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SKIING ACROSS PICTURESQUE WILLIAM BLAKE POND IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE. FROM THE OLD FARM TRAILHEAD NEAR THIRTEENTH LAKE, BOTHERATION POND LOOP IS ONE OF THE NEWEST TRAILS IN THE GARNET HILL AREA. PHOTO BY RICH MACHA

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Discover a Winter Wonderland

Backcountry Ski Touring in Upstate New York

By Rich Macha

If you have a sense for adventure, a thirst for exploration, an eye for the beauty of nature or just like to have more fun, then backcountry skiing could be for you! A day tour can be invigorating plus it can offer some expected and unexpected challenges. Add in the exhilaration of coasting down hills under control and you have the makings of a memorable outing.

Whether we like it or not, we all need some exercise and cross-country skiing offers a great cardiovascular workout, as well as utilizing both upper and lower body muscles. Getting that exercise in crisp air amongst natural beauty is a bonus.

The winter of 2011-12 was not the best for snow lovers, but I was still able to get out on my cross-country skis more than 40 times, most of the time on ungroomed trails. We did not have much snow in the Albany area where I live, but we often found snow after a drive of an hour or two. Thanks to the Internet we can find out snow depths in a variety of locations (nohrc.noaa.gov/nsa).

We can get to these scenic places on snowshoes, but why trudge when we can glide? While beginner skiers might be able to tackle easy terrain, it does take time, patience, and practice to become proficient at negotiating steeper and bumpier hills. The more you do it the better you get.

I have a small quiver of skis to choose from. Most of my skiing is done on skis that are 70-millimeter (mm) to 90mm at their widest point in front and 60mm to 70mm at their narrowest point

under the foot. A narrower ski tends to be faster, but a wider ski with more "sidecut" will float and turn better. Sidecut is the difference between the widest and narrowest part of the ski.

Metal edges on these skis protect and help you maintain a sharper edge, plus they aid you in turning on the steeper downhill sections – especially in less than ideal conditions. Waxless bases allow skiers to pay more attention to their surroundings, rather than attending to the performance of their skis. I do however either wax the front and back of no-wax ski bases for a better glide, or wipe a product like Maxiglide or Swix Easy Glide over the entire ski base, especially with warmer temperatures when the snow tends to be sticky.

Staying warm in cold weather can be an issue. It is best to dress in layers and avoid wearing any cotton clothing, which can suck the heat right out of you when damp. In your pack, carry extra gloves and mittens, extra warm clothing, and a down jacket is great for breaks when you are more likely to feel chilled. Other welcome additions are hand warmers (small, mostly disposable packets), an insulated pad to sit on, and a hot drink to consume. No matter what season it is, the essentials include a whistle, map and compass, multi-tool, food and water, fire-starting stuff, first aid kit, headlamp and repair items – including duct tape.

Where can we find snow? If there is no snow in your backyard, then think elevation! Here in the Capital Region, most people

See **Backcountry Ski Touring**, 19 ►

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SNOWSHOEING RUNNING & WALKING

“Double Your Snowshoe Pleasure, Double Your Fun”

By Laura Clark



2011 SARATOGA WINTERFEST.



2011 CAMP SARATOGA. PHOTOS BY BRIAN TEAGUE

We have all heard of folks who have set their sights on double Ironmans, or of 50 States Marathon Club members who log consecutive weekend marathons across state lines. Most of us greet this news with a slight shudder and a sense of incredulity. Then the overachiever aspect of our personality kicks in and we guiltily wonder if we should be doing any of this stuff.

With the 2006 Disney Goofy Challenge, featuring a half marathon on Saturday followed by the marathon on Sunday, the trend toward multiple day events suddenly became less mind-boggling and slightly more achievable. After all, with a bonafide Disney endorsement and Donald, Mickey and Goofy leading the way, how difficult could it be? Last year 6,500 runners succeeded.

This winter could be your opportunity to jump on the bandwagon without spending big bucks to travel to Florida. Just strap on your snowshoes, visit runwmac.com, and note the current lineup of 16 events. Even the most mathematically challenged among us can grasp the fact that with approximately 10 weeks of prime-time winter, some doubling is inevitable in the scramble to cram as much fun as possible into a too-short time span. Actually, we have been doing this for years, but now we get to latch onto a major trend.

So for the 2013 season there is a possibility of six weekends of back-to-back races. Add in the additional races sponsored by dionsnowshoes.com, empirestatesnowshoe.org and snowshoeracing.com, and the possibility for an endless winter really does exist. As the popularity of snowshoeing has increased and our race calendar has subsequently expanded, many experienced snowshoers began doubling, not to make any sort of personal statement, but rather because we hated to miss out on any of our favorite events. Through trial and error we have learned a few things; mainly, targeting likely races, streamlining pre-race logistics, training your mind if not your body.

As a starting point on your winter adventures, it is probably not a good idea to tackle a distance that you have never before attempted. After my first Peak Snowshoe Marathon, my husband Jeff and I blithely proceeded to the Hawley Kiln Five-Miler. The feeling was rather like the initial transition from bike to run during a triathlon, only more so. A better way to approach this insanity would be to consult the schedule and select a combo that features a more difficult event of doable mileage followed by an easier second day.

