

Wachusett Views

Worcester Chapter Appalachian Mountain Club



Autumn 2020

A close-up view of our chapter's vibrancy and dedication.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair	Kim Beauchemin
Vice Chair	Michael Morin
Secretary	Peter Eggleston
Treasurer	Jose Schroen
Biking	Neil Schutzman
Communications	Zenya Molnar
Communications	Alexandra Molnar
Conservation	Jonathan DiRodi
Finance	Christine Crepeault
Families	Ingrid Molnar
Hiking	Dana Perry
Historian	Michele Simoneau
Leadership	Paul Glazebrook
Membership	Michael Hauck
Midstate Trail	Mike Peckar
Paddling	David Elliott
Past Chair	Joe Massery
Programs	Peter Hinrichs
Skiing	Ruth Langh
Social	Mike Foley
Technical Climbing	John Grote
Technical Climbing	Dave Brainard
Third Wednesday	Fred Mezynski
Trails	Stephen Crowe
Trails	Don Hoffses
20s & 30s	Ben Coon
At Large Social Media	Lisa Buckley

Fall 2020

Letter from the Editors

There is no doubt that this has been a strange summer. But, it's been a good one. It has made us ever more grateful for the outdoors and the AMC community – for the sanctuary the woods and waters provide and the friendships, old and new, that have formed and grown even at a time when we are physically distant. As autumn takes hold, bringing its patchwork of gold, campfire orange, and sprite berry red to the hills and forests of central MA, we are happy for the change. With it comes a refresh of the mind and spirit and the reminder that life is truly fleeting and we must relish every moment, despite the challenges.

In this issue you will hear about the importance of using bear canisters when backpacking as well as the story of a black man's experiences with racism while hiking; and you can enjoy some photographs of beautiful Worcester-area hikes from the summer.

Thank you to all our writers, photographers, and contributors. We are always looking for content and photos! If you'd like to contribute to the next edition, please send your submission to:

newsletter@amcworchester.org.

In good health and autumn fun outdoors,
Zenya and Alex

Alexandra Molnar

Zenya Molnar

Worcester Chapter Communications Co-Chairs



AMC Worcester Chapter
amcworchester.org
Appalachian Mountain Club
10 City Square
Boston, MA 02129



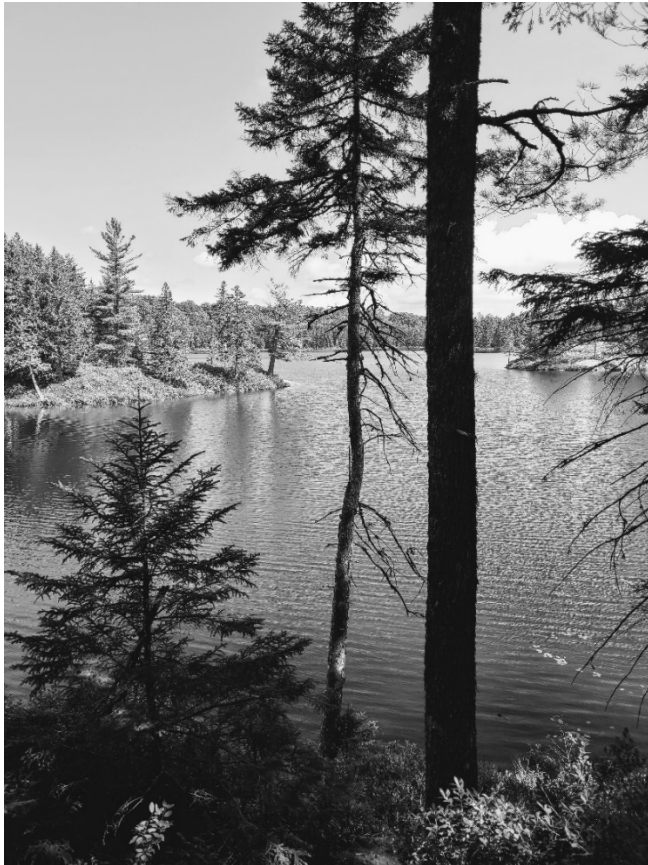
A Message from the Chapter Chair: Under the Red Felt Crusher

