



# The Easy Glider

Kick 'n Gliders Nordic Ski Club

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Issue: February, 2011

## Program for Kick 'n Gliders meeting Tuesday, March 1, 2011

What is Cohousing? What is an EcoVillage? What is a passive house?

These questions and more will be answered by Cheryl Capitani and Dave Powell as they present a program describing the EcoVillage in Ithaca, NY where they will be relocating in early 2012. Dave & Cheryl have both been interested in planned communities which care about neighbors, conservation and the environment.

Cohousing communities are located all over the United States and around the world. The goal is to live more simply, grow food organically, use fewer natural resources and care and assist our neighbors. Even with the more severe winters in upstate New York, the homes can be heated with a hair dryer.

Another benefit is that during the winter, Dave & Cheryl can Nordic ski right out the door of their house. The location is also closer to numerous local state forests with many ski trails and also much closer to BREIA, Adirondack, Vermont and other Nordic ski venues. Not to mention good summer bicycling and kayaking.

Ground will be broken on the development when the ground is workable this spring. If you care to read up on this lifestyle ahead of time you can read "EcoVillage at Ithaca, Pioneering a sustainable Culture" and/or "Choosing a

Sustainable Future, Ideas and Inspiration From Ithaca, NY." You can also check out [ecovillageithaca.org](http://ecovillageithaca.org). Plan to attend this interesting and meaningful meeting.

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## March Social Dinner Wednesday, March 16, 2011

The final dinner social of the season will be held at the **Hummelstown House, 5 West Main Street, Hummelstown**. A typical turnout for prior socials has been 15 skiers. Join us at 7:00 pm for good food and conversation about our latest skiing adventures.

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## Lake Louise Trip January 12-19, 2011 Nancy Borremans

The Lake Louise Trip started on an ominous note with a delayed flight due to snow, but ended as a glorious adventure in Banff National Park. The cancellation of our early morning flight and reassignment to a noon flight out of Harrisburg which necessitated rescheduling rental cars and notifying our hostel in Kananaskis of our late arrival turned into a plus when Charlie Cole renegotiated our rental cars at a much lower cost. We arrived at the hostel at 10 PM (12 AM PA time) in subzero temperatures, unloaded

groceries and gear and got our room assignments from our host, Garrett. Couples were in private rooms and singles in dorms of 8 bunks each. We shared the hostel with a small school group of 3 senior high students and a teacher and parent chaperone who gave us valuable information on the ski trails. The kitchen was spacious and well stocked. The community room had a fireplace and sofa and chairs for lounging. Best of all there was lots of snow for skiing the next day.

On Thursday, Jan. 13, after breakfast we headed for the Peter Lougheed Provincial Park for a wonderful ski on fluffy snow through the woods. The elevation of over 5000 feet necessitated frequent rest stops, and the minus sixteen Celsius temperature turned cheeks rosy as we skied in a winter wonderland of single track trails winding through a quiet woods of snow laden spruce. The next day was our last at Kananaskis, so we skied up Ribbon Creek enjoying a long glide down before heading to Canmore for more groceries, additional toe and hand warmers, and a visit to the wine store. On the way to Lake Louise the weather grew more and more threatening until the last 25 kilometers were a harrowing ride through a blizzard, peering through fogged windows into driving wind and snow trying to see the road. But we made it, unloaded at the Lake Louise Alpine Centre Hostel, settled into our rooms and celebrated our safe arrival and good fortune with libations and dinner at the Café Peyto. That evening the following announcement was posted on the hostel's bulletin board: It's the storm of the winter so far! National Parks Avalanche Bulletin Outlook: The storm will rage on into tomorrow morning where there will be a lull in precipitation. Routes 93 North and South closed by avalanches indefinitely.

