



Randolph Mountain Club Newsletter

The mission of the Randolph Mountain Club is to promote the enjoyment of the Randolph area through hiking, trail development and maintenance, upkeep of camps and shelters, and the sharing of the collective knowledge of its members.

December 2024

Volume 22, No. 2



RMC Camps Report

by Adam Ritchie, Camps chair

The summer of 2024 was unusually warm and dry, contrasting sharply with the near-constant rain of 2023, and as a result our guest numbers increased. We completed a successful airlift on September 4th thanks to more than a dozen volunteers, seven of whom hiked up to receive loads and stow away three tons of Biobricks (stove fuel) for the winter.

We welcomed returning caretakers Lea and Declan this fall and are happy that Declan will stay through the winter and be joined by newcomer Sarah Grebleski. (See their bios, page 6.)

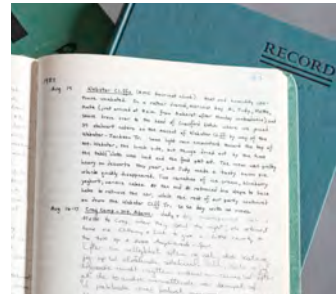
The caretakers have been excellent stewards of the camps and welcomed and assisted countless hikers over the past year. This year the RMC began reimbursing caretakers with existing wilderness medicine certifications and also sponsored a Wilderness First Aid course at Stearns Lodge. We believe that these credentials and training provide an invaluable contribution to the hiking public and to our members; in a Rescue article in this issue you can read about the critical roles for which our employees are now prepared.

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Airlift volunteers on Sept. 4: Declan Kiley, Adam Ritchie, Tim Mather, Julia Rudlaff, Emma Brinks, pilot Mark Hitchcock, and Lea Giguere, with Scout. A. Ritchie photo.

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For over half a century Al Hudson (1932-2024) was devoted to leading, preserving, enriching and amusing the RMC, variously as President, Archivist, trip leader and musical conductor. At his Randolph memorial service in July, much of what was spoken were his own words, as relatives and friends shared his written entries from the family's legendary logbooks. Curiosity, fellowship, geographic specificity and humor are all there, as Al carried on the best traditions of RMC writing. On p. 5 we present more logbook selections in our salute to him. - Editor

The Hudson-Maddock Randolph Logbooks

text by Al Hudson; introduction by Judy Hudson

Our family has maintained a hiking logbook since the summer of 1968. It was Al's idea, begun when almost-three-years-old Kate was able to walk on her own. Many are in Al's meticulous, often miniscule, handwriting. Al was an eloquent writer, capturing the large vistas and describing the beauties of nature, sometimes veering into self-deprecation:

Below the Second Cascade one of the ladders had been removed completely, making for a tricky descent over an extensive smooth rock face, inducing louder imprecations from Al. Shortly thereafter Al stumbled over a root and ceased to be a pleasant walking companion. (9/2/1999)

Over time, four generations of family, our guests, and other friends have written entries. There are accounts from old and young; some in Danish, Norwegian, and German. Entries written by children reflect their ages as they grow up and are able to undertake increasingly difficult, longer hikes. In the past fifty-six years, three 160-page volumes have been filled and we are well into the fourth.

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Top left, the logbooks, with one volume open to the 08/14/84 entry for the Gourmet Hike to Webster Cliff. Right, Al on a walking tour in Ireland, 2017. Kate Hudson photos.

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Randolph Mountain Club 2024-2025

Officers, Directors,
committee chairs and honorary members

President	John Phinney, Randolph NH
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Treasurer	Adam Berger, Seattle WA
Secretary	Joel Douglas, Andover MA
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Camps	Adam Ritchie
Trails	Deva Stekete, Ben Lieberson, Andy Gallop
Trips	Mary Minifie
Merchandise	Michele Cormier
Events	Ginny Umiker, Eliza Horton
Planned Giving	Randy Meiklejohn
Membership	Michele Cormier
Work Trips	Benzo Harris
Stearns Lodge	Howie Wemyss
Alumni	Benzo Harris, Deva Stekete
Revenue Dev't.	Chris Cross
Trail Easements	Randy Meiklejohn
Trail Adoption	Deva Stekete, Sally Micucci
Communications	John Phinney
<i>Newsletter</i>	Randy Meiklejohn
<i>Website</i>	Tom Breunig, Jenna Maddock
<i>Social Media</i>	Lea Giguere, Carl Herz
Archives/History	Steve Chase, Judy Hudson
Honorary members	Bill & Barbara Arnold Paul & Michele Cormier Bob Drescher Judy Hudson Edith Tucker

www.randolphmountainclub.org

The Randolph Mountain Club is a diverse organization, committed to equal opportunity in employment and program delivery. The RMC prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, military status, veteran status, income level, political affiliation and familial status.



From the President ...

