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The magazine of the  
North Country Trail Association

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# north star



**Register Now for Celebration in Fargo!**  
**Pokeweed: Edible or Poisonous?**  
**Is That a Tick?**  
**2600 Miles Per Shirt**







Tamera Dean

Eugene and Linus Branigan of JV 45° Chapter.

## About the Cover:

Mountain laurel blooming in northwest Pennsylvania along the Clarion Chapter's section of the North Country Trail. Photo by Devin Callihan.

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## North Star Staff

**Irene Szabo**, Mostly Volunteer Editor, (585) 658-4321 or treeweenie@aol.com

**Peggy Falk**, Graphic Design

**Lorana Jinkerson, Becky Heise, Joan Young,**

**Tom Gilbert, Christine Ellsworth, Amelia Rhodes**, Editorial Advisory Committee

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## Staff

**David Cowles**

*Director of Development*

dcowles@northcountrytrail.org

**Jill DeCator**

*Administrative Assistant/Membership Coordinator*

jdecator@northcountrytrail.org

**Matt Davis**

*Regional Trail Coordinator Minnesota/North Dakota*

mdavis@northcountrytrail.org

**Andrea Ketchmark**

*Director of Trail Development*

aketchmark@northcountrytrail.org

**Laura Lindstrom**

*Financial Administrator*

llindstrom@northcountrytrail.org

**Michelle Mangus**

*Administrative Assistant*

mmangus@northcountrytrail.org

**Bruce Matthews**

*Executive Director*

bmatthews@northcountrytrail.org

**Bill Menke**

*Regional Trail Coordinator Wisconsin*

bmenke@northcountrytrail.org

**Alison Myers**

*Youth Outreach Intern*

yor@northcountrytrail.org

**Amelia Rhodes**

*Marketing/Communications Coordinator*

arhodes@northcountrytrail.org

**Matt Rowbotham**

*GIS Coordinator*

mrowbotham@northcountrytrail.org

**Kenny Wawsczyk**

*Regional Trail Coordinator, Michigan*

kwawsczyk@northcountrytrail.org

## National Board of Directors

**Terms Expiring 2016**

**Jaron Nyhof**, *First VP, At Large Rep.*

(616) 786-3804 · jnyhof@wnj.com

**Brian Pavlek**, *At Large Rep.*

(763) 425-4195 · pavlek@comcast.net

**Larry Pio**, *Lower Michigan*

(269) 327-3589 · nalcoman1@aol.com

**Doug Thomas**, *Treasurer, At Large Rep.*

(612) 240-4202 · dthomas7000@gmail.com

**Jerry Trout**, *Minnesota*

(218) 831-3965 · jjtrout@tds.net

**Gaylord Yost**, *VP West, At Large Rep.*

(414) 354-8987 · gaylyost@aol.com

**Terms Expiring 2017**

**Ruth Dorrough**, *Secretary, New York*

(585) 354-4147 · rdorrough@hotmail.com

**Jerry Fennell**, *At Large Rep.*

(262) 787-0966 · jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com

**John Heiam**, *At Large Rep.*

(231) 938-9655 · johnheiam@charter.net

**Lorana Jinkerson**, *At Large Rep.*

(906) 226-6210 · ljinkers@nmu.edu

**Tim Mowbray**, *At Large Rep.*

(715) 378-4320 · tmowbray@earthlink.net

**Peter Nordgren**, *Wisconsin, and U. P. of Michigan*

(715) 292-3484 · pnordgre@yahoo.com

**Terms Expiring 2018**

**Mike Chapple**, *At Large Rep.*

(574) 274-0151 · mike@chapple.org

**Dennis Garrett**, *At Large Rep.*

(724) 827-2350 · dcgcag@gmail.com

**Tom Moberg**, *President, North Dakota*

(701) 271-6769 · tfmoberg@gmail.com

**Lynda Rummel**, *VP East, At Large Rep.*

(315) 536-9484 · ljrsoc@roadrunner.com

**Paul Spoelstra**, *At Large Rep.*

(616) 890-7518 · spoelymi@comcast.net

**Jeff Van Winkle**, *At Large Rep.*

(616) 540-2963 · rvanwink@gmail.com



# Trail Head

Tom Moberg  
President

This spring my volunteer duties as NCTA President, Trail Development Coordinator of the Dakota Prairie Chapter, and co-chair (with Mary Moberg) of the 2016 NCTA Celebration have engaged much of my time. Elsewhere in this issue of the *North Star*, you will find a big article about the Celebration. Since the Celebration has been my main focus lately, I'd like to share some information about the planning process.

Organizing the 2016 Celebration has been interesting. Having co-chairs who are married to each other has mostly been convenient, although I doubt if either of us would recommend that for future Celebration planners unless they have been married a long time. With the registration process underway, a significant part of the planning and organizational work has been done (we hope).

The 2016 Celebration in September will be the first "official" NCTA conference under the new guidelines approved by the Board in the spring of 2015. There will be some changes in the details, but many things will be the same as NCTA conferences in years past.

In the past, the NCTA conferences were expected to generate funds for the NCTA. That requirement is not part of the new Celebration guidelines. However, the guidelines do require careful limits on the amount of financial support

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**The notion that the Celebration is a regular and essential gathering of the NCTA "tribe" remains central to the nature of the event.**

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the NCTA provides and the amount of time the NCTA staff can be expected to provide for the event. We are trying to adhere to both those rules. Nevertheless, staff assistance with publicity, web support, fund raising, registration planning, and other areas has been extremely helpful.

When we started planning the Celebration, I had a distinct reluctance to get involved in raising funds for it. But I have been pleasantly surprised to find out how easy it has been. People and organizations have responded to our vision of providing recreational opportunities for our community, promoting health, and engaging people of all ages. So far, five generous donors have given \$9,500 to support the Celebration. Those donations will allow us to keep registration fees low while still providing a high-quality event with a range of nice amenities for attendees.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the Celebration planning has been the enthusiasm and cooperation among the members of the Dakota Prairie, the Sheyenne River Valley, and the Laurentian Lakes Chapters. It feels like the planning work is really amplifying our sense of shared mission across three Chapters and several hundred miles of the NCNST. Whatever else may result from the Celebration, I think this collaborative organizational endeavor has been valuable and significant.

Other newsworthy activities will have to wait for another time. For now, I would again like to invite you to attend the 2016 Celebration. Please join us in North Dakota and Minnesota for more wonderful experiences along the great North Country National Scenic Trail. ✱

Tom Moberg





# Matthews' Meanders

Bruce Matthews  
Executive Director

Here among the staff in the trenches at NCTA Headquarters it's often easy to get buried in our jobs. There are the daily details involved with keeping the "wheels on the NCTA bus." Sometimes it's brush fires—an unexpected request from a Congressman, an agency relationship heading south, a hiker "discovering" an impromptu shooting range near the Trail. Whether we're working on membership, writing grants, negotiating with state or local agencies, supporting NCTA, Partnership for the National Trails System or other committee work, entering GIS data, meeting with the Park Service, calling legislators, planning trainings, or telling the Red Plaid Nation story on social media, it's way too easy to get hunkered down and lose sight of why we do what we do.

We know why, of course. On one level we help enable the building, maintaining, protecting and telling the story of the North Country National Scenic Trail. It's the lofty goal we cite when asked by outsiders about our jobs. But the REAL reason we do what we do, and why we keep doing it, is because of you, our volunteers who serve so faithfully and tirelessly day in and out, doing the REAL work of the NCTA. We just don't get to see that many of you here at HQ. It helps to be reminded!

That is why it was so delightful to see many of you when Linda and I dropped by the Quiet Waters Symposium at Michigan State in early March.

It was literally a deep breath of fresh air (notwithstanding the odor from the rabbit show sharing the Livestock Pavilion)

to walk down a row of exhibits into an entire section of the show devoted to the North Country Trail. Three NCTA Chapters (Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore, Chief Noonday and Jordan Valley 45°) had exhibit space next to and across from each other, so attendees got to be surrounded by the Red Plaid Nation, its people, volunteers in NCTA shirts, red plaid Kromers, photo displays and banners, hiking and backpacking paraphernalia, and even song! Chief Noonday was playing our "Trail in Low Places" video on a loop, though by the time we arrived they'd gotten mighty tired of the repetition and the volume was pretty low! Go here to see it for yourself (<https://vimeo.com/106299493>), although I doubt our Noonday volunteers want to hear it again anytime soon.

JV45° Chapter brought a genuine Trail Register box (featured elsewhere in this issue), which offered a nice touch as show attendees mingled and asked about the trail. We got to see HSS members Tom Walker, Bob McNamara and Bill Courtois offering a wonderful program to an audience of 40 attentive participants, detailing in photos and narrative their Chapter's experience building five miles of NCT last year, routing the Tahqua Trail off road along the Tahquamenon River to its mouth in Lake Superior. Their enthusiasm was evident and sparked a number of questions about how the audience could get involved. Great stuff!

All across the North Country Trail this winter our NCTA Chapters and volunteers have been doing the same things, doing outreach to the public, sharing their stories and enthusiasm and inviting others to join in. At Canoeopia, community expos, college activity fairs and a host of other venues, you've been out there telling our story and inviting others to share.

We, your NCTA staff, get to serve you. What a privilege. ✨



## SAVE THIS DATE!

### Extended Outing September 18 - 23, 2016

*Following the NCTA Celebration in Fargo, North Dakota*

Hike the NCT in and around Minnesota's Itasca State Park, home of the Headwaters of the Mississippi. Lodging and meals will be centered from Douglas Lodge in the heart of the Park. Come and help celebrate Itasca State Park's 125th birthday. It is the 2nd oldest state park in the USA.

The area's topography is gently undulating and relatively easy hiking for the average hiker, young and old. We will hike with only daypacks daily, returning to the lodge each evening.

Points of interest in the area include hiking on the watershed between the Mississippi and Red Rivers. Precipitation on the west side of the NCT flows into Hudson Bay (via the Red River) and on the east into the Gulf of Mexico (by way of the Mississippi River). The NCT also passes through mature mixed deciduous and northern

conifer forest. It passes by numerous glacial lakes that dot the landscape, one of them a crystal clear designated trout fishery.

Sept. 18 and 23 are travel days, Sept. 19, 20, 21 and 22 are hiking days in and around Itasca State Park on the NCNST.

Also you can celebrate the National Park Service Centennial and grab a few miles toward your NCT 100 with some like-minded people. NCTA trips are known for the camaraderie and lasting friendships that develop during hiking experiences.

Contact Bruce Johnson, [brucej@arvig.net](mailto:brucej@arvig.net), (218) 255-1924. <https://northcountrytrail.org/get-involved/special-events/extended-outings/>





Jerry Fennell

## After All, What's Important? By Jerry Fennell

I have a mission before me: three days of fall hiking in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan followed by an epic meal at Henry's. When I plan a hike I think about scenery and food. The food I dwell upon is not what I carry on the trail but the meal I will devour at trail's end. I am perfectly happy surviving on peanut butter and ramen noodles for days on end while hiking but when I head home I make a detailed plan for an epic meal. NCT through-hiker Luke Jordan, affectionately known by his trail name, Strider, wrote in his 2013 trail journal about Henry's Never Inn in Rockland, Michigan. "Here I met Sally, Henry's wife. She takes my order: ½ pound ground round burger with fries, a plate of garlic bread, a soda and a milkshake, all homemade. Soon my order arrives and I am in heaven as I bite into the best burger I have ever had in my life."

For a scenery-rich trail near Henry's my research then turned up this quote from author Ron Strickland, in [The North Country Trail](#), where he described a 14-mile segment of the NCT near Rockland: "This hike is one of the most varied, spectacular, and historically interesting hikes on the entire NCT." I added another 10 miles to Ron's 14-mile route by beginning at an NCT trailhead on US Highway 45 just 5 miles north of Bruce Crossings. With my plan set, I began work on the minor details for a trouble free solo hike.

The NCT segments I hiked are located southeast of the Michigan's Porcupine Mountains in the western Upper Peninsula. Detailed NCT maps for this area can be downloaded from the website of the Peter Wolfe Chapter ([www.northcountrytrail.org/pwcf/](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/pwcf/)) or ordered online at the NCTA Trailshop (<https://northcountrytrail.org/product-category/maps-guides/>). If you plan a spring hike, check on stream conditions which can run high with late snow melt and spring rains. A very detailed description of the 14-mile segment east

of Old Victoria can also be found beginning at page 72 of Strickland's guide book, [The North Country Trail](#).

Here are a few suggestions for a successful and trouble free hike. Cell towers are scattered in the UP of Michigan, so make sure someone knows your route and schedule. Yes, there are black bears in the area. If you prefer to keep them out of your camp, hang your food bag 8-10 feet above ground. If you hike May to July, you will need some bug spray and a head net to keep the bugs from driving you crazy. I encountered few in early October. Finally, and most importantly, at the Norwich Mine area, beginning approximately a mile east of Norwich Road, the ridges you will traverse are riddled with abandoned copper mine tunnels and adits (horizontal mine entrances). The Ottawa National Forest has sealed up the vertical shafts. While wandering around these ridges do not enter any mines, pits or dangerous, disguised cavities.

My hike began on a beautiful early October Friday at the Ottawa National Forest parking area on US Highway 45, approximately 5 miles north of Bruce Crossing. There was excellent signage for the westbound NCT. My hiking plan was to leave my car there (which I found undisturbed three days later) and, beginning at noon, hike west for approximately 25 miles, arriving by noon on Sunday at Norwich Road. I would then hitch-hike back to my car, a distance of 35 miles because of the absence of east-west roads crossing the Ontonagon River. From there it would be 11 miles further north on US Highway 45 to Rockland for Henry's Sunday buffet ending at 2:00 PM. The timing was a bit tricky because I was not sure how much traffic there would be on Norwich Road and if anyone would pick up an old guy with a backpack and a walking stick. And of course if I was late I would starve to death, or so I imagined.

*...Continued on page 6*

## After All, What's Important?...*Continued from page 5*

The first seven miles were a mostly level walk in the woods. The glorious fall colors were subdued by the shadowy density of hardwood trees. On the plus side was the well-maintained trail with its abundant blazes, all to the credit of the volunteers from the Peter Wolfe Chapter. I encountered no other hikers. Not surprisingly I found, near a creek bed, very clear tracks of a large wolf. I did easily cross numerous creeks throughout the hike so if I had needed to replenish my water supply they would have been many a good source.

At the seven-mile mark I came to the west branch of the Ontonagon River. Here, less than a mile below the dam that forms a large reservoir, the river bed is over 100 yards wide, but at this time of year, I was able to navigate around several foot-deep pools. I did have to cross over a large field of football size and larger boulders. The Ontonagon River cannot be forded in the spring and early summer, necessitating an 11-mile road walk detour north on US 45 and west on Victoria Dam Road. Check ahead for current status with NCTA Peter Wolfe Chapter. From the Ontonagon it was approximately a mile to the village of Old Victoria and the charm of the Old Victoria Restoration Site. I arrived too late for a guided tour of the restored rustic homes of the early settlers. The history of this area is heavy with sadness. During the 1899 to 1921 copper boom 1 in every 118 miners died in work-related accidents each year. If you are of Irish descent a must-do side trip is the Irish Cemetery on the south end of Rockland.

When I tell friends about my multiday hikes the most repeated comment is, "Oh, you have to camp," to which I always reply, "No, I get to camp." There are few greater joys than spending a night at one of the far too few shelters on the NCT. One of the best is less than a hundred yards from the Old Victoria Restoration Site. It was built by Peter Wolfe Chapter volunteers on a hillside, with the open side wisely facing south. There are two bunk beds under a solid roof, and bug tight screens, all of which bring peace and comfort after a day of hiking. Once settled into my sleeping bag, atop a quality 2-inch pad, I slept like a well-worked hunting dog.

Before climbing into my sleeping bag though, I had to confront a serious problem caused by poor planning on my part. A mile back, all downhill, at the river crossing, I did not replenish my water supply, which I then depleted preparing a dinner meal of ramen noodles (of course) and hot tea. I had assumed, because I was tired and a bit lazy, that there would be a source for water in Old Victoria. Wrong. I consulted the NCT map notes and learned that approximately a quarter mile south from the shelter on Old Victoria Road there was a spring. Which side of the road and how close was not included. Camel back and flashlight in hand I set out to find it. On my first try I passed blindly by it, but upon my return I proceeded slowly. Miracle of miracles, I heard the sweet sound of water striking stones some 30 feet to my right. There I found a half inch white pvc pipe protruding from a hillside from which flowed cold delicious safe water. My morning coffee was now secure and I could not have been happier. It is these unexpected events that make hiking and camping so wonderful.

Saturday was everything author Strickland promised. Fortified with coffee and oatmeal I set off to explore over the next day and a half the 14 miles of remaining trail. I found numerous historic

settlements and mining sites. I spent hours meandering along the Trap Hills bluffs overlooking the Ontonagon River Valley. The entire area was ablaze with peak-week fall colors. Over a period of 3 to 4 hours I encountered no fewer than five spectacular overlooks. The photo with this story is looking southwest over the valley of the Ontonagon River. To the west are the highest summits of the Trap Hills. Further to the north the hills of Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park, Michigan's largest state park, came into view. I covered roughly 10 miles on Saturday, saving the last four miles for the hike out on Sunday. I located a camping area near a good water source and spent a restful night.

I awoke Sunday around 7:30 A.M., figuring I had plenty of time to get to the trailhead on Norwich Road. Then I remembered that Rockland was in the Eastern Time Zone. Yikes, I just lost an hour! I scrambled to break camp and head west. To my consternation I discovered that the last four miles were the most challenging of the entire hike with numerous climbs and descents. While I passed through a forest of blazing sugar maples, red maples, and yellow birch I hardly looked about. My mind was scenery overloaded from the previous day, and I could only think about Henry's buffet. Just after noon I finally arrived at the trailhead and stuck out my thumb and prayed for a passing vehicle. For 20 plus minutes not a car passed. Then from the north appeared a pick-up driven by a "trail angel." Actually, there were three very old male trail angels who were wandering the back roads of the UP reminiscing about the places they had, in their youth, hunted and fished. They gladly hauled me all the way back to my car, because, guess what, they too were headed to Henry's! I have to add that it was no real surprise to me that the first vehicle would stop. That's because I was in the UP, a very special place.

