



# Trackin'

The Chautauqua Rails to Trails Newsletter

Fall 2002

## Chautauqua Rails to Trails Annual Meeting



Enjoying the great weather, good food and a *short* business meeting at CRT's annual meeting in July.

## View From The Locomotive



The fall colors have begun to show along all the trails and those of us that enjoy x-country skiing are dusting off our boots and skis as we await the new season.

Exciting work has continued on the JW Trolley line/Portage Trail from 430 in Mayville to Quilliam rd. The trail is dry and awaiting final approval from the DEC to address the beaver dam just north of 430 so as to protect the trail from flooding.

Hopefully this and a dressing of good quality surface material will make this gem ready for full use soon. A commemorative ceremony is planned for the spring of 2006 when the trail will officially open and be named in honor of the late Dr. William (Bill) Sharp, teacher and naturalist. Hopefully a final landowners agreement will clear the trail for use all the way to Martin Wright Rd. in Westfield in the near future.

I wish all of you a safe and happy fall and winter season, and ask that any who are interested in becoming active in the trail project step up and be counted. Your help will be much appreciated. ----- *Robert Berke, MD*

## Membership

Friends of Rails to Trails, we need your help. The membership in your organization has decreased over the past year or two and we need your help to increase the numbers of people willing to help keep the rail-trail system alive and well.

What we are asking is for each present member to recruit one new member. One new member shouldn't be too hard to do and will certainly help the present and future of the organization.

There is a membership form as part of this Trackin'; there is a form on the trail guide; and there is one in the web site, at

[www2.cecomet.net/crtt](http://www2.cecomet.net/crtt).

Please don't let this plea go unanswered. We need your help badly and we need your new members badly. - **Thank you.**



## Treasure Hunting Along The Trails

by David Salley

Instead of just hiking along the trail, why not pretend you're on a hunt for hidden treasure? For that matter, why pretend?

### LETTER BOXING

Letterboxing is a hobby that combines treasure hunting, scrapbooking, computer skills, map reading, puzzle solving, navigation and orienteering. Someone hides, somewhere in the woods, a sealed plastic food storage container which contains a blank notebook, and a rubber stamp. This is called a letterbox. The hider then creates a set of clues for finding the box and gives it out to friends or posts it on the Internet. Hunters try to solve the clues to find the box. The clues can be anything from a straightforward set of directions to secret codes to literary references that could take spending a week in the library to solve.

In addition to a compass, maps, paper and pencil and anything else that might be needed to solve the clues, a hunter carries their own rubber stamp, inkpad and blank book. When he finds the box, he stamps his own stamp into the box's book so the box has a log of all of its finders and he stamps the box's stamp into his book so he has a record of all the boxes he's found. There are currently over three dozen letterboxes hidden in Western New York, a few of them are along Chautauqua's Rails to Trails.

Letterboxing North America (LBNA) lists over 10,000 sets of clues on their website (<http://www.letterboxing.org>). For more information in finding these letterboxes, go to their website and click on the big red map book pictured on their home page and then click on the map of New York State. Letterboxes are listed alphabetically by county, then alphabetically by town within each county. Find one that closest to you and print out its clues. Solving the clues may involve working out puzzles with pencil and paper, or learning how to use a map and compass. When you think you have it solved, go hiking! The website also has several well-written articles on getting started as well as a means for contacting letterboxers in your area.

*More on treasure hunting in the future*

## Birds on Sheldon Trail

By Tom Simmons



Thank you for my "lifer," CRT. My life bird, that is. The Le Conte's Sparrow played hide-and-peek with me on the Sheldon Rail Trail. This little sparrow with the pumpkin-colored face was the first individual of this species that I had observed in my life - a "life bird." On April 20, 2004, as I walked near the beaver dam, the Le Conte's afforded me several good looks before it flew to the side of the trail and disappeared in the marsh grasses. So, thank you, Chautauqua Rails to Trails, for giving me the opportunity to add this species to my life list.

