

The Catskill 3500 Club — Steward of the Catskills



April—June 2014

www.catskill-3500-club.org

Volume 47 Number 2

Trail Mix: News & Notes from the club

Save the date: WFA

The **SOLO Wilderness First Aid** 16 hour course will be offered again this spring. Dates are April 26 and 27, with WFA from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days and CPR offered Saturday evening. Location is The Catskill Center in Arkville, NY. First priority will be given to current hike leaders; space is limited to 16 participants. Please contact Maria Bedo or Heather Rolland for more information regarding cost and Founder's Award reimbursement.

For more information about the **WFA** contact either:

Maria Bedo:

maria1bedo@gmail.com (917) 881-9272 or,

Heather Rolland:

haliagrace@hotmail.com 



DUES NOTICE! Club DUES are DUE.

2014 Annual dues are now payable, you can save the club an extra mailing by renewing now. The new renewal form can now be downloaded from the website. Printing it out is not necessary if you supply the necessary information: what you are ordering/paying for. All checks should be made out to the Catskill 3500 Club. If you are a member (climbed all the peaks and received a number) they should be sent to David White; if not (you are an aspiring member), they should be sent to Terri Maxymillian. See their addresses on page 2.

<http://www.catskill-3500-club.org/joining.htm>

Views from the Top The President's Column

I'm writing this in the depths of Winter. A huge snow storm has finally turned the Catskills into a Winter wonderland. Apparently getting to the summit here is currently more difficult than the high peaks of the Adirondacks! Most of us know conditions like that are short lived. We have temps in the 50's predicted for next week. The powder we have



now could turn to slush in a matter of hours. Then we will have ice after that. Such are the vagaries of hiking in the North East. Conditions are constantly changing. Spring time hikers can find it's warm and sunny in the morning down in the valley. But as they ascend, deep, 'rotten' snow up high in the firs, slows their progress considerably. The much cooler temperatures make them wish they'd brought heavier jackets.

What am I getting at? We should always be prepared for the best and the worst the mountains can throw at us. I frequently meet hikers who are not even carrying a pack! Sometimes I want to ask them if it fell off. Other times I try to get in a gentle reminder about safety. Hunters have to take a Safety Course before they can go out in the woods. Maybe Hikers should as well!

Since you will probably be reading this as Winter comes to a close, let me congratulate everyone who has finished the Winter 35 this past season! We hope to see many of you at the annual dinner. It may not be too late to sign up, check the end of this Newsletter for details..

Tom Rankin - President 

The Catskill Canister

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Nominal dates for receiving the Canister are:
 Mar 15, Jun 15, Sep 15, and Dec 15.

New Members 2014

2205	Sam (DongWoo)Lee	11/17/13
2206	Sol Ham	11/24/13
2207	Carron Blanchet	01/05/13
2208	Peter Ellis	12/12/13
2209	Monique Lamb	12/19/13
2210	John M Ogle	07/27/13
2211	Mark Purdy	11/02/13
2212	J Ryan Sloan	12/21/13
2213	Keith Starlin	12/24/13
2214	Rich (YongDea) Park	12/22/13
2215	Jack Rohan	12/29/13
2216	Donald Kent	12/29/13
2217	Trevor Kent	12/29/13
2218	Mark Woodard	01/01/14
2219	Bethany Woodard	01/01/14
2220	Lisa Porcelli	03/17/13
2221	Troy Hodas	12/29/13
2222	Anna Hodas	12/29/13
2223	Joseph Ferri	01/08/14
2224	Shari Aber	01/08/14
2225	Tim Huneck	01/19/14
2226	Jan King	11/05/13
2227	Simon Dudar	12/21/13
2228	Susan Jordan	02/01/14
2229	Linda Bowden	01/25/14
2230	Daniel R Van Engel	02/01/14
2231	Martha Waldman	02/01/14
2232	Cliff Prewencki	02/01/14
2233	Joseph Chenier	02/01/14
2234	Elsie Lee	02/02/14
2235	Dean Keating	02/02/14
2236	Wayne R deTorres	02/01/14
2237	Brent Horine	02/09/14
2238	Ronald Roberts	11/25/13
2239	Wesley Joseph	02/17/14
2240	Michael Stonek	02/16/14
2241	Raj Tailor	02/15/14
2242	Marv Freedman	02/22/14

