



Trackin'

Cross-country Ski Day Enjoyed By Many



A skier enjoying a perfect day on the trail.



Signing up for a chance to win one of the many prizes

The day and the Diggs Trail made for a great time for all who participated. The trail had a fresh covering of snow and the temperature was just cold enough. The hot chocolate and hot dogs were also nice to have when done on the trail.

The event was sponsored by Hollyloft Ski and Bike to raise funds for CRT. Hollyloft and its vendors supplied prizes, which were given out at the end of the day. Shorty Gesaman was the big winner, walking off with a new cross-country ski package.

Hopefully we'll see you there next year.

Chautauqua Rails to Trails Presents **Outdoor Nature Festival**

Sunday May 25th
Rain date June 1st

11 AM to 4 PM

At The Old RR Depot in Mayville, NY
This Festival will feature

- Short guided bicycle rides on the trail
- Kayak demonstrations
- Chicken BBQ
- Nature related displays & vendors
- Chinese auction.

There will be drawings for

- a mountain bike
- a backpack

**This promises to be a good time.
Come on out and join in the fun.**

Help!!!

It has been a long hard winter and we can only assume the trails have suffered. If you spot problems, please contact CRT.

View From The Locomotive

The long winter days are grudgingly giving way to signs of an impatient spring ready to be sprung. This looks to be a tough year all-round with budget woes from the top down affecting every walk of life. The very existence of agencies such as CRT depends on the goodwill of like-minded folks as well as some grasp by our fearless leaders of the Geshtalt of greenspace preservation.

We need to awaken this conciousnees in order to achieve the goals we have set forth. CRT needs now, more than ever, your help in keeping our natural heritage alive and green for perpetuity. Please be generous with your volunteer time and help preserve the natural recreation resources that surround our communities.

R. Berke, President CRT Board of Directors

Our sincere thanks to the following for their generosity in joining Rails-to-Trails since the Fall issue of *Trackin'*.

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R.Q. and Sandra Anderson
George & Barbara Weaver

Benefactor \$250 to \$999

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Janet Lawson
Vickie Fisher

Fincher Report

by Jim Fincher, Trail Managet

Since the last *Trackin'*, we have been involved in trying to purchase the 3 miles of rail corridor known as Wheelers' Gulf, which lies between the Stockton-Fredonia Rd and Chautauqua Rd in the town of Pomfret. This area is home to many diverse species of plants and animals, is an Audubon Important Bird Area, and is quite beautiful. Since we've been in discussions with the owner, we've discovered there are at least 2 other parties wanting to buy the property, and neither party would allow a trail on the railbed. As I write this, we are waiting for the owner to decide to whom he will sell the land. We are hopeful.

We are also working to re-establish the *Portage Trail* from Mayville to Westfield as a recreational trail. The entire corridor is owned by private individuals. We've contacted most of them and have been encouraged by their willingness to allow a trail on their land. However, two land owners north of Quillian Rd will not allow a trail. We are stymied at the moment and are trying to figure out how to manage that problem.

We received a grant from the Margaret L. Wendt foundation (in Buffalo) which will allow us to buy 6 new 'saloon' type gates to replace some of our broken down farm gates. We will be contacting some of you for help installing the gates when we get them from the welder. We still need another 12 gates at about \$800 each. We plan to attach plaques to the gates that will thank donors for their generosity. Hint, hint. Continued on next page

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

By: Carolyn Witt

Sam Thorndike is an invaluable member of the CRT family volunteering countless hours as our organization's Treasurer and Membership Committee Chairman. He was one of the charter members envisioning a purpose for some railroad property being put up for sale in 1990 by Pennel, a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad.

Sam said he was reading an editorial in the newspaper one day that spurred him into action. He said after a lifetime of public infrastructure systems work, he thought the old railroad beds should be set-aside for the public to enjoy. The volunteer expressed his thoughts as he described the first meetings to pool funding to buy the land with other public officials and the decision to form a Rails-To-Trails chapter in Chautauqua County.

"Rather than have the properties split up, I thought they should be used for the public good," Thorndike said. "I thought it was



such an obvious thing that needed to be done."

Now more than 10 years later, Sam said he loves to walk the trails with his wife, Evelyn, and enjoy nature at its best. He said his favorite place to go is the Laurie Baer Trail between Bliss and Plank roads to watch the beavers. However, he said that all of the trails are nice, especially the Ney Trail.

Sam said all of his volunteer work occasionally leaves Evelyn to wonder what he is up to. He admitted there are times when his wife would like to have him home more often to "fix this, that and the other thing".

A love of nature and public systems isn't the only thing that attracted Sam to the Chautauqua CRT project. While displaying a shy grin after some prodding, he admitted a lifelong love of trains. As a child, Sam said, he used to make believe he was an engineer while riding his bike and pretending to guide a train around a bend or to coast one down a hill.