Of course, the longer a birder persists, the fewer chances he or she has to add a life bird, having seen most of the "usual suspects" in prior years. So, I keep a "year" list - noting the "new" birds each year. The Eastern Phoebe and Rusty Blackbirds near the Titus Road parking area on April 6, 2004, were the first of those species that I saw there that year. Also on the same date, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teals, Northern Pintails, Ring-necked Ducks, and Mallards rested on the ponds of the Sheldon Trail. Then on April 20 - my Le Conte's Sparrow life bird day - Wood Ducks, American Wigeons, and Buffleheads joined the Mallards and Pintails on the ponds. Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows flew over the ponds; Yellow-rumped Warblers flitted in the trees. A few days later, April 24, Palm Warblers joined the Yellow-rumps; and Northern Rough-winged Swallows foraged over the ponds with the Tree and Barn Swallows. Most of the waterfowl had continued their northern migration, leaving a pair of Mallards, a pair of Buffleheads, and a pair of Pied-billed Grebes. Two Canada Geese challenged me, honking and hissing, when I walked by their goose-down nest with four exposed eggs.

Each trip through the Trail that spring revealed new arrivals of "our" birds from their southern haunts. I invite you to follow the flow of the birding year. Each season can surprise you with new sightings. I remember a day in August 2002 when hundreds of Bobolinks in nonbreeding plumage moved in the shrubs and the marsh grass near the beaver ponds. The Sheldon Rail Trail is a rich area for birds. Grab your binoculars and hike the Trail. Start your own life list.

## Alison Wells Ney Trail

Designated one of NY State's  
TEN TERRIFIC TRAILS FOR FALL FOLIAGE

**Parks & Trails New York** announces its Ten Terrific Trails for Fall Foliage in New York – places to walk or bike that are guaranteed to be radiant with a kaleidoscope of autumn color. Trails allow people to experience the sights and smells of autumn in a way that is impossible from a car. Drawn from all regions of the state, the Ten Terrific Trails offer the opportunity to enjoy the essence of Fall's beauty in a tunnel of colorful tree canopies, multi-colored hedgerows, and long views across meadows of wild flowers and fields of pumpkins and corn.

The Ten Terrific Trails for Fall Foliage are: Genesee Valley Greenway (Western New York), Outlet Trail (Finger Lakes), Alison Wells Ney Trail (western Southern Tier), Cato-Fairhaven Trail (Central New York), Warren County Bikeway (Adirondacks), Catskill Scenic Trail (Catskills), Walkill Valley Rail Trail (Hudson Valley), Old Croton Aqueduct (New York City area), Bethpage Bikeway (Long Island) and the Erie Canalway Trail (across the state between Albany and Buffalo).

Information on each of the Ten Terrific Trails for Fall Foliage is included in TrailFinder Maps, Parks & Trails New York's easy-to-use, on-line guide to [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)

"One of the most rewarding ways to experience the splendor of Fall in New York is to take a walk or bike ride on one of these Ten Terrific Trails or any one of the more than 100 other multi-use trails throughout the state. And, while enjoying the scenic vistas of the surrounding countryside you'll be doing something great for your health," notes Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director.

The Ten Terrific Trails for Fall Foliage follow historic rail and canal corridors so they are, for the most part, flat or have very gentle grades, making any walk or bike ride fun and relaxing, as well as healthy. These trails are often located beside scenic rivers and streams as long ago these were the only level areas where transportation corridors could be located.

"What makes the state's multi-use trails so valuable is that they can be used by almost everyone, regardless of age or fitness level. In addition to being relatively flat, most trails are paved or have firm cinder surfaces," adds Dropkin.