New Winter Members

0875	Lisa Porcelli	2220	03/17/13
0876	David Klein	2139	01/04/14
0877	Arlo Cusmano	1874	01/12/14
0878	Sergey Boldyrev	2129	01/19/14
0879	Dorothy Kucar	1975	01/20/14
0880	Paula Repka	1827	01/25/14

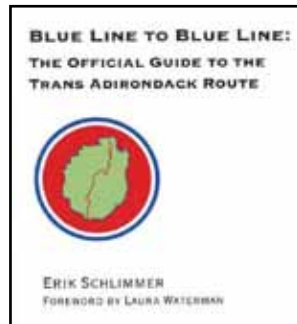
Continued on page 8...

Hiker's Bookshelf



With a publication date of March 15, this issue of the Catskill Canister likely finds you finished with your winter peaks and eagerly planning your summer adventures. Catskill veteran hiker Erik Schlimmer's latest book, *Blue Line to Blue Line: The Official Guide to the Trans Adirondack Route*, may give you just the inspiration you seek.

A route, not a trail, requires some explanation, and Schlimmer is thorough in his treatment of just what makes the Trans Adirondack Route (TAR) a route. Among the unique features of this book and route are the choices Schlimmer makes in taking the hiker from blue line to blue line – north to south (or vice versa) from park boundary to park boundary. To a peak bagger, devising a route that does anything other than traverse as many high points as possible is heresy, but the TAR eschews the peaks, crossing only 3 in its 230+ miles. But the purpose here was to create a route – on trails, logging roads, snowmobile trails, and roads as necessary – that led the hiker from blue line to blue line, crossing the Park in a way that maximizes the unique wilderness experience available when one steps off the high peak highways. Catskill readers, prepare to have your curiosity piqued.



Schlimmer is a good writer and a great storyteller, illustrating points with anecdotes rather than a terse list of bullet points, although he does make judicious use of concise lists when appropriate. The treatment of Leave No Trace ethics, and following DEC regulations is relevant to Catskill hiking as well, and very much in line with the recent efforts by the 3500 Club board to improve our safety and stewardship efforts. Throughout the route description, pull-out text boxes entitled “There’s More To It” offer additional historical or natural history details, or charming stories (don’t miss “Hitch Up, Mathilda”).

Blue Line to Blue Line is engaging reading, but for those of you “Type A” reader-hikers, you may find yourselves skimming or even skipping section not immediately relevant to the route itself. Experienced backpackers and veteran Cat-Dackers, for example, might flip to page 87

to get right into the route information. I do recommend that you flip back and read through Schlimmer’s detailed introductions and stories. I promise that the section of giardia will raise your awareness and your eyebrows.

As a trail (sorry, route) guide, *Blue Line to Blue Line* provides everything you need to know to tackle this project. Logistics are covered, as are all the details any hiker or backpacker might need regarding weather, seasons, gear, DEC regulations... the book is thorough, dense, charming, and readable. It is also small enough to carry. Well thought out and truly different, this is definitely a recommended addition to your hiking library.

Review by Heather Rolland, #1777 W757

Conservation Corner

A Note from our Conservation Chair, Carol White

We are asked to report the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, which is fatal to hemlock trees. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/hwabrochure.pdf to view the [Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Brochure \(PDF\)](#) and the [Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey Form \(PDF\)](#) to report what you see. If you notice trees that are losing their needles or where needles are no longer deep green but grayish green, look for a white woolly substance on the undersides of twigs near the base of hemlock needles. These are the eggs that can remain on needles year round after they hatch. The brown crawlers themselves are difficult to spot because they are the size of this period. View photos at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7250.html and compare with similar, non-harmful insects’ presence. Call DEC’s forest pest hotline at 1-866-640-0652, or [email photos](#).

This insect was confirmed in the lower Hudson Valley in the 1980s and spread into the Catskills and Capital Region. Originating in Asia, trees there are resistant to the adelgid, but here, infestation is usually fatal to the host after several years. It is now invading southern New York and the Finger Lakes region..



