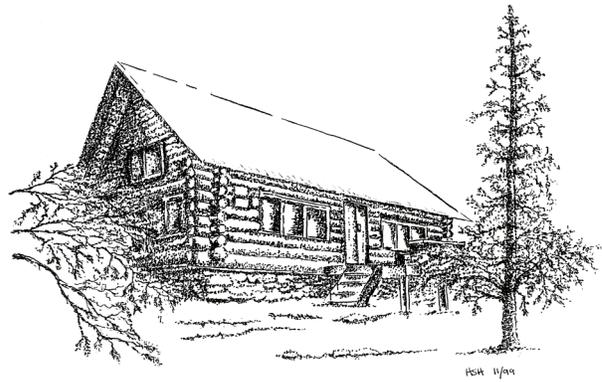


# RIDGE LINES



GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB  
BURLINGTON SECTION

[www.naturecompass.org/gmcburlington](http://www.naturecompass.org/gmcburlington)

## THE SUMMIT ISSUE

SUMMER - FALL 2005

Meet a summit caretaker and learn a little about the natural history of Vermont's most fragile summits. Take the Peak Bagger's Quiz. Read about a volunteer opportunity on Vermont's highest mountain. Also, introduce yourself to the new Burlington Section president, check out the schedule of activities and outings, and enjoy the latest installment of "Heard Along the Trail".

<p><b><i>Flee as a bird to your mountain.</i></b> Psalms</p> <p>1 – When seen from the Underhill side, what is the ridgeline of Vermont's highest mountain supposed to resemble?</p> <p><b>Mt. Abraham</b></p> <p>2 – Where are the alarmingly-named Hell Brook and Profanity Trails?</p> <p><b><i>High mountains are a feeling.</i></b> Byron</p> <p><b>Mt. Ellen</b></p> <p><b><i>Hillmen desire their hills!</i></b> Kipling</p> <p>3 – Another name for Camels Hump is the ____ Lion.</p> <p><b><i>Hills whose heads touch heaven ...</i></b> Shakespeare</p> <p><b><i>The Vermont mountains stretch, extended straight.</i></b> Frost</p> <p>4 – Place the mountains listed on this page in order according to height.</p> <p><b><i>Trust in all things high comes easy to him.</i></b> Tennyson</p>	<p><b><u>Seek the places that are good for your soul.</u></b> on a T-shirt, with a picture of Camels Hump</p> <p>For many people, mountain summits are places that are good for the soul. Thousands of hikers hit Vermont's trails every year, the greatest numbers between the Fourth of July and the end of foliage season. Most hikers head for a summit, looking for the unique combination of excitement and serenity that's found on a mountaintop. This issue celebrates Vermont's summits and those who work to protect them.</p> <p>Go to page 8 to answer the seven questions on this page and take the Peak Bagger's Quiz.</p>	<p><b><i>Look not thou down, but up!</i></b> Browning</p> <p><b>Killington Peak</b></p> <p>5 – What four Vermont mountains have summit caretakers during the busy hiking season?</p> <p><b>Mount Mansfield</b></p> <p><b><i>Life always gets harder toward the summit - the cold increases, responsibility increases.</i></b> Nietzsche</p> <p>6 – What is Frenchman's Pile and what does it commemorate?</p> <p><b>Camels Hump</b></p> <p><b><i>On the mountains there is freedom!</i></b> Schiller</p> <p>7 – Which is highest: Mt. Mansfield's Chin, Forehead, Nose or Adam's Apple?</p> <p><b><i>Does the road wind up hill all the way? Yes, to the very end. Will the day's journey take the whole long day? From morn to night, my friend.</i></b> Rosetti</p>
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## Meet a Caretaker of Vermont's Fragile Summits

*The Green Mountain Club stations summit caretakers on the four peaks that see the most visitors: Mt. Mansfield, Camels Hump, Mt. Abraham and Stratton Mountain. The first three of these peaks have the only arctic/alpine vegetation in the state. Summit caretakers are experienced hikers whose mandate is to protect both the summits and the visitors to the summits. Caretakers work every weekend during peak hiking season plus three week days. (Days off are negotiated among all the GMC workers on a specific mountain, and the summit caretakers cover for shelter caretakers on their days off.) Caretakers of summits and shelters also have other duties, such as maintaining the composting privies along the Long Trail. However, the primary job of a summit caretaker is to interact with visitors to the mountains and educate them about hiking safety, Leave No Trace ethics, and fragile alpine ecology without lecturing or overwhelming them.*

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## Kristin Link

Kristin is a second-year summit caretaker for the GMC. She was on Mt. Mansfield last summer, mostly stationed at the Visitors' Center at the top of the Toll Road from Stowe. This year, Kristin is working on Camels Hump.