"It's easy to envision what it must have been like while biking or hiking our trails," Thorndike said.

Trail Manager Jim Fincher said Sam puts in many, many volunteer hours and does a great job. He said his contributions have helped to found the organization and continues to help keep it going.

"We all value Sam for his analytical mind and his financial management skills," said CRT President Dr. Robert Berke. "However, the thing we like most about him is his caring and compassion for his fellow man and the world we live in."

Fincher Report cont: We have developed a PowerPoint Presentation about Rails to Trails that we have been pleased to give to Rotary, Lions, and Optimists clubs around the county. If you'd like us to come talk to your group, please give me a call. We'd be happy to spread the word about CRT.

We welcome **Carolyn Witt** to our Board of Directors. Carolyn has been helping us with publicity, writes the "From the Corral" feature in the newsletter, and is the resident expert on things equestrian. We are very pleased to have Carolyn with us.

In addition to the PowerPoint presentations, our 'outreach' is continuing. We have been to two High Schools 'fairs' with a display about Rails to Trails. We have updated projects listed in the Southern Tier West Comprehensive project listing. We attended meetings of the Waterfront Revitalization Committee to push for recreational opportunities in the plan. We've cooperated with two snowmobile clubs, the County Motor Vehicle Department, The Erie County, Pa. Rails to Trails organization, and dealt with other organizations on a cooperative, partnering basis.

The snowmobile clubs had a big problem with their insurance this year. We do not have that problem. We've been renewed, but the premium did go up about 30%. Please be as generous as you can with your donation

**We really appreciate your support.
Thanks for all your help.**

The Magic of Water

by Mike Fugagli



A view of the Gil River near Silver City, NM

Like the shape-shifting magician of King Arthur's court, a merlin sits before me now in the bare crown of an Arizona walnut. His beak, perfectly evolved to snap the necks of small birds, now tears the wings from a mourning cloak butterfly. The butterfly's wings drift to the ground in seeming judgment of the truth of spring. Beside me, the Gila River sings. "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water" wrote Loren Eiseley, and humbled by this sparkling torrent, I agree.

The merlin, the mourning cloak, and I are mostly water. Like the river, we are part of the earth's great hydrologic cycle – the global, solar powered, water circulation network that transports water between earth's watersheds, atmosphere, and oceans. That water, on its rush back to the oceans, should take the time to laugh and love, eat and be eaten, is no small thing for a human mind to ponder. No small thing at all.

Once, chasing loons around a northern lake, I felt free. Unclipping the sierra cup from my belt, I reached over the gunwales of my canoe and drank deeply without fear. Are those days gone forever? I look across the river and think of water as resource, as commodity. I wade through the ankle-deep water knowing that soon these slippery green cobbles may

bake lifeless under summer suns. I raise my eyes to the dark rim of the Mogollon Mountains and think of snow.

Broadly viewed, we think of river systems as the veins of a leaf. More accurately, the river is the leaf, the valley, and the hillsides, all the way up to the watershed's dividing rims. The river is also grass, ponderosa pine, lichen, and beaver. The river courses through the human heart.

We are asked to steward magic and I can barely balance my checkbook. My dad, always a wise guy, once asked me if I thought Thoreau wasted his words and contradicted himself by repeating "simplicity" three times. But I see no contradiction – "simplicity, simplicity, simplicity" he said, once I think for the preservation of self, once for the preservation of community, and once for wildness, the magic of water, and the preservation of the world.

Population, though, is overwhelming simplicity. The demand for food, housing, energy, irrigation, and recreation continues to grow, affecting both water quality and quantity. We still want magic but feel we can no longer afford it. Water becomes resource and "beneficial use" is defined solely in human terms. River otters become fantasy and no longer an ethical imperative. Irrigation ditches become "preferred" habitat for endangered species. Magic comes bottled, diluted, for \$2.00 a pop.

The dilution of magic cannot be quantified as easily as a solution of acid mine waste. Though it is pollution nonetheless. Magic is measured in the diversity of butterflies, the migration of birds, a child's sense of wonder. Being smart primates, we can probe around the edges of magic, look for trends,

and define indicators of health, but the mystery of water always eludes us. I stare across the channel into the understanding eyes of a bullfrog.

