

Finger Lakes Trail NEWS

Winter 2021



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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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Winter 2021



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About the Cover:

Hikers from the Cayuga Trails Club savor a wonderful fall day on the Interloken Trail, a branch of the Finger Lakes Trail. Photo by Gary Mallow.

President's Message

Pat Monahan



I must reflect on this fall in my neck of the woods (Steuben County/Corning). It was good and bad. Let me start with the good. The leaf peepers (including me) had to wait a couple of weeks for the fall colors to emerge but it was worth the wait. The bright reds of the maples turned the forests on fire with color. The other trees just added beauty everywhere you looked.

Now on to the bad news. I cannot begin to tell you the number of times we faced torrential rain storms. We used to call them gully washers. Years ago, Lynda Rummel (retired Vice President of Trail Quality) commented that the worst enemy of the trail was water. I must agree. One stream crossing on the Crystal Hills Trail (CH1, Erwin Hollow Rd) has been moved 3 times. The creek chewed the bank to an 8-foot cliff from the road to the creek bed. With the help of the DEC (Tad Norton) another reroute was located. Unfortunately, the river did it again in October. We will try it again further upstream. Recently, the rivers have been boiling (Cohocton, Canisteo, Chemung and Tioga) and caused terrible damage in the Woodhull/Addison area. The property damage was horrific but fortunately, there was no loss of life.

All of these things make me so grateful to all those who give their time and work so hard in support of the trail. Volunteers across the trail manage these kinds of situations throughout the year so that thousands of trail users can enjoy the Finger Lakes Trail in every season.

We need more of those volunteers – we need you! Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization and of the trail itself. Please consider volunteering in some way. We are currently looking to fill several leadership positions – our VP for Trail Quality and Regional Trail Coordinators, for instance. These are exciting opportunities to make meaningful contributions. The VP for Trail Quality provides oversight and guidance to all trail related issues, and Regional Trail Coordinators oversee large sections of the trail



Larry Blumberg

and assist trail maintainers with their individual sections. Please email volunteer@fingerlakestrail.org or contact the office at 585-658-9320 to learn more.

I am grateful always to our landowners as well. Nearly 50 % of our trail is on private property. We could not be a continuous foot trail without their permission to walk on their property. If you see them out on their property, be sure to thank them. Stay on the trail and respect the landowner's wishes.

As the temperature gets colder and the ground turns white, find time to get outside and **“Go take a hike!!”** 🍁

Foothills Youngest Trail Steward

Teddy Hilburger, with help from his father Mike, maintains the West Bucktooth to East Bucktooth Roads section of the Conservation Trail on Map M2/CT

Along with the family dogs, this team is the very best!!!



Main Trail End-to-End #512

Gail Mortimer



My friend, Thomas Markel, introduced me to the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) on January 13, 2019. I never considered hiking the trail to completion, even though I had hiked on some of the spurs of the FLT. Completion was on September 28, 2021, due to both coronavirus and trying to get our hiking schedules in sync.

I never would have made it without Tom there pushing me. Since I wasn't in shape, I was constantly whining about the hills that would "never end." I also seriously considered asking some snowmobilers to take me back to my car on a 12-mile snowshoe hike. First time I'd been snowshoeing and I was beat. I would have gladly paid them. In the end, I wouldn't have been happy with myself if I had, so we trudged on. It started to snow, too. That was fun. Lol.

We met one couple on the FLT who asked what was my favorite spot? The whole trail counts, because it served as an opportunity to recharge and get in touch with myself, through the challenges and just the beauty and quietness of being with nature. I remem-



Tom Markel

ber walking through a few sections and feeling that the forest was ancient, decrepit, forgotten and forlorn. I actually felt sorry for it, but yet, marveled at its beauty. I remember walking through forests with fern-covered understories. This transported me back to the dinosaurs and I expected to see Velociraptors charging! In the Catskill area we were walking down a hill into a cathedral of hemlocks with only an occasional bird twittering quietly in the background. The floor of the forest was covered with a shimmering layer of silver gossamer. It was gorgeous. We were trying to figure out what was causing this gorgeous (to be redundant) image. We discovered that the sun was filtering through the hemlocks, just enough, to cause the water in the pond located at the feet of the

trees to shimmer. These images are some of the many that will stay with me.

Again, thanks to Tom for putting up with my whining and getting me up and out hiking on a gorgeous trail. 🍁

David Sadler FLT End-to-Ender #502



Christine Gregorie

I was introduced to the FLT by Peg Schmidt Fuller on a Veteran's Day Memorial Hike on Nov. 11, 2017, a few weeks after joining the Bullthistle Hiking Club at the Wolf Mountain Festival near Smyrna, N.Y.

On April 8, 2018, exactly six months after joining BHC I decided to hike the FLT end-to-end. It has been an interesting and challenging journey. Early on I had some serious medical issues which put me in the Syracuse Veteran's Hospital for two days and I was unable to hike for several months. Those issues are completely cleared up now.

In my opinion M4 was the easiest and M32 was the most difficult and dangerous of the hikes. The hikes have been a mixture of thru, drop-offs, spotted and solo out and back hikes. I completed the E2E on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, at 4:05 PM on M31 at the D.E.C. Alder Lake parking area.

On my Finger Lakes Trail end-to-end journey I have had the pleasure to hike many miles with Sigi Schwinge, David Gohn, and Karen Ellsworth, all great hikers and people. Now on to the FLT branch trails, of which I have completed only the Onondaga. 🍁

Executive Director Report

Deb Nero



As I write this it is early November but the weather outside is still gorgeous. Cool at night and sunny with perfect hiking temperatures during the day. It's proving a bit of a struggle to sit at the computer and write this, but I want to share with you some of the news about the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

Let's begin with the successful trail projects and programs from 2021. The Cortland Cross County Hike series was a big success this year! To date there are 75 hikers who have completed the six hikes and have been awarded their patch and completion certificate. The last hike in September was followed by a dish-to-pass picnic at the Blodgett Mills Town Park. Despite all the hungry hikers there was still more food than could be consumed. Thanks to all the hikers who hiked in Cortland County this year!

Finger Lakes Trails Day was held at the Steuben Brewing Company outside Hammondsport on Saturday, October 2. This event celebrates our trail and those who make it a success – trail maintainers, sponsors, landowners, and hikers. The festivities included morning hikes followed by vendors and information tables at the Brewery in the afternoon with music in the evening. Mother Nature joined into the fun and provided great weather.

Successful trail projects this year included two Alley Cats – one on the Holland Ravines section of the Conservation Branch Trail and another on the Letchworth Branch Trail in Letchworth State Park. The Letchworth project was a joint venture with a volunteer work crew of American Hiking Society members. A new effort, organized and carried out by Jon Bowen, was workdays for volunteers who wanted to help and learn about trail maintenance.

My deep thanks to all the people involved in planning and carrying out these projects and all the extra care that was taken in consideration of COVID. Among many others the organizers include staff members Director of Marketing and Communications Christy Post, Director of Operations Debbie Hunt, and Director of Trail Development Michaela Aney, as well as officers and Board members, Director of Crews and Construction Mike Schlicht, Vice President of Trail Maintenance Jon Bowen, Chair of the Program Committee Peg Fuller, and volunteer Sigi Schwinge.

Looking ahead to 2022, planning is well underway for the Tompkins County Cross County Hike series, Trails Day, a Fall Weekend get-together for our members, and several Alley Cats and other trail projects. Check the monthly e-newsletter Footnotes for updates and information about registration for all events.

I have been spending time working on the FLTC proposed budget for 2022. This has traditionally been done primarily by the Executive Director. Due to the retirement of Quinn Wright and the addition of the new staff member Director of Trail Development Michaela Aney, the budget planning process has become a joint effort among the ED, Director of Trail Development, Director of Operations and Director of Marketing and Communications.

I would like to thank the three Directors for all their hard work on this project. The Finance Committee contributes to this annual job, too.

The organization is doing well financially despite the challenges of COVID. Two important sources of income, memberships and map sales, are both continuing to increase as people discover the advantages and freedom of spending time outside. I hope all of you contributed to the end of year appeal as your donations are very important to the continued financial health and well-being of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

At the Annual Membership Meeting in September the members voted in a slate of officers for the Board of Managers; welcome to Ann Bayley, Christine DeGolyer, Tim Holahan, Terry Meacham, and Lisette Smith!

In October Michaela Aney and I attended one of the most enjoyable meetings I can remember. The meeting was organized by the Tompkins County Parks and Trails Network group (my home county) and included representatives from at least 12 different groups involved in developing or maintaining all sorts of trails in the county. Attendees came from the City of Ithaca, Cornell University and Ithaca College, the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT has worked with the FLTC on acquiring easements and land to preserve the FLT), rail trails like Dryden Rail Trail (which includes the Jim Schug Trail, part of the FLT) and the Black Diamond Trail, the volunteer group that maintains trails in Hammond Hill State Forest (again, part of the FLT) and of course the Finger Lakes Trail. It was inspiring to hear all the work being done by so many people to expand the outdoor opportunities for everyone.

A large amount of my personal time this summer and fall—opposed to ED time—has been spent checking the condition of the Finger Lakes Trail! I completed my fourth end-to-end of the main trail on July 4 this year – a 1-day belated birthday gift to myself. Since July 4 I have hiked 33% of the trail towards my 5th E2E. Every time I'm out on the FLT I re-discover my feelings of joy and peace. This keeps me grounded when I sit at my computer and work on my various FLTC volunteer activities and Executive Director tasks. Happy hiking to all! 🍁



Colin Parrish

Contact: Deb Nero
fltcexecdir@fingerlakestrail.org

A Naturalist's View

D. Randy Weidner



Winter has a way of laying things bare. In the mixed and deciduous woods through which runs our Finger Lakes Trail, all deciduous trees and nearly all herbaceous plants have shed their leaves. What is left to see are the skeletal trunks and branches of woody growth. These structures are both attractive and telling in their own way.

There are innumerable fascinating forms to catch the eye, wooden sculptures rendered by the hand of Nature. These works are only enhanced by a dusting of snow here, or an encrustation of ice there. Burls and oddly broken branches become masterpieces when decorated by frozen precipitation. Landscapes and vistas attract more attention, but the artistic fine details of a winter wood should not be overlooked.

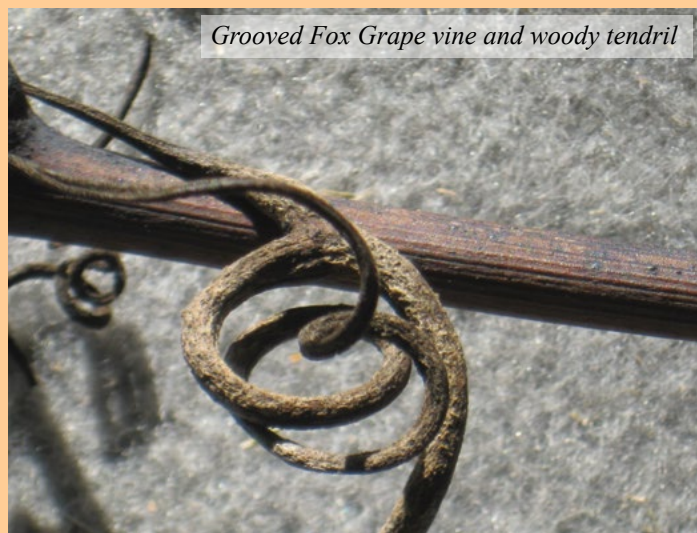
Competent naturalists and all foresters are not the least deterred by the lack of leaves. These wizards of tree identification learn all that is necessary to identify woody plants by the character of the bark, the arrangement and appearance of the buds on twigs, plus a few other observable traits. Not bothered by interfering green growth, those so educated can move quickly through a wood and readily develop a list of what trees are there.

