Fellow Appies,

I hiked with a group up Mount Cardigan over to Firescrew and back to down to Cardigan Lodge as part of the very successful Woostahshire Weekend Extravaganza (Worcester and Berkshire Chapters). My guess is that the temperature at the summit was in the high 30’s to low 40’s. The wind was blowing at approximately 50 mph and the sleet was hitting us so hard it almost hurt. We had to navigate through puddles that were so deep I think we lost some people. Tongue in cheek, we made sure to reprimand all the children in the group for getting their shoes wet. At the end of it all, not one person complained of being cold or regretted the adventure.

Weeks earlier, my son and I took our first paddle of the season down the Pemi. The water was running at 3900 cubic feet per second and the water temperature was a bone chilling 47 degrees. During the tourist season, the river normally runs 300-500 cubic feet per second. The shuttle driver commented that we were the first customers of the season so if we would be so kind, could we let them know if there was any debris in the river that might impale any of their sane customers. Book time for the trip is 5 - 6 hours. We made it in less than three hours with barely sticking our paddles in the water. When we pulled out our kayaks at the take out, we were bombarded by so many black fly’s we had to put towels over our heads to keep from breathing them in. We high fived each other for not dying then headed off for a burger and beer.

It’s only early summer and my body looks like a voodoo doll that has been dragged around by a dog.

If you are like most AMCer’s, you also love the exhilaration of getting outdoors, testing your limits and building confidence in your abilities. If you don’t like the cold weather and prefer the bugs and mud it’s time to get out there! Take that bike out of the garage and hit the road. Throw that kayak on your car and get to your favorite river, bog or lake. The Worcester Chapter can help. We offer a wide variety of activities that can help you take that first step. We offer local walks, volleyball, rock climbing, paddles, hikes, trail work all right here in our back yard. Take a look in this newsletter you will find lot family events, social events and other activates that we have offered. But you haven’t missed out. Get online, pick an activity and join us. Don’t wait. This is New England and the Fall will be upon us soon enough.

Keep your feet moving.

Steve Ciras
On March 27, the AMC Worcester Chapter ventured to Eastleigh Farm in Framingham. The farmer, Don, was nice enough to volunteer his time to teach us about sustainable farming practices and the benefits of RAW dairy products, http://wwwrealmilk.com/ or http://www.eastleighfarm.com/benefits-of-raw-milk.html.

Over a dozen brave souls trekked through the muck to learn about oxen, production of hay, milking, processing of milking and a few even milked a cow. I was even told that milking a cow was on some of our members’ buckets lists; who knew?

Eastleigh Farm is a small local farm in Framingham. After many years of selling their milk into the large community milk pool, in order to be able to have a larger voice in their farming practices, as well be able to make a descent living, they opened their own retail store -- they would sell RAW dairy products. (When a farm sells to the local milk pool they only take home a fraction of the grocery store selling price however when they sell RAW Milk products right from their farm all the proceeds go directly to the farmers and farm.) They are the only such farm in the MetroWest area. Many of our tour goers have joined me as regular buyers of the farms products -- milk, cheese, eggs. The farmers wanted to say a big thank you to our Worcester AMC for their support.

Please stop by:

Eastleigh Farms

1062 Edmands Road

Framingham, MA 01701

Not only is Eastleigh Farm a local source of food but there are Farmers Market’s in nearly every community near us. A great local site to help find your local farmers market is: http://massnrc.org/farmlocator/map.aspx?Type=Farmers%20Markets. The closer to home we buy our food the less CO2 used in the transportation of our food and it helps boast our local economy.

Upcoming Conservation Events

On going Flower Watch (contact Julie for more details)

TBA August Farm Tour

September 17 Assabet River Clean Up

I am also starting an email list of AMC’ers interested in Conservation Events. Please email me at jthrunner@verizon.net, to sign up for the email list.