Rambles and Brambles: Hike Schedule April—June 2014

Assumed Risk: Hiking involves certain inherent risks and persons participating do so at their own risk. In cool weather, hike participants should avoid cotton clothing, as it retains dampness and the resulting chill can result in hypothermia, which can lead to death. Instead, wear (and have available in your pack) garments of wool or fleece. Silk or polypropylene make the best base layers, as they tend to wick moisture away from the body. Hats, gloves, and a headlamp must be part of the standard early spring kit. Ice and snow can still be found unexpectedly in these peaks. In early spring, if there is any doubt about the conditions that may be encountered, each hiker is strongly advised to bring snowshoes and full crampons to the trailhead; the leader may advise that these do not have to be taken on the hike, but be aware that while there may be bare ground at the trailhead, there is often very significant ice and snow as the elevation increases, which could result in those improperly prepared being sent back. Anyone not properly equipped may be refused permission to participate, at the leader's absolute discretion. Don't be seduced by buds on the trees at the trailhead, early spring in the Catskills is not to be treated lightly.

Rating System: Please be advised that the hikes listed herein would most likely be rated more difficult by clubs who hike in non-mountainous terrains

Private Property: All Catskill 3500 Club hikes respect "No Trespassing" signs and the owners' wishes in such regards; leaders shall obtain permission to cross private property when so required.

Volunteer to Lead: If you are a member of the Club please consider becoming a hike leader. Just contact Manuel Peraza [outings@catskill-3500-club.org ; 718-698-4422 (7 p.m.-9 p.m.)], and he will arrange to add you to the low-volume private Yahoo list through which hikes are coordinated. You will be contacted via this means when hikes are needed.

Group Size: All Club bushwhacks are limited to 12 participants including the leaders. The DEC limits group size to 12 in the Wilderness Areas. Accordingly, all Club hikes allow no more than 12 participants. If in doubt, please contact the leader.

Sat. April 5—NO HIKING TRIP SCHEDULED**Sun. April. 6—BEARPEN & VLY**

Distance: 8 mi. Ascent 2035' Elev. 3600', 3529'

A moderately paced bushwhack and trail hike that may still require winter gear.

Registration Period: between March 31, 2014 and April 4, 2014

Leaders: Tom and Laurie Rankin #1503, #1337
laurierankin@hvc.rr.com (preferred);
845-926-2182

Sat. April 12—KAATERSKILL H.P.

Distance: 8 mi. Ascent: 1775' Elev. 3655'

Moderately paced trail hike and bushwhack.

Registration Period: 4/7-4/24

Leader: Ryan Sloan, ryan.sloan@bbh.com,
201-956-0371

Sun. April 13—GIANT LEDGE & PANTHER MT

Distance: 6.7 mi. Ascent: 1900' Elev. 3200', 3720'

Easy to moderately paced trail hike. Heavy rain cancels.

Registration Period: 4/4/14-4/10/24

Leader: Tonda Highley (#1944); thighley1944@gmail.com or 914-475-9536.

Sat. April 19—FRIDAY & BALSAM CAP

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 2200' Elev. 3694', 3623'

Moderately paced hike and very strenuous bushwhack to two more difficult peaks.

Registration period: April 10 to April 17

Leader: Paul Pilmanis #2002, ppilmanis@yahoo.com

Sun. Apr. 20—THOMAS COLE OVER CAMEL'S HUMP (Optional Extension to Black Dome)

Distance: 5.8 mi. (ext. 7.4 mi.) Ascent 2000' (ext. 2540')
Elev. 3940'

Moderate to relaxed-paced trail hike.

Registration Period: Contact leaders to register by

Thurs. Apr. 17.

Leaders: David & Carol White #859, #860; ccswhite@juno.com (preferred), 315-853-1070.

Sat. April 26—ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP

As part of the state-wide, Adopt-a-Highway program, please join us to help clean up the Club's segment of Rt. 214. Bring work gloves and a great attitude. All else will be provided, including refreshments at end. It only takes a few hours, you'll have the rest of the day to yourself and have done a good thing for the Catskills.