Greetings from Randolph, where winter is hovering. Gray Knob had eighteen inches of snow recently, so it's hard to remember the frenetic pace of summer 2024, with the Town bicentennial celebrations combining with RMC events new and old. Through it all the Club—the board, key volunteers, alumni, trail crew and caretakers—carried on with this season's work and continued to plan for the future. You'll find highlights in this newsletter and in my notes below.

About a year ago, the RMC announced a two-phase Lowe's Path rehabilitation project in honor of the bicentennial, and I'm pleased to inform you that our outstanding trail crew has successfully completed phase one. Representatives of two of the project's significant funders, the US Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation, hiked in for a tour during the summer season, and they selected it to be showcased at a meeting for all trail clubs in the northeast. On November 1st at the Tin Mountain Conservation Center in Albany, NH, directors Deva Stekete and Eric Sandin gave a joint presentation covering the 2024 trail work and the history of the RMC. Both our third-party funders and our peer trail maintainers were impressed with our accomplishments on this important trail. The project's second phase, including treadway improvements in the alpine zone, will be completed in 2025.

On the "town side", the crew completed important work on the EZ Way and Pasture Path (*see p. 10*) this fall. In the coming years we expect to do more work on these trails and their bridges, to respond to the weather and climate-change impacts affecting our mountain trails.

Treasurer Adam Berger's report on page 10 shows that RMC's overall financial picture is good. For the first time in a decade the board increased club dues, and that has provided a small boost. In his Camps report (*starts p. 1*) Adam Ritchie writes about planning for roof replacements at Crag Camp and Gray Knob, and while I expect we'll embark on a capital campaign (as we did for the rebuilding of the camps a generation ago), we can also seek outside grants and draw on the memorial donations in our own Mt. Madison Fund. Transport of building materials to the sites will likely be by volunteers on foot as well as by airlift. On that subject, please join me in acknowledging Chris Hawkins, who has supervised RMC helicopter missions for many years and just completed two terms on the board. He's handing off his airlift responsibilities to director Thomas Strayhorn.

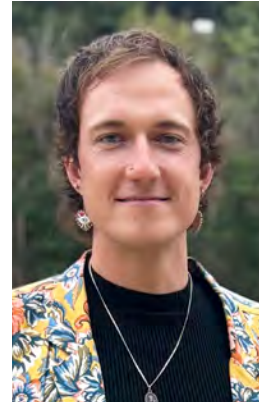
Before we know it summer 2025 will be here, and it promises to be a busy time for the RMC. Your board can be most effective with meaningful feedback from members, so please don't hesitate to use the website to report trail, signage, and camps issues, or to make suggestions of any sort. I hope you'll consider joining a committee, brushing and blazing on a volunteer work trip, leading a club hike, or helping with events. Feel free to contact me, by email or text, with any ideas to keep the RMC strong and moving forward.

John Phinney, President
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New RMC Director

by Joel Douglas, RMC Secretary

Willie Wy session’s family is from Gorham, and their great grandfather Edward Fenn was the namesake of the primary school there. But it was their grandmother Barbara Wy session who introduced the family to Randolph, and taught Willie to love hiking, classical music and Dynasty Buffet. Willie has hiked the forty-eight New Hampshire 4,000-footers and the Vermont Long Trail, as well as the entirety of the Appalachian Trail. They are very excited to help steward the land and deepen relationships in Randolph. A skilled carpenter, Willie lived for many years in New Orleans, and now spends most of their time farming and community building in Maine. Willie is a friend, comrade, family member, fairy enthusiast, and aspiring worm. In 2008 they chose the word ‘doldrums’ for Valley charades at the Annual Picnic—perhaps their crowning achievement. Finally, Willie acknowledges that Randolph exists on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Abenaki people.



Willie Wy session

At the 2024 Annual Meeting in August, the members elected Willie Wy session to an initial three-year term (replacing outgoing Chris Hawkins), Eric Sandin to a two-year term, and Joel Douglas, Jenna Maddock, Deva Stekete and Howie Wemyss to second three-year terms.

Honorary RMC Membership for Bob Drescher

As provided for in the by-laws, RMC members at the 2024 Annual Meeting voted unanimously to elect Bob as an Honorary Member of the club, in recognition of his many years of sustained year-round work on all aspects of RMC trails. At right, excerpts from remarks at the meeting given by former director and trail crew member Benzo Harris.

Captivated by hiking in the Northern Presidentials, Bob Drescher was introduced to the Randolph Mountain Club about fifteen years ago, through chance meetings with a few locals and club members. In the years since he has become somewhat of a Randolph institution himself.

He has no residence in town, nor does he have any family ties in the area. Instead it is a love of the region, the people, and the trails that has pulled him here again and again throughout the years. During his involvement with the club, Bob has spent easily 9,000 hours and driven half a million miles round-trip from his home in Center Barnstead. And that is a conservative estimate.