On Saturday spirits were high with anticipation for great skiing, and so was the temperature, up to a balmy 15 degrees. The storm had wiped out the groomed tracks and the groomers were snowbound on Route 93 north, which was closed by avalanches for the rest of our stay. Undaunted we headed to the Lake Louise Chateau and skied the Fairview Loop, breaking trail through the snowy woods, enjoying some downhill runs and

occasional vistas of the majestic peaks of the Canadian Rockies, though somewhat obscured by snow. We lunched in the deli of the Chateau which welcomed this motley crew and enjoyed delicious lattes, soup, or pastries in a very classy setting. Eleven of us decided to ski the Tramline trail back to the hostel, a delightful 4 mile downhill glide through the forest with a spectacular panorama of the mountains near the end. Throughout the day we experienced snow flurries, gray skies, and low clouds that obscured some of the highest peaks

Sunday we broke trail on the Pipestone Intermediate Loop, climbing through the snow laden spruce until after 3 miles the snow was too deep to track. We retraced our tracks enjoying a well-deserved downhill run. Our adventure ended by getting two of our vehicles unstuck from snow banks in the parking lot. Jean Geiger suggested putting the car mats under the wheels. That ingenious idea gave the tires traction and with some coordinated muscle we pushed the cars free. Then we piled in and headed for the chateau for sustenance, capping off the day with a final ski to the hostel along the Tramline Trail. Monday we left early for Banff where we skied Cascade Trail for 8 miles, enjoying vistas of the craggy Canadian Rocky peaks. We then retired to the Wild Flour Café in Banff for mugs of hot chocolate and coffee. Some of us explored the quaint town surrounded by the mountains, while Charlie, Wanda, Nancy, Chris and Barb decided to luxuriate in the thermal hot springs looking out on the mountains and sky. All returned tired and relaxed to the hostel and another "home cooked" K'n G dinner.

Tuesday, our last day, dawned bright and sunny. The mountains in previous days, magnificent but somber under the gray snow laden sky, were lit up by the sun's rays and outlined by an azure sky. Chris Brubaker, and Charlie and Wanda Cole headed for the downhill ski slopes while the rest of us headed to Lake Louise where we explored an exquisite ice castle on the lake and then skied across the lake enjoying the sun on the sparkling snow and the poster perfect peaks. After eating lunch at the Chateau, we skied nearby trails

through the woods. At a junction we saw three dog sleds mush by, one of many hallmark moments. The final ski was back to the hostel. We accessed the tramline via a challenging run down a 900 meter snow shoe trail along a creek. Our last dinner was a sumptuous buffet of Mediterranean Chicken and leftovers orchestrated by the Richters. We had so much food that we invited the other guests of the hostel to partake. The rest of the evening was spent on a final slide show, packing, and loading the cars. We left the next morning for Calgary Airport at 7:15 AM in the dark. As we drove, dawn's first light illuminated our final view of the Canadian Rocky Mountains' magnificence, a proper farewell to a great trip.

### **Downhill Ski Report from Lake Louise**

Christine Brubaker

From the hostel Charlie and Wanda Cole and I used the free shuttle to the Lake Louise ski slope via Mountain Road. After purchasing our senior lift tickets and arranging our rental packages, we split to investigate the mountain slopes: 9 lifts, 139 runs, top elevation 8,650 ft. and vertical rise



of 3,250 feet. The Canadian Rockies and the weather finally cooperated for all skiers with crisp air, sunny slopes and a bright blue sky. We faced the Continental Divide and Victoria Mountain. The Lake Louise ski areas front side/south face, Larch Area, and Power Bowls enticed us. I found my skis were my transportation from one beautiful, not-to-be-missed picture moment to the next.



Members on the trip: Chris Brubaker, Barbara Brandt, Nancy Borremans, Jean Geiger, Dennis Major, David Walborn, Charlie and Wanda Cole, Tanya and Fred Richter, and Bill and Sandy Stine.

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### **Port Leyden, NY**

**January 14-17, 2011**

Mother Nature smiled on the 11 Kick 'n Gliders who made their way to the Allegro House in Port Leyden, N.Y., Jan. 14-17. "Smiled" may be too mild a term in light of the abundance of the fluffy snow on the ground and in light of the powder that fell Saturday and early Sunday. Total snowfall was in the neighborhood of 10 inches for the 24-hour span.

Participants included Jim and Virginia Magee, Ben and Peggy May, Lisa Baer, Jamie Hackman, Andrea Hospodar, Tom Gibson and Fred Burgess. Tim and Cindy Hoehn led the trip. Many of them arrived early enough Friday to ski, with the Hoehns checking out the Carpenter Road trails near Turin, the Magees enjoying the Osceola cross-country ski center and Lisa and Fred stopping at the BREIA trails off Egypt Road near Alder Creek.

The Hoehns prepared vegetable soup and fresh-baked bread for the arrivees – and it was so good that no one wanted to leave the house for a restaurant meal. And to think Cindy had worried she would have to deal with leftovers.



