



# THE ROC CAIRN



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—RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC.—UNION BOX 26, R.P.I., TROY, NEW YORK—

September 15, 1993



# ***ROC***

I would like to welcome all the new members this year and say a few words that might help clarify some of what goes on in this club. The Outing club has an extensive inventory of equipment available for use. During Pit hours (3:30 to 5:30 Fridays, located in the Armory basement) you can check out: tents, sleeping bags and backpacks for all seasons, snow shoes and cross country and back country skis, kayaks, canoes, white water rafts and drysuits, caving helmets and lamps, rock climbing and ice climbing shoes, ropes, ice axes and crampons, and also first aid kits and books on the various activities the club is involved with. There are some restrictions on the more technical gear, and you generally have to demonstrate some proficiency or become a trip leader to get access to it.

## **Leaders and trips out**

A trip leader is something I hope everyone will strive to become. They have shown the Executive Committee (E-comm) that they have some ability in a particular activity and are capable of leading beginners on the appropriate trips. Trip leaders announce upcoming trips at meetings for which you can sign up on trip sheets. These sheets will be posted outside the pit so you can sign up if you miss a meeting. It is a good idea to sign up as leaders do need to know how many people to expect, and how to reach you if they have to change plans.

## **E-comm**

These people are the students elected to run the club. They often meet after regular club meetings to discuss rules changes, and approve leaders, activities chairmen (there are a few openings here in winter mountaineering, cross-country skiing) and patch members, and also manage how the club spends its budget. These meetings are open to all, so if you are interested in seeing what goes on, or if you have something you want to say, stop by.

Have fun,  
Eric Kirchner  
kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu

# Notes From The President

I would like to welcome everyone to the Outing Club. I'm looking forward to a great year of outdoor fun and festivities! The club has a new and excited executive committee, and will be changing a few things...hopefully for the better. One large change has already taken place. That is, to borrow gear from the club, one will have to do an hour of club service a month in addition to their dues. Any exceptions of this rule should be discussed with a member of the Executive Committee. Anyway, WELCOME to the Rensselaer Outing Club!

Sincerely,  
Scott Stepenuck  
ROC President

## Patch Membership

Patch membership recognizes an active member of the club, and allows the individual to wear the patch on a red shirt. The red shirt distinguishes the patch member as a person who "knows" about the outing club, and can possibly answer questions of new members. It is therefore strongly encouraged for the patch members to wear their patch (and shirt) to meetings. Patch members are also allowed to vote at elections and the such. To become a patch member, the requirements are as follows:

- Must have participated in at least three(3) different club activities
- Must have done one overnigher with the club
- Must do service for the club
- Finally, pass the approval of the Executive Committee.

## Dues

Dues This Year Are \$12.00 Per Semester Or \$20.00 Per Year.

## Officers

President: Scott Stepenuck.....276-7307.....stepes@rpi.edu  
Vice President: Don Lussier.....276-4718.....lussid@rpi.edu  
Equip. Chair: Yancy Seamans.....272-8730 or 271-7571.....seamay@rpi.edu  
Treasurer: Matt Osborne.....272-5022.....  
Secretary: Todd Iwanicki.....276-4718.....iwanit@rpi.edu  
Cairn Editor: Eric Kirchner.....235-9346.....kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu  
Member At Large: Alan Demers.....271-8148.....demera2@rpi.edu

## Electronic Mail

To mail anything to the outing club mailing list, mail it to:  
outing-club@rpi.edu

## The Forum

### Patch Membership

As a new E-board/comm whatever member, I am surprised with the leniency with which some people become patch members. Although tradition has that leniency is ok due to lack of active members as shown during the recent elections, I feel that the patch membership article needs to be amended (actually the whole constitution should be overhauled including bylaws) and become a bit more relevant to the needs of the club.

The first on the list is the overnight requirement should be axed. If a person does an overnight (real camping type stuff) that can count as two separate trips. Next, all trips should be officially sponsored by the ROC this requirement is in there but we, myself included, need to be more strict on its enforcement. Finally, obtaining patch membership should be a yearly process for all members whether they have already earned a patch the previous year. I hope this would keep people as active members and remove apathetic people who get their patch then never return except maybe once a semester.

I am all for keeping the club service requirement even though this is not part of the list in the constitution and for having only active members voting and holding office.

