A diligent Trail Conference volunteer kicked off a series of negotiations that resulted in protection of land adjacent to the Shawangunk Ridge Trail.

At a tax auction in Orange County on July 31, County Executive Eddie Diana removed a scenic, 129-acre undeveloped parcel in the Town of Deeppark on the Shawangunk Ridge from the sale, indicating that it would be preserved as open space and opened for trails.

The Trail Conference applauds Diana’s decisive action, which culminated several weeks of work by the Trail Conference, Town of Deeppark, Shawangunk Conservancy, and Orange County officials to remove the land from the auction and preserve it in its natural state.

The effort began in July when Trail Conference volunteer Andy Garrison, supervisor for the Shawangunk Ridge Trail, spotted the parcel on the list of properties to be auctioned by Orange County. The land was identified by the Trail Conference as a preservation target in 2004 and had been purchased by the county.

“Goodell then began to spread the word about the preservation opportunity to others. He contacted two frequent Trail Conference partners in land preservation projects, Jim Delaune at the Orange County Land Trust and Bob Anderson at the Open Space Institute, as well as longtime Trail Conference partners in land preservation projects, Jim Delaune at the Orange County Land Trust and Bob Anderson at the Open Space Institute, as well as longtime Trail Conference members and Orange County legislator Wayne Decker.”

The effort revealed an obstacle to the county’s ability to quickly protect conservation land that ends up on an auction block: an advance review process to identify key parcels. Legislative Decker began work on legislation to enable saving conservation properties in the future.

“This is a wonderful outcome that was made possible by the continuing collaboration of numerous organizations and officials,” Goodell says.

Andy Garrison adds, “That parcel would have never been pulled from the auction had others not produced the land acquisition plan in 2004 and other acquisitions in the area not happening. So a special thanks goes out to all those who laid the groundwork for me to follow and to everyone for their support of the Shawangunk Ridge Trail project.”

The Trail Conference’s work to advance land protection along the Shawangunk Ridge is supported by a grant from the Land Trust Alliance and NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation.

The Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad bridge in 1978 and, top, on October 4, 2009 when it opened as a Mid-Hudson trail link for walkers and bikers.

On the first weekend of October, an estimated 40,000 trail users walked, ran, biked, skate-boarded, kick-scootered, roller-bladed, or wheelchaired across the Hudson Valley’s newest state park. Walkway Over the Hudson.

Not Your Usual Walk in a Park

Looking at Palm Trees, Writing about New York-New Jersey Trails

When, more than a year and a half ago, Phil McLewin, Mahwah resident and professor emeritus of economics at Ramapo College, volunteered to help develop content about parks and trail regions for the new Trail Conference website, he quickly proved to be the very model of a new kind of volunteer—one who can make enormous contributions to a project or organization without necessarily being on the scene in person.

Phil volunteered not only via his computer at home, but, for most of last winter, from the sun-stoked warmth of a seaside apartment in Southern California. “It was a bit jarring writing about mountain peaks and pine trees while looking at the Pacific Ocean and palm trees,” he concedes. Lucky the one who can do it.

When the Trail Conference began planning a new, expanded website more than three years ago, among its objectives was to make its vast storehouse of information about trails, bikes, and parks more easily available to the public. Starting points for this effort included the Walk Books for New York and New Jersey. Ultimately he completed four of them on the west side of the Hudson River, including Harriman-Bear Mountain, the site’s most visited web page.

Read More on page 7

Return of the Fisher

Reintroduced in NY in 1970, fishers have traveled the Shawangunk Ridge to NJ.

Newly preserved land (in blue) protects a section of the Shawangunk Ridge Trail and creates a corridor to the Nature Conservancy’s Neversink Preserve.

Read More on Page 5

New! Improved!

Trail Conference volunteers build a new trail loop and improve another in Norvin Green.
Letters to the Editor

Remember Our History

The Trail Conference is accomplishing great things these days, and the Trail Walker has been—and is—a great part of it. I eagerly look forward to reading every issue.

However the Trail Conference seems to be afflicted with a case of “social amnesia.” A case in point is the elimination of the sketch of “The Thre” (Dr. Dickinson, Frank Flex, and Raymond Torrey) from the heading of the hike listings. Yet they were the pioneers who, with very little help from others, put out two editions of the New York Walk Book, the first in 1923 and the second in 1934. And it was done in an age that most regions could be reached by train and trolley, with a motor car now and then, with rough roads, and an average speed of 25-30 miles per hour. Still, their books inspired many city folks to seek out and tread “the long brown path.”

Then there is the case of the “Beach” Trail. This trail was scouted and marked well over 30 years ago to honor Art Beach for his many years of dedicated work for the Trail Conference, both as a tireless trail worker and as a holder of several official positions, not the least of which was his liaison to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

The name “Beach” did appear on a park map shortly after the trail was made, but the park had a policy of not naming trails for living persons, and Art, being a modest man, agreed with the policy, so the name of the trail took on the spelling of the tree.

Perhaps the time has come to set the matter right by changing the spelling back to what it was intended to be, perhaps with a little ceremony held at one of the trailheads to emphasize the point.

Robert Schulz
Richmond Hill, NY

Give the gift that makes a difference!

Special gift membership deal during the months of November and December.

Purchase a Gift Membership for someone special at 50% off our regular price!*
From the Executive Director

A Pundit Gets It

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof typically addresses topics in the international- and human rights spheres. But in August, Kristof wrote a couple of columns that took as their theme the need for people to keep in touch with nature. He and his 11-year-old daughter, he reported, had backpacked into wilderness “to recover from a surfeit of civilization.” Kristof said that he and his family are frequent trail users, often back-packing on long-distance trails. But, he observed, trails in the U.S. are too often neglected to do enough to preserve their connection to nature and their importance from a prominent writer.

Kristof writes, a direct connection to nature helps to make a difference. The work we do to keep trails open and enjoyable is a kind of public health program intended to forestall an epidemic of “nature-deficit disorder.”

