

The CATSKILL CANISTER

Volume 58 - Number 2
April - June 2025

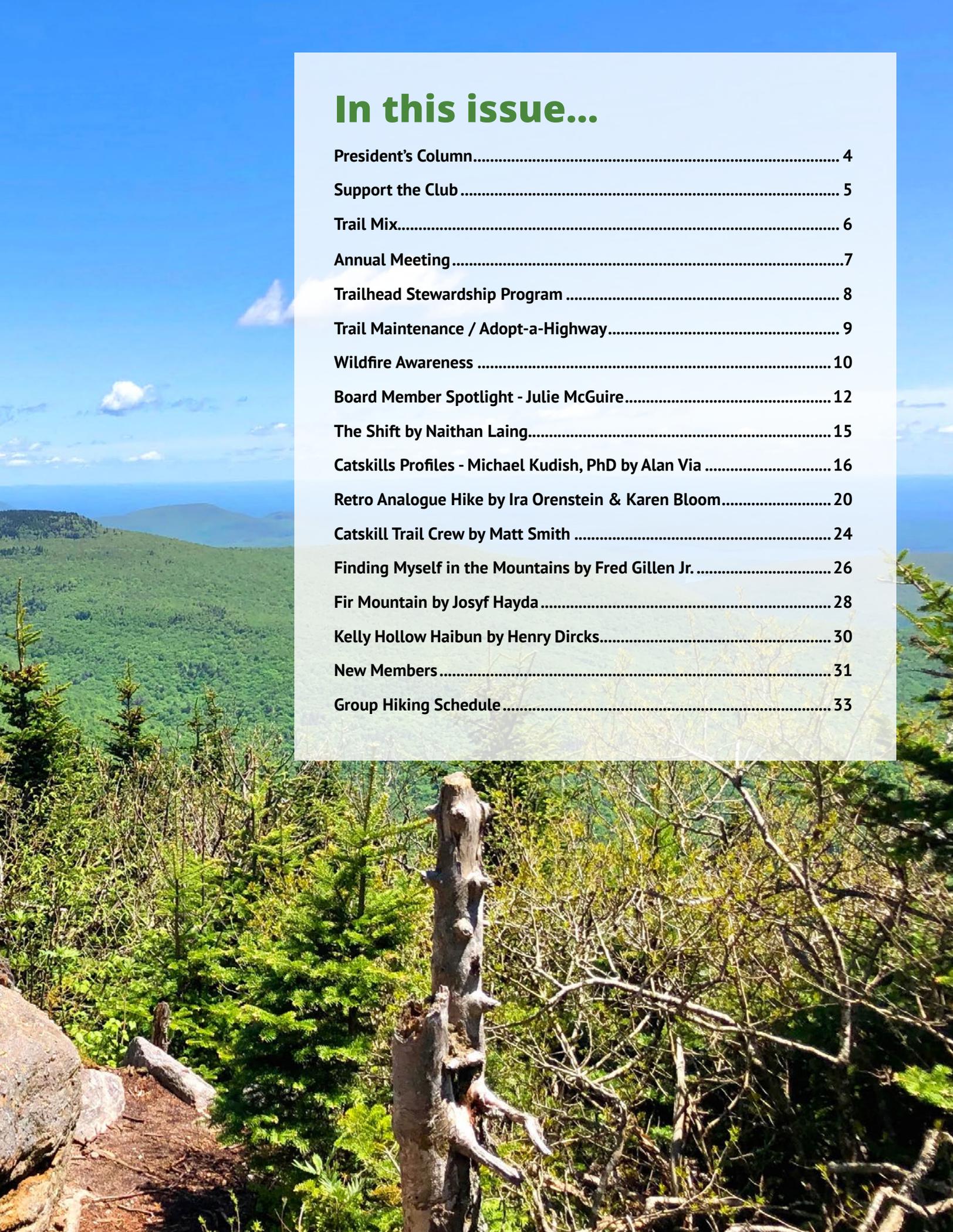




View from Peekamoose. Photo courtesy of Siu Samantha Yuen #2894 WI 511

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The Catskill Canister

Volume 58 - No. 2 | April-June 2025

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President's Column by Michael Bongar



Dear Catskill 3500 Club Members,

I recently had a conversation with Bob Nuzzo, a fellow hiker, committee member, and SAR team member, and something he said truly resonated with me. He shared that the reason he is involved with the Club is simple: the people. That means you. It's our members—their passion, their stories, and their love for the mountains—that make this Club so special.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting some of the most inspiring and adventurous individuals, all bound by our shared love of the outdoors.

We are a community as diverse as the Catskills themselves, made up of people from all walks of life. Yet, we are united by a deep sense of adventure, a drive for achievement, and an insatiable curiosity about the world. The latest issue of Jack Walker's *Catskill Canister* beautifully reflects these shared values, and I encourage you to read it cover to cover. Within its pages, you'll get to know some of the remarkable individuals who make up our Club.

You'll meet Julie McGuire, an exceptional skier of the high peaks. Dr. Michael Kudish, a historian and natural scientist, continues his invaluable work chronicling the Catskills. Karen Bloom and Ira Orenstein remind us of our Club's history, taking us back to the days when our membership numbers were in the triple digits. Fred Gillen, Jr. shares his spiritual journey as a musician and a champion for clean water. Josyf Hayda recounts a peaceful spring backpacking trip along the Biscuit Brook watershed. Henry Dircks offers a poetic haibun inspired by Ansel Adams and Kelly Hollow.

Beyond these stories, there's always work to be done to preserve the trails we love. Lourdes Sonera leads efforts in Trail Maintenance and Highway Cleanup, while she and Colleen Hardcastle continue their incredible work with the Trailhead Stewards Program. Their dedication ensures that our beloved mountains remain accessible and protected for generations to come.

But what makes all of this truly special is the opportunity to meet each other on the trails. Whether you are a seasoned hiker or new to the Club, I encourage you to take part in a group hike, introduce yourself, and get to know our outstanding hike leaders. And of course, don't forget to mark your calendars for our Annual Dinner on **Saturday, July 26 at the Ashokan Center**—a wonderful chance to connect, celebrate, and share our love for the mountains.

I look forward to seeing you out on the trails and at our upcoming events. If you have any questions or thoughts, please don't hesitate to reach out at president@catskill3500club.org.

Happy hiking!

On the cover: Witt Birch & Rocks. Photo courtesy of Steve Aaron #3199

Protect, Preserve & Inspire



Why Give to the Club?

Because Together, Our Impact & Efforts Make a Difference!

Leading Hikes and Welcoming All: Through our official club hikes, we strive to create an inclusive community where everyone is welcome. Whether you're a seasoned hiker or a first-time explorer, the Catskill 3500 Club maintains an active hike schedule that provides opportunities for all to explore, learn, and enjoy the beauty of the Catskills together.

Preservation and Conservation: In 2024, the Club funded two special projects; one supporting Bicknell's Thrush research and another supporting the Bramley Mountain Fire Tower restoration project. Your donations allow us to make impactful contributions to important projects that benefit the mountains.

Stewardship Programs: Thanks to your generosity and the graciousness of many volunteers, our Trailhead Steward Program has grown, educating hikers about Leave No Trace principles and protecting fragile ecosystems. With your help, we can continue to expand this program to be even more effective in the coming years.

Support Search and Rescue Efforts: The Catskill Mountain Search and Rescue Team, supported by the Club, plays a critical role in ensuring hiker safety. Your donation helps provide training, resources, and equipment so that our dedicated team of volunteers is fully prepared when called upon.

Connect and Inspire: From an upgraded newsletter, The Catskill Canister, to enhanced social media outreach, we are connecting with more members than ever, sharing the joy and responsibility of Catskill hiking. Your gift helps us tell the Catskill 3500 Club story far and wide.

**Your support means MOUNTAINS to us!
Please consider making a tax-deductible
gift to the club and help sustain all these
important initiatives.**

ONLINE DONATION

Scan the QR code to make an online donation. Payments will be processed through Paypal.



BY CHECK

Checks can be made out to: Catskill 3500 Club, Inc.
and sent by mail to:
P.O. Box 294, West Hurley, NY 12491

Does your employer offer a match for charitable donations? If so, please apply for a match through your employer, or your employer's foundation's, web portal.

As a 501c3 organization, all contributions to the Catskill 3500 Club, Inc are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Mission Statement

The Catskill 3500 Club, founded in 1962, continues to uphold the following principles for its members:

- Foster interest in hiking;
- Provide on-going education on outdoor skills;
and
- Engage in public service, stewardship, and responsible conservation of our region's natural resources.

Value Statement

We value and celebrate those who have ascended, on foot, the 33 highest peaks on public lands in the Catskill Mountains, as well as those who have additionally hiked these mountains in winter.

Trail Mix: News & Notes

Catskill 3500 Club Education Committee

The Catskill 3500 Club is in the process of forming an Education Committee. The committee plans to host various workshops and learning sessions throughout the year, and is in the preliminary stages of planning events and topics. If interested in joining the committee, please contact board member and Education Committee Chairperson, Sherri Goffman at education@catskill3500club.org.

Quilt Raffle to Benefit CMSAR

This year, quilter Emily Oakhill has donated a beautiful 58" x 58" quilt to be raffled at the Annual Dinner. Proceeds from the raffle will benefit Catskill Mountain Search and Rescue. The quilt features colors and textures of the Catskill forest, arranged in a Double Bear Paw pattern over a white background. A trillium leaf stitching pattern adorns the top of the quilt. Tickets will be made available at the dinner, by mail for those who cannot attend, or from members of Catskill Mountain Search and Rescue.



Catskill Search & Rescue is Welcoming 3500 Club Hikers Who Would Like to Volunteer



Are you a Catskill 3500 Club Member (or near-finishing Aspirant) who would like to take your backcountry game to the next level while providing a valuable service to our community? Do you enjoy positive teamwork and the satisfaction of working together to solve problems in the wilderness? Do you like going off trail and reaching difficult locations that few have visited? Do you enjoy learning, practicing and sharing new skills in first-aid, navigation and survival?

If so, you might be a great fit for the 3500 Club's very own volunteer Search and Rescue Team. We welcome teammates from all walks of life (no prior skills needed - we'll teach you!) who live within an hour of the Catskill Park. The time commitment includes a monthly meeting and drill, wilderness first-aid training (free of charge if you take it with us), some online course work, and periodic voluntary callouts for mission-ready members.

If you'd like to become a team candidate this summer or to learn more about the team, please reach out to Jake Haisley, the Chair of CMSAR, at catskillsar@gmail.com

59th Annual DINNER MEETING

Saturday, July 26, 2025



Please join us on Saturday, July 26, 2025 for the 59th Annual Dinner Meeting at the Ashokan Center

Event Details

Access will be open from 12-8 p.m. Your ticket includes entrance to all the trails at the Ashokan Center and a dinner buffet with vegetarian and gluten free options. Iced tea, soda and water will be provided and a cash bar will be available with beer, hard cider and wine.

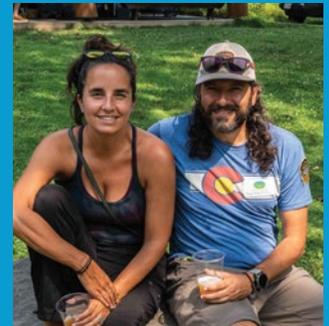
Children under 12 are welcome at no charge. Unfortunately, canine hikers are not permitted at the Ashokan Center.

Event Times

- 12 p.m.: Access to the Ashokan Center
- 1-3 p.m.: Socializing with appetizers and a cash bar
- 3-5 p.m.: Annual business meeting & awarding of certificates
- 5 p.m.: Dinner buffet
- 8 p.m.: Departure

As in the past, Club-related merchandise will be available for purchase, as well as Carol and Dave White's books. Our CMSAR Team and Trailhead Stewards will be represented.

Additionally, this meeting fulfills the requirements of our bylaws to gather membership for an annual meeting. At the meeting, members in good standing (i.e. any member up to date on their dues) will be asked to vote on the slate of Officers and Directors.



Hiking on the Ashokan property and canoe rentals are available. Hiking includes many trails along the Esopus including the 1885 covered bridge, Winchell's Falls and Cathedral Gorge.

Lodging and camping options are available.

Ashokan Center
477 Beaverkill Rd
Olivebridge, NY 12461

Announcing the Kick-Off of the 5th Season of the Trailhead Steward Program

by Lourdes Sonera & Colleen Hardcastle,
Trailhead Steward Program Co-Chairs

The beauty of the Catskill Mountains is a treasure that we all share, and it takes a community to ensure that it remains pristine, welcoming, and safe for generations to come. We are thrilled to announce the kick-off of the 5th season of the Trailhead Steward Program, a vital initiative aimed at preserving the natural splendor of this beloved mountain range while enhancing the experience for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

Since its inception, the Trailhead Steward Program has engaged volunteers in welcoming visitors to the Catskills' most popular trailheads: Slide Mountain and Woodland Valley. This program plays a critical role in fostering a responsible hiking culture in our community.

