

Finger Lakes Trail NEWS

Fall 2021



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- * Wild Turkey in our Woods
- * Letchworth Alley Cats
- * Bunny Kramer's Gift to the FLT



FINGER LAKES TRAIL CONFERENCE

Mission Statement

The mission of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference is to build, protect, enhance, and promote a continuous footpath across New York State for the enjoyment and health of residents and visitors. Forever!



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Fall 2021

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About the Cover:

The Kish-a-wa creamery is on NY 408 just east of Nunda, with a bunch of acrylic life-sized cows in the yard. Naturally this became a favorite place for refreshment after trail work for the Letchworth Alley Cat Crew. Behind this mountain of ice cream is Mike Schlicht, our Director of Crews and Construction, and this cone is size MEDIUM!! Picture by Ann Bayley.

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President's Message

Pat Monahan



Earlier this summer, I did something I haven't done in a very long time. After driving for a couple of hours, I joined 100 plus hiking enthusiasts to begin their journey across Cortland County as part of the annual FLT County Hike Series. I remember very clearly starting to drive at daybreak and arriving at a road lined with cars and people crowded near the start catching up with old friends and welcoming newcomers. It was nice to reconnect with people I hadn't seen in at least a year. It helped me to recenter part of my life as we transition to a new normal. Many thanks to our 2021 County Hike Series Coordinator, Sigi Schwinge, and to Peg Fuller, Deb Nero, and a whole crew of hike leaders for a great walk in the woods.

Let me comment on a few points for your consideration as we go into the fall season and prepare for 2022.

- Our Annual Membership Meeting will be held during our Fall Weekend Festival at Greek Peek Mountain Resort on September 18, 2021. Members will vote on a new slate of officers including Ann Bayley (returning), Christine DeGolyer, Tim Holahan, Terry Meacham (returning) and Lisette Smith as well as a bylaws change regarding rolling memberships. We are excited to hold this meeting in-person, but members will receive a proxy form via USPS and email allowing you to cast your vote on these important matters in absentia.
- Thank you for the many years of service from Rich Breslin and Scott Brooks, who ended their Board of Managers terms this fall.
- The Board will hold its annual retreat on December 3-5, 2021, at the Letchworth State Park Conference Center. This is the Board's opportunity to discuss issues that require more time than is available at a regular Board meeting. The topics will include 2022 budget planning, strategic plan/financial sustainability, leadership model and others to be determined. I will report on the outcomes of the retreat in a future column.
- More people are out using the trail than ever before. Please always be mindful of hunting closures and remember that we are guests on private property. You can get trail closure information by reviewing the maps, checking current trail conditions on our website, and most importantly, by observing the signs on the trail. Special note: the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has extended the hunting season across



Peg Fuller

New York State. Be responsible. Check for trail closures before you hike especially during hunting season.

- Volunteers are essential to the FLTC. There are many tasks that need to be done and we could use your help. We are currently seeking Board members and a Vice President of Trail Quality in leadership roles. For more information, please email volunteer@fingerlakestrail.org.

As the forest starts to show all of its beauty and splendor with its fall colors, find a friend, head out to the forest and **“Go take a hike!!”** 🍁

Join the FLT Googlegroup E-Mail List

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference's e-mail list is a discussion group hosted by Googlegroups.com. Its purpose is to allow the subscribers (approximately 850 people) to communicate information to each other pertaining to FLT hikes and other FLT activities, and to also allow subscribers to post general hiking-camping-backpacking and/or FLT-related questions that can be answered by any of the other participants.

The co-moderators who oversee the use of this electronic mailing list and offer help with questions are: Larry Blumberg (lblumberg@stny.rr.com) and Scott Geiger, (scott.geiger@gmail.com).

To join the group, send a note to lblumberg@stny.rr.com requesting that you be added to the FLT HIKING Googlegroup. If you have any problems or questions, contact one of the co-moderators.

Bullthistle Trail Fixer-Upper

Photos by Peg Fuller



The Bullthistle Hiking Club put in about 65 feet of puncheon on July 29th in the Otselic State Forest. There is a consistently wet area that we finally fixed. We had ten volunteers come out to do the work. Tom Bryden is our Club Trail Coordinator and organized the workday. The rest of the workers were Larry Cheseboro, Tom Larkin, Julie Simonec, John Nesbitt, Warren Johnsen, Pete and Colleen Stapleton, Peg and Mike Fuller. The workday included the best sandwiches in Chenango County from the South Otselic General Store, where the owner enjoys talking to the FLT hikers. 🍁



They are nailing down strips of roof shingling, in order to cut down on slippery boards when wet.



Thank You

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Donor of land boundary research and property information
for the Finger Lakes Trail and the North Country National
Scenic Trail

Executive Director Report

Deb Nero



I have been working part-time as Executive Director for the FLTC for two months now and I'm discovering that despite my involvement with the Board of Managers and as Executive VP, that there is quite a bit I don't know. This organization is complex and the learning curve is pretty steep sometimes. I often think how much I would rather be hiking the nice steep hills of the Finger Lakes Trail in the Catskills... But this position is as rewarding as a long tough day on the trail, and I'm enjoying it immensely.

Current projects include beginning the process of creating the 2022 budget to continue the strong financial position of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. We're also wrapping up the development phase of the ongoing database project. Standard commercially available software programs didn't work because we have the two different but overlapping parts of the organization, both the trail volunteer stuff and the membership and fundraising aspects. Each part has its own specific subset of information, sometimes

overlapping and sometimes not. No commercially available software that we could find covered everything.

The new database is custom built, and when finished will be a powerful tool to manage landowner relations and volunteer coordination, and also to drive increases in membership and giving. With it, we will improve our oversight of the trail, including supporting our trail sponsors and maintainers, Regional Trail Coordinators, and landowners, and communications with you, our members.

I hope you are enjoying being outdoors during the summer and fall seasons! 🍁

Contact: Deb Nero
fltcexecdir@fingerlakestrail.org

New Campsite on Map M8

Peter Wybron



There is a dearth of campsites from Map M9 through M8, so I started looking over tax maps of the area, looking for a spot that hikers could use for overnight camping. There is a large area between Hesse Lean-to and Bossard's cabin and now we have a hunting closure at Bossard's. I was going to talk to the DEC about Rattlesnake Hill Wildlife Management Area across the valley from Swain ski slopes, but knew that would be an uphill battle and probably would never happen. Looking at the maps I found a couple of parcels that were owned by Allegany County, just southeast of the WMA. They were all forest land, so I contacted the County. I met with the County Forester to see if they allow camping on their forest property and they do. So I scouted the properties and found this site. High, dry, level and next to a man made spring-fed pond. The County approved the site. They are happy to have hikers use the property.

I should add that Michele McCall and Clyde Morrison helped clear the site and spur trail, and built a stone fire ring. A blue-blazed trail leads off England Hill Rd., across from Swain. What's next? The Forester has also approved the installation of a lean-to. So in 2022 there will probably be an Alley Cat to build a lean-to on this site.

Also, by working with the DEC in Rattlesnake Hill WMA I now have a gate key so I can get into the WMA for trail maintenance. This will also give me a better route to the tent site/lean-to. I won't have to climb England Hill Road with materials. England Hill is so steep that I've nearly fallen down walking it, just from slipping on sliding little rocks.

Sometimes you just get lucky. All you have to do is ask! 🍁



Peter Wybron

A small sign and blue blazes lead to the campsite off England Hill Rd., Map M8 across from Swain.

Five Point Junction

Alex Gonzalez



Alex would like to express his gratitude to Jo Taylor for her willingness to create the mini-map below and to Lisa Barrett for sending her photograph of the trail sign. To obtain the full English Loop Trail map, go to the Finger Lakes Trail web page, find the interactive map, click on M19, and several loop maps will pop up; click on EL. Thanks also should go to Greg Farnham, who, in his former role as Director of Mapping, created map EL with Jo Taylor's assistance, despite Alex's numerous and admittedly very picky revisions.

I have several times written about what I call “the romance of trail junctions,” that they fire up the human imagination and entice hikers to explore places unknown to them. And junctions can be a lot of fun when hikers find their way to a known spot but have come to that spot from a different direction.

Although it surprises me, some hikers instead find junctions a source of confusion and anxiety. For example, one hiker posted on *AllTrails* that “there are so many intersecting trails it gets super confusing.” Several others also used the word “confusing.” I suspect that hikers like these are largely accustomed to out-and-back hikes with no junctions, such as a good many day hikes are on the main FLT; junctions require hikers to use basic navigational skills that clearly not all hikers have.

However, for other hikers junctions are a source of pleasure, as posts on *AllTrails* also reveal. One hiker calls the junctions collectively a “nifty place—all kinds of colorful trail markers and fun side trails.” Another exclaims, “All kinds of neat little short loops, with a variety of vegetation and terrain and scenery.” A third declares, “We will definitely come back to explore more loops!” It’s always satisfying or even pleasurable for hikers to know exactly where they are on a trail, and junctions confirm hikers’ precise locations, which helps them also to make decisions about what routes to take. That is, junctions provide options. On the map for the English Loop Trail (map code: EL), for example, hikers will find several loops and trail junctions; those junctions allow for a range of hikes that can vary from one outing to the next. Short loops are also great for snowshoeing, the snow and shorter winter days necessitating the ratcheting back of summer hike lengths. Short loops also attract local residents, creating in many of them a growing interest in hiking, and parents will readily recognize the utility of quick exits without the necessity of mechanically retracing their steps; the kids may short-circuit the



planned hike, but the parents at least get to enjoy a different route back.

The trails on map EL are perfectly suited not only for hikes with children, but also for hikes involving hikers who are new to the sport or are returning to the sport after years off or, even more importantly, for hikers who are rehabbing an injury. That is, the several junctions allow for hikers to add on more mileage if they’re doing better than they anticipated or reduce their mileage if they want to quit early for the day, and in each instance, they do not have to retrace their steps to finish their hikes. It’s also a great place to build up stamina after an injury-related hiatus from hiking, if they hike a little further each time they visit. Almost all grades tend to be gentle, generally with switchbacks to ease climbs.

What I think most gets to the heart of the matter in general is that most of us find it innately a pleasure to arrive

at a three-way or four-way junction and wonder—imagine—where the other paths lead. Those of us who enjoy trail junctions are explorers at heart, as the third positive comment posted on *AllTrails*, above, would also suggest.

Such hiking explorers will probably find Five Point Junction quite a bit of fun. To my knowledge, it is the only spot in the entire FLT system from which five different marked paths emanate, like spokes on a wheel. The red-blazed English Loop enters and exits, as does the orange-blazed Spanish Loop, and yellow-blazed Eric’s Path, which leads to a nearby bivouac area, is the fifth spoke. Located in the middle of a long-abandoned evergreen farm, the shady junction is nestled in among a host of middle-aged conifers. Aspiring end-to-end Lisa Barrett described for me the pleasure she took from standing in the center and actually counting the five paths, later confessing that she is a CPA and that counting is simply in her nature! But I have to wonder how many other hikers have done the same thing. One time I remember being in a hurry as I was ending a hike downhill on the English Loop and was approaching Five Point Junction. Just as I was entering the junction, I heard voices of a group of hikers climbing uphill on the Spanish Loop. As I charged on through, I easily overheard a woman’s voice exclaiming just as she saw me go dashing by, “Wow! There are trails all over the place!” Her tone, bless her heart, was not of worry or confusion; she sounded thrilled. That junction caters to those of us who just love to explore. 🍁

Cortland County Hike Series 2021

Peg Fuller, FLTC Program Chairperson



On June 19, 2021, about 90 people finally gathered to start the hike that was first scheduled for April 18, 2020. The excitement was in the air to begin the first of six hikes, that will finish the Saturday of the FLTC Fall Weekend. The first hike was a little over 10 miles. The whole series (all of the main FLT in Cortland County) is about 62 miles.

As the hikes began, the temperature rose to the low 80s and quite humid. The skies were beautiful with wisps of clouds. As the hikers exited the woods at the 7-mile SAG Wagon spot, smiles were abundant.

One special smile caught my attention. It was that of 5-year-old (6 in July!), Otter McAliley. He did not look like he was struggling in any hot and humid weather and after a short break at the SAG Wagon he was ready to complete the long road walk.

Otter hiked with his grandmother, Jennifer Yates and her son, Otter's uncle, Andrew Yates. His hiking group was not the slowest group, but rather a medium speed group. His was assigned a hike whistle, which he understood was to be used only when necessary. All well equipped hikers should carry a whistle.

I look forward to seeing Otter and his family as well as the 100 plus county hike registered hikers at the Fall Weekend celebration on Saturday September 18th at Greek Peak. All hikers who complete the whole series will be honored for their achievement. 🍁



Peg Fuller

Our youngest hiker for the 2021 Cortland County FLTC Hike Series, Otter McAliley.

