

July-September, 2020

The Magazine of the  
North Country Trail Association

Volume 39, No. 3

# north star



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Dale Painter's Biathlon Adventure  
Part 2 of Dub's North Dakota Hike  
2020 Awards

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Columns

Trailhead .....	3
National Park Service Corner .....	4

Advocacy Update .....	5
Welcome Abby Whittington .....	5



### Trail Protection

NCTA's Role in Trail and Land Protection.....	5-6
--	-----



### You're Invited

Celebration 2020 Goes Virtual.....	7
------------------------------------	---



### Trail Maintainer's Spotlight

Spotlight: Coronavirus Task Force.....	8
All That Was Missing.....	10
Trailbuilding in the Time of Coronavirus .....	10
Volunteer Spotlight: Marianne Duvendack.....	11



### Hikes

Dale Painter's Biathlon Adventure....	12
Farm Country Savvy: Leave Gates as You Find Them!.....	14
Part 2 Dub: I hiked North Dakota ...	16
North Country Trail Members Participate in Birdathon .....	19



### Awards

2020 Awards .....	20
-------------------	----

### About the Cover:

The Trail overlooks the Manistee River in lower Michigan, near the Highbanks Rollway, where cut logs were rolled off the edge to the river below for transportation westward. See Dale Painter's adventures in this issue.

Photo: Joan Young, in the Grand Traverse Hikers Chapter area



#### Staff

**Valerie Bader**  
*Director of Trail Development*  
vbader@northcountrytrail.org

**Nancy Brozek**  
*Director of Development and Communications*  
nbrokek@northcountrytrail.org

**Matt Davis**  
*Regional Trail Coordinator, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin*  
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

**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

**Abby Whittington**  
*Annual Events Coordinator*  
awhittington@northcountrytrail.org

#### National Board of Directors

**Tim Mowbray**, *President*  
tmowbray@earthlink.net

**Jaron Nyhof**, *VP, First VP*  
jnyhof1@gmail.com

**Dennis Garrett**, *VP East*  
dgcag@gmail.com

**Mike Chapple**, *Treasurer*  
mike@chapple.org

**Mark VanHornweder**, *VP West*  
mvanhorn74@yahoo.com

**Ruth Dorrough**, *Immediate Past President*  
dorroughcm@gmail.com

**Josh Berlo**, *Minnesota Rep.*  
joshberlo@gmail.com

**Jerry Fennell**, *At-Large Rep.*  
jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com

**Duane Lawton**, *At-Large Rep.*  
delawton@torchlake.com

**Derrick Passe**, *Minnesota Rep.*  
derrickpasse@gmail.com

**Larry Pio**, *At-Large Rep.*  
Nalcoman1@aol.com

**Jo Swanson**, *At-Large Rep.*  
joannamswanson@gmail.com

**Jan Ulferts Stewart**, *North Dakota Rep.*  
janustewart@gmail.com

**Jeff Van Winkle**, *Michigan Rep.*  
rvanwink@gmail.com

**Steve Walker**, *Ohio Rep.*  
nilesprinting@gmail.com

**Quinn Wright**, *New York Rep.*  
wrightquinn4@gmail.com

### 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*, Summer issue, Vol. 39, Issue 3, 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.



# Trailhead

## Tim Mowbray, President

Here we are in the second half of 2020 and the novel coronavirus is still affecting almost every aspect of our lives. This unfortunate circumstance has given us a great opportunity to use the North Country Trail as an outlet for exercise and exploration. The Trail is a great place to practice social distancing and to change your focus from the craziness that COVID has caused to our daily routines.

The North Country Trail Association continues working on the trail and completing projects using revised protocols and precautions to keep everyone safe. Many of our in-person events and meetings have been cancelled, but we have adapted using electronic meeting formats to continue necessary and important communications. Many of the cancelled events are being rescheduled to the following year in hopes that a vaccine will be here to slow the virus and allow us to return to a normal environment.

We have been fortunate that at the association level our work has been continuing so that we can keep moving forward building the organization and making progress on our goal to build out and maintain the rest of the trail. The organization's strategic plan is moving toward completion as we start to finalize the action plans to define our course direction for the future. We have had a successful year in our fund raising and membership drives, and we continue to look at ways we can increase our diversity to share the beauty and enjoyment of the trail.

The board of directors and staff are extremely thankful to all the volunteers, financial supporters, elected officials, landowners, National Park Service, Affiliates, Chapters and so many others who help us accomplish the mission of the NCTA. We hope you will stay active with us in these difficult and changing times to continue the growth and viability of NCTA.

From the Board of Directors and Staff of the Association, we hope that all of you will continue to be safe and in good health as we all work to Hike it, Build it and Love it. Thank you all for being a part of the North Country Trail family! Stay Safe, TSM ✨



Picture taken in the Brule State Forest of Wisconsin

Photo: Sue Mowbray

## Andrea Ketchmark, Executive Director

We're halfway through 2020 and although this year hasn't been what anyone expected, our community has rallied around the Trail like never before.

**We've pulled together to provide resources and guidance to trail users and volunteers.** As we grappled with how to handle our work during a global pandemic, the NCTA established a task force of NCTA Staff, Chapter and Affiliate leaders, National Park Service and US Forest

Service partners to guide decision making and develop best practices for our volunteers and Trail Leaders to make solid decisions about how we could safely consider hikes, Trail projects and events over the upcoming field season.

**We've pulled together to fund the work that needs to keep us moving forward.**

During a time when it was needed most, you rose to meet, and exceed, the John and Cyndi Woollam fundraising Challenge, securing a \$30,000 match and ensuring we meet our commitments for 2020 to bring on two new Regional Trail Coordinators and to fund many other projects planned for this year and next.

**Lastly, we've pulled together to commit to the idea that everyone is welcome in the outdoors and on the Trail.**

The healing power of spending time in nature is unparalleled and the world needs access to trails and public lands more now than ever before. As part of the Outdoor CEO Diversity Pledge, NCTA is promising to amplify the voices and experiences of people of color, to work toward ensuring diverse voices on our Staff and Board and within our Chapter leadership, and to engage broader partnerships with communities of color and other identities not often represented in the outdoor community. The Trail belongs to us all.

These experiences have taught us that we can not only handle adversity, but that we can thrive because of it.

I recently asked our staff a question. If they made a movie about our organization, what would it be called? There were some funny answers and some thoughtful ones but my favorite was from Regional Trail Coordinator Matt Davis. Our movie would be called *A Trail runs through it*. It is not only the Trail itself that connects thousands of miles across eight states, but it's the mission and vision and the values of NCTA that run through us, the people who make the Trail truly remarkable. ✨



Andrea working from home, of course.

Photo: Ted Bentley



## National Park Service Corner

Chris Loudenslager, Superintendent,  
North Country National Scenic Trail



**Chris Loudenslager**

Photo: Mick Hawkins

Hello all,  
I sincerely hope you are all doing well, staying healthy, and staying positive. Despite how we may have had to modify how we do our work, the National Park Service staff has remained very busy through the spring and into the glorious summer we've been enjoying in Michigan.

One endeavor I'm particularly excited to share with you is that we have spent the last few months hiring two new NPS staff. In mid-July, we will be welcoming Stephanie Liguori to the Trail

as the North Country National Scenic Trail's first Planning and Compliance Specialist. This position is entirely new and will be dedicated to ensuring that our project planning includes the necessary evaluation and protection of natural and cultural resources required by laws and policies. For more complex planning projects, Stephanie will also arrange and lead public outreach and meetings and facilitate public input and feedback as a function of the process.

We have also just completed the hiring process for a new, full-time Volunteer Coordinator. An offer has been extended and accepted earlier this week: this person will be introduced to all of you once the ink dries and the logistics of her arrival are ironed out. With this position filled, this will also be the first time that the NCT has had a dedicated, full-time Volunteer Coordinator. In the past, we have shared this position with the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, and more recently, these duties were assigned to Luke Jordan, not as a primary role, but in addition to his primary roles. Having this position staffed full time will without question be a huge benefit to all of you and the Trail, and you can soon expect a level of service and assistance far beyond anything the NPS has been able to offer in the past.

As for trails, we are positioned to begin the reroute we have long hoped to complete on the NPS property in Augusta, Michigan. Currently, the existing trail is straight-line Trail following the property's west line, skirting what was once the



**The farm fields at the Hutchinson Property in lower Michigan are returning to prairie.**

Photo: Chris Loudenslager

agricultural field. Now under NPS ownership, the field is no longer being farmed and is entering into its third year of stewardship as a created native prairie.

The new Trail will be accessible, winding its way from the trailhead through the midst of the prairie up to the majestic vista that unfolds in the southern viewshed. Continuing north from the vista, the Trail will be traditional construction and tread and will continue north through the prairie where it will duck into the wooded portion of the property. While this former stretch through the woods was a lovely section and wasn't at all a bad trail, what we learned after the property was surveyed was that the last leg of the route had long ago veered off the property and was not exactly crossing through lands we had permission to be on. Since we needed to adjust the route anyway, this provided an opportunity to bypass some perpetually wet areas that would have otherwise been problematic to address. Chief Noonday Chapter volunteers have already begun pre-work, assisting with trail routing and pulling garlic mustard from the future route before we begin disturbing soil. With any luck at all, this new section of Trail through the NPS property will be completed before summer is over and will be ready for folks to enjoy the autumn colors.

