

ADIRONDACK

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Peeks

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Cascading in the High Peaks

Surveying Recreation in the Northern Forest

by Carena J. van Riper

Marcy, Giant, Algonquin, and Gothics rear their stone faces into the afternoon sky. These mountains are among the most distinctive summits in the 46 High Peaks of the Adirondacks. The spectacular view I have from Cascade Mountain again confirms that it deserves designation as a “famous 46er.” With at least an hour before the majority of visitors reach the summit, I have plenty of time to relax and stretch my legs from the two-and-a-half-mile trek I’ve taken with my field partner, Kelly. Reflecting on the experiences we have shared throughout the summer, she and I banter back and forth about the insights we’ve gleaned from fellow hikers as we revel in the beauty of the 46ers.

On my first ascent of Cascade, I remember breaking triumphantly through the tree line to see the peak’s bald face amid the thick clouds that brushed across the skyline. When I stood on top of the US Geological Survey plaque marking the official summit of this mountain, I felt a sense of accomplishment, accompanied by a kind of humility drawn from the raw beauty of the High Peaks. I discovered a perfect spot to eat lunch, a rock conveniently shaped like a chair. Here, on this granite throne, I developed an appreciation for the High Peaks, a place that not only harbors fragile ecological resources but also serves as a destination for locals and tourists alike.

My uniform—a dark green shirt, white nametag, and University of Vermont (UVM) baseball cap—indicates that I’m on some sort of official business. My purpose here is to collect information for my graduate research, which has been supported by the Northeastern States Research Cooperative and the University of Vermont. My

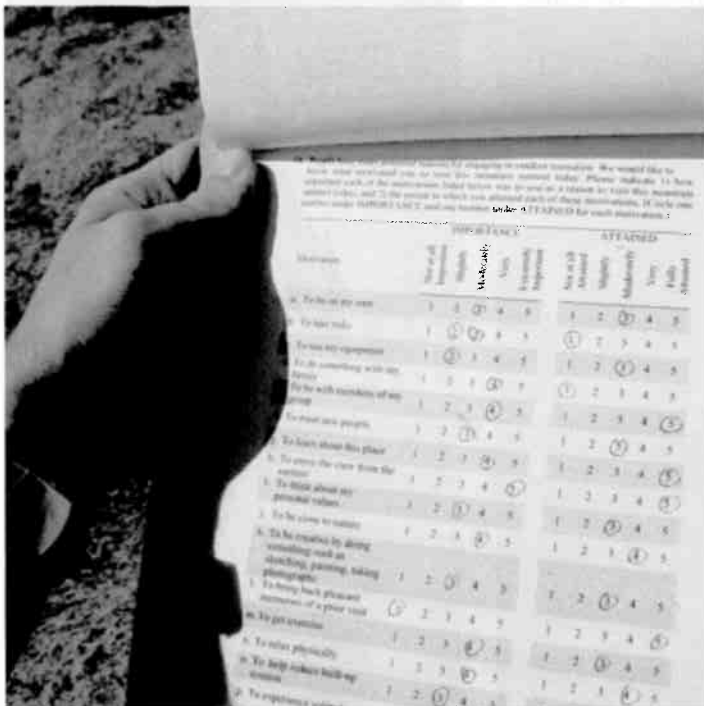
field partners and I spent the summer administering surveys, asking visitors to thumb through pairs of photographs that show a mountain summit similar to Cascade with varying environmental conditions, numbers of people, and management techniques like fencing or stepping stones. The selection of one photograph over the other sheds light on the relative importance that visitors place on the combinations of conditions represented in the photographs. For example, one photograph could show a summit covered in vegetation with visitors corralled behind a fence lining a trail; the other could show less vegetation, many visitors roaming about the larger summit area, and few tactics used to keep visitors on-trail.

I look down at a stack of surveys and study photographs organized in a dark green binder that rests at my feet. What will the next few visitors to reach the summit have to say about the current conditions on Cascade? Perhaps they will prefer a solitary experience with pristine resource conditions and a high intensity of management. Alternatively, they could be more concerned with the ability to roam freely about the summit and socialize among their friends.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2008, my colleagues at the University of Vermont and I researched outdoor recreation opportunities at three mountain summits in the Northern Forest: Cascade Mountain, NY, Camel’s Hump, VT, and Cadillac Mountain, ME. Our study sites range from low to high levels of use and development, with Cascade falling on the lower end of the spectrum. Over the course of nearly 20 survey days at Cascade, through rain, shine and snow, we collected nearly 400 questionnaires. We tried to catch the early birds who seek to avoid crowds, as well as late risers who prefer a more leisurely and social experience.

