

Smoke & Blazes

Volume 79, Number 1

Killington Section, Green Mountain Club

Spring 2026

Land Shark!



Larry and Sunghee narrowly escaped the jaws of death on the trail to Little Pond in November.



KILLINGTON SECTION



Spring 2026

Killington Section Officers

- Herb Ogden, *President*
- Allison Henry, *Vice President*
- Melissa Reichert, *Secretary*
- Maura Wildman, *Treasurer*

Committee Chairs

- Amy Peacock, *History & Archives*
- Sue Thomas, *Outings*
- Larry Walter, *Trails & Shelters*
- Dave Coppock, *Trails & Shelters*

Delegates to GMC Board

- Bruce Peacock, *Director*
- Ruth Hare, *Alternate*

Web Site: gmckillington.org

- Andrew & Isaac Jones,
Web Masters

Smoke & Blazes

- Sue Thomas, *Editor*

Killington Section Directors

- Term expires 2026:*
- Wayne Krevetski*
- Melissa Reichert*
- Allison Henry

- Term expires 2027:*
- Sheamus Fagan
- Amy Peacock*
- Maura Wildman*

- Term expires 2028*
- Dave Coppock*
- Herb Ogden*
- Larry Walter

**Second consecutive 3-year term, not eligible for re-election.*

Contact us:

KillingtonSection@greenmountainclub.org

Trail Mix

We're looking for hardworking, trail-loving and enthusiastic folks to join the Green Mountain Club in various seasonal field staff positions for the 2026 season. Sign on as a **backcountry caretaker, ridgerunner, trail technician or trail assessment specialist**. Go to greenmountainclub.com for job descriptions and applications.

Couldn't make it to Waterbury for the **Winter Speaker Series**? Most are now available for viewing on the GMC YouTube channel. Learn about Vermont's changing climate future, bat conservation, hiking the Tour du Mont Blanc, the North Country Trail, and follow a speed hiker on a quest to break the Long Trail record.

The Killington Section could use some help! We need someone with tech expertise to manage the email system and help revamp our website. If that sounds like you, contact **Herb Ogden, 802-772-7322**, or **Sue Thomas, 802-773-2185**.

Mud season will be upon us soon, and the GMC reminds hikers that some trails will be closed to protect them from erosion. **Respect trail closures** and always have an alternate plan. **Avoid muddy trails**, especially above 2500', and **don't step around mud** as it tramples vegetation and widens the trail – walk through the mud if you can't turn back. **Hike on bike paths, mountain roads and other durable surfaces** – check out great alternative hiking destinations on the GMC website. And **don't underestimate the weather**, there may still be snow and ice in the woods.

The Extra Mile

Trails & Shelters chairs **Larry Walter** and **Dave Coppock** have been spending time with students at Rutland High School's Allen Street Campus teaching basic saw skills. They report that the kids show great enthusiasm!

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is currently conducting a quality and importance inventory of every view along the trail to help with conservation efforts. This past summer they collected scenic quality data on all of Vermont's AT views, measuring aspects like color harmony, view integrity and range of vision. Now they are hosting meetings with local trail partners to score view importance. This will measure aspects that local partners know best, like viewpoint publicity, management and visitation. In January Killington Section President **Herb Ogden**, Trails & Shelters chairs **Larry Walter** and **Dave Coppock** along with **Cindy Taylor-Miller** and **Sue Thomas** participated in a zoom meeting to assist with the project.



This view from Killington's summit is one of several in our section being considered, along with Airport Lookout, Deer Leap, Clarendon Gorge bridge and Pico's summit.

Board of Directors Report | *December 13, 2025 submitted by KS rep. Bruce Peacock*

Finances are fine and the club is on budget. The feared federal cuts have not happened this year, although many of the USFS employees that negotiate federal contracts for future years are not available.

The bulk of the meeting was spent on governance changes. Melissa and I voiced our dissatisfaction with the Governance Committee's proposal to reduce the number of section directors to two, but we were in a minority. We heard the old resistance to change argument and how we need to adapt with the times. Someone said that the changes will actually improve sections' authority and leverage with staff through the proposed President's Committee, but I don't buy that argument. The plan is to have the board vote on the final proposal at the March meeting and then the full membership will vote on the bylaws changes at the June annual meeting. A two-thirds majority is required, so please put June 13th on your calendar and maybe we can rent a van.