Later  
MattO

## Meetings

Sept.	15	CC330	Nov.	3	CC318
	22	CC330		10	CC330
	29	CC330		17	CC330
Oct.	6	CC330	Dec.	1	CC330
	13	CC330		8	CC330
	20	CC324		15	CC330
	27	CC324			

In response to ...

"So, why aren't you a leader?"

On numerous occasions last semester one leader expressed his disappointment over trips that he had scheduled which had to be canceled due to lack of participation. Having no one to lead can be tough on a leader's morale. I can sympathize. I hope that increased membership from the tremendous publicity push will provide members and hence encouragement to leaders to lead more, thus eliminating this reason for non-leadership.

Another reason I have heard from leaders is that they get tired of leading beginner trips that are not challenging for them. One friend of mine who is real expedition-type climber (Everest, Kenya, Fiji, someplace in Equador last fall, you name it, she's been there) was raving on about how it drags everyone in the expedition down when they bring "non-serious" climbers along. I can understand that. I chuckled to myself, though. I can't imagine that a "non-serious" climber would be silly enough to tagalong to Everest in the first place. But aside from expeditions and bringing it back to the club level, it happens here too. Beginners expect that there will be trips for them and experienced people want their own challenge. But if trip participation is sparse as it is, then why lead more trips of differing levels? ...Publicity to the rescue????

On the other side, beginners have expressed that what they hear when some trips are announced is, "it's gonna be too hard for me to do." I just heard that one again from a different person last night ...a person who I wouldn't have thought of as a beginner either. Maybe trip leaders should just announce the level of a trip and give an explanation of whatever grading system is used and leave off all the gory qualifiers about death and dementia, saving the extensive gear list for the sign-up sheet.

So, present leaders can understandably get bored or discouraged, which doesn't leave would-be leaders with much incentive. Both take personal trips instead of leading while beginners have no trips to go on of any interest to them. It's nobody's fault. Encouragement on the publicity level is one route that is actively taking place at the moment. But what about on the policy level?

I'm somewhat curious about club gear policy. I think that it is mutually exclusive with promoting club trips and membership goals. It seems self defeating for the club to have people join just to get gear when we talk so much about getting people to come out on trips. There are people who take out gear but rarely show up at meetings or led trips, much less think to lead trips themselves. I'd like to consider the present thrust of the club regardless of the past. In the past, maybe those people that I see taking lots of gear for personal trips were active members. Or maybe gear use has historically been thought of as a "right" where I think of it more as a "privilege." Or maybe the club has previously focused as strongly on personal trips as on led trips and it's just this recent publicity push that makes it seem different.

Things that can be changed on the policy level in the present in order to promote more led trips: charge some minimal gear fee for non-led trip gear, require patch membership, or require some minimal number of meetings and/or trips per semester to maintain gear privileges? It just seems that club policies and club goals should be more self consistent.

Diane H Peapus  
diane@xray.chem.rpi.edu

## The Forum (Again)

### General Leadership

Since in general the Cairn does not get to many articles, I'll sound off again blah, blah blah. The short discussion this time is leadership requirements. I won't get into specific areas due to my lack of qualifications to discuss the intricacies of caving/kayaking(which I don't really care about) or rock climbing(which I should learn).

The ROC needs leaders. Non-officially lead trips should not become the norm as has been suggested/mentioned in passing?. I think the major problem is that the club seems to require First Aid, CPR and SOLO Back Country First Aid as well as all the technical requirements. Most of the technical requirements do not appear beyond anyone's ability if they have done the activity several times. The problem is with that First aid stuff.(I still don't have it)

I had basic First Aid many years(>10) ago and took SOLO last spring. SOLO was much more practical and covered the same material. I believe CPR would not be to useful in the middle of a forest, cave etc. since the victim is several hours from any medical help. Therefore I believe certification in SOLO should be the only medical type requirement.

This does not mean get it once then forget about refresher training. If the club ever gets around to appointing a First Aid chair (who should have all those other requirements), this person would be responsible for holding at least once a semester a retraining of the leaders. All leaders should have the retraining once a semester so nothing ever gets a chance to get old, a new requirement but not so daunting or costly.

Sorry, I could not keep it shorter. Read my other forum yap its a tad shorter.