Another feature that is more obvious in our leafless woods of winter are the vines. As with other flowering plants, vines may be herbaceous or woody. Like other herbaceous plants, fully herbaceous vines are gone in winter. A few others that are very slightly woody, like Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*), and the non-native Bittersweet Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) will not be discussed here, but the three largest native woody vines likely to be encountered along the Finger Lakes Trail will be described in turn.

As our Trail traverses the Finger Lakes region, it is not surprising that the most commonly encountered vine is that of grape (*Vitis* sp.). Some of these vines are from the many commercial vineyards of the region, planted unwittingly after passing through birds. Those aside, most grapevines you will encounter are

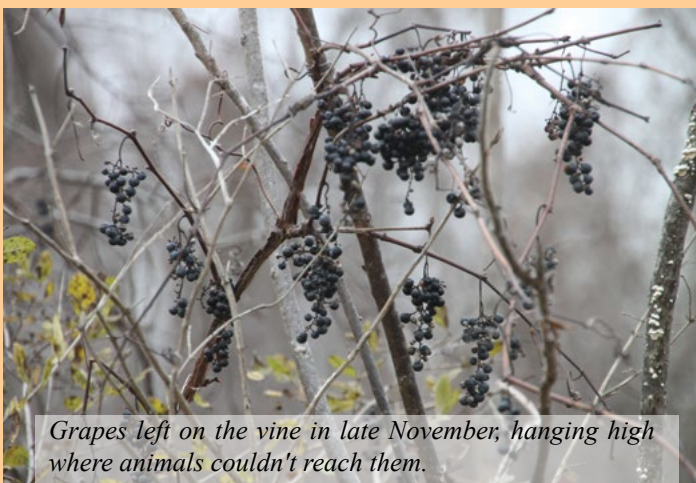
probably the native Fox Grape (*V. labrusca*), although there are a few other native *Vitis* species. The name is not related to the sly carnivorous mammal, but to the distinctive “foxy” aroma, an earthy, sweet muskiness. This odor, and the characteristic “slip-skin” feature of the fruit, persists in cultivars of this species such as Catawba, Concord, Delaware, Isabella, and Niagara.

The Fox Grape vine can reach 40 feet in length, extensively draped over adjacent tree branches. A very old stalk might reach 12 inches in diameter. Older Fox Grape bark is brown and shredded, while younger vines are often longitudinally grooved. Opposite the old leaf buds, look for either a woody tendril, or fruit shoots, often found opposite three leaves in a row. The structure that supports the fruit is finely branching, like any bunch of grapes. Fox Grape may still have some withered, small berries in winter, but these berries are favorites of birds and other wildlife. Look for this winter vine to arise from a thick tangle of vegetation.



Grooved Fox Grape vine and woody tendril

D. Randy Weidner



Grapes left on the vine in late November, hanging high where animals couldn't reach them.

Irene Szabo

Probably the least common winter woody vine along the Trail is Climbing Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*). This is a native North American plant, not to be confused with the invasive, introduced Asiatic Bittersweet (*C. orbiculatus*). Both Bittersweets are twining woody vines, wrapping themselves around adjacent trees. The bark of our native Bittersweet is smooth, thin, and grayish-brown to purplish. Asiatic



Climbing Bittersweet twining up a sapling

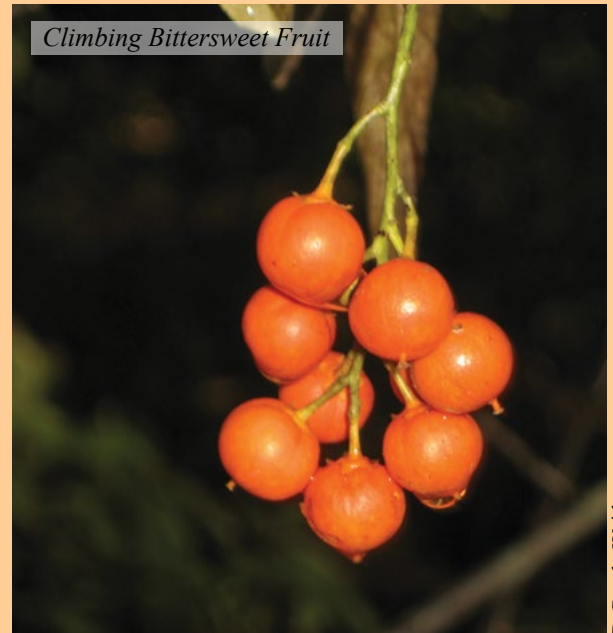
D. Randy Weidner

Bittersweet bark is rough, with dull thorns felt as bumps on the vine. The other distinguishing feature is the arrangement of the fruits, which persist into winter on both species. Native Bittersweet fruits hang in clusters, as opposed to being spaced along the vine at leaf nodes in the Asiatic species. Our native Bittersweet forms orange fruits in fall, and in winter they split open to reveal showy, scarlet seeds. Look for Bittersweet growing in rich thickets.

The name Bittersweet was given to this vine by European colonists who thought it was like their Nightshade, which they called Bittersweet. The berries and seeds of native Climbing Bittersweet are toxic, and are avoided by wildlife. Native Americans used the bark and roots as an emetic, and purportedly for venereal disease and tuberculosis. Possibly Bittersweet's best use is as a hiker's mood elevator, lifting your spirits whenever you spot the bright orange and red berries, a welcome splash of color in an otherwise white and brown winter woods.

Last but not least of our three common woody winter vines is Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). This native plant, notorious for producing long-lasting, severe contact dermatitis, is a vine everyone venturing outside needs to be able to recognize. At warmer times, the "leaves of three, let it be" warning works well, but the plant is deciduous, so in winter all you have is the vine. Make no mistake: the vine/bark is just as toxic as the leaves, if not more.

The key to winter identification of Poison Ivy is the presence of numerous aerial roots along the dark-gray bark. These aerial roots are short projections giving the vine a very fuzzy appearance. As a woody vine, Poison Ivy will climb tree trunks, fences, and walls, or just trail along the ground. Poison Ivy vines are known to have grown 150 feet in length. Sometimes the grey or whitish berries persist in winter, but birds, deer, and other animals will eat this plant, apparently without ill effect. On the other hand, if your dog rubs against the vine, and then you pet him bare-handed, you may well get the dermatitis. Should you ever inadvertently touch poison ivy, you have six hours to thoroughly wash off the offending plant oil, after which, no matter what, you are doomed. Physicians do have helpful treatments, and a lucky



Climbing Bittersweet Fruit

D. Randy Weidner



Asiatic Bittersweet

Online Image



Poison Ivy

Annette Brzezicki



Poison Ivy

Annette Brzezicki

few people do not react with dermatitis. There are also over-the-counter medications applied to the skin before contact that are effective, but wearing protective clothing and gloves followed by rigorous soapy washing is still advisable if you must touch it. Sadly, with a warming climate, Poison Ivy is likely to spread more extensively.

I hope you look for some of our native woody vines during those winter hikes. Finding the Bittersweet is truly a delight. Avoiding the poison ivy is essential. Look for birds feasting on Fox Grape. And realize as daylight grows steadily longer, spring will come. 🍁



Laurel Newman #507

Back in early 2004, Dave mentioned the County Hike Series that the FLTC was running in Tompkins County. Our son Pete was 9 years old and we were stuck in a rut of school/work during the week and house/garden chores during the weekend. Dave thought that if we signed up for this we would be forced to take at least 1 Saturday a month to just go and hike. I eventually said OK.

During the first hike, any concerns we had about taking a 9-year-old on these treks were tossed away. I have a great memory of going up a very steep, muddy hill. As some of the other hikers were starting to stop along the side of the trail, Pete was walking up while eating a box of raisins, saying a cheery “Hi!” to everyone he passed. Some of the looks on their faces were priceless! By the next month’s hike, Pete had turned 10 and we were hooked. Of course, it didn’t hurt that every hike had to stop at an ice cream shop on our way home.

We followed the series as it continued west, ending at the Pennsylvania border in 2008. 2009 brought the series back to the Catskills. Pete was in high school and Scouts with all the associated camps and sports. The long weekends needed to drive there from the Rochester area weren’t going to work. So, we took a break and enjoyed some hikes on our own that fit with our schedule. Once the series returned to the eastern end of the state in 2017, Dave and I were empty nesters and Dave was retired so taking a 3 day mini-vacation every month was very appealing. Did I mention that our direction of travel took us past many wineries? A few tastings on our way to and from the hikes helped us build up our wine cellar. (It became our “grown up” version of stopping for ice cream!)

Well, that brought us to 2021 in Cortland County. (Skipping 2020—the lost year) Wow, we were almost to the end of our FLT completion! We enjoyed seeing old friends again and hiking with our “medium 2” group. We’ve always enjoyed talking to fellow hikers about trips we’ve taken to other places and the places they have been to (getting ideas for future vacations). The last hike in



Jacqui Wensich

September 2021 saw four of us in our group finish our E2E. The rest of the group gave us the obligatory hiking pole arch to walk through. Our son came along with us for this last hike. It reminded me of how we started this whole thing and how far, in miles and years, we had come. 🍁

Thank You

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LANDMAX

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

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.

Twisted Branch Race

Mark Valites



Staff Member Completes Twisted Branch Trail Race

Congratulations to FLTC Director of Marketing & Communications Christy Post for successfully completing her longest trail race to date, the Twisted Branch 100K (62 miles)! The race begins at Ontario County Park, covers the entirety of the Bristol Hills branch trail and continues along the Main and Triad trails to the finish on Keuka Lake. 173 runners started the race, with 108 completing the entire distance under the 20 hour limit.

The FLTC's Donna Noteware (Regional Trail Coordinator for the Bristol Hills branch), Lynda Rummel, Michaela Aney, and Deb Nero greeted runners at a table the FLTC hosted at the pre-race packet pickup/expo.

About those sleeves...

A lot of folks might initially think they're arm warmers, but these are actually the exact opposite: they're arm coolers! The light color doesn't absorb the sun and the material is extremely quick drying. You wet them with water and the evaporative effect cools you. They work really well too!

-Mark

Those sleeves were AMAZING! He surprised me with those arm coolers and proceeded to soak them down with cold water at every opportunity we had, and he filled one of my bandanas with ice and tied it around my neck. This was at mile 25 or 26. I was tired and hot and those two things gave me a HUGE boost! Clean socks and shoes also helped at that point.

-Christy



Mark Valites

Christy and all the runners pass lovely Lake David on Map B3 of the Bristol Hills Trail on mowed trail around its perimeter.



Adam Moffett

This was taken a few hundred yards from Chestnut Lean-to in Danby on August 5th. Three eastern newts are sheltering under a large mushroom on a rainy day.



Send **address changes** to
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or FLTinfo@FingerLakesTrail.org

End-to-End Update

Jacqui Wensich, End-to-End Coordinator



Main

#496 Theresa Evans, Syracuse (2nd #310)
#497 Jay Evans, Syracuse
#498 Debra Nero, Ithaca (4th #346,386,443)
#499 Ryan Levering, Arlington, Mass. Continuous, Self-Supported FKT: 22 Days
#500 Amy Lopata, Rochester
#501 Dan Lopata, Rochester
#502 David Sadler, Clockville
#503 Mark Valites, Hamburg. Continuous, Supported FKT: 15 Days
#504 Kevin Armstrong, Naples
#505 Brian Armstrong, Ontario
#506 David Newman, Honeoye Falls
#507 Laurel Newman, Honeoye Falls
#508 Kathy Good 2nd (#476) Horseheads
#509 Paul Good 2nd (#375), Horseheads
#510 Lynn Anderson 2nd (#448) Ithaca
#511 Colin R. Parrish, Ithaca
#512 Gail Mortimer, Wyoming

Branch

#131 Dan Lopata (#501)
#132 Kristen Veltman, Marion

Updates:

Cindy and son Mike Ripple completed the Letchworth Branch trail in July. Life member Wanda Shirk has completed over 300 miles of her main trail hike. Nick Jendrowski of Buffalo plans to begin his main trail hike. From Dennis Permoda #493 "Hi all. I'm heading out for my next AT section hike tomorrow (10/20), starting in Waynesboro Va. and ending 200 miles north in Waynesboro Pa. I'll be posting daily journals on www.trailjournals.com." His journal makes excellent reading.