By Kim Beauchemin, Worcester Chapter Chair

Hello everyone! I hope you are well and that you have had some time to enjoy our beautiful summer! It's just starting to get a little cool as the wonderful fall season approaches – such a beautiful time to be outdoors in New England. I've been getting outside as much I can over the summer and I've had the opportunity to complete some more AT miles, finish Maine's 100-mile wilderness, and spent a long weekend at our Gorman Chairback lodge (after receiving a negative COVID test, of course) with some wonderful new Worcester Chapter friends! (Our Gorman Chairback trip is an annual chapter trip – ping me if you're interested for 2021!)

We have a few more months in our chapter's fiscal year, but the Executive Committee is already starting to plan for next year. While we're hoping that the COVID situation will change for the better, we're preparing to deliver more distance programs to you if necessary. If there are new ideas or programs you'd like us to consider or have any feedback for the committee in general, please send it all my way – I'd love to hear from our members!

All the best,
Kim



Pond near Monson, ME along the 100-Mile Wilderness

Mount Washington or Bust

Photos submitted by Andrew Fritsche



Leave No Trace: Bear Canisters

By Pete Lane, Worcester Chapter member

Backpackers have numerous excuses for not carrying a bear canister. They include:

- Canisters weigh about 2 ¾ pounds. This adds too much extra weight in a backpack.
- Canisters are bulky, about 8 inches in diameter and 12 inches tall. They take up too much room in a backpack.
- Unlike a sack, the canister does not compress as food is eaten down.
- It's another expense, about \$75.00, perhaps roughly the same magnitude as other gear such as backpacking stove, cookware, or various items of clothing.
- I can always hang my food in a tree (bear bagging).



But there is one good reason to carry a bear canister: They work. And they work where other methods have failed. So, from a wildlife management viewpoint, this trumps all the excuses.

Bear bagging has been the traditional method recommended, taught, and used by many. However, in practice, it's often less effective, less foolproof, less reliable, less efficient, and less safe than other food protection methods. Why?

- There isn't a suitable tree with a branch (or branches) over which to throw a line. Branches within throwing range are often too low or are obscured by other branches.
- When hung, the bear bag is often too close to the ground or not far enough from the trunk of a tree or maybe too close to the supporting branch.
- Trees may be a softwood such as spruce that flexes under the load of an animal, thus putting the bear bag within reach of an animal seeking your food.
- A branch can break under the load of an animal seeking your food.
- Backpackers lack the knowledge, practice, and skill to throw a line.
- It can take time at the end of the day to find a suitable tree and it can take time to rig the line.
- Backpackers may lack energy and enthusiasm at the end of the day to hang a bear bag.

Because food storage techniques such as hanging a bear bag have not been successful, numerous land managers now require a bear canister because they know that they work. Bear canisters are required in many heavily used national forests and national parks out West. They are required in the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks. They are recommended in the White Mountain National Forest and along the entire length of the Appalachian Trail. In fact, the White Mountain National Forest loans bear canisters free of charge and makes them available at all USFS offices and ranger stations.

The goal is to keep wildlife wild. Once habituated, the animal, big or small, becomes a problem that must be dealt with sooner or later.

If you want another opinion, read Andrew Skurka's article in Outside Online:

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2386146/bear-bags-ineffective>

Interested in learning more about Leave No Trace?

- Take the Leave No Trace online awareness course at: <https://Int.org/learn/online-awareness-course>
- Attend a Leave No Trace Trainer course. This is a two day course with overnight. Search on the [AMC website](#) for "Leave No Trace" or on Leave No Trace website at <https://Int.org/learn/courses>.