As this issue goes to press, the Trail Conference is wrapping up a year marked by unusual challenges, both to our own operations and those of many of our partners. But even in the midst of cutbacks and hard choices, the Trail Conference has continued to make a difference. The work we do to keep trails open and enjoyable is a kind of public health program intended to forestall an epidemic of “nature-deficit disorder.”

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and staff, we have helped keep many of our most beloved parks and open spaces accessible to the public via the trails we maintain and build. And interest in our work has grown.

• We support more volunteers—1,636 individuals actively volunteering—than ever before—a more than 25% increase in the number of volunteers over two years!

• We maintain more miles of trail—some are added at the request of local communities and park managers, themselves strapped for funds with which to properly maintain public open space and trails. The Trail Conference’s expertise in managing trail projects and recruiting, training, and organizing trail volunteers is highly regarded and sought after by park agencies and local governments with trails in their care.

• We have pushed the vacancy rate in our volunteer posts to its lowest level on record (less than 10%), even as we continue to add new opportunities for outdoor public service.

So there is good news for the Trail Conference and trails in our region. We may not yet be out of the woods, but with your continued support—through your membership, donations, and purchase of Trail Conference maps and books—we are on the Recovery Trail!

— Edward Goodell
Executive Director

Our work is a kind of public health program intended to forestall an epidemic of “nature-deficit disorder.”

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Sixty stalwart trail supporters turned out on a gray, rain-threatening Saturday to support trails in our 2nd Annual Hike-a-Thon. This was a 50% increase in the number of participants over last year. Thanks to the hikers, donors, and sponsors for helping us raise $15,000 for trail stewardship and education!

Presented by

A very special thank you to our sponsors:

HIKERS RAISE $15,000 FOR TRAILS AT HIKE-A-ThON 2009

A very special thank you to our sponsors:
Boy Scouts + Girl Scouts + Trail Conference = New Trail Loop

The Highlands Trail Creates an Opportunity for a New Loop Hike in Norvin Green State Forest

Long-distance trails such as the Appalachian Trail, Long Path, and Highlands Trail are more than linear corridors for one-way thru-hikes or in-and-out excursions. They are the backbone along which more modest loop hikes, popular with hikers and casual trail users, can be attached and enjoyed.

Such is the case with a new loop in Norvin Green State Forest, west of the Wanaque Reservoir in New Jersey. Completion of a link in the Highlands Trail (HT) connecting the Wanaque Reservoir to the Roomy Mine Trail would be a short distance away. The project became the focus for a productive collaboration between Trail Conference volunteers, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. Not only was the Roomy Mine Trail extended to the HT, the entire Mine Trail was improved and a section relocated to avoid a difficult climb up a talus slope. (See map on page 12.)

The Mine Trail improvements became an Eagle Scout project for Anthony Outcalt, a Life Scout of BSA Troop 350 in Green Trails Co-Supervisor Paul Makus and us (Central Jersey Co-Chairs Estelle Anderson and Bob Jonas) to design a new route off the talus slope up the hillside along the Roomy Mine that would become the connection to the Wanaque Reservoir. This portion of the project was completed in the fall of 2008.

Norvin Green Volunteers

Norvin Green Trail Conference Paul Makus and Central Jersey Co-Chair Estelle Anderson and Bob Jonas thank the following volunteers for their work on trails in Norvin Green State Forest.

Eagle Scout candidate Anthony Outcalt and his fellow friends, students, and family: Christopher, Joshua, and Marie Geoces, Robert Jonas, Kyle Kates, Mike Kahl, Emily Kratt, Mari and Tim Kondahl, Sld. Celeste, Michelle Silva, and John Monastera, Henry, Pat, Matthew, Tristan, and Rosalia Outcalt, Mike Penn, Todd Porter, Matthew Rogers, Jeffrey Telep, Ashley Noelle Volpe and Alex Voss.

Cathie and Rachel Maynard and her fellow scouts, friends and family, including: Jessica Levine, Antonio Lombardo, and Lombard, Debbie Maynard.

Central Jersey Trail Conference, regional representatives, and potential Central Jersey Crew members: Monica and David Day (West Jersey Crew Chief), the Barnhard family, Jack Baccaglini, Ian Blundell, Christie Ferguson, Lee Higgins, Larry May, Gay Mayer, Leslie McGlynn, Lee Mott, Steve Reiss, Jeff Roggenburg, Karen Schoof, Shawn Smith, and Bill and Linda Taggart.

Conservation & Advocacy News Notes

Make sure you get Alert Alerts from the Trail Conference so that you can better support our local parks, parks, and open spaces. Set your email program to accept mail from the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference!

NEW JERSEY

ATV Legislation

Up for November Votes

By advocate volunteer Brenda Houbigant

Bills that would create new regulations for All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) in New Jersey are expected to be up for full votes in both the Assembly and Senate after the November 3 elections. S2055 and A823, would place limitations on the registration, and identification of ATVs and enforcement of laws regarding their use.

Legislation requiring the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to “try” to locate three ATV parks in the state is currently linked to S2055 and A823, which means that both bills must move forward through the legislative process together. If no action is taken before the end of the year, when the current legislative session expires, a fully refiled Assembly, with a fully refiled Senate, and a slightly reconfigured Senate, convenes. Because this time frame is so short, your help is needed more than ever to pass this important legislation!

For current updates about this legislation, contact the group and visit the website at www.nynytc.org/advocacy.

NATIONAL

Members Help Save Funds for Proposed Trails in New York

In September, Trail Conference members and supporters were among those who helped defeat two amendments to annual federal transportation funding legislation that would have prohibited the use of federal funds for pedestrian or bicycle facilities that would “reduce vehicle collisions with wildlife, and other specified Transportation Enhancement projects.” The House of Representatives, with 5 votes to 4, defeated the amendments on a voice vote on September 25. A second amendment, which would have eliminated the current service charge for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, was defeated on September 26. The Trail Conference had sent an email alert about the funding issue to its members and friends.