Comments:

"I was curious about road walking. Some Challenges require them, others do not. I'm assuming they are required, but obviously would like to know for sure." This question is asked every year by hikers new to the FLT. **YES.** The road hikes are required. Many of the road walks are in the woods, on some low maintenance roads. The conference continues to look for off road routes.

Ryan (brother of Kimery #482, Continuous) hiked a very fast pace with long days (22). His trail journal makes great reading. His was the first Fastest Known Time set this summer.

Mark Valites completed many of the Branch Trails (#112) as thru-runs but to run continuously on the main trail is incredibly impressive (15 days). He had the support of his family and friends. His story has been shared in the Finger Lakes Trail Friends and Hikers group on Facebook (search for it and join if you're not a member), and on the Buffalo Trail & Ultra Runners Instagram Feed.



Selfie by Jacqui Wensich

- ▲ David and Laurel Newman #506 / #507
- ◀ Dan and Amy Lopata #500 / #501
- ▼ David Sadler #502 at M32 Beaver Pond



Christine Gregorie

Please send in your finish on the day or shortly after you do finish your end-to-end hike. The articles, application and documentation can be sent in after you have received your correct number. It is always better to send in your completed application ahead of time. I will update it. Thanks to the many who do so.

The main trail end to end badges will be sent out after Thanksgiving. A total of 23 hikers completed their main trail hike in 2021 including four second timers and one fourth timer.

Car Spotter News:

Kathy Jones (M19-27) is no longer a car spotter. Thanks for the years of availability. The car spotter list is fluid...it changes. The Uttechs will be spotting for M19 only. Thanks to MJ and Chuck for covering 3 maps for many years and for the many sawyer projects.

Have your map on hand when you call to make arrangements. Offer to pay for gas after your ride. Take the spotter's photo so we can recognize them in the *News*.

We need more car spotters for the Branch Trails and **M1-5, M27-34**. Please consider signing on as a car spotter. Just email me 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/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
jwensich@rochester.rr.com
 585/385-2265

Nominations Sought for 2022 Wally Wood Award



The Finger Lakes Trail accords its highest honor to one person or pair of people who have contributed to the trail as a whole well above the norm, and for a long period of time, whether as trail workers, administrative volunteers, hike leaders, event organizers, advocacy volunteers, or outreach specialists, and that award is named for our founder, Wallace Wood. The FLT Recognitions Committee (Mary Zuk Domanski, Steph Spittal, Ron Navik, Donna Coon, and Chair Irene Szabo) solicits members' nominations as soon as possible in order that we might bestow this award at either Trails Day or Fall Weekend.

Please help us honor a special deserving volunteer. Send written nominations with explanation for your choice to Irene Szabo, treeweenie@aol.com, 7639 Swamp Rd., Bergen 14416. Deadline 31 December 2021. 🍁

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



Amy and Dan Lopata

“Enjoy what you are doing. If you aren’t having fun, then change something so you can, and if you can’t, then stop” – paraphrased from Kevin Sayers, Race Director for Massanutten Mountain Trail Ultra

“So...what if we did this? Maybe a better plan?” – Dan and/or Amy, too many times to count throughout our journey of the Finger Lakes Trail



Our plan: 34 hikes, starting January 11th, 2020. Weekend day hikes, west to east; we’ll be done by November 1st. And in May and September, week-long backpacking trips to finish up the Bruce Trail in Canada, thus finishing two goal end-to-ends.

The universe’s plan: 67 hikes, with changes to “our” plan from day 1, ultimately finishing on August 11th, 2021. Canceled both trips to Canada due to COVID-19.

Although just about none of this hiking endeavor went according to “our plan,” the journey that resulted was beyond anything we could have gotten from that original spreadsheet. While it was heartbreaking to cancel our trips up north (this was to be the culmination of a 5-year project, starting on our 5th anniversary and ending with our 10th), the lessons we learned on our FLT E2E will make our future trips on the Bruce much more enjoyable.

I am usually a fairly articulate writer, but I have struggled to put down on paper this experience. It is just not something I can adequately describe in a brief article, so I’ll do my best to share a few moments.

January 11th, 2020, we managed one hike that first weekend then bailed on day two because of high winds. I slept for over 12 hours that night in the cabin at Allegany State Park, much needed from weeks of stress at work. First lesson in listening to my body, and deferring to nature for safe decisions.

The next several months would find us taking time away from the trail for a variety of reasons, finally making our way back in May, and our first overnight backpacking trip. We had no idea what we didn’t know then! We hauled so much, and hiked 35 miles in those two days. As former ultrarunners, thankfully we knew that our bodies would carry us over the miles, even if we shuffled.

We decided that we did still want to do some of the trail in multi-day fashion, and with many lessons learned, eventually spent a total of over 20 nights out there. We stayed at various lean-tos (Pharsalia Woods is a must!), at campsites using either our tents or hammocks, a night at Susquehanna Motel in Bainbridge and later on, the Blue Hill Lodge on Denning Road. Our night at Bossard’s Cabin was the only time we shared space, albeit it with the

resident mice, and we enjoyed tea while chatting with the cows in the field. We also spent two different trips in Park cabins at Treman and Watkins Glen, hiking the trail back to where we were staying.

While we did not encounter many humans, we walked alongside cows, horses, goats, pigs, turkeys, some BIG turtles and not so big snakes, and even saw a bear on our last week! And of course, several dogs...thankfully they

were all friendly. Of the humans we did meet, several were trail coordinators or other avid hikers.

We hiked in every season, using microspikes and snowshoes when needed, and endured a full day of rain ahead of arriving at the Ludlow Creek lean-to, where we gratefully awoke to clear skies. As long as we were prepared, overall we had great weather. On our 10th anniversary trip in August 2020, we were grateful to have friends who shuttled our car and met us when we had to end our trip early due to lack of water sources. We had the generosity of car spotters at various points during our hikes. Our most memorable one was when Mike Tenkate shuttled us for a snowshoe hike...we told him we planned to do about 10 miles that day and he just smiled and nodded. It took us over an hour to cover the first mile, breaking over 2 feet of deep snow, and by the 2nd mile, we both looked at each other and said “this isn’t fun anymore.” Deferring to the wise advice of Kevin Sayers, we popped out at the next road crossing, strapped our snowshoes to our packs and walked the remaining 8 miles back to our car. Oh, and we were parked just a short drive to the best tacos in Dryden.

A few things that stand out:

*We sometimes experienced “FOMO” (fear of missing out) as we watched the progress of other hikers. Eventually we were able to embrace that we each do this in our own way, and the trail will be there when we are ready.

*When I am feeling overwhelmed, I can bring it with me and add more to the weight I am carrying, or I can leave it there (following Leave No Trace!). Sometimes that was a good cry, even a scream once, or often just a pause among majestic pines or by a stream to breathe and be grateful.

*Turns out, I can read a map and follow blazes. And Dan can cook us dinner. We found out that we can share tasks and take turns and even sometimes just sit and play cards. These gifts were precious in times when life at home felt like an emotional roller coaster. The simplicity of being on the trail gave us back the focus on what matters.

*There are some really great things to check out while walking across this state. In no particular order... Little Rock City, Tobey's Donuts in Watkins Glen, Village Taqueria in Dryden, Hoxie Gorge on a spring day and Lick Brook on a snowy trail.

*Dan and I often have different hiking styles, but we agreed to do this one together. We learned so much about ourselves both as individuals and as partners. We are forever grateful for what this experience brought to our lives.

I would like to thank Dan's father for introducing him to nature and trails, and Dan for sharing that love with me. Our last few hikes took place as we were saying goodbye to him and we felt him with us along the way. And to my parents, who supported us through the last 80 miles in the Catskills. To car spotters, and the landowners who allow us to walk through their property, some even offering water and other assistance along the way. This journey was never just the two of us. 🍁



Dan King

Late October male deer fighting for territory.



Answers to the Fall 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:



Jim Moran

Correctly ID M3/CT3 original photo by Marty Ruszaj

"I'll guess M3, smallest and eastmost of Holimont ski area's 3 snowmaking ponds. Funny, the bent up part of that pipe looks just like one of the floppy guys you see in front of used-car lots." Terry R McDonnell

"The Name That Map Quiz for Fall 2021 is Map 3 at 42° 15' 52.5" N, 78° 41' 42.882" W [see our photo attached] as part of the old piping along ponds that support the water system for the Holimont Ski Club near Ellicottville. Myra and I were there on 14 April 2021 when we were nearing the end of our End to End FLT hikes. In fact, three days later we sent this photo to our friends Kathy and Dick in Tucson, Arizona under the caption of "Wayward Saguaro" and said: "Looks like a saguaro lost its way and got into a place with too much water so it rusted!" Jim Moran and Myra Shulman

New Picture:



Lisa Barrett

The Epic Saga of the Cortland County Hike Series

Sigi Schwinge and Peg Fuller



Wow, it is over. It was amazing. What a journey.

Planning for the Cortland County Hike Series began before anyone heard of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nor could we have imagined the lockdown the country would experience beginning March of 2020. So allow us to bring you along our journey.

Chenango County Hike Series ended September of 2019. Donna Coon had organized that series, as well as the previous two county hikes in 2018 and 2017. So now, she was looking to pass the responsibility on to a new coordinator. She was very grateful for all the help she received, especially from Larry and Susan Blumberg, Karen Goodman, Barbara Bailey, and several others, but she was ready for a break. Finding someone to organize the Cortland series would take time, but the perfect person, Sigi Schwinge, eventually appeared.

Initially, Sigi thought she was just needed for pre-hikes, then our past Executive Director, Quinn Wright, asked her to do the hike plots for the whole series, which made sense since she was well versed on the trails in the area. That is an important part to being coordinator, knowing the trails. After ordering new maps for Cortland County, another important factor, and working out the initial plot with Larry Blumberg (who thankfully agreed to lend a hand with the computer logistics of the series), Peg Fuller, FLTC Program Chairperson, asked Sigi to help with the FLTC Fall Weekend festivities too.

As Peg and Sigi began working on how the SAG wagon locations might be planned and test driving some of the roads, they also started looking at venues for the fall weekend and visiting a few locations. Busy working on a plan for 2020, the world kept getting smaller. The shutdown was only temporary, so “what ifs” began to be discussed, such as starting later in the year. Reality was setting in and we realized that 2020 was going to be canceled. Even the bus company wasn’t sure they could provide buses. So, we set our sights on 2021.

Everyone learned to adapt to our changing world. We stayed optimistic. As much as we hoped 2021 would begin virus free, we quickly adapted to the required time frame. The county hike series would not begin in April. So, we moved it back, and we added two hikes to some of the months. We were determined to end the last hike at the Fall Weekend. We talked to the bus company; do we have to wear masks? How many people on each bus? Do we have to skip seats? What about the SAG wagon: can we have food? Calls were made to the county health department and coronavirus information sites were watched closely.