Leader: Contact: Cathy O'Neill: cathyon1@gmail.com (preferred), or 914-737-4990 H, 914-772-7423 C.

In case of bad weather or dangerous conditions, hikes may be canceled; if in doubt contact the leader.

Sun. April 27—WINDHAM H.P.

Distance: 6.4 mi. Ascent 1524' Elev.: 3524'

Leisurely paced trail hike to Windham HP.

Registration Period: 4/13-4/26

Leader: Eric Hazard #2132; ehazard@yahoo.com

Sat. May 3 -- PEEKAMOOSE & TABLE TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Please join us for our annual spring maintenance day. Bring work gloves and tools if you have ones you like to use: loppers or hand clippers, garden hoe, hand saw. If you don't have tools, the Club will supply them. Refreshments at end of day. Come join us. This event is work but it is fun as well.

Leaders: Cathy O'Neill and Phil Knudson. Contact: Cathy O'Neill: cathyon1@gmail.com (preferred), or 914-737-4990 H, 914-772-7423 C

Sun. May 4—KIDS HIKE TO WINDHAM HIGH PEAK

Distance: 6.5 mi. Ascent 1500' Elev. 3524'

A trail hike suitable for children who must be accompanied by an adult.

Registration Period: between April 28, 2014 and May 2, 2014

Leaders: Tom and Laurie Rankin #1503, #1337 laurierankin@hvc.rr.com (preferred); 845-926-2182

Sat. May 10—TABLE & LONE

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent: 1900', Elev. 3847' & 3721'

Trail climb up and bushwhack down loop from Denning.

Registration Period: before April 25th

Leader: Michele Farrell; cornfarrell@hvc.rr.com

Sun. May 11—BALSAM LAKE + Mill Brook Ridge & Alder Lake

Distance: 12 mi. Ascent of Balsam Lake Mt.: 1200'

Total Elev.: 1700'. Elev. 3723'.

First we will hike up Balsam Lake Mt. to the fire tower and then we will traverse Millbrook Ridge and continue west to Big Pond on Barkaboom Road. This is a moderately paced hike.

All day rain will cancel.

Registration: E-mail leader between May 5th-10th.

Registration closes 5/10 @ 7:00 PM.

Leader: Aaron Schoenberg #1582; askus3@optonline.net (preferred); (845) 987-4893.

Sat. May 17—BLACKHEAD & BLACK DOME (LOOP)

Distance: 6.3 mi. Ascent: 2370'; Elev. 3940', 3980'.

Moderately paced hike.

Meeting Place: Big Hollow Road Parking Area

Leader: Dan Mahoney (#1835); eraseirs@gmail.com; 518 943-4067.

Sun. May 18th—EAGLE & BALSAM

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 2600', Elev. 3600', 3600'

Moderately paced trail hike and bushwhack. Well behaved dogs welcome.

Registration Period: May 4th- May 15th

Leaders: Doug Garrity, #1757, Suzanne Provenzano #1968, suzanne273@gmail.com

Sun. May 18—Devils Path West including HUNTER & WESTKILL

Distance: 14 mi. Hunter-2000' elev. , Westkill -1600' elev, total hike 4000' elev. Elev.: Hunter 4040' & Westkill 3880'.

We will traverse the western half of the Devils Path from Stony Clove Notch to Spruceton Road. Also included will be a spur extension to the summit of Hunter, thrown in for good measure. This is a moderately paced hike.

All day rain will cancel.

Registration: E-mail leader between May 12th-17th.

Registration closes 5/17 @7:00 PM Leader: Aaron Schoenberg #1582; askus3@optonline.net (preferred); (845) 987-4893.

Sat. May 24—INDIAN HEAD & TWIN

Distance: 9 mi. Ascent 2,400', Elev. 3573', 3640'.

A moderately paced trail hike. Bad weather cancels.

Registration Period: Please contact leader to register between May 15-22.

Leader: Jim Malumphy #890; lump63@hotmail.com; 203.206.0586 Please NCA 8pm.

Sun. May 25—NORTH DOME & SHERRILL

Distance: 8 mi. Ascent: 2150' Elevation: 3610', 3540'

Strenuous bushwhack done at moderate pace. Register early.

