



12 Inspiring Backyard Hikes

All right, they're not literally in our backyards, but close. You don't have to drive for several hours, or climb the highest mountain you can find, or traipse for several hours to enjoy an outing. Getting out can be very simple. There are many delightful outings just a few minutes from your home. To provide some examples, we asked a dozen hikers who have written about hiking (often in the past for this magazine) to tell the world about a few in different parts of ADK's territory, from North Jersey to the Niagara Frontier to the High Peaks and beyond.

They told us about more than hikes. They told us about natural features, of course, but also about kids catching frogs, about historic landmarks, about original art by famous Old World masters, about old cemeteries. Use these pages as a guide to some of these places and an inspiration to find similar adventures in your own locales. Some great hikes might be literally right at your feet. —NSB

Photograph by Mark Meschinelli

1 The Warren County Cross-Country Ski Trails: Outings for All Seasons

BY CARL HEILMAN II

Just north of Warrensburg is an intertwined collection of trails that are designed for cross-country skiing in the winter, but are also ideal for walking in spring, summer, and fall. The main trail is almost completely level, but some of the other trails traverse more hilly terrain. While a trip down to the river and back is about a mile in length, combining routes on the different trails adds both diversity and length to a walk.

To reach this Warren County trail system get off the Adirondack Northway (I-87) at the Warrensburg Exit, # 23. Head north into Warrensburg on Route 9 (Main Street). Drive about 1.4 miles north to the second light in town, by the bandstand at the five-point intersection. Take a left and then an immediate right onto Hudson Street, which becomes Golf Course Road. In another couple of miles the road passes Cronin's Golf Course on the left. Just north of the golf course, look for the brown and yellow sign on your left for the Hudson River Recreation Area/Lake George Wild Forest. There is a trail map near the center of the large parking lot.

The main trail heads west from the center of the parking lot, and wanders about a half mile through a beautiful pine forest until it reaches the bank of the Hudson River. Here, a small path leads down to the rocky shoreline of the river. Various wildflowers grow along the edge of the river, as well as throughout the forest. Wild roses bloom along the edge of the river in June, and cardinal flowers can be found later in the summer.

Every season of
the year has it's own
beauty here.



Carl Heilman II

Once you reach the river, wandering north along the shoreline or turning right on the woods trail along the edge of the river brings you to a rock ledge outcropping at the edge of the water. Here the river narrows before winding around a bend. This can be a great place to relax in the sun and watch the water pass by.

The footpath continues over the exposed rock ledge and then drops down to near river level, and to one of the more unusual rock formations I've seen in the Adirondack region. While I'm not a geologist, the rock along the river's edge looks like a swirl of calcite, and some type of dark igneous rock, which gives it the appearance of an earth-sized swirl of fudge ripple ice cream. The granular, white calcite has been scoured smooth by the water action.

Every season of the year has its own beauty here. Fall colors can be lovely, and in winter, snow covers the pines lining the riverbanks, while the ice flowing downstream

gets backed up and can build to many feet in thickness. Ice plates pile up along the shoreline, and eventually across the whole river, creating a rugged surface with all manner of unique shapes.

Since the trails are smooth, it doesn't take too much snow accumulation to




Carl Heilman II

Wild roses bloom along the
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have good skiing. A couple of these trails adjoin the neighboring golf course trails, so it's also possible to ski the terrain around the golf course—as long as the skier stays off the fenced greens. While most of the terrain is rated "easy," a couple of sections of the interconnected trails are considered "expert" level.

Spring can be quite dramatic as water levels rise and ice dams up, breaks apart, and then heads downstream with the rushing current. Depending on the warmth of the spring weather, ice chunks that are left along the shore can remain for a couple of weeks or more, before they melt and rejoin the Hudson on its journey from the High Peaks to New York City.

 Well-known photographer Carl Heilman II of Brant Lake is also the author of an edition of ADK's Eastern Region trail guide.

2 The North Country and Finger Lakes Trail in Central New York:

Natural History, Human History

BY MARY COFFIN

A favorite walk near my backyard is a section of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) and North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT), just south of Syracuse. It offers ponds, old foundations, vistas, a pioneer farmer museum, county park visitor center, and lots of animal habitats. It provides great snowshoe opportunities as well as many skiable sections for winter adventures and wildflowers in the spring and summer.

One can park on the wide shoulder where the FLT/NCT Onondaga trail



SHACKHAM POND. *Mary Coffin*

A quiet hiker may hear flickers, woodpeckers, and songbirds, or even flush out a wild turkey.

crosses Shackham Road and walk east to beautiful Shackham Pond in Morgan Hill State Forest. The DEC dammed up the pond years ago; beaver have added their work. The two outlets that cross the trail may be a bit wet depending on the beaver activity and time of year. The beaver are active on this pond and often sighted. Anglers also enjoy the pond. Sometimes a great blue heron is observed. The pond is surrounded by grouse habitat enhanced by the Wildfowlers Association. Unfortunately, the bamboo-like Japanese knotweed has invaded too.

Human history is as evident as natural history. As you approach the pond you will note the Hodgson family cemetery with huge hemlocks pushing over the nineteenth-century graves. The dates in the early 1800s are eroded away and no longer distinguishable.

As the FLT/NCT leaves the pond the trail turns north with glimpses of the pond still in view. The forest here is comprised of mixed hardwoods with some conifers and very little understory. Walking is still quite level. It is very pretty any time of year.