Summer hiking in beautiful Worcester County

Photos by Zenya Molnar



Adirondack Story

By Chris Baldyga

Part One: On Golden Pond

I was home for X-mas break this year for three weeks; I, being the adventurer, decided to join some old friends from Geneseo's Outing Club on a snowshoe adventure in the Adirondacks. We met at Jamie's cabin late Sunday night and slept in on Monday; we (4 of us) got up and packed our gear and prepared the food sled, and we drove off to the trailhead and starting our hike around 1:30PM. We got to Lake Golden around 5:30PM in the darkness. We arrived at the first lean-to, which was occupied, and decided to go across the lake to the next set of lean-tos for the sake of some privacy. We trekked across the lake with the moon barely shining through the misty clouds; we saw the peaks all around us although it seemed more like the peaks saw us as we crossed the frozen lake. We made it to the lean-to that was situated near the Opalescence River running about 200 feet in front of our temporary home. We unpacked and prepared a simple meal complimented with some Saranac beer. A good end to a hard hike. Tuesday AM we arose at 11:30! Still pretty tired from all the traveling and late night hiking; with this in mind we decided not to do a peak but just snowshoe up a series of lakes that ran along several faults to Avalanche Pass to have lunch. The weather was great and the best views were down looking up rather than vice versa due to the mist. Had our lunch and made it back to the lean-to. That night we cooked, ate, drank a bit more, talked, laughed and played some cards; unfortunately there was no singing of U2 songs! We slept like kings and woke like roosters ready for the big hike up Mt. Golden. We started up the mountain around 9:30AM aiming for Algonquin, but streams were swelled up preventing us from crossing, so we headed back to Lake Golden and up Mt. Golden. Talk about a cardiac workout, ho boy! We made it to the top around 12:30PM in complete whiteout conditions—no views but it still felt great; we had a quick lunch and snapped a few photos and headed back down. I made much better time because the design of my snowshoes was much more suited for sliding. After plenty of tumbles I made it back down to the lake by 1:40PM. When the others arrived completely soaked, we decided to cut our trip a day short and hike out that day. However this was not meant to be...

Part 2: A River Runs Through It

In Part One: On Golden Pond: four young fellows took a snowshoe expedition to the High Peaks Wilderness area in the Adirondacks. The conditions were unseasonably warm with snow around four feet deep. On the return from the trek up Mt. Golden, we encountered some new streams barring our normal passage back to the Opalescent Lean-to. Jaime tried jumping a small tributary but failed in the attempt and landed where the snow met the water. He fell in to his knees, and he quickly became wet but with only his pride hurt. We eventually made our way back to the lean-to and began to pack up our gear. I got the majority of my gear packed away before everyone else because I opted not to change my clothing realizing that I was to get wet and sweaty on our hike out either way. So I started packing up some of the communal items like tarps and was folding one of them up in front of the lean-to. I noticed that the water level was rising because I saw a small tributary from the river meandering its way towards the lean to. I walked over to investigate, and the little stream ran just shy the overhanging food bag. I marked the edge of the stream with a stick and resumed packing. Within ten minutes, the tiny rivulet had completely disappeared. We were happy to see this but decided to pick up the slow pace to get out of there before it came closer. I continued picking up outside the lean-to, and about five minutes later, I was facing the other three who were gathering their belongings when I saw **it** coming. The words

fall short of describing the following events but in a feeble attempt "it" was the Opalescent River on a new course headed directly towards the side of our lean-to. Due to the unusual January thaw, streams and rivers become swollen. With the increase in water level came detachment of snow and ice blocks from the banks. At approximately 2:30PM, an ice jam occurred about 100 yards upstream from our lean-to, causing the Opalescent to diverge and spill out onto the low-relief area where our lean-to was situated. Ten seconds after seeing and hearing the hissing of the wall of water, it slammed into the lean-to with a vengeance. The level of the water was quickly rising and was well over the elevated floor of the lean-to within minutes.