The Trail Conference has a membership of more than 10,000, with a strong network of volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to the preservation and enjoyment of the region’s trails and parklands. The Trail Conference is supported by individual membership dues, corporate membership, and donations, as well as by grants from foundations and government agencies.

The Trail Conference is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a member of the National Alliance of Trails. For more information, visit www.nynytc.org.

Boy Scouts + Girl Scouts + Trail Conference = New Trail Loop

News

In Harriman State Park

Victory Trail

That a section of the Victory Trail is a utili-

ty corridor, and large utility corridor work that has been reported and questioned by several hikers. Construction of a road or a trail would also entail clearing of the park by the park after the utilities advised that without the road development, the lines to park will remain underground. By the the September deadline for this newsletter, clearing and construction of a widened dirt road by the park near the terminus of the trail, was nearly com-

continues on page 10

continued on page 10

Page 4

November/December 2009
Volunteers Build New Staircase to Wyanokey High Point

On two consecutive weekends this September, members of the West Jersey Trail Crew and the Central Jersey Trails Committee constructed a total of 34 rock steps on the co-aligned portion of the Mine and Hewitt-Butler Trails as they begin their climb of Wyanokey High Point in Norvin Green State Forest. The goal was to create a safer, more enjoyable hiking experience and to forestall erosion on a steep and rocky trail section to Wyanokey High Point. This popular route connects with the Otter Hole Trail from the Weis Ecology Center.

October – December 2009

Check our website for possible additions or changes to schedules. Go to www.nynjtc.org and click on Trail Crews in the Get Involved tab.

TBD = To Be Determined

For all trips bring work gloves, water, lunch, insect repellent. In some cases, tools are provided. Contact leaders in advance for meeting times and places.

HIGHLANDS TRAIL CREW
Leaders: Green Greeting, HT Supervisor: Hugesson@verizon.net or 973-263-0396
Adam Rosenberg, HT Co-Supervisor: adrosm@verizon.com or 973-570-0853

Monthly on a 3rd Sunday
We generally get together the third Sunday of each month to tackle various jobs building new sections or rerouting existing sections of the Highlands Trail throughout New Jersey as well as in New York west of the Hudson River. We also schedule other work dates. All are welcome, experience is not necessary. Contact leader for details of the current trip and what tools to bring.

Sunday, November 15
Combo Hike & Work Trip Location TBD

Sunday, December 13
Combo Hike & Work Trip Location TBD

CENTRAL JERSEY TRAILS COMMITTEE
Leaders: Estelle Anderson and Bob Jonas, ysekell@comcast.net, 908-803-3883 (cell)

Winter Break

MORRIS JERSEY WEEKEND CREW
Leader: Sandy Purr, 732-409-5109
Second Sunday of each month
Trips start at 9:30 am; call for location and details during the week before the scheduled trip day. Tackle a variety of projects ranging from trail repair to bridge building in northern New Jersey.

MORRIS JERSEY WEEKDAY CREW
Leader: John Moran, thomson@verizon.net
Winter outings as needed
This crew covers the NJ Ramapos, Ringwood S.P., Norvin Green S.P., and NJ Palisades area. Its purpose is to respond quickly to immediate needs, rather than to schedule definite events far in advance. If you’re interested in being on call for this work, contact John Moran by email.

WEST JERSEY CREW
Leaders: Monica and David Day, westjerseycrew@trailstobuild.com 732-907-9048 or 908-307-0949 (cell)
Website: www.trailstobuild.com

Bring your lunch, plenty of water, gloves and sturdy work shoes, and prepare to get dirty. All tools, materials and training will be provided. Beginners are welcomed on all work trips.

All events begin at 9:00 am. Please phone/email the leaders for meeting location and driving directions. There is usually a walk to the work site, so please be there on time (call the leaders’ cell phone if you are coming in an event and are running late). Rain cancels—it if doubt, call the leaders between 6:00 and 6:30 that morning.

Carpooling: If you are interested in carpooling (offering a ride or riding), please let the leaders know and we will try to arrange a shared ride. (Passengers please be prepared to contribute for gas.)

Saturday, October 31
Terrace Pond North Trail, Wawayanda State Park
We will install stepping stones in a wet area of the Terrace Pond North Trail.

Saturday, November 14
Gurney Springs Trail, Worthington State Forest
We will install water bars and mitigate an eroded area of the Gurney Springs Trail.

NEW JERSEY APPALACHIAN TRAIL CREW
Leader: Gina Glorianto, trash@greenjordans.com
Second Saturday of Each Month, April through November
Work begins at 8am and is finished before 4pm. Covers the entire NJ section of the AT, blue-blazed side trails, and shelters. Supplements work by our individual maintainers as requested and for special work projects. Workers bring gloves, lunch, and water; all tools, equipment and training provided. Email leader to be placed on email notification list.

WEST HUDSON SOUTH CREW
Leaders: Chris Ezzo (crew chief): 516-431-1148, mustrystanumber@yahoo.com, brian@bushwhacker.com; Linda Sullivan, crew chief, 973-912-8313, mainreynolds@comcast.net; Liz Gonzalez, lizgonzalez@verizon.net
Sturdy work boots or other hiking footwear is mandatory. All participants must sign in to perform trail work. RSVP is a must.

Please contact Linda Sullivan, Metro Trail Crew Chief, in order to receive email notices of work outings, or check the Metro Trail Crew page on the Trail Conference website for more information and the schedule.

Dutchess-Putnam AT in Fahnestock State Park

Every Saturday
Leader: Tim Messerich, bascomgrillmaster@yahoo.com 845-297-9673

Ward Pond Ridge volunteer trail maintainers meet weekly year round. If you would like to be put on their email list for notifications, contact bascomgrillmaster@yahoo.com or view the East Hudson Trail Crew webpage at www.nynjtc.org for more information and the schedule.