As many of you know, the popularity of the Catskills has surged in recent years, bringing both excitement for our natural environment and challenges to the ecosystems we cherish. The Trailhead Steward Program was developed as a proactive response to these challenges, empowering individuals to take an active role in stewardship by becoming responsible and ethical hikers who practice Leave No Trace principles.

What to Expect This Season:

As we embark on this fifth season, we anticipate a range of activities and opportunities for both new and returning stewards. Here's what you can look forward to:

1. Welcoming Visitors: Stewards at Slide Mountain and Woodland Valley will greet visitors, share current trail conditions, and promote Hike Safe and Leave No Trace principles to ensure enjoyable hiking experiences for all.



2. Community Engagement: This season will focus heavily on outreach and education, aiming to foster a deeper understanding of Leave No Trace principles, helping to protect the environment, and minimizing the impact of hiking activities.

3. New Uniform: We are excited for new uniforms for our stewards this season and of course The Patch!

4. Training Sessions: New volunteers will receive virtual training from experienced stewards. Training will cover safety awareness, communication skills, and best practices for assisting hikers. **Mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 30th at 6:30pm**

[Click for Training Link](#)

5. Volunteer Appreciation Celebration: We will host an event to celebrate and appreciate the hard work of our volunteers throughout the season, recognizing the stewards' contributions to the Catskill community.



Whether you are an experienced hiker looking to give back to the trails you love or a new member eager to connect with the hiking community in the Catskills, we warmly welcome you to join the Trailhead Steward Program. Your involvement can make a significant impact on the preservation of our hiking paths and the surrounding habitats for the next generations.

If you're interested in becoming a Trailhead Steward or learning more about the program, please visit our website at www.catskill3500club.org/trailhead-stewardship or contact us at trailstewards@catskill3500club.org.

Join us in our mission to protect the Catskills for all outdoor enthusiasts! Together, we can ensure that the Catskills remain a haven for adventure, exploration, and connection with nature.

We are all looking forward to a successful 5th season of the Trailhead Steward Program—let's hit the trailhead and make a difference!

Trail Maintenance and Community Clean-Up: Spring Events in the Catskills!

As spring awakens the beauty of the Catskill Mountains, it's the perfect time for us to roll up our sleeves and give back to the trails we cherish. We are excited to invite you to participate in two special volunteer events taking place on the weekend of May 3rd and 4th.

Trail Maintenance on Peekamoose/Table Trails

Date: Saturday, May 3

Time: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Location: Peekamoose & Denning Trailhead
(2 crews!)

Join fellow club members for a day of trail maintenance on the Peekamoose and Table trails! This is a fantastic opportunity to help keep these popular hiking routes well-maintained and safe for everyone. Whether you're an experienced trail worker or a newcomer, your efforts will make a significant difference in preserving our beloved hiking paths.

What to Expect:

- Trail clearing, brushing, and erosion control.
- Lean-to maintenance
- Guidance and leadership from experienced trail stewards.
- A chance to connect with fellow club members who share your love for the outdoors.

Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring gloves, water, and a packed lunch. Tools will be provided, but feel free to bring your own, too!



Adopt-A-Highway Clean-up

Date: Sunday, May 4

Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Devils Tombstone Campground
Parking by Notch Lake

On Sunday, we will continue our commitment to keeping the Catskills beautiful with our Adopt-a-Highway clean-up event. This is another wonderful opportunity to volunteer and help keep our roadways clean while enjoying the great outdoors.

What to Expect:

- A light, community-focused clean-up along route 214.
- Support and camaraderie from fellow volunteers.
- A contribution to the overall beauty and health of our local environment.

All volunteers will be provided with hard hats and trash bags, but feel free to bring along any additional supplies you think may be helpful and gloves.



To participate in either or both of these events, please sign up by visiting our website or [click here](#). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out: trailmaintenance@catskill3500club.org

Let's come together as proud members, enjoy the fresh air, and take pride in our beautiful Catskills. Your participation is vital, and we can't wait to see you there!

Thank you for your continued dedication to the Catskills 3500 Club and for helping us maintain the natural beauty of this incredible region.

Happy Hiking!



WILDFIRE AWARENESS

by Jim Bouton,
Stewardship Committee Chair

As spring draws near, so does the danger of wildland fire. For this reason, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has issued a Spring Burn Ban for the past several years. This ban is intended to cut back on the large volume of fires in NYS during the period before green starts to show up on the forest's trees and floor, which is typically between March and May in the Catskills. Without snow cover or the moisture provided by green flora, the forest can be incredibly dry. Some of these fires are caused by debris burning of lands being cleared for construction, municipal burning of leaves and brush, homeowners burning of brush, faulty electric wires, and campfires.

This year's ban runs from March 16 through May 14.

What does this mean for those of us using the backcountry and planning a campfire?

The area of the Catskills contained within the blue line that is referred to as the Catskill Park does not allow campfires above 3,500 feet at any time or season. Camping and fires are not permitted within 150 feet of any trail, road, or water source except in areas designated by a yellow camping disk. The spring fire ban does not include campfires under 3 feet high, and 3 feet wide (or diameter). You cannot leave a campfire unattended unless you completely extinguish it. You should also use a designated fire ring with a hardened base like those found at lean-tos. Fires started on bare ground, even

if litter has been removed, have a risk of burning the dry organic matter underground, often for days or even weeks. The area around the fire should be raked to bare ground for several feet. Only dead, DOWNED, and dry wood should be used. Extra care should be taken if it's windy or dry. The DEC also has a fire danger rating which can be found on its website. Or call the local DEC Forest Ranger before you go because conditions can vary from zone to zone.

However, the 3500 Club asks you to consider not having a campfire in some areas and conditions, even though it may technically be a "legal" fire. A campfire 3x3x3-feet is a large fire—much larger than needed for cooking or ambiance. It takes water to safely extinguish a small campfire. Lots of water. Most of us only carry what we need for drinking or cooking, which is usually a few liters at most. It takes gallons to extinguish even a small fire. Unless you are camped at a designated site near a stream or lake, the amount of water is not available to properly extinguish a campfire.

We also urge you not to camp at higher elevations except at designated sites such as lean-tos. Areas of boreal-type forest (thick fir and spruce) such as found from Peekamoose to Slide and along the eastern Devils Path, even if below 3,500 feet, should be avoided. Soils are thin, water is scarce, and the fire load is high. Fires can readily burn into the organic layer of duff and spread undetected underground. There are examples of this type of fire happening on both Indian Head and Rocky Mountains. Camping with fires more readily lends itself to degrading a sensitive site, as branches are broken off for fuel, the ground is trampled, and the area dries out



Example of fire damage on Indian Head



Fire damage which spread through duff on Rocky.

and becomes more combustibile. If you want to camp, go down to the deciduous forest, which is much less susceptible to fire.

You are the most important tool for fire prevention and control in the backcountry. You can take certain actions if you discover an unattended fire or the smoldering, hot remains of an abandoned campfire. The first thing is to call. **The number for DEC Ranger dispatch is 1-833-NYS-RANGERS (833-697-7264).** They will contact the nearest Ranger, who can advise you. Or call 911. Insist on being connected to Ranger Dispatch. Even if you think the fire is out, let them know what you found. Let them decide on how to handle this. You can then try to put the fire out or slow it down if it is contained. Clear the area around the fire of any combustibles. Use any water you have to sprinkle on the fire, stirring it slowly into the hot spots with a stick to make the water go farther. Use your hands to feel for hot spots. If short of water, try using any available inorganic soil to mix in or cover the hot spots. Don't be shy or offended— use the water source carried in your body... pee on it! If the fire has spread, don't try to contain it unless you have been trained or have some knowledge. You can use branches as rakes to create a fire line. Often lean-tos have tools such as brooms, shovels, and rakes. If you have called, help is on the way. You may need to do some hiking to get cell service, even if it means hiking out or to a higher spot. Fire is everyone's responsibility. There are no excuses for not calling in a fire to the DEC.

If you discover an attended illegal or dangerous-looking legal fire, call Ranger Dispatch. Don't confront. Often people take offense and there may be drugs or alcohol involved. Let the professionals do their job.

CAMPFIRE ALTERNATIVES

There are many reasons when having a campfire while camping isn't the best choice—whether regulations prohibit open fires, like above 3,500 feet in the Catskills; conditions are too dry to responsibly have a campfire; or, as is often my case, after a long day of hiking or biking, I'm just too tired to make a fire. Foregoing a campfire doesn't have to mean that you will sit around all evening in the dark. Here are a couple great campfire alternatives.

Click on the image below to learn about alternatives to campfire light courtesy of Chris Adams





Board Member Spotlight: A Q&A with Julie McGuire #3500

by Jack Walker #4190

In this latest Spotlight, we feature Board Member Julie McGuire, who shares her inspiring journey from Aspirant to High Peaks Skier to serving on the Board.

How old were you when you first started hiking and what are your earliest memories?

Julie McGuire: I didn't start hiking until my early 30s when I was dating my ex-wife. She and I got into it together. Up until that point, my main outdoor activity was resort skiing. We bought a book, (AMC's Best Day Hikes in the Catskills and Hudson Valley) and used that to determine hikes we might want to do each weekend. Since my second home is in the Catskills, we primarily stuck to those hikes, though we did sometimes venture into Harriman and the Gunks on the way back to the city on Sundays or on weekends when we couldn't go upstate.

I remember following my ex since she was the navigator and having our two dogs with us. I don't recall many specifics from that period of my life. I just have clips of memories like trying to get my small dogs up scrambles on the eastern side of Indian Head, looking at the view from Orchard Point on Plateau, and feeling like the Devil's Path down from Southwest Hunter dragged on.

We know you're a 3500 Club member and you have the special distinction of being number 3500. How did your 3500 Club journey begin and what was your inspiration for completing the challenge?

JM: When I got divorced I didn't want to stop hiking, but I was really intimidated at the idea of being in the woods alone since I was paranoid about getting lost. I couldn't even remember which hikes were the most straightforward since I blindly followed my ex. Soon after she left, I was in the Catskills trying to get her to talk to me on the phone. I said, "I don't even know what to do up here anymore without you." She said, "Go organize your closets or something, or do an easy hike like Windham High Peak." She really just wanted to get rid of me, but at least now I had an idea of a hike I could do.

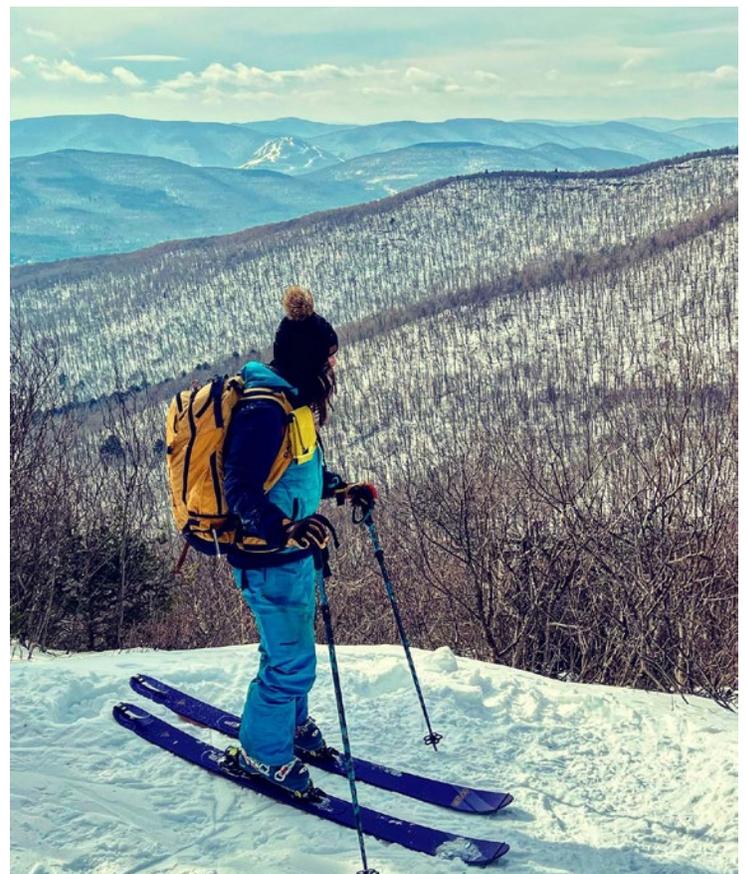
I remember doing Windham High Peak a lot since it's 15 minutes away from my house, very straightforward, has a couple decent views, and felt like a decent enough workout that could be done in a relatively short period of time. I then branched out to Hunter and Plateau from 214.

As this was happening, I had gotten into backcountry skiing, and was using guides in my travels overseas. On one of my trips, the other people had canceled and it was just me and two guides. I said to the lead guide, "Maxi, I want you to teach me how you navigate in the backcountry, how to cut skin tracks, and anything else I need to know." He was a great teacher and it gave me the confidence I needed to feel more comfortable in the mountains alone.