We began to adapt our hike series to begin later, June, with some months having two hikes. Registration was opened and people began to anticipate a great hike in Cortland County. Sigi continued to work on the trail conditions and having hike leaders and sweeps. Deb Nero jumped in to run the SAG wagon and recruit volunteers for that. Christy Post worked on the ever-

changing marketing of the hike series, whatever it would be.

As much as COVID changed things, some things stayed the same. We had trail conditions to consider. Sigi and her awesome crew of pre-hikers (Deb Nero, Dick Frio, Gary Mallow, and others) checked the trail and made sure the hikers had a safe path. Rain and beavers were creating a flooding situation at one part of Cortland County. Parking was being reevaluated because of thefts of catalytic converters. Maintenance was being done on the whole stretch of Cortland County by some ADK Onondaga Chapter trail workers and Cortland County trail maintainers under RTC Peter Dady. For the last hike one of them rerouted around a big blowdown so beautifully that it will remain new trail, while another tamed Trout Creek by making a number of pebble piles to jump over. Ingenious and well done! Sigi’s hero pre-hiker award goes to Mary Jane and Charles Uttech who sawed 36 logs and put steps in!

It was decided the first hike would be June 2021. Approximately 130 people registered to hike the series. Buses were contracted. We were ready. Hikers started showing up. Nerves were raw. Did we bring enough water, energy drink, watermelons, snacks? Do we have all our hike leaders? On June 19th we had hike #1 of six hikes. We were pleased to have FLTC President Pat Monahan attend and hike with one of the medium fast groups. The volunteers worked hard to ensure proper parking and everyone checking in for registration, Barbara Baily was one of our stars with that, along with Jennifer Wilson, Peg Fuller, Deb Nero, Dave Newlun, Mary Jane Uttech, and others. Sigi was great with keeping it all under control. Three buses thankfully appeared on the road.

After a brief introduction and sharing rules, hikers boarded the buses and received their pennies. Pennies? Yes, how else would everyone find Where’s Waldo? This has become a tradition on the hikes. Every hiker receives a penny. As they hike, they come across a Where’s Waldo spot. This is a bucket, pail, box, with or



Peg Fuller

A tradition on the County Hike Series is "Where's Waldo." As hikers board the buses each receives a penny. When they get to the spot on the trail where "Where's Waldo" is, they put the penny into the container. Many hikers add money to the bucket. This helps fund the hikes and also helps maintain and preserve the hikes for the future.

without decorations that indicates to the hikers to drop the penny in the container along with any extra cash to help support the county hike series and the trail projects along the trail. The hikers of the 2021 Cortland County Hike series raised \$1535.62 which includes a \$350 anonymous donation.

The SAG wagon had a great volunteer staff. Deb Nero organized it under the guidance of Sigi. So many volunteers helped, including Peg Fuller, Dave Newlun, Mary Jane Uttech, Barbara Baily, and Jennifer Wilson. The SAG wagon made sure there were drinks and snacks for hikers along the way. Half hikers usually dropped out at this point since they hiked the rest the previous day. Splitting a 10- or 11-mile hike in half between two days made sense for several of the hikers.

As the hikes went on, it became obvious that a Fall Weekend was not going to happen. Coronavirus was still high in N.Y. and the Delta variant was worrying many of our members. Christy Post and Peg Fuller spoke to many people over several weeks and ultimately decided that Fall Weekend would once again be cancelled. This was not an easy decision. But that now left a big hole in the hike series. How do we complete the series? Sigi and Peg jumped into action. A permit was obtained to hold a picnic at Blodgett Mills Park in Cortland. A hamburger and hotdog cookout will be held as a celebration on the day of the final hike. Sigi asked hikers and helpers to bring various side items, desserts, and appetizers.

So overall the series had hikers go 63 miles in 6 hikes, each hike ranging from 9.2 to 11.7 miles. Over 130 hikers registered and about half of them finished by mid-October, with another 20 close enough to get it done by year's end. To be or not to be on the bus each time, that was often the question. Do we order 2 or 3 buses? We got it right 5 of the 6 hikes. From 96 for the first hike, the numbers dwindled to 60 (as the Delta variant soared and some decided to hike in small groups). In those 63 miles, there was rain, mud, sunshine, bugs, and lots of laughs. We hope everyone can look back on the hikes as some of the best times of their lives.

A great big thank you to all the hike leaders and sweeps. You kept your groups together, didn't lose anyone and no one got injured. You made everything easier for Sigi, knowing the hikes were well supervised. Sigi's hero hike leader award will go to Kevin and Brian Armstrong who showed up every time and consistently had 11 – 15 hikers in their group. Kevin and Brian also received their end-to-end award at the picnic.

We know that not everyone joins the FLT hike series to finish it. They come for the convenience of the bus and to exchange email addresses and phone numbers for make-up hikes. Many come to have a good time over hill and dale, to see "old" friends made over the years in the series, the ease of the different hike speeds where you could feel at home, and the camaraderie that develops with a love of hiking and seeing each other.

One advantage of participating in the county hike series is completing the end-to-end. We were pleased to have four "finishers" achieve that goal on September 18th, David and Laurel Newman and Kevin and Brian Armstrong. They received their end-to-end patches at the picnic, presented by Donna Coon. Completing the FLT is not a reason to stop hiking in the series; it is just a good reason to jump in and volunteer to coordinate it or volunteer for the



Peg Fuller

Hikers emerge from Kennedy State Forest to cross a dirt road.



Peg Fuller

The Cortland County Hike Series ended on September 18, 2021, and a celebration picnic was held at Blodgett Park. The hikers who completed the series received their Cortland patch at the picnic. Hike Series Coordinator Sigi Schwinge is pictured in front of all the hikers who were grateful for all her hard work. She is wearing the vest with many patches on it.



Peg Fuller

Hikers heading down Stoney Brook Road after refueling at the first SAG wagon of the 2021 Cortland County Hike Series on June 19, 2021. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful view.

endless list of volunteer jobs or perhaps restart the whole trail again. The picnic also provided the opportunity to present those who finished the 2021 Cortland County Hike Series with their patch. We miss you all already. We hope to see everyone next year in Tompkins County. 🍁

Gonzalez Preserve

Irene Szabo



Very early in our history, Alex Gonzalez was #12 to walk the whole main Finger Lakes Trail. His 1992 ending story included a bitter recital of how hard it was to get over a certain hill, which obviously had had no maintenance for years, since he had to take off his jacket and hold it above his head to protect himself from lethally tall pricklers. Just to show you how these things evolve, I was so inspired, in a bitter negative way, to fix that hill walk that I stole it from the club who had been ignoring it, made it my own section to maintain, and then as good luck had it, asked the owner, John Cobb, if he'd consider donating us his adjacent property over that same hill. In a smart move to avoid property taxes on a property his family no longer used, he did just that, so now the FLTC owns the 44 acre Cobb property on Map M4! In other words, we are all so grateful that Alex complained in public about that section of horrible trail.



Unknown

This isn't surprising, since Alex has become, since then, one of the most meticulous trail maintainers on the whole trail! Our awards have been invented over time, so he was honored with one of our earliest Clar-Willis Awards for excellent trail care, and then after he and Michele were married, they received an even newer honor, the Garrison Award, as extra special landowners themselves! While we are drop-dead grateful for EVERY landowner permission our trail enjoys, a few landowners have gone to great lengths to make our passage on their properties especially welcoming, as Bill Garrison did on the Bristol Hills Trail when he had a log shelter built trailside on his property on Map B3, hence, the award in his name.

They were thus honored because they had bought several properties in a single neighborhood, over several years, closely located, enabling them to build the many loops off the Spanish Loop and its neighbors. Their creative loops added miles of great hiking to a compact area on Map M19, offering nearby enjoyment to hikers from both Ithaca and Cortland.

Meanwhile, they both kept hiking: Michele wanted to hike the FLT end-to-end, so became #174 in 2004, with Alex of course, so he became #175. Then she was inspired to be the first woman to hike the whole main trail a second time, so in 2008 became #254, with Alex at her side, for his third time, at #255. Considering how perfectly their own trail is maintained, I desperately hope they never walked on mine when it wasn't recently tidied!

But their most dramatic contribution to the Finger Lakes Trail was yet to come. They recently decided to donate, yes, DONATE 60 acres spread over three properties to the FLTC in order to create **The Alex and Michele Gonzalez Hiking Sanctuary and Forest Preserve**. The donations, accepted by the board of the FLTC, include only a few stipulations: no wheeled recreational usages, and no logging. No hunting, either, so while hikers are still urged to wear blaze orange during hunting seasons on nearby properties, they are assured of a place to hike for miles with no legal hunting. Such sanctuaries are special treasures we cherish during this season of the year, since most miles of trail on either private land or state forest lands are open for hunting.

Not only is this the largest single donation ever made to the Finger Lakes Trail, it is especially significant because of the restrictions imposed by the

WELCOME TO THE ALEX AND MICHELE GONZALEZ HIKING SANCTUARY AND FOREST PRESERVE

This property is owned by the **Finger Lakes Trail Conference**.

Its purpose is to provide a place where hikers can walk in relative safety during hunting seasons. Hikers are still advised to wear blaze orange during those seasons.

ABSOLUTELY NO HUNTING IS PERMITTED in the sanctuary and forest preserve.

- Open to the public for hiking, running, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.
- Overnight camping is allowed **only** at designated bivouac areas and is **limited to stays of no more than 72 hours** at each area.
- Motorized vehicles of any sort are **prohibited**, including snowmobiles.
- Bicycles, mountain bikes, and horses are also **prohibited**.

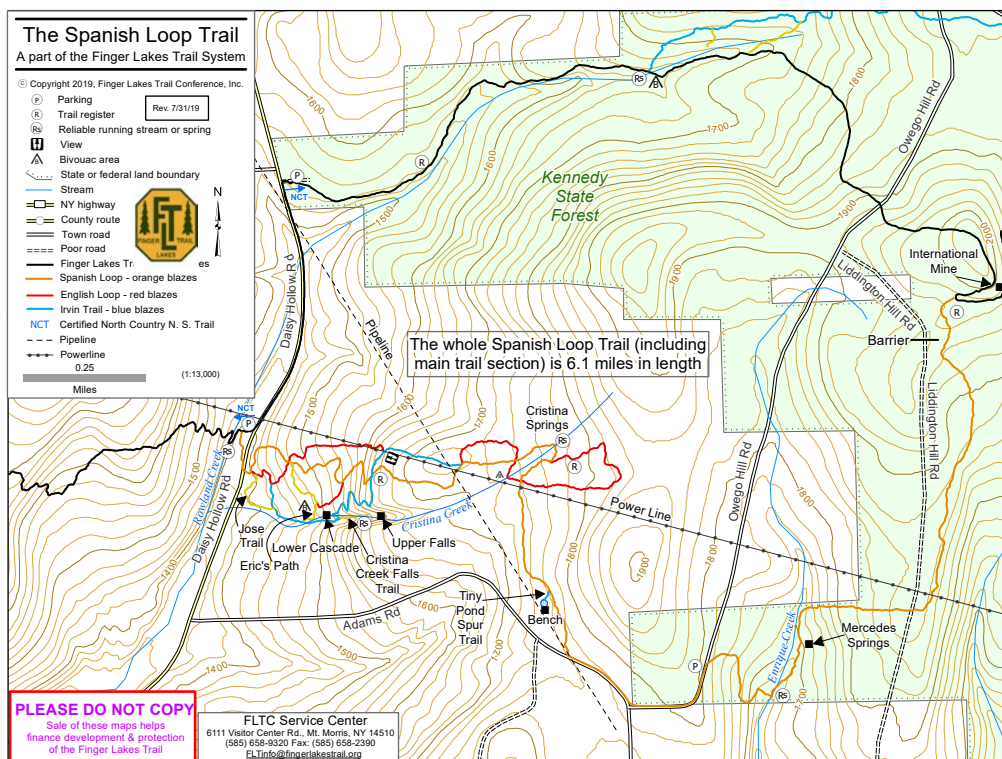
Violators will be considered trespassers and will be prosecuted.

Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Inc., 6111 Visitor Center Road, Mt. Morris, NY 14510
FingerLakesTrail.org, (585) 658-9320



Tom Reimers

Alex and Michele Gonzalez being honored as special landowners, as they gradually turned their own properties into a bunch of enjoyable loop trails.



Gonzalez couple. We are thankful indeed.

I'll also confess that I bow before their abilities and knowledge in the conduct of our language. While I bow to few mortals in matters of grammar and usage, I do to them. Alex is retired Emeritus Professor of English and SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor at Cortland, while Michele is still working, as Associate Professor of Literacy Education and Chair of the Department of Literacy, also at SUNY Cortland. 🍁

Two rectangular properties cover most of the Spanish Loop, English Loop, and Irvin Trail, then a third wedge-shaped parcel connects Adams Rd. to the northwest corner of the state forest at lower right, connecting Tiny Pond to Mercedes Spring.

2022 FLTC Cross County Hike Series

Deb Nero



Hike the 60 miles of Tompkins County and Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference!

Looking for a few great hikes? Thinking about hiking part or all of the Finger Lakes Trail? Looking to do some day hikes without worrying about transportation logistics? If this sounds interesting join us for 6 fun, stress-free hikes through Tompkins County with the 2022 Cross County Hike Series. If you have done any of the previous County Hike Series, you know how it all works. If you are new to this hiking program, please keep reading!

Each year the Finger Lakes Trail Conference offers a series of hikes in one of the counties traversed by the Finger Lakes Trail. Each series continues where the previous year ended. Stick with the program and in eight years you will have hiked the entire main FLT!

In 2022 the hikes will cover the approximately 60 miles of glacially created over-steepened hills, deep valleys, ravines, and gorges of Tompkins County (and a tiny corner of Tioga County). You'll view many spectacular vistas from the level uplands at the top of those over-steepened hills and see many, many waterfalls formed when the streams make their way from the uplands down those steep hills to Cayuga Lake.

Hikers are divided into groups according to hiking pace. We accommodate all speeds, from trail runners to the Nature

Appreciative hikers who usually take 2 days to do each hike – one day with the groups and a second day of their choosing. Each group has an experienced hike leader and a sweep. Hikers should be able to hike 10 miles over varied terrain, including up and down plenty of hills. Hikers in the Nature Appreciative group should be able to hike about 5 miles over the same sort of terrain. There will also be an independent hiker option for those hikers who prefer to do the hikes at their own pace and on their own schedule.

The dates for the six group hikes are Saturdays on:
April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20, September 17

The registration fee covers bus transportation to shuttle hikers from their cars placed at the end point of each hike to the beginning. Everyone who completes the hike series by December 31, 2022, will receive a patch and a certificate. Please join us to hike the hills and dales of Tompkins County!

This year one of the hikes may offer the chance for hikers to purchase a barbeque chicken to pick up at the end of the hike! The last hike will coincide with the 2022 Fall Weekend which will be held in Tompkins County. Planning is underway for Fall Weekend and more information will be forthcoming.

If you have questions, please contact the Cross County Hike Coordinator Deb Nero at dn13@cornell.edu. 🍁

Trail Topics: Trail Maintenance

Jon Bowen, VP of Trail Maintenance



A lot of news from our Regional Trail Coordinators (RTCs) this quarter.

Foothills - Jeanne Moog RTC - Maps M1-M4, CT 1-12

On August 14 the FLTC's Roving Trail Crew joined Foothills' members to open the trail across Poverty Hill on M3 which had been closed for many years. Eighteen people cleared trail from Poverty Hill Road to Cotter Road. Jeanne Moog, RTC, painted blazes and Nick Scarino, who maintains the section, organized the project. Work included weed whacking, hand saws, loppers, painting blazes and benching. The upper section of the trail was fairly easy while the switchbacks required much work. Mark Hittle removed a lot of debris from creekside on Cotter Road. Although the trail is now open, it is rough with steep switchbacks which would be treacherous when wet. We hope to have an Alley Cat work on extending the switchbacks next year to improve the steep descent.

In addition to the three people mentioned above, others who worked were Laurie Ondrejka, Pete Hagmire, Barry Erickson, Jon Bowen, Donna Flood, Jake Kern, Annette Brzezicki, Rich Meyers, Pat Connolley, Marie Dybala, Barb Mach, Charlie Sterling, Marty and Donna Ruszaj, and JoAnne Ratajczak.



Annette Brzezicki

Rich Myers and Nick Scarano cutting weeds to create new trail on Poverty Hill.

Peter Wybron, RTC - Maps M7-M11

On August 28, Peter Wybron invited the Roving Crew to a reroute on M10, between Windfall and Turnpike Roads.

When we arrived, he also had another short reroute planned so Lynette Thelen and Laurie Ondrejka set off to finish that area. Peter and Barry Erickson took the DR mower to Turnpike Road and headed south, while Hannah Hughes, Nick Scarino and Jon Bowen started clearing trail heading north from Windfall Road. The previous day saw torrential rain that flooded some local roads so it was a wet, muddy day in the woods. The trail is cleared, flagged, and hikeable, but Peter doesn't plan to blaze it and officially open it until spring. It's great to see these sections open and off the roads.

Map M10 will soon be revised to show that the FLT between AP2 and AP3 has been reopened. The City of Hornell Water Treatment project located behind the EconoLodge off of Seneca Rd N has been completed and the FLT is now open.

At AP2 turn left (NE) off of Seneca Rd onto the driveway up to the EconoLodge; in 400' take the right fork uphill past the new water tanks, on your right. Turn right after the tanks and continue very steep uphill on dirt road through woods. Pass tower at top of hill, then steeply downhill to Big Creek Rd (CR 70A) to AP3.

This was a one year project but because of delays it took two years. The trail has been re-blazed and the road walk blazes have been removed.

Dave Malinowski, RTC - Cobb Property - Map 4

Kristi Nomm and Pete Marcov have been maintaining our Cobb property for the past 4 years but have decided to move to Arizona. We are sorry to lose them. They have been excellent maintainers. Our RTC, Dave Malinowski, has decided to take on maintenance of this section himself.

Bill Meehan, RTC - M13-M14

Regional Trail Coordinator Bill Meehan obtained a Field Grant from the North Country Trail Association to construct 224 feet of puncheon bridges at two sites on Sugar Hill State Forest, Schuyler County (Maps 13 and 14). There the Finger Lakes Trail/North Country Trail crosses areas of heavy clay soils that become saturated with ankle deep water during spring and summer wet seasons. With the increased popularity and use of the trail in Sugar Hill State Forest, the unimproved trail has become problematic during wet weather. The trail cannot be rerouted due to land management and site limitations. The bridging will allow hikers to traverse these wet and muddy sections with minimal impact on the site.

The bridging was prepared and assembled during the month of September by a volunteer crew assembled by Bill Meehan at a site provided by the Tyrone Volunteer Fire Department. The crew then moved the bridges and materials using a wagon recently purchased at Tractor Supply. The crew included Aaron Havill, Dave Moyer, Bob and Chris Moore, and Jon Whitney. Many thanks to this crew for their dedicated service.

The North Country Trail Association provides 50% cost share grants for trail projects. The project was able to be completed under budget once lumber prices recovered this summer.

Onondaga ADK - Maps O1, O2, M21, M22

The Onondaga Chapter has numerous trail maintainers and workers, but no one stepped up to assume the responsibility for the Trails Chair position or the Regional Trail Coordinator position. The group decided Dick Frio and Bob Rosati would serve as interims for the two positions. Thank you for taking on these positions.

Peter Dady, RTC - M20

Three trail maintainers needed on this map; contact Peter, dady@toast.net.

Tom Bryden, RTC - M22-M24

We received the sad news that Tim Davis, a longtime Bullthistle Hiking Club trail maintainer, passed away in July. Tim had kept a section of FLT on M23, as well as several miles of spur and side trails, in superb condition since before the Bullthistle Hiking Club existed. Our condolences to Tim's family; he'll be greatly missed.

Longtime BHC maintainer Warren Johnsen has decided to turn in his tools at year's end. I could write several pages of my adventures and conversations with "Traildawg." He was a fine trailworker and maintainer of the Perkins Lean-to for several years, as well as working on other FLT sections earlier in his illustrious (infamous) career. Hard to replace a legend.

Logging closure on M23 west of Jackson Pond is now in effect. A very hiker friendly detour via John Smith Rd. and Johnson St. will suffice until June 2022.

Rick Roberts, RTC - M28

I have three sections on Map 28 that need trail maintainers:

1. From Bear Spring Horse Camp east to Rte 30 in Downsville, 6.5 miles. Relatively steep from Horse Camp to top of Ridge (1.5 miles) then follows old unused road to Rte 30. All portions are wooded.
2. From County Rte 27 to Chamberlain Brook Rd. 3.5 miles. Relatively steep from Rte 47 to top of ridge, but County Rte 47 follows an old logging road. Grassy area from Rte 27 to 47. Can be accessed from either end.
3. From Rte 10 to intersection with Fire Tower Trail. 1.5 miles. Rolling wooded terrain. Can be accessed from either end. Originally Bruce and Donna Coon's section.

Contact Rick Roberts 607/746-9694
or hikerrick2000@yahoo.com 🍁

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

Windfall and Turnpike Roads Reroute

Photos by Jon Bowen



◀ Hannah Hughes using loppers.



Bridge Rehabilitations on Map M27

Captions by Larry Blumburg, Photos by Matt Rose



Over the East Branch of Cold Spring Creek, the ramp was extended farther over onto the bank because it had fallen into the creek.

"Were the bridges tied off with cables at least at one end so that high water doesn't send the bridge downstream? I've wasted a lot of hard work when others failed to do that!" Editor

Over a tributary of the East Branch, the bridge was raised about two feet (the original planks simply sat directly on the banks and would be washed downstream following major storms)



M13 and M14 Puncheon Project:



Strips of shingling help break up potential slippery wet boards

Bill Meehan and Aaron Havill celebrating completion of the puncheon project with a Trail Town Hazy Pale Ale from Steuben Brewing Company.



Trail Topics: 2022 Tentative Alley Cat Projects

Mike Schlicht, Director of Crews and Construction



The following projects were submitted for funding for the 2022 Alley Cat season.

- Allegany County Lean-to
- Cuyler Hill Lean-to
- Bristol Branch Retaining Wall
- Letchworth Branch Trail Improvement
- Catskills Alley Cat
- Rt. 219 Switchbacks Project

Allegany County Lean-to (Map M5)

In 2021 we had planned to build a new lean-to somewhere in the Catskills to replace one of the existing lean-tos that are showing their age. The Unit Management Plan for the Catskills when last completed did not include the addition of a lean-to so instead we are using the lean-to kit to erect one in Allegany County. This will be one of the traditional FLTC lean-to builds. Mike Ogden has already volunteered to be the Construction Manager and Peter Wybron the Project Manager.

Cuyler Hill Lean-to (Map M21)

The Department of Environmental Conservation has donated a log lean-to to the FLTC that we have been asked to locate in Region 7. The name of this project does not at this time reflect where this lean-to may be placed as there are other options in Region 7 that could be a destination for this structure. The log lean-to was originally located in the New York State Fairgrounds and is not the one that we used to use during the fair to promote the Finger Lakes Trail. This lean-to is only a few years old so constructing this should be fairly straight forward.