Have a Good One  
MattO

### Anarchy

I have a proposal for consideration - abolish the E-comm and all procedural rules for the Outing club. This, of course, would have the effect of creating easy access for everyone. You could get any gear you like at your convenience, take out your own trips, avoid those annoying first aid requirements, and best of all you would only be responsible for yourself. Well, you say we would lose some neat features of the club like Fall Lake George, Friday night caving, and you might even consider the Cairn in that list. Well, I think not. If people really wanted these things, they would do the necessary tasks to make them happen. All it would take is that enthusiastic individual to take the initiative and go for it! Anyone could jump up and lead us in a new and exciting direction. So, what about dull stuff, like the budget? I think there is sufficient incentive there for all of us to pitch in: no budget = no gear = no club. In fact I can not see why we should miss anything from the old system. Everyone would be involved and have their own stake in the clubs future.

Come to think of it, there is no reason these thing should not be happening now. Got an idea? let's hear it. Something you want to do? Stand up and make it happen. Don't let the apparent establishment fool you into thinking you can't do it.

Eric Kirchner  
kirchner@unix.cie.rpi.edu

SATURDAY OCT. 2, 1993:

Your eyelids slowly open as they allow the bright morning sun filtering through the canopy of leaves above you to flow into your eyes. You don't even notice the wide smile that forms on your face as you close your eyes again to smell the fresh air and to pull your warm, soft sleeping bag up to your chin. Reminiscing on the previous night you remember canoeing through the almost eerie, still waters of Lake George as the Moon and the light on Turtle Island provide the only light for your journey. The only sounds you hear are the paddles piercing the mirror-like water, propelling your canoe on its way. You remember how that wonderful feeling of peace and calm enveloped the whole ride and you realize that this same feeling has overcome you again, but just before you enter dreamland again you hear laughter and voices off in the distance and smell the smokey flavor of bacon and the sweet smell of buttered toast. You can just taste it in your mind as your mouth begins to water. You think about how you'll prepare your own custom made breakfast: bacon, eggs, bread, anything you want! Your eyes open wide and you think about all the things you want to do today: Hike up to the first and second peaks of Tongue mountain, maybe more if you're quick enough; Canoe to the nearby islands or maybe even seek the waterfall on the mainland; Learn a few things on one of the kayaks; Maybe even find time to do a little rock climbing, if you are up to it. Then you begin to think about the square dance later on and you are anxious to meet all the different people from the other Outing Clubs that have joined us. Your day dreaming and thinking is suddenly cut off by the grumbling of your stomach and you quickly find your way out of your sleeping bag and off to the food tent. It's chow time!

DO IT - FALL LAKE GEORGE '93 - OCTOBER 1, 2, 3rd

FULL DETAILS AT EVERY MEETING AND IN THE ARMORY BASEMENT

Alan Demers

R.O.C. Member @ Large

271-8148

## In Search of Scat.

Diane H Peapus

Yes, scat. Animal droppings, dung, manure, turds, pooh-pooh, cah-cah, feces defecation. You name it, it's all the same. Or is it???

Andrew, Anyta & I hiked in the Catskills a few weekends back. At the crest of a hill we found the remains of a porcupine. The group's fascination may have been due to that primordial morbidity which lurks deep inside every one of us or maybe it had to do with the fact that I have earrings made of porcupine quills which I bought for 45 bucks and we thought we could make a necklace to match for a lot cheaper. Whatever the reason, Anyta & I picked a few quills from the dried pelt, while Andrew watched. (Do women have a greater need to investigate death than men? Do men fear death too much to participate? Or does Andrew not make his own jewelry?). The kill was pretty old and the quills were weathered; sun bleached and fragile. They would never match my earrings. I poked at the pelt with a long stick hoping to find nicer quills beneath. Instead, I found some random porcupine innards. I backed a few steps away.

It was then that I spied the scat, neatly laid atop of a small flat rock. All white and full of fur, I knew what that meant: it must have dropped from a carnivore. We surveyed the scene for other clues. It was old scat, weathered like the porcupine pelt. Was it the spine hog's last meal, caught off guard while taking a dump. Or are they herbivores? Was it from the predator that had eaten the porcupine. It was about 3-4 inches long and 1/2 inch wide and curled up on one end. Andrew suggested that it looked rather canine in nature. I've picked up a lot of dog scat in my lifetime, and I agreed with his assessment. We cleverly convinced ourselves that a fox had eaten the porcupine and taken a break in the middle of dinner to sculpt the scat on the rock. The mystery solved, we lost interest in the scat & carcass. I put the quills I had collected in an empty 35mm film container, tucked them in my pack next to my lunch and we went on with our hike.