I was back at my car by 1:00 P.M. and on my way to Henry's. Finding Henry's in Rockland is easy. It and a small general store, owned by Sally and Henry Gagnon's daughter Tina, are the only businesses there. Except for a five-year period in the 70s Henry's bar has been in the continuous ownership of the descendants of Minnie Gagnon and her husband Simon Bahan, who opened it in 1898. It is a quintessential Yooper (UP) bar with its elongated room and large ornate back bar, which has not been moved or changed since 1898. The back bar was originally provided by Pabst Blue Ribbon Brewing and was manufactured by Brunswick Colander Co. The stamped metal walls and ceiling are also all originals. You feel like you are eating in a museum.

I grabbed two plates for the buffet. My three trail angels had saved a spot for me at their table. The buffet closed at 2:00 but I kept eating till almost 3. Strider was spot on about the home cooking. One hint: I have since returned for Henry's Friday night all you can eat fish buffet for which I would hike 100 miles, which of course I plan to do in 2016.

And if you have any suggestions for an end of the trail eating destination near the NCT, please drop me a line at [jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com](mailto:jeroldvfennell@hotmail.com). Happy trails to you until we meet again. ✨

Jerry Fennell, trail name Cranberry Jerry, is a member of the NCTA Board of Directors.



# Meet Alison Myers, Hike 100 Challenge Youth Outreach Intern



Chris Myers

Raised in the back woods of west Michigan, Alison Myers grew up with a love for plants, animals, and landscapes. She was a member of her local Girl Scout troop while in elementary school, and later attended many years of Boy Scout meetings and outings with her younger brother and parents. Family vacations to National Parks

across the country solidified her love for nature conservation. The summer after graduating high school in 1999, she volunteered with the Student Conservation Association doing trail maintenance on the Sal Hollow Trail at Mammoth Cave National Park.

Attending Montcalm Community College and working for local retailers gave her friendships that led her to the local folk music scene. Alison currently plays in the traditional Celtic band, Peat in the Creel, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She also works for The Piano Cottage of Grand Rapids as the Receptionist and New Student Coordinator.

Alison is leading the effort to round up Boy and Girl Scout troops in all seven North Country Trail states to participate in the Hike 100 Challenge in 2016 that celebrates the National Park Service Centennial Anniversary. Scouts can participate individually, with their families, or with their troops, and coordinate with their own efforts to earn badges, or just for fun.

"I grew up playing in the woods at our house and being an observer of nature, but being a Girl Scout (and then later watching my younger brother in Boy Scouts) showed me how I could appreciate the outdoors more deeply. As human beings it is our duty to be stewards of the Earth."

## Introducing the Hike 100 Challenge for Scouts

The Hike 100 Challenge is open to everyone, but Scouts will be awarded an exclusive Scout Ranger patch from the National Park Service just for participation. Anyone (not just Scouts) who completes the Hike 100 Challenge will be given the NCTA 100 Miler patch and certificate. The effort is in hopes of bringing more awareness of the Trail to Scouts, to show there are opportunities to work with the National Park Service and NCTA along the North Country National Scenic Trail, as well as to enjoy the vast beauty of this exquisite national treasure.

Volunteering enriches young people's lives by allowing them to experience the value of what our natural resources have to offer. It helps them to develop a connection to the earth, learn about the animals, plants, history, buildings, and artifacts. It also shows them that there is a wealth and incredible variety

of job opportunities beyond the private sector. And it helps them to "pay it forward" while giving something back, to learn that service is the rent you pay for the space you occupy on this planet.

The National Parks Scout Ranger Program is regularly available in all of our country's National Parks. Boy and Girl Scouts can earn certificates and patches by participating in educational programs and volunteer service projects. "This program is designed to increase Scout visitation to National Park units, promote a better understanding of the National Park Service (NPS) mission among Scouts and their families, educate young people about their responsibility to conserve our natural and cultural resources, encourage volunteer service and promote good citizenship." Resource Stewardship Scout Ranger – Hopewell Culture National Historic Park, U.S. National Park Service" n.p. March 22, 2016. <<http://www.nps.gov/hocu/learn/kidsyouth/resource-stewardship-scout-ranger.htm>>

Alison is connecting Scouting groups with their local North Country Trail Chapters, Affiliates, and Partners so that Scouts can choose to participate in the many scheduled activities along the trail. They offer educational workshops, group hikes, trail restoration projects, historical demonstrations, and many other events for communities to partake in year round.\*



Lois Loftham

The NCTA 100 mile patch on the left, and the special Boy Scout patch on the right. We await the Girl Scout design.

# The Many Faces of NGTA – Irene Szabo

## Treeweenie: Member/Volunteer/Editor Extraordinaire



Irene at the Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, where, she says, “I sometimes volunteer, and am slowly learning to be an engineer. Here I am in the cab of one of our operating diesels, #1654, with which we give visitors rides in two trailing cabooses.”

By Christine Ellsworth

**H**ere you are, holding the latest issue of the *North Star* magazine in your hands, or viewing it on your phone or laptop or tablet, scanning the photos and catching up on Association news.

Did you ever wonder who puts this magazine together? Who takes the time to read through and judiciously edit all the member submissions? Who has been doing this since about Volume 26? It may be you don't read the masthead of the *North Star*, but Irene Szabo has been editing it for nine years.

Irene Szabo, aka Treeweenie. She loves trees, she says, but also nature, birds, and railroads.

Irene was born in Philadelphia and was raised in many places because she was, she says, “an Army brat.” She remembers being at White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico, where she recalls experiments with captured Nazi rockets post-war, including some that exploded in the night. She attended second grade at West Point, but spent most of her childhood in south Jersey.

Her history with the Trail starts, as most stories about the NCTA do, with love.

“You’ve really gotta go back to where I hooked up with the Finger Lakes Trail, mid ’80s”, Irene says. “I was staying for the weekend with a bunch of friends at a ski resort. Few of us skied so I took a walk in the neighborhood and saw a plastic disk on a tree that changed my life: Finger Lakes Trail. I’d never heard of it. But I fell in love with it once I found out it crossed upstate New York.”

She started hiking and that brought back to mind the many happy summers she’d spent at camp as a teen, canoeing and hiking. There, 20 years later, it felt like she’d come back full circle. It felt right; it felt good. She kept at it.

It wasn’t long before the late Howard Beye (trail director of the FLT for many years) asked her if she’d be willing to adopt a section of the Trail. She says she was honored! And Irene loved the Trail and the work so well that, at one point, she cared for 22 miles in different areas. She says she acquired all the bits and stretches by raising her hand when openings came up, something good volunteers are known for doing. Like many of us, Irene had a full-time job she worked, as well, and wonders how she managed it all. She even bought her own mower to get all the work done.

On top of trailwork, Irene is an avid hiker and has been for decades. She was the 30th person to complete the entire Finger Lakes Trail. “It took me nine years,” Irene says with a chuckle. “I walked all across the state with our early crude maps (and often a favorite canine companion) and survived.” She’s hiked enough to list some of her favorite experiences, too: spending New Year’s of Y2K in a snow fort on the Trail in northern Michigan with Joan Young is high on her list.

But on top of hiking and trailwork, Irene also became President of the FLT in the early ’90s, and started contributing articles to the FLT magazine. Through all this involvement, Irene became aware of the North Country Trail and joined the NCTA. Of course, as a member she received the *North Star* and, somewhere around 2005, she says she



raised her hand again, this time to offer to proofread the *North Star*.

A couple of years later, the editor at the time left the position vacant for a personal move, and Irene moved into it naturally. In 2007, the magazine was usually 24 to 32 pages. "Now, we once in a while have 48 pages. It's growing in size and is now printed on glossy paper."

The magazine continues to evolve, like all good things. Irene hopes that it continues to be "our primary method of sharing messages with everybody. Even though," she says of her notorious distaste for overreliance on computers, "I know there are people who would rather read on a computer screen than on paper. I myself couldn't stand not having previous issues sitting here in the pile at my left elbow, on PAPER!"

So whether you're reading the paper or pixel version of this issue of *North Star*, now you know who's been providing that service for almost 10 years. Although she says that English grammar drives her crazy, Irene also says she loves the work. And that love shows on every page of every issue, doesn't it? ✱



Gin Shear

**"I may be the only trail caretaker who bought her own mower long before we started getting DR mowers. I just had too much mowing to do, so bought my own around 1990. It's still running." And so is Irene! {but more slowly, and across way fewer miles.)**

## How A North Star Is Born

The process for creating the magazine has evolved a great deal since 2007 when editing this baby was abandoned in my volunteer lap. Today, an era of much greater oversight is in place, so there is an advisory committee, chaired by Lorana Jinkerson, which discusses article ideas, proposes trends, and looks over any issue just produced. Also, Bruce Matthews and Amelia Rhodes preview at least the text of each article before it goes to Peggy Falk, queen of layout and graphic design. When I send the approved text to Peggy, I add pictures and captions.

But before these stages, I have sifted through innumerable submissions, some of them arriving in many separate pieces, before I can put together an article that holds its theme and unites all those pieces. Of course, 90% of you name your documents "*North Star* Something..." which would create for me an enormous heap of articles in one folder, all of them looking the same, so I rename every one of them so that I can find them later.

Then I make a list on good old PAPER, of each article, using the current name in my folder, and listing the pictures I'll use by THEIR folder names, somehow keeping track of photographer names, too. A pen check means I've edited it, a blue marker check says I've sent the text to Bruce and Amelia, and then a green check says it all, text and pictures, went to Peggy. Then it's HER turn to take all these articles in her own heap and put them onto pages in a logical and attractive order. Peggy is very talented with Photoshop, too; several times now we have needed to remove a person from a picture for various reasons, and nobody is ever the wiser. Background leaves magically fill in that sudden blank spot, but oh, so seamlessly!

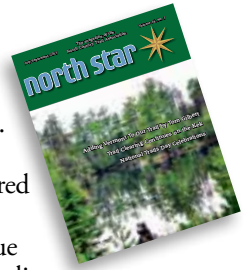
Somehow Peggy creates a table of contents and puts everything on the pages over the space of a couple weeks, during which the draft versions go back and forth several times between us, then finally it all goes back to HQ for final approval.

Rule: no matter how perfect we think we've made it, Bruce always finds some dopey little errors that crept through. After near perfection has been achieved, Peggy sends it to the printer, where another couple weeks pass before the post office has their chance to slow things down. Now you know why the magazine doesn't arrive until about six weeks after deadline!

Since the advent of digital photography, a lot more people take pictures, and some think of sending them in to the magazine. However, many of those people don't know what resolution they are using for their pictures, and are nearly reduced to tears when I ask them if they took that picture at a higher resolution. A what? Learn at least that about your camera and pictures, so you don't have to lose a potential cover because you thought you were saving money by taking "little" pictures.

Another change since 2007 is that we now receive many more articles from members, which is a welcome trend. Please keep it up, and don't forget that it's usually a struggle to find a front cover for each issue, so send me your pretty pictures...and in very high resolution, over 3000 pixels!

Irene Szabo, editor  
treeweenie@aol.com  
(585) 658-4321





# Get to Know Your National Forests

By Eric Sandeno, Region 9 Wilderness, Wild & Scenic River, National Historic and Scenic Trails Program Manager

In all, just over 680 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail traverse National Forest System Lands. This article continues our journey from east to west to introduce you to the National Forests and Grasslands along the Trail's route.



The Wayne National Forest is located in the hills of southeastern Ohio, a patchwork ownership that covers over a quarter million acres of Appalachian foothills. The Forest is divided into three units managed out of two Ranger District offices located in Nelsonville and Ironton, with a field office in Marietta.

The Forest started when the Ohio State legislature approved a bill in 1934, authorizing the U.S. Government to acquire land for the purpose of creating a national forest. Land acquisition was steady between 1935 and 1942, but was suspended during World War II.

After the war, land acquisition resumed and the Forest has steadily grown. In 1951, when a total of 97,000 acres had been acquired, it officially became a National Forest. The first priorities of the Forest Service were to stabilize erosion, rehabilitate land damaged by mining, and control wildfires. The Wayne National Forest is within a few hours' drive of several metropolitan areas such as Columbus, Akron, Cleveland, Dayton, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Pittsburgh. Yet it retains an air of nostalgia, with covered bridges, rock shelters, springs and rugged hills covered with hardwood and pine. Visitors to the Wayne are welcome to camp, hike, hunt, and fish.

Andrew Bashaw, Executive Director of Ohio's Buckeye Trail Association, shares these observations:

*Ohio may not be synonymous with "wilderness" but the North Country Trail experience within the Wayne offers a surprising feeling of solitude. The rugged hills, valleys and sandstone outcropping of the Allegheny Plateau coupled with the Central Appalachian hardwood forest often provide the connection with southern ecology and culture. The Trail puts hikers in touch with the history of the region including the first settlement in the Northwest Territory around Marietta on the Ohio River. The Trail through the landscape of the Athens Unit of the Wayne National Forest reveals the remnants of the boom and bust coal mining era in a region known as Little Cities of Black Diamonds.*

Sally Sugar

## Welcome to the Wayne National Forest

The Forest features over 300 miles of trails for hiking, all-terrain vehicle riding, mountain biking, or horseback riding in season. The Buckeye Trail, Ohio's State Trail, winds over 1400 miles through 48 counties around Ohio and where it is located on the Wayne National Forest, it is co-located with the North Country National Scenic Trail.

The North Country National Scenic Trail crosses the Athens and Marietta Units of the Athens Ranger District. The segment on the Athens Unit is approximately 20 miles in length and the segment on the Marietta unit is about 41 miles. The trail section is laid out over terrain which is surprisingly rugged and includes several special features, such as a natural bridge, a large rock shelter, covered bridges, and an historic sandstone house.

The Forest relies heavily on partners and volunteers with the Buckeye Trail Association and the River Valley Mountain Bike Association to provide critical maintenance along the Trail. The Wayne National Forest is currently working with partners to analyze potential reroutes along the Buckeye Trail/ North Country National Scenic Trail to address safety and trail sustainability.



Left: A hiker in the Wayne National Forest.



Andrew Bashaw, speaking from the Buckeye Trail headquarters amidst the Wayne National Forest, says,

*Our trails through the Wayne really show how nature meets history. One hundred years ago these hills were stripped bare and degraded by mining, but now the forest and enjoyment of it have regenerated. We're excited to be working with our partners at the Wayne on significant projects that will dramatically improve the trail experience and increase the relevancy of both the Trail and the Forest in the very near future!*

John Portenger



## Welcome to the Huron-Manistee National Forests



The Huron-Manistee National Forests are located in lower Michigan and comprise almost a million acres of public lands extending across the northern Lower Peninsula. The Huron-Manistee National Forests provide recreation opportunities for visitors, habitat for

fish and wildlife, and resources for local industry.

The history of the two Forests begins long before the creation of either. The land that is now Michigan was once an unbroken forest. After European settlement of the area, logging and farming became the main occupations. The lands were heavily logged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Forest Service established the Huron National Forest in 1909, comprised of 437,287 acres spreading 70 miles east to west and 30 miles north to south. The Manistee National Forest was established in 1938 and is 538,756 acres that spreads 40 miles east to west and 70 miles north to south. In 1945, the Huron National Forest and Manistee National Forest were joined for administrative purposes. Working hand in hand with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other partners, the Forest Service has changed the lands into healthy forests again.

The 128.8-mile portion of the North Country National Scenic Trail which goes through the Manistee portion of the National Forests has 15 spur trails to other hiking and interpretive trails, including the popular Manistee River Trail, which when combined with the North Country Trail creates a 20 mile loop around the Manistee River.

The Western Michigan and Spirit of the Woods Chapters of the NCTA have been invaluable partners providing countless hours of work to care for the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Beth Keloneva, WMI Chapter president, tells us about their portion:

*The Western Michigan Chapter of the North Country Trail includes two counties, Kent and Newaygo County. We are blessed in Newaygo County to have a large portion of the NCT in the Manistee National Forest. The Manistee here includes deciduous trees, a variety of pines and cedars, many lakes, streams and rivers, and a wonderful variety of woodland creatures and plants. We*

**The Trail is often aligned with the Manistee River within that national forest.**

*even have a prairie where you can see prickly pear cactus, lupine flowers and the Karner Blue Butterfly. Northern Newaygo County also showcases the Loda Lake National Wildflower Sanctuary under the auspices of the Forest Service. The rivers and streams in the Manistee are phenomenal. In particular, near Newaygo, the Muskegon River is one of the longest and cleanest rivers in Michigan.*

*The Chapter has a great working relationship with the U.S. Forest Service Office in Baldwin. Our volunteer Trail Managers meet once a year with them to discuss the NCT and share plans and goals for the year. For example the USFS and the Chapter are working together to purchase and install interpretive panels at ten different locations in the Manistee! The USFS is always willing to help us out with larger projects such as board walks and bridge building where necessary. The Trail would not be the same without the Manistee National Forest and the work of the Forest Service.*

Loren Bach, Spirit of the Woods Chapter President, shares a description of their segment:

*Our 80 miles of the North Country Trail are largely in the Manistee National Forest. One area has interesting flora: Joan Young hikes extensively at the south end of our Chapter and notes that there is an area that has 11 species of ferns. This area is found at Upper Branch Bridge trailhead on the NCT Map MI-04. Joan has a website where she describes this area, [www.getoffthecouch.info/lake/upperbranch.htm](http://www.getoffthecouch.info/lake/upperbranch.htm)*

*Another loop hike is the Manistee River Trail/North Country Trail loop at the north end of our Chapter near the Hodenpyle Dam (Map MI-05). This area is hilly and there are many overlooks above the Manistee River as well as a suspension walking bridge built by Consumer's Power Company. More information may be found on our local website [www.northcountrytrail.org/spw](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/spw) as well as links to the Forest Service information on campsites on the Manistee River Trail side. The North Country Trail Association store also has a map for sale (SE-MRL). This loop hike is also described in Strickland's book. Unfortunately the Manistee River Trail side has no official volunteer group involved with upkeep and it is being loved to death. High numbers of hikers are eroding this sandy trail.*

In the next publication, we will continue our western trip along the North Country National Scenic Trail and introduce you to the other national forests in Michigan, the Hiawatha and Ottawa. ✨



Joan Young

Our author met up with James "Attrition" Lunning in Western Michigan, to talk about his current journey.

