

STEPPING STONE

Newsletter of the Bennington Section of the Green Mountain Club

CLUB OFFICERS

President: Reed Goossen

Vice President: Tim Marr

Secretary & Director: Martha Stitelman

Treasurer & Membership: Bill Lyons

Trails & Shelters: Matt Vezina

Website & Meetup: Ann and Billy Martin

Newsletter: Hal March, Lorna Cheriton, Ann Martin



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section President: 1-2

Nature Notes: 2-3

Unlikely Thru-Hiker: 3-4

Catskill Mountains: 4-6

Trail Fungi: pages 6-7

Asian Jumping Worms: 7-8

Upcoming Events: 8-9

CHANGE OF SEASONS

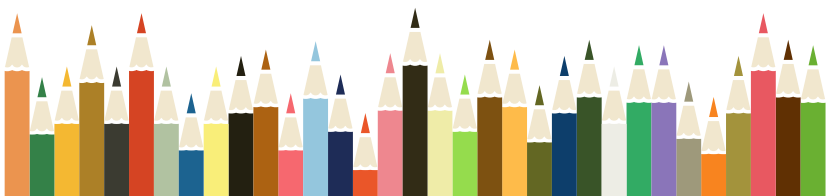
We look back with fondness of long summer days, vegetables from the garden, and vibrant forest greens. Now our senses shift to crisp cool days, cold apple cider, and the golds and reds of Autumn. Before we know it, skis and snowshoes will make an appearance as we appreciate each of our Vermont seasons.

Fall Get-together Potluck or Bring Your Own Bag Lunch

October 9, Saturday – 12 noon to 2pm Upper Pavilion at Willow Park. RSVP on Meetup please, or contact Reed Goossen, or Lorna Cheriton 802-447-1383.

Message from the Section President - Reed Goossen, Fall 2021

As I write this (September 23), the COVID situation is in a state of flux. I am sure we all hope to be able to move about freely, without the need for restrictions, but that remains to be seen. Currently, we are able to hold outdoor events with few restrictions. Perhaps the most significant restriction is for people to avoid carpooling when possible. When hiking with a group it is not required to be masked as long as people are maintaining social distancing. Trip leaders have the option



of making more restrictions, but in general, if you don't feel comfortable on an outing because there may be someone who is not vaccinated, please skip that outing. We are not requiring people to be vaccinated in order to participate. I would ask that all trip leaders have participants sign a paper with their contact information, either email or phone, for the purposes of contact tracing if it turns out to be needed. Since the earlier restrictions were reduced we have held two outings this summer, a paddling trip to Somerset Reservoir and a hike to the summit of Stratton Mountain, and there have been informal outings with members of our Bennington section fairly frequently. Ann and Billy Martin and I have GMC business cards that leaders can pass out to people on outings that have contact information for our section.

This summer the main club organized airlifts of building materials for a number of projects in the southern Vermont area: Stratton Pond, and the Kid Gore, Nauheim, and Seth Warner shelters. The Seth Warner shelter is slated to be replaced with the new shelter about 2 ½ miles further north. Within our section's purview, the supplies are for replacement of the privy at the Melville Nauheim shelter.

One issue over relocating the Seth Warner shelter is what to name the new shelter. Since there are no immediate plans to close the tenting area at Seth Warner, probably the new shelter will need a different name. If you have any suggestions, please send them to Keegan Tierney or Mike DeBonis at the main club.

At my Zoom meeting today with other section presidents it was pointed out that the main club is working on an initiative promoting DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Please look for information on that in upcoming Long Trail News issues.

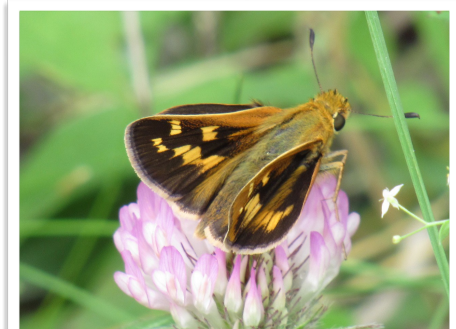
Nature Notes: A Late Summer Visitor

By *Terri Armata*



The butterfly season is winding down, with fewer seen every day. Monarchs are migrating south in good numbers; Cabbage Whites and Clouded Sulphurs are continuing their life cycle, producing new broods until the cold shuts them down. Woodland butterflies such as Mourning Cloaks, Eastern Commas and Milbert's Tortoiseshells have awakened from their August period of inactivity and can be found on dirt roads sipping nutrients from the soil. They will overwinter as adults in woodpiles, under house eaves, in tree holes and underneath bark until spring.

