

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



April, 2016

OUR TRAILS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF LOVE STORIES (& ONE OTHER)

I'd like to say at the outset that what I received when I asked you for essays on your favorite trail was not what I'd expected. Which brings up the question: what did I expect? Well, for one thing, I thought I'd hear from Trail Adopters lauding the footage they'd poured so much body fluid (I'm thinking blood, sweat and tears) into over the years. Nope. Maybe all that fluid loss had left them dry and exhausted; unable to pick up a pen. Except for Ann Carman -- congratulations, Ann! And I did hear from Larry Labrie who totally confounded that notion by writing about all the trails he'd worked on except the one he'd adopted.

For another, I thought that the trails I'd hear the most about were the big ones; the ones leading up to our own two 4,000 footers. And people did write about them. But the two trails that got the most attention were the smallest: the Brook Path and -- this was a surprise to me -- the Blueberry Ledge Cutoff. Although maybe it shouldn't have been a surprise. Along the brook on the first part of the Cutoff is where my sister and I scattered our mother's ashes.

Maybe loving the smallest trails the most makes perfect sense because you can do them over and over. You can do the Brook Path every day of the year, and some people come pretty close to that. If you do the same thing over and over, it can cause either adoration or boredom. I've been trying to decide if that's because the thing itself changes enough over time to continually reward the viewer or because the viewer is the sort of person who's attuned to those changes of light and season. In the case of our trails and our members, it's both. Plus history.

Here's **Denney Morton** on the **Brook Trail**:

Over the many years, our family has climbed and loved all of our WODC trails, but I would like to sing the praises of the smallest, the easiest, the most accessible and the greatest fun: The Brook Trail.

So often, people come with only a tiny amount of time, and this is where we take them almost as soon as they get out of the car. So often, people come who are completely unfamiliar with these woods and mountains and streams, and this is their first taste. So often, the littles have too short legs to go very far, and parents cannot carry three or four at once. And then we ourselves get more frail, more teetery, less agile, puffing our way along, even on the flat.

I remember clearing the Brook Path with George Zink, and when we came to the straight sandy bottom section before the Elephant Rocks, where the mosses drape into the water on both sides, he smiled and looked at me.. "The Zen Garden ." I remember bringing 25 high school students on the Brook Path from the Waynflete School to rescue and re-set the bridge Roger Korpi and family had put in place which the brook had upended. There is nothing quite as satisfying as a chore which needs 25 sets of arms and backs, and gets done really fast, followed by a mass splash. Designed for teenagers..makes them LOVE trail maintenance. I remember a lovely young bride from NYC who was timid about going into the woods, asking her fiancé to bring along walk-talkies in case "...there are bears.."; standing in the stream in old sneakers looking for "feelies." I remember a long afternoon with the McVicar children walking down the middle of the stream to the dam and back, in old sneakers which squirted sand fountains out of the holes in the toes. I remember countless missions with plastic bags to bring home mosses, ferns and mushrooms for the terrariums we would take home for winter windowsills, so we did not forget. I remember the "ACID TEST" for all new boyfriends and girlfriends being checked out on the visit home..Will they jump in at the Elephant Rocks quickly and joyously ? If not, watch out ! I remember new Afghan refugee friends who came over from Portland, conservatively dressed in head scarves and full length robes tying up their dresses and pants so their seven children could romp in the stream, and the oldest son cradling the crystal clear water in his hands, telling me "This is like our stream in Jalalabad!" I remember celebrating a birthday with Helen Steele where a batch of us girls went to the pools at the Elephant Rocks at 5:30 am to skinny dip together, and then ate blueberry muffins baked for the occasion by Susan Korpi. I remember an encounter with a porcupine who slid down a trunk and fell into the trail just in front of me. I remember a silent walk in the evening light where a scarlet tanager erupted out of a hemlock along the trail and almost brushed my cheek with its wing on its way by. I remember a searingly bright spot of sunlight near a fallen tree which had created a tiny sandy beach, and there in that natural spotlight was a blooming day lily, on which rested an enormous monarch butterfly, orange on orange. I remember the blue-going- towards-green icy pools churning in spring melt below fallen logs. I remember the clusters of Indian Pipes