On Saturday the entire group trooped to Carpenter Road as the snow began to fall, provoking the skiers into a kicking and gliding frenzy that lasted for about six hours. Suffice it to say no trail went unbroken by the time the last few skiers were ready to call it quits. Tom and Tim even made their way to the Snow Ridge downhill ski resort, defying the skeptics (i.e.: Fred) who said they'd never make it.

The day also offered some other wrinkles. Fred managed to find a way to get bogged down in a not-quite-frozen pond. Tim became so mesmerized by a Siberian husky's blue eyes that he fell down from a standing position, cutting open his head. (The husky was accompanied by a young couple attempting the sport of skijoring. They were the only people the club members encountered all day on the trails.)

And Lisa, who had entertained the group the night before by admitting she had come to New York lap-topless, had a wardrobe malfunction on the trails. Her Camelbak wouldn't allow her even one sip of water but it leaked elsewhere, dousing her backside.

Virginia and Jim prepared Saturday's supper, which drew raves. It consisted of chicken cutlets, baked potatoes, steamed broccoli, fresh salad and pound cake complete with chocolate chips and walnuts.

Most of the skiers then watched the Steelers eke out a win over the Ravens, though Peggy and

Cindy were more interested in a very challenging Coke jigsaw puzzle.

Sunday saw the group split up, with the Magees, Mays, Andrea and Jamie driving to Osceola and the other five heading to Barnes Corners to ski up to the brink of the Inman Gulf canyon. Trail-breaking was unnecessary Sunday, and skiers and snowshoers were plentiful.

The spectacular views of the canyon provoked Cindy into a delusional state, as she was heard to refer to the three Kick 'n Gliders following her up a steep hill as "three strapping young" men.

Meanwhile, the other group enjoyed flush toilets and shopping opportunities as well as the immaculately groomed trails of Osceola.

Sunday evening saw the Hoehns and the Mays add to the skiers' girths with a lip-smacking supper highlighted by meatloaf, sweet potatoes and stewed tomatoes. The Mays' contribution featured cookie fragments, pudding, whipped cream and heaven knows what else in a heavenly dessert.

Afterwards, Cindy and Peggy defied the predictions of skeptics (i.e.: Fred) by completing the jigsaw puzzle.

Plummeting overnight temperatures failed to stop some members of the group by venturing back outside for a last hurrah Monday morning. At dawn the thermometer read minus 20 F. Regardless, the Mays broke out their snowshoes while Tom, Lisa and Fred made their way to the BREIA trails off Egypt Road for more skiing. All the others except the Hoehns also headed for different trails on the BREIA trails. By the time they finished at noon the temperature had climbed to something around 15 above. Each had a similar sentiment as they left Tug Hill: "Wish I could stay longer."

Tim and Cindy Hoehn

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## Pulaski I Trip Report January 21-24, 2011

Sixteen Gliders arrived in Pulaski on Friday afternoon in near whiteout conditions. The "Lake Effect Snow Machine" was cranking up providing lots of that fluffy white stuff that provides great ski conditions. Tim Musser and I were a few minutes north of the Groves. Our first indication that there was a problem was the pickup truck sitting down over the bank to the right of the highway. From there it was creep and crawl past all the bumper covers and the twelve or so cars sitting crumpled up on either side of I-81. We couldn't help but speculate what Dennis Major's quick assessment of the body damage might be. Jeff & Marilyn jumped off I-81 onto route 11. Veteran travelers to the Pulaski area advised that route 11 has more road markers than I-81; therefore, it's easier to figure out where the road is during whiteout conditions.

We arrived at the 1880 House to find a new "house dog" - a stray border collie mix. She seems to be fitting in nicely. And, of course, Teeka, the "house cat" was there to greet us. There didn't seem to be any staff around, but we helped ourselves to soup. Dave and Cheryl drifted in. Then Dawn came back and said she left a note to serve ourselves soup. We never read the note, but had acted just like we were at home. The six of us headed to Chateaugay to find that the parking lot wasn't plowed and the snow plow had filled in most of the driveway with deep snow. Tim used his BMW as a snow removal machine pushing off a parking place for us alongside the road. So, Tim got his car parked and Dave squeezed his Prius into the pushed down area that Tim created. The Groves decided to head to Winona at the Center & Wart parking lot and reported that conditions were reasonable good. The trails had been packed a few days earlier with about six inches of new snow on top. The snow in the parking lot was up to the rocker panels on their Odyssey. The Chateaugay group suited up - skis for Dave & Cheryl and snowshoes for Tim and Peg. It was brutal with blowing snow going down the straight road to the trail, but as soon as we



turned left into the woods, conditions turned very pleasant. Dave reported that the snow was up to his knees. It was a tough go in the nearly two feet of unbroken trail. We soon decided to return to the 1880 House. The Majors were the last to arrive around 10 PM, but we were all sleeping and didn't see them until the next morning.