Examining the schedule, on January 12 and 13, **Constitution Hill** in Lanesborough, Mass., followed by Albany Running Exchange's **Brave the Blizzard** in Averill Park are likely candidates. Constitution Hill, one of the few races to thrive in last year's snow drought, takes you 3.6 miles through deep, untrammeled snow and winding, scenic wooded areas. Brave the Blizzard, with its trademarked costumed characters, continues to bill itself as a non-threatening beginner's four-mile event. As an added plus, this duo is early enough in the season to permit you to rack up more doubleheaders.

On the weekend of February 23 and 24, there is also **Moby Dick**, a difficult seven-mile trek up Mount Greylock's version of the white whale in Lanesborough, with a glorious ride down the hump, followed by the next day's **Hallockville Orchard**, a comparatively flat 3.8-mile trek in West Hawley, Mass.

For those who prefer the opposite tactic, the weekend of January 5 and 6 brings you **Turner Trail** five-miles in the Pittsfield (MA) State Forest, whose slogan should be "up, down and twist around," followed by the more moderate, but still challenging **I Love Woodford** three-miler near Bennington, Vt.

However you choose to go, know that the mental side of the equation is equally as important as the detailed racing strategies outlined in *Runner's World* John Hanc's *Five Strategies to Nail Back-to-Back Races*. By the time the snow arrives and you connect all the dots, the season will be over. After some post-Turkey Trot down time, concentrate on maintaining your fitness during the holidays. Visit the Western Mass. Athletic Club's runwmac.com site to peruse past *SnoNews* newsletter stories about your target events.

Most especially, don't make the mistake of sabotaging your Saturday race by holding something in reserve for the next day. Not only will you ultimately disappoint yourself, but you will be pleasantly surprised at how your Sunday legs quickly recover from the previous day's effort. Snow is softer than both roads and trails, and allows your body to rebound so much more quickly. The second day, you will want to start out a bit slower than usual, which is not necessarily a bad thing. If you have selected radically differing courses like the ones outlined above, you will discover that you will fool your body into believing it is starting fresh by recruiting different muscles and race speeds.

The three remaining combos pretty much

employ similar hard/easy strategies; that is, if you count Camp Saratoga as being easy. But here, lengthy road trips in possibly challenging weather conditions up-the-ante. On January 26 and 27, the **Side-Hiller** four-miler in New Hampshire is followed by **Curly's Record Run** four miles in Pittsfield, Mass.

On February 9 and 10, the **Camp Saratoga** five-miler in Wilton, is three hours away from the **Northfield Mountain** 6.2-mile race in Massachusetts. And Sunday's **Moore State Park** 3.1 miles near Worcester is far away from anything local.

This is not like attending a running festival weekend where one drive, however long, will net you several events with relaxing downtime in between. During your downtime you will be racking up road mileage in an unfamiliar setting while trying to dry out your clothes and refuel your body. Not exactly stress free. Your best bet, which remains true for any of these events, would be to carpool – either with like-minded companions who are in it for the long haul or with a completely fresh set of friends for round two.

In the *Calendar of Events*, you may notice that the WMAC Dion Snowshoe Series for the last three weekends of February – by which point we are presumably tough enough – features three doubleheaders!

If triple headers sound like a good idea to you, or if you are new to the sport of doubling, this is not the time for serious weekday training. One or two short shakedown runs at a ridiculously easy pace will be enough to loosen your legs. This would also be a good time to mentor a beginner or to cross-train. Or perhaps simply sleep in! Spend your extra time wisely by sorting your gear and doing those errands you would normally save for the weekend.

You don't have to be super-trim or extra speedy to take on the doubles challenge. In fact, doubling is particularly suited to the abilities of the average athlete who isn't as concerned with winning the race as they are with running outside of the lines.

As Mary Whittredge, Saratoga Stryders club member and No Boundaries program mentor, discovered after completing Disney's Goofy Challenge, the possibilities expand exponentially. Attempting her first 50K, which previously seemed impossible now seems eminently doable. By tackling a double, you will discover what you are truly made of, and be ready to go wherever that takes you.

While you may not ever win a race outright or snag an age group medal, through your sheer persistence, you will become a role model to many and a hero to yourself! 🌲

Laura Clark (lclark@sals.edu) of Saratoga Springs is an avid trail runner, snowshoer and cross-country skier. She is a child's librarian at the Saratoga Springs Public Library.

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SWIMMING & TRIATHLON

IRONMAN PEGGY PHILLIPS TESTING HER SKILLS IN THE MICHAEL PHELPS SWIM SPA AT CONCORD POOLS AND SPAS IN LATHAM.

Where's Your Favorite Place to Swim?

By Kristen Hislop

When I posed that question on Facebook, my husband said, "Hawaii," and Julie Gauer, of Clifton Park, said, "Aruba." Since those aren't options for regular workouts, I pulled together closer venues and found some alternative pools for aqua newbies, swimmers and triathletes.