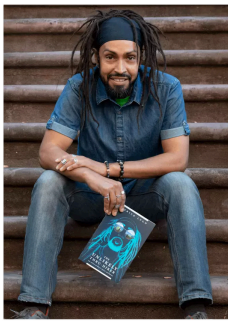
One species of butterfly that has just emerged to end summer, Leonard's Skipper (*Hesperia leonardus*), is not often seen, and I had the good fortune to have an encounter with one. On August 24th, I was walking a dirt road in Shaftsbury, when a flicker of wings stopped me. Perched on a dandelion leaf was small butterfly. A brand spanking new Leonard's Skipper! Its brown base color was deep and rich. The yellow spot band on its ventral side glowed. Holding my breath, I got out my camera and, praying for it to not fly off, (they are hard to photograph as they will disappear in an instant when they detect motion), I was able to click off a few pictures. It then flew to a purple clover flower (they prefer to nectar on pink or lilac-colored flowers) and began to sip nectar. It opened its wings and revealed the striking topside pattern of a female. These are grass skippers, emerging in late August or early September in our area. Various grasses such as Little Bluestem, Oat Grass or



Switchgrass are the caterpillar's host plants. She will scatter the eggs near the grasses; the eggs will hatch, and the tiny instar caterpillars will overwinter. Next August they awaken and continue their life cycle. I wished this female success in finding a mate and went on my way delighted and grateful.

The Unlikely Thru-Hiker

By Ann Martin

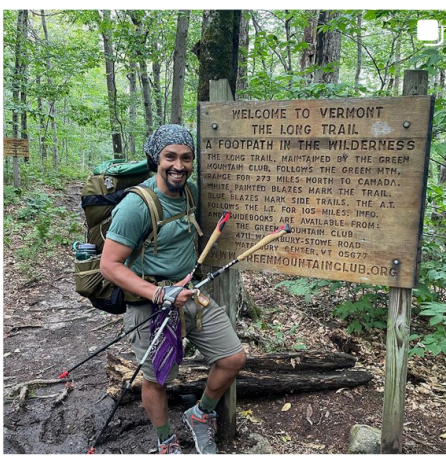
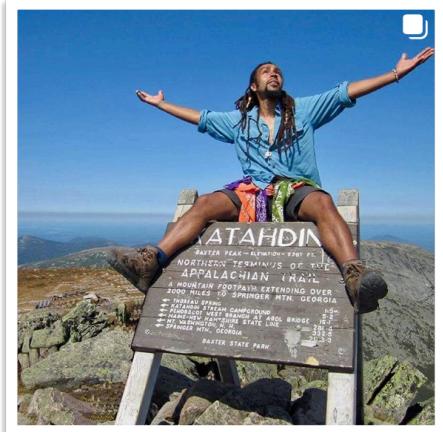


Wouldn't it be cool to read a story about a fastidious New Yorker city dweller who had never camped or hiked at all, but decided on a whim to walk the Appalachian Trail? Not just decided to do it, but actually thru-hiked the entire trail. Meet Derick Lugo! Derick fell in love with hiking, the outdoors, and the people he met along the trail. Since his 2012 thru-hike, he has become an author, a motivational speaker, and an advocate for encouraging people of all colors, fitness levels, experience, and backgrounds to get outdoors and experience nature.

Earlier this year, after giving a very entertaining talk for the GMC, they worked together, and the GMC arranged for him to return to Vermont to hike our Long Trail, which runs 272 miles from the Massachusetts/Vermont border to Canada.

Part of the trail coincides with the Appalachian Trail from the southern border of Vermont up to Route 4 near Killington, where the AT veers off to the east heading for New Hampshire while the LT continues north. The plan was for Derick to use social media to keep his thousands of followers updated in real time about his travels along the trail.

We had the pleasure of hosting Derick on Monday, September 13th. At dinner in our home, along with three neighbors, he thoroughly entertained us all with tales of his exploits along the Appalachian Trail. On Tuesday morning four of us started Derick on his journey by hiking with him up the Chestnut Trail in Williamstown, to the Class of 98 Trail, to the AT, and up to the Vermont border.



There, a sign welcomes people to the oldest long-distance footpath in the US. Wednesday saw Derick hiking all day when a strong afternoon thunderstorm rolled over the mountain, drenching everyone in its path. After a very wet and slippery walk down the stones on Harmon Hill, he met us at the trailhead on Route 9 east of Bennington to replace what he thought was a leaky water bottle. There, we convinced him to dry out at our house and continue in the morning.

We all know how the best laid plans can change in a minute! Derick became quite ill that night and was unable to continue his hike the next day. Better to be sick in a warm bed in town than in a shelter on the trail! So, remember the leaky water bottle? Actually, it was a missing washer from his water filter that made it appear that the bottle was leaking and also opened up the possibility of contaminated water. On Wednesday night the ER doctor prescribed a course of antibiotics. Derick didn't react well to the antibiotics and couldn't get out on the trail as expected.

After much dialog with the GMC, they decided that the long delay would put the hike late for the season and not a good idea in Derick's weakened condition. Many of the people Derick hoped to connect with - caretakers, hikers, hostel owners, trail crews - would be winding down for the season and his trip might not be as rich as anticipated. The GMC reminds us that when hiking it's important to listen to your body, and not doing so puts the hiker at risk as well as emergency resources if they are needed. So, Derick is disappointed, yes, but happy with the new friends that he made in Vermont, and looking forward to returning next year.

He won't be sitting idle until next year, so you can keep up with his adventures on his many social media outlets.

Keep up with Derick

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/derick.lugo> and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dericklugo/>

Read Derick's book "The Unlikely Thru-Hiker" about his Appalachian Trail hike available at the Bennington Bookshop or on Derick's website <https://dericklugo.com/>

Podcast: "Unlikely Stories" hosted by Derick Lugo and Carly Meree wherever you get your podcasts (Apple Podcasts) <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/unlikely-stories-podcast/id1582812426>

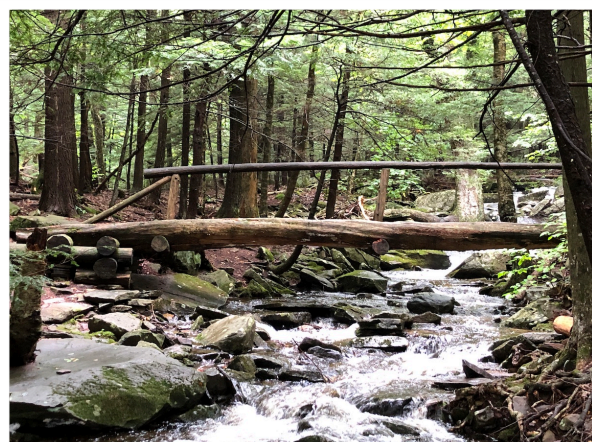
Listen to Derick's talk for the GMC: "Hiking Stories with Derick Lugo" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpGz-F8u57U>

Read an interview with Derick and the GMC at <https://www.greenmountainclub.org/derick-lugo-to-postpone-long-trail-thru-hike/>

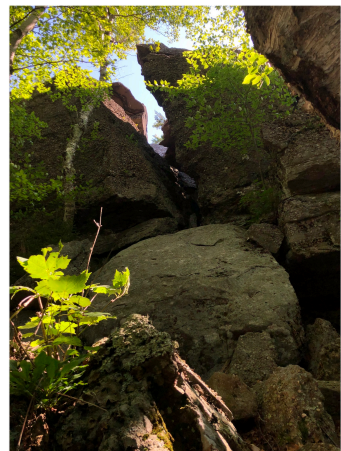
Indian Summer Camping and Hiking in the Catskill Mountains

By Lorna Cheriton

The Catskill Mountains of New York State, where Hamilton Topping worked for two decades as a forest ranger, recently drew him to re-visit the sites he had known and protected during his career. He proposed a trip to neighbors Ann, Billy, Lin and myself, who all joined him planning a hiking and camping trip for September 7-10. We drove the 2 ½ hours to a state



campground at North South Lake (a single body of water made when a man-made dam raised the water level and united two smaller lakes). That afternoon we made a short hike to view the famous Kaaterskill Falls which drop 260 feet in two successive plunges. Hamilton recounted how, in the 1970s, many "hippies," who had fled cities for immersion in nature, would sit on the expansive flat stones at the top of the falls and sometimes leap over the water stream to rocks on the far side. Those who slipped on the often-slick rocks did not survive the resulting plunge; Hamilton, with his colleagues, carried out numerous bodies. With the spectacular falls attracting



more and more visitors over the years, in 2021 Hamilton noted huge changes made to control crowds and keep people safe. Strong fences and bright yellow warning signs urge visitors to stay on the wide, well-maintained trails leading to viewing platforms. The formerly skimpy and slippery trail descending steeply from near the top of the falls to the highway far below has been replaced by stone steps and clearly marked viewpoints with railings and sternly worded warning signs.

Supper that evening was mac and cheese that Hamilton and Lorna had made at home, followed by pear cake for dessert. Lin brought home-made hummus and a kale salad that we ate for various meals. The following day, having researched on-line alternatives to standard camping fare, Ann made a delicious and nourishing

breakfast of onions, potatoes, colorful peppers, and eggs. That fueled us for Hamilton's taking us to hike the Escarpment Trail. After a steep climb, we hiked along the edge of dramatic cliffs where the rock plunged straight down to the valley far below and its pale ribbon of the Hudson River. At viewpoints, Lin and Lorna lay on the rock looking over the edge, avoiding standing



close to the cliff's edge.

Descending through the beautiful and distinctive forest of birch, mature hemlock, and the unusual, very long-needled pitch pines that are common on the escarpment but not frequently seen anywhere else, we encountered a myriad of smaller but beautiful waterfalls, especially in a valley called Mary's Glen.



That evening we enjoyed a delicious chili that Ann had made at home before the trip and that included the meatless "Impossible" ground beef. We then retreated to the Martins' cozy Aliner trailer

where we were treated to peach crisp dessert as the forecast rain began to fall. After Hamilton and Lorna settled in their tent, the Martins in their trailer and Lin in the jeep, a thunder and lightning storm hurled rain that drummed at high decibel levels on the trailer, jeep and tent roofs and produced running streams of water flowing across our campground. In the morning, we all agreed to forego sitting at the wet picnic table to eat oatmeal. Instead, we drove to town and were served omelets, yoghurt parfaits and oatmeal with fresh blueberries and walnuts. With trees dripping and mud underfoot, Hamilton drove us to places that had been his responsibility during his ranger career and told us about his work: enforcing regulations where camping was not permitted, requiring campers to pick up trash or tone down their noise, and searching for lost people such as Alzheimer's patients who wandered away or a seven-year-old boy whom they found after the child survived four days in the woods.



Our hikes after the rain dealt with increased mud and required rock hopping. Many small waterfalls became torrents. We rock-hopped over soggy ground and climbed to the escarpment once again to see the panoramic view from North Point. Hamilton dropped Lorna at a trail leading to the top of Kaaterskill Falls, and she had the treat of hiking the trail to the bottom and seeing, at various viewpoints, the enlarged falls plunge in torrents unusual for so late in the year.

Fabulous Fungi

Photos by Lorna Cberiton

As you are walking in the woods, keep your eyes out for beauties like these. The fungi shown here were seen on one hike in late September on the Chestnut Trail, Class of 98 Trail and the AT near Williamstown.





Beware the Asian Jumping Worms

By Hal March

There is a new (at least to this area) invasive that is moving into the northeast. Sometimes called snake worms, or crazy worms, these things look pretty much like our ordinary European earthworms, but they usually look fatter, darker and have a noticeable pale band around their bodies. When uncovered or disturbed the jumping worms squirm and thrash, thus the name(s). These worms devour protective forest leaf litter, change the soil chemistry and displace beneficial earthworms.

Unusual small piles of dirt is a sign that the jumping worms have arrived in your lawn. They showed up in our front lawn about 3 years ago, probably from flowers that we bought and planted. Now these worms have spread over the whole lawn, turning it into a quagmire. They also moved into the garden, munching roots, weakening the plants.

So when you notice those little piles of dirt on your property, immediately dig up the top layer of dirt around the holes and you should see these worms going crazy. Grab the worms before they dive down into the dirt and leave them in an empty pail until they're no longer crazy. Since the jumping worms seem to dislike heat, covering the ground around garden plants with clear plastic may keep them away.



Jumping worm (*Amyntas agrestis*)

- Thrash and twitch
- Shiny, slightly iridescent, and grey-brown
- Milky-white ring (clitellum)
- Mostly dry

Photo credit: Purdue Plant and Pest Diagnostic Laboratory



Common earthworm (*Lumbricus terrestris*)

- Wiggle gently
- Dull red-brown
- Red-ish ring (clitellum)
- Slimy

Photo credit: Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

Schedule: Fall 2021 - Winter 2021

Please check our Meetup Site for further information or updates to the following events: <https://www.meetup.com/benningtongmc/>

VT Regular Deer Hunting Season November 13-November 28; MA Shotgun Season November 29-December 11

October 4, Monday - Bike the Somerset Road to enjoy fall foliage. RSVP on Meetup or contact Harda Bradford 802-447-7065 or sbwhips4@sovernet by 6pm Saturday October 2, as bike transport must be arranged. Meet at Bennington Recreation Center at 10am.

October 9, Saturday – Fall Get-together Potluck or Bring Your Own Bag Lunch – 12 noon to 2pm Upper Pavilion at Willow Park. RSVP on Meetup please, or contact Reed Goossen, or Lorna Cheriton 802-447-1383.