2021 HUNTING SEASONS

For details and maps, see dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/huntseason21.pdf

The schedule is full of details and variations, and what is omitted from the DEC schedule are variations between counties, but basically here is what matters to hikers:

Early bear	September 11 – 26	Only in the Catskills and south
Bowhunting	October 1 – November 19	
Guns	November 20 – December 12	Variation by county is whether hunters are limited to shotguns or may use high-powered rifles with much longer range.
Late bowhunt	December 13 –	I have no idea why no end date is shown. It's usually one week.
Muzzleloaders	December 13 – 21	
	December 26 – January 1	

Advice, which we'll keep sharing, even though some ignorant people ignore advice every year, by hiking during hunt season wearing dark clothes, even a brown coat, and maybe white gloves or a white hat. If you've ever seen a startled deer running away from you, their raised tail looks for all the world like a white flag, so pay attention to your wardrobe. Wear as much blaze orange as you can muster. I have a size 3X brilliant orange shirt, light weight, that is big enough to fit OVER any coat the weather might require of me. I have two knit caps in blaze orange, one of them with a face mask. I even made a vest for my dog out of an orange people vest. Avoid weekend hiking, since the majority of hunters will be out then, especially Thanksgiving weekend. Hunters are out around dawn and sunset, because deer move about then, less in midday.

End-to-End Update

Jacqui Wensich, End-to-End Coordinator



Main Trail

#493 Dennis Permoda aka Lone Ranger, Rochester
#494 Andrew Converse, Dryden
#495 Emily Flagg, Pittsford
#496 Theresa Evans 2nd (#310)
#497 Jay Evans
#498 Debra Nero 4th
#499 Ryan Levering 22 days...a record thru hike

Branch (none)

Updates:

Kate Riley is currently hiking the western FLT. Jason Draper plans to hike M16-19 this summer. Chris Garfield, Michael Dropp and Patrice Campbell plan to thru hike the trail this year. Cynthia Ripple has decided to try to finish the main and branch trails as she lives near the trail in Hornell and has hiked many segments over the years. Her son is helping her. Arthur Smolinski (#492) was assisted by his wife. Myra and Jim, previous end-to-enders, met Art on the trail. Dennis Permoda completed his main trail hike; check out his excellent journal (www.trailjournals.com), trail name "Lone Ranger."

Comments:

Thanks to Deb Nero, there is an updated main trail spread sheet 2021 available on the FLT website or directly from me (jwensich@rochester.rr.com). Hikers can transfer the data from the older version easily. Remember you do not have to re-hike trail changes once you have completed an area.

Regarding keeping me updated: I sometimes get hike by hike updates or long segment updates or just notification of finishing updates. This is up to the hiker. I like receiving full resolution captioned photos of thru or day or back-packing hikers and often use these photos on Facebook and the *FLT News*. It is best for thru hikers and those close to finishing the main trail to send me a completed main trail application. Then the hiker(s) just let me know exactly when they have completed the trail. This usually guarantees the correct end to end number assignment. Note not just the date but the time and who gets the first number if more than one finishes together. Yes, there have been several occasions of hikers completing the trail on the same day. This includes the county hike finishes where everyone usually finishes on the same day so the exact time is very important.

Car Spotter News:

John Kiczek has offered the use of his cabin near M3 for hikers. Contact Jacqui Wensich for information..

Scott Kelly is no longer on the car spotter list. He has moved. Thanks for being available in the Ithaca area. Steve Suffet (M20)



Dennis Permoda and his wife.

Jacqui Wensich

no longer is on the car spotter list. We thank him for his long-time assistance.

The car spotter list is fluid... it changes. Have your map in hand when you call to make arrangements. Offer to pay for gas after your ride. Take the spotters' photo so we can recognize them in the *News*. Remember not everyone is ready to assist at this time although there have been no reports about this.

We need more car spotters for the Branch Trails and **M1-5, M27-34**. Please consider signing on as a car spotter. Just

email at jwensich@rochester.rr.com for the application. You are a vital part of hiking our trails.

TIPS for aspiring end-to-enders: 1. Review the End-to-End Hiking section on the FLT website. 2. Join the FLT egroup, hiking@fingerlakestrail.org (often find more spotters and specific location hints.) 3. Purchase new MAPS (remember FLT members receive a 20% discount for all purchases). Waypoints are also available. 4. *Check trail conditions online frequently.* 5. If you are not already a member, join the FLTC. Membership supports this wonderful trail. 6. Let me know about when you plan to complete the main/branch trails to receive the correct number. 7. Email captioned photos in high resolution as you hike and keep trail notes so you can write your end-to-end article 8. Car spotters "spot" for designated areas. It is not a shuttle. Longer rides must be arranged on your own.

HIKERS-PLEASE ASK FOR THE MOST RECENT CAR SPOTTER LIST TO AVOID PROBLEMS. (Just like our maps, things change). Let me know if phone numbers or emails are incorrect or no longer working. Do not ask spotters to take long trips. Ask other spotters according to the maps listed on the car spotter list. If you need a longer ride, join the discussion group to see if someone is willing, if you do not have a friend or family member available. 🍁

Contact: Jacqui Wensich
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585/385-2265

Alone on the Finger Lakes Trail

Art "Tic Toc" Smolinski

An April thru hike on the FLT



Once you've caught the bug of long distance hiking, you're always looking for your next hike. I caught the bug on my 2019 thru hike of the Appalachian Trail and have been turning my sights to different trails ever since. My latest goal was the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT). Like all planning for a long distance hike I went online to see available information from the Finger Lakes Trail Conference website, Youtube videos, hiking blogs and any other sources that I could Google. During this research I learned that the FLT was not considered "set up" for thru hiking due to spacing of lean-tos and camping spot distribution, easily accessible resupplies and is generally completed as a number of section hikes. However, I was confident that with resupply planning and a few very long days of hiking, I could thru hike the FLT. I chose an early spring hike to avoid trail closures due to May turkey hunting, bugs, and prickles, and to enjoy improved views due to lack of foliage.

I was dropped off the morning of April 2nd at the trailhead after spending the night at Seneca Casino and was excited to start my planned one month hike, despite 2 inches of snow the previous night. The sun was shining but the snow did not slow down my miles and the trail through Allegany State Park was well marked which made for an enjoyable hike. The hike back to the Seneca Hotel, plus a 30 minute drive to the trailhead, took over a day.

The snow quickly disappeared and the weather warmed. It would not be till the evening of the fourth day that I would meet my first hiker in the woods. The trail was devoid of hikers so far, and it would be like this for much of the trail. My first resupply was before Ellicottville at Little Valley Dollar General, located one mile off trail. Ellicottville ski resorts had deep snow and icy conditions; micro spikes would have been helpful for my early spring hike. Finding resupplies along the trail was one of the first plans that I undertook for my thru hike, as it is necessary to find points every 4 to 6 days for lightweight thru hiking. At first I used the FLT online interactive maps to follow the trail and locate villages that had grocery stores or other possible resupply, switching to Google maps for additional information of possible resupply options, and sometimes even looking at street view to confirm possible store selection. I started by putting together a spreadsheet of resupply options with distance from trail and after I got a set of paper maps from the FLT, I then added maps and mileage to each resupply, and the cumulative mileage. I selected my planned resupplies, as well as backups to ensure flexibility if plans changed.

My first off trail day was in North Hornell at Days Inn, right on trail after 9 days. I had spent the previous six days in Lean-tos and two nights tenting. The FLT has, in my opinion, some of the best lean-tos I've seen. Most are relatively new and well constructed, have picnic tables and fire rings provided, are near a reliable water supply, and mice free. The next week held cold rain every day, which led to blisters forming and my feet getting sore. The weather improved in the days after I hit Watkins Glen, but the trail remained wet.

One advantage of an early spring hike was that the grass was low and the views to the next blaze were clear which made it eas-

ier to see the sometimes trampled and difficult to follow trail. The weather got cold and snowy when I was near Cortland, with wind chills near 15 degrees. Hiking over exposed fields was cold with the high winds, but the snow did firm the trail some. Sleeping with my water filter became the norm to prevent freezing and damage.

As I hiked on and at a faster rate, I was averaging hiking one map per day.

However, halfway through my hike I was not on schedule to meet my target of a one month completion. It would require averaging over twenty plus miles per day to hit my target. I was determined to meet my goal and picked up my pace

On par with most of my journey, the second to last day on trail was wet. I started at Mary Smith campsite, listed as having no water, which I found out to be true. After setting my tent up, I went down the road to explore for water and was unsuccessful. I had enough for the night but I would need to forgo my morning coffee. Luckily, as they say, the trail provides, and it started to rain which allowed me to catch water off the tent roof and filter enough for the next morning. The day hike to the last lean-to, Fall Brook, was a wet one. It rained and rained and the trail was very slippery. There was no reason to step over puddles, since the entire trail was a river. I fell six times this day, a new record for me.

Summit day was dry and sunny but windy. I started early on the trail by 6:00 and a lot of road walking awaited. The miles went fast and I met a fellow hiker, "Lone Ranger" working west on finishing the FLT. When I summited April 30th, snow was still present on the peak with extreme wind but no other hikers. The hike would end as it started: alone. I snapped a picture of myself on top and contacted my wife to let her know I made it. It would be a difficult seven mile hike down to Woodland Valley Camp Ground to meet my wife for the ride home. I was happy I decided to do a spring hike and although it was a lonely trail, those I did meet I was happy to stop and talk to. I was on trail for 29 days; it was not the greatest April weather but the FLT is April thru hikeable and enjoyable. 🍁



Diane Smolinski

At the trailhead on Map M1 in Pennsylvania, near the border with NY.

Wilderness First Aid

Story and Photos by Gary Mallow



Safety out there is a priority.

That was clearly demonstrated as 26 members – a more-than-full class - completed a Cayuga Trails Club-sponsored Wilderness First Aid training on July 1st and 2nd. The high quality class was based out of an outbuilding and adjacent field loaned to us by Polley McClure and John Smith in West Danby. Instruction was led by Todd Miner from the University of Colorado Medical School, with assistance from Cornell Outdoor Education instructors. After Todd offered to teach the course, Myra Schulman and Polley organized it, including supplying coffee, donuts, muffins and bagels each morning to wake us up before class began.

This was quality instruction with a ton of critical course material delivered by Todd, who brings an obvious commitment to the instruction, EMT training, along with a wealth of real-world experience leading outdoor trips around the world. Two jam-packed sessions ran more than eight hours each day. Participants raved about simulated outdoor scenarios in which one to three of us volunteered as patients, coached on what symptoms to demonstrate. Teams of four to six were then brought to the scene and tasked with assessing the patient and selecting appropriate treatment and evacuation. Our performance was critically evaluated for both correct decisions and mistakes. We struggled with the first scenarios, but got better with practice.

A partial list of the course curriculum includes primary and secondary assessment of scene and patient; treatment of: shock, cardiac issues, drowning, falls, hypo- and hyperthermia, frostbite, water purification, musculoskeletal



Todd Miner, WFA instructor (standing) is a master of the curriculum.



Instructors demonstrate the safe method of rolling a patient who cannot move on his own.



Gundy Lee (right) practices use of a tourniquet.



Todd Miner demonstrates the best way to immobilize a broken arm. Charlie Strohman volunteered as patient.



First steps are to assess the situation, then complete a primary and secondary assessment with the patient, if possible.



Final exam was 50 multiple-choice questions.

injuries, wounds, bleeding, burns, and broken bones. But there was so much more.

In addition to its overall quality, the course was a great value as the fee was discounted far below what you'd pay for it elsewhere. This was possible because Todd, a Life Member of CTC, donated his time, a gesture of support for hikers, trail adopters and our club. If you were a hike leader or certified chain sawyer, your fee was further discounted by \$100. It was a great way of encouraging volunteers to work safely, providing a tangible thank-you for their volunteer work in the woods.

This was the second Wilderness First Aid course sponsored by CTC, the last offered in 2019. By offering these courses, the club is demonstrating its commitment to safety during the events and outings we all value and enjoy. The club is committed to providing our hike leaders and sawyers the essential knowledge they need to keep us safe, and to help bring first aid quickly to a hiker should injury or illness occur. 🍁

Habitat, Invasive Species, and DEC Wildlife Management Areas



Article by Michael Palermo, DEC Wildlife Biologist and Captions and Photos by Peter Wybron

The Finger Lakes Trail crosses a lot of state land, but not all those lands are managed the same way. Some of these state lands are classified as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). WMAs are managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Division of Fish and Wildlife. Across New York there are 125 WMAs, comprising approximately 245,000 acres (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html>).