Bob’s zeal for trail maintenance rivals that of many famous members of years past. The many thousands of hours he has spent on and off the trails in service of their upkeep is reflected in the overall quality and preservation of RMC’s paths. Under his leadership, the Trails Committee has overseen milestone construction projects from the alpine zone to the swamps of Randolph Hill. He has had a hand in practically every inch of trail that has been improved or preserved over the last 15 years.

The RMC has a very small footprint organizationally and relies heavily on volunteers and dedicated individuals willing to take on huge administrative and labor burdens without compensation. From those who have worked with him regularly, to someone on his or her first work trip ever with Bob, all can agree that his good cheer, enthusiasm, and industriousness are the acme of the Club’s spirit.



Above, Bob on Starr King in 2019; at right, Bob in the back row with a large group of volunteers he led brushing two sections of the Diagonal, in 2022. Wendy Walsh and R. Meiklejohn photos.



Summer and fall events

*Notes by Eliza Horton;
photos by Ginny Umiker
and Franklin Stone Wenk*

2024 summer events kicked off with the lively “Beers, Bites, and Bids” silent auction at Big Day Brewing in June, attended by approximately 90 members. July brought more community gatherings, including the Fourth of July Tea at Kelleys’s barn, with over 175 people enjoying the afternoon. At the “Rendezvous / Gourmet Hike”, an RMC contribution to the Town Bicentennial celebrations, participants took creative routes to Castleview Ledge. The trail crew was awarded the “most innovative journey” for their route from Stearns Lodge which began before dawn. At the viewpoint, hikers shared gourmet dishes they had carried with them, including a pavlova.

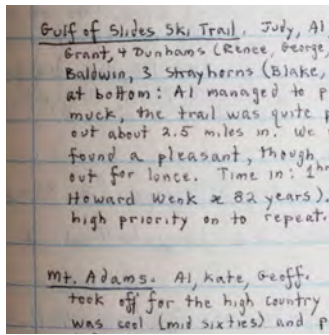
Early August saw this year’s edition of “Songs for a Summer Evening” at the Town Hall, where 70 people enjoyed serene performances by Keith Dempster, Thomas Strayhorn, Bill Minifie and John Dillon. The second annual Randolph Boogie dance party, also at the Town Hall, had about 45 attendees. This great new inclusive event again featured a competitive game of musical chairs, with Sophie Obayashi winning the 2024 title in a close final against Adam Berger.

On August 17 the Club held the 111th Annual Picnic and Charades in Mossy Glen at mid-day and the Barn Dance in the evening, generously hosted by the Beringers. The Randolph Ramble on October 26 drew 49 participants to race across 10km of the Crescent Range trails in the Randolph Community Forest.



Al Hudson, cont'd. from page 1

As the logbook's contents expanded, Al decided that we needed an index, and painstakingly created one. Now expanded to more than ten pages, the index gives us easy access to descriptions of a particular peak or trail. I especially cherish the entries made by my mother Charlotte Maddock that describe her adventures, including skinny-dipping, with her indefatigable hiking group of older women (especially Anna Stearns, Kay Billings, and Miggy Woodard). The logbooks also were a valuable source of accurate dates when I was writing *Peaks & Paths*, the history of the RMC.



Left, Joan Rising, Al Hudson, and Klaus Goetze, on an RMC trip to Mt. Katahdin, August 1981. Right, a 1992 entry, in Al's handwriting at actual size. Photos by J. Hudson (from RMC Archive Hudson collection) and K. Hudson.

July 28, 1976: Baldface Circuit, RMC Gourmet Trip

Led by Chips Muehl (her 4th attempt, the other 3 rained out). Kate, Judy, Al teamed up with Chips, Jack and Tina Stewart, Joan & Hawley Rising, Dave & Danny Ernsberger, Ed Purcell, et al. Up the Bicknell Ridge Trail (nice approach) to join the Baldface Circle Trail. Quite windy on the ridge, but wonderfully clear. Lunch on the south side of the north peak. The menu included: smoked oysters, marinated mushrooms, various cheeses and dips, crackers, washed down by Mountain Chablis; for dessert, peaches, lemon squares, butterscotch brownies. We all missed Sandy Malcolm, a charter member of gourmet climbs. Stuffed, the party moved on to South Peak at a leisurely pace, with Judy picking a pile of blueberries. The wind having dropped, we sat long atop South Baldface admiring the incredible view. Reluctantly, we began the descent over the ledges, with Jack, the Risings, Judy and Al (in fact, all the drivers) hanging back as long as possible on the lower ledges above the Forest Service shelter. Once into the woods, Judy & Al put on speed, overtook the rest of the party, picked up Kate, and all galumphed down the trail for a dip at Emerald Pool. Had a lovely, fairly exclusive swim, since only the Risings joined us at the pool. All in all, a perfect day.

