

Long Trail NEWS



Quarterly of the Green Mountain Club

SPRING 2023



Plane Crashes on the Long Trail | Celebrating Vermont's Alpine Flora | Membership Survey Results

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

Michael DeBonis, Executive Director
Chloe Miller, Communications Manager &
Long Trail News Editor
Richard Andrews, Volunteer Copy Editor
Sylvie Vidrine, Graphic Designer

Green Mountain Club
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center, Vermont 05677
Phone: (802) 244-7037
Fax: (802) 244-5867
E-mail: gmc@greenmountainclub.org
Website: greenmountainclub.org

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.

The *Long Trail News* (USPS 318-840) is published quarterly by The Green Mountain Club, Inc., 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677. Periodicals postage paid at Waterbury Center, VT, and additional offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Long Trail News*, 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677.

Copyright © 2023 The Green Mountain Club, Inc., 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677. Permission to reproduce in any form any of the material in this publication without prior written approval of The Green Mountain Club, Inc. is granted only to individuals for their own personal hiking convenience.

FRONT COVER:

State Botanist Bob Popp leads an alpine walk on Mt. Mansfield's ridgeline. Photo by Angie Hilsman.

C O N T E N T S

SPRING 2023, Volume 83, No.1



PHOTO BY ANGIE HILSMAN

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

F E A T U R E S

6 › AIRPLANE CRASHES ON THE LONG TRAIL

by Brian Lindner

Vermont's Alpine Flora

10 › REDISCOVERING THE PURPLE CROWBERRY

by Liam Ebner

12 › PLANT IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Photos by Angie Hilsman

14 › STATE BOTANIST BOB POPP RETIRES AFTER 33 YEARS

by Hailey Lynch

D E P A R T M E N T S

3 › From the President

4 › Mountain Views

5 › Get Involved at GMC

16 › Field Notes

18 › Land Conservation

20 › Members

21 › Trail Mix

22 › Journey's End



From the President

As 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 Trail 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 Long 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 protection and maintenance of the Long Trail as the club's most important goal. Rated as extremely or very important were advocating for conservation, educating the public and children about hiking and resource protection, and protecting and maintaining the Kingdom Heritage Trails, which GMC manages.

GMC members hike year-round, and most still get their information about the club and its activities from the *Long Trail News*. Eighty-six percent of members want the Long Trail News to keep its current format, and 93 percent like receiving it quarterly.

As GMC and other outdoor recreation organizations grapple with the twin problems of overused trails and overcrowded facilities, 85 percent of survey respondents expressed concern for the impact of overuse. Fewer than 40 percent of respondents said they found GMC facilities occasionally overcrowded, but 70 percent endorsed some sort of permitting program at popular

places like Stratton Pond, Little Rock Pond, Camel's Hump, Mount Mansfield and Sterling Pond, if necessary, to address overcrowding and adverse impacts.

Ratings of education programs were: Leave No Trace, very important or important, 97 percent; hiking and backpacking skills, very important or important, 91 percent; wilderness first aid and trail maintenance workshops, important, well over 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?

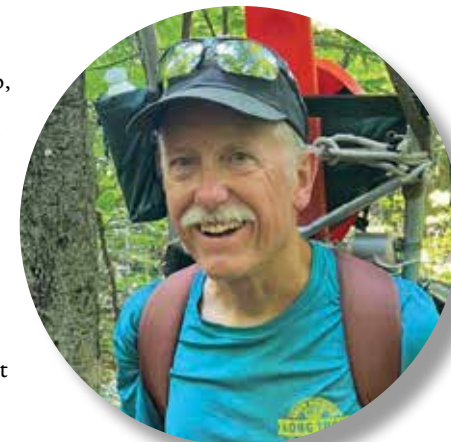
We are not alone. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountain Club and other East Coast trail clubs are experiencing the same generational shift.