After the trail crosses a dirt DEC road it turns east again and the forest is dominated by conifers (spruce and red pine) from old plantations. Squirrels and their cone piles abound. Stone piles are evident from the

agricultural days.


The trail crosses several little stepover streams as it progresses to the dryer upland where mature maples, beeches, and other deciduous trees take over. This area was logged in 2006 but most of the trail route was protected. A quiet hiker may hear flickers, woodpeckers, and songbirds, or even flush out a wild turkey.

Eventually the route crosses Rowley Hill Road, an extension of Morgan Hill Road, and follows a little stream as it cascades over limestone ledges. There are two stream crossings that can be managed in hiking boots. After the second crossing a row of stately old maples suggests an old property line or road, and just up the hill to the right is the corner of an old foundation partially camouflaged by vegetation. It is hard to believe that this forest was probably a cultivated field or pasture during my grandfather's day.

The trail continues around a cirque-like bowl and exits Morgan Hill State Forest as it enters private land. It crosses two bridges over a drainage ditch and passes through young wooded areas with lots of grouse and song birds in the tall understory. Deer just love this old field habitat.

At one point the trail ducks out into a field overlooking the village of Fabius (school and church steeples) in the valley below. This diversion is just for the bucolic view. Intermittently, puncheon boardwalks protect the trail, as the ground is squishy with boot-sucking mud. It finally descends to the Fabius Brook valley and follows a temporary road walk (Bardeen Road and Cowles Settlement Road) across the scenic valley to the next ridge.

For a shorter hike, spot a car on the shoulder of Bardeen Road. For a longer hike, spot a car in the parking lot on the Dam Road at De Ruyter Lake and continue from the Cowles Settlement Road trailhead through Highland Forest Onondaga County Park. The Fabius Historical Society maintains a small pioneer and farm museum by the park road crossing just south of Skyline Visitor Center. Skyline Lodge provides a great view of the Limestone Creek valley north and a place to get out of the weather. For more information and maps: www.fingerlakestrail.org.

 *Mary Coffin of ADK's Onondaga*

Chapter has been active in the North Country Scenic Trail project.

3 Champagne and Puddingstone: A New Jersey Fire Tower Hike

BY DIANE PILIERE GRUNTHAL

Every year for the past ten years, on the anniversary of our wedding, Allen and I have taken a short evening hike to watch the sunset atop the Bearfort Mountain fire tower. Allen carries a bottle of champagne and some cheese and crackers; I

If you scramble down this trail just a short distance, you will see the violet-hued rock said to be all that remains of a long, narrow inland sea.

bring water and a headlamp. Neither energy bars nor ibuprophen required on this hike.

There are many miles of blazed trails in the Pequannock Watershed and nearby Wawayanda State Park, including various ways to hike to the fire tower. These trails are maintained largely by the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference. However, there are no published descriptions for the route Allen and I hike to reach the Bearfort Mountain fire tower.

To find the trail, take I-80 or I-287 to New Jersey Route 23 North to Union Valley Road, Route 513, in western Passaic County. Follow Union Valley Road for 4.5 miles. Turn left onto Stephens Road for 0.2 mile, driving past the equestrian center, where you will find a small parking area just below a gate across the road. There is a sign designating this parking area as P8.

Walk beyond the gate and hike about half a mile gently uphill on a wide, unmarked woods road to the intersection of a yellow-blazed trail with a yellow gate across the trail, on the left. Turn left onto the yellow-blazed trail for a rock-strewn, moderate uphill of about another half mile. The route passes through a ruggedly



Above: CEDAR POND.
Right: DIANE AT THE TOP OF BEARFORT MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER.
Diane Grunthal

diverse forest, characterized by black cherry, mountain laurel, hemlock, cedar, and white pine.


You will soon see the fire tower peeking through the trees on the left, on the edge of an open meadow with picnic tables. Built in 1934, this 68-foot-high fire tower provides a panoramic 360-degree view. The elevation at this grassy open summit is 1320 feet.

This part of the New Jersey Highlands is also known for its sandstone conglomerate rock called puddingstone. You can see some of it if you walk across the summit to where the Highlands Trail comes in from the valley. If you scramble down this trail just a short distance, you will see the violet-hued rock said to be all that remains of a long, narrow inland sea or sound into which pebbles and sand were deposited by fast-moving rivers more than 350 million years ago.

We scamper up the fire tower for dramatic views. A dry, relatively warm wind usually greets us at the top of the tower's steps. The cabin is not open at this time of the evening, although it is one of the fire towers in the New Jersey–New York area still manned seasonally. The tops of New

York City's skyscrapers gleam above the Ramapo Mountains to the southeast. Cedar Pond, a natural glacial lake, glistening like a diamond, can be seen directly to the west while Clinton Reservoir lies to the southwest. We stare in wonderment northeast across Union Valley to Sterling Ridge in the distance; Kanouse Mountain stands nearby against a darkening sky. We enjoy a lazy spring evening, sipping champagne, eating cheese and crackers. We watch the shadows lengthen behind a cloudless sky as the sun slides below the horizon; it's another magical anniversary evening.

An annual permit is required to hike in the Pequannock Watershed; it costs \$8, seniors half price. The permit is issued in person at the watershed office, 223 Echo Lake Road, West Milford, N.J., 973-697-2850. The office is open 8:00 AM–4:00 PM weekdays and until 12:30 on Saturdays.

