Focus on: AMC NH Ski Committee

BY VALERIO VITI, PAUL PINKHAM, AND THOR SMITH

This is the second in a continuing series of articles focusing on the New Hampshire Chapter’s activity committees. Since it is now mid-Winter and snow came early this year, and has continued to mount, what could be better than to focus on the Ski Committee?

Who is the Ski Committee? We are twenty-five trained leaders (and seven leaders in training) who enjoy backcountry skiing and snowboarding on a variety of equipment and trails, and offer trips and instruction in nordic, telemark, and AT skiing. We focus on skiing ungroomed back-country trails, but will also hop a chairlift ride to practice and teach skiing technique. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced backcountry skier, there is a place for you.

This is the season for skiing, and the Ski Committee offers a wide variety of outings for those wishing to escape the lift lines at the alpine skiing mountains, or to explore beyond the groomed trails in the cross-country ski areas. Even if you love skiing in these areas, there is value in stretching your horizons. The Ski Committee also provides instruction in new techniques if you are looking to expand your skill set.

One highlight of the 2017/2018 season was a week-long trip to the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec organized by our leaders Casey Calver, Marty Janoschek and Margaret Brumsted. The 16 participants enjoyed amazing ski terrain and snow in the Chic-Choc Mountains. But that trip was only a small part of our activities. For example, in the 2017/2018 winter season, the Ski Committee also

AMC NH Chapter Winter School

Two sessions Feb 1-3, 2019, and Feb. 22-24 2019

BY RICK SILVERBERG

The Winter School offers instruction in winter mountain travel to backcountry skiers and snowshoers of all levels, covering just about every aspect of winter backcountry travel including a special leadership track. The weekend is filled with instruction, field exercises, lectures and discussions. You can be sure there will also be plenty of great food to fuel you back up!

Choose from one of the following classes:
• Winter Mountain Travel: Will include beginner and intermediate classes. Instruction will be provided in safety equipment, route finding, map and compass, off-trail navigation, weather, trip planning, nutrition and emergencies in the mountain environment.
• Backcountry Skiing: Will include beginner, intermediate and down mountain back country classes taught by AMC Cardigan Mt. Ski school instructors.
• Advanced Winter Wilderness Travel: Will cover snowshoeing on mountain terrain, use of crampons, dressing for extreme weather condi-
WINTER SCHOOL, FROM PAGE 1

- **Winter Backpacking**: For those who want to take their skills beyond day hiking. Will include a beginner backpacking class in January, and an intermediate class in February. Instruction in backpacking equipment, campsite selection, route finding, map and compass, weather, trip planning, cooking and emergencies will be offered. Plan to spend Friday and Saturday night outdoors and provide your own backpacking equipment.

- **Leadership and Mountain Skills**: For those who have good winter hiking and/or skiing skills, and wish to enhance them to run trips of their own. Exercises in planning, organizing and conducting trips with emphasis on leadership techniques and group dynamics. The basics of accident scene management, medical considerations and off-trail navigation will also be covered. This course is also for those with potential and desire to become Trip Leaders for AMC’s NH Chapter.

  - Not sure which class is right for you?
  - Just ask Workshop Director Rick Silverberg at
  - (603) 225-5921.
  - You must be 18 years or older to attend.
  - Cost is $170 for AMC members and $190 for non-members, and includes lodging, excellent meals, materials and instruction.
  - Workshop begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday and ends at 4:30 p.m. Sunday.
  - For more information go to
  - [www.amc-nh.org](http://www.amc-nh.org) and to register, go to
  - [http://amcnhregistration.qilan.com](http://amcnhregistration.qilan.com)

Go to page 4 to read about Volunteer at AMC’s lodges, huts, campsites, and more!

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Winter School--Snow Shoeing doesn't get much better! Photo credit John McHugh.

Winter School--Great Day for Backcountry Skiing! Photo credit Scott Taylor.

