

April-June, 2019

The Magazine of the
North Country Trail Association

Volume 38, No. 2

north star



**Our Preferred Route Approved
at Last!**

Annual Awards

**Tom Gilbert and Bruce Matthews
on How we got the Route through
Congress**

About the Cover:

Mountain Lake on the Border Route in far northern Minnesota, only NOW an official part of the North Country Trail. Pictured is Joan Young during her own long end-to-end walks to finish the whole Trail. Photo by her hiking partner, Marie Altenau. Our Trail would have been so impoverished if we couldn't include such wonderful viewpoints.

In This Issue

Next Generation Outreach Intern 5

Celebrating The New Official Route 8

Achieving Bold Visions Takes Time (and Patience) 11

Advocacy Takes the Day! 14

The First, and Last... Literally... To Blaze the Trail 15

Adirondack Trail Stewards on the NCT Why do they do it? 16

For Many of Us, Trail Care is the Best Fun 17

Annual Awards from the North Country Trail Association..... 18

Long Distance Hiker Patches 26

State of the Trail, Central New York Chapter 28

Harbor Springs Hikes 29

Natural Connections, Flyover Country 30

Columns

Trailhead 3

National Park Service Corner 4

Departments

Corrections 5

Next Deadline for Submissions 5

You're Invited..... 6

Where in the Blue Blazes?..... 7

Hiking Shorts..... 17, 27, 28, 29

North Star Staff

Irene Szabo, Mostly Volunteer Editor, (585) 494-0307 or treeweenie@aol.com, 7639 Swamp Rd., Bergen, N.Y. 14416

Kelly O'Hara, Graphic Design

Lorana Jinkerson, Becky Heise, Joan Young, Tom Gilbert, Duane Lawton, Kate Lemon, Eileen Fairbrother, Jeff Van Winkle Editorial Advisory Committee

The *North Star*, Spring issue, Vol. 38, Issue 2, is published by the North Country Trail Association, a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, 229 East Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331. The *North Star* is published quarterly for promotional and educational purposes and as a benefit of membership in the Association. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the North Country Trail Association.



Staff

Valerie Bader
Director of Trail Development
vbader@northcountrytrail.org

Greg McAleenan
Director of Development
gmcaleenan@northcountrytrail.org

Matt Davis
Regional Trail Coordinator, Minnesota/North Dakota
mdavis@northcountrytrail.org

Tarin Hasper
Annual Fund Coordinator
thasper@northcountrytrail.org

Andrea Ketchmark
Executive Director
aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org

Kate Lemon
Marketing and Communications Coordinator
klemon@northcountrytrail.org

Nicole Murphy
Administrative Assistant
nmurphy@northcountrytrail.org

Bill Menke
Regional Trail Coordinator, Wisconsin
bmenke@northcountrytrail.org

Alison Myers
Administrative Assistant
amyers@northcountrytrail.org

Matt Rowbotham
GIS Coordinator
mrowbotham@northcountrytrail.org

Lisa Senneker
Financial Administrator
lsenneker@northcountrytrail.org

Kenny Wawsczyk
Regional Trail Coordinator, Michigan
kwawsczyk@northcountrytrail.org

Emily Rodriguez
Next Generation Outreach Intern
nextgen@northcountrytrail.org

National Board of Directors

Tim Mowbray, *President*
(715) 378-4320 · tmowbray@earthlink.net

Jaron Nyhof, *VP, At Large Rep.*
(616) 786-3804 · jnyhof1@gmail.com

Larry Pio, *Secretary*
(269) 327-3589 · ncta.secretary@gmail.com

Ruth Dorough, *Immediate Past President*
(585) 354-4147 · dorroughcm@gmail.com

Josh Berlo, *Minnesota Rep.*
(574) 532-4183 · joshberlo@gmail.com

Mike Chapple, *Treasurer*
(574) 274-0151 · mike@chapple.org

Jerry Fennell, *At Large Rep.*
(262) 787-0966 · jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com

Dennis Garrett, *VP East*
(724) 827-2350 · dcgcag@gmail.com

Cheryl Kreindler, *At Large Rep.*
(313) 850-8731 · ckreindl@ch2m.com

Derrick Passe, *Minnesota Rep.*
(651) 470-0432 · derrickpasse@gmail.com

Jan Ulferts Stewart, *North Dakota Rep.*
(701) 318-5180 · janustewart@gmail.com

Mark VanHornweder, *VP West*
(218) 390-0858 · mvanhorn74@yahoo.com

Jeff Van Winkle, *Michigan Rep.*
(616) 540-2693 · rvanwink@gmail.com

Steve Walker, *Ohio Rep.*
(330) 652-5623 · nilesprinting@gmail.com

Quinn Wright, *New York Rep.*
(716) 826-1939 · wrightquinn4@gmail.com

Trailhead

Tim Mowbray, President

Greetings to North Country Trail Association and Affiliate members. I want to say thanks and congratulations to all the advocates who worked hard to complete the Trail Route Adjustment Act (S.47) recently passed by Congress and signed into law. We also want to welcome our new Affiliates in Minnesota and Vermont to the North Country Trail. We look forward to working with existing Chapters and our new partners to continue development along the Trail route as we work to fill in the gaps, and maintain and build the Trail along our designated route. The efforts of our advocates will be continuing as we work to pass the Scenic Trails Parity Act to bring about equalized funding across the nation’s scenic trails.



Photo: Sue Mowbray

We hope that you have plans to participate in some of this year’s events and activities that happen on the Trail during the year. We will have lots of time to discuss the success to date and form plans for moving ahead with our new partners. Volunteer work and participation are what drives the NCTA and we want to provide recognition and fellowship throughout the year. Two gatherings to celebrate the recently passed legislation are being discussed for Duluth, Minn., in late May and a similar event in Vermont.

The Board of Directors continues to work with staff to update the organization’s strategic plan and to keep the organization in a strong financial position. NCTA’s recent audit results and 990 tax filings are available online at the website for all to review. Committees of the Board continue to update policies and to make the organization more efficient and effective so we can focus on trail building and maintenance to accomplish our mission: To develop, maintain, protect and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.

I continue to be amazed with NCTA as a great organization, its dedicated Board of Directors, wonderful staff and incredible volunteers. As we look forward to the rest of 2019, I know we will accomplish many of our goals and that the North Country Trail will continue to be a great place for recreation and for sharing the outdoors with our families and friends. I hope to see many of you at future events and hope you are off to a great start in our new hiking season. ✨

Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director

On February 12th, I sat with a group of trail advocates in the U.S. Senate Gallery as we watched S.47 (which included the North Country Trail Route Adjustment Act) pass with a level of bipartisan support that we haven’t seen in years. In the weeks that followed, it passed the House and went on to be signed by the President, closing the door on a legislative process that had been in the works for close to three decades but opening up many new doors as our Arrowhead reroute and Vermont extension became a reality.



Photo: Andrea Ketchmark

To be in the Senate gallery when it passed was exhilarating and to be part of an incredible team of partners and volunteer advocates that made it happen is humbling. In the pages that follow, we will revisit the history of these two routes and the advocacy efforts that got us to today. In future issues, we’ll delve deeper to explore our new partnerships and what’s needed in Vermont and Minnesota to further define the routes and get the Trail on the ground.

Much work lies ahead, but first we celebrate. Join me in welcoming new sections of Trail and new partners to the NCT community. The Green Mountain Club, Middlebury Area Land Trust, Superior Hiking Trail Association, Border Route Trail Association, the Kekekabic and Arrowhead Chapters of the NCTA, the Green Mountain (Vermont) and Superior (Minnesota) National Forests and many more. They are all stewards of existing sections of Trail that will now officially be on the NCT route and they will be instrumental in our efforts to develop the new trail needed to close the gaps. We plan to celebrate with an event in Duluth at the end of May and have started discussions to do the same in Vermont when the time is right. We welcome you to our team and look forward to what’s next.

Although this is a HUGE accomplishment, it is only a fraction of the expansion, growth and development of the North Country Trail that is happening in 2019. Each and every day, our volunteers and partners are developing new trail, and struggling to maintain Trail that was built long ago. To meet the needs, the NCTA must grow as well. We must provide support to our partners, training to our volunteers and funding to get the needed projects done. We cannot do that without you so keep hiking, promoting, volunteering and donating to ensure we meet the needs of an ever growing resource and the community that supports it. ✨



National Park Service Corner

Chris Loudenslager, Acting Superintendent, North Country National Scenic Trail and Luke Jordan, Trail Planner

The National Park Service recently made its first official purchase of property specifically for the long-term goal to complete and protect the North Country National Scenic Trail. The Hutchinson property, located in Augusta, Michigan, is an 80-acre parcel comprised of a formerly farmed agricultural field and a 30-acre plot of forest. The different projects planned for the property will serve not only to enhance the delightful hiking experience and majestic views this section of Trail has long been known for, but will also reflect and support the spirit of the Park Service mission to “extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.”

The first project, converting the formerly farmed portion of the property to native prairie, began in late spring last year. The type of prairie being created will be similar to what much of the southwest Michigan landscape once was prior to European settlement. Today, only 1% of this



The Hutchinson property; the view from the top of its long hill.
Photo: Chris Loudenslager

type of environment remains, and is listed as globally “Imperiled” and “Critically Imperiled” at the state level. While important in and of itself, planting the field to prairie was also a quick and sustainable solution to protect the exposed soils from erosion and prevent rapid colonization by invasive plants. The low-growing ground cover will also preserve the vista and stunning views of the Kalamazoo River Valley that makes this section of Trail so special. Over time, the six species of native grasses and 22 species of native flowering plants that have been planted thus far will not only add to the beauty of the site, but will also provide critical habitat for variety of animals and insects, with an emphasis on pollinators (bees and butterflies, for example). As the native plants are given the opportunity to become established over the next two to three years, the field will be mowed periodically to control the spread of invasive plants that were already present on the property. Once established, we will explore the possibility of using prescribed fire as a more natural and effective way to enhance and maintain the prairie.

Project work this year will begin with an archeological survey of the property. This survey will be conducted to identify any potential cultural or archeological resources that might be present on the property and need to be protected. While obviously important, this study is also mandated for any projects occurring on federal land or sponsored by the federal government. But this is a good thing: once the study is completed, we will know much more about the history of this landscape and

property, and also better understand how to plan our future project work to avoid and protect these important resources.

Assuming that the archeological study won't include any surprising discoveries, our two major projects on the property this season will be a reroute of the existing Trail through the property, and to begin a long-term invasive plants treatment within the fencerows and forest edge that surrounds the property.

As it currently exists, the Trail is a straight-line hike along the western border of the property, situated to avoid interference with the former farming operations. While this route has a few perks, namely berries and shade, the Trail also follows the fall line of the steep hill that defines the property – in other words the route eroding water would take, and offers no potential to make the Trail accessible. The planned trail reroute will instead meander through the prairie, reducing the trail grade and allowing hikers to experience the unique sights, smells, and sounds the prairie will provide.

Continued on next page



Chris Loudenslager
Photo: Mick Hawkins

The second project, the invasive plants treatment, will begin to address the significant presence and diversity of invasive plants that are found throughout the un-farmed portions of the property. The North Country Trail will be receiving assistance from the Park Service's Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team to begin this treatment and to help us develop our long-term invasive plants management plan. The team's efforts and planning assistance will be supplemented by the very skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced volunteers and local North Country Trail staff who we are so fortunate to have in this part of the state.

Looking to the future:

In addition to the prairie and the Trail reroute, planning has also begun to expand and improve the existing trailhead. The small existing trailhead is cozy and comfortable, but does not provide for much more than a few visitors at any one time. The expanded trailhead is projected to provide parking for the increasing number of hikers and visitors to the property the prairie is expected to attract. A number of additional amenities, such as interpretive and educational displays and vault toilets, are also being considered. This will be a significant project for the Park Service, so it will take us some time to complete the planning and secure the funding that will be necessary before we're able to begin these improvements. But the wheels are turning, the ball is rolling, and it is exciting to know that this future is waiting for us, hidden just beyond the next hill. ✨

Corrections

In our last issue we published a page of 2018 Chapter and Affiliate Honor Awards, but the name of the Wampum Chapter's choice, Carol Wright, wasn't there. Shame on us. Congratulations, Carol, and we apologize.

—Editor

Next Generation Outreach Intern

My name is Emily Rodriguez and I am the Next Generation Outreach Intern for the NCTA. I graduated from Grand Valley State University with a degree in Spanish and a minor in Environmental Studies. I grew up in West Michigan but spent some time in South America before returning to the area with my husband, who I just happened to meet on a hike in Brazil. I have a passion for all things outdoors and love to introduce people to the benefits of spending time in nature. When I'm not in the office you can find me at my favorite bouldering gym, coaching pole vault, traveling or hiking. Over the next few months, my goal is to gain experience in the outdoor recreation industry while positively influencing our Trail community.



