



SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

Winter 2014

On Foot in Potter County...God's Country



PO Box 643 • Coudersport, PA 16915 • www.stc-hike.org • info@stc-hike.org

The purposes of the STC are to build and maintain trails, aid in the conservation of wetlands and wildlife, and promote good fellowship through the medium of hiking and nature study.

Announcing the 2015 Annual STC Winter Frolic



Photo by Curt Weinhold

When: Saturday February 14, 2015
Dinner: Beginning at 5:00 PM
Price: \$15.00 per person
Where: The Gold Church
Route 449, Village of Gold
9 miles south of Genesee, PA 16923

Menu: Chicken
Swedish Meatballs
Macaroni and cheese
Potatoes
Pasta
Cole Slaw
Beverages
Dessert

RSVP: Saturday February 7, 2015
If mailing after January 31, 2015, please notify the club at info@stc-hike.org or (814) 435-8270 that you will be attending.

Program: Hiking the Appalachian Trail
Presenters: Steve and Lorrie Hanes

The Susquehannock Trail Club's annual Winter Frolic will be held Saturday February 14, 2014. Time to enjoy a day of adventure in Northcentral Pennsylvania!

As usual; a short STC business meeting will follow the dinner, and the "Big Shoe" award will be presented to someone who has performed exceptional service to the Susquehannock Trail System.

The featured speakers will be Steve and Lorrie Hanes of Westfield, PA, who will tell about their thru-hike of about three-quarters of the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Connecticut last year. They plan to return to Connecticut and hike through to the northern terminus of the AT in Maine this year.

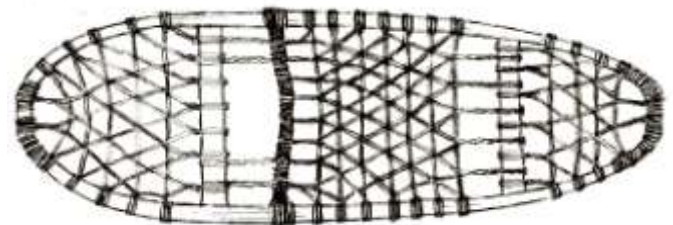
One Winter Frolic activity is scheduled — a 3-mile morning loop hike on the Sidewinder Trail near Patterson State Park. Meet on Saturday, February 14, at 10:00 AM at Patterson Park along PA Route 44, the Jersey Shore Pike, south of Coudersport.

Sturdy winter hiking boots are a must, and depending on the snow cover that day, snowshoes may be useful. Bring

water and a snack with you. **The hike leader is Penny Weinhold. If you plan to attend, please contact Penny no later than Friday, February 13, at (814) 274-9858 or by email at penny1@zitomedia.net.** As always, if no one registers for the hike, the hike will be canceled.

The hike assumes a few inches of snow, but not enough to make walking difficult without snowshoes. If the main roads are impassible, or weather conditions are deemed too nasty for a pleasant hike, the leader will also cancel the hike and notify those who have registered.

After the hike, the group will stop for a light lunch at *Fozzy's Silk City Diner* in Sweden Valley. (Just don't eat so much you spoil your appetite for the evening dinner!)



Trail Maintenance Report

By Bill Boyd, Chairman, STC Maintenance Committee

The year got off to a disappointing start, but after we adjusted our plans and dug into the work, it was a pretty good year after all. Sixty-five volunteers put in a reported 1,261 trail maintenance hours. Seven of them earned the 50-plus hour awards: Joe Allis, Bill Boyd, Tom Fitzgerald, Jerry Johnston, Lowell & Barbara Luft, and Wanda Shirk.

The disappointment was a last-minute indefinite postponement of the long planned and prepared-for restoration of six-tenths of a mile of eroded hillside footpath in the middle of the STS Hammersley Trail. Shortly before the scheduled work date, a club member encountered a group of horseback riders on the trail. The incident was reported to the Susquehannock Forest District. The project will be rescheduled at some future date after the district assures us that they are able to keep horses off the foot-only trails. The problem with horses is not horse manure, but hoofprints in soft wet ground. When the ground dries, the hoofprint ridges and holes make walking difficult.