The Covid lockdown occurred about a month after I returned from that trip. I was upstate and couldn't hit the high peaks, so I focused on exploring the Dutcher Notch area that was close to home. I was there every single day. I think the sign-in book was exclusively my name for pages, but I got more comfortable and thought I might like to start tackling the 3500 Club list when the peaks opened back up. I assumed it would take years and I wasn't sure I would be confident enough to do the bushwhacks.

On May 13, 2020, I started my 3500 journey on Blackhead. I decided I'd start from scratch and not count any previous hikes. I just said to myself, "Let me see how far I can get." In less than a month, I had already done 25. I had to take some time off for an injury, but on August 6, 2020, I finished the initial round on Doubletop. I just had to repeat the four in winter for my patch. Not only had I hiked all of them, but I completed the list much faster than I ever imagined and did every single one solo.

Yana asked me to write an article for the Canister at the end of that summer even though I hadn't technically finished the journey. I remember crying after she asked me to do that because something in me felt like the healing from my divorce was complete. I wasn't this loser my ex couldn't wait to get rid of and now I was even getting some recognition. I was developing a new identity.



In 2021 you began a personal quest to ski all 33 high peaks in the Catskills. How did this quest come about?

JM: As I was hiking, I was also starting to explore what I could ski in the Catskills since I wanted backcountry skiing to be a regular part of my life, not just something I did on my big mountain excursions. I had ventured from resort touring to Hunter from Spruceton and then Bearpen, which are the two most skiable peaks. However, this thought kept persisting on my hikes, “Wouldn’t it be cool to ski these?” I would brush it aside and argue to myself, “These are impossible to ski. I’m not good enough.”



Eventually, I conceded and said the same magic words that got me hiking the 35s, “Let me see how far I can get.” I started my ski journey as I was ending my hiking challenge for the initial patch. I decided once again that I wouldn’t count any previous peaks skied and started from scratch on Balsam on January 18, 2021.

At some point during this journey it became apparent to me that the universe wanted me to do it. It didn’t feel like something I was necessarily doing for myself, but because I was supposed to. I think the universe speaks to us in intuition, persistent nudges, and synchronicities and that’s what I was experiencing when that thought of “Wouldn’t this be cool to ski” kept recurring.

How much research and preparation went into the ski challenge? Were there certain peaks that were more of a challenge in finding a workable ski route?

JM: I hiked every peak from every possible trail to the summit so that I could figure out the most ski friendly routes. I saved the easier ones for when the snowpack was minimal and the harder ones (like the peaks on the Devil’s Path) for when there were storms with good accumulation.

Sugarloaf was initially a puzzle for me. I wanted to just ski the

east side from Roaring Kill as the west side by Mink Hollow isn’t skiable. However, I know Roaring Kill isn’t plowed and I didn’t want to get my car stuck, so I went up the west side, skied down the east side, and then took the Mink Hollow trail back around. The Mink Hollow trail was not easy to follow in the storm and all the markers were covered by snow. I spent hours in the dark alone. I knew I’d make it out, but I thought I was going to be there until late into the night at one point.

Lone and Rocky were also a challenge, but Jamie Kennard joined to film for an upcoming documentary so I felt much safer having someone else with me.

How did you mentally prepare for each peak and the challenge in general? Was there ever a point in your mind that the quest may be unattainable?

JM: Once I did Sugarloaf I knew I’d complete the project of skiing the 35s. That peak gave me a lot of confidence. I’m always scared when I go out alone because so much can go wrong. The only thing I can do is make sure I have all the gear and things I’d need in my pack to survive should something happen.

I talk to the universe a lot when I’m out there and I think it has blessed this journey. I think being somewhat scared makes me hyper-aware and able to perceive a presence that’s always there, kind of still, silent, and hanging in the air, but we don’t notice it because we’re too busy going about our lives. I feel like I’m able to commune with the presence more when I’m alone. It gives me insights and I think feeling connected to that is what pushes me to go out there even when my fear is trying to talk me out of it.

On November 30, 2024 you accomplished your goal of skiing all 33 Catskill High Peaks. Besides becoming the 3rd person and the first woman to finish the challenge, what are your biggest takeaways from the overall journey?

JM: I’m still working this out. Obviously, I learned a lot about backcountry skiing and had personal insights along the way, but the big life lesson is what I’m still asking the universe to help me understand. I know there is a parallel between what’s going on in my life and backcountry skiing. Since 2018, the universe has been removing people who represented a false sense of security (most notably my wife and my father). I don’t have any family with whom I have a relationship with except my mother. Granted, I have great friends and a community that I belong to, but the sense of responsibility friends feel for you is different than that of parents and partners, so it makes me very fearful of going through life alone. I fear what challenges might arise that I won’t have any help with.

Yet, as all this was happening, the universe brought me backcountry skiing, which is something I usually do alone. It has taken me out of the false security of resorts to rely on no one but myself. Every time I go out into the woods I ask the universe, “What are you trying to teach me about my life in bringing me here? I know there is a connection. What do you want me to learn?”

Best speculation I have so far is that I am learning that I can rely on myself more than I thought and maybe the universe is trying to take people out of my life so that I can learn to rely



Photo: @catskilltracks

on it instead. But being in the city during the week, and seeing how much suffering there is, it's hard to trust the universe will save me when it hasn't saved others. I really wrestle with understanding how the universe guides and helps me versus the way others seem abandoned. How do I know it won't abandon me? How do I know I won't be homeless one day? It's the biggest thing I'm trying to reconcile when I'm in the woods.

Beyond your own goals with skiing, you also share your passion in a program called winter4kids. How did you become involved with this program and how has it impacted the students that take part in it? How would you describe the satisfaction you get from sharing in this experience?

JM: When I was living in the Catskills for a year and half, I was able to feel such a connection with the universe because I didn't have to be on high alert all the time. I wasn't in a constant state of survival mode. I wanted my students to experience this state of consciousness so I asked the universe to find a way to bring this to them. My friend, Nichelle, introduced me to Brandon, the head of ski school at Winter4kids, a non-profit organization that brings winter sports to underprivileged youth. They have a campus in New Jersey at the former Hidden Valley ski resort and my students get lessons in skiing and snowboarding every year.



I have so many stories of how my students have been impacted by this program. It has changed my

relationship with them tremendously and I've realized that with some students, it has given them a whole new purpose and passion in life. I'm so grateful that the universe used me as a conduit to help them in this way. Nothing brings me more joy or meaning in life than to see them acting as their highest selves on the mountain and demonstrating passion and determination.

You are currently a 3500 Club Board Member. Describe your journey from club member to joining the Board.

JM: Since the Club was such an important part of rebuilding my self esteem after my divorce and since the universe made me number 3500, which I still think is wild, I have a special connection to the Club and want to do my part in supporting it.

I started off as a member of the social media committee and eventually Michael Bongar asked if I'd be interested in joining the board, which was a huge honor.

What are some of the roles you take part in as a Board Member?

JM: I used to lead the social media committee and now I am the NYNJTC liaison, a member of the Canister committee, and will be part of the new education committee.

As a high school teacher, you are active in giving young adults an opportunity to share in your passion for the Catskills. In what ways have you shared these outdoor experiences?



JM: I take my students volunteering to do trail maintenance in the Catskills with Charlie Gadol from the NYNJTC. We have done this twice so far and will be doing our first overnight trip in May. Every time I pass by Frost Valley, I say to myself, "I bet my kids would love this" so I organized for my students to stay there this spring.

Do you have any plans in the future to continue exposing young adults to the Catskills and the outdoors in general?

JM: In addition to trail maintenance, Michael Bongar, the education committee, and I will be brainstorming other ways for my students to experience the Catskills, but that has yet to be determined.

THE **SHIFT**

by Nathan Laing #3165



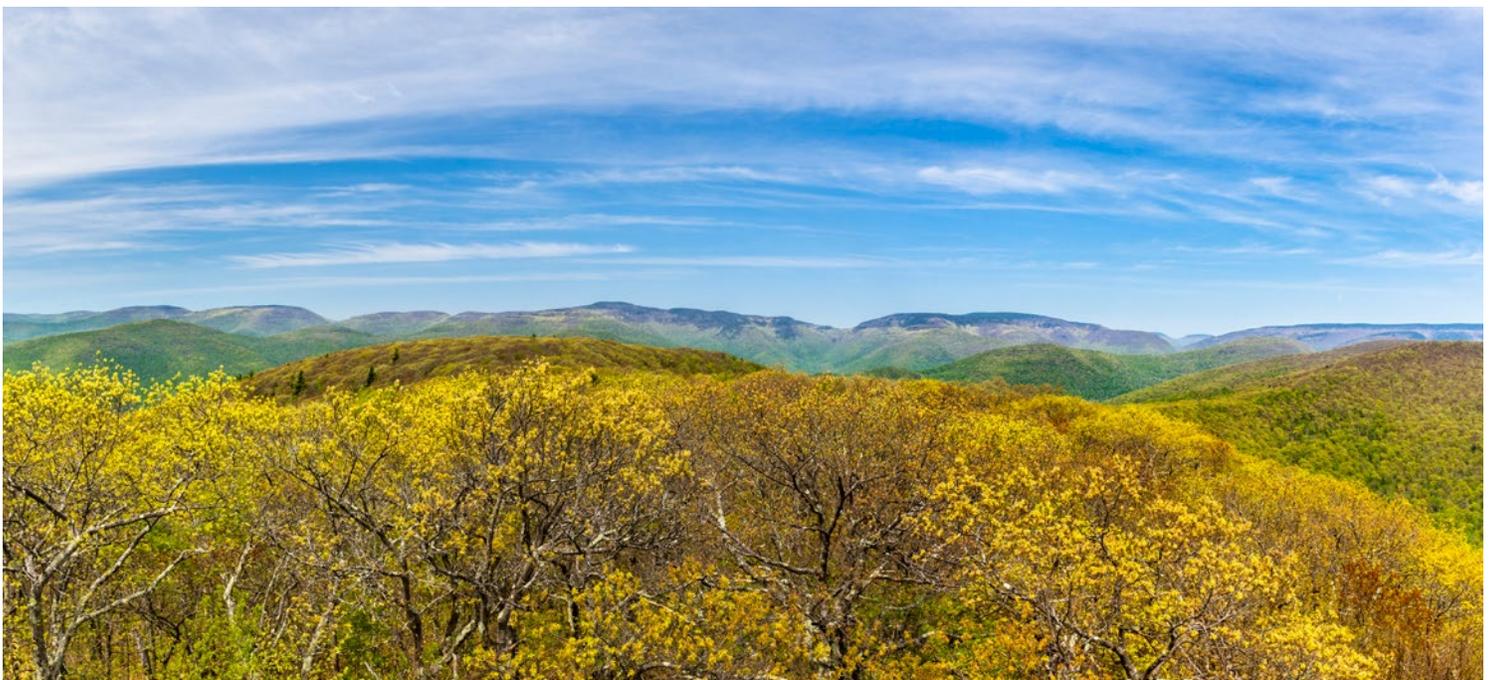
The blanket of snow imparts a sense of pause and rest across the landscape. Trees stand resolute in the winter winds. Silent streams sit frozen. Across the ground surface the occasional faunal forager traverses the shifting drifting snowpack.

What seasonal changes are most visually apparent to you? Perhaps the flowering of Elm, Red Maple and Birch trees? The emergence of Trout Lily, Bloodroot, and Leeks contrasting against the muted tapestry of crimson, browns and grey? The symphony of songbirds by day and peepers by night?

Now can you conceptualize some landscape changes that are not as apparent? The upward erosive retreat of a stream? The dissection of the Catskill plateau? The retreating darkness of night (this is a cue for trees to initiate the growing season). The widening of a tree trunk? Migration/dispersal of a plant species?

As we can see, changes are not measured on the same instruments or timescale for that matter. The moments are the words that write the ever changing story of the environment. I hope you have found some time to pause and reflect on this winter. Learning to slow down amongst the eternal entropy permits one to simultaneously observe and participate in the changes.

Books about observing seasons and change in the environment: A Sand County Almanac - Aldo Leopold; The Outmost House - Henry Beston



Tremper Tower North View. Photo courtesy of Steve Aaron #3199

Catskills Profiles

Dr. Michael Kudish, PhD

by Alan Via #429 W174

This is the inaugural article in a series featuring Catskill luminaries, authors, hikers, and people impacting the mountains and the region.



Mike in office laboratory – Photo courtesy of David Turan

Born in 1943, Michael Kudish's interest in botany began while hiking with his father who taught him about plants and history. As an undergraduate, recreational hiking in the Catskills presented him with a puzzle. Why was the forest dramatically different on many summits? After receiving his B.S. in biology at CCNY and M.S. in botany at Cornell University, he earned his Ph.D. at SUNY ESF College of Environmental Science and Forestry. His doctoral dissertation documented his attempt to find out.



Bog research Halcott Mt - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

Following a teaching career in the Forestry Division at Paul Smith's College in the Adirondacks, he 'retired' to the Catskills in 2005 where he continued his work on forest history full time, focusing on the post Ice Age era. His core samples and research on bogs has established the formation of the Catskills back 13,000 years.