Thank you everyone for all you do each and every day, year in and year out. Hope to see you in person very soon. ✨



## Advocacy Update: Congress Approves the Great Outdoors Act

By Andrea Ketchmark

**T**his summer, Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act.

The bill created a new National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund, putting \$9.5 billion toward the backlog of maintenance in our federal land management agencies, including the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, which will benefit the NCT across our region. The bill also makes it mandatory for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to obligate \$900 million per year on land acquisition projects to protect resources, including those needed to complete and protect the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Both of these programs are funded with non-taxpayer funds, coming instead from the receipts from offshore energy sales and energy leases on public lands.

The bill now moves to the President's desk for signature.

If you have interest in being involved in NCTA's advocacy efforts, consider joining our Advocacy committee. Email [hq@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:hq@northcountrytrail.org) with your interest and help us speak for the North Country National Scenic Trail and outdoor reaction across the nation. ✨

## Welcome Abby Whittington

**A**bby Whittington is the newest addition to the North Country Trail Association as the Annual Events Coordinator. She has a background in event planning and has been involved in the event world for over seven years. Abby has worked in a variety of different settings, including restaurants, hotels, nonprofits and the private sector. She looks forward to continuing her work with the North Country Trail Association. Abby has a BS in Recreation, Sport and Tourism with an emphasis in Tourism Management from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



Photo: Steven Whittington

When Abby is not planning events, she is busy spending time with her family. She has an energetic toddler who loves exploring the outdoors. Her family loves taking trips and exploring new places and is excited to explore the NCT as a family. Abby is glad to be a part of the NCTA and she looks forward to planning events for you! ✨

## NCTA's Role in Trail and Land Protection

By Valerie Bader and Andrea Ketchmark

**I**n the spring issue of the *North Star*, Tom Gilbert laid out the history of protecting lands for National Scenic Trails, with a focus on the National Park Service's role in building an acquisition program to complete and protect our National Trails System. The National Park Service's role is critical but they can't do it alone. The North Country Trail Association and our many partners have a long history in working with landowners to secure rights of way and if possible, collaborate on land acquisition projects that protect the surrounding land and the trail experience.

*Continued on page 6*





### OPTIONS FOR TRAIL PROTECTION:

Although NCTA doesn't hold land, we have many options available to us to secure the right of way or work with partners on acquisition projects. Our volunteers and staff work to identify the best option to meet the needs of the Trail and the landowner. These options include:

**Trail Access Easement:** Our preferred way to protect the Trail, which grants permanent permission for the Trail to pass through a defined corridor. This agreement is bound to the property and passes on to subsequent owners.

**Conservation Easement:** This type of easement is desired to protect the land's conservation values like water and habitat. This will outline what activities can and cannot take place on the property, as agreed upon by the landowner and easement holder, which is usually a local land trust or conservancy.

**Fee simple acquisition:** When we have the opportunity, NCTA will partner with land trusts, conservation organizations or state and local agencies if a landowner is willing to sell their property and the organization/agency supports the management of the trail long-term.

### CLOSING THE GAPS:

One of our biggest roles as a partner is to work toward protecting sections of trail we've already built, but also to do the planning necessary to identify the potential routes for the Trail and what lands need to be secured for those routes. This work is done locally and often on a small scale but sometimes we take on projects that take on a larger planning area.

In 2019, working with a contractor, NCTA's Pennsylvania Chapters completed a project focused on "Closing the Gaps" in that state. The Wampum, Butler and Clarion Chapters cover 185 miles of Pennsylvania's North Country Trail (The other 97

are within the boundaries of the Allegheny National Forest.) Those miles include 41 on-road miles and dozens of "handshake" agreements, where the Trail is permitted to cross a private property but has no permanent protection. The Closing the Gaps project identified 26 major gaps in the Trail between the Ohio/Pennsylvania border and the southern end of the ANF. Of those 26 gaps, the Chapters identified 5 major priorities to focus on permanently protecting the NCT corridor and will be engaging landowners in those gaps over the coming years.

### PARTNERING ON LAND ACQUISITION WITH PHEASANTS FOREVER:

NCTA also partners with others to acquire pieces of land that are valuable to us for the Trail but also to others for the habitat or other resources it provides the local community. Over the past few years we've worked on several projects that have done just this and in two cases, NCTA has provided the financial match for these projects that will protect the trail long-term.

NCTA has been working on sustainable and feasible options for connecting the North Country Trail with the Superior Hiking Trail at the Minnesota/Wisconsin boundary for over a decade. In 2019, a parcel of land became available for sale on the Minnesota side that would help make that critical connection. NCTA Regional Trail Coordinators Matt Davis and Bill Menke learned that both Carlton County (Minn.) and Pheasants Forever had mutual interest in protecting the property. Pheasants Forever applied for a Minn. state grant to purchase the property and NCTA provided matching funds for the grant, in exchange for a permanent easement across the parcel. Pheasants Forever was able to acquire the property in early 2020 and we are looking forward to holding a celebration on site as soon as possible and our staff and volunteers hope to begin route planning on the



**Sometimes landowners even pitch in to help.**

Photo: Butler Chapter

property this season. The parcel is 241 acres. The trail route is expected to be about 1 mile and will connect the southern end of the Superior Hiking Trail to completed trail in Wisconsin. The whole property is wooded but heavily cut-over in the past.

### THE FUTURE:

Protecting our current miles of trail and completing the close to 2,000 miles we have left to go, simply won't be a reality without this work and these creative partnerships. Our challenge and opportunity moving forward is to increase our capacity, resources and expertise to move more projects forward. By solidifying agreements on land for our existing trail, as well as for the current gaps in connections, we will get closer to our goal of completing the longest premier hiking trail in the United States. Your support of NCTA will help us grow our capacity in this vital area. ✨

### Resources

*NCTA provides resources for our volunteers as well as staff guidance where possible to work with landowners and partners on these projects. <https://northcountrytrail.org/volunteer/volunteer-resource-center/trail-protection/>*



## Celebration 2020 Goes Virtual

By Abby Whittington, NCTA's Annual Events Coordinator

**A**lthough we made the tough decision to cancel our in-person Celebration events this year, the North Country Trail Association is pleased to announce that we are able to bring some exciting programs virtually to our community throughout the month of August. Watch your email and check [nctacelebration.org](http://nctacelebration.org) for more information on how to register and participate in these events. We are excited to come together and we hope you will join us for the Annual Celebration 2020!

### **Wednesday, August 5th at 7:00 p.m. EDT: Opening Ceremonies**

Join our Executive Director, Andrea Ketchmark, as we kick off our first ever virtual Celebration! We will share some recent accomplishments, stories from the Trail and host a live Q&A to hear directly from you.

### **Thursday, August 6th at 7:00 p.m. EDT: North Country Trail Association Awards**

We invite you to join us as we celebrate our awardees who have earned these distinguished awards such as Trail Builder, Rising Star, and Outstanding Private Landowner, and hear from the 2020 winners of the Thomas L. Gilbert Lifetime Achievement Award.

### **Thursday, August 13th at 7:00 p.m. EDT: Founders Circle Reception**

By special invitation only, our Founders Circle Members will be invited to join us for an exclusive reception. We want to say thank you for all you have done!

### **Wednesday, August 19th at 4:00 p.m. EDT: Trail Management Webinar, Map Workshop**

Join NCTA's Matt Rowbotham (GIS Coordinator) and Kenny Wawczyk (Michigan Regional Trail Coordinator) as they discuss the role of the NCTA's mapping technology in trail management and hiking. They will present the tools they use on a day-to-day basis, including smartphones, tablets

and Bluetooth GPS receivers. They will also leave plenty of time for your questions on how best to work with the NCTA's mapping resources from the perspective of both trail volunteers and hikers.

### **Tuesday, August 25th at 3:00 p.m. EDT: Next Generation Summit**

Hear first hand from NCTA's Next Generation Coalition Members about how they've been getting involved in outreach, volunteerism and advocacy along the Trail and how we can work together to engage the next generation of trail stewards.

### **Thursday, August 27th at 7:00 p.m. EDT: North Country Stories: Creating Space**

Join NCTA's Executive Director, Andrea Ketchmark, for this first in a series of conversations with outdoor leaders across the trails community and in our own backyard. In our first conversation, Andrea will connect with Alice Jasper, the host of Color Out Here, a show focused on reframing what outdoorsy looks like by creating a more inclusive outdoor space.

### **Tuesday, September 15th, 7:00-9:00 pm EDT: An Evening with the National Park Service Roundtable discussion and Awards**

Join us for this opportunity to engage in dialogue with our National Park Service Team. Led by our Superintendent, Chris Loudenslager, this session is an opportunity to discuss important issues and priorities, meet new NPS staff, and celebrate another round of awardees as they recognize volunteers for the many hours of service to the Trail.