 *Diane Grunthal knows fire towers well; she wrote the Fire Tower Challenge article in the July-August 2010 Adirondac.*

4 New Land Trust: A *Treasure Trove of Trees*

BY RICHARD FROST

On an afternoon when I don't want to drive to the High Peaks, or climb Poke-o-Moonshine again, or walk the shore of Lake Champlain at Point au Roche State Park, I'll look for a less trammled part of Clinton County for a walk. One under-used option has become a new favorite—the New Land Trust.

This 287-acre parcel of land in the Town of Saranac was purchased communally by a group of students during the 1970s. Use of the property apparently waxed and waned until a nucleus of interested individuals, including some of the original

Notice also the nicely built (and newly decorated) composting outhouses ... these further demonstrate the New Land Trust's commitment to land stewardship and an environmental ethic.

owners, renewed their dedication to the site over recent years. Volunteers worked on trails and buildings. By changing to a non-profit status, the Trust has overcome various financial obstacles while also satisfying a desire for public use.

The trails begin just outside Saranac—not Saranac Lake, but a similarly named village on Route 3 west of Plattsburgh. One must turn north off Route 3 onto Pickett Corners Road, and at the top of a hill, go left on Chazy Lake Road. Continuing west, go straight ahead at a four-way stop; the road becomes Clark Hill Road.

It's worth stopping at an historic marker at that point. Text details the first settlement of the area in 1802, after which houses, a church, hotel, sawmill, and cemetery were built. An Indian trail ran through here; smugglers later used the route. During the War of 1812, American troops briefly skirmished with British forces. It's a reminder that this quiet rural intersection was once a more active place.

Go right on Plumadore Road (by now there will have been signs denoting "NLT") to a parking lot by the trailhead. After perhaps a tenth of a mile of walking, there's a kiosk with a map of the terrain. Just beyond stands the New Land Trust Club House. Though it's always been closed during my visits, the Web site indicates that its renovation is a priority project.

Trails boast names like Solstice, Equinox, Saranac, Zipper, and Foxhole. Expect a mix of forest and meadow. Stone fences dot the property, too. Though undulating, no trails are particularly steep or require consistent climbing.

One spur goes to Luke's Shack, an open plank lean-to. Another turn will put you on Bunk House Trail, which (surprise!) brings you by an attractive, cozy-looking, wood-shingled cabin. From a bench near Growler, there's a nice view of Lyon Mountain and Averill Peak. I found plenty of maples along the Sugar Shack Trail, though there's no longer an actual building for processing sap.


The Saranac Trail runs almost the entire north-south axis of the preserve. Woods along the way include a grove of white birch and a fragrant area of balsam. Near its southern end, the route becomes mainly pasture. There's an outdoor stage, the fulcrum for a pleasant natural amphitheater.

Look at the preserve as a place for strolling and wandering. Although the map displays some fifteen to twenty trails, all are short, and there's plenty of interconnection. Consider following the New Land Trust Tree Identification Trail, a fourteen-stop route mapped out by Hannah Racette as a Girl Scout Silver Award Project in the fall of 2009. Along with species already mentioned, expect to find aspen, cherry, white and Scotch pine, cedar, beech, basswood, and more.

Notice also the nicely built (and newly decorated) composting outhouses at several points. Replacing the one- and two-holers of the past, these further demonstrate the New Land Trust's commitment to land stewardship and an environmental ethic.

Keep this place in mind come winter, too. Trail maintenance makes this an excellent cross-country ski site.

A Web site (www.newlandtrust.org) provides maps and further information. Although access is free, the group welcomes donations and memberships.

 Rich Frost, an Algonquin Chapter member, is the author of *One Foot Forward: Walks in Upstate New York*. (Bloated Toe Enterprises, 2008).



Carl Heilman II

5 Saratoga Spa State Park: *Golf Courses and Geysers*

BY JOHN J. KETTLEWELL

My father liked to go for a hike after work, which often meant a very short drive to the “Spa,” located just off of South Broadway (Rt. 9) in Saratoga Springs. More formally called the Saratoga Spa State Park, its core properties were first purchased by the state in 1912 in order to preserve the many mineral springs that were in danger of being tapped out by commercial concerns. In the 1930s, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Works Progress Administration, numerous grand buildings were erected to provide work for the many unemployed during the Great Depression. Some of these buildings were bath houses utilizing the naturally occurring mineral waters.

Despite these trappings of a suburban and urban environment, every effort was made over the decades to preserve as much open space, natural forest, and water as possible. There are places where trails lead off into forest that is reminiscent of much more wild areas further north. There is a park fee charged per car in the summer to access the roads in the central valley of the park, but in the winter the toll booth is empty and the roads are mostly closed. Snow-covered roads and golf course fairways add to the easy snowshoe and cross-country ski opportunities. Plus there are some wonderful sledding hills on woods roads and trails.

At any time of the year it is possible to access the more natural sections of the park from a large parking lot located behind the Roosevelt Baths building (see the map at saratogaspastatepark.org). From the parking area several trails set out through the woods to the south, with an old road being the most prominent at the west end of the parking area. The road heads downhill into what I call Geyser Valley, so-named for the spouting gusher of water located on a mound of orange minerals from the spring. This mound is located in Geyser Creek, near a road bridge over the creek. A stroll north on the Geyser Creek Trail soon brings you to an even-larger mound of orange mineral residue that my dad nicknamed “The Brain.” You’ll see what he was thinking if you hike to this unique outcropping. A little further on the trail dead ends at a small roaring waterfall that emerges from a large, dark stone tunnel. A footbridge leading to the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) amphitheater looms high overhead.