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 me 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 VANBENTHUYSEN
GMC BOARD PRESIDENT



Howard VanBenthuyssen



GMC Officers

Howard VanBenthuyzen, *President*
Nancy McClellan, *Vice President*
Nancy Thomas, *Treasurer*
Caitlin Miller, *Secretary*

GMC Directors

Cathi Brooks, *Northeast Kingdom Section*
Kip Potter, *Northern Frontier Section*
Andrew Hood, *Connecticut Section*
Anne Houser, *General*
Tom Kahl, *Upper Valley Ottaquechee Section*
Elisabeth Fenn, *Sterling Section*
Mariah Keagy, *General*
Andrew Nuquist, *Montpelier Section*
Bob Paquin, *Laraway Section*
Mike Peckar, *Worcester Section*
Alexis Peters, *General*
Martha Stitelman, *Bennington Section*
Larry Walter, *Killington Section*
Millie Mugica, *General*
Ram Moennsadt, *General*
Jeffrey Wehrwein, *General*
Nika Meyers, *General*
Don Taylor, *General*
David Hathaway, *General*
David Hartman, *Manchester Section*
Collier Shutter, *Brattleboro Section*
Susan Tobin, *Burlington Section*
Beth Eliason, *Bread Loaf Section*
Paulina Murray, *UVM Board Fellow*

GMC Staff Directory

Main Telephone: (802) 244-7037

Nigel Bates, *Field Coordinator*
E-mail: nbates@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8218

Jason Buss, *Chief Financial Officer*
E-mail: jbuss@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8214

Lorne Currier, *Volunteer and Education Coordinator*
E-mail: lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8329

Michael DeBonis, *Executive Director*
E-mail: mdebonis@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8212

Alicia DiCocco, *Deputy Director*
E-mail: adicoco@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8322

Rick Dugan, *Membership Coordinator*
E-mail: rdugan@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8325

Mollie Flanagan, *Director of Land Conservation*
E-mail: mflanigan@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8217

Erica Harris, *Development Assistant*
E-mail: eharris@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 882-8107

Matt Krebs, *Operations Manager*
E-mail: mkrebs@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8321

Lily LaRegina, *Communications Coordinator*
E-mail: llaregina@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8215

Chloe Miller, *Communications Manager*
E-mail: cmiller@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8324

Hailey Lynch, *Outreach and Field Coordinator*
E-mail: hlynch@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8327

Keegan Tierney, *Director of Field Programs*
E-mail: ktierney@greenmountainclub.org
Phone: (802) 241-8320

Kathryn Thompson, *Accounting & Finance Coordinator*
E-mail: ktompson@greenmountainclub.org



Mountain Views

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. I was haunted because, in my old age, I kept thinking I had been 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 about a CT Section backpacking trek in our local newspaper that I read every day, the *Hartford Courant*. This led to her "40-plus-year 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 benefit, 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

We Welcome Your Comments!

cmiller@greenmountainclub.org

OR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, GMC

4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road

Waterbury Center, Vermont 05677

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 1975. 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 1990), 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 1977 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.

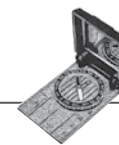
It would be so much easier and less costly for GMC to publish online only but I hope that never comes to pass. We already spend too much time in front of our computers. While I understand some may prefer an electronic version, this issue, like most before, was digested in my easy chair near my wood stove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

—DENIS LA FORCE
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 developed the trail with the help of my father-in-law, William Meade Burrows. George and his wife, Molly, lived in the house at the base of the trail. The house was later the ranger station, but the last time we visited it looked like it was a private residence. When my father-in-law was 80 (in 1992), he, my husband and our two sons climbed to the top and had a three-generation picture taken. We will be having a family reunion in Vermont this summer and plan to revisit the trailhead. Many of the family will make the climb, including the next generation of Burrows.

—JACK (JOHN) AND JANEEN BURROWS



Get Involved at GMC!



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 staffers, 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 addressing muddy, eroded, flood-prone areas of 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.



LEARN MORE and APPLY at
greenmountainclub.org/vltp



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 HOUSER (second term)

MARIAH KEAGY (second term)

ALEXIS PETERS (second term)

OWEN RACHAMPBELL (first term)

MICHELE KUPERSMITH (first term)

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



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

PLANE CRASH SITES

Along the Long Trail

By Brian Lindner

mistakenly

An 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.

Since 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 unknowingly 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 remaining wreckages. Let’s take a hike travelling north along the LT.

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, 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,

nine, following as she broke trail. Finally Fletcher stumbled into a field near Route 7, and was spotted by photographers who had fortuitously chosen to stop there. She directed rescuers to follow her tracks, and they found the pilot’s younger son suffering from extreme hypothermia. He lost both legs, but survived.