Be sure to mark your calendars for August 4-8, 2021, as we will be back together in person in Clarion, Pennsylvania for our 2021 Celebration. ✨

**Find information about registering for individual events at [nctacelebration.org](http://nctacelebration.org)**





**The first Wisconsin Rovers trip of 2020. The crew replaced the Spring Creek Bridge and followed all of the new guidelines. (above and right)**

Photo: Bob Leedle

## Spotlight: Coronavirus Task Force

Valerie Bader, Director of Trail Development

As with everywhere else in the world, the Coronavirus significantly impacted the North Country Trail and its volunteer community over the past several months. Projects and maintenance days were postponed, chainsaw and Crew Leader training events were cancelled, and events and hikes put on hold indefinitely. NCT volunteers adapted to these changes, even with increased Trail visitation almost everywhere across the Trail. In May and June, NCT locales began to reopen and individual land managers began to welcome group projects on the Trail, so NCTA was met with the new challenge of providing guidance for volunteers to return to work safely with Coronavirus still impacting our Trail communities.

NCTA established a 16-member Task Force to help address best practices and guide discussion and decision making. The Task Force is composed of Chapter and Affiliate leaders, volunteers, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service partners, NCTA Board representatives and Association staff. The Task Force focused initial efforts

on establishing a framework for trail leaders to make good decisions about how NCT volunteers could safely consider hikes, trail projects and events over the 2020 field season.

**The “Volunteer Responsibly” guidelines include the following recommendations:**

- Minimize the spread by staying home if you feel sick
- Focus on projects rather than public hikes or events
- Limit group size to 10 or fewer participants
- Maintain six-foot distance between volunteers and trail users
- Use face coverings when physical distancing isn't possible
- Practice good hygiene
- Clean tools between use and avoid sharing
- Keep projects local and avoid shuttles
- Avoid conflict



**Allegheny National Forest Chapter takes a break and puts on their masks when physical distancing isn't possible.**

Photo: ANF Chapter

More information and the full guidelines document can be found on NCTA's Trail Alerts web page. The Task Force will continue to meet regularly over the coming months and re-evaluate the guidelines based on changing conditions across the Trail. Many thanks to this great group of people who have jumped into engaging conversations and challenging decision-making to keep NCT volunteers safe, happy and healthy. ✨



# VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

The North Country Trail Association provides these guidelines as framework for Trail Leaders to make smart decisions based on our collective knowledge and best practices. Participants are expected to adhere to these guidelines for the safety and health of our volunteers and Trail community. Your safety is the #1 priority. Visit **[northcountrytrail.org](http://northcountrytrail.org)** for additional information.

## MINIMIZE THE SPREAD



Stay home if you feel sick. Minimize contact with anyone outside your household.

## FOCUS ON PROJECTS



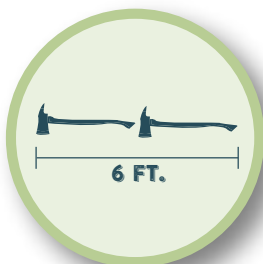
Prioritize trail projects, and do not host public hikes and events.

## KEEP IT SMALL



Limit group size to < 10 and consider breaking into smaller work groups.

## KEEP DISTANCE



Maintain a six-foot distance (two Pulaskis) between volunteers and trail users.

## USE PPE



All volunteers must use face masks when physical distance isn't possible.

## PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE



Wash hands frequently. When soap and water is unavailable, use hand sanitizer.

## CARE FOR TOOLS



Avoid sharing tools. Clean all tools before and after use, disinfect between projects.

## TRAVEL SAFELY



Keep projects local, and avoid carpools and shuttles.

## AVOID CONFLICT



Keep interactions positive and focused on information sharing, not enforcement.



**Under the watchful blue eye of the North Country Trail: Joe Torok (chainsaw operator and Crew Leader) with Doug Mangold working southbound from Henry's Mills**

Photo: Lynda Chudy

## All That Was Missing

By the North Country Trail in the Allegheny National Forest  
(with the help of Lynda Chudy a.k.a. Muddy Sneakers)

There was nothing unusual about the snowshoe adventures throughout the winter and the first hikes of spring. However, as the spring season progressed the sounds and feel of the North Country Trail changed. The quiet and peaceful walks were different. Undergrowth and low growing berry bushes started grabbing at shoe and boot laces, while bogs of mud sucked on your feet with each step. Low hanging tree branches grabbed your hat and bushes brushed your shoulder. Uprooted trees, too, lay across the Trail blocking progress to your intended destination. Even the wind sounded like a low moan as it moved through the trees. We were feeling the effects of the Coronavirus and the repercussions of social distancing, and the North Country Trail was no different. The Trail was crying out for help.

In early May the cries were answered ever so slowly and carefully by Masked Cr\_saders, the heroes of the Allegheny National Forest portion of the North Country Trail. It started with individuals and pairs traveling the Trail while noting downed trees and needed work on GPS units. Then came the lone trail blaze painters and pruners. On May 15, a small group of five approached Salmon Creek area to fix bridges impacted by beaver activity. Two days later Mike Toole, Doug Mangold and Randy Thomas moved as a socially distant threesome starting at Route 59 and traveling southbound. They cleared downed trees and completed much needed drainage work. Three small bridges were put into place as well.

Then on May 31, if it wasn't already, it was clear that the NCT and Allegheny National Forest were responding to the new activity. Under the watchful blue eye of the NCT blaze, Joe Torok and Doug Mangold took on the challenge of clearing downed trees southbound at Henry's Mills while Jim Penley and Katie Prindle teamed up clearing the northbound

section starting at Minister Road. Chainsaws revved and the leaves, with the help of the breeze, applauded loudly. Trees rubbing and bending together squealed with excitement. Thirteen Cr\_saders in all helped that day with DR mowing, weed whacking, trail blazing, pruning, and lopping.

The Trail cried out, "We miss yo\_!" and "We need yo\_!" and yo\_ answered. The vol\_ntees, the masked cr\_saders. On May 31 as gear from the day was loaded back into vehicles for the trip home, a sigh of relief rose up from the Trail along with two final comments: "Welcome back! All that was missing was U!" *Happy Trails* ✨



**Eugene and Linus Branigan, Bob Courtois, Mary Campbell, Duane Lawton, Tamera Dean, Dave and Annie Matz, Kevin Whitley, Sue Miller, Not Shown: Dove and John Day, John Larch**

Photo: Duane Lawton



## Trailbuilding in the Time of Coronavirus

By Duane Lawton

The Jordan Valley 45° Chapter held a small group puncheon building event on the date Formerly Known As National Trails Day.

We attacked an area of the NCT within the Petoskey Bear River Recreation Area beset with seeps and mud. Armed with a "please" from Petoskey Parks and Rec., and a DEQ permit (thanks to our Michigan RTC Kenny Wawczyk), we built several puncheons while observing caution, even though we were outside. A nice picnic followed along with the satisfaction of knowing that the many people and dogs who use this urban section of the NCT will keep their feet drier now. Several walkers happened by and were appreciative. ✨



# Volunteer Spotlight: Marianne Duvendack

Kate Lemon and Marianne Duvendack



Since mid-March of this year, face masks have become an essential part of wardrobes across America. The Coronavirus pandemic caused the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to recommend keeping one's mouth and nose shielded if stepping out in public was a necessity, to limit or prevent the spread of the virus. The quick spread of the virus and the urgency of the CDC's recommendation caused a shortage of face masks, but many crafty and generous seamstresses and tailors – both amateur and seasoned – volunteered their sewing skills, fabric

and time to keep their communities healthy. The North Country Trail community is proud that one of its own, Marianne Duvendack of the NW Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association, has been involved in this effort.

"I started working on them [masks] when most of us did: mid-March or so, and I work on them when it's too yucky to go outside," Marianne explained. "I've been sewing garments and quilts since grade school. Anywhere I go, my sewing machine goes. Since I have a great stash of fabric, it was just natural to start making masks."

Marianne has been giving away masks as much as possible. When she finishes a batch, she leaves a box on her front porch for friends to pick up.

"I sometimes find that folks also drop off a little cash," Marianne added. "I've also asked friends to send an extra donation to one of their favorite charities instead of paying me."

She uses patterns and sizing recommendations from Johns Hopkins Medicine's website, and has experimented with both elastic straps and ribbon-and-string ties, the latter of which she used on masks for fellow NCTA volunteers.

"The oddest thing I discovered," Marianne mused, "is that my older son's ears are so soft he can't wear any of the elastic ones! That's when I started experimenting with strings."

"I was also worried that I might run out of red plaid fabric, so I lined them with my next favorite fabric: anything oak related!" Marianne wrote. "The pattern I've settled on lately is super quick to make and provides basic coverage. Interestingly, quilt fabric is more effective than even the fabric used in traditional cloth surgical masks and the blue "paper" ones, because of the higher thread count and double layer. There are lots of sewists (we call ourselves that now) who are making masks that can be used with special filters."

Marianne was gifted a decent amount of elastic recently and enjoys the challenge of finding the "sweet spot" of elastic length for each mask, considering not everyone's head is the same size. She has created several custom fitted masks to work around this, especially for people who wear glasses and hearing aids.

