Plane Crashes on the Long Trail | Celebrating Vermont’s Alpine Flora | Membership Survey Results
A s you read this message, GMCers, volunteers and staff are gearing up for spring trail and shelter maintenance and another hiking season. There’s a foot of snow here in Hyde Park as I write, yet I am eager for spring and hiking to return.

Last year was highly successful for GMC. Volunteers put in more than 7,000 hours to keep our trails and shelters in great condition, and staff carried out major repair, replacement, and improvement projects along the 500-mile Long Trail System. This year promises to be equally busy and successful! Significant multi-year projects continue into 2023: restoration and improvement on the Northern Trail; year two of the three-year Burrows Tower reconstruction; construction of the Bromley Observation Tower; and building a new rental cabin at Wheeler Pond.

2022 also marked the end of a five-year strategic planning cycle. Themes of the 2017-2022 strategic plan were: Protecting and Managing the Trail Resource; Operational Excellence; Engagement and Inclusion; and Strengthening Sections, Membership and Volunteers.

The five years were productive, and we achieved success on all themes. Notable accomplishments were improving the condition of the Northern Trail, completing the Bluff Mountain Trail in the Northeast Kingdom, adding $2 million to the club’s endowment, protecting key portions of the Long Trail in Johnson, and building a sustainable camps program.

The 2023-2028 Strategic Plan identifies as priorities protecting, maintaining, and improving the Long Trail and side trails in the face of climate change and increased use; conserving the remaining six unprotected miles of the Long Trail; engaging the next generation of trail users; and ensuring that the club and Long Trail System are welcoming and inviting to all visitors, members, volunteers and club staff.

Setting our direction for the next five years will be guided, in part, by the results of our 2022 Membership Survey, which was recently compiled and presented to the Board. You can read key survey results on page 20.

Not surprisingly, 98 percent of members surveyed endorsed protecting, maintaining and improving the Long Trail as the club’s most important goal. Rated as extremely or very important by more than 90 percent: and programming for marginalized populations, important, 60 percent.

A key finding was that our membership is aging, with the greatest concentration of members in my age group of 64 to 76 years old, and a median age of 65, significantly higher than 20 years ago. Thus one of GMC’s most pressing challenges is to attract and keep members and maintainers from all age groups and communities. At 71 I am thankful I can still get out there with chainsaw, loppers and hoe, but for how much longer? We are not alone. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountain Club and other East Coast trail clubs are experiencing the same generational shift.

Our staff and volunteer leadership are developing strategies to meet these challenges, including reinvigorating the GMC Membership Committee and our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion working group, which are seeking ways to ensure that the club and our trails are welcoming and available to everyone. We are also supporting and engaging our 14 sections in broadening their reach with more effective public messaging. We welcome suggestions for ways the club can meet these goals and enable us to protect, maintain, and cultivate the Long Trail System to the highest standards possible. You can email your thoughts at gmc@greenmountainclub.org, Attn: Board President.

I am confident the club will meet the goals in the new strategic plan, and attract new members from all age groups and communities, fulfilling our mission to make the mountains of Vermont play a larger role in the life of the people. Each of these programmatic challenges is, in its own way, existential for the GMC Membership Committee and our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion working group, which are seeking ways to ensure that the club and our trails are welcoming and available to everyone. We are also supporting and engaging our 14 sections in broadening their reach with more effective public messaging. We welcome suggestions for ways the club can meet these goals and enable us to protect, maintain, and cultivate the Long Trail System to the highest standards possible. You can email your thoughts at gmc@greenmountainclub.org, Attn: Board President.

I am confident the club will meet the goals in the new strategic plan, and attract new members from all age groups and communities, fulfilling our mission to make the mountains of Vermont play a larger role in the life of the people. Each of these programmatic challenges is, in its own way, existential for the GMC, but we can meet them with our fine professional staff and our enthusiastic volunteers and members!

Thanks for all you do for the trail and club, and I will see you out on the trail!

Howard VanBenthuyzen
GMG Board President

From the President

Azure bluet is a montane species found in alpine fields on Mansfield. They typically flower April – July.

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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The Long Trail News is published by The Green Mountain Club, Inc., a nonprofit organization founded in 1910. In a 1971 Joint Resolution, the Vermont Legislature designated the Green Mountain Club the "founder, sponsor, defender and protector of the Long Trail System." Contributions of manuscripts, photos, illustrations, and news are welcome from members and nonmembers. The opinions expressed by LTN contributors are not necessarily those of GMC.

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From the President

Howard VanBenthuyzen
GMG Board President

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From the President

Howard VanBenthuyzen
GMG Board President

COMPETITIONS

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Connecting to the Trail through the LTN

After moving permanently to Vermont four years ago I had a vague recollection of belonging to the Green Mountain Club a long time ago. I thought it was when I was going through a major life transition in the early 1980s when I lived in Simsbury, a suburb of Hartford, Connecticut. That was over 40 years ago.

Of course I had to join (again)! now that I was living in Vermont after I discovered and read every word of an impressive Long Trail quarterly (they all are!) that I found in our senior community library. It was haunted, because, in my old age, I keep thinking I was a member and couldn’t remember when or why.

Then the coincidence and mystery was solved in the Fall Long Trail News issue mentioning Carol Langley’s Honorary Life Membership award. I couldn’t believe it. She was of the Connecticut Section and posted a 1980 item mentioning her 40-year-plus tenure with the club. “I would love to read a copy of that posting by her, again!”

Even though I have not been a hiker and am sorry to now miss the Long Trail experience due to recent lower body joint replacements, I read every word of every single article in every Long Trail News issue. I have tremendous admiration for the wonderful experience and respect members of the GMC have hiking the Long Trail and beautiful Green Mountains! The beauty of Vermont, health benefits, camaraderie, volunteerism, commitment, hard work, dedication, family and friendship togetherness enjoyed by the hikers and members is beyond any sport I’ve experienced which are many, other than hiking the Long Trail.