Much to my surprise, visitors have been eager to complete the nine-page questionnaire, and to exchange trail stories and share perspectives on environmental conservation. Those who express reluctance have been easily convinced otherwise, when reminded that the survey provides an opportunity to engage in the process of protecting such a special place.

As far back as I can remember I have been playing in the outdoors, exploring the social and natural processes of parks and related areas. My parents’ research on bird migration patterns and wildlife disease brought my sisters and me to some of the most astounding places on the planet. Nearly every summer in my youth, my sisters and I were released into the playgrounds of our nation’s national parks, participating in recreation activities such as fishing in the streams of Yosemite, hiking the craggy peaks of the Tetons and sightseeing in Glacier National Park. These experiences gave me a sense of urgency to protect and maintain our natural resources, but also showed me the importance of making it easy for the public to enjoy these places in coming years. As an



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For those who want more than an Italian guidebook and a map, we recommend hiking with an Italian group. If you don't have your own transportation, this is a great way to hike, and to meet Italians, many of whom speak enough English to make you feel comfortable. They start in Rome, perhaps at a Metro stop, and go by private car, bus (in Italian, "pullman"), or van ("pulmino"). A couple websites to try are altrimonti@tin.it (Altrimonti) and www.associazionelaltair.it (Altair).

The groups often have Sunday hikes planned for the Abruzzi, which are spectacular mountains, and you can go on a two-day hike to, for example, Monti della Laga, a gorgeous mountain group in back of the Gran Sasso. In our book, *Rome the Second Time: 15 Itineraries that Don't Go to the Coliseum*, we describe and provide maps for a couple of the smaller hikes in the Colli Albani and from nearby Tivoli, and we have more details on hooking up with an Italian hiking group. We narrate some of our more recent adventures on our blog: www.romethesecondtime.com.

We were introduced to bushwhacking by our son, Riley Graebner, #3887, on a Bear Den-to-Noonmark trek (before the

fire). We often think of our 46er experiences as we hike in Italy—and put the techniques we learned (including reading a map, using a compass, and bushwhacking) to good use.

We love hiking in Central Italy and encourage more ADKers to try it. A couple differences from 46ers: most Italians hike for the view and to eat (always bring your own food and water), not to get to the top of a peak. On one excursion, our Italian companions stopped for lunch only 200 yards from the top, and it soon became clear they had no intention of going further. They also tend to hike more slowly than the hikers we've been with in the ADKs. We spent weeks getting ourselves in shape the first time we signed up with a group, climbing up long stairways in Rome with a heavy pack, only to realize we already were in the best shape of any of the hikers.

Hey, it's Italy! Just-born calves with umbilical cords, snow, the ruins of antiquity, wild boars, open ridges, and high plains. What's not to like? So get in shape ("in gamba"), and, buon trekking. ❖

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Cascading...

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undergraduate at Arizona State University, I envisioned a career as a social scientist. Since that point I have aimed to help decision-makers strike a balance between visitor use and preservation of parks and related areas.

My graduate research at the University of Vermont has taught me the importance of outdoor recreation research. With the guidance of Professor Robert Manning and the other members of the Park Studies Laboratory, I have focused on visitor experiences in our nation's national parks. Our research in the Northern Forest, for example, found that visitors were willing to make tradeoffs

among recreation conditions on three mountain summits. We also learned that visitors perceived conditions differently, preferring little impact, few other people, and a low intensity of management. At Cascade, visitors were most concerned with off-trail use. In turn, they were willing to tolerate more restrictive management techniques. At our other two study sites, visitors had different preferences, which suggested to us that mountain summits in the Northern Forest should be managed on an individual basis to offer an assortment of opportunities for outdoor recreation.

While surveying on Cascade, I picked up interesting tidbits in side conversations with fellow hikers. For example, one pair of travelers from the Netherlands talked with me for nearly two hours about the crowded conditions in European parks to which they were accustomed. They saw Cascade as a truly remote peak that offered solitary experiences. Conversely, several experienced hikers from the northeast expressed just the opposite, arguing that too many people visit the site. Avid hikers who have acquired vast amounts of knowledge over the years claimed to know more about the nuances of this place than the managers do.

Managers of Cascade are providing high quality experiences and should continue to integrate a variety of visitor preferences into the multiple opportunities available to visitors in the northeast. I have been fortunate to also attain quality experiences amidst the unrivaled beauty of the 46ers. I hope that through my graduate research, managers of mountain summits in the Northern Forest will have a better idea of how to prioritize their decisions about visitor preferences for recreation conditions. Through sustainable and informed management practices, such as those currently underway at Cascade Mountain, we will continue to perpetuate stewardship of natural areas and ensure the survival of our most precious natural resources. ❖

For more about the author, please see page 32.



