

Trail Talk

GMC Montpelier Section Newsletter
Spring, 2021 ~ No. 137

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Dana Lawrence

Welcome back to *Trail Talk* and thank you again to our amazing editor Nancy Jordan. We are coming to the end of winter soon and hopefully to the virus that has kept us from gathering and sharing our love of the outdoors with each other. But as the warmth of the sun and the breath of spring set our hearts racing and our feet on the path, it must be with caution. The annual meeting, which has been as much a ceremony of gathering of kindred spirits as a business process, will be for one last time, virtual.

Reflecting on how much our lives have been different in the last year, we can't wait to get back to the way things were. In so many ways for so many, it has been a terrible time. To the best of our ability, we have had to adapt. As the list of things we could not do grew longer, we had to figure out what we could do safely.

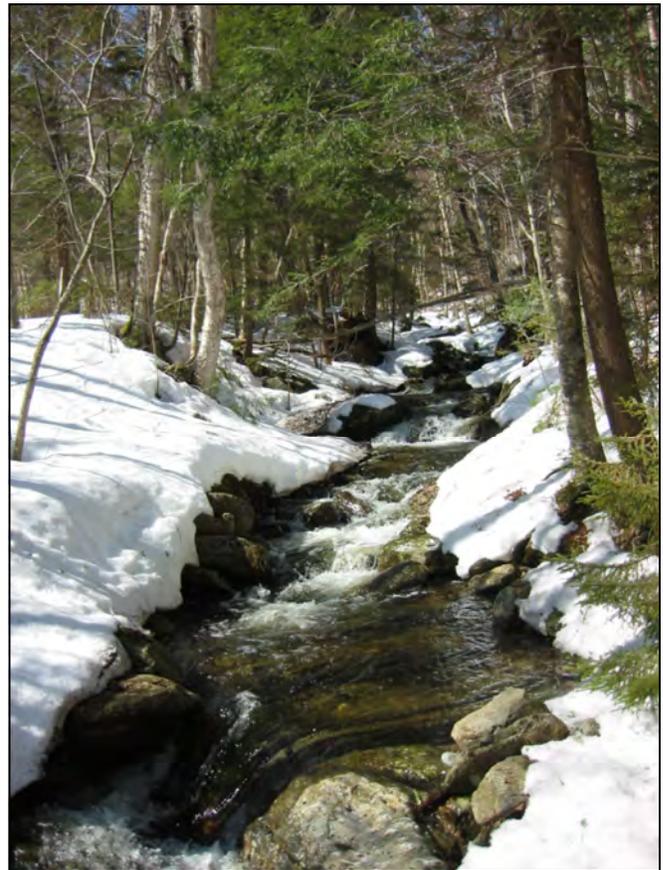
Blessed with a state filled with beautiful places close to home we took to the roads, especially the dirt ones in our neighborhoods and to the little gems of trails in our town forests. As our freedom gradually returns and we again embark on bigger, farther, adventures, we should remember and support those smaller special places that many of us did not know existed until now.

During COVID, many of us were on this same journey of discovery, not just of dirt roads and small out-of--the-way trails, but everything in the outdoors. Despite the limitations created by the virus, GMC members have not been the only folks who have been enjoying the "great outdoors"; there has been an explosion of people, locally and nationally, recreating in the outdoors.

So as we incrementally (think spigot) move increasingly back out into the natural world, we are apt to find that we are not alone and that the solitude we have found in wild places is less available than in the past. So what do we do now? Adapt; as an old guy who is coming out of COVID like the rest of us, this is not my favorite answer. Being personally not ready for extinction, it is the answer.

The question is how we share the things we love while at the same time protecting them? GMC is a

venerable organization with a long history of doing both. So as you come out from under the COVID-19 menace and get back on the trails, when you run into someone on the trails and strike up a conversation (this will soon be allowed), let them know why you're there and invite them to join GMC (the Montpelier Section of course, and yes this is a recruitment message). Then they can help us preserve and enjoy one of the things we both have learned to love.