Kristin was born in Belgium, lived a while in New Jersey, and completed high school in London. She's currently between her freshman and sophomore years at Middlebury College, considering a major in Environmental Chemistry with a possible second major in Studio Art.

Kristin first fell in love with New England's mountains as a young child when she visited her grandparents in Maine and did some backpacking on the Appalachian Trail. After that experience, Kristin has looked forward to summers as "my time to get away and run to the mountains".

In spring 2004, Kristin decided to apply for a job as a GMC summit caretaker. She loved the idea of talking informally with other hikers while acting as the first line of defense for Vermont's unique alpine summits. On the job, Kristin quickly realized that she'd have to use a wide range of approaches in order to reach the largest number of hikers. Like other summit caretakers, she has to gauge each hiker's level of expertise and tolerance for new information. Sometimes, she sits down with groups of hikers and gives little mini-lectures. Other times, she walks along with them for a while, answering their questions and pointing out things that might interest them. Last summer she found out that many of the visitors who take the Toll Road up Mt. Mansfield know very little about mountains and are actually frightened when they step off the wooden walkways and are out on open rock faces for the first time in their lives. Kristin said she always urged visitors to walk at least as far as Frenchman's Pile (a heap of rocks on the ridgeline, not far from the Visitor's Center parking lot).

*"The top of the Toll Road really isn't a mountain experience. I didn't want them to leave without just a taste of what a mountain is really like. Besides, it's so cool when they don't think they can go that far and they do and then they're so psyched. They think it's a really big deal – and it is for them."*

Many of the other hikers Kristin met last summer on Mansfield were old pros. They knew about Vermont's fragile alpine summits and they didn't really need reminders to stay on the trail. But they were often delighted to spend a few minutes chatting with another experienced hiker, sharing information about trail conditions and wildlife sightings.

An important part of the summit caretaker's job is to be prepared for emergencies. Particularly on Mt. Mansfield, where so many visitors either drive up the Toll Road or take the gondola part of the way, summit caretakers see people who simply aren't prepared for what a mountain can deal out. Kristin always carries extra water and first aid equipment. She's also worked out gentle ways to advise people that they might be setting themselves up for trouble. For example, she's seen people start out across the Mansfield ridgeline toward The Chin wearing backless sandals with narrow high heels. Kristin said she might be thinking "No way! Those shoes just **aren't** going to cut it!" But aloud she'll say very gently, "It can be quite treacherous between here and the summit. You might want to change into hiking boots if you have some in the car".

Kristin thoroughly enjoys meeting all of the visitors to Vermont's mountains. But she takes the greatest pleasure in meeting and interacting with the youngest hikers.

*"I think when you get past a certain age, it's very hard to get interested in outdoor stuff – so I love seeing kids on our mountains. It means they're getting the right start, and what they learn now will stick with them for their whole lives."*

That's certainly true for Kristin. Her early AT experiences led directly to her current job, on top of Camels Hump.

## **A Brief History of Vermont's Alpine Summits**

By Maeve Kim

Vermont has over ninety mountain summits, all pushed up above the surrounding landscape when this part of the continent was “folded” millions of years ago. Over three dozen summits are crossed by the Long Trail, and other hiking trails make it possible to reach the highest points of many of the other mountains.

Eighteen thousand years ago (give or take a few hundred), all of Vermont was under a mile-thick lake of ice called the Laurentide Ice Sheet. This monstrous glacier covered eastern Canada, all of New England and New York, parts of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and even some of the Dakotas. When the global temperature entered one of its warmer phases, the ice sheet started melting. It gradually receded, leaving behind a polished granite landscape that was bare of living things. Very soon, however, sparse layers of green began appearing, as tiny lichens established themselves on the glacially-scoured rocks. These mutually beneficial combinations of fungi and either bacteria or algae anchored themselves by sending down tiny threads into even tinier spaces between the separate grains and crystals of the rocks. The lichens survived because they were able to get their nutrients directly from the air. Centuries passed before there was anything around except the thin smears of lichens on the rocks. Gradually, more complex lichen arrived. Then little bits of dirt brought by wind or water caught on the lichens and stayed to become the first post-glacial Vermont soil. Bigger plants (still tiny, but a whole lot bigger) provided more opportunity for soil formation, which allowed for more retention of water, which in turn created the conditions for still bigger plants to root themselves, survive and reproduce. Gradually, Vermont was covered with low-growing sedges and small flowering plants that hugged the earth for warmth and protection from the wind.