Emily Rodriguez and husband
Photo: Emily Rodriguez

My internship started in February and during my time at the NCTA, I will continue to broaden the Association's outreach efforts intended for our younger generations. Additionally, I will focus on diversifying our Trail community by fostering relationships with various organizations and clubs. One of my focuses will be the Next Generation Coalition, an exciting initiative that was launched in summer 2018 with the goal of engaging and educating young Trail lovers ages 18-28. Our members share a passion for the Trail and are involved in outreach, volunteerism and advocacy.

To join our Coalition or for more information, you can contact me at nextgen@northcountrytrail.org or visit the NCTA website at northcountrytrail.org/volunteers/next-generation-coalition. ✨

North Star Submission Guidelines

Without your material, we cannot have a magazine, so we eagerly request your submission of pictures and text for every issue. Please send both to Irene Szabo at treeweenie@aol.com, or 7639 Swamp Rd. Bergen N.Y. 14416.

Please **do not embed pictures within your article**, but send them separately as .jpg attachments. We will no longer accept embedded pictures. In all cases, please supply photographer's name.

Front cover photo candidates: prefer vertical format, and if digital, at least 300 dpi or greater than 3000 pixels, AND we are always looking for great cover photos! Inside pictures look much better with at least 1200 pixels in each direction, or more than 300 KB total. More is better. (You can find this information by right clicking on a photo file, hitting the properties tab, and then looking at the general information and the details information.)

Next deadline for Vol. 38, No. 3, is 1 July 2019.

Remember that 900 words equal approximately one page of dense text, so very few articles should exceed 1800 words in this size of magazine.

Thank you!

Your editor, Irene
(585) 494-0307



You're Invited

Ruth Dorrough

Welcome to a new feature in the *North Star* magazine, "You're Invited!" Here you will find listed opportunities to participate in NCT activities beyond your local Chapter. Come here to find out about events planned in the next six months and how you can participate.

The vitality of our organization lies in the excitement of joining with others to build, maintain, promote, experience and enjoy an entity which over more than 4,600 miles connects people and places at a time when widespread polarization in society threatens unity. Here is a sample of NCTA events to inspire you to venture from the comfort of a local trail section and explore more of all that the NCNST has to offer.

We are asking all Chapters and Affiliates to designate a person responsible for notifying your magazine of these events, perhaps your "Communications Coordinator" if you have one. This could also be the person who already posts your normal local events to the online regional calendar.

If you are offering an event consistent with the NCTA mission and would like to invite fellow NCT enthusiasts, please send your submissions to Kate Lemon, NCTA Marketing and Communications Coordinator, klemo@northcountrytrail.org. The deadline for submissions is the first day of each quarter, same as the *North Star*. For example, submission by July 1 would be included in the issue mailed in mid-August, that would cover events occurring in the fourth quarter and next year's first quarter. Submissions will be published twice if there is sufficient lead time.

You're Invited! Rockin' the Trails, a Trail Town Celebration June 13-15

Join the Western Michigan Chapter for Rockin' the Trails, a Trail Town Celebration in White Cloud, Michigan, June 13-15. The celebration includes guided hikes, kayak trips and races, trail runs, live music, great food, kids' games, and much more! Prices vary by event. Free admission to the park. Learn more and register for events at www.rivercountrychamber.com/events.

You're Invited! Long Weekend Trail Reroute Project September 27-30

Join the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter as we start work on a reroute enabled by the new Bear River Bridge approval. Camp or motel. Some meals and lots of fellowship provided. Arrive in Petoskey, Michigan, when you can; depart when you must. Save the date, celebrate NCNST Day with us. Send us your email address to be updated as plans develop: delawton@torchlake.com.

You're Invited! Finger Lakes Trail Days July 26-27

This is a family friendly event to show people of all walks of life the wide array of non-motorized outdoor activities and trails available in this area. Join us at the Steuben County Fairgrounds in Bath, N.Y., on Friday and Saturday, July 26 and 27. Friday afternoon enjoy music from Steep Canyon Rangers. Saturday the music continues with Aaron Lipp and The Slack Tones and Sawyer Fredericks among others.

On Saturday you can learn about geocaching, hike on the NCT/Finger Lakes Trail, try a kayak in the on-site pool, learn about Heather Housekeeper's (the Botanical Hiker) 2015 1000-mile thru-hike of the Finger Lakes Trail, learn how to track wild animals, take a free yoga class, find out about therapies for relaxation and flexibility, try the climbing wall, learn how to build a hiking trail, learn to tie flies and more! For more information see the Finger Lakes Trail Days website: www.fingerlakestraildays.com

There is limited on-site camping and several motels and campgrounds in the surrounding area. See website

You're Invited! Softies Hike 2.0 October 4-6

The first weekend in October – Friday, Saturday, Sunday, October 4-6 – we'll complete our Softies trek across the U.P. We call the hikes Softies, because we stay in motels or lodges, eat dinner at restaurants, and day-hike with a five-minute break every hour or so to stop and appreciate our surroundings and enjoy some conversations!

Hiking just two weekends each year (one in the spring after the snow but before the bugs, and one in the fall before the snow returns) it will have taken us 12 years to go from Copper Peak in Bessemer to the Mackinac Bridge in St. Ignace.

Join us on our grand finale hike to the bridge and help us decide what to do next. We could just rest on our laurels, of course, but I suspect we'll choose to hike some more. But, do we want to start over again in the west or simply turn around and go back? The possibilities are endless!

Marge at Mforslin2@charter.net

You're Invited! ADK Volunteer Trail Work Week August 5-9, 2019

Help volunteers build new foot trail in the Hoffman Notch Wilderness section of the 4600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail in N.Y.'s Adirondacks. Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Procrew training on day one. Volunteers provide own food and lodging, with limited camping available: first come, first served. For details and registration contact: maryccoffin@gmail.com

You're Invited! See the Superior Hiking Trail events listed on page 10 celebrating their new status as official NCT.

Where In The Blue Blazes?

In this regular feature of North Star, we challenge your knowledge in a friendly competition to name the location of a detail or point of interest along the 4600+ mile North Country Trail. Any of our readers can submit a photo for consideration for the next puzzle, or play our game by answering the question: Where in the Blue Blazes can this location be found?

"This creekside rest stop is on the Trail about a half mile north of the Wexford County line near Fife Lake, Michigan.

The "table and chairs" are actually about half the size of the real thing and have been in this location for several years.

It's a whimsical setting waiting for Alice to come along."

Jerry Freels

Grand Traverse Hiking Club Chapter

On 3/14, Jim Charvat of West Michigan Chapter called me with the correct answer.



And our next mystery candidate? Can you tell our editor where on the NCT it is? Irene Szabo, treeweenie@aol.com, (585) 494-0307

Celebrating The New Official Route

Let us hear from several long distance hikers who have hiked the new route, even before it was official, to share how much they appreciate the treasures of the new Trail.

Oh, the Places We Would Have Missed

Ruth Dorrough, end-to-end with her husband Dan

Until March 2019 the North Country National Scenic Trail ended abruptly on the N.Y. shores of Lake Champlain near Crown Point. A stunning pedestrian access bridge at this Eastern terminus sang its siren song to lure hikers on to the fields and mountains visible on its Vermont side. It would take eight years from the opening of this bridge and a literal “act of Congress” until the NCNST was able to respond officially and extend the Trail across the waters to Vermont.

Unable to resist the call and with faith in the vision, most of us included Vermont and the Minnesota Arrowhead reroute in our quest to complete the entire Trail. With gratitude to the many whose patient, intelligent persistence made the change official, we are glad we did. The already rich experience of hiking the NCNST was greatly enhanced by the challenges, views, and people we encountered in these now official sections of the Trail.

Derrick and Cheryl Passe guided us through the Kekekabic. Dan said it was the hardest thing he had ever done, “like walking up and down flights of stairs with a refrigerator on your back.” I worried about the Kek for years and so my comment at the end was, “That wasn’t bad at all.”



“At the time we walked it I thought it was a crime to include Kek locations such as the rocky one pictured. Distance and comfort have changed my mind. It would be a crime not to include the wildness of the Kek.” —Ruth

Photo: Dan Dorrough



On the Border Route, another nearly inaccessible trail in northern Minnesota that requires backpacking, hikers enjoy the views.

Photo: Joan Young

The Route Adjustment Act Brought Us So Many Jewels

Joan Young, end-to-ender over 20 years

The strength of the North Country Trail is the diversity of experiences it offers. Our vision statement embraces the scenic, environmental, cultural and historic riches to be found along the way.

With the passage of the Route Adjustment Act, all of these goals have been expanded in wonderful ways, particularly the scenic and environmental portions.

Although the Minnesota Arrowhead change has been generally recognized for several years, we've now officially added some impressive and wild landscapes to the NCT experience. The Superior Hiking Trail along the north shore of Lake Superior is known for its black volcanic base and hills of lighter rock that floated on the magma to raise peaks in the 1800-foot range. The trail traverses these hills dropping 500 or more feet between each top. Vistas are impressive, and even though many of the climbs are rugged, the scenic reward is more than adequate compensation.

The Border Route follows a chain of lakes along the Canadian border. The trail largely follows bluffs which afford views across the blue waters. Near the end of the Gunflint Trail (a road), the NCT joins the Kekakabic Trail and enters the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, noted for remote lakes and pristine backcountry.

The northern piece of the Arrowhead is isolated and cannot really be accomplished by day hiking, due to the lack of access points. Adding this section to the NCT greatly enhances the



Looking inland over seemingly endless forest on the Superior Hiking Trail

Photo: Dan Dorrough

overall wildness of the trail experience.

The Trail passes through Ely, considered one of the premier northern Trail towns. It's a jumping off spot for paddlers and hikers and will be a welcoming community along the NCT.

Currently, the back side of the Arrowhead is primarily on the paved Mesabi Trail, through reclaimed mining lands. This territory has an interesting sort of beauty and many cultural and historic riches including Finnish heritage sites, the lowest recorded temperatures in the contiguous United States, and logging history.

Split Rock on Lake Superior becomes the second lighthouse which is directly on the NCT route (Au Sable Point in Michigan's Pictured Rocks is first) and Marquette Harbor Light, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse are within a quarter mile.

Vermont adds the eighth state to the NCT roster! These miles connect us with other famous trails, the Long Trail and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The Long Trail, cresting the ridge of the Green Mountains, adds a new highest elevation, over 3300 feet. Geologically, the Greens are a part of the Appalachian chain. Incidentally, the lowest point on the NCT is at Lake Champlain at about 100 feet. You climb from the lowest to the highest points going either east to 3300 feet or west to 2400 feet within a few miles. You can look west from the Greens, across the Lake Champlain valley, to see the peaks of the Adirondacks.

Using the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), Vermont adds a split pathway to the NCT. Hikers may choose to go either way around the town.

Depending on the final route chosen to take the trail from Middlebury to the Long Trail, the NCT may pass the Robert Frost Farm in Ripton, a National Historic Landmark where the poet lived and wrote seasonally.

These additions to the array of opportunities along the North Country Trail are worth cheering about. We've not only gained miles, we've gained treasures well worth the wait. It would have been a crime not to have these treasures as part of our Trail.



This new bridge over the south end of Lake Champlain between New York and Vermont now has a pedestrian lane, and aren't we glad!

Photo: Dan Dorrough

Glad to have where we walked now official.

Luke Jordan, National Park Service Trail Planner for the NCT and one-season NCT end-to-ender

Being from Minnesota myself and spending a lot of time growing up along the North Shore, it would surprise no one that the Superior Hiking Trail holds a special place in my heart. The 400+ miles of existing Trail that encompass part of the Arrowhead route of the NCT will add some world-class hiking to the NCT, some of the best along the entire route.

Moreover, as someone who has always been an advocate for the NCT, I am particularly excited about the extension into Vermont. Now that it's official, we can hope that sometime soon there will be some type of sign at the new eastern terminus of the Trail. Folks who have made it to Vermont along their Appalachian Trail journey will see this sign, but most of them probably having never heard of the NCT. I am hopeful that properly identifying and celebrating the connection with the AT will bring in a new wave of NCT supporters. Most AT hikers are likely contemplating what their next adventure will be, and hopefully with the eastern end of the NCT highlighted it may give some of them the curiosity at least to give it a try.



