RIDGE LINES

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GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB
BURLINGTON SECTION

HAPPENINGS ON THE HUMP

Gardiner Lane
Sally S. Spear
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This past summer the Green Mountain Club and the State of Vermont combined to carry out a comprehensive ranger program to protect Camel's Hump. Camel's Hump, the highest undeveloped mountain in Vermont, attracted over 10,500 hikers in 1973. Its problems range from trail erosion to littering, from lost hikers to the destruction of the rare arctic flora on the summit.

The program's greatest emphasis was a low key approach to educating the hiking public. Over 2000 hikers visited the Hump in August alone, either as day hikers or through hikers. The impact, felt on the entire area, is most severe on the summit where the rare arctic-alpine plants are adapted to withstand environmental extremes but not intensive human pressure.

This management program did not just happen. Conceived by the GMC, the proposal was presented to the Camel's Hump Forest Reserve Commission by Larry Van Meter in March, 1974. With the full endorsement and recommendation of the Commission, the plan then went to the Vermont Department of Forests and Parks. By the end of May a working agreement between the state and the GMC had been made.

In essence the GMC contracted with the state to provide certain services. The state paid two-thirds; the New York Section and main Club combined to pay the remaining one-third. As the proposal pointed out, the state would be assured "a high quality, comprehensive program" at a low budget figure of under $3500, far less than a similar program run solely by the state would have cost.

The services covered in the contract were public education, trail work and gathering of statistical information. The underpinnings of the entire program centered on having a ranger on the summit every day (weather permitting) from mid-May to the end of October. The staff included two full time rangers, Larry Van Meter, supervising ranger, and Gary Shaw; and four full time caretakers: Bill Anderson, Wiley Lodge; Mary Carlson, Buchanan; Joe Cook, Gorham; and Bobb Hoffman, Montclair Glen. Provision was also made for additional part time rangers during busy periods in the fall when as many as 400 hikers made it to the top in one day. A schedule of bi-weekly operational meetings was set up with the district forester, who is the over-all manager of the 17,000 acre park.

Utilizing a log cabin built at the Monroe Farm site last year by Forests and Parks, Larry and Gary made a useful information center and comfortable home. In the relatively little free time left them between trips to the top, they chinked between the logs with cement (a task requiring over 1100 pounds of dry motar) and built a partition to separate the quasi-public from the private area. Inside, pictures of the Monroe Farm, donated by the GMC, and color prints of the arctic flora found on the summit were displayed along with maps and other informational material. To emphasize the different climatic zones on the mountain, a running chart of high-low temperatures from the top and from the ranger station was kept on display.

Through the ranger efforts and presence, the area became a focal point for hikers. Being able to contact the hiker before he hiked greatly increased the educational effectiveness of the program. Many groups, ranging from a botany class from Goddard to Audubon Society bird census-takers, used the mountain this summer. One morning three busloads of students all from different preparatory schools, arrived within a 90 minute period.

Rangers rely heavily on tact in dealing with the public. They do not have legal enforcement powers although they wear khaki uniforms with a GMC badge on one sleeve and Vermont

State Forests and Parks insignia on the other. Their abilities were displayed in a variety of situations: helping a 75-year-old lady down the Forestry Trail at dark, playing "cat and mouse" with hikers planning to camp in the hut clearing (not allowed), hiking for a diabetic's medicine lost along the trail and finding lost hikers. On the summit the rangers reminded hikers to walk on rock only and explained that the inconspicuous arctic-alpine plants, especially the grass-like Bigelow sedge, are easily destroyed by human feet.

One amusing encounter occurred with a group of five hikers who had, in addition to four dogs, a pet goat carrying saddle bags. The hike was finally abandoned because the owners feared that porcupines would excite the pregnant goat unduly. The goat, Windmill, knew a good thing when she saw one. She visited the ranger information center, jumped on a bed and refused to move. When bodily removed from the cabin, she proceeded to butt the door.