It looks like they have figured out work arounds for the section insurance and finance issues, but they didn't have full details to share yet. Keegan did not give a field report today but he sent out a 30-minute video summarizing the year's projects. Let me know if you would like to see it and I will send you the link.

Putting the Trail to Bed | November 1, 2025 by Larry Walter

The weather cooperated today, although it was a bit windy. We had a good turnout of six fellas, including Sandy B., me, Dave C., Sheamus Fagan, Matt McCoy and a newcomer, Creston Rabtoy. Seeing as how we had a lot of material to pack onto the Cauty Trail, we went up there first and replaced around six or eight planks and one sill. Those big 12" spikes required some pilot holes to keep things from splitting. Some of the planks were 2" x 8" pressure-treat boards. We really need to get some shingles on those sections as they're really slippery when wet. The trail is cleared up to where the grade pitches up towards the cascades. Dave and I got over the last, big water crossing over some loosely set logs a day earlier, but I had to use a stick for balance. I think we wrapped up there around noon. Still a lot of water bars that need attention before they silt in entirely. Second part of the day was a carpentry project up at Minerva Hinchey. The Spring Lake folks had given us permission to drive up the access road. We worked until about 1630 on the following:

1. Sheamus wrapped and tacked a whole roll of hardware fabric (steel mesh) around the front-center support post and on both front-side-posts. The table still needs attention when I get some more mesh.
2. Removed the galvanized steel covers on the front end of the sleeping platform.
3. Removed the first four tongue & groove 1" x 6" flooring that had been pretty much eaten away.
4. Replaced a short section of board number 5 with a good section of the removed material.
5. Installed the front four boards and re-attached metal protectors.
6. Removed east window and re-glazed the panes. Installed with side hinges and a nice little latch on the right side. I have to return with some green paint to finish it up. Looks nice.
7. Cut up the old floorboards for firewood use.

The porcupines had eaten more since the first inspection. We may want to consider putting some mesh on the bottom side of the flooring as well. Or at least some wood screws to slow them down.



Creston, Sheamus, Sandy and Dave put in a long day at Minerva Hinchey.

Come lend a hand! Our spring lower-elevation work day will be Saturday, May 9.

Outing Reports

Into the Triangle | Little Pond Trail, Glastenbury, November 8, 2025 by Allison Henry

This was yet another hike that had been rescheduled due to our rainy spring, and luckily we had a clear sunny day this time around. I put the Little Pond Trail on the schedule as part of my Side-to-Side quest. It's an interesting piece of trail to get to, because the Little Pond Trail itself is a half-mile section of trail a little over a mile from the actual trailhead on

Route 9. In other words, you have to trek over a mile just to get to it. On our drive to the trailhead we passed a huge sign for a "Runaway Truck Lane" and one member of our party commented that if a truck really wanted to run away, it would be silly to hide in such an obvious spot. Pure genius. We began our route by following a footpath through some woods for about a tenth of a mile. We then followed a dirt road past some unique sights, including a big rock painted to look like a shark and a bit farther on a huge compound decorated with raw-wood fence poles, animal skulls, and a high-tech looking security system. The "compound" had a completely still horse head peeking out a barn window which led to much discussion as to whether the horse was real. After the road walk we entered the woods on another, woodsier woods road which we followed to the junction with the much-anticipated Little Pond Trail. The actual Little Pond, presumably the trail's namesake, was straight ahead and straight down, and we chose to follow the Little Pond Trail up to the Long Trail first. The climb was easy, and once reaching the LT we meandered south a few tenths of a mile for a leisurely lunch at the falsely named Porcupine Lookout. I looked out carefully but did not see any porkies. After retracing our steps along the LT and down the Little Pond Trail, we indeed went down to Little Pond which was not little, but not really big either. The shore of the pond was gravelly and it looked like a nice spot to wade in on a warmer day. The climb from Little Pond back to the woodsier woods road was by far the hardest part of the hike. Our hike out was mostly uneventful, except for the trail runner who materialized out of nowhere and caused at least two members of our party to nearly jump out of their hiking boots. We thought maybe he was



Allison, Larry and Sunghee at the not-so-little Little Pond.

someone who had disappeared in the Glastenbury Triangle decades ago and had suddenly reappeared. When we passed the giant compound we'd seen on the way in, the horse head still hadn't moved, which led most of us to conclude that it was in fact fake. We returned to the trailhead with the same number of hikers that we'd started with, and considered it a success that none of us had become a Glastenbury Triangle statistic.