West Hudson South Crew

Saturday, November 1
Contact: Wayne Johnson, 718-793-7833, johnson2459@netscape.net
Meet: 9:00am at the trailhead near the Mine and Mine Brook Trail in the Lemon Avenue section of White Plains.

The Friends of Angel Fly hiking trail will be working on a new trail called Angel Fly. This volunteer crew will work on clearing brush, rerouting the trail to avoid the Manhattan Trolley Line. Equipment needs include: pruners, loppers, shovels, pickaxes and gloves. Meet at the trailhead near the Mine and Mine Brook Trail in the Lemon Avenue section of White Plains.

HUMBIE TRAIL CREW
Leader: John Moran, thomson@verizon.net

Project Manager: Eddie Walsh, beaumonttrailmaster@gmail.com, 845-991-1437
Volunteer Coordinator: Christopher Ingui, bearmountaintrailmaster@gmail.com, 201-783-0389

Thursday-Monday, Weekly to November
General work days, suitable for beginners to experienced trail workers.
Training will be provided according to participant’s skill level, interest, and project needs. Meeting time is 8:30am at Bear Mountain. Please sign up via email and call for either an email or phone confirmation from us prior to attending to confirm the trip and so we know whether to expect you.

Work trips involve a variety of tasks and experience, such as: corridor clearing, preparing work sites, quarrying stone, using an overhead higlifence to transport stone, creating crushed stone (with mash and sedge hammers), building crib walls, setting rock steps, and splitting stone.

WEST HUDSON NORTH CREW
Leaders: Denise Viale (crew chief): 845-738-2126
Second Sunday of Each month or on early weekends
Clare Webber (crew leader): webberb1@yahoo.com, 845-452-7238

Peters Kill Loop Red Trail, Minnewaska State Park Preserve

Relocation of this trail continues. Each work trip will include education for the novice and plenty of challenges for the more experienced. This is a great opportunity to learn all the basics of trail building like side-hilling, rock moving with rock bars and a high-line system, plus rock splitting/shaping and building crib walls and stairs.

Saturday, November 14
Leader: Dave Weiber

Sunday, November 22
Leader: Denise Viale
Volunteer Classifieds: Get Involved!

To indicate your interest, or for more information about these or other volunteer opportunities, go to www.nynjtc.org/volunteer on our website, or contact us at volunteer@nynjtc.org or 201-512-9348 ext. 22.

OFF-TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Help Support our Virtual Trail Conference

Join an enthusiastic team of volunteers who ensure our website is the best place to go for trails information in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region!

The New York–New Jersey Trail Conference is putting in place a team of volunteers to support and enhance our website’s capabilities. If you have a few hours each month or more to volunteer and would like to be a champion of our virtual presence on the Web, sign up now! We need a wide range of skills and abilities to keep our site running, ensure its content is current and accurate, and to maintain our presence in the expanding Web-enabled social network. Much of the work can be accomplished from your home computer on your own schedule.

Openings exist in the following areas: Assistant Webmaster, Web Developer, Analytics Maven, CRM database lead, Long Island Parks Section Writer. See our volunteer openings postings on our website for additional details.

Volunteer Office Assistants Needed!

We need your help! Come to our Mahwah office and assist anyone you can. The Trail Conference has a wide variety of tasks that could use your expertise, from assisting customers and answering phone calls, order processing and mailings, to working on special projects. Make new friends or join current ones at the TC office for a few hours.

Volunteer Job Description Writer

We need a volunteer to write clear and comprehensive job descriptions for our different volunteer positions. This would suit someone with a background in HR, or an individual with good listening and writing skills. If you are able to listen and help volunteers think through particular job positions to develop a set of written volunteer job descriptions, then let us know!

Long Island Parks Web Writer

Our website includes descriptions of parks throughout our region, but the Long Island region is yet to be done. Check out other park pages at www.nynjtc.org/view/parks and let us know if you’re interested in researching and writing the Long Island region.

ON-TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Trail Maintainer

Adopt a segment of a trail to keep clear and adequately blazed two or more times a year, and help to keep our region’s footpaths accessible, pristine, and protected. Vacancies exist in the following areas:

NEW YORK
- Appalachian Trail (Putnam County), Black Rock Forest, Black Dome Range (Canisville), Cardells Long Path (Devil’s Path, North Escarpment, Phoenixia-East Branch, or Mount Tremper), Harriman/Bear Mountain, Hudson Highlands, Shawangunk Ridge Trail, South Taconics, Sloatsburg, Van Cortlandt Park
- Hudson Highlands, High Mountain, High Point State Park, Highland Trails, North- ern Wysnokies, Palisades (Edgewater), Pochopanocks Watershed, Ringwood State Park, Southwest Highlands, Stokes State Forest, Swartswood State Park, Waywanda State Park

NEW JERSEY
- First State Park, NRE, Northern New Jersey Border, and Putnam County

Corridor Monitors Needed in Northern NJ/NY Border and Putnam County

Corridor Monitors walk the boundaries of the Appalachian Trail lands, reporting incursions and misuse, documenting monuments and markers, and interact with neighboring landowners. If you enjoy the off-trail experience, and would like to help protect these trails, then this is the opportunity for you!

Trail Supervisor for Harriman State Park

If you have a trail maintenance background and would now like to apply your experience to the stewardship of 25% of the footpaths in Harriman, then this may be just the job for you! Working with the West Hudson Trails Chair, you would be responsible for assigning, training, and supervising maintainers covering an area of about 45 miles of trail.

Trail Crew Leader for East Hudson

Exercise your leadership skills! Supervise and work with regional Trail Chairs and Trail Supervisors to lead Trail Crew trips throughout the East Hudson area. Trail Crews provide the constructive and trail restoration needs in order to ensure that trails are built or repaired to Trail Conference standards. You would be responsible for assigning the wrong schedule, help identify and plan projects, build your team of volunteers, and mentor new leaders.