Tammy Friend, of Halfmoon, and Catherine Bologna, of Rexford, stop swimming as soon as the triathlon season is over, but others in the Capital District are looking for options to workout, improve their strokes and get faster. Cory Metler, of Halfmoon, says, "I just joined the Southern Saratoga Y. First swim last night and I had the place to myself; so far, so good." Tom Orcutt, of East Greenbush, heads to the Greenbush Y. "I can swim while my kids are at swim team practice. I follow along the with kids' workout if the coach posts it on the white board." Bill Becker, of Albany, suggests heading to University at Albany for \$18 per month. UAlbany alum Trevor Ortolano, of West Hartford, Conn., used to bring Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team in Training athletes to Albany Academy for early morning sessions. Some of the local high schools are a great bargain if the hours work for you.

Those who learned to swim as kids often pick the sport up again in adulthood for a lower impact workout or sometimes due to injuries. Others decide to start swimming to be able to compete in triathlons or cross another 'must learn to' item off the bucket list.

For those just starting to swim, some of the adult swim lessons offered at area pools are a great place to start! The Albany JCC and Ciccotti Center in Colonie and most of the local Ys offer swim lessons for non-members. These pools also offer intermediate lessons for those who want to improve their strokes or learn another stroke like butterfly. Private lessons can be great for people who are very nervous about the water or want the class to progress at their speed.

The number one impediment to doing a triathlon is the swim. Michelle Shovah-Mickalonis, of Mechanicville, says,

"Swimmer? Me? NOT! I've run a marathon, I can bike 100 miles, but to do that first leg of a triathlon I knew that I had to learn the right way to swim. Problem being, I was terrified." She's now one of my clients, so we started slowly and worked on one thing at a time. Michelle recently said, "I no longer look at the pool as a scary place, where I do not belong. I belong."

As masters swimmer and Total Immersion swim coach, Ann Svenson, points out to her students at the Saratoga Regional Y, "Swimming is a technique sport more than an endurance sport. We are vertical land animals and need to learn how to get balanced in an environment in which you can't readily breathe."

Triathletes like Tammy and Catherine may take a break from swimming in the fall, but by December most are looking for a place to get their feet wet again. Now is the time to look at facilities, as many are or will be running membership specials in December and January. If your high school or health club is not listed but has a pool, please check as they most likely have public swim hours.

Masters swimming is open to anyone over the age of 18. Adirondack District Masters Swimming (adms.org) offers meets over the course of the winter at area pools and summer open water swim events. Masters swim programs offer structured workouts led by certified coaches. Members can participate in the meets with swimmers of varying abilities. Triathletes should consider a winter meet to develop speed. Nick Deck, aquatics director at the Ciccotti Center, says he focuses on efficiency with his swimmers and would love to help prepare them for meets.

Other groups like the Capital District Triathlon Club (cdtriclub.org) and Team LUNA Chix (teamlunachix.com) offer winter swim clinics. These are opportunities to learn drills, get feedback, and improve swim technique. The Saratoga Regional Y in Saratoga Springs offers Open Water Safety Clinics and clinics on how to prepare for open water swimming in the pool.

Sometimes we need a little change to shake up swim training. How about swimming in a 17-foot pool with a variable current? No walls, the temperature you choose, and a shorter more intense workout. If that sounds interesting, you can check out the Michael Phelps Swim Spa at Concord Pools in Latham, or the Endless Pool at Revolutionary Velo-Watts in Clifton Park.

The Phelps Spa, installed and available for a test swim at Concord Pools, is a deluxe system. The 18-foot long pool has a propeller propulsion system that can hold Michael Phelps at bay. At a recent demo night I swam in the pool with Ironman Lake Placid finishers Peggy Phillips, of East Schodack and John Perry, of Johnsonville. We all found it to be realistic and challenging as the level increased. It's easy to change strokes and wide enough to swim butterfly. For coaches, is it a great tool to give a specific workout, and with a video camera/monitor be able to view the swimmer underwater (without holding your breath) to provide immediate feedback. You can schedule a time to try out the Phelps pool via the Concord Pools Facebook page: [facebook.com/concord.pools.spas](https://www.facebook.com/concord.pools.spas). The team at Concord will be happy to sell you your own pool!

Revolutionary Velo-Watts has an Endless Pool named "The Triquarium" at their cycling studio. You can schedule time in the pool; it's \$25 for 30 minutes or \$35 for 45 minutes. For more info, go to velowatts.com.

Finding swim gear in the winter can be a challenge. Fitness facilities, sporting goods stores, and tri-friendly bike shops often have training gear for sale. The Deep End is a swim shop in Latham, which carries wetsuits and all the necessary accessories.

Here is a sampling of Capital Region high school, college and health club pools.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES - COST AND SWIM TIMES

- Albany Academy - \$5/day, \$50/month, \$500/year; Mon-Fri 5:30-7:45am.
- Albany - No charge; adults 50+ Mon eves, families Wed 6-8pm.
- Ballston Spa - \$1 resident, \$2 non-resident; Mon/Wed/Fri 6-7am, Mon-Thu 8:30-9pm.
- Bethlehem - Four lane pool, open to the public.
- Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake - \$2/day, \$50/semester; 6:30-7:30am, 7:30-8:30pm.
- Niskayuna - \$2 resident, \$5 non-resident; Mon-Fri 6-7:20am, 11:20-12:40pm, 8:30-9:50pm.
- Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk - \$30/year resident, \$125/year non-resident; Mon-Fri 5:30-7:30am, Tue/Thu 8:30-9:30am, Sat 10am-1pm, Sun 3-4:30pm.
- Schenectady - Via Capital District Y or \$12.50/month resident & \$25/month non-resident; Mon-Fri 5:30-7:45am, 5-9pm, Sat 8am-12pm.
- Shenendehowa - Session (3 months): \$59 resident, \$74 non-resident; Mon-Fri 5:45-7:45am, Tue/Thu 6-9pm, Sat 12-4pm; adult lessons.