The next crash site northward is in Brandon just south of Route 73. In October 1957 four U.S. Army officers were en route to Burlington in a single-engine L-20 Beaver. The pilot called Burlington to report their estimated arrival time, but nothing further was heard. Nine days later weather finally allowed an air search, and the wreckage was spotted.

Three of the officers had died instantly. The fourth was later determined

VISITING Crash Sites

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 Tillotson 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.

< Remains of a Cessna crash on Mt. Abraham, the most visible and accessible wreckage on the LT. The pilot and two passengers survived. Photo by David Modica.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN LINDNER

The Zlowe family crashed on Mount Tabor on their way to a ski trip in 1972. Of five occupants, two survived.



Fuselage of the Camel's Hump bomber three days after the crash. This was removed by scrap hunters in the early 1950s.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN LINDNER

Tail of the 1968 crash of Dr. & Mrs. Groce on Jay Peak. The tail was left behind as the rest of the plane and the Groces passed through the crack.

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 Cooley Glen shelter hit a downdraft that knocked the plane 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 Trail. The pilot was uninjured, and the wreckage was quickly removed. In February 1961 a pilot and his mistress crashed into a snow-covered area off the Bamforth Ridge Trail. The pilot left his passenger in her skirt and street shoes while he slogged down the mountain in deep snow. He was charged with



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN LINDNER

A complete wreck in the Breadloaf Wilderness.

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 most 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 Burlington 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 marginal weather, despite a briefing advising against flight. We can only imagine their sudden terror on North Jay in thick fog, suddenly facing a rock wall with a five-foot-wide crack. The plane flew directly into the crack, peeling off the wings and leaving the tail at the entrance. The engine and the Groces

continued through the crack and out the other end. Neither person survived.

A Long Trail hike follows a path of historic aeronautical tragedies and survivals. I tell these stories only to provide a new perspective and a deeper understanding of the history of our trails. Out of respect for family members who have lost loved ones, and Vermont's natural environment, I do not encourage hiking to most of the crash sites described. If you wish to explore a crash site, please see our tips on page 7.

Brian Lindner is a historian and foremost authority on plane crashes in Vermont. He is retired from National Life Group in Montpelier though he continues to study the organization's history.

View a recorded version of Brian's plane crash presentation, part of the 2023 Taylor Series, on GMC's YouTube channel, [youtube.com/GreenMountainClubVT](https://www.youtube.com/GreenMountainClubVT)



PHOTO BY ANGIE HUSMAN

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

Alpine 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 tundra 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

Tolan, 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 the Greater Antilles 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 turn-around point we chatted and took a snack break. Like any curious steward, I carefully explored, making sure to stick to bare rock while off trail. Plants in the alpine zone are extremely vulnerable to human impact: only a few footsteps can permanently damage or kill them. That's why you'll see white string delineating trail corridors on summits in Vermont and New Hampshire. It helps clearly guide people and dogs to stay on durable surfaces and concentrate their impact away from the most delicate plants.

I noticed 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 nigrum*, 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 atropurpureum*, 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.



Liam Ebner, Summit Steward for the Adirondack Mountain Club, greets a hiker on Wright Peak.