Saturday the high temps were forecast at 14 degrees. We enjoyed the cooked breakfast fare prepared by Dawn & staff. The Group ski was scheduled for Osceola and we were all pleased with the conditions there. Dave and Nancy were signed up for the "Try It Race." They drove over to the Winona CCC start point and found that the only tracks in the snow were heading away from the camp - not towards it. They learned that the race was cancelled due to the bitter cold conditions. They joined us at Osceola. Yes, there was new equipment purchased: new skis for Dennis, new skis and boots for Cheryl and lots of other miscellaneous items. We stopped at the Winona Lodge Nordic Emporium - a new place that just opened. They had hot chocolate, chili, and other fare. They also had a nice selection of Louis Garneau outerwear, snowshoes, bags, etc. After a great day on the trails, we returned to the 1880 House for the traditional cauldrons of soup to hold us over until the baked ham dinner. Dave Powell reported that he got up in the night to facilitate at which time, Teeka came thundering up the stairs looking for warm bodies to cuddle with. He was happy with Cheryl & Dave's company - so happy in fact that, he spent Sunday night with them, too.

Sunday morning arrived along with the bitter forecast of minus one as the high temp for the day. We again enjoyed cooked breakfast fare and then headed to Winona Forest CCC. Our ski venue for the day was the Tourathon loop which totaled around 8.3 miles. When we started the temp was minus three and it warmed up to minus one by the time we returned to our cars. It was a little rough keeping everyone warm enough until we could start skiing; however, as soon as we skied into the woods, life became near perfect! It's amazing just how comfortable minus one is when you are XC skiing! We split into two groups with Dave P., Cheryl, Dennis, Beth, Nancy B., David W., Carolyn Hoffman, Tim, Jeff, and Peg in the first group. The second group was Dave, Nancy & Tom Hooper skiing just a few minutes behind us. By the time we returned to the cars, everyone agreed that they were done for the day. A smaller group consisting of Bill & Kay Pickering and Fred and Carol Wilcox spent the day skiing at Osceola.

We awoke Monday morning to minus thirteen temps and a wind chill of minus twenty-seven. School in the Pulaski area was cancelled since the buses wouldn't start and we questioned the wisdom of heading out into those conditions to ski. Even the downstairs of the 1880 House was chilly. The thermostat was set at 75, but it may have been about 67 in the house. Thanks to Carol Wilcox for waking in the middle of the night and venturing downstairs to find that the door next to the living room was hanging wide open! The twelve Canada bound skiers headed out and six happy Gliders headed back to PA - all with full bellies.

Linda Tarbox, the owner of the 1880 House was not there this weekend. She was at an outdoor convention promoting fly fishing in the late season in Pulaski. We were to be complemented by her absence. When they decided which event to attend, they looked at the ski groups and realized that the Kick 'N Gliders were the easiest group to host without Linda worrying that there might be problems. Go Gliders!

Peg Hampton

## **Laurentians Hit it BIG**

### **January 24-30, 2011**

**by Bill Stine**

This trip marked our fourth consecutive year visiting the vicinity of Val-David in the Laurentian Mountains, about an hour north of Montreal. It is a delightful area and we've developed a really good list of places we love to ski.

One notable change, this year, was that we gave up the convenience of an auberge, or lodge, with its prepared meals in favor of three rented chalets and, for the most part, putting up with our own cooking. This reduced our costs and made for meals that more suited our comfort-food palates. Chalets Chanteclair are situated a couple of miles north of Val-David adjacent to the slopes of Mont Alta, a small downhill ski area. Although each unit was unique, they were all well-equipped, nicely designed, knotty-pine-paneled, three-bedroom structures that were located very close to each other so we could easily walk among units. All 16 Kick 'n Gliders found their ways to the chalets on Monday evening and we enjoyed a communal pot of chili as we plotted our skiing agenda.