Bristol Branch Retaining Wall (Map B3)

The cost of full size trees in 2021 increased significantly during the year and doubled the cost of this project. The ultimate goal of the project will be to bring the trees to the creek by transferring them via a tractor through a field and then winching them the rest of the way. Once the trees are in the creek, we need to secure them to the stream bed and then lift the smaller tree on top of the larger and again secure the two together. We should be able to do this via winches to alleviate the need to physically lift the trees, one atop the other.

Letchworth Branch Trail Improvement (Maps L1 & L2)

An application for a trail crew was made to the American Hiking Society (AHS) to assist us again with the trail improvement of the Letchworth Branch Trail. The 2021 project was very successful and the volunteers from the AHS all asked if they could come back to help again so I was only too pleased to extend that invitation. We may be replacing the roofs of the two lean-tos but the main focus of the project will be to continue improving the trail and not performing structure work.

Catskills Alley Cat (Maps M30-M34)

The Catskills Alley Cat had to be postponed again and an application was submitted to the American Hiking Society for this event as well. I had made an application to another

volunteer organization but the deadline from when I received the documentation was very short and more involved than time allotted to complete, so we will see if both the Letchworth and Catskills project will have AHS crews for 2022. The Catskills project was changed to be a true roving crew Alley Cat with the crew backpacking in each day, setting up camp and removing downed trees with one and two person cross-cut saws. Part of this change was to appeal to the adventurous hiker population to have a unique experience unlike any we have offered in recent memory. If the AHS does not approve a crew for this project, we will still attempt to use this format and see what interest it attracts.

Rt. 219 Switchbacks Project (Map M3)

The trail from Rt. 219 going towards Poverty Hill was closed for over a year and was in need of some overdue trail maintenance for some time prior to the trail closing. Michaela Aney and I assessed the trail in late September and we have a lot of work to take care of. First, this is a call to sawyers across the state that we will need a few of you to remove a lot of fallen trees before we can even start creating switchbacks on that section. We may have you go in a few days before the actual Alley Cat to remove these so we can be assured that volunteers are not downhill of the trail in case of falling timber. We will be constructing upwards of seven staircase/ladders in this area as well. While we can get supplies to the top and bottom of the hill, we will need to winch materials up and/or down to each logging road in that section to help hikers get from that plane to the trail 5-10 feet above them. Michaela and I will be the Project and Construction Managers for the Alley Cat.

Look for these projects to be listed on the FLTC Alley Cat and Eventbrite pages for more information and to volunteer in any of the roles of Project and Construction Managers or to volunteer and have some fun doing good work in the Finger Lakes Trail system. 🍁

Contact: Mike Schlicht
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Ed O'Shea

Members of the ADK Onondaga performing trail work with a two-man saw, which always starts.

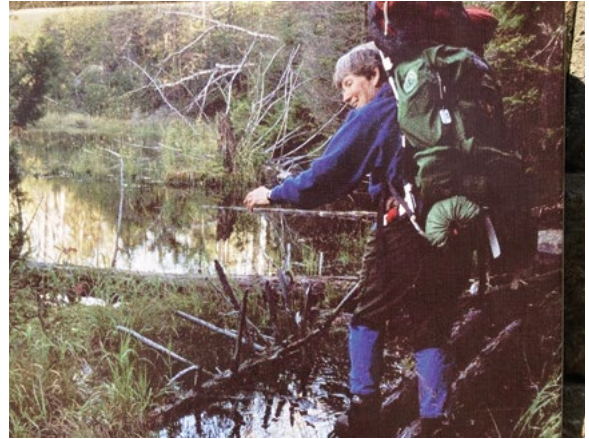


Edna Northrup

Edna was a longtime trail maintainer in the Ellicottville area (Map M4) who also procured a number of trail permissions across private land, including our walk on Holiday Valley ski resort. Mary Zuk Domanski was still building new trail on Edna-obtained permissions until just a few years ago, when Edna was in her 90s. Edna's obituary in *The Salamanca Press* would bring smiles to any reader; while that writer didn't know that Edna was a maintainer on the FLT, it was mentioned that, after her husband's death, she and her friend Anne Mausolff of Vermont walked the whole Appalachian Trail in 1991. And at the age of 84 Edna became the oldest woman to hike to the base camp at Mt. Everest! It will be no surprise that Edna was skiing in Ellicottville from a young age, produced one female member of the U.S. Ski Team among her many children, and that "Her children recount how she often got her deer on Thanksgiving morning and then got home in time to cook the turkey."

Mary says that Edna often did trail work with Helen Fredericks, and that when they worked together, they "were like the Bobbsey

twins!" Oh, to have seen that, or to have two maintainers like that again, or even to have met the delightful Edna Northrup! 🍁



Edna on the Appalachian Trail, presumably taken by her AT hiking partner, Anne Mausolff

Philip R. Dankert (10/29/35 - 9/23/21)

Longtime FLT member Phil Dankert died recently, just shy of his 86th birthday. A 30 year member of the Cayuga Trails Club, Phil was End-to-End #79, and #67 to finish the FLT Branch Trails. For his main trail hikes, he often hiked with Jack Vanderzee and Nick Vandam, whom he appreciated especially for their willingness to re-hike sections with him, just for the company, or to slow down if Phil required it.

Phil served on the Board of Managers of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, while holding various officer posts for the Cayuga Trails Club. One critical job was his for years, finding and stocking Ithaca area retail outlets for the club's guidebook to a major chunk of the FLT, a project which gave the club an attractive income stream.

Gary Mallow shares, "We had a habit of meeting for coffee at the Brookton Diner, mostly with David Priester, which were great times to catch up with each other. Sometimes, if Phil was up for it, we'd follow coffee with a short hike. He loved seeing completed trail work projects, even though by that point he was unable to participate."

Club newsletter editor Curtis Myers allowed us to use material from their memorial to Phil. 🍁



Gary Mallow

The bench is the Tom Riemers memorial bench on the White Church Road property owned by FLTC. David Priester on left, Phil on the right.

Statewide North Country Trail Council Meeting



Statewide North Country Trail Volunteer Council Meets to Share News and Plan our Shared Future

From a fall newsletter by retiring chair, Mary Coffin

N.Y. will be the host for the annual NCT Celebration in 2023, so already a committee is being formed to choose a location, a local host, and dates for the event. The FLTC has hosted four times already (logical progression puts this in our hands every seventh year) so there is a good chance that the primary host in 2023 will be the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK). As soon as anything is planned, you'll be the first to know!

The current NCT trail hosts in N.Y. are the FLT, the CNY Chapter of the NCTA, and the ADK, with Vermont's fairly new group added in. The ADK groups, led mostly by Mary Coffin, have continued building new trail over many miles in the eastern Adirondacks; however, not until a route is cleared and blazed from road to road can NCT signage be installed. The DEC is cooperating with volunteers' efforts in each of several places, and as new trail is built, each section gets an ADK volunteer steward to take care of its maintenance. Some sections are so remote that a maintainer must hike in and stay overnight!

Each group shared their accomplishments over the last year: the CNY Chapter continues to improve existing trail plus keeps searching for a route north of Rome and into the southern

Adirondacks, through Clark Hill State Forest and Pixley Falls State Park. Readers of this magazine are familiar with the recent accomplishments of the Finger Lakes Trail.

Our own Ruth Dorrough of Canandaigua, a woman who, with her husband Dan, has hiked the whole NCT, the Ice Age Trail, and the Potomac Heritage Trail, among others, has been the chair of the Council's Marketing Committee. Realizing that most people haven't even heard of the North Country Trail, even those who are local to it, the committee has created a statewide display map for public event displays, helpful and appealing brochures, and has launched ambitious plans to blanket the state with press releases and general articles. Their NCTA display was even present at the FLT Trail Days near Bath, where they had many fruitful conversations with attendees. The North Country National Scenic Trail is a pretty big deal in the hiking community, so we at the FLT are excited to host over 400 miles of it within N.Y. 🍁



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Six Days on Crystal Hills

Joan Young



Sure, we could have done it in five days, or maybe even four, but who cares? The Crystal Hills Branch of the Finger Lakes Trail has passed beneath our feet. But how many new ideas and options have opened before us with the completion of those 49.7 miles?

The reason the Crystal Hills Branch was built is to connect the Great Eastern Trail to the Finger Lakes and North Country Trails. The GET extends south to Alabama and, along the way, rubs elbows with the Pinhoti Trail, the Appalachian Trail, and others. Through Pennsylvania, it runs concurrent with the Mid-State Trail which traverses the Keystone state.

Think about this a moment. Loop trails are currently all the rage. What a loop one could do! The Crystal Hills Trail, the FLT/NCT, continuing on the NCT to Vermont, then taking the AT south to the GET and returning to New York via the GET/Mid-State trails. And this is only one suggestion. So many options, only one lifetime!

In September 2021, best buddy Marie Altenau and I began in Pennsylvania at Cowanesque Lake. Hiking north, most of day one was road walk. But we enjoyed the lovely long views of New York's hills. We also appreciate local history, and found graves of people born in the 1700s at Liberty Pole Cemetery on the road of the same name.



Joan Young

Buck in velvet right in village of Erwin

The final half mile of that day was around Levi Pond, a beautiful space with a picnic area. The joke of that section was a bridge made of two picnic tables which had been dragged to span a wet area. They would have worked great, but they were about two tables short of an adequate bridge.

Day two began in McCarthy Hill State Forest and then wandered through Pinnacle State Park. We began to understand that perhaps the table-bridge was a hint of the state of Covid-affected

maintenance schedules. Although most of the trail that morning was off road, many sections were severely overgrown.

By the time we reached the village of Addison, it was pouring rain. We were thankful for a park pavilion along the bank of Tuscarora Creek where we ate lunch. As we rested, we couldn't help but notice that there had been a serious amount of flooding there recently. As we continued our walk, it became obvious that Addison had suffered severe damage. A shed had been washed across the road, broken up, and its parts and contents scattered in a corn field. All the fencing around a sports field was fallen and twisted. Businesses were still recovering from water damage.

We left town through the beautiful Addison Cemetery, climbing to the top of a ridge. After so many years of hiking, it's hard to find a trail sign that is truly unique. However, at Towner Farm Airport we were warned to watch for low-flying aircraft crossing the trail! Definitely a first.

Now we were completely soaked, and we opted to bail out on a spur that led us to NY 417. Then we only had a short road walk to reach our car.

This turned out to be a great choice. The next day we decided to do a short hike to finish what we'd planned for the day before.



Joan Young

Little Niagara Falls near Addison, N.Y.

The fording of Goodhue Creek might have been quite a challenge on a serious rain day; it was difficult enough on a dry day. High water has undercut the banks, and the approach on the east side was a test to find. Our adapted plan also gave us time to walk the spur to Little Niagara Falls, which turned out to be a delightful place. There is an overlook platform, but the more adventurous can cross a log bridge and get much closer to the falls.

Our fourth day was all road walk again, but surprisingly tough. It consisted of one hill, climbing steeply for two miles and then descending into Erwin where we saw a beautiful buck in velvet, right in town.

Because of how we needed to stage vehicles the next day, we switched and hiked north to south from West Hill State Forest back to Erwin. Erwin Hollow State Forest was delightful with the “usual” carved shale streambeds, a few great views, and even in September, plenty of wildflowers. An unplanned perk of hiking that direction was treating ourselves to ice cream just before reaching the car.

We also hiked north to south on the final day. It was fun to encounter trail markers for the Great Eastern Trail in addition to the FLT signage. Moss Hill Lean-to was a delight. A plaque commemorates many canine hiking companions and I grinned at the memories of many furry friends, surprised at how many of the mentioned dogs I had actually met.