August 21, 1979: Southern Peaks, RMC trip

Judy, Al, Steve, and Margot accompanied the Meiklejohn-led trip up Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail to Lakes hut (Al in 52 minutes). We waited some time at Lakes for the slower members of this large (42) group to arrive. Lunched on Monroe, where Judy did some ambulant berrying. Our group then headed toward Crawford Path in company with a fast-moving flight of "youth" (Betsy & Bill Rising, Jim Grant, Martha and Charlie Breunig),

in the course of which Judy twisted her ankle and strained her knee. The group made it down to Crawford's in good order, in time to get the Risings back to Randolph in time for Bill to make an important Mossback ball game (they won). Nice day.

August 24, 1979: RMC Work Party to Crag Camp

Under the threat of incipient rain that seems to plague such endeavors, Al, Klaus Goetze, Bill & Ruth Knight, Tom & Charlie Breunig, Ted Horton, Hawley Rising (Sr), Gay Johnson and Barbara Wilson met at Appalachia at 8:30 am, whence we repaired to the vicinity of Memorial Bridge to get uploaded from our VW bus. In addition to a few last remnants of Crag porch materials, we took up lumber and tools for the repair of the Crag back room, and two 35 lb. rolls of insulation for Gray Knob. Everyone made it to Crag by about noon, and a fine lunch was laid out: corn chowder, Cuban bread, assorted cheeses, Chablis, and a wonderful plum concoction made by Erika Goetze. The party was joined by Betsy Rising and Ginger Beringer. Bill Rising and Bob White supervised work on the porch, while Al and Hawley took on the back room; the others picked up and bagged trash, of which there was a lot, and creosoted lumber. Members departed with trash ad lib during the afternoon. Al and Hawley were the last to leave (after 5:30) and they were privileged to see the last nail hammered home on the completed deck. A successful work party.

July 10, 1981: Log Cabin -- Gray Knob

For the first time in years without filial impedimenta, Judy and Al undertook a romantic tour of the RMC hostelry realm....Well, not too romantic. After picking up some tools and plans left at Lowe's by Sandy Harris, we went up Lowe's Path to the Log Cabin. Admired the external trenching that had been done there by Jamie (Crag) and Steve Chase (Gray Knob). Pete Wallace and John Tremblay appeared, and we consulted on the rebuilding of the Log Cabin floor. We then ascended to Gray Knob to meet Steve Chase, also inspecting the hut and environs. Gray Knob was quite spruce, but the spring had not yet been cleaned out (Steve had been carrying water from Crag). We admired the Davis Woodruff "endowed chair," then departed for lunch on Adams IV. After a long post-prandial nap over to Spur Trail and down to Crag, where we found Steve and Jamie waiting. Crag also in very fine shape. We admired Jamie's new sleeping quarters, then returned to the valley via Old Spur, King Ravine Trail and Lowe's Path. Weather clear, dry and relatively cool given the heatwave that has been gripping the areas to the south of us. Nice day.

July 8, 2021: Presidential Rail Trail from Dolly Copp Road (Final appearance in Logbook, age 89)

Judy, Al, Geoff, Willa, and Abby (the dog). We thought that by taking a short walk on the Rail Trail we'd miss the next rainstorm; turned back a bit before the first bridge. Not long thereafter it began raining lightly, then eventually getting much harder. All pretty soaked by the time we got back to the car.



Al crossing Cold Brook on the Memorial Bridge, March 2005. Judy Hudson photo, from RMC Archive Hudson collection.

Camps, cont'd. from page 1

Our cabins and facilities are in good shape and all maintenance is current with plans underway to make improvements and repairs. As is well known, these buildings endure some of the worst weather in the world, and after 30+ years of keeping the rain and snow out, the roofs of Crag Camp and Gray Knob are due--actually overdue--for replacement. High-elevation building renovation work is extremely challenging and just getting the materials and tools to the site involves a terrific amount of planning and coordination. Currently the design and materials selection for the new roofs at Crag and Gray Knob are in the advanced planning stage, with next fall as a target date to begin the on-site work following our 2025 airlift resupply. Your camps continue to hum along, providing an amazing and highly unique resource to our membership and the broader hiking community.



Above left, Field Supervisor Emma Brinks and alumna caretaker (and former director) Carl Herz getting the compost cooking at Gray Knob. Center, Adam Ritchie window-washing at the Gray Knob vestibule, in September. Right, Carl re-installing the sign post at the trail leading to Chandler Fall, from the lower Spur Trail. Adam Ritchie photos.

