



# CAIRN NEWSLETTER



Rensselaer Outing Club

April 27, 2005

## Knox Farm

By: John Lembke

Over spring break I took a trip to the newest state park New York, Knox Farm, located in East Aurora, NY (near Buffalo), it covers an area of 650 acres. My parents said they have some nice trails, and I wanted to see how they were for cross country skiing. The park covers a really nice area of young hardwood forest and open fields. The trails are well maintained, but conditions weren't very good when I went; there were several bare spots along the trails. Most trails are fairly flat. The few hills that are there are pretty mild, so it made for a smooth trip.

The park is also open in the summer time, and trails are open to hikers, runners, bikers, and horseback riders. Of course there is also a visitor's center containing information about the Knox family and their importance in Buffalo's history. If you are looking for something to do while in western New York you may want to check it out, it's really easy to find and access.

## Things That Shouldn't Have Been Overheard

- You just stick it in, move it around for a little bit, then figure it out. – Monica
- My butt's not really orange. – Mariana
- I don't have any problem getting it in, but it just keeps slipping out. – Ken
- My hand is all slippery. I can't rub my nipple. – Jeremy



Monica, Greg, Lauren, & Kent at the summit of Phelps Mountain

## Hiking in the Adirondacks

By: Monica Blount

The last couple days of spring break Lauren, Kent, Greg and I went winter camping, something none of us had ever done before. Well, unless you count sleeping outside in the snow for the past couple New Year's Eve nights as winter camping. We packed up the car, headed north, and ended up in some parking lot. We weren't really quite sure where exactly we were on the map. Standing in the parking lot, we couldn't really tell which way we wanted to walk either. So, having just loaded a whole bunch of stuff in our packs, we asked for directions to the trail head. After finding the trail, we hiked about 2 miles to Marcy Dam and found a nice lean-to and decided to make dinner and call it a night.

Someone had told us about putting boiling water in Nalgens and taking them to bed with us. This was an ingenious idea, amazingly brilliant, and I highly recommend it. Since none of us had gone to sleep before midnight in quite some time, we didn't really know what to do since it was only 9pm and there was nothing left to do but sleep. So, we played cards, in a keep-as-much-of-your-body-as-possible-inside-your-sleeping-bag kind of way.

I usually love sleeping in sleeping bags. It reminds me of my favorite Minnesota North woods. However, this night I had a little bit more trouble. Now, I'm not pointing fingers, but Lauren stole my sleeping pad in the middle of the night, and I ended up sleeping on the bare wood. It wasn't too bad, though. I slept most of the night, minus the parts when I woke up shivering.

In the morning we awoke to a very animated Greg, which is, if anyone knows Greg, completely out of the ordinary. I believe he was doing some sort of jig (partly to keep warm) with the intention of encouraging us to get out of bed. I don't think we really knew what to do with an animated Greg; it doesn't happen very often. Since then we have all determined that something in the outside air is good for Greg and brings out his more animated characteristics.

That morning, we set off to hike up Marcy. There was a debate about whether snow shoes were truly needed since the trail we had walked in on was packed down enough that they weren't really necessary. But, there was no way of knowing what it

would look like higher up. We decided we had better take them. That is everyone but Greg, who only had ankle high shoes and gators. There was a lot of walking...up...and through snow...and next to lots of cool snow drifts. For most of the trail snowshoes weren't necessary, enough people had walked the trail before us that it was packed pretty well.

The really neat section was when we got above the tree line, and the wind picked up. You had to walk with your body bent in to the wind and keep your eyes closed. I personally am a HUGE fan of the wind. I love it. And am convinced that wind combined with cold temperatures that make your eyes water, and your cheeks rosy, are the best...it just doesn't get any better (and I'm not being sarcastic). But because of the wind, the trail was a little iffy to find, which wasn't too much of an issue since we just needed to keep going up. But the real problem was that our once packed hiking surface was now drifty snow. Now this wasn't a problem for those of us who decided to take the snowshoes. But for Greg, who declared earlier that morning that he would not need them, the going got a little rougher.

