

# The Long View

High Peaks Hiking Club Upstate Chapter

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## Take a hike close to home

BY GARY FALLESEN

In this car culture, where the pedal is constantly put to the metal, Americans sometimes need to get footloose. They need to escape life's gridlock and hit the off-road walking.

There is no flow of traffic there, no bumper-to-bumper at 65 mph. You can go your own speed.

There are no fender-benders, only bends in the trail.

"We spend so much of our time and national energy on our road system," says Betsy Russell, president of Ontario Pathways. "Everyone loves their car, but everyone needs to get out and get back to nature to relieve stress."

The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors has reported that 155 million people walk for fun. About one-third of them hike on trails.

The American Hiking Society, which Saturday celebrates the sixth annual National Trails Day, envisions a time when no home will be more than 15 minutes from a trailhead.

Russell says that is starting to take shape

in the Rochester-Finger Lakes region.

There are dozens of places close to our backyard to go hiking — from the Genesee Valley Greenway to the Finger Lakes Trail, and from High Tor Wildlife Management Area to Hamlin Beach State Park.

The Finger Lakes Trail is more rugged than, say, the Genesee River Trail System in Rochester. Those who have hiked the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail find the FLT comparable to those nationally recognized footpaths.

Rochester's Howard Beye says the Finger Lakes Trail "gives people an opportunity to get out on as much of a wilderness trail as we're ever going to have in this portion of the state."

Beye, 64, is the chairman of the FLT's trail management committee.

"There are many stretches," he says, "where you can go a mile, two miles, three miles without seeing a road or anything."

For residents of northern counties, however, the FLT is a healthy car ride away. There are many trails — albeit tamer — closer to home.

Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway have opened 40 of the first 50 miles of their hoped-for 90-mile trail.

## Rochester-Finger Lakes trails

1. Auburn Line Trail  
8.3 miles  
Victor Hiking Trails  
924-7141
2. Webster-Hojack Trail  
2.5 miles  
Friends of Webster Parks  
671-0258
3. Crescent Trail  
27 miles  
Crescent Trail Association  
234-1621
4. Groveland Secondary Trail  
20.8 miles  
Department of Environmental Conservation  
(607) 776-2165
5. Erie Canal Heritage Trail  
101.6 miles when completed  
New York State Canal Corp.  
800-422-6254
6. Finger Lakes Trail — Bristol Hills  
32.2 miles  
Finger Lakes Trail Conference  
288-7191
7. Genesee River Trail System  
8.9 miles when completed.  
City Parks, Recreation & Human Services  
428-6755

## Next meeting

The Upstate Chapter of the High Peaks Hiking Club will meet at 7 p.m. Monday, April 29, in the Genesee High School auditorium. The agenda will include:

- Brainstorming and discussion of this year's HPHC annual fundraiser.
- "Eaten Alive: Black Flies and You," a presentation by the Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Rock-climbing tips by HPHC member Alicia Stuart.
- "Backpacking Hawaii's Kalalau Trail," a slide presentation by members Dan and Patricia Season.

# Off the beaten path

If you're ready to camp on a trail, leave the car behind and hike to a place under the stars.

By GARY FALLESEN

Two logbooks hang in a plastic bag inside the lean-to on George Fraley's back four acres. One entry, dated July 20, 1996, comes from a father and daughter.

"Laura's 6 and a Brownie," Patrick Eble wrote. "I wanted to take her to a hiking camp versus a family campground. That isn't really camping."

Tired of overcrowded campgrounds? Ready to venture more than 20 feet from your car?

The Finger Lakes Trail is dotted with lean-tos like the one Fraley cares for as if he's its doting dad. The 72-year-old outdoorsman calls the shelter that is a half-mile from his home — and public parking in his driveway — "primitive camping."

"You've got to be able to be a camper: people who are very interested in the outdoor type of thing, not the people who pitch a tent next to their car," he says.

If you want to park and hike, Fraley's place on East Hill Road just southwest of High Tor Wildlife Management Area is a great destination. The lean-to stands unoccupied most week nights. Scouts, church groups and clubs visit some weekends.

"The problem is people in Rochester don't know High Tor exists," Fraley claims. "They think this is (only) a game management area. They don't know there's 28 miles of ski trails, hiking trails, mountain biking. In Monroe County, you can't mountain bike on the trails; down here you can."

One logbook entry, dated Aug. 25, 1995,

comes from three Wayland schoolteachers who were bicycling the trail and came across this "wonderful oasis seemingly in the middle of nowhere."

"Sure do appreciate the beautiful work done on the location for the enjoyment of us general masses," Don Fox, Hal Rowley and Rob Hughes wrote. "The care and love for nature is evident."

Fraley moved about an hour's drive from downtown Rochester a decade ago. The difference in usage between Mendon Ponds Park and High Tor amazes him.

"Fifty mountain bikes can be up in there and they'll probably never see anybody," he says. "(In Mendon Ponds Park) You had to watch out that the front of your ski didn't hit the guy in front of you. Down here, we can have 100 skiers and they may see two or three."

"When we moved down here I felt sorry for some of the people who really are interested in camping," says Fraley, explaining how pitching a tent on state property just three-quarters of a mile away is restricted (to groups out of hunting season and with a permit).

The lean-to was built as an Eagle Scout project. The nearby outhouse was built by a church group.

But that's as far as the amenities go.

"Most people want to go to a campground where they've got showers, recreation for the kids, toilets, electricity they can plug a portable refrigerator into," Fraley says. "We don't have that here. We're sort of wild."

• Ontario Pathways Opening new section of rail-trail and dedicating three bridges near Phelps, 2 p.m.

## Think Letchworth

The U.S. championships for "the thinking sport" — orienteering — will be held next weekend at Letchworth State Park. The long-course event is 10 a.m. Saturday on the east side of the river and the short-course is 9 a.m. Sunday on the west side. For information, call 671-2437.

## Short jaunts

### National Trails Day

More than 3,000 trail groups nationwide will be conducting events Saturday, including:

- Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway Dedication of eight acres of land given to state in Caledonia, 10:30 a.m., and 2.5-mile hike at Canawaugus Park, Scottsville, 1:30 p.m.
- Genesee River Trail Cleanup of section in Maplewood Park, 9 a.m.

# Book Reviews

## Hiking New York

If you're looking for places to hike, horseback ride or mountain bike in New York, the first place to turn might be A Falcon Guide.

The Montana-based publishing house (406-442-6597) has produced a series of books, including Hiking New York (\$14.95).

It isn't the best guidebook ever produced, but Hiking New York provides some necessary information. Trails have been grouped into 10 geographic regions — Thousand Islands-Seaway, Adirondacks, Niagara Frontier, Chautauqua-Allegheny, Finger Lakes, Central-Leatherstocking, Capital-Saratoga, Catskills, Hudson Valley and Long Island.

## 50 Hikes in the Adirondacks

Barbara McMartin's 50 Hikes in the Adirondacks (Third edition, The Countryman Press, 248 pages, \$14.95) has always been a favorite because it covers all of the Adirondacks and a wide variety of types of hikes (mountains, flatlands, lake areas). There are other guidebooks that cover specific areas in detail, so the strength of this is variety.

McMartin does a nice job of mixing history, ecology, geology, flora and fauna. Some trail guides just walk you through the trail, telling where to turn left and right.

For someone wanting a good general book of hikes in the Adirondacks, this one's tough to beat.

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