Lea: This this will be my fourth season as caretaker at Gray Knob. I have become acquainted with several of the locals, including Harold our resident Gray Jay, the pine marten, and the snowshoe hare. I look forward to soaking up the last of the sun with Harold, continuing my alliance with the pine marten against the mice, and the short but magical encounters with the hare. It has been wonderful to have returning guests who recall previous visits while I was caretaker, and I look forward to more of these encounters. If I'm not out hiking the path less traveled you'll find me inside with a book, or working on my knitting skills by the wood stove. Scout--my dog and loyal co-caretaker--returned again this season to continue her selfless work as Gray Knob's best crumb collector.

Fall and Winter Camp Caretakers, 2024 - 2025

- in their own words -



*Lea Giguere - summer/
fall*



*Declan Kiley - fall/
winter*



Sarah Grebleski - winter

Declan: I am excited to enter my third season as caretaker this winter. Witnessing the changes of the seasons has been one of my favorite aspects of caretaking, and so I look forward to the onset of winter on the mountain. My hope for this winter is deep snow and lots of guests. I don't mind time alone at Gray Knob, but I would rather welcome guests so please come visit! I consider all my time on the mountain a privilege, and I am very grateful for the experiences I've had and people I've met thus far as caretaker. It is a great honor for me to play a small part in the rich history of Gray Knob and the RMC.

Sarah: Originally from the Fingerlakes Region of NYS, I started hiking in the Adirondack Mountains over a decade ago. Flash forward some time and after moving to Southern Maine in 2021, I began exploring the White Mountains. During this time I spent countless days and nights in the backcountry, completed my Bachelor's degree in Environmental Emergency Management and Law Enforcement and became a WEMT, as well as receiving a few other outdoor recreation certifications. Having recreated outdoors all my life, working in the outdoor industry, and completing my first season as a Backcountry Ranger in Baxter State Park, I'm both thankful and excited to start spending my time at Gray Knob working for the RMC as a Winter Caretaker.

Edmands Col Hiker Rescue

Excerpts from Lea Giguere's account of assisting in a May 2024 rescue, with fellow caretaker Declan Kiley.

On Memorial Day weekend, Declan and I were overlapping at Gray Knob in anticipation of holiday traffic. By Sunday it was still less busy than we had expected, but then at 1:00 PM I received a text from AVSAR (Androscoggin Valley Search and Rescue) asking if anybody was out hiking in the Edmands Col area; could they assist with locating a possible subject? I called the dispatch number and let them know that I was currently caretaking and could easily hike over to the Col to assist. I asked Declan, who is part of PEMI SAR, if he would like to go too. Unbeknownst to us as we headed out, NH Fish & Game (which has primarily responsibility for mountain rescues) had also requested assistance from the National Guard.

Here is part of the F&G press release published later:

"NH Fish and Game Department was notified of a SPOTs Device emergency SOS signal from the Edmands Col Cutoff Trail in Thompson & Meserves Purchase. The company monitoring the device had no additional information to determine the type or cause of the emergency. Shortly thereafter a 911 call was received in the same location. However the call was brief and was dropped after only a report of a serious injury was relayed.

The location of the SOS signal and dropped 911 call was over 4.5 miles from the nearest road and on the exposed ridgeline between Mt. Jefferson and Mt. Adams. Having no ability to confirm the status of the event and the likelihood that it was a possible life-threatening situation, a call was placed to the NH Army National Guard with a request for a helicopter support. The National Guard was able to scramble a crew in the midst of a holiday weekend and provided a Blackhawk helicopter."



In the moment, however, Declan and I had little information to go on. We quickly packed first aid supplies and debated carrying a litter, but decided it would be best to get to the scene quickly and locate the hiker. Declan headed to Edmands Col first, while I made sure that the camp would be fine in our hasty retreat. Arriving first on scene, Declan found the hiker who had crawled

3/10ths of a mile to the Col. I arrived next and sought out higher ground for better phone service. I relayed to the dispatcher that we had found the hiker and made a plan with them about next steps. Declan and I then explained all this to the hiker, including the news that the Blackhawk was on its way. We provided the hiker some basic first aid including nutrition and fluids, clothing layers, and an ankle splint.

The cloud cover was low that day, so it was not guaranteed that the helicopter would be able to reach us, and we crossed our fingers hoping F&G would not have to initiate a carry out down the long route to the valley. As the Blackhawk approached we saw it circle, making several passes—a standard practice. We then packed up the hiker's gear and secured our own. Expecting a litter and National Guard member to be lowered to us via winch, we soon realized the Blackhawk was actually landing. It was quite the sight to see this machine maneuver and land on such technical terrain. Debris flew about from the insanely powerful updraft, and we covered the injured hiker with our bodies as best we could. On the ground, National Guard members came over with a litter, and we helped to package the hiker and their gear. The Guard gave us ear plugs and we made a plan for the litter carry to the roaring helicopter. It's important to discuss beforehand how to proceed, because once you are near the aircraft you cannot hear anything. As soon as the injured hiker was secured inside, Declan and I ran for cover and hunkered down. We watched in awe as the Blackhawk took off with the hiker, flying down and out towards Randolph valley shortly before 4:00 PM.

