

Catskill Mountain Region

March 2014

# GUIDE

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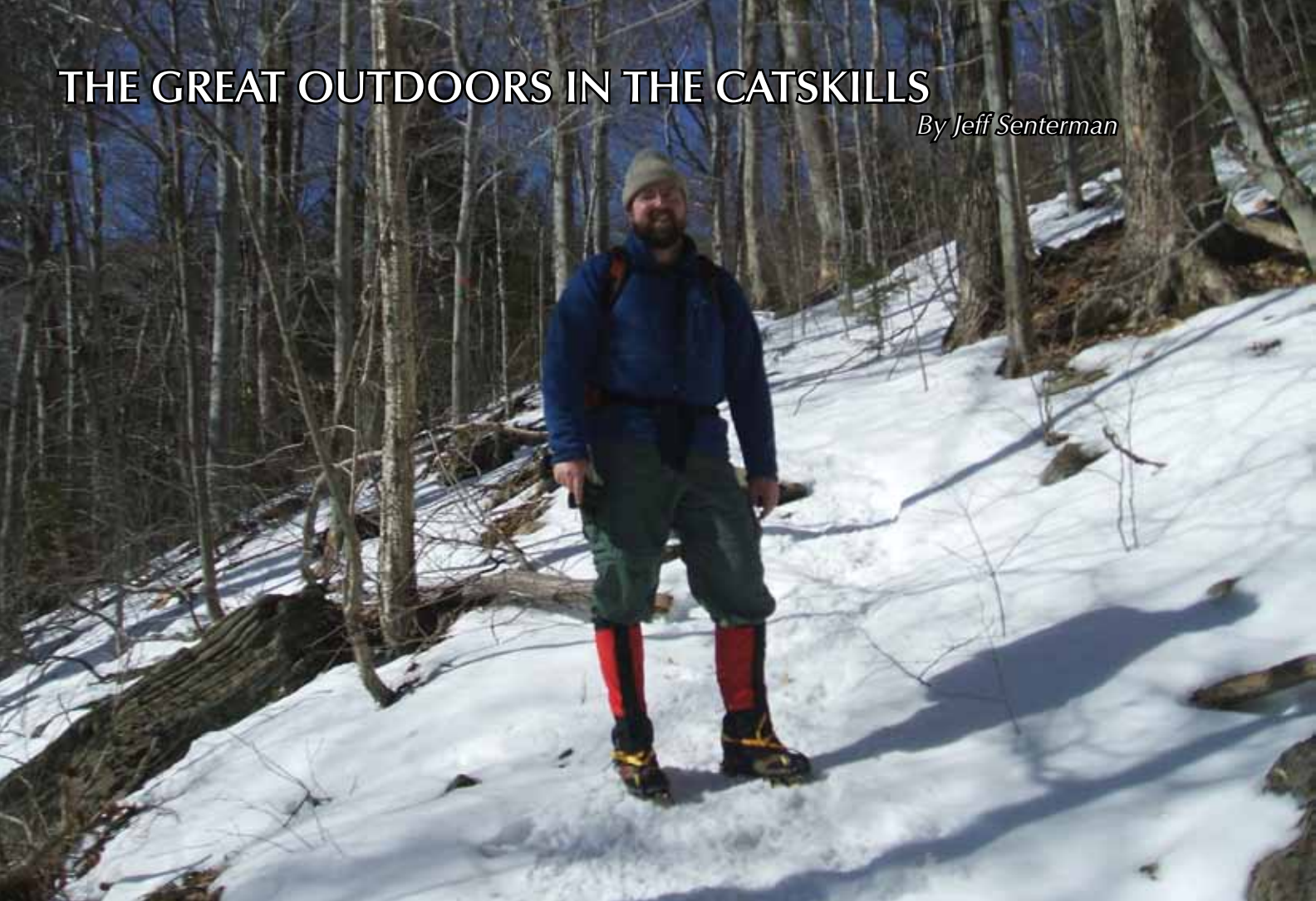
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# THE GREAT OUTDOORS IN THE CATSKILLS

By Jeff Senterman



Winter hiking on the Devil's Path. Photo by P. Senterman

**W**ith multiple snowfalls and a deep snowpack in February, winter sport enthusiasts had a lot to celebrate. Skiers were able to enjoy the slopes and the backcountry trails of the Catskills and hikers were able to climb peaks on snowshoes throughout the region.