After years exploring every corner of the Catskills, simply describing Michael Kudish as a botanist doesn't cover the breadth of his activities. He's a teacher, forest historian, railroad expert, multi-book and articles author, presenter of countless presentations and accomplished hiker.



Lecture in Schoharie County - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

As 3500 Club member #147 (Panther Mt 3-12-73) he'd likely be a 'gridder' if he kept a peak count over a lifetime's worth of field trips. Besides his botanical research exploring every corner of the Catskills and being a railroad historian, he continues to teach at presentations and on formal field trips.



Scouting New Catskill Mountain Club trail – Morris Hill
Photo courtesy of Alan Via

A lot of research happens before a field trip. That often includes older versions of topo map, historical documents and publications. ▶

◀ The Catskill Mt Club has established six Catskill trails in close cooperation with New York DEP. A seventh, Morris Hill currently has no trail. Mike was part of a group scouting and flagging a route to the summit.



Map homework - Photo courtesy of David Turan



"Don't get me started on mosses" – David Turan

◀ Hike with Mike and you'll hear this. It's usually prefaced by with "Mike, how come" or "why does this look like".

Documenting an unusual sight - Winter usually means a season of research and writing. Mike is not often out on snowshoes but a mild day to a summit he hadn't previously visited was an attraction. ▶



Bushwhacking SSW Warren - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

Like many others, my first introduction to Mike Kudish began by reading his seminal work, *The Catskill Forest*. The book began as the Vegetational History of the Catskill Forest, his PhD dissertation. Its publication was a response to years of inquiries from individuals, scientists and organizations.



The Professor - Rip's Ledge - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

My in-person introduction happened at the Catskill 3500 Club dinner, Spring 2008 after we had previously corresponded. While speaking with someone at my table, I sensed a server standing behind waiting to clear dinner dishes. I half turned, handing my plate to 'busboy' Mike Kudish. Lots of laughs ensued whereupon he sat down for the beginning of a great friendship. I still laugh remembering the introduction to a friend who I hold in high esteem. It wasn't long before we began hiking together, mostly bushwhacks.



Looking for first growth - Hardscrabble Mt - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

There weren't many places Mike hadn't been to for his research but we were happy to bushwhack many of the Catskill 100s and 200s previously unfamiliar to him. His vast array of knowledge and friend network got us entrees to many areas. For me, the hikes were all day botanical field lessons. I couldn't soak up enough of the surroundings and to this day, "What's that, Mike" is an integral part of every hike.

At any viewpoint, Mike points out the name of every visible mountain or hill. Amazingly, using the hands on his analog watch, noting the time of day and sun position, he's usually within a few degrees of what my compass shows when pointing toward a distant landmark.

Those who hike with him recognize the folded notepaper sheet in the outside pocket of whatever he's wearing. He'll stop to note location, elevation and other observations. These are turned into minutely-detailed field notes with a hand drawn map displaying old roads, stone walls, waterbodies, flora and more.



*Ashokan Quarry Trail - Updating botanical field notes map
Photo courtesy of Alan Via*

Mike says that for every hour spent in the field, it takes two hours to produce the day's field notes and map. Recognizing that they document a lifetime of irreplaceable research, they're now being digitized and saved in the cloud. After every series of outings, Mike sends copies of the last group of field notes which are backed remotely.

It's been my privilege to spend time with our modern-day John Burroughs and observe research which will benefit generations of future scholars.

We'll soon be treated to the first of a multi-volume follow-up to *The Catskill Forest*, a project he's been working on for years.



A Forest Historian's Desk - Photo courtesy of Alan Via

Counting tree rings and measuring tree size are the components of most hikes. ▶

◀ Updating the day's research from inside a fallen tree.



*Modern version of Lord of the Rings
Photo courtesy of David Turan*



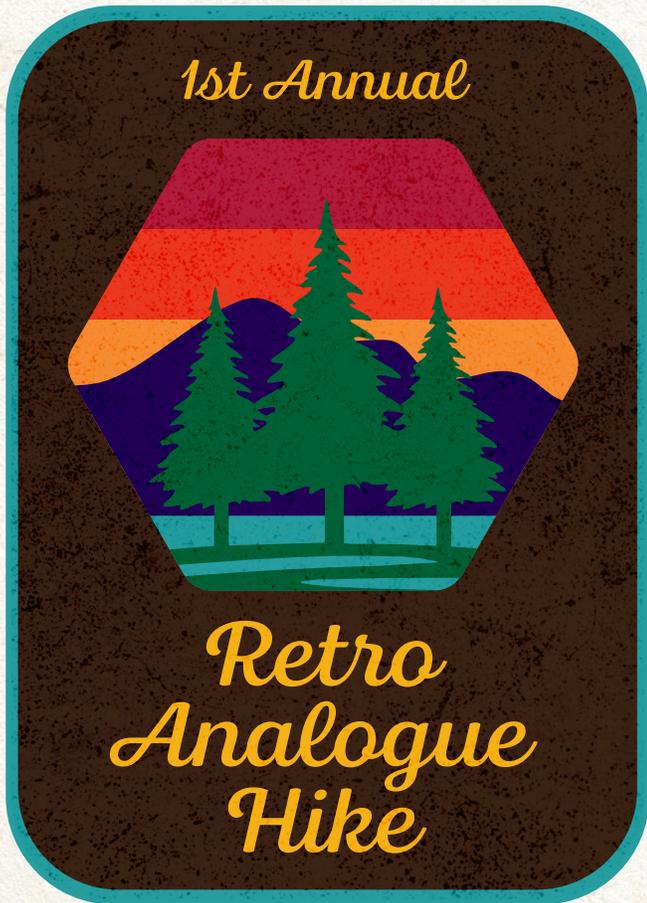
Counting Rings – Alan Via



How old is this one – Alan Via

Here are Alan's publications:

*The Catskill 67 – A Hiker's Guide to the Catskill 100 Highest Peaks Under 3500ft and Doghiker – Great Hikes with Dogs from the Adirondacks to the Catskills. The State University of NY Press will be publishing Alan's latest next year
The Lostkills – Bushwhacking and Hiking the Catskills Lesser Known Peaks.*



A Retro Day on Plattekill Mountain

by Ira Orenstein & Karen Bloom



The Idea & Invitation For This Inaugural Hike

It all began with a simple query by Ira Orenstein (#415, 3500 Club hike leader) to Michael Bongar (#2173, current Catskill 3500 Club President), and Harold Oakhill (#283, 3500 Club hike leader), followed by an announcement to a few buddies:

Join our first ever 'Retro' Analogue Hike using map and compass (no electronics) for an unforgettable expedition up trailless Plattekill Mountain taking place Saturday, February 15, 2025 and facilitated by the intrepid Ira Orenstein.

How to know if this hike is for YOU...

Are you curious when hearing long-time hikers reminiscence about the good ole days of map and compass? Or, are you the one doing the reminiscing?

Can you imagine waiting a week for that perfect viewpoint photo to be processed? Or, are you the one with slide carousels still in your closet?

Have you ever wondered if a hike is really a hike if you aren't told how many steps have been taken, heartbeats per minute are ticking, calories burned and the exact number of minutes spent in motion? Or, are you someone who is just content to know that your heart is still beating?

This hike is planned for those who remember those old Grivel Grippers, woolen army surplus pants, wooden snowshoes, and analogue altimeters. And especially for those who don't!

Feel free to bring some items of retro equipment... clothing, packs, maps and compasses, and more.

Prize awarded to most standout Retro Hiker.

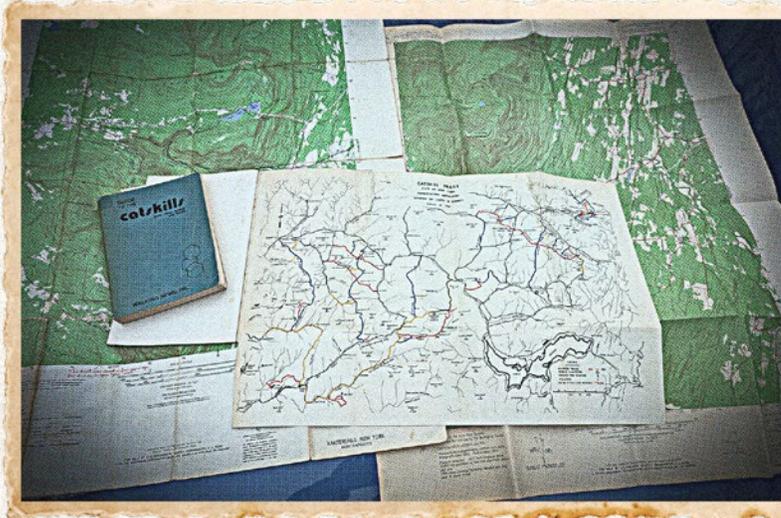
Limited to 12 brave souls. No Retro Experience Necessary.

For Questions or To Register: Send a Carrier Pigeon OR Contact Ira Orenstein

The Retro Day: Off to Climb Plattekill Mtn

Our group of six hikers assembled in the Kaaterskill Parking Area off Platte Clove Road outfitted with clothing and gear from an era gone by. Participants were alerted in advance of our plan to award a prize to the most retro-themed hiker which we named The First International Retro Hikers' Association Grand Prize. If we were going to make up a hiking association, and offer a prize, we decided to go big!

At the parking area, it was immediately apparent who would be a strong contender in what we hoped would remain a "friendly competition." Harold Oakhill sported his wooden hiking stick, and was dressed in flannel-lined blue jeans, a heavy overcoat, plaid Woolrich hat, and wool scarf (in lieu of a neck gaiter). Holding up the jeans was a leather belt with a brass Philmont buckle, acquired on a 1974 trip to the New Mexico Boy Scout reservation of the same name. On a car hood, he carefully opened and displayed two quadrangle maps, one of which dated back to 1945 with browning edges, that would help us to plan the day's objective. He placed a vintage mirrored sighting compass off to the side for use to establish bearings. He also provided two Catskill Trails books to refer to as needed, the earlier dated back to 1969.



Route planning the retro way. Photo courtesy of Harold Oakhill

Our group of six, heavily clad in enough wool clothing to provide a feast for moths on warmer days, gathered into a circle for a briefing. Ira noted today's navigational technology is amazingly precise and, with that comes a concern for preserving, and introducing to others, the tremendous feelings of accomplishment, exploration, adventure, and connection to one's surroundings found using only basic analog navigational aids. This sentiment struck a chord with our hardy group of retro hikers.

Our group stood in sharp contrast to the Spandex-laden and cell phone-wielding hikers and ice climbers heading off

from the Kaateskill Parking lot. Ira pulled his old woolen pom-pom hat over his ears and confessed that back home he decided to forego his itchy and very heavy army surplus woolen pants as even retro hikers have their limits.



There's nothing like the solid feel, stability, and crisp sounding shutter release of 2 pounds of film camera. Photo courtesy of Harold Oakhill

Regarding pants, approximately forty years ago coming off Algonquin Peak on an Autumn hike in the Adirondacks, Ira and Karen (#1723) (co-authors of this article) ran into the famous Forest Ranger Pete Fish (#12, he was stationed in the ADK High Peaks from 1978 to 1998, was a DEC Forest Ranger in the Catskills in 1969, and is also one of the founding members of the Catskill 3500 Club). Pete politely suggested we trade in our cotton blue jeans for 60/40 pants due to its reduced cotton content and told us they can be purchased at Sears. Thus, began our understanding of the need for appropriate hiking gear.

The Retro Hikers headed off to the trailhead at Platte Clove Reserve. At approximately the one-mile mark we briefly explored a bluestone quarry and soon after reached the Devil's Kitchen Lean-to, where we put on our snowshoes. Jerry Licht's (#1423, 3500 Club hike leader) classic mainstay old Sherpa snowshoes were clearly well-maintained and in great condition. He noted he never felt disadvantaged when hiking with others wearing new generation snowshoes. For those interested in going even more retro, Ira suggested Country Ways which makes snowshoe kits with pre-shaped White Ash wooden frames, lacing, and comes with detailed instructions. Ira made two pairs of Ojibwa-style snowshoes for Karen and himself (48 inches long and 54 inches long, respectively) that came out looking beautiful. A trial run in them on the short path to the Kaaterskill Falls lookout platform by North Lake immediately revealed they were better suited to very deep snow in open terrain, as would be encountered out west. In fact, standing up gracefully after a fall proved an exercise in futility. These snowshoes, now deemed "functional art," hang on a wall in their house. Ira hopes to make other styles of wooden snowshoes in the future.



This wool-clad "mothly" crew takes a welcome break at a bluestone quarry overlooking Platte Clove. Photo courtesy of Michal Bongar

A not so quick group photo was snapped with Ira's Canon AE1 camera, loaded with Ektachrome 100 slide film (he generally prefers Kodachrome but unfortunately it is no longer available). Harold tucked away his old Stanley thermos and we were back on the trail.