As we headed back to Gray Knob, Declan and I discussed the rescue and how we felt things went. Often rescues in the Northern Presidentials require long, strenuous carry outs, sometimes during the nighttime, and arriving at the trailhead only the following morning. We were grateful for the use of the Blackhawk and support from the National Guard which made this one much quicker. As caretakers and fellow SAR members we were just happy to help F&G make this rescue a simple, effective one.



Left, the Blackhawk descends to Edmands Col. Above, the RMC caretakers remember to get a selfie before it takes off with the hiker on board. Lea Giguere photos.

It's worth noting that the hiker's injuries resulted from an accident, not negligence. It is always humbling to be reminded that accidents can happen to anybody regardless of experience. RMC caretakers are not obligated to help with rescues, and they always assess the situation before volunteering to help. This was an experience I know Declan and I will not soon forget. Thank you to the multiple parties involved for coming together to help a fellow hiker in need.

Trails Report: Lowe's Path

by Deva Stekete, Trails Co-chair
and Emma Brinks, 2024 Field Supervisor

Editor's note: This article is a progress report on the Lowe's Path project for 2024-25 featured in the newsletter's June issue. Funded by the Forest Service, the National Forest Foundation, the NH RTP program and the RMC's Ben Campbell Fund, it was selected for presentation at a regional meeting of trail maintainers (see President's letter p. 2). Text is excerpted from an October report to the board by Deva, and from Emma's end-of-season FS report; photos by Emma and by crew member Max Buttrill.

The season began with a series of trainings which aided our crew in our work and skillset, including USFS Ax Day, a two-day Wilderness First Aid training (which included camp caretakers), a two-day rigging training led by Ben Lieberson, a one-day rock pinning training led by Benzo Harris, and a 2.5-day training by Karl Gifford. There was also pre-season training for returning members Maya Barnett, Matt Jaffe, and Emma Brinks at the

AMC/USFS Trail Skills College. These trainings are fantastic opportunities for the crew, particularly returners who have displayed motivation and dedication. From the employee perspective, continued training and certifications are a compelling reason to return to a position. Benzo's pinning training played a critical role in resolving concerns shared by the Field Supervisor and Crew Leaders about executing new rock work techniques efficiently, safely, and well. It helped that Benzo is already familiar with the RMC, and that the training came at an early stage in the project. While pinning is a fairly straightforward work process, the training with Benzo gave leaders the exposure they needed to have confidence pinning rocks, and to lead others in doing it for the first time. We expect that crew leaders and members who return in 2025 will be well prepared for the pinning work on next year's slab and to train incoming crew members.

In mid-July the trail crew took up residence at the Log Cabin and dug into the tread restoration and erosion control on Lowe's Path. The work this year focused on two sites with different damage conditions and technical challenges.



Ben Lieberson leading on-site training below the slab at the second site.



At the second site, drilling the slab for a concealed rock pinning.



Rigging slung between two trees, to "fly" large stones dug up nearby.

Trail Volunteer Work Trips

by Benzo Harris

In summer and fall 2024, volunteers contributed over 200 hours on trails across our network; many thanks to the RMC members and others listed on the next page. In addition to the standard brushing and blazing trips that help keep our network functional and open, we had multiple trips that directly supported our professional trail crew. Much of the trail crew funding comes from a state Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant which requires we match their dollar amount either with volunteer labor or our own money, so these work trips have an outsize impact for the club's productivity and finances.

Volunteer work largely focused on Lowe's Path this summer. Despite being one of the most-hiked and important trails in our network, there were multiple sections that were heavily grown in with brush. Volunteers also made it up above treeline to clear severely grown-in sections of the Perch Path, Lowe's Path, and Randolph Path. Nor were town-side trails missed: an early season trip cleared the Mossy Glen trails, and later in the summer volunteers helped move and stage bog bridging materials for the Trail Crew on the EZ Way.

continued on opposite page



At the first site, a quarter mile below the Log Cabin, the crew replaced a series of deteriorating bog bridges with a series of stepping stones, with Crew Leader Matt Jaffe in charge. Replacing such log structures with stone is an important investment to our trail infrastructure, since wood bog bridges need replacing every 10-12 years on average, while stonework should last much longer. The resulting improvement tallies nineteen large stones, placed on top of pads of crushed stone to make a level and permanent treadway though this wet area. Crushed stone is essential to most trail structures, especially those that firm up wet areas of tread. RMC's practice is for the crew to make it entirely by hand at each work site, smashing larger stones into golf-ball-sized "crush" that locks together to form a treadway that will be firm to walk on and will drain water. Matt's crew was able to transform an extremely sloppy, muddy section of trail into a stable, level walking surface. At the project's completion this summer, we immediately began to hear very positive feedback from many hikers about its "sidewalk-like" qualities.