- University at Albany - \$8/day, \$160/semester, \$380/year; Mon-Fri 7:30am-9pm.
- Voorheesville - \$2 all; Wed 7-9pm, Sat 1-3pm.

HEALTH CLUBS - GUEST FEE; ADULT LESSONS; STEAM, SAUNA, WHIRLPOOL; MASTERS SWIM AND TRIATHLON PROGRAM

- Albany Jewish Community Center - \$10 two guests/member, first Thu of month: free two guests/member; group/private lessons for all; sauna; outdoor pool (23m); spring swim clinics.
- Schenectady Jewish Community Center - 1-day pass available, member guest pass \$5; private/semi-private lessons for all; members/non-members; hydro fit classes; steam, sauna, whirlpool; outdoor pool.
- Ciccotti Center - \$15/day guest pass; group/private lessons; whirlpool; masters Mon/Wed 8-9pm seven-week session (\$100 member, \$150 non-member); February triathlon program.
- Bethlehem Y - Members get 3 guest passes/year; group/private lessons for full/program members (guests and lessons: same for all Capital District YMCAs); steam, sauna, whirlpool; masters Wed 6:30-8pm; spring triathlon program.
- Greenbush Y - Masters Mon-Fri 5-8am, Wed 7:30-9pm, Sun 7:30-9am; winter triathlon program.
- Glenville Y - No masters or triathlon programs.
- Guilderland Y - Steam, sauna; no masters program; triathlon clinics.
- Southern Saratoga Y - Steam, sauna, whirlpool; masters Tue/Thu 8-9pm for \$15/month; triathlon program Feb-April as prep for Anyone Can "Tri."
- Troy Y - Steam, sauna, whirlpool; no triathlon programs.
- Saratoga Regional Y - \$10/day guest pass; lessons: Sun 7:30-8:30 am, 7-week session for full/program members; steam, sauna, whirlpool; no masters program; Open Water Safety and Tri Training clinics in spring for all.
- Glens Falls Y - \$10/day guest pass; lessons Wed 12:15-12:45pm for all; steam, sauna, whirlpool; masters Mon 7:30-8:30pm, Wed/Fri 6:30-7:30pm, Sat 6-7am; coached workouts for swim/tri.

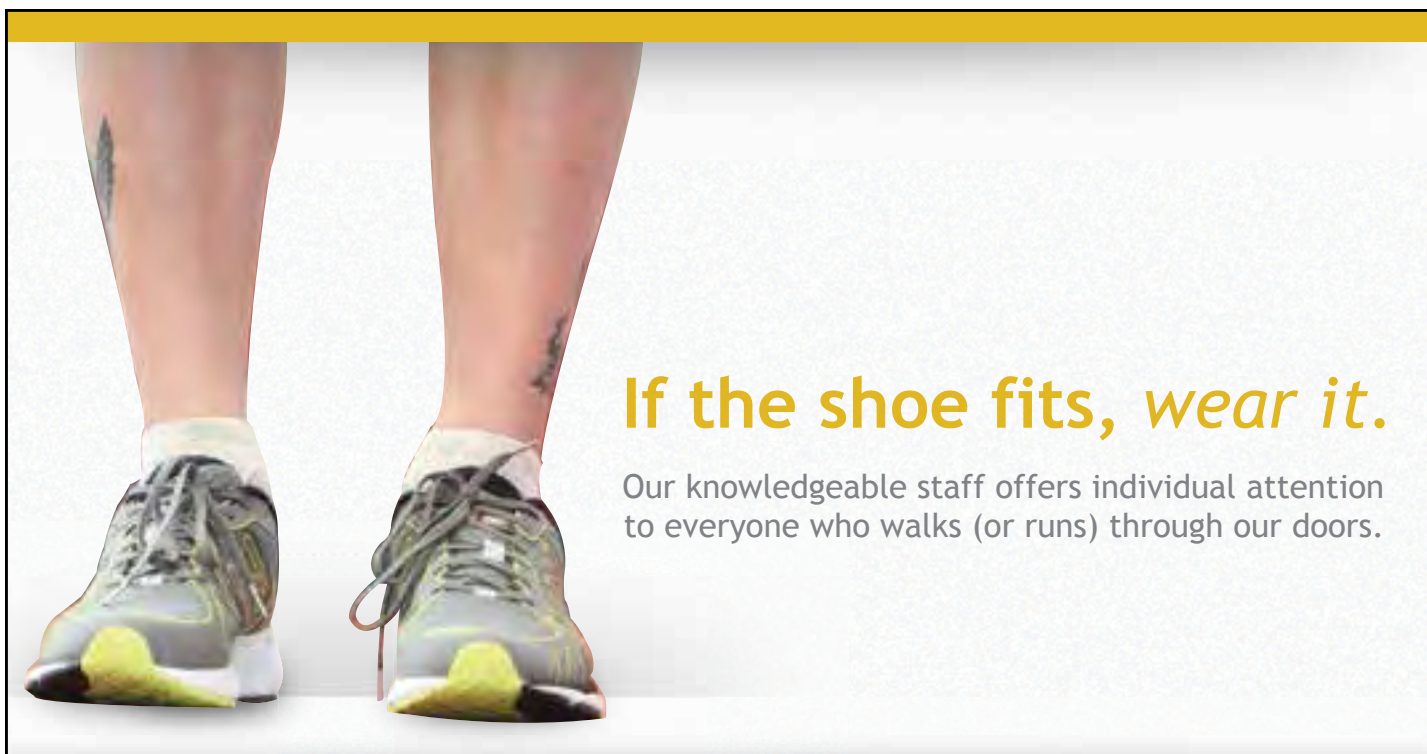
Pools are all 25 yards and 8 lanes except: Albany and Schenectady JCC indoor (20 yards, 5 lanes); Bethlehem and Glens Falls (6 lanes); Troy (20 yards, 4 lanes); Glenville (5 lanes). Pools are about 82 degrees, except: Ciccotti lap pool (79-81); Albany JCC (83-84). Happy laps! 🏊‍♂️