near the dam on the rotting corduroy roadbed. I remember the chanterelles lighting up the stream banks as I tried to remember if they were edible or not. I remember the beautiful Weymouth daughters posing for lovely photographs by Ralph Weymouth at the Falls. Someone told me the pictures were being saved as gifts for their future husbands. I remember my youngest diving off the platform above the Falls into the icy depths like a straight blue arrow. I remember accidentally coming upon Nat Steele rising up out of his sauna pool like a Norse God at about age 25, sparkling all over with diamond drops, breath-takingly handsome. I remember gathering partridge berries to make Christmas wreaths never quite as beautiful as those of Diane DiFilippe and Susan Korpi. I remember walking on the old wooden pipes of the power station held together with metal bands, and peeking through the window into the shining brass machinery turning water power into electricity. I remember being shown the swimming pool heated with that electricity and Mr. Brooks giving in to my begging to ride the chair lift from the top to the bottom and back. And when I go to sleep at night, I can hear that clear clean happy tumbling water rolling over the granite rocks like liquid silver. For a short little path, it has taken me a long, long way

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*What a mosaic of memories! And memories illuminate
Helen Steele's writing about the Brook:*

I treated the Brook Trail as my daily meditation. I wish that meant that I walked it daily. I don't.

It began a long time ago when I I walked down the trail behind my parents house with my mother. That river or the sound of that river have always seemed the ultimate in

beauty to me. We walked from the back of her house on a trail which always smelled of moss. That smell led to the the smell of warm rocks and dark beautiful wooden branches and sticks. I followed her because I felt so safe doing that. She didn't speak often but when she did I always listened to the sound. There was sun and the sound of running water and our steps. Eventually we get to the old road that ran on the other side of the river between Tamworth and Wonalancet. Then we headed west up the river to the falls. Locke Falls. We would sit with our feet in the water below the big falls covered with the sound and the mist and the smell of balsam. My mother usually brought a bit of a snack. Her favorite was white bread and something that tasted a bit like modern jerky.

This was where I led my unsuspecting first husband on our first little hike. I was 15 and he was a tennis player. It worked after pretending that the Model A had broken down in front of his house on Great Hill. (I had turned off the gas). We walked that trail many times as my destiny with the farm developed.

My favorite part of the trail is the part that runs through a bit of my property. My mother and I used to fish there where the River turns and pools. Perfect for sitting down for a while and dunking the poor old worm. Friends and I over the years have stopped to swim and cool off after a hard days work or haying. Further on down the river, lots of rocks especially moose rocks. There is a swimming pool here where Susan, June and I celebrated birthdays until recently. My dog Willy loves to go down the river with me and I will always wish that I did it much more often. The river is always astoundingly beautiful and calming.

Years ago, one of my sons wondered what he would do when I was gone. I told him to come to the river and he

would find me. I don't know if he found that comforting but I'm glad I said it. It takes about an hour to do the whole circuit on skis or on foot. When you finish you come out into Wonalancet Intervale and yet another miracle.

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Note; All photos can be viewed in color on the WODC website!



Doug McVicar's photo of a late summer afternoon on the Brook Trail

*Andy Thompson sees the **Blueberry Ledge Cutoff Trail** with the eyes of an artist and a naturalist.*

40 years ago I was living in Manchester and trying to decide where I would go hiking. Dead center on my New Hampshire map just north of the Lakes Region I noticed a small dot with the unusual name “Wonalancet”, far from any common tourist destination, and with a number of hiking trails emanating from it. Perfect! Soon after this first visit to hike to the summit of Mt. Whiteface, these idyllic surroundings quickly became my favorite hiking destination. Well, 40 years later my love affair with the Blueberry Ledge Cut-off Trail has settled even more blissfully into the depths of my emotions.