October 16, Saturday - Tibbitts State Forest Loop 4.2 miles; 810 ft elevation gain. Lovely loop trail through the forest near Hoosick Falls, good mixtures of pines and hardwoods along with small water streams. About 3-4 hours including rest stops and lunch. On the easy side of Moderate but requires a degree of stamina, some previous experience desirable. RSVP on Meetup. Limited to 8 participants plus the 2 leaders. Check the Meetup site the night before the hike for last minute updates or changes, particularly if the weather is questionable. Bring layers of clothing, water, lunch, snacks, sturdy hiking shoes, possible rain gear. Meet at 9:30 at the Bennington Rec Center or contact leader if you are meeting at the trailhead (there are 2 trailheads, make sure you are at the right one.)

October 19, Tuesday - Bike the River Road beside the Battenkill River and Route 313 west of Arlington. RSVP on Meetup or contact Harda Bradford 802-447-7065 or sbwhips4@sovernet by 6pm Sunday October 17, as bike transport must be arranged. Meet at Bennington Recreation Center at 10am.

October 23, Saturday - Hike Pine Valley to Little Pond Loop A 5.5-mile loop, from Pine Valley parking lot in Woodford, and hiking on a snowmobile trail to Little Pond, a remote wilderness pond in the GM National Forest, where we will have lunch, then hike out on the Little Pond forest road. This easy-paced hike, on snowmobile trails and forest roads, features about 400 feet elevation gain, active beaver ponds, and a beautiful remote wilderness pond. Wear sturdy hiking shoes; gators are helpful. Some areas may be muddy. RSVP on Meetup or call/text leader Tim Marr at 518-257-0829 by Friday evening. Meet at the Bennington Rec Center at 11am and return by 4pm.

October 31, Sunday - Prospect Mountain, Woodford Easy-paced hike up Prospect Mountain, Woodford, via the beautiful, remote Mountain Trail, which is a steady climb with a 600-foot elevation gain. Some nice views from the ski trails at the summit of 2767 feet. Hike down the access road, for a total distance of about 3 miles. Bring Trick or Treat candy to be shared at the summit. RSVP via meetup or call/text leader Tim Marr at 518-257-0829. Meet at Bennington Rec Center at 1pm. Back to Bennington by 4pm, in plenty of time for trick or treaters.

November 6, Saturday - Dome Trail to Broadbrook Trail Loop. Approx. 6 miles; 1696 ft elevation gain. Nice hike along some old roads and some trails up into the pines. Great climb on large rock formations at the top; however, the view has been obstructed by trees. About 5 hours, including rest stops and stop for lunch. On the more difficult side of Moderate - requires a degree of stamina, some previous experience desirable. Limited to 8 participants plus the 2 leaders. RSVP on Meetup. Check the Meetup site the night before the hike for last minute updates or changes, particularly if the weather is questionable. Meet at 9am at the Bennington Rec Center or contact leader if you are meeting at the trailhead. Bring layers of clothing, water, lunch, snacks, sturdy hiking shoes, hiking poles if desired, possible rain gear.

November 11, Thursday - Bicycle the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail About 20 miles round trip, all level. Bring snack and water. Purchase lunch at café at turn-around point. Riding time about 2 1/2 hours + driving time to Adams. Postponed if rain. RSVP on Meetup or contact Harda Bradford 802-447-7065 or sbwhips4@sovernet by 6PM Tuesday, November 9 as bike transport must be organized. Meet at 10am at the Bennington Recreation Center.

December 26, Sunday - Hike, ski or skate at Woodford State Park RSVP on Meetup. Leaders: Lorna and Hamilton. Meet at 1pm at the Bennington Rec Center.

January 1, 2022, Saturday - Ski or snowshoe or hike Bolles brook trail (A traditional GMC Benn New Year's Day outing) Start the New Year with an energizing outing, about 2-hour out-and-back trip along the roaring Bolles Brook in the Glastenbury wilderness. All are welcome, whatever your pace. We will stay together for a while, then some will go faster or farther. RSVP on Meetup. Leaders: Lorna and Hamilton. Meet at 1pm at the Bennington Rec Center.

SKIING CROSS COUNTRY - Given the unpredictable weather and snowfall, ski trips led by Marjorie March and others will be posted "Pop-up" style on the website and/or Meetup. If we get as much snow this winter as we had rain this summer, we will have lots of skiing once we shovel out our driveways. On the other hand, if the atmosphere has sent its precipitation for the year already, we will have to hike instead!