The “big dig” this year was in Long Hollow. A large group of us roughed in the rest of the relocation of the combined Susquehannock Trail System/Donut Hole Trail up on the hillside above the stream. Portions of the original CCC footpath had been eroded away by the occasional flash floods over seven decades.

We installed three posts and six signs along the trail—one at each end of the Buffalo & Susquehanna Railway section in the East Fork, and one at the Jacobs Trail.

We also put a log footbridge across the Jacobs Trail and a slightly more elaborate footbridge at Camp Beaver, which allows access with a mower to about a mile of old woods road along the East Fork Crossover Trail.

A couple of the local STC members have privately-owned Swisher walk-behind mowers which they have been using on suitable trail sections. This is working out well, saving a lot of weed whacking.

The club purchased a dump truck load of gravel to top dress the parking area at the trailhead along the upper Sunken Branch Road. Afterward, the forest district’s crew spread it across the parking area.

And, of course the trailer was our big purchase for the year. It’s now pretty much fully equipped and ready to take out to our big projects.



Plans for 2015 include a second, earlier camp-out at Ole Bull State Park, probably in May or June. It’s intended as a work party field headquarters for a trail-maintenance weekend in the southern reaches of the Susquehannock Trail System. Travel time eats up too much of the day when we drive from home.

We appreciate both the time spent by all the volunteers, and the donations made by those who couldn’t physically participate. Your donations help the club pay for the purchase and maintenance of tools and the fuel and oil for the power equipment.

Welcome New Members

By Lois Morey, STC Secretary

Last year, 37 folks joined the Susquehannock Trail Club. The most recent are:

Tom & Betsy Beakler
Mt. Wolf, PA

Robert & Kristen Page
Wellsboro, PA

Roy & Patricia Boyd
Westfield, PA

Matthew Teeter
Martinsburg, PA

Joe & Amanda Jones
Emporium, PA

Marlene Wheeler
Coudersport, PA

STS Circuit Hiker Award

In 2014, 23 new Circuit Hikers were added to the roster. Congratulations to the following who are the most recent inductees into this distinguished group!

1086 Don Teet
Penn, PA

1092 Ian Meason
Baltimore, MD

1087 Brandon Teet
Penn, PA

1093 Mike Balog
Baltimore, MD

1088 Andrew Moyer
Mechanicsburg, PA

1094 Rob Wetzel
Aberdeen, MD

1089 Scott Moyer
Mechanicsburg, PA

1095 Roy Boyd
Westfield, PA

1090 Randall Miller
Bethlehem, PA

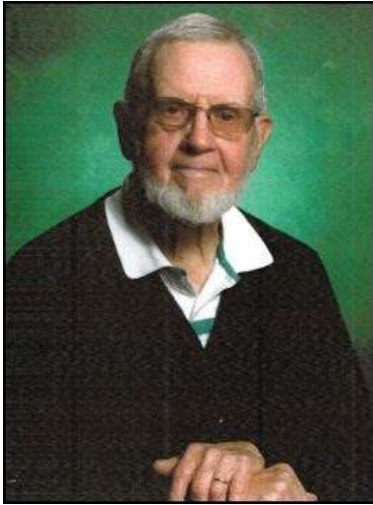
1096 Patricia Boyd
Westfield, PA

1091 David Scott
Rising Sun, MD

For information on the Circuit Hiker Award, contact the Susquehannock Trail Club at PO Box 643, Coudersport, PA 16915, or email us at info@stc-hike.org.

Remembering Tom W. Leete

By Tom Fitzgerald



The year was 1964, the summer of my 25th birthday. It was my first permanent job. I was a young forester assigned to the timber management staff of the Susquehannock State Forest District #15 in Potter and Mckean counties, PA. My job was to learn to lay out timber sales on state forest land, select

and mark the trees to be cut, and to administer the sales during the logging operations.

Whenever a sale was ready for the potential buyers to look at, there was a tour when the district staff would show it to interested prospective bidders, and answer any questions they may have. Tom Leete was the owner of the Leete Lumber Company in Roulette, PA. His was one of the smaller sawmills in the area. From time to time, he was the winning bidder on a district timber sale.

The first time I saw Tom, I was impressed with how young he looked, and by the gentle civility of his manners. He was very different from the rougher, cruder, “woods boss” image of some of the other sawmill owners. As time went by, I learned that when Tom had bought a sale, he was among the most cooperative of the timber buyers who cut state sales. I eventually found out that, unlike myself, his real first name was “Tom,” not “Thomas.”