Once the fabric is washed and ironed, Marianne can cut out about 20 masks per hour, and can sew about 10 per hour. "And right now I have more fabric calling my name."

"My piece of advice," Marianne recommended, "is to get several masks so you can make sure they get washed and of course, they should match your outfit! We're in the long haul for mask wearing, so stock up."

She has also generously offered to create masks for anyone who needs some.

"And if you have a special fabric request for a group of folks," she added, "I can send photos of the fabric I have on hand, or you can send me the fabric, and we'll go from there. On average I can get eight to 12 masks from a yard of fabric."

*Editor's Note: Johns Hopkins Medicine face mask information can be found at [hopkinsmedicine.org](https://hopkinsmedicine.org). Marianne can be contacted about mask sewing requests or questions at [mbduvendack@gmail.com](mailto:mbduvendack@gmail.com).*

✱



## A Biathlon Adventure on the North Country Trail

By “Trail Dale” Painter

Most of us certainly lay claim to a favorite stretch of the North Country Trail. I’ve hiked mine numerous times over the past 20+ years. In early June, as I was contemplating yet another foray onto that very familiar, 48-mile section, I wondered how I might spice up or add a new dimension to my routine trek up the impressive Manistee River Valley in Michigan’s west-central lower peninsula.

Interestingly, I recalled reading a blog of two hikers who made a detour on their NCT hike along the Border Route Trail in northern Minnesota when they encountered an impassable stretch of dense underbrush and blow-downs. To salvage their hike, they spontaneously opted to rent a canoe from an outfitter at their nearby resupply stop and successfully by-passed about 30 miles of the problematic trail segment via a Boundary Waters canoe route. A light bulb suddenly flicked on in my normally landlubber-prone hiker brain: why not add a canoe leg to my early season hiking agenda?

Two days later, I found myself backpacking my favorite 48 miles of Trail up-river from Red Bridge as the NCT traverses, in roller-coaster fashion, the banks and high bluffs and bottomlands along the heavily forested Manistee River. However, instead of heading back home at my normal end-point near the Old M-131 Campground, I exchanged my hiking boots and trekking poles for water shoes and a canoe paddle in order to ride my (secretly stashed) canoe back downriver for the 65-river-mile return trip to my starting point and parked vehicle.

The venture offered a distinctly “bi-polar” approach for experiencing the beauty of both the Trail and the river but from two totally different visual and experiential perspectives... 22 hours of hiking followed immediately by 18 hours of canoeing. Ahhh, “variety is indeed the spice of life,” even on the NCT! By adding the canoe-trail leg, I discovered a whole new realm of planning logistics, magical moments, and, yes, a few “trade-offs” unfolding before me.

**New Sets of Logistics:** Selecting the appropriate trail/river segment to be tackled requires a bit of study and research, especially related to the river leg of the “hike.” Of course, the NCT map sets give the exact mileage and terrain for the hiking leg but I needed to check out a whole different set of maps and guides to plan and navigate the river leg. This includes factors such as river access points, on-water

distances and float times, potential camping spots, degree of difficulty (rapids/white water) and assessing whether I had the requisite canoeing skills to meet the river’s challenges. Fortunately, the upper Manistee River involves only strong currents and hidden snags, but no real white water, although all of the river’s twists and meanderings present real challenges knowing exactly where you are and how far you have to go!

Further downstream, paddling across the expansive seven-mile-long open backwaters of Hodenpyl Dam necessitates additional decisions aimed at reducing effort and fatigue. Ideally, the long crossing needs to be carefully timed (early morning or evening is best) to avoid the usual head winds that can set up exhausting battles with the whitecaps and waves. Below the dam, the logistical challenges continue as a whole different character of the river emerges as the now-quickly flowing river stirs up exhilarating sets of rapids requiring modest river-reading and paddling skills.







**Dale starts to haul his canoe out of hiding, with his hiker pack still on his back.**

Photos: Matthew Painter (Dale's son)

Determining where and how to pre-plant my canoe and canoe gear poses another important strategic decision to ensure that my canoe and gear would be there when I arrived several days later! In my case, I had planned to ask the campground host at the Old 131 State Forest Service Campground if he or she would watch my stuff at their site, but when I found the entire campground deserted, I decided to paddle my canoe downriver a mile or so and hide it on the bank, below a point where I'd be passing by on the NCT. I was also careful to hang the food and gear bags for the canoe leg in a tree to protect it from four-legged critters.

This naturally leads to decisions about the new sets of gear that need to be taken. Miserly-like packing of my backpacking stuff has become a complete no-brainer for me, but since I had never done a solo overnight river trip, I had to consult with my canoeing-obsessed son for advice and equipment decisions (life jacket, paddles, dry bags, Crazy Creek canoe seat, sponge, ropes.) Unlike packing my minimalist Osprey backpack (where every ounce and inch of space matter), loading my ancient 17-foot, aluminum

Grumman canoe was pure heaven! There were seemingly tons of "cargo space!" I confess that I even threw in a folding lawn chair, but resisted the temptation to take a cooler for beverages. (Hey, I'm still headed into the backcountry, not to a pool party!)

**New Sets of Magical Moments:** Prior to my June biathlon, I never realized just how different the landscape of the NCT appears when viewed looking up from the open water in a canoe as opposed looking down from the forest banks and bluffs of the footpath. For example, a totally unexpected thrill shot through my psyche the first time I caught a river-level glimpse of one of those comforting blue blazes painted on a tree up in the woods that signaled the NCT was right there beside me!

Wildlife encounters are always magical moments anywhere on the NCT. However, the river's more open sight-lines greatly increased my chances of viewing my furry and feathered friends, especially in the morning and late afternoon hours: a doe and her two fawns lapping water at river's edge; a family of racoons digging in the river bank; muskrats swimming across the current; turtles basking on logs; two up-close encounters with bald eagles swooping low searching for breakfast; the frantic, broken-wing acting job of a mama merganser as she flopped and zig-zagged wildly in front of my canoe to protect her newly hatched ducklings from the menacing, shiny monster passing by; and the numerous families of swans, Canada geese, and sandhill cranes which graced the sandbars ushering the entrance onto Hodenpyl Pond.

I will also not soon forget the simple pleasures afforded by the canoe leg, like the stash of fresh apples and oranges I carted along that I would never dream of toting in my backpack, or dangling my hot stinky feet over the gunwales of my canoe into the cool, refreshing water as I quietly glided along. And I discovered that the proverbial "trail angels" are also alive and well for the backpacker who just happens to be riding in a canoe. Case-in-point: As I reached the portage point at Hodenpyl Dam after four hours of uninterrupted

*Continued on page 14*

## **CREATE YOUR OWN BIATHLON TRAIL EXPERIENCE WHEREVER THE NCT COINCIDES WITH A WATERWAY. A STATE-BY-STATE SAMPLING OF OPTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:**

**North Dakota:** Sheyenne River, Lake Ashtabula, Lake Audubon/Sakakawea

**Wisconsin:** Brule-St Croix River Portage, Upper Lake St. Clair

**Michigan:** Kalamazoo River, Manistee River, Lake Superior Shoreline (150+ miles!)

**Minnesota:** Boundary Waters Canoe Area

**Ohio:** Miami River, Maumee River, Auglaize River

**Pennsylvania:** Allegheny River, Kinzua Reservoir, Lake Arthur

**New York:** Black Water Feeder Canal, Erie Canal



paddling, I found myself struggling to stand up and uncramp my very stiff and aging 71-year-old body. A man and his teenaged son were fishing from the dam's embankment and watched my ordeal to straighten myself to an upright position. I felt a bit embarrassed when they rushed down to offer assistance. But my injured pride turned to deep appreciation as together they graciously proceeded to lug my heavy canoe and gear up over the embankment and all the way down the portage route stairs and deposited me and my canoe into the lower river below the dam. Frankly, I had worried how I would do this by myself.

**New Trade-Offs:** Let me be quick to observe that not everything about my backpack/canoe combo adventure is all “sweetness and light.” There are unexpected trade-offs. For example, throughout the often arduous hiking leg, I kept a healthy pace by just visualizing and anticipating the upcoming, unadulterated luxury of sitting down on a cushioned seat all day as the river current would placidly propel me all downhill back to my car! However, all too soon my tight calves and blistered toes from my incessant trail trudging was

replaced by sharply aching shoulders and back muscles and painfully blistered hands from the seemingly endless hours of paddling! And, similarly, my simple mantra of “one foot in front of the other” would inevitably yield to the repetitious chant “stroke, rudder, repeat...”

But ultimately, when I descended the final grade to find my canoe near the Old 131 Campground, and two days later rounded the final bend in the river to spot the landing at Red Bridge, the only trade-off that mattered was the utter satisfaction and exhilaration of another successful passage on the trail I know and love, our beloved North Country National Scenic Trail. ✱

*Dale Painter is a retired social worker and grant writer who lives in Newaygo, Michigan, with his wife, Kathy, where he is a member and trail maintainer in NCT's Western Michigan Chapter. “Trail Dale” is a veteran long-distance hiker whose thru-hikes have included Michigan's NCT border-to-border, the Pacific Crest Trail, the Grand Enchantment Trail in Arizona/New Mexico, and sections of the Continental Divide Trail.*

## Farm Country Savvy: Leave Gates as You Find Them!

By Dave Newman, Finger Lakes Trail

It should go without saying that hikers must leave any gates they come across on the Trail in the same status they found them in. If the gate is open, you can walk through but you must leave it open. If it is closed, and there is a stile or pedestrian gate available, you need to use them, not the main gate. If it is closed but there is no stile or pedestrian gate, and blazes are visible beyond, you may use the gate if it isn't locked, but you must secure the gate closed in the same position as you found it. And if there is an electric fence with a spring-loaded disconnect designed to let you open the circuit and pass through, you must reconnect it!