There are many ways to give back to trails. In addition to volunteering to serve as a new member of the Trail Conference Board of Directors, Hans Khimm (center) recruited friends to participate in Hike-a-thon. Check the volunteer opportunities listed above or visit our website, www.nynjtc.org and click on “Volunteer” to give back in the way that best suits you.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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Fishers Return to New Jersey
By Robynn K. Shannon

Fishers (Martes pennanti), sometimes known as "fisher cats," have returned naturally to New Jersey, after an absence of at least 100 years. Data collected by C. C. Kontos and P. A. X. Bologna in 2006 and 2007 from camera trapping, tracking, and scat analysis confirmed the occurrence of this relative of marten and weasels in Stokes State Forest (Sussex County). (See Charles Kontos’ article on tracking fishers and bobcats, page 5.)

Fishers were once widespread and abundant throughout the northeastern U.S., but hunting and trapping during the 19th and early 20th centuries led to dramatic declines and local extinctions. Over the past 30 years, successful fisher reintroduction programs have been carried out in Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut, producing potential source populations for the natural return of fishers to New Jersey. The most likely source of the New Jersey population is the Catskills, via the Shawangunk Ridge. The combination of large areas of suitable habitat (forest) and abundant prey (small mammals and birds) makes Sussex County an ideal area for fisher populations to establish and persist naturally. Historically, fishers and other native North American wildlife species were able to disperse across vast areas of forested landscape. With agriculture, industrialization, and modern development in the northeastern United States, such habitat became increasingly fragmented, resulting in a patchwork of forest and human-impacted habitats. Now, in this fragmented landscape, fishers and other wildlife, and even plants, depend on corridors of suitable habitat connecting forest fragments of various sizes. As Kontos and Bologna point out, the Shawangunk - Kittatinny Ridge is such a corridor. The Trail Conference’s work in protecting trail corridors that may also serve as biodiversity corridors is extremely important to conservation efforts of both animals and plants, and like-ly to become even more so.

Fishers are my-sterious animals, in part because they are shy and secretive (although they are apparently becoming increasingly habituated to humans), fast-moving, and mostly nocturnal. They are dark brown to nearly black, with white-tipped hairs that give them something of a frosted appearance, about the size of a red fox or a little smaller, with a long, bushy tail. They have a reputation of being fierce predators, and are the only known natural predator of porcupines. Around human habitations, where natural prey may be scarce, they are a threat to small domestic animals (cats, dogs, chickens), though probably less so than coyotes. They are adept tree climbers, and often nest in holes in trees.

I was first introduced to fishers by way of their strangest trait. Three of us were sitting out on a deck near Hatfield (CT) after dark one late summer evening, rounded by a small patch of woods. All of a sudden came a sound that is generally described as a scream or a screech, eerily human sounding, like something straight out of a horror movie: Hearts pounding and eyes wide, we all looked at each other, wanting confirmation that the others had heard it as well. There was some (brief) discussion about taking a flashlight and going to look for whatever had made the noise. The next day a neighbor asked us if we had heard something in the woods. When I told a local zoologist about it, she said without pause, “Oh, that was a fish-er.” About a year later, the photo at left was taken from the same deck.

Robynn K. Shannon is a botanist and Trail Conference volunteer who divides her time between northern New Jersey and Connecticut.

Snow Tracking Fishers and Bobcats
By Charles Kontos

With the winter season fast approaching, many animals such as wood-warblers, salamanders, and black bears have started to either migrate or hibernate and will not be seen again until spring. This doesn’t mean that naturalists can’t continue to explore the amazing landscape within the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference trail network. In fact, winter is the perfect time to search for rare forest carnivores such as bobcats and fishers, which are mostly active at night, and usually avoid humans.

Over a century ago, fishers were extirpated from this New York-New Jersey region because of a combination of loss of their forest habitat to farmland and unregulated trapping. That loss, they were reintroduced in New York in the late 1970s and have just recently made their way back to the Kittatinny Ridge of New Jersey. Similarly, bobcats were eliminated from New Jersey and were reintroduced to the Garden State around the same time. Now we have the opportunity to find evidence of these elusive mammals—normally solitary creatures with remote wilderness areas in Ontario or Maine—right here using snow tracking techniques.

Fisher tracks are similar to mink and otter, but of intermediate size. Clear tracks of the fisher measure about 2 3/4” in length by 3” in width and have five toes on each foot with claws showing. Depending on snow conditions, the grouping patterns of tracks may assist in species identification. Fishers often move in a lope pattern with the four feet landing at different times, but usually one track overlaps another. In deep snow, fishers will travel by bounding with both front feet landing simultaneously at an angle to one another and then the hind feet landing in the same spots. Raccoons will sometimes use this pattern as well but will switch up the track angle more frequently than fishers. Without a clear print, other diagnostic characteristics are the fisher’s solitary behavior and general avoidance of trails and open areas. So, you may not see tracks running along a trail, but watch for tracks crossing trails, or in the nearby woods.

Bobcat tracks have the classic shape of animals in the cat family, with four symmetrically aligned toes on both front and hind feet, and tracks measuring about 1 1/4” in length by 2” in width with no claws showing. The front feet are slightly larger than the hind feet. Bobcats usually move using a direct register pattern in which the front foot is lifted and then the hind foot of the same side is placed almost exactly on top of the previous track. Small bobcat tracks can overlap with those of a large housecat but are typically about twice the size and have a wider trail width.

Surprisingly, much more can be learned from following the trail of an animal than from an actual sighting. Habitat use, food preferences, and even human impacts can all be gleaned from snow tracking. My best outdoor memories are of below-freezing days near the Appalachian Trail in New Jersey tracking fishers, bobcats, and coyotes as crisp, cold winds howled through majestic white pines. I have discovered sites in which fishers and bobcats have left the remains of their prey—raccoon, opossum, and red squirrel—allowing me to learn about their species made the scat and what population it came from, but even distinguish individual animals. Following tracks is also used to figure out where animals are crossing roadways, and this information is then used to help establish wildlife corridors, underpasses beneath highways, and other linkages that allow animals to move safely from one patch of habitat to another.