You’re not supposed to swim in Geyser Creek, but I can never resist the temptation to cool my feet on a hot summer’s eve. There are several places along the creek, as it meanders its way south to an eventual rendezvous with the navigable Kayaderosseras, where one can wade across, but there are also some deep holes and a very swift current. A fun hike, winter or summer, is to follow the creek through the park, crisscrossing back and forth on various small bridges.

Trails also stay on the high ground surrounding Geyser Valley, and there are several places where other trails and old woods roads branch off to descend into the valley. Many of these branches are small and steep, but a few are wide enough to form nice downhill runs on skis or fast sledding routes. The winding path down the hill past the Ferndell spring is particularly nice, with huge trees looming overhead from the high banks. The path follows a burbling brook down into Geyser Valley. Some of these trails are marked as ski trails for winter users. Most of the

terrain is easy to moderate, though some of the downhills can be icy and winding.


The area is compact enough that you can wander about without any real idea of where you are going, and yet you will soon come to a landmark or a paved road to orient yourself. The Loop Road circles through and around Geyser Valley, and if you keep following it in a circle you will



A stroll north on the Geyser Creek Trail soon brings you to an even larger mound of orange mineral residue that my dad nicknamed “The Brain.”

end up back at a spot you recognize so you can find your way out. There are park police patrolling in the summer—if you really get lost just ask one of them for help.

Just like my dad used to do with us kids forty years ago, the Spa is a great place to unwind after a hectic day in the office. It is a wonderful wandering ground where you can’t really get lost, but you can feel like you’ve gotten away from it all.

 John Kettlewell is ADK’s publications and marketing director.

6 Merestead: Art, History, and Nature

BY DARIELLE GRAHAM

Perhaps Merestead calls to the Scottish blood flowing in my veins, “merestead” being Scottish for “farmland,” and that is why, after much thought, I chose this county park to present to readers, as Mount Kisco, where I live, is rich in parks, preserves and sanctuaries, many a mere five- or ten-minute drive from home. My return to Merestead after several years’ absence was engendered by an invitation to participate in a Trail Maintenance 101 Workshop conducted by Jane Daniels of the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference. Since then, I have kept returning to Merestead, initially to help clear and reblaze the trails, but more and more like a migratory bird journeying back to habitat that can’t be preened from its feathers.

In the early 1900s, Merestead—on Byram Lake Road in Mount Kisco—was the country estate of William Sloane, president of W&J Furniture Company, and wife Frances. In 1982, their daughter, Margaret Sloane-Patterson, and husband, Robert L. Patterson, a prominent New York City orthopedic surgeon, bequeathed Merestead to Westchester County, envisioning that it would be used for purposes of conservation, culture, education, history, and recreation. Upon Mrs. Patterson’s death in 2000, the county took full possession of the property to develop it as an historic site.

Merestead’s ties to the past are evident the moment you step from your car. In the parking area, a stately carriage house silently greets visitors. As you pass through the wrought-iron gate and proceed up the driveway, the twenty-eight-room Georgian mansion the Sloanes made their home, fronted by sumptuous

gardens, graces the eye and creates the impression of stepping back into another era. Curator-led tours of the mansion can be arranged by appointment. Original works by artists such as Rembrandt, Whistler and Goya are alone worth the visit.

Within a short distance of the mansion, on the green trail, the pet cemetery, complete with fire hydrant, speaks of the Sloane family’s many dogs: Wattle, Wimble, Beetle, Pico, Rusty, Foxy, Figaro, David, Susie, Sou, Seebe “Doodie,” Doxie, Dippie, Blaine A Prince, and two or three others, names almost vanished into the stone. Moved by this display of love for departed companions, I cannot pass by, no matter how many times I travel this trail, without stopping to gaze at the gravestones preserving each dog’s memory.

Merestead’s 2.3 miles of trails, some original to the property, meander through woodlands and fields

7 On the Hiking Menu in Niskayuna

BY LISA CROSBY METZGER

When I was asked to write about a hiking/walking opportunity in the Capital Region, I reacted like a hungry diner considering an appetizing and varied menu. Just one “entrée”? I thought. I hadn’t been out in a while and I wanted to choose several. The weather, however, became unbearably hot; it checked my appetite and steered me toward cooler, shaded destinations, attained with a minimum of effort.

My mother and I set out early one morning for the Lisha Kill Natural Area in Niskayuna, a 3.3-mile drive from my home near a busy four-way intersection in suburbia. Owned by the Nature Conservancy, its appeal on this day was its deep woods, cool stream beds, and proximity.

Located off Rosendale Road in Niskayuna, 0.2 miles west of River Road, the Lisha Kill Natural Area is comprised of approximately 110 acres; the Lisha Kill stream runs through the middle of it. Parking for the trail is behind a small white building that once served as the Niskayuna Grange Hall.

The trails are easy to walk and locate, and appear well used; in an hour in the woods, we met three other small groups (and two leashed dogs). The trail initially passes through a maturing forest, down a hill into a cool ravine. As you climb out of the ravine, you can take Frank’s Trail (right) or continue straight.