While March is the beginning of spring for many areas, often in the mountains it's still the realm of winter with the potential for highly variable weather conditions and snowpack. Visitors to the Catskills should be prepared for all different kinds of conditions and should keep an eye on the forecast before they leave for their Catskills adventure.

## Trail Safety

Hiking, skiing and snowshoeing conditions can change quickly in the Catskills. A warm spring hike can suddenly turn dangerous when it starts raining and temperatures drop. In the winter months, the mountains can be unforgiving with low temperatures, high winds and deep snowpacks. Anyone planning on recreating in the Catskills should keep in mind a few general safety guidelines for any trip. It's a good idea to consider all four of these guidelines for every trip you take into the backcountry, no matter if it's summer, winter, for a few hours or for a few days:

## WEATHER

Always obtain local weather conditions from sources like the Albany National Weather Service, or local services like the Hudson Valley Weather website, all of which provide local conditions and weather discussion for areas throughout the Catskills.

## WARNING

Wilderness conditions can change suddenly and all users should plan accordingly, including bringing a flashlight, first aid equipment, extra food and clothing. Weather conditions may alter your plans; you should always be prepared to spend an unplanned night in the woods before entering the backcountry. Backcountry hiking trails can be rugged and rough—they are not maintained as park walkways—always wear proper footwear and clothing!

## REMEMBER

Weather and trail conditions can change rapidly, especially during fall, winter and spring. Plan and prepare accordingly.

## ALWAYS

Inform someone of your itinerary and when you expect to return.

For more detailed information on the condition and status of trails and trailheads in the Catskills, the Trail Conference offers a page on their website with regularly updated conditions ([www.nynjtc.org/content/catskill-trails-updates](http://www.nynjtc.org/content/catskill-trails-updates)). While this information is regularly updated, it may not reflect current, specific conditions. The local Forest Ranger is the best source for more current and specific information. To contact the Forest Rangers for Region 3 (Ulster & Sullivan Counties), please call the NYSDEC's New Paltz regional office at 845 256 3026. For Forest Rangers in Region 4 (Greene and Delaware Counties), please call the NYSDEC's Schenectady regional office at 518 357 2161. These numbers should also be used to report backcountry emergencies, such as lost or injured hikers, and wildland fires to the DEC Forest Rangers.

In part, the Trail Conference relies on hikers and visitors to the park to help maintain the status page. If you are on a trail and notice a problem, you can use the Trail Problem Report Form to let the Trail Conference know. They will use that information to update trail conditions and then work with their volunteers and with the DEC to address any specific issues. Trail Problem Reports can be made at [www.nynjtc.org/webform/trail-problem-report](http://www.nynjtc.org/webform/trail-problem-report).

## Spring Brings New Opportunities for Volunteers in the Catskills

You can help sustain hundreds of miles of Catskills trails! The Trail Conference is looking for a motivated volunteers to join trail crews, adopt trails for maintenance and to supervise trail maintainers. The Catskills are home to a number of trail crews, including trail maintenance crews that work throughout the region, crews that work on building new trails and crews that work on rehabilitating lean-tos. Trail maintainers adopt about a mile of trail and make regular trips to their trails to cut back brush and weeds to make sure the trail is passable. Trail Supervisors help recruit, train, and supervise a team of trail maintainers in the Catskills.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, please e-mail the Trail Conference at [catskills@nynjtc.org](mailto:catskills@nynjtc.org).

No experience is necessary, as training is provided as part of the Trail Conference's work in the region. If you have any interest, they need you, as the hundreds of volunteers working throughout the Catskill Park are what makes are a big part of what makes our trails, lean-tos and recreational resources available to all.

## Trail News and Events

### Give Back to Catskills Trails with a Service Vacation this June

The Trail Conference, as part of its work to build 9.5 miles of new backcountry trail between the Village of Phoenicia and the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area will be offering a weeklong backcountry service vacation between May 31 and June 7. On this extended backcountry service trip the crew will be working on the section of new trail that traverses Cross Mountain between Wittenburg and Mount Pleasant. This will be a week long work



*Trail Crew building new trail between Phoenicia and Slide Mountain Wilderness.  
Photo by J. Senterman*

trip in the backcountry of the Catskill Mountains. The crew will be camping each night on the mountain at a basecamp and work will include clearing trees and vegetation, and tread construction such as raking, side-hilling, waterbars and stone steps. In addition to volunteering for the crew, the Trail Conference will be leading several hikes to the worksite and the basecamp to resupply the crew and volunteers are needed to carry up and down supplies and tool. If you are interested in either opportunity, please e-mail the Trail Conference at [catskills@nynjtc.org](mailto:catskills@nynjtc.org).

### Mark your Calendars Now for National Trails Day 2014

In 2014 celebrate National Trails Day on Saturday, June 7. Planned celebrations include the grand opening of the new section of Long Path between the Village of Phoenicia and the Burroughs Range Trail in the Slide Mountain Wilderness.

### Take a Hike!

If you are looking to get out on the trails, but would like to go on a guided group hike to help you get your bearings on Catskill Mountain trails, the region has several different groups that lead guided hikes. The Catskill Mountain Club (CMC) offers members and non-members the opportunity to go hiking, paddling, biking and skiing throughout the Catskills with a majority of the trips in the western Catskills ([www.catskillmountainclub.org](http://www.catskillmountainclub.org)).



## Guide Yourself to Great Trail Adventures

### Best Trail Maps & Books

Order today at [www.nynjtc.org](http://www.nynjtc.org), 201-512-9348, or find them in most outdoor stores.

Our maps cover hundreds of miles of trails in the Catskills, Shawangunks, and Hudson Valley regions and are:

- easy to read
- accurate
- waterproof



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Go to [nynjtc.org/pdfmaps](http://nynjtc.org/pdfmaps)



The Catskill 3500 Club leads hikes up the 35 peaks in the Catskills that reach above 3500 feet in elevation ([www.catskill-3500-club.org](http://www.catskill-3500-club.org)). The Rip Van Winkle Hikers also lead hikes throughout the region and you can find out more information about their activities at [www.newyorkheritage.com/rvw](http://www.newyorkheritage.com/rvw).

All three of these organizations are member clubs of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and in addition to leading hikes, work through the Trail Conference's agreement with the DEC to maintain trails and lean-tos in the Catskill Mountains. The organization all offer unique opportunities to explore the Catskill Mountain Region, meet new friends and find hiking buddies.

## Getting Connected & Getting Involved

If you are interested in learning more about hiking the Catskill Mountains, getting the latest news and updates about trails, joining a trail crew, adopting a trail for maintenance, or just finding out more information about stewardship of our recreational facilities in the Catskill Mountain Region, please contact the Trail Conference's Catskills office at 518 628 4243 or via e-mail at [catskills@nynjtc.org](mailto:catskills@nynjtc.org).

*Jeff Senterman was formerly an Assistant Forest Ranger for the DEC in Greene County, graduated with a degree in Environmental Science from Lyndon State College, has worked in the Environmental Planning field, is currently the Catskill Region Program Coordinator for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Catskill Mountain Club and the Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center.*

*The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference partners with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of 2,000 miles of public trails, including 29 lean-tos and over 200 miles of trails in the Catskill Mountain region. We offer volunteer opportunities for people who love the outdoors, as well as publishing detailed hiking maps for the Catskill Mountain Region, along with a number of other regions. For more information on our maps and our Catskill Community Trails program please visit us on the web at [www.nynjtc.org/catskills](http://www.nynjtc.org/catskills) and follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NYNJTC.CatskillRegion](http://www.facebook.com/NYNJTC.CatskillRegion).*



*Skiing near North & South Lakes. Photo by J. Senterman*