**This gate in the Finger Lakes National Forest in N.Y. needs to stay shut to keep grazing cattle confined. Phil Dankert and Rich Breslin.**

Photo: Warren Johnsen



It may be common sense to more seasoned hikers but with many new hikers out exploring the Trail, it's important we take a moment to remind us all how we can be respectful while traversing private lands in farm country. Just because you don't see animals in the field does not mean you can leave the gate open. In one case, someone did, and the farmer had to spend his time rounding up loose cattle. Fortunately none of them wandered unseen into the roadway as a car/cow collision is usually bad news for both. When he called, he was a real gentleman, but very frustrated. The Trail has been on his property for many years. He feels good about sharing his farm road with hikers. But, as he very clearly put it, he can't deal with this anymore! Seems that a few years back the opposite happened: Someone closed a trail gate that was open. But his cattle were in the far reaches of the upper field and that closed gate kept them from their water source for several days until he discovered thirsty cows and a closed gate. (Heifers, young cattle not yet old enough to be milked, are often put out in the pasture for days at a time.)

Maybe we solved the issue this time, for this particularly gracious and cooperative landowner. Our Regional Trail Coordinator was meeting with him on-site within 36 hours of his initial call, a signage plan was put in place immediately and longer term plans for stiles or pedestrian pass-through gates are in the works. Situation solved... maybe. We hope nobody will ignore these generous hiker accommodations. ✱



**The Trail passes through several of this farmer's pastures so hikers must deal with gates whose positions change at times. However, since there is a stile built adjacent, hikers should NOT open or close this gate.**

Photo: Scott Geiger



**In 2007 Jacqui Wensich took this picture at a spot along the Trail where hikers have to use the gate to walk through a charming sheep pasture, but here the sign is clear that we need to close the gate behind us. Alas, this sweet spot has no gates now since the sheep are pastured in a different place and tended by the next generation. But the landowner still lets us route the trail here, which climbs to a wonderful viewpoint down the valley below.**

Photo: Jacqui Wensich



**Here, too, hikers shouldn't touch the gate, since a novel crossing stile has been built for us on the right side.**

Photo: Scott Geiger



Continued from the April Issue

## Dub: I hiked North Dakota

By Winford C. Bludworth, Jr., trail name rubadubdub



Dub on NCT in Ohio 2009

Photo: Harry Bludworth (Dub's brother)

in the other direction. When I got to the dam Liz was sitting there in her car. She took me back to Dianne's for another dinner put on by Liz and more great visiting. Liz said that when I went thru the upcoming National Grasslands that water would be scarce. It rained most of the night.

On May 8 Liz took me back to the dam and I slack hiked with no pack the 13 miles to Valley City and a motel. Dianne brought my pack to me. It was cloudy, but no rain. It was mostly road walking on pavement, but some super good trail right at the last in Valley City. Through here, there was less crop farming and more cattle ranching. I contacted Bob and Jerry and we went to Dianne's Woodland Lodge bar and grill for dinner together. Liz had gone home. Dianne was at the bar and grill, so we had a good visit. Bobby Koepplin, another NCT Sheyenne River Chapter member, came and visited with us at Dianne's place also. Bobby said that I could camp at Clausen Springs, Little Yellowstone Park, and Fort Ransom free of charge because I was a thru hiker. That was cool.

On May 9 I hiked 20 miles mostly road and a few miles of Trail to Clausen Springs campground and camped. Partly cloudy weather, some pretty scary clouds; it rained a few times. I saw a dog chasing a deer. Nice campground.

On May 10 I hiked a mere 9 trail miles and 1+ spur mile to little Yellowstone Park campground. It was just me there. The water was on; that was great. I had a nice talk with a farmer where the Trail passed thru his property. He was thrilled to see me coming. I thanked him so much for letting the Trail come through his

property. It was a cloudy and cold day, but no rain.

On May 11 Friday the weather was good. I hiked 1+ spur mile back to the Trail plus 12 miles to Fort Ransom State Park Campground. There were some great people at the park. It was mostly road, but a few miles of Trail, some of the best Trail and country on the hike to this point. I was in camp and set up early. Then Jerry showed up, and I broke camp, and he took my pack and I hiked 1+ mile to his house. I slept at his house that night and we went out to dinner.

On May 12 Jerry spotted me for a packless slack hike. I hiked 17 miles to Lisbon and checked into a motel. I had a nice talk with a couple along the way. Had a great all you can eat buffet for dinner. Quite an expensive motel.

May 13 was Sunday. I had every intention to stay in Lisbon Sunday to go to church. The weatherman on TV said that big time lightning and rain was coming Thursday night and Friday. If I didn't hike this day, it would be Friday afternoon before I finished my hike. Maybe it would slow me and I wouldn't be able to finish it. I owed it to all those great people who helped me to finish it. They were really pulling for me. Heavenly Father would understand; besides the motel was expensive. The weather was great now, sunny and hot. So... I hiked.

First, I hiked 15 road miles to the west trailhead of Sheyenne National Grasslands. A man and woman passed

**I had a nice talk with a farmer where the Trail passed thru his property. He was thrilled to see me coming. I thanked him so much for letting the Trail come through his property**



me in a pickup going the other direction, then they turned around and came back. They stopped and said that they had to come back to pick up their friendly dog or he would follow me all the way to Minnesota. At the Grasslands trailhead, Liz had left some water, an almond bar, and an apple with my name on it. I ate the bar and the apple right there; what a great treat. Also, the trailhead had a notice about a prescribed burn ahead of me, just north of highway 27. I could see the smoke.

It was 6 great miles to highway 27. I hiked 4 miles going thru a real nice forest at the last. I was starting to leave the forest so I made camp in a real nice spot that did not have water. It's a good thing that Liz had left me that water. I was in camp about 4pm. I had hiked a total of 19 miles.

On May 14, Monday the smoke from the fire was all gone so on I hiked. Soon after crossing highway 27, I skirted the burned area. I hiked only 12 miles to one mile past the middle trailhead. I was about out of water but Liz had left me another gallon of water and 2 almond bars! I ate the bars right then, filled my water containers, filled myself with water and carried the gallon jug with what was left in it. I had great weather. I stopped because I was running out of trees and wanted their protection from the weather, and I had read a poster a little ways back about possible sheep dogs ahead.

On May 15, Tuesday I hiked 13 miles to a wilderness camp. The trail through the Grasslands was great, with big posts marking the trail, plus mile posts. Along the way I came upon a nice bridge across a creek. Liz had left an apple, an almond bar and a gallon of water. At the east trailhead

there was a woman in a car who gave me one small bottle of water. Right next to the trailhead was a campground with water and a privy. I took advantage of both, then I hiked one

more mile until the trees

were running out, so I camped. It was sunny and hot. I had been sucking up water like crazy. Liz is the greatest! I could never have made it thru the grasslands without her. She is the greatest trail angel.

On May 16 I had just barely started hiking when I came across a herd of sheep. Here came five huge sheep dogs after me. Scary. I followed the instructions on the posters so said, "Go back, no, go back, no" a number of times. It worked. It was very early. The sheep herder was still in his wagon. He hung half of his body out to see what was going on. I waved at him, he waved back and went back in. I hiked on and was glad when I had gone a good way. I hiked on to the Ekre trailhead. I made good comments in the trail register there then hiked down 59th street SE. I was lying by the side of the road taking a break, only a few miles from Walcott, my destination for the day. It was super-hot and I was exhausted. Tom Moberg and Bill Kubista pulled up in a pickup. They had been clearing trail. Tom asked, "Are you Rubadubdub?" They wanted me to go back and do a new section of trail that wasn't on the map. I had done the section that goes down by the river and comes out on county road 29, but this was different, so they took me into Walcott to leave my pack at the bar. Then they would take me back to the trail and I would slack hike back to the bar. The owner of the bar, Kayla, was flabbergasted with what I was doing. She put her arm around me and took a selfie. I asked Kayla if I also could leave my pack at the bar the next day and slack hike to Minnesota the next day and the end of my hike. The trouble was, the bar didn't open



**The land along the dammed up Lake Ashtabula is administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is used for pasturing cattle. Yes, we walk through their herds and cross fences on stiles.**

Photo: Becky Heise



**Dub on an unknown trail, unknown location.**

Photo: Harry Bludworth



## HIKES

up until 11 AM but Doug, another great North Dakotan and a customer at the bar was listening. He bought me dinner, then I camped across the street in the city park. I hiked 18 trail miles and 3 spur miles that day for a total of 21 miles.