## 2,600 Miles Per Shirt

By Joan Young

That's an average. Current NCNST thru-hiker James Lunning, trail name "Attrition," was quick to point out that he got only 2200 miles from the first shirt. But his current raggedy red tee is now at about 3000 miles. He thinks he'll get a new one soon. Or not. The shirts are doing better than the boots. James picked up his fourth pair at his aunt's home in Fife Lake, Michigan, in early March of this year.

Despite these impressive statistics, the 23-year-old machinist from Minneapolis, Minnesota, isn't even halfway into his planned walk. He began (February 2015), as so many hikers do, at Springer Mountain, Georgia. That's the southern terminus of the famed Appalachian Trail. Before he reached the northern terminus at Mt. Katahdin in Maine, he'd caught the true wanderlust fever. Where the AT comes closest to the Atlantic, in Connecticut, he just took a little hundred-mile detour to see the ocean. On foot, of course.

At the Midwest Mountaineering Expo in Minneapolis, before he began this adventure, James had met Luke "Strider" Jordan, North Country Trail end-to-end. Luke said, "Why not hike the NCT while you're out there." So "Attrition" thought, "Okay."

He reached Maine, but needed to return to where the NCT leaves the AT at Maine Junction, confusingly located in Vermont. But he didn't want to backtrack; that would be boring. Instead, he marched across the tops of New Hampshire and Vermont to reach the Long Trail. Following that southward, he arrived at Maine Junction, the triple point where the Long Trail intersects the Appalachian Trail and is the proposed eastern terminus of the NCNST. Then he turned west.

I met up with him as he passed through west Michigan, about halfway along the North Country Trail. His plan is to finish the NCT, hike across the rest of North Dakota and then Montana, to reach eventually the Pacific Northwest Trail. James wants to connect to the Pacific Ocean. Then he thinks he'll go south on

the Pacific Crest Trail. What might stop him? The clue is in his trail name. His is a hike of attrition; he'll walk until his money runs out. I suspect, however, he's already got an incurable case of the trail bug. As some other multiple-trail hikers have, my guess is he'll find a way to keep supporting his addiction. (Trail folks will recognize this disease in Andy Skurka and Jennifer Pharr Davis.)

He confesses that being on the trail "feels more like real life." You spend your time doing "exactly what you need to be doing," with the focus on food, water, shelter, staying warm or cool. "Lots of interesting things happen, punctuated with time."

He added that trail life features "weird stuff." In explanation, he said he and two friends were semi-kidnapped by an older man in Tennessee. They were hitching a ride to return to the trail from town. The driver instead took them on a three-hour road trip to the Smokey Mountains and then called the police because he was afraid the hitchhikers might hurt him. "I'm not easily scared," he said; "It was an adventure."

How does his family feel about his recent lifestyle? They're supportive. "I'm the youngest of five," James said. His siblings have all embarked on successful careers requiring plenty of higher education. He joked, "They've satisfied my parents' wishes, so I get a free pass."

Despite the ratty top shirt, he admits to being a gearhead. Most of his equipment is state-of-the-art. He thinks he might buy shirt number three soon. Maybe, but it hasn't reached high-priority status. "Nothing is stopping me except inertia."

I wanted to stay and talk with him for hours. But I was keeping him from dinner, a serious crime against someone who has spent a full day on a cold trail. Hike on, James "Attrition!" ✨



Amelia Rhodes

Attrition stopped briefly for a visit at the Lowell office.





Dove Day

Jordan Valley 45° sign notes that you are crossing earth's 45th parallel, so you won't miss the moment! Stormy Kromer hat courtesy of Bill Courtois.

### The North Country Trail's 45th Parallel

By Jordan Valley 45° Trail Coordinators  
John and Dove Day

The Jordan Valley 45° Chapter of the North Country Trail Association boasts some pretty special places... from the beautiful vistas at Landslide Overlook and Deadman's Hill, to the rushing waters of the Bear River Valley Recreation Area in Petoskey. The chapter cares for approximately 80 miles of trail in northern lower Michigan, and spans from Starvation Lake Road near Mancelona, to Kipp Road in Harbor Springs. It is a destination not to be overlooked. One coordinate in particular, and a must visit, is located along the Jordan River Pathway, near Alba, Michigan. The North Country Trail crosses the 45th parallel here, and it is the only spot along the entire NCT that does so. This is the reason the chapter is called Jordan Valley 45°. A sign that marks the location can't be missed, alongside the ever-growing rock cairn that begs for additions. A newly planted register box, installed on North Country National Scenic Trail Day in 2015, invites every hiker who passes to add his or her name and experience to the log book. It also encourages hikers to take a photo by the 45th parallel sign by resting their camera on the register box, and asks them to share their photo on the North Country Trail Jordan Valley 45° Facebook page.



Dove Day

The cairn at the 45th parallel.



Dove Day

New register box at the 45th parallel (planted on North Country National Scenic Trail Day, 2015)

The Jordan Valley 45° Chapter hopes that when you visit the area you will have a chance to hike some of the Jordan River Pathway. During your hike you will walk along the Jordan River, catch breathtaking views from Deadman's Hill and Landslide Overlook, and step across the 45th parallel. If you're interested in more than just a day hike, you can combine the NCT with the DNR section of trail on the east side of the Jordan River and hike a beautiful 18 mile loop, with backcountry camping opportunities at the Pinney Bridge Campground.

The 45th parallel is located just west of Alba and less than a 1/2 mile west of where the trail crosses Cascade Rd. For more information and for a map of the Jordan Valley Pathway visit our website at [www.northcountrytrail.org/j45/](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/j45/)

Don't forget to snap a picture of yourself or your group at the 45th parallel sign, and share it with us on the chapter's Facebook page. A photo album has been started with snapshots of those who have taken a moment to share their photos. To check out photos and to share yours, visit: [www.tinyurl.com/hlxy59w](http://www.tinyurl.com/hlxy59w)

Come visit and enjoy your hike in this beautiful area of North Country Trail! ✨

## THE JV45° REGISTER BOX

Story and Pictures by Duane Lawton

While walking a good portion of the NCT in Michigan, I saw a variety of trail “register boxes.” In many cases they were succumbing to the elements, or to the critters. This got me wondering how a more durable and multi-purpose register box would be designed, so two years ago I took a shot at it.

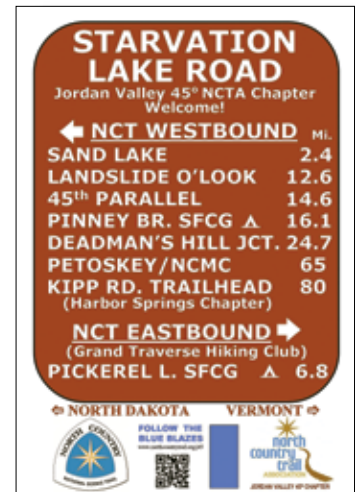
This design has an asphalt shingle roof that extends forward, and a swing-out desk that covers the rack for the logbook, pencils and brochures. The case is primarily cedar. On the front of the swing-out is a “hiker scale” distance sign. Last year we held a “work bee” and mass produced six of them.

We installed our prototype at “Deadman’s Hill Junction” below the iconic lookout in the Jordan Valley in early 2014. It has held up well so far. Since then we have installed five more, and intend at least two additional in 2016. That should pretty much cover our territory.

We select locations that have some significance, but are not parking lots. You have to walk a ways to reach them, but we try to make them reasonably accessible for our adopters who replace brochures and check the logbooks.

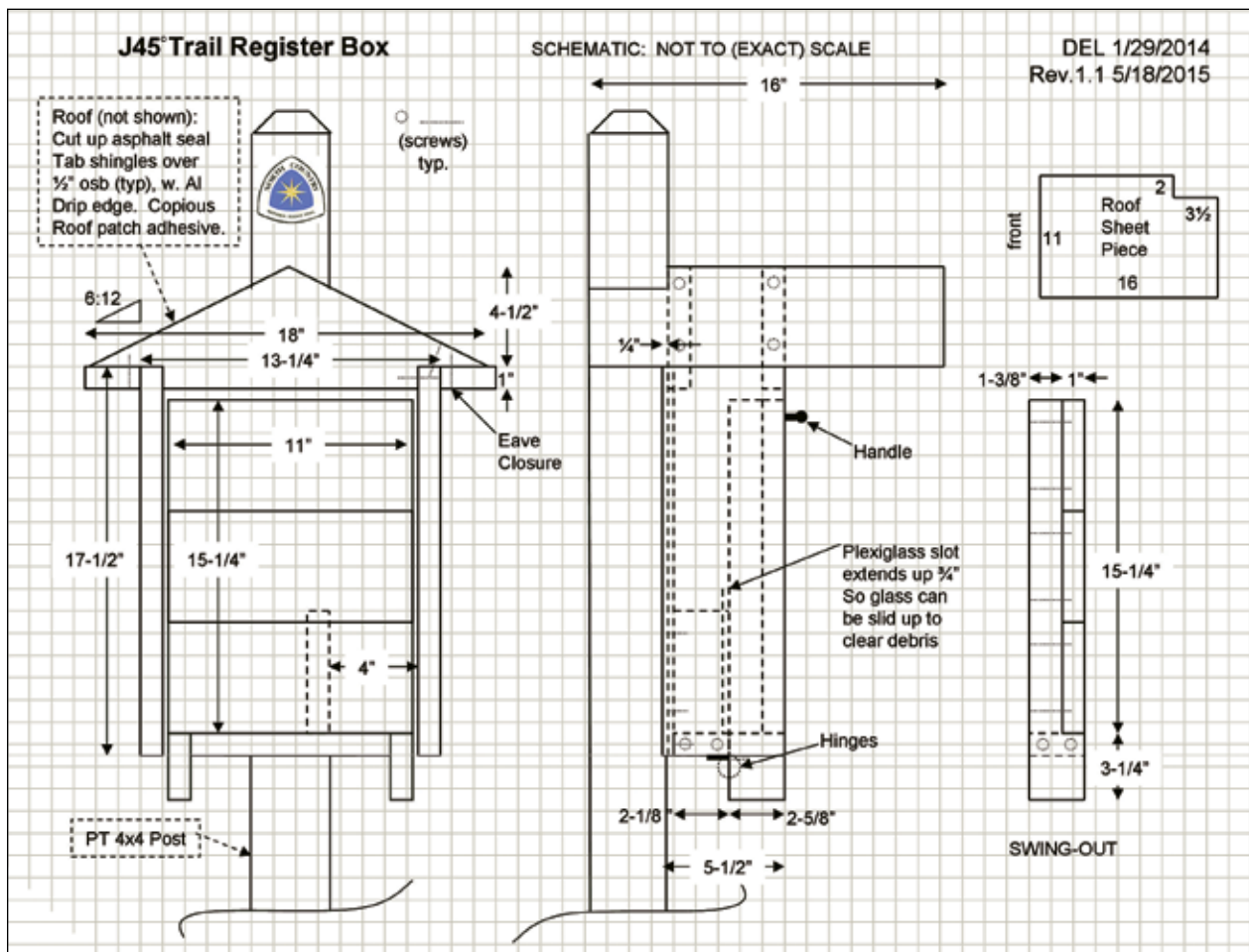


Luke “Strider” Jordan signing in to our new register last summer.



One of our new destination signs for the front of JV45° register boxes.

We set up our latest box at the NCT displays at the March 5 Quiet Water Symposium in East Lansing, and it was a hit, so I’m making the plans available (jpeg and excel). Should anyone want them, email me, Duane Lawton, Jordan Valley 45° Chapter, [delawton@torchlake.com](mailto:delawton@torchlake.com)✱







Carl Robinson



Carl Robinson

Both pictures are of a board walk being built across a damp area in the growing trail cared for by Middlebury Area Land Trust.

## Middlebury Area Land Trust – Vermont

By Carl Robinson, MALT

*An update from our future trail hosting partners in Vermont, where we hope to have the trail's extension approved to connect with the Appalachian Trail...*

The Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) received some major and minor work over this past year. The Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT) also closed on a conservation project, on which a trail will be built, adding to our ever-expanding trail network.

Our first project began in early spring on the Boat House Bridge, one of two bridges that MALT has constructed and maintains, which crosses over the Otter Creek. After 15 years of use, the 180-foot-long suspension bridge needed a little TLC. Working with Big Branch Builders, we raised the middle of the walking platform by 3 feet. Old hardware was replaced, and later in the year a coat of linseed oil was applied. The bridge receives a tremendous amount of use, and the work completed will help keep this community asset available for many years to come.

This past year we scheduled a number of volunteer work days, the 1st Saturday of each month beginning in May and ending in August. With the help from many volunteers we were able to reroute a section of the Blue Trail, and provide some needed maintenance to many other sections. We were also once again lucky to have students from the Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC) and Hannaford Career Center help with many of our projects. Work completed consisted of spreading gravel, boardwalk repair, in addition to cleaning and clearing of the trail.

In June, our summer intern from Middlebury College, Allie Aiello, began her work with us. She quickly became familiar with our 24 plus miles of trail. Allie and John Derick (MALT's Trails Coordinator) would work daily on a section of

trail, spreading gravel, cleaning and clearing, and supervising volunteers. They also completed some bigger projects including the installation of culverts in the Otter Creek Gorge and Wright Park sections of trail. These sections have been greatly improved, with less water on the trail. Allie also helped develop the 4th Edition TAM map, which is now available, and ended her internship with us by presenting MALT's work at last year's NCTA *Rendezvous*. Thank you, Allie!

Our 12th Annual TAM Trek was once again a huge success. The TAM Trek is an annual event hosted by MALT with a mission to celebrate growth and activity on the TAM. Each year the Trek seeks to introduce new audiences to this recreational resource, in hopes to encourage a sustained and active user-base on the trail. It is both a fund-raising effort for the TAM as well as a way to inspire more people to donate time and financial resources to the trail throughout the year. All event proceeds go towards trail maintenance and the TAM Endowment. We are well under way in preparing and looking forward to our 13th Annual TAM Trek Event.

Our ongoing fundraising project, the TAM Endowment, was successful as we raised \$85K, and we are excited about the potential to build new trail on 45 acres of newly conserved land. This parcel, conserved to protect wildlife habitat, will help us add trail from Middlebury to East Middlebury, our preferred route for the NCT.

We are looking forward to the coming year as we develop our work plan which includes the construction of a new boardwalk, updating a couple old boardwalks, increasing trailhead and trail signage, obtaining a trail easement, and planning for our TAM Trek event, just to name a few. ✨

# State of the Trail



Eric Haugland

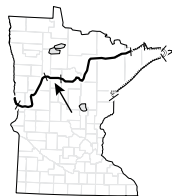
Hikers using the trail and a campsite in “The Gulch” area.

*Apologies to Itasca Moraine Chapter, since their submission just plain was overlooked in the pileup for the last State of the Trail.*

—Editor

## Itasca Moraine Chapter

The state of the Trail is the best it has ever been according to many adopters of the Itasca Moraine Chapter, primarily due to the preparatory maintenance work needed for the 165-mile Hiking Challenge. The challenge was to hike the trail through both the Itasca Moraine and Laurentian Lakes Chapters. 104 different hikers participated in the inaugural season-long challenge. Itasca Moraine Chapter (ITM) member Beth Trout, a visionary of the challenge in collaboration with Karen Stenberg (Laurentian Lakes Chapter), was one of five completing the entire 165-mile distance. The donation of a DR brush mower by chapter members and adopters Don and Kay James and the purchase of a utility trailer made possible by the award of an Itasca-Mantrap Electric Co-op Round-Up Grant have greatly enhanced the chapter's maintenance program.



## Additional 2015 trail improvements and trail promotion included:

- Moccasin Lake Spur Trail – constructed by chapter members and Elk River, Minn., Boy Scouts.
- Hovde Lake Campsite improvement – a new Leopold bench with table were built and installed as well as a USFS fire ring, and two tent pads.
- ITM formally adopted the Lake Erin Loop Trail – Trail improved to NCT standards and old benches removed and replaced.
- A new bench was installed and a scenic overlook established .75 miles north of Spur 1 Road in the midst of magnificent red and white pines.
- A short trail was made from the Paul Bunyan State Bicycle Trail to Arthur's Restaurant near Hackensack, to be used to distribute trail information from a brochure holder.
- The chapter mechanic Byron Knapp has done an excellent job maintaining the trail equipment.
- Members promoted the chapter and North Country Trail by participating in the Park Rapids Health and Wellness Expo, Park Rapids Chili Cook-off, and the Midwest Mountaineering Expo in Minneapolis.

The successes of the chapter are due to an excellent working relationship with federal, state, county and township agencies and our members. We also honor the tireless work of the late Susan Carol Hauser including co-editing the Guide to the North Country National Scenic Trail in Minnesota.

## This year members received numerous worthy honors.

- Melinda McCarty – NPS 200 volunteer hours recognition.
- Phoebe Alden – NCTA Chapter Honor Award - unique routed trail signs recognition.
- Florence Hedeon – NCTA Leadership Award, national recognition for her role in the 2014 Duluth NCT Celebration.
- Bruce Johnson – NPS President's Award – 4,000 volunteer hours. A letter of commendation from President Obama.

## Planned chapter structures include

- Replacing a culvert/beaver washout between CR 125 and FR 2100.
- Building and installing an NCT kiosk in downtown Walker.
- Relocating a section of the NCT off of school trust lands to county and state DNR land.
- Long range goal of installing a boardwalk in the Schoolcraft River valley of the Trail.