PHOTO BY BEN BROUSSEAU

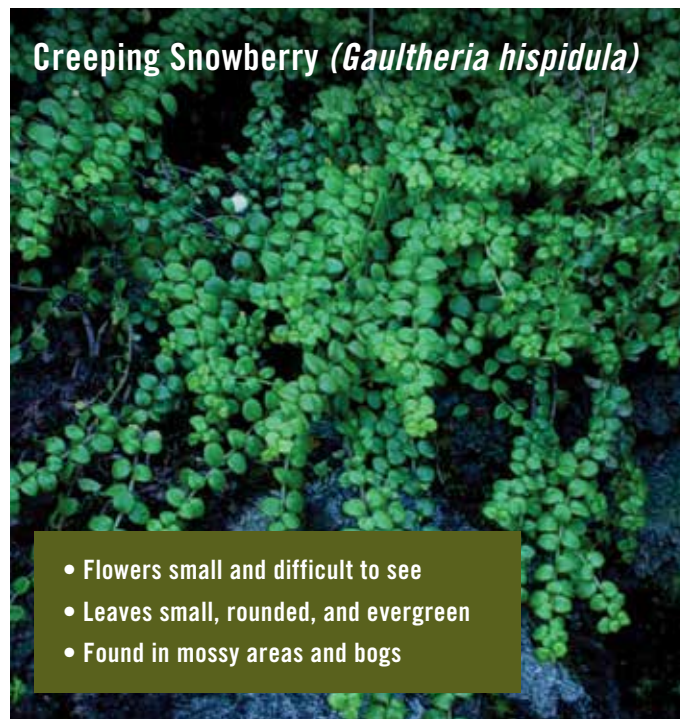
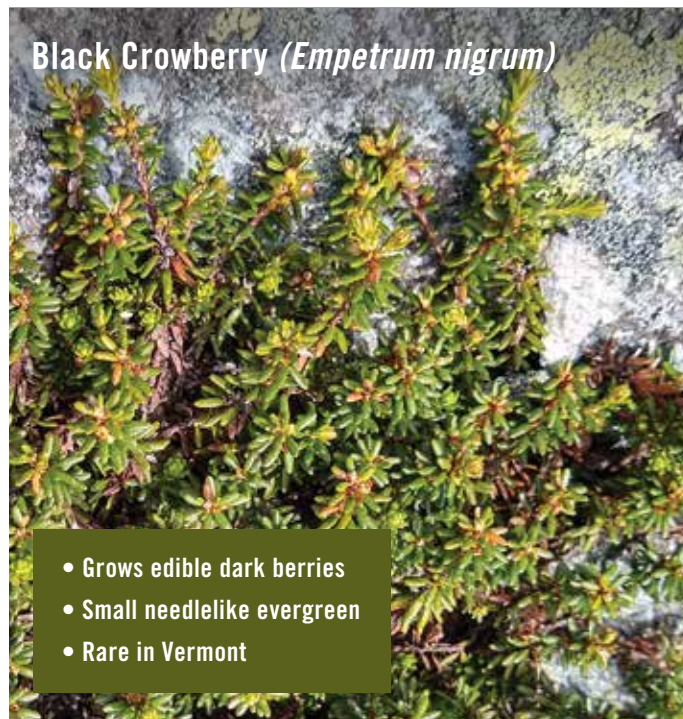
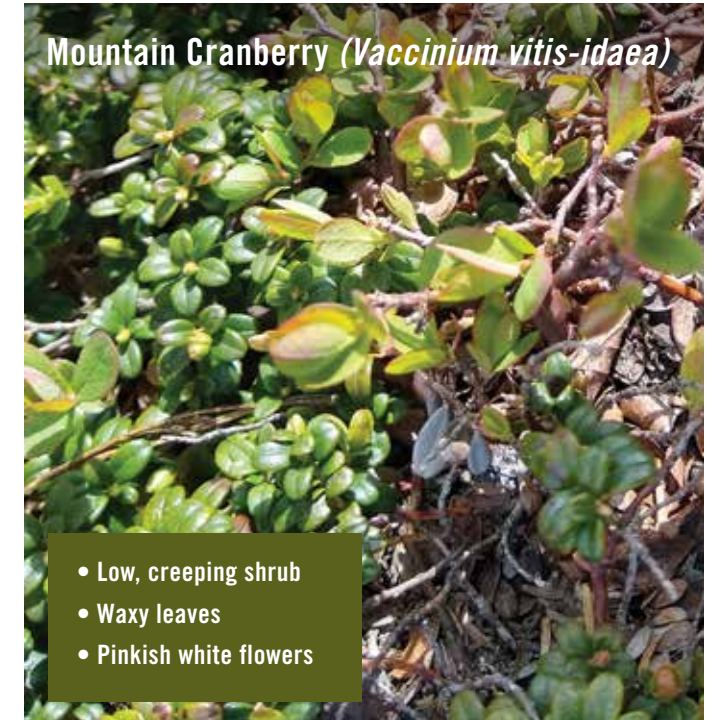
