

Spring, 2008

April Fools' Issue



Untangle Your Boots
And...Work!

TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS

A publication from the Trail Management Committee's Training Team

Finger Lakes Trail Conference

Warning: This issue contains *some* stories that are written *as if* they are true. Although the stories themselves are not true, the questions raised by these hoaxes are important; the points made are valid; and the standards and policies mentioned are legitimate. See if you can sort the wheat from the chaff; please allow yourself to laugh, or at least chuckle, once or twice; and please forgive everything that's in questionable taste.

Special points to ponder:

- What's your responsibility for blocking off access to dangerous areas?
- What responsibility does the FLTC have when a hiker gets lost?
- C'mon -- Can the little itty-bitty amount of oil-based paint used in a 2"x6" blaze *really* harm a tree?
- What should you do to keep that wooden picnic table in tip-top shape?

No Bull. Please Check Your Blazes!



Irene Szabo, legendary grumpy and opinionated but knowledgeable steward for the Huckleberry

Bog Loop Trail (see other front Page story), is urging maintainers to check the blazes on their section(s) to make sure that each next blaze can be seen, in all seasons of the year, when standing at the preceding blaze. Inspecting the blazes will give Irene and other trail tenders an opportunity to improve the quality of the blazes (bright paint, sharp corners, straight lines), rectify any

Another Hiker Lost in Beye's Bog

According to the Steuben County Sheriff's Dept., a second hiker apparently has been swallowed up by the plant life of Beye's Bog. Beye's Bog is located just 0.2 miles east of Huckleberry Bog on map B-3; the Huckleberry Bog Loop Trail is part of the Bristol Hills Branch of the FLT. With the aid of Irene Szabo's famous tracking dogs, Sandy and Pearl, officers found where the hiker left the Loop Trail and entered Beye's Bog. Although the Sheriff's Dept. is treating this officially as a missing person's case and no remains were recovered, no human tracks were found exiting Beye's Bog.

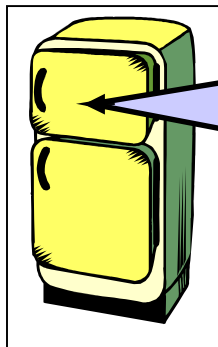
On April 1st, the family of the missing hiker reportedly called the Sheriff's Office when he did not return for dinner. Since the hiker had left destination information with his family, officers immediately went to the Huckleberry Bog area where they found his truck parked on the side of Wixom Road. According to investigators, the truck's doors were unlocked and the interior was "clean" except for a scribbled note found on the floor and a small purse found jammed under one of the seats. The note said that the hiker was hoping that being in the out-of-doors would lift his spirits.

The family has speculated that the hiker got lost and became entrapped by the decaying vegetation and Giant Pitcher Plants (*Pitcher gigantius*) that populate Beye's Bog. Family members who went to the scene pointed out that the blazing on the Loop Trail was sometimes confusing and was sometimes absent altogether. The Sheriff's Office, however, suggested that the hiker may have wandered off intentionally, if his spirits had not been improved by the hike on the Loop Trail. The Sheriff's Dept. and the family's insurance carrier will continue to investigate.

This is the second hiker to be lost in Beye's Bog in recent days. Two weeks earlier, a woman who lived in the same neighborhood as this lost hiker disappeared in Beye's Bog. The FLTC has sent condolences but has noted also that it bears no responsibility for the loss of either hiker. The families have joined forces and hired a lawyer to investigate what role trail conditions may have played in the disappearance of each hiker, and, in particular, whether the blazing was up to snuff.

possibly confusing situations, and change old turn blazes to the new style. The new style (see the Jan. '08 issue of the *TTN*) consists of two stacked vertical blazes, with the top blaze offset in the direction of the turn. According to the Signs and Blazes Subcommittee of the TMC, old turn blazes consisting of two rectangles, one directly above the other, should be corrected by painting over the top blaze and repainting it

off-set in the direction of the turn. The popular but old-fashioned style of turn blazes (stacked blazes with a directional arrowhead above or below) is also no longer acceptable and should be changed by painting over the arrowhead and the top blaze and then repainting the top blaze offset in the direction of the turn. Although tempting, adding a directional "finger" to the top blaze is also a no-no.



A Serious Tip: One of the real advantages of latex paint is that it cleans up more easily than oil-based paint. In fact, the brush doesn't even need to be cleaned! After blazing, just wrap your paintbrush, wet with latex paint and a few drops of water, in plastic and store it in your freezer.