Kristen Hislop (hislopdesigns.com) of Clifton Park is a USA Triathlon coach, Team LUNA Chix member, Leukemia & Lymphoma Team in Training coach, and personal trainer whose motto is "Do. Believe. Achieve."



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COMMUNITY

“Long Distance” Running in New York City

By Kim Kilby

In 2011, my partner, Bryan Cherry, and I spent a lot of time running in New York City. Living in Schenectady and running races over and over in NYC can prove logistically challenging and a bit tiresome, but we were running with a purpose... To qualify for the one-and-only NYC marathon!

It all began on a very chilly 14-degree morning in the city, and despite the cold, we felt great running the Manhattan Half-Marathon in Central Park. After the race, we hurried back to the subway train to warm up and start the trek back to the Bronx to our car and then back upstate. The adventure was such a success that we were hooked. We thought, hey, why not run a half-marathon in each borough? Unfortunately, that plan was quickly thwarted when we were closed out of the Brooklyn Half-Marathon – we were outsiders after all.

What to do now? What's this “9+1 Program” everyone keeps talking about? As we learned more, we became more and more excited to give it a go. The 9+1 is one of the few guaranteed ways to get into the ING New York City Marathon by 1) joining New York Road Runners by January 31 of the calendar year, and 2) running nine of their qualifying races and volunteering for one during one calendar year. If you do this, congratulations, you are now qualified for entry into the following year's NYC Marathon. For a NYC resident, this would seem like a no-brainer – why would you NOT do this? The NYC Marathon is the world's greatest marathon! But for those of us runners who live three hours away, it does become a bit more challenging. But, we are runners – challenging ourselves is what this is all about! Here are six things we learned along the way.

Utilize nyrr.org and sign up for races early – NYRR races tend to sell out, so don't wait until the last minute. Their website is excellent and the calendar is generally updated with races several months in advance. Note that most of the races are 9+1 qualifiers, but not all, so pay attention!

Get a routine down early – It is possible to wake up very early and drive down to NYC on race morning and avoid traffic. Since most races are in Central Park, choose the same spot to drive to, and catch the train down to the park. We did most of the races down and back on the same day, which saves on housing costs, and gives you half of your weekend comfortably back at home.

Find a favorite pre/post race spot – Ours was a café that was right at the top of the subway stairs, offering a decent bathroom before the race, and warm coffee and croissants after. We went there every race and even discovered the guy behind the counter was a runner too!

Pretend to be a city-dweller – Seeing all of the runners fill up a subway car bright and early in the morning made it fun to play it cool and pretend to be just another city-dwelling-runner among them. Since my partner grew up in the Bronx, this came pretty naturally for him, but I'm sure I stood out like a sore thumb.

Respect the club – NYRR is a group that knows how to put on a road race. They are a well-oiled machine every step of the way, from packet/shirt pick-up, to D-tags, to the baggage drop, to the race starts neatly corraling thousands of runners, to the finish line food where you quickly grab a bagel, fruit, and water without even stopping! It gives you a lot of respect for a group that has what it takes to put on such large, smooth running events week after week.

Stay for the post-race celebration and raffle – There was such an awesome party after each race that was definitely worth staying for. How often can you watch a raffle emceed by a beautiful six-foot tall drag

queen or be in the running to win an all expenses paid trip to Abu Dhabi? Every race, there are plenty of freebies for everyone, and really sweet raffle prizes for a few lucky runners.

Keep a journal – Working toward a race for two years gives you lots of time to reflect on the experience and it was fun to document it all in a journal that we can look back on anytime. Each race ended up being its own unique experience. We ran Boomer's Cystic Fibrosis Run to Breathe with Super Bowl quarterback Boomer Esiason and runners living with CF, including one who was awaiting a lung transplant. And, we ran the Pride Run on June 25 – the very day gay marriage was legalized in New York. The excitement of the crowd on that day was nearly visible in the air.