A difference between WMAs and other state land, such as DEC's State Forests or a State Park, is that the primary goal of these areas is to provide and enhance wildlife habitat and wildlife-dependent recreation (e.g., hunting, trapping, bird watching). Every action that occurs on a WMA is scrutinized by the question "how does this affect wildlife and wildlife recreation?"

Habitats are actively managed on WMAs to maintain or improve their value for various wildlife species. This includes mowing fields, conducting timber harvests, and controlling invasive species. Fields need to be mowed to prevent woody plants from taking over grasslands, timber harvests can help diversify forest habitats and create young forests, and invasive species need control because they can degrade habitats.

A recent project completed in June 2021 on Rattlesnake Hill WMA (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24443.html>) in Allegany County (Maps M8 and M9) tackled an invasive species issue located along the stretch of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) that crosses the property. Invasive shrubs (e.g., honeysuckle, common buckthorn, and autumn olive) were cut and treated with herbicide along 1.5 miles of forest edge. This project was a partnership



WNY Prism crew member Lyndzie Vail treating stems of invasive shrubs with herbicide. Trail workers tend to develop strong prejudices against many invasive plants, so... applause!!! for killing autumn olive, honeysuckle, and especially wild rose!

between DEC, the Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNY PRISM), and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (thank you, Peter Wybron and Deb Nero!) It was a mighty hot few days, and the work was tiring, but the finished task provided immense satisfaction knowing it will make a big difference.



The Rattlesnake Hill project was part of WNY PRISM's Crew Assistance Program that works with partners on invasive species management (<https://www.wnyprism.org/2021-wny-prism-crew-assistance-program/>). The effort will benefit local habitat by reducing competition with native plants and eliminating a large seed source that could colonize the nearby forest.

The problem with non-native invasive plant species on the FLT and other

Crew preparing to begin work on the first day of invasive species removal along the FLT in Rattlesnake Hill WMA. (From L to R) DEC - Michael Palermo, WNY Prism - Brittany Hernon, Jason Kappan, Aubrey Franks, Lyndzie Vail, FLTC - Deb Nero

places across New York is that they can outcompete native plants and provide very little wildlife value themselves. Over time the native plant community will decline and what remains is dominated by the invasive plants. Very few wildlife species feed on these plants; deer rarely browse them, most insects avoid their leaves, and the berries provide low value nutrition. The dominance of invasives is especially problematic following a natural disturbance or a timber harvest (which often aims to mimic the habitat effects of a natural disturbance). In high numbers these plants can prevent the establishment and success of young trees that would make up the future forest. A lot of effort goes into detecting these species on WMAs and implementing control actions to try to eradicate (best case scenario) or shrink infestations and limit spread.

How can you help? Please always clean your footwear before and after visiting new areas. While thru-hiking sections of the FLT, it might be wise even to carry a small brush or scraping tool to periodically clean off your shoes each day. This will greatly reduce the spread of invasive plant seeds into new areas. You could also learn how to identify various invasive plants and report observations using tools like the online, collaborative, GIS-based NY iMapInvasives database - <https://www.nyimainvasives.org>.

Please enjoy visiting DEC WMAs while you're hiking the FLT. If you have questions regarding this or other WMAs across the state, please contact the regional wildlife office for that area by visiting <https://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html>. DEC looks forward to continuing to work with our public and private partners like the Finger Lakes Trail and others to continue offering quality recreational opportunities and protecting our resources. 🍁



DEC Wildlife Technician Jeff Thompson cutting invasive shrubs with a power weed-eater equipped with a saw blade. Hurray.

Happy Easement News on Map M10



East of Hornell a small state Forest (Burt Hill) almost connects our route between two roads, in an area of mostly private land and large farms, *almost* because it doesn't go all the way east to South Woods Rd. That short private gap could have ruined our use of Burt Hill State Forest, especially sad because there is a nice log shelter there, built by an Alley Cat crew in 1999. There is even a normally reliable stream immediately east of the shelter.

Luckily, Terry Meacham, local trail sponsor and board member, realized he knew the family who owned that critical gap, so he asked Kim Gardner for permission to let us move the approaching trail into her woods, in order to stay out of an adjacent farm field. Then more recently he asked her for a permanent easement; fortunately, she and her four adult children were happy to let us enjoy permanent access from South Woods Rd., especially since they remembered childhood fun in that state forest and in the shelter. 🍁



Peter Wybron



As with so many other types of events previously on pause worldwide, 2021 has also seen the return of trail running races that take place along various sections of the FLT. The FLT plays host to over a dozen races each year, ranging in distance from 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), all the way up to many ultramarathons (any race over the standard marathon distance of 26.2 miles), with one being 100 miles long!

The full list of races and the locations where they take place is as follows:

Race	FLT Map	Distances Offered	Producer
Twisted Branch	B1, B2, B3, M12	100K	Twisted Branch
Frozen Branch	B3, M12	50K	Twisted Branch
Many on the Genny	L1, L2	40M	Trail Methods / #TrailsRoc
Dam Good	L1	14M	Roads are Poison
Muddy Sneaker	B1	20K	Roads Are Poison
Morgan Hill Meat Grinder	O1	Half/Full Marathon, 50K, 50M	Salt City Trail Running
Sehgahunda	L1, L2	Marathon/Relay	Yellow Jacket Racing
Thom B Trail Runs	M19	8.5M/17M/Full Marathon	Finger Lakes Runners Club
Monster Marathon and Half Marathon	M16	Half/Full Marathon	Finger Lakes Runners Club
Danby Down and Dirty	M17	10K/20K	Finger Lakes Runners Club
Finger Lake 50s	I1	25K/50K/50M	Finger Lakes Runners Club
Highland Forest 1-2-3 Trail Run	O2	10M/20M/30M	Syracuse Chargers Track Club
Virgil Crest Ultras	M19	50K/50M/100K/100M	Red Newt Racing
Cayuga Trails 50	M16	50K/50M	Red Newt Racing
Ontario Summit Trail Races	B1	Half/Full Marathon	Goose Adventure Racing

Even a 10K trail race is challenging (especially for this author: I don't run fast!), but the longest races of Twisted Branch 100K and the 100 mile distance at Virgil Crest Ultras are incredible feats for runners.

Twisted Branch is unique among the other races that take place on the FLT in that participants who complete it cover the entire 54.2 miles of the Bristol Hills branch trail (in a single day!), plus some additional mileage on the main FLT. Part of the mission of the race is "to provide a supported, safe, and challenging ultra-marathon event which showcases the Finger Lakes Trail System." The race purposely limits the impact to the trail by both restricting the number of runners and taking place in late August to help ensure a dry, hard packed trail surface. Full details on this and additional considerations the race organization is mindful of can be found on the Twisted Branch website, under the "About Us" link.

Twisted Branch deserves recognition for having earned the honor of becoming one of fewer than 200 races world-wide (and the only one in New York) that runners can submit as a qualifying race for entry into the oldest 100 mile trail running race in the world, the prestigious Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run. Becoming a qualifying race has helped it to draw in runners from across the entire country and even some from abroad. For many, the race is their first introduction to the FLT.



The author, during the inaugural Twisted Branch 100K. Original photo credit Ron Heerkens Jr of Goat Factory Media. Many additional beautiful photos from FLT races can be found on his website, <https://www.goatfactorymedia.com/>

Red Newt Racing has produced several excellent races along the FLT for many years, but September 11th, 2021, will see the return of a race that's been on hiatus for several years, Virgil Crest. Runners can choose from multiple distances, with the longest distance also the longest race on the FLT, covering 100 miles! As if the distance alone wasn't difficult enough, the area the race takes place on includes ski slopes and the 2021 course will require 100 mile participants to climb 22,000 feet. While the race in previous years has attracted elite, professional ultra runners and the course record was run in 2009 in an impressive sub-18 hour time, the majority of runners will be able to enjoy the FLT for much longer, all the way up to the cut off of 36 hours. Those trained or lucky enough to do so will earn the traditional reward for completing a race of 100 miles, a belt buckle.



With the trails heavily saturated the day prior by rain, Shawn Weishaar takes advantage of a trail closure detour to run some miles on the more durable surface of Pennycook Road (M7).

Longer distance races like these take a tremendous amount of effort to produce. If running for hours on end isn't appealing or possible for you, races can always use help from volunteers in the form of trail work prior, serving food/water at aid stations, course marking/cleanup, pre-race packet pickup, runner timing, etc. There's never a shortage of different types of tasks and varying levels of commitment for everyone. Volunteering is a great way to help runners, but also to meet other FLTC members, as the FLTC frequently helps out with these races. Reach out to the volunteer coordinator or race director listed on a race's website for more details. Just seeing a runner physically and mentally beat down from a long race or complete such a large undertaking can be quite powerful and an act as simple as handing a runner a pretzel mid-race may very well help them cross the finish line. Volunteers can make a big difference!

Several of the race organizations donate a significant chunk of their race profits to the FLT, for which we are very grateful, but some send us nothing. Trail runners in turn often serve as designated trail maintainers or host various trail maintenance events themselves. Many longer distance races require runners to volunteer at other trail events or perform trail maintenance as a prerequisite to participate. The Rochester based #trailsroc trail running group even goes as far as to host trail maintenance events on the segments of the FLT after events other than their own! Several of the race producers are FLTC Business Members, too. (See the FLTC website -> Members -> Business Member section.)

Follow along at <https://www.instagram.com/buffalotrailandultrarunners/> for images I've captured while out trail running, often along the FLT. Be forewarned though: you may find yourself wanting to run on the FLT! 🍁

Membership Benefits

- ♦ A subscription to the Finger Lakes Trail News magazine, printed four times per year.
- ♦ A 20% discount on all items you purchase from the FLTC store (except memberships and donations).
- ♦ One vote (two votes for Family memberships) at membership meetings of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.
- ♦ A portion of your dues may be tax deductible; consult your tax advisor.
- ♦ The satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to a magnificent recreational legacy.

FLT MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 County _____ Phone (____) _____
 Email _____

Make check payable to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference
 Mail to 6111 Visitor Center Rd., Mt. Morris, NY 14510 along with this form.
 Annual dues (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31. Dues paid after Dec. 31 will be applied to the next membership year.)

Pathfinder Memberships:

Youth (under 17)	\$15
Student (under 24)	\$15
Limited Income	\$30
Adult	\$40
Family	\$60
Youth Organization	\$30

Sustaining Memberships:

Trail Blazer	\$100-\$249
Trail Builder	\$250-\$499
Trail Guide	\$500-\$999
Trail Patron	\$1000 +
Lifetime (Individual)	\$600
Lifetime (Family)	\$900

Trail Topics: Trail Maintenance

Jon Bowen, VP of Trail Maintenance



We finally have a new Regional Trail Coordinator at the far eastern end of the trail. Ralph Bressler has agreed to coordinate the section of trail from Downsville to Slide Mountain. Previously Rick Roberts has been the RTC for most of the Catskills. Ralph will take some of the load off Rick. Here is information Ralph supplied:

My name is Ralph Bressler and I have recently taken on the responsibility of being the FLTC Trail Coordinator for the eastern Catskills. This section runs from Downsville to Slide Mountain with some sections of the trail assigned to maintainers by the FLTC and some sections covered by maintainers from the NYNJTC. I am also the NY-NJ Trail Conference Trail Supervisor for the Willowemoc Wild Forest and parts of the Balsam Lake Wild Forest and Big Indian Wilderness. I began serving in this position last year. I grew up in Sullivan County and hiked some in the mountains. I started keeping track of my hikes in the summer of 2005. Since then, I have hiked the Catskill 3500 foot peaks in all seasons. I have completed the Catskill Highest Hundred, the New Jersey 1K, and the Long Path. I have hiked the Finger Lakes Trail from just west of Hornell to Slide Mountain and hope to get back to it sometime soon.

With all the hiking I have done, it did not occur to me that the trails do not maintain themselves until 2013. I worked with Rick Roberts and a group from the Catskill Mountain Club to clear the trails around Frock and Hodge Pond. I was hooked! I have maintained trails in the Willowemoc Wild Forest for a number of years for the NYNJ Trail Conference. I also maintain the FLT from Beech Hill Road to Balsam Lake Mountain. I love the challenge and the sense of accomplishment I get from clearing and building trails.

My wife and I have lived in Livingston Manor since 1981 where we raised two sons and a daughter. I taught science and mathematics in the public schools for 36 years, 29 at Liberty Central Schools. I still coach three seasons of running at Liberty. I have been a volunteer EMT with the Volunteer Ambulance Corps of Livingston Manor for 35 years.

Contact: Email: rbressler@hvc.rr.com Phone: 845-439-3591

Another of our Regional Trail Coordinators is retiring this season. Tony Rodriguez has been Trails Chair of ADK-Onondaga for many years as well as RTC for FLTC. (See an article elsewhere in this magazine.) I am currently working with Dick Frio, Chair of the Onondaga Chapter, in search of someone to fill both positions. Note that I said "fill the positions" because Tony can't be replaced by one person. Currently the Onondaga Chapter has several volunteers to take over some of Tony's responsibilities.