Looking forward to new and appropriate signage at this exciting spot, where the NCT meets the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. Joan Young and Marie Altenau both took this, so we suspect some digital photo manipulation, but they truly did hike here on their quest to Do It All even before it was official NCT. We hope Luke Jordan's prediction that long distance hikers will discover here that there's another good one out there!

Superior Hiking Trail now Official!

Three wonderful shots along the Superior Hiking Trail, and aren't we glad they are now part of our North Country Trail!



A view of Lake Superior from the Trail.
Photo: Molly Cochran



The Drain Pipe Overlook.
Photo: D2 Photographic



A section 13 sunset.
Photo: Tone Coughlin

The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) is very pleased to “make it official” finally and include the Superior Hiking Trail’s blue blazes among the ranks of the NCNST. Beyond the welcomed “National Scenic Trail” designation, SHTA is excited to partner more closely with NCTA to address some of the Trail’s biggest problem areas and highlight the incredible hiking, backpacking, and trail running opportunities in northern Minnesota. As SHTA’s Trail Development Director Jo Swanson put it, “Two thumbs up, NCTA!”

In fact, the SHTA is going all out to celebrate their new National Scenic Trail Status:

- **Arrowhead Reroute Celebration Social Gathering** on Thursday, May 30th from 6-8 p.m. at the Spirit Mountain Grand Avenue Chalet in Duluth.
- **Arrowhead Reroute Celebration Ribbon Cutting Ceremony** on Friday, May 31st at noon at the Magney-Snively Trailhead.
- **SHTA Hike Fest Guided Hike: Ely’s Peak Loop with Larry Sampson** on Friday, May 31st at 1 p.m. (after the Ribbon Cutting). Meet at the Magney-Snively Trailhead, shuttle to 123rd Ave W. Trailhead to hike Ely’s Peak Loop OR hike back to Magney-Snively Trailhead. The hike should be completed by 4:30 p.m. Open to all and free of charge.

—Jaron Cramer,
SHTA Development and
Communications Director

Achieving Bold Visions Takes Time (and Patience)

By Tom Gilbert, Former National Park Service Superintendent
North Country National Scenic Trail

The enactment of the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment (Section 2501) as part of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Public Law 116-9) culminates 22 years of effort to modify the route of the Trail in Minnesota and to move the eastern terminus of the Trail from Crown Point, New York, to the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. Many, many people in the governmental and private partner realms have worked to accomplish this goal.

The Minnesota Reroute

Five years after completion of the 1982 Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT), Minnesota state officials and various trail leaders informed the National Park Service (NPS) that the proposed route for the trail between Jay Cooke State Park (near Duluth) and the Chippewa National Forest traversed as much as 60-70 miles of Black Spruce/Tamarack swamp. Surprisingly, this important detail had not been raised by these same sources during preparation of the 1982 plan. Nevertheless, in 1987 everyone agreed an alternative route for the trail should be sought.

Perhaps the reason this issue surfaced in 1987 was the development of the Superior Hiking Trail which, together with linkages with the Border Route Trail and Kekekabic Trail, provided a viable alternative that could be considered. In 1993, an NCT “Summit” meeting of all key Minnesota stakeholders was held in St. Paul. All agreed the “Arrowhead Reroute,” as the alternative route was dubbed, was a better route for the NCT. The NPS said it would need letters of support from all stakeholders before it could take the next step. By mid-1995, all parties had sent letters.

The National Trails System Act states, in Section 7(b), that a “substantial relocation” of the route of a National Scenic Trail shall be by an Act of Congress. However, this provision had never been invoked since original passage of the law in 1968. There was no precedent for what constituted a substantial relocation. In 1996, the NPS Midwest Regional Director at the time was willing to try to make the change administratively, and if someone later objected asserting that only Congress could make the change, he would ask forgiveness. But first, he told me, consult with the staff of Minnesota Congressman Bruce Vento, who was chairman of the U.S. House Subcommittee on National Parks.

Representative Vento’s staff expressed doubt that the “substantial relocation” provision had never been invoked and bet he would prove me wrong. Three days later he called back and reluctantly agreed that I was correct. Just as I had learned on a previous trail matter, he said “substantial” might not be determined by how many miles were involved, but by how much public controversy the proposed change engendered. He said, at a minimum, the NPS needed to do a professional evaluation (study) of the alternative routing opportunities, including an environmental assessment, as an amendment to the 1982 Comprehensive Plan.

The Northeastern Minnesota Route Assessment got underway in 1998. In July 1999 a series of three public “open house” meetings were held to gather public input on alternative routing opportunities, primarily between the western terminus of the Kekakabic Trail and the Chippewa National Forest. Shortly thereafter, NPS funding for the planning work was curtailed and work was suspended. It resumed in 2001.

During 2002-03, there were many meetings of the planning team and much field work to figure out viable routing alternatives. Six more public meetings were held to present findings and receive feedback. In February 2004, the NPS staff reviewed the preliminary conclusion and report with the new NPS Regional Director and staff in Omaha. They agreed with the report’s conclusions. However, unlike his

predecessor, the new regional director was not willing to attempt to make the route change administratively. To him, the suggestion that this was not a substantial relocation did not “pass the red face test.”

The report and environmental assessment were placed on official public review during late May and June. All documents were finalized by December 2004 and I prepared a draft North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act.

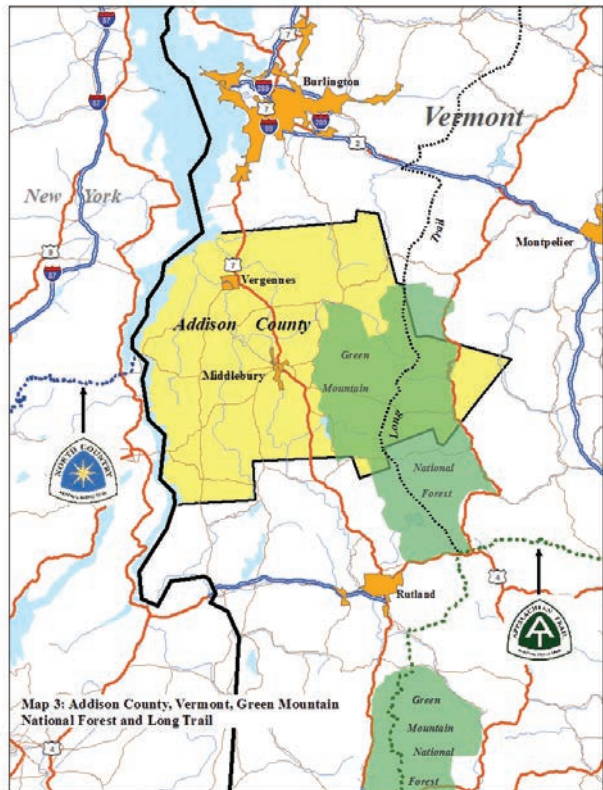
In 2005, an official map of the adjusted route was prepared to accompany the legislation. In 2006, the NCTA began advocacy activities to persuade Representative James Oberstar to introduce the legislation. In February 2007, the NPS Regional Director wrote to Representative Oberstar urging him to help take the final step in changing the route through the necessary legislation. In December 2007, Mr. Oberstar introduced the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act of 2007.

In addition, the NPS Midwest Regional Office submitted the Route Adjustment Act through official NPS channels in 2007, 2009, and 2011 to be included in the Washington Office’s legislative agenda to Congress. Nevertheless, bills to make the adjustment languished in Congress year after year.

The Vermont Extension

The illustration on page 12, drawn by Bureau of Outdoor Recreation cartographer Madge Patterson in 1975 as the NCT feasibility study neared completion, captured the challenges that the proposed trail faced in becoming a reality. It needed to get a positive recommendation from Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Nathaniel P. Reed, who was from Florida (hence the alligator). The enormous potential cost of the trail had to pass the review of the federal Office of Management

Continued on page 12



Map of Vermont's Addison County
Source: NPS study

and Budget, and that may have been the source of the idea to authorize the trail with no federal land acquisition authority. Then the proposal had to pass the Congress and be signed into law. Five years passed before Congress acted (1975-1980).

The point of resurrecting this drawing now is to emphasize the challenge depicted at the right edge: the “Detour” sign at the New York-Vermont state line. The President’s signature on the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act on March 12, 2019 has finally removed that detour sign!

The intent from the very beginning of the idea for the NCT was that it should connect at its eastern end with the Appalachian Trail (AT) in Vermont. This is enshrined in Section 5(c) of the National Trails System Act:

“(6) North Country Trail, from the

Appalachian Trail in Vermont, approximately three thousand two hundred miles through the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, to the Lewis and Clark Trail in North Dakota.”

During the study (1970-1975), several possible connections to the AT were explored. In the end, the final

feasibility study depicted the Trail terminating at Crown Point, New York. Why? What diverted the study’s conclusion from the original concept?

In 1974, then-Governor of Vermont Thomas P. Salmon sent a letter to then-Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton asking that the Vermont portion of the proposed NCT route be deleted from the final feasibility study report. The Green Mountain Club (GMC) that maintains the Long Trail became very concerned that there would be large numbers of eastward-heading NCT hikers who would traverse portions of their already-overused trail. Their board adopted a policy opposing creation of another National Scenic Trail in Vermont (besides the AT) and persuaded Governor Salmon to send the aforementioned letter. The Interior Department complied with the request.

In early 1980, when Congress was considering the bill that eventually passed on March 5 authorizing the NCT, the GMC Board of Directors adopted a position that “neither supports nor opposes” the legislation. Knowing trail proponents still had hopes for an eventual linkage with the Long/Appalachian Trail, their position stated that “...until the location(s) of such a linkage and its associated impacts can be assessed, the Club reserves judgment...”

After the Trail was authorized by Congress 1980, an eventual connection to the AT was occasionally discussed with trail interests in Vermont. Leaders of the GMC said there might come a day when the club would be open to discussing the possibility.

New Life for the Original Vision

In 2005, while promoting his concept for the Sea-to-Sea Route, which would need a connection between the AT and NCT, Ron Strickland made a visit to the Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) in Vermont, which had created a network of public trails known as the “Trail Around Middlebury,” or TAM. Ron realized it could be an important link in the needed connection. Gioia Kuss, MALT’s executive director at the time, became excited about the



Gioia Kuss, then executive director of Trail Around Middlebury, on a fence stile.
Photo: Ron Strickland



Dan Dorrough walking the Trail Around Middlebury in Vermont.
Photo: Ruth Dorrough

possibility of a National Scenic Trail utilizing the TAM as part of its route.

The engagement of a local land trust provided the open door for actively exploring the current sentiment about extending the NCT into Vermont. On June 8-9, 2007, then-NCTA Director of Trail Management Clare Cain and I had two very successful meetings in Vermont. The first meeting was with local interests in Middlebury, hosted by MALT. The second meeting was in Manchester at the annual meeting of the GMC. We were invited to set up a display about the NCT and briefly address their membership.

It was very important that both of us were involved in these meetings. I was able to explain the historical background of the National Trails System and its authorities. I also explained the NPS’ role as overall administrator, the resources and services it provides, and gave assurances that the individuality and autonomies of trails and partners making up the route remain intact.

Clare was able to speak about the Association as the primary nonprofit partner and the role that volunteers play in establishing and maintaining the Trail. This approach to trail development and management was familiar to trail interests in Vermont and her comments resonated with the audience in important ways. Together, our presentations laid the background for, and asked, the question, “Is the time right for reconsidering the connection of the NCT and AT in Vermont?” Many GMC members we talked with said connecting the NCT and AT simply made sense. The leadership of the GMC gave us a “green light” to continue exploring the matter.

There was no question about whether adding another state to the route of the NCT would be a “substantial relocation” (change) in the route. So it was immediately clear the NPS would need to prepare another study of alternatives for routing the NCT into Vermont. Congress would need this to inform them as they considered the necessary legislation. In the winter and spring of 2008, the NCTA, MALT, GMC, and Green Mountain National Forest sent letters to the

NPS urging it to undertake this evaluation.

In 2009, the NPS entered into a cooperative agreement with MALT to lead the study, delineate a preferred “corridor of opportunity” within which an eventual trail would be located, and assess the environmental impacts. In February 2010, three public meetings were held to announce the study and present conceptual corridors. Local residents offered opinions about “can’t miss” natural and cultural features, routes through difficult areas, potentially cooperative property owners, and important services such as lodging and food. Following the public meetings, the executive director of MALT and other key stakeholders met with

representatives of the planning commissions of each town through which the Trail might pass to seek their input and answer questions.