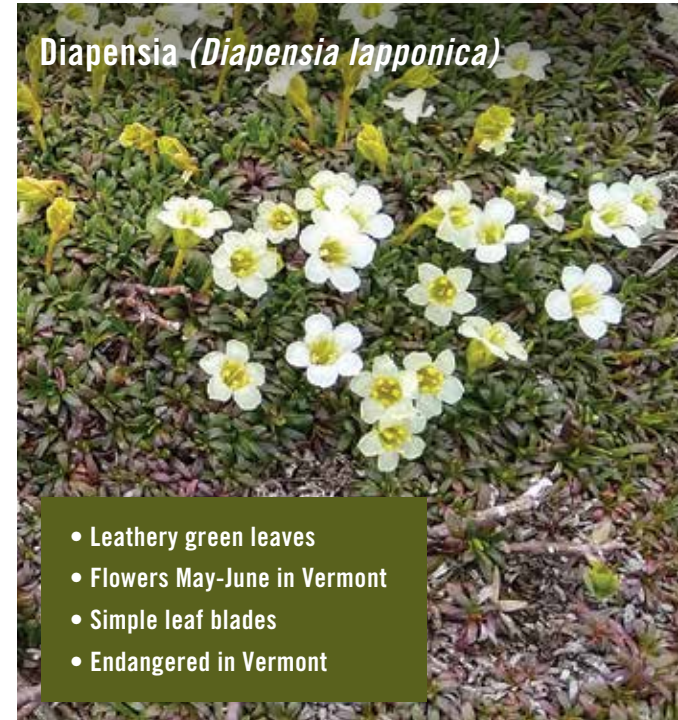
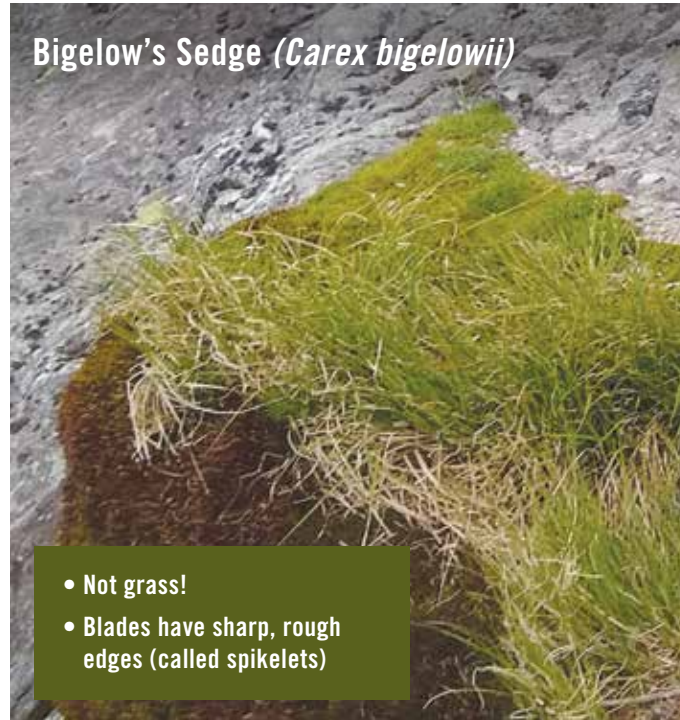
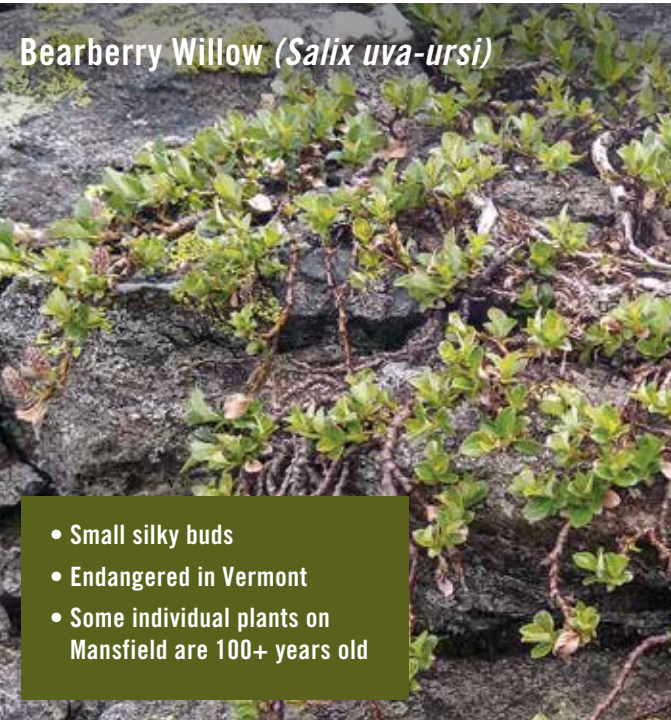