Roving Crew

Our roving crew has been out doing a few projects. We completed two projects in May, one on M11 and the other on M5. Regional Trail Coordinator Peter Wybron led a group of 7 participants on a clean up day of a 4 mile trail section that hadn't been maintained this year. The group mostly used loppers to open up the trail. We

also had a couple sawyers with us who took out trees that needed removing. In addition to Peter, other workers were Lynette Thelen, Mike Kramer, Don Lowe, Aaron Thomas, Laurie Ondrejka, and Jon Bowen

The other May project was clearing a new trail in Bush Hill State Forest, M5. This was a section that I had previously flagged to move a short section off Stebbins Road. Ten participants created the new trail. This was a little more work than some projects but we had a larger crew of Christy Post (FLTC Marketing and Communication Director) and her dog and friend Noah, Patty Singer, Lynda Chudy (trail Sponsor), Katy Carrier, Don Lowe, Lisa Oun, Michele McCall, Barry Erickson and Jon Bowen

In June the roving crew was off to Dryden (near Ithaca) to work with RTC Dave Priester to make trail improvements including a short reroute around a steep bank on M18. I was not able to attend, but I was told this was another successful project.

The biggest project to date was on the Conservation Trail near Getman Road, Map CT7. A crew made up of 24 workers from the Foothills Trail Club and the roving crew from the Finger Lakes Trail successfully built three 16' bridges across some of the tough ravines on the section. The wood was cut and brought to the site by Dave Potzler. Thanks to one of the local landowners, Ron



The picture above shows Donna and Marty Ruszaj on one of the new bridges built on Map CT7 near Getman Rd.

Goudy, the lumber was transported close to the three work sites. This section of the trail is entirely on private land. Ron not only allows us to walk on this beautiful property but went above and beyond, helping us to make this work party a success!

In addition to the bridges the crew re-routed the trail around a steep section and benched some eroded areas to make this wonderful trail safer. This project was led by Donna and Marty Ruszaj.

Peter Wybron - Regional Trail Coordinator M7-M11

Still looking for trail maintainers for maps M9 and M11, Hornell and Bath area. I have a couple of trail sections that need maintainers. We've also lost the volunteer for just plain mowing with the wonderful DR mower, which is stored at Kanakadea Park on its own trailer, with a 2" ball hitch. There are about 8 hours of mowing, three times a year. It's just been done, so perhaps one more session will be needed this year. Contact prwybron@rochester.rr.com, 585/ 243-5351 home, 443-9982 cell.

Removal Of Invasive Plants On The FLT

Peter Wybron and Deb Nero volunteered to help Michael Palermo, Biologist, DEC Region 8 Bureau of Wildlife and the WNY Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) during the week of June 28th to July 2nd. Mike arranged for the WNY PRISM crew to remove terrestrial invasive plants along a section of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) which passes through the Rattlesnake Hill Wildlife Management Area in Allegany County on FLT Map M8. Deb and I removed the brush that was cut by Mike and his Field Technician, while the PRISM crew treated the cut-stumps with a specialty herbicide. The majority of the invasive plants removed from along the edge of the trail were Honeysuckle, along with some Buckthorn and Autumn Olive.

New Trail Sponsor/Maintainer: Lisa Karr from Hornell has volunteered to maintain a 1.6 mile section of the FLT on Map M11 from Harris Hill Rd. to Snell Hill Rd. Welcome Lisa!

Tom Bryden - Regional Trail Coordinator M22-M24 Bullthistles Hiking Club

New bridge and Perkins Lean-to work (M23) on June workday, Planned workday 7-29-21 for 75 feet of puncheon on M22, near Will Warner Rd. Numerous trees cleared after recent storms by BHC Sawyers Larry Chesebro and Steve Ellsworth. Steve Ellsworth is communicating with FLT mapping to GPS new Kopac Trail route (M24), and new red trail route near Perkins Lean-to (M23).



Foothills volunteers on one of the bridges they built on Conservation Trail Map CT7.



Donna Ruszaj

Front from left to right: Rich Kyers, Kendall Farr, Ann Tiberi / Back: Lisa Kenney and Robert Chau.

Bill Meehan M13-M14

Maintainers needed for 1.5 mile stretch of trail on Map 13, South Bradford State Forest in eastern Steuben County.

Maintainers also needed on 3.5 mile stretch of trail on Map 14, Sugar Hill State Forest in Schuyler County.

Also looking for workers to help with a puncheon bridge building detail on Sugar Hill State Forest, Schuyler County, Map 14 during the month of August and September. Contact Regional Trail Coordinator Bill Meehan at bmeehan@frontiernet.net or 607-481-9228. 🍁

Contact: Jon Bowen
325/638-8749
jkbowen@gmail.com

Trail Topics: FLT Maps

Jo Taylor, Mapping Committee



We're working on it...

Since I last wrote you, the FLT mapping team has added two members. The father and son duo, Ian and Crosby Woods, have come on board to back up Roger Hopkins on the website and interactive map side of the team. Crosby, a tenth grader, is currently updating our elevation profiles, and Ian has been lending a hand with publishing map updates while learning the intricacies of the software that produces the interactive map and does myriad other mapping-related tasks.

With the arrival of spring and the end of the May hunting season, FLT trail workers have been busy with trail maintenance and rerouting sections of trail where needed. Consequently, the mapping team has been active, too, keeping up with these changes. One recent map update resulting from the hard work and dedication of FLT volunteers reflects the re-opening of a major closure on the Conservation Trail on Map CT4 where loss of landowner permission on a small section had necessitated the closure of a much longer section of trail. A 3.5 mile section there had been closed and replaced by a 3.7 mile road walk. By the time you read this, a similar long closure on map M3/CT3 should also have re-opened. These two sections were able to be restored thanks to the diligent work of the Foothills Trail Club and the generosity of new permitting landowners. Since both of these sections will be closed again for hunting from Oct. 1 until the end of the year, right now is a good time to get out and explore them.

Not every change to the maps merits a public announcement. Corrections of minor errors and some incremental improvements happen without fanfare. The mapping team is working to improve consistency between the PDF maps and the interactive map and to improve the quality of the parking information provided by the maps. You may have noticed a new symbol 🟡 recently introduced on the interactive map in some map sections. We now have three parking-related symbols that appear on Garmin devices (GPS) and our interactive maps (FLT) and two on our PDF maps (PDF) as follows:

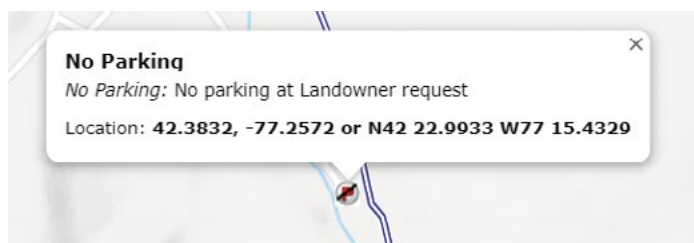
GPS	FLT	PDF	Description
			Parking — Parking at or near trailhead including vehicle capacity and quality.
			Parking Advisory — A trailhead with marginal or no good parking, often with a suggestion for nearby parking.
			No Parking — Official No Parking restriction, trail hosting landowner request, neighbor request, or dangerous conditions.

On the PDF map, parking details are noted on the back of the map. This is work in progress; gradually over time you can expect overall improved consistency and better parking information on our maps. 🍁

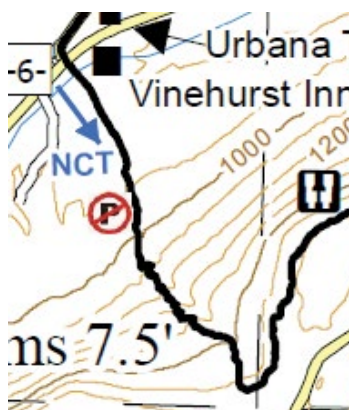
I've always been fascinated by maps and cartography. A map tells you where you've been, where you are, and where you're going — in a sense it's three tenses in one.
— Peter Greenaway

Some examples from the maps:

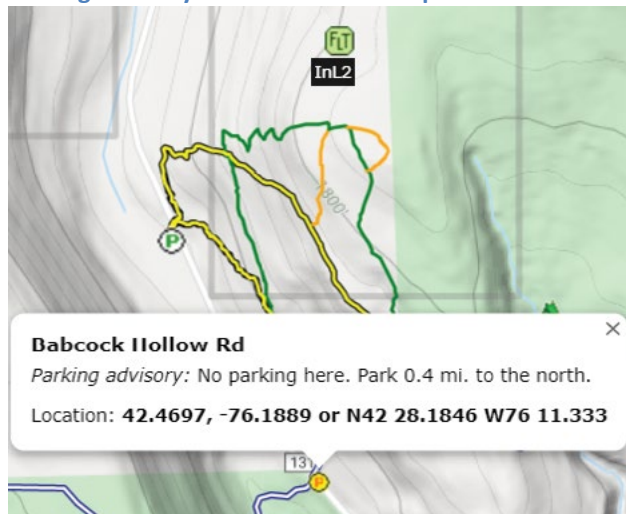
No Parking: M12 Interactive map



No Parking: M12 PDF map, same location



Parking Advisory: M19 interactive map



Parking Advisory: M19 PDF map, same location

9.6 Cross Babcock Hollow Road (1480'), no parking here! Park 0.4 mi. to the north. Cross deep ditch on footbridge, and go uphill. Start of Joe Dabes/Ray Kuzia section.

Contact: Jo Taylor
jhtaylor@frontiernet.net

Trail Topics: Trail Preservation Report

David Newman, VP of Trail Preservation



Updates and Droplets of Progress

To any of our landowners who are reading this who might be thinking of granting FLTC an easement someday, let me know and I will be happy to get the ball rolling! From a landowner standpoint it usually takes very little time and the biggest hassle is stopping by your local bank or town office to get a notarized signature. FLTC pays all the fees.

Speaking of easements, we're working with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to finish up easements on the new trail route leading southeast from the top of Eastman Hill (Map M18). This is the project where the Eberhard family has donated property to FLLT. Our Regional Trail Coordinator David Priester, working with FLLT and DEC contacts, has established the exact location for the future reroute and is scheduling the necessary work teams using mostly Cayuga Trails Club volunteers. I expect the trail will open on this reroute later this year.

We're in the middle of FLTC's single largest trail preservation project to date, a purchase of 140 acres that will eliminate 3 miles of road walk. As of the publication cutoff deadline for this issue of *FLT News*, we have a signed contract and the surveyor has completed their field work. If all goes as expected, you'll see press releases from FLTC sometime in August with details on the project and its whereabouts. Michaela Aney, our recently hired Director of Trail Development, has already evaluated the necessary trail construction activities and is in discussion with our local volunteers to begin to plan the work. This is a \$300,000 project funded by the Sidote Trail Preservation fund, with a longer term expectation that NYSDEC will eventually purchase the property from us and add it into the adjacent State Forest lands.

For those who remember from my past columns, FLTC filed an *amicus* brief in a lawsuit in the Town of Brighton, Monroe County, where the Town Board had granted the developer of a Whole Foods (Amazon) plaza a permit to expand the development's size including building over a long established recreational trail on an old rail line running alongside the property. The strategic issue for us was that under the NYS Public Trust doctrine, dedicated parklands in NYS may not be converted to uses other than parkland without specific approval by the NYS Legislature (Senate and Assembly). In this case the Town didn't outright own the land in question; rather, they owned an easement to the former rail bed and claimed that easement did not count as parkland, even though their own parkland map showed the recreational trail. The court ruled in favor of the parkland on that point and some of the other points in the lawsuit. The Developer of course is appealing. In the meantime, in what appears a sort of deep pocketed intimidation move, the Developer has paid for the completion of not just one but two additional traffic signals on this already super congested section of roadway out front and is proceeding to build stores on the property (albeit, not in the area where the trail right

of way existed). The Court has specifically told the Developer that it is at their own financial risk and they may be forced to downsize the project even to the extent of demolishing some of the buildings going up. Bottom line: not settled.

It appears the ruling relative to parkland easements is on good footing, which was our objective in this, but the overall issue of cramming too much development into too small a parcel and creating worse traffic issues on an already very gridlocked street continues to simmer. Isn't it fun to watch this stuff? Whole Foods (Amazon) on one side... with local residents possibly being supported by Wegmans (whose flagship store is just down the street and who would have no legal requirement to disclose their financial support), on the other side. It's not over 'til it's over: let's hope the Public Trust Doctrine limiting local government's ability to trade off parkland rights survives. So far, so good. 🍁



Bodhi Rogers

Contact: Dave Newman
danewman@rochester.rr.com
585/582-2725

THANKS TO OUR TRAIL LANDOWNERS

Please accept the appreciation of the Board of Managers of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and hundreds of hikers for your continuing permission to route the path through your property. Even if your trail's caretaker didn't say so directly yet this year, know that we all are grateful for the privilege of enjoying your back woods, streams, and fields. On behalf of all hikers and FLTC members, we acknowledge that, without your generosity, we would simply never have a continuous trail across upstate New York.