Happy Blueberry Season!
Conservation Corner
Woostahshire Weekend Extravaganza!
(June 10-12, 2011)

Pat Lambert, Vice Chair

After a sabbatical of a few years or so, the Berkshire and Worcester Chapters once again joined forces to put on a weekend trip at the AMC’s Cardigan Lodge in Alexandria, NH. Approximately 50 AMC members from both our Chapters and other AMC Chapters joined us for a weekend of fun and activities ranging from singing around the campfire to hiking to contra dancing to paddling and, of course, EATING!

We arrived at the Cardigan Lodge under sunny skies on Friday. Some of us hiked to Wellington Falls to enjoy the sights and sounds of the gushing water before returning to the Lodge for happy hour and a leisurely buffet dinner. Social time continued well into the evening as we gathered ‘round the campfire and enjoyed the music provided by our intrepid harmonica, guitar, fiddle and bottle players.

Saturday brought precipitation of all sorts, with the exception of snow. That didn’t stop us from leading merry, and soggy, bands of hikers throughout the 1200-acre Cardigan Reservation from the low point of Wellington Falls to the high point of Mt. Cardigan. Not even sleet stopped us!

Saturday night once again brought happy hour, a dinner of slow-cooked ribs with all the fixin’s and contra dancing! The entire Lodge got out on the dance floor and enjoyed the music of the Sugar River Band.

Between dancing and laughing, lots of calories were burned!

Sunday brought more precipitation as we packed up and bid adieu to old and new friends. Although the rain did not lend itself for bike riding, our paddlers were not to be stopped!

Lots of fun was had by the group and we determined that this trip is a “do again”! Check the Berkshire and Worcester Chapter trip listings next year for the 2012 Extravaganza!

pictures by Sharon Whalen
On June 1-3, over 40 students from Ayer-Shirley Middle School went to the AMC Cardigan Lodge in Alexandria, NH for their 7th Grade 3 day/2 night trip to the Mountain Classroom, an annual tradition. Students learned about the flora and fauna of the mountains, and how mountain climate produces its own weather patterns also known as “cwind” (cold wind). Students challenged themselves to climb to the summit of 3000 ft.+ Mt. Cardigan where they went back in time to the long past days of fire towers and ranger cabins. They had lunch at the AMC Cardigan High Cabin enjoying a sense of teamwork having accomplished a 5+ mile hike, many for their first time ever on a mountain. We spent quality time together outside the classroom and away from technology sharing personal challenges, understanding edible plants and wildlife, compass skills, and felt first hand what hypothermia really is as the weather that produced the tornadoes also turned quickly from 90 degrees to 50 as we ascended to the cold windy summit. The students came up with a variety of adjectives to describe their experience “fun, exciting, adventurous, insightful, challenging, flabbergasting, amazing scenery, informational, educational, productive, awesome, great head clearer” amongst many more quotes. They can’t wait to return again and some will be returning with their families to share their grand experience and accomplishments, which makes these trips return full circle. Special thanks to the AMC Worcester Chapter for providing us with a grant to enable students who might not otherwise get this experience the chance to be part of the “No Child Left Inside” initiative. On a personal note, it is trips like these that not only bond the students but also student/teacher relationships. See the link for more information on A Mountain Classroom http://www.outdoors.org/recreation/groups/classroom/index.cfm.

http://www.telegram.com/article/20110617/COULTER01/106179841/1189
The Chapter Youth Program (CYP) is designed to have experienced AMC leaders introduce children from various local youth agencies to the great outdoors. The program was created to help children get outside whom might not otherwise have the opportunity. Today children are spending more time inside accumulating screen time and getting less physical activity; which is contributing to the pediatric obesity epidemic. A growing body of research links positive mental and physical health directly to our association with nature. The leaders of our future need to become familiar with the environment and natural resources; which is becoming more widely utilized and is the way of the future. Chapter Youth Program leaders are instrumental in sharing their knowledge of the outdoors with children to enhance their ability to utilize their senses and observe and explore their surroundings to create memories and experiences to shape their development as they blossom into teenagers and adults.