Don't miss the Achilles Hope & Possibility Five-Mile Run – This was the race we volunteered for and one of the most inspiring events to watch, with physically challenged and able-bodied athletes showing unbelievable strength and fight to achieve... Awe-inspiring!

◀ SOME OF KIM'S NYC MARATHON QUALIFIER RACE BIBS SURROUND HER JOURNAL.

▲ ON NOVEMBER 4TH, BRIAN AND KIM FINISH THE MANCHESTER CITY MARATHON!

By January 9, 2012, we had both received emails from NYRR documenting that “We were in.” It didn't seem real but the 9+1 had actually worked... We were going to run the New York City Marathon in 2012!

But, as so many things in life, it didn't turn out quite as we expected... With the devastation brought to the NYC region by Hurricane Sandy, we knew even before the race was cancelled that we would not run the NYC Marathon as originally planned.

So, we changed our plans and ran the Manchester City Marathon in New Hampshire on November 4 instead – a much smaller field, and a much hillier course, but we survived our first marathon. We are keeping hope alive that the New York City Marathon is still in our future, just one more year away. NYC 2013 has a nice ring to it. 🌱

Kim Kilby (kimberlyakilby@gmail.com) is a runner and triathlete residing in Schenectady. She is one of the medical directors of the Mohawk Hudson River Marathon and Half Marathon, and is a primary care doctor at Albany Family Medicine Group of Delmar.



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ATHLETE PROFILE

Spencer Morrissey

AGE: 39

FAMILY: Corenne Black, fiancée;
Son, Kole; Daughter, Emily

RESIDENCE: Lake Placid

CAREER: Assistant Manager, Eastern
Mountain Sports, Lake Placid

PRIMARY SPORTS: Hiking, Snowshoeing, Paddling

SECONDARY
SPORTS: Trail Running, Backcountry
Skiing, Bouldering,
Ice Climbing

The Rule of Up By Alan Via



■ WINTER HIKING IN THE HIGH PEAKS.
■ ON THE WAY DOWN KILBURN MOUNTAIN.
PHOTO BY ALAN VIA

“Always follow the rule of up,” is a phrase I associate with Spencer Morrissey from our many off-trail hikes together. It refers to a bushwhack hike with no trail and answers the question “Where do we go from here?” It’s also a philosophy of life that Spencer’s adopted as an approach to his sports and all other activities in his life, and should someday be engraved on his tombstone.

Spencer is likely one of the most highly travelled and experienced hikers and bushwhackers in the Adirondacks. He was born and grew up in the heart of the mountains, Long Lake. Growing up in the mountain and lake country, you’d certainly expect he would be comfortable with a pack or paddle, but he’s taken his outdoor pursuits to a whole new level.

The first time I crossed paths with Spencer was many years ago on an Internet hiking forum. Both of us were hiking the Adirondack 100 highest peaks and began trading information. This turned into a plan to do a bushwhack together, and that was the start of a long and exhilarating friendship.

The young Mr. Morrissey loved to go fishing with his father and grandfather, his first steps into an outdoors life. He climbed his first peak, Goodnow Mountain, in third grade at age eight, and then began hiking taller and taller mountains, like Blue Mountain, and the second highest in New York, Algonquin Peak. The real hiking bug didn’t hit him until his teen years when he fell in love with the sport and jumped in with both boots.

Spencer added paddling to his outdoor pursuits in his early 30s, kayaking and exploring ponds, with his good friend, Brian Yourdon. They had the idea of trying to

hike into or canoe all the remote lakes and ponds throughout the Adirondacks, a pursuit they termed ‘pondhopping.’ Exploring the vast Adirondack network of waterways led to another activity, inspiring them to begin climbing the Adirondack 46 High Peaks of 4,000 feet or higher, to become Adirondack 46ers.

Not resting on their hiking and paddling laurels, Spencer and Brian set out on another almost impossibly difficult journey, the “Adirondack Quad Quest.” There are over 100 United States Geological Survey topographic maps that are either completely or partially within the Blue Line boundary of the Adirondack Park. Doing the ‘quads’ means climbing every named mountain, peak, ridge or mountain feature on each of those maps. The goal was to ascend every mountain feature that had a name. Some of these are summits, but could also have the name notch, cliff, ridge, hill, ledge, peak or knob.

Just selecting one of these USGS maps at random, I noted over 75 climbable map features, almost every one without a trail. Even a map quad with a modest number of destinations requires hundreds of miles of hiking and bushwhacking. Spencer has 30 map quads fully completed and he is nearing 700 climbs. I don’t believe anyone has even begun a project like climbing every destination on just one map, let alone taking aim at them all. Even with a two-year hiatus for school and another hiking project, Spencer is almost at 700, and is planning to pick up the pace this year.