If you would like a copy of our trail map in your property's neighborhood, please ask the FLTC Service Center: info@fingerlakestrail.org or 585/658-9320.

Also, the trail is CLOSED on private land on the first Monday in February, just to reassure you that we do not establish a permanent right-of-way on your land by walking there every single day of the year.

Trail Topics: Alley Cats Projects, Before...

Mike Schlicht, Director of Crews and Construction



Planning and organizing the two scheduled Alley Cats for Holland and Letchworth has been underway for some time now as Michaela, members of the Foothills Trail Club and I have hiked the trails, identifying various issues that we would like to address. Michaela Aney and I evaluated the Letchworth Trail from Access C to Access F in April and have submitted over 300 items we would like to see addressed to the Parks Administration thus far. This does not include the GPS plots submitted in March 2020 that will also be addressed this August including a partial reroute of access E that has been a muddy mess for years. Most of the work will involve benching, creating drainages and armoring creek crossings. After a lot of thought and the input from others within the FLTC who will be assisting with cooking and transportation issues along with the status of the pandemic, I will be hosting the American Hiking Society trail crew to be a part of the Letchworth Alley Cat. It has been a long time in coming to realize this event and I am looking forward to meeting like-minded volunteers who want to help us out on the trail and partake of the beauty of Letchworth State Park.

Likewise, Jake Kern and Dave Kaczmariski and I hiked the Holland Ravines on the Conservation Trail in late April and identified over 200 issues over 9.5 miles of trail. Most of the work we identified includes benching and drainage work that wasn't a significant part of the 2007 Alley Cat and it will be great to see these improvements made. There is also a fair amount of construction to be undertaken. The stairs, steps and culverts put in back in 2007 need some tender loving care along with some new construction of puncheons. A slide system to shunt falling shale from accumulating on some staircases Michaela and I have been working on will be implemented. Shale continuously falls down onto the steps and a small retaining wall will be attached to the ladder stairs along with some cut up black culverts to catch the shale and slide it down to the bottom of the ravine.

Speaking of retaining walls, the Bristol Hills Trail Alley Cat is moving forward. The permits have been sent in for approval as some changes to the overall plan had to be made to lower the cost of the trees needed for the wall. The original plan called for two 80' retaining walls to be put in to slow the erosion of the sides of the creek where a 40' bridge was put in back in 2010. As many of you already know, the cost of wood has risen dramatically which has increased the costs of the Alley Cats this year and the current plan will now be to limit the length of those walls to 64'. I am still seeking a construction manager for this project. Overall the project isn't that difficult. Sixteen-foot white oak trees will be delivered to the road side; a tractor will take them the first ¼ mile to the edge of the forest. From there, the trees will be winched into the creek another ¼ mile down the trail, lowered into the creek bed and secured with rebar. In 2010, I was a part of the Alley Cat that winched in telephone poles to be moved using the same process. We had two folks with rock bars periodically

guiding the poles over trail hazards and it wasn't that difficult to winch a 40' telephone pole to the site.

I was notified by the DEC that we will not be able to put a lean-to in the Catskills portion of the trail at the present time. The Unit Management Plan needs to be updated to address this and we have to wait until the DEC decides to amend it in the future. A location for the lean-to is being evaluated and identified and once we secure approval for it, I will send out a call for volunteers to assist in its construction. 🍁

The Bullthistle Hikers' Mike Fuller is mowing a section of their trail responsibility in the Otselic State Forest between Partridge Hill and Will Warner Rds., with the DR Mower they first used in 1990. This is a wonderful example of good maintenance of a quality mower, which is why it's still working thirty years later.



Peg Fuller

Trail Topics: and After. Letchworth Alley Cat

Mike Schlicht, Director of Crews and Construction



Six volunteers from the American Hiking Society (AHS) joined fifteen Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) volunteers in Letchworth State Park for our first Alley Cat of 2021, representing the states of New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, Oklahoma and South Carolina. We could not have asked for better weather with sunny skies and temperatures in the upper seventies and low eighties. Our week started with a home-cooked breakfast by our own Ann Bayley who also led the entire crew in an eighteen therapies stretching routine that prepared us for the work ahead.

We split into two crews on the first day, one led by Michaela Aney starting at Access D and one led by me starting at Access C, creating and clearing drainages, benching and armoring stream crossings. Over the course of the week our respective crews managed to get all the way from Access C to the first blue trail past Access E leading to Fiddler's Elbow totaling almost 10 miles of trail.

We also put in a new reroute extending off Access F that will relieve hikers from having to hike almost three tenths of a mile in mud and weeds. The new path takes advantage of higher land with good drainage. At the moment the new trail is marked with orange tape that will be replaced by blue blazes once the Letchworth State Park Administration has an opportunity to comment on the reroute. The new trail emanating from the Letchworth Branch at Access F is about a hundred feet farther south than the current access and is at least six feet wide to allow ATV passage in the event of a hiker emergency; that width was requested by the park. We are going to ask the Park to extend the trail west and possibly reroute another 400 feet of trail. That will leave about 800 feet of muddy and weedy trail that we will hopefully be addressing next year.

Ed Benson who hailed from Virginia was the AHS crew leader and has over 20 years of experience in trail building. His experience came in handy as we navigated the trail and identified solutions to the various issues we outlined previously and marked by GPS. He taught us a few things along the way, and Michaela and I really appreciated having another person to brainstorm with. One of the tools Ed keeps in his pack is an old chain saw with two loops of chain, literally, on each end, no motor, to cut down trees with, two people pulling back and forth with the chain.

It was quite a sight to cut up trees larger than twelve inches in diameter where a motorized chain saw would normally have been needed to remove fallen trees. This piece of chain proved handy on several occasions. We even had some fun competing with each other during the week to see if a regular cross cut saw or an old chain saw could cut through a large log faster. On one day Ed and I used the literal chain
continued on next page...



Ed Benson rolling ball to gauge outslope, to ensure that this trail will shed water instead of keeping it on the trail. Good idea, and so simple.



Ed Benson and brother Jeff cutting log with hand held chain saw with Hank serving as a chair and Joy watching. Of course Hank's service has greater impact than merely acting as a chair, since he braces the uphill worker on such a steep slope.

saw with handles, unmotorized, and Urs Frei used the cross cut saw to take out a fallen log. I looked over to see Urs was nearly through his section when I used the old trick “Urs, your shoe is untied” to slow him down. Urs looked at this hiking boot and Ed and I went to town finishing off the log and thought we had won, but our referee Joy, who hailed from South Carolina, verified that Urs had already cut through his section, making him the winner of the event.

This was one of the many funny and humorous antics during the week, and our AHS volunteers asked us if we would host another event in 2022. The sights of Letchworth State Park, local museums, stores and the wonderful ice cream place in Nunda along with our camaraderie and humor made for a memorable volunteer vacation. My plan is to host another Alley Cat next year in Letchworth as there is another 10+ miles of trail that needs work in addition to replacing the lean-to roofs, resolving some of the issues on the Access trails among many other needs and I will request another AHS crew to help participate.

This was a fun event and you had to have been here to experience the laughs, sights and sounds. In closing, I will leave you with some tidbits that may help to inspire you to come and enjoy the event next year in addition to listing the volunteers from the American Hiking Society who came to stretch, work and eat some good food.

- Who burnt the pancakes?
- Who was proposed to with a dirty spoon?
- Who “took one for the team” by eating most of the carrot cake?
- Who had to admit he couldn’t make coffee because he doesn’t drink it?

AHS Volunteers:

Ed Benson – Virginia, Jeff Benson – New York, Joy Travis - South Carolina, Tom Dunlea – New Hampshire, Aithne Bialo-Padin – New York, Hank Martin - Oklahoma

Special Acknowledgements:

Jacqui Wensich - who helped Ann Bayley with recipes for some meals and prepared some home cooked meals at her house and shipped them to the conference center.

Letchworth Park – They allowed us to use the conference center to host our AHS and FLT crews, cook meals and enjoy some good conversation. They also approved the vast majority of work several of us had GPS’d in mapping out the work needed on the branch trail.

All the volunteers from AHS, the FLTC and parts unknown who worked hard to give hikers a vastly improved hiking trail to enjoy! 🍁

Contact: Mike Schlicht
716/ 316-4388
pageazi@yahoo.com



Hank from Oklahoma explaining how to cut a tree like a beaver. When you have a tree of greater diameter than your handy little hand chain saw, reduce the diameter by chipping out a big space with a hatchet.



Glen Owens on Map M4, taken by Patti Owens

FLT Alleycat Project Food August 2021

Ann Bayley



For anyone who wants to support trail work but is not up to working hard all day with heavy tools, cooking for the team is a real contribution. After planning the menu, you need to add up all the ingredients in all the recipes and make a master shopping list. I had 8 dozen eggs, 8 large loaves of sandwich bread, 30 drum sticks, 6 pounds of hot dogs, a LOT of cheese, 2 gallons of milk... enough for 10 people for 6 days. 6 breakfasts, lunches and dinners. I made cookie dough that would yield 100 cookies. The FLT budgeted \$1000 for the food and incidentals. The volunteers brought their own special beverages. I asked a friend to help me drive down with everything. We had 4 large coolers and both cars filled up to the windows. In both of our cars there was only just enough room for the driver; everything else was packed tight. When we unloaded, the nonperishables took up one end of a large kitchen. The refrigerator and freezer were full to bursting with food. This was without the beer.

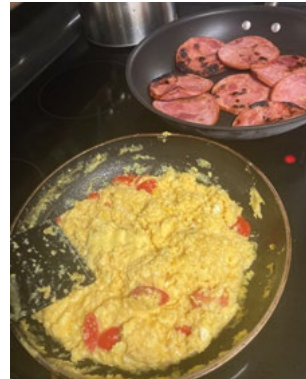
Jacqui Wensich was so generous with her time, talent and resources. She made 2 pans of vegetable lasagna, which was the favorite meal, frozen beef meatballs and sauce. In addition, she made 3 ice cream cakes and a pan of delicious pumpkin bars with cream cheese frosting. She provided enough food for an army. The volunteers ate the lasagna for lunch and breakfast. One volunteer fell in love with the pumpkin bars and finished them off over the course of several days. Jacqui has cooked for 20 alleycat projects that I know of. Each time she did it by herself. I was determined to do as well. It is hard to describe the thought and attention to detail involved. That was every bit as important as the actual cooking.

The crew would change a little from day to day because of local volunteers who came for one or two days. All would return from the trail, tired, sweaty and covered with insect bites, sunscreen and insect repellent. There were 3 showers for 10 of us so people had to take turns. There was no grumbling.

These people ate an astonishing volume of food. I figured that they would eat anything that was not raw or burnt but they really enjoyed the food and said so. I was then astonished further by the quantities of dessert they could consume. One of the volunteers is a crew leader for AHS. He said that when he was planning food, if there were no left overs, he had not made enough. One piece of meat would sit in the pan and eventually someone would eat it.

The AHS members are not all hikers. They actually pay money to travel to parts of the states and do trail work. Cooking is usually done on a rotation basis by the crew. For some of them, this was the first time they had a cook. They were great with clean up. It was a real treat to cook for these folks.

There will be a next time for me. I will need to rent a trailer or buy a bigger car to get everything down to the trail. I learned a lot from Jacqui Wensich, my hero, and from on-line recipe research. My favorite meal was the grilled drumsticks which had been marinated in Cornell sauce, a mixture of vinegar, oil, salt, herbs, sugar. I went into Castile that afternoon and bought fresh picked corn. It was Soltice variety. So good. I baked cookies every day so that there would be fresh-baked cookies for the lunches.



Blueberry muffins and cheesy eggs and ham.



Two cars were required to carry all the cartons and five coolers from Rochester down to Letchworth State Park. Thus were transported both groceries and meals that Jacqui Wensich made beforehand. Fortunately the Park's Conference Center has put in all new and larger kitchen appliances.

The best part of the day for me was after dinner. Everyone gathered around the fireplace with a beverage of some kind and we talked. We were all doing this out of a desire to do something worthwhile so we had a lot of common ground. It is an experience I recommend to anyone who wants to contribute but is not up to long hours of trail work.