A busy schedule of maintenance activities was carried on by the rangers although the time consuming work on the cabin precluded the extensive sort of trail maintenance that should be possible next year with the cabin completed. Early in the season trails were cleared of blow-downs and water bars cleaned. Rangers worked with caretakers in removing trash from the shelters and in constructing a composting-type outhouse at Gorham Lodge. Vandalized signs had to be repaired. Larry described using a wire brush and oven cleaner to remove graffiti from the north side of the summit. Rangers and caretakers were also trained in first aid and fire fighting techniques.

An experiment to preserve the battered tundra on the summit was undertaken. In conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service, selected plots of tundra were lightly fertilized to stimulate new growth. Over a dozen photo plots were set up to determine the rate of regeneration or deterioration. Photographs taken in early October showed marked improvement in the vegetational cover of those areas fertilized in early July. The experiment will probably run four to five years.

Gathering hiker statistics was a part of ranger activities. Three different methods were experimented with, one of which proved highly unreliable. Two infrared ("electric eye") counters set up near the summit were tripped by the fog blowing in and out.

In what Larry described as "the great counter experiment," pressure plates and infrared counters were placed at the same spot on the Callahan Trail and a sign-in trail register about 50 feet from them. After a two week period Larry concluded that "the expensive infrareds are not only time consuming to install, but totally unreliable in use. The pressure plate counter is perhaps the most accurate, but the sign-in box, which provides additional information, is quite accurate as well."

When records from Callahan, Forestry, Burrows, Forest City and Long Trails were combined, it was found that 2,171 hikers had been recorded in August. This is close to the 2,274 total for 1973 for the same period. Vermonters make up 65 to 70 percent of the day hikers whereas the reverse is true of hikers on the Long Trail. Overall, it appears that about 60 percent of the park visitors are Vermonters, an unusually high percent of home use.

There are many positive signs that the public education program is working. The rangers felt optimistic enough part way through the season to remove the "no camping, no camp fires" signs from the clearing near the summit. As a result of the on-going education (much of it from GMC caretakers) many through hikers now carry stoves, and the "carry in, carry out" campaign has resulted in much less litter. Sign-in registers show that between 40 and 50 percent of the hikers have been up Camel's Hump previously, an encouraging sign which should mean that the educational program will be still more effective with each passing year.

Tom Slayton gave his impression of the program in a preceptive article which appeared in the Rutland Herald. The first and concluding paragraphs follow.

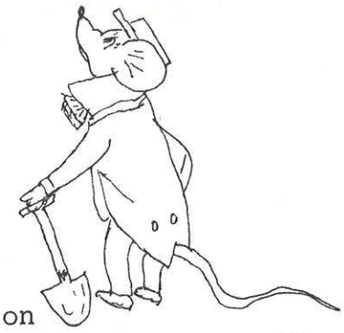
"A recent hike up Camel's Hump was a reassuring experience, both because it confirmed that much of Vermont is still an extremely beautiful, unspoiled place, and because of a minor insight into state spending priorities it afforded.

...

There's a lot of public debate about the inflated Montpelier bureaucracy and the wasteful ways in which state money is sometimes used. But we hope that even in a time of budgets that some money will continued to be found to pay someone to sit atop Camel's Hump, assist hikers, and guard the Bigelow sedge."

THE RAT PATROL Ralph Gibbs

Our section is trying a different approach to our trail and shelter problems. This approach is in the form of a "rat patrol" made up of members of our section whose task it will be to take care of the difficult jobs on the Long Trail and at the shelters. Difficult jobs include bridge building, water barring and replacing rotten or broken logs in shelters, to mention a few. The Long Trail will take priority over the side trails. The patrol work-weekends will not be included on the club outing schedule. The patrol will go to an area on the trail and work on it until it is finished, whatever has to be done.



George Pearlstein participated in two work weekends and gave us instruction on trail maintenance. We want to be able to take care of our own section with little or no outside help once we've been properly taught.

We just cut our teeth on Puffer Lodge and latrine. Our two trail tractors, Jack Lance and John Sharp, hauled lumber from Bolton ski area over Bolton Mountain to Puffer Lodge. The job was finished that day including replacing a window.