For thousands of years after the first plants returned, post-glacial Vermont looked like a hilly Siberia. There were no tall flowering plants – no goldenrod, no meadowsweet, no hobblebush. There were no trees at all. (The landscape wasn't completely without large living things, though! Vermont was home to herds of over-sized elk, bison and mammoths, as well as a kind of bear with legs six feet long.)

Every few hundred years there was a bit more diversity in the plant world. Most of Vermont was on its way toward stands of white pine, mixed hardwood forests, birches, oaks, maples, and a riot of flowers. In three places, however, the arctic tundra never left. In these three places – the summits of Mt. Mansfield, Camels Hump, and Mt. Abraham – you can still see the arctic-alpine ecology that once covered the state.

The plants on these three Vermont mountains have lasted so long simply because nothing has come along to push them out. Nothing else can survive there. The plants on the three highest Vermont peaks are sturdy little things, designed to succeed in unusually harsh climates where there are high winds, lots of cloud cover, and long periods of sub-freezing temperatures. However, these amazing survivors, plants that have clung to Vermont's summits for tens of thousands of years, can be killed by careless boots or paws, the stab of a hiking pole, or someone dropping a heavy pack on them.

Alpine plants aren't designed for rapid growth. If a section of a plant is crushed or ripped, repair and regrowth can take decades. If a hiker pulls one of these tiny survivors loose from the little crevasse where it's been huddling for centuries, it will be picked up by the relentless winds and taken far from the only environment in which it can live.

GMC members are obvious protectors of the state's unique alpine environments. When we travel to a summit, we should do our part not only to stay off fragile plant life, but also to talk with fellow hikers. Point out the amazing plants. Give a little bit of their history. Remind hikers to keep their dogs on short leashes when they're on alpine summits. Tell others on the summits that they'd have to travel 1500 miles north to find the next place where these same plants live.

***Vermont's small communities of alpine plants have been here for thousands of years.***

***Let's give them a few more!***

### **Ridge Lines**

*Co-Editors:* Maeve Kim and Laura Philipps

*Outings:* Paul Houchens

*Printing:* Hard Copy

*Production:* Len Carpenter, Llyn Ellison, Pam Gillis, Corky

Magoon, Carol Mogilski, Sally Spear, Andy Squires,

Carlene Squires

*Send contributions to:* Maeve Kim, [maevulus@aol.com](mailto:maevulus@aol.com)

*Send address changes and subscription requests to:*

Dot Myer, 7 Patrick Street, So. Burlington 05403 or

[Dotmyer@together.net](mailto:Dotmyer@together.net)

## ***A Message from Phil Hazen, New President of the Burlington Section***

*First, some background:* Phil joined the Green Mountain Club a little over a decade ago, and he's packed an amazing amount of volunteer work and activity into those ten years. After going along on a few GMC outings, Phil started helping out with organizing the Burlington Section activities schedule. Then he became a trip leader and designed and taught Map and Compass workshops. For several years, Phil and Paul Houchens have co-chaired the outings committee. (Phil says he's been "the enforcer", the one who relentlessly uses e-mail and phone calls until he's rounded up enough leaders to fill the schedule.) Currently, Phil is serving as both the president and the outings co-chair of the Burlington Section. He's also the chair of the main club's Membership Committee and is on the GMC Headquarters Planning Committee.

Over the last few years, Phil has dedicated a lot of his time to "peak-bagging" in the Northeast. He's climbed all of the "Northeast 111ers" in winter. (That includes all the official peaks above 4000 feet from New York to Maine. There are 115 of them now, but the old "111" term has stuck.) Currently, Phil is off on an expedition to Alaska-Yukon with his outings co-chair Paul Houchens and four other GMC members.

### ***President's Report: Volunteer Benefits Package***

I was in the Outdoor Gear Exchange (OGE) in the middle of May talking to Josh Stephen, an employee, about gear for our upcoming Alaska-Yukon expedition when the subject of GMC trail work came up. In the course of our conversation, I mentioned the damage done by some rather big trees to Duck Brook Shelter and the work that needed to be done to put the shelter back in shape. Josh immediately volunteered to help and said he could probably get some other OGE people to come on National Trails Day — this from a person I had just met for the first time!