All the best to Michaela and Mike who each left to go work on their next projects and to Irene Szabo, Christy Post, and Deb Nero who stopped in to cheer us on and deliver things. Thanks to all the volunteers who did such great work. 🍁



I was excited when we moved from Bloomfield to Bath, back at the end of 1995, because we'd be living close to the Finger Lakes Trail. And in the spring, guided by my official Steuben County road map, I started thoroughly enjoying it. It must have been a year or so later that I pulled a membership brochure from the registration box east of Aulls Road on M13, figuring that if I was going to keep walking on the trail, I ought to pay something to help with the upkeep.

And on I went, cheerfully hiking, until late October 2005, when I started to feel ... off. And on November 1 I crashed. Losing weight. Dropping blood pressure. No interest in food. Constantly falling asleep. Losing muscular strength. Forgetting things. And feeling cold – horribly, horribly cold. I'd lie in a warm bath as long as I could manage, but would soon be shivering again. Our cat was my best friend, pressed up against me as I lay covered up in bed wearing multiple layers of clothing.

Not much hiking in the spring of '06, though I just managed to lead a hike uphill along the Mitchellsville Gorge. As we approached the County Route 13 my vision suddenly became like a photo negative for about sixty seconds, and that was the last hike. By June I had lost about 60 pounds, and I couldn't sit up without a chair back to support me. I figured that I had less than a month to live, and most of my family and friends figured the same.

At just about the last possible moment doctors (including our own Randy Weidner, who writes *The Naturalist* for this magazine) pulled the right diagnosis out of a hat. Addison's Disease – a vanishingly rare wasting condition, incurable but easy to treat, with steroids twice a day to replace those that my body no longer generates. I started taking them on a Saturday, and on Tuesday noticed just a little spring in just a few steps. One August day I had an explosion of strength and energy, climbing steep trails all over Mossy Bank Park.

But that was it. Just one day. I ate again, I regained weight, I stayed awake, I no longer suffered that Dante-esque cold, but I was still worn down, and beaten down. In February '07 our elder son Josh dragged me out to Penn Yan and Keuka Outlet Trail, and we managed a few hundred yards each way, despite a cold wind and about three inches of snow. After we finished I was shaking at Dunkin' Donuts, not from cold, but from depletion.

We went back a week later, and we even got an early spring that year, with snakes and frogs and turtles and all. I'd walked the entire route (a rail trail) before, and with Josh's help determined to do it again, and by summer I had! (Twice, in fact, walking out and back in segments.)

I returned to the FLT, and at some point I completed walking the Main Trail from one side of Steuben County to the other. (Twice) Then I decided that I would work very deliberately on my recovery by completing the Bristol Hills Trail. I had done much of Map B3, so piece by piece I finished it below Bean Station Road, then went on toward B2. The BHT has a lot of ups and a lot of downs, and some are steep and some are long, so it was a struggle for a guy

doing this in order to recover his strength. And in early July of 2010 I walked from the north and west into a little shop in Naples and celebrated with a sandwich for finishing the BHT. Once I'd hiked back to my car I gave myself a round of applause for having end-to-ended it twice.

It took me a couple of years to get the new Crystal Hills Trail done (twice), and a couple of weeks later I started on the wonderful Interlaken Trail, just finishing (twice) before winter weather set in.

Since then I've finished Maps M9-M14 and the Letchworth Trail, and I hope this summer to finish M15, and I've also done the MFHL, the QCML, the Texas Hollow Loop, the Cranberry Bog, and various non-FLT hikes, plus retracing old ground. Being alone in the woods and the fields does my PTSD soul a world of good. But now... literally... where do I go from here?

Though my Addison's is under control, I still only get a few hours of output each day, and that's EVERYTHING – hiking, driving, paying bills, writing articles, washing dishes – whatever. So driving an hour, hiking for two hours, and then driving back, withdraws four hours from the bank for that day, which is pretty close to the limit. I once had hopes of becoming a Branch Trail end-to-ender, and I guess could manage the Onondaga Trail, over time, with good organization and help from my family. But the Conservation Trail is a good long drive from Bath, and even if I did it without doubling back, six miles a day (probably about my reasonable limit now, and I maybe couldn't do that two days in a row) it would take twenty days, and that's not including commitment for travel and possible overnights.

Soooo... I re-hike trails, of course. I'll surely do the Interlaken again, and probably the Crystal Hills. I've just replaced my maps, so I've already started picking up any re-routes from M9 to M15, and the BHT. There's much of the Greenway Trail I haven't done, and trails in Keuka Lake State Park. I'm doing the Outlet Trail again this year. Maybe I'll take up Volkssports again.

My wife and our sons are incredible supporters, and are willing to live with my limitations. I owe the world to them, and to Josh in particular for dragging me out that day... and to Randy and his colleagues... and to the Outlet Trail... and to the Bristol Hills Trail. And to the Finger Lakes Trail, a footpath across New York (the parts I can easily reach, anyway), forever.

Carpe viam (seize the way).

Kirk, I know you're not the only one to be sabotaged by your own body. Many of our well-known hiker friends have just faded away quietly, stymied by various ailments or slowed in general by advancing age. I'll confess that I myself can barely walk at all due to spinal crud in my lower back, probably damage from over-enthusiased weed whacking while doing trail work. Without the grocery cart to lean on now, I don't know how I'd get through Wegmans each week! Yes, I miss certain pieces of well-known trail terribly, but so far my memories are intact. Editor Irene. 🍁

A Journey Born From Injury

Emily Flagg, End-to-End #495



“Embrace Life” – This is not just a phrase on one of my rings; it is a mantra that holds true in my heart. How, you might ask, does a phrase on a ring relate to a story of 52 days spent adventuring 587 miles across New York State? And, how did I trek those miles injured? Well, put up your feet (they get tired after hours on the trail after all) and join me as I retrace my steps through magical woodlands, small upstate towns, across paved and gravel country roads and endless state forests, breaking trail in several feet of snow, stopping for jaw dropping hilltop views and restful creek side lunch stops, embracing “Type II fun” downpours in 30-something degree temps, quiet solo miles and some with our 4-legged friend Luna, as well as many miles that clicked by accompanied by friends and family, generating conversation and laughter that echoed through the silence of those special places.



Ken Schaible

Trailhead on Map M17, Emily with her dog Luna.

Summer 2018, I was training for the Twisted Branch 100k (which takes place on the Bristol Hills branch of the FLT), when a minor injury had me sidelined from racing the event. After I processed this disappointing news, I embraced the change in direction life presented and took a peek into my adventure bucket list. I was aware of the Finger Lakes Trail from running branch trails and seeing white blazes on other hiking outings, but *what was it really?* A

nearly 600-mile trail extending across New York State? That sounds amazing! I’m in. I then and there set my new goal, ordered the full set of maps, and set a date for Day 1 (Embrace Life!). Since I work full time, I would be dedicating many weekends for the next two and half years to accomplishing this goal of reaching the new terminus at Slide Mountain.

The journey began with my husband, Ken, and me immediately soaking in the woodsy wonders as we meandered through Allegany State Park, crossing the Pennsylvania/New York state line and official main trail Mile 0. The following weekend (and also our anniversary), Ken had an unfortunate accident and broke

his ankle. This meant I would now be continuing my eastward trek solo, without Ken helping as my crew, spending numerous hours transporting me to starts and patiently waiting for me at the day’s end (thank you!), but also joining me for miles when he was able.

Making my way by foot across the state fueled my soul, rejuvenated my body, cleared my mind, and shed life stresses. I craved the FLT weekends with a sense of giddiness as I packed up the car and headed south. My cheeks curled up as a grin formed across my face at the sight of the hills and forests in the distance. As I trekked from map to map, county to county, one state forest into another, I frequently felt in awe of such varied terrain and landscapes within my own home state. Every outing, every hour for that matter, presented something different – plant life emerging through the fresh spring soil, splashes of color lining the trail as the trees shed another year of growth, an endless blanket of white from a recent winter storm, a sea of ferns giving way to a meandering path, nature sightings (I managed to get one momma bear and cub sighting), pine forests, expansive hilltop views... Despite some of the challenges met over the 52 days on the trail, including a final summit push with Ken and friends (with crew support from my parents!) on an under 40-degree drenching rainy day, I am incredibly grateful for the experiences and memories made along the way. Thank you to everyone who shared miles with me and helped to spot the next white blaze (“there’s one!”). Also, a special and final thank you to the property owners who give access to their land and the volunteers who maintain the trails, because certainly this adventure would not be possible without them. 🍁

*Friends
gather on
Slide Mtn.
to celebrate
Emily's finish
on May 30,
in pouring
rain, temps
below 40!*



Beth

A Naturalist's View

D. Randy Weidner



There are many delights one might experience while hiking the Finger Lakes Trail in autumn. Cooler air is a welcome relief from the heat and humidity of summer. Color change of the deciduous woods only enhances the visual appeal of the many vistas and any wooded trail. Bird and insect activity might be waning, but mammals are a bit more active, preparing as they do for the upcoming winter. Chipmunks and squirrels are caching nuts. Deer and bears are feeding vigorously. All this activity makes the observant hiker more likely to encounter wildlife.

There is one bird that is present year around along the entire length of the Finger Lakes Trail, and by virtue of its size, hard to miss: the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). New York Department of Environmental Conservation estimates the current population of Wild Turkeys to be 16-25 birds per square mile over the area through which runs our Trail. But it was not always thus. Wild Turkeys had been extirpated from New York for about 100 years, and attempts to re-establish wild populations using domestic birds failed repeatedly. By 1948 a few Wild Turkeys had crossed the Pennsylvania border into western New York. Finding favorable habitat, the wild populations grew and spread across our southern counties. Eventually their numbers were so great that some were trapped and transferred to other parts of New York, and even to other states. Peaking at a population of perhaps 300,000 in 2001, today New York is home to an estimated 180,000 Wild Turkeys.

perhaps an inch long in jakes but up to nearly a foot long in toms, and his prominent spurs off the rear of the foot, over an inch and a half long in older toms but just nubbins in jakes. Hen Wild Turkeys are more rusty-brown with a blue-gray head and average 9-12 pounds in weight.



Anne Keddy



Nancy Peek

Wild Turkeys are indeed big birds. Adult males, referred to as “gobblers,” or “toms” for older birds and “jakes” in their first year, will stand 2 ½ feet tall and may weigh 25 pounds by autumn. Gobblers are very dark, appearing black all over except for the brown, striped wing tips. Especially in spring, a gobbler’s featherless head will be white with blues and reds on their face, neck, wattle, and snood (the fleshy appendage drooping over their bill). Other characteristics of a gobbler is his “beard,” a clump of thin, oily, closely adherent feathers hanging down from his chest,

Wild Turkeys have an elaborate mating ritual in spring. Males begin gobbling from their roosts before dawn, and hens will answer with yelps and clucks. After flying down from their trees, males attract females by gobbling, then strutting about with their tails fanned out, chests puffed up, wings drooped down, and vocalizing a thrumming sound. When hens become receptive, they will be mated daily by a gobbler, laying 12 or more eggs a season, one per day. Nests are often at the base of a tree or in a thicket, often on a slope offering the sitting hen a good view of her surroundings. The nest is in a shallow scraped out bowl of leaves, later lined with feathers plucked from the brood patch on



Nancy Peek

her lower breast. After an incubation of 25-31 days chicks hatch, feathered and able to walk. These chicks follow their mother, growing through the summer, and as poults in fall, attain nearly the size of the hen.

By autumn, two or three hens with their poults may gather together in a common flock. As you walk the trail, look for areas where leaves have been scratched down to the soil, a sign of foraging turkeys. Turkeys survive on mast, nuts, seeds, and fruits from forest plants and trees, and also readily eat insects, snails, and waste agricultural grain. While the Wild Turkey is primarily a bird of the woods, returning to roost in a tree every night, they readily enter fields to feed. I have watched multi-brood groups, strung out abreast and covering most of a hayfield, sweep across the field like a military maneuver, heads periodically striking at grasshoppers and other insects they flush.

Wild Turkeys, although perfectly capable of flying, prefer to walk. Therefore, look ahead as you hike and you might see them moving through the woods. Being quite shy, Wild Turkeys run off when they sense a threat, so you will not see them for long. Their sense of vision and hearing is very acute. An old saying is that if an acorn drops in the woods at 100 yards, the turkey saw it, the deer heard it, and the bear smelled it. Wild turkeys will see any movement you make and usually run off in alarm. Should you really surprise them, a few might take to flight in a great commotion of wing-flaps and breaking branches. While I have never seen it, Wild Turkeys are also capable of swimming, tucking in their wings, spreading their tails, and kicking.