Snow Tracking: Handout

By Robynn K. Shannon

So, keep your eyes peeled this winter if you’re out in the snow! Please report any tracks of fishers or bobcats to me at chkontos@eden.rutgers.edu. The information will be used in making recommendations to the wildlife management agency to protect and enhance these wonderful predator’s lives in our midst.

Charles Kontos is a conservation biologist focusing on wildlife in New Jersey. He is a graduate student in ecology and evolution at Rutgers University.
November 2009

TRAIL WALKER
November/December 2009

Find more hikes at www.nynjtc.org. Click on Scheduled Hikes Going up! Go Hiking!

November 1
Sunday, November 1
[Don't forget your favorite soup and bread] Breakfast!

WFR. Door County North, East Hudson State Park, NL Leader: Jim, 414-270-4465. Meet: 7:30am at Great Central Terminal, 1533 Cherry Lane (Just off I-43 South). Meet at trailhead. Join the 3rd shuttle for a guided hike. Top off at 1:00pm. Bring lunch, rain gear, and all things needed.

AFH. Walk in the outdoor museum. NL Leader: Mary. Meet: 8:30am at Lakeside Harbor (ör thru East Main St.). Meet at Lakehead at the boardwalks. Easy trail.

ADK-MH. Easy Poetry Walks. NL Leader: Nancy Frame. Meet: 8:30am at Pickering Campground. Meet at the parking lot near the overlook. Meet at 9:00am. Bring lunch.

ADK-ML. Locust Grove Walk, Poughkeepsie, NL Leaders: Bill Bueler and Julie Ritt. Meet: 9:00am at the parking lot at 91 Josie Eighmy Road. Join the 1st shuttle to the start of the hike. Meet at the overlook and return. Bring lunch.


WFR. Sheavors Cove Trail, Ramapo Lake, Oakland, NJ. Leader: Ron Kuhns, 201-836-5256. Meet: 10am at Lake Sebago boat launch parking. Meet at the parking lot near the overlook. Meet at 9:00am. Bring lunch.

MT. Taurus, East Hudson Highlands, Cold Spring, NY. Leader: Peter Pollack. For more info contact Evan Millen at evan@ehudsonhills.org. Meet: at 7:00am at 700 White Plains train station (SR 155 just off SR 9D). Attend the meeting on train at 6:30pm. Hike from Sleepy Hollow to Stockbridge. Meet at 11:00am.

AFH. Rangeley River Hiking Club, Mahine, NH. Leader: Susan Jacoby, 973-420-3555. Meet: at Sunrise Lakes parking area east of 1 mile on Route 52, south of Mahwah. Meet at 6:30pm. Meet at the trailhead.

WFR. Appalachian Trail, East Rondaland, New York, NY. Leader: Hal Kaplan, 914-376-3156. Meet: at 9:30am for hike. Meet at the trailhead. Call for more information and meet at 8:30pm.


MT. Bear Mountain and continuing over to the Timp. Return on the Ramapo-Dunderberg and other trails. Bath weather weather.

AW. Westside of Buttermilk Falls State Park. Leader: Eileen Kress, wswirled07@earthlink.net or 973-743-4833. Meet: 9am at Poet’s Walk; call for more information.

ADK-A. Thanksgiving Weekend Wrap-Up, Harriman State Park, NY. Leader: Register at www.adirondacks.org/nj. Meet: at the trailhead. Call for more information and meet at 9:00am.


WTA. Three Preserves in Easton,CT. Leader: TNC environment. Meet: 9:30am at the parking lot, off exit 17 on Route 11. Meet at the trailhead. Call for more information and meet at 9:00am.

AFF. Appalachian Trail, East Rondaland, New York, NY. Leader: Hal Kaplan, 914-376-3156. Meet: at 9:30am for hike. Meet at the trailhead. Call for more information and meet at 8:30pm.


ADK-MH. Black Creek Preserve, Essex, NY. Leader: Bill Wolfe, 607-359-7810. Meet: 9:00am at North White Plains station (SR 155 just off SR 9D). Attend the meeting on train at 6:30pm. Hike from Sleepy Hollow to Stockbridge. Meet at 11:00am.

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Green and Black Forest
At Minnewaska, nature thrives a year after a major fire
By Laura Conner

The Overlooks Fire at Minnewaska State Park Preserve, which lasted for six days in April of 2008 and closed the Preserve for over a week, was significant in size and intensity. The fire burned more than 2,000 acres, leaving forest communities like the Black Forest with major damage.

The blackened trees remained as nature's reminder of the fire's impact. No one can forget the sight of these trees, their trunks standing tall and unburned, as they provided a stark contrast to the landscape. The blackened ashen trees stood as a testament to the destructive power of fire, reminding us of the fragility of nature.

The forest floor was scattered with the remnants of nature's beauty - leaves and twigs charred by the flames. The air was filled with the scent of smoke, a reminder of the fire's intense heat.

In the days following the fire, a sense of tranquility returned to the forest. The sound of birdsong filled the air, and the sight of leaves beginning to grow again was a sign of nature's resilience.

Today, the forest has begun to heal. The hardy plants of the forest are already beginning to thrive, and the landscape is gradually returning to its former beauty. The scars of the fire are slowly healing, and the forest is beginning to recover.

Adventitious buds on charred pitch pine.

Native Americans in this region used fire as a tool as far back as 3,000 years ago. Regular burning of the forest created a park-like landscape with overhanging nut trees complemented by a Gray heron with fruit-producing shrubs. The use of open fire was made for hunting and gathering.

The forest at Minnewaska has evolved to be fire-dependent, and the plants living in this area have adapted specifically to survive and even thrive through fire. For instance, a close look at the trunk of a pine can reveal clusters of pine needles. These bright green tufts of Audreyus adornment trees that are capable of new growth if other portions of the tree die. And, the pine tree's serotinous pine cones, which remain tightly closed until exposed to heat, open for pollination. This strategy provides the tree with a competitive advantage. The fire eliminates other plants, which would vie for sunlight and nutrients in the forest, and the organic matter resulting from its destruction produces a rich, humus layer that is ripe for seed germination.