Thank you from a loyal member of the Green Mountain Club.

— Penny Snow

Shelburne, VT

Thoughts on 100 Years of the LTN

I first heard about the Long Trail from an enthusiastic hiker in a shelter in the White Mountains in 1974. The following year I headed out on the first piece of my first Long Trail End to End, finishing in 1977. That was followed the next year by starting a section hike of the AT (finishing in 1980), followed by my second LT End to End, this time as a thru hike in 1991. My third trek started in 1996-97 and my second completion of the AT from 1998 to 2005.

In 1997 I joined the Worcester Section of GMC and have been a 40+ year trail maintainer since (now limited to when my gimpy knees allow it). I met my future wife on a Worcester Section outing in 1980, and have been happily married since 1982.

My life, the Long Trail, and the Long Trail News have been intertwined through most of my adult life. That connection to GMC and the LTN became evident with my just received 100th anniversary edition. Many of the covers I remember, many of the names mentioned were people I’ve met, many of the stories recalled from my reading them in the LTN when it would arrive in my mailbox.

It would be so much easier and less costly for GMC to publish online only but I hope that never comes to pass. We already spend too much time in front of our computers. While I understand some may prefer an electronic version, this issue, like most before, was digested in my easy chair near my wood stove on a cold winter’s day. I hope the slow deliberate reading of the paper version of the LTN never ceases.}

— Denis LAFORCE

Worcester Section, GMC

The Next Generation of Burrows

It was with great interest we read the article in the Fall Long Trail News about rebuilding the Burrows Trail. George Howard Burrows brought the trail up from its foundation in 1825 to 1837. He was a very active member of the GMC, and has been a 40+ year trail maintainer since 1980.

We were pleased to read that the next generation of Burrows will be headed by John and Janine Burrows.

— Denis LAFORCE

Worcester Section, GMC

VOTE for GMC’s Next General Directors

At GMC’s Annual Meeting on June 17, five general seats will open on the board of directors. Directors are elected by members to three-year terms, with a limit of six consecutive years of board service. The GMC Nominating Committee presents the following candidates for approval:

Anne Rouser (second term)
MARIAH KENY (second term)
ALEXIS PETERS (second term)
OWEN RACHAMPELL (first term)
MICHELE KUPERSMITH (first term)

To meet the candidates and cast your vote, go to greenmountainclub.org/vote2023

GMC Officers

Hershel Thatcher, President
Nancy McCallon, First Vice President
Nancy Thompson, Treasurer
Caroline Miller, Secretary

GMC Nominating Committee

Owen Rachambell (first term)
Mariah Keagy (second term)
Anne Houser (second term)

Get Involved at GMC!

We Welcome Your Comments!

cmiller@greenmountainclub.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, GMC

4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road

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GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB

LEARN MORE and APPLY at greenmountainclub.org/vitp

VOLUNTEER VACATION on the Long Trail

Have you ever wondered how trail crews get those stone staircases in place, or what really goes into creating crushed rock turnpike? Or, did you work on a trail crew in another life and find yourself missing the muddy crew camaraderie? GMC is seeking applicants for the summer Volunteer Long Trail Patrol, a unique opportunity to learn and practice trail building skills with minimal disruption to daily life.

Run away for a week or more (weeks run Thursday to Tuesday) and get a taste of trail crew life. Four to eight volunteers, led by two experienced GMC staff, will meet and get oriented on Thursday evenings. Friday, you’ll head into the field, review tool use and safety, and gain on-the-job training assessing muddy, eroded, flood-prone areas of the trail. Volunteers camp at their work site Friday through Tuesday before packing out. It’s challenging, fun, and an incredible way to give back to the Long Trail.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, June 17, 2023

GMC’s 113th Annual Meeting

This year’s meeting will be hosted by the Laraway, Sterling, and Northern Frontier sections at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center. For information on registration, lodging, and additional activities, visit greenmountainclub.org/annual-meeting

Saving the Date.
PLANE CRASH SITES
Along the Long Trail

By Brian Lindner

A
old Far Side cartoon showed two pilots looking out the windshield as a poor animal peers back. “Say… what’s a mountain goat doing way up here in a cloud bank?” the copilot asks.

As the beginning of flight, airplanes and mountains have never gone well together, and it has been no different in Vermont. Our mountains are littered with crash sites, and in some cases wreckage is still on scene. The Long Trail passes near several, some of which can be seen easily from established trails, though few hikers have realized how much aviation history was nearby. A 1996 state law requires wreckage removal from all new crash sites.

In most cases, the unfortunate pilot mistakenly flew his (all males thus far) perfectly airworthy airplane into a Green Mountain thanks to weather, human error, or a combination of the two. There have been tragic deaths, but also remarkable survivor stories.

I became interested in local historical plane crashes on a hike up Camel’s Hump in the early ’60s. A schoolboy then, I quickly dug into research on that well-known bomber crash. Since then I’ve gained a reputation for knowledge of all Vermont crashes. Most state and federal files were lost or destroyed in the late 1970s, so next-of-kin, survivors, police, FAA, Civil Air Patrol, the media, and others often came to me for information.

I began to create my own files from a wide variety of sources, and this article pulls from those files.

Space does not allow me to detail every known accident, but here are the more intriguing backstories and the best known accident, but here are the more known stories.

Vermonter Mockler, from Buffalo, New York, mistakenly flew his airplane into a Green Mountain thanks to weather, human error, or a combination of the two. There have been tragic deaths, but also remarkable survivor stories.

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Southern Vermont

On July 14, 1930, 19-year-old Frank Goldsborough became the first pilot to crash near the LT. The crash made national news, including page one of the New York Times. Goldsborough had become famous for setting several transcontinental and other records, and had been featured in endless news stories of his aviation adventures.