Registration Period: 5/11—5/24

Leader: Eric Hazard #2132; ehazard@yahoo.com

Sat. May 31—SUGARLOAF

Distance: 6.69 mi. Ascent: 1761' Elev. 3780'

Moderate to Difficult

Registration Period: 5/16/14-5/28/14

Leader: Tonda Highley #1944; thighley1944@gmail.com or 914-475-9536.

Sun. June 1—DOUBLETOP w/ possible BIG INDIAN

Distance: 12+ mi. Ascent: 1900', Elev. 3860'

Trail hiking with a four mile bushwhack.

Registration Period: before May 20th.

Leader: Michele Farrell; cornfarrell@hvc.rr.com

Sat. June 7—TABLE & PEEKAMOOSE

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent 3000' Elev. 3843', 3847'

A moderately paced trail hike on National Trails Day!
Come see what your club does.

Registration Period: between June 1, 2014 and June 6, 2014

Leaders: Tom and Laurie Rankin #1503, #1337
laurierankin@hvc.rr.com (preferred);
845-926-2182

Sun, June 8—HALCOTT

Distance: 4 mi. Ascent 1720', Elev. 3520'

A moderately paced bushwhack. Well behaved dogs welcome.

Registration: Please contact leader between May 25th and June 5th.

Leaders: Doug Garrity #1757 and Suzanne Provenzano #1968, suzanne273@gmail.com

Sun. June 8—LONE & ROCKY

Distance: 11mi. Ascent: 2000' Elev. 3721', 3508'

A very long bushwhack, strenuous in parts, to the two most remote

peaks. Moderate pace. The hike will fill up quickly.

Register early.

Registration Period: 5/25—6/7

Leader: Eric Hazard #2132; ehazard@yahoo.com

Sat. June 14—S.W. HUNTER

Distance: 5 mi. Ascent: 2000' Elev. 3740'

Moderately paced trail hike and strenuous bushwhack.

Registration Period: June 5 to June 12

Leader: Paul Pilmanis #2002, ppilmanis@yahoo.com

Sun. June 15—PLATEAU MT.

Distance: 3.5 mi. Ascent: 1,700' Elevation: 3,840'

Short, relaxed-pace trail hike, hopefully done by lunch

Registration Period: 6/6-6/13

Leader: Hans Schick #1853, W759; Hans.W.Schick@gmail.com (845) 896-6454 (7 to 10 PM)

Sat. June 21-WITTENBERG& CORNELL

Distance: 7 mi. Ascent: 2850' Elev. 3860', 3780'

Moderately paced trail hike to two summits and some of the best views in the Catskill.

Registration Period: Contac Leader to register from 6/09/14 to 6/18/14

Leader: Tonda Highley #1944; thighley1944@gmail.com or 914-475-9536.

Sun. June 22—BALSAM LAKE & GRAHAM

Distance: 8 mi. Ascent 2040' Elev. 3723', 3868'

A moderately paced hike and bushwhack. Rain cancel.

Registration Period: Call leader to register between June 16-June19th.

Leader: Suzanne Knabe#1326; suzkna@msn.com; 718-435-3092 after 7:00 pm

Sat. June 28—RUSK

Distance: 4 mi. Ascent: 1,600' Elev. 3,680'

Easy to moderately paced bushwhack.

Well behaved dogs welcome

Registration Period: 6/23—6/27

Leader: Bill Winterbottom #1904, billw@usdsoftware.com

Sun. June 29—BIG INDIAN & FIR

Distance: 10 mi. Ascent: 1600' Elevation: 3700', 3620'

Half trailed hike, half bushwhack done at moderate pace to two peaks.

Registration Period: 6/15—6/28

Leader: Eric Hazard #2132; ehazard@yahoo.com



Letters to the Editor

Avery L. Smith, DVM
avlesm@aol.com

January 22, 2014

Dear Editor:

Sixty five years ago, *Ursus americana*, the American black bear, was a figment of this, then, ten year olds imagination. Today, one can roam the Catskill Mountains and with luck have a rare bear citing. If not, look closely, the evidence of their reticent, lumbering, majestic presence surrounds you everywhere.