The initial reaction was laughter mixed in with obscenities; I assumed that it would leave as quickly as it came. My reaction was to jump into the lean-to. The other three jumped out of the lean-to. Opposite reactions. Ian threw the snowshoes that were placed in a snow bank into the back of the lean to where the current was slowed by the lean-to wall so that they did not wash away. Anything that was in the front of the lean-to was quickly carried away, so I made attempts to catch items flowing past and toss them to the back. As time progressed, the situation worsened for all parties. Immediate danger was present for the others, and longer-term danger was in store for me. Jamie had literally been caught with his pants down and his shirt off. His previous fall in the stream required him to change out of his wet clothing; however, he was only able to get thermal underwear on before the next disaster happened. Wherever they stood the new river quickly inundated them forcing them to migrate farther from the lean-to. The snow quickly turned into an icy slush mixture that provided no firm ground to stand except for the earth floor that was four feet beneath them. Ten to fifteen minutes later the others were approximately 30 yards from me holding onto young sapling trees for support. They were yelling to me, but I could not hear because the river's new main channel was flowing all around the lean-to. After several tries, I understood Jamie to say that he was becoming hypothermic, and was freezing, and that he was going to try to get to the ranger's outpost nearly a mile away. He promptly left only to face a new stream in front of him; running out of options he stepped into the stream and was submerged. All I saw was head and a brown mixture of snow racing past him. Three or four seconds later he began to swim! He thrashed his way to the other side. Having just seen this horrific sight, my reaction to the situation quickly changed. It was no longer funny. Thoughts of him in the river, and later finding out his boots had been sucked off his legs while crossing, made me feel that at least one person was about to die. Ten minutes later everyone was out of sight; left to my thoughts knee deep in nearly freezing water, I began to speculate about my future. Although only my legs were wet, I felt the main veins pumping freezing blood back to my heart and recirculating it through my body via the major arteries. I started to shiver as my core temperature dropped. I made attempts to get out of the water by piling the remaining gear into a pile and sitting on it. This quick fix lasted only a few minutes because the water level continued to rise whereas I sank, resulting in me getting wetter. I knew then that I was going to die unless I got out of this water. The roof of the lean-to was my next idea. Getting there, however, proved to be very difficult. It involved leaving the safety of the lean-to and stepping out into the river. I carried two ski poles for stability and began to wade to the back of the shelter in chest deep water. The feeling of such cold water is hard to describe—it is similar to the headache received from eating too much ice cream, but instead my whole body felt this way. Near the back of the lean-to there was remnants of a tree. With the remaining coordination, I had I propped myself up the tree and stepped onto the roof. There were about 40 inches of wet snow on the roof. The fact that it was wet made it very packable and less prone to sliding off the roof. I climbed to the "A" of the roof and decided this was going to be my new home for an undetermined amount of time. However, I was going to have go back down to find dry sleeping gear. This process would involve two trips; the last of which I almost fell face first into the water while climbing the tree. By the grace of some divine power, I made it to the roof. The arrangement up top had a depression in the snow for my body, a Therm-a-Rest pad laid down in it, a

sleeping bag on top of the pad, a 9X9 tarp on top of that and then a -20 degree down sleeping bag inside the tarp. Before entering the womb, I stripped my clothes off to see what damage had been done to my body—frozen numb limbs to no surprise. I attempted to massage some heat into my legs; however, once I was dry I opted for dry clothes then wrapped an emergency blanket around my legs and entered the sleeping bag. I felt safe to be out of the water, but at the same time I felt uneasy being perched on a roof just above a mad river. Frantic thoughts soon set in once I stopped moving around: were my friends dead or alive, was I going to live or die, am I going to slide off the roof, should I attempt to seek high ground, etc. It was ridiculous, so I began to narrate my life starting from kindergarten until I fell asleep. It was dark when I heard the first voice since the others left. The voice was from far away; I called out but could not understand anything that was being said. I repeated myself several times saying that I was okay, and the voice disappeared after a few minutes.

Two hours later (8:00PM), I heard another voice slightly more comprehensible this time. I was able to ascertain that it was a ranger checking on my status. Apparently, every two hours they were supposed to check on the possible hypothermic subject (me). The second time, I told him that I was safe and warm and that I would see him in the morning. I would not hear another voice for the rest of the night.

