

## **Autumn Hiking**

*Tom Rankin*

Autumn is a great time to go for a hike. The days are cooler and drier, and the leaves are worth a trip all by themselves. But before you go out, take a minute to think about safety and Fall hiking.

To start with, it can get cold in the mountains as the seasons change. We think of winter as the time when it's really cold and snow falls, but in the Catskills, temperatures can plummet during fall. I remember at least twice recently when over a foot of snow blanketed the Catskills in October. And while you might not meet with winter-like conditions at the trail head, as you climb you could run into wind, snow, and freezing temperatures. It's said, 'the mountains make their own weather'.

Bring extra layers in your pack, including hats and gloves. There are lots of traction devices you can buy to assist in hiking when a light amount of snow or ice is on the ground, but snowshoes are not yet needed. Some examples are Microspikes, Trail Crampons, and Stabilicers. While Yaktrax are OK for going out to the mailbox, they are not recommended for the mountains. As the days get shorter, you will have less time to finish your hike during daylight hours. A headlamp is always in my pack.

When checking a forecast, consider that if it says 40 degrees F for Hunter, that is for the bottom of the mountain. As you climb, the temperature goes down about 4 degrees Fahrenheit for every 1,000 feet. So by the time you get to the top, it could be below freezing.

Let's not forget, there are many hunting seasons in the fall. (There are many hunting seasons during the entire year, but this is big game season). Rather than list them all for you, I suggest you check the DEC web page, <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28605.html> . While some people avoid the woods during hunting season, I have no problem hiking at this time of year. I just wear bright red or orange clothes and a similarly colored hat. While there were 4 deaths in New York related to hunting last year, none of them involved hikers, and none of them were in the Catskills.