He was an expert fly fisherman, and was featured in a book on night fishing by Jim Bashline.

I also learned that Tom was an avid hunter, but approached his sport with an attitude different from most hunters I have ever known. One of his favorite stories was about a trip to New Hampshire some years earlier. He spent two days in the woods without catching sight of a deer. On the third day, he spotted a deer’s ear sticking out from behind a tree. That was real hunting to him—the way it ought to be! How many other hunters do you know who think that way?

During the fall of my first year on the job, an elderly hunter named David Stephens disappeared without a trace. Tom decided to become involved in the search. At his request, several of us from the forest district office joined him, and we spent a few hours sweeping strips back and

forth through the woods in the Black Diamond area where the old hunter was last seen. Tom carried a sock filled with lime dust to mark the edge of each strip. I think it’s the only time I have ever seen a lime sock used. To my knowledge, to this day, 50 years later, no trace of David Stephens has ever been found.

One day, a near tragedy struck. Somehow, Tom accidentally shot himself in the shoulder. He was alone, but was able to drive himself to the hospital, where he was admitted and over time, made a full recovery. Several of the foresters in the district office donated blood through the Red Cross for him.

After I became settled in to my apartment, I was looking for something to do in my spare time, and learned that the Roulette Wheels Western Square Dance Club was offering classes for prospective members. I was accepted even though I had neither wife nor girlfriend at the time, and eventually graduated into club membership. (The following year, I met Jayne, my future wife when the next beginner’s class was held.) I began to attend the club’s regular dances, and soon discovered that Tom and his wife, Lois, were among the regular members. I got to know him socially as well as professionally.

A few years after that, a local newspaper publisher in Coudersport named Bill Fish, Jr. proposed the development of a hiking trail system in the Susquehannock State Forest. The Susquehannock Trail Club was formed and a few of us began scouting out potential routes for a loop trail system. Tom Leete quickly joined the movement and was active in scouting of the trails. In honor of his efforts, the Susquehannock Trail Club presented him with their fourth annual Wil & Betty Ahn Big Shoe award in 2013.

Tom often carried a potato hook with him on those exploratory hikes, and used it to poke around in the ground whenever we came upon a place that looked like it might have been the site of an old logging camp in the 1800s. I eventually learned that he was always on the lookout for the elusive undamaged “Swartzenbach Brown Eagle” beer bottle from a defunct brewery once located in Galeton. Tom, as far as I knew, never drank alcohol, and once pointed out that the Swartzenbach brewery carefully kept the alcohol content of their product to less than ½ of 1 percent—considerably less than most modern beers.

One of the activities of the trail club in the early days was an occasional wildflower-viewing hike. Tom knew about the location of some wild azaleas, and led one or more hikes to that site. I never met another logger who had an interest in either hiking or wildflowers!

After six years in the Susquehannock District, I was transferred to the Pittsburgh area, and rarely saw Tom after that. I learned that sadly, his wife, Lois had died, but I never learned what her illness was. I was glad to learn that he had remarried after a few years, but I never became well acquainted with his second wife, Shirlee. From time to time, I would see him at a monthly meeting of the Susquehannock Trail Club. At one meeting, he told me that he had retired as a sawmill owner and had become a lumber grader for Patterson Lumber Company.

The last time I saw Tom was in March 2013 when a group of us from the Susquehannock Trail Club presented him with the Big Shoe Award. He was convalescing in Sweden Valley Manor at the time. When I think of my own age—75—I realize I have known Tom Leete for half a century. All of us who knew him will miss him. “May choirs of angels sing thee to thy rest!” 🍄



2014 Wild Game/Harvest Supper a Bust

The 2014 Wild Game/Harvest Supper was a major disappointment for the club. Only fourteen people showed up this year, all of them local members. The only wild game dish on the table was a venison stew and the only wild plant served was Galinsoga, an edible plant from the Andes Mountains of South America that has become an official Pennsylvania noxious weed. The saving grace of the event was a 55-minute video from the Appalachian Trail Conference that showed highlights of the southern half of the Appalachian Trail. It was a fascinating production, extremely well done. Thanks to Bob and Helen Bernhardt for making the video available, and to Gene and Myra Neefe for bringing the equipment to show it.