Closeup of a purple crowberry plant (not the same specimen discovered on Mansfield).

PHOTO BY GLEN MITTELHAUSER/VERMONT FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Learn to Identify 8 Alpine Plants >>

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.



Sources: GMC caretakers' "An Interpretative Field Guide to the Summit of Mount Mansfield"; Bob Popp, Vermont State Botanist; Angela Hilsman, photos.



Bob trains incoming caretakers in 2007.

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. Those sessions have been an essential part of the club's effort to protect alpine rare and fragile vegetation on Vermont's higher summits.

Each year, caretakers are humbled as they breathlessly chase Bob along the Mount Mansfield ridgeline, learning the differences between red and black spruce

and the importance and special character of Vermont's alpine vegetation.

"Many GMC Backcountry Caretakers are new to conservation work," said Isaac Alexandre-Leach, departing GMC Field Programs Coordinator. "It's a treat to meet and work with Bob, and significant to be treated as a professional worthy of trust and honesty by someone of his caliber. The highlights of many caretakers' seasons, mine included, involve following Bob as he delicately scrambles up a gully or crawls through krummholz."

I asked Bob how he got started studying botany and began his career

with the State of Vermont, and how GMC's backcountry caretaker program evolved and shaped Vermont's hiking culture as he observed it.

Bob enrolled at Columbia University in New York City to study engineering. "It was not a good fit," he recalls. "It took me a couple years to figure that out. Chemistry, calculus, and physics were too abstract, and I needed to see and touch things."

He left Columbia, and while a summer camp counselor he met a coworker studying forestry. They hiked together on their days off, and Bob realized he wanted to work outside. He applied to the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, got in, and changed his major from forestry to botany on his first day of classes.

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 has so little alpine vegetation, GMC's caretakers' efforts to protect it are critical. "We have just over 100 acres on Mansfield, maybe on Camel's Hump it's five or six, and Abraham is just a postage stamp. The plants and environment up 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 education 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 quirk. He's a walking encyclopedia of Vermont's most intriguing plants, a rough and tough Vermonter 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 (see 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 "never 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."



Bob's passion helps instill a deep appreciation for alpine vegetation among GMC stewards. Here, 2021 caretaker Sarah Bailey learns from Bob. Sarah returns to GMC as caretaker supervisor this year.

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 high-profile backcountry construction. The **Burlington Section** re-roofed **Puffer Shelter**, and combined with the

GMC Backcountry Construction Crew's stabilization work, this sagging but beloved shelter feels new again.

Construction of the new **Seth Warner Shelter** and privy was similarly a joint crew and volunteer endeavor, with special thanks to Jonathan Bigelow and his framing friends for the complete prefabrication and installation of the frame, walls and roof.

We finished the multi-year **Stratton Pond** trail relocation project designed to protect the shoreline by removing all trails and structures uphill and away from the pond. Crews spent seven weeks continuing relocation efforts for the Long Trail-Appalachian Trail away from the shore, and finishing spur trails to the **Willis Ross Clearing** and the **Stratton View** overnight site. The LT/AT relocation opened to hikers in August, while spur trail work continued into fall. The project absorbed nearly 500 crew hours and about 185 volunteer hours.

We continued our commitment to

improving the northern Long Trail, with six weeks addressing a particularly impressive wetland/mud pit conditions by **Tillotson Camp**. Crews moved about 100 feet of trail away from mud so deep we couldn't place bog bridging, lengthening the trail by roughly 300 feet. Relocation required: clearing a corridor; cutting through roots and clearing duff; setting rocks; armoring the trail with crush (crushed rock), step stones, and retaining walls; and building puncheon.

This season will be another high-volume year, and we are adapting our work force accordingly. We will run two Long Trail Patrol crews and one special projects crew, and we aim to hire 19 caretakers. As always we are seeking to attract the best employees possible through continued increases in wages and benefits. We are also expanding seasonal staff housing to confront the challenging Vermont rental market.

This winter staff members are concentrating on a few special projects.

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.

After receiving permits last fall, we began building a new cabin at the former **Beaver Dam Cabin** site at **Wheeler Pond**, where Justin Towers has diligently led a small team through Mother Nature's sloppy winter. The job should wrap up in late spring or early summer, so stay tuned to hear when it will be available for reservations!

Planned LT projects include the start of a three-year investment between **Stratton Pond** and **Rootville Road** in Manchester, and volunteer crews working all summer between **Kelley Stand Road** and **Forest Road 71**. Both sections are on fairly flat terrain with poorly draining soils. Work will include stone structures, minor treadway relocations, and some puncheon to escape the mud.