Bear population recovery has been well managed and remarkable, so much so, the NYSDEC has formulated a ten year Bear Plan to ratchet down that growth here in the Catskill Park. The plan calls for a 16 day mid September hunting season. As a life long outdoorsman and woodlands advocate, I oppose this aspect of the plan strategy for the following reasons.

- 1) This plan allows legions of outdoorsman, of every stripe, age and level of prowess, into direct and indirect contact and potential conflict, during one of the year's most atmospherically ideal outing months.
- 2) Hunters don't want the impediment of dense foliage, warm weather or herds of, on and off-trail, hiker activity.
- 3) Hikers don't want hunter encounters, proximity to discharging firearms, competition for lean-to access or wounded bear encounters.

If the hunting must begin, there is a simple solution. Keep the regular bear season on schedule with No Bag Limit for one season. Reassess the population, based on bear kill statistics and readjust the bag limit accordingly for the following season. If this system fails to meet objectives, simply extend the season incrementally on both ends, only, until goals are met.

The results: No conflicts and everyone, EXCEPT the BEARS, get their fair share of prime time in the woods.

Respectfully, Avery Smith #119 

Note: the opinion expressed does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the 3500 club, or its members as a whole.
 —Ed.


Diving on Shipwrecks Catskill 3500 Annual Dinner Presentation

Shipwreck explorer and Catskill 3500er, Jim Kennard, will be the evening speaker at the 2014 Catskill 3500 Annual Dinner on April 5th. Jim's presentation will chronicle his journey in shipwreck exploration in the inland



waters of the northeast including the discovery of the 1780 British warship HMS Ontario in Lake Ontario. Jim will be showing a video presentation of this discovery.

Ever wonder what lies just off Kingston in the Hudson River? We will also get a look at some of the never before views of the shipwrecks and bottom formations just offshore from where we will be dining. It will be an exciting evening of underwater discovery and exploration in the deep depth waters of New York State.

Jim Kennard has been diving and exploring the lakes in the northeast since 1970 and has found over 200 shipwrecks in the Great Lakes, Lake Champlain, NY Finger Lakes and in the Hudson, Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In 1983 he discovered a unique horse powered ferryboat in Lake Champlain. National Geographic featured the ferryboat in their October 1989 issue. In May 2008 Jim Kennard and Dan Scoville discovered the 233 year old British warship HMS Ontario, the oldest shipwreck ever found in the Great Lakes and, in September 2008, a rare 200 year old "dagger-board" schooner. Kennard is a Fellow member of The Explorers Club. To view some of the shipwrecks that Jim and his team of explorers have discovered go to his website: www.shipwreckworld.com 



Jim on a wreck dive...

New Members continued from page 2...

0881 Andrew van der Poel	2154	01/25/14
0882 John Fellows	2153	01/25/14
0883 Tom McCutcheon	1878	01/25/14
0884 Melissa Bean	1877	01/25/14
0885 Ralph H Coy	1763	01/19/14
0886 Matt Hicks	2171	01/18/14
0887 Jesse Stramiello	2109	01/26/14
0888 Terri Baker	1955	02/08/14
0889 Scott Baker	1956	02/08/14
0890 Margo McGilvrey	2117	02/12/14
0891 Robert McGilvrey	2116	02/12/14
0892 Ronald Roberts	2238	02/12/14
0893 Steve Shumway	2050	02/16/14
0894 Fran Shumway	2049	02/16/14
0895 Thomas Rossner	2156	02/20/14
0896 Mike Young	2045	02/23/14

New Life Members

1492	Elie Bijou
1728	Mike Siudy
1757	Doug Garrity
1777	Heather Rolland
1840	Will Soter
1968	Suzanne Provenzano
1985	Yin Yin Liu
2055	Michele Corn Farrell
2072	Brian Bacher
2108	Peter Ellis
2187	Mona (YongKom) Ham
2215	Jack Rohan
2229	Linda Bowden
2230	Daniel Van Engel
2242	Marv Freedman



The Catskill Fire Tower Interpreter Program: The best volunteer job you'll ever love!

by John Slechta and Ralph Coy

We both began our working careers, about a million years ago, in the military where the time honored rule was “Never volunteer!” However, we’re a little wiser now. Not only did we volunteer to be Fire Tower Interpreters on Hunter Mountain, but four years later we’ve never had cause to regret the decision. It’s one of the most rewarding and fun experiences either of us has ever had.