Our next stop was the viewpoint at Codfish Point, which served as our starting point for the bushwhack up Plattekill Mountain. Ira was relieved to see there were no footprints leading up the mountain. This would be a true navigational bushwhack. He pulled out his topographical map and determined we were standing at an elevation of 2,560 feet. He retrieved an analog altimeter that works based on barometric pressure and calibrated it using this known elevation. This type of altimeter would be useful later on to determine how soon the forecasted low-pressure system and associated snow would be arriving (Plattekill summit is at a known elevation of 3108 feet. A higher erroneous elevation reading by the altimeter would indicate a low pressure system trend, whereas a lower erroneous elevation reading would indicate a high pressure system with improving weather. An accurate reading indicates stable conditions).

We started up the mountain with compasses draped around our necks and set at a bearing of 262 degrees. After 20 minutes, we arrived at another bluestone quarry with an open view back towards Platte Clove Road and the Platte Clove Bruderhof Community. The old timers reminisced on how they remember the site as the New York City Police Camp where New York's Finest and their families would enjoy their summer holidays. We reset our compasses to a new bearing of 230 degrees, and Mike Siatkowski, (#4134, 3500 Club hike leader) who recently finished his Winter 3500 Club certification, effortlessly led us to the summit. Michael B. admitted that the hardest part of the day was not glancing at his cell phone to check our location. But there was no need, given Mike's navigational precision.

At the summit, we stopped to hydrate and refuel. Remarkably, without pre-planning, both Ira and Harold pulled out the same vintage food product (still manufactured in England) called Romney's Kendal Mint Cake. The food wrapper described the rich history of this product that was said to accompany Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay on the first ever summiting of Mount Everest back in 1953. The ingredients of simple sugar (quick energy that is easily digestible energy at high altitude) and strong mint flavor (said to have a soothing effect on the stomach) was a winner during that mountaineering achievement, and would hopefully serve us well on the remainder of our day's adventure.



A most remarkable coincidence atop Plattekill Mountain - both Harold Oakhill and Ira Orenstein brought Romney's Kendal Mint Cake, famed for sustaining Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay on the 1953 first ascent of Mount Everest. Photo courtesy of Michael Bongar

Although not used this day, Michael B spoke about, and may bring, his Swedish Optimus Stove on the next Retro Hike so he can make hot chocolate for the crew. Authors' note: We hope that he does!

The moment everyone was waiting for had come to determine the first prize winner for the most retro-themed hiker. By unanimous decision, it went to.....Harold, who was awarded a brass sundial with integrated compass and features that allowed for leveling and latitude

adjustment. We planned to use the sundial to determine what time it was which would allow us to decide whether to continue on towards Echo Lake vs. turning back the way we came. But wait! There was no sunlight to cast a shadow,

and the snow was starting to fall (no need to forecast the weather with our altimeter). With this information at hand and no knowledge of the time, our cohesive group decided to double back the way we came.

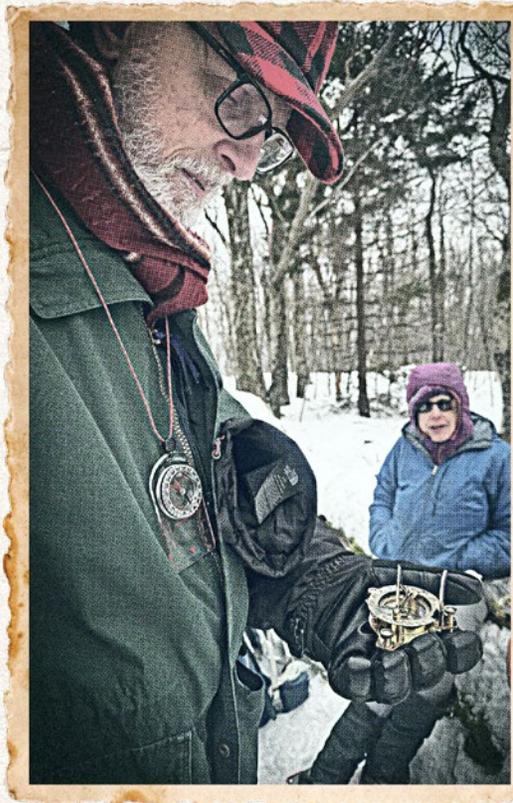
Michael B. suggested Mike S. receive an honorable mention prize for his vintage plaid heavy Woolrich Buffalo coat. Again, by unanimous agreement he was awarded a delicious Bread Alone oatmeal raisin cookie (the business was founded in 1983, so it qualified as retro).

On the way down the mountain, Ira suggested that we share thoughts about what items of clothing and gear have withstood the test of time and even remain gold standards to this day. He opened with a discussion of fishnet baselayers. Yes, fishnet! He noted that his base layer shirt was made by a Norwegian company called Brinje. While not a gold standard, this is an interesting product that has an open mesh to facilitate evaporation into the next clothing layer and is made from polypropylene which is hydrophobic (non-water absorbing), and can potentially make a comeback. Jerry Licht noted the reliability of Sherpa snowshoes and how easy to they are to repair.

Below, Ira includes a few additional examples of items that, in his opinion, remain gold standards:

Natural fibers such as wool and down

Wool is said to absorb 30 percent of its weight in water before feeling wet on its surface, and we all know how important it is to avoid dampness in cold conditions. Wool does not contribute to microplastic contamination of the Earth's water supply. Most hiking socks designed for colder weather are still made of wool. Dachstein 4-ply boiled wool mittens are a classic product that is still available and when worn with an overmitt is one of the warmest forms of hand protection options available in extremely cold conditions. Today, even base layers are made from merino



The First International Retro Hikers' Association Grand Prize for the most retro-themed hiker goes to Harold Oakhill, who received a beautiful brass sundial that proved worthless on this cloudy day. Does anyone know what time it is? Photo courtesy of Michael Bongar

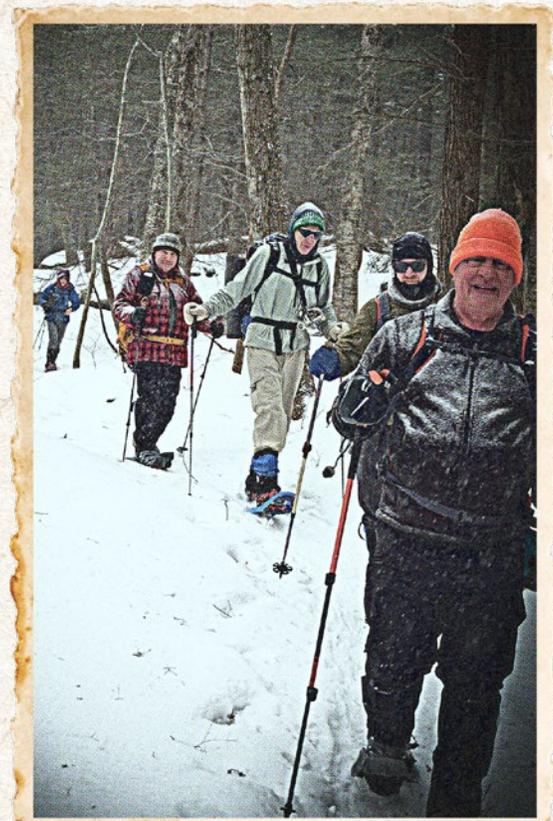
wool or wool blends that are more odor resistant than their respective synthetic counterparts.

Despite continued efforts, manufacturers are still unable to create a product that equals the warmth-to-weight ratio down provides. Beware, however, that down loses loft when wet, so it is most suited for cold, dry conditions.

Paper Map and Compass

Yes, don't forget to pack your paper map and compass! Mostly used as a backup to newer technologies, map and compass offer security in the forests in the event of electronic failure.

So, how about it? Are you ready to open yourself up to adventure, connection, and a unique feeling of accomplishment by occasionally using paper map and compass as your primary navigational tool? Keeping your electronics at the bottom of your pack as backup? We think the rewards will surprise you. Stay tuned for the 2026 Retro Hike which will be planned for next winter and listed on the Catskill 3500 Hike Schedule. The 2026 grand prize will be awarded that day and Harold may need to abdicate his title...may the best Retro Hiker win!



The end of a great day filled with fun and storytelling. Photo courtesy of Harold Oakhill ▶



by Matt Smith #889 W309

Catskill Trail Crew Progress Report: Building a More Accessible Trail System Together

As we reflect on an incredible year of trail restoration accomplishments in 2024 and look ahead to new challenges, we want to extend our gratitude to the volunteers, partners, and supporters who make the Catskill Trail Crew possible. The dedication of volunteers like you ensures that hikers can continue to explore and enjoy the remote beauty of the Catskills.

Who We Are

The Catskill Trail Crew is a volunteer-driven team committed to restoring and maintaining overgrown trails and improving access to remote areas in a fun and social atmosphere. We operate as part of the **New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NYNJTC)**, with essential leadership and support from:

Matt Smith Trail Crew Leader
Charlie Gadol.....Regional Trails Chair
Melissa Casini.....Catskills Program Coordinator
Katie & Mike Volunteer Coordination Team
NYNJTC Professional Staff..... Providing logistical & financial support

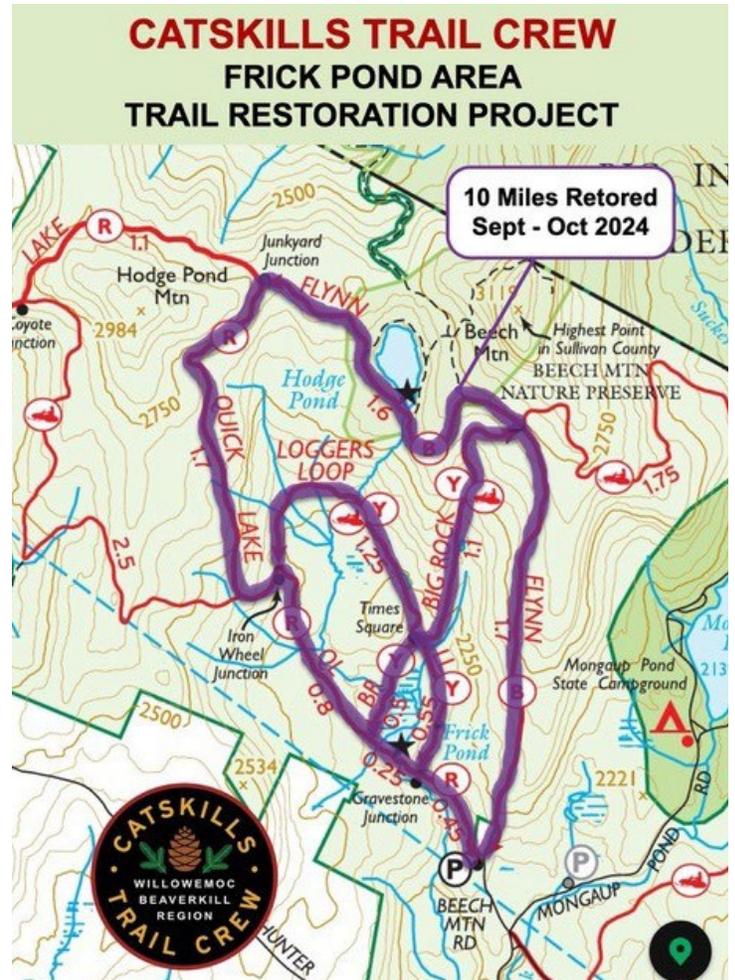
Additionally, we coordinate closely with the **New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**, working to support Rangers and Foresters to ensure sustainable trail stewardship. We operate under the guidance of the professional land managers at the DEC to ensure that our work is aligned with their priorities.

2024 Accomplishments

This past year, our team made significant progress in improving the trail network with a special focus on the remote trails in the southern Catskills and Sullivan County.

Restored 20 Miles of Trail in the Mongaup Beaverkill Region

Contributed over **1,000** volunteer hours
 Cleared over **200** blowdowns



Adopted 25 Miles of Trail for Regular Maintenance

Transitioning from individual maintainers to a team-based model

Established a Dedicated Saw Team

One certified **Sawyer**
 Four trained **Swampers** to assist the NYNJTC Sawyers

Recognized Outstanding Contributions

Two Catskills Trail Crew members were honored with the NYNJTC **Paul Leiken Award for Going the Extra Mile**. **Matt Smith and Clint Sikes** were selected for their leadership and dedication and for creating a community of active volunteers.

Looking Ahead to 2025

We have ambitious plans for the upcoming year and are eager to expand our impact:

- Our new **Saw Team** is gearing up to tackle the spring blowdown season in April



- We are in the process of **Adopting the Millbrook Ridge Trail**
 - Working with the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) to finalize an agreement
 - Launching a summer restoration project to clear the overgrown trail corridor
- We are planning **Roving Trail Crews** for day trips and overnight outings
 - Spring cleanup trips to assist individual maintainers with trouble spots
 - Neversink Hardenburgh Trail restoration project, camping along the Beaverkill
- **Strengthening community engagement**
 - Partnering with scouting groups, school programs, and hiking clubs to inspire the next generation of trail stewards and engage local community groups.