In the spring of 2012, NPS staff worked with the MALT staff to finalize the public review draft of the report. A public meeting was held at the Weybridge School on May 21, 2012. There was broad overall support for the extension of the Trail and for the preferred routing alternative. Some people expressed concern that private lands would be condemned. NPS staff explained the legislative restrictions which prevent the use of eminent domain to acquire trail lands.

Following the public meeting, all of the key stakeholders – Green Mountain National Forest, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, GMC, NCTA, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, MALT, and the Moosalamoo Association – sent in comments favoring the Preferred Alternative. The final report, issued on December 13, 2013, concluded that it was both feasible and desirable to extend the NCT into Vermont to connect with the AT.

Subsequent to the favorable public review of the draft report in June 2012, I revised the Route Adjustment Act language to include the Vermont extension. The NPS staff revised the official map referenced in the bill to show the Trail connecting with the AT in Vermont. The NCTA substituted these in its advocacy efforts and in 2014 Minnesota Congressman Rick Nolan and Senator Amy Klobuchar introduced the revised bill in the House and Senate to make the changes in Minnesota and Vermont.

It still required almost five years for Congress to enact this fairly benign legislation, which is perhaps a reflection of our times. Nevertheless, now that Congress and the President have acted, the Superior Hiking Trail, Border Route Trail, Kekakabic Trail, and portions of the Trail Around Middlebury and the Long Trail have gained status as part of a National Scenic Trail, and their supporters have become part of a growing North Country Trail community. A very warm welcome to all! We appreciate your patience over the years required to make this a reality. ✨

Advocacy Takes the Day!

By Bruce Matthews, Former North Country Trail Association Executive Director

The large scale of the adjustment to the original Congressionally approved route of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in both Minnesota and into Vermont was well outside the scope of what the National Park Service was authorized to approve on its own. This dictated that Congressional approval was needed. And thus began a saga of epic proportions for our tiny (but increasingly powerful!) North Country Trail Association.

Advocacy, or the education of Members of Congress (House and Senate) about the merits of legislative action affecting the NCNST, was in a fledgling state when efforts first began in 2006 to have a bill introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate that would effect the required change. The first such introduction was by Representative Jim Oberstar (MN-07) in the 110th Congress (December 2007). Adding the Minnesota Arrowhead trails (Superior, Border Route, and Kekekabic Hiking Trails) to the NCNST (plan approved by the NPS in 2004) and later connecting the NCNST to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Vermont (plan approved by the NPS in 2013) actually requires only a simple, two-sentence bill. It would amend the NCNST section of the National Trails System Act of 1968 (PL 90-543) to change the originally approved mileage of “about 3200 miles” to “4600 miles, extending from the Appalachian Trail in Vermont,” and substituting an updated map reference that depicted to route changes.

Simple, right? Nothing political about it, right? Surely bipartisan...

Then how come it took over 12 years, and six different Congresses, to get this passed?

Despite the simplicity of the bill and its merits, all the documented local and state support, the fact that no dollars were being requested (and in fact the projected costs were LESS than what it would have taken to construct trails over the 100 or so miles of northern Minnesota wetlands in the original route), it took us six Congresses to make this happen.

Here’s why:

- Congress operates on a two-year cycle. Any legislation that fails to pass either House or Senate by the end of the legislative session must start all over again, with a new introduction by a Member of both House and Senate, with all the accompanying co-sponsors, documentation of local support, Dear Colleague letters and so on that are a monumental effort, particularly for a volunteer-driven organization that mostly just wants to build a hiking trail. We had to start over six times in order to get to this point.
- Related to this, getting legislation passed is all about building relationships, mainly with the bright young staffers supporting each Member of Congress. At latest count the NCNST now passes through eight states (times two Senators) plus 31 separate Congressional Districts. That’s 47 different sets of relationships to be built and

- maintained with Congressional Members and staffers, biennially compounded by these staffers’ mobility. This is made more interesting by the predominantly Democratic Senators representing these states and the mostly Republican House members representing these 31 Congressional Districts.
- The NCNST Route Adjustment Act was such small potatoes it took vigilant efforts to keep it on the radar screen of Members of Congress and their committees. We often had to wait for a conglomeration of similarly small bills to get wrapped together into an omnibus package, the strategy that ultimately got the bill passed. We could never hope for floor action as a stand-alone bill.
 - Although the NCNST Route Adjustment was simple and intuitive and locally supported it still ran afoul of a broader national anti-public lands and federal control agenda espoused by western Members of Congress and adopted by the Tea Party Republicans. To them, increasing the federal footprint with an additional 1400 National Scenic Trail miles (to update the language of the original 1980 legislation) was a real non-starter.

- The NCNST Route Adjustment bill was viewed as a means by Tea Partiers to advance their agenda, which included attacking the eminent domain doctrine by which many National Parks and some National Scenic Trails were able to condemn and acquire private lands for park use. Even though the NCNST has never had eminent domain authority nor desired it, some Members saw the bill as a chance to make a statement about opposing eminent domain. Throughout our experience over the years with this bill in the House and sometimes the Senate, we were plagued in each Congress by adverse amendments offered by Members that specifically prohibited the use of eminent domain. Although we had no evidence supporting it, we were also concerned that our bill might be used to attack the entire National Trails System Act and remove eminent domain even from those trails that had that authority.
- Another factor whereby our NCNST Route Adjustment bill was used to advance the Tea Party agenda was through adverse amendments that established the primacy of utilities needs or energy transmission uses over those of the Trail, in effect removing related protections afforded National Scenic Trails (and litigated as such by the Appalachian Trail and others).

With the House majority of the 112th-115th Congresses being Republican, these concerns were a major factor influencing efforts to get a “clean bill;” i.e. the simple, two-line bill as introduced (without amendments). Or, as was mostly the case, to negotiate the least egregiously worded amendments addressing eminent domain and energy transmission. Fortunately, those years of ground work finally paid off this March with fairly bipartisan approval of the Dingell bill.

The plus side of our bill taking all this time to pass has been the evolution and maturation of NCTA’s Advocacy Committee as well as NCTA member awareness of the importance of advocacy. Since 2006 NCTA’s advocacy has grown from what had been a one or two staff member effort to a major initiative with a volunteer committee chaired and led by volunteers. NCTA not only has staff and volunteers attending advocacy events in Washington, D.C., such as the annual Hike the Hill (American Hiking Society and Partnership for the National Trails System-sponsored) as well as advocacy fly-ins supporting the Land and Water Conservation Fund, there is much greater participation at the state level with trails advocacy efforts. NCTA is increasingly equipping its membership to respond to outreach efforts on behalf of trails.

At the risk of missing some mentions, we should recognize the pioneering advocacy efforts of Al Larmann, John Leinen, Bobby Koepplin, John Heiam, Laura DeGolier, Quinn Wright, Steve Walker and NCTA’s first chair of the Advocacy Committee, Peter Nordgren. Gary Werner, longtime Executive Director of the Partnership for the National Trails System, has been a major supporter of NCTA’s efforts. NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator Matt Davis has been a faithful stalwart in coordinating efforts in Minnesota and North Dakota. NCTA’s Executive Director Andrea Ketchmark brought advocacy experience as one of her strong suits when she started with NCTA in 2009 as Director of Trail Development.

Without these leaders and the strategic advocacy efforts developing since 2006 the route adjustments would still be a pipe dream. ✱

The First, and Last... Literally... To Blaze the Trail

By Denny Caneff, Executive Director for the Superior Hiking Trail

For Susan Dolph and Doug Robertson, there was something a bit clandestine about their contracting with the Association to blaze the SHT (paint the blue marks) back in 2006.

“Gayle Coyer [executive director at the time] was sort of quiet about it. She sensed there was resistance to blazing (in the organization),” recalls Doug.

According to SHTA legend, early SHT pioneers resisted blazing the Trail, fearing it would mar hikers’ wilderness experience. But having hiked the entire Appalachian Trail (AT) and the SHT, Susan and Doug learned to value the presence of those trail-marking blazes, the AT with them and the SHT without.

“Having blazes on the AT certainly didn’t diminish the experience,” Susan says. “In fact, you wake up when you don’t see blazes. They provide reassurance that you’re still on the trail.”

The couple blazed the entire SHT, painting the standard 2-inch by 6-inch blue rectangle on trees every tenth of a mile or so in the summers of 2006 and 2007. Susan started at one end of a section, Doug at the other. They would meet in the middle, have lunch, then carry on to the other end of the section. They smartly equipped themselves with two sets of keys. (Imagine forgetting to hand off each set of car keys at the mid-point...)

They have hiked the SHT several times over, and they’ve been section adopters of the Cramer Rd. to Cross River section for sixteen years. They still admire their blazing handiwork, and seem pleased that the Association will be retracing their footsteps this year during Blue Blaze Blitz weekends in July and October. Can their original blazes have lasted a dozen years, especially on the common aspen on that trail?



Susan doing a blaze. The organization was to learn about doing 2" wide blazes with 1" wide brushes applied vertically some time later.

Photo: Doug Robertson



Susan Dolph and Doug Robertson.

Photo: Denny Caneff

Part of their objective back then was to make the Trail easier to find for winter users, compelling them to “blaze high and blaze often.” To this day, Doug says he can detect which blazes they painted in 2006 and which were done in 2007 because they might have gotten less careful the second year. That their work is still visible and functioning is a credit to their patient commitment to do the job well. ✱

Adirondack Trail Stewards on the NCT

Why do they do it?

By Mary Coffin



Photo: Mary Coffin

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) crosses New York’s Adirondack Park west to east from the Stone Dam Lake Trail to the Lake Champlain Bridge at Crown Point State Historic Site. About 80 miles of its ~158 miles are on existing DEC trails in Forest Preserve Units and new trails are being constructed to connect them. The trail is in sparsely populated areas and state owned remote areas classified as Wilderness Areas and Wild Forests.

A trail is only as good as its maintenance, so we have developed an Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Trail Steward program for the NCNST under the State Volunteer Service Agreement program with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Trails Department. We have begun recruiting Trail Stewards for both existing NCNST sections and for the newly constructed NCNST sections.

The responsibilities of a trail steward (trail adopter) include visiting the trail at least twice each year to inspect the trail, side cutting of vegetation, picking up fallen limbs and branches and reporting any major problems such as bridge repair, major blowdown, beaver activity, washouts etc. to the State Department of Environmental Conservation. Most stewards have a long drive to reach these remote trailheads.

While coordinating the NCNST stewards, I became impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm for maintaining Adirondack trails as part of the National Trails system. I wondered why they signed on to do more than just hike the trails, to actually keep them cleared for other hikers. Some of their responses are below.

Steve Hayes who maintains the Brooktrout Trail and on to the Northville Lake Placid Trail junction and Horn Lake East Trail in West Canada Lakes Wilderness, “loves being in the wild” and feels “he might as well work on the trail while there to make it easier for others and it keeps him in shape.” In his experience, Steve has “met the nicest people who often thank him for his work.” He also has “helped a good friend scout the NCT Adirondack route who wants it done during her lifetime.”

Ed O’Shea enjoys working the Long and Rock Pond Trail in Siamese Ponds Wilderness. Ed reflected that “I spent my childhood roaming the woods and never was afraid of hard work. Using the crosscut saw is enjoyable work, plus the crew we have (ADK Onondaga Chapter) all seem to feel the same way too! One more reason is that there is a lot of history behind the crosscut saw, so I guess it’s the nostalgia.”

We could base an entire article on Paul Weinstein’s comments based on his experiences maintaining the French Louis/Pillsbury Lake Trail to the 97-year-old

Northville Lake Placid Trail (NPT) junction and setting an example for his two children. He comments, “I seriously think as a grassroots movement, volunteerism, and specifically environmental activities are one of our biggest priorities in today’s world. I always had a sense that being out in the woods is somewhat primal.”

Paul likes challenging himself to do something beyond normal daily activity, and outside his comfort zone. He further comments, “It occurs to me as a trail steward that hikers appreciate seeing the cut off end of a log on the ground, sort of a trail marker, itself. And I know most of them don’t want to climb around, under, or over a scraggly mess of blowdown.”

Norm Kuchar, Walt Hayes and the ADK Schenectady Chapter volunteer crew work tirelessly in Hoffman Notch on several trails and feel a sense of accomplishment after a day of trail work, be it the challenge of scouting off trail for a new route or clearing a new or existing trail. I have observed the sense of accomplishment and enthusiasm they exude relative to trail work.

This is just a sampling of how a few trail stewards feel about their trail work. Others express a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction or self-respect, and even ownership for their trail.