Our next job was on October 12 when we tackled Butler Lodge where we spent a day and a half replacing a log eaten by carpenter ants, rebuilding the stone step, replacing broken window panes, and chinking cracks. Next was Taylor Lodge, October 19. When we replaced a base log, we found the log resting on it needed to be replaced also. We chinked the inside of the Lodge with oakum and made a latch for the door. Blazing, brush cutting and sign hanging will be left to the regular scheduled work weekends.

We feel that we have the capability in our section to do the job. Members of the patrol are Harris Abbott, Ray Bard, Ralph Gibbs, Jack Harrington, Jack Lance, Gordon Moore, and John Sharp, and we appreciate the help from Tom Cooper, Bob Dill, Hollie Johnson, Jean Lance, Corky Magoon, Vic Mertrud, Madeline Miles, Dot Myer, Andy and Linda Toma, and Carlene Whitcomb.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominating Committee for 1974-75

Madeline Miles, Dot Myer and Ron Nemcosky, chairman. Please contact if you have suggestions.

Needed for Taylor Lodge

Anyone with used but still usable 28" by 35" window frames that he wishes to donate to Taylor Lodge is asked to contact Ralph Gibbs.

You Did It!

Ralph Gibbs, who completed the LT end-to-end when he led fellow GMC'ers on a hike from Smuggler's Notch to Route 15 recently. Congratulations!

Western Hiking Trip

A hiking trip to either the Canadian or American Rockies is being considered depending upon interest shown. (Approximate date end of July - first of August). If you are interested and wish to be kept informed, mail tear out to Pirk Pirkanen.

Tools and Materials

Are you presently storing tools and materials which belong or would be donated to the section for use on the trails and lodges? Ralph Gibbs (864-6145), Jack Harrington (658-2097) or Jack Lance (985-3715) would like to hear from you as a central storage place has been found to keep tools and supplies together.

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New Co-Chairman

Jack Lance was elected co-chairman (with Ralph Gibbs) of the Shelters Committee at a recent executive committee meeting. Jack replaces Howie Van Benthuysen, who has become a resident advisor in the graduate program at Colorado State University, and finds commuting to repair shelters a little difficult. His address: Parmalee Hall, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521.

Hudson Bay Bread Anyone?

There's a new recipe going around - thanks to Madeline Miles - which we'd like to share with you. It came about in mid-August as a result of much detailed planning by Marion Holmes, Hollie Johnson, Corky Magoon and Madeline Miles. These gals had every single item they needed for their 10-day canoe trip in Quetico Provincial Park except for two loaves of Hudson Bay Bread - which the outfitter promised in his literature to have on hand for sale. The Hudson Bay Bread turned out to be - not a loaf of delicious home-made bread as the name sounds - but a whole meal in one, and here's how you do it.

Cream 'til smooth 2 cups of granulated sugar, 2 cups of butter or margerine, 1/3 cup of honey and 1/3 cup of syrup. Add 9-1/2 cups of rolled oats and 1 cup of sliced almonds or other nuts. Mix until blended. Spread 1/2 inch thick on greased pan. Bake at 360° 'til golden brown - about 18 minutes. Cool, cut into individual squares and wrap in foil. These can be frozen and taken from the freezer as needed. Will keep at least two weeks when thawed. Serve as a trail lunch alone, or delicious with peanut butter or jam or what-have-you spread on top.

NEW MEMBERS

The Burlington Section welcomes the following.

George Burrows, Jay Collier, Erik Findholt, Karl Henson, William Hickson, Marshall Levitt, George Longnecker, Donald MacDonald, Jack Meili, Priscilla Miller, J. Patrick Reed, Dave Runge, Roger Schmeeckle, James Schuster, Harvey Smith, Paul Thompson.

RIDGE LINES

Ralph Gibbs, Hollie Johnson, Gardiner Lane, Corky Magoon, Madeline Miles, Jane Page, Dot and Pirk Pirkanen, Sally S. Spear, Larry Van Meter, Carlene Whitcomb.

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