Carena van Ripper on Cascade. Photo by Andrew Lavigne.

46er Club Notes

From the Editors

We are running out of excuses for why your *Peeks* is late, so let's just pretend that all along we intended this to be more a winter than autumn issue. One change you may have noticed is the use of color throughout the magazine. This is a big step for us. Who knows? Within a few more years we may actually learn how to use it properly.

The drawback to upgrading to color is that we face new limitations on space. As a result, several worthy articles could not be included here. Poor Mark Lowell, who was assured in person that his article would be printed, must now wait until Spring 2010 to complain about how we edited it. Kevin MacKenzie, who contributed last issue's cover photo, spent a great deal of time writing about a ghastly bushwhack from one impenetrable mess to another. This too must be postponed.

At the Fall Meeting we discussed posting photographs and stories that did not fit into *Peeks* on the 46er website. Please let us know if this is something you would like. Other changes are coming to the club as well. The Office of the Historian, for example, has announced new procedures for aspiring members, while the organizers of the Outdoor Leadership Workshops are considering new formats.

Please do not let these changes deter you from sending us your stories, drawings, photographs, and poetry. We read them gratefully, whether or not they are published. We are particularly interested in your stories about recovering from accidents. Melissa, who broke both her fibula and her tibia descending Peekamoose last April, plans to write about her rehab process. Given the least encouragement, she will include a description of hiking three miles down one of the steepest trails in the Catskills with a broken ankle.

In the spirit of saving space for more deserving writers, we will only allude to two controversies: 46r or 46er? NE111 or NE115? Which is correct? Which do you prefer?

The Spring Meeting will be held on Sunday, May 30th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Lake Placid. More information and reservation details are available in the Spring Newsletter.

To our dismay, we received a total of one partially correct entry in the contest to guess the location of the Spring 2009 cover photograph by Kevin MacKenzie. He writes, "This was taken around noon on August 5th, 2006 during a break between ascending one of the western slides and descending Hunter Slide with Rich McKenna. The view is northwest from Dix's summit ridge. The mountain in the forefront with the small slide is the Nippletop ridge (north of the summit). Sawteeth is barely visible just behind (the one with the cloud shadow). The main focus of the photo, from left to right is: Basin, Saddleback, Pyramid/Gothics, Armstrong and the Wolf Jaws." The winner, Martin Paris of Lake Placid, receives a copy of *No Place I'd Rather Be* by Stuart F. Mesinger, published by the Adirondack Mountain Club.

For this issue's cover, guess the location of the photograph and, as a tie-breaker, the general direction the photographer was facing. We will accept entries only by land mail, and only with postmarks between January 1st and 31st. Mail entries to: Daniel Eagan, P.O. Box 1192, NYC 10159. (The photographer, his or her subjects, and anyone else who participated in the hike are not eligible.) The winner will receive a copy of *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why* by Laurence Gonzales, published by Norton.

About our contributors:

Carena van Riper is currently a Ph.D. student at Texas A&M University in the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Laboratory. Research for "Cascading in the High Peaks" was completed for Carena's M.S. through the University of Vermont Park Studies Laboratory (<http://www.uvm.edu/parkstudies/>). For more information on this project please see <http://www.nsrcforest.org/fullprojectpdfs/manningfull06.pdf>.

Dianne Bennett ("Under the Lazio Sun") was managing partner of Hodgson Russ LLP, Buffalo, New York's largest law firm. William Graebner is a widely published author of books on American history (the latest, *Patty's Got a Gun: Patricia Hearst in 1970s America*). When not in Rome getting around on their Malaguti 250, they live in Buffalo. Their book, *Rome the Second Time: 15 Itineraries that Don't Go to the Coliseum*, is available at Barnes & Noble and from their blog, <http://www.romethesecondtime.com/>.

Neal Burdick ("Editing *The Adirondack Reader*") is associate director of University Communications for St. Lawrence University and editor-in-chief of *Adirondack* magazine. An essayist, reviewer, poet and fiction writer, his writing has appeared in numerous publications. Burdick is also past editor of ADK's eight-volume Forest Preserve Series trail guides. A native of Plattsburgh, he holds a history degree from St. Lawrence University.

In Memoriam

James Blais, #5492

William Hearne, #2506

Peggy Hohmann, #207

Claude M. Janeway, # 2319

Edward Mash, #1869

Irvin C. Simser, #2821

Frank Trerise, #1323