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Accidents

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Accidents

*Analysis from the White Mountains of
New Hampshire and occasionally elsewhere*

WHAT ARRESTED MY ATTENTION IN LAST SEASON'S SEARCH-AND-rescue reports was the number of slip-ups. Of 62 incidents reviewed, 22 began with slips. These made me think of footing, from two angles: first, weather and trail conditions; second, what people put on their feet.

In summer 2015 and its shoulder seasons, most of the heat stayed south and west of the Whites, which were well watered and sometimes doused. Worldwide, it was the hottest year on record, but in the North Country, temperatures were moderate and encouraged foot-fun. Although total rainfall was near normal, the cool weather of early summer—especially in June—meant that the near-average rainfall stuck around on the ground for long stretches. There was simply less mopping up by the usual high, hot sun or thick towels of warm wind.

The second angle of wondering looked down, toward what we wear on our feet when we go out and up. Was I looking at some spawn of a transition in footwear during this slippery summer?

“Back in the day,” hikers wore boots (usually with lug soles) and sneakers (usually patterned but slickish on the bottom) and inappropriate other shoes. Choice of footwear for the mountains was limited, and so it was easy if one tended toward prudence or tradition: boots ruled. Athletic footwear has exploded, ranging now from recognizable boots through a spectrum of demi-boots and on into a broader spectrum of trail-running-ambly-shuffling shoes. What do we know of our treads, and how secure are we on them? I'd say less than hikers and climbers of a generation ago.

Confession of bias: I grew up into Limmer boots; getting my first pair (of two, lifetime) when my feet stopped growing was a rite of mountain passage. I had arrived. And during the 40 years I wore those boots, I got to know their soles' capabilities very well. I simply knew when they would hold and when they wouldn't; I was rarely wrong.

My shift to lighter footwear some years ago bowed to the old saw, “Every pound on your feet is worth five on your back,” and it grew also from my longtime fondness for running trails. My switch also mimicked the aforementioned broader one, and, as I replaced these lighter trail shoes once or more per year, I had to learn and relearn their soles. Yes, much of the time, I still knew when I’d hold and when I risked slippage, but near-certainty vanished. All of this made me speculative, careful, and, I think, a little more vulnerable. And it makes me wonder just how much each of us knows about our sole source of traction on our trails.

Perhaps through the examples of a few of the slip stories below, we may all think a little more about the tread that meets the trail.

The season’s other noted trouble was with water. New Hampshire Fish and Game called it “a very dangerous summer” as the agency catalogued a series of water-related fatalities. We begin, then, at the water’s edge.

Fast-Rising Brook

On May 4, 2015 at 10:50 P.M., NHFG received a report of two overdue hikers. Eric D., age 38, and Veronique R., age 34, from Granby, Quebec, had left the Lincoln Woods parking area off the Kancamagus Highway that morning with the reported intent of climbing Owls Head as a day hike. Both hikers were said to be experienced, and this factor, added to the warm temperatures and uncertainty about their route, persuaded NHFG to wait until daybreak to see if the hikers made their way out. A check of the parking area on the morning of the 5th found the hikers’ car still there. NHFG launched a search.

The past winter’s significant snowpack was still in mid-melt, and the 4th’s temperatures in the 70s had the area’s rivers running high. Conservation officers (COs) drove in on all-terrain vehicles and found Veronique (and her dog) on the Lincoln Brook Trail, blocked by the high waters of Franconia Brook. COs could not cross the swollen river to assist her until they had backtracked and found a safer ford; the officers then escorted Veronique out.

Meanwhile, Eric had consulted his map and set out on a bushwhack to find a way to the Lincoln Woods Trail without any dangerous river crossings. He then planned to either return for Veronique and her dog, or send someone back to get them. Eric and Veronique developed this plan partly because her dog had hesitated even at small river crossings throughout the day. Eric emerged at 1:20 P.M. on the 5th; COs and Veronique reached the parking area at 4 P.M. The pair carried no overnight gear.