While the scientific binomial for many species is descriptive, the one for Wild Turkeys is no help. *Meleagris* is Greek for Guinea Fowl, a distantly related African bird. Worse is the species name, *gallopavo*, *gallo* meaning barnyard fowl (chicken) and *pavo* referring to peacock. This species name seems to arise from a mistaken early Spanish notion that the Wild Turkey was the result of crossing a chicken and an Asian peafowl. In truth, the Wild Turkey has purely American origins. Early Spanish explorers brought some back home after visiting Mexico and started breeding them. Trade ships that ultimately delivered turkeys to England

from Spain, often originated in the Middle East, and the English apparently assumed these birds came from Turkey. Turkeys became very popular in England, and the Pilgrims brought some along on the Mayflower, returning the bird to its rightful home. Becoming the main course of Thanksgiving dinners probably goes back to this story, although there now exists considerable skepticism about the details of any Pilgrim feast with the natives.

And while we are discussing turkey tales, there is an old saw about Ben Franklin desiring the Wild Turkey, not the Bald Eagle, to be our national bird. Ben never said that, nor spoke against the symbolic eagle. But in a letter to his daughter, Sarah Bache, in 1784, he did mention that he considered the eagle of low moral character because he steals fish from the Osprey, and also a coward because he is chased by Kingbirds. Commenting that the eagle on an official crest looked more like a turkey, Dr. Franklin praised the turkey as a native American, and although vain and silly, believed the turkey would not hesitate to attack any brigade of red-coated British Grenadiers that dared invade an American barnyard. How quintessentially Franklin!

Enjoy your autumnal hikes through our Finger Lakes region and keep a sharp eye out for this magnificent big bird, the Wild Turkey. Should you encounter one, you too will be able to spread some turkey tales. 🍁

From your editor: As recently as the earliest 1970s, my sighting of a flock of turkey taking flight in Letchworth's woods during the Christmas Audubon bird count was unusual enough that columnist Floyd King added my report to his Sunday Outdoors article in Rochester's *Democrat & Chronicle*. Since those days, as described above, they have become much more common.

Those eggs are rock hard! One of my dogs found a nest in my hedgerow so wandered around for quite a while, trying to bite into one. The sound of her big teeth on the egg sounded more like she was trying to eat a rock, and it took her some time to crack it.



Nancy Peek

Bunny Kramer's Gift to the Finger Lakes Trail

Christy Post



The FLT can be a lonely place. You might spend a day or more out on the trail and not see another soul. Finding ways to connect with the trail community can be hard, especially in the last year-and-a half when group hikes and other events have been cancelled.

Even before the pandemic, many FLT members and friends found ways to connect online, specifically in the Facebook group Finger Lakes Trail Hikers & Friends.

If you're a member of this group, you may not know that it wasn't created or managed by the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. It was created by Bunny Kramer, who quietly volunteered her time and highly diplomatic talents for years before getting help from the FLTC.

Bunny's primary interest is women and hiking. "I was planning to start the Appalachian Trail in 2013 and I was part of a Facebook group for the AT. I was shocked to see that women's concerns just weren't taken seriously,

particularly concerns about safety on the trail." Even after her AT hike Bunny continued to follow the group, and grew increasingly bothered by how women were treated. "When women asked legitimate questions about safety the responses and comments were degrading and inappropriate. A woman would ask if it was safe to hike alone and the responses would be along the lines of 'It depends what you look like!' It was infuriating."

Instead of just getting angry about it (though she got plenty angry!), Bunny took action. She created the All Women All Trails Hiking Group, a space just for women to support other women in their hiking and backpacking adventures. Now nearly 25,000 members strong, this is the largest Facebook group that Bunny manages. In addition to providing a safe space for women to talk about their hiking adventures and to share insights and advice, Bunny is taking the group to a new level now, and is organizing women-only hiking vacations. The first trip – to Iceland in September 2022 – sold out in just 21 minutes.

These Facebook groups have become strong communities, as anyone who is part of the Finger Lakes Trail Hikers & Friends group can attest. And creating these communities takes a lot of work. Bunny is a Certified Community Manager with Facebook, and manages dozens of groups. It is important to keep conversations focused on shared interests and purpose, and to ensure that everyone is treated respectfully. The groups have rules, and all members must abide by them. Managing this is no easy task. It requires a significant amount of time and a high level of oversight, so Bunny recruits and trains moderators to help her. She currently manages 23 Admins and Moderators over 17 Facebook Groups.

I commented to Bunny that this seems like a full-time job and she laughed. "I know I should be doing something I'm paid for with all the time I spend on this! But I love doing this. I love connecting people."

I ask Bunny how she came to create and manage the Finger Lakes Trail Hikers & Friends Group, which just hit the 5,000-member mark. "I always camped and hiked, but my first backpacking trip was on the Bristol Hills Branch. My partner purchased all the maps, and we started to feel overwhelmed. This was much bigger than we thought! But I didn't die. And I fell in love with the trail."

In 2015, Facebook made some changes to how business pages and groups functioned, and businesses



Firefly (trail name)

Thrilled to be entering Great Smoky Mountains National Park at mile 166.

had the opportunity to create both—but they are separate and very different. Pages function like websites. Businesses can share information and market themselves to followers, but followers aren't able to post content on the page, they can only react to what the business shares by liking or commenting.

Groups are very different. Groups encourage involvement of members. They are the community space where members share pictures and stories, ask questions, and engage with each other. Groups are the place where the community grows through shared interests and mutual support.

So when this change happened in 2015, the Finger Lakes Trail created a page, but not a group. Bunny had already been managing other hiking groups, and saw the need to create one specifically for hikers of the Finger Lakes Trail.

"I've never been an 'official' volunteer with the FLTC," Bunny tells me. "I created and managed the group because I love the Finger Lakes Trail, and I *really* love the Finger Lakes Trail community. I reached out a few times to members of the Board of Managers, but there was little interest in being involved with the group, so I just did it."

In the last year and a half the group exploded as more and more people became aware of the Finger Lakes Trail and got involved with the Finger Lakes Trail Conference through the FLT50 Challenge, FLT Connect presentations, and other initiatives designed to raise awareness about the Finger Lakes Trail and the FLTC. Now more than ever, Bunny's expertise managing Facebook groups is benefitting the FLTC in ways most people aren't even aware of.

"This group is generally pretty good," Bunny says, "but it still requires a lot of oversight. Some people who join think the group is for any trail in the Finger Lakes region rather than a specific trail system, so we have to constantly educate about that. And of course there are always some trolls and spammers who join the group to stir up trouble or to sell something. We work hard to manage that, but as the group grows it becomes more and more difficult to keep those people out."



Rosie Rosie (trail name)

Scrambling up Albert Mountain in Georgia which marks 100 miles on the AT.

The FLTC is so grateful to Bunny for creating this Facebook community, and for managing and building it over the last seven years. This year, she recruited some help. Peg Fuller (FLTC Board), Patti Owens (Volunteer FLT50 Coordinator and part-time staff for FLTC), and Kim Morse (newly recruited member of the FLTC's Communications Committee), all serve as Moderators, and I serve as both Admin and Moderator. Bunny has spent a lot of time teaching and training us, and I for one have developed a true appreciation for all the time she has spent on this.

If you're not a member, please join! You are sure to find some old friends and make some new ones. 🍁

Survey Markers Along the Trail

Terry R. McConnell



Mike has just finished cleaning his mess kit after dinner on this warm August evening in 1939. The first stars have begun to appear, along with the first bats, and his thoughts turn to the night's work ahead. Mike is a *lightkeeper*, an employee of the federal government. It is his job to light a lamp on top of a 75-foot pole nearby, wait a couple of hours, and then turn it off again. That's pretty much the whole job description, except for setting up a campsite among the ruins of an abandoned farm on top of hills like this one, breaking camp the next day, and then repeating the whole thing on top of another hill the day after that. Admittedly this is boring work, and lonely too, but during these depression years any job is a good job.

Eleven o'clock comes, and then midnight, and Mike begins to focus his attention on the summit of distant Connecticut Hill, seen only in jagged dark outline against the starry background. Finally, sometime after 2am, the awaited signal appears – a sequence of long and short flashes of light from the top of the hill, telling him in Morse code that he should turn off his light and go to bed.

Mike is not a real person, but many young men like him were lucky enough to be hired by the Coastal and Geodetic Survey (CGS), a branch of the Department of Commerce that has been renamed the National Geodetic Survey (NGS). During the 1930s and 1940s, teams of CGS surveyors fanned out across New York State to complete the survey of a *triangulation network*, a grid of triangles whose corners represent the most precisely located points on Earth. The signal Mike was waiting for came from two men standing on top of a temporary scaffold that had been erected earlier in the day. One of the two men, a highly trained engineer called the *observer*, used a Theodolite (a telescope-like instrument) to measure the angle between two sides of one of the triangles. The work was painstaking and often took hours for a single measurement. It needed to be done late at night because the level of precision demanded the still air of the wee hours. The observer would center the cross hairs of his theodolite on Mike's light, and then on some other lightkeeper's light, and in so doing measure the angle between two sides of one of the grid triangles. The other man on the scaffold was called the *recorder*, and he was probably the one who sent Mike the "all clear." His job was mainly to write down the cryptic list of numbers recited by the observer in the course of his work. These numbers would be crunched later at the CGS home office to compute the precise latitude and longitude of each vertex (triangle corner) in the network.

Directly under the theodolite, at the end of a long string, a plumb-bob hung poised above a small triangle inscribed in the center of a brass disk. This disk was mounted in the top of a small concrete monument, about one foot square, that had been poured by other members of the survey team before building the scaffold. The triangle, or more precisely, the small dot at the center of the triangle, represents the exact point whose location the survey team had been sent to measure. Because of the need to see previously

surveyed corners (or often, the lights mounted above them), it was common to position these survey monuments at the very tops of the tallest hills around. Since, as every achy hiker knows, the FLT also seeks out the tops of these same hills, it is not uncommon to encounter the fruits of CGS surveyors' work as you traverse the trail today.

Indeed, if you hike over the summit of Connecticut Hill from the west you are almost bound to trip over the survey monument shown in Figure 1. As you can see, the monument encroaches on the trail. Behind it there is an orange pylon called a "witness post" that was placed by the NGS to help later searchers find the monument. You can see another very prominent example at the top of Virgil mountain. As you pass the summit on the trail, look just to your right (south) and you will see another survey monument nestled in a shrine-like setting just off the trail.

If you look carefully at Figure 1 you will notice that the brass disk has an arrow on it rather than the triangle described above. Many people lump all survey monuments together and call them "bench marks," but in reality there are a number of different types that serve different functions. The type of marker with the little triangle is technically called a "Horizontal Control Mark" and these are found among a group of 4 related monuments collectively called a *triangulation station*. Each horizontal control

Figure 1



Terry McConnell

is given a name (or *designator*) that also serves as the name of the station. Names were typically chosen by the team leader and are sometimes colorful. They may refer to the name of a hill, the name of a property owner, and sometimes the name can be quite obscure. (I believe there is at least one case where a station was named after the leader's dog.) The station on top of Connecticut Hill is named *Newfield*.

Since station names are not required to be unique, each station also receives a unique and cryptic code called its PID. If you go to the NGS website (<https://geodesy.noaa.gov>) you can find a tool that lets you look up the datasheet for a station by entering its PID. The datasheet contains a wealth of information about the station. It bristles with numbers and technical terms, but down at the very bottom there is a text section that tells how to find the station and gives a brief sketch of its history. These often make quite interesting reading. Most important, of course, for searchers with a GPS device, are the exact coordinates of the mark that are listed near the top of the datasheet. The PID for Newfield is NB1807.

In addition to the horizontal control mark, each station typically had 2 other monuments within 100 feet or so of the control mark called *reference marks*. You can easily recognize a reference mark because the disk has an arrow pointing towards the control mark instead of a triangle. The monument pictured in figure 1 is reference mark 2 (RM2) of station Newfield. RM1 is harder to find. When I visited the site in 2016, I found it nestled in a thicket of scrub brush about 10 feet east of a grassy path between the two radio towers. The datasheet for a station lists the exact distance and direction from the control mark to each reference mark. These were intended to be used to recover the control mark if it got destroyed without having to redo all the surveying that was needed to locate it originally.

The 4th marker in a typical station is called the *azimuth mark* and was located much further away – ¼ mile to as much as 2 miles – from the control mark. Azimuth mark disks also have an arrow, but they have “Azimuth Mark” written on the disk. They were originally designed to be line of sight intervisible with the control mark and were a convenience for later surveyors calibrating their equipment. Unfortunately, our intrepid survey teams failed to foresee that those hilltop meadows would soon turn into state forests, and it is the rare azimuth mark that is visible from its control mark today. The azimuth mark for station Newfield is an easy find. It is visible from the Y-intersection of Ridge Road and Boylan Road looking to the SE. It is nestled in the ivy, with a spooky old cemetery looming in the background, about 9 feet off a faint trail leading from road to cemetery. (The azimuth mark is at GPS 42 21 53.1 N 76 40 45.9 W).