Trail usage is difficult to measure. However, while working in my remote section of the Trail (“The Gulch” area of the Paul Bunyan Forest) the first week of October, other members and I saw an array of hikers. On October 4, nineteen hikers gathered for the annual Hike for Hope. Six others hiking from the other direction met them on the trail and four others participated in the hike by hiking two days later. The previous week, trail maintenance volunteers and I met assorted separate small groups of hikers. Thus, in one seven day period 35 confirmed hikers walked a total of 260 miles. Considering this is an isolated section of Trail that the chapter maintains, and just one week of the year, I must conclude that the Trail and backcountry campsites do get used.

Shortly after the above reported week I heard that nine members and friends of the local bike and ski club had hiked the section as well as twelve members of a Bemidji church the very same week.

The chapter invites you to join us (Itasca Moraine and Laurentian Lakes Chapters and Itasca State Park) in 2016 for the 12 Days of 2016 Hikes on the North Country Trail at Itasca State Park celebrating the 125th anniversary of Itasca State Park and the Centennial of the National Park Service. Once a month in 2016 a hike will occur on the trail within the park (the exception is a July paddle in Lake Itasca). A list of these hikes can be found at [http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/destinations/state\\_parks/itasca/itasca\\_north\\_country\\_trail\\_hikes.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/destinations/state_parks/itasca/itasca_north_country_trail_hikes.pdf)

Following the 2016 Celebration in Fargo join us for the After Celebration Hikes at Itasca State Park. (September 18–23, 2016). More information on this extended outing on page 4.

—Eric Haugland



# State of the Trail

## Grand Traverse Hiking Club

Grand Traverse Hiking Club's major accomplishment in 2015 was the completion of the Twenty-two Creek re-route by building two bridges and 1.7 miles of new trail, creating a very nice loop trail. The old trail was named "John's Trail" after long time member, John Heiam.

With completion of a spur to the NCT Fife Lake Loop, the Village of Fife Lake was declared a Trail Town. A celebratory hike and picnic was held in June. Many thanks to the residents of Fife Lake and Patty and Dave Warner for seeing this through.

In September, Trans-Canada gifted \$25,000 to the development and maintenance of the Iron Belle Trail that will run through Kalkaska. The trail will be a co-operative effort between Grand Traverse Hiking Club, the DNR and North Country Trail Association.

**In total, roughly 1040 hours were spent in 2015 on trail maintenance, including:**

- Building a boardwalk over a mud hole near Guernsey Lake.
- Re-building a bridge over Sand Creek due to high water damage and installed water bars.
- Re-blazing trails as needed.
- Cut down and moved trees that fell across the trail during the August wind storm.
- Replaced steps and railing on NCT west of No. 19 Road.

GTHC installed a memorial bench for John Briggs, a long-time GTHC member who passed away suddenly in 2015, at the site his wife Nancy had picked out west of the Rollways. A second bench has been installed at Twenty-two Creek in memory of Stan Malaski, a long time active member of the trail crew, who also passed away this year.

Goals have been set for 2016 to maintain and improve our beautiful 105 miles of the North Country Trail.

—Pat Brumbaugh,  
Administrative Trails Coordinator



Dick Parks

**High water damage required a new Sand Creek Bridge of the Grand Traverse Hiking Club crew.**

## Where in the Blue Blazes?

*In this regular feature of North Star, we challenge your knowledge in a friendly competition to name the location of a detail or point of interest along the 4600+ mile North Country Trail. Any of our readers can submit a photo for consideration for the next puzzle, or play our game by answering the question: Where in the Blue Blazes can this unique location be found?*

*Send your answers before July 1 to Irene Szabo, at [treeweenie@aol.com](mailto:treeweenie@aol.com), or mail them to 6939 Creek Road, Mt. Morris, NY 14510.*

*The correct answer to the location where this picture was taken will be published in the next issue of North Star. \**



Ed O'Shea

## North Star Submission Guidelines

Without your material, we cannot have a magazine, so we eagerly request your submission of pictures and text for every issue. Please send both to Irene Szabo at [treeweenie@aol.com](mailto:treeweenie@aol.com), or 6939 Creek Rd., Mt. Morris NY 14510.

Please do not embed pictures within your article, but send them separately as .jpg attachments. We will no longer accept embedded pictures. In all cases, please supply photographer's name.

Front cover photo candidates: prefer vertical format, and if digital, at least 300 dpi or greater than 3000 pixels, AND we are always looking for great cover photos! Inside pictures look much better with one dimension over 1000 pixels, too, preferably 2000.

Next deadline for Vol. 35, No. 3 is July 1, 2016.

Remember that 900 words equal approximately one page of dense text, so very few articles should exceed 1800 words in this size of magazine.

Thank you!

—Your editor, Irene  
(585) 658-4321)

## Branching Out: On the Trail with Outdoor Pursuits



**Participants in SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits Trip Leader training (Left to Right): Troy Platt, Kaycie Haller, Charlie Kollmer, Kyra Newcombe, Elea Harvey, Kyle Cozzens, Jeff Sladewski, Jay Harcum, and Adam Lavender.**

Story by Christine Ellsworth

Photos by Kyle Cozzens, SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits Trip Leader and Social Media Manager

Imagine being born and raised in a large metropolitan area. You've been blessed with great access to diverse communities, libraries, fine food, museums and universities. But you've never camped outdoors. You've never hiked a beautiful trail. You've never actually stepped foot into a forest.

That's one of the very reasons Outdoor Pursuits opened its doors on the campus of State University of New York (SUNY) at Cortland. The Recreational Sports Program at SUNY is highly respected in the United States, one of the campus's oldest programs, in fact. And with the addition of Outdoor Pursuits to Recreational Sports, students and graduates now have a way to put that education in the classroom into development on the ground.

And students—most of whom come from densely settled Long Island beyond New York City—now have a way to bond outdoors, over experiences many say are transformational. I spoke with the program's Assistant Director, Jay Harcum, about Outdoor Pursuits.

"Outdoor Pursuits began as a vision by Julian Wright, director of Recreational Sports here at SUNY Cortland," Jay said. "His vision was to create a Student Life Center that could be used any time from six in the morning until midnight."

That vision grew into just such a student life center, a tripping program, a climbing wall, a place where students can affordably rent outdoor equipment such as canoes and other camping gear. Jay told me that within the year the program's been operating, they've already hosted 22 outdoor trips. With each trip capable of welcoming up to 10 students, the program has already actively engaged more than 175 people.

Jay, himself, comes from an outdoor-based lifestyle. After serving in the military, he got involved with the Outdoor Adventure Program at Old Dominion in Virginia, with Outward Bound and then the National Outdoor Leadership School. He spent some time in similar functions at the University of Redlands, California. But when he heard about the opening at SUNY Cortland, he jumped at the opportunity.

Who wouldn't? The Assistant Director recently took a group of students to Zion National Park in Utah. "The students described it as the experience of a lifetime," he says with a huge smile. "Most of them had never crossed the Mississippi."

And what's all this got to do with the North Country Trail? The answer is symbiosis: "an interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association, typically to the advantage to both."

Outdoor Pursuits has been utilizing parts of the Trail to train undergraduate students to become trip leaders. "To be honest," Jay says, "I never knew that the Finger Lakes Trail we train on is a part of the North Country Trail. But we've used it to train because of its proximity. And because it's beautiful." The training involves learning basic camping skills, navigational skills using maps and compasses, how to cook, and first aid. "Most important on that list, though, is Leave No Trace. We stress that's a major responsibility," Jay notes. "We've seen the Trail is well cared for and we need to help keep it that way."

For their latest winter weekend, the students broke into three groups, camped out at shelters built by the Finger Lakes Trail, and hiked 6 to 8 miles the next day, practicing medical lessons and hiking skills.



# Advocacy Lesson from New York State

By Mary Coffin



We had a close call in New York State with an 11th hour budget bill that included a rider supporting all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on all public lands and public roads. Our State Senators and Assemblypersons are under heavy lobbying pressure not only from ATV riders but also the manufacturers.

Fortunately the Adirondack Mountain Club along with some environmental groups rallied the members of trail organizations ... North Country Trail Association, Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Adirondack Mountain Club, New York New Jersey Trail Conference ... to contact their state legislators fast in the last week before the budget deadline. The trail community complied, so the rider was removed from the budget bill.

If the proposed ATV bill had passed the following would have been supported: ATV use on public roads with speeds up to 55mph and riders as young as 12 years of age, ATV use in State Forests, State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas, increased allowed ATV weight to 1500 pounds, and DEC (similar to DNR) mandated in charge of regulating ATV use much like NY State Parks regulates snowmobile use. This would have placed DEC in a very awkward position since DEC has completed studies indicating ATV use is not compatible with its mission of protecting the environment and managing forests and natural resources. ATV use would run counter to the NYS DEC Strategic Plan for Forest Management, which protects the NCNST and FLT as long distance foot trails.

We as hikers, trail designers and trail maintainers have observed first-hand the destruction resulting from normal ATV use and frequent ATV trespass. Consider the potential lasting environmental damage in the 67 State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas hosting the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) and North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) as well as other major trails. Naturally, within a week after the budget deadline, a stand-alone bill was introduced in the N.Y. State Senate proposing all of the same dangerous conditions, so in truth we have just begun this advocacy project. ✱



**Making cinnamon buns for breakfast on a wood fire. Nice rolling pin!**

And, like most folks who get out on the trail, the students learn more than just how to camp or build a responsible fire. They learn how to build community. "It's medicine, really," Jay states. "Hiking outside is healing. And a chance to experience the simple things, being free."

Now, with the program moving into its second year, the assistant director sees more interaction, more symbiosis, with the North Country Trail in the near future. "We're looking into adopting a part of the Trail. And the more we learn about it, the more we can share with students." Jay says he hopes to work more directly with NCTA and FLT personnel, to develop ways to work together for mutual growth.

And that's yet another way the Trail is branching out into an even greater future.

For more info, see the program's website at: [www.cortland.edu](http://www.cortland.edu) and visit their Facebook page: SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits.

The photos were taken during SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits Trip Leader training. All of the participants are students at SUNY Cortland with the exception of Jay Harcum who is the Assistant Director of Outdoor Pursuits. ✱



## National Park Service Corner

Mark Weaver  
Superintendent, NCT

On our magazine's April first deadline, the crocus are up; the tulips are peeking through. Hope you're venturing outside to enjoy the relative warmth of the sun and implementing any (at least in my case) "spousal induced outdoor projects."

So what's in store for this summer? Because it's the National Park Service Centennial year, we have been fortunate to support a number of projects to be implemented by NPS and/or by NCTA.

**Picture THIS!!:** The successful 2015 kids' hiking and photography program has been funded again to support both a staff person to manage it and supplemental funds to support training and materials. We again will introduce about 50 Battle Creek area kids to the North Country Trail by giving them cameras, and the inspiration to look at nature in an entirely different way from behind the lens. Last year's pictures were incredible, and the stories behind them sometimes real tearjerkers. An NPS summer staffer, Ben Giese, will be coordinating Picture This!! . His bio appears later in this article.

**Business Planning:** Our NPS Regional Director recommended the NPS North Country Trail office embark on developing a Business Plan for the Trail, so we will be working with NCTA executive director Bruce Matthews and his team to ensure that we dovetail on our missions, visions and strategies. Jeff Cline will be our NPS summer staffer coordinating the business plan development. His bio appears later in this article as well.

**Trailhead Interpretive Panels.** The statewide and local trailhead panel program implemented last year will continue with strategic planning of panel locations and additional design. We anticipate additional funding next year to finish the designs and fabricate the signs. Stay tuned!

**Hike 100 Challenge.** We're providing funds for materials and supplies to support the Hike 100 Challenge (celebrating the NPS Centennial!) to make sure that we don't have to cut any corners that might impact its success. Thousands of people have signed up for the Challenge and we want to make sure that their experience is the best it can be.

**Michigan's Iron Belle Trail.** There's a lot of work to do in Michigan, and the state is gung-ho on helping us get it done. We are supporting additional Trail coordination and planning to move toward a finished trail.

**Diversity Focus Groups.** We're working with the NCTA-Chief Noonday Chapter and local communities of color to understand better how they can be more engaged with the North Country Trail.

**Safety.** As usual, we provide Volunteer Safety training to make sure that those of you using a chainsaw are properly trained and certified in its use.

**Other NPS Centennial events.** If you are planning on having any events thru this calendar year, please consider promoting the NPS Centennial in your plans. We have two very nice "Find Your Park" banners, one generic and one specific to NCT that you can borrow. If you have any incidental expenses that might hinder a successful event, let us know (beforehand!) and we may be able to help.

### Welcome Our Summer Staff!

I am very happy with our staff selections for this summer. Ben Giese, very much the outdoorsman, will engage the kids with the joy of being outside by coordinating the Picture THIS!! program in Battle Creek. He is starting fulltime May 16. Jeff Cline and his project management skills are exactly what we need to tackle our Business Planning. He is starting April 4 and working part time. Welcome, guys!

**Ben Giese** will be coordinating the Picture THIS program in Battle Creek this summer. Ben was raised in Battle Creek and spent his youth wandering the woods, devouring books, and volunteering for conservation organizations. He graduated from Pennfield High School in 2007, working and taking some college courses until fulfilling his childhood dream of enlisting in the Army in 2010.



Ben Giese

Ben left for Basic Training in January 2011, emerged as an infantryman and got married in May, moved to Fort Hood, Texas, later that month, and deployed to the Middle East in July of that year. His unit spent six months in Iraq before driving to Kuwait and spending six months there. He got out in 2014 and eagerly moved back home to Michigan with its beautiful trees and lack of desert.

Ben has been working as a chauffeur while studying Freshwater Science and Sustainability at Western Michigan University, and remodeling a duplex with his wonderful wife, Sadie. Ben is pumped to be wearing the National Park Service uniform this summer and cannot wait to explore the North Country Trail.





Jeff Cline

## Jeff Cline

**Jeff Cline** will be coordinating our NPS Business Planning efforts for the Trail. Jeff is a native Michigander and has spent his recent years as a project manager, helping companies in west Michigan overcome obstacles to success. Jeff is also a 14-year US Army Veteran, serving multiple tours in Macedonia, Kosovo and Iraq in his role as a Civil Affairs Team Chief. Most proudly, Jeff's team started a program, coined "The Village of Hope," in which local Iraqis were trained in functional areas to rebuild their own infrastructure instead of bringing in outside contractors.

In his spare time, Jeff jogs (he no longer considers it running speed) over 30 miles per week. He also enjoys building and flying drones for the purpose of aerial photography.

And finally... "Where's Waldo Luke?" Luke is somewhere in Colorado on his trek to hike the proposed Great Plains Trail. We anticipate he'll complete his hike at the Canadian border before May 15, when he'll move to Lowell and join NPS Headquarters staff. Luke has a facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/StriderNCT/>) so you can follow his adventures, which, on March 23, consisted of an "adventurous" full plate of sausage, eggs, bacon and toast, followed by a herd of cattle stalking him. Apparently Luke wasn't interested in sharing his breakfast...

Luke will continue as an NPS Outdoor Recreation Planner, plus has Volunteer Coordination duties as well. ✨

## Volunteer Mary Coffin Wins National Park Service Hartzog Enduring Service Award

The National Park Service has announced that the 2015 Midwest Region National Park Service Enduring Service Award goes to longtime North Country Trail Association volunteer Mary Coffin. Honoring volunteers with extraordinary records of service, the George and Helen Hartzog Awards are given annually within each NPS Region, with the winners then competing for the national award.

New York's Mary Coffin has served the North Country National Scenic Trail in a number of ways over the past 20 years, as Vice-President, Board Member, Committee Chair and trip leader. Her dedicated work in New York was crucial in the years-long process of gaining approval to route the North Country National Scenic Trail through the 6 million acre Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve.

N.Y.'s Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) spent years contemplating how best to integrate various alternative routes for the North Country NST within eight distinct Unit Management Plans to traverse the Adirondack Park, seeking to avoid heavily used areas while simultaneously using existing trails when possible. Managers from all involved parties were becoming skeptical about a successful solution for the North Country NST through the Adirondacks.

It took Mary Coffin to lead a number of other invaluable volunteers to scout out, hike, GPS, photograph, evaluate, document, and report on each and every mile of all proposed alternative routes in order to provide the NPS, NCTA, DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency officials the solid and timely data they needed in order to come to agreement eventually on an approved route for the North Country NST.

After eight years and approximately 100 work trips into the wilds of the



Irene Szabo

Adirondack Mountains, Coffin's herculean dedication came to fruition. On September 25, 2015, the New York State DEC approved the Adirondack Park Trail Plan for the North Country NST, providing for 158 miles of trail route through five Wild Forests and four Wilderness Areas of the central Adirondacks.

Coffin has more than 4,000 hours of recorded volunteer service. Her work includes securing seven permanent trail easements in the N.Y. Finger Lakes region, chairing for 12 years a special work team to connect trail segments throughout the Central NY area, serving nine years on the NCTA Board of Directors, chairing numerous committees, and personally leading trail construction work crews for the past 14 years. Mary was also the founder of national North Country National Scenic Trail Day, the 4th Saturday of September.

The Midwest Region of the National Park Service encompasses 13 states and more than 60 parks and trails. Coffin's accomplishments were recognized as the most outstanding among all nominations submitted from this region in the Enduring Service category. ✨





# Celebrate With Us in Fargo!

## ***Building Trails and Discovering History in Our Prairies, Valleys and Woodlands...***

Linda Norland

**Please Join Us for the 2016 North Country Trail  
Association's Annual Celebration  
The Cambria Hotel and Conference Center  
Fargo, North Dakota  
September 15-17, 2016**

Please join us for the NCTA Annual Celebration in Fargo, North Dakota! The Dakota Prairie Chapter, along with our colleagues in the Sheyenne River Valley and the Laurentian Lakes Chapters, are excited about showing you our great new sections of the North Country National Scenic Trail up here "North of Normal." The theme of the Celebration is Building Trails and Discovering History in our Prairies, Valleys, and Woodlands. Interpreters on buses and hikes will help you understand the scenic, natural, cultural, and historic features of these areas and explain how the environment and history affect trail building activities in unique ways. Various non-hiking events will be available each day as well.