The Wild Game/Harvest Supper is one of the three major events of the Susquehannock Trail Club year. Members are to bring food made from game animals they have killed themselves, edible wild plants, or vegetables harvested from their gardens. It has traditionally been held on the Saturday of Columbus Day weekend in the belief that distant members of the club are more likely to be close to Potter County that weekend—either staying at one of the lodges for a weekend of hiking, or in a few cases, at their camps. This year, various commitments and conflicts kept several of the local members away. A year earlier, the 2013 supper was not much better attended.

This year at the business meeting, the few club members present recalled similar poor attendance at Winter Frolic meetings in recent years. It was thought that the recurring light turnout is due to a combination of factors: insufficient advance publicity, tight household budgets combined with higher travel costs, recurring conflicts with other events scheduled for the same holiday weekends, and the aging of the membership. The events no longer have the appeal they did when the members were younger. Many of us have a “been there, done that” feeling. One of the members reported that nearly all clubs of various interest types are having difficulty attracting young members in the current socioeconomic climate.

The Winter Frolic, for example, was originally held in early March, but was backed up to February after early thaws several years in a row melted away good cross-country skiing conditions in early March. But in recent years, only a few of the local members spend much time skiing or snowshoeing anyway, regardless of weather conditions.

We are starting to consider a revision in our annual meeting schedule. It was suggested that the Wild Game/Harvest Supper be moved to the last Saturday in October or the first Saturday in November. Fewer members may have conflicts that weekend. Another thought was to drop the Winter Frolic entirely in favor of a “Welcome to Spring” event in late April or early May, shortly after Easter. No decisions were made, but ideas will continue to be discussed at future meetings. 🍄



DCNR Conservation Volunteers

All STC members who help with trail maintenance are encouraged to enroll as “DCNR Conservation Volunteers.” In so doing, you are covered by the same liability and workers compensation insurance as state employees, and are authorized to use forest district tools at the discretion of the district forester, and according to your capabilities. Please report your hours worked to the STC Trails Committee chairman. He will keep track of the hours and report the STC volunteer totals to the Susquehannock State Forest District for inclusion in their annual volunteer report.

To enroll, download the volunteer form from the DCNR website at [<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cons/>]. After you fill out the form, mail it to the Susquehannock State Forest District, P.O. Box 673, Coudersport, PA 16915.



Photo Submitted by Chris Bell

Winter Backpacking in the Hammersley

By Michael Martin, DC UL Group Organizer

One of the great ironies this weekend is that those who brought snowshoes (Bear Run) didn't have enough snow for them, while those who left their snowshoes at home (Hammersley) probably could have used them!

I knew we were in for it when, after an uneventful drive up to Cross Fork, PA, we pulled into Deb's on Feb. 8, 2014 to find the parking lot full of snowmobiles! Seriously, about 30 of them. I promptly got my car stuck in the parking lot. We pushed it out. Well, by "we" I mean, Will, Jimmy, and Karan pushed. Anyway, we got the car out. (By the way, Karan is not a woman but a man from India.)

Chris Bell, "Hobbit"--a local from the Susquehannock Trail Club--promptly joined us as we had lunch. And boy, he did not disappoint. With his Zpack and his stripped-down load, he was way lighter than all of us! I hope, in a year or so, I can walk into the woods, anticipating temps below zero, with a load as light as that one! It goes to show that the "more you know, the less you need." Chris is really at home on the Allegheny Plateau, and it shows. I don't think I've ever seen anyone pack that light when it's that cold

(Our packs were in the high 20s to low 30s range--light for the negatives, but heavy for us. I was certainly carrying the heaviest one. I became quite conservative with temps projected to be that low and carried my 4-season tent as well as my -25° F bag. Still, the weight was no more than 30-ish. Again: Texan.)

After drinking a few beers—(Three times now, I have yet to do that climb out of Cross Fork dry. It's a tradition.)—we started the trip with temps in the teens. The moment we stepped over the guardrail and into about 12 inches" of snow, I knew we were going to have a time of it. The snow was light and dry and every step took us to our calves or knees. Still, we five were all strong, and we plowed gamely up the slope, taking turns. DC UL was

built to go do stupid things, and we were proving it. I jokingly asked, "Think we'll see any other backpackers?" We did not.