I also enjoyed passing through Watson Homestead, since that was the site of the first North Country Trail Conference I ever attended, in 1995. Maintenance was problematic, however, and later we were informed that it was also a Covid-related consequence.

The Crystal Hills Branch, at this time, has quite a lot of road walk, but there are many opportunities to catch scenic views and enjoy roadside streams and cemeteries even on these. The off-road miles are mostly pleasant and mildly challenging with fewer steep hills than many places on the FLT. The kiosks at McCarthy Hill State Forest with detailed trail maps were helpful, giving lots of detail.

Before our hiking time together ended, Marie and I also did the Letchworth Branch. Last year we completed the Interloken and Bristol Hills Branches. Earlier, we did the Onondaga Branch. Only the Conservation Trail stands between us and one more patch. I say, hike on! 🍁



Joan Young

Levi Pond in McCarthy State Forest



Irene Szabo

The winter view of Addison's Valley and the Canisteo River below, taken from an overlook by the lodge at Pinnacle State Park. Now the park has suspended all mowing, so our two hikers had no reason to slog through tall wet grass toward a view blocked by fog and rain. If they had known, they'd have left the park road to catch their own view.

Holland Ravines Alley Cat

Story and Pictures by Mike Schlicht



Part One: Hot and Humid

If there is one thing everyone who volunteered for the Holland Ravines Alley Cat will remember in the years to come, it is how hot and humid it was. Local meteorologists in Buffalo stated that August 2021 was the hottest month on record for the area and we can all take heart that we lived it, survived it and got a lot of good trail work done!

On behalf of the Finger Lakes Trail, the Foothills Trail Club, and all the volunteers who assisted this past August and September on the Holland Ravines Alley Cat project, I would like to recognize three landowners (anonymously) who made this project possible. The heat and humidity was not the only challenge volunteers would have faced if two landowners had not volunteered to use their tractors to haul in wood and materials to trailside. These two landowners saved us a tremendous amount of work and time had portaging these items from Vermont St. and Humphries Hill Road been necessary. Likewise, a landowner also allowed us to park several cars that provided a shortcut for the volunteers to get to the work site during the week, saving us a lot of hiking time that was put to good use on the trail. Without your generosity, the Holland Ravines Alley Cat of 2021 would not have been possible.

Michaela Aney and I started out on Sunday afternoon getting some of the lumber from a home improvement store in Hamburg, and picked up some other wood that Gus Phillips from the Foothills Trail Club had graciously picked up days early and cut to length. We stopped at the two landowners' homes, placed the wood and materials in the tractor box, walked alongside the tractor while we watched the sixteen foot stringers flex along the way, unloaded the materials and got a ride in the tractor box on the way out which was fun. At the next stop we palletized the materials at the second landowner's home, who had them trailside for us the next morning.

Monday morning several volunteers got to work portaging the materials for the one sixteen-foot puncheon that was still about a ½ mile from the palletized materials site while others started the process of repairing many of the steps on some of the Marshall staircases in the ravines ("Marshall" staircases were so named after the landowners of the ravine where we first built them back in 2007.) The plan for the Alley Cat was to do some repairs on existing structures, but to really focus on "dirt work" such as drainages, reroutes and armoring.

After Monday, nothing went to plan. Tuesday morning, we had a crew start replacing the stairs on another Marshall staircase when one volunteer, Mike Heckathorn (who just happened to be a carpenter by trade), discovered that the stringer was rotted ¾ of the way through the 2x8x16. I called the one landowner who had taken the materials to the trail on the pallets and asked if they would be willing to transport the 2x8x16s which they graciously agreed to.



Left to right, Theresa Kemp, David Kaczmarck, Kasia Dec, Pat Connolly

Laying out the stringers and identifying the precise location where a support should be placed for the stairs was a major challenge back in 2007 when these Marshall stairs were initially built. I recall it took us the better part of the day just to lay out the step supports which we did with the stringer at a sixty-degree angle on the side of the hill, yet Mike had the stringer step supports in place and secured in about two hours while the stringers lay flat on the ground at the top of the ravine. Everything lined up perfectly when we placed the stringers, and a few hours later the new staircase was done just in time for a pair of hikers to break them in.

Later that afternoon, I was made aware that one puncheon I looked at last April and felt that it was fine for a few more years needed to be replaced, as the telephone pole stringer on one side succumbed to the elements. So I made another call to the same landowner who again graciously said they would haul them to the trail once we palletized them and lo and behold, like magic, the materials were trailside once again.

On the preceding Sunday, Michaela and I noticed that the same landowner who used their tractor to move the palletized loads to the trailhead had these large pallets that appeared to be built to haul heavy machinery sitting on the side of the yard. We made an inquiry to see if they were available, which they were and yes we could use them for the trail. We managed to get a few of the pallets out from the pile on Thursday and hauled to the trail access at Carpenter Road, but the weight of them made it unlikely we could have done anything more that day. Once again, the same landowner said they would use the tractor and make them more accessible which they did when we went back for the Holland

Ravines, Alley Cat part two in September. The same landowner also hauled out two pallets of junk wood and let us store them off the driveway until we came back in late September for part two of the Alley Cat.

In past articles, I have written about the importance of community and the Holland Ravines Alley Cat is just another example of how this manifests itself. Without these three landowners, the heat and humidity and the extra wood needed for additional structure work might have forced us to hold numerous weekend “Mini Cats” to address the issues. Through their generosity, this Alley Cat was a tremendous success even with the challenges the week threw at us. We also had an awesome team of volunteers like Gus Phillips get some work done for us ahead of the project and enjoyed some great meals by cooks Donna Flood and Lois Justice. We also had some volunteers from the Hike WNY Hiking challenge come and spend some time with us and saw many new faces we hope to see again on the trail.

Part Two: Dirt Work

Michaela and I realized we needed to organize another work crew to get to the “dirt work” that was a part of the original plan farther along than was possible in August. On September 24th and 25th, we spent another two days digging drainages, armoring trail and building new trail reroutes around problematic areas. The weather couldn’t have been better. It was cooler with temps in the lower 60s and moderate humidity. The turnout for the weekend was great and we managed to get about three miles of “dirt work” completed starting from Vermont Street and going north. On that Sunday, Michaela took a crew back to the landowner who had the pallets cut into smaller sizes that were capable of being carried by a small crew and installed them or put them aside at the Carpenter Road access so we can purchase materials that will help us use them in that location. For those who recall that access, it is a grassy area that can be very wet and extends about 250 feet before entering the woods. The pallets will go a long way to helping hikers keep their boots dry for part of that length and we greatly appreciate everyone, especially our landowners, volunteers, and cooks who made the Holland Ravines a popular place to hike in Western New York. 🍁

I’m section hiking the FLT from end to end in a series of day hikes, so I’ve hiked over many of the well-built bridges with lots of appreciation!

Ode to FLT Builders

To clamber creeks can be a chore
My muddy boots I don’t adore.
I slip and slide and ski and skate
And shake a head at this slow rate.

Rocks will slide and leaves give way
As logs and sticks, they will not stay.
My feet get wet, the water’s cold;
“Oh,” I think, “this could get old.”

But sometimes I behold a sight
That makes me smile in delight;
For in the forest deep and low
I’m on a path that lets me GO.

And climbing down below the ridge
I look around and see a bridge!

--Diane Lebo Wallace



Carl Cuipyo

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.

Miles With Mark, End-to-End #503

Mark Valites, a trail runner and FLTC Trail Maintainer



In addition to <https://www.instagram.com/buffalotrailandultrarunners>, detailed daily recaps and dozens of captioned photos from the run can be found in the Finger Lakes Trail Hikers & Friends Facebook group.

It's hard to believe that it's already been a couple months since I arrived at the New York/Pennsylvania border to complete a westbound E2E trail run and capture the overall/supported Fastest Known Time for the FLT. Doing so was the realization of a crazy idea that had been kicking around in my head for a couple years.

Thru-running the entire FLT wasn't something I anticipated being able to attempt for several years; my focus for the last several years has been on training/running a qualifying ultra marathon each year to enter the lottery for entry into one of my dream races and the world's oldest 100 mile trail race, the Western States 100. Unexpected lottery entry adjustments stemming from the pandemic this past year provided a pleasant surprise though: the opportunity to attempt the FLT this year.

With no basis for comparison, I didn't have a good idea what mileage I'd be capable of sustaining day after day in order to estimate how long it would take to cover the entire trail, but conservatively figured three weeks would be sufficient. For a variety of reasons including training, weather, hunting closures and work constraints, September presented itself as the optimal time of year.



Shawn Weishaar

When I approached my manager at work about taking so much time off, I was initially shocked that not only had he heard of the FLT (well, close enough: "that's the trail in Letchworth, right?") and I was also pleasantly surprised when he pointed out that such long vacations weren't unheard of in the department and even arranged coverage for my on-call responsibilities before I had a chance to ask my co-workers. What I

Rock City Lean-to, located on the section of trail I maintain on M3.

thought would be a big issue was a non-issue. Gulp...! Suddenly the first major hurdle was gone.

It wasn't planned specifically for the FLT, but given the lack of socialization and group runs over the past year due to the pandemic, I stopped drinking any alcohol on New Year's Day. I wasn't broadcasting my plans about the run, but the reclusiveness also provided no reason to be forthcoming about them either; very few people were aware of what I was up to.

While I always maintain some base level of fitness throughout late fall and winter, the weekly mileage I typically run then drops significantly each year. I started my typical yearly training mileage increase in February, split over both running and hiking off trail while looking for deer antler sheds. With the FLT being bigger than anything I'd done before, I decided some more formal guidance for such a large undertaking would be prudent and hired a coach.

As training progressed, my weekly mileage never increased to more than what I've typically done each year to train for 100 mile races (75 miles/week maximum), but my coach accompanied it with core/leg strength training, flexibility work, a focus on mindfulness and a good deal of time hiking with a big dead ash log stashed in my backpack. I distinctly remember several scary hikes with it while doing hill climb repeats in the dark and pouring rain while thunderstorms raged above.

Weekend training almost always called for at least one day with 20-30 miles on trail, sometimes two. I spent many of these days refamiliarizing myself with a couple lousy sections of the FLT near me that I long ago learned to avoid, completing as much of the trail as far east as I could (ultimately from the western terminus to the Triad Trail on Map M12) and scouting both the eastern terminus and some areas south of Syracuse.

Living south of Buffalo, I'd long known that heading east to west was the direction I'd head. Although it caused some challenges with so much of the FLTC information assuming travel in the opposite direction, I figured it'd be easier for a handful of reasons: I'd be sharper mentally in unfamiliar areas, in better physical shape for the more mountainous Catskills, able to more easily complete estimated daily goals early on, able to alter plans on the fly in more familiar areas, crew would be easier to recruit closer to home and it would provide a sense of "coming home."

As the summer progressed and no issues arose, it became time for me to recruit crew members. Crew would meet me at access points along the way, refresh my supplies, provide some guidance on what was up next and shuttle us to/from nightly accommodations. Asking others to crew was difficult for me, especially since I'd need them during the work week. I wasn't even exactly sure where I'd be on trail when and needed to find enough people to crew for three weeks. To make it worse, the crew would actually have to overlap some, to exchange my gear. I recruited eight crew members, but my pace ended up requiring only six.

