and have let three revegetate. The scoring categories were:

- **Access:** could maintainers reach the field with the necessary equipment?
- **Vista:** was the view from the field worth preserving?
- **Non-native invasive plants:** would invasive plants make management prohibitively challenging?
- **Species of concern:** were there rare plant or animal species needing special management to survive?
- **Cultural and historical resources:** were there stone walls, foundations, or other historical remnants?
- **Wildlife habitat:** was the field valuable for ground nesting birds or other animals needing meadow environments?

Without the Open Areas initiative, hikers would be confined to the "green tunnel" of the forest and there would be little to no early successional wildlife habitat along this stretch of the AT.

Have your methods changed over the years?

From 2013 through 2017, GMC and our partners reclaimed the priority fields by cutting saplings of fast-growing Northern hardwood trees. This work was mainly done by GMC's Long Trail Patrol who worked with brush cutters and a tow-behind mower for a week each fall to clear one or two fields. With reclamation done, in 2018 we were able to focus on maintenance and mowing each field every other year going forward. Mowing is much less work than reclamation, so keeping up with a regular cycle is important to maintain the hard work we've put into each site.

With the shift to mowing, the roles of our organizations have also changed. The national forest wildlife crew, which manages habitat openings all over the Green Mountain National Forest, does more of the regular mowing, enabling GMC and ATC to concentrate on controlling invasive species along field edges.

Every year we reevaluate the status and needs of the initiative and review our resources, to ensure we are maintaining or gaining ground.

How does mowing and clearing affect wildlife habitat?

Maintaining early successional habitats, such as meadows and shrublands, is a key goal since many native species rely on them. Some of those native wildlife species are bobolinks and other birds that nest on the ground in meadows; bees and other pollinating insects that rely on flowers such as milkweed and pin cherry, and



PHOTO BY MOLLIE FLANIGAN



PHOTO BY MOLLIE FLANIGAN

deer and other wildlife that feed on the fruiting plants, such as apples, raspberries and hawthorns.

To create quality habitat, managers focus on suppressing invasive species that outcompete natives; managing for flowering and fruiting plants; and keeping structural diversity, a mix of shrubs and trees of varying sizes, along edges for cover and perching places for birds and other animals.

Has prescribed burning been considered?

Yes. Only the Forest Service can conduct prescribed burns, but they're planning for it in two open areas in 2022 if conditions allow. GMC and ATC help by doing some of the prep-work for the burns. Prep work includes clearing field edges of vegetation and debris, and cutting saplings too large to burn. Prescribed burns aren't a cure-all: they're labor intensive and condition sensitive, so lining up all the variables can be difficult.

Have goats or other animals been considered or used?

Yes, to a limited extent. Mary Beth Herbert, a former GMC staff member, worked on the initiative in 2016 and 2017 and became interested in whether grazing could reduce the need for power equipment. She volunteered her time and goats in 2018 and 2019 to test grazing on a one-acre field in West Hartford and continued under contract with ATC in 2020 and 2021. The trials have revealed the two main challenges of this management technique on open areas are timing and duration. Mowing can be done in the autumn, after



Open areas
grazing on
Merrill Hill

the flowering plants have bloomed and set seed, in just a few days. Grazing the same area takes more time and waiting until after the plants have bloomed in autumn often means less desirable forage. Pasturing earlier in the season results in more complete grazing, but can lead to fewer flowers and seeds from late-season plants. We plan to continue the experiment and investigate if these challenges can be overcome to allow grazing to meet the initiative's goals in a sustainable way.

How sustainable is the initiative, and what do you expect in the future?

This question is a topic of discussion at every planning session and there are several ways to consider it.

Environmentally, most maintenance methods depend heavily on fossil fueled mowers, brush-cutters, chainsaws and chippers, not to mention fuel for transporting crews and equipment. Moving management towards grazing may reduce our carbon footprint, although it would certainly not eliminate it.