MOUNTAIN PASSAGES

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Winter School--Great Day for Backcountry Skiing! Photo credit Scott Taylor.
This year, we again have a full calendar of events planned. Our schedule of outings for the remainder of this season is printed on page 7 of this issue, and you can find an updated schedule on the web at https://amc-nh.org/committee/ski/index.php.

The Ski Committee also focuses on training programs to improve the skills of its leaders and participants. In addition to the informal training that takes place during our ski trips, formal training courses are offered throughout the season. For example, during the 2018/2019 season, an avalanche awareness course will be offered in January, and three training programs will be offered at each of the two NH-AMC winter schools at Cardigan lodge: Introduction to Backcountry Skiing, Intermediate Backcountry Skiing and Down Mountain Skiing. In addition, two Ladies Resort to Backcountry skiing classes will be offered in February and March.

Valerio Viti, Paul Pinkham, and Thor Smith are the current Chairs of the NH Chapter Ski Committee and you can reach them at skinh@amc-nh.org.

So, whether you are a classic or free style cross-country skier, a telemark skier, an alpine touring skier or snowboarder, and are interested in participating or expanding your horizons, the Ski Committee has a program that will match your desires. See you on the snow!
Imagine this: you are setting off on a three day backpacking trip in winter. As an experienced hiker, you have layers of warm clothing, a stove, tent, and a cozy sleeping bag. You make your way up the trail for a few hours, and then you come to a junction you weren’t expecting. You pull out your cell phone to look up a map, and you have difficulty getting a signal. What’s worse, you see that your battery is low.

This situation may be recognizable to a lot of people. In today’s society, we tend to rely on cell phones and GPS. But, out in the wilderness, cell service might not be available, and while the GPS on your phone may still work, you may only see your location on a blank screen instead of a map. In addition, batteries die quickly, especially in the cold weather. What do you do when you are lost on the trail and can’t rely on technology?

The simple answer is to take out your map and compass and figure out where you are and in what direction you should go. The more complex answer is that many people don’t carry a map and compass, and even when they do, they aren’t confident in their ability to use them.

Leaders from AMC NH have been leading Map and Compass workshops to teach people the skills they need to navigate in the outdoors.

This past March, Frank Miller and Lu Ann Laquerre led an evening workshop on Map and Compass skills at Harvey-Mitchell Memorial Library in Epping, New Hampshire. The class was designed to walk students through the basics of reading a map and using a compass.

They began by looking at some of the features of a topographical map and answering common questions. Why do the lines get closer near the top of a mountain? What do the green areas of a map indicate? Why are some areas tan brown?

After an introduction to the basics of map reading, they learned the parts of a compass and how to use them. Frank uses easy mnemonic devices to help break down the intimidating aspects of understanding a compass; if you’ve taken a Map and Compass class with AMC NH, you might remember phrases such as “Red is in the Shed,” or “Black takes you back.”

Frank and Lu Ann use “The Rule of 3” method of teaching: they tell you; they show you, and then you do it. After they demonstrated how to use a compass, they set their students tasks to navigate through the library stacks. Miller says a typical comment from students when looking at a compass is, “I’ve carried this piece of plastic around for years but never knew how to use it.” By the end of the evening, however, they start to integrate their new map and compass skills, and are pleased to realize that they can find their destinations.

Map and Compass skills can be confusing, and attending a class with an expert can be intimidating, but Frank stresses that these skills anyone can learn. “It’s not difficult if you have an instructor,” he says. Frank felt fortunate to have good teachers when he started hiking, and is looking to pass on those skills to new outdoor adventurers. Frank says the classes are fun, but the skills learned are serious. Being able to use a map and compass could save your life.

If you are interested in beginning to take the mystery out of map and compass skills, AMC NH offers several types of Map and Compass classes. You can join AMC leaders like Frank and Luann for a two hour evening course to discover the basics. Once a year, AMC NH offers a full day course. In this course, students begin inside with basic map and compass skills, just like the students did in the library, but then they venture out into the forest and begin to navigate their way through the outdoors. If you are up for an even more in depth Map and Compass education, you can also check out the Map and Compass Weekend Workshop. After reviewing some basic skills, you’ll spend two full days in the outdoors, navigating to the next night’s camping spot and even doing some bushwhacking.