He was taking a friend, Donald Mockler, from Buffalo, New York, to Keene, New Hampshire. As they approached Vermont in their open cockpit biplane, they encountered unanticipated fog. They passed Bennington headed east, and never saw the mountain ahead. They cleared the Long Trail, but slammed into rising terrain near Stamford Meadows in Woodford.

Goldsborough broke his skull and two legs. Mockler had only minor injuries, but couldn’t remove the unconscious pilot pinned in the wreckage. Mockler heard running water, and found a stream which he mistakenly followed uphill. Five hours later he staggered out of the woods, but by then couldn’t provide any meaningful information about the crash site. After hours of searching the next day, rescuers found the wreck with an unconscious Goldsborough still pinned inside. Rescuers struggled for hours to evacuate him to a waiting ambulance in Dunville Hollow. He made it to Putnam Memorial Hospital.

He made it to Putnam Memorial Hospital, but died within hours without regaining consciousness.

The so-called “Bennington Triangle” around Glastenbury Mountain is known for strange disappearances, including at least six airplane crashes from 1948 to 1997. Seven of ten pilots and passengers perished. Almost all evidence has been removed except for the 1997 crash near Goddard Shelter, where small pieces of wreckage have been reported hidden among leaves and ferns.

Tragedy and Survival

Further north, another crash caused both horrible tragedy and a remarkable survival.

In February 1972 the Zlowe family of New Jersey flew to Vermont to ski. Near Griffith Lake they hit the west side of the mountain around 11:00 a.m. Mr. Zlowe had filed no flight plan, so the family was not missed until that evening.

The pilot and his oldest son died, leaving three uninjured younger children. They survived the night, and the next morning set out for help in deep snow and sub-zero temperatures. Crawling down a steep ravine in chest deep snow, Zlowe’s 16-year-old daughter died of exposure. Her friend, Pamela Fletcher, also 16, continued with David Zlowe, their detailed plan.

If you are keen to see a crash site, the B-24 Liberator bomber crash site on Camel’s Hump, the Cessna on Mount Abraham, and the F-51 near Tiltonson Camp are easy to find, and locations are marked on some maps.

If you do venture to one of the crash sites, please keep these precautions in mind:

- Avoid hiking off trail in the alpine zones (summits of Mount Abraham, Camel’s Hump, and Mount Mansfield) in order to protect rare alpine vegetation.
- Please respect Vermont’s wilderness and historical sites. Do not disturb crash sites, touch or remove materials.
- Hiking off trail or “bushwacking” requires competent use of map and compass. If you must bushwhack, consider going with a companion and giving a friend back home your detailed plan. Remember, there is often no cell service in the backcountry.

VISITING Crash Sites

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Remains of a Cessna crash on Mt. Abraham, the most visible and accessible wreckage on the LT. The pilot and two passengers survived. Photograph by David Modica.
to have died waiting for rescue. The Army taught flyers to stay with a crashed aircraft and await rescue. The slightly injured young colonel followed that training to the letter, and it cost him his life. He died of dehydration and exposure.

Some Wreckage Remains

In the Breadloaf Wilderness a hiker wandering a bit off the LT could stumble across the most complete aircraft wreck in a Vermont wilderness. Except for the engine and electronics the plane sits intact, a brand-new barf bag still in the glove box. The Cessna CE-150K went down in 1984 when a couple flying down the ridgeline toward Conley Glen shelter hit a downdraft that knocked the planes into the trees. The occupants opened the door and walked down the mountain.

Farther north is another Cessna sitting mere feet from the LT on the summit of Mount Abraham. Photos of this wreck are everywhere on the internet – often with inaccurate information about the crash. Under a low cloud ceiling the plane was unable to safely descend into the Mad River Valley, and settled into the trees on the foggy ridge and bounced on the LT at a right angle. The pilot and two passengers survived minor injuries and walked down the mountain.

As the LT passes the top of Sugarbush ski area there is a crash site on the ridge. The twin engine craft had five on board, including a professional pilot and two boys on their 11th birthdays. Flying south at night in 1969 they apparently realized they were too far east, then turned right and flew into Nancy Hanks Peak. Nobody had a chance. Although within a stone’s throw of the LT, this small amount of wreckage isn’t visible until one is five or six feet away.

Camel’s Hump

Camel’s Hump has seen three airplane crashes. In 1946 a single engine crashed and hung in trees on the Monroe T rail. The pilot was uninjured, and the wreckage was quickly removed. In February 1989 a pilot and his mistress crashed into a snow-covered area off the Bamforth Ridge T rail. The pilot left his passenger in her skirt and street shoes while he slogged down the mountain in deep snow. He was charged with negligence, his cold passenger was rescued, and his wife sued for divorce.

The most famous of all Vermont plane crashes was the U.S. Army Air Force B-24 Liberator bomber that crashed on Camel’s Hump on Sunday, October 16, 1944, killing nine of the 10-man crew. The weather was near perfect but the night moonless when they hit the west side of the summit. Today if you stand on the LT at its southern junction with the Alpine Trail, you are on a large flat rock. The 30-ton bomber scraped this rock clean by bouncing on it as it careened around the Hump’s south face. A bronze plaque at the base of the Monroe Trail in North Duxbury was dedicated in 1989 with the survivor and many of the victims’ families present – including two elderly mothers. Both large wings still rest near the Alpine Trail, and the site is marked on GMC’s Camel’s Hump maps.

Northern Long Trail

At Tillotson Camp a curious hiker can easily find the nearby swampy area whose edge holds the remains of a World War II F-51 Mustang. (For aeronautical readers – “F”-51 is indeed correct. For unknown reasons Lt. John Arburn from Ethan Allen Air Force Base in Rutland lost control and came straight down onto a ledge while practicing aerobatics. One of the pristine machine guns from this crash is displayed at the Vermont Veteran’s Museum at Camp Johnson in Colchester.