The Celebration is designed especially for members of the NCTA and is also open to the general public. The schedule will give attendees time to hike, learn, socialize, and relax. In most cases, you will travel to the event venues on comfortable, air

conditioned coach buses with snacks and beverages provided. You will be able to hike on interesting riverfront trails in Fargo-Moorhead on Thursday. On Friday, the Laurentian Lakes Chapter will host a variety of NCT hikes in the magnificent Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota. Saturday hikes in North Dakota will highlight interesting features of the Red River Valley and tall grass prairie including the Fort Abercrombie Historical Site, the Ekre Grassland Preserve, and the Sheyenne National Grasslands.

**The Celebration website, which contains much more information on event details, hiking venues, schedules, and registration information, is: <https://northcountrytrail.org/get-involved/special-events/2016-celebration-fargo-nd/>**

### **Celebration Headquarters**

The Celebration headquarters will be the new Cambria Hotel and Conference Center in West Fargo. A Celebration Hospitality Desk at the Cambria will be open throughout each day and evening of the Celebration for on-site registration and to provide information for attendees. The Trail Shop will also be located at the Hospitality Desk.



## Lodging

A block of rooms has been reserved for Celebration attendees at the Cambria Hotel. You may reserve rooms anytime by contacting the Cambria Hotel directly at (701) 551-0120. The cost for a large room with two queen beds, with full breakfast buffet for everyone in the room, is \$129 plus tax per night. The breakfast is available for non-guests for \$15 each day. When you reserve rooms, remember to ask for the North Country Trail block rate.

The Fargo-Moorhead area has numerous other hotels, including Microtel, Element Fargo, and My Place within one mile of the Cambria. Information on camping options within 80 miles of Fargo-Moorhead is available on the Celebration website.

## Food

Thursday lunch will be on your own in Fargo. Restaurant options, maps, and transportation will be provided. You will also have an opportunity to sign up for specific lunch groups with a leader. You may order sack lunches for Friday and Saturday to take to hikes and non-hiking events. There are no readily available lunch options at the Friday and Saturday hiking venues.

All evening receptions, dinners, and programs will be in the Cambria Conference Center. Please see the Registration form for meal descriptions and costs. A cash bar will be open during the evening events.

## Transportation

Transportation between the Cambria Hotel and all hiking and non-hiking venues will be provided to coincide with the starting and ending times of the hikes and non-hiking events. Transportation schedules will be adjusted to accommodate demand for the various events. The final transportation schedules will be available at the Hospitality Desk in the Cambria and in your registration packets.

Please check the Celebration website for much more descriptive information about all the hikes, including tables summarizing details of the hikes. The hikes will be accompanied by a leader, a sweep, and an interpreter who will provide information about the features of the area traversed by the hike. An “easy” hike will be on flat terrain and will cover about 1-2 miles in an hour; a “moderate” hike will be on flat to rolling terrain and will cover 1.5-2.5 miles in an hour; a “challenging” hike will be on flat to hilly terrain and cover about 2.5-3.0 miles in an hour.

## Thursday Hikes: Fargo-Moorhead

The Thursday hikes in Fargo-Moorhead will be on flat, hard surfaced trails and sidewalks that cross several Red River bridges, and are accessible by wheelchair. All Friday non-hiking events and several hikes will begin and end at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) Discovery Center. The Friday and Saturday hikes are almost completely on new footpath segments of the NCNST. The Saturday hikes will all take place on the Dakota Prairie Chapter's trail development area between the Red River and the Sheyenne National Grasslands. Some Saturday hikes will cross stiles; photos of such stiles can be viewed on the Celebration website.

### T1: River Trails between Gooseberry Park and Downtown Fargo

(4 miles, easy; 9:00 AM)

This flat hike will travel through parks on both sides of the Red River along an extensive network of urban walking/cycling trails, crossing the river several times on pedestrian and road bridges. Combine this hike with Th-H4 in the afternoon for a full day of hiking.

### T2: River Trails between Trefoil Park and Downtown Fargo

(3 miles, easy; 9:45 AM)  
This urban hike will follow flat Red River trails and city sidewalks between Trefoil Park in north Fargo and downtown Fargo. Hikers will get a short introduction to the Hjemkomst Center and some history of life along the Red River. Combine this hike with Th-H3 in the afternoon for a full day of hiking.

### T3: River Trails between Downtown Fargo and Gooseberry Park

(4 miles, easy; 1:30 PM)  
This hike is a repeat in reverse of Thursday Hike 1. It will start in downtown Fargo near the Great Northern Bicycle Company (old railroad depot) and end at Gooseberry Park in Moorhead.

### T4: River Trails between Downtown Fargo and Trefoil Park

(3 miles, easy; 1:30 PM)  
This hike is a repeat in reverse of Thursday Hike 2. It will start in downtown Fargo near the Great Northern Bicycle Company and end at Trefoil Park in north Fargo.



Tom Moberg



Karen Steinhilber

## Friday Hikes: Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR)

### F1: Discovery Center Loop (2 miles, easy; AM)

This hike follows a loop and spur trail that connects to the NCNST from the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Discovery Center. The trail includes old growth hardwoods, through an old field with pioneer cabins, and a view of a lovely lake near the TNWR Visitor Center. You can also register for Hike 2 (Fr-H2) or Non-Hike Event 2 (Fr-NH2).

### F2: Tamarac Lake Vista (2 miles, easy; PM)

Hikers will shuttle from the TNWR Discovery Center to the Pine Lake Trailhead and finish at the Old Indian Trail. The hike includes an old farm field with views of wetlands and woods, an overlook of beautiful Tamarac Lake, and a walk on an elevated 1,800' causeway built to protect cultural resources of the past.

### F3: Ojibwe Migration Route (5 miles, easy-moderate; AM-PM)

Hikers will begin at the Tamarac Lake boat landing and walk out and back on an unusual 1,800' causeway. Then the trail heads north and east along the Old Indian Trail and the NCNST to the scenic Black Bird Wildlife Drive along the historic Ojibwe migration route through sugar maple forests.

### F4: Otter Tail River Crossing (4.5 miles, easy-moderate; AM-PM)

Starting from the eastern boundary of the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge on 400 Ave. and ending at the NCNST crossing of the Black Bird Wildlife Drive, this hike features mixed pine and deciduous forest, an impressive 1,000' puncheon crossing a spruce bog, and an old dam over the Otter Tail River.

### F5: Greenwater Lake Exploration (7 miles, moderate; AM-PM)

Starting at the NCT trailhead at Greenwater Lake Scientific and Natural Area, this hike features pristine woodlands and wetlands, views of a massive beaver dam, and a climb up to a ridge top vista. The hike ends at the NCT trailhead at the eastern boundary of the TNWR.

### F6: Trek Across Tamarac

(13 miles, challenging because of the distance; AM-PM)

This hike will cover almost the entire Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) segment of the NCNST. From the Trail crossing of CR126 near the south boundary of the TNWR, the route passes the Pine Lake Trailhead and then follows the NCNST to the eastern boundary of the TNWR using essentially the same routes as Hikes 2, 3, and 4. Hikers will experience the beauty of this remarkable part of northern Minnesota on a premier segment of the NCNST.

## Saturday Hikes: North Dakota

### S1: Red River Valley Sampler

(2.5 miles, easy; AM)

Explore the "The Gateway to the Dakotas" at Ft. Abercrombie, which is also the eastern terminus of the NCT in North Dakota. Guides will present a brief history of the Fort and its role in opening the Dakota frontier. An urban segment of the NCT will lead you through the small town of Abercrombie and toward the vast prairie experienced by settlers. After a brief bus ride, you will hike an NCNST segment along a railroad right-of-way, strolling through native plants and wetlands with numerous puncheons. Then another short bus ride along a country road segment of the NCNST will get you to the Ekre Grassland Preserve, after which you may choose Hike 3, 4, 5, or 6 in the PM.

### S2: Monarch Way

(6 miles, easy-moderate; AM-PM)

Hike 2 will start with a brief visit to Fort Abercrombie followed by a short bus ride to a unique section of the NCNST that follows the right-of-way of a working railroad. You may see pheasants, hawks, song birds, deer, monarch butterflies, coyote and gopher diggings, and many types of native prairie plants. The flat trail wanders under old telegraph poles emblazoned with the NCT blue blaze. You will cross some impressive puncheons but no fences or stiles. Then a bus will take you to the Ekre Grassland Preserve where you may choose further hiking on Hike 6.

### S3: Dakota Prairie Special

(6 miles, moderate; PM)

This popular and highly recommended section highlights all the types of interesting NCNST scenery that eastern North Dakota offers. Begin at Jorgen's Hollow Campground on the Sheyenne National Grasslands for an exploration of oak savannas, prairie wetlands, wind sculpted sand hills, pasture land, and lovely prairie vistas. You will climb stiles and cross puncheons as you hike east to the Ekre Grassland Preserve. Ruth and Dan Dorrough will be hiking the last segment of their full NCNST hike with you.





Connie Burns

**Prairie Fringed Orchid.**

#### **S4: Sheyenne River Overview**

(3.5 miles, moderate, with some hills; PM)  
Located near the Ekre Grassland Preserve on private land secured with an easement, this undulating trail through the woods, ravines, and sand hills along the meandering Sheyenne River provides a picturesque hike. Although some parts of this property are used for cattle grazing, none of it has ever been plowed. You will climb over several stiles to cross pasture fences on this point-to-point hike.

#### **S5: Happy Valley Loops**

(2 miles, easy, with several possible hills; PM)  
Explore the Ekre Grassland Preserve (Happy Valley Ranch) during this easy hike that includes several stiles. From ridgeline vistas to farm fields and river bottoms, this hike displays the natural beauty of the Sheyenne River Valley. You may join an easy guided hike or wander along several loop trails through woods and pastures on your own, and later join Hike 6.

#### **S6: Albert's Woods & Fields**

(2 miles, easy; PM)  
Follow the NCNST westward from the old Ekre family log buildings as you climb over stiles, enjoy oak woods, and explore the beauty of the prairie world. You may have time to hike farther along the NCNST on your own before turning around to head back to the historic farmstead.

**S7: Grasslands Far and Fast** (15 miles, challenging because of the distance; AM-PM)  
This hike follows the NCNST within the 70,000 acre Sheyenne National Grasslands. The route winds through open grazing land, climbs sandy ridges, traverses oak savannas, and crosses Iron Spring Creek before reaching the new Jorgen's Hollow Campground (with pit toilets). The rest of the hike eastward to the ending at the Ekre Grassland Preserve is described in Hike 3. The fence crossings on this hike have gates or stiles.

## **Thursday Non-Hiking Events: Fargo-Moorhead**

### **Thursday Non Hiking Event 1: Tour the Hjemkomst Interpretive Center** (10:00 AM - Noon; \$8 - \$9 at the door)

This unique experience is a tour of the Hjemkomst Interpretive Center which serves as a home to the Hjemkomst Viking Ship, the Hopperstad Stave Church replica, museum exhibits, and a museum shop selling interesting items related to the Scandinavian history of the Red River Valley.

### **Thursday Non Hiking Event 2: A Visit to the Historic Fargo Theater** (1:30 PM - 2:30 PM; No charge)

The Fargo Theater is an historic, art deco movie theater in downtown Fargo that was built in 1926 and restored to its original grandeur in 1999. You will learn about the history of the theater and then be treated to a 20 minute organ concert on the "Mighty Wurlitzer" built to accompany silent movies in the 1920's and 1930's.

### **Thursday Non Hiking Event 3: Explore the Plains Art Museum** (1:30 PM - 3:30 PM; No charge)

Celebration participants are welcome to visit the "Plains," a regional fine arts museum, on Thursday afternoon. The Museum's permanent collection contains approximately 4,000 works including national, international, regional fine art, and ethnographic objects. An attractive museum shop is located in the Plains atrium.

### **Thursday Non Hiking Event 4: Food and Shelter Systems for Long Distance Walkers** (3:30PM - 4:30 PM.; No charge)

This afternoon event at the Cambria led by Sam Demas is an overview of how long distance travelers take care of their need for food, shelter and rest, focusing on alternatives to backpacking, including a discussion about the future of the American outdoor recreation system as interest grows.

## **Friday Non-Hiking Events: Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge**

### **Friday Non Hiking Event 1: Fall Color Nature Photo Safari at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge** (10:00 AM - Noon; No charge)

Experience autumn on the Refuge through the lens of a camera! With the fall colors nearing their peak, we will travel to some very scenic and perhaps less known areas on the refuge. There will be bus transportation from the TNWR Discovery Center to each scenic spot and a short hike of about a quarter mile or less for this two hour photo shoot.

### **Friday Non Hiking Event 2: Bird Habitat Restoration Project Tour at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge** (12:30 PM - 2:30 PM; No charge)

The American Bird Conservancy is working on an extensive wildlife habitat restoration and improvement program in Minnesota including about 500 acres of the TNWR. The primary bird species involved is the Golden-winged Warbler, which is very popular with TNWR visitors. Starting at the TNWR Discovery Center, Project Leader Peter Dierker will discuss the project and lead a bus tour of restoration areas.



Riverkeepers

## Saturday Non-hiking Events: Fort Abercrombie State Historical Site

**Fort Abercrombie Tours —Saturday Non Hiking Event 1:** 9:15 AM, **Saturday Non Hiking Event 2:** 10:15 AM, **Saturday Non Hiking Event 3:** 11:15 AM; No charge) Special 1-hour tours of the Fort Abercrombie State Historical Site will be scheduled during the morning and led by the Fort staff. You can also explore the Fort grounds and Visitor's Center museum, or explore some of the NCNST through the small town of Abercrombie on your own.

**S.S. Ruby Tours on the Red River—Saturday Non Hiking Event 4:** 10:15 AM, **Saturday Non Hiking Event 5:** 11:15 AM, **Saturday Non Hiking Event 6:** 12:15 PM; \$8 in advance; 14 passenger limit per tour)

The S.S. Ruby is a specially constructed pontoon boat used for various types of Red River tours. You can discover the history, geography and wildlife of the Red River from comfortable seats on the S.S. Ruby during a 45-minute narrated boat tour beginning and ending at Fort Abercrombie. Each tour is limited to 14 passengers.

## Registration

Registration is required to attend all Celebration activities. The full registration fee of \$40 covers transportation, receptions, programs, hikes, and non-hiking events except for two special tours. A \$15 per-day registration fee is available for people who are attending fewer than the full three days of the Celebration. There is no registration fee for children age 16 and under although they will need to register to participate in events, ride buses, etc. Lodging and meals are not included in the registration fee. Celebration name tags will be required to participate in Celebration activities. It is possible that meals, bus seating, or space on hikes and other events may be limited for walk-in or late registrations.

Registration may be done by mail (with payment by check only) or on-line (with payment by credit card or PayPal). Registration forms received on or before June 30, 2016 will be eligible for a drawing for one of five \$20 gift certificates from the Trail Shop. The last day to register on-line is August 31, 2016.

## Evening Programs

### Thursday

The Thursday evening program will recognize our local landowner and community partners, Celebration donors, and other special guests. After the reception and dinner on Thursday evening, you will be entertained by Steve Stark, a local story teller, illustrator, political cartoonist, and reenactor, who will illustrate as he speaks, presenting a humorous historical view of the Red River Valley.

### Friday

The Friday evening program will include a general reception and the President's reception (by invitation), a Soup-and-Salad Buffet dinner, the NCTA and National Park Service Awards Presentations, and the famous NCTA live auction hosted by the Sheyenne River Valley Chapter. Auction items will be on display in the Trail Shop.

### Saturday

The Saturday evening program will feature Ruth and Dan Dorrough who will talk about their epic, multi-year, end-to-end hike of the entire NCNST, which they expect to complete this year. Their illustrated presentation is entitled "An Unexpected Adventure: Hiking the Entire North Country Trail." As a special treat, Celebration attendees will be able to hike the last 6 miles of the Dorroughs' incredible trip with them on Saturday. The evening will also include a reception, buffet dinner, long-distance hiking awards, and an invitation to the 2017 Celebration in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.