That conversation put the pressure on me to finalize the materials needed to do the work. On the Friday before National Trails Day (June 4 this year), I took a quick trip to Duck Brook Shelter to make a list of what needed to be done: repair the broken picnic table, replace some side boards and floor boards, and rebuild a bunk support. Fortunately, Kerstin Lange, our shelter adopter, and Chris Hanna, our former Shelters Chair, had done the critical part of shoring up the crushed side of the roof. Earlier, Dave Hardy from GMC headquarters had come with his crew to cut the downed trees.

At the Richmond Park and Ride on National Trails Day, a number of volunteers appeared and were eager to help. We had Josh Stephen, Marc Sherman, and Mike Donahue from the Outdoor Gear Exchange, Erica Lamb (on the Long Trail Patrol this year), Paul Demers, and Phil Schlosser. John Sharp supplied transportation to the trailhead, plus refreshments.

At the trailhead, I had barely opened the tailgate of the truck when Marc and Mike each grabbed an armful of lumber and took off to the shelter. The rest of us brought the remaining lumber, tools and paint. Once at the shelter, it seemed like we were a work crew who had worked together for years. The team split up in 2's and 3's handling their jobs as if this was a normal workday. The boards were cut, fitted, painted, and screwed in place. It looked great when everything was finished. Kerstin would have been with us, but she had family obligations and was planning to come up later to determine our bonus pay for being under budget and on time.

Well, our bonus was the satisfaction of doing a greatly needed job and having a good time in the process. Then the Outdoor Gear Exchange people offered another bonus: Come into the store anytime and they would give us 10% off any purchase. Oh, they do that for anyone with a Green Mountain Club membership card. With benefits like these you just got to be a volunteer (or at least a member).

Thanks to all that support the GMC in anyway you can.

Have a great summer,

Phil

**Special thanks to all the volunteers who made the GMC Annual Meeting (June 10, 11, 12) held at Smugglers Notch Resort a great success. The Annual Meeting was co-hosted by the Burlington, Laraway, and Sterling Sections.**

### ***On the Summit Heard ~~Along the Trail~~***

*(our now-and-then series of comments overheard while hiking)*

*A man and woman were standing next to "Frenchman's Pile", on the Mt. Mansfield ridgeline not far from the parking lot at the top of the Toll Road. The man had his arm around the woman and was telling her with great authority where they were and what they were seeing. As they gazed directly west, he squeezed her shoulders and said, "If it were just a little clearer, honey, we could see Montreal! Right there!"*

**Great Opportunity!**  
**WORK ON VERMONT'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN**  
**and**  
**HELP BUILD SOMETHING YOUR GRANDKIDS CAN VISIT!**

The Sterling Pond Shelter, in Smugglers Notch, is being rebuilt this summer.

On July 8-9, materials will be carried to the site. With support from the Smugglers Notch Resort, we'll take things up on the ski lift and then volunteers will carry supplies the rest of the way to the shelter. ALL AVAILABLE HANDS, LEGS AND MUSCLES WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED!!

Construction will take place on four weekends: July 23-24, August 5-7, August 12-14, and August 19-21. The dedication of the new shelter is scheduled for September 18.

All volunteers are welcome! You don't need expertise – just a willingness to be part of this exciting project. You'll receive a warm welcome, get to participate in interesting and satisfying work, and enjoy great views of the pond.

Contact Duncan Wilkie, Trails and Shelters Coordinator for the Montpelier Section. You can reach him by e-mail ([duncan.wilkie@state.vt.us](mailto:duncan.wilkie@state.vt.us)) or phone (week days 828-3965, nights or weekends 223-0566).

**Bring your own lunch, water, snacks, and work gloves.**

**COMING IN AUGUST** – an introduction to the Burlington Section's historic shelters, information about shelter caretakers, and memories from a woman who was a caretaker at Bolton Lodge in the '70s

***And, finally, from our past - Burlington Section member Ray Unsworth sent us a photocopy of a receipt dated January 15, 1955. Treasurer L. M. Brown had received the grand sum of \$2.00 from Ray for his annual Green Mountain Club dues. The receipt reminds members that they don't even have to pay the full two dollars. They can deduct part of their dues if they've done volunteer work on trails or shelters.***