It’s a short 1.5 mile trail that eventually merges with its more commonly travelled cousin, the Blueberry Ledge Trail, at the open granite ledges about half-way to the summit of Whiteface. The “Blueberry Ledges” are known for both its scenic vista looking south, and its prolific crop of wild blueberries in late summer. It’s the largely unknown alternative to the very heavily used Blueberry Ledge Trail, and after (quite honestly) hiking it hundreds of times in every season over the years, it has all the right variety of elements that make it an outstanding trail in my opinion. It has sections that look down into the pristine mountain waters of Wonalancet Brook that emerges from the Bowl Natural Research Area watershed, dense sections of Red Spruce and Eastern Hemlock, steep climbs up the walls of mini glacial cirques where old growth hardwood forests of mature Maple, Beech, and Ash allow for distant visibility, and a new wonderful relocation that travels along the upper rim of one of these mini cirques. But for me it will always be a sweet reminder of a relationship that I have had with this landscape that has lasted many years.

When I get to the ledges and look southward toward the Ossipee Range and see the continual economic development of such things as gravel pits, race tracks and large new homes, I am heartened to know that this beautiful respite of designated wilderness will always remain in this busy world. And when I wander back down the trail catching glimpses of Wonalancet, Paugus, and Chocorua through a quiet forest canopy of old trees, I often marvel at how I really got here. As the old saying goes: does the wanderer choose the path or does the path choose the wanderer?

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*The following essay is a (cruelly) edited version of one that **Ed Parsons** first published in **Hiking**.*

On a cold day, with the delicious feel of winter in the air, my friend Sky and I decided to go for a short hike in the Sandwich Range. Sky wanted to show me the new section of the Blueberry Ledge Cutoff constructed this fall by the

WODC; a wide switchback that avoids a very steep section of the old trail. This may seem a relatively minor improvement in the scheme of things. But when there is a change in a trail that you frequently depend on for exercise and renewal, and a change that makes it safer and more pleasant, it's a big deal.



Andy Thompson's photo provides not only a lovely portrait of his dog, Bella, but a visual record of the trail's steepness. And this is the new relo! Old trail off to right.

So, we combined a good hike with checking it out.

Often hikers are creatures of habit, and both of us tend to do the Blueberry Ledge loop by going up the main trail first and down the cutoff. Going down that way makes sense, as you descend into the wonderful valley of Wonalancet Brook. Rolling steepness gives way to the flats right next to the bubbling brook. In high water or spring runoff, the brook takes on a more serious and celebratory tone. Walking it is a perfect way to conclude the loop. However, when we saw wet leaves and hidden ice, we decided to ascend the steeper cutoff first and go down the main trail. That was quite a change, as Sky had never done it that way, and myself only once. Also we changed our approach to the cutoff by going straight on the dirt road past the Cooke Farm to the start of the Dicey's Mill Trail, and taking that for a half mile through the woods to a left hand turn leading to a bridge across Wonalancet Brook, and then the Blueberry Ledge Cutoff on the other side in the middle of its lower section. Once there, we bore right and proceeded up it on one of its more beautiful sections next to the brook. At that point we were in a 65-acre section of land, that the Cooke family had recently donated to the forest service. When I later talked to WODC volunteer trail crew leader Fred Lavigne, he emphasized the importance and generosity of this gift of forest.

We walked uphill, crossed a tributary and passed into the Sandwich Range Wilderness. We approached a steep rise ahead, recognizing it immediately as one of the more challenging sections when descending the Cutoff from above. In the present conditions of wet leaves and hidden ice, it would be downright treacherous to go down it.

I didn't notice any other trail at first, but Sky paused and pointed to our left, saying "There's the new section of trail." It was barely visible as a subtle depression in the leaves. But

upon looking, blue markers on trees marked the new route, which bypassed the steep rise. We were impressed how few saplings had been cut to make way for it. It was almost as if the forest had parted to let it through. The new section was a switchback that ascended slowly west, then turned north and rose gently to reach the top of the rise and rejoin the trail.

Later, I learned a little about the process of building the section of new trail. First, the route was flagged by Fred Lavigne, Jack Waldron (trail chair and president of the WODC), and Jana Johnson, backcountry recreation manager for the Saco District. Then Lavigne went back with Cristin Bailey, trails supervisor for the Saco District, and three forest service specialists. All disturbances of land in the national forest must first be okayed with consideration for rare plants, hydrology, soil, cultural heritage and wildlife. After the project was approved, Lavigne and David Giampietro "pin flagged" the route of the new trail, placing flags close to the ground to make the route clear, and started cutting brush.