Our trip up Marcy can be separated into 3 parts: walk/force our way to the top, look at one another, take a picture, and get incredibly cold in a short amount of time, and turn round and go back down. It was really neat to be up there. Especially for those of us who are from vertically challenged states like Minnesota, who get giddy at the sight of any mountain (I want to set the record straight though, Minnesota is not flat, we have cliffs, and big hills, but we do not have mountains). Shortly after departing the summit, we stopped to eat lunch and while we were just sitting there, a tele skier, flying down the mountain, almost killed us. He skied up the side of the snow drift next to us just in time, but if he hadn't I think it could have been ugly.

We made it back to camp, 4 incredibly tired people. I think it might have been around this point in time when we realized the floating things in our water weren't only little bits of leaves and such but also included bugs...lots and lots of little bugs (later determined to be snow fleas). Um, all I have to say is "YUM!!!" And that from here on out whenever I go camping I will look very closely at my water before I drink it. Oh, and we didn't get sick from the snow fleas either, I mean if it doesn't kill you it only makes you stronger, right?

We decided that we would climb Phelps Mountain the next day and return to RPI that night. Phelps was very different. It was a steeper climb, but a lot shorter, and we were able to have a nice summit lunch with a view of Marcy. Again, Greg decided he did not need snow shoes, only this time we were jealous of him because he was correct. On the way down, Greg just

slid on his shoes while the rest of us had to drag our showshoes across the ice. Greg definitely won the race down. I think for next trip, I'll buy some sort of roll-up plastic sled so I can slide down the trails. I think it would be quite the rush.

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### How I Learned To Enjoy Winter

By: Jenn Zuba

I was not a fan of winter. Mostly because of the bitter wind and sub-zero temperatures that Troy tends to acquire during the December to March months. I refused to go outside for any longer than absolutely necessary. Running to and from class, wearing 3 layers of clothing (not including the long underwear which went under all of that), and cursing my decision to attend a college up North were not uncommon occurrences. Then, I discovered cross country skiing (and the wonders of hand and toe warmers).

During Monica's cross country skiing leadership e-comm, I asked her if I voted for her if she would teach me how to ski. I held up my end of the bargain, so this winter it was time for Monica to hold up hers. After bugging her for a few weeks, she finally agreed to take me out to Frear Park to show me the basics...on the coldest day of the year. The forecast said it wasn't supposed to get above -7° F the whole day. Add blustery winds on top of that and you've got a -30° windchill at 3 pm. After dreading the trip, I finally agreed to go. Bundled up in more layers than I could count and wearing the best hand and toe warmers a college student's money can buy, I ventured out into the snowy rolling hills of the Troy Public Golf Course.

Needless to say, I fell down a lot. But it was fun! Gliding along on the snow and sliding down hills, all the while enjoying the beautiful scenery and silence that characterizes a bitterly cold yet sunny winter day. And with all that moving around, I even got *hot* and had to take off my hood! At the end of the trip, I still had feeling in my fingers and toes and they didn't even hurt! It was the first time I had enjoyed being outside during a Troy winter. I had so much fun, I went cross country skiing again. And again. And again. The ruse was up. I could no longer pretend that I hated winter with a passion. It was official: I was addicted.



Jenn & Kent XC-Skiing at Thatcher Park

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## **Grand Canyon/Colorado River: Class 8 Rivers and Scorpions**

**By: Lauren LaBella**

It all started with my Aunt having to go to Las Vegas for work. She was going to have a free hotel room, rental car, petty cash, food tickets, etc. Naturally, my mom and I decided it would be fun to tag along, especially when the word free popped up so much. However, the cover story was that my Aunt needed company since her family wasn't interested in going. The only flights I've ever taken were to Florida and I've only been as far west as central Pennsylvania, so this trip was gonna be awesome.