The rest of Spencer’s hiking resume is equally impressive. He has hiked all over New England, has completed 32 of the 50 US State High Points, and all of the New York fire

tower peaks. His achievements also include climbing the Adirondack 46 High Peaks multiple times and in winter. Since legendary John Winkler completed all of the 46 peaks by bushwhack, non-trailed routes 30 years ago, Spencer is only the second person to complete the peaks by hiking them all, even the trailed summits, by original off-trail bushwhack routes – something that required planning, perseverance, endurance and drive.

Our lives intersected when he and Brian Yourdon had begun hiking all of the Adirondack 100 highest summits. The three of us joined together to climb them, in heat, humidity, bugs and in all weather conditions. Spencer is the 23rd known completer of the ADK-100 list, which still has under 50 finishers. Climbing these mountains sparked an idea in Spencer, one that led to his publishing, *The Other 54: A Hiker’s Guide to the Lower 54 Peaks of the Adirondack 100 Highest*. Until the book was published, information on the 100 summits was largely word of mouth. The book has sold out its first two editions with a third edition due April 2013. One of my biggest regrets is having suggested to Spencer that *The Other 54* would make a great book title. He gets a kick out of my having eliminated “The Other 67” as a possible title for my own hiking guide – his book and quest was its inspiration.

Spencer and his fiancée Corenne are the authors of another book, *Adirondack Trail Runner: A Sample of More Than One Hundred Trail Running Destinations*, and they are working on a couple of other as yet

unnamed projects for outdoors enthusiasts. What does a person like this do to stay in shape? Besides lots of gym work, weights and yoga, his outdoor fitness regime includes running on roads and trails, snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, and lots and lots of hiking.

To round out his outdoors background, Spencer took a year off and enrolled and graduated from the SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry School, commonly known as The Ranger School. He is also a volunteer forest firefighter, member of the Champlain Valley Search and Rescue, and is a licensed NYS guide.

Spencer and Corenne are co-owners of Inca-pah-cho Wilderness Guides, a business that takes clients into the backcountry for a variety of mountain associated adventures. 🌲

Alan Via (be46@nycap.rr.com) enjoys hiking, photography and fly fishing. He is the author of many hiking oriented articles and his hiking guide, The Catskill 67: A Hiker’s Guide to the Catskill 100 Highest Peaks under 3500’ was published by the Adirondack Mountain Club in April.

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BACKCOUNTRY SKI TOURING *cont. from page 1*



THE AUTHOR ON THE **NORTHVILLE-PLACID TRAIL** TO TIRRELL POND IN THE CENTRAL ADIRONDACKS.



DAVE LOUX OF DELMAR ON THE **TACONIC CREST TRAIL**, NEAR PETERSBURG PASS, WITH MOUNT GREYLOCK IN THE BACKGROUND.

live a little above sea level, yet within a half hour's drive there are areas exceeding 2,000 feet in elevation that attract and hold snow.

For example, in southwestern Albany County, the **Partridge Run Wildlife Management Area** (dec.ny.gov) in Berne and **Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve** (huyck-preserve.org) in Rensselaerville, offer many miles of high elevation trails. Partridge Run has

designated cross-country ski trails, plus many more miles of snowmobile trails. The Huyck Preserve's network offers ski trails suitable for novice in the Lake Myosotis area and intermediate in the Partridge Path loop trails.

In Rensselaer County, the **Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center** (dykenpond.org) in Grafton is located on the Rensselaer Plateau, with elevations above

1,500 feet, and it's just a short drive from Troy. Well south of NY Route 2, Dyken Pond is away from major roads and offers many trails in a peaceful, out of the way setting. To learn more, visit rensselaerplateau.org.

Further east, Route 2 climbs to the 2,000-foot mark and crosses the New York and Massachusetts border at **Petersburg Pass**. The Taconic Crest Trail crosses here, and the three-mile ski north to the Snow Hole, a cave that holds some snow year-round, is a good intermediate ski with a couple of steep hills and a great view toward the Hudson Valley at a lookout en route. South of the pass is an old alpine ski area on Mount Raimier, which attracts telemark skiers willing to "skin" up and then ski down. Climbing skins are attached to ski bases to make it easier to climb the steeper slopes.

The best guidebook to cross-country skiing in the greater Capital Region is **ECOS Ski & Snowshoe Tips** published by Environmental Clearinghouse. They also publish separate guidebooks to natural areas in Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga and Rensselaer counties, which I find very useful year-round. You can buy their guides at book or outdoor gear stores.

In most winters, the southern Adirondacks attract a lot of snow due to being in the line of lake-effect snows. Last winter the central Adirondacks, including the Blue Mountain Lake area, had some of the best snow depths throughout the winter. The intermediate backcountry skier has several choices here.

The Northville-Placid Trail heads north of NY Routes 29 and 30 over rolling terrain to mile-long **Tirrell Pond**. From the pond, there are super views of Blue and Tirrell mountains. There are lean-tos at both ends of Tirrell Pond that make for great lunch spots. South of Routes 29 and 30, trails lead past **Lake Durant to Cascade and Stephens ponds**, each of which also has a lean-to and mountain views if you ski out onto the ponds. The downhill run on the return to Lake Durant is one of my favorites.

From the Old Farm Trailhead near Thirteenth Lake, you have several choices of intermediate-level ski tours. The **Botheration Pond loop** is one of the newest trails in the area. There are views of Gore Mountain from Botheration Pond and The Flow, and skiing across picturesque William Blake Pond is always a pleasure.