New blazes are generally not cut in the bark of trees in a Wilderness Area, so Lavigne cut up an old blue sled to make small rectangular temporary markers, which he nailed to a few trees along the route. After a year, when the footpath will be more defined, they will be taken down.

On Sept. 24, National Public Lands Day, a volunteer WODC trail crew of nine finished the work in a short six-hour day. They were David Giampietro, Fred Lavigne and his partner Evelyn MacKinnon, Doug McVicar, Sheldon Perry, Mike Schneider, Steve Swift, Gabrielle Watson, and David White.

For Sky and myself, it was slippery going descending the icy ledges of the main Blueberry Ledge Trail. We were certainly glad we had broken an old habit and gone up the steep Blueberry Ledge Cutoff instead of down it. However, we knew that it would be easier going down it in the future with the new section of trail.

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Andy's photo of the signposts on the Ledges pointing out the two ways to get down. They're a recent addition to the landscape. My first time there, I had no map, and I went down the cutoff by mistake. Halfway down I realized I was on a different path (if I'd had a map I'd have known it didn't matter since they both ended at the same place) and

*had the memorable experience of panic. It didn't last long but it was a throwback to Pan and the primitive forest and amazing! And maybe there's something about the Cutoff that induces amazing experiences. Just saying. . . and speaking of which, while I appreciate the new, less steep Cutoff, I also love the fact that **Ann Carman**, who once broke both wrists on ice on the Ledges and slid down the Cutoff on her butt, values precisely what's now lost. . .*

Trying to write selectively about a favorite trail is very, very hard, but I'll give you two--well, maybe three! The first one, I'll just say, but not for publication in the Newsletter, is the Blueberry Ledge Cut-off Trail. That's simply because, long ago, our family adopted it and maintained it every summer as best we could. At first, we trimmed the hobblebush with Alan Purves, and then, after Alan's death, with various members of the Cooke family. Now it's mainly up to us, but as you know, it's most recently been in expert hands, getting a much-needed rerouting in an area so very prone to erosion. It's a great trail, and because it's steep, if someone happens to fall on the Ledges and break their wrists (or whatever!) as I did, that person can mostly sit and slide down to get help! Very helpful feature of the trail, especially when there's snow.

Well, Ann, now you know what happens when you send something not for publication to an editor (heh heh).

Another favorite I'll mention is the **Dacey Mill Trail** up Passaconaway. I've done this one so often that it's like an old friend. I always forget how long it's going to seem as I climb, and I always forget the rocky sections that have to be taken more or less on all fours. What I love is that the trail takes you through many distinct areas, including over a tiny stream near the site of the old shelter. Once on top, there's a broad rocky slab where you can sit for lunch in

sunshine (if lucky!), view the opposite mountains, and decide whether to take a little more time to descend to the spur that offers the best view of the northerly mountains that I know. Even knowing that the climb up and back to the true summit area will take additional energy, I can't often resist that view. Even now, as I write, I can just feel how it is, sitting in that particular spot, and looking over so many more mountains than I could climb in a lifetime. I think that's one reason I love New Hampshire so much--there's always more beauty, more to explore, than I can ever cover. The most beautiful of my trips up and down Dacey Mill was late one fall, descending just as very light snow began to filter down through the trees. It was like a blessing.

One of my special favorites is the **Wiggin**, because the entrance from Dacey Mill takes you into a lovely wooded area (often site of mushrooms!) from which you cross Wonalancet Brook--and then, thanks to work done quite a while ago, you have the joy of climbing excellent rock steps for the first part of the upward trail. After the steps end, having passed a huge rock

shelter, you begin to feel as if you're in deep wilderness, even if you're still not so far from Wonalancet houses. One of my earliest associations with the trail goes back to a bright fall day when Dave Bowles and a foot-sure group of rescuers brought an injured hiker down that steep path on a litter. I am still amazed, thinking of how difficult that must have been. Dave, though, has done so many rescues that he says he doesn't remember that one!