Jay and North Jay Peak each have multiple sites. One crash near the LT took place on May 11, 1968, when Dr. Herbert and Dorothy Groce flew from Quebec City to Newport in a brand-new Cessna. They were too far west, then turned north into the foggy ridge and bounced on the LT at a right angle. The pilot and two passengers survived minor injuries and walked down the mountain.

The Zlowe family crashed on Mount Tabor on their way to a ski trip in 1972. Of five occupants, two survived.
Alpine Steward Discovers Rare Plant on Mount Mansfield’s Summit

The Purple Crowberry was last seen in Vermont more than 100 years ago

By Liam Ebner

A lpine areas, living remnants of the last ice age, make their homes on the higher summits of New England and New York, where they serve as refuges for endangered plants adapted to thrive in the harsh conditions there. In Vermont, less than 275 acres of this isolated alpine biome remain. Because the rare patches of alpine zone lie in beautiful and popular recreational areas, their plants face multiple dangers: climate change, development, invasive species, and the most immediate danger, human recreational impacts. In such austere conditions survival is never guaranteed. However, in 2022 the alpine zone welcomed back to the community a plant long considered extinct.

My first experience in the alpine zone was hiking Algonquin Peak with friends in September 2020. New York has 173 acres of alpine zone, fewer than neighboring states, all concentrated in the Adirondack High Peaks like Marcy, Haystack and Algonquin.

I knew these mountaintops were special, and I wanted to help protect them. I was fortunate to work as a summit steward for the Adirondack Mountain Club in 2021 between my junior and senior years of college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. After graduation I returned to ADK for the 2022 season, educating hikers about the alpine zone, assisting in botany research, and maintaining trails above treeline in the High Peaks. In February this year I became the Summit Steward Coordinator for the Adirondack Mountain Club, and I am thrilled to continue working to protect this fragile ecosystem.

In October 2022, I attended the biennial Northeastern Alpine Stewardship Gathering co-hosted in Vermont by the Waterman Fund and the Green Mountain Club. The conference features professional presentations of alpine research and stewardship, and is a chance to engage with counterparts from New England, New York, and Canada to discuss challenges, trends and successes.

After two days of presentations, conference participants went on field trips to places with significant natural histories in Vermont. I joined a trip up Mount Mansfield led by Kevin Tolon, Staff Biologist at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, to learn about the Bicknell’s Thrush (Catharus bicknelli), a rare migratory songbird that breeds in high elevation coniferous forests before migrating south to coniferous forests for the winter. Like alpine plants, the alpine and subalpine breeding habitats of the Bicknell’s Thrush are threatened by climate change. In October the chance of seeing this bird was slim, so I was also checking out some plants while on the summit ridge.

At our turnaround point we charted and took a snack break. Like any curious steward, I took a small cluster of crowberry plants clinging to the soil and sprawling across the rock. In New York, two species of crowberry plants live in the alpine zone. The more common species, black crowberry, Empetrum atropurpureum, is abundant on most summits, and even grows on lower summits that would not normally be considered alpine (less than 3,500 feet in elevation). It’s common in Vermont as well. Purple crowberry, Empetrum nigra, is much rarer in New York. It had not been seen in Vermont since 1908, causing biologists to list it as extinct in the state. While working in New York I picked up the habit of checking every crowberry plant, hoping to find more populations of the purple crowberry.

Two major characteristics differentiate the two plants. Berry color is the most obvious. Purple crowberry sports purple fruit, while black crowberry bears black fruit. This enables easy identification, but only when there are berries. The plant on Mansfield had no berries, so I turned to the next trait. Black crowberry leaves grow from a bare red-orange stem, while the purple crowberry stem has the same color, but fine white hairs too. The Mansfield plant had white hairs, confirming it to be purple crowberry!

Discovering a plant thought extinct in Vermont is extremely exciting. Not only is it great news for the biological community, it helps show that stewardship practices, such as GMC’s summit caretaker program, continue to help protect the alpine zone. The greatest danger for these plants remains hikers’ footsteps, but the greatest protectors are hikers themselves. You need not be an outdoor professional to help ensure plant survival. Just stick to marked trails, stay on bare rock, and practice Leave No Trace Principles.

The Vermont’s Fish and Wildlife Department will monitor the health and growth of the purple crowberry and consider whether to include it on the state’s threatened and endangered species list. Next time you are on a high summit in Vermont or New York, ask a summit steward to show you some plants, and remember to do the rock walk!

Liam Ebner is the Summit Steward Coordinator for the Adirondack Mountain Club. In his free time, he enjoys birding, paddling, and nature photography.
Mount Mansfield has 100 acres of alpine tundra and at least 50 plant species, some considered true alpine plants and others also found in non-alpine poor soil environments, like bogs. Here are eight to look for on your next adventure. When exploring alpine zones please observe plants from a trail; remain on durable surfaces in the stringed corridor to protect these fragile organisms.

Learn to Identify 8 Alpine Plants

Bearberry Willow (Salix uva-ursi)
- Small silky buds
- Endangered in Vermont
- Some individual plants on Mansfield are 100+ years old

Bigelow’s Sedge (Carex bigelowii)
- Not grass!
- Blades have sharp, rough edges (called spikelets)

Diapensia (Diapensia lapponica)
- Leathery green leaves
- Flowers May-June in Vermont
- Simple leaf blades
- Endangered in Vermont

Mountain Cranberry (Vaccinium vitis-idaea)
- Low, creeping shrub
- Waxy leaves
- Pinkish white flowers

Black Crowberry (Empetrum nigrum)
- Grows edible dark berries
- Small needlelike evergreen
- Rare in Vermont

Creeping Snowberry (Gaultheria hispidula)
- Flowers small and difficult to see
- Leaves small, rounded, and evergreen
- Found in mossy areas and bogs

Bigelow’s Sedge (Carex bigelowii)
- Not grass!
- Blades have sharp, rough edges (called spikelets)

Mountain Sandwort (Minuartia groenlandica)
- A disturbance colonizer that can grow among foot traffic
- Often found under rocks along trail
- Large white flowers

Three-Toothed Cinquefoil (Sibbaldiopsis tridentata)
- Compound leaves made of three leaflets
- White, five-petaled flower (not pictured)

Sources: GMC caretakers’ “An Interpretative Field Guide to the Summit of Mount Mansfield”; Bob Popp, Vermont State Botanist; Angela Hilsman, photos.
State Botanist BOB POPP, Instrumental in Caretaker Education, Retires

By Hailey Lynch, GMC Outreach and Field Coordinator

Generations of Green Mountain Club backcountry caretakers know that spiky Bigelow’s Sedge isn’t just plain old grass, thanks to Bob Popp, who is retiring after 33 years as Vermont’s State Botanist. One element of his role has been leading annual alpine plant identification training sessions.

Bob went on to earn a master’s degree in alpine plant ecology in Colorado and to conduct research in Kenya for a year. He worked for several consulting firms in New York and Massachusetts before making his way to Vermont. In 1989 the state hired Bob and two other biologists for its National Heritage program to inventory the state’s plant and animal species and natural communities, to inform conservation planning and management. Bob focused on rare, threatened, and endangered plants, and also conducted wetlands inventories, consulted with land managers, and helped graduate students with their research.

Bob says that because Vermont’s climate, Bob says, has “never changed so much, so quickly,” there are part of our heritage.”

He has seen the unmistakable effect of the caretaker program in his three decades. “I used to routinely see dogs off-leash above tree line and people off trail, but now when I see that, it’s a surprise,” he says. Summit caretakers try to speak with every person they encounter above tree line and explain how just a few footsteps can kill fragile plants, so they should walk on durable surfaces and leash pets. “I think the club has really caught on,” he concludes. “Today, caretakers are a known entity, and hikers don’t seem at all surprised when they are approached by one.”

For their part, dozens of GMC caretakers are grateful for Bob’s expertise and inspiration at the start of their environmental education careers. Kate Songer, a former lead caretaker on Mount Mansfield, said Bob “has been inspiring caretakers for as long as I’ve been alive, and he does it with such curiosity, passion and quiet. He’s a walking encyclopedia of Vermont’s most intriguing plants, a tough and tough Vermont who can out hike me, and overall a gentle, humble soul who really, really loves plants.”

Alpine vegetation often takes decades to reestablish itself after disturbance. Today meadows of Bigelow’s Sedge thrive in places that were mud pits in the 1970s, showing the difference environmental education can make. When a visiting Adirondack summit steward found purple crowberry, an alpine plant previously considered extirpated, on Mount Mansfield (page 10), Bob was filled with renewed hope for the future. “It’s all been bad news, with habitat loss, fragmentation, degradation and climate change, and it’s just great to have an environmental plant conservation success story. It certainly makes me hopeful and excited that something we assumed wasn’t there is still there. Although I didn’t find it personally, that has to be one of my career highlights. Overall, it’s very encouraging.”

Vermont’s climate, Bob says, has “changed so much, so quickly, and I don’t think anybody can predict what’s going to happen next. We’re likely going to see habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and degradation due to invasive species primarily. They all kind of work together. As landscapes get more fragmented, that provides an avenue for invasive species to establish. They tend to do better in changing environments, so climate change is just going to promote them, and we are getting more weedy things like dandelions even on Mount Mansfield.”

Bob sees advancing summit education is the best way to conserve New England’s alpine zones. People are not going to advocate for protection of the alpine zone if they can’t go there and see it. So visitation should be encouraged, not shut down.

“If you rope it off and make it this elitist thing, the average person is not going to care about it,” he explains. “You want to encourage people to use the alpine; to visit and recreate in it, but at the same time you don’t want to love it to death. That’s where you folks come in. The Green Mountain Club and the Adirondack Mountain Club are there to educate people: This is a great place, we want you to come here, but it’s very fragile. I think most people get that, and adhere to that message.”

Thank you, Bob, for inspiring and educating GMC’s caretakers. As Kate sums up: “Bob is one of my main motivations to protect rare alpine plants, and an invaluable resource to everyone who knows him.”

Celebrating Vermont’s Alpine Flora

THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB FIELD PROGRAM TEAM has substantially expanded its capacity in the three years since the pandemic upended the landscape of work and society. After cutting the program to bare bones in 2020, we leveled up significantly, and in 2022 we surmounted the final challenge of reincorporating the Volunteer Long Trail Patrol. We also experienced repeated staff quarantine through our first, second... fifth, sixth Covid cases on staff.

Early winter is always a whirlwind of compiling project reports and logging completed work with our partners. Reviewing the booming 2022 season, I am especially proud of our work. As always, volunteers played a huge role, logging more than 7,000 hours. In addition to their usual work on trails, shelters and privies, they completed some addition to their usual work on trails, logging more than 7,000 hours. In am especially proud of our work.

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We submitted an Act 250 permit application for the new Bromley Tower, the final administrative step before construction. We are finalizing contractor selection and hope to see construction done by fall.

We will support volunteers through trail skills trainings and refreshers for sections and individual adopters. We have again engaged Northeast Woodland Training, Inc. (NEWT), for chainsaw training to meet U.S. Forest Service requirements for training and certification for working on trails on federal land.