Killington Section **Annual Meeting**

Sunday, March 29, 12:30 p.m.

Godnick Adult Center, Deer St., Rutland



**Bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch at 12:30 p.m.,
followed by a short business meeting and election of officers**

Terror on Mt. Tom | Woodstock, Nov. 15, 2025 by Sue Thomas

I chose Mount Tom as a safe place to hike in November, as no hunting is allowed in Vermont's only National Park. Little did I know what perils awaited us there. The steady climb up to the mysteriously named pond warmed us up on this brisk day. (Why is it called "The Pogue?" Everyone asks, but nobody knows.) And then we saw them, paddling furiously toward us and quacking menacingly, warning us not to encroach on their territory – as if a Polar plunge was on any of our minds. We left the demon ducks behind and followed the carriage road up to the lookout, a beautiful spot with views in several directions. We had no sooner settled down on the east-facing bench, when trouble found us again, in the form of a very cute fluffy terrier intent on sharing our lunches. Dark forces are never easily defeated, and repeated assaults had to be repelled, but we triumphed in the end and he was carried away snackless. We briefly considered descending on the rocky Faulkner Trail, but could hear what sounded like a leaf blower from that direction. Larry has always asserted that leaf blowers are instruments of the devil, so we decided not to push our luck and took a different route back, arriving at our cars with souls unscathed and spirits high from a lovely day in the woods.



Ruth and John enjoy lunch with a view.

Ryder's Excellent Adventure | Equinox Preserve, December 6, 2025 by Diane Bargiel

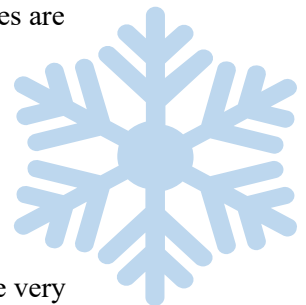


Ryder, loving the snow.

It was a great day to hike in the Equinox Preserve with snow, the sun popping out, and some nice puppies to say hi to along the way. I think we can all agree that a little fella named Ryder had our hearts wrapped around his little paw. Gail, Larry, John and I ended up doing about 5.3 miles as we wound our way through the woods. The sun eventually peaked out and we had a couple of a great views: one from Robin's Lookout, and the other on a little bushwhack climb that we had done while on the Mt. Bluff trail. Here's the breakdown of what we did: Red Gate to Snicket, where we hooked back on to another section of Red Gate and onto the Blue Summit trail and then climbed a little to Trillium at Thompson's Flats over to Robin's Lookout and then, after a snack, decided to go up the Mt. Bluff trail. It was a little less well marked, but after a little off-trail excursion, we connected with Trout Lily to come down. I carefully slid down a chunk of the trail, which was fun, and it protected an injury. We finished up with the Pond Loop, where we saw Ryder absolutely loving the snow, and took Flatlander's Pass back to the trailhead. I had to get to a rehearsal, but the trio took the Burr & Burton connector down to their car at the BBA parking lot, which is allowed to be used on the weekends and after 3 p.m. during the week.

The Outing That Wasn't – Twice! | by Herb Ogden, would-be leader

On 24 January, I was supposed to lead an excursion from the Notch Road in Mendon along the East Road and a wood road more or less following the Cold River to a nice western vista over a disused gravel pit. Grades are gentle enough so skiing was a possibility. It sounded like a good idea — until the forecast was for a temperature near zero and wind chill of minus 20. Only one person called about the outing, and he was perfectly happy to hear I was postponing it for a week. But a week later, the forecast was for below zero at the trailhead, and the few who had expressed interest in the outing also expressed interest in avoiding hypothermia, shared by the leader. Too bad, because the road was nicely covered with a foot of powder snow. A couple of days before, when it was a balmy 16° F and sunny, I skied to the dead end of the East Road to test conditions, and they were very good. I can recommend that route for skiing, except a for several tank trap-style waterbars.



Ed. Note — Herb was not Mother Nature's only victim, several other hikes were cancelled due to storms and frigid temps!

Whither Cooper? By Herbert Ogden, Killington Section president

[This editorial reflects the views of its author. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of GMC.]