Karen Steinberg



# 2016 \* NCTA CELEBRATION \* Registration Form \* September 15-17

Deadline for registration is August 31, 2016. Please Complete One Registration Form For Each Person.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province/Region \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ e-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently a North Country Trail Association member? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, which Chapter or Affiliate? \_\_\_\_\_

Staying: ☐ Cambria ☐ Other Hotel \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Camping (where?) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Other (where?) \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION: (No fee for children age 16 or under): ☐ Full Weekend Registration \$40 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Per day Registration ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday Number of Days x \$15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## MEALS:

Breakfast at Cambria (Full buffet; No charge for Cambria Hotel guests; \$15 per day for those not staying at Cambria)

☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday Number of Breakfasts \_\_\_\_ x \$15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sack Lunches (Wheat bread sandwich w/lettuce; granola bar; fruit; pretzels; cheese w/meat sandwiches)

Friday ☐ Tuna salad ☐ Chicken salad ☐ Turkey ☐ Ham Number of sandwiches \_\_\_\_ X \$5 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday ☐ Tuna salad ☐ Chicken salad ☐ Turkey ☐ Ham Number of sandwiches \_\_\_\_ X \$5 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Dinners (No cost for evening receptions. Buffet style dinners include various beverages. Cash bar)

☐ Thursday Dinner (Lemon Pepper Chicken, Vegetarian Lasagna, Caesar salad, and more) \$28 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Friday Dinner (Tomato Basil Soup, Chicken Wild Rice Soup, tossed salad, rolls, dessert) \$18 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Saturday Dinner (Bison burgers, Walleye fingers, veggies, salad, smashed potatoes, dessert) \$22 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

EVENT CHOICES: (Please refer to the Hikes and Non-hiking Event Descriptions on pages 23-26 and select your choices):

### Thursday:

☐ T1: Thursday Hike 1 (Fargo: Gooseberry to Downtown)

☐ T2: Thursday Hike 2 (Fargo: Trefoil to Downtown)

☐ T3: Thursday Hike 3 (Fargo: Downtown to Gooseberry)

☐ T4: Thursday Hike 4 (Fargo: Downtown to Trefoil)

### Friday:

☐ F1: Friday Hike 1 (TNWR: Discovery Center Loop)

☐ F2: Friday Hike 2 (TNWR: Tamarac Lake Vista)

☐ F3: Friday Hike 3 (TNWR: Ojibwe Migration Route)

☐ F4: Friday Hike 4 (TNWR: Otter Tail River)

☐ F5: Friday Hike 5 (TNWR: Greenwater Exploration)

☐ F6: Friday Hike 6 (TNWR: Tamarac Trek)

### Saturday:

☐ S1: Saturday Hike 1 (ND: RRV Sampler)

☐ S2: Saturday Hike 2 (ND: Monarch Way)

☐ S3: Saturday Hike 3 (ND: Dakota Prairie Special)

☐ S4: Saturday Hike 4 (ND: Sheyenne River Overlook)

☐ S5: Saturday Hike 5 (ND: Happy Valley Loops)

☐ S6: Saturday Hike 6 (ND: Albert's Woods and Fields)

☐ S7: Saturday Hike 7 (ND: Grasslands Far & Fast)

## Non-Hiking Events

Please select the non-hiking events you would like to attend.

☐ Thursday Non-hiking Event 1

(Hjemkomst, \$8 at door; 10 a.m.)

☐ Thursday Non-hiking Event 2

(Fargo Theater; 1:30 p.m.)

☐ Thursday Non-hiking Event 3

(Plains Art Museum; 1:30 p.m.)

☐ Thursday Non-hiking Event 4

(Hut 2 Hut Discussion; 3:30 p.m.)

☐ Friday Non-hiking Event 1 (TNWR: Photo Safari; a.m.)

☐ Friday Non-hiking Event 2 (TNWR: Bird Project; p.m.)

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 1: Fort Tour (9:15 a.m.)

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 2: Fort Tour (10:15 a.m.)

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 3: Fort Tour (11:15 a.m.)

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 4:

S.S. Ruby (10:15 a.m.) \$8 Fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 5:

S.S. Ruby (11:15 a.m.) \$8 Fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Saturday Non-hiking Event 6:

S.S. Ruby (12:15 p.m.) \$8 Fee \$ \_\_\_\_\_

➡ Total Amount Due: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check for your total amount due, payable to North Country Trail Association. Mail your registration form with your check to: North Country Trail Association, 229 E. Main Street, Lowell MI 49331

**Waiver—Please read and sign the following:** Those persons enjoying the North Country Trail (NCT) and/or activities sponsored by the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) or any chapters/clubs conducting activities on behalf of, or in support of the NCTA, accept full personal responsibility for their own well being, or, for the well being of a minor when acting in the capacity of parent or guardian. Further, users of the NCT accept and understand that hiking is a rigorous activity often conducted in rugged outdoor conditions subject to variations in weather and terrain conditions which may involve the risk of injury or death, and, that these persons are fully responsible for their own safety and selecting activities that are consistent with their physical capabilities.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Pokeweed—Edible or Poisonous?

Story and pictures by Joan Young

**Y**es. The answer is yes. It is both. This fact, by itself, should not be cause for shunning the entire pokeweed plant. After all, the delicious rhubarb of pie fame is a plant whose leaves are toxic. We've learned from childhood to eat only the stalks, and one rarely hears of death by rhubarb (I couldn't find a report of one since 1960). Many other familiar botanical edibles have this same characteristic, that only certain parts of the plant should be eaten.

Pokeweed, *Phytolacca americana*, (pokeberry, inkberry) is one of those plants that has a terrible reputation for being poisonous, but solid scientific answers as to just what that means are not easy to find.

Historically, the roots, mature leaves, stems and berries have been considered deadly, with a certain amount of waffling on the issue. Tea made from the roots was used medicinally to treat rheumatism and various other ailments. This led to a number of deaths, particularly in the 19th century, as way too many people were ingesting way too much of the chemicals present in the plant. Also, the juice has been used as a dark ink, and as a fabric dye.

On the other hand, the young leaves are considered a delicacy, particularly in the American south where they are eaten as cooked greens, and sometimes known as poke salat. They are very tasty. A friend of mine pretty much lives on them in the spring. Harvest before they reach eight or nine inches tall, and before much red color is showing. Boil three times, draining the water each time. This leeches out the light load of toxins from the new leaves. Never eat it raw.

More concern should be given to the possibility of children eating the attractive purple berries. There have been some reported deaths of small children who ingest even one berry. That said, there is again a great deal of uncertainty both in the literature and in individual reactions to the chemicals responsible for the problem. Additionally, some livestock, most notably cows, have died from eating the plants. So people made the seemingly sensible jump to conclude that people shouldn't eat it, either.



Clusters of berries on a mature plant, late summer through fall.

One of the strongest scientific studies on the toxicity of the juice is rather old, from 1962. Even so, the experiment followed the normal protocol at the time for such tests. They extracted juice from the berries and fed it to mice in order to determine a lethal dose. As it turned out, they were unable to kill any mice with an amount of juice that would fit in a mouse's stomach. After force feeding the animals with three stomachfuls an hour apart, a few mice died. Not exactly a definitively deadly compound. They extrapolated that an adult male human would have to eat 45 pounds of berries to kill himself.

There are even reports of the juice being used in Europe as an additive to some wines. Armed with this information, and the knowledge that most of the toxicity is in the seeds rather than the berry itself, I ate one berry (and spit out the seed) a couple of years ago. The results weren't even anti-climactic. Nothing happened. In fact, one berry wasn't enough of a sample for me to report what it tasted like. In that quantity it wasn't bitter, tart, grape-like or anything. Pretty disappointing.

The specific compounds present in the roots and stalks were not isolated until the 1980s and 90s. As suspected, there is not just one culprit to blame. Several triterpenes were found. Don't get scared; that simply means each molecule has 30 carbon atoms arranged in rings. Cholesterol and steroids are also triterpenoids. A study by Kang and Woo (1980) described several, including a brand new one which they named pokeberrygenin. How cool is that?

The plant produces natural saponins (soaps), which only means there are hydrophilic molecules that will produce foam when shaken in a water solution.



Winter stalks are easily identifiable.

Many plants have these compounds. But don't take a pokeberry bath; you'll end up red. There have also been reports that some people may have skin reactions to *Phytolacca*. I'm skeptical. I'm not saying this is impossible; I just think that there's hardly a compound on the planet that someone, somewhere might not be allergic to. This fact shouldn't raise major alarms.

Pokeweed grows throughout North Country Trail states with the possible exception of North Dakota. It likes damp edges, but may grow in the open as well. It is easy to identify in the winter by the brittle, hollow white stalks. Finding sprouts at the base of these skeletons can help you be sure of harvesting the correct greens in the spring. The herbaceous perennial will reach 5-10 feet in height each year. In late summer the beautiful plant will sport drooping clusters of small white flowers from red stalks, followed by the dark purple berries.

So, what does this mean to the average hiker? The young plant might provide a free meal in the spring, if you know what you are looking for. Never eat the mature leaves, stems or roots. That's just asking for trouble. The roots are most toxic. In late summer through fall, if you are hiking with children, point out the beautiful berries, but advise them they are not good to eat. No sense taking chances with a plant that seems to be problematic for small children. If your child does ingest some berries, do call the poison control center. If you experience diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or weakness after eating the greens, seek medical treatment immediately.

And if you want to write a letter and forgot your pen, just squeeze some juice and use it for ink. ✨



# GIS and Mapping Updates for 2016

By Matt Rowbotham, NCTA GIS Coordinator

The North Country Trail Association's (NCTA) mapping and GIS program had an exciting year in 2015.

The online mapping resources NCTA launched at the end of 2014 saw incredible growth throughout 2015.

The NCTA's public web map was viewed nearly 220,000 times in 2015. These "views" can be thought of as individuals visiting the web map, and "server requests" can be looked at as a measure of how much these viewers are interacting with the information on the web map. June through October saw just over 1 million "server requests" per-month, with most of the remaining months falling somewhere north of 500,000 requests per-month. These are exciting numbers and illustrate that these resources are being well received and extensively used by the North Country Trail community!

However, maps are only as good as the information behind them. Without accurate and up-to-date information, all of this is for naught. Currently, there are 3,386 segments of North Country Trail in the NCTA's GIS, representing 4,504 miles of trail. As the NCTA brings 2015 to a close, there have been 457 miles of trail updated in GIS. In this context, "updated," includes the obvious things like new trail construction and re-locations, but also includes improvements or corrections in trail information itself. These improvements are what make up the majority of these updates each year. These changes range from improvements to the location of an existing segment of trail to updating the information we collect about each segment of trail; i.e., the type of camping allowed, the trail's surface, open to bikes, etc.

The means by which trail information gets updated varies too. Volunteers and the NCTA's Regional Trail Coordinators are the primary source of new information into the GIS. Additionally (and as anticipated) the ability to pan and zoom in to great detail using the online web maps has revealed errors in data and led to an increase in the number of trail updates.

2016 will continue to see an increase

in the pace of updates to the trail's centerline, with an expanded focus on point based features along the trail. Point features are things like parking, campsites and trail structures among others. There are currently 2,150 active point features in the NCTA's GIS, with a lot more information in archived files. As any hiker knows, the facilities along the trail are just as important to using the trail as an accurate trail line is. As the point feature information is reviewed and updated over 2016, one of the most exciting new additions to this data will be "geo-tagged" photos. Most smartphones embed a set of GPS coordinates in the picture file when a photo is taken.

These coordinates can be used to pinpoint the location of the photo in our mapping system. Being able to click a point on an online map and bring up a photo is valuable in and of itself. However, the trail management staff at the NCTA and NPS are interested in more than just the location of these point features. A number of attributes need to be recorded about these supporting features along the trail. Because a picture is worth a thousand words, trail management staff will be able to gather more insight from these images than was previously possible with simple GPS data. To see a working demo of the photo-enabled point features please visit the following link: <http://arcg.is/1mj83I7>

Of course with an increase in updated information will come an increase in new and updated paper hiking maps available in our trail shop. 2016 is going to be a big year for trail information along the North Country Trail! ✨



Essential GPS field equipment—Bad Elf GPS receiver and trail mix.



Trail management staff tests geo-tagged photos with an iPad in Wisconsin. Front to back: Bill Menke, Matt Davis, Andrea Ketchmark.

	Total Estimated Mileage	Total Off-Road Miles	Total On-Road Miles
New York	625	366.8	148.0
Pennsylvania	265	231.7	44.3
Ohio	1,050	501.1	588.4
Michigan	1,150	813.0	325.7
Wisconsin	200	133.2	84.0
Minnesota	775	583	255
North Dakota	475	250.1	180.0
Total	4,540	2,879.9	1,625.4



# North Country Trail Association Goes Social

by Amelia Rhodes, Marketing/Communications Coordinator



Over the past decade, social media has taken the internet by storm. According to Pew Research, nearly 65% of American adults use social media, which is about a ten-fold increase over the past decade. The rate is even higher for young adults ages 18-29 at 90% ([www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/)).

## Who could've imagined?

Social media provides a means for organizations like NCTA to stay in touch with their members, provide nearly instant updates, and even “live broadcast” events as they happen.

The North Country Trail Association has also “gone social,” and we have a variety of ways you can stay in touch with us across the Trail. I’ll provide a few tips to help you manage your social feed to make sure you don’t miss our updates. I’ve also rounded up all of our Chapters’ and Affiliates’ social links so you can be sure to follow your local groups.

## Hashtags

Across social networks, you’ll see the use of hashtags, such as #Hike100NCT. Hashtags are a way to “categorize” a conversation and group posts around a topic. You can click on a hashtag within a social network and see all the pictures and posts related to that topic. Try searching #northcountrytrail and find posts by other trail lovers. You may find new people you want to follow or connect with.

Note: hashtags don’t work quite as well on Facebook as they do the other social networks. Most individuals set their Facebook posts to friends only and not public. If you want a picture or post to be publicly searchable, click on the box just left of the blue post button to bring up the options available.

## Tagging

Tagging users is one way to get their attention and have a conversation. When you make a post on a social network type @ followed by the user’s name. For example, on Instagram, type @northcountrytrail when making your post. When I next log into our Instagram account, I’ll get a notification that you’ve said something about us. I can then make a comment on your post and reply to what you’ve said.

## Curating your feed

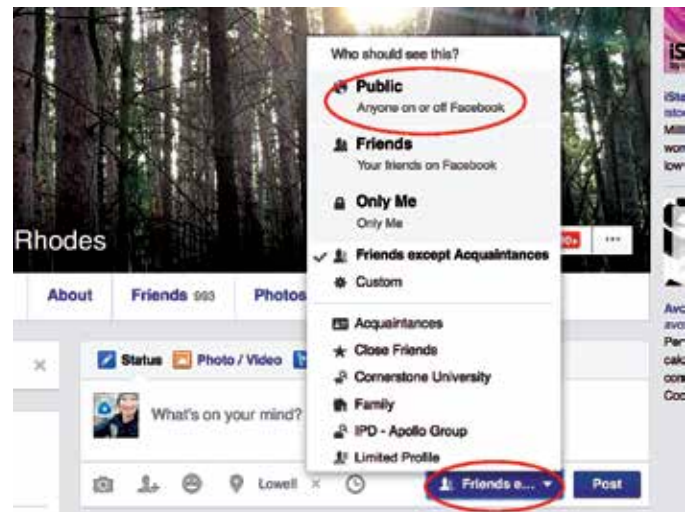
Many social networks curate your newsfeed using algorithms, pulling items into your newsfeed based on how much you’ve interacted with someone or topics that are most popular among those you follow.

You can curate your feed to make sure you don’t miss posts from people and organizations you most want to follow. Here’s a step-by-step guide for the top 3 platforms the NCTA uses.



## Facebook:

1. Go to our page at [www.facebook.com/northcountrytrail](http://www.facebook.com/northcountrytrail).
2. Hover over the dropdown arrow on the “like” button and you’ll see these options: (1) Unlike this Page, (2) In Your Newsfeed options to See First or Default, (3) Notifications options for On (All posts) or All Off.
3. If you click “See First” our posts will show up at the top of your newsfeed with a blue star whenever you check your newsfeed. If you click On (All posts) you will get a notification (the little world icon at the top right of your screen that has red numbers) whenever we post.
4. On your mobile app, go to our page, and click the

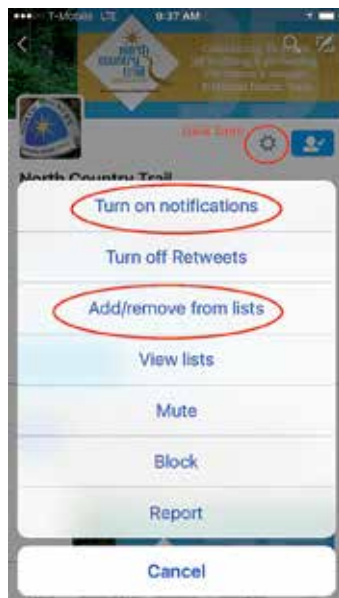
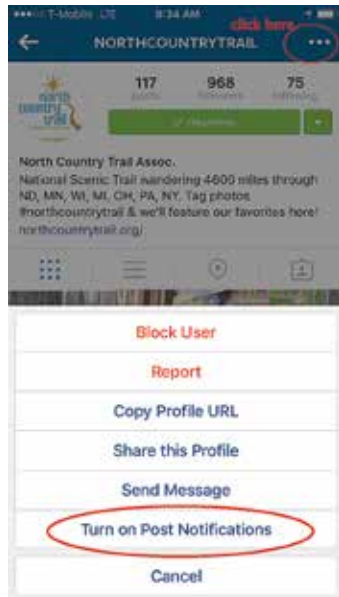




“Following” dropdown arrow and choose the “See First” icon.

### Instagram:

1. Go to our Instagram profile @northcountrytrail.
2. Click on the 3 dots at the top right of your screen.
3. A menu appears at the bottom of your screen. If you click “Turn on Post Notifications” you will get a notification on your phone every time we post. These notifications work with Push Notifications, which is a setting on your phone that you must have turned on for Instagram. These are the annoying little things that pop up on your phone no matter what app you are using. No, wait, NCTA posts would never be annoying, right?



### Twitter:

1. Go to our Twitter profile @nctrail
2. On your phone, click on the gear symbol to bring up a menu at the bottom of the screen. Turn on Notifications is one of the options. This works with your phone’s push notifications as mentioned above.
3. On Twitter you can also create lists. You can create a list or subscribe to an existing list. If you want to create your own Twitter list of hiking organizations to follow, you can create a “private” list that only you can see and add users you want to follow. Then you can view that list’s feed, making sure you don’t miss the posts from those organizations in what can easily become an overwhelming Twitter feed. Here’s a great article on creating lists for Twitter using the various software platforms: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/76460#>

Nearly all of our Chapters and Affiliate partners are on social media. Check the list below to find and follow their accounts. Each one will post information about upcoming work events, group hikes, and fun updates from their sections of the Trail.