Photo Submitted by Chris Bell

Down we went along Elkhorn Hollow, where we camped last Memorial Day. Here the STS turns north, and we turned south. I think we all felt some trepidation as we left the orange blazes, and the trail. But Hobbit's instincts were right. There is a beautiful wide spot of ground just to the south along the Hammersley. I asked Hobbit if people camped here often. He said, "As far as I know, no one had ever camped here." I was dreaming of future thru-hikes.

(I pitched my tent on a nice flat spot that turned out to be a frozen braid of the creek. Ice makes a good tent pad!)

The stars and the moon came out, and we settled in for a long winter's night. Early in the morning, the trees popped repeatedly, and we emerged from the tents to find the Hammersley almost frozen. Hobbit's thermometer read -5°, though back in town we heard tales of -10°! It was cold. Savage had to use pliers from his Leatherman to pull stakes from the ground. I dipped my hydroflask into the creek, only to have it emerge with the droplets of water freezing instantaneously!

(For what it's worth, the alcohol stoves we took with us worked great at -5°F.)

At 8 AM, we started backpacking south, Hobbit in the lead. We immediately climbed a steep slope to find an old disused CCC trail. Then came a stretch of awkward side-hilling in the powder, with lots of slips. I shambled along like a mummy--if only one leg was three inches shorter than the other. Cow Run and Dump Hollow passed by. We descended to the valley of the Hammersley, saw traces of porcupines, and crossed the river on a suspension bridge where once there was an old CCC camp. We walked north towards the confluence of the Bell and Nelson Branches. In the early twentieth century, there had been a logging town there.



Photo Submitted by Chris Bell

But we were moving slowly. All strong hikers, it was the best we could manage to do just over 1mph through the powder. Every step was a struggle. Hobbit stated that his hip was bothering him. Karan became worried that his feet were freezing. It was still very cold. I had never heard Karan express discomfort before. Alone, I was reluctant to lead us on the bushwhack over Cow Run. Maybe we could have done it, maybe not. We turned back, trying to make good time so that we could have a fire and have Karan get his feet into his down booties.

I glissaded down that steep slope I mentioned. Turns out that glissading in a Pennsylvania hollow is not such a great idea. Too many trees. But I survived.

Thanks to GQ, we did have a lovely fire, and we enjoyed the conversation and the camaraderie as it began to snow. That night it dropped to 2° F, and by 7:30 the next morning, we were all eager to return to the trail and to Cross Fork. All of us felt old and slow and heavy, climbing up Elk Horn Hollow. All of us vowed to go to the gym more often. A trivial ascent, but in that powder,

nothing was trivial. On the plateau, there were 14 inches of snow in spots.

The descent was a joy. GQ fell on the road and kissed the pavement. Karan said that we had clocked 18 miles. That may be among the toughest 18 miles I've ever walked. Off trail at times, in bitter cold, and in deep powder! I began to dream of spring! Still, DC UL is built to go on stupid adventures. Mission accomplished.



Photo Submitted by Chris Bell

That said, this trip really confirmed my love for this place. There is great exploration to do in the Hammersley. And I am going to go back this spring to walk the loop Hobbit and I envisioned. When I don't need snowshoes and heavy winter gear!

Thanks to Savage, GQ, and Karan for toughing out this ill-considered adventure. And special thanks to Hobbit, for sharing his expertise with us! We had a wonderful group for plowing through the snow. And most of us set "new lows" (for coldest night out) on this trip! ❄️



Updating the Constitution

In the summer 2014 edition of the *Susquehannock Hiker* we announced that the club was revising our constitution and by-laws, which requires the vote of the entire membership to go into effect. To review the proposed changes alongside the existing wording, review the Summer 2014 *Susquehannock Hiker* online at www.stc-hike.org.

Included with this newsletter is a ballot for all members to place their vote on the proposed changes. Please return your completed ballots in the envelopes marked "ballot enclosed" to Susquehannock Trail Club, PO Box 643, Coudersport PA 16915 before April 1, 2015 or bring the ballots to the April 10 2015 club meeting to be counted. ❄️