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Spring is always busy, with hiring our seasonal staffers and crews, planning projects, and training. I’m looking forward to continuing our momentum improving our trails and building our new Wheeler Pond cabin site.
GMC Conserves Judevine Headwaters Property

Key Piece in the Continuing Long Trail Protection Campaign

By Mollie Flanigan, GMC Director of Land Conservation

A n important piece of the Long Trail protection puzzle fell into place on December 15, when the 12.26-acre “Judevine Headwaters” parcel in Johnson was successfully conserved. This small but critical parcel fills out a narrow section of trail corridor along Plot Road, provides for an off-road trailhead parking area, and protects about 100 feet of Long Trail roadway.

The land, now owned by the State of Vermont, is managed as part of the Long Trail State Forest for public access and recreation. GMC has sought to protect this property and section of trail since the 1970s, when the club first entered into a license agreement with the private landowner. Since then, the opportunity to conserve the land didn’t arise until the longtime owner was ready to sell in 2018.

The acquisition was accomplished through the club’s partnership with the Trust for Public Land and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. GMC purchased the land in December 2020 with the Trust for Public Land and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. GMC holds 65 conservation easements and annually monitors them through the volunteer corridor monitoring program.

Why Easements?

Acquiring an easement comes with the cost of purchasing it. The price of an easement GMC is to hold on state land is set at 25 percent of the appraised value of the property. After buying the easement, there are the ongoing costs of annual monitoring, to ensure the terms of the easement are being followed. Why does GMC continue to incur these expenses on land that goes into state ownership?

The answer is the result of some of GMC’s foundational goals: to manage the Long Trail as a “footpath in the wilderness,” to have its route legally protected, and to retain a role in determining land use in the trail corridor, defined as 500 feet on either side of the trail.

In the early 1990s GMC and the State of Vermont established a strong partnership to protect the route of the Long Trail. This partnership is built around public dollars supporting land that GMC buys and then transfers to the state to own. The partnership plays on both organizations’ strengths: GMC’s ability to work with landowners and act quickly when they are ready to sell, and the state’s capacity to own and manage land for public use over the long term.

Most state land is managed for a wide variety of public uses in addition to hiking, forestry, hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling, for example. State land managers have to balance all of the public uses and impacts, and an easement can establish which use(s) is given precedence. Thus, GMC conservation easements add a layer of legally binding protection to ensure that Long Trail management will be prioritized and protected into the future on those properties.

Protection Zones

The easements establish the Long Trail Protection Zone (LTPZ), a 1,000-foot-wide corridor centered on the trail where natural forces are allowed to run their course, timber harvesting is restricted, and crossings by roads and other trails are minimized. The zone is designed to maintain and promote the experience of hiking in a natural, wild, or rural setting; and to enhance scenic beauty, solitude, and contact with nature, while preventing environmental degradation.

The LTPZ is comprised of two management zones. At its core is a Primary Protection Zone (PPZ) that extends two hundred feet on either side of the center of the roadway. The PPZ has the strictest management guidelines, and is designed to provide a forested and remote recreational experience.

Vegetation management is generally not permitted, except in accordance with the property’s management plan and with prior written approval from GMC. We do consider vegetation management that protects forest health (for example, removal of non-native species) and scenic qualities, such as maintaining vistas.

The rest of the LTPZ is called the Secondary Protection Zone (SPFZ), and it is designed as an additional buffer to the Long Trail. Here silviculture and forest management activities are permitted, provided they are consistent with the terms of the easement and the management plan, and with prior written approval of GMC.

Other provisions of the easement restrict what type of development can occur, specify how other trail systems can be manage other necessary land uses.

Want to Learn More about Conservation Easements and How their Provisions are Upheld?

The Green Mountain Club is looking for new volunteer corridor monitors to adopt parcels in central and northern Vermont. Corridor monitors are asked to visit their assigned parcels at least twice a year. This is a great way to learn and practice map, compass, and bushwhacking skills; gain conservation experience; and observe wildlife. Please get in touch with Mollie Flanigan, director of land conservation, to learn more at mflanigan@greenmountainclub.org or (802) 241-8217.

Properties Available for Adopting:

- Northern slopes of Jay Peak
  Jay, 166 acres, 2 miles of Long Trail

- Belvidere Mountain foothills
  Eden, 519 acres, 1 mile of Long Trail and 0.6 miles side trail

- East of Pimnee Brook
  Button, 319 acres

- Burnt Rock Mtn. Ira Allen Ridgeline
  Fayston, 171 acres, 1.25 miles of Long Trail

- North of Clarendon George
  Shrewsbury, 247 acres, 0.6 miles of Long Trail/Appalachian Trail

Long Trail. Here huckleberry and forest management activities are permitted, provided they are consistent with the terms of the easement and the management plan, and with prior written approval of GMC.

The two levels of protection within the 1,000-foot zone enable GMC to achieve its primary goal of maintaining a wilderness experience, while allowing the State of Vermont to manage other necessary land uses.

Other provisions of the easement restrict what type of development can occur. As long as other trail systems can be planned for and staked, and codify that future subdivision or sale of the property requires GMC approval.

The conservation easements give GMC a larger role and more authoritative seat at the table when management decisions are made on key Long Trail System properties, and that, the club wagers, is worth quite a lot.

GMC is thrilled to have successfully conserved the Judevine Headwaters property and to have added this small but critical parcel to the Long Trail State Forest. It took more than 30 years, but GMC’s patience and dedication to protecting the Long Trail was once again rewarded. 
Since 1994 the Green Mountain Club has surveyed its members about every four years to learn what the membership’s characteristics and opinions, and how they may be changing. From 1994 to 2012, surveys were conducted by mail by Professor Bob Manning of the Rubenstein School of the Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont. In 2016 and 2022 GMC staff members conducted the surveys using an online survey tool.

One thousand randomly selected members received surveys in 2022, and 197 returned them, for a response rate of 20 percent, compared with 46 percent in 2016. The response rate may have declined because the survey was longer in 2022, and it was sent from a third-party electronic survey tool provider rather than directly from the club.