In order to become a CYP leader you must first be an active AMC leader. The next step is to complete a brief application and phone interview with AMC staff. The youth training is 4 hours long and gives an overview of the legal aspects of working with youth as well as tips on trail games and scenarios of possible mishaps during a CYP event. Several AMC leaders from various chapters attended last training session, hosted by the Worcester Chapter, in April at Camp Harrington. Recertification of the training is done via a webinar every two years. First aid/CPR and a criminal background (CORI) check are mandatory. Next you are on your way to becoming a full fledged CYP leader after completing three coleads.

The CYP coordinator contacts various youth agencies in the Worcester area and then plans events, such as: natures walks, hikes, and outdoor skills training. Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Girl Scouts, and the Regional Environmental Council of Central MA are a few agencies that the Worcester Chapter CYP program has contracts with. Four Spring hikes were planned this year, unfortunately two were rained out. Two successful hikes took place at Breakneck Hill Conservation Area in Southboro with Big Brothers and Big Sisters and at Mt. Wachusett with a Girl Scout troop from Oakham. The Girl Scouts had a great time identifying plants and flowers with the help of CYP leader, Neil Schutzman. Dave Sauriol was an enthusiastic leader on both hikes. The children were rewarded with water bottles and whistles courtesy of REI, Inc. Our next hike is with the Regional Environmental Council at Tully Lake Campground on July 7th.

Plans are in the works to organize more summer and fall hikes and outdoor activities. Attempts are being made to establish contacts with more youth agencies, such as: Girls, Inc. and the Boys and Girls Club. If you would like to become a CYP leader, help to contact and establish contracts with youth agencies or have any questions please contact Johsie Olivia, Worcester Chapter CYP Coordinator, at jmo1853@yahoo.com. Don’t forget to check out the CYP section of our website for more information and to download the CYP application.
AMC Worcester and Narragansett Chapters teamed up on June 4th, National Trails Day, to explore the wonders of Purgatory Chasm in Sutton, MA. Purgatory Chasm is a unique natural landmark and State Reservation. The Chasm runs for a quarter mile between granite walls rising as high as 70 feet. It is believed to have its origin in the sudden release of glacial meltwater near the end of the last Ice Age, approximately 14,000 years ago. Hiking trails lead to rock formations such as The Corn Crib, The Pulpit, and Fat Man's Misery.

The 2.6 mile hike included a view of a run-off waterfall as well as several spontaneous off-trail side trips to locate geocaching treasures. With ages ranging from 4 to 54 - the group of four adults and nine children enjoyed rock climbing and cave crawling and the trip leaders gave lots of opportunity for off-the-beaten-path exploration and fun! Most impressive were the strong teamworking skills demonstrated by everyone involved in navigating the sometimes challenging and precipitous terrain. The day wrapped with a visit to West End Creamery for delicious and locally made sweet treats. Thanks to all who participated and please continue to check our online family offerings - Kings Ravine Hike coming in August! Brief description below.

Families - Join Expert Mountaineer Stephanie Keimig on a 6.2 mile round trip hike through Kings Ravine on Saturday August 27th. 2.0 mph pace and approx 2400'. Not suitable for children under 10 y.o. Daypack 101 demo during lunch break while enjoying spectacular views of White Mountains Presidential Range. Email co-leader kclark5663@aol.com for more information.
by David Elliott

(A newbie’s month long pursuit of nautical nirvana)

In the latest example of AMC friends coaxing me into a novel adventure, last summer I took a trip down some mild whitewater on the Deerfield River in a borrowed kayak. And I have to say there is something wonderful about moving water, its active participation, the way it speaks, makes demands. From a leisurely paddle, the pulse rate kicks up a notch at the first note of an approaching rapid, the promise of hydro powered acceleration - sans throttle, sans gasoline and blessedly sans stink and racket. As for the streamlined plastic bottle I steered among the rocks, my inner 12 year old needed one of these personal go fast machines.