Financially, members and donors of GMC and ATC, and taxpayers funding the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, largely make our work possible. We also get some grant and corporate support, so the Initiative is currently on solid financial ground.

With regard to the actual work, any annual or biannual program is a challenge and vulnerable to disruption. The ecological tendency of the forest to regrow will continue, and we buy only a few years each time we clear an area. Rather than focus on that continual challenge however, I like to focus on the short term and what open areas give hikers and wildlife today. Every hiker who enjoys a vista and every butterfly that finds a meal is an accomplishment. Let's enjoy what we have achieved and work towards making it as long lasting and sustainable as possible. 🐐

PASSING the BATON

AmeriCorps Outreach & Field Coordinator



THE 1990S WERE A WILD TIME ON THE LONG TRAIL. Sometimes groups of 100 or more camped overnight, and the impact of such large groups was becoming ever more apparent.

In response, the club created the GMC Group Outreach Program. Today the program's outreach and field coordinator position is managed and funded through Vermont's Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps Program. Coordinators typically serve 11-month terms. The program strives to reach groups before their trips to explain ways to minimize impacts on the trail. In the last ten years the program expanded to include service trips and additional education. Now you will seldom see a group of more than ten people.

Today the position is held by me, Liz Palmer. I started in September, knowing little about the GMC or the program. As usual for an AmeriCorps member, I was a bit confused at first. By the time most of us feel adjusted to our roles our term is ending. Luckily I had a special resource: John Plummer, who was coordinator for the two years before me. He later held other jobs at GMC before leaving in October to become conservation easement steward at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

With my first field season fast approaching, I asked John about his experiences, and he graciously delivered.

LIZ: Can you tell me about your experience with GMC and how you became the outreach and field coordinator?

JOHN: Like many folks, I came to the GMC in a roundabout way. I worked in IT at Liberty Mutual, and I quit in 2017. I thru-hiked the AT, then served as a GMC Caretaker at Stratton Pond and Griffith Lake in 2018. I went to New Hampshire for an AmeriCorps Conservation Corps term with the Squam Lakes Association. And in 2019 I came back to GMC as the outreach and field coordinator. I knew from my time as a caretaker that the people and work would be enjoyable. I didn't expect to stay for two years, but I didn't expect a global pandemic either.

So, how did those two years go? Did Covid have a significant impact on your service?

Covid was definitely a big factor. For one thing, it wasn't a great time to be moving around and job hunting, so that's partly why I stayed in the position two years. We also couldn't run many service-learning trips in my first field season, and group use on the trail was understandably far below normal.

A year is a short time for the role, especially the way conservation organizations are structured. It's nice to have the off-season to work on stuff once you really know what's going on, before heading into your second year. And it was nice to have a more typical summer in 2021 when group trips were back up to more normal levels, and despite Covid we had a record number of service-learning hours.

What was your favorite part of the position?

It allows so many opportunities for learning. I got my hands dirty learning construction skills and I learned how to manage projects in a non-profit setting. It's nice that I could offer something to the GMC, and they also offered so much to me.

What about being the outreach and field coordinator challenged you?

One challenge in earnest is it can be hard to find groups of volunteers excited about hauling lumber up a mountain — 50-pound loads, carried three miles over muddy trail. It requires groups with high physical capability as well as willingness to complete a strenuous task. Sometimes it takes some convincing.

But the thing is, we rely on that labor. Volunteers are vital to supporting the Green Mountain Club's trail maintenance

efforts. Each year hundreds of people come in groups to haul supplies, clear drainages, or help with other basic trail maintenance. Without them we might have to spend more money on helicopters to fly materials into remote sites, or increase the already demanding workload of our field staff. Luckily in my case I managed to find people to haul lumber. Even though it was a struggle, the sense of accomplishment I felt from executing that task outweighed the hurdles.

Do you have any advice for me?

Capitalize on the flexibility this position offers. No two AmeriCorps members approach this position the same way. That leaves so much room for you to follow your interests and make the position enjoyable for you.

LIZ: That makes a lot of sense. Over the winter months I've dipped my toes into learning how to code and created an app to track service trips and hours more effectively. So, I guess I've already started taking your advice!

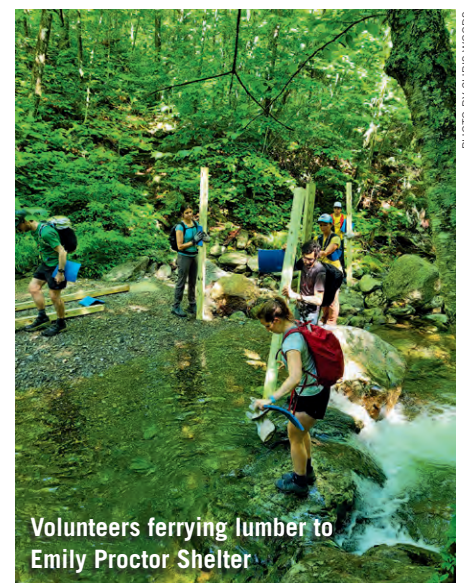


PHOTO BY CHRIS WOODS

IN MEMORIAM

THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB MOURNS THE PASSING OF KIMBALL “KIM”

SIMPSON, who died peacefully at home on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, surrounded by family.

Kim served as GMC Board President from 1991 to 1994, and with his wife Kate Donaghue made historic contributions to the Green Mountain Club and the Long Trail.

Kim and Kate section-hiked the Long Trail beginning in 1976, finishing in 1980. Shortly afterward they began volunteering for trail work with the Worcester Section. This began a decades-long journey of service and accomplishment for the club and the Long Trail.

Before serving as president, Kim was a member of the GMC Board, and he served as treasurer from 1988 to 1991. He was actively involved in many facets of club operations, and supported its mission by participating on a number of committees, including the GMC Land Protection; Budget and Finance; Legal, Insurance, and Endowment; and Nominating Committees. Kim chaired the GMC Fundraising and Land Protection Committees for many years, achieving robust growth in the club's annual budget and program activities.

In recognition of their contributions to the club, Kim and Kate were awarded Honorary Life Membership in 2003 — the club's highest honor. Kim called Westborough, Massachusetts home, but never let the distance from Vermont keep him from his GMC duties. Kim drove north for every meeting, and made additional time to meet with staff and volunteers on important GMC initiatives.

Former GMC Director of Conservation Susan Shea said, “I worked with Kim for over twenty years in his role as club president and later, chair of the Land Protection Committee. Kim was easy to work with and very supportive of my efforts. He and Kate were two of our most enthusiastic supporters of Long Trail protection, and were regular donors to the campaign. Kim made a major contribution to GMC and the Long Trail through his dedication and leadership.”

Under Kim's leadership, the GMC purchased the May Farm property in Waterbury Center, which became the club's headquarters. He and Kate implemented several of the club's systems for volunteer engagement, membership recruitment, and fundraising, which remain core elements of club operations today.

But Kim's greatest impact was on protection of the Long Trail System. In 1985 Kim and Kate helped launch the *Long Trail Protection Campaign*, which set out to raise funds and purchase private land to maintain the continuity of the trail. For decades Kim, Kate and a dedicated corps of staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to raise money and protect key portions of the trail. To date the campaign has conserved more than 25,000 acres and protected more than 60 miles of the Long Trail. Even after stepping down as chair of the GMC Land Protection Committee, Kim regularly drove to Vermont for lunch at the Green Mountain Inn to talk strategy for protection projects.

Former GMC President Rolf Anderson recalled, “Kim's dedication to the Green Mountain Club was both inspiring and



Kimball “Kim” Simpson

PHOTO COURTESY: GMC ARCHIVES

heartwarming. He and his wife Kate seemed to be involved in every significant aspect of the GMC, especially in terms of securing the club's future. His leadership had a personal touch. As keen as Kim was in supporting the GMC as an organization, he showed his affinity for the members with a gentle, respectful and steady manner. Leading by example, Kim was an avid trail maintainer and hiker. He was an ambassador for the Long Trail and the club. Perhaps no other person put as many miles on their car in traveling back and forth between GMC headquarters and his home. What's more - Kim and Kate would donate their cars to the GMC after all those trips. Kim Simpson was the very best example of leadership in the Green Mountain Club. We and the GMC are much the better for all that Kim Simpson gave of himself to the GMC and the Long Trail.”