Many thanks to these Adirondack NCNST trail stewards and ADK Chapters: Jon Bowen with ADK -Onondaga, Norm Kuchar and Walt Hayes with ADK-Schenectady, Stephen Hayes & Kevin Kecham, Paul Weinstein, Ed OShea, Gail Livingston, Jim Bradley, Steve Starner. All these folks while working on their adopted sections are contributing to the larger trail, the 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail.

If you have an interest in adopting and becoming a trail steward for an Adirondack trail on the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) please contact coordinator Mary Coffin, maryccoffin@gmail.com. ✱

For Many of Us, Trail Care is the Best Fun

By Aaron Sherk

I am writing you regarding the article, Michigan Finale, page 41, from the *North Star* Volume 38, No. 1. The couple, Merv and Rachel Frey, who wrote the article, mentioned a bicyclist they saw on Craig Lake Road. I am the bicyclist/trail maintainer they referred to. I remember the encounter with the couple and it happened exactly as they describe. I was amazed when I read the article and realized I was the trail maintainer they were describing.

I help my uncle, Rick Duemling, who is the official trail maintainer for that section of Trail. The section we maintain for the North Country Trail Hikers Chapter is the three-mile section west from Craig Lake State Park. He has 80 acres of property bordering the state park and we regularly ride our bikes from the property to the park. We have also seen moose in this area as the couple did. Years ago, while camping and kayaking on Crooked Lake, we were in our kayaks and came across two bull moose on the shoreline. What an amazing thing to see!

We look forward to maintaining the Trail every spring and fall. We also visit the area in winter on snowmobiles and snowshoes. Our trips to this area in Michigan’s upper peninsula are the best times of the whole year and we look forward to them with much anticipation. ✱

HIKING SHORTS

Now an Official Trail Link

By Peter Nordgren

A long-awaited link in the NCT between Wisconsin and Minnesota can be built in 2019, thanks to recent action by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The WDNR Board approved a new master plan that permits the Trail to cross the St. Louis River Streambank Protection Area adjacent to the border, 16 miles southwest of Superior, Wisconsin. The new trail segment will join with an existing segment at the south end of the Superior Hiking Trail, NOW the authorized route of the North Country Trail in northeast Minnesota. The Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew and Brule-St. Croix Chapter volunteers will begin work in late spring to make the connection.

And then, from the Superior Hiking Trail Association, came this.

Here’s the sign we’ll eventually mount at that spot. It’s Michael Loscheider, with our Trail Development Director Jo Swanson. Michael created the sign. In fact, he’s become our new wooden sign guy; for years we’ve been without someone with a router to make these signs.



The sign which currently blocks the uncompleted trail at the border.
Photo: Peter Nordgren



Photo: Denny Caneff, SHT Executive Director

Chequamegon Chapter's Annual Midwinter Meeting



This group shot from the Chequamegon Chapter's Annual Midwinter Meeting on Saturday, February 9th, illustrates the Chapter's largest turnout for a meeting to date. We also currently have a record number of Chapter Members! Some participants arrived after the photo.

Photo: Marty Swank, a Northern Great Lakes Visitor Staff Member from the National Park Service

Annual Awards from the North Country Trail Association

Based on nominations from our members and the deliberations of a hard-working Awards Committee chaired by Larry Pio, it was exciting to announce and present the 2019 awards to our best and brightest at the Celebration.

OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER Tara East, Director, Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center



Photo: Gary

This property provides therapeutic equestrian services, and it gives the Chief Noonday Chapter an off-road rolling landscape to connect the Kellogg Biological Station and the Kellogg Forest. Our partnership with them has continued for 16 years. Some of our trail is for hikers only, with other portions shared with horses. The sharing has worked well.

OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER Jarett Svihra, Mines & Meadows ATV Resort Park



Photo: Jarett and Melanie Svihra

The Wampum Chapter enjoys 1.5 miles of Trail within this property, where mutual respect for different trail users works well. It's one of only a few instances where we "share the trail" with motorized vehicles yet a fun and safe environment has been established for all. We value the respect that Mines & Meadows and their clients show toward hikers and appreciate their dedication to helping the NCTA.

BOOTS ON THE TRAIL (for those who lead others onto the Trail) Jim Gilkey



Photo: Unknown

After he finished walking the whole Buckeye Trail, some 1400 miles, when asked what he'd do next, Jim replied that he'd do it all again, except this time he would make a concerted effort to enable others to join him. With lots of scouting beforehand, he figures out parking spots and lunch locations, then publicizes the typically 10-mile hikes well beforehand, hopping from side to side of Ohio. Many have joined his monthly hikes, which he also publicizes in local papers, enabling many to earn their NCT 100-mile patch as they work toward an anticipated finish of this huge circle in late 2019.

BOOTS ON THE TRAIL Zach Johns



Photo: Nick Perronteau

Zach has been promoting use of the Superior Hiking Trail/NCT to the general public for the last 20 years. This has included participation as a sweep on SHTA sponsored hikes and leading a half dozen hikes each year with friends and coworkers via the IRC Adventure Club (a club he started with coworkers at Delta Airlines reservation facility in Chisholm, Minn.). In addition, Zach has worked at the SHTA's booth at the Outdoor Adventure Expo for the past 15+ years.

BOOTS ON THE TRAIL Donna Noteware



Photo: Judy Erwin

For decades Donna and Tom led weekly hikes on the Trail, promoted both the Finger Lakes Trail and the NCT with those who attended, added speakers who could talk about geology or wildlife or photography, and arranged the logistics, and Donna still does this herself since Tom died. She has added a few others to her list of hike leaders, so is spreading the joy of and enthusiasm for the Trail to people who can carry on. Her "pick up" informal group attracts people from a wide area, and continues to be known as the "Nowhere" group. Because they both taught in the Hammondsport school system, they knew everybody, and gradually grew into jobs other than leading their hike group, including Donna's ability to arrange several permanent trail easements in a very rural area – a real blessing.

OUTREACH Tom Dahle



Photo: Becky Heise

Even though he lives two hours away in Bismarck, Tom has for years been an active member of the Sheyenne River Valley Chapter. His primary outreach effort has been spent on the Boy Scouts, whom he has led on many a long backpack or day hike, on the North Country Trail, when they were working to finish badges, so his own miles on the Trail must be immense! Since he spent 20 years at this, just think how many people have been introduced to hiking and the Trail. By now he has retired from leading Scouts on these long hikes, but is currently trying to recruit some Eagle Scouts to work on an NCT reroute in the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge.

OUTREACH Sam Bonifas



Photo: Liz Debraal

The Delphos Section of the Buckeye Trail is a 46-mile section co-located with the North Country Trail. Sam Bonifas has been serving as the Delphos Section Supervisor for a number of years. He actively promotes the Trail all along the Miami and Erie Canal corridor which includes the Defiance and St. Mary's Sections for about 125 total miles of North Country Trail. He is very involved with several agencies in the region including the Miami and Erie Canal Corridor Association.

Due at least in part to his efforts, the towns along this corridor understand the importance of the presence of the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trails. Continuing improvements along the route of the Miami and Erie Canal corridor are a happy result.

OUTREACH Deb Nero



Photo: Laurie Ondrejka

Her recent retirement has given the Trail and the organization a big boost. She mans our display at several outreach events a year and is always looking for new events where the Finger Lakes and North Country Trails should be represented. She also keeps track of other events where our members present and makes sure that they have pertinent and up to

date materials to distribute. One of the materials used for promotion is the Passport Booklet. The booklet has simple sample hikes, designed to introduce new people to the Trail. Hikers do a rubbing on periodic metal plaques. If they get rubbings from four different hikes they can send in for a patch. In the process of updating the booklets and securing sponsorship to reprint the booklets she came up with the idea to number the booklets, thus providing a way to track which events lead to hikers on the Trail and new memberships through the Passport program. This year the FLT will be sponsoring their first ever Finger Lakes Trail Days, a spectacular two-day event at the Steuben County Fairgrounds with the purpose of attracting a large and varied group of people. Deb is spearheading this event, organizing programs, vendors, and volunteers.

LEADERSHIP Mary Campbell



Photo: John Larch

As President of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter, Mary has played several pivotal roles for us. She secured funding for the Bear River Bridge, which when completed will be a stupendous improvement in our local section of Trail. She has long played a role in our work with partner agencies, and when things looked pretty tenuous in the preparations for the 2019 Celebration in Bellaire, Michigan, Mary stepped in and put out full time-plus hours for several weeks, assuring that the event could go forward. She has rarely missed an opportunity to play a central role in furthering the goals of the organization in hundreds of ways, large and small.

LEADERSHIP Andy Mytys



Photo: John Lawton

Andy has stepped up innumerable times to take on challenging jobs for his West Michigan Chapter, performing such vital tasks as website manager, newsletter editor, Facebook manager, board member, and for years, trail maintainer, even though he now has a three-hour drive to get to his piece of the Trail. Andy also leads hikes, especially his several night backpacking trips in the Upper Peninsula, when he does all the organization and makes a safe, wonderful experience for up to a dozen people every year. He also answers questions for many about hiking particular segments of the Trail in Michigan, since he has probably walked almost all of it.

LEADERSHIP
Cal and Jean Lamoreaux



Photo: Cal Lamoreaux

This Chief Noonday Chapter couple has been instrumental in a lot of local outreach that promotes the Trail and brings people to it, including the Woodpecker Festival and Thornapple Trail activities. Cal especially leads hikes and likes to point out plant life along the way, while both have been active in promoting partner organizations and activities that also use the North Country Trail. They have both led Volksmarches for six years now.

COMMUNICATOR
Tracy Hager



Photo: Dave Brewer

Wampum Chapter is grateful to have Tracy’s enthusiasm for the Trail, because she has brought their visual presentations a big leap forward. As a graphic artist, she has designed trailhead signs, a Chapter brochure and map, and even made a tablecloth for their display table that shows the whole Trail section Wampum tends. Special events rate unique banners, both promoting the Trail and thanking sponsors for their help. In addition, she tends trail and leads hikes.

COMMUNICATOR
Matthew Edmonds



Photo: Selfie!

M.D. Edmonds is the Whipple Section Supervisor for the Buckeye Trail Association. This 57-mile section is very remote and includes 13.5 miles of off road trail that is certified North Country Trail in the Wayne National Forest. Because of the remoteness, it suffers from lack of volunteers and trail adopters. Matthew is committed to changing that through trail promotion using electronic media, printed materials, and face to face contact and local presentations. To help hikers with logistics, he has created a website called Ohio Transit Hiker’s Resource, filled with local information including how to get on or off the Trail in such a remote area. On his own he has presented a display table at multiple public functions, promoting the Trail, both Buckeye and North Country, in order to gain new members, plus he uses other social media platforms to promote the trails.

LEADERSHIP
Bob Haack



Photo: Dove Day

Bob is a recent addition to the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter, but has ratcheted up our communications to a high degree in just a few years. He edits a newsletter six times a year, and is noted for cajoling members into sending him stories about their hikes. In addition, if something important should come up between newsletters, Bob doesn’t mind sending a note to our entire email list just to make sure nobody misses anything, giving us very high turnouts at recent events. He also shares information gleaned from his previous career studying trees and their foes.

RISING STAR, from the next generation
Nick Perronteau and Jackson Johns



Photos: Then and Now by Zach Johns

Brothers Nick Perronteau, 20 and Jackson Johns, 16 have literally grown up volunteering on the Superior Hiking Trail with their dad, Zach Johns. Their volunteer contributions include volunteering as campsite adopters at the Penn Creek Campsite for over a dozen years since they were 7 and 4. Additionally, both Nick and Jackson have volunteered at an aid station for the 100-mile fall Superior Trail Race, supporting the runners who use our trail. As a family, they all went to the Leave No Trace training last fall to learn how to implement and share the LNT principles. They’ve also been sweeps on a couple SHTA group hikes and have introduced dozens of people to the Trail on IRC Adventure Club hikes. The boys have shared their love for trails and hiking with their friends, inspiring some to join the fun on their family hikes. Nick is currently studying Graphic Design-Media at Mesabi Range College in Eveleth. Recently, he has volunteered his expertise to create a “documentary style” film about a group hike last fall on the Kekekabic Trail that he and his dad completed with friends. This video captures the “good, the bad, and the ugly” and fills a vital need as there is not a lot of information currently on YouTube on what it’s like to hike the Kek.

RISING STAR
Hannah Mowry



Photo: Chrislyn Mowry

A member of the Wampum Chapter along with her parents, Hannah wanted to help hikers by collecting items to make small first aid kits in recycled pill bottles and placing them in the log book trailhead boxes, and also made bird boxes to place along the Trail. Last year, Hannah completed the PA Hike 50 and NCTA Hike 50 by May, and the Hike 100 by November. She has attended countless Chapter group hikes and events, volunteering her time to help lead or sweep hikes, and volunteers at the events tent cutting and carving hiking sticks. She has even cut the young trees for our trademark hiking sticks.