The 51 year old rest of me called the whole thing a motivated workout.

And yet, I dreaded the process of actually buying a kayak. I would settle only for the real thing: rotary molded descendent of the aboriginal work boat, noble confluence of stone and information age technology, and not some degenerate byproduct of a booming leisure products industry. And booming it is. Everybody wants one, as I discovered with a kayak on the car roof, drawing strangers toward me in shopping center parking lots.

With hundreds of models to choose from, kayaks are on sale everywhere, generally costing in the high hundreds of dollars, though the most pool toy like models are a bit less at the big box stores. In sum, at a cost beyond my means, with a mind boggling array of models - including older styles in the used market and a multitude of tawdry knockoffs - it was a research project I didn’t cherish.

My one salvation however was that the kayak I’d just borrowed, an off brand available locally at a discount, already provided a good solution that any contending boat would have to better. That is, while the project looked arduous, I was assured of success. So I began.

Online I soaked up basic vocabulary, certain counterintuitive rules of boat design, and the oft repeated admonition “thou shalt paddle many boats before buying one.” I also learned the kayak I’d paddled was of the “recreational” variety, under which category falls most of what you’ll find on fresh water. They run shorter for greater maneuverability (this one was 13.5 feet), correspondingly wider (28”) to maintain buoyancy, and generally sport a large “convenient” cockpit. On the down side, this extra width makes it incapable of being righted by an occupant still seated in the cockpit, the maneuver called “rolling.” The sole course of action this leaves you, on finding yourself upside down, goes by the technical term a wet exit. This accomplished, rescue is the name given to climbing back aboard, which is a harder if less hurried procedure.

Next come touring kayaks, which are longer, narrower (24”), paddle easier, have tighter cockpits and multiple sealed cargo bins. They lend themselves better to paddling...
serious distances and camping.

Finally comes the granddaddy from which the others descend. Sea kayaks run long and narrow and incorporate various features like raised bows making them capable of surviving the ocean. (These are not to be confused with Ocean Kayak, which is just a brand of sit-on-tops). Sea kayaks are the truest descendents of the aboriginal design, and being the most all around capable, are the platform addressed by kayak books, instructors, and popular imagination.

But you won’t hear this summary from kayak salesmen. Even the best will begin by asking, “What kind of use will you make of it, on what sort of water?” – which initially struck me as absurd, as I intended to paddle everywhere. Didn’t everybody? Or worse, “How much kayaking experience do you have?” – which once put me in a boat I’d swear was made by Tupperware.

What I came slowly to appreciate though, was that the kayak industry sells a lot of boats to fishermen and hesitant weekenders who want a rock steady platform above all else. At kayak rentals on Cape Cod we encountered many such flat bottomed, very short boats (10’) with immense cockpits, targeted at the least common denominator consumer, known in those parts as tourists.

Besides, as all watercraft design represents a tradeoff of capabilities, it’s important to know what portion of your time you intend to spend on which sorts of water. Weigh your priorities: good tracking (going straight) versus easy turning, converting paddle strokes into distance (efficiency) versus stability, and water condition versatility also versus stability.

Stability in particular is a tradeoff involving ability to handle diverse water conditions and skill level required. On a mirror smooth pond, a barge flat bottom provides the greatest primary stability. But, to perform in rough conditions you need what’s called secondary stability, the ability to operate smoothly at an angle to the water surface, as when heeled over or encountering a wave broadside. Secondary stability is achieved by a somewhat V shaped or rounded bottom, with particular emphasis on rounding the chine - the transition between bottom and sides. Unfortunately, back on calm water, this same rough water capability makes for a boat that feels wobbly.

Efficiency also trades off against stability. The more perfectly round a hull, the easier it glides through the water, by virtue of having the least area in contact with it. Unfortunately, rounder also makes a boat less inclined to remain upright. To understand why, picture a maximally efficient kayak built round as a log. Then consider how this kayak’s dynamics resemble those of a log in a rolling contest.