Spring thaw at Trapp Family Lodge

N. Jordan



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TRAILS & SHELTERS REPORT

by Alan Paschell

It's been a tough year for the trails. From my rambling on our section's trails, it is evident they've seen considerably more feet. In some places, trails have doubled in width. I assume due to increased use and a lack of conscience by our hiking community. Our own section's scheduled work hikes have been put on hold due to concerns around the Corona Virus; the only work accomplished was by individuals going out on their own to clear water bars and remove blowdowns that were manageable by hand. It is most likely that any organized work on trails this spring will be limited. Perhaps by fall we will see a return to a semblance of normality. There are certainly still many small areas on our trails that need improvement, such as the spur to the Bamforth Ridge Shelter which is perpetually wet. The project of rebuilding the tent platforms still needs one platform to be completed. We are looking for some volunteers posing as donkeys to lug material up to the shelter. The shelter itself remains in wonderful condition and is delightfully free of the graffiti adorning many of the shelters on the trail. We do need more hands - younger hands! I myself have reached the ripe old age of seventy - about the average age of the core of trail workers who consistently show up for work hikes. Remember, your children are also welcome to accompany you and pick up a rake, shovel, pruning saw. What better way to build responsibility than by the example of taking care of what you use. Especially when it is the planet, which we derive so much pleasure from.

Although my term as Trails & Shelters Coordinator expires this year, I look forward to my continuing relationship with the Long Trail, whether it's placing a stone in a muddy hole, or just sleeping out under the stars.

"Opt Out" List

If you would like to be added to the "Opt Out" list and instead read this newsletter *Trail Talk* online, just send a reply to newsletter@gmcmontpelier.org with the Subject: "Opt Out." Please include just your name. In the future, you will receive an email telling you when the next issue is available online.

Curious to see the electronic version, go to: gmcmontpelier.org, Welcome to the Home Page, refer to the *Trail Talk* paragraph, and click on current issue.

Montpelier Section 2021 Annual Meeting

by Dana Lawrence

Unfortunately, our in-person annual meeting for the section will need to be canceled again this year due to the risk of COVID-19. It will be happening remotely. Details on this meeting and how members can participate can be found on the Montpelier Section website (www.gmcmontpelier.org). Just click on the About Us pull-down menu, click on the Annual Meeting title and you will find the information needed.

May this be the last time we have to do it this way.

SECTION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

by George Longenecker

*...it's been a long cold lonely winter...
George Harrison*

Despite the long winter of COVID-19, the Green Mountain Club will begin to return to normal in the next year. Two Long Trail Patrol crews, a construction crew and our caretakers will be back this summer. The club is in good shape financially, thanks to lower expenses, donations and a stimulus funding grant. While most organized outings have been curtailed, people have been on the trails in greater numbers than past years. The *Long Trail News* will return to its regular publication schedule with a spring, 2021 issue. Because the pandemic is not over, the main club's June annual meeting will be held virtually, as have all meetings for the last year. Our directors and staff have kept things running smoothly, but we haven't seen each other in person for over a year.

As Treasurer Nancy Thomas said in her latest report: "The Club is in a strong financial position as we finish the FY 21 year and move into FY 22. While there are many unknowns, the GMC leadership has positioned the Club well to weather the COVID storm and get back to full or nearly full operation on the trails, with our club members, other trail users and our conservation partners."

While we get our vaccines, the places we frequent will also get an injection. At our last meeting, Mike DeBonis, Executive Director, spoke of funding in the governor's proposed budget for outdoor recreation. As Mike said, "these one-time COVID funds will serve as a significant shot in the arm to Vermont's outdoor recreation economy."

The GMC is now in its public phase of the Long Trail Legacy Campaign. The capital campaign has raised \$2 million already, with a goal of \$500,000 more in this phase, and eventually \$4 million. The money will be used for a much-needed renovation of headquarters, and for trails. You'll be asked for donations soon.

As I said in my last report, the club has been concerned that we don't represent an increasingly diverse Vermont community. There have also been disturbing instances of bigotry on the trail. At our March meeting, we voted unanimously to adopt the following statement:

The mission of the Green Mountain Club is to make the mountains of Vermont play a larger Role in the life of the people. We are committed to ensuring the GMC and Long Trail system are places that are inviting, safe, and open, regardless of age, gender, race, reli-

gion, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

As part of its strategic plan, the GMC will work with others, for example with schools, to introduce a younger and more diverse group to the outdoors. And, these programs are fun for the kids and the leaders.

There are still 6.28 miles of the Long Trail on private land. Some side trails are also on private parcels. The GMC is working to secure these rights of way, either through permanent agreements or purchase. For example, the Duck Brook Trail crosses 21 different parcels, and its shelter is on private land. The section of the LT north of Hazen's Notch also crosses private land. The club is working to bring all of the Long Trail and most side trails into permanent protection.

Bears enjoyed the pandemic, as more hikers came out and camped away from shelters. Little do hungry Vermont AT bears know what they have in common with their Georgia brethren. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is starting a pilot program in both states to lend bear canisters to hikers.