Fire tolerant trees such as chestnut oak and pitch pine, have a thick, flaky bark that protects the living cambium layer beneath for rain scavenging. These and other fire tolerant plants have the ability to respout from root material. This category of plants includes laurels, blueberries, huckleberries, oaks, and aspens.

It's been no surprise to see the pitch pine trees bouncing back as ecologists predicted, but it has been a delight to actually witness the aggressive growth of adventitious buds out of blackened, dead-looking trees. Any one who hiked Jenny Lane/Long Path this summer saw a dazzling abundance of blueberries. And in mid-summer, the forest floor was carpeted with a plethora of light and red berries protruding from abundant wintergreen.

One surprise has been the super-sized return of the sassafras. After the fire last year, I noticed stumpy-sprouting sassafras that seemed to grow stronger, bigger, and faster than other trees. The sassafras are still growing strong, but other plant species seem to be catching up. Included among these are New York fern, bracken fern, tulip tree saplings, saffron yew, fern, sheep and mountain laurel, wintergreen, green cucumber root, red maple, chestnut oak, and bear oak.

In 2008, it was easy to distinguish the pockets of forest that had burned hotter from those that were more lightly scorched. The hastily burned forests revealed the charred skeletal remains of mountain laurel, and the tall blackened trunks of mature trees retained leaves only in their crowns. Other areas were burned so lightly that charring could be seen only upon a close examination of the forest floor and the bottom of tree trunks.

In 2009, though plants reborn and added new life, some burned ground and stumps, a keen observer could still pick out these areas. Many of the bally burned peduncle trees, in particular red maple, chestnut oak and birch, are sporing vigorous, almost shrubmy newgrowth from their stumps, even as lightly leaved upper branches struggle to sustain these large trees.

Another Way to Give
Have you considered investing in the Trail Conference’s mission? Making a donation in the form of a charitable gift annuity from the Trail Conference might be the perfect opportunity for you. A charitable gift annuity pays you a steady fixed income for the rest of your life.

Charitable gift annuities are very popular gifts because of the high rate of return, which will never change after a gift is made, regardless of interest rate fluctuations. And, a charitable gift annuity is simple to establish.

With a charitable gift annuity you would get an immediate income tax deduction for a significant portion of the value of the asset you are giving. The remaining value of the annuity payments will increase the spending power of your annuity.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Hezel at hezel@nyntc.org or 201-512-9348, ext. 28.
HUNTING SEASONS 2009

NEW YORK

Deer Seasons: Regular and Archery Southern Zone
Indicates Hudson Valley and Catskillss
Regular: Nov. 21 – Dec. 13
Archery only: Nov. 21 – Dec. 13

Suffolk County
Bow: Oct. 17 – Dec. 31

In New Jersey, the safest course in the field is to hide only on Sundays, when hunting with firearms is generally prohibited throughout the state. Therefore, hunting seasons vary by weapon and geography.

December 7-12 in all zones.

A one-shot hunting season is set for December 16 in many zones with additional days permitted in some zones.

THANK YOU TO WAL-MART FOR PROUDLY SUPPORTING OUR TRAIL CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS

ONLINE THANK YOU TO WAL-MART

For Trail Conference record-keeping purposes, he figures he averages five hours per needed updates, and to search for and add content. That works out, he notes, to practically 1,000 hours over the past season sojourn on the Californiacost.

Tribe’s Costume and Information.

For info about other deer seasons in New York, visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28605.html. For info about all other deer seasons and regulations in New York, visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/10003.html.

NEW JERSEY

In New Jersey, the safest course in the field is to hide only on Sundays, when hunting with firearms is generally prohibited throughout the state. Therefore, hunting seasons vary by weapon and geography.

A day-six season hunting is set for December 7-12 in all zones.

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Tribe’s Costume and Information.
On the Trail with GPS
How to Choose a GPS Receiver
By Jeremy Appar, Trail Conference cartogaphet

As the staff cartographer here at the Trail Conference, I am often approached by vol-
unteers or members asking, “I am interested in getting a GPS receiver to hike with but don’t quite know what to look for... can you provide some advice?”

More and more people are carrying a GPS receiver when they hike. In addition, many people are getting into geo-caching, a fam-
ily-friendly activity that utilizes GPS receivers to hunt for treasure in the great outdoors. In a survey we conducted earlier this year con-
cerning trail map usage, 50% of the 660 respondents noted they use a GPS receiver when out hiking, with their frequency of use ranging from rarely to always.

(Fortunately, over 90% of total respon-
dents noted they carry a trail map most of the time. GPS units should not be considered substitutes for map and compass, but supplements to them. Like any electronic technology, they are not wholly reliable: batteries may die, the unit may fail, contact with satellites may be lost.)

With so many different brands offering multiple models with a wide range of fea-
tures available, finding the right GPS receiver for you can be daunting. This article aims to provide some guidance about what to look for when shopping for a GPS receiver, keeping in mind that everyone has different needs and varying wallet sizes.

Positional Accuracy: Look for GPS receivers that utilize a 12-channel parallel receiver system. This allows the receiver to lock onto multiple satellites at the same time to more accurately pinpoint your location. Many factors affect GPS accuracy, regardless of the model, but some receivers provide enhanced accuracy under certain conditions, such as one with a system called WAAS (Wide Area Augmentation System). GPS receivers need unobstructed access to satellites; instead of relying on the best connection, they should not be hidden inside a deep pocket or backpack (keeping in mind it is still possible to lose satellite connection even under seemingly perfect conditions).

ADVANCED FEATURES
Maps: Not all GPS receivers have mapping capabilities, so it is important to check the GPS receiver perfect for your use. This article aims to provide some guidance about what to look for when shopping for a GPS receiver, keeping in mind that everyone has different needs and varying wallet sizes.