Whichever option you chose, you’ll be led by experienced AMC NH leaders who will teach you and guide you on your way. You’ll get to experience the wonder of New Hampshire’s wilderness and learn skills that will last you a lifetime. Frank has been hiking the Whites for 40 years, and he still takes a map and compass on every hike. He says he wouldn’t set foot on a trail without them.

Join AMC NH at an upcoming Map and Compass Workshop so that, if you ever find yourself at a trail junction without a GPS signal or with a dying cell phone battery, you will know exactly what to do! Schedules of upcoming courses can be found on the AMC website.
BY JESSIE ROBIE

The sun is setting and the fresh smell of the forest fills the night air. The first thing I hear as I walk up the path to the Shapleigh bunkhouse at Crawford Notch is the sound of laughter. This is a theme that will be constant all weekend. The word everyone I talk to uses, from program leader Mark Heslin to participants, is “social,” and from the first few moments of my first Hut Night, this proves to be true.

NH AMC Chapter Hut Nights take place twice a year, in June and September, at one of the high huts in the White Mountains. Groups of around 30 people, of all different ages, backgrounds, and experience levels, gather to hike together, socialize, and spend a night at one of AMC’s high huts.

I attended my first Hut Night this past June. Before that, I wasn’t even aware that Hut Nights existed. When I found out about them, I will admit that I was a little intimidated. Spend a weekend walking into the woods and sleeping in bunks with strangers I’d never met before?

Everyone to whom I talked said the hut nights were amazing. Indeed, the majority of participants are what Mark calls “repeat offenders,” people who return season after season to enjoy catching up with friends and spending time together. But, for the first time initiate, the prospect was a little bit daunting.

Which brings me back to Friday night outside Shapleigh bunkhouse. The leaders and a few participants got a head start on the weekend, spending the night dining at the AMC Highland Lodge and sleeping in the bunkhouse. I felt immediately welcome by everyone. We stayed up late talking about the next day’s hike. Before turning in for the night, we went outside to look at the stars. This far from any light pollution, we had a glorious view.

In the morning, we ate a hearty breakfast at the Highland Center before heading off to the Zealand Falls Trailhead to meet the other participants. We were joined by families, friends, and singles, all of different ages and hiking ability levels, but all eager to get hiking.

The day was bright and sunny, and the trail up to Zealand proved to be an easy hike, even with our large overnight packs. We crossed over a series of bridges through beautiful wetlands. Hike leader Debbie Marcus shared her expertise and identified many of the wildflowers we saw along the way, including bunchberry and trillium. The trail was strewn with mud, and something I’d never seen before: white lady slippers, too numerous to count. We were lucky enough to be hiking with wildlife photographer Paul Hopkins, and he gave us hints about how to best capture the beautiful and elusive flowers in photographs.

After a moderate hike, we arrived at Zealand Hut. Poised right next to Zealand Falls, Zealand Hut is the ideal place for a group to spend the night. Members had several different options:

- hiking down to Thoreau Falls and enjoying the water,
- hiking up to Zeacliff to enjoy the stunning views, or
- taking on the challenge of going up to the peak of Mount Zealand to tick off one of New Hampshire’s four thousand footers.

Since I am working on the 48, I chose to go with the group led by Debbie and Frank Miller and we made a short but steep ascent to Zeacliff. The sun was out and the sides of the trail were covered in bright purple rhododendron blooms. After stopping for a few pictures and a quick snack, we sped off to the summit, eager to get there and make it back to the hut for Happy Hour at four o’clock. Zealand Summit is a viewless peak, just a small cairn hidden on a short path that branches off of Twinway Trail. However, we were lucky enough to have a special cherry on top! Literally! Some wag had placed a single cherry on top of the cairn!