An online survey has advantages: cost savings, response timeliness, and ease of data processing. But it also has disadvantages: screen fatigue among respondents, reliance on a third party, and surveys getting lost in the increasing abundance of other electronic communications.

Information from the survey helps club leaders and staff understand what members want, identify priorities, and measure the effectiveness of programs and services.

A snapshot of the latest survey results is below. To see the full results, please visit greemountainclub.org/2022survey.

As seen in the table, our membership is not representative of the Vermont population as a whole, based on 2020 census data. Additionally:

- GMC members are a small fraction of Long Trail hikers. More than 300,000 people visit the Long Trail every year. Less than 10,000 are GMC members.
- While our membership is aging, member retention remains strong. Members have been active for an average of twelve years, and a median of six years.

How Members Communicate and Where They Get their Information

- Use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter all ranked below 20 percent. The club reaches about 40,000 folks via its social media channels, indicating that non-members use them more than members.
- Use of Facebook Outdoors and AllTrails is up significantly over the last survey – 60 percent vs 20 percent. Thirty-six percent of members don’t use apps for hiking.
- Twenty-two percent of members use online services (Meet Up, Facebook groups) to communicate with other hikers and sign up for outings.
- Almost 80 percent of members list the Long Trail News as the primary source of information about GMC, followed by the main website and email newsletters.
- In addition, advocating for environmental issues specific to the Long Trail is educating children and the public about the trail and outdoor skills also rank as very important.
- Almost 80 percent of members are satisfied or very satisfied with the maintenance of the Long Trail.
- Sixty percent of members felt it was appropriate or very appropriate to include Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) priorities in the club’s strategic plan.
- When asked what motivates members to give to the GMC, more than 70 percent responded trail work.

Next Steps

The club is creating its next five-year strategic plan, and the membership survey results will help inform our priorities. Clearly, proactively addressing the generational shift of GMC members is a top priority for the club, and reinforces the importance of engaging current and future generations of hikers.

Please remember, you don’t need to respond to a survey to tell us what you think. This is your Green Mountain Club. We welcome and encourage feedback from members and all trail users. Email us at gmc@greenmountainclub.org or call at 802-244-7037.

—Mike DeBonis, Executive Director

### GMC Member Attributes Compared to Vermont Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Vermont – 2020 Census</th>
<th>GMC – 2022 Membership Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degrees or higher</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender distribution</td>
<td>50% female</td>
<td>35% female (stable since 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65 (up 21 years since 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$67,000</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
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</table>

The Green Mountain Club has had many staff come and go over the years. Many names stand out in GMC’s history, thanks to their contributions to the club’s mission, the expertise and professionalism they brought to the club, or their leadership through challenges.

This year we are saying goodbye to someone who embodies all of the above. Isaac Alexandre-Leach has spent the last seven years working for GMC in a variety of roles.

Lorne Carrié summarized Isaac’s lengthy resume, saying “as Sterling Pond Caretaker and Camel’s Hump Lead Caretaker, he protected alpine zones and fragile, high-elevation water resources. As a support staff in the development and membership team, he supported the critical fundraising GMC must do every year to fund caretaker roles like his. As Field Supervisor, he supported staff in the field professionally and emotionally. As Field Coordinator, he was an administrative powerhouse.”

Isaac has worked tirelessly over his tenure to make the GMC field program a highly regarded and accessible employment opportunity to anyone who desires to work in recreation trail management. He strengthened GMC’s seasonal field staff hiring process in many ways, including discussing GMC’s expectations of the employee and the program as a whole. As a seasonal staff member himself, he always held himself to the highest standards of professionalism and quality. In the hiring role, he recognized that to retain high-caliber staff, GMC must offer those employees the respect, organizational resources and financial compensation they deserve.

Isaac is passionate about equitable access to the outdoors and in outdoor careers. He is a role model for other staff in his approach to understanding the barriers that prevent folks from marginalized communities from feeling welcome in the mountains or as GMC staff. He is always willing to have difficult conversations, examine his own inherent bias, and be profoundly committed to growing as a person. His individual growth shows up at work, as he has pushed the organization to complete critical self-examination around diversity, equity, and inclusion. He contributed to the development of the GMC’s recently adopted land acknowledgement statement.

Nigel Bates, who was promoted into the position Isaac is vacating, expressed gratitude for Isaac’s trusting approach to teaching and training: “I came to GMC with a background in environmental education but very little experience with trail design, tool maintenance, or carpentry. Certain corners of the trail world can feel intimidating at times, as if everyone already knows everything there is to know. Isaac has had a profound effect in steering (GMC’s) field program away from that sort of culture, making GMC a more welcoming and inclusive place to work no matter what skills you bring on day one.”

Isaac has become GMC’s in-house expert in backcountry waste management. He has helped guide the conversion of more than a dozen GMC pit privies to the most recent model of moldering compost privies, and he has trained hundreds of individuals in backcountry waste composting.

He even sits on a working group of club and trail organizations from the northeastern U.S. sharing best practices and providing case study input to improve backcountry waste management techniques and strategy.

“I’ll miss working with Isaac every day, and hope to emulate his mind and vision in carrying the field program forward,” said Nigel.

We will miss Isaac for all his contributions to the club in recent years. His dry sense of humor will leave a gap that will be hard to fill. Thank you, Isaac, for all the work and passion you have put into the club. And thank you especially for the work that goes unseen, unknown, and unacknowledged because you took the initiative to create solutions for problems no one else ever saw.