The Adirondack High Peaks have some of the best scenery in the state. From the south, novices can ski from **Upper Works to Henderson Lake**, and from the lake enjoy spectacular mountain views that include the distinctively-shaped Wallace and the McIntyre Range. Intermediate skiers can continue on to the **Preston Ponds and Duck Hole** for more magnificent views.

From the north, a popular and relatively easy trip goes from **Adirondack Loj Road to South Meadow** and along a wide truck trail to stunning views at Marcy Dam after a ski of four miles. Advanced skiers can continue past Marcy Dam and tackle the steep trail through **Avalanche Pass to Avalanche Lake**.

The best guidebook to skiing in the Adirondacks is **Ski and Snowshoe Trails in the Adirondacks** (Adirondack Mountain Club) by Tony Goodwin. For more year-round ideas, check out the **"Discover the Adirondacks"** (Wild River Press) series of trail guidebooks by Bill Ingersoll and Barbara McMartin, and also the Adirondack Mountain Club has a series of trail guidebooks (adk.org).

If you are looking for company out on the trails, check out your local chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club (adk.org). 🌲

Rich Macha is owner of Adirondack Paddle 'n' Pole, a specialty cross-country ski and paddlesports shop in Colonie (onewithwater.com). Rich also leads backcountry ski trips for the Adirondack Mountain Club's Albany Chapter (adk-albany.org).

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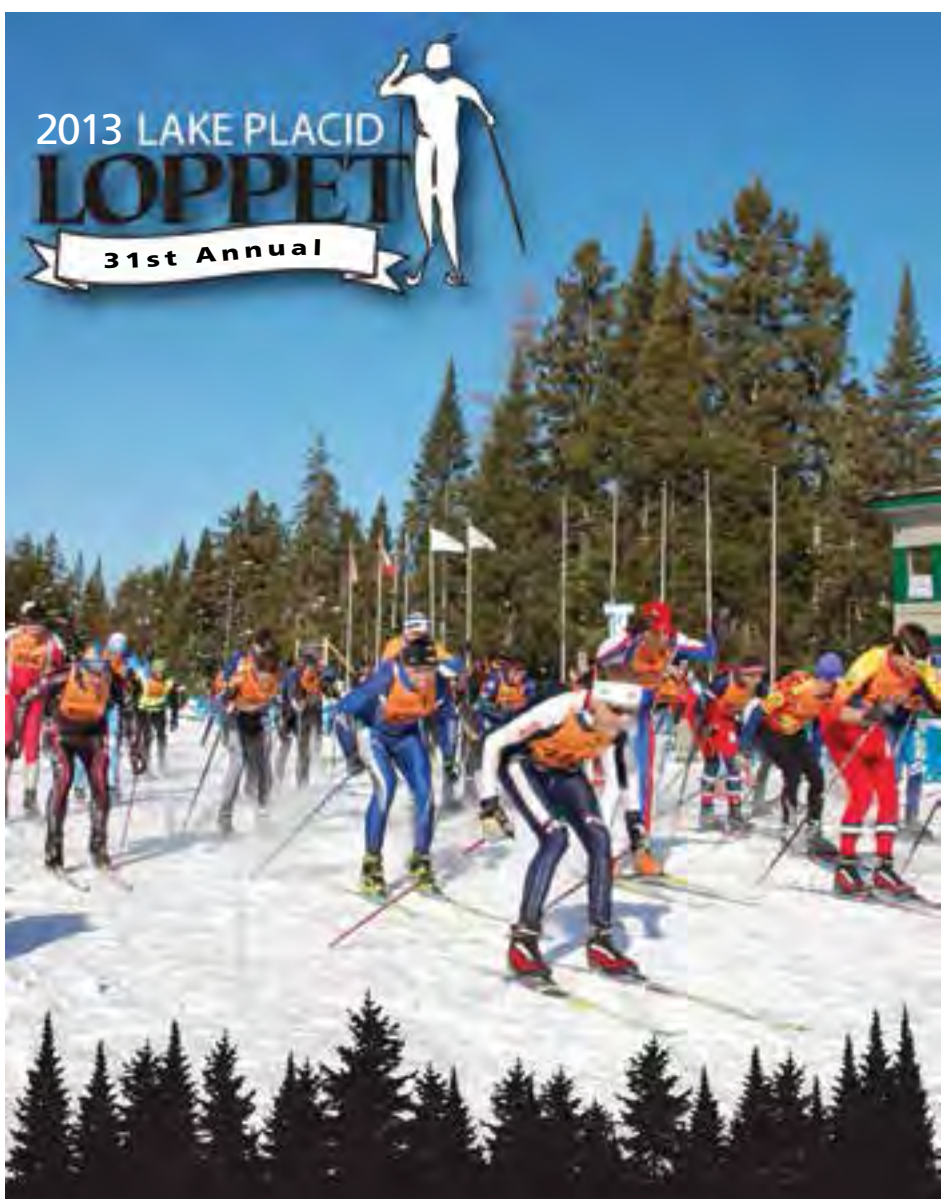


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