On May 17 Thursday I woke up to quite a bit of thunder but no rain. I went to Doug's house and he fixed us a great breakfast. Then I left my pack with Doug and started my slack hike. After the bar opened, Doug left my pack there for me. What a guy to do all that for me. I hiked 6 miles along the railroad right of way to Colfax, then roads and a little trail for 10 miles to the Minnesota border. Cool threatening weather. I hiked to the Minnesota end of the bridge, then I hiked back to the bar in Abercrombie and had a great late lunch. Then, Bob Stein came out from Fargo and picked me up and took me to a Motel 6 in Fargo. As we drove to Fargo the rain and lightning came like crazy, went late into the night and some on Friday. I was glad I finished on Thursday!

On May 18, Friday I relaxed and hung around. The Mexican restaurant next to the motel had a lunch special for only \$4.99. I was given a big basket of chips and a large thing of salsa. The lunch plate was like a big dinner plate and really good. I was flabbergasted with what I got for only \$4.99. Bob and Liz went out to dinner with me at another good Mexican restaurant. It was a great day, just like the whole trip.



**The Karnak railroad bridge crosses the wide valley that holds Lake Asthabula. BNSF trains are frequent and long.**

Photo: Becky Heise

On May 19, Saturday a cab picked me up at 4:30am. I got home midafternoon in Salt Lake.

I have been long trail hiking since September 2000. I have hiked gobs

and gobs of

long trails. On this hike, I passed the 21,000-mile mark, and I passed the half way mark on the North Country Trail's 4,600 miles. This hike was all of the 430 miles of the North Dakota portion of the NCT.

I had not expected that much from North Dakota, but it turned out to be one of my best hikes ever. The canals, the Lonetree Wildlife Management Area, the towns, the people, the Sheyenne River valley and Lake Ashtabula, the Sheyenne National Grasslands, even the road walks were great and much more. Dianne Hatcher and the NCT people Liz Walberg, Jerry Warren, Bob Stein, Bobby Koepplin, Tom Moberg and Bill Kubista were great and other people, like



**Within the Sheyenne National Grasslands, a lot of beef are pastured. These "branded" wooden posts stand up to hooves better than flexible fiberglass Carsonite posts**

Photo: Deb Koepplin

Mayor Ken Gilbertson and Donna Lorentzson, and Ethel of Binford. plus others, like Douglas Nowatzki and Kayla of Wolcott and many more. Forgive me if I left you out. If you want a great long trail section to hike, go hike all or part of the North Dakota portion of the North Country Trail.

The same time next year, I hope to hike the NCT from North Dakota to the Kekekabic trail. I have already done the rest of Minnesota. I hope to finish all of the NCT eventually.



*In an email to your editor on February 14, Dub said,*

*at the end of my story i said that i hoped to hike the NCT from North Dakota to the Kekekabic trail at the same time in 2019. i did not make that hike because a 170 pound goat about tore my arm off just before i was supposed to go and i couldn't pick my back pack up for a while. but my arm healed up.*

*but between my N.D. hike and the goat incident i walked on the arctic ocean ice and i hiked on the continental divide trail in idaho and montana, some of the n.c.t. in ohio and the 96+ miles of the n.c.t. in Pennsylvania closest to new york.*

*since the goat incident i have hiked some more on the c.d.t. in montana and i have hiked 527 miles on the pacific crest trail in california.*

*i now have air tickets bought to fly to fargo, n.d. on this coming april 23 and do the n.c.t. 447 mile hike from n.d. to the kekekabic trail. then fly home from Duluth on may 23.*

*thanks so much for everything.*

***Dub passed away in February 2020, and we send our condolences to his family and friends. We loved hearing about his experiences on the North Country Trail, and he is deeply missed by us all.***



# North Country Trail Members Participate in Birdathon

By Ellie Williams and Mary Stenberg

“Mary, we should know that song.”

“I know, Ellie. It is a robin or a rose-breasted grosbeak. They sound an awful lot alike!”

“Darn it, Mary, if only we had gone birding last week before the trees leafed out. Would have made seeing the birds a lot easier.”

“You’re right, Ellie, and there wouldn’t have been so many mosquitoes either!”

So went the conversation between two enthusiastic, but only intermediately-skilled birders as they walked along the North Country Trail in the Chequamegon National Forest during the last week of May 2020. They were part of Team North Country Birders, just one of 61 teams taking part in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon. The GWB began on April 15. This year it runs through October 15. The GWB is an educational and fun effort to raise needed funds for bird conservation under the auspices of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation. The WNRF uses the donations to fund grants to study and mitigate loss of bird habitat and bird populations. It is estimated that in the last 50 years, bird populations in the United States have suffered a full one-third loss.

The whole adventure began when Ryan Brady, bird biologist for the Wisconsin DNR, contacted Ellie and asked her if she thought the Chequamegon Chapter of the North Country Trail Association would be interested in forming a team to join the Birdathon. The wheels started to click and Ellie put out a request for Chapter members to join the team. She stressed that this was not a competition, nor a test of birding skills, but rather a chance to connect with and appreciate our feathered friends freshly arriving from hundreds to thousands of miles away. Just as importantly, she felt that showcasing the NCT as a carefully and safely maintained trail through a diversity of habitats would remind everyone what a treasure we have in our midst.

Within a week or two we had eight Chapter members signed up, many of them experienced birders, looking for a chance to get out and roam the varied habitats on the sections of the NCT maintained by the NCTA Chequamegon Chapter. The team members decided to go out solo, or in pairs socially distanced, for one day during the last week of May. The team asked other Chapter members and members of the Facebook pages

“North Country Trail Association in Wisconsin” and “Chequamegon Bay Birding” to donate to the team. Setting a donation goal of \$500, it was explained that one-half of all donations would go to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation for grant purposes and one-half to the Chequamegon Chapter for purposes of maintaining the hiking Trail and safe passage into the natural world.



**Northern Goshawk**

Photo: Ellie Williams



**Hermit thrush nest**

Photo: Ted May

A grand total of 61 bird species was noted by sight and sound by team members! Some of these species were seen in only one section of the Trail while several species were seen or heard in five of the six sections. A remarkable outing by Colleen M. and Tom P. garnered 51 species in just a few hours along a two-mile section beginning at a trailhead just west of Lake Three – a motherlode of activity. Tom M. counted 35 species in the Porcupine Lake Wilderness, five of which were not seen on other sections. Ted M. counted 25 species just east of the Porcupine Lake Wilderness, of which one was unique to the list. Lynn K. and Dennis W. hiked the Lake Three to the Brunswiler River section, netting two additional unique birds to the list. Ellie W. and Mary S. scouted two sections together and added two additional unique birds. We now have information about each of these sections that can be shared and compared in coming years.

Chequamegon Chapter volunteers maintain Trail through two National Forest Wilderness Areas and several State of Wisconsin State Natural Areas. Day hikers, backpackers, exercise buffs and hikers of all ages enjoy safe passage due to their efforts. Donations to Team North Country Birders can be made through October 15 at the Great Wisconsin Birdathon website: [wibirdathon.dojiggy.com](http://wibirdathon.dojiggy.com)



**Common merganser pair, he on the right in bright white, she with reddish headdress at left.**

Photo: Vinnie Collins



## 2020 Awards

Let us recognize those of our friends and members who contribute above and beyond to the growth of our North Country Trail. The Awards Committee is pleased to recognize the following, as nominated by those who work with them.

### FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

#### Denny Caneff



Photo: Eric Hadrath

Our Trail is stronger and better because of the vision and leadership of Denny Caneff. For the past three years he has worked tirelessly as executive director for the **Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA)**. He has forged relationships, grown the Association, and remains completely unafraid of spending time in the mud and deep snow.

Because of his leadership, 300 miles of the North Country Trail are on a sustainable trajectory. Denny leaves SHTA on August 1, but his profound legacy will continue. What he created was the Trail Renewal Program (TRP), a plan for responsible, sustainable management of the trail as a resource, with concern for the environmental impacts that increased use and lagging maintenance have caused. It focuses on developing standards for new construction and maintenance that volunteers, contractors and staff alike must adhere to. It engages volunteers and gives them opportunities for training and involvement with an emphasis on safety, and perhaps most importantly, it creates a process to evaluate the trail, identify and then prioritize projects.

### FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

#### Jack Norland



Photo: Tom Moberg

Jack Norland has been instrumental in jumpstarting efforts to develop new segments of the NCT east of the Sheyenne National Grasslands in North Dakota. As manager of the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Foundation's Ekre Grassland Preserve, Jack has assisted in the development of the NCT and other loop trails that traverse the property. He has assisted Tom Moberg's work with adjacent landowners to secure permission for the NCT. Jack has also helped the NCTA gain a foothold on the NDSU campus by promoting the NCT to students.

### FRIEND OF THE TRAIL

#### Richard Lutz, Buckeye Trail Association



Photo: Eric Albrecht

Although Richard does work part-time for the BTA, it's generally agreed by all that he works far more than he is paid for. Many achievements in recent years would not have happened without him, like obtaining hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of grants to protect miles of trail route, organizing work parties to create new trail and add campsites, and obtaining state lands for improved trail routes. He also works on most of BTA's big annual events, and has been in the thick of mapping improvements.

### SWEEP

#### Mary Berube and John Schrock



Photo: Mary Berube and John Schrock

The 60 miles of Trail tended by the **Brule-St. Croix** Chapter of Wisconsin offered blazing that was suffering from old age, so Mary and John volunteered to reblaze the whole thing and keep it all on a recommended five-year rotation. In addition they are active Chapter members whose other contributions are appreciated.

### SWEEP

#### Rick and Sher Eiler



Photo: the Eilers

**Wampum Chapter's** Eilers have been active members for almost twenty years. Not only does Rick maintain all of the Chapter's machinery, they tend trail near the town where they live, and Sher especially participates in the many Chapter events every year.



#### TRAIL BLAZER

### Gunflint Lodge, Mandy Huskey



Photo: Carly O'Connor

The Gunflint Lodge is the quintessential, historic Northwoods resort facility on Gunflint Lake that goes back to 1927. They offer the public a variety of lodging opportunities, a fabulous restaurant, and a full service Boundary Waters outfitter operation in far northern Minnesota. **Owners John and Mindy**

**Frederickson's** hospitality allows our volunteer work crews to shower after work sessions, stay overnight for free before and after trips into the interior, and even to borrow canoes and other equipment when the U.S. Forest Service doesn't have enough to go around. **Mandy Huskey** runs the operation so is currently most responsible for their hospitality to **Kekekabic** and NCT volunteer work crews.

#### TRAIL BLAZER

### Joe DeMuzio



Photo: Dennis Garrett

The **Wampum** Chapter honors Joe for his contributions as an excavating contractor, because he has brought his machinery and time to bear on worthy projects like the Chapter's accessible trail for the disabled and bank restoration work near their Watts Mill site.

#### TRAIL BLAZER

### REI Foundation



Photo: Kristen Ragain, Mgr, Philanthropy and Community Partnerships. Selfie with her daughter.

While REI stores have contributed to our local projects for years, this year many of them were temporarily closed, so the national Foundation stepped in to contribute \$25,000 to NCTA, not tied to any specific project, to be spent as we needed. We remain grateful for their ongoing support.

#### TRAIL BUILDER

### Richard Ostheimer

Rick has been involved in all of **Wampum Chapter's** miles of new trail construction for years now, offering his experience in both designing and creating new off-road trails. His expertise is especially valued for the new eighty miles in Ohio that the Chapter has adopted. Shelters, bridges, and actual trail have been his jobs, and Rick is noted for sharing what he knows with youth groups especially

#### TRAIL BUILDER

### Byron Guy

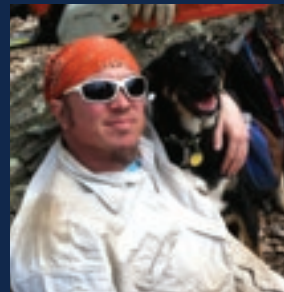


Photo: Shannon Guy

Byron is responsible for a 51 mile section (!! ) of the **Buckeye Trail Association/NCT** in the Hocking Hills and works over 500 hours of trail maintenance annually. He also participates in group projects to build facilities and more new trail, and somehow finds the time and energy to organize several hiking events.

#### TRAIL MAINTAINER

### Bill Courtois



Photo: Kay Kujawa

Bill was a trail adopter for years, then gave up his section to become the Adoption Coordinator for the **Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter's** whole trail, consisting of eighteen sections. He is an aggressive coordinator, communicating with all of his maintainers frequently, visiting their sections, sharing material kits with them. He bought a small RV so he could join the Chapter's Roving Crew on more projects, naming it the Lyme Lounge after his jar of ticks inside.



## AWARDS

### TRAIL MAINTAINER

#### Cal Kangas



Photo: Karl Jenson

Cal was the President of the **Ni-Miikanaake Chapter**, a true leader, positive influence and friend to all who knew him. He spent his time doing what he loved most: maintaining the trail, planning new sections and working to bring different trail user communities and age groups together.

Cal passed away last year and will be missed.

### VANGUARD

#### Dan Vogler



Photo: Provided

Dan is serving his sixteenth year as a County Commissioner in Lawrence County, where the **Wampum Chapter** has been very fortunate to receive over \$11,000 in grants over the past thirteen years and we feel it is because of Dan's efforts. The grant money was used towards trail maintenance, the construction of a kiosk and a hiking shelter,

installation of mile markers and most recently multiple bridges for a new section of Trail.

### TRAIL MAINTAINERS

#### Doug Lawrence and Kathy Rea



Photo: Colleen Chamberlain

The **Wampum Chapter** is the beneficiary of this couple's dedication to their section of trail, a highly trafficked portion where any report of a tree down or some other typical mess brings them out within a day, typically. No surprise, they also support many other Chapter activities, too, and join in with group trail projects.

### BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

#### Cecil Dobbins



Photo: June Dobbins

Cecil died last January, but he and his wife Joanne had been members and significant donors since 1981. His bequest to us was placed in a fund dear to him, the Trail Protection Fund, so his lifelong interest in hiking trails will continue to benefit all of us for years.

### TRAIL MAINTAINER

#### Frank Lynn

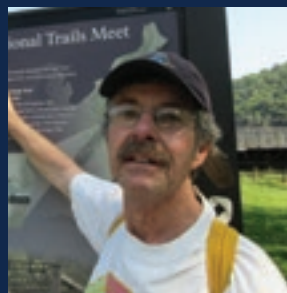


Photo: Jenny Lynn

Frank has been a maintainer for the **Western Michigan Chapter** for his own section since 2009, plus is one of the Chapter's chain sawyers, so responds quickly to such emergencies. They figure he has walked many miles carrying his chain saw, plus he joins in on Chapter work projects also. He is one of their regular mowers, too, for the twice-annual tours of their grassy portions.

### BLUE BLAZES BENEFACTOR

#### Cheryl and Mark Kreindler

Cheryl and Mark are avid hikers who understand that it's important to support the organizations that make trails a reality. As an NCTA Board member, Cheryl led the Association's Executive Director search and helped establish an organizational governance structure. Presently, she has an active role in the strategic planning for the Association's future and is a devoted member of the Fund Development Committee. Cheryl's development involvement is to lead by example, including providing important matching gifts for campaigns and inspiring her fellow Board members to give.



## RISING STAR

### Lynnae Branham



Photo: Nick Potyok

Lynnae Branham was a Northern Michigan University student majoring in Environmental Studies & Sustainability. At the beginning of the fall semester of 2018 she approached our Chapter, **North Country Trail Hikers**, regarding her interest in trying to start a club called NMU Conservation Crew. The basis of the club would be to perform

conservation tasks ... erosion maintenance, trail grooming or building, picking up trash, etc. ... to preserve our beloved local lands but also teach students. Her efforts succeeded, and NMU students have joined our Chapter on several projects. Now that Lynnae has graduated, we remain hopeful that the club will remain active.

## RISING STAR

### Austin Horning

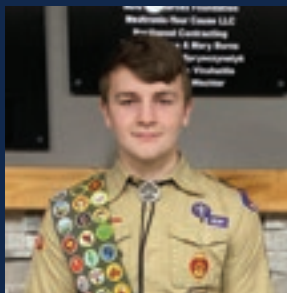


Photo: Beth Horning

Austin Horning completed an Eagle Scout project in 2018-19 to develop a new 4-mile segment of the North Country Trail within Audubon National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. This 4-mile segment is the beginning of a new 15+ mile NCT segment within the Refuge. In 2020, the NCTA hopes to finish the remaining 11+ miles and

continue the development of a volunteer group that started with Austin's project. It is a rare treat to be able to put a hiking trail in a Wildlife Refuge, yet Austin managed to bring this one to fruition within months of his first phone call to the Refuge.

## RISING STAR

### Marisa Hoffarth



Photo: Becky Heise

Marisa has been active with North Dakota's **Sheyenne River Chapter** since she was five years old. Now eleven, she has worked on many Chapter projects like boardwalks and signage, with more than 100 hours contributed! She also won honors for her good display about hiking at a regional competition. Watch this Rising Star in the future!

## TRAIL PROTECTOR

### Jim Bronson



Photo: Mary Rebert

As farm manager of the Michigan State University Kellogg Biological Station, Jim helped the Trail get onto that property, which relieved us of a lot of road walking. Now that he is retired, he has become even more active with the **Chief Noonday Chapter**, especially encouraging private landowners to welcome the trail onto their properties and off the roads. He also participates in the layout of new trail routes.

## TRAIL PROTECTOR

### Dave Newman



Photo: Dave Newman

As VP of Trail Preservation for the **Finger Lakes Trail** Dave has become savvy at creating deals that protect our primary fund for buying or protecting the trail route. While sometimes we spend money from it to buy a critical vulnerable property, in most cases we then sell it to an adjacent state forest. The critical thing in such deals is that we can act with relative speed, whereas the state's processes are rusty and ponderous. So we might not be earning interest on that money for a few years, but it mostly comes back to our fund. He also works a lot with the Finger Lakes Land Trust on mutually advantageous deals.