### Main NCTA Social Media Accounts

[www.facebook.com/northcountrytrail](http://www.facebook.com/northcountrytrail)  
[www.instagram.com/northcountrytrail](http://www.instagram.com/northcountrytrail)  
[www.twitter.com/nctrail](http://www.twitter.com/nctrail)

### New York

**Central NY Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/CNYNCTA/](http://www.facebook.com/CNYNCTA/)  
**Finger Lakes Trail Conference:** [www.facebook.com/fingerlakestrailconference/](http://www.facebook.com/fingerlakestrailconference/)

### Pennsylvania

**Used by all Pa. Chapters:** [www.facebook.com/PA-North-Country-Trail-Association-248795517529/](http://www.facebook.com/PA-North-Country-Trail-Association-248795517529/)  
**Allegheny National Forest Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/ANFChapterNCT/](http://www.facebook.com/ANFChapterNCT/)  
**Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy:** [www.facebook.com/Rachel-Carson-Trails-Conservancy-139477179404285/](http://www.facebook.com/Rachel-Carson-Trails-Conservancy-139477179404285/)  
**Clarion Chapter:** Uses the Pa/ Facebook page  
**Butler Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/NCTAButlerChapter](http://www.facebook.com/NCTAButlerChapter) and [www.facebook.com/groups/ButlerCountyNCTA](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ButlerCountyNCTA)  
**Butler Outdoor Club:** [www.facebook.com/butleroutdoorclub](http://www.facebook.com/butleroutdoorclub) and [www.facebook.com/groups/ButlerOutdoorClub](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ButlerOutdoorClub)  
**Wampum Chapter:** Uses the Pa. Facebook page and [www.meetup.com/Wampum-Chapter-North-Country-Trail-Association-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Wampum-Chapter-North-Country-Trail-Association-Meetup/)  
also posts on: [www.meetup.com/Pittsburgh-Adventure-Lovers-club/](http://www.meetup.com/Pittsburgh-Adventure-Lovers-club/)

### Ohio

**Great Trail and Sandy Beaver:** [www.facebook.com/GTSBChapter](http://www.facebook.com/GTSBChapter)  
**Buckeye Trail Association:**  
[www.facebook.com/buckeyetrail/](http://www.facebook.com/buckeyetrail/)  
[www.twitter.com/hikethebt](http://www.twitter.com/hikethebt)  
[www.instagram.com/buckeyetrailassociation/](http://www.instagram.com/buckeyetrailassociation/)  
**Northwestern Ohio Rails-to-Trails Association:**  
[www.facebook.com/nortaofnwohio/](http://www.facebook.com/nortaofnwohio/)

### Michigan

**Chief Baw Beese Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/NCTbawbeese/](http://www.facebook.com/NCTbawbeese/)  
**Chief Noonday Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/North-Country-Trail-Association-Chief-Noonday-Chapter-128504520542086/](http://www.facebook.com/North-Country-Trail-Association-Chief-Noonday-Chapter-128504520542086/)  
**Western Michigan Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/NCTA.WMI](http://www.facebook.com/NCTA.WMI)  
also posts on: [www.meetup.com/hiking-477/](http://www.meetup.com/hiking-477/)  
**Spirit of the Woods Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/Spirit-of-the-Woods-chapter-of-the-North-Country-Trail-161957897214269/](http://www.facebook.com/Spirit-of-the-Woods-chapter-of-the-North-Country-Trail-161957897214269/)  
**Grand Traverse Hiking Club:** [www.facebook.com/GTHikers/](http://www.facebook.com/GTHikers/) [www.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/GrandTraverseHikingClub/info](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/GrandTraverseHikingClub/info)

**Jordan Valley 45° Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/North-Country-Trail-Association-Jordan-Valley-45-636045479799699/](http://www.facebook.com/North-Country-Trail-Association-Jordan-Valley-45-636045479799699/)

**Harbor Springs Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/Harbor-Springs-Chapter-North-Country-Scenic-Trail-124041384304528/](http://www.facebook.com/Harbor-Springs-Chapter-North-Country-Scenic-Trail-124041384304528/)

**Hiawatha Shore-to-Shore Chapter:**  
[www.facebook.com/nctahss](http://www.facebook.com/nctahss)

**Superior Shoreline Chapter:**  
[www.facebook.com/SuperiorShoreline](http://www.facebook.com/SuperiorShoreline)

**NCT Hikers Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/NCTHikers](http://www.facebook.com/NCTHikers)

**Peter Wolfe Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/NCT.PWC](http://www.facebook.com/NCT.PWC)

**Ni-Miikanaake Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/groups/124962937528178/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/124962937528178/)

## Wisconsin

**Used by all Wisc. Chapters:** [www.facebook.com/NCTinWI](http://www.facebook.com/NCTinWI)

**Heritage and Chequamegon Chapters:** [www.meetup.com/CheqPenHikers/](http://www.meetup.com/CheqPenHikers/)

**Brule St. Croix Chapter:** [www.meetup.com/sscbhikers](http://www.meetup.com/sscbhikers)

## Minnesota

**Used by all Minn. Chapters:**

[www.facebook.com/NCTinMN/](http://www.facebook.com/NCTinMN/)

[www.facebook.com/ArrowheadReRoute/](http://www.facebook.com/ArrowheadReRoute/)

[www.twitter.com/NCTinMN](http://www.twitter.com/NCTinMN)

[www.meetup.com/HikeNCTinMN/](http://www.meetup.com/HikeNCTinMN/)

[www.meetup.com/Chip-NCT-hikers/](http://www.meetup.com/Chip-NCT-hikers/)

**Superior Hiking Trail Association:**

[www.facebook.com/suphike](http://www.facebook.com/suphike)

[www.twitter.com/SHTHike](http://www.twitter.com/SHTHike)

**Border Route Trail Association:**

[www.facebook.com/groups/borderoutetrail/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/borderoutetrail/)

[www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Border-Route-Trail/](http://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-the-Border-Route-Trail/)

**Kekekabic Trail Club:** Uses main Minn. pages.

**Arrowhead Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/arrowheadhikers/](http://www.facebook.com/arrowheadhikers/)

[www.meetup.com/Arrowhead-NCT-hikers/](http://www.meetup.com/Arrowhead-NCT-hikers/)

**Itasca Moraine Chapter:** Uses main Minn. pages.

**Glacial Edge Chapter:** [www.facebook.com/groups/565210860298649](http://www.facebook.com/groups/565210860298649)

[www.meetup.com/Otter-Tail-Outdoors/](http://www.meetup.com/Otter-Tail-Outdoors/)

[www.meetup.com/Otter-Tail-Outdoors/](http://www.meetup.com/Otter-Tail-Outdoors/)

**Laurentian Lakes Chapter:** Uses main Minn. pages.

**Star of the North Chapter:** Uses main Minn. pages.

## North Dakota

**Used by all N. Dak. Chapters:** [www.facebook.com/NCTinND-233196580028628/](http://www.facebook.com/NCTinND-233196580028628/)

[www.facebook.com/NCTinND-233196580028628/](http://www.facebook.com/NCTinND-233196580028628/)

**Dakota Prairie Chapter:** [www.meetup.com/Red-River-Valley-Outdoors/](http://www.meetup.com/Red-River-Valley-Outdoors/)

**Sheyenne River Valley Chapter:** Uses main N.D. page

## Other:

**Trail Angels Page:** [www.facebook.com/groups/trail00angels00of00the00NCNST/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/trail00angels00of00the00NCNST/)

[www.facebook.com/groups/trail00angels00of00the00NCNST/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/trail00angels00of00the00NCNST/)

**NCT:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1442749329321045/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1442749329321045/>



*Apparently hikers are being subjected to more afflictions than ever, many of them transmitted by bugs. This article centers on Minnesota problems in this realm, but almost all of the Red Plaid Nation is subject to diseases from ticks, according to maps published by the Centers for Disease Control. Only northern Ohio seems to be relatively free of these cooties, so far. Worse yet, an article was included with the Chequamegon Chapter's winter newsletter, describing yet another debilitating disease that can be transmitted by ticks. It is named for the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where this variation on Lyme disease was isolated in some patients. Best advice, should you have mysterious symptoms, with or without the classic red bullseye, remind your doctor that you could well have been bitten by a tick, so that the proper tests are administered.*

## Is That A Tick?

Georgia Nothdurst, Mayo Clinic

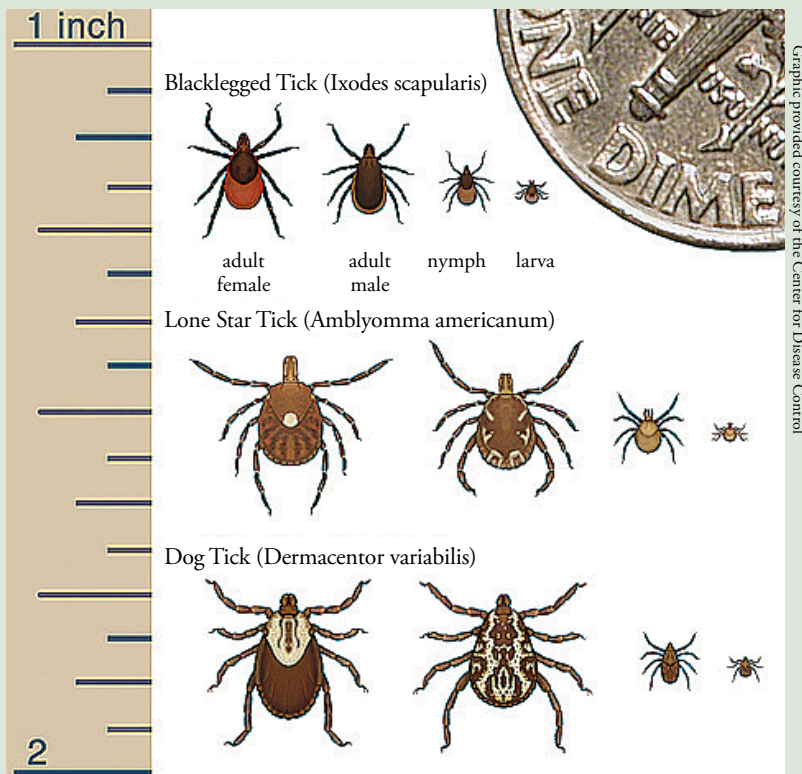
“What kind of tick is that?” is becoming an all too commonly asked question in the North Woods. Hikers in Minnesota, especially along the Mississippi drainage, are most likely to encounter *Ixodes scapularis*, commonly known as the “black legged” or “Deer tick.” Highest risk counties, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, include Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing, Carlton, Hubbard, Itasca, Mille Lacs and Pine counties, areas North Country hikers are most likely to be traveling. Want to know more about who might be traveling with you?

*Ixodes scapularis* has a three stage (and often three year) life span. As larvae, the size of the dot at the end of this sentence, these arachnids (8-legged bugs) attach to and feed on the body juices of small mammals, most often voles, mice and chipmunks. It is through this feeding that the tick becomes infected from the rodent carrier of multiple diseases. The nymphal stage, a tick the size of a freckle and likely to go unnoticed, is the most common vector of tick-borne illness. So, what illness are you likely to catch?

Lyme disease, the most infamous tick borne illness, is characterized by fever, headache, fatigue, and in about 50% of cases, a migratory “bulls-eye” rash. However, Minnesota has seen a significant increase in other, more deadly tick-borne illness, about which the back-country user should know. Other bacterial diseases include *Borrelia miyamotoi*, (BMD which may cause meningoencephalitis, an infection within the brain); Ehrlichiosis (2% fatality rate); Human Anaplasmosis (HA); and Rocky Mt Spotted fever (RMSF, 3% fatality rate), a protozoan disease (much like malaria); Babesiosis, and an encephalitic virus; and Powassan, a relative of West Nile. All are all transmissible from ticks. These illness ranges from infrequent to rare in Minnesota; however, cases continue to increase each year. If you've been exposed to tick habitat, develop fever, headache, and muscle aches see your medical provider as quickly as possible, and tell them of your tick exposure. All the above illnesses, except Powassan, can be treated with Doxycycline.

Many users of northern trails have more exposure to *Dermacentor variabius*, the wood or dog tick. Larger than the red and black *Ixodes*, the brown bodied (with tan accent) wood tick is a poor vector of Lyme disease, but is known to transmit RMSF, Tularemia and Tick paralysis. The first two diseases are characterized by high fever, chills, fatigue, rash in the case of





Here are websites from the Center for Disease Control that talk about insect borne diseases and prevention.

[www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/)

[www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/bourbon/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/bourbon/index.html)

[www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/index.html)

[www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on\\_people.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html)

[cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/](http://cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/)

[www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on\\_pets.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_pets.html)

[www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/in\\_the\\_yard.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/in_the_yard.html)

## Not Only Cooties, But Evil Plant Life, Too!

In our last issue you may have noticed the photo on the back cover of the gateway with a boot scraper installed by the Laurentian Lakes Chapter and then wondered why there was such a silly effort made to clean our boots before the hike. The boot scraper is an effort to reduce the travel of invasive species' seeds. With trails being a vector for dispersal of seeds from invasives tracked in on boots, hikers should be mindful of doing their part to prevent further spread of plants that don't belong.

Plant invaders? Aliens? Oh, indeed! Horrid thickets of multi-flora rose aren't natural to forests, but many of us have to fight back monstrous hedges of those thorns to keep trails clear. Japanese barberry, several all-consuming vines, honeysuckle...we all know some of these invaders, and often their seeds have hiked into the woods on our boots. Next time you are out hiking, check out trailheads and the trail itself to see what plants are growing there, that aren't growing elsewhere. Likely, they got there on our boots.

### Here Are A Couple Resources:

**Play Clean Go** encourages simple steps like removing plants, animals and mud from boots, gear, pets, and vehicle, cleaning your gear before entering or leaving a recreation site, and staying on designated roads and trails to help prevent the spread of invasive species. Visit their website [www.playcleango.org](http://www.playcleango.org) to learn more about invasives and how to stop their spread.

**The US Forest Service** offers a comprehensive training on invasive species. Watch their video "Playing Smart" at <http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/prevention/playingsmart.shtml>. Visit their website to learn more about invasive species, early detection, defending favorite places, and more: <http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/>.

RMSF, and a skin ulcer in Tularemia. Tick paralysis is a result of neurotoxins secreted by the female tick as she feeds, which leads to an ascending paralysis, which, in undiagnosed cases, can lead to respiratory arrest. The toxin is secreted by a feeding tick; removal of the tick results in cure.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Treat your clothing (and your pack, and outside of the tent floor) with Permethrin, a cidal (kill) agent. Do not use this on skin! DEET or Picaridin should be applied multiple times a day to exposed skin. Speaking of exposed skin, don't expose it. Wear long-sleeves and long pants (light color increases the chance of seeing a tick on your clothing), have a barrier between the shoes and under your pant leg, as most ticks are encountered in deep grass. Ticks "quest" on the ends of tall grass, detecting carbon dioxide and heat. The moment you come in contact with a questing tick, the race is on, as the critter heads for areas of body hair. Pubic areas, armpits and head hair lines are especially tempting, but a less discriminating tick may simply find a suitable meal in any skin fold (back of knees, stomach, and buttocks are notable). While wearing your pants tucked into your socks may draw an odd stare, it may also deter access to your skin.

Prior to climbing into your tent and sleeping bag, remove your trail clothing. To avoid bringing ticks into your tent, place your trail clothes in a small garbage bag, preferably with a small rag soaked in Permethrin, for overnight killing.

Minnesota has two seasons, (May to early July, and September to October) when ticks are most active; however, ticks can be encountered in the midst of a mild winter. Frost does not kill them, and they are protected from winter's wrath by tunneling in the leaf litter of the forest. Anytime the winter temps rise above freezing, you may encounter them questing from any vegetation they may find. Get out on the trail, and stay safe. A bit of knowledge and preparation will go a long way in making this summer's hiking as memorable as it is beautiful. ✨

# Hike 100 Challenge Finishers Inspire and Motivate

by Amelia Rhodes



Amelia Rhodes

**Amy Reedy (left) and Lisa Gilbert (right) came into the Lowell office to pick up their Hike 100 Challenge patches and certificates.**

The Hike 100 Challenge launched January 1, 2016. We're celebrating the National Park Service's Centennial Anniversary with a 100-mile hiking challenge. Anyone hiking 100 miles on the North Country Trail during 2016 is eligible for a special patch and certificate. Those who sign up at [www.northcountrytrail.org/hike100challenge](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/hike100challenge) are also entered for exciting prize drawings throughout the year.

It's not too late to sign up! Still plenty of time to win prizes and hike 100 miles before December 31.

As of this writing over 4000 people have signed up for the Hike 100 Challenge, and 38 challengers have completed their 100 miles. Across social media we're seeing hundreds of #Hike100NCT posts with inspiring stories and photos.

**As March ended, the finishers started rolling in nearly every day.** They've hiked, run, snowshoed, and skied their miles. They've hiked solo, with friends and family, and with furry companions. We've had finishers from all seven states, plus one from Illinois.



David Turner

**David Turner finished his 100 miles with friends from a local Facebook Group.**



Carmen LaGuardia

**Carmen LaGuardia was our first finisher on January 18.**



Shari Sanderson

**Shari Sanderson and Dennis Schanski celebrate their 100 mile challenge.**

**Our first finisher was Carmen LaGuardia from Michigan.** Carmen finished her 100 miles with a 16.25-mile hike on January 18, ending in Marshall, Michigan. She started hiking January 1, hiking all but three days. 60 of her 100 miles were unique with the other 40 being repeat miles. Carmen serves in the Air Force Honor Guard and is a grandmother to three. She said, "Hiking is so awesome...I encourage everyone to get out there and hike. Life is too short to not enjoy the outdoors!"

**Shari Sanderson shared a heartwarming story about hiking in memory of her father.** "My father instilled the love of hiking in me. He died a few years ago, and I inherited the hiking stick that he made. I have been hiking the North Country Trail for a couple of years with his hiking stick. It makes me feel like he is with me out on the Trail. We started the Hike 100 Challenge on January 16, 2016, in a couple of feet of fresh snow. We finished our 100 miles today in the rain. We had 72.78 unique miles and 27.22 repeat miles. We did the entire Harbor Springs Chapter and portions of the Jordan Valley 45° Chapter. I am looking forward to several weekend hikes in the Upper Peninsula this



summer. I feel lucky that the Trail can be experienced just a few miles from my home.”