Prior to the start of the run, we held a crew meeting on Zoom to review all of the information from the various FLTC sources I'd gathered and set expectations. While I'd asked each of the crew to preload all of the documentation on their phones ahead of time, they ended up depending heavily on one crew member's spare phone, which we dubbed "The Adventure Phone." It contained offline versions of all of the PDF maps, elevation profiles, GPX files, Google Docs and the various apps we used. The Adventure Phone's most important role ended up being for the maps.me application. The app allowed for an import of all the trailhead/access points in the "FLT Trailheads Google Maps.html" on the FLTC site to be used offline, something not possible with Google Maps. Once loaded, the crew could easily select the next access point and be presented with driving instructions to it. Crew members also found the FLTC provided elevation profiles vital to estimate quickly the amount of mileage and climbing until the next access point.

Scouring over the various sources of FLTC mapping info as I prepped and tried to break down the entire trail ahead of time without knowing exactly how much distance I'd be able to cover took weeks. I found a large number of issues as I studied, and recorded them to share with the mapping team later.

The hot weather throughout the first week of September concerned me, as I knew it would slow me significantly. A couple 90+ degree long trail days confirmed this, so I was relieved when cooler temps arrived quite literally the day before we drove out to the eastern terminus.

We camped at the junction of the Phoenicia East Branch and Curtis-Ormsbee trails prior to the start. I hiked up to the summit of Slide Mt. the following morning for a relatively late start of 7 a.m. Knowing the trail down was clear of overgrowth and then followed by a long section of road, I had been looking forward to what I suspected would be a rare day of starting with dry feet. Unfortunately, the rain that arrived shortly after I started had other ideas and a daily pattern of wet feet throughout at least the mornings was established quickly: my feet were soaked by the time I hit Denning Road.



Mark Valites

Slightly damp, but unfortunately common conditions. West of M15; Satterly Road.

I set a minimum goal of a conservative 50K/day (31 miles). With the difficult terrain and some navigational issues early on, I became fearful I wouldn't even be able to sustain that, but eventually found a groove and averaged between 35-40 miles/4500-7000 ft. of gain a day, spread over 12-13 hours. Several times my pace placed me ahead of the sleeping accommodations I'd arranged, but I welcomed that problem.

My general daily routine:

- Wake up around 5 a.m.
- Load and put on my running vest/sock/shoes
- Grab breakfast and eat on the ride to the trail
- Hike for ~2 hours
- Run/hike the remainder of the planned miles for the day, meeting crew for resupplies
- Hopefully enjoy a couple what I called "gravy miles" - easy miles beyond the minimum planned
- Heat up a freeze dried meal at the car and eat it on the ride to sleeping accommodations
- Eat another "real" meal once we arrived
- Shower
- Go to bed in the running clothes I'd wear the next day

Details on the gear I used can be found in my column in the Spring 2021 *FLT News*. Nutrition was one thing that differed though: in order to simplify logistics for the crew, I had them pick up bowls of various dishes from Chipotle, Naan-Tastic and CoreLife Eatery. They packaged these into tinfoil wrapped burritos handed to me at access points. I ate 5-6 each daily, in addition to typical running staples. I'd intended to eat some hot dehydrated meals in the mornings, but found I couldn't afford the time either to cook or cool them, so breakfasts typically consisted of yogurt, hard boiled eggs, blueberries and granola.

On trail, I referenced the FLTC PDF maps via Avenza a couple times, but found my Garmin Fenix 6 Pro GPS watch to be the most valuable piece of gear I carried without a doubt. It allowed me to follow the GPX tracks provided with the map downloads, vibrate if off trail, alert me of any upcoming turns, and display individual climbs/descents -- all without the hassle of digging out a phone or map.

For the most part, my body held up quite well throughout the entire run. Even after the long days, I still struggled to fall asleep the first couple nights. I lost somewhere between 5 and 10 pounds, suffered only some very minor chafing and developed no blisters. The soles of my feet did hurt from day four onward and I've still got a bit of numbness in one of my big toes, but that's something I've encountered previously after 100 mile races. The biggest issue was with my shins; they both started to hurt days out from the finish, but became very concerning the last two days. On the very last day, I felt a sharp sudden pain twice in my right one and feared I'd torn something and limped a couple miles. It took over two weeks until I felt no pain whatsoever.

I was happy with my preparation and execution, but if I were to do it again, the biggest changes I'd consider are renting a camper van to save on travel time to/from access points and potentially choosing a time of year with more daylight.



Christopher Valites

There is certainly meat left on the bone for anyone else considering attempting an FKT (Fastest Known Time), but I'd suggest setting realistic expectations for what you will encounter on the trail. While there's a lot of beauty on the FLT, there's also a lot of overgrown and poorly marked trail. (Races run on the FLT don't show that off!) I'd also suggest familiarizing both yourself and your crew with the nuances of the trail and various sources of info from the FLTC; issues encountered can become magnified with speed and fatigue.

I ran the trail not only to see what I was capable of, but to see what was out there. While so much of the trail was incredible, I found a good deal of the beauty was matched with sections full of thorns, mud and wet feet.

The very end was unfortunately particularly gloomy. I closely watched the mileage drop on my watch as it followed the GPX file. 4 miles. 3 miles. I started to mentally prepare for the terminus. 2 miles. Not much left now. 1.5 miles. A couple minutes more and suddenly I saw the terminus. Wait. What? I was supposed to have over a mile to go. How did this happen? And then it hit me: while I'd pointed out multiple sources of confusion from the FLTC over the location of the western terminus earlier in the year and the interactive map was updated because of it, the corresponding GPX file never was. I was annoyed not only that I'd purposely taken the time to ask about this confusion and thought that it was corrected, but also that I still didn't catch it when processing the GPX files for my watch. I'd noticed other issues, but not this one. I wasn't surprised it happened, but didn't welcome this surprise. Still a bit in shock, I stopped my watch and tried to process that I'd abruptly just finished. I'd been joined by the FLTC's Christy Post for the end. She grabbed some photos, but I already knew there was nothing there to pose in front of that clearly reads "FLT" or "Finger Lakes Trail." I removed the register from the ammo box and sat down on the ground to sign it. Christy asked me what the pile of fur next to me was. I turned to find I was sitting

Taken on Map M11, from Cochrane Rd.

inches away from a decomposed raccoon carcass. Of course. It was getting dark at this point, but we tried to grab a couple more photos. While moving around to do so, Christy accidentally stepped on the raccoon's skull. It was hardly an iconic ending to a huge undertaking and offered little closure or sense of completion. It still bugs me when I think about it.

I've struggled a fair amount since the finish, often wondering if it was worth it or if anyone even cares. With the condition of my shins, I physically couldn't run for a couple weeks and found myself floundering without any goal. I thought this article would be easy to write, but it has not been, nor does it even begin to tell the full story. On a positive note, I have since been put in touch with the mapping team and am starting to get more involved there. I really hope to work to be able to eliminate some of my frustrations for future trail users. I am sure I will continue to log many miles on the trail near my home and now know of several areas across the state I'd like to revisit.

Overall, I recorded running 595 miles, with 97,000 ft. of elevation gain. I averaged 37.2 miles/6,070 ft. of elevation gain per day, which added up to 15 days, 12 hours, and 10 minutes from when I first left the summit of Slide and the overall/supported Fastest Known Time (FKT) for the FLT.

For those not familiar, FKTs are not races. There is no official governing body for them, but the website <https://fastestknowntime.com/> serves as the most authoritative source of guidelines and recordings of them. There are currently over 4,000 routes from across the world on the site.

Times recorded include total time from start to finish, including all non-moving time. The time I recorded this fall is considered the overall/supported FKT, but there are three distinct categories:

Unsupported means you truly have no external support of any kind. This means you carry everything you need from start to finish except water from natural sources. Given the length of the FLT, I doubt we'll ever see one of these for the main trail.

Supported trips can have as much support as you can enlist, as long as you are entirely self-powered. This can range from one person handing you water once, to an entire team that accompanies you the whole distance giving you everything (except physical assistance).

Self-Supported means you may have as much support as you can manage or find along the way, but not from any thing or person just for you; any support you employ must be equally available to anyone else. This can range from caching supplies in advance, purchasing supplies along the way, staying at motels, to finding or begging for food or water; camping in a friend's yard would be Supported, because that is not available to the public. Most long thru-hiking routes are done Self-Supported.

Ryan Levering still holds the FLT self-supported FKT, with a time of 21 days, 14 hours. I was impressed with his accomplishment even before I did the trail myself, but gained another level of respect for him after.

The site points out that "Not everything is a FKT Route." To be worthy of becoming a route, "the route has to have interest and integrity, be it aesthetic, historical, or otherwise - other people will understand it and be attracted to repeating it." Given its history and the length, the FLT was long overdue for entry.

Not only is the main branch a route on the site, but entries for the Letchworth Branch FKT (roughly 25 miles) can be found there as well. The current Letchworth FKT is 3h 47m 25s for one direction and 9h 45m 15s out and back! While we never submitted them, I suspect some friends and I hold the FKTs for the Crystal Hills and Onondaga branches.

High profile trails attract world class athletes. The current FKT on the 2,189 mile long Appalachian Trail is just over 41 days. That averages out to 53 miles a day! It will be interesting to see who else may attempt the FLT.

I'd like to close with some thank yous:

John Ghidui: Unquestionably my MVP crew member. He joined me for over a week, continued to quarterback support remotely after and returned to help twice more. He not only arranged getting my mother to the finish, but had flowers for her. I could write a whole article on him, but I'm afraid I don't even know half the things he did for me.

Jeffrey Adams: FKT holder for the Long Path. A lot of the blame for this terrible idea falls on you.

Ryan Levering: I will admit that I was initially a bit bummed to see your declaration in the *FLT News* that you were hoping to do the trail in record time before I was able to attempt it, but enjoyed messaging with you prior, remotely cyber stalking as you went along and flipping back through trail registers to find your entries. Completing the trail in a self-supported fashion at the speed you did is incredibly impressive.

Christy Post, FLTC Director of Marketing & Communications. We've shared many FLT adventures and she's continued to provide a great deal of inspiration and insight into the FLTC. She crewed for me several days mid-run and re-joined me for the finish. The FLTC is lucky to have her.

My brother Chris. I'm sure Mom is happy we didn't kill each other! Thank you for coming all the way from Boston, capturing some great photos early mornings and finding the maps.me app. I'm happy that herd of loose goats decided not to attack you.

Nate Seversky. Nate has family located near the FLT above the Otselic River, but wasn't aware of the trail. I have no doubt his kids will enjoy exploring it now that he's discovered it. One of my favorite moments from the trip was when he asked me to leave him alone one evening so he could study the maps for the next day.

Shawn Weishaar: a frequent partner on the FLT. Shawn decided not to take off from work for his scheduled crew time after seeing my progress, but still joined for two weekend days, did my laundry, and accompanied me for many hours while I suffered near the end. Shawn is heavily involved with the Allegheny National Forest Chapter of the North Country Trail and does great things for their chapter.

Jake Rodler: I'm jealous he was the only one to (allegedly!) spot a bear, but grateful he drove all the way up from Virginia to spot it and crew.

Brain Stewart: I'm sorry (but not sorry) I wasn't out on the trail long enough to put you to use as crew. We'll run along the FLT from Allegany State Park into the Allegheny National Forest together soon enough.

Nathan Huckle: Huckle is the men's and women's cross country head coach at Canisius College. This was my first experience with a coach and I enjoyed it. He catered to my non-typical goal and helped me with my weaknesses.

John Kiczek: Your cabin was beautiful. 🍁



A stunning early morning sunrise over the fog filled valleys below, east of M20; Hoxie Gorge Lean-to.

Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Inc.
6111 Visitor Center Road
Mt. Morris, NY 14510

Berry Hill fire tower on Map M23, newly refurbished. Now hikers may visit and climb for the view. Photo by Warren Johnsen