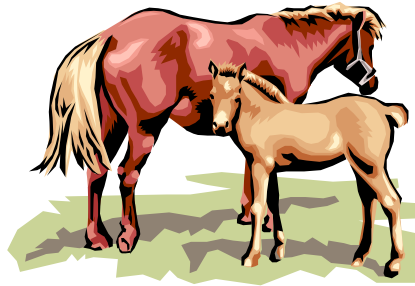
Answers also elude us. I live on a razor's edge of hope and fear. They say that no matter what your cause, if it doesn't address human population growth, in the long run you will fail. Nevertheless, I dream of raising a child, maybe one. I also dream of river otters and jaguars in my own back yard. Two things sustain my hope, the quest for simplicity in my own life and the fundamental belief that humanity cannot live without magic. People thirst for water's magic as they thirst for the water itself. We are, after all, storytellers.

I have never seen a merlin this well before. He has dazzled me with his quick, powerful flights and his mid-air captures. He is back on his perch now tearing the wings off of yet another butterfly, indifferent to my presence. To the east, I hear cranes calling from great heights. They are circling, preparing to leave for their breeding grounds in the north. Though I will miss the cranes, I know that the black hawks are coming. Like the cranes, the hawks are getting restless on their wintering grounds and are dreaming of the north. The hawks are dreaming of the Gila River and its giant Fremont cottonwoods. They are dreaming of its waters running cool and clear, of its frogs and fish, and of a thousand other things we will never understand. Again, I am humbled. Though I lack Merlin's magic, I know that I am water, and that I am holding the mystery of a black hawk's dreams in my all too clumsy hands.

Editor's note: Mike, a native of Chautauqua County, is a naturalist for The Nature Conservancy at TNC's Bear Mt. Lodge near Silver City, NM

FROM THE CORRAL

By: Carolyn Witt



It was a tough winter for most horse people to get out of the corral and hit the trails. Below normal temperatures and heavy snowfall kept most of us at home in the pasture or close to the barn.

However, renewed vigor has energized Mother Nature as she warms the rolling hills that are once again green. The birds are singing, the deer are foraging and the turkeys are nesting. Speaking of turkeys, I accidentally dislodged a few of them the other day as my horse and I wound our way beneath a canopy of Hemlock branches. For anyone who has ever done this, they sound like a bunch of B-52 bombers taking off from a runway.

My horse was up in the air while the turkeys were trying to strategize a safe landing on the ground beyond the horse. I have one word for the scene that followed,.....chaos. A fresh horse penned up until spring facing off against 10 turkeys was more than enough to set my heart racing!

Everything turned out okay. The turkeys had a safe, if not unscheduled landing. My horse decided they

were not as much of a threat as he had perceived once they had landed and stopped rearing. A word to the wise for my fellow equestrians, avoid those low branches on your early morning rides.

I spoke with Jim Fincher about the new trail gates. He said the horses should fit through them without a problem. However, you might have to hitch your legs up as you ride through them. Better yet, the safest way to proceed would be to dismount and lead your horse through the opening.

For those of you riding the Ney Trail, please ride on the shoulder and avoid riding on the new trail surface. It tears up the trail and the footing will harden in your horse's shoes like concrete.

Last but not least, vaccinate your horses for West Nile virus and rabies. Two horses tested positive for the virus last year. Several bats and raccoons also tested positive for rabies. Rocky, my Appaloosa, and I hope to see all of you out on the trail.

Chautauqua Hiking Club

Rails to Trails Hike Saturday, June 7

Meet at 10:00 AM at the old train station on Rt. 394 near the Mayville Park by Chautauqua Lake. Watch for signs.

This is the new Chautauqua Rails to Trails Headquarters.

After a quick look around inside the new office we will cross Rt. 394 to start our hike on the Webb section of the trail. This is a relatively short section, which ends near Rt. 430.

Bring lunch and we can eat by the lake when we return. Maps provided.

Coordinators: Ceil & Tom Bingham
673-1434 Rated: easy



Meet
Trail manager

Jim Fincher

Say "Hi" the next time you see Jim on the trail.

I'm not sure I want popular opinion on my side -- I've noticed those with the most opinions often have the fewest facts.
Bethania McKenstry

Yes I want to support CRT's effort to change the abandoned rail lines of Chautauqua County into multi-use trails which can be enjoyed by all.

Individual \$20 Sustaining \$100
 Family \$35 Benefactor \$500
 Patron \$50 Sponsor \$1000 up
 Business Partner \$100/\$200 per year for 10 years

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: Chautauqua Rails to Trails
PO Box 151
Mayville, NY 14757-0151

Check out the **CRT** website at:
www2.cecomet.net/crtt



Sam, far left, working with other volunteers on one of the trail's bridge

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*Climb the Mountains and  
get their great tidings.*

*Nature's peace wil flow into you  
as sunshine flows into trees.*

*The winds will blow their freshness into you  
and the storms their energy, while  
cares will drop like autumn leaves.*

**John Muir**  
\*\*\*\*\*

Return Service Requested



P.O. Boz 151 Mayville.NY 14757-0151  
[crtt@cecomet.net](mailto:crtt@cecomet.net)