**Neil Rinne was our second finisher, completing his challenge on January 31.** He said, “I did all my hikes on segment 9 of the North Country Trail Hikers section. I walked a total of 101.81 miles in 21 hikes and spent a total of 52 hours 18 minutes 57 seconds on the NCT. I tracked my hikes with a Garmin eTrex 30x receiver and used Garmin BaseCamp software to extract miles and hours spent hiking.”

**David Turner wrapped up his challenge with friends from Facebook.** “I serve as a trail volunteer for my local chapter, and only live 1/4 mile off the Trail, so it was easy for me to add the miles up. I finished my journey in Lowell with the Michigan Hiking and Backpacking Facebook group on February 13th. I love the NCT, and hope to raise further awareness of it for those who enjoy hiking. Here’s a video I produced of my final 15 miles on the Trail in Lowell.”

Check out David’s great video at [https://youtu.be/7-\\_td6Qcqkx](https://youtu.be/7-_td6Qcqkx).

**Participants have gained strength and endurance as Amy Reedy shared:** “On November 28th, my friend Lisa Gilbert and I participated in a group hike on the North Country Trail; it was supposed to be roughly 12 miles. We were unable to complete that and bailed at the halfway point. On March 18th we made that same hike! We also completed our 100 miles on that same stretch, building up our strength and endurance.”

**Bill Tate, also from Michigan, made the Hike 100 Challenge his New Year’s Resolution and finished on February 4.** “I hiked the Jonesville-Hillsdale portion of the North Country Trail. I started 1-1-2016 thru 2-4-2016 finishing this morning. I hiked 13 days in January and 3 days in February. All of my miles hiked were repeat miles with the longest being 10.05 and the shortest 5.03. My goal was to hike at least 5 miles a day. I am a retired state employee.”



Stephanie Francis

**Stephanie Francis, right, ran most of her miles with her Moms Run This Town group.**

**Roxanna Stewart from Michigan reported:** “I did the whole 100+ miles on cross-country skis! Next year I will again ski the Trail but probably not 100 miles.”

**Dan and Cheryl Patterson from Ohio were our first family finishers.** “My wife and I used the two car shuttle method to keep from doing out and back hikes. We primarily hiked the Buckeye Trail in Ohio, and fortunately it has been a mild winter on the weekends we hiked. The paved bike trails were flat and easy terrain, but monotonous and hard on the feet. So the last 25 miles we hiked the NCT through the East Fork State Park, and even though the terrain was more challenging, it was actually easier!”

**Stephanie Francis from Minnesota shared how she just can’t get enough of the Trail.** “With the exception of two miles hiked with my family of six, I ran my 100 miles by February 22 with friends from the local Moms Run this Town (MRTT) group. They often tease me, as I have become known as a euphoria seeker. There is something about being on the trails! No matter how hard I have to work to reach the top of the hill or power up the never-ending steps, EVERY time I am out there, I know there is going to be at least one moment of pure exhilaration...euphoria, I call it. My favorite outing was January 30 when we stomped through 2 miles of knee-deep snow and then saw a wolf in the distance. We’ve seen deer and fox, smelled skunk, watched the sun come up, heard the first gurgling of running

creek water and identified countless plants and fungi together.”

We couldn’t agree more, Stephanie! Keep hiking those 100 miles, and we look forward to hearing your stories. Share on social media using #Hike100NCT.

When you’ve finished your miles, fill out the form on the link below and we will mail your patch and certificate to you. [www.northcountrytrail.org/hike100finish/](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/hike100finish/) ✨



**Liz Slagle near Little Presque Isle north of Marquette. She and her father, Brad Slagle (photographer) are working on their Hike 100 Challenge.**

# North Country National Scenic Trail Goes on the Air with Amateur Radio!

By John Forslin, KC8ULE  
Marquette, Michigan

**Y**ou're planning an adventure out on the trail. What do you need? Working? Bug dope, lopping shears, bug headnet, maybe a McLeod. Not working? How about some snacks and water, trusty GPS and bug dope. Add a whistle and first aid kit. But what if your list included bungee cords, RG-8x coax cable with PL-259 ends, a 40-meter whip with an adjustable stinger. Oh – and bug dope? If you run into someone who is working on that last list, he or she is probably an amateur radio operator going out to “activate” the trail for the year-long National Parks On The Air (NPOTA) celebration of the National Park Service’s hundredth anniversary!



NPOTA is a wildly popular amateur (ham) radio activity for 2016. It was amateur radio’s centennial in 2015, and the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the “mother ship” for American ham radio, created a hugely successful on-air contest that let each state be “it” for two separate weeks during the year and encouraged hams all over the world to work (contact) as many states as possible over the year. NPOTA is similar in that the Park Service’s more than 430 “administrative units” are “it” for the year. Amateur operators can “activate” them by going to a National Park and getting on the air. “Chasers” are hams trying to score a contact (a QSO) with as many units as possible over the course of the year.

Sean Kutzko, callsign KX9X, is the ARRL media relations manager and the person who brought forth the NPOTA idea. “ARRL had their Centennial Celebration in July 2014. We celebrated with a three-day convention in July near our headquarters in Hartford, Connecticut, with over 4,000 guests from nearly 40 countries. After the last day, I was

tired, and just wanted to sit down. I ordered a pizza and turned on TV, and the Ken Burns series on the National Parks Service was on. Near the end of the episode, there was a casual mention that 2016 would be the Centennial of NPS. Having just gotten done with our own centennial convention, my brain instantly went to work on how Amateur Radio operators could help bring attention to the NPS Centennial. I had the basic idea for National Parks on the Air outlined on a scratch pad in about half an hour.” One would not go wrong calling Sean a promoter!

There is nothing official between NPS and ARRL about NPOTA, but Parks managers are getting with the program on their own. Kutzko continued his remarks: “We’re getting a lot of feedback from NPS units all over the country, happy to see the ham radio community transmitting from parks and helping promote each individual park’s story. Several NPS units have welcomed Amateur Radio operators into their park, including the Homestead National Monument in Nebraska, the De Soto National Memorial in Florida, and many others. Superintendent Mark Weaver here at the North Country Trail contacted us even before the event started, and has been one of NPOTA’s biggest advocates.”

“Most parks are amazed to discover there have already been several hundred two-way radio contacts made from their NPS unit, and how many hams are interested in transmitting from a park, said Kutzko. We’re hearing anecdotal evidence from a few parks that the Amateur Radio community is one of the largest communities that is engaging with the National Parks Centennial.”

NPOTA has really fired up the ham radio community. The event was announced on October 15, 2015, and the first planned activation for January 1, 2016 was logged in just 90 minutes later. National Parks, Battlefields, Historic sites, Memorials, Preserves, Reserves, Rivers, Seashores, National Scenic Trails, and some others are all qualified NPS “units.” Each has a designator. The NCNST is known as TR04, for instance, and the Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin is TR05. Through February 29th, 311 different NPS units had been activated and more than 136,000 contacts had been electronically reported. The single most activated unit is our cousin, the Appalachian Trail, with 39 separate activations logged and 1,913 contacts reported. Our TR04 had been activated 15 times already, with 1,455 contacts reported, and remember that more than half the trail was still frozen solid then! The NCNST is certain to be a hot topic to hams around the world over the course of the summer and into the fall.

But wait! Isn’t ham radio dried up and dead, what with cell phones and video services like Skype? No way! The U.S. had nearly 720,000 amateur licenses in effect in December 2014, and the number of licenses continues to increase. And licensure is growing fastest among younger people who are looking for ways to provide help in communications emergencies in their communities (Hurricane Sandy, earthquakes, wild land fires for instance). So NPOTA gives unit “activators” a chance to prove they can get out into field locations, set up and make contacts using only temporary setups, as might be the case in an emergency. And you can scratch your head at this one: part of the fun of this style of



operating is that hams put up technical rules that make it harder to make contacts! Many, many operators operate QRP, that is, extremely low power. QRP is defined as 5 watts or less, but half watt operations or even milliwatt operations are common, and stunningly effective. Hams prove every day that they can still get messages through under the most extreme conditions.

A very welcoming note from Trail HQ in Lowell was sent to the ham community via ARRL's QST magazine, appearing in the March issue.

NCNST was not on the original list of NPS units when the NPOTA program was announced. A few ham operators who are also trail volunteers picked that up and HQ in Lowell went into overdrive to get that fixed. And they did! Trail Superintendent Mark Weaver visited a trail activation in February with Hank, callsign N8XX, and liked what he experienced to the point he is considering testing for a radio license!

In the NPOTA application, operators have a chance to increase awareness of the park in the chaser community being activated by just naming the unit. If traffic is not heavy, more information about the unit might be exchanged. And this is significant for public relations : for every contact, there are about 5 other parties hearing the contact but not participating directly. So, 140 contacts could well represent up to 700 people learning something about that unit, so this is a very effective publicity tool, besides just being really fun for the activators and the chasers.

One extreme dimension of the fun is called a "pileup." This is when dozens, perhaps hundreds of chasers are all calling you at the same time. Activators have friends "spot" them on amateur radio web sites. The "spot" is a one-line announcement that N8XX is on the air, on this frequency, and is working the NCNST for NPOTA. Wow. That draws a crowd! Being on the inside of a pileup is challenging, and managing the pileup so that as many callers as possible get a confirmed contact is a real art. Again, this is a very useful skill in a high-intensity emergency management scenario.

So you should expect to see some oddly-equipped folk out on the trail this season. They love to chat about what they are doing and you may get some flash insight into how much fun they are having activating your trail. If you have some insider knowledge about your section of trail, some little-known historical fact, or maybe that rare birds come through, the operators will want to know about it so they can use that in chatter with their contacts. If you have the time, hang out at an activation and listen in. You might even get asked to help, as by "logging" (writing down contact information in the log book). You can even take a turn on the air if offered. It can be quite an experience!

Here are some quick reports about recent Trail activations:

Russ, N8MWK, felt at home on the trail. "I have a lot of history around Burr Oak State Park here in SE Ohio. I have been hiking and camping in the area since I was 10. I activated the Trail on January 30th. It was still winter, but sunny and 45 degrees. Good for the solar panel keeping my batteries charged up! I made 150 contacts in about 4 hours. I got to talk to 4 hikers, two people just driving through and

the Park ranger. This was a lot of fun. It's nice to see the Trail getting some attention this way. There was a very hungry Canada goose after my lunch. He didn't get any."

Steve, AB9ZZ, is retired Navy (22 years), now living in northern Wisconsin. Radio is his deep wintertime activity. NPOTA interested him from the beginning – and was a way to combine radio with his love of the outdoors! Also a great excuse to buy a new portable radio!

He did not know of the existence of the Trail until he searched the NPOTA materials on the web and found that the Trail traversed the forests near his home. This led him to



**Russ, N8MWK, ready! Note battery on the left, solar panel in front.**

the NCTA's wonderful website, historical documentation and interactive maps. "I was hooked!" he said.

His first NPOTA activation on the Trail was March 12th from Iron County. The Trail was still slippery with ice and snow. His first contact was with Randy, W9RWB, who was activating a Scenic Riverway in Missouri. He made 46 contacts in 90 minutes of operating. "I didn't see any hikers. Too bad. Even with the snow cover, it was a beautiful day to be outdoors!" he reports. His QSO tally is impressive when you understand he was operating at 2.5 watts! Hams like to make stuff. He made his own antenna for the purpose. New radio and home-brew antenna are working for him – on a subsequent activation of TR05 – the Ice Age Trail – he worked England and Italy on 5 watts!

Del, W8WDW, is a Boy Scout Leader, and the Boy Scout cabin in Lowell, Michigan (home to NCTA HQ!) is on the Trail. His troop uses it often for hikes. This last activation had a dozen Trail hikers stop and chat, and most seemed interested in the activity. "Operating portable is always fun!" he notes. He's a modern ham operator – light advanced chemistry battery and a solar panel to supply power to a standard radio with the power just dialed back. A lightweight, highly packable antenna completes his traveling kit. And it's all effective. "Close to 400 contacts in 4 activations of the Trail in over 40 states. This included seven contacts at other NPOTA units, too!" he reports.

*Continued on page 38*



Del Rockwell W8WDW/3

Hank, N8XX, with NCNST Superintendent Mark Weaver at the Boy Scout cabin on the trail near Lowell, Michigan.

Nor are all attempts successful. John, KC8ULE, tried hard in -3 degree weather, but got skunked by the howling of the wind and the pounding of the Lake Superior surf just a few yards away. "People told me there were hams calling me, but I just couldn't hear them, even with good headphones!" he reports. This, after hauling a huge deep-cycle battery along the packed-snow trail in a Yooper-scoop.

Ok! That's the story about what's happening on your trail this year. You might get a phone call or an email from a ham looking for a new site to activate. Any help you can offer will be appreciated! The activation will be a good club newsletter item, too, so stay in touch with your on-air visitors. Ask them a question to start a conversation. You could start with something casual, like, "You running QRP? How's the solar flux today? Scored any good DX?" They'll love it! What you said was "Are you running at low power? How are the prospects for long-range communication today? Made any contacts at long distance?" Yes, my friends, it's going to be a great year on the Trail! ✱

See author John Forslin's website: <http://qsl.net/kd8dku/LightUptheTrail.htm>

## Ham Operator Directory

Cell phone communication along the North Country Trail is not available in many locations, particularly in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Energized by the National Parks On The Air program a group of NCT members who also happen to be ham radio operators are putting together a directory of operators along the trail and we need your input. If you are a ham radio operator or know of someone who would be eager to assist hikers and maintain contact with hikers via ham radio, please send your location, call sign and local repeater information to [kd8zyw@gmail.com](mailto:kd8zyw@gmail.com) in order that we may put together a resource for hikers/ham radio operators along the trail. It does not matter in which state you are located or whether or not cell phone coverage is good in your area.

—Tim Hass  
(906) 202-2214  
KD8ZYW

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY'S  
NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®



**Join Us for  
National Trails Day®  
June 4, 2016**

June 4 is American Hiking Society's National Trails Day. This event is the nation's largest celebration of trails, and the North Country National Scenic Trail is excited once again to participate with events across our seven states.

National Trails Day isn't just about hiking and enjoying our country's magnificent trails system. It's also about celebrating the incredible work volunteers like you do all year long to make trails great.

This year on National Trails Day, you can participate in a triple celebration. As you join a local event on the North Country Trail, you'll celebrate both National Trails Day and the National Park Service's Centennial Anniversary, and get miles in for your Hike 100 Challenge. It's a win-win-win!

To find an event near you, visit [www.nationaltrailsday.americanhiking.org/](http://www.nationaltrailsday.americanhiking.org/) ntd-events/ or check with your local NCTA Chapter or visit our website [www.northcountrytrail.org](http://www.northcountrytrail.org). We will see you out on the Trail June 4!

—Amelia Rhodes,  
NCTA





Left to Right: Barb, Roberta, and Wendy.



Fourth member Carol.

## Meet The West Team

By Tim Hass

As the snow finally begins to leave the Trail along the Lake Superior coast, it is time to commence planning that first hike of the spring when the forest is beginning to awaken and the bugs have not yet appeared. Perhaps you have wondered the identities of those who maintain that trail and enhance your enjoyment. The Superior Shoreline Chapter's section is a linear trail spanning approximately 120 miles, broken into east and west sections separated by Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. By reason of this geography two trail teams developed, one on the east led by Ed Bowen of Grand Marais and one on the west led by Barb Isom from Munising. We introduce to you Barb and the three core members of her team.



Barb is on the left, Roberta is in the middle, and Wendy is on the right..Carol is in the second photo. The four of them brush, clear and blaze the 20 miles of trail from Munising to its west terminus. For those who have not hiked this section, it is replete with hills, valleys and the occasional level segment. While design standards call for a trail four feet wide, including a 24 inch tread, if some branch, fallen tree or overgrown bush might even encroach upon the trail and interfere with one's feet, they remove it. There is an interesting and educational physics lesson in watching the ease with which they remove fallen trees when many would not attempt the project without bringing in a sawyer to buck, or section, the tree. This is not to say that they are averse to bringing in a sawyer. But to bring in a sawyer slows them down. They view it, move it or remove it while the sawyer is still donning PPE (personal protective equipment).

Barb's team seems to have an insatiable appetite for trail work as not only do they keep the west section clear, blazed and visible during BOTH seasons in the UP (winter and non-winter), they readily travel to the east section of our trail not only to perform the same work as they do on the west section, but also lay out and build trail where it has eroded and collapsed onto the shore of Lake Superior.

They pay attention to the smallest detail, do not seem to tire, never cease to be upbeat, have a seemingly never ending sense of humor and an appreciation for the trail. They have even been known to invite and include mere mortals in their trail maintenance outings. And, should there be a question about some particular flora, one need only ask Carol, the resident botanist among them. Most important of all, working with them is a heck of a lot of fun! ✱

*Great to hear your appreciation of their work, Tim. It has been noticed before that some women trail caretakers have more patience and more willingness to fuss over details. Some of them are great blaze-painters, too. Maybe your tale will convince more women that they should graduate from the cookie-making squad into actual trail work. Over the last year I've been trying to train a squad of well-meaning men to take over a big section of my own, but they still get jibber-jabbering with each other and just step right over stuff that should be picked up!*

—Editor



**North Country  
Trail Association**

229 East Main Street  
Lowell, Michigan 49331

NONPROFIT  
U. S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Permit 340



Lois Judd

Let us never complain about building switchbacks on our puny little hills along the North Country Trail. This is the upper end of the Bright Angel Trail down to the bottom of Arizona's Grand Canyon, taken in February, about one and a half miles as the raven flies from the photographer's vantage point along the Rim Trail.



Your Adventure Starts Nearby.

## Come Visit Us!

The Lowell office is open to the public Tuesday-Thursday 1:00 to 4:30 and Friday 10:00 to 4:30  
Other hours by appointment. Please call ahead M-F during working hours.

229 East Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331  
(866) HikeNCT • (616) 897-5987 • Fax (616) 897-6605

The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners.

Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of the premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers and backpackers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.