We will also build several small stone staircases and make drainage improvements between **Jungle Junction** and **Cooper Lodge** near Killington. Crews will spend two weeks north of **Middlebury Gap** just beyond a staircase built in 2019.

Up north we will push to replace more than 40 sets of punky native puncheon between the summit of **Laraway Mountain** and **Corliss Camp**. We will dive into a second season on the **Burrows Trail Reconstruction** project on **Camel's Hump**. Like last year, trail crews from GMC, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, the Northwoods Stewardship Center, and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps will work under project coordinator Justin Towers.

Construction projects include renovating the **Stratton Mountain Caretaker cabin**; finishing **Stratton View** and **Sunrise Shelters**; and building a new privy at **Lost Pond Shelter**. If the supply chain stars align, crews will build a bridge on the LT at the north end of **Lye Brook Wilderness**.



Justin Towers supervises construction at the new Wheeler Pond cabin site.

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.

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 field team. 🌲

— KEEGAN TIERNEY
DIRECTOR OF FIELD PROGRAMS



Volunteers pause to celebrate progress on the new Seth Warner Shelter.



Staff working on the new spur trail by Stratton Pond.



GMC Conserves Judevine Headwaters Property

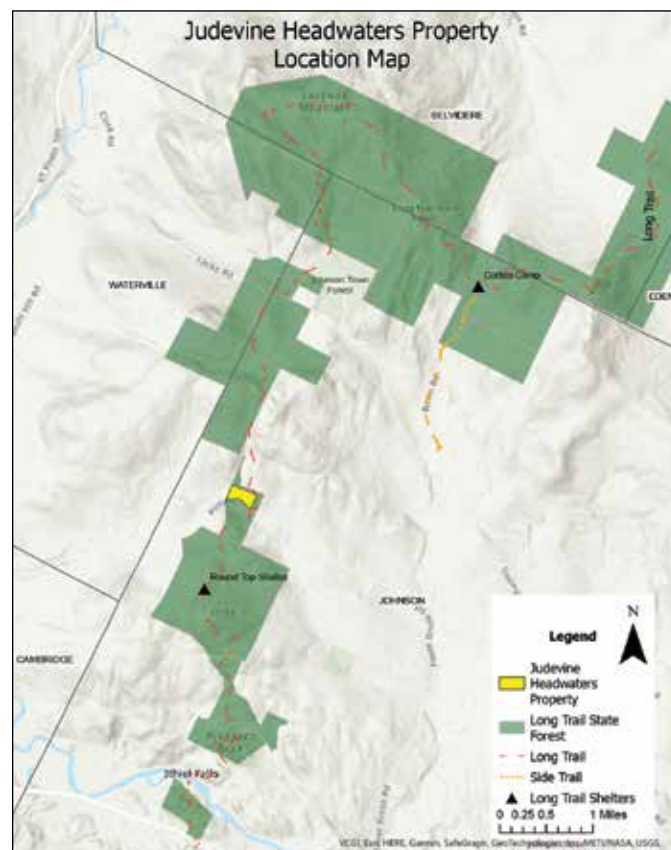
Key Piece in the Continuing Long Trail Protection Campaign

By Mollie Flanigan, GMC Director of Land Conservation

An 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 treadway.

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 after an appraisal, an environmental assessment, and a survey. The club then owned the property for two years while public funding was secured through a capital appropriation by the Vermont General Assembly and the easement GMC would hold on the property was negotiated.



What is a Conservation Easement?

A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between a landowner and a land trust, state agency, or other qualified entity, through which specified rights on the property are permanently transferred or prohibited. These rights are often those of public access, development or resource extraction. Easements are designed to “run with the land” even as the landowner of the property may change. 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.