Ice water falls, Laraway.

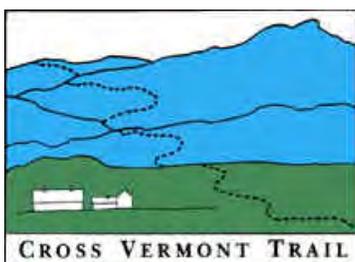
A. Paschell

Cross Vermont Trail Update

by Greg Western

You know that Montpelier has its own long trail? It's a trail alongside a river, rather than along a ridge line. And it is multi-use, inviting people of all abilities, connecting village centers, schools and neighborhoods as well as parks and wild natural places – across Vermont!

The Cross Vermont Trail is a vision to build a path from Lake Champlain to the Connecticut River – following the Winooski River from Burlington through Montpelier and on to Groton State Forest, and then following the Wells River to the New



Hampshire border. Cross Vermont Trail Association (CVTA) is a small grass roots organization that works with many community partners – helping to promote, improve and extend local trails with the ultimate goal of a connected statewide network.

The next piece of the Cross Vermont Trail is under construction now. We are "Building the Bridge" – a new bike/pedestrian bridge over the Winooski River in East Montpelier. Construction started last fall. Maybe you've seen the orange traffic cones on the side of Rte. 2 headed east from the roundabout (just past the Kubota dealership, just before the dump, great scenic landmarks). That's our project! The bridge is at the center of miles of new trail being built over the next two to three summers that will connect the regional trail network (Montpelier Bike Path, Central VT Regional Path through Berlin, Barre and Barre Town, and the East Montpelier Trail) up to U-32 School and on across East Montpelier to where the Montpelier and Wells River Rail Trail begins at Rte. 14 (where the Cross VT Trail continues in various forms on to the New Hampshire border). At the same time the project is providing immediate access to the Winooski River for fishing, paddling and just walking through conserved land along the banks, as well as new trailheads, parking and other amenities, along with some primitive hiking-style loop trails – convenient for daily exercise and access to nature.

The Winooski Bridge project is the keystone of CVTA's current active effort to make a complete greenway trail from Montpelier to Groton. We are talking now with landowners about the best places to put new trail to fill in the gaps in our route, and hope to have many new projects to tell you about in the coming few years. The first of these is happening near the East Montpelier/Plainfield town line this coming spring - we'll be leading volunteer

work parties to build new trail starting in April, once the weather allows.

Do you want to be able to bike or backpack in a linear park from downtown Montpelier all the way to the summit of Owl's Head in Groton? You can help make this happen. Go to www.crossvermont.org to learn more or give us a shout any time at 498-0079 or greg@crossvermont.org



The sap is running.

N. Jordan

How NOT to lead a group hiking event

by Dana Lawrence

In the afterglow of memory, the enthusiasm of youth, or possibly the confusion of young hearts in spring, in early April, 1973, a plan was made to hike Mt. Mansfield and spend the night at Taft Lodge. There were three of us, two young ladies and myself; I had some limited winter hiking experience, they had none.

We had received some information from a mutual friend who hiked the mountain the weekend before, who told us that snowshoes would not be necessary as the trail was boot packed by previous hikers. I met with my companions prior to the weekend and emphasized the importance of warm, wool clothing, back-up down clothing, and stout, warm hiking boots with multiple pairs of wool socks.

Thinking we were properly prepared, we made a plan to get to the mountain on Saturday morning. From there we set off for Underhill State Park, the trailhead for our planned hike up Sunset Ridge, over the Chin and down to Taft Lodge.

Riding separately, we arrived at the trailhead and

got out of our vehicles, at which point I realized we had a number of problems. I was dressed in Johnson Wool pants, Sorel's with Vibram soles, boiled wool mittens with leather covers, down jacket, wool sweater, down sleeping bag, wool hat, and backpack. My partners, on the other hand, were wearing gloves, down jackets, jeans, and either uninsulated hiking boots or LL Bean chain-tread rubber-bottom pacs.

At that point an animated debate took place. I was very reluctant to set off with the clothing choices they had made for the trip. They argued that given how warm it was back in Burlington and the fact that it was only a couple of miles up, it was no big deal. And we were staying in a four-sided cabin with a wood stove. To my later regret, I relented and we set off.