We went straight, through what must have been part of the forty acres of old-growth Eastern white pine and Eastern hemlock forest noted on a sign at the trailhead. At the banks of a steep ravine, with the Lisha Kill below, we turned back. The trail continued along the Lisha Kill, and by the map appears to cross it further on. We decided to come back later in the week when we had more time.

On our return to the parking lot we detoured along Frank’s Trail, knowing it rejoined the main trail, and were rewarded with a loop through a brighter, more open area of quaking aspens and grassy undergrowth.

When we did return later that week, a detour off River Road to admire gardens on the side streets brought us to a new entrée: a neglected and intriguing “Nature Preserve” sign beside a well-trod path. We were only a mile from the Lisha Kill Natural Area, but it was obviously a different preserve.

We left our car in the lot at the end of Whitmyer Drive (off River Road), next to a water treatment plant, and followed the path. We soon found a sign for the Schenectady Museum Nature Preserve and a map, and decided to stay and explore these trails rather than drive over to the Lisha Kill Natural Area. Though I was initially skeptical of any trail that runs behind a water treatment plant, our persever-

and follow old farm roads. Highlights along the way include restored fieldstone root cellars, remnants of century-old bridges, the masonry milk spring, and two Chinese lantern statues. Most outstanding: a panorama of the Hudson Highlands. Merestead is the only place I know, so close to home, that affords such a view. Whenever I walk in Merestead, I am drawn there as a hawk to thermals. On this hilltop, the breath slows, time stands still, and in silence deep as the Hudson River, I soar.


Oats apparently are one of the richest silicon foods that help renew bones and all connective tissue. With its serene fields, peaceful woods, and spectacular vista of the Hudson Highlands, Merestead has been the bag of oats nourishing me since my reacquaintance with this park. Past and present mingle effortlessly here, reminiscent of a simplicity that



today's technology can't replicate, no matter how smart. Hikers and horseback riders, as well as bird-watchers and photographers, will enjoy this gem of 130 acres. For those who simply wish to rest and read or close their eyes and lap up the peace and quiet, the idyllic lawn in front of the mansion's courtyard, where a magnificent oak tree extends a bough in

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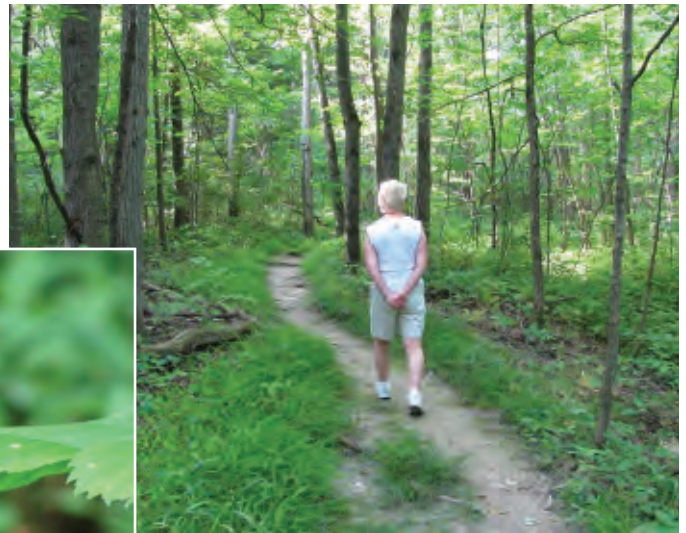
welcome, provides a panacea all its own.

 *Darielle Graham grew up in London, England, and from an early age loved walking in the city's many parks. She lives in Mount Kisco, N.Y., with husband John Graham; when not venturing farther afield, they enjoy the bounty of nearby sanctuaries and preserves.*

Though I was initially skeptical of any trail that runs behind a water treatment plant, our perseverance was richly rewarded.

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We quickly forgot we were close to any facilities. We followed yellow blazes, then green, red, and white. Along the way we dallied along a cool stream, explored ridges, and followed a gentle trail out to the Mohawk River and Lock 7. As noted in the Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady's *Natural Areas of Schenectady County* (which features a good map of the area, as well as one of the Lisha Kill Natural Area), the preserve presents "a rich and unusual variety of natural landforms, plants, animals and habitats. There are scenic river overlooks, deep ravines and excellent examples




SCHENECTADY MUSEUM NATURE PRESERVE
Lisa Crosby Metzger

of the stages of ecological succession from farmland to forest."

We explored for two hours and didn't cover all of the trails. Nor did we make it back to the Lisha Kill. Maybe we'll visit both areas in the spring, topping off a great meal with a "desert" of spring wildflowers.

Note: For the Schenectady Museum Nature Preserve, you can also park at Lock 7 (off Rosendale Road); there is a lean-to of sorts along the bike trail, northwest of Lock 7, and the trail into the preserve is next to it.

 *Lisa Crosby Metzger is the associate editor of this magazine.*

8 🍏 Apple Cider Memories: A Walk in Williamsville

BY LARRY BEAHAN



ABOVE: SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS
Larry Beahan

McMansions have replaced the fields that surrounded Williamsville when I was a boy. But its character is retained in parks along Ellicott Creek, its Glen Park waterfall, and the 1811 Williamsville Water Mill. We loved its fresh-pressed, unpasteurized apple cider.