Hunter Tower and Cabin--Photo by John Slechta

The Catskill Fire Tower Project, which is administered by the Catskill Center in cooperation with the NY DEC, made this possible. Interpreters man the five Catskill fire towers (Hunter, Balsam Lake, Tremper, Overlook, and Red Hill) every weekend from Memorial Day to Columbus Day.

A huge perk, on the four mountains with summit cabins, is that interpreters are permitted to stay overnight in the cabins (on Tremper there is a nearby lean-to). Although some Interpreters do it as a “day job,” most of us backpack up to the summit and stay one or more nights. The cabins are stocked with many essential items which significantly lighten our packs.

It’s a privilege to stay in a cabin in relative luxury and to experience the peace and serenity that surrounds us every morning and evening. However the biggest reward comes from our interactions with the hikers who visit the summit.

We meet people with all levels of hiking experience from those on their first hikes to 3500 Club members who've completed the 420 Grid multiple times. They include folks of all ages, genders, backgrounds, and nationalities. Virtually everyone has something interesting to say and/or a good question to ask. Most people sincerely thank us for opening the tower and spending our time with them. Being an Interpreter is a tremendously rewarding and fun way to spend a weekend!

We often tell people that although we're volunteers, we'd gladly pay to be Interpreters!

One life lesson we've learned from this job is that it's much easier to make new friends than one might think. Often people "march" into the summit clearing looking straight ahead and avoiding eye contact with the strangers hanging out there. Regardless, we greet every single person the same way with a cheerful: "Hello and welcome to the summit!" Miraculously we are all soon interacting like old friends as we share our hiking experiences, aspirations, successes, and failures with one another.

You may be wondering what a Fire Tower Interpreter "interprets." We're not really sure! It's basically a PR job in which:

- We unlock the tower cabs and invite people up

Once you enter a tower cab it's a whole different world out there. There is simply no comparison between the 360° view from the tower windows and the view from either the top of the stairs, or from anywhere else in the Catskills. Often the expression on the face of someone who looks out the windows for the first time is one of excitement and wonder, even someone who hated the trip up the stairs.

- We identify the peaks, point out landmarks, and do our best to answer questions. In addition we often



John Slechta (l) & Ralph Coy standing in front of Hunter Mountain's fire tower.

learn a lot from many of our visitors who frequently have more and different hiking experiences than we do.

- We discuss the history of the Catskill Park, the towers, and the paid fire observers who manned them until the 1980s. We explain what conditions were like in the Catskills over 100 years ago when these towers were constructed.
- We invite people into the cabins to see how the observers of yore lived when they stayed on the summits.
- Occasionally we assist an unprepared or unlucky hiker with water, some basic first aid, or directions.

Hunter Mountain Cabin--Photo by John Slechta



So, if you've hiked the Catskills but have never been inside a fire tower cab or a summit cabin, come on up! We can't guarantee every tower will be open on every weekend, but it's a pretty good bet.

If you'd like to help us guarantee to have all the summits manned, please consider volunteering. New Interpreters are always needed and welcome. The training is easy and is usually conducted by a Volunteer Coordinator during an orientation hike to the tower. You can choose the mountain you want to work on and you can request the dates you want to work.

For hikers and Interpreters alike, each of the five locations has its own unique appeal:

Continued on page...10

Catskill Fire Towers continued from page 9...

- To experience virtual non-stop hiker traffic from about 11 AM to 4 PM, pick Hunter or Overlook. The other peaks usually afford a more relaxed experience.
- Hunter and Tremper are the most challenging hikes, whereas Red Hill is the easiest.
- Red Hill's trail and summit clearing are beautiful and charming features of the southwestern Catskills. Although relatively unknown to many 3500 Club members, the area is well worth visiting.
- Balsam Lake's cabin is set up as a museum of fire tower history and natural lore.
- Tremper is the summit most in need of volunteers. It is ideal for someone looking for a one day per weekend commitment and/or a solitary experience. Since there is no cabin its feasible for a lone Interpreter to interact with everyone who visits the summit.