The early walking was on boot-packed trail as described to us by earlier hikers, but as we started gaining elevation things started changing dramatically. What we were unaware of and should have researched better, was the fact that during the prior week of our hike, a high elevation local storm with high winds had drawn moisture from unfrozen Lake Champlain, dumping 18-24 inches of snow and enormous drifts, without any precipitation in Burlington.

The result of this was that the boot-packed trail soon disappeared completely. Blazes became harder to find, and without snowshoes we were wading and crawling up the trail.

By this point, my partners were tired, wet and cold. I pressed for us to turn around but they demanded to continue so they could get to the hut and get warm. I couldn't talk them into going back, so we proceeded up in an effort to locate the trail, which at this point was buried. I reached the Chin and coaxed them up.

The trail from the Chin to the Adam's apple was also buried and replaced by a drift that extended all the way to the trail intersection sign in the swale. It and all the trees were buried under the snow and the landmarks they provide. Without them I knew Taft Lodge was downslope to the east. My partners were, by this point, very cold and probably hypothermic. I was running out of ideas, energy and beginning to panic.

As the rose of sunset grew, I continued "swimming" downslope and suddenly in the breeze came the smell of rescue, smoke from a wood fire. I hurried back upslope to the girls and shared the good news. We followed the smoke from the chimney of Taft Lodge. We worked our way around to a tunnel through the snow to the door.

Inside was a warm fire and some of the Boy Scouts from Stowe who had snowshoed up and dug their way in. Scouting has had a tough time of

late, but on that cold night, they did something for three college kids who should have known better, and may have saved our lives.

Little Acts of Kindness

by Alan Paschell

My partner and I were hiking the southern section of the Long Trail last summer from North Adams to the Inn at Long Trail. I have a problem with getting chilled easily in the rain, even in summer. We broke camp on day three to the sound of thunder and were quickly trashed in heavy rain, wind and lightning. Goddard Shelter was six miles out and Kid Gore another four in more downpours. We got completely soaked, even in rain gear. By the time we reached Kid Gore, I was freezing cold, shivering. Arriving at the shelter we found three peaceful hikers waiting out the storm and a wall of wet clothes strung across the front. The shelter looked pretty good to me in these circumstances and all I wanted was to get out of my wet clothes, eat, and get into my sleeping bag. One of the hikers came forward, said only: "speak



French," and then - "my rope" and proceeded to play out another section of line for drying our clothes. It doesn't sound like much in retrospect, but in the moment it was such enormous kindness! It's something you don't read about in the Long Trail Guide but it's one of my most meaningful experiences of hiking the trail - being vulnerable and accepting someone's help; that Cliff Bar offered when you've eaten your last cracker, that liter of water offered when your filter has failed. The recollections of kindness are not the same as the memories of the effort it took to reach a summit for an expansive view of mountains, but they linger in my mind and heart long after the hike is over.

Fun Times at Barnes Camp Hiker Information Center, Stowe, VT

by Ira and Cindy Sollace

The Green Mountain Club partners with Smugglers' Notch State Park, Stowe Mountain Resort, and Lamoille County Planning Commission to manage, maintain, and operate the historic Barnes Camp Visitor Center as a gateway to Smugglers' Notch, Mount Mansfield State Forest, and the Long Trail. We couldn't do it without the GMC volunteers who staff Barnes Camp on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from Memorial Day weekend through the fall.

Many visitors arrive at Barnes Camp and ask, "Where is Smugglers' Notch and what can I do?" It's the volunteers who help guide them to an adventure suiting each indi-



vidual or group. Some visitors want to walk on flat ground, some want the biggest and most spectacular hike we can think of, and some just want to stop and stretch their legs along their driving tour. We are lucky to see a lot of thru-hikers at Barnes Camp, which serves as a great respite or resupply spot for hikers.

We have a highly dedicated crew of volunteers, most of whom return to Barnes Camp year after year. The summer of 2019 brought over 12,000 visitors to Barnes Camp (visitors are only counted when there are interactions). As a rule, visitors are happy, excited, and interested in the area and Vermont in general. However, with COVID-19, 2020 brought about a new Barnes Camp summer, not opening until July when our procedures were 100% safe for volunteers. With travel restrictions and fewer visitors, we only assisted 3,300 visitors in 2020. We anticipate 2021 will be a banner year for visitors with much of COVID-19 calmed. We are already getting excited about opening for the season.

Barnes Camp is always looking for volunteers. Most of our volunteers come back year after year, loving their time at Barnes Camp. If you love people, love to talk about Vermont, and are willing to help

visitors figure out what to do, you might consider volunteering at Barnes Camp. Volunteers share 4-hour shifts so they may come on duty at 8 AM or 12 PM.