Comment: Once trapped by rising waters, both hikers showed good judgment by not forcing a crossing. As the next three incidents will point out, water is in many ways our mountains' most dangerous element. Less laudable is the pair's decision to split up. Though reportedly experienced in the White Mountains, Eric and Veronique created a situation where each had no backup or assistance, and, at a time when they were overdue, they also created the possible need for separate searches. Planning a solo hike is very different from two going solo after they encounter trouble. Dogs, too, shape a hike; the woods and streams can seem just as alien to them as they do to other inexperienced beings.

Slippery

Mid-August saw two brook-centered fatalities. The first was Steven M., age 29, who on the 8th sought to climb the attractive, steep ledges beside Pitcher Falls, along the Champney Falls Trail. The second was Julia H., age 17, on the 11th; she tried to jump from rock to rock while crossing a rain-swollen Franconia Brook.

At around 12:30 P.M. on the 8th, Steven and a large group of friends reached the falls, where three of them decided to climb the steep ledges beside the stream. Although the rock that day was dry, it is smoothed by years of flow (as NHFG CO Alex Lopashanski pointed out). Steven slipped in an exposed position and fell some 40 feet onto the rocks below. The region of the falls has no cell phone reception, and so the news traveled out with a hiker, who informed U.S. Forest Service employee Ben Smith. Smith hiked in the 1.9 miles, arriving at about 1:45; NHFG COs followed and set up the litter-carry that brought Steven's body out.

Comment: Such accidents are a recurring problem where steep terrain and water meet. Open rock and falling water seem to offer a siren call to hikers, "Come, take a look at this," and some do. And, as Lopashanski noted, once someone is out on its water-worn surface, there may be less traction, especially when wet. The sound of water slipping over and falling to stone should always suggest caution.

Heavy rains on the 11th had raised the level of Franconia Brook by the time Julia and friends reached Franconia Falls with the aim of taking a swim, so they resolved to cross the brook to find quieter, slower water for that swim.

Two friends crossed first, and as she followed, hopping from rock to rock, Julia missed a landing on a slippery boulder and fell into the brook, where the swift waters swept her under. Her friends could see her hand, but Julia was either wedged into a rock or held down by the water's force, and they couldn't reach her.

Shut off from cell phone reception by the terrain, one of the friends, Samuel S.-F., ran the three miles to the Lincoln Brook parking area, where he flagged down a motorist and summoned help. COs, the Lincoln Fire Department, the Woodstock Fire Department, the U.S. Forest Service, the Lincoln Police Department, and the Linwood Ambulance responded, and, using ATVs, they reached the site of the accident. Even in the few hours between the accident and his return to the site, Samuel S.-F., found that the waters had risen further; now they covered even the rocks the group had used to cross. COs reported "extremely high water" that forced them off-trail and made ropes necessary when they found and recovered Julia's body.

Comment: Franconia Falls is a popular site for swimming and sliding in the brook's currents, but the day's rains had made the usual spots off-limits. Julia and her friends were being prudent in seeking slower waters for their swim, but, as we see often in this column, the crossing of water, not the swimming in it, caused an accident. COs cited not only the water's raised power, but also the water-slippery boulders as dangers at that crossing. Our mountains' funneling effect makes their rivers especially subject to rapid rises. Any heavy rain's a signal to be wary approaching brooks, rivers, and streams.

Solo Hiker Swept Away

On October 14, the brother of Clairemarie C., age 64, reported her missing when she did not show up for work following her planned solo hike in the White Mountains. Authorities began looking for her. On October 16, after a significant search of the Pemigewasset Wilderness area by land and air on the 15th, rescue personnel followed a social media tip and found Clairemarie's body washed up along the North Branch of the Gale River. NHFG COs then pieced together what must have happened. They speculated that more than two weeks earlier, on September 30, following heavy rains, Clairemarie had tried to cross the swollen Garfield Brook while descending the Gale River Trail. She was caught in its current and carried nearly a half-mile downstream to where she was found.

Clairemarie had planned an early October, five-day solo hike from the Garfield Trail parking lot out to Bondcliff and back, staying at Garfield Ridge and Guyot campsites, a 26-mile itinerary that suggests ample time for walking and nosing about. Such hikes were an annual tradition for her, and she took her two weeks of vacation at that time to make them possible. Clairemarie was an experienced hiker and longtime Appalachian Mountain Club member. Although going alone might draw attention, it was also likely that she would have met plenty of people during this popular hiking period. Once her brother reported her missing, and the search began, it became clear that she had come to the mountains a week earlier than planned. Her brother later said that she often altered plans to match the weather.

After the unsuccessful search on the 15th, posts asking for help on social media elicited notice from two visitors of a sighting of someone fitting Clairemarie's description at Galehead Hut on the night of September 29. That sighting, confirmed by the hut's register and the heavy rains of the 30th, led NHFG to shift from searching Clairemarie's planned route and instead look at the possibility that she had descended the Gale River Trail, which meets the road a mile and a half from her car.

Comment: When we go out alone, we can rewrite our plans based on what we encounter or by our whims, and, as the plans change, whatever itinerary we've left behind goes out of date. So, if we go missing, that summary provides only a starting point for those looking for us. No condemnation here, just a note that finding us when we stray is sometimes, even in this era of technology and overflights, guesswork. Also of note: searching methods have expanded into social media.

Another raised river figures in this story, and the usual cautions pertain, with an added consideration: once full fall arrives and trees and other plants stop drawing much water from the ground and the cooling air tightens it, water runs more freely into rivers. Summer's sponging effect has gone away, so rivers rise even more quickly in heavy rain. This is what happened when Clairemarie was out. As proof of this, the two hikers who reported seeing Clairemarie at Galehead on the 29th descended on the Twin Brook Trail the next day; the heavy rains made the river crossing dangerous, and they were forced to spend a night in the woods.

By sad coincidence, Clairemarie was reported missing on the same day that Appalachian Trail thru-hiker Geraldine Largay's remains were discovered less than two miles from the trail in Redington Township, near the Bigelow Preserve. Largay had been missing for more than two years. The two incidents

are joined by the absence of specifics known about each solo hiker's steps that led to disappearance and by the rarity of such incidents.

A few thoughts about crossing rivers alone: even at the edge of mild streams and rivers, I always pause for a moment to look both up- and downstream. Steve Smith, my favorite mountain blogger (at mountainwandering.blogspot.com/), does the same. I want a sense of the terrain and the river's flow, where it goes and what it might mean to go or be taken there. Then, once I decide to cross, there are steps to take: unclip waist belt and shoulder strap to make shucking my pack easy if I fall; pick a route and then examine its surfaces; decide too if staying dry makes sense (for me, it does only if the rocks I'll cross on look stable, have good traction, and don't demand leaps); if I will wade, take off socks and leave boots/shoes on; take small steps; face partially upstream; if the water is swift and above knee-level, consider finding another crossing . . . or waiting, even if it adds a day. I've scouted for a half-hour to find a better crossing. Also, I hike and run now with poles most of the time; they help with balance in water. If I'm not carrying poles, I'll often choose a solid stick for a third point of balance. River crossing's a complex subject: a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) Guide offers more than six pages of advice on the subject.

In a Flash

August 11 hurled some heavy weather at the Whites (see the drowning of Julia H. above), and a morning thunderstorm that blew in on Mount Madison scattered a party of five hikers to the point where a significant search had to be launched for one as the day waned. At around 9 A.M. on the second day of a section hike along the AT, the five, who were from Michigan (with some AT experience, but all new to the Whites) arrived at Madison Spring Hut, where they took a short break. They then turned up toward the summit, and, as they climbed, the group spread out before the storm hit. It shocked the hikers: one described it as worse than any weather he's ever seen. Each of them fled down on a different trail. On nearby Mount Washington, 1.11 inches of rain fell, and the winds hit peak gusts of 71 MPH. Jeff S., who later called for help finding his nephew, Jason S., age 32, said he hid behind a cairn at the storm's height and saw his nephew go by but couldn't get his attention. One of the group reportedly shucked off his pack and just ran. By late afternoon, four of the hikers had emerged on their various trails; Jason was unaccounted for.

Searchers from Androscoggin Valley Search and Rescue, AMC, Randolph Mountain Club, and NHFG looked for Jason in the dark. It was one of the season’s larger efforts. Eventually, they located Jason camped at the same Osgood Tentsite that his group had aimed for when they left Madison Spring Hut. Jason waited in a spot where his phone could get no signal—another common problem in the Whites—so his attempts to call out and receive his friends’ calls failed.

Comment: Weather and reading it lie at the heart of this episode. On the exposed summit of Mount Madison, it pays to be weather-wary. The advantage of all that exposure is that one can see clouds as they approach—if there’s no fog. But a scan of the weather on nearby Mount Washington during that morning (see table below) shows visibility dropping from 90 miles to a tenth of a mile in an hour; it also shows a strong wind from the south and rain arriving midmorning. Mount Madison would be directly in the path of this weather, and once it clapped down on the summit area, hikers would be pummeled and unable to see where they were. If lightning and thunder were also embedded in that cloud cap, the effect and nearness of danger would be daunting. Perhaps that explains the scattering of the Michiganders and some of the panic that ensued.

Reading weather in the mountains is an art with old and new techniques. The old ones—being aware of the day’s and days’ forecasts, watching clouds, reading wind direction and strength, listening, scanning memory for similarities—should go with each person who climbs. But, of course, these skills require experience. The new methods—tech-enabled forecasts and condition reports (including radar)—require equipment that works wherever

Mount Washington Conditions, August 11, 2015

Time	Temp	Visibility	Wind	Gust	Sky
6:49 A.M.	41.0 °F	90.0 MI	South 43.7 MPH	54.1 MPH	Overcast
7:48 A.M.	44.6 °F	0.1 MI	South 42.6 MPH	62.1 MPH	Fog
9:48 A.M.	48.2 °F	0.0 MI	SSE 41.4 MPH	54.1 MPH	Fog, Rain
10:47 A.M.	48.2 °F	0.0 MI	SSE 49.5 MPH	58.7 MPH	Fog, Rain

one is. The Whites are rife with spots where tech signals don't roam, where the old ways of knowing trump the new.

Monadnock and Monadnock and Monadnock—Let's All Go

A July 13 NHFG press release began this way: "Around 9 P.M., Fish and Game Conservation Officers were called to Mount Monadnock State Park for the third time in the last three days. . . ."

On July 11, NHFG COs were called to look for a missing 55-year-old man, Travis P. They set out at 6:45 P.M. Travis had begun the day with his friend Paul V. (whose age was not reported) ascending the popular White Dot Trail, with plans to return the same way. The two had separated early in the day because Paul moved much faster than Travis.

Later in the afternoon, when Paul returned to the base, he couldn't find Travis, and so he went to park headquarters to report him missing. Travis's wife also called New Hampshire State Police to say her husband had potential medical issues. The officers searching could not find him as darkness arrived. Search parties kept on into the night, and at a little after midnight state park personnel located Travis off-trail in the Mead Brook drainage. He had fallen and was lodged between boulders, where he couldn't move. Rescuers from the state park, NHFG, Jaffrey Fire and Rescue, Troy Fire Department, and volunteers from Rescue Inc. in Brattleboro, Vermont, carried him off the mountain in a litter, clearing the mountain finally at 7 A.M.

In a later interview, Travis said he'd lost his way when he reached treeline; after wandering for several hours, he decided to try to go down the drainage, where he fell and became stuck. He had remained wedged into this spot for more than ten hours. He was transported from the base to Monadnock Community Hospital, where he was treated for a number of injuries.

It was a big week for problems on Monadnock. The next day, NHFG went out to search for a tired hiker who had called for help and who, fortunately, didn't end up needing assistance.

And then, on July 13, NHFG officers were called to Monadnock again. Merlinna N. V., 22, and her 14-year-old relative were missing. The pair had become separated from their group during descent, and, just before dark, two of their relatives arrived at park headquarters and called police for help. The relatives also had Merlinna's cell phone, and so park officials could not call her. Two COs got to the park at about 9:30 P.M. to begin their search, and, as they arrived, the pair emerged from the woods.

Comment: A note about our friendly “little” mountains that draw so many who would stay away from their higher cousins to the north. Monadnock, with its many trails, open summit, and easy access, is a particular magnet. Often, it’s cited as the second-most-climbed mountain in the world after Japan’s Mount Fuji. That Monadnock’s slopes and woods contain the same risks as other mountains gets lost amid the crowds—so many people; it must be safe.

But the distance from a traveled, sometimes crowded trail to nowhere-at-all is not great. Once he was there, Travis also fell. Only a little imagination suggests how his incident could have ended with big woe.

Flight Patterns

Helicopters figured in four searches or rescues. The following story of one of them illustrates their increasingly common use in search-and-rescue in the Whites.

An 11 A.M. call on October 10 alerted NHFG to a Quebec man’s medical emergency high on the Falling Waters Trail in the vicinity of Shining Rock. Simon D., age 24, had collapsed, and friends and passersby had begun cardiopulmonary resuscitation. NHFG, U.S. Forest Service personnel, Pemigewasset Valley Search and Rescue, and AVSAR volunteers responded. A call also went out to the New Hampshire National Guard, which agreed to send a helicopter to the scene. CO Robert Mancini reached Simon at 12:35 P.M. and determined they should move him for a helicopter rescue. Rescuers carried Simon to a place where the tree canopy was open. The helicopter arrived at 2:15 P.M., and a medic and litter were lowered. Simon was flown to Littleton Regional Hospital, where, despite the efforts of rescuers, who had maintained CPR throughout the incident, Simon was pronounced dead.

Comment: As happens often in our populated mountains, friends and passersby quickly helped. They kept up CPR for a considerable time before rescuers arrived and continued until the helicopter brought its medic and litter. That Simon’s medical emergency outstripped what could be done makes the incident tragic.

Ready

Elizabeth B., age 41, was mid-hike just below the summit of Mount Moriah early in the afternoon of August 10, when she hit her head on a low-hanging

branch, sustaining a severe cut that, being a head wound, bled heavily. Her two companions and two passersby used first-aid materials and clothing to stanch the bleeding and bandage her wound. They then placed a 911 call.

As NHFG organized a rescue, Elizabeth and her four helpers began the more than four-mile walk toward Route 16 via the AT and Stony Brook Trail. AMC rescuers reached the trailhead and, followed by a CO, made their way up; the groups met about two miles in from Route 16 at around 5 P.M. The whole group then made its way back to the highway at around 7 P.M., and Elizabeth was taken to the hospital for follow-up evaluation. Gorham police drove the two Good Samaritans, who had altered their route to stay with Elizabeth, back to their car. CO Matt Holmes cited Elizabeth and her party's preparedness and response: "In this case there was the need to control significant bleeding many miles from the road, and then to have the fortitude to hike toward help. They accomplished this because of good planning." Elizabeth and her companions are all experienced hikers and AMC members.

Comment: CO Holmes clearly appreciated what this group was able to accomplish a long way up a trail. What could have been a lengthy, rescuer-intensive effort was simplified and contained by the group's readiness, Elizabeth's grit, and the added efforts of two unrelated hikers who happened on the scene. Although such head wounds are rare, they remind us that when we walk, we are intent on our footing, and so our eyes are focused down, and what's near our heads can go unnoticed. I can recall a few near misses, when a branch or rock turned out to be right where my head was headed. And for trail runners, who are moving sometimes at accelerated clip, this reminder may be timely.

Perhaps the greatest demand backcountry travel makes on our imaginations occurs before we start walking. When we consider what to carry with us, and how we might handle unexpected moments, we must imagine beyond the usual to those precarious situations when an extra headlamp bulb or a sterile compress or a day's training may keep us walking toward home.

In Place

While doing research for a second essay on the Kate Matrosova incident, I spoke with NHFG Sergeant Mark Ober, who coordinated the initial search on February 15, 2015. As we talked of the mix of professionals and volunteers who make up White Mountain SAR, Ober mentioned the Appalachian Mountain Club. "It's impossible to count all the SAR [search-and-rescue] episodes avoided or kept minor by the AMC," he said. "Whether it's giving

advice at a trailhead, or responding from one of their locations, they help a lot.” I then asked AMC rescuer Phoebe Howe to give me a first-person account of a rescue she helped with. Howe worked four summers in the huts. Here’s her story:

After dinner on Saturday, August 1, Galehead Hut’s summer 2015 croo, Nat Haslett, Emily Bishop, Brian Taintor, Annalise Carington, and I sat back to enjoy the evening. Saturday is unique for a croo because it is the only night when nobody is on days off. In the waning weeks of the summer, time together is especially treasured; later that night we would feel grateful for each other in an unexpected way. Each croo member proved essential to our success in a SAR incident.

At 8:30 P.M., we received a radio call from Pinkham [Notch Visitor Center], saying that someone on the summit of South Twin had sustained an injury and was unable to walk. As part of being a hut croo, we are encouraged, although not required, to act as volunteer first responders for backcountry incidents. We didn’t hesitate. All hut croo are required to undergo Wilderness First Aid Training, but experience has proven to be a better teacher. Often, SAR victims suffer from nothing more complicated than dehydration, hypothermia, a sprain, and/or low blood sugar, the severity of which is often compounded by anxiety, a dead headlamp, being lost, or simple inexperience. Hut croo can often stabilize and resolve problems, which relieves Fish & Game of the need to trigger a costly SAR effort. Still, as Brian and I loaded our packs with first aid supplies, warm clothing, food and water, and the hut’s mobile radio, we had very little sense of what this injured hiker would need.

The summit of South Twin, at 4,902 feet, is accessible from Galehead via the Twinway, which rises 1,150 feet over eight-tenths of a mile. Considered one of the more challenging sections of trail in the Whites, the ascent is marked by scrambles around boulders, tentative steps across steep slabs, and unrelenting climbs up rock staircases. Once on the summit, we found Liz B., age 30, calm, warm, and kept company by a couple who was camping nearby. Liz said that earlier she had stumbled and fallen as she left the summit, twisting her right knee so the joint was unable to bear any weight. Fellow hikers had assisted her back to the summit, and Liz, well prepared with layers, food, and water had remained comfortable until our arrival.

After Brian and I splinted her knee, Liz could just make small, rigid movements, and we began slowly to descend the Twinway. The mild, moonlit

evening gave way to a rainy darkness punctuated only by our headlamp beams. Relying on her trekking poles to bear her weight and our assistance to navigate larger obstacles, Liz felt significant pain but remained remarkably determined and positive. At 11:30 P.M., two-thirds of our way down, Liz slipped on a rain-slicked slab, falling to the side of the trail; her injured knee crumpled. This second fall robbed Liz's knee of any motion and left her in excruciating pain. Brian and I now understood that Liz needed to be litter-carried down to the hut and, ultimately, out on the Gale River Trail. We stopped to assess our options.

Without proper planning and support, litter evacuations can pose unnecessary risks for both the carriers and the patient. After considering the level of risk, given the rough terrain, rain, darkness, and limited people-power, Brian and I chose to go ahead and radio the rest of the croo to bring up the hut's litter and carry Liz down. Had we waited the four hours until a larger team could assemble, or tried to stay put until the next morning, we ran the risks of hypothermia, further injury to Liz's knee, and dangerously low morale.

It took the five of us two hours to carry Liz the last quarter mile to the hut. This was an unusual litter carry—most carryouts involve 20 to 30 people, working in teams of 6, who rotate out every five to ten minutes and cover about a quarter mile per hour. Our croo and Liz, working as a team, reached the hut at 2:30 A.M., mentally and physically exhausted, but confident that we had made the right choice. In the morning, Liz became the first person in several years to use the hut wheelchair (packed up by former croo) as intended and take full advantage of Galehead's ADA-accessible floor plan. Later, she was carried out by a usual mix of professionals and volunteers (NHFG, PEMISAR, AMC). These seasoned experts covered four miles in just two hours. I cannot say enough about the commitment, experience, and professionalism of Fish & Game and the many volunteer SAR groups in the Whites.

As far as SAR goes, much of what a hut croo and other AMC employees contribute to safety in the White Mountains is offered as preventative advice and guidance. Every day, we review trail information with hikers and suggest alternative plans when weather or ability levels suggest that.

Our work that August night from Galehead was by no means extraordinary; rather, it serves to illustrate the role that hut croo play in search-and-rescue. Just this past summer, other hut croo dealt, for example, with a heart attack on Crawford Path and lost hikers in a lightning storm on Mount Madison.

Anyone who's worked anywhere in the Whites has a story. Hut croo certainly don't work in the huts because of the search-and-rescue opportunities, but SAR events form lasting impressions. Above all, we come away humbled.

Phoebe Howe was the Galehead hutmaster during the summer of 2015. A New Hampshire native, she now lives in Middlebury, Vermont, and works at Efficiency Vermont's Modular Housing Innovation Project to increase access to net-zero energy affordable housing.

Being Carried and Carrying the Card

Jeanne F., age 55, of Ottawa, Ontario, slipped while descending the Greenleaf Trail, a half-mile above Greenleaf Hut on the fair afternoon of August 22. Her husband's 911 call for help had NHFG first contact AMC, and rescuers from Greenleaf Hut assessed Jeanne's injury. Once they ascertained that she shouldn't go on, PEMISAR, AVSAR, and NHFG responded, and once they had packaged Jeanne in a litter, they began a long carryout at 7:10 P.M., finally reaching the trailhead at 11:30 P.M.

Comment: The sequencing of evaluation and rescue is ideal in this incident, and it resonates with AMC Galehead hutmaster Phoebe Howe's earlier description of a hut-based rescue. Although proximity of help is no guard against accident, it does make the summer Whites a safer place to walk. And this incident provides ongoing reminder of the generous rescuers who bear our litters out of the mountains.

On July 12, Deborah B., age 64, joined a group of friends for a climb of Mount Chocorua. Around noon, as the group began its descent of the Piper Trail, Deborah jumped down a small ledge and injured her ankle. At first, with assistance from a USFS employee already in the area, Deborah was able to hobble downhill, but it became clear that she needed more assistance. Rescuers from the Conway, Madison, and Tamworth fire departments, along with the USFS, Mountain Rescue Service, and COs, responded and carried Deborah out, arriving at the trailhead at 4:20 P.M. Deborah was the first person to be rescued while carrying a hikeSafe card.

Comment: The incident needs little analysis, other than the reminder that carryouts require a lot of carriers. In January of this year, NHFG Colonel Kevin Jordan said in an interview that the agency's first year of offering the hikeSafe card had been successful, with the sale of 2,200 cards. A hikeSafe card

offers protection against assigned costs for rescue and may be purchased for \$25 for an individual and \$35 for a family from NHFG. Jordan said the agency raised nearly \$60,000 through the card sales to help offset the department's more than \$300,000 budget. Jordan thought this a "good start," though he also noted that card purchases can be "a double-edged sword, because it's impossible to tell how much they cut donations to other SAR groups." Still, Jordan was pleased with the first year and looks forward to the second.

Jordan also cited two bills that were before the New Hampshire legislature in January 2016. If passed, they will strengthen the hikeSafe card program. The first would extend coverage to adult children who remain dependents in a family. Currently, anyone over 18 is not covered as a family member. The second, sponsored by Representative Gene Chandler, seeks to clarify the card's coverage by making it explicit that reckless and negligent behavior that precipitates a search or rescue is not covered. As Jordan said, "The card is not a get-out-of-jail-free card." Jordan also added that a fishing license is a good deal because it also carries hikeSafe card coverage, "and you get the fish too."

—Sandy Stott
Accidents Editor



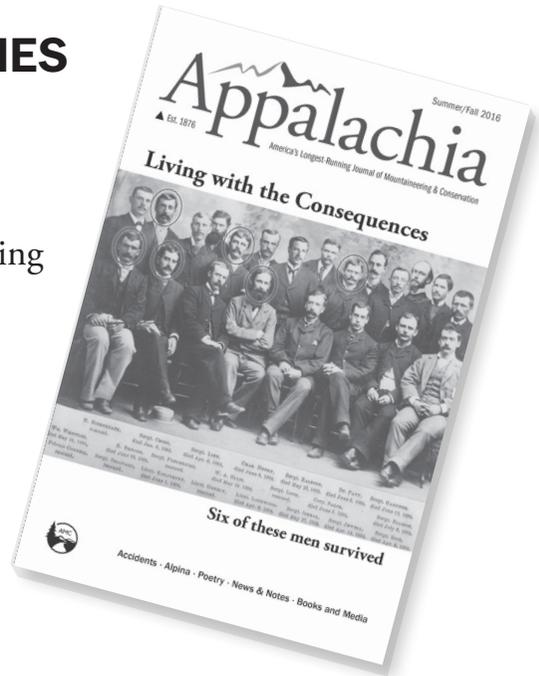
Rescuers spent more than four hours carrying a 55-year-old hiker down the Greenleaf Trail. She'd slipped while descending Mount Lafayette. NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME

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