Red Hill Tower--Photo by Douglas Hamilton

On Hunter our experience has been that the team




approach works best. Typically one of us stays on the ground to chat with arriving hikers and invite them to check out the cabin. The other person stays up in the tower with folks who arrived earlier. It's ideal if you can volunteer with another person, but it's not required.

For lots more information go online to www.catskillfiretowers.org.

To volunteer, or if you have questions, call Jonathan Mogelever at 845-586-2611, or email him at jmogelever@catskillcenter.org. You can also address comments or questions to the authors at slechtajl@earthlink.net.

If you decide to volunteer, Jonathan will put you in contact with the Volunteer Coordinator for your desired peak.

Go ahead, volunteer! You've got nothing to lose and a world of great experiences to gain! 



Overlook Tower - Photo by Diane Sirois



***Ralph Coy enters the summit clearing
-Photo by John Slechta***



Inside Hunter Cabin--Photo by John Slechta



Red Hill Tower and Cabin - Photos by Douglas Hamilton



Looking SW from Overlook - Photo by Diane Sirois



Hunter Mountain Tower & Cabin before sunrise — Photo by John Slechta



View from Balsam Lake Tower— Photo by Laurie Rankin



Blackhead Range — Photo by John Slechta



Sunrise over Kaaterskill High Peak — Photo by John Slehta



“Foggy Morning” — Photo by John Slehta

Members and aspirants are cordially invited to attend the:
FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL DINNER MEETING
Saturday, April 5, 2014

Location:

Hillside Manor
Route 32 (240 Boulevard)
Kingston, New York 12401
(845) 331-4386

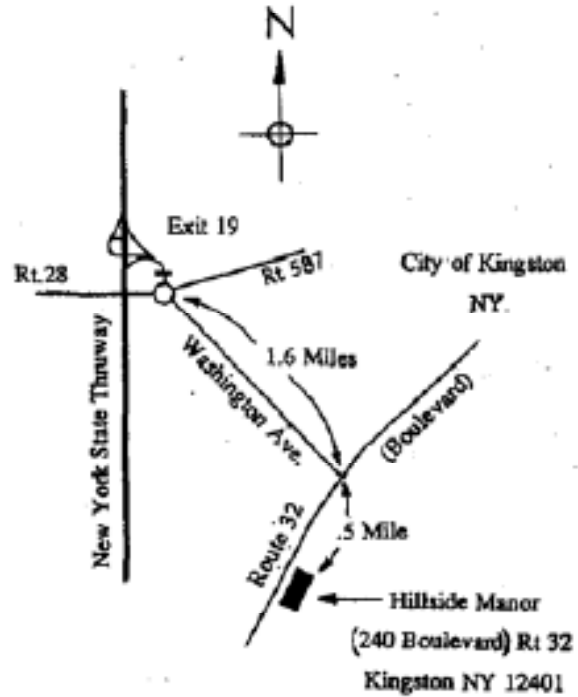
Social Hour: 3:30 P.M. — 5:00 P.M.

Cash bar, hors d'oeuvres served

Dinner: 5:15 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Jim Kennard

Topic: Diving on Shipwrecks



Please detach and mail to:

Michael Doehring
 7 Cloverdale Avenue
 White Plains, NY 10603
 tigermath@aol.com (preferred)
 914-761-7225

Reservations \$34.00 per person.

Amount of Check: \$ _____

Check should be made payable to "Hillside Manor" but mailed to Michael Doehring.

Please Circle Choice of Entrée

Name: _____ Prime Ribs Chicken Française Mixed Veg. Lasagna
 Reg # _____ Winter # _____

Name: _____ Prime Ribs Chicken Française Mixed Veg. Lasagna
 Reg # _____ Winter # _____

Note: If you intend to sit with a large group, print the names of the people you would like seated at your table, and please verify that they plan to attend and wish to sit with you.

Space is limited so reserve early — Checks will be deposited after dinner

Deadline - March 22, 2014