Tuesday found us making the short drive to Parc régional de Val-David-Val-Morin. Formerly known as Le Parc régional Dufresne, it is largely the creation of the adjacent villages of Val-David and Val-Morin. Crisscrossed by about 100 kilometers of trails for hiking, biking and skiing, it is also the site where the first organized rock-climbing took place in Québec. In winter, of course, skiing is the primary activity. We love the variety of trails, the warming hut and the convenience of two ski centers, Chalet Anne-Piché at the Val-David end of the park and the Far Hills Inn at the Val-Morin end. Having two centers means you can start at either one and you can ski from one to the other, have lunch and return by a different route. The snow depths were a bit slim this year but skiing conditions were excellent and we all had lots of fun. True, a couple of the expert trails were closed due to the

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lack of snow but there were still plenty of challenges for the adventurous skier.

On our second day we headed for Parc régional de la Forêt Ouareau. Imagine our surprise when we arrived at the spot to find that the parking lot was fenced off and the ski center was GONE! Shock gave way to understanding when we spotted the small sign, in French that explained the center had been relocated and that we'd passed the entrance two kilometers earlier. We were delighted to find a brand new ski center. A few new trails had also been added and others had been reconfigured. Now, instead of entering from the very end of a main, linear trail with side trails, we were entering nearer the center of the system and had more and better choices about how to explore the trails. The beauty of the place remained unchanged and we still delighted in the five warming huts, especially the southern-most one where chickadees pester you for food. It was another great day in this lovely but little visited ski venue.

Thursday was reserved for a visit to Parc des Campeurs in nearby Ste-Agathe-des-Monts. This summertime campground is transformed into one of the prettiest trail systems we know. True, you have to ski the campground roads, lined by snow-covered campers, to get to them. But, it's a small price to pay to experience the beauty of the meticulously groomed, single-track trail system that snakes around a small valley and circles two secluded lakes. Some of us took the high road with its slightly more difficult trails while others followed a less demanding path closer to the lakes. All trails appeared to be open including the one to the top of Mount Belvoir and its striking view of the town. After skiing, many of us spent a couple of hours in the ski shops and cafes of this lovely town.

The next day we gathered our gear and headed out on the 45 minute drive to the Parc national du Mont-Tremblant (Secteur La Diable). The place is huge, the ski center is beautiful, the trails are wide and the grooming is faultless. With such a variety of skier tastes we broke into several groups, some preferring the gentler trails near

the shores of Lac Monroe while others sought the grander scenery, big climbs and corresponding thrilling descents that characterized the Le Poisson (A5) and the Le Malard (B4) circuits.

Our final day, Saturday, was reserved as a day off for some or a day to indulge our personal favorite places to ski. Some explored the shops in nearby Ste-Agathe-des-Monts. Others returned to Parc des Campeurs or did a one-way ski along a section of Le P'tit Train du Nord linear park. The park corridor follows the path of a former railway between Saint-Jérôme and Mont-Laurier which passes right through the center of Val-David village. A final group, myself included, skied the backcountry trail, #15, up Mont Césaire in Parc régional de Val-David-Val-Morin. The climb was probably the hardest we'd ever done, over 400 feet in 0.4 miles, requiring constant herringbone and even some side stepping. However, a snow fantasy cruise down the backside of the mountain made it well worth the effort!

I mentioned at the top of this report that we'd save a few bucks by cooking most of our own meals. And we did just fine, sampling the Stine's chili and their Santa Fe Chicken with sides prepared by Pam and Mike. On Wednesday we were treated to Victor Martinez's beef Bourguignon. Thursday night we enjoyed a dinner out at the cozy Spago restaurant in Sainte-Adèle. The next evening, Cheryl and Dave prepared a chicken dish drawn from the Craftsbury cookbook. Our final dinner was a fun meal prepared by Jean and Nancy featuring baked potatoes dressed with leftovers. Great eats to cap off each day!



It's always difficult to say which ski trip offers our favorite skiing. I can say, however, that the Laurentians are certainly at, or very near, the top of our list! And, our new digs raised it another notch. It will certainly remain on my list of must-do ski trips!