RISING STAR
Linus Branigan



Photo: Eugene Branigan

Linus, about age 13, has been hiking the NCT since he was 2.5 years old and for the past few years has helped with trail maintenance and Chapter hikes. He was just tall enough to reach the trees for blazing when he began to help his dad (Eugene) maintain his section of adopted Trail. Linus shows up for numerous JV45 work days and attends as many Chapter functions as possible (and is often the only teen there). Linus loves the outdoors and has completed Michigan’s NCT in the Lower Peninsula and has hiked a good portion of the NCT in the Upper Peninsula. He hopes to finish that this coming year and get his Michigan patch.

VANGUARD (legislator or public servant)
Will Mitchell

Those less familiar with the workings of Congress often assume that it’s the actual Members (the Senators and Representatives) that you meet with and who work on your behalf on your agenda (or not, in many cases!). In truth, it is the staff that makes Congress happen, and often serve as gatekeepers in getting things accomplished. Over the years in Minn. Rep. Nolan’s office, Will Mitchell has worked tirelessly with NCTA staff and volunteers, to find ways to keep our legislation moving. He has reached out to other Member and committee staffers to help us move things through the committee and legislative processes. He has negotiated across the aisle on our behalf. Where almost every other staffer waits for you to call for an update, Will proactively initiates communication. There is no doubt in my mind that the

fact that our reroute bill has just now passed is due to the unflagging efforts of NCTA’s volunteers championed by Will Mitchell. There is also no doubt in my mind that if there were more Will Mitchells in Congressional staff leadership roles our Congress would be a lot closer to meeting its potential. (Nomination by Bruce Matthews)

VANGUARD
Dakota Hewlett



Photo: Mick Hawkins

Despite a short term rocky start in our relationship with Michigan’s Iron Belle Trail, due to a lack of communication, in 2017 Dakota Hewlett stepped into the role of Iron Belle Trail’s Assistant Coordinator and is currently the IBT Coordinator. Dakota has worked with NCTA staff directly to increase communication and strengthen our relationship. Dakota not only attends outings and supports the work of the NCTA and their volunteers, he has also been part of building the NCT, as he has helped with the construction of the 2.5-mile reroute within the Rogue River State Game Area and planning for the proposed route through the NPS property in Kalamazoo County. With a major increase in IBT funding over the last couple years, Dakota has played a huge role in managing those funds among all the partners in Michigan. He has also ensured that the IBT’s largest partner (NCTA) receives their fair share. Over the years we have received multiple “IBT mini-grants” and most recently a couple “Challenge Grants.” This year alone, while working with Dakota, the NCTA will be receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars for projects from engineering to planning to construction.

TRAIL MAINTAINER
Scott Sellers



Photo: Steve Kinne

Scott, himself, remains a long-time Central New York Chapter Trail Steward, beginning several years before 2013 when he took over as Steward Leader. Scott has done an exceptional job organizing our 29 stewards, making sure they are all on the job each spring, collecting their volunteer hours for the NCTA, and training new stewards. Another responsibility Scott has is mowing several sections of our Trail with our DR mower. The overall goal is to mow each section twice a growing season. Scott keeps up with that mowing, often alone, sometimes with help, throughout the warmer months. He also leads hikes, and participates in projects like replacing rotten old stairways, but isn’t that typical?

TRAIL MAINTAINER
Steve Hicks



Photo: Larry and Mick Hawkins

Steve is best known for his many years of mowing trail. Throughout the year, he was out on the Trail mowing with our DR mower. When he wasn't mowing, he was maintaining the mower which after years of service became rather cantankerous. So good was he at this, he produced a YouTube video on DR mower maintenance and repair which, at last check, has had over 8700 hits. It has been a major resource for trail maintainers of the NCTA. When we obtained a new DR, Steve trained others in the Chapter how to mow and how to maintain the mower. We cannot forget the gazillion hours of work that Steve spent repairing and maintaining our original mower, which is still going strong due to his great care.

When Chief Noonday Chapter initiated its certified sawyer program, Steve was in the original class and he continues to be one of the most active sawyers in the Chapter. When we replaced the puncheons in Yankee Springs with a board walk, Steve set up his power saw with a generator at the trailhead and mass produced stringers and deck boards. In the winter, Steve would host Work Bees in his heated shop at Saddlebag Lake. We built log boxes and freestanding mapboards after Steve had spent hours designing and cutting the parts for them. We overhauled our work trailer in Steve's garage. We also did mower and tool maintenance at Steve's getting ready for a busy summer of trail work.

TRAIL MAINTAINER
Jim and Norma Matteson



Photo: Lorana Jinkerson

They have been Trail Adopters from the get-go, adopting the western-most segment(s) of our NCT Hikers Chapter at Craig Lake State Park. It takes an hour just to get there to begin a day of maintenance. In addition to being remote, the trail is rugged, hilly, and rocky, but also very beautiful. As the years passed, they eventually gave up those segments and now maintain the Elliott Donnelley Wilderness, a much closer segment to access but still a challenge with hills, rocks and roots.

Jim is often a "mule," carrying the chainsaw, gas, or other equipment. Other times he serves as a swamper, a lopper, or a weed whacker operator. Regardless of the job, you know when you are near Jim as he is always humming a tune as he works. Norma typically lops encroaching branches and helps with marking the Trail with blazes, either painted or plastic. She is meticulous in her maintenance, often lagging behind the Trail Crew, as she puts finishing touches on the Trail.

TRAIL BUILDER
Jim Bradley



Photo: Hope Bradley

Jim has been an extraordinary trail builder for the Western Michigan Chapter, tackling thorny problem areas that seemed impossible, one after another. For instance, Kent County has 79 miles of Trail, some of which are road walks which utilize quiet country stretches, while others are on busy sections of road with little to no shoulder for hiking.

Two of these busy sections of Trail have now been rerouted thanks to the efforts of Jim Bradley and his collaboration with officers in Rockford and Cannon Township. Through careful negotiations, the Trail was routed off of busy 10 Mile Road in Rockford and moved to the less traveled 9 Mile Road. In addition, he secured the ability for the NCTA to connect to the White Pine Trail and install appropriate signage along the way. Similarly, Jim secured permissions for routing and signage in Cannon Township.

He is that rare trail builder who isn't afraid to talk to the people who control the land, whether private landowners or public officials. Thus he has created several projects in our Trail range that improve conditions and avoid bad road walks. Wish we could run him through the copier to get more volunteers of his caliber!

TRAIL BUILDER
Mike Schlicht

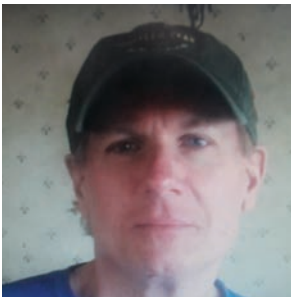


Photo: Mary Zuk Domanski

Mike takes trail work vacations. He had been doing this for several years through the American Hiking Society. It gave him the opportunity to visit many states including Alaska. Through his participation in these working vacations he learned many trail building techniques. First he adopted his own section along a branch of the Finger Lakes Trail system, then started joining the several project work weeks all over the FLT in N.Y., and by now has become the Director of Crews and Construction, in other words the guy who runs all of the special projects. While there is usually a local project leader, Mike does all the planning, making sure each project has materials and people arranged.

Michael has become an expert in smart trail construction and a driving force in these matters. This year he has crews working on managing erosion, building several shelters and a bridge, and cutting a switchback trail into a steep hillside.

TRAIL BUILDER
Matt Williams



Photo: Dave Brewer

Matt introduced himself to the Wampum Chapter several years ago by jumping into the construction of a new mile-and-a-half segment of North Country Trail through the woods, and in the process, recognizing the need for a substantial bridge along this section, went out and secured the donation of all of the materials needed from the local Home Depot. He supervised his fellow volunteers in building this 20-foot structure and utilizing his experience as a contractor, constructed one of the most unique trail structures along the Wampum Chapter's Trail.

His other immense contribution has come to us as a landowner negotiator. He is determined to help get miles of our Trail off the road. Doing that in stages, he obtained 10 new permissions, enabling us to build 2.5 miles of new trail off-road. Now he's deeply involved in negotiating those next miles.

SWEEP
Vickie Swank



Photo: Ellie Williams

Vickie Swank took over as the "keeper of the Chequamegon Chapter history" from Tana Turonie in 2006 and is working on her seventh Chapter scrapbook. These pages are full of accomplishments and highlight the volunteers who have all made this happen. There are pictures of volunteers dressed to the hilt with bug protection, volunteers doing some hard work, beautiful nature pictures, pictures of celebrations at a local watering hole, newspaper clippings of stories and event notices from local publications, favorite trail dog pictures, photos of volunteers receiving awards, Annual Meeting photos, and a number of pictures of people just having fun on the NCT! Many of these photos were taken by Vickie.

In recent years, the Chapter has gained a lot of viewers on the Wisconsin NCT Facebook page. Postings of Vickie's photos have often gained thousands of views with a LOT of likes, loves and wows. When Vickie is at an event there are usually well over 100 photos to choose from for publication in the Chapter's newsletters and press releases.

More than just the Chapter's historian, Vickie is also a co-adopter of a section of Trail in the Porcupine Lake Wilderness, made extra challenging because only hand tools are allowed there.

SWEEP
Robert Stein



Photo: Robert Stein

Bob has been an active member of the NCT for 18 years, and was a founding member of the Dakota Prairie Chapter. Like every good Sweep candidate, he has performed many jobs, Chapter secretary for nine years, maintaining trail for seven, and regularly participating in special work days. He leads hikes, and keeps up friendly relationships with the people and elected officials in area Trail communities. Best of all, his story-telling, folksy personality makes him an outstanding spokesperson for outreach to the media!

SWEEP
JoEllen Sokolowski



Photo: Dave Brewer

It is difficult to put down in writing the thousand little things that JoEllen has contributed to the Wampum Chapter and North Country Trail Association over the years to make this venture an ongoing success. The steadfast financial work done as Chapter treasurer, the participation in Chapter hikes and events, the encouraging word to her fellow volunteers at the right moment, and her steady enthusiasm for boosting her community through her work with the NCT all add up to an individual who is worthy of recognition with this award.

JoEllen is a prime driver of all Chapter functions, from co-organizing the annual Christmas party and summer picnic, to participating in outreach events. When a special need for a facility in town is identified in order to support a hike or event, JoEllen handles the details and makes sure that things run smoothly, all behind the scenes and without asking for recognition.

FRIEND OF THE TRAIL
Jane Anklam

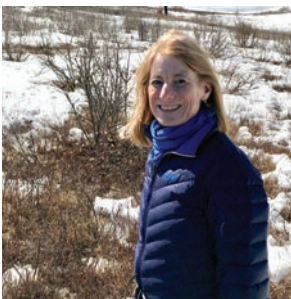


Photo: Jim Anklam

Jane Anklam has been the essential partner in acquiring lands for the North Country Trail in Wisconsin during the past five years. As Conservation Manager for Landmark Conservancy (formerly West Wisconsin Land Trust), Jane proactively worked with Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, NCTA, Iron County Forestry,

Continued on page 24

and the landowner to make possible the Oronto Bay property acquisition in 2017. She connected these diverse identities, brought them to agreement, and helped them bring together the resources to obtain this unique and critical Trail link. Jane continues to monitor the status of adjacent property, as well as other properties along the Wisconsin Trail route, as future acquisition projects.

Since our work on the Oronto Bay purchase began, Jane and her husband Jim have become active members of the NCTA Brule-St. Croix Chapter, adopting a section of Trail.

FRIEND OF THE TRAIL
Colleen Lynema

As the Executive Director for the River Country Chamber of Commerce (RC3), Colleen Lynema is responsible for providing and promoting innovative opportunities for Newaygo County (Michigan) businesses, organizations and communities. In that role Colleen has been a huge supporter and promoter of the NCT as one of this county’s greatest recreational resources. Approximately 60 miles of the North Country Trail go through Newaygo County, where White Cloud became an NCTA Trail Town in 2014 and celebrated with a half-day Celebration event. Beginning in 2015, this became an annual RC3 organized and sponsored two-day event with primary oversight and planning by Colleen, and now it’s three days of hikes, footraces, displays, and fun!

A major effort that Colleen initiated was to promote White Cloud as a recreational destination with the tag line, “A Trail for All Seasons.” She secured grant money for a local vendor to make small banners for the lampposts on the two main streets in White Cloud. Each banner has the tag line at the bottom and a graphic of running or hiking on a trail, kayaking the White River water trail, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, or snowmobiling.