True Colors for Latex Blazing Paint

Listed below are colors that workwell for blazing various trails in the Finger Lakes Trail System (FLTS). Use high quality gloss exterior latex house paint.

(Pantone Color ID Numbers for *similar* colors recommended by the Penna. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources [PA DCNR] are listed in the right-hand column.)

Color & Use for FLT System (FLTS) Trails	Brands/Color Names for FLTS Blazes	PA DCNR Pantone Color ID No.
Blue (side trails, spurs)	Sherwin-Williams "Breaker Blue" or Ace (Royal) "New River Gorge"	PMS 300
Orange (Conservation, Bristol Hills, Interloken, QCMT/MFHL trails)	Benj. Moore "Fiesta" or "Blaze Orange"	PMS 165 2X
Yellow (Letchworth Br.)	Sherwin-Williams "Corn"	PMS 102

Ted's For-Real Tips for Prolonging the Life of Picnic Tables in the Woods

- ✓ The table is made of exterior pressure treated wood, but the table and bench tops will last longer if treated periodically with a coat of deck preservative.
- ✓ If you have extra pieces of pressure treated wood, tuck these under the table's feet, to raise the feet off the ground.
- ✓ Tighten the fastenings every few years.

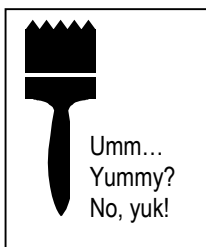
Thanks to Ted Anderson for providing these tips at the Trail Management Committee meeting, February 23, 2008

Child's Parents Sue Over Paint-sicle

"Just because the paintbrush was wrapped in a discarded Popsicle™ wrapper?!" exclaimed trail steward, Mary Hartman. Mary Hartman, when she learned that the parents of a young house guest were suing her for gross negligence. "Surely the kid could see that it wasn't really an ice lolly -- the brush was covered in blue paint!"

The parents allege that their 6-year old son "got sick" from licking the object that he took from Hartman's freezer. The parents claim that Hartman failed to reasonable precautions to prevent the child from sampling the "paint-sicle"; and they further allege that she may have disguised the wet paintbrush on purpose, to entice and "punish" the youngster whom they claim she felt was annoyingly rowdy and impulsive.

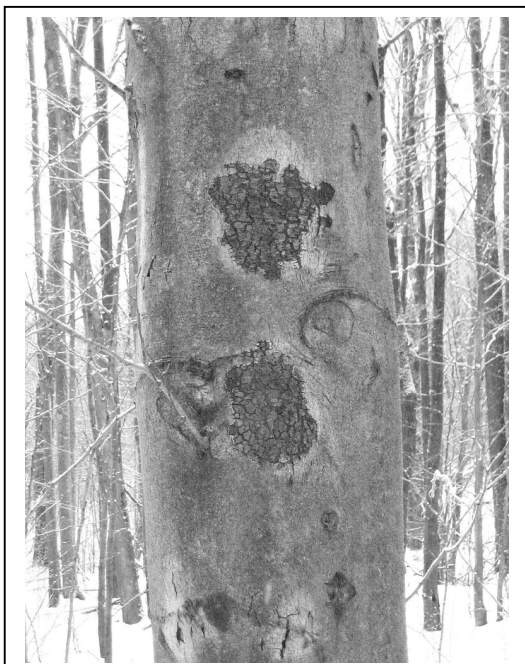
Through her lawyer, Hartman has explained that it is routine for her to store her latex-paint-coated paintbrushes in her freezer and that she typically uses discarded plastic wrappers from all sorts of different food products because she thinks it is foolish and wasteful to use clean plastic for this task. (Hartman showed investigators another "paint-sicle," wrapped in a plastic celery bag.)



Hartman also explained that she washes the plastic thoroughly before she reuses it, so the child could not have gotten ill from licking the wrapping, instead of the paint brush, and, Hartman asserted, at the age of 6, he should have known better than to open a freezer without asking, unwrap something he found in it, and then lick the brush part which had a paintbrush handle extending out from it, for heaven's sake.

The child's parents, speaking through their lawyers (the firm of Grubby, Money and Hungry), said that they have never heard of anyone storing paintbrushes in their freezers, and if Hartman was intending to do this as a regular practice, she should have bought a refrigerator with a freezer on top instead of a refrigerator with a freezer on the bottom. Hartman's lawyer, I. V. Indigestion, said Hartman had read about it in her trail club's trail maintainers' newsletter and asserted it's common practice among trail stewards. And, Hartman's lawyer stressed, expecting Hartman to have bought a refrigerator with the freezer on the top is totally unreasonable. Hartman's lawyer called the suit ridiculous, said he does not expect the case to go to trial, and announced that Hartman will not settle out of court.