I haven't yet mentioned the control mark Newfield itself. It happens that this station is quite unusual in that the main marker is recycled from an earlier survey and does not match the usual concrete monument with bronze disk description at all. (I lied to you earlier.) Back in 1882 New York State had conducted its own, less detailed, triangulation survey. The NYSS of 1882 normally marked its stations using granite posts with an inscribed cross on top. Sometimes the later CGS surveyors would find a perfectly good NYSS marker that they could reuse as a marker of their

own. This was the case at station Newfield. The CGS team left the stone post in place and added reference marks and an azimuth marker of their own.

To find the marker post you need to bushwhack a little in the direction of the arrow from RM2 on the FLT. Just navigate to GPS location 42 23 11.2 N 76 40 09.7 W and you will be close enough to spot the orange witness pylon that is about 4 feet west of the post. (See Figure 2.)

Let's tour one other station that is close to the trail, complete, and relatively easy to find. Station Travor (PID NB1788) is on M17, about ¼ mile west of the Tamarack Lean-to. From the lean-to, bushwhack west straight up to the top of the hill to the mark at GPS 42 18 58.3 N 76 25 37.1 W. RM1 is 43.8 meters east of Travor and RM 2 is 44.3 meters west of it. All 3 monuments have nearby witness posts that makes them quite easy to find. To reach the azimuth mark, if you are hiking from the west, go south on Travor Road for about ½ mile from the point where the trail first reaches Travor Road (mile 14.6 Rev. 11/12). The mark is on the left side of the road, 19 feet east of the centerline, at GPS 42 18 14.5 N 76 25 32.8 W.

Figure 2



Terry McConnell

If you enjoyed looking for station Tavor, I list below a few others that are relatively near the main trail or a branch trail. In each case, I list the designator (PID), the map number and approximate mileage of the nearest point on the trail, with perhaps some additional comments. I don't give the GPS coordinates. You should find them yourself by going to <https://geodesy.noaa.gov>. Click on the "Looking for Benchmarks" icon and then search by PID. This will allow you to download and view the datasheet for the given mark. (I know of at least 5 other stations quite close to the trail, but they are on private land. **Important:** Do not enter private land while benchmark hunting without first having secured the landowner's permission.)

- Boyce (NC1013) M4 Rev. 1/14 mile 7.5 Put on your big-girl bushwhack pants because the station is 0.7 miles SW through state forest. Suggest you waypoint your car so you can find your way back. Azimuth mark is easy just off Bryant Hill Road. Be careful not to stray onto private land.
- Bristol (NB1894) B1 Rev. 11/13 mile 0.0 Station is on a mound behind the observatory.
- Virgil 2 (NB1774) M19 Rev. 9/14 mile 14.7 Station mark is obvious (see above). Both reference marks are findable but difficult. I have never found the azimuth mark.
- Nottage M20 Rev. 9/15 mile 24.6 42 35 06.8 N 76 01 04.9 W Nottage is not in the NGS database because it's a USGS mark. It is a surveying nail in a concrete post 2 inches in diameter.
- Fabius 2 (NB1743) O1 Rev. 9/13 mile 17.5 then mile 1.6 Fellows Hill Loop Trail. I found the original NYSS Fabius (1) post that the CGS team gave up on buried nearby. Can you duplicate the feat? Neither the original azimuth mark nor its reset have ever been found.
- Morgan (NA2276) O1 Rev. 9/13 mile 11.5 RM1 is destroyed. The azimuth mark is very challenging. Can you find it?
- Nimrod (NA2258) M23 Rev. 3/14 mile 3.2 Going east on Johnson Road pass the azimuth mark on the left. Station is about ¾ mile up Mud Lane Road on the right behind trees. I had to brush away some dirt to find it. RM2 is destroyed – monument lying on left shoulder like a beached whale. RM1 is not found, probably destroyed by road grading.
- Berry Hill Reset (NA2254) M23 Rev. 3/14 mile 13.7 RM3 is obvious right in front of the ranger's station. Station mark is near fire tower. RM2 is on private land.

- Ludlow (NA2197) M24 Rev. 8/10 mile 7.7 Head due east for about ¼ mile to the corner of the state forest to find station mark and both reference marks. Azimuth mark has been partially unearthed and is in the ditch next to Corbin Road.

NGS still accepts recovery reports from individuals who find station marks, but their support for the station mark database will end in 2022. Physical survey marks have been rendered largely obsolete by professional gps-based units that can find the coordinates of any given point to an accuracy comparable to that of the survey grid. After 2022 it can truly be said that the government will have abandoned altogether its family of survey marks (more than 400,000 of them in the continental U.S.) That's too bad, because we live in a turbulent world, and who can say whether GPS will even exist 50 years from now? It is possible that someday small teams of surveyors will once again fan out across NYS, and perhaps our own FLT will help them reach the tops of those hills more easily than their ancestors. 🍁



Rune King, 15 months old, leading his big brother Raiden King (11 years) on trail above Robert Treman Park. Photo by Amanda King, mother.

Tony Rodriguez, Longtime FLT RTC Retires

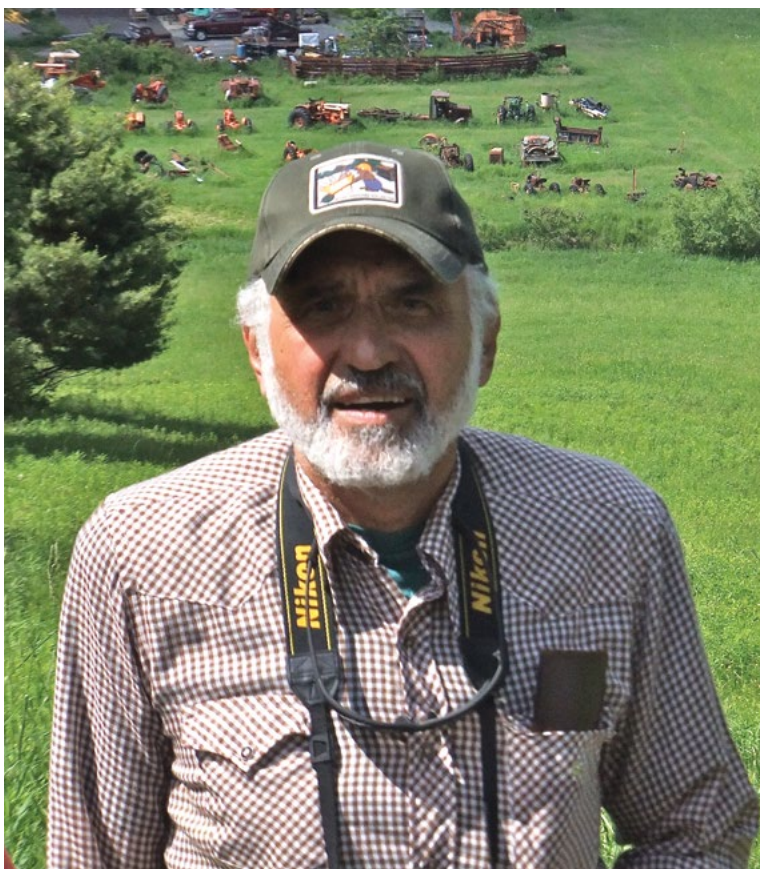
Mary Coffin



It is with sadness and deep appreciation that the Adirondack Mountain Club Onondaga Chapter (ADK-ON) has accepted Tony's resignation as Chapter Trail Chair at the end of 2021. His role as FLT Regional Trail Coordinator (RTC) for Central New York also needs to be filled. These are big shoes to fill. And these shoes or boots have walked this over 100 miles of trail with a string trimmer in hand and saw and loppers in the pack for more than 20 years, first as a maintainer and then as Coordinator and Trails Chair. As time passed ADK-On gave trail at the east end to the Bullthistles and at the west end to Cortland County stewards reducing ADK-ON FLT responsibility to a more manageable 70 miles.

Tony accepted both positions: ADK-ON Trails Chair and FLTC RTC for nearly 20 years, the longest tenure of any ADK-ON Trails Chair. During this time, Tony has coordinated FLT/NCT stewards, trail marker painters, sawyer teams, trail relocations, North Country Trail Team, DEC Region 7 relations, trail steward picnics, training workshops, building and repairing bridges and lean-tos as well as overseeing several Adirondack trails and an Adirondack Wilderness Area for which the ADK-ON Chapter assumes responsibility. Often Tony would go out solo with the string trimmer to clear a stretch of trail. He might be gone for hours, working on the trail while enjoying the woods. Tony is our "go to guy," our link between the FLTC and ADK-ON trail stewards. However, Tony is not disappearing. He will still be seen on work trips as time permits.

An unseen part of Tony's volunteer job was completing annual reports regarding work done, volunteer hours, location etc. Using information supplied by our chapter statistician Tony compiled reports for the DEC, NCTA and FLTC. Fortunately, Tony will help mentor his successor on all of the above.



Mary Coffin

Someday we'll all learn not to take photos of people whose faces are shaded by hat brims, but this is still a good one of good old Tony. Behind him is the collection of farm machinery at the bottom of a hill on the Onondaga Trail, a hill that used to be a private ski slope; our trail requires a stunning series of switchbacks to climb the rear side of this same hill!

So why does he do it? In a recent interview with Jamie Condon, ADK-ON newsletter editor, Tony indicated that he was interested in the environment and getting out into nature ever since his youth in New York City. He commented that he "always had an instinct for natural things and enjoyed visiting parks" and forests upstate. He has a special love for all animals especially dogs and stray cats. Tony is concerned about the environment and supports sustainable trails when relocations are scouted and constructed, or older trails are repaired.

The ADK-ON Chapter has recognized Tony with the Distinguished Volunteer Award and several Trail Builder of the Year Awards over the years. In 2014 FLTC recognized Tony's efforts with the Clar-Willis Award, which is appropriate, since it's reserved for "stars in the world of trail work."

Dick Frio, ADK-ON Chair, in a recent interview with Jamie Condon described Tony Rodriguez as a "soft spoken leader who is respected by all." That sums it up.

Thanks, Tony, for all you have done for the FLT, NCT and Adirondack trails. 🍁



Send **address changes** to
Finger Lakes Trail Conference
6111 Visitor Center Rd.
Mt. Morris, NY 14510
or FLTinfo@FingerLakesTrail.org

Cortland County Hike Series


Peggy Fuller



The annual county hike series is a great way to eliminate the logistical headaches of taking two cars or else walking out and back again. This spot, featuring a wonderful wide shoulder, is the end of this particular hike, so everybody parks there. School busses are hired to pick up the hikers and take them to the start. While taking a hike with approximately 100 people may sound unpleasant, people arrange themselves voluntarily in slow, medium, and fast walking groups, often with fanciful names for each. Very quickly the fast people disappear over the horizon, while those of us stopping to sniff a flower still get there eventually! Nobody has ever bumped into the group ahead of them! ▶



Peggy Fuller

The SAG wagon is a welcome sight somewhere near the middle of each hike. This station offers snacks and liquid refreshment, plus it's an "out" for anybody who discovers that he or she might have overestimated their stamina. ▶ 



Peggy Fuller

Bullthistle Trail Work



Steve Ellsworth after chain sawing a cluster of fallen trees.

Just one more of a day's worth of chain sawing by Steve Ellsworth, with photographer Warren Johnsen acting as his helper.





Answers to the Summer 2021 “Name That Map!” Quiz

So, you hiked the FLT or parts of it. Let's see how observant you were!
Send your guess to: Jacqui at jwensich@rochester.rr.com

Previous Location:

New Picture:



Terri Dempki

Lisa Barrett and her dog Annie.

Previous “Name that Map”, of concrete blocks and a bench:

Correctly Identified:

Theresa and Jay Evans on the final hike of his first and her second main trail end to end hike.

Lisa Barret and Annie

Terri and William Dempski and Zorro

Dan Drogone (DC) comments:

I remember this spot very well, as I recently hiked that on May 31st. M10 not far from stepping off Laine Rd. It was my first day back on the FLT after a short hiatus due to the loss of a brother



Marty Ruszaj

to COVID. When you pass the concrete block throne, there is a beautiful pine forest with a thick duff floor. I had a lot on my mind, and nature gave me some much needed peace. That day, I hiked an out and back for 22 miles, way more than I had intended. I am so grateful for all the volunteers and landowners who make the trail possible. Peace and Happy Trails

Peter Wybron, Area Coordinator explains:

Map 10 off Laine Road near the Upper Glen Ave intersection. The concrete blocks were used by the landowner to make temporary benches for weddings in the woods. The bench was built by the Boy Scouts as an Eagle project.

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Cuddle up to the honey locust tree. Not. Photo by Mark Valites