FRIEND OF THE TRAIL
Michigan DNR

Every Chapter within Michigan has Trail within state land; in fact, 338 miles, 40% of our Michigan Trail, of the NCT are on various types of state-managed lands. So it’s obvious that we need a functioning cooperative relationship with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, or DNR. In addition to the enormity of the territory we collaborate on, the Iron Belle Trail has brought NCTA over \$200,000 in the last couple of years for various trail projects we wouldn’t have had the resources to conduct otherwise.

Engineering work, planning, and facilities construction have been enabled by this grant stream. We also look forward to several new bridges coming up, funded by the DNR, major ones like a suspension bridge over the Little Iron River in Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park. So this award goes to an invaluable partner and Friend of the Trail.

BLUE BLAZE BENEFACTOR
Roger and Whitney Bagnall



Photo: Bystander

Roger and Whitney Bagnall are two longtime members of the Finger Lakes Trail who live in New York City, far from even the eastern end of the FLT, which is part of the reason I noticed their names several decades ago when I saw their annual generosity on our donor lists. Even better, in recent years they have sent donations to the Finger Lakes Trail often more like \$10,000 at a time.

It turns out that they like upstate N.Y., even though most of their walking is within New York City, or else on vacations in France or England. Nonetheless, when the FLT’s Sidote Preservation Fund was announced, with the purpose of protecting the Trail, they were most excited. Roger said, “The FLT is our best opportunity to support walking in a part of the state that we’re much attached to.” Also, since the FLT is at least 50% private land, more than most trails have to negotiate through, they are rooting for us.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
Eileen Fairbrother



Photo: Mark Wadopian

Eileen’s contributions have been steady and many, from tending her own section of Trail and leading hikes to her most unique gift, helping our Central New York Chapter communicate with the rest of the world. She shared her computer skills by creating our original website, and is now also the Chapter secretary, one whose reports to the membership are written perfectly and details are crisp. Everything she does is done well, so we want to honor her thus.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
Ed Bowen



Photo: Cathy Egerer

Superior Shoreline Chapter’s Alger County has only 9160 people, so finding enough volunteers to bring the Trail up to snuff after parts of it weren’t maintained for some time after the previous Chapter folded was a challenging task. Ed Bowen took up the task anyway, even though he had a real estate business and was already on 17 different committees. But he began to find volunteers, and made sure he taught them how to make good trail, after he’d learned how himself. He continues to recruit members, and follows up with his volunteers in the field, plus he attends every meeting with the agencies in charge of our Trail properties.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE
Dennis Garrett



Photo: Unknown

In a few short years, Dennis has gone from being a Trail landowner then joining the small Wampum Chapter of 34 members, to the wonderful leader of a Chapter of over 120 members. He has created win/win relationships with state agencies, local businesses, and local charitable organizations like the Knights of Columbus by constantly working on outreach, communication, and projects that benefit both the Trail and the community. He also worked with 13 landowners to help the Chapter move five miles of Trail off road in the last few years. Dennis has been a wonderful leader, negotiator, and inspiration for all of us, and has extended his vision and charm to other Chapters in Pennsylvania in order to close Trail gaps. He also serves on the NCTA Board.

THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Dave Brewer



Photo: Dennis Garrett

Dave has worked so hard for the Wampum Chapter for 17 years that it’s hard to believe he also works full time. He is the Trail Coordinator, so maintenance is kept to high standards. Dave trains new adopters, works on miles of Trail himself, keeps Chapter equipment in good repair, and works on building new Trail, too. He is also an articulate writer, so shares a monthly report to the membership so that everybody knows what’s going on along the Trail. Naturally, he also tends the Chapter’s communications with the rest of the world, promoting events and inviting new people to hikes with his writing and all the pictures he takes. In other words, he contributes as much as any three normal mortals.

THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Peter Nordgren



Photo: Deb Nordgren

Peter not only started the Brule-St. Croix Chapter and has served almost every office there, but also has taken care of some of the most challenging jobs, too. For instance, he has communicated with all of the private landowners along Wisconsin’s Trail miles, and has been deeply involved in negotiating several permanent easements for the route. He also works on every grant the Chapter has ever received, whether from the NCTA or the National Park Service, and coordinates Scout projects that benefit the Trail. His realization that signage is important to both hikers and the public has resulted in a section of the Trail reputed to be the best signed in thousands of miles. Peter has also been the Chair of the NCTA Advocacy Committee, which recently succeeded at last in passage of the Trail Route Adjustment in Congress.

THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Stan and Kay Kujawa



Photo: Renee Wysynski

For more than 15 years, Stan and Kay have worked on the Trail and for the Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter so much and so continuously that an observer wouldn’t realize they are retired. They both work on field projects and tend Trail, work at least a half-dozen promotional public events every year, and work especially hard making the Trail a real part of towns like St. Ignace, where there are spots along the Trail where displays inform, and sometimes Kay and Stan have children making decorated hiking sticks. Kay has been the Chapter President and Communications Chair, while Stan has been Treasurer. Kay has already earned her 10,000 hour service award, and Stan is very close!

Long Distance Hiker Patches

Narratives Shared by Committee Chair Joan Young



Jeff is from Wexford, Penna., and now has the Pennsylvania patch.

State Park and I set a goal of hiking the Trail from one end of the park to the other. In addition, I noticed the NCTA had a Hike 100 mile patch available and added that to my list as well. A longer, seemingly impossible goal would be to hike all of the NCT across my state of Pennsylvania.

It has taken me 15 months to complete my journey across Pennsylvania. During that time I have not only completed what once seemed like an unachievable goal, but have also realized the following.

- lost over 70 pounds {WOW! Are we proud of you! Editor}
- lowered my blood pressure
- reduced stress
- learned that Pennsylvania has more rocks and roots than I knew existed
- met many friendly and interesting people (including an elderly couple hiking using walkers)
- learned that there is a very special group of people who volunteer their time and energy maintaining the Trail for the rest of us
- viewed many beautiful sights which are accessible only on foot
- discovered that winter hiking is my favorite



Frank Pisano, also of Pennsylvania, will receive the same patch, but he did not respond to Joan’s request for a narrative. In fact, he took only this hidden-man picture along the trail.

Jeff Beatty

In February of 2017 I was leaving work at the same time as a coworker on a Friday afternoon. It was a particularly nice day for February and she mentioned that she was planning on hiking that weekend. I was overweight and not in very good shape at the time and thought I would look into doing some hiking, too.

I decided to look for trails in Moraine State Park which was just north of me. One of the trails was called the North Country Trail (NCT), and I hiked a whopping 1.9 miles on March 12, 2017, my first day on the NCT. I was exhausted and sore, but enjoyed my hike.

I looked into the NCT and discovered it was one of the National Scenic Trails. I decided that it would be a good thing to set some goals for my new hobby. I saw the NCT passed through most of Moraine

John Schmitt, Scottsville, N.Y.

The NCT has given me an opportunity to see a wide part of the north central region of the country.

My love for hiking really developed in the mid 1970s in the Adirondacks and hills of New York's southern tier, including early segments of the Finger Lakes Trail. I also took several hiking trips to the Rocky Mountains. After completing the Adirondack 46 high peaks, a lull of several years occurred in serious hiking. On a late winter hike in 1998 on the Bristol Hills Branch of the Finger Lakes Trail, a fellow hiker mentioned that I would really enjoy a series of “longer/faster” hikes on the main Finger Lakes Trail led by a member of the Foothills Trail Club. I joined the group, and I finished the main Finger Lakes Trail in 1999. I did not know at the time that much of the Finger Lakes Trail is also part of the NCT.

I have continued to hike on the NCT out of enjoyment and wanting to see what else the Trail has to offer. By the end of May 2014, I had completed the NCT in Ohio. During the remainder of 2014, 2015, and 2016, I hiked all lower Michigan except the northernmost 20 miles on many long weekends where my wife Marge provided a shuttle to many remote locations. I also hiked from Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore to Tahquamenon Falls State Park in the upper peninsula of Michigan. I was able to take advantage of several weekends in 2014 and 2015 when I was traveling to Madison, Wisconsin, for work to hike the NCT across Wisconsin. These were a combination of day hikes and overnight backpacking trips. I retired from full-time work in early 2018. This has given me more time for my varied interests. From late April through mid-May, I backpacked 350 miles from Frazee to Ely, Minnesota, on the NCT. Late July through mid-August saw me backpacking from the NCT western terminus at Lake Sakakawea State Park

approximately 530 miles to Frazee, Minnesota.

There have been many highlights of the NCT hiking, beautiful scenery in every region, being surrounded by a herd of cattle, many sections of very well maintained trail, views of the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior, support by many Chapter and Affiliate members, friendly local people, and more.

Some low lights are good for conversation. These included being bitten by a dog with a subsequent trip to the emergency room; having milkshake and pop thrown at me from a passing car, and very overgrown trail conditions in the Wayne National Forest (I believe that this has since been rectified), and hiking to Rome, N.Y., at the rainy edge of Hurricane Irene.

I look forward to hiking the remaining segments of the NCT during 2019 and possibly 2020. I also hope I can revisit these areas with Marge in the future to see the many unique visitor attractions that were off the trail.

John has also hiked the Appalachian Trail, the Long Path, the Taconic Crest Trail, Mount Kilimanjaro, and has completed Pennsylvania NCT's Allegheny 100 Challenge twice. He uses the trail name of Design Wizard. Along the NCT, John has now received seven Long Distance Hiker patches, those for 1000, 2000, and 3000 miles, plus those for Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, and North Dakota!

HIKING SHORTS

Electronic Mapping Available in Ohio

By Jim “Sunny” Sunyak
Electronic Mapping Chairman of the Buckeye Trail Association

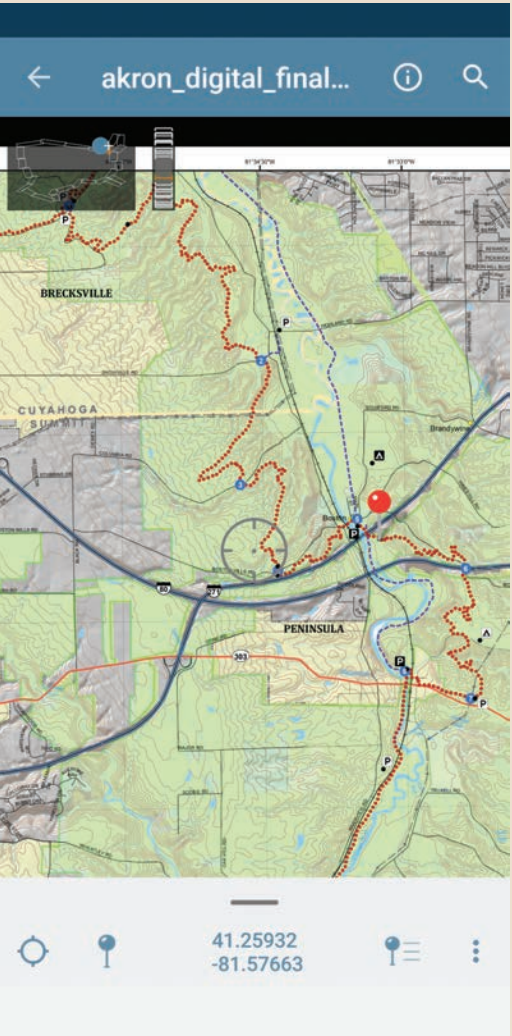
The Buckeye Trail Association is pleased to announce the availability of our Section Maps downloadable thru the Avenza Maps® app for iOS® and Android® devices. All 26 Buckeye Trail Section Maps are available! Yes, there are North Country Trail and Buckeye Trail thru hiker specials. The Avenza Maps app uses your device's built-in GPS to locate you even when you are out of range of a network or internet connection. Maps used in the app are geospatial PDFs, GeoPDF or GeoTIFFs. You can import your own or find just the right one in the Avenza Map Store. Our maps are very similar to the ones the NCTA is producing, just with a BT twist! Use the mapping tools in the app to add GPS tracks, add placemarks, add photos and more. Individual maps are \$6.99. www.avenzamaps.com/vendor/3587/buckeye-trail-association

The Buckeye Trail Association has contracted Atlas guides to produce the official Buckeye Trail App. Look for this app to be available this spring. Please spread the word to our newest friends from Vermont; they now have an electronic way to follow the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trail here in Ohio.

Technology can make things easier. This is what we love about the Avenza App. Download a map for the section of the Trail you're interested in and then use your mobile device to track your location.