Clearly the performance I sought in a kayak demanded some skill from its occupant – a not unfamiliar lesson. But think what skill and good design could accomplish together.

For instance, the correct way to sit in a kayak is with your knees held firmly against the hull, possible only in narrower boats with smaller cockpits. Grasping your kayak thus enables you to maneuver it by pivoting your hips, a skill important to becoming master of your vessel. Using this method, skilled operators even deliberately heel their boat for quick turns in a maneuver called edging - possible only in boats with good secondary stability.

Up to this point, my kayak buying research could be summarized as follows. I wanted to paddle every manner of fresh water including mild rapids, and also estuaries, meaning occasional surf, which by the way requires a length of about 13 feet. I wanted a classic form: narrow hull, small cockpit, and capable of handling rough water. Such a kayak would represent a blend of recreational and touring styles.

But taking the next step, matching these attributes to actual boats, proved daunting. Visiting showrooms, turning boats over, studying and comparing their shapes, I found variations I hadn’t accounted for. I could only speculate how this or that organic curve or concavity of bow affected performance. It would require a naval engineer, with topographical maps of each hull, to exhaustively analyze their capabilities - and that wasn’t going to happen. Besides, as experts had warned me, analysis gets you only so far. The real proof lay in the paddling.

So I fell back on a couple of flesh and blood local independent kayak retailers for guidance. For if I was
qualified for anything by now, it was assessing kayak dealers. These guys had won me over by their exhaustive knowledge and honesty, speaking to the true merits and weaknesses of various boats – not reciting what they thought I wanted to hear. They’d invested considerable time and patience in educating me - even to the point in one case of talking me out of buying a boat that didn’t quite fit my needs.

Then one day I came by to rent a boat under consideration and was asking technical questions as usual when it hit me. My goal was a good boat, not a PhD in the entire kayak industry. If I wanted to make a choice anytime soon, I was going to have to put my confidence in somebody else’s expertise. Come to think of it, that’s exactly what I was already doing that very moment, so why not admit it to myself and close the deal? Sure, my impression of the boats he recommended were colored by his enthusiasm for them, my fondness for him, and the great stories he told – but cool headed reason maintained that stalling would profit me nothing. Here was my last, best, credible, accessible resource.

So after duly paddling everything he pointed at, I bought my Kestrel 12 HV by Current Design, in which name the 12 as usual stands for length in feet. The HV happens to designate a high volume version of this boat, recommended for paddlers over 170 pounds. Shortly afterward my wife Susan followed with a Manitou 13 by Necky, a wonderfully fast and straight running boat I would have bought myself except that whitewater requires quicker turns.

As for the rest of you, looking ahead, your best opportunities for kayak research are the demo days coming up in the spring, generally accompanied by sales of last year’s leftovers. Or if you can stand waiting, come Labor Day, retailers and rental shops sell off their used boats. Bottom line though, shop for the hull, not the price.

For links and additional details, browse to 1stprinciplesdesign.wordpress.com

David Elliott
Struggling up the mountain together, as a team, gave us the feeling of satisfaction to reinforce the indescribable reverence we gained for the mountain itself. The fulfillment one gets when he or she works to see the beauty is immensely greater than that which could possibly be gained from the instant gratification of a picture.

There were many lessons learned from the experience, and each of us drew something different from it. Some thought it more difficult than others, and some struggled more than the rest. Despite how it may have appeared at the time, we all came away better.

We all learned something about the world around us, about ourselves, and about each other. I believe we all agree, this is something we would do again and again given the opportunity, and we are boundlessly grateful we were able to do it in the first place.

Alexandria J. Rogers
is an eighth-grader at Clinton Middle School.

Editor, Barbara Dyer. All newsletter submissions should be sent to barbaradyer@hotmail.com. We reserve the right to edit for length and content. All contributions are welcome. Fall deadline September 15th.

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