### Farewell Isaac Alexandre-Leach

By Keegan Tierney

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Revisiting

CLARENDON GORGE BRIDGE

50 Years After the Big Flood

By Tom Broido

While hiking with old friends last fall, I stopped for a photo with another old friend: the bridge over Clarendon Gorge. I realized that this summer it will be 50 years since the Flood of ’73, which would shape my first summer working on the Long Trail Patrol (LTP). The Flood took place June 28-30, 1973 and was one of Vermont’s most damaging. Rainfall was already high in May and June, and this storm’s totals were measured between 6 and 7 inches in central and southern Vermont. President Nixon declared Vermont a federal disaster area. Estimated damages were $64 million. The flood even inspired a song: “The Flood of ’73” by Dan Linder of the legendary Vermont bluegrass band, Banjo Dan and the Mid-nite Flatboys.

Nudy waters took my home
Sweetly all that I own
Killed my crops and my stock and put me
on my knees
But somehow we all survived
Sure felt good to be alive
After the mighty Flood of ’73

Unfortunately, there were two fatalities reported. One was hiker Robert Brugmann, who tragically drowned on July 4 trying to cross Mill River at the site of the Clarendon Gorge bridge. Bob loved the outdoors and was spending his summer hiking the AT/LT from north to south. His family and friends provided instrumental support rebuilding the bridge in 1974.

Over the past century, three bridges have spanned the 70-foot crossing, 35 feet above the upper Clarendon Gorge on Mill River. The first reported bridge was an early 1900s wooden foot bridge. GMC’s Killington Section led construction of a suspension bridge in Spring 1957, which stood until it was wiped out in the Flood. Reports indicate that debris carried downstream by the swollen Mill River flooded the river and approached the bridge. The resulting dam backed up the river, creating a large whirlpool that eroded away the northeast bank. Remarkably, the bridge anchors held in place until the water rose up and hit the bridge broadside, pulling it into the river.

I learned about the LTP from friends who worked on the fall crew in 1973, so I joined the following summer. George Pearlinstein, volunteer leader of the LTP in 1974, assigned Bob Reed and me our job for the second half of the summer: rebuild the bridge over Clarendon Gorge! (Bob was known as “Pinky” due to an unfortunate sunburn incident.)

First, we dismantled and hauled the old bridge and other debris out of the gorge. We were given a portable hydraulic cable cutter and went to work cutting it up and carrying the pieces up the bank. Next up was to assemble the new bridge along the side of the trail from Route 103. At St. Peter, the GMC volunteer who did the initial engineering design for the new bridge, taught us how to read the plans, cut different length and diameter cables, and use cable clamps to hold everything in place.

“St. Peter, Broido and O’Brien worked until 1 a.m. [the night before] pre-assembling some of the cables and parts…” (Long Trail News, November 1974)

I don’t remember such a late night, but on July 27 about 25 volunteers came out to “string the bridge.” Most of the summer it was just me and Pinky at the site, so I was amazed at the number of people who showed up to help winch the bridge across the river, lift the main cables over the towers and deck the bridge.

The dedication ceremony on August 24 brought mixed emotions. GMC was rightfully proud of the new bridge, a public/private/volunteer partnership project completed just over a year after the old bridge was destroyed. Portions of the event were also a solemn occasion as Bob Brugmann’s friends and family recognized his loss.

The power of Mill River during high flow conditions has stuck with me for 50 years. Pinky and I had crossed the river almost daily, usually a simple rock hop or shallow wade. One day, it had rained in the early morning hours, but the river was low all day long. While sapping on the river shore, I woke up to a loud roar and tumbling sounds. I found a swollen river with subsurface rocks rolling down the stream bed and large tree trunks being carried into the gorge. GMC had temporarily re-routed the trail around the gorge, but nonetheless a couple hikers showed up intent on wading across. Luckily, they changed course. Another time the crew was taking a time-honored afternoon skinny dip. It had recently rained at some point upstream from the gorge. As we relaxed and sunned ourselves on big boulders in the gorge, the river turned turbid and rose quickly. Our clothes, which we had left safely on shore, were now swirling around in a big whirlpool about to be swept away.

The dedication ceremony allows hikers to see the new bridge. A new generation of the Long Trail Patrol has had volunteer or staff elders for guidance, support and insight. For me they were primarily George Pearlinstein and Gardiner Lane. There was also the occasional sighting of Mauri Wintturi. Each carries their own memories: George, who thought nothing of driving six hours round trip after work to deliver us ice cream and our mail. Mauri, showing up unannounced with beers, in his famous “Bed Bug” – a Volkswagen Beetle with a mattress instead of a passenger seat. Gardiner, each week transporting us to and from the trailhead in his little red jeep we christened “Gardiner’s Bandoised Box.” I was fortunate to reconnect with Gardiner decades later on the backcountry ski trails at Bolton Valley where he was an inspiration, skiing into his 90s with a free heel and free mind.

Spending over 50 years hiking the Long Trail develops many old friends. Some of those friends are the people you hiked with, some are the people you met along the way, while others are the places you’ve visited along the trail. I can’t drive through Rutland without taking a side trip down Route 103 to visit my old friend, the Clarendon Gorge Bridge.

Tom Broido worked on the Long Trail Patrol in 1974 and 1975. He is recently retired, lives in Hinesburg, and enjoys his new position as a full-time Senior Recreationalist.
Long Trail News is printed using 0% VOC, Soy Based Inks, 100% Certified Renewable Energy and paper that is certified by Bureau Veritas to the FSC standards.

Bequest Challenge

When you include the Green Mountain Club in your will, trust, or estate plans, two anonymous donors will donate $250 to GMC—immediately. Up to $10,000.

Here are a few examples of ways you can include the Green Mountain Club in your will:

• A FIXED AMOUNT — any amount qualifies for this matching gift

• A PERCENTAGE OF YOUR ASSETS — e.g. I designate the Green Mountain Club to receive 3.5% of my assets when I pass away

• A SPECIFIC ASSET — such as real estate

All you need to do is fill out the online form - we don’t need the details of your bequest or a copy of your will.

www.greenmountainclub.org/bequestchallenge

QUESTIONS? Reach out to Alicia, adicocco@greenmountainclub.org; (802) 241-8322