The five hour flight out of JFK was interesting. I admit to being nervous about flying since 9-11. The only problem during the flight actually came while we were still in the gate at JFK preparing for take off. I had a seat in the first row and wanted to keep my backpack in front of me, but the flight attendant wasn't having any of that. She stole my bag and said it needed to go in the overhead compartment. I told her to be careful because I had nalgenes in the outside pockets and my laptop in it. The flight attendant wasn't all that bright and turned my bag completely upside down. In hindsight, I should have had a carabineer clipping my nalgenes in, but I was afraid of them causing problems with security. So my completely full nalgene falls out of the bottle holder and smacks this bald guy right in the head. He screams at the attendant and the whole flight is looking at what was going on. The funniest part is that she couldn't find room above me, so she moved my bag three rows back where there was room. My aunt hadn't reserved us seats so we were scattered slightly, and she was unfortunately sitting next to the guy that got clobbered. She pretended she didn't know us for the whole flight as the bald guy asked for aspirin and an ice pack.

JetBlue is a sweet airline company and had cable t.v. for every passenger. Between watching the hockey playoffs and having my laptop, the five hours went pretty quick. Nearing Las Vegas at night was amazing. The strip was completely lit and it reminded me of Times Square, only this place was in the middle of the freaking dessert.

Throughout the week we spent time in on the strip, quadding in the dessert and site seeing. The best part was visiting the Grand Canyon. We drove out to an indian reservation where our "Grand Canyon Fun" would begin. Apparently the United States and Indians each own half of the Colorado River/Grand Canyon. So our entire day was going to be run by Indians, which I thought would be pretty cool since they know the land so well.

We loaded two yellow buses of tourists and headed out of the ranch. They warned us the roads were bumpy since they weren't paved, but I wasn't expecting to not be able to hear myself think as the buses clambered down into the canyon. After a nice scenic route to the put-in, the tourists were looking a little blue, and I was wondering if getting in a raft with them was the greatest idea. We all got situated in about 6-8 rafts. The water looked pretty nice, and I was thinking that today was going to be a nice day on a class 3-4 river. For the sake of my aunt and mom, we weren't going to be paddling. Our tour guide would control the motor on the raft (more like a Navy Seal Zodiac).

After setting off, I asked our guide, who didn't like us "Americans," what class river we were on. He promptly told me that we were definitely on a class 8 river and that we better not fall in because he didn't want to have a rafter die of hypothermia since he sure as heck wasn't going to save our lives. I was laughing hysterically with his "class" system. I wasn't sure if he was just trying to be a good tour guide and make his "high paying Americans" think they were doing something really adventurous or if he truly didn't know anything about rivers. Either way, he really didn't like us much and went out of his way to ignore us or insult us.

Despite the rude guide, the river was pretty exciting, and the water was really cold (we went early May so the snow was still melting.) The Colorado River was pretty weird. It seemed to form a lot of whirlwinds/drains in the water, ones that even the motor had to force its way through. It would be amazing to be able to paddle it, but I hear the waiting list to paddle the Colorado River, legally, is about 35 years. Anyone want to go?

So the guides made sure to get us nice and wet and then set us ashore to view a small waterfall in a cavern. The stop was perfect since we got to dry out in the sun and see a beautiful part of the canyon. We all got back on our rafts and continued on for some rougher waters. The guides sure knew how to hit the waves right and got us off the water pretty high, it was a lot of fun even though I couldn't paddle. We stopped for lunch on what was an honest to goodness beach. It was weird to see the beach since throughout the entire trip downriver, the rivers banks were rocks or high brush. Lunch beat anything Commons could have cooked up and gave us time to make some new friends on the trip.

After the beach, we zipped by on lake water the whole way to the put-out. We stopped once for a pit-stop which was pretty cool. We all docked on about three feet of sand and walked through a jungle to an outhouse hidden in the back of the brush. Waiting in line for the restroom proved to be yet another time to

make conversation with others. As I was talking to a couple from southern Texas, a woman came running out of the bathroom screaming about a scorpion by the toilet. The couple from the south laughed and explained that they find them in their house all the time. I was a little less thrilled about the idea of a scorpion, but we all used the out house regardless.