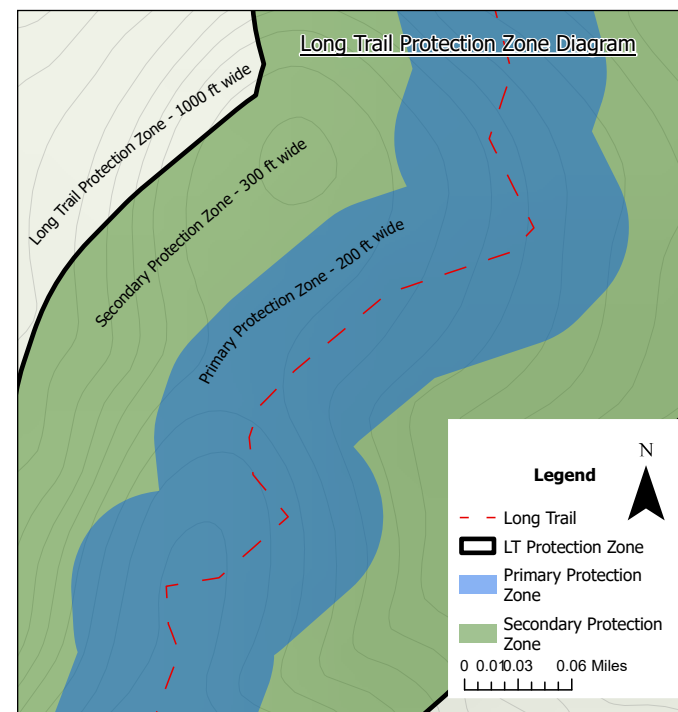
Protection Zones

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 treadway. 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 (SPZ), and it is designed as an additional buffer to the



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 Pinneo Brook

Bolton, 319 acres

Burnt Rock-Mt. 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 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.

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, specify how other trail systems can be planned for and sited, 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!

2022 Membership Survey Results

Since 1994 the Green Mountain Club has surveyed its members about every four years to learn 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 greenmountainclub.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

- Member use of apps (like FarOut or 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.

- 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.

What Members Think

- Long Trail system protection, maintenance, and stewardship remain the most important issues for club members.
- In addition, advocating for environmental issues specific to the Long Trail and 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



FAREWELL Isaac Alexandre-Leach

By Keegan Tierney

The Green Mountain Club has had many staff come and go over the years. Many names stand out in GMC 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 Currier 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 is 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 was 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 mindset 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.



Isaac teaching privy maintenance to 2019 fall caretakers.

PHOTO BY ILANA COPEL

GMC Member Attributes Compared to Vermont Population

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

New Faces at GMC

HAILEY LYNCH is amid her 11-month AmeriCorps term as a Group Outreach and Field Coordinator. In this role, which GMC has hosted since 1998, Hailey leads group service trips and helps groups plan their Long Trail hikes while minimizing impact. Hailey worked as a GMC Caretaker on Mt. Mansfield for the 2021 field season and completed a northbound thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail in 2022 before returning to Waterbury in late summer for her current role.

KATE SONGER is starting a new role with GMC as Volunteer Field Supervisor. This role was piloted in 2021 and is designed to support trail adopters and section volunteers in developing trail maintenance skills and to provide logistical support for the Volunteer Long Trail Patrol. Kate has worked for GMC in many capacities: as a Caretaker and Lead Caretaker in 2021 and 2022, and as a part time Visitor Center information specialist during the 2023 winter.

SARAH BAILEY is also a returning former caretaker, starting the role of Caretaker Supervisor, providing training and support to the 19 seasonal caretakers positioned at high-use sites across the Long Trail. Sarah is a botanist and herbalist with a passion for Vermont's unique vegetation and environmental education.

LILY LAREGINA joined GMC in December as the Communications Coordinator, supporting GMC's public outreach via email, web, and social media. Lily also serves as the Sections' communications contact, providing advice and guidelines to streamline section communications efforts. Lily has an extensive background in photojournalism and joins us following a stint at Friends of Acadia, the membership organization supporting stewardship in the Acadia National Park area in Maine.



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 Plowboys:

Muddy waters took my home
Swept away 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 jammed where the river turns to enter the gorge. 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 joined the following summer. George Pearlstein, 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. Al 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.



PHOTO BY MARK WETZEL

Tom Broido at the Clarendon Gorge bridge in the fall of 2022.

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 napping 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!

I suspect every generation of the Long Trail Patrol has had volunteer or staff elders for guidance, support and insight. For me they were primarily George Pearlstein 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 Bandaid 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.



PHOTO BY MARK WETZEL

The 1974 Long Trail Patrol at the Clarendon Gorge Bridge dedication. (L to R) Tom Broido, Chuck Storrow, Bob O'Brien, Garret Conover, Mark Wetzel. (Front) George Pearlstein.



GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB
4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center, VT 05677

Periodicals Postage
PAID
Waterbury Center
and Additional Offices

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