When I got home I called a friend, Laura, and mentioned that I had collected some quills to make a necklace. She's removed lots of quills from her dog's snout after numerous canine-porcupine confrontations, so I didn't figure that a dead spine hog would be a big deal to her.

"You found a dead porcupine in the woods?", she asked doubtfully. "Are you sure it was in the woods or was it in a clearing?"

"Well, if you want to get technical, I suppose it wasn't actually in the woods," I replied.

"Near the top of a hill or a high flat area?", she drilled for more details.

"There was some grass in the immediate area and it was at the flat part near the crest."

"And was the stomach still there?", her excitement at this point was quite evident.

"Well, there was some sort of left over innards, but I couldn't identify it."

"Yup," she stated definitively, "it was a fisher. That's incredible." She went on to illuminate me. "Fishers are the only things smart enough to kill a porcupine. They circle them, confuse them, attack from the front, flip them over, and pull out their bellies."

"Are you sure?" I asked her. "There was some scat nearby and it looked like it might have been canine. Maybe a fox ate the spine hog."

"Scat!! There was scat??? Was it firm?" Laura jumped in, her excitement increasing by the moment. "Did it have lines on it almost like an imprint of the intestine?"

"Well, I didn't investigate it that thoroughly, but it was loaded with fur, so it must have been a carnivore."

"Was it 3-4 inches long an 1/2 inch wide and did it taper off and curl up on one end?"

"Yeah. And it was neatly piled on top of a flat rock."

"Yup. It was a fisher, alright."

I was fascinated that Laura could reconstruct the whole scene from stomach to the scat, and she was fascinated that I had discovered it. Apparently, fishers are a fairly uncommon member of the weasel family that were nearly exterminated in the early part of the century. As fierce predators, they require a large home range and they will prey on anything within their territory, including chickens, ducks and other farm fowl (small children?) They can still be found, but are not at all common, in Adirondack Park. I felt privileged that I had come across evidence of this uncommon mammal at all, much less in the Catskills where you wouldn't expect it even if you knew what you were looking for. If I had known how uncommon this was, I would have taken pictures of the scat & kill to share with all of you.

I wonder what other noteworthy scenes we pass without notice on our way to bagging that peak, or as we take our Disney-Land-like ride down those rapids. How many of nature's cycles go on along the trail without our slightest awareness. Predator and prey. Life and death. Birth and habitat. Coons and cocoons. Webs and snares. Molted reptile skins. Tracks in the mud. Holes in the ground. Nests in the birch branches. Hair balls at the base of an oak tree. Half eaten acorns. Nibbled maple bark, or is it rubbed off? Discolored snow. Piles of scat.

What does it all mean?

## Mailing List

The Outing club now has an electronic mailing list that members can use to inform others about trips, special events, and other related activities. Joining this list is simple and easy, and for those of you who use their RCS computer accounts, it makes things convenient.

If you are a member of the Rensselaer Outing Club and wish to be added to the mailing list, send an e-mail message to Mike Dinsmore (dinsmm@rpi.edu). Within a few days, your name will be added to the list. Likewise, if you no longer wish to continue to get the electronic messages, send some mail to dinsmm@rpi.edu. When joining or adding, just say "join <userid>" where you enter you e-mail address for the userid.

Don't abuse the list. Only post relevant things. There are quite a few people on the list and we don't want to overburden the Rensselaer Computing Services equipment.

Michael Dinsmore    Computer and Systems Engineering  
dinsmm@rpi.edu    Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

### Rock climbing ratings made easy:

- 5.6 - Roping up scrambling taste of adrenaline rappelling long way down, isn't it?
- 5.7 - Coming to terms: Arete Dihedral chimney face flake stem mantle protection
- 5.8 - Balance. Stay on your feet. Plan your moves. Rest. Think. Top Rope. Don't Freeze.
- 5.9 - Grip with your feet or lose your arms. Trust your feet to hold the rock
- 5.10 - fingertip clinging to merciless vertical tenuous exposed lead climbs
- 5.11 - heavy mental heel hooking thin finger crack system solution
- 5.12 - Spidery tensile stamina toe jams and sheer smear runout on razor flakes
- 5.13 - Elegant panicking overwhelming overhanging tyranny of gravity ballet
- 5.14 - To seek out blank faces. To boldly go where only small lizards have gone before

(from an EMS t-shirt)