You can find links to both hard copy and Geospatial PDF maps from the NCTA, Buckeye Trail Association and Finger Lakes Trail Conference at northcountrytrail.org.

A note from Matt Rowbotham, GIS/ Mapping at NCTA: “While out enjoying the excellent winter we had in Northern Lower Michigan, I was surprised at how quickly my iPhone 8 Plus would freeze up. Generally, I could get less than a minute of use when I exposed the device to single digit or sub-zero temperatures, so remember either to print or purchase a hard copy of your map before you head out on the Trail!”



Central New York Chapter

(accidentally omitted from our last issue by the doof in the editor’s chair)

NEW YORK – In 2018 the Central New York Chapter of NCTA was supported by a membership of about 120 hikers. Chapter members have recorded over 1300 volunteer hours. We monitor, blaze and/or maintain more than 107 miles of trail including road walks. Our 30 Trail Stewards are directly responsible for monitoring and reporting on over 42 miles of off-road trail.

The Chapter coordinates with several state, county and municipal entities. N.Y. Parks permits are up to date.

These permits require renewal in September each year. N.Y. Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Fish & Wildlife and DEC Forest permits and agreements are renewed in December. We continue to monitor these critical documents. Madison and Oneida County offices are also frequently consulted.

The Chapter sponsored and provided leaders for 14 hikes and work sessions. These included tree identification, birding, wildflower identification, a Trail Days hike and a tour of old mill relics and sites along the Gorge Trail in conjunction with the Cazenovia Preservation Foundation (CPF). The use of MeetUp for event promotion has been successful and will continue.

To enhance safety and reduce hazardous sections of road-walk, reroute planning for the NCT through the City of Rome up to Pixley Falls State Park continues, albeit slowly. Although we have hit a snag in our request to access a power line right-of-way, suggestions for alternate routes are under discussion with the City of Rome Planning Office. City planners have supported our efforts and encouraged use of the city’s River Walk in proposals to reroute the Trail off city streets. Concurrently, the Griffiss Land Development Corp. (GLDC) and Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth Enterprises Corp. (MV-EDGE) have completed the work previously discussed with NCTA/CNY from the River Walk through the Griffiss Art Park to Perimeter Road and Floyd Road. GLDC, MV EDGE and the Rome Planning Department were nominated for Chapter Honor Awards which have been approved by NCTA and will be presented in early 2019.

At Clark Hill State Forest work continues to abate the main obstacle, a bridge necessary to cross Stringer Brook. This project has been complicated by retirements within state DEC offices, but new contacts have been established. Permit requests and the use of drones for remote survey are pending.

The Annual Meeting was conducted on Sunday, October 21 at the Chittenango/Sullivan Free Library. It was attended by 22 members and guests. Award recipients were Eileen Fairbrother (2018 Outreach Award), and Doug French and Sharon Schmidt (100-hour volunteer work award). The guest speaker, Adam Perry from the N.Y. DEC, was engaging, entertaining and informative. He presented information on New York State’s “Young Forest Initiative” with emphasis on recent work in the Tioughnioga State Forest which hosts our route.



Photo: Scott Sellers

HIKING SHORTS

Flemmo’s Trail Story

By Jeff Fleming, Trail Manager, Chief Noonday

Walking in Kellogg Forest this week, I crossed paths with a lone gentleman hiking in the other direction whom I recognized... as I had just met him briefly, only two days before, when we were both hiking in the Fort Custer segment, where we just exchanged normal pleasantries. I knew from a distance it was the same gentleman as he walks with a very noticeable “hitch in his giddyup,” as if one leg is a bit shorter than the other. With this second encounter, we chatted a bit. Ron, from Livonia, is driving over here when he can (not quite daily) to hike the non-roadwalk portions of the NCT. Has hiked starting from Lost Nations State Game area, heading northward, and hopes to get to the Croton Dam area “before the weather gets too hot for me.” It’s 110 miles (one way) from Livonia to Augusta, so that’s determination! A 25-foot fall broke his pelvic bone, resulting in three months immobilized followed by three months in a wheelchair, so he’s trying to get back into shape and chose the NCT to do that. Hurray for Ron!

On Friday, the day we talked, he was completing a 13-mile round trip (has to hike “out and backs”) to finish off trail in Kalamazoo County, saying his next hike would be in the Yankee Springs area (but didn’t say when). If you see Ron out there (drives a late model red pickup truck), say hi! Another thing he noted: he greatly appreciates finding benches along the trail and takes advantage of nearly every one encountered; he really liked the one along the puncheons in Fort Custer National Cemetery, and would like to see more benches along the route.

Harbor Springs Hikes

By Judy Conrad

The Harbor Springs Chapter of the NCNST is the northernmost Chapter in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Our northern terminus is the Mackinac Bridge which spans the five-mile distance between the lower and upper peninsulas of our beautiful state. So in 2019 we started a new promotional campaign. It is called “Hike to the Bridge!”

Each month we are hiking a portion of our 46 miles so that the participants can accomplish the goal of hiking from just north of Petoskey to the Mackinac Bridge. This challenge is bringing in the hikers! We are so excited!

Chapter President Shari Sanderson was thrilled to report that in January, with crusty snow, 27 people bundled up and snowshoed the first four miles of this challenge!

In February we completed the second portion of our section 1 with an out-and-back snowshoe, again a total of four miles. The snow was deep but this time we had 25 join us. We were very pleased when several participants stepped forward as trail adopters!



Photo: Shari Sanderson

members to the NCT roster!


In reviewing the trailhead logs for last year, our Chapter had an 11% increase in usage over 2017. May had the highest hiking traffic. People must feel the urge to stretch their legs after our long Northern Michigan winters. The next most hiked months were July, August and September. We had hikers from 23 other states as well as four other countries: Switzerland, South Korea, Poland and Canada.

To encourage our dedicated volunteers, some of the comments from the logs sheets were:


Thanks for the hard work, you ROCK! Yab, North Woods!
In training for Pictured Rocks!
Happy Birthday to ME!
Thank you for the Shingles, Great Idea!

Happy trails! ✨

Hike to the Bridge in 2019!



Follow the Blue Blazes!



Join the Harbor Springs Chapter of the North Country Trail and hike the first Saturday of every month. Our goal will be to hike all of our chapter’s 46 miles from Kipp Road (near Crooked Lake just north of Petoskey) to the Mighty Mac in 2019!

For more information call or text our president Shari Sanderson at 231-838-9744 or email her at sandersonshari@gmail.com or our website www.northcountrytrail.com/hvb

HIKING SHORTS

Introducing Greg McAleenan, NCTA Director of Development



Photo: Karin McAleenan

An outdoor enthusiast, Greg joined the NCTA staff in April 2019. He brings extensive development experience to NCTA having served as Vice President for Advancement at Aquinas College and Chief Development Officer at Hope Network. He is also the founder of The Locker Room, a social media platform that raises funds for high school and college sports and co-curricular programs. The outdoors is a family passion as his wife Karin spent years as an interpretive teacher at Howard Christensen and Blandford Nature Centers, and spearheaded the family camping trips. A graduate of Williams College and the University of Michigan Law School, Greg looks forward to connecting with all looking to make a difference for the NCT.



Like a flock of Mary Poppins, the sandhill cranes arched up their wings and parachuted down with leggy landing gear outstretched.

Photo: Emily Stone

Natural Connections, Flyover Country

By Emily M. Stone, Naturalist/Education Director
at the Cable Natural History Museum

Emily writes a weekly column often pertinent to our northern Wisconsin Trail, and her museum is near the NCT. While sandhill cranes are seen frequently in northern Michigan and Wisconsin, their territory is expanding, so they are more common now even in western N.Y.

—Editor

A cacophony of rattling cries filled the car as soon as my window slid down. While the engine noise faded, the chaos of sound crescendoed. Perhaps it isn’t surprising that sandhill cranes have such loud voices. At four feet tall, their extensive windpipes coil into their sternums. This amplifies the low, rich tones that can travel a mile or more across tundra, marsh, or field. Aldo Leopold wrote that they are “bugling the defeat of the retreating winter...”

Sound was only part of the experience, though. The soft gray bodies of cranes stretched as far across the stubby cornfield as I could see. Farm equipment, irrigation sprinklers, and homesteads provided backdrops that faded in and out of the mist.

Every spring, over 500,000 sandhill cranes descend on the Platte River of central Nebraska. The agricultural landscape of the Great Plains may be derided by coastal humans as “flyover

country,” but to the cranes, it is just the opposite. The shallow river and its gravel bars provide safety for nighttime roosting. Nearby farm fields hold feasts of waste grain, and surrounding wetlands provide additional food and habitat.

On their long migration from wintering grounds in northern Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico to their summer breeding habitat in the northern U.S., Canada, and even Siberia, sandhill cranes spend a very important month near the Platte River. Here they can put on an additional 10-20% of their bodyweight: fuel for the final leg of their journey.

As my friend Jamie and I poked our cameras out of the car windows, we were a little frustrated at how focused the birds were on eating. Heads down in the corn stubble, their fluffy gray rumps were cute, but not terribly photogenic. We could empathize, though. This crane-watching stop was just the halfway refueling point on our own, longer journey. The



Cranes are often confused with great blue herons. But while herons fly with their neck in an S, cranes leave both legs and necks outstretched.

Photo: Emily Stone



Sandhill cranes sometimes dance just to release nervous energy, but dancing is also an integral part of their pair bonding and mating ritual.

Photo: Emily Stone

sunbathed slickrock of southeast Utah beckoned, but with evening descending, we also needed to find some dinner and a safe place to roost.

The cranes find safety in numbers. In any group, at least a couple sentinels stood with their red-capped heads upright and alert for danger. I was surprised to notice that cranes near the roadsides turned and stalked inward as my little station wagon rolled by calmly. Cars often make pretty good blinds for birdwatching, and surely these birds were used to traffic on the country roads that dissect so much of their habitat. But while cranes are protected in Nebraska and Wisconsin, they are hunted in Minnesota, Kansas, South Dakota, and several other states. It’s good that they are skittish around humans.

At first I was afraid that simply driving by would interrupt their feeding and cause them to move farther out of the range of my zoom. Once the cranes became agitated and stopped feeding, though, a few of them started dancing. Sometimes called “ambivalent behavior,” it’s a way to release nervous energy when the danger isn’t serious enough to cause flight.

Lifting great black-fingered wings, they flapped, bowed low to grab some scrap, and leaped straight up while tossing leaves, stalks, or corncobs into the air. Their pointed toes and slim legs emulated the grace of a ballet.

I’m sure a true courtship dance would be even more spectacular. The trumpeting unison calls of mated pairs would add to the intensity. The tango of two is essential to pair bonding, readying their hormones for mating, and even dissipating aggression between rivals. Parents dance with their colts to help them learn, and young cranes practice dancing for three years before they mate.

The sporadic dancing halted as a farmer on a four-wheeler sped off down a field. In great waves, wings opened and carried the birds aloft. They trumpeted and circled. The breadth of their reach, the urgency of their calls connected us to ancient rituals.

Aldo Leopold wrote eloquently of the cranes in the “Marshland Elegy” chapter of A Sand County Almanac. “Our appreciation for the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earthly history...When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia...”

That isn’t mere hyperbole. Cranes are some of the oldest living birds. In Nebraska, a 15-million-year-old crane skeleton records their ancient stake on the territory. Over that time scale, the habitat has changed more than the bird. Several glaciers

advanced and retreated; with the last one just creeping into the eastern edge of Nebraska. Perhaps, even back then, the dancing cranes meant spring, and their great flocks were “bugling the defeat of the retreating winter...”

As the four-wheeler disappeared around a corner, though, a silent group of the circling cranes began to descend. Like a flock of Mary Poppins, they arched up their wings and calmly parachuted down with leggy landing gear outstretched. Sometimes, flyover country is the perfect place to land.

Emily’s second book, Natural Connections: Dreaming of an Elfin Skimmer, is now available to purchase at www.cablemuseum.org/books and will soon be available at your local independent bookstore, too.

*Emily M. Stone
Naturalist/Education Director*

*Cable Natural History Museum
P.O Box 416
Cable, WI 54821*



North Country Trail Association

229 East Main Street
Lowell, Michigan 49331

NONPROFIT
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
Permit 340



High falls in Tettegouche State Park on the Superior Hiking Trail. Can you imagine our Trail without such beauties?

Photo: Jaron Cramer



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

Come Visit Us!

**The Lowell office is open to the public Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
229 East Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331
(866) HikeNCT • (616) 897-5987 • Fax (616) 897-6605**

The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.

Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of the premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers and backpackers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.