Glen Avenue is a block north of Route 5, which follows the “Old Iroquois Trail” through Williamsville and along the Onondaga Escarpment. Walking east, the roadway drops abruptly into the Glen with trees and shrubs on either side. When I was a kid, a tiny carousel and Ferris wheel and booths for games of chance occupied the Glen. The Inferno nightclub took its place.

The creek poured over the Onondaga Escarpment in white plumes as generous as Santa Claus’s beard

When an apartment building was proposed, residents organized and turned it into this charming park.

A bridge spans the rushing waters of Ellicott Creek. I was on the bridge recently after a good rain. The creek poured over the Onondaga Escarpment in white plumes as generous as Santa Claus’s beard. To the right of the falls, just below its crest, the water mill stood out in faded red glory. Suddenly, a guy and girl in bathing suits bobbed by on plastic inner tubes, ably navigating the white water.

Let’s walk the paths up the escarpment alongside the falls. We pass


mallard-adorned ponds and plantings of bushes and trees. Black chert, valued for the making of Stone Age tools, studs the rugged limestone cliff. At Route 5, the Eagle House, built in 1827, is to our right. The Holland land company advertised it thus: “Bird, Beef and Bottle with a Bed.” If it’s Saturday, why not browse the farmers’ market at the mill. Later we will cross Main and explore Island Park behind Town Hall. The island is formed by a looping side-channel from the creek. A dam stores a considerable head of water for the mill and for clandestine swimmers.

On the north side of Glen Park, a trail parallels the creek through thick woods into a relatively narrow defile. It is a bird-lover’s paradise that turns at dusk into an adolescent jungle for the enjoyment of bonfires and other vices. In a shallow backwater we pass a bubbling natural gas leak.

Then we burst from the woods into Shangri-La, the broad green flood plain of Ellicott Creek. Ruling the plain is a storybook, copper-spined castle with dentate towers and Gothic windows—“Saint Mary of the Angels,” the former motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Francis. The con-

vent and its grounds are now a state park.

The nuns used to forbid trespass, fearing small boys who might steal apples from their orchard. My first step into the park each time still fills me with awe. But then anglers casually pulling in bass off the nuns’ wooden bridge and people walking dogs in the orchard dispel the wonder. So let’s pet a dog, chat with the owner, and head back to the Eagle House for one of those famous bottles.

 Retired psychiatrist Larry Beahan has long been active with the Niagara Frontier Chapter of ADK. He has written previously for Adirondac.

9 Henry's Woods: A Community Preserve

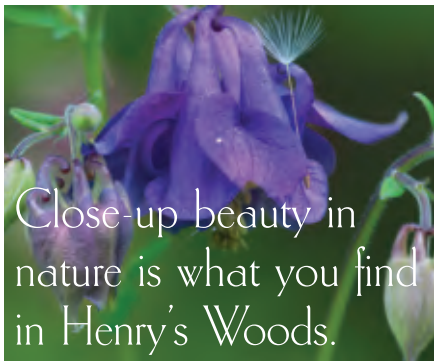
BY BRUCE WADSWORTH

The “Henry” of Henry’s Woods on the edge of Lake Placid was Henry Uihlein, a noted Lake Placid philanthropist and charter member of the Adirondack Mountain Club. Henry’s Woods is the creation of the Uihlein Foundation. Need an hour or two to relax, walk the dog, make a refreshing cross-country ski circuit, or just enjoy the wildflowers? Henry’s Woods is just the place for you.

In Lake Placid, jump into the car and in only five or ten minutes you can pull into the large semi-circular parking area at Henry’s Woods. On Military Road, which bypasses town, go to Bear Cub Road, 0.1 mile east of the Olympic Training Center or 1.8 miles from Route 73 at the Horse Show Grounds. Turn south onto Bear Cub Rd. and at 0.1 mile look for the Henry’s Woods sign on the right at the first turn in.

People come and go all day, but at any given time you will generally see few other hikers. Close-up beauty in nature is what you find in Henry’s Woods. You’ll meander a 2.5-mile loop with trillium and other wildflowers in springtime. Birches, balsam fir, and maples are in abundance. Gurgling brooks are crossed on wide bridges. There is an ever-changing seasonal panorama.

One hundred feet up the trail is a kiosk in the woods to the left. The attractive log structure has a large map, so you can get your bearings before setting out. Log benches provide a nice place to rest a bit after your outing.



Close-up beauty in nature is what you find in Henry’s Woods.

Darla Outhout

The trail is fine gravel layered over a net cloth material, so drainage is very good year-round. The hiker is urged to stay on the primary trail, avoiding unmarked private side trails.


With a few interspersed gradual inclines, there is a barely discernible rise in the trail grade. The trail leads 0.3 miles to a junction where a 1.9-mile loop begins.

If you are in fair physical condition, in which direction you complete the loop isn’t a concern. If you prefer the more easily traveled direction, bear right and do the loop in a counterclockwise direction which is how this description proceeds.

There is steady but very gradual gain in elevation before a fairly long level stretch in the middle of the loop. The trail then gently winds down toward the junction where the loop begins. It eventually reaches a sharply winding S-curve, with greater steepness. Just when you think you are out of it, a second but less severe S-curve occurs. While this is of no concern to the walker, the faster-moving skier must have good self-control to avoid a serious spill.

Beyond this short stretch of trail, the way resumes a gradual descent to the junction and then a very gentle downhill back to the parking area.