Parks & Trails New York is the only statewide non-profit organization with more than 20 years experience promoting the development of a statewide network of parks, trails and open spaces for all to use and enjoy.  
on

## Working On The Portage Trail



### Trail Manager's Report By Jim Fincher

Earlier this year I hoped for a fairly dry summer. Ooops. My hopes were too strong. Some people are saying drought. But.... we had time to fix the Portage trail. We had ½ mile of the trail south of Parker Rd re-worked and it is now dry. The surface isn't smooth as we'd like, but we plan to fix that, too. Other areas were bulldozed into better shape. We have run into a couple of unexpected problems, but are working on them right now. We plan to have a grand opening ceremony in the spring.

Beavers were not a problem to us this year. Hope you enjoy the article on beavers elsewhere in the newsletter.

Engineers under contract to the Resource Conservation and Resource Development (RC&D) Committee, (to which CRT is a member) have surveyed the washout/slide on the Diggs trail. They are charged with repairing or bridging the area to return the entire crown of the railbed for use as a recreational trail. We don't know what they will recommend to do about the gap in the trail, but we are waiting and should hear fairly soon.

The TEA-21 grant the Villages of Sherman and Mayville applied for and received is beginning to move in a good direction. If all goes well, we may see some construction in the spring.

As we have been saying for some time now,....

**Take a Hike...it's good for you.**

## TRAIL RUNNING

An old form of exercise is making a comeback. Trail running is gaining in popularity as a form of exercise and is gaining more and more enthusiasts.

The first trail runners were probably cavemen running through the woods trying to keep ahead of saber toothed tigers. Today, modern man is running through the woods to stay in shape and keep ahead of disease.

Trail runners describe their sport, running up and down hills, over slippery rocks and tree roots, as a sublime union of exercise and nature. It's easier on the legs and far more scenic than jogging on roads.

The sport is not new. There was a 7.1 mile race through the woods in the San Francisco area in 1905. Today, there are over 1000 runs a year, according to the All-American Trail Running Association.

There is easy trail running and hard trail running. Hard would be running the Pike's Peak Marathon, up to 7,815 feet and return. Easy would be running the rail-trails in Chautauqua County, at only a couple hundred feet above sea level. A little harder would be running the County's Eastside and Westside Overland trails.

Either way, a trail runner would be surrounded by nature and fresh air and would be doing good things for his or her body.

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## Here's a Simple Way to Boost Your Memory

If you want to sharpen your memory, attention span, and learning ability, put on your walking shoes and get going.

A study of more than 18,000 women ages 70 to 81 from the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that the more active we are, the better our cognition, reports HealthDayNews.

The study: Led by Jennifer Weuve, the Harvard team tested the women, who were all part of the long-running Nurses' Health Study, for verbal memory, attention, and other gauges of cognitive functioning. In addition, they were asked about typical physical activities in which they participated, and the researchers converted that information into what it would be in terms of miles walked.

The results: HealthDayNews reports that among the women who put in the highest of five levels of activity, which would be the equivalent of six or more hours of weekly walking at an easy pace, there was a 20 percent lower risk of cognitive impairment, compared with women in the lowest level of activity, which was the equivalent of walking less than two hours a week at an easy pace. An easy pace is walking one mile in 20 to 30 minutes. If you walk one mile in 16 to 20 minutes, then one and a half hours of weekly walking will give you the full cognitive benefits.

How does walking give your brain a workout? Weuve said there is evidence that better cardiovascular health is related to better cognitive function. Physical activity also appears to have a direct effect on the brain itself," she told HealthDayNews. "It appears to promote the production of chemicals in the brain, called nerve growth factors, that improve the brain cells' survival and growth."

The study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

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## To Burn Off Big Mac Meal, Walk This Far

**Enjoying a McDonald's Big Mac meal--that would be the Big Mac, french fries and a milkshake--every once in a while won't make you fat, right? Not if you walk off those extra calories.**

Nutritionists in Great Britain helpfully computed just how far you have to walk to shake off the 1,411 calories from that Big Mac lunch: 9.5 miles.