Cooper Lodge has been plagued by vandalism over the decades. After extensive repairs in 1960, there was vandalism which required further repairs. A new stove was installed, windows were replaced, and the roof seams mended. By August 1962, vandals had smashed all 96 panes of glass. The GMC found itself forced to make the lodge an open shelter. The windows were screened to keep out porcupines but not reglazed. By 1977, the stove was removed. With no glass in the windows and no stove, the place became inhospitable in windy or cold weather. Nevertheless, it became a favorite hangout for people coming over from nearby Killington Ski Area, especially in winter. Vandalism continued. By 1987, the Killington Section had disclaimed responsibility for maintenance. The Section nevertheless spent considerable time and effort re-roofing Cooper in 1992, and its newsletter reported “it was a hard job but the new roof should last for decades.” The very next season, the new roof leaked because people sliding off it had sprung the seams. Bullets had also been fired through it. That’s when the Killington Section gave up. A couple of adopters tried to maintain the place decently after that, but the last one gave up in 2004.

Cooper has not been formally maintained for years. GMC staff and Killington Section volunteers, with sporadic support from Killington Resort, have removed trash in recent years. However, the roof leaks badly and the masonry has developed a menacing split. Everyone agrees that its current condition is unacceptable and reflects poorly on the GMC, but no practical management plan exists. Over the last decades, discussions about a path forward have ranged from complete restoration to complete demolition. At one point, the GMC Trail Management Committee (TMC) voted to tear the walls down to near floor level so one could still see what used to be there, and install something for historic interpretation.

Proposed solutions

The vandalism and misuse problem remains, especially in winter. Cooper is easy to reach from the ski trail. Both the Killington Section and the TMC agree that the only way to prevent vandalism is to have a winter management plan that promotes acceptable public uses and discourages some of the bad behavior. But that would require a significant investment in time and resources to be practical and would require full-winter staffing to be effective. To date none of the organizations involved or interested in management of the site have identified a way to make that possible.

There may be an alternative: Rebuild the windows and door so that they can be locked when no caretaker is there. To withstand the ire of the winter (ab)users, the construction would have to be very solid and shutters would have to be locked over the windows so they would not be broken. However, even that wouldn’t entirely solve the problem of people getting onto the roof on foot, skis, and snowboards, which can damage it so that it leaks.

Current status

GMC Director of Field Programs Keegan Tierney has been working over the last year with the Vt. Dept. of Forest, Parks & Recreation to reach a decision about Cooper Lodge. The process was launched in 2019 with representatives from FPR and the GMC. It was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. But at the time the following was agreed upon:

- FPR wanted to identify a management plan for the future.
- FPR staff wanted to keep the building.
- Cooper was a good base location for the GMC Coolidge Ridgerunner.
- The GMC was interested in encouraging new users, generally, across the trail system.
- Cooper was an excellent example of historic infrastructure on the LT/AT.
- Cooperative management was key to success

In 2022 an attempt was made to resume conversations. However, the GMC had multiple complex projects running concurrently with FPR and FPR staff had to allocate time and resources between Cooper planning and Bromley Tower planning. Due to having funds in hand, the Bromley Tower permitting, license agreement and long-term management plan took precedence. In February 2024 the GMC relaunched the planning process and visited Cooper with FPR staff, Killington Resort staff, and a representative from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to understand the impact of winter nuisance behavior occurring due to easy access from Killington Resort. This visit also served as an orientation and hand-off of responsibility between FPR staff members as a number of staff transitions took place, including retirements. It was agreed that planning should commence and the above conditions should be revisited. FPR is bringing a new perspective to the conversation and is looking for solid policy reasoning on renovation or removal of the historic structure. This has led to the start of a formal process and assessment known as the Visitor Use Management Framework. This framework is a policy decision making tool that was developed through inter-agency cooperation at the federal level. *(Continued on p.7)*

Backtracking

Cooper Lodge

By Herb Ogden

The building is the highest shelter on the Long Trail. It is about 18 x 20 feet. The rear is built of stone to the roof and the rest is stone to the bottom of a long row of windows that extends clear across the front and halfway along the two ends. Above the windows the structure is of wood. It has bunks for 12. Construction began in the summer of 1938 but was delayed by a hurricane that September. The lodge was



Cooper Lodge, brand new in 1940

completed in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps Plymouth camp under the direction of the Vermont State Forestry Department. It was formally dedicated on June 2, 1940. It is named after Charles P. Cooper, an outdoorsman who was vice-president of the Green Mountain Club in the club's early years and became the third president of the club in 1917. He continued as president until moving back to the Midwest in December 1925. Cooper was an active trail builder for the GMC and helped to clear many miles of the Long Trail.