A few words must be said to skiers. The trail is rated intermediate to novice. However, trail difficulty is rather uneven at a skier’s typical rate of travel, though very easy for walkers. Unless the skier is quite good at turning and snowplowing, a clockwise direction of travel is recommended. This allows the skier to climb through the sharp turns described above. The bridges appear suddenly at curves and do not have side barriers. Walk the trail in summer before skiing in the winter so as to become acquainted with and avoid future trouble at these bridges.

 Bruce Wadsworth, a resident of Lake Placid, is the author of numerous guidebooks, many published over the years by ADK.

10 Stone Valley: A Northwest Adirondacks River Walk

BY NEAL BURDICK

For a river-oriented outing, “Stone Valley” between Colton and Hannawa Falls in St. Lawrence County, and about a twenty-minute drive from my home in Canton, is unsurpassed. Trails that are maintained in part by the Laurentian Chapter of ADK parallel both sides of the Raquette River on lands owned by Reliant Energy, St. Lawrence County, and the Town of Colton; thanks to highway bridges at both ends of each, a six-mile loop is possible, downriver on one side of the Raquette and up on the other. Or, you can do an out-and-back hike of whatever length you wish on either side. Thanks to the owners’ good will, the trails are open to the public, no permit needed; camping, though, is prohibited.

The site, while outside the Blue Line by a handful of miles, involves one of the major Adirondack rivers, which provides dramatic scenery as it tumbles off the uplands and into the St. Lawrence Valley. This is the natural boundary of the Adirondacks, man-made boundaries notwithstanding.

The trails are distinct and well marked, but watch for enticing side paths that lead out of the parcel on the east side. Swimming holes are abundant and often dramatic.

A note of caution, though—you are within a hydroelectric project, one of many on the Raquette. Prominent signs warn of rapidly rising water thanks to releases at the dam at the upstream (Colton) end. These are done for the benefit of both the power company and kayakers. It’s easy to find out when kayakers’ releases are scheduled (in fact, the spectacular falls and holes and the proximity of the trails to the river make for exciting kayak-viewing), but other releases can be done at the whim of the com-


James Bullard

pany. They are not frequent, and you won't be caught in a biblical flood, but do keep alert if you enter the riverbed. If you hear what sounds like a train bearing down from upriver, get back on the trail.

The southern, or upstream, ends of both trails are the more spectacular, with falls and gorges sporting textbook geologic features such as potholes. Sometimes the trails approach the rims of these gorges. Watch your footing here; pine needles (which can be remarkably slippery), roots, leaf litter, and uneven ground are hazards to the feet.

There is much human history here too. Near the southern (upstream) trailhead of the "West Bank" trail are the stone foundations of an immense nineteenth-century tannery. Interpretive signs tell its story and prove that this location looks a lot more natural today than it did a century ago. If you're sharp-eyed and spot beside the trail a small mound of reddish-brown furlike material that looks like buffalo hair, that's exactly what it is, still intact after 125 years; the trail goes through the tannery's dump. Between here and the trailhead is a steel-grate pedestrian bridge over the dripping penstock that carries a steady supply of water to hydroelectric generators downstream, a reminder that the Raquette is "the most dammed river in the state."

There are four access points to the Stone Valley trails, two on either side of the Brown's Bridge Road bridge over the Raquette River (turn east off NY 56 between Hannawa Falls and Colton; the east-side trailhead requires a right turn onto Lenney Road just after the bridge), and two on either side of the bridge in the village of Colton (for the east-side trailhead, follow signs to the fire station and continue a short distance past it). The two in Colton, at the upstream end of the tract, are the more popular.

 Neal Burdick is the editor of Adirondac. Adapted with permission from an essay that appeared in Dog Hikes in the Adirondacks (Shaggy Dog Press, 2009).

11 A Walk through Mountain Laurel: The Catskills' Mt. Guardian

BY WILL NIXON

Okay, here's my beef: the Catskills have 355 miles of state hiking trails, thirty-five peaks over 3500 feet for peak baggers, some of the wildest terrain you can find south of the Adirondacks, yet the Catskills have almost no place to walk, if by walk you mean a leisurely hour in the woods after the last afternoon e-mail and before dinner and NPR. Our trails ask you to commit to mountains. So people like me, who insist upon their daily constitutional, have two choices: walking the roads or trespassing. Once you get past the "Posted" signs you do find abandoned woods roads spread for miles through the forest, a *de facto* trail system for those in the know. But I won't be the one to write the *Underground Walking Guide* sure to offend private land owners, and rightfully so.

But there is a walk that only feels like trespassing. It's one of my favorites in Woodstock, my home, though I can't say that everyone I've led up there has understood the appeal. It's a trail that zigzags up through mountain laurels under an oak forest to a rock outcropping with a valley view of Woodstock cloaked in trees—look for the white church steeple that reveals the hamlet—and farther hills and ridges down to the Shawangunks on the southern horizon.

Granted, at this sunny outcrop amid the shrub oaks you won't be at the summit of Mt. Guardian, still some distance away. (If you're a bushwhacking peak-bagger like me, you'll wrestle your way to the top, where you'll find a forest with no view and no reason to be there.) Nor will you have as grand a panorama as the sweeping five-state view from neighboring Overlook Mountain. But, almost

12 Frogs, Toads, and Butterflies: Camden's Forest Park

BY WILLIAM J. "JAY" O'HERN

My wife, Bette, and I never wanted to live far from the Adirondacks. We chose the great underdeveloped physiographic plateau, New York State's snowfall capital, the Tug Hill Plateau, for its rural character. "The Tug's" vastness is an underused four-season recreational hub close to major cities. I divide most of my leisure time between this "Lesser Wilderness" and the Adirondacks, the Greater Wilderness.