The second of the two sites, captained by Crew Leader Annalise Brinks, tackled the problem of a large, steep slab of bedrock just above the Log Cabin. Infamous to caretakers and hikers alike, this slab was wet throughout the year and extremely icy and treacherous during the shoulder seasons. To avoid the hazards of the slab, over many years hikers had effectively widened it by picking their way along the edges, creating multiple herd paths, exposing tree roots and eroding the thin soils. Our crew's goal was to create a safe new route across and above the slab, and to restore the surrounding damaged areas. This required innovative trail techniques: multiple winch systems to transport rocks over steep terrain, building a multi-tier retaining wall, and using steel pins to anchor a new stone staircase to the slab.

At the base of the work area, the crew built a series of steps that tie into a retaining wall that raises up the treadway; this is to make the incline more consistent. Next, the crew took on the slab section itself, building another set of stone steps, each

continued on page 10



Setting tread stones on crushed stone pads, at the first work site.



Another stone, still held in its sling by the rigging system, is eased into place.



Finished treadway, with brush placed at sides to protect damaged areas.



For 2025, I encourage people to RSVP for trips through our website or by contacting me: worktrips@randolphmountainclub.org. If you want to be in the loop for volunteer goings-on, please email me to be added to our mailing list. And we are always seeking trip leaders: it's easy and fun, and we'll train and support you.

Thank you to 2024 summer and fall trail volunteers:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Eric Sandin | Jaelyn Francis | Joel Douglas |
| Bob Drescher | Chris Campbell | Margaret Douglas |
| Ben Lieberson | Margaret Campbell | Redza Dempster |
| Christoph Geiss | Randy Meiklejohn | Anne Barschall |
| Oliver Geiss | Chantal Wood | Joe McKenney-Barschall |
| Lucas Geiss | June Hammond Rowan | Wendy Walsh |
| Lynn Hettinger | Megan Carey | Declan Kiley |
| Michael Francis | Ethan Denny | |

Lowe's Path before / after: On page 8, brush has grown in and partly obscured a stone staircase (*between white dots*), causing hikers to form a "herd path" to the right. This page: After ten minutes of brushing, the staircase has re-emerged! Volunteers piled the brush on the right, blocking the herd path and allowing the area to regrow. A staircase like this would have taken about a week to build originally, and it needs regular brushing to remain useful. Benzo Harris photos.

Lowe's Path, cont'd. from page 9

pinned in place with concealed steel anchors, and filling the gaps between the stones with crushed rock. In total, the crew placed ninety-eight rocks and built twenty-four new steps at this site.

This project was at a higher-than-usual degree of difficulty for the RMC crew (and indeed most trail crews), as it required technical rock pinning, a skill our crew has not used in recent years. It also posed several safety challenges due to the steep rock slab members were working on, which provided very little purchase and was extremely slippery when wet. To combat this, Annalise and Emma developed a system using the one-ton griphoist to secure rocks as the crew lowered them off the highline and moved them up and down the slab. Additionally, we regularly reminded one another to have high situational awareness as a crew and to be attentive to work hazards. Thanks to Annalise's leadership and adaptation to new challenges over the course of the season, crew members became comfortable moving rocks across the slab. Everyone gained an understanding of the intersection between

traditional rock work and pinning, learning to move rocks under tension, drill and pin on steep slopes, work in tight spaces, and set rocks on the ledge. The resulting staircase on the ledge is level, clear, and now the most desirable route to hikers, as well as an impressive amount of rock.

A few crew members extended our trail work season into October to some of the tackle bog bridge replacement and drainage improvements needed on the EZ Way and Pasture Path. More of this work is planned for 2025. These trails traverse some very wet sections of forest, and they are heavily used year round by local members. Also on the town-side trails the fall crew eliminated blowdowns that fell during the summer (thank you membership for all of your reports!), and hung the new trail signs that had been stenciled, painted and routed by our team of volunteers (always looking for more recruits!). All in all, this trails season represented a huge collaboration by all our board and committee members, trail volunteers, seasonal staff, and grant partners, and we're deeply grateful to all who participated.



The first steps at the base of the steep slab; line of rocks above held by pins.



Crushed stone, placed against the wall and below each new step.



The finished staircase from below, crossing the formerly exposed slab.