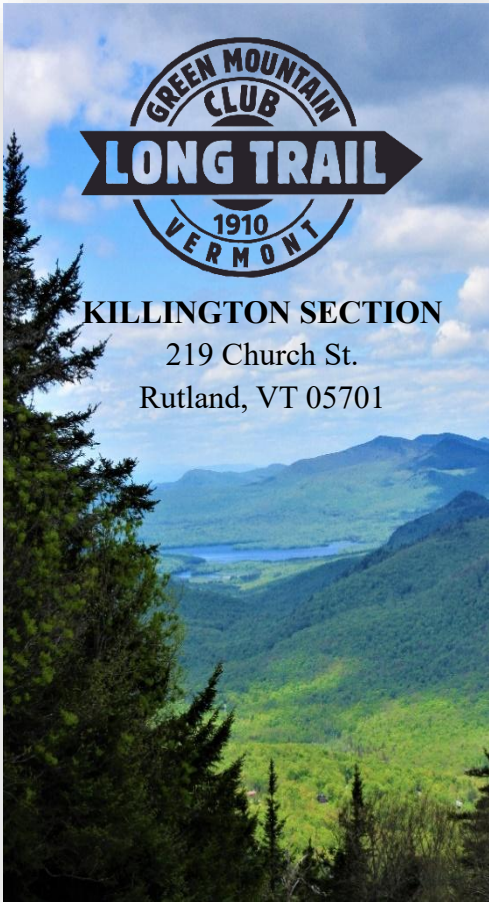
(Whither Cooper? Continued from p. 6)

While it may not bring a lot of new information to light, it does give FPR staff a process that can be defensible for any decision they make. It should allow a decision about project direction to be made by the start of the 2026 field season. The GMC's current position and expectations for the site are as follows:

- The Killington Section has absolved itself of any responsibility for Cooper Lodge and wants it removed.
- The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has remained mostly neutral on the issue aside from the desire that any change in management fit the nature of the AT experience.
- An overnight site on Killington Peak is an ideal base of operations for the GMC's Coolidge Range ridgerunner due to its easy accessibility from the Bucklin Trail and the Killington Resort gondola.
- The Long Trail System Management Plan says that the site is managed for three-season use (spring, summer, fall), has a significantly remote feel that aligns with the goals of the Long Trail System, and is accessible as a free, short-term, overnight location for users of the Long Trail System that maintains top-notch human waste management facilities in the form of a composting privy.
- According to the Long Trail System Management Plan, the site should require little-to-no management by the GMC for other activities (that would conflict with or significantly alter backcountry hiking trail experience.) The GMC expects conversations with FPR will continue this winter. If FPR decides against tearing down the building, there will be a plan for its restoration. If FPR is willing to move forward with removal, a tentative agreement to tear it down and install historic interpretation materials will be revisited with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is responsible for preserving the history of historic structures like Cooper.

I have strong nostalgia for Cooper Lodge, since I spent my first LT overnight there in 1960. It was a wonderful place with intact windows, a warm stove, comfortable bunks, and a good view. The lodge's historic connections are important as well. But mere pro-Cooper sentiment or fond memories don't get us to a solution. I'd be sad to see Cooper torn down, but given the ongoing challenges I would now favor creating a historic interpretive site, keeping just enough of the stonework to show where the lodge was. GMC staff are open to all possibilities and are committed to seeking consensus among partners and funding.

GMC Director of Field Programs Keegan Tierney reports that, with effort and a little bit of good fortune, we should see a path forward emerge in the next 6-12 months.



Your invitation to join

Killington Section, Green Mountain Club

The Killington Section, based in Rutland, VT, is a chapter of the statewide Green Mountain Club. Membership in the Section includes membership in the Club. Members receive a membership card, the Club quarterly *Long Trail News*, and the Section quarterly *Smoke & Blazes* including a schedule of outings, trail work parties and social events. Members also receive reduced rates on items from the Club store and at most overnight sites served by caretakers. Membership dues help to maintain trails and shelters in the Killington Section (Route 140 to Route 4) and the Long Trail system throughout Vermont.

ANNUAL DUES:

- Individual.....\$45
- Family.....\$60
- Senior/Student/Friend.....\$25

Contact us for information on life memberships and categories for giving at a higher level.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

I would like information on volunteering for:

trail work, shelter work, sign making, publications, leading outings, publicity, education, tech support

Make check payable to "GMC" and mail with this application to:
Green Mountain Club, 4711 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677