Presently, we are open Friday – Sunday (and some holidays), from Memorial Day Weekend to Columbus Day. No experience is necessary and we take any hours you can give! Barnes Camp organizers provide all the information you need to volunteer, and you can team up with seasoned volunteers to learn the ropes. Please consider this great opportunity. If you want to help, contact Lorne Currier at GMC (Lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org). Or, if you have any questions about Barnes Camp, contact Cindy Griffith (cindy.griffith.vt@gmail.com) or Ira Sollace (IsollaceL50@gmail.com).



Morgan Irons eating a wam dinner at Theron Dean Lodge
A. Paschell

Mount Cardigan



In summer its long ridges of granite are warm, with views to Monadnock and Camel's Hump, where blueberries thrive in crevices, food for birds, bears and people, where ravens circle on updrafts, call back and forth all day. Some night's fireflies light the sky, trail blazes marking the way. What more could anyone need, than warm stone, blueberries and fireflies.



...George Longenecker

WE PAY TRIBUTE TO:

Robert (Bob) Wilson (94) passed away at his home in Montpelier on March 11, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn, of 59 years and their five children. Bob and Marilyn have been active members of the GMC for many years, and he will be dearly missed by many. Because of his love for the outdoors, Bob could be found skiing, either downhill or cross-country in the Vermont and New Hampshire mountains during the winter months, or paddling on the Vermont rivers, ponds, lakes and reservoirs during the warm weather.



Chases Mountain Trail

by Dave Shepard

Chases Mountain Trail is a relatively new hiking trail in the Central Vermont region. Located within the Middlesex Town Forest (MTF), this 2.4 mile trail leads from a Class 4 road to the summit of Chases Mountain. The MTF was established in 2009, and initial scouting for the trail commenced in 2012. Scouting and laying out potential routes with flag lines continued over several years, with selection of the final route in 2017. Cutting of the trail also began in 2017, and by early June 2019 the entire trail was cut and blazed, although trail signs weren't installed until December 2020.



Parking for the trail is at the end of the Class 3 section of Notch Road at the Middlesex Notch Wildlife Management Area (MNWMA). Please park carefully so as to leave room for users of the MNWMA. From the parking area, continue along the Class 4 section of Notch Road; after passing several houses the road becomes distinctly rougher. In about 0.25 miles, you will see an information kiosk for the MTF. Notch Road continues straight ahead, leading to a series of beaver ponds. The trail begins by crossing a brook just past the kiosk on a woods road. A short distance after crossing the brook, the trail diverges uphill to the left leaving the woods road. The trail ascends a ridge and crosses a series of low rock ribs through mixed woods before climbing a prominent south-facing ridge to join a major ridge running east-west that eventually leads to the Chases summit. The trail follows this ridge through hardwoods along moderate grades before climbing steeper terrain via a series of switchbacks. After more climbing in an easterly direction the trail makes a sharp left turn to the north and follows the increasingly narrow ridgeline through mainly coniferous forest toward the summit. After a short steep descent to a saddle, marked by an impressively large yellow birch, the trail ascends again more moderately to the summit. A short distance before reaching the top, the trail passes a prominent easterly vista, reached by a short spur diverging to the right. The actual summit, at 2,250' elevation, is wooded, but in addition to the easterly viewpoint there is also a nice view of White Rock Mountain and Mount Hunger, just north of the top.

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We encourage you to join or renew your membership in the **Montpelier Section** of the **Green Mountain Club**.

Annual dues are: Individual - \$45.00

Family - \$60.00 (inc. children under age 18)

Friend/Senior/Student - \$25.00

Life (1 adult) - \$1,000.00 (one time)

Dual Life (2 adults) - \$1,500.00 (one time)

Sponsor (Individual or Family) - \$75.00

Renewals: MAILED ON ANNIVERSARY DATE OF JOINING GMC



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I/We wish to join the **Montpelier Section** of the **Green Mountain Club**, Inc. and you will receive a membership card, the Section quarterly newsletter (*Trail Talk*), the GMC quarterly (*Long Trail News*), a discount on **GMC** publications and merchandise, and reduced overnight fees at selected shelters.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____ E-mail: _____ Amt. Enclosed \$ _____

I/We are interested in helping with trail maintenance.

I/We enclose a \$ _____ donation to the Montpelier Section.

Please make check payable to the "Green Mountain Club" and mark it for the Montpelier Section.

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