8:30AM the river had receded slightly and occupied only several main channels. I saw a ranger snowshoeing as close to me as possible, so I began to get ready for my departure, packing up gear in my backpack and getting dressed. As an extra barrier to the water I fashioned my tarp around my legs and put my newly bought mountaineering bibs over it. Some communication went on about how the swift water rescue would go. Before doing so, I entered the lean-to to fish around for the six snowshoes, Jamie's wallet, and his only pair of keys. This took about ten minutes after which my voice had become very hoarse. The ranger was concerned about water levels rising. I crossed the river with snowshoes and a life jacket on and a rope attached to me. The biggest difficulty arose when I came to the river's edge where there was the snow wall. I was unable to get on top of it, so I had to drag/be pulled to get to the ranger. We hiked back to the cabin, rejoined all three of my partners (by hook and by crook each made their way to the ranger's cabin and spent the night in the cabin), warmed up, and two hours later we hiked out with three other rangers. The majority of our gear remained—either lost, in a pile submerged, or hanging on the available nails in the lean-to. A separate trip was made two weeks later to recover to our surprise nearly everything from the ranger who had made several trips to the lean-to once the river had gone back to its normal course.

Two months later during a shift change between rangers, the outpost caught fire and was burned to the ground by the time the next ranger made it there. New laws forbid the construction of a man made building in this wilderness area.

2020 *Virtual* Annual Meeting
Sunday November 15, 2020
5:30 - 7:00pm

The COVID-19 pandemic may have upended our cocktail hour and banquet, but it hasn't dampened our spirits. Join us *online*, to recognize the many accomplishments of chapter committees and individuals, to honor outstanding volunteers of this past year, and elect our new Executive Committee.

"Socializing" may be a bit different this year, but we'll still have a great time celebrating our chapter, volunteer leaders, and members. We'll also welcome our new Executive Committee.

So, plan to join in for our very first **VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING!** Register today via the [Annual Meeting](#) event posting on the AMC Activities Database. Please be sure to [register](#), as we need a tally of attendees for official business. With registration you will also get the ZOOM details to connect and information on how to use ZOOM.



***Wachusett Views* needs you!**

Did you go on a memorable outdoor trip recently? Did you participate in an interesting training or program? Do you want to share your knowledge about anything related to the outdoors? We want your stories!

Please submit stories, trip reports, photos, and anything else you'd like to contribute to the winter 2020 *Wachusett Views*.

Email all contributions by **November 30, 2020** to: newsletter@amcworchester.org.



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Corner

‘We didn’t expect to see you’: racism and profiling on Katahdin

By Juan Michael Porter II

Reprinted from AMC Outdoors Magazine, printed August 25, 2020



PHOTO COURTESY OF JUAN MICHAEL PORTER II

The author on one of his many fast hikes to the summit of Katahdin, where he says he’s experienced several instances of racism and stereotyping.

I’ve loved embarking on outdoor treks ever since I was 14 years old. What started with me sneaking onto El Toro Marine Base near Irvine, Calif., to run through its adjoining wildlands has evolved into hikes on Pikes Peak, the James Irvine Trail, and my favorite site: Katahdin.

The first time I attempted the ascent of Maine’s highest mountain (elevation 5,269 feet), I was 28 years old. I made it to Baxter Peak, 5.2 miles from the trailhead, in under 4 hours. At that point, I was so in love with taking in the unconquered beauty surrounding me that I didn’t mind the fact that my hiking partner was slowing me down. Leisurely strollers can handle the elevation gain in about 8 hours but outdoor warriors have tracked times as swift as two and a half hours. In the following years I’ve returned several times to Katahdin by myself, intent on making it to the top even faster than I did before.

Unfortunately, Katahdin’s natural obstacle course isn’t the only challenge I’ve faced. On my initial solo trip, it was suspicious glares that a couple kept throwing my way. You see, I’m Black.

The couple's stares were borderline comical. Every few steps, they stopped and glanced back in my direction as I caught up to them on the trail. I responded by stopping and looking around for the invisible point of fascination. I surmised that it was either a giant spider on my head or a yeti standing behind me.



JASON BRESLAU / AMC PHOTO CONTEST

The view of Katahdin from Pamola Peak in Baxter State Park, Maine.