Treasurer's Report

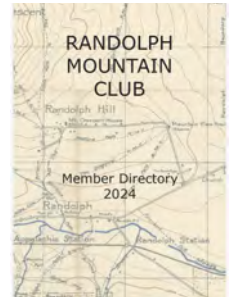
by Adam Berger

	Admin.	Camps	Dev't.	Stearns	Trails	Trails Grants	Total Actual
Revenue YTD 10/16/24:	\$44,905	50,480	47,691	-	(58)	83,441	226,459
Expense YTD 10/16/24:	\$43,993	59,079	250	9,927	44,692	64,825	222,768
Net Operating Income:	\$911	(8,599)	47,442	(9,927)	(44,751)	18,616	3,691

The Club is in a solid financial position, largely due to large foundation grants supporting the Lowe's Path work. Membership revenue is up while other revenue streams (camp fees, donations, and merchandise) are stable from last year. We've increased interest and dividend revenue by investing our memorial, reserve, and some surplus funds in higher-yielding (but conservative) investment accounts.

At the same time, we have experienced significant increases in some expense items. For example, we saw an approximately 65% increase in the cost of the Camps airlift as a result of high fuel costs and a lack of competitive options in the marketplace. General inflationary pressures and market conditions have also caused increases in insurance costs, professional fees, and trail crew wages, as well as smaller items like tools, supplies, maintenance, and printing and shipping costs. While we expect to end the year with positive net income in the low five figures and begin next year with a solid cushion of liquid assets, we also need to take efforts to ensure that revenue sources such as individual donations, corporate donations, and camp fees keep pace with the overall increases in our expenses.

RMC Merchandise
by Michele Cormier



It's still 2024 out there, and we're still celebrating the Town of Randolph's Bicentennial at the RMC Store! We continue to offer the RMC's bicentennial edition t-shirts, much in demand during the summer and fall. At our website you'll find this comfy shirt in Red Rock (*above left, with bicentennial logo on front*) and Walnut (*above right, with Woodard Hiker Guy on back*) The Red Rock color is available in youth sizes, perfect for the pre-teens and tweens in your household. Dads will be pleased to see the return of the Trail Sign Cap, highly popular and sold out in summer; white to match your spotless new pickleball footwear and with the stacked RMC logo in black. For apparel items, the 2024 directory (*right*), and many other RMC publications and gifts, just head to our online Store.

... more photos of the trail crew's summer on Lowe's Path ...



Hammer, eye protection and work gloves, for making crushed stone.



Annalise practices tree-climbing, under supervision of Ben Lieberson.



Cooking on the porch at the Log Cabin, the crew's home on the mountain.



L-R, on 2022-23 trips: Oliver and Lucas Geiss (King Ravine Trail); Lynn Hettinger (Diagonal); Christoph Geiss (Kelton Tr.). Photos by W. Walsh, C. Campbell, R. Meiklejohn.

Golden Loppers, cont'd. from back cover

Many in Randolph have met Christoph and his family on our work trips, especially after they bought a cottage on Randolph Hill Road and became regular seasonal Randolphians. The rest of the year they live in Connecticut, where Christoph is a Professor of Physics and Environmental Science at Trinity College. An Appalachian Trail maintainer in western Connecticut and guest naturalist at the AMC's huts, he has been a mainstay on RMC work trips for the past three years and is now also the Club's "Trail Adopter" for the Watson Path. As a volunteer he has also been joined by his wife Lynn Hettinger and their two college-age sons Oliver and Lucas. Christoph's trail skills, insights and enthusiasm have been a remarkable part of our volunteer crew. His knowledge of trail markings has been illuminating, especially when double blazing at trail junctions.

2024 Golden Loppers Award

by Bob Drescher



Christoph Geiss at the Goetze workshop, with The Loppers.
Photo by Bob Drescher.

This award, originally known as the “Golden Clippers”, was first presented by the RMC Trails Committee in 1995, to a member of the trail crew whose perseverance had become legendary. That inaugural awardee, Jim Samek, would refuse to stop brushing in sweltering conditions even as the rest of the crew enjoyed a break in the shade, cooling off with ice cream that magically appeared courtesy of Doug Mayer, then the Trails chair. Today the award hangs on the wall of the Goetze workshop, and its plaque reads:

“The Jim Samek Order of the Golden Clippers”

“Given each year to a Member of the RMC Trail Crew for Unsurpassed Excellence and Devotion to the Study and Practice of the Fine Art of Brushing”

In the seasons since 1995, the trail crew has had to focus on major trail repairs and blow-down removal, shifting the work of brushing and blazing to volunteers. In 2018 the award likewise shifted, and began to recognize outstanding regular volunteers. Although initially the award had some humor attached to it, by now it has become a symbol of volunteer dedication to maintaining and preserving RMC trails. Volunteers, whether on work trips or through our new Trail Adoption program, play a major role in caring for the trails and directly support our eligibility for grants from government and non-profit organizations.

If the Trails Committee finds that a volunteer or volunteers have shown willingness to participate frequently and work tirelessly over time, consideration is given to nominating them for the award, and the committee deliberated in this manner in our October meeting.

On behalf of the unanimous and appreciative committee I am pleased to announce that the 2024 GOLDEN LOPPERS AWARD will be going to: **CHRISTOPH GEISS.**

continued on page 11