How Can You Help?

Join the Trail Crew for a Day Trip

- Sign up at: <https://www.nynjtc.org/catskills-trail-crew>
- No experience or long-term commitment is required
- Help with clipping, clearing, and maintaining trails while enjoying great company
- Earn points toward your 3500 Club service patch

Report Blowdowns to help us respond to emerging trail issues

- Send updates to catskillsblowdowns@gmail.com

Please support our work with a donation to the NYNJTC

- <https://www.nynjtc.org/support>
- Contributions help fund professional staff, insurance, and essential supplies

Together, we're making the Catskill trails more accessible and enjoyable. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to another year of adventure, teamwork, and trail stewardship!





Finding Myself in the Mountains:

A Journey of Music, Loss and Discovery

by Fred Gillen Jr. #3928



I've always loved being in the woods, surrounded by nature. As a kid, I played in "the swamp" behind our house in Verplanck, NY, near the Hudson River. The best days were when my dad took me hiking at Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill.

From 2017 to 2019, I was in a band called The Greenheart, and we were invited to perform a series of concerts in Nepal. Over 18 months, we traveled there four times, playing dozens of shows in support of environmental initiatives. On one of these trips, I met Megh Ale, director of Waterkeeper Nepal, who told me about a "sister river" project between the Hudson River and the Karnali River—the last undammed river in Nepal. When he learned where I was from, he asked if I could bring him water from the source of the Hudson for a religious ceremony. I said, "Sure—how hard could it be?"



Lake Tear of the Clouds. Photo courtesy of Michael Bongar

Back home, I reached out to my friend Michael Bongar, who I vaguely knew as a 'hike leader' and aspiring 46er. We planned a hike to Lake Tear of the Clouds, the source of the Hudson, which required climbing Mount Marcy. Since Michael had already climbed Marcy for his 46er patch, he insisted we also summit two other peaks to count toward his goal. No problem. That day turned out to be one of the most challenging and rewarding of my life. I brought the water back to Kathmandu in August 2019, and happy tears were shed by all involved. It was beautiful.

Six months later, the world shut down. After 30 years as a working musician, playing 100 to 200 shows a year, I suddenly couldn't perform. I lost several loved ones to COVID, and along with other personal struggles, it broke me. I didn't know how to exist outside of my work.



Fred Gillen Jr (right) presents Megh Ale (center) with water from Lake Tear of the Clouds to be used in a religious ceremony.

Amid all this, I moved to Greene County. Not long after, Michael called again. A mutual friend in Peekskill had land bordering state forest in Big Indian, and Michael was leading a bush-whack hike up Panther Mountain. He remembered how much I'd enjoyed our hike up Mount Grey and Mount Marcy and invited me along. Though it was necessary to turn back before the summit, it was my first experience with the Catskill ledges and boreal forests. A week later, using a paper National Geographic map, I found my way to the Black Dome trailhead on Big Hollow and hiked Black Dome, Thomas Cole, and Blackhead alone—with only a half-liter of water and a granola bar.

In the mountains, I feel a deep connection to something much greater than myself.

Since then, I've hiked solo, with friends, with the club, and with strangers I met on the trail. I've never wanted to be part of a club before, but when I learned about one where membership required summiting 33 mountains, I was in! I've met incredible people and become part of a community. I've also spent countless hours alone in the wilderness, experiencing absolute solitude and stillness. Hiking in these mountains taught me that while I love my work, life—and I—are about more than just that. In the mountains, I feel a deep connection to something much greater than myself. These mountains found me when I was lost, and I'm grateful for that.

Recently, I joined a celebration for a fellow hiker, Lorraine Anderson (#3557), at the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain. A dozen of us met way out on Mill Brook Ridge Road, hiked up the mountain, and celebrated her achievement with food, cheering, and even some snowshoe dancing. Lorraine's story is incredible, and though the details differ, it's also my story.

We are not alone. The world—like the Blackhead Range—is bigger than we can imagine. To quote my friend Kate (#3929) at her 3500 Club finish: "Where are we hiking next?"

ATTENTION SHOPPERS!!!

\$10 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

\$10 ASPIRANT MEMBERSHIP

\$200 LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

There's a special item offered in Aisle Three. That is, the membership page on the Catskill 3500 Club website.

You can purchase your annual memberships and your aspirant memberships. You can purchase them for a yearly renewal or you can purchase them with automatic renewal.

Oh yes, and if you are feeling your immortality or if you are just a big shot and a swell person, you can get a lifetime membership too....

Visit: catskill3500club.org/dues

or scan the QR code



FIR MOUNTAIN

The Only Thing We Have to Fir is Fir Itself

Story & Photos by Josyf Hayda #4525

Silence is rare and hard to find. The world around us is filled with noise and chaos, making moments of solitude increasingly rare. Even alone, someone speaks to us through television, radio, and cell-connected phones. Solitude can reset me to my natural state. It forces me to face the world the old-fashioned way—with no internet connection. The distractions have become a security blanket. I'll check my phone if I'm bored, without knowing what I'm checking. "The world around us is filled with noise and chaos, making moments of solitude increasingly rare."



Springtime is the big tent revival of the seasons. The snow and cold yield to longer, warmer days. Trees get their leaves back. Buds pop on plants and bushes. Winter lets its boot off our neck, and the world shakes itself off and starts moving. I'd done a fair amount of winter hiking this year. Still, as the daytime temperatures hovered in the 60's, I dusted off my camping gear. I began planning an overnight trip into the woods. And then another. Hunched over maps, I plotted out some trips. It always looks easy on the map. I forget to factor the contour lines into the equation and pay dearly for it on the trail. No matter. Plans were set. The gear was dusted off and repacked. My leg joggled in anticipation as the days rolled by. First order of business: climb Fir Mountain and Big Indian.

I picked a few weekdays towards the end of April to make my assault. I'd backpack to the Biscuit Book Lean-to, set up camp, and climb the two after a night's rest. I liked the idea of getting an early start. Plans were set, and one late afternoon, I found myself sitting in the Biscuit Brook Trailhead parking lot.

On the trail to the Biscuit Brook lean-to, I met two hikers heading out. They gave me reports of the trail and summit



conditions, wished me well, and headed for the trailhead. It was getting dark, and they looked worried that I was headed out so late. I watched them disappear down the hill, and it hit me—I was likely the only human in these woods. I was about to get all the solitude I wanted.

I watched them disappear down the hill, and it hit me—I was likely the only human in these woods. I was about to get all the solitude I wanted.

Behind the lean-to, about 50 paces away, is a NYS-designated primitive campsite marked with the telltale yellow disk hammered into the tree, inviting me to "Camp here." The streams were all running and full. The Biscuit Brook, which runs in a ravine the lean-to sits above, was thundering and running fast with snowmelt. I was glad I stopped for earplugs. I usually wear them when I sleep in the woods. I don't care what kind of fights are happening around me. I don't want to hear the crack of downed branches on the forest floor and guess what sized animal caused it. I'm prone to run threat assessments on the noises, keeping me awake. Low-tech noise-canceling plugs equal a restful night's sleep.

I woke up one hour later feeling like I was sinking. My brand new mattress was leaking air and about half flat. I blew it up and closed the seal. I don't know why I thought this would fix it, but the slumbrous have a loose handle on reality. Like a clock that bangs on the hour, I woke several more times to breathe into the mattress. I admitted to myself that there was a leak. I was blowing it up in exchange for some sleep.



I exited the tent at dawn as the birds sang "Good morning" to me. The cold slapped my face. My portable thermostat read 22 Fahrenheit. I unpacked the stove, attached the gas canister, and boiled some water for coffee. (I learned that day that gas canister stoves lose efficiency as the temperature drops.)

I made another

cup of coffee, waiting for the sun to climb over the ridge and spread its warmth. It was glacially slow. Between my third and fourth cup, I decided not to spend another night without a working mattress (apart from the comfort, this mattress is insulated and adds warmth, something I didn't want to deprive myself of in this cold). It was nearly 10:00, and I didn't have time to climb both mountains. I packed most of my gear, stacked it in the lean-to, packed some lunch, water, and other essentials, and headed up to Fir.

I immediately came to a narrow path that ran high above the brook. I haven't seen anything like that in the Catskills. The path descends, crosses the creek, and returns to level ground. A few steps later, I made a right at the cairn and started climbing to the summit. I was less anxious about staying on the herd path this time. I zigged, zagged, veered everywhere, and eventually found the canister. It was sunny and warm. The morning freeze was forgotten.

Descending was an adventure. I climbed over downed trees and came perilously close to a steep ravine. My poles sank alarmingly deep into several areas of duff. The direction of travel was constant: down. I rejoined the herd path and crossed the brook to the lean-to. I stuffed everything in my pack and took one last walk in the woods to the trailhead. Later, I saw a bear run across the road. I never did see another human.



CLUB THREADS!



This is your chance to show off your membership and pride in conquering all of the Catskill High Peaks with exclusive apparel that lets you wear your achievement with honor.

Discover a range of high-quality apparel, from moisture-wicking shirts and half-zips to cozy hoodies, wool sweaters, hats, and more — perfect for all your outdoor adventures. With a variety of fabrics, colors, and sizes to choose from—including apparel for our younger mountaineers—there's truly something for everyone!

And there's more good news: 15% of every purchase goes directly back to support the Catskill 3500 Club. Proceeds will help important programs like our Trailhead Stewardship Program, Trail Maintenance and Adopt-A-Highway efforts, conservation initiatives and support our all-volunteer Catskill Mountain Search and Rescue team.

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As always, your support means MOUNTAINS to us. Thank you!

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Shop by QR Code:



Kelly Hollow Haibun*

by Henry Dircks

I've always admired the art of Ansel Adams. His photographs of mountainous landscapes - Yosemite, Denali, the Tetons -- were brought to vibrant life by his darkroom manipulation of the images. Accentuating glacial whites, or the deep black fissures in a mountain face, created interplay between the elements, and balanced the composition.

At first, my choice of Kelly Hollow as a subject for mimicking Adams's work left me with little hope. The hollow, a tiny corner in the Catskills south of Margaretville, is surrounded on three sides by Mill Brook Ridge. Six inches of snow had blanketed the hiking trail, and overcast skies allowed only momentary glimpses of sunlight.



Still, subjects presented themselves, despite my lack of faith. Cathedral-high red pines, planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression, posed in reverent silence. Muted shadows inside a secluded lean-to spoke of loneliness. Crevasses plying snow drifts atop the beaver pond morphed into abstract illustrations. Even the country graveyard adjacent to the trailhead, headstones peeking up from beneath the frosty surface, vied for my camera's attention.

seek the majesty
in all things by altering
your own perspective

** A haibun is a traditional form of Japanese poetry that combines prose with a haiku that contributes to or contradicts the theme*

CATSKILL 3500 CLUB MEMBERS - 2025 / 1Q

NUMBER	NAME	DATE	LAST PEAK
4549	Glenn T Messina	07/28/24	Balsam Lake
4580	Charles Mirro	07/08/24	Cornell
4581	Derek Yorke	04/29/24	Balsam Lake
4582	Abby Matousek	12/15/24	Fir
4583	Joshua Miller	12/15/24	Fir
4584	Dylan Reed	12/25/24	Blackhead
4585	Brody DeLorenzo	11/11/24	Wittenberg
4586	Betsy Anderson	12/26/24	Blackhead
4587	Christina Seiss	11/20/24	Lone
4588	Hannah Wise	12/22/24	Balsam Lake
4589	Patrick Cohen	12/30/24	Big Indian
4590	Alicia Keen	12/31/24	Slide
4591	Elizabeth Groves	01/05/25	Kaaterskill
4592	Gabrielle Grantier	01/05/25	Kaaterskill
4593	Sarah DeBoyace	01/05/25	Kaaterskill
4594	Stephanie Spiegler	01/01/25	Balsam
4595	Gala Delmont-Benatar	10/26/24	Bearpen
4596	John Lucadamo	12/31/24	Balsam
4597	Beth Boehning	01/19/25	Panther
4598	Lisa Fernandez	01/19/25	Panther
4599	Ryan Bukowski	01/05/25	Panther
4600	Natasha Voisey	02/21/25	Panther
4601	Susan Elliot	01/26/25	Balsam
4602	Logan Mohr	01/19/25	Blackhead
4603	Danielle Lukaszewski	01/25/25	Slide
4604	Jacob Heiden	01/20/25	Blackhead
4605	Katherine Hudson	01/20/25	Blackhead
4606	George Angevine	01/18/25	Panther
4607	Nancy Kopans	01/28/25	Panther
4608	Julie Bergstresser	02/02/25	Kaaterskill