2008 ALLEY CAT WORK CREWS 4 opportunities this year – No April Fool! Contact Howard Beye at fltc@frontiernet.net or (585) 288-7191 to sign up for a crew: **June 9-13**, based at Camp Sam Wood, Barlow Cabin (Pike) – various trail improvement projects, several sections, M6. **July 21-25**, based at Holland Community Center – improvements to ravines on CT6. **July or August** (TBD), Mariposa SF – constructing a new lean-to, M22. **Sept. 15-19**, base camp at Chenango Day Use Area, Taylor Valley SF, M21 – building foundation & assembling/installing 60' open web steel bridge.



The No-Joke Photo (above) by George Lockey, experienced steward for the Quehanna Area Trails Club, shows damage to a beech tree that may be the result of the oil-based paint that was used for the two blazes (photo center). Forester Peter Smallege studied the image and says that the oil-based paint does not appear to have harmed the overall health and vigor of the tree. While the oil-based paint and the pattern in the bark do seem to occur together on this tree, apparently it has not been established that oil-based paint **causes** the “scabs.” An alternative hypothesis, suggested by Smallege, is that the bark damage may be caused by an interaction between the oil-based paint and another problem, such as the Beech Bark Disease that is also clearly affecting this tree.

No Hoax! But Just a Urban Forest Legend? A Special Investigative Report About Blazing Paint

Those who attended the fall, 2007, regional meetings will remember us telling them that Howard Beye, VP for Trails, had been told that new research indicated that blazes made with oil-based paint can harm – and even kill – trees; and so we were urging stewards to switch to latex paint. However, since we had also been told that the PA DCNR had issued new trail marking guidelines that forbade the use of oil-based paint, we decided to contact the PA DCNR, read the guidelines, and check out the research behind the claim.

We found many statements that presumed that oil-based paint harmed trees; but none cited evidence or provided explanation. After contacting Peter Smallege, NYS Extension Forester & Director, Cornell Arnot Teach & Research Forest, and Jonathan Kays, Maryland Extension Forester, we realized that the claim is just too broad and is more assertion than established fact.

A somewhat more precise idea was that oil-based paint harms the tree when it comes into contact with the *inner* bark (cambrium). A possible variation on this was that the oil-based paint penetrates the outer bark and then damages the cambrium; however, both Smallege and Kays argued strongly that simply painting oil-based paint blazes on the outer bark of trees would be *very unlikely* to do any damage to the tree at all. Another possible variation was that oil-based paint would damage the cambrium when the tree had first been hatchet-blazed or there had been some other breach of the outer bark prior to paint-blazing. However, we never did find any research that explained *how* oil-based paint harms the cambrium, described the kind of damage that is done, or discussed whether certain species (or trees under certain conditions) are especially susceptible to damage. *And*, our experts pointed out that some oil-based paints, like specially formulated oil-based tree or forest boundary marking paints, *which are different than oil-based house paints*, are likely to be just fine to use over and over on all kinds of trees.

We then sent the photo to Gretchen Cicora, DEC Region 8 Forester, and asked her opinion. Cicora replied, “[The] tree definitely has birch bark disease, one of the later stages of it in fact” and explained that birch bark disease is “caused by a specific bug, a scale, that causes a specific fungus, a nectria, to infect the tree.” Cicora continued: “I have not heard of any studies, for or against, oil based paints harming trees. [The tree]...doesn’t have the healed blazed look to it, so probably wasn’t blazed down to the cambrium. With its smooth bark, Beech keeps its scars for a long time. But it does appear to have the blaze locations specifically affected. So, my semi-educated wild guesses include maybe the scales were attracted to the paint slightly more than the rest, and thus infect that section first, maybe somebody...scraped the bark before painting it, irritating it, or ?? or it could be just chance....”