London's Sun newspaper reports that even the McDonald's salads require a 2.5 mile walk to ward off the extra calories, thanks to the fatty salad dressings that can have more calories than the burgers.

**So it doesn't just pick on McDonald's, the Sun compiled a list of several favorite fast food items and how many miles you have to walk to get rid of the extra calories:**

- Meat pizza: 930 calories requires a 6.2 mile walk
- KFC meal: 910 calories requires a 6.06 mile walk
- Apple: 45 calories requires a 0.3 mile walk
- Stick of celery: 2 calories requires a 0.013 mile walk

If you eat at McDonald's or KFC or Burger King regularly, you are more likely to gain weight and become obese--unless you do that 10 mile walk after each meal. Why? (Continued on next page)

### To Burn Off (continued)

British researchers from the Medical Research Council Human Nutrition Center and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have put forth what they call a "probable" explanation: Fast food not only contains many more calories than traditional food, but also is more likely to undermine normal appetite control systems, reports The London Times.

**The hidden reason fast food makes us fat:** It has a very high energy density--about 65 percent higher than a typical diet and twice as high as recommended healthy diets--which makes us eat more than we otherwise would. Energy density refers to the amount of calories an item of food contains in relation to its weight. Foods with a high energy density confuse the brain's control systems for appetite, which are based solely on portion size. Eat a Big Mac and fries and you'll consume almost twice as many calories as you would if you ate the same weight of pasta and salad. "Fast food restaurants are feeding the obesity epidemic by tricking people into eating many more calories than they mean to," writes Times science correspondent Mark Henderson.

Now you know why we keep saying, "**Take A Hike**"

## Work Party

The weeds are growing faster than we can cut them down in some areas and so, we are calling a work party to get ahead of some of them.

**When: Oct 29. A Saturday**

**Time: 9:00 am**

**Where: Baer Trail on Plank Rd. We'll work south, towards Parker Rd.**

**What: Cut back vegetation and throw it off the trail.**

**Bring:** gloves, boots, loppers, chain saw, weedeater with a blade, and/or just your strong backs.

Hope to see you there for some good healthy outdoor exercise.

**Saying what we think gives us a wider conversational range than saying what we know. -- Cullen Hightower**

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

## Would You

like to be involved in the development of the multiuse trails in Chautauqua County?

If so, please consider serving on the *Chautauqua Rails to Trails'* board of directors.

If interested contact CRT at:  
Phone: (716) 269-3666  
E-mail: [crtt@cecomet.net](mailto:crtt@cecomet.net)

## Something New

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## The Life Cycle Of A Beaver Pond.

Last time I looked, there were no beavers in the Titus Rd wetland or the Portage trail wetland, though there were lots of beavers north of the Titus Rd swamp, along the trail. Rest assured, the beavers will come back.

### **Did you know this about our favorite nemesis?**

The sound of rushing water seems to be as annoying to a beaver as the sound of fingernails on a blackboard is to humans. Beavers will pile up sticks and mud in any spot they hear that sound until they no longer hear it.

This explains in one go why beavers always pick the narrowest and most shallow section of stream to build their dams - it's because that's where the noise is. And they continue piling up sticks and mud in that spot until that annoying sound is silenced. Surely there is an instinctive part of making dams but it might also be said that beavers build dams because they like peace and quiet. When beavers move into an area, they often build a dam that floods the area and eventually kills most of the trees in the flood plain.

In addition to water killed trees, the beavers gnaw and fell a lot of the trees in the area for food. When the trees that can be used for food are all gone, the beavers tend to move on. After that, the water source fills what used to be the beaver pond with silt, and the dam disintegrates, leaving a 'meadow', also known as a Vega, (Spanish for fertile valley). The meadow becomes a habitat for many other species of creature, and will eventually become part of the surrounding forest once again.

Thus, beavers can be an aggravation, but are simply part of the cycle of things in nature. Let's appreciate them for what they are and for what they do.