NUMBER	NAME	DATE	LAST PEAK
4609	Margret McBurney	02/02/25	Kaaterskill
4610	Lance Elliott	01/26/25	Balsam
4611	Brooke Calaci	02/09/25	Panther
4612	Matthew Calaci	02/09/25	Panther
4613	Paul Darian	02/09/25	Panther
4614	Daniel Tornatore	01/26/25	Lone
4615	Sathish Muhtukrishnan	02/09/25	Panther
4616	Andre Savoie	02/09/25	Panther
4617	Sri Simhadri	06/22/24	Windham
4618	Dana Pogorelec-Khan	06/16/24	Fir
4619	Georgiana Podany	05/11/24	Rocky
4620	Kevin Beasley	02/14/25	Slide
4621	Nisha Saxena	10/20/24	Panther
4622	Rita Siu	02/09/25	Panther
4623	Victoria Gellatly	02/23/25	Blackhead
4624	Toni Saychek	02/23/25	Blackhead
4625	Jeffrey Heller	11/04/24	Friday
4626	Mary Gelber	01/26/25	Balsam
4627	Trey Hotaling	02/21/25	Bearpen
4628	Scott Geiger	02/22/25	Panther
4629	Keith Lebron	02/23/25	Slide
4630	Mallory Pierce	02/24/25	Rocky
4631	Allison Seyler	04/01/22	Plateau
4632	Petra Weller	02/23/25	Blackhead
4633	Hari Kasina	03/01/25	Panther
4634	James Chung	03/01/25	Lone
4635	Kasandra Aquino	03/02/25	Slide
4636	Derik Walter	03/01/25	Balsam
4637	Coree Ward	03/08/25	Friday

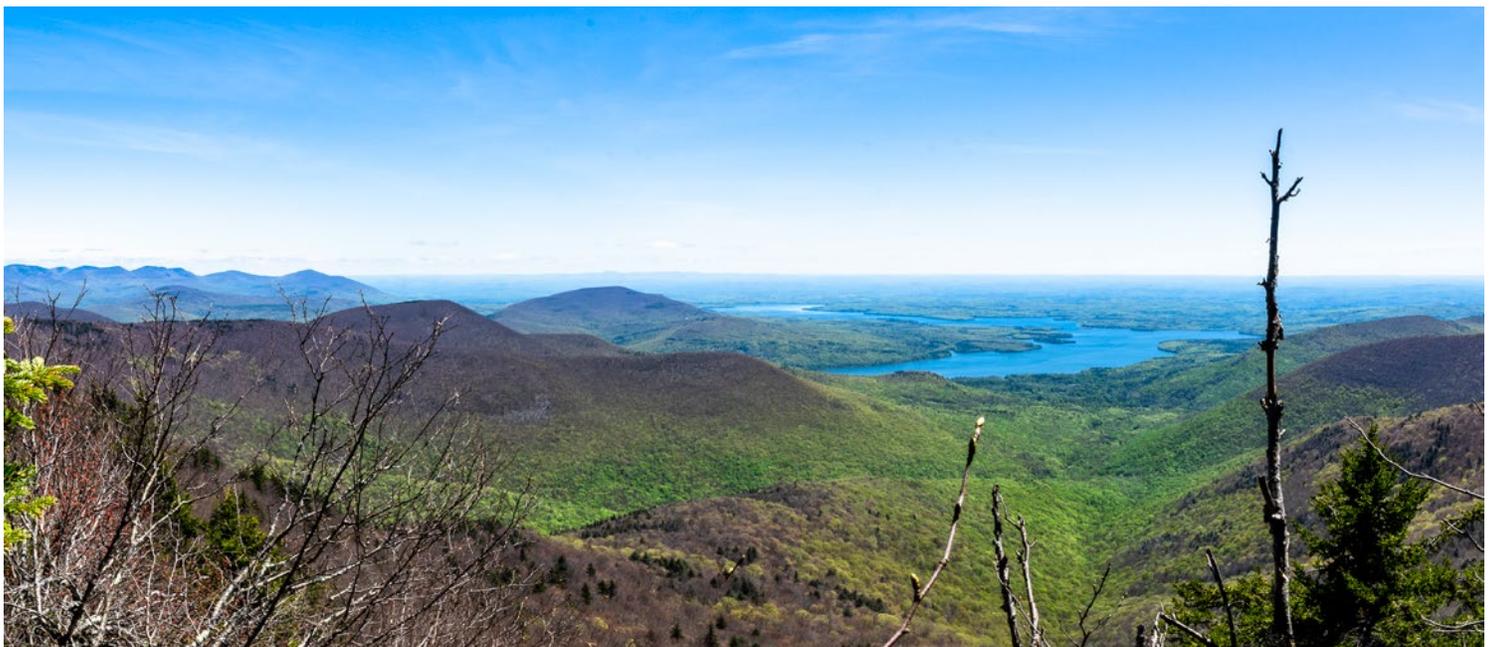
LIFE MEMBERS

0139	Brian Whitney	4331	Alex Drivdahl	4615	Sathish Muthukrishnan	ASP	Lynette Thelen
0887	Andrew Bagatta	4317	Serena Brochu	4624	Toni Saychek	ASP	Colleen Cremen
2352	John Fallucca	4589	Patrick Cohen	ASP	Susan Eby	ASP	Robert McLynn
3899	Karyn Libretto	4597	Beth Boehning	ASP	James Kenny		
4005	Frank Vigna	4602	Logan Mohr	ASP	Bruce Pollock		



NEW WINTER MEMBERS

NUMBER	NAME	REGULAR #	DATE	LAST PEAK
1670	Lori Herpen	4105	01/25/25	Rocky
1671	Danielle Lukaszewski	4603	01/25/25	Slide
1672	Mikey Siatkowski	4134	01/18/25	Rusk
1673	Christine Guarino	4438	02/08/25	Hunter
1674	Denise Weiss	4232	02/09/25	Hunter
1675	Matthew Busse	4364	02/15/25	Balsam Lake
1676	Inga Guerrera	4300	02/01/25	Cornell
1677	Anthony Colombo	3008	02/08/25	Bearpen
1678	Roger Brown	4267	02/05/25	SW Hunter
1679	Qi Wang	4248	02/15/25	Balsam Lake
1680	Peijun Huangfu	4207	02/15/25	Balsam Lake
1681	Rita Simpkins	4520	02/22/25	Peekamoose
1682	Christy Greening	4526	02/22/25	Peekamoose
1683	David Hollenbaugh	2114	02/23/25	Halcott
1684	Trey Hotaling	4627	02/23/25	West Kill
1685	Mallory Pierce	4630	02/24/25	Rocky
1686	Richard Frio	3664	02/24/25	Big Indian
1687	Kami Morgenthaler	4397	03/08/25	Peekamoose
1700	Kevin Fuller	1802	03/20/10	West Kill
1701	Elaine Shebey	4273	12/30/24	Sugarloaf
1702	John C Shebey III	4272	12/30/24	Sugarloaf
1703	Ruby Rainbow Miranda	3937	12/31/24	Eagle
1704	Izzy Miranda	3936	12/31/24	Eagle
1705	JD "Bear" Szala	3935	12/31/24	Eagle
1706	Erica Miranda	3934	12/31/24	Eagle
1707	Matthew Rotjan	2450	01/02/25	Twin
1708	Taekyu Kim	3866	01/18/25	Cornell



Ashokan from Friday. Photo Courtesy of Steve Aaron #3199

THE CATSKILL 3500 CLUB GROUP HIKES: PRINCIPLES & GUIDANCE



Familiarize yourself with the seven Leave No Trace Principles for all your hikes.

- 1** Plan Ahead and Prepare
- 2** Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- 3** Dispose of Waste Properly
- 4** Leave What You Find
- 5** Minimize Campfire Impacts
- 6** Respect Wildlife
- 7** Be Considerate of Other Visitors



THE CATSKILL 3500 CLUB'S HIKING CREDO INCLUDES THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- 1** Follow the Rules
- 2** Use your Map & Compass
- 3** Know your Limitations

THE CLUB ALSO PROMOTES THE ADHERENCE TO THE HIKESAFE HIKER RESPONSIBILITY CODE.

hikeSafe encourages hikers to be prepared:



- ✓ with knowledge and gear
- ✓ to leave your plans
- ✓ to stay together
- ✓ to turn back for emergencies
- ✓ to share the hiker responsibility code with others

Assumed Risk

Cool Weather & Summer

Hiking involves certain inherent risks and persons participating do so at their own risk. In cool weather, hike participants should avoid cotton clothing, as it retains dampness and the resulting chill can result in hypothermia, which can lead to death. In summer participants should have available in their pack garments of wool or fleece and a headlamp, should one have to unexpectedly spend the night in the mountains. Anyone not properly equipped may be refused permission to participate, at the leader's absolute discretion.

Hike Pace

Pace is indicated as one (or a range) of the following, based on the intended moving pace. It should be understood that for any particular hike, actual pace is usually slower in steep/icy/difficult terrain or while bushwhacking.

- Relaxed (1 mph or less)**
- Moderate (about 1.5 mph)**
- Quick (about 2 mph)**
- Fast (faster than 2 mph)**

Rating System

Please be advised that the hikes listed herein would most likely be rated more difficult by clubs who hike in non-mountainous terrains. Club hikes may be canceled at the hike leader's discretion if dangerous weather conditions exist. When in doubt (heavy rain, high winds, or other serious weather conditions), please contact your hike leader.

Private Property

All Catskill 3500 Club hikes respect "No Trespassing" signs and the owners' wishes in such regards; leaders shall obtain permission to cross private property when so required. Identify private property via the NYNJTC Catskill Trail maps (2023 13th edition), and determine property ownership via online county tax maps.

Cold Weather & Winter

Hiking involves certain inherent risks and persons participating do so at their own risk. In cold weather, hike participants should avoid cotton clothing, as it retains dampness and the resulting chill can result in hypothermia, which can lead to death. Instead, wear (and have available in your pack) garments of wool or fleece. Silk or polypropylene make the best base layers, as they tend to wick moisture away from the body. Hats, gloves and a headlamp must be part of the standard fall kit. Ice and snow can come early and unexpectedly to these peaks; if there is any doubt about the conditions that may be encountered, each hiker is strongly advised to bring traction aids to the trailhead; the leader may advise that these do not have to be taken on the hike, but be aware that while there may be bare ground at the trailhead, there is often very significant ice and snow as the elevation increases, which could result in those improperly prepared being sent back. The hike leader may specify required clothing or gear for a hike. Anyone not properly equipped may be refused permission to participate, at the leader's absolute discretion. Fall in the Catskills is not to be treated lightly.

Group Size

Maximum group size is limited to **12 persons** including hikers and leaders, but a leader may specify a smaller groups size. During fledgling season (June 1-July 15), hikes on trailless peaks will be limited to **8 hikers. The minimum group size is 3.** The hikes listed here and on the online events calendar are official Catskill 3500 Club hikes. Any other advertised hikes to the 3500 peaks are private hikes and, while they can count for membership to the Club, the Club is not affiliated with those hikes.

Blaze Orange Alert

Please refer to this DEC link (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/65231.html>) for the summary of hunting seasons. Wear orange, avoid white and remember the same for your four-legged hiking companions!

HIKE SCHEDULE - APRIL 2025

The Catskill 3500 Club hike schedule is developed and printed three months in advance. While we strive to provide accurate and up-to-date information, please be aware that hikes may be subject to change. Always check the Catskill 3500 Club website for the latest updates, including any additions, changes, or cancellations. Thank you for your understanding and flexibility.