When you join the Blueberry Ledge Trail, after many bends and turns, you have the choice of continuing on up Whiteface or descending the Blueberry for a good "loop" hike.

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*It takes a lot for the WODC to warn folks off one of its own trails but **Doug McVicar** (who took the photo above) writes:*

It's mighty hard to choose a favorite WODC trail, isn't it? People usually say they have more than just one favorite. Personally, I love them all, each and every one. My favorite is usually the one I'm hiking at the time.

But the Editor says I have to pick one, and since I'm partial to underdogs, I take the underest dog of all: The **Tom Wiggin Trail**, hapless recipient of the WODC's most notable badge of shame, its "not recommended" rating.

But before getting into the thinking behind un-recommending your own trail, let's examine what the Wiggin Trail did for Wonalancet.

In the early 1890s inns were blooming all over Wonalancet. They offered city folks an agricultural setting, farm-fresh food, and, of course, mountain air and scenery. Mountain air and scenery, yes, plenty of it. But actual mountain climbing . . . not so much. The problem was there weren't any trails. To build the extensive and varied trail system we enjoy today took years of labor. So early guests who wanted to hike had no convenient trails at hand; they usually made their way over to Chocorua. The first great trail in the Intervale was the "Passaconaway Path" – now called the Dicey Mill Trail – cut in 1891.

Mount Whiteface looks so inviting – and so close – from the Intervale, but in those days anyone who wanted to go there was facing a minimum trek of 8 miles, 16 miles round trip. The only trail up the mountain started at McCrillis's, way over in Whiteface Intervale. By 1895, though, local innkeeper

Thomas S. Wiggin was leading hiking parties up a new route that he discovered, which cut the distance from Wonalancet to the summit by half.

Wiggin's trail was our first – and for a while, our only – trail up Whiteface. Hikers from Wonalancet used the new shorter trail; but right from the start a lot of them didn't like it. They said it was too steep, they called it the Fire Escape, and in 1899 they built an alternative, the Blueberry Ledge Trail which immediately became the preferred route, for good reasons, and remains so today. But the Tom Wiggin still offers its own attractions, like a challenging treadway that is nearly ladder-like in spots, and proximity to the virgin forest of The Bowl. And, of course, there is a special bonus for hiking a lowly, not-recommended trail: it's never crowded.

So why did the club single out the Wiggin to "not recommend"? Maybe it's the steepness. We should note, however, that the rationale for condemning steepness in the mountains has reversed over the years. The 1908 WODC Guide says hikers can descend the Wiggin, but the "path is too steep to climb." Today the AMC Guide doesn't seem to have a problem with climbing, but warns that "many sections of loose, gravelly footing are particularly tedious on the descent." Another issue for the Wiggin may be that any trail that runs straight down the fall line of a slope is at risk for erosion. The treadway has indeed eroded, but given that it's more than 120 years old, erosion of the Wiggin is hardly one of the more aggressive threats our trail system currently faces.

Yes, yes, certainly, a trail as steep as the Wiggin could be dangerous. But much terrain and many trails in the mountains share that risk. For example, although the lower part of the Blueberry Ledge Trail is pretty namby-pamby, the upper part involves many difficult, potentially dangerous rocky scrambles. That part is actually very similar to the Wiggin in its insensitivity to danger, and its embrace of challenge.

This dual nature of the Blueberry Ledge Trail makes sense since the upper and the lower sections, in fact, had different makers. In 1899 when the upstart Blueberry Ledge Trail first came cautiously creeping up the ridge and hit the Wiggin Trail, it just stopped. From that point, hikers who had climbed the newly cut Blueberry Ledge Trail continued up the Tom Wiggin Trail to the summit. Since most hikers chose to start their ascent on the Blueberry Ledge Trail and since to them the whole route over the two trails naturally seemed like a single unit, by common usage the name of the more popular trail soon extended from trailhead to summit. The original trail to the summit, the Wiggin, by a process of renaming rather than physical changes on the ground, lost its top and became just a side trail. So there is a good historical reason that both the Wiggin and the upper Blueberry Ledge Trail may feel similar to a hiker: both were laid out by the same hand, and express the dreams of the same trail maker.