## AWARDS

### BOOTS ON THE TRAIL

#### Jeff Landon



Photo: Mary Rebert

Jeff leads the longer, faster hikes each month for the **Chief Noonday Chapter**, which includes organizing parking for some very large groups, up to 100 people at times!

### BOOTS ON THE TRAIL

#### Mark Roberts



Photo: Keith Meyers

For the **Peter Wolfe Chapter**, Mark leads many of their hikes, and is always very informative along the way, so participants feel like they get something extra. He also finds new hikes to keep up the variety offered.

### OUTSTANDING PRIVATE LANDOWNER

#### Circle Pines Center, Sasha Ospina



Photo: Circle Pines staff by Bluthe Ruusker

The Center is a longtime private cooperative that offers many groups a place for retreats in a serene wooded setting. They permitted the **Chief Noonday Chapter** to take the Trail off-road to go all the way on their property, plus permitted parking for hikers, and offered camping and water.

### OUTREACH

#### Marianne Duvendack



Photo: Colin Sloan

**NW Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association (NORTA)** has been the beneficiary of Marianne's energy and hard work for over 25 years, but she has really shined in recent years for her efforts to extend the NCT route past the 40 miles of railtrail they originally adopted. Now she has resurrected off-road trail in a state forest, moved another section onto a town's own trails, and is clearly changing the trail map in this neighborhood. The Chapter hopes to open these reroutes in 2021.

### OUTREACH

#### Carol Wright



Photo: Dave Brewer

**Wampum Chapter** participates in local events about 40 out of 52 weeks a year, spreading the word about the Trail and its local group, all due to Carol's efforts organizing volunteers and getting her toe in the door at all these venues, including events in the Chapter's new territory in Ohio. She coordinates activities with local colleges to bring in the next generation, and keeps all of the Chapter's private landowners informed about the Trail they host.

### OUTREACH

#### Mark Heise



Photo: Randall Roberts

Mark is the owner of Yellow Springer Tees, whose shop in Yellow Springs, Ohio, actively promotes both the NCT and the **Buckeye Trail Association** within his store, which is frequented by hikers. Mark also serves on several BTA committees involved with promotion, and has been active volunteering for several local hiking events.



#### LEADERSHIP

### Beth Keloneva



Photo: Sarah Collier

Beth's leadership has been exercised to the benefit of the **Western Michigan Chapter**, where she began by joining the board at a time when the whole structure of the Chapter's administration was changing. During her time as President of the Board she managed to continue her work on their Facebook page, while participating in major local events like the annual White Cloud Trail Town Celebration and serving on the committee which debated the fate of the White Cloud Schoolhouse, which the Chapter used to take care of.

#### LEADERSHIP

### Shari Sanderson



Photo: Nancy Kota

Shari is one of those people who becomes President of her Chapter (**Harbor Springs**) almost immediately, and then leads by example to enthruse numbers of people to join, volunteer, adopt trail segments, and go on hikes. A half-dozen years ago Chapter hikes may have had 3 to 6 people, whereas Shari's endless barrage of public relations in the area has made hikes of 25 or 30 a regular occurrence. Currently she is trying to get permission for some reroutes of the trail and construction of a parking area, and nobody is betting against her persistence.

#### LEADERSHIP

### Brian Hager



Photo: Tracy Hager

The **Wampum Chapter** has benefitted from Brian's apparently limitless ambitions. He created a podcast about the NCT and his Chapter, has rustled up local grants to benefit Wampum Trail projects, and organized a 5K race in Darlington, which was so successful that he's going to add two more in nearby towns. He is also locally well-known for appearing as Bigfoot during several Trail events.

#### COMMUNICATOR

### Tina Harkins

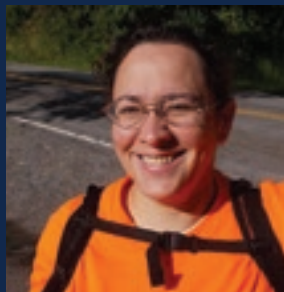


Photo: Dave Brewer

**Wampum** also benefits from Tina's steady stream of information and event listings on three social media outlets and in local newspapers. She also keeps their two Pennsylvania Counties' Visitor Bureaus up to date and well-supplied with materials.

#### COMMUNICATOR

### Mary Brinks

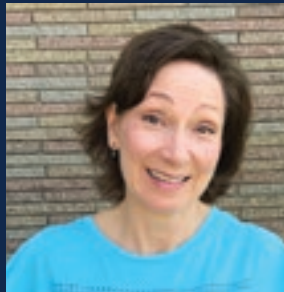


Photo: Mary Rebert

The attendance at hikes and **Chief Noonday Chapter** meetings has nearly doubled since Mary volunteered to handle our communications with the world. She takes advantage of nearly 30 free press opportunities in the area and keeps our Facebook page updated with upcoming events and programs expected at meetings, a major increase in our outreach.

#### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

### Mark VanHornweder



Photo: Rachel VanHornweder

While Mark's home territory on the NCT is the **Brule-St. Croix Chapter**, he has also worked extensively for the Superior Hiking Trail, principally designing the section between Two Harbors and Duluth, and he still tends a section of trail in Minnesota. Mark has participated in many Rovers Crew projects back in Wisconsin, where he is especially valued for his good sense at trail location. Now he is President of the BSC Chapter and has a seat on the national NCTA Board, where he is noted for his attention to detail and good suggestions.



## AWARDS

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

#### Joe Hardisky



Photo: Dave Brewer

While Joe has long been a member of the **Wampum Chapter** appreciated for his constant trail work on both maintenance and creating new off-road trails, he has also participated on projects for all four Pennsylvania NCT Chapters. In fact, his good work is so well-known that some local parks rely on him to create solutions and gather volunteers to fix places that are beyond the park's abilities, especially in the challenging gorge at McConnell's Mills State Park. Whenever he is offered the help from an outside group, for instance, the Student Conservation Association Crew, he always has ready in his mind a good project to make use of the extra hands. He is always working beside the other volunteers, too, creating a productive situation and teaching others.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

#### Phil Anderson



Photo: Bill Menke

Phil has served as the **Brule-St. Croix Chapter** Trail Maintenance Coordinator for ten years, while tending his own section of trail and participating regularly on the Wisconsin Roving Trail Crew to build major projects all across the state. So it was his job to convey quality standards to all two dozen of his trail caretakers, train new people, and keep them equipped with tools and mowers from two tool trailers. His capabilities have been especially helpful when any crew needed to build structures like either truss or beam bridges, and he invented a good plan for erecting trailhead kiosks. He has been personally attentive to the Chapter's trail signage.



Photo: Mick Hawkins

### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

#### Lorana Jinkerson

Lorana Jinkerson is one of the most dedicated volunteers, leaders and donors NCTA has ever seen.

Consider a too-short list of her contributions: she has served on the NCTA Board, has chaired two committees that require a lot of work, and has done so with great attention to organization and gentle leadership (NCTA Awards, North Star Advisory), and even wrote a children's book about the Trail. She then mailed the book, *Nettie Does the NCT*, to every local library near the Trail in each state, at her own expense! Clearly, promoting the Trail is one her higher priorities. She goes out of her way to house, host, and feed long distance hikers (or anyone visiting Marquette including staff and chapter members and leaders from other states), and is the primary organizer for her Chapter, **North Country Trail Hikers**. Lorana is pretty much beloved to many, many members.

This year, Lorana became the first donor to reach a major milestone by giving more than \$100,000 to the Association over her years of membership. This is truly remarkable support.





Photo: Mary Moberg

#### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Tom Moberg

Tom has long exercised firm and efficient leadership, especially visible when he was President of the NCTA Board of Directors for three years, and sat on that Board for nine. Now in his “retirement,” he is doing a ton of valuable service for the **Dakota Prairie Chapter**, where his efforts as Trail Development Coordinator involve work with private landowners, route planning, and actual new trail building off-road. Part of his work is to recruit and organize volunteers, especially for local projects building new trail, and to coordinate the Chapter’s efforts with agency partners both in-state and nationally. As a consummate “grown-up” Tom is perfect for such roles.

He and his wife Mary have also been frequent major donors to the NCTA.



Photo: Border Route Trail Association

#### THOMAS L. GILBERT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Ed Solstad

Ed and many of the other volunteers who work on the **Border Route Trail** live in the Twin Cities, a mere 250-mile one-way trip to their Trail. Also, some portions of the Trail can be reached only by means of canoe trips so the several disasters that continually visit the area force too few people to clean up after windstorms and fires, to keep clear a trail that is constantly bursting with new regrowth yet doesn’t get enough hiking to keep a path visible. Ed has been actively working on this challenging trail since 1971! He also promotes the trail by hosting displays at several outdoor programs annually, and was active for years promoting the Arrowhead Reroute legislation which enables the Border Route to become official NCT. He is also active working with the land managers of the Superior National Forest.



## North Country Trail Association

229 East Main Street  
Lowell, Michigan 49331

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



**Alizabeth Zink on the Trail at Pictured Rocks. It's probably against a rule somewhere to feature the same child on our cover two issues in a row, but this was too good to pass up.**

Photo: Allison Zink



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.