Kim worked tirelessly towards the goal of permanently protecting the entire Long Trail corridor, and we honor his legacy today by continuing this arduous task. We thank Kim and Kate for their decades of service to the Green Mountain Club.

GMCers with memories or condolences to share are invited to send them via email to gmc@greenmountainclub.org, Subject: Kim Simpson. We will share them with Kim's family.

From the Board

Once again, we are testing moving many updates from GMC's volunteer Board of Directors online. Go to greenmountainclub.org/board-notes to see the latest news and minutes from the January Board Meeting.

Annual Election of General Directors

At GMC's Annual Meeting on June 11, three general seats will open on the board of directors. Directors are elected to three-year terms, with a limit of six consecutive years of board service. The GMC Nominating Committee presents the following candidates for approval: **Nika Meyers, David Hathaway, Don Taylor** To meet the candidates and cast your vote, go to greenmountainclub.org/vote2022

June 11th — Save the Date for GMC's 112th Annual Meeting!

With the state of the pandemic still very much in flux, we are hopeful for an in-person annual meeting but are also prepared for the likelihood of a virtual meeting if we are unable to safely meet in person. Regardless, please save the date for **Saturday, June 11**, and check greenmountainclub.org/annual-meeting for updates.



Turn Your Next Hike into a Science Project

BY NIGEL BATES, GMC CARETAKER PROGRAM FIELD SUPERVISOR

SPRING IS AN EXCELLENT TIME TO EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD and celebrate plants and animals emerging again. But did you know your observations can contribute to scientific research projects all over the world?

Citizen science is the public's collaboration and participation in professional research, especially in the natural world. The most successful projects include data collection or analysis that requires minimal training and can be replicated on a large scale with lots of citizen participants. The number of citizen science projects has exploded in the past ten years or so, as smartphones have given most hikers access to good cameras, and current information even when afield.

Check out the local and global citizen science observation projects below, and consider how you might assist scientific research on your next outdoor adventure!

GLOBAL Citizen Scientist Projects

iNaturalist

inaturalist.org and iNaturalist app

This global observation database welcomes your sightings of mammals, birds, fish, insects, plants, fungi—in fact, any living thing you can think of. The site connects you, the citizen scientist, to millions of naturalists and identifiers to help name and catalog your findings. There's even a computer-based tool to suggest possible identifications for your photo.



PHOTO BY MICHELLE TATUM

iNaturalist will help you identify any creature, like this green frog.

eBird

eBird.org and eBird app

eBird is a project of the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology**. Birders create or use checklists; record when, where, and how they saw or heard birds; and share their observations with the world. It allows scientists to track bird migration patterns and other trends to guide conservation efforts. If you're ever at GMC headquarters in Waterbury Center, you can join and contribute to the GMC Headquarters Hotspot!

eButterfly

ebutterfly.org

Sponsored by the **Vermont Center for EcoStudies**, this international data-driven project requires both photos and another community member to confirm your butterfly identifications. It's a much smaller community than eBird or iNaturalist, but the observations help achieve the same goals of tracking butterfly biodiversity and changes over time.

Community Snow Observations and Mountain Rain or Snow, via NASA

Mountain Hub app; rainorsnow.org

There may be a few more weeks this spring to contribute observations of high elevation snow depth and precipitation. The Community Snow Observations uses the Mountain Hub app, and asks citizen scientists to measure snowpack using avalanche probes. Mountain Rain or Snow asks observers to record the type of precipitation that falls and the temperature to help compile data on mountain weather patterns.