We reached the take-out and I was truly sad to have the day ending. I really enjoyed being in the canyon. Little did I know the best part was yet to come. In order to get us all back to our buses, they needed to chopper us out of the canyon. Three choppers kept coming in and out taking people back to the rim. The coordinator who was checking to make sure that choppers didn't get overloaded, called us out for the next flight. It was determined that I was the lightest of the four passengers so I would get to be up front with the pilot. Flying out of the canyon was one of the most awesome experiences in my life. The view was amazing and the pilot took us right over the rim and made it feel like we were going to hit it. As we turned from the canyon, I found myself wondering if I could somehow transfer to the University of Las Vegas and do this every weekend.

The bus ride back was two hours of mixed emotions. Again we were mostly on torn roads through dessert terrain. The passengers had long since given up on talking, since most were burnt out by the sun and a long day. My aunt and mom sat next to each other so I wound up sitting next to another guy who was in our raft. We got to talking and I found out that he was actually an engineer. Ironic isn't it? We talked about college and his new job after graduating a year ago. It seemed that I couldn't escape RPI even in the Grand Canyon.

We got back to the lodge and everyone headed their separate ways. All-in-all the trip went really well. I learned a lot: 1. My mom and aunt could do cool things without complaining the whole time. 2. The Colorado River is a class 8 river, no joke folks. 3. Scorpions aren't that bad. 4. Helicopters are the shiznits.

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## **Where's The Climbing?: An Informative Guide to Rock Climbing In and Around Troy**

**By: Jeremy Morgan**

So you like rock climbing eh? Well, you're in luck. We happen to be within a few hours drive of some amazing climbing of all varieties. No matter whether you are a die-hard traddie or a pad-toting boulder, there is something for you. There are of course the well know areas: the Gunks in New Paltz and the numerous cliffs around Keene Valley in the Adirondacks. There are pretty comprehensive guidebooks for these areas so I will focus more on

the many smaller cliffs that have been more developed in the last few years.

About an hour and a half west on I-90 in the town of Little Falls there is a fair bit of climbing in several areas. The main area is Moss Island, which has many moderate to hard lines. While several of the climbs can be led on gear, most are generally top roped. Typically the anchors require either gear or lots of webbing/static line. On the north side of the island there is some interesting bouldering...from what I've been told. On the other side of the river (and train tracks) is an area known as the Dihedrals. There are numerous lines here including some bolted lines.

If you feel like getting out of New York for the day, you can always head to Rose Ledges in Massachusetts. There are some good cliffs here with a bit of a walk along some power lines. I haven't the faintest idea how to get there but if you ask around I'm sure you can find some directions. Most of the popular climbs can be top roped easily, though I would imagine that at least some of them could be led on gear without too much hassle.

Feel like going sport climbing but don't want to drive to Rumney? Stewarts Ledge on Buck Mountain near Lake George might be just what you are looking for. This is a great little cliff that is only about an hour from campus. There are a handful of bolted lines from 5.7 to 5.11. Most of them are well bolted, though there are a couple that could use some supplemental gear. There are also some great lines that can be top roped or led on gear.

For all you pebble wrestlers, I mean boulderers, there are some pretty nice little rocks to climb near McKenzie Pond outside of Lake Placid. Even a dirty trad climber like myself can find some enjoyable climbing on these beauties. In the last couple years some pretty nice boulders have also been found near Nine Corners Lake.

Now if you enjoy a nice hike through the woods and prefer to climb away from the crowds, there are many crags of various sizes listed in the Don Mellr Adirondack Guide Book. Of the ones that I have visited, I highly recommend Huckleberry Mountain, near Warrensburg, and Good Luck Cliff, near Gloversville.

I think that's enough for now. If you want to find out more about any of these areas just ask around. What I have listed here just scratches the surface. There is continual development at various crags around the area. Some of these new areas have some incredible lines for both sport and gear. Enough of this...time to go look at gear online...I mean study for finals.

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