But I don't need to go far to connect with the essence of nature. I find as much contentment in Camden's 117-acre Forest Park as I do backpacking in the High Peaks or fishing and paddling on Tug Hill, and Forest Park is a few minutes from my back door.

The park, an outstanding natural resource and community asset, is the result of community-minded philanthropists, volunteers, and an organization known as Friends of Forest Park who oversee several miles of paved and unpaved roads and winding forest pathways for walking, jogging, biking, and skiing. With its small brooks, towering trees, birds, ferns, and wildflowers, it's a beautiful retreat for summer picnics, family reunions at quaint pavilions, or just peaceful meditation. Anglers trout-fish in Mad River and Fish Creek. The park is also home to a variety of wildlife.

While the village of Camden, at the southern foot of the plateau, has many attributes, I like how two of my grandchildren, Edward and Laura, sum up their experiences in the park. Twelve-year-old Edward says he likes going "because there are a lot of interesting things like the trails, creeks, and build-

surely, you will have a private pocket of Shangri-La to yourselves, even on a summer afternoon. Recently, a friend and I made it up there in a leisurely hour. And if you're lucky, as I was one day in June, you'll catch the mountain laurels blooming with pinkish white popcorn balls of flower clusters. It's as if the forest is giving itself a wedding.

Park at the Byrdcliffe Theater on Upper Byrdcliffe Road. Founded in 1902, this arts and crafts colony of wooden buildings that mix Swiss chalets with Californian styles attracted such famous visitors as Wallace Stevens, Thomas Mann, Isadore Duncan, and John Burroughs. Now walk up Camelot Lane, a dirt road, where in a few minutes you'll pass a long low wooden house down to your right with a green roof and gravel drive, which in the 1960s was Bob Dylan's home. The current rock-star owner doesn't take kindly to intrusions, so beware.

Next, look for the small "Mt. Guardian Trail" sign nailed crookedly to a two-inch-thick shrub tree on your left. There's also a chain slung between gateposts.

Don't be inhibited by the lack of a welcoming trailhead kiosk, or a map, or anything else. The assumption seems to be that this is one for the locals. So consider yourself local. Woodstock is a global brand, after all. The trail sticks to properties owned by Byrdcliffe or the town of Woodstock, both of which permit public access.


Around the gate chain, you'll come up to a sun-baked clearing of weeds, gravel, and dried (or maybe wet) mud. Across this clearing you'll see the start of an old woods road. Take it. You're now on your way. Recently, someone spray-painted orange spots on the trees as blazes to help.

The lower portion of the route follows this road for five minutes or so, crossing a footbridge before starting uphill, where it branches off onto a footpath on the right that will in time zigzag up through the mountain laurels. There are several trail splits along the way with turnoffs that dead-end in the shrubs, but



If you're lucky, you'll catch the mountain laurels blooming with pinkish white popcorn balls of flower clusters. It's as if the forest is giving itself a wedding.

that's life, at least in Woodstock. If there weren't a few tricks, you would not have such a marvelous mountainside to yourself.

 Will Nixon is the co-author with Michael Perkins of *Walking Woodstock: Journeys into the Wild Heart of America's Most Famous Small Town* (Bushwhack Books, 2009).



I find as much contentment in Camden's 117-acre Forest Park as I do backpacking in the High Peaks or fishing and paddling on Tug Hill.

ings. It's also peaceful."

"I like catching frogs and toads there," seven-year-old Laura reports. "The frogs are slippery and hard to hold on to. Toads are

all bumpy. I also like to catch moths and butterflies. They're pretty and easy to catch. I put them carefully in a container and look at them. Mommy says I need to let them go so they can have a home where they belong, and we can see them when we want to. I also like to go to Forest Park because I like the swings, and I ride my bike and fish there."

Laura's attempts to catch a chipmunk have never been successful, but she doesn't mind. She says the fun is in trying. Edward adds that part of his enjoyment is seeing his sister act like a "tomgirl." "Laura likes to be rough and do boy stuff, like getting into the mud, and doesn't worry about getting her clothes dirty and grungy or even worry about getting cuts and bruises," he tells me.


Kerry, the children's mother, notes, "They both like to go into the woods following the dirt trails to check out what's beyond the paved roadway. There is a long pipe near the entrance that channels water from a marsh into a large pool

on the other side of the road. They count to three, drop their sticks into the water at the end of the culvert, then run across the road to see whose stick wins the race as they pop out the other end."

Bette and I have always valued the intrinsic payback being outdoors in nature offers. Forest Park adds another dimension to the forested setting around our rural home. It's good to see that our grandchildren's curiosity about nature is alive and well, just as it was in us when we were young.

For starters, become familiar with the natural side of the Tug Hill Plateau with *Tug Hill, A Four Season Guide to the Natural Side* and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's Web site: www.tughilltomorrowlandtrust.org.

Location, directions, and features of Forest Park can be found at www.forestparkcamden.org.

 Retired teacher Jay O'Hern is the author of several books about the Adirondack historical topics; one of his favorite subjects is Noah Rondeau.