**The following Laurentian write-up is from Dave LeRoy**

On a frigid January 24, sixteen Kick 'n Gliders left the relative security of the USA and ventured to Val David, north of Montreal, Canada for 6 days of skiing. This year, leader Bill Stine found a great new place for us to stay. He rented 3 Chalets on a wooded, hillside colony of similar buildings. The weather was close to ideal for skiing with temperatures ranging from about 0 deg to 30 deg Fahrenheit. Our days were spent at the great venues that we had enjoyed in past visits to Quebec. They all offered well-groomed trails



passing through scenic woodlands and beside lakes, often with mountains in the background. Those of us who enjoy the thrill of long downhill runs were not disappointed and those of us who prefer the comfort of more level trails were not disappointed either.

Our meals were creatively planned, with each chalet taking their turn in hosting dinners. Stine's chili was an early hit, followed by Santa Fe chicken with delicious Brussels sprouts compliments of Pam McMullen. Victor Martinez made delicious Beef Bourguignonne and Nancy Martinez introduced the group to Maple Cream Liqueur, a Quebec specialty. Several bottles of this elixir came home with our group! We cooked S'Mores in the fireplace for dessert that evening. In order to sample the local color, on another evening, we went to a local restaurant called Spago where a number of us ordered a big pot of mussels with a fantastic broth in the bottom. Cheryl Capitani made a great sesame chicken dish with a lot of support from her male house-mates, and shared some Italian limoncello (a lemony liqueur). Jean Geiger and Nancy Borresman orchestrated a delicious dinner of baked potatoes topped with leftovers for our last evening together.



We had some interesting experiences on this trip. Bill Pickering found a great pair of waxable skis

which he brought home with him. After skiing, we enjoyed charming little cafes for hot chocolate and pastries. In St. Agathe, we watched the local kids flying down long chutes of snow and ice which had been built for them. Their exuberance prompted Cheryl to exclaim that “They embrace winter!” And some resourceful members of our group discovered that the sauna in their chalet was a great place to dry ski boots. Our last evening included an art show of the three paintings that Victor had painted while there and a great digital presentation prepared by Bill Stine. A unique venue on this trip was the rail-trail which is skiable from Val David south for 44 kilometers. This is a local favorite and one of the most beautiful rail trails that we have experienced, anywhere. When skiing at Parc de Campeur, we learned some French from little yellow signs that told us of the severity of the upcoming downhill runs and that beginning skiers are called “debutants”.

Bill Pickering and those of us who rode in his Volvo to Foret Ouareau had an adventure en route. The entrance to the trailhead had been relocated causing a bit of confusion for us all. In addition Bill found that the back road he was taking was only partially plowed, the end of the plowed section demarked with a barrier of plowed up snow. As this loomed ahead of us, Bill realized that he could not avoid intimate contact with said barrier and aimed for a low spot thereon. The Volvo, true to its Scandanavian DNA, blasted through the barrier. So as the snow was cleared from the windshield we saw that we had arrived on the unplowed side of the barrier. It took a fair bit of pushing the Volvo to get it headed back through the opening which it had created in the barrier. Bill was subject to a bit of good-natured kidding about this for the remainder of the trip.

At Parc Dufresne, the more adventurous of our group skied up a long, steep climb on an ungroomed trail to a point where they returned on a delightful downhill run. An unnamed skier called the run “orgasmic”. Perhaps this was the climax of the trip! The group agreed that Val David is a great place to ski, so Bill Stine made

arrangements for us to go there again next season.

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## **Highland Forest February 4-6, 2011**

Nine KnG’ers descended on the Brae Loch Inn in beautiful Cazenovia, NY on Feb. 4 for the Highland Forest trip. There was a last-minute cancellation—Kate Goelz, whose work schedule unexpectedly changed.

Unlike last year when the snow was on the thin side, the white stuff was in abundance and not encrusted in ice like the snow back home was. I skied Friday afternoon at Stoney Pond, which I had contemplated as our destination on Saturday. But although the snow was quite deep and powdery, the trails I tried had only been skied or snow-shoed once before my arrival. I tried to widen the trails by skiing outside the track. However, I soon realized that for most of our group, Stoney Pond would be too much of a challenge in its current state. So I made the decision to go to Green Lakes State Park instead, which turned out to be quite fortuitous. Green Lakes had a little less snow, but the trails were much more heavily skied so we didn’t have to break trail. There was still plenty of snow so that there were no bare spots or exposed rocks. We all enjoyed great conditions there and did some trails none of us had done before. We got about 10 miles of skiing without any backtracking and still didn’t exhaust the network there.