George Lockey, the seasoned woodsman who took the photo, told us that he has observed the damage only on thin-barked trees (like beech *and* maple) where the same spots had been paint-blazed year after year. His photo may show some relationship between repeated blazing with oil-based house paint and crusty, scab-like growths on the blaze spots; but the tree also has Birch Bark Disease, so any relationship between the oil-based paint and the damage is likely to be complex. Thus, we’re left with no firm or simple answers; however, we do want to err on the side of caution, so **we recommend the following**: (1) Remove blazes made with oil-based house paint by carefully and gently scraping the paint off the out bark. Use a small paint scraper (not a wire brush); take care not to scrape into the cambrium. Leave the blaze as is, if scraping could damage the inner bark. (2) Repaint the blaze with latex paint or with oil-based paint that is specially formulated for forestry applications. *Note: Thick (for paint brush use) forest boundary marking paint lasts long that tree marking paint.* (3) If starting fresh, scrape off only as much of the outer bark as is absolutely necessary to prevent the blaze from sloughing off too quickly. Do not scrape thin-barked trees – just gently rub off any loose surface detritus with a glove. (4) Use high-quality latex exterior house paint, if you don’t mind reblazing more frequently (but cleanup is easy!). Use thick oil-based forest boundary marking paint, if you want the blaze to last longer and you don’t mind the cleanup. Forest boundary marking paints are available from forestry supply stores, such as www.forestry-suppliers.com (not an endorsement!); but if you can’t find the right color and you’ve got some oil-based house paint leftover, it’s probably safe to use it up by painting it on the outer bark of healthy trees. (5) Change the location of your blazes occasionally. (6) Keep your eyes open for evidence that could help answer the many questions that are still open.

We found that the new (2007) PA DCNR trail marking guidelines do not prohibit the use of oil-based paint. However, Matt Beaver, Recreation Section Chief, Operations and Recreation Division, PA DCNR-Bureau of Forestry, who kindly sent us the guidelines, told us: “We buy high-quality gloss exterior house paint, or boundary-marking ink. Latex paints are easy to apply, thin with water, dry quickly, and are less harmful to the environment. Oils are thicker, dry slower, and require thinner for clean-up.” Beaver did not provide any evidence that oil-based paint blazes damage trees but told us to “Just get a material safety data sheet for both latex and oil based paints” if we want to justify switching to latex paint for blazes.

AND NOW 3+ MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE YOUR TRAIL BUILDING SKILLS — No April Foolin'!

Slide Presentation/Discussion and In-the-Field Trail Workshop

The Onondaga Chapter of the ADK will host a two-part trail building and maintenance workshop in June. Trail maintainers and all interested parties are invited. These follow on the heels of the ADK-ON Annual Steward Picnic where the BIG gas powered tools will be demonstrated.

Part I (Thursday, June 26, 7:00 p.m., Fayetteville Library) is a slide presentation/discussion and Q & A session that will review FLT and NCT trail criteria for both maintenance and construction. Topics include: blazing, width, height, steepness/grade, outslope, drainage, structures, tools, safety, maintenance frequency, reporting hours, requesting help, etc. The goal is to construct environmentally friendly, hiker friendly trails that are easy to maintain. It is open to the public.

Part II (Saturday, June 28, 9:00 a.m.) is in the field on a section of the new NCT/FLT Onondaga Trail south of Syracuse. This hands-on session will focus on safety, putting to use hand tools, trail building and maintenance skills and employing quality trail criteria. Tools will be provided but you can bring any you have. We will be using only non-motorized hand tools. Gloves are advised. All stewards and would-be maintainers are encouraged to participate.

For more information about the 2-part workshop described above, contact Mary Coffin at: mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com or 315-687-3589

Trail Building Workshop At NCTA Cazenovia Conference -- A "Volunteer Vacation" -- No Joke !

The NCTA Trail Management staff will hold a trail building and maintenance workshop on **August 6th & 7th**, two days prior to the annual conference. Volunteers will camp out in DeRuyter State Forest and work on a new section of NCT/FLT Onondaga. Emphasis will be on the skills and criteria for building a quality trail (a premier footpath). *In addition there will be another workshop offered during the conference.* Space is limited, so sign up soon. Please e-mail Clare at clarecain@northcountrytrail.org if you are interested in attending.

Please send questions, comments, complaints, corrections, suggestions, new info or tips about trail building or tending, plus grocery coupons, to any member of the "Traveling Training Team": Editor/lead writer (this issue) -- Lynda "Mom Always Said I Had Poor Taste" Rummel (ljrassoc@roadrunner.com). Volunteer senior contributors -- Howard Beye (fltc@frontiernet.net); Bill Coffin (wmscoffin@twcny.rr.com); Mary Coffin (mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com) and Irene Szabo (Treeweenie@aol.com).

WOW! April Fools' Issue
...plus Some Serious Stuff!

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