So there it is. The Wiggin – all of it – is my favorite trail. And, while I don't exactly not not recommend it, I cordially, though cautiously, invite everyone who is prepared and thinks they might enjoy it to give it a try.

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(And Doug promises more about the remarkable Tom Wiggin and his trails in a future number of this Newsletter.)

*Larry Labrie, who keeps so much of Dicey's Mill in good shape, shares the next writer's trait (alas, a rare one) of preferring trail work to plain old hiking for pleasure. Asked for his favorite trail, he responded by looking back twenty years and summarizing his **Memory Trail** of clearing and restoration.*

In the twenty-plus years that I've been a WODC trails volunteer and trail adopter the most memorable event was the impact of the ice storm of February 1998. Clearing trails of tangled branches and blowdowns was amazing, especially in deep snow and where the trail was sometimes unrecognizable. A band of us spent weekends clearing the damage with bow saws, loppers and axe. The rest, under snow, was cleared away in spring.

Some of my most memorable trail work days include the rock work on the Kelly Trail in the in the mid-1990s with projects accomplished jointly with TrailWright volunteers. The Lawrence Trail is memorable looking back to when the original trail took one around the "Overhang" with its rugged narrow path skirting some impressive ledges -- a challenging area for trail work. And equally challenging was rock work on the steep Walden and Tom Wiggins trails; luckily accomplished without serious bruises or crushed fingers.

I have happy memories of the series of WODC's annual 3-day backpack trailwork trips on the Kate Sleeper Trail. These trips were always a lot of fun and we made great efforts to accomplish as much quality trail tending as possible during our stay. On one of these trips, Fred Lavigne and I had the brilliant idea of using a wheelbarrow to haul four heavy backpacks up the Flat Mt. Pond Trail to the intersection with the McCrillis Trail; hiding the wheelbarrow in the brush for the return trip, and then hiking the rest of the way to the Kate Sleeper. Well, this turned out not to be as easy as we'd anticipated, what with soft gravel, drainage crossings, etc. Needless to say, we never did it again.

I remember with pleasure the important series of summer trail work performed by the SCA students and other volunteers. I really enjoyed working with these students, most of whom stayed cheerful, even when camped in the back country with the black flies and rain.

Giving back to the Sandwich Range; being a part of WODC's history of trail maintenance, and working with other volunteers have all been their own rewards. The friends I've made along the way, the knowledge I've gained, and the intimacy with the landscape that comes with working on so many trails, have blazed my own personal indelible memory trail on my mind.

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*And finally -- what you've been waiting for -- the one person who had the guts to write about a trail he didn't like -- although even he softened the blow with a trail he did: **David White** on the **Bennett Street** and **Gleason Trails** publishes his*

Confessions of a reluctant hiker

The truth is, I have always preferred skiing and ski trails to hiking and hiking trails. For the most part, those trails have been backcountry ski trails. Hiking for its own sake has not been a passion with me.

However, this is a story of two hiking trails. A story of love and hate. (Well, perhaps not hate, but strong aversion.) As my wife CC has written in an earlier issue, it was the ice storm of 1998 that connected us with the Sandwich Range and provided both of us with some memorable trail experiences (and lasting friendships). It has been our association with the WODC trail's committee and crew that has given me the greatest incentive to hike. I am naturally more inclined to hike for the purpose of doing trail work than strictly for recreational enjoyment.

In 1998, my first experience with trailwork in the Sandwich Range involved clearing the Gleason Trail along with many other volunteers, following the ice storm. Our approach was via the Bennett Street trail, part of which had already been cleared by others.

That first exposure to the lower section of the Bennett Street trail was a case of love at first sight. It has the features I most appreciate in a trail: the long, easy, handsome, first section, with plenty of time to warm up one's legs; diverse terrain; dramatic, steep-sided ravines with the river below; a mix of airy, open hardwood forests and dark, intimate coniferous woods; both the sound and the views of clear, rushing water; the deep, golden, transparent pools. While Sandwich Dome, the trail's endpoint, might not satisfy everyone with its less-than-spectacular views, I have always preferred more intimate, foreground kinds of views. The quality of the trail itself, the surrounding forest, the herbaceous groundcover, the rocks and ledges, the sound of birdcalls, the diverse fungi -- all of these things stir my sensibilities and arouse my admiration.

