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A Peak Ahead: Off Trail

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Off Trail

THE NEW CORONAVIRUS CREPT INTO NORTH AMERICA ALMOST A YEAR ago, relentless and unpredictable, on a path with no clear end. It breathed shadows onto every route I have followed in my life, even daily routines in town. But despite the threat of illness all around, somehow I know better than ever what truly matters. For me, that means continuing to move toward forests, hills, and waterways.

Following this thinking, *Appalachia* is gathering stories for Summer/Fall 2021 that head right into that sense of uncertainty—off trail. Here is a glimpse of what's coming up:

Steven D. Smith, who knows every trail in New Hampshire's White Mountains and who edits the Appalachian Mountain Club's *White Mountain Guide*, narrates his personal history bushwhacking up Scar Ridge, "dark, massive, and densely wooded, its northwest face raked with glistening slides."

Lisa Ballard swore off trailless peaks more than 40 years ago. In summer 2020 she went against her word, pushing through the nearly fourteen miles to the top of the famously inaccessible Mount Marshall in the Adirondacks of New York, an experience that changed her attitude.

Our Accidents editor, Sandy Stott, writes of tracing a stream to its source in the Shem Valley below Mount Cardigan in New Hampshire. He's explored this area his entire life. "It's both a filling in of a long-walked picture, and still, surprisingly, a place where you can suddenly feel disoriented, a little lost," he says.

Some other stories include: a doctor recalling the day his best friend died in front of him on Mount Madison, and a hiker veering off her route up Owl's Head while pondering the imminent loss of her partner to a terrible disease.

As always, *Appalachia* will include analyses of accidents in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, reports of major climbs in the greater ranges, and stories about science and conservation in wild areas.

We are working on making some back issues of this journal and all issues going forward available online via an open-access arrangement with Dartmouth College. The latest issue will be available online starting three months after publication. We are excited by this opportunity to share our mission of publishing great wilderness writing with a wider public.

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