Normally on this trip we ski Saturday at Highland Forest County Park, but this was the venue of the Special Senior Olympics on Friday and Saturday, and, in a phone call to the park, I was advised that it would be crowded, and that West Wind trail, one of our favorites, would not be available to general patrons. So Highland was changed to Sunday's venue.

On Saturday afternoon and evening we had some snow and rain, but by the time the precipitation ended overnight there were about 2 inches of new snow on the ground. I did not ski with the group Sunday, as I had a nearly 400-mile drive to the North Conway trip. By all accounts the day at Highland went well. Most trippers were interested in getting home at an early hour, so I doubt they spent the entire day on the trails.



Word was spread about something called the Stupor Bowl that was taking place Sunday evening. Why skiing should take a back seat to this is beyond me.

Bill Hoffman

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**Hut-to-Hut ... Civilized  
Maine Huts & Trails  
February 12-18, 2011  
by Bill Stine**

*"It's not just a trail. It's a path to discovery, conservancy and opportunity,"* reads the inscription on the back of the business cards

handed out by the Maine Huts & Trails' staff, hosts for our Hut-to-Hut trip. Well, it's not just a slogan. It's imbued into virtually everything this non-profit organization does from design and construction and sourcing supplies and services to heating and powering their facilities.

Now in its third year, they have three huts strung along more than 30 miles of groomed and, often, track-set trails. This is the current state of completion of a vision that comprises about a dozen huts strung along approximately 180 miles of trails. Use of the trails is free and open to the public. However, membership is encouraged as is volunteering for several aspects of their operations. The huts are modern and the latest in "green design", providing first-class composting toilets, comfortable sleeping accommodations, gear drying rooms, hot showers and great meals prepared in a modern, commercial kitchen. Food and services are obtained locally to the extent possible and they subscribe to pack-it-in/pack-it-out philosophy to discourage waste. Electricity is generated locally using a combination of solar, hydro and back-up propane generators. The staff, who make it all work, are as friendly and competent as they are enthusiastic.

We began our adventure on Saturday at the trailhead near Flagstaff Lake Hut at the middle of the system. While we skied almost two miles to Flagstaff Hut, our gear was picked up in the parking lot and hauled by snowmobile.



The "hut" is really not what you'd expect. There is a lodge building containing a dining/social hall, the kitchen, showers, toilets, drying room, library

and staff quarters. A couple of separate buildings house well-designed, hostel-type sleeping accommodations with room capacities ranging from three to a dozen. This particular hut could accommodate up to 42 people overnight. All buildings are heated using a wood-fired, radiant hot-water system in the floors.

Our gear arrived before we did and we quickly set up in our assigned sleeping quarters. Maine Huts & Trails was holding their annual race (distances of 20, 40 and 60 kilometers) the following morning, so the hut was full to capacity with eighteen of us and another two dozen racers. Hutmaster, Brittany, and her crew managed to feed all 42 of us quite well with an excellent pasta dish including special versions for the gluten intolerant and vegetarian among our numbers. Most crew members, incidentally, operate on a ten-days-on rotation, staying full time in the lodge during their on-duty periods.

The following morning, coffee, pancakes, granola, yogurt and all the fixings fueled racers and us touring skiers alike. Racers set off to the south and the start of their race, which would end at Sugar Loaf Outdoor Center, where the Maine Huts & Trails' system currently terminates. We, meanwhile, headed north along the twelve-mile trail to the Grand Falls Hut which was just completed in October of 2010. The trail begins by loosely paralleling the shore of the 20,000 acre Flagstaff Lake through rolling mixed forest. It was along this section of the trail that we saw most of the southbound racers doing the 60-kilometer version of their race. Most were still skiing very fast and the leader was making whooping noises as he flew by. The trail then emerges onto a flat section that follows the peaceful Dead River, downstream of the Long Falls Dam which regulates the outflow from Flagstaff Lake for hydroelectric production. Finally, as the river approaches the Grand Falls and a popular whitewater portion of the river, the trail crosses it on a beautiful, newly constructed bridge and passes by a viewing area for the falls.

A couple of miles downstream through more rolling, wooded terrain and we arrived at Grand



Falls Hut. Newest and smallest of the huts, Grand Falls Hut is also the most remote in the system. The facilities were no less well developed, however, and it is equipped similarly to the older huts except that it incorporates the latest thinking in design and systems. And, with a sleeping capacity of 32, it's hardly small. Also, because it is remote, the crew, Sky and Marianne, live there full time. We had an enjoyable evening, socializing, reading and taking an energy tour where we were shown the intricacies of operating their frugal energy system and managing the large Clivus composting toilet system.

Our second full day found us retracing our ski along the twelve-mile trail back to Flagstaff Hut.



This time we all took time to see Grand Falls up close. (All but the author missed the turn to the falls the day before.) Interestingly, the second day ski seemed a bit easier than the first. Maybe it was the break while we all enjoyed the falls or perhaps we were already getting used to the relatively long distances. In any event, we arrived at Flagstaff Lake Hut early in the afternoon and had the place almost to ourselves. By now our

evenings were beginning to set into a routine of showers and relaxation, perhaps accompanied by a glass of wine or a local brew sold at the huts. That was followed by an excellent dinner and more reading, discussion or an enthusiastic game of Scrabble. Most retired early, likely the wages of a long day on the trail.

Tuesday dawned breezy and a bit chilly, as in 4°F chilly. We delayed our start for half an hour but that changed nothing. So, we added another layer and headed for our twelve-mile, southbound ski. It wasn't bad, really. Most of the trail was in wooded terrain and, where it crossed an exposed shoulder of a mountain, the wind was mostly at our backs. Along the way we could look



back to see beautiful Flagstaff Lake spread out behind us, crossed



the Appalachian Trail, and saw the Little and Big Bigelow Mountain peaks arrayed before us. There were lots of fresh animal tracks, including those of a moose that walked the trail less than an hour earlier. None of us dallied too long, though, as the day's high reached only about 8°F.



We had Poplar Stream Falls Hut, the first of the system, completely to ourselves that night. Hutmaster, Paul, greeted us and directed us to our rooms. Poplar Stream Falls Hut was to be our home for two consecutive nights, giving us the opportunity for an easy day to ski as we wished or to just relax. Some spent that day reading and



relaxing. Some visited Poplar Stream Falls, a half-mile ski and walk from the hut. Some skied a couple of short, local trails. Others skied to the Gauge Road Trailhead and "town", meaning Carrabassett Valley. That group hoped to get lunch and to sample some of the seventeen draft beers offered by Tufulio's Restaurant & Bar. To our disappointment, Tufulio's didn't even open until 5:00 pm ... oops! Not to be discouraged we skied down the road to Ayotte's Country Store where we found an excellent selection of microbrews that we could tote back to the hut to enjoy that evening. On our return ski we encountered a group of eight folks who were

packing their gear in to spend a few days skiing north to Grand Falls Hut. Along our way back we had fun following a snowshoe trail to the base of Poplar Stream Falls.

By Thursday morning the weather changed completely. At breakfast, the thermometer already read 32°F! And, by the time we got halfway back to Flagstaff Lake Hut, the snow was becoming saturated with water in places, alternately dragging on our skis in sunny areas and surprising us with fast conditions in the shade. Our last night on the trail found us back in



the now familiar surroundings of Flagstaff Lake Hut. The author had packed in his laptop to collect photos and Maine Huts & Trails supplied a projector for our use. So, we were able to enjoy a video show that included about half of the over 1,300 photos and video clips taken by our members.

Friday dawned warm, with some light rain in the air. Fearing a possible soaking, we were pleased that we'd have less than two miles to ski to the trailhead. We did not envy the prospects of the group of eight who were headed twelve miles north that day. As it turned out, we had no rain during our ski back to the parking lot and we think that the northbound group probably had only a small amount of light rain. It was all hugs and good wishes as we went our separate ways from the trailhead; some bound for Lake Placid, some for home and a few to other destinations.

This was a wildly successful trip. First, we never dreamed we'd get 18 participants, given the physical demands of our skiing schedule. Second was the skiing itself, with delightful trails set in such a scenic area. The company, as on all our trips, was great; a consequence of the close-knit group that is the Kick 'n Gliders. And, of course, we were very lucky with the weather. But, what made the trip really enjoyable were the facilities and staff that comprise Maine Huts & Trails. This is a first-class, professional organization sharing a common vision and making great strides in making it happen. All possible success to them ... we'll be back!

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