Recall, however, that the purpose of hiking the Bennett Street Trail was to reach the top of the Gleason Trail, from which point we descended, armed with saws and axes, into a tangle of broken and fallen trees. It is likely that my negative feelings about the Gleason trail stem from that early encounter. It was not an auspicious way to first experience a trail that, under better conditions, is a bore. It was a colossal mess, in which it was impossible to see the forest for the downed trees.

The Gleason runs through forested terrain, parallel to and not far from the Bennett Street Trail. Given its location, it seemed quite unnecessary. No water, no views, not much left of the forest after the ice storm. Until WODC responded, the ice storm had effectively obliterated the Gleason Trail. We invested a stupendous amount of work to clear a trail that, because it was superfluous, was soon afterward abandoned. Its closure ended my relationship with the Gleason Trail.

Good riddance.

Annual Meeting: We'll hold our Annual Meeting on Sunday August 21 at 6:30PM in the Chapel
Potluck in the Grove at 5:00PM.

The Spring Trails Report

What a difference a year makes! Last year wood stoves were burning overtime and skiers pondered which excellent opportunity to ski. Whether due to El Nino, Climate Change, or the vagaries of Wonalancet winters, this winter has been much warmer. On March 21, the Old Mast Trail is snow free up to the Wilderness Boundary. Seasonal snowfall through March 21 is 30 inches, at this time last year we had received 83 inches of snow. Last February had an average daily temperature of 7.1F and an average daily low of -6.2F. This February the average daily temperature was 23.6F with an average low of 12F. There are going to be some pretty healthy piles of cord wood left in June. Conversely, the early estimate on winter survival of moose is not positive; the winter tick has fared much better than the moose.

Plans for a major trail reconstruction project this summer are still in flux. Some reconstructive rock work is required on both the final section of Dicey's Mill before the junction with Rollins and the portion of Walden just past East Loop. We are studying these projects with Jed Talbot but haven't yet decided whether we will tackle them this season. We are also looking at some smaller projects on the lower sections of both Blueberry Ledge Cutoff and Dicey's Mill that would require Jed's expertise. We will again hire members of Jed's crew to help us with Annual Maintenance. The section of the Bennett Street Trail that had washed out will be relocated on one of our volunteer work days. That section was initially damaged in Super Storm Sandy, and it now appears that Pond Brook is intent on reclaiming some of the trail/riverbank as river.

As usual we'll host 4 Volunteer Trailwork days on:
 Saturday May 14 (WODC Spring Trails Day),
 Saturday June 4 (National Trails Day),
 Saturday July 16 (New Hampshire Trails Day), and
 Saturday September 24 (National Public Lands Day).

We'll meet at the Ferncroft Parking Lot at 8:30AM on all our Trailwork Saturdays. Bring water, food, gloves, and clothing appropriate for the weather. Most of all, be prepared to spend a day outdoors deriving satisfaction from a job well done. If you want more information on any of our trail projects contact Jack 323-8913, jackw@g4com.com or Fred 284-6919.

WODC members have supported our commitment to perform Wilderness Monitoring stints in the Sandwich Range Wilderness. Maintaining that wilderness environment and spiritual refuge requires dedication and effort on our part. We'll need volunteers again this season to spend a day monitoring the Wilderness for the values we hold dear. If you'd like to help, contact Jack.

Jack Waldron, Trails Chair (and, although he's too modest to say it himself, President)

WODC ORDER FORM

(SHAMELESS COMMERCE & STOCKING STUFFER DIVISION)

PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED ORDER FORM TO:

WODC MEMBER SERVICES
 HCR 64. BOX 248
 WONALANCET, NH 03897

NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE, ZIP

PHONE (.....).....