PHOTO BY MICHELLE TATUM

Submit butterfly photos to eButterfly to identify species and track biodiversity.

LOCALIZED Citizen Scientist Projects

Loonwatch from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies

vtecostudies.org

On the third Saturday in July (July 17 this year) Vermonters fan out to document and track breeding loons. GMC's caretakers at Little Rock Pond and Stratton Pond keep an eye out for the majestic birds during the field season. You can sign up for the Adopt a Lake program to track loon activity.

Audubon Vermont Peregrine Falcon Monitoring and Management Project

vt.audubon.org

Early in the spring peregrine falcons start returning to their cliffside nests to lay eggs and raise fledglings. The peregrine falcon was designated endangered in the '80s and '90s, but conservation efforts have enabled the population to recover. However, continued success depends on careful monitoring and protection of their nests. Falcons abandon their nests if disturbed, so GMC joins other outdoor organizations in Vermont to close trails near nesting sites and teach the public about protecting the falcons. Contact Margaret Fowle to adopt a nesting site and start monitoring.

Northeast Alpine Flower Watch, via iNaturalist

inaturalist.org/projects/northeast-alpine-flower-watch

This initiative is a partnership of GMC, the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and Maine's Baxter State Park. It invites citizen scientists to photograph and record the phenology (the timing of biological events like blossoming) of alpine plants. You can take part in the flower watch on your next hike to the top of Mount Mansfield, Camel's Hump, or Mount Abe. Just remember to observe from a distance and stay on the rocks!

Amphibian Road Crossing Program by the North Branch Nature Center

northbranchnaturecenter.org

Amphibians, including frogs, toads, newts, and salamanders, migrate from upland winter habitats to lowland wetlands each spring. They typically emerge on warm wet nights and may cross roads to reach their breeding grounds. Citizen scientists can observe and report amphibian crossings, or even stand guard to ensure the creatures' safety as they cross busy roads. North Branch Nature Center also hosts other community-driven science projects throughout the year.

READERS, what citizen scientist projects do you know or assist with that we missed? Send an email to gmc@greenmountainclub.org, and we'll add your submissions to the list on our blog!

Links to sign up for all these projects can be found on our blog: www.greenmountainclub.org/citizen-science-projects-in-vermont/



Loon on Stratton Pond



State botanist Bob Popp observes diapsania on Mt. Mansfield.



A Red Eft is one amphibian you can track with the North Branch Nature Center.



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Mud Season is Coming

We'd like to remind all hikers that spring mud season runs from snowmelt (generally early April, though we can't predict for sure) until the trails are dry, usually around Memorial Day weekend. Some trails are closed, and hikers are urged to stay off all wet and muddy trails during this time.

Why? Excessive foot traffic causes soil compaction, which degrades the quality of the trail by reducing its ability to absorb water. This causes increased flooding later and makes it harder for vegetation to grow. Erosion then carries the soil away, leaving rocks and roots exposed. Plus, many hikers tend to walk around the mud, trampling vegetation on the edges of trails and widening trails. Luckily, there's plenty to do while we wait for the trails to dry out. Thanks for helping protect Vermont's hiking trails!

✓ MUD SEASON DOS

- ✓ DO seek out low-elevation trails that dry out sooner
 - ✓ DO hike on bike paths, mountain roads, and other durable surfaces
 - ✓ DO turn back if you encounter muddy conditions
 - ✓ DO walk directly through the mud if you can't turn back
 - ✓ DO wear waterproof shoes and gaiters
 - ✓ DO try one of GMC's "Hike This, Not That" Alternatives
 - ✓ DO enjoy signs of spring in your own backyard!
- Check out the Citizen Scientist projects on pages 22-23.

✗ MUD SEASON DON'TS

- ✗ DON'T hike on muddy trails, especially trails above 2500' feet
- ✗ DON'T try to avoid the mud by stepping around it (it tramples vegetation and widens the trail)
- ✗ DON'T underestimate the weather. You may still find snow, ice, and chilly temps.