Sat. Apr. 5 - RUSK

Distance: 3.7 mi. Ascent: 1600', Elev: 3686'
Short but steep bushwhack. Relaxed pace. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Yanny Hecht #1868 W751
YannyHecht@gmail.com

Sat. Apr. 5 - PANTHER

Distance: 6.6 mi. Ascent: 1900', Elev: 3724'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sat. Apr. 5 - FRIDAY, BALSAM, CAP, ROCKY, LONE, TABLE & PEEKAMOOSSE

Distance: 12 mi. Ascent: 5000', Elevs: 3692', 3608', 3487', 3700', 3825', 3819'
Long, challenging bushwhack and trail hike at a slower pace.
Best suited for experienced hikers.
Shuttle Required.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

Sun. Apr. 6 - BEARPEN & VLY

Distance: 6.5 mi. Ascent: 2060', Elevs: 3587', 3541'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sat. Apr. 12 - BRAMLEY MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER

Distance : 4 mi. Ascent: 1000', Elev: 2817'
Relaxed pace, beginners welcome
Our newest Catskills Fire Tower, this tower was recently restored to its original location with the help of many dedicated volunteers and a grant from the 3500 club. A "Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower" member will give a talk about the history of the tower and will open the cabin for us.
Registration Period: March 15 - April 9
Leader: Sharon Klein #3364
catsngunks@gmail.com

Sat. Apr. 12 - INDIAN HEAD, TWIN, SUGARLOAF & PLATEAU

Distance: 12 mi. Ascent: 4500', Elevs: 3573', 3650', 3783', 3835'
Challenging trail hike, best suited for experienced hikers.
Moderate to fast pace. Shuttle required.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Maria Jose Orchard #4120 W1584
MJOOrchard21@gmail.com

Mon. Apr. 14 - BALSAM & EAGLE

Distance: 9.3 mi. Ascent: 2180', Elevs: 3600', 3600'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Tues. Apr. 15 - BALSAM LAKE MOUNTAIN

Distance: 5.9 mi. Ascent: 1150', Elev: 3729'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Wed. Apr. 16 - WINDHAM HIGH PEAK

Distance: 7.4 mi. Ascent: 1700', Elev: 3525'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Fri. Apr. 18 - SLIDE

Distance: 6.9 mi. Ascent: 1835', Elev: 4190'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sat. Apr. 19 - PEEKAMOOSSE & TABLE

Distance: 9.5 mi. Ascent: 2539', Elevs: 3819', 3825'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sat. Apr. 19 - PANTHER

Distance: 10.0 mi. Ascent: 3000', Elev: 3724'
Long, challenging trail hike at a moderate to quick pace.
Shuttle required (Fox Hollow to Woodland Valley).
Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. Apr. 19 - BEARPEN & VLY

Distance: 6.4 mi. Ascent: 1800', Elevs: 3529', 3600'
Relaxed pace trail hike
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Michael Bongar #2173, W994
michael@bongarbiz.com

Sun. Apr. 20 - BALSAM & EAGLE

Distance: 9.35 mi. Ascent: 2180', Elevs: 3607', 3583'
Moderate slow pace from Rider Hollow, beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

Tue. Apr 22 - SHERRILL

Distance: 6.2 mi. Ascent: 2119', Elev: 3558'
Relaxed pace bushwhack, beginners welcome.
Registration Period: April 1 - April 14
Leader: Moe Lemire #2921 Winter #1667
Co-leader: Vicki Ferreira #4014
Moejlemire@gmail.com

HIKE SCHEDULE - APRIL 2025

Sat. Apr 26 - PLATEAU, SUGARLOAF, TWIN, & INDIAN HEAD

Distance: 9.5 mi. Ascent: 4200', Elevs: 3835', 3783', 3650', 3573'
Long, very steep, demanding trail hike with scrambles at a moderate pace.
Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. Apr. 26 - BLACKHEAD, BLACK DOME & THOMAS COLE

Distance: 7.5 mi. Ascent: 2700', Elevs: 3940', 3994', 3953'
Moderate to fast pace. Beginners Welcome
Shuttle required.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Maria Jose Orchard #4120 W1584
MJOOrchard21@gmail.com

Sun. Apr. 27- EAGLE

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 1700', Elev: 3600'
Moderate relaxed pace hike. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Apr 19-24.
Leader: Tonda Highley #1944 W857
Thighley1944@gmail.com

Sun. Apr. 27 - TABLE & PEEKAMOOSE

Distance: 9.5 mi. Ascent: 2539', Elevs: 3825', 3819'
Trail hike at Relaxed-Moderate pace. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Roger Green #2627 W1813
roggr5959@gmail.com quick pace.
Beginners welcome. Relaxed pace.
Target is 1 to 1.2 mph overall (1.2 to 1.3 moving speed).
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Roger Green #2627 W1813
roggr679@gmail.com

All Official Catskill 3500 Club hikes may not be republished without written consent from the Board of Directors



Spruceton Valley from Rusk. Photo Courtesy of Steve Aaron #3199

HIKE SCHEDULE - MAY 2025

Sun. May 4 - FIR, BIG INDIAN, EAGLE, & BALSAM

Distance: 14.0 mi. Ascent: 3600'; Elevs: 3629', 3699', 3583', 3607'
Strenuous, very challenging bushwhack and trail hike at a moderate to quick pace. Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 10 - FRIDAY, BALSAM CAP, ROCKY, LONE, TABLE, & PEEKAMOOSE

Distance: 12.0 mi. Ascent: 4200'; Elevs: 3692', 3608', 3487', 3700', 3825', 3819'
Strenuous, very challenging bushwhack and trail hike at a moderate to quick pace. Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 10 - VLY & BEARPEN

Distance: 6.5 mi. Ascent: 2100'; Elevs: 3541', 3587'
Unmarked trail hike.
Relaxed pace. Beginners welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Yanny Hecht #1868 W751
YannyHecht@gmail.com

Sun. May 11 - HUCKLEBERRY POINT

Distance: 4.6 mi. Ascent: 1154'; Elev: 2545'
Trail hike at Relaxed-Moderate pace. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Roger Green #2627 W1813
roggr5959@gmail.com

Sun. May 11 - WITTENBERG, CORNELL & SLIDE

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent: 3600'; Elevs: 3782', 3857', 4184'
Challenging hike with fantastic adventures and scrambles.
Will traverse at a slower pace and a shuttle is required.
Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

Tue. May 13 - WITTENBERG & CORNELL

Distance: 10.4 mi. Ascent: 3130'; Elevs: 3782', 3857'
Relaxed pace, beginners welcome
Registration Period: April 25 - May 9
Leader: Moe Lemire #2921 Winter #1667
Moejlemire@gmail.com

Wed. May 14 - HALCOTT, VLY, & BEARPEN

Distance: 3.5 mi. Ascent: 1800'; Elev: 3509' (Halcott)
Distance: 7.0 mi. Ascent: 2100'; Elevs: 3541', 3587' (Vly & Bearpen)
Short but steep, difficult bushwhack, followed by a moderately challenging bushwhack and informal trail hike, at a moderate to quick pace. Hike the one, the pair, or all three. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 17 - WEST KILL, NORTH DOME, & SHERRILL

Distance: 12.0 mi. , Ascent: 3900'; Elevs: 3898', 3605', 3558'
Strenuous, very challenging trail hike and bushwhack at a moderate to quick pace.
Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 17 - WINDHAM HIGH PEAK

Distance: 3.4 mi. Ascent: 1574'; Elev: 3525'
Easy bushwhack and trail hike at a moderate pace with map and compass training.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Harold Oakhill #283 W1244
hoakhill@gmail.com

Sun. May 18 - KAATERSKILL HIGH PEAK

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 1900'; Elev: 3652'
Bushwhack & trail hike. Fun scrambles & great views.
Relaxed pace. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Yanny Hecht #1868 W751
YannyHecht@gmail.com

Sun. May 18 - SUGARLOAF

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 2150'; Elev: 3783'
Relaxed-Moderate pace
Registration Period: May 11-17
Leader: Lyn W. #2865 W1312
catskill35r@gmail.com

Sun. May 18 - WEST KILL

Distance: 6.8 mi. Ascent: 1798'; Elev: 3898'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sun. May 18 - INDIAN HEAD TWIN PEAKS AND BEAKS

Distance: 7.2 mi. Ascent: 1750'; Elevs: 3640', 3573'
Relaxed pace and moderately strenuous trail hike
Novice birding along the way with no prior birding experience needed.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Ira Orenstein #415 W777 and Karen Bloom #1733 W776
ksbiho@aol.com

Sat. May 24 - RUSK, HUNTER, & SW HUNTER

Distance: 12.5 mi. Ascent: 3200'; Elevs: 3680', 4040', 3753'
Strenuous, challenging bushwhack and trail hike to fire tower at a moderate to quick pace.
Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 24 - BLACKHEAD, BLACK DOME & THOMAS COLE

Distance: 7.5 mi. Ascent: 2700'; Elevs: 3940', 3994', 3953'
Slow paced, challenging trail hike, shuttle required.
Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

HIKE SCHEDULE - MAY 2025

Sat. May 24 - BALSAM AND EAGLE

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent: 1600', Elevs: 3600', 3600'
Relaxed pace trail hike
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Michael Bongar #2173 W994
michael@bongarbiz.com

Sun. May 25 - HUNTER & SW HUNTER

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent: 2300', Elevs: 3753', 4030'
Mostly trail hike. Pace relaxed to moderate.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Roger Green #2627 W1383
roggr5959@gmail.com

Mon. May 26 - THOMAS COLE, BLACK DOME, & BLACKHEAD

Distance: 12.0 mi. Ascent: 3000', Elevs: 3953', 3994', 3940'
Strenuous, challenging trail hike at a moderate to quick pace.
Shuttle required (Barnum Rd to Colgate Lake). Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 31 - BALSAM LAKE MOUNTAIN

Distance: 5.9 mi. Ascent: 1129', Elev: 3729'
Moderate Pace Trail Hike.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Harold Oakhill #283 W1244
hoakhill@gmail.com

Sat. May 31 - WITTENBERG, CORNELL, & SLIDE

Distance: 10.0 mi. Ascent: 3800', Elevs: 3782', 3857', 4184'
Long, very challenging trail hike with fun scrambles at a moderate to quick pace.
Shuttle required. Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Stephen Tsang #4420 W1634
smtsang15@gmail.com

Sat. May 31 - HUNTER & SW HUNTER

Distance: 7.4 mi. Ascent: 2312', Elevs: 4045', 3740'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net



White Trillium. Photo Courtesy of Siu Samantha Yuen #2894 W1311

HIKE SCHEDULE - JUNE 2025

Sun. June 1 - BLACKHEAD, BLACKDOME, THOMAS COLE

Distance: 8.2 mi. Ascent: 2750'; Elevs: 3940', 3994', 3953'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sun. June 1 - OVERLOOK MOUNTAIN AND FIRE TOWER

Distance: 7.3 mi. Ascent: 1700'; Elev: 3140'
Beginners Welcome. Relaxed to Moderate paced trail hike.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Roger Green #2627 W1813
roggr5959@gmail.com

Sun. June 1 - INDIAN HEAD, TWIN, SUGARLOAF & PLATEAU

Distance: 13 mi. Ascent: 4700'; Elevs: 3573', 3650', 3783', 3853'
Eastern Devil's Path is a challenging and difficult hike.
Will traverse at a slower pace and a shuttle is required.
Best suited for experienced hikers.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

Sat. June 7 - INDIAN HEAD & TWIN

Distance: 7.4 mi. Ascent: 2320'; Elevs: 3650', 3573'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sat. June 7 - BALSAM CAP & FRIDAY (LIMITED TO 8 HIKERS)

Distance: 7.69 mi. Ascent: 2813'; Elevs: 3606', 3660'
Relaxed pace bushwhack
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Michael Bongar #2173, W994
michael@bongarbiz.com

Sat. June 7 - WEST KILL, HUNTER & SW HUNTER

Distance: 12.7 mi. Ascent: 3750'; Elevs: 3898', 4030', 3753'
Trail hike & bushwhack, best suited for experienced hikers.
Moderate to fast pace.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Maria Jose Orchard #4120 W1584
MJOOrchard21@gmail.com

Sat. June 7 - FIR & BIG INDIAN

Distance: 9.4 mi. Ascent: 2563'; Elevs: 3629', 3699'
Moderate paced hike. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: May 31 - June 5
Leader: Jake Haisley #2488 W1065
jacobhaisley@gmail.com

Sun. June 8 - PLATEAU & SUGARLOAF

Distance: 4.8 mi. Ascent: 2828'; Elevs: 3845', 3806'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sun. June. 8 - HALCOTT

Distance: 4 mi. Ascent: 1800'; Elev: 3509'
Beginner bushwhack, very steep, but short fantastic hike.
Slow pace, beginners are welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Christopher Leon Garibian #3881 W1474
christophergaribian@gmail.com

Sun. June 8 - BALSAM LAKE

Distance: 6 mi. Ascent: 1150'; Elev: 3729'
Relaxed pace. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: Open
Leaders: Yanny Hecht #1868 W751
yannyhecht@gmail.com

Sun. June 8 - WESTKILL

Distance: 6.8 mi. Ascent: 1900'; Elev: 3898'
Relaxed-pace, beginners welcome
Registration Period: June 1 - 7
Leader: Lyn W. #2865 W1312
catskill35r@gmail.com

Sun. June 15 - HALCOTT

Distance: 3.8 mi. Ascent: 1500'; Elev: 3509'
A steep but relaxed pace bushwhack
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sharon Klein #3364
catsngunks@gmail.com

Thurs. June 19 - KAATERSKILL HIGH PEAK

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 1900'; Elev: 3652'
Relaxed Pace, Beginners Welcome
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Sue Hall #2460 W1091
shall@catskill.net

Sun. June 22 - BALSAM

Distance: 5.2 mi. Ascent: 1600'; Elev: 3600'
Moderate relaxed pace hike. Beginners welcome.
Registration Period: June 14-19
Leader: Tonda Highley #1944 W857
Thighley1944@gmail.com

Tue. June 24 - INDIAN HEAD

Distance: 6.7 mi. Ascent: 1729'; Elev: 3573'
Relaxed pace, beginners welcome
Registration Period: June 1 - June 14
Leader: Moe Lemire #2921 Winter #1667
Co-leader: Vicki Ferreira #4014
Moejlemire@gmail.com

Sat. June 28 - KAATERSKILL HIGH PEAK

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 1752'; Elev: 3652'
Moderate pace trail and bushwhack hike with a steep scramble.
Registration Period: Open
Leader: Harold Oakhill #283 W1244
hoakhill@gmail.com



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