COLOR vs. GRAYSCALE: More expensive models tend to provide color screens while less expensive models have a grayscale screen. This factor often goes hand-in-hand with mapping capabilities, as topographic maps are often published with a color screen. If the intended use of the GPS receiver is less focused on using maps, consider a grayscale model to save some money. It is also important to make sure the screen is readable in the outdoors, as certain screens can appear to be washed out in sunlight.

USEABILITY
Size/Weight: Though many GPS receivers for hiking use are designed to be handheld and some are designed to be bulkier and can be eas-
er to use with larger adult hands. Screen sizes and resolutions also vary, so be sure you can easily read the text and maps on the screen. The best way to figure out what works for you is to find an outdoor retail store such as Cabela’s or Ramsey Outdoor that carries GPS receivers and allows custo-
mers to handle the units and try them out.

PRICE
Each of the above factors influences the cost of a GPS receiver, so if you can decide what you need in a receiver, you can easily narrow your possibilities. A small, grayscale receiver with no or very limited mapping capabilities and other functions may cost about $100, while a top-of-the-line color receiver with topographic mapping, touchscreen display, and other advanced features may cost as much as $600. Lucky-
ly, there are some GPS receivers that offer a good mix of these extremes for around $300.

Keep all of these factors in mind as you figure out your needs and research different brands/models on the internet or at an outdoor

door retailer. Please visit our website at http://www.mountainconcepts.com to learn more about how to choose a GPS receiver and view some specific GPS receiv-
er recommendations. If you have experience with GPS receivers and would like to provide your personal recommendations, add your comments on this webpage for others to read. (You must be a registered user of the site to read and write comments.)

When Bill Myles' Harriman Trails guide-
book was first published in 1992, one description of trails did not suggest any loop hik-es. 10 Hikes in Harriman Park and More, written and published through iUniverse by Paul Huberman, attempts to address this deficiency. It contains descriptions of ten different trails in Harriman-Mountaintop State Parks, all of which are broken down into "short manageable stretches," along with hand-drawn maps for each of the first four hikes and many photos. The book also has a list of recommended overnights, "peaceful spots" and day-use areas for each hike.

The revised fifth edition of the Trail Con-
fERENCE'S WESTHUDSONTRAILS map set is now available! This edition includes updates to the trails in Storm King State Park, Black Rock Forest, and Schunnemunk Mountain State Park. New GPS data for many trails was collected by volunteers and used to improve the accuracy of the trail descriptions, especially in Black Rock Forest. The maps show the route of the Long Path through Schunnemunk Mountain State Park, as well as a 10-mile section of New York's Highlands Trail, including a recently-com-
pleted segment that extends down to the Hudson River from Storm King Moun-
tain. The section of Map 5113 that includes the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum Outdoor Discovery Center has been revised to show the new entrance to the museum and its updated trail system. Stay up-to-date with trail changes in the region. Refresh your map collection by ordering this new edition of West Hudson Trails. Or consider giving it as a gift to your trail-using friends and families.

Some of the hikes are attractive loops, but one includes a long roadwalk for the return trip, and some involve off-trail hik-
ing for part of route (generally not allowed). The descriptions are not always clear, in some instances, it’s impossible to figure out which way to go without con-
figuring a map.

Unfortunately, the text includes substanc-
tive and typographical errors. For example, reference is made (p. 9) to "Hillburn-
Torne-Sebago Trail" (it should be "Hillburn-Torne-Sebago") and the Averill-
Suerie Trail leads to Lake Skananata rather than the "Ramapo Dunderberg." Two of the three maps contain errors that are pointed out in the text, an awkward solution. The hikes are all rated, but it is difficult to understand why the hike beginning on p. 24, which includes a steep 1,000-foot climb of Bald Mountain, is rated "moderate," as this is one of the most strenuous hikes in the park. In sum, the author has identified some attractive hikes, but a novice hiker is likely to have some difficulty following the author's descriptions.

Daniel Chazin is editor of the New York and New Jersey Walk Books and other Trail Con-
fERENCE books. He writes the Trail Conference's "Hike of the Week column for The Record, in Bergen County.
A new loop hike of 3.1 miles in Norvin Green S.F. is possible, thanks to an extension of the Roomy Mine Trail to a new junction with the Highlands Trail. (See project story on page 4.)

The description here has been adapted by the Trail Walker editor from Daniel Chazin’s longer hike write-up on the Trail Conference website (www.njtc.org/trail_hike). View from near Wyanoike High Point.

The lake begins on the Highlands Trail (HT) from a parking area on West Brook Road west of the Wanaque Reservoir. Follow the HT’s trail blaze parallel to West Brook Road, turn left onto Townsend Road, then right into the woods. The trail climbs, passing the orange-blazed Roomy Mine Trail on the right (the return route), then continues for about half a mile over undulating and scenic terrain, passing many glacial erratic boulders and crossing a number of picturesque rock ledges. It then descends to a junction with the red-on-white-blazed Wyanoike Circular Trail and the yellow-on-white-blazed Mine Trail.

When the yellow and orange trails diverge, continue to follow the orange-blazed Wyanoike Trail, which turns right and descends, first on switchbacks and rock steps, then more gradually to its end on the Highlands Trail. (This trail section was recently constructed by a Girl Scout for her Gold Award; see page 4.) Turn left onto the Highlands Trail and retrace your steps to your car.

A new loop hike of 3.1 miles in Norvin Green S.F. is possible, thanks to an extension of the Roomy Mine Trail to a new junction with the Highlands Trail. (See project story on page 4.)

In the opinion of Central Jersey Trails Co-chairs Bob Jonas and Eustice Anderson, this new route “offers the hiker a little bit of everything as its makes its 3.1-mile circuit up and down a series of hills, passing two old mines, a few scenic viewpoints, a lovely forest, and gorgeous rock outcrops.” The description here has been adapted by the Trail Walker editor from Daniel Chazin’s longer hike write-up on the Trail Conference website (www.njtc.org/trail_hike). View from near Wyanoike High Point.

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