EMAIL

QTY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
	WODC Patch	3.00	
	WODC Map & Guide (3rd edition) Members Non-Members	6.00 8.00	
	Unfolded WODC Map & Guide	9.00	
	3 or more unfolded Maps - each	7.00	
	WODC Historical Collection (CD)	25.00	
	"Serene Green" Cotton T-shirt (Old Logo) Specify M, L or X-L _____	18.00	
	Synthetic (silky) Navy Blue T-shirt (New Logo - see design on website). Specify M, L or X-L _____	18.00	
	New Memberships (not for renewals!) <input type="checkbox"/> Pathfinder <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Blazer <input type="checkbox"/> Five Year	15.00 25.00 50.00 250.00	



Editor's Ramble: The one time I visited an injured raptor rehab center, I realized that I really don't like raptors. I'm with Ben Franklin in thinking wild turkeys should have been our national bird. I've never admired American eagles whose (almost) bald heads remind me of vultures, and for good reason, since they'll eagerly plunge into carrion. Plus anyone who's spent as much time as I have hanging around Alaskan fish processing plants thinks of bald eagles mainly as dumpster divers; their favorite sport, and one they seem to practice with large numbers of team-mates. (I reserve judgement on golden eagles, since I've never gotten up close and personal with them but my guess is that I'd be both dazzled and terrified.) Hawks, falcons and their brethren are beautiful and admirable athletes and killers, but I find them hard to love. Nevertheless, I've always loved owls. I think we all do -- look at Wol and Hedwig and the owl that woos a pussycat in the Lear poem. It's true they're hunters. But they're so different from all the others. In the dog world, where there used to be scent hounds and gaze hounds, owls would have been ear hounds (only, of course, if they were dogs). Stealth fighters, they have special soft feathering adaptations that allow them to drift silently (and yes, the DOD is working to adapt these to plane design), through the woods, listening for the tiny noises that small animals make as they scurry along. Barn owls, with the best hearing of any animal ever tested, have their ears at two different heights and one further forward; a double asymmetry for locating their prey in three-dimensional space. Owls can turn their heads 270 degrees. (Don't try to do this as it may result in injury.) Their flattened faces resemble satellite dishes, which is fitting since they receive and concentrate sound signals. A barn owl can hear and catch a mouse or vole under a foot of snow. Unfortunately, it can't do this under three feet of snow, and hard winters like the one before last, resulted in a large number of dead, emaciated owls. And, perhaps even more unfortunately for future owl populations, they can't hunt effectively under an ice crust. So a mild winter, like the one we've just had, can also be tough on owls, as snow is followed by rain followed by a freeze.

A lot of humans that I know were happy about our mild winter. But it wasn't so great for a lot of other species. The far north is really taking a beating as it warms -- and it's warming a lot faster than our region. The George River caribou herd which migrates between Labrador and northern Quebec, used to be the largest in the world. Censused at 776,000 in 1993 it's now estimated to be about 25,000. Why? Well, hunting has taken a toll, but climate change seems to be the major culprit in two ways. First, lichens comprise 90% of the caribou winter diet. Caribou use their forelegs to scrape the snow away from lichens, an adaptive behavior called cratering. The problem for caribou is that they can't crater through the ice that forms from thaw-freeze cycles in the new warmer Arctic. Or, when they can, getting through the ice burns more calories than they get from the lichens. Either way, they starve. The second problem is that their migration has been timed to get them to a birthing ground before biting insects emerge. But the insects are now emerging earlier. We may see the end of the George River caribou herd. We can't tell yet about other herds, which are further north and give birth by the shore, where wind keeps the bugs at bay. Jack has pointed out the link between a good year for ticks and a bad year for moose. Last April's issue discussed the death of trees, falling like dominoes to insect-borne diseases. It's clear who the current big winners from climate change are, and they have six feet and hard carapaces.

A few years ago, I was emailing with a fellow mushroomer in Alaska, who mentioned that a friend had been attacked by a grizzly while picking porcini. I answered that I was glad I didn't have to worry about large animal attacks, whereupon he emailed back that the woman was doing okay and large animals were nothing to worry about. He said he was glad he didn't live in the east, with its increasing number of insect-borne diseases. Now *that* scared him.

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