While the ‘view’ was underwhelming, I felt very lucky to be in the company of experienced hikers like Frank, who generously shared his experience and provided great advice about hiking as well as entertaining stories.

Debbie Marcus. She even hung flowered banners from the drying racks. Friends, new and old, shared wine and stories. Happy Hour culminated with a group photo by the waterfalls next to the hut as the sun set.

We enjoyed the hospitality of the hut crew, as they provided lectures on nature and the hut system and entertained us with skits during dinner. The dinner they prepared for us was amazing- fresh bread, turkey, and veggies: a full Thanksgiving Dinner cooked without electricity at 2,700 feet.

After dinner, the conversation continued, until I found myself nodding off at a
While some of our New Hampshire wildlife hibernate through the winter, and others go into winter torpor, many others remain active. Probably the most obvious animals active during the winter are birds. While many of our summer birds migrate south for the winter, chickadees, titmouses, juncos, woodpeckers, and jays among others remain, and are active throughout the winter. These birds are most apparent on sunny winter and early spring days when they can be seen snowshoe or cross country ski tracks backwards, you will likely unnecessarily add to their stress and decrease their chances of successfully making it through the winter. If you follow their tracks backwards, you will likely avoid alarming the animals, and your experience will be rewarding as you follow and learn more about the animal’s activities. After all, you are following the tracks to learn a bit more about the wildlife around us, and not to disturb them.

If you decide to track wildlife in the snow, consider avoiding unnecessary stress to the animals. Remember, animals in the winter are already under extreme stress due to limited food and harsh winter conditions. If you pursue them by following their tracks forward, you may unnecessarily add to their stress and decrease their chances of successfully making it through the winter. If you follow their tracks backwards, you will likely avoid alarming the animals, and your experience will be rewarding as you follow and learn more about the animal’s activities. After all, you are following the tracks to learn a bit more about the wildlife around us, and not to disturb them.

So, the next time you are in the snowy woods, consider going a bit off trail and learning something new about the wildlife. Remember, before you wander far off trail, be sure you have the map and compass skills that will allow you to find your way back. Also, be sure that you are carrying the 10 essentials in your pack. If you are not sure what you should be carrying, an article on the 10 essentials appeared in the May/June 2018 Mountain Passages available on the New Hampshire Chapter’s website.
Date/locations are tentative! Please check with leaders and online at:
https://activities.outdoors.org
blue writing is for midweek trips
Questions? skinh@amc-nh.org

2018/19 AMC NH Skiers calendar

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617-523-0636 or www.outdoors.org/membercenter

Questions? skinh@amc-nh.org
Blue writing is for midweek trips

Address changes and membership renewals:
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'Mountain Passages’ is only the beginning…

From hiking to biking, AMC’s New Hampshire chapter has it all. Visit our website at amc-nh.org and read more about us and our many year-round events.

53rd Annual Presidential Range Hike

*July 13 – 21 2019*

What is the Presidential Range Hike? It is a hike of over 50 miles of scenic trails in the White Mountain National Forest including many on Appalachian Trail. You will climb at least a dozen peaks over 4000 ft. including Mt. Washington. It is a STRENUOUS AND WONDERFUL GROUP HIKE with 15,000 feet elevation gain!! Daily hikes are 5 to 10 miles.

There will be four NH Chapter Leaders and a maximum of 21 hikers. A variety of hiking options will be offered each day.

The cost for AMC members is $990 ($1,040 non-members) and includes 8 nights lodging and meals at AMC huts, gratu-

ities, trail snacks, and in-hike transportation.

Go to the Presidential Range Hike website at [http://www.amcnhprh.org/](http://www.amcnhprh.org/) for more details. Deposit $495 ($25 non refund). Register early! For additional info contact John McHugh: 603-382-6685 or ljmchugh@comcast.net.

Hiking in the Northern Presidentsials-2018 AMC Presidential Range Hike. Photo credit Terri Pinto.

The hiking group for 2018 for the AMC Presidential Range Hike-Madison Hut. Photo credit Terri Pinto.