They Were Staring Because A Black Man Was Following Them

I'm really fast, so I commonly overtake hikers ahead of me. On Katahdin, I'm even faster than the average hiker because I hop like a billy goat over the gaps between rocks. Trying to play it cool, I decide to show-off my athleticism. I jaunt past the couple as they stand watching in awkward silence. I stop and turn to say hello and am greeted by the couple flinching back in unison. I do not have a gun, but they look as if I'd just pointed one in their direction.

What annihilates my delusion of coolness is an encounter later on the same hike with three women, who start speaking at me very loudly as soon as they see me. It feels like they are trying to alert anyone in the vicinity that a threat has entered the space. I stop dead in my tracks as they alternate between demanding that I get away and asking, "What are you doing here?" It was nerve-racking, to say the least.

Rather than continue, I sit down and pull out my canteen to rehydrate. Interestingly, the canteen inspires the group to stop belly-aching and ask where I got it. Not feeling particularly sociable, I respond, "Is there a reason that y'all were screaming at me?"

“You surprised us,” one replies. “We didn’t expect to see you.”



COURTESY OF JUAN MICHAEL PORTER II

The author at the summit of Katahdin.

Surprised by Blackness

The only thing surprising about me in relation to everyone I’ve encountered during my Katahdin hikes is that I am usually the only Black person around. Maine is almost 95 percent white. Couple being Black with my being gay and in love with the Maine’s Millinocket region, and you’ve got a unicorn on your hands.

I love being outdoors. I hate that my sweat creates a chilly layer in my clothing the higher I go but love knowing that it’s a sign of how hard I’ve worked; that is, until I’m forced to engage with white people interrogating me about what I am doing outside.

If you’ve grown up watching American television, the impulse to react negatively to Black people is easy to understand: How often do we see nature programs or movies featuring people of color? On the flip side, how often have we seen Black people portrayed as urban-dwelling bad guys more interested in selling marijuana than in feeling their lungs burn from a fast climb?

All things being unequal, I have a similar fear of white people assuming that I am up to no good. I’m not paranoid; I’m numb from seeing white male police officers beat people who look like me because they

decided that we breathed too quickly. That same fear floods my lungs when I am alone in an elevator with a white woman clutching her purse because I pressed the elevator button. It's why I rush past or cross the street whenever I encounter a white woman in New York City, my home, lest my Blackness trigger her to threaten my life.

But when I am outside, I assume we are all there to challenge our stamina and enjoy the payoff of watching an endless cascade of clouds spill across the horizon. I go hiking not just to best a previous version of me, but to connect with the can-do spirit of my fellow climbers. It is never easy; sometimes I slip while jumping from one rock to another or trip and smash my knee. But I never regret that I am giving my all to the world—except when I'm treated like a highway bandit.



ANDREW BERTINO / AMC PHOTO CONTEST

Katahdin's infamous Knife Edge section presents a foreboding experience for many hikers.

Confrontation on the Edge

My first time on the Knife Edge trail, I got into a standoff with an older gentleman who insisted that I was following him. I was; he was in front of me on the narrow trail—which drops off precipitously on one side—and there was no way that I could speed past him.

Eventually I gave up, turned around, and completely re-routed my trail. That day it took me five hours to get to the top of Baxter Peak. When I finally arrived, I encountered the older gentleman. He apologized and told me that being on the Edge alone with me made him nervous. I told him that a stranger

screaming at me made me nervous. He laughed. I walked away and made the treacherous descent so quickly that I nearly compressed my spine from jumping down to rocks without bracing myself.

If you are unfamiliar with the phenomenon of Black hikers, I want you to know that we are out here, and much like you, we just want to enjoy the open air without having to deal with anyone else's nonsense. The next time I visit Katahdin I hope my fellow hikers keep the following in mind: The savage assumption that I am a threat is something I deal with every day. Please leave your profiling at home alongside your other troubles and let me hike in peace.

LEARN MORE:

Read AMC's [statement of solidarity](#) for Black Lives Matter.

[Meet a globe-trotting trekker](#) who has used invisibility to endure racism on the trails.

Join a group of [New York City](#) kids on a camping trip just outside the city.