



UPSLOPE

Newsletter of the NORDIC Ski Touring Section of PATC



Visit Us On the WEB at <http://www.patcskitouring.us>

April 2023

UpComing Attractions In Fall UPSLOPE

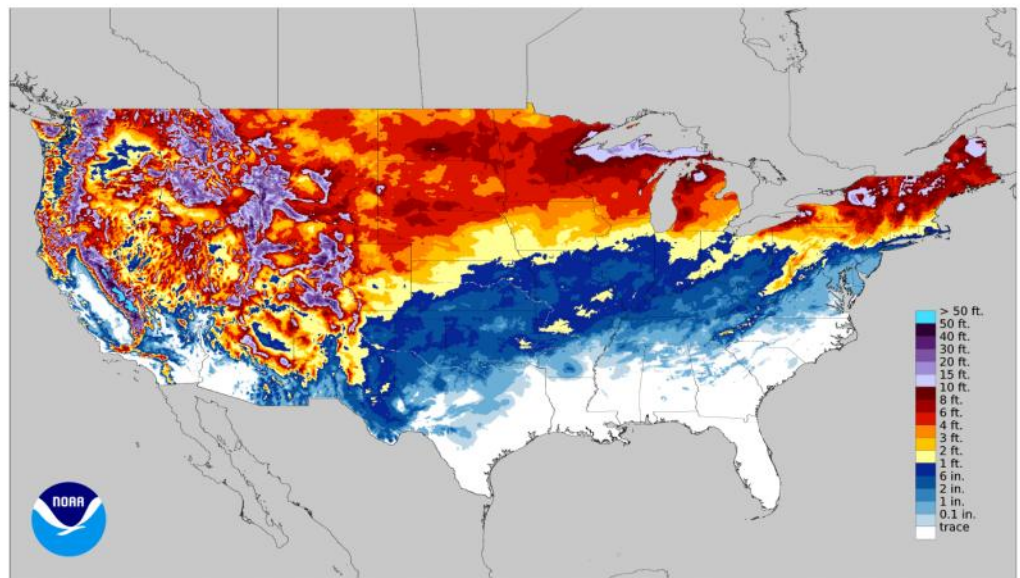
- Plans for Ski Fair
- 2023-24 Season Schedule

Winter of 2022-23: Where Did All the Snow Go?

by Ralph Heimlich

Despite the best efforts of weather forecasters and the accumulation of more highly-developed forecast tools and technologies, Mother Nature still throws weather surprises our way, especially when climate change effects are thrown into the mix. Last fall's forecasts for wintery conditions (see UPSLOPE 96) were knocked off-kilter by the development of "atmospheric rivers" of precipitation on the West Coast that were largely unanticipated, accompanied by a persistent blocking low-pressure area

National Snowfall Analysis: accumulation from 2022-09-30 to 2023-04-01
Issued 2023-04-01 14:00:38 UTC



(Continued on page 4)

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(blue links are live)

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APRES SKI PARTY Sunday, April 29, 2023

Meeting at 4PM Potluck at 5:30 PM

This is a POT LUCK PARTY: Everyone is to bring a dish or edible contribution that others will enjoy, either beatifically healthful or sinfully rich—Your choice!

The Section will provide beer and wine

Driving directions: Capital Beltway to Exit 44, Georgetown Pike, Rt. 193. Turn onto Georgetown Pike inside the Beltway, toward Langley, not outside toward Great Falls. Almost immediately, turn left onto Balls Hill Rd (north toward the River, not south toward McLean). Take the first left off Balls Hill Rd, which is Live Oak Road, a bridge going over the Beltway, and then paralleling the Beltway. Take first left, onto Green Oak Drive. Follow to end of cul de sac, and take the driveway to the left of the large eagle statue/sculpture. Catherine's house has the green roof, number 7035 Green Oak Drive. Her phone is 703-827-0370.

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FROM THE SLOPES – Chair Notes

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Well, we had another low-snow year in the mid-Atlantic. Yet, there was snow to be had—one just had to take a road trip or an airline trip.

If you were able to go north to New England or New York on the east coast, you would have enjoyed some quality snow and cross-country skiing. We all heard about the many California storms which dropped tons of snow across the far western states. My friends in southern California said they could see snow on the surrounding mountains, which doesn’t happen a lot. Did you see the pictures of Mammoth Mountain downhill resort in the eastern Sierras which had to shut down because the snow buried the ski lift and almost the lift towers? So, the Sierra Nevada mountains were snow magnets.

And, if you went further north to Oregon, Washington state, or perhaps British Columbia, there was no shortage of good snow. My sister lives in Anchorage, Alaska, and they got a lot of snow from the same weather phenomenon—the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage has been looking strong this year.

And, if you were on the western side of the Rockies in Wyoming, Montana, or Utah, you had a plethora of Nordic classic and backcountry opportunities. I guess I’m still thinking of snow....

Yet once again, there is always next year for another mid-Atlantic try! And some excursion STS trips to find the snow.

So, please join us at the Section’s **annual Après-ski social April 29th** to gather as a Nordic skiing community for some food and drinks and share ski stories, some photos from the past winter’s trips, and plan for new xc ski adventures next season. Catherine Payne has generously agreed to host us at her beautiful home overlooking the Potomac River. And the Section will provide drinks to include some wine and beer. You all just bring the pot-luck food.

Steve Jarvis, Chairman



Section Kindness—Mountaineering Section Donates

I received an email from the Mountaineering Section Chair this winter asking if the Ski Touring Section might be interested in some snowshoes which were donated to them by another group. Since the Mountaineering folks are more focused on rock and ice climbing, they thought we might put them to better use. I was able to pick up several pairs of brand-new snowshoes of varying sizes to include a few for children at no cost thanks to their kindness. We’ll be providing a few to our trip leaders and any extras will be available to the membership. I plan on bringing them to the April 29th Après Ski event at Catherine Payne’s house for the trip leaders and then make them available for STS members. (If your membership is not current, you may want to approach Doug Lesar, STS Membership Director). If you ever come across a Mountaineering Section person, please thank them!



Trip Reports; From All Over

Tug Hill New Year's Trip December 27-31—Greg Westernik—The spirit was willing but not club applicants. The two applicants I had cancelled before trip departure. Hence, the publicized trip was CANCELLED due to lack of applicants. There was, and has been, no lack of snow in upstate NY's Tug Hill area during Xmas thru now. See below for details from one place ([Osceola Tug Hill Cross Country Ski Center](#)) in southern Tug Hill area:

"**12/29/22** Current temp 20 degrees, high today 44 degrees. Partly sunny, by 10am it will be 32 degrees and remain above freezing for, ugh, the next few days (Sunday night is next time temps will dip below freezing--Happy New Year?!?) Hey look on the bright side--at least it won't be raining (yet). We will be **OPEN** today and conditons will be spring-like. Thomas is grooming early morning then we will have to play the waiting game with Mother Nature until temps are low enough to groom trails again. We are fortunate to have a deep base--we will weather this non-storm, but you may want to dress in shorts and a t-shirt for your day on the snow! Have a great day.

12/26/22 Happy Monday (especially if you have the week off from work--kind of--like me) Current temp 15 degrees at 5:30 am, high today of 21 degrees mostly cloudy with light snow showers--just below the intense persistent band of lake effect forecast to pummel areas to the north of us. **Won't add up to much new snow but we have a hefty base of 16 inches compacted snow (with a total of 110 inches this season).** Surface is loose granular and powder so conditions will be fast and amazing. Trails groomed for skate and classic techniques. Hope to see you in Osceola, have a great day."

Winona Forest [webcams](#) (in northern Tug Hill area closer to Watertown) show some 2-3 feet of snow in unpacked areas and excellent conditions reported thru yesterday.



Greenland Ice Sheet Movie—Great movie about research expeditions studying the ice. The ice at the poles is melting, which will result in enormous rises in sea level and have major consequences for the world. But how fast will it really go? In the Greenland ice

sheet we can see our future. The film travels with three pioneering glaciologist on their expeditions INTO the inland ice of Greenland. Top-notch science meets breathtaking visuals when one of them descends into a 200 meter deep moulin hole to find out about the bottom of the ice sheet. What they find may sound the alarm for our planet's climate and is a clear call to act now. The scientists ski, setup stations, et. al. Great scenary. Go to <https://watch.eventive.org/dceff> and select "Into the Ice". Other movies are good ("Memory of Water" is one) but no skiing.

Mark



Laurel Highlands in January—At the end of January, STSers on a trip to Laurel Highlands found excellent snow on 1/27, good snow still on warming Saturday 1/28, and morning spring skiing before the rains hit by noon Sunday 1/29 amid a forest infested with snow snakes! This current cold wave and lake-effect winds add more dusting for our gliding pleasure this week-end. Here are the current snow reports in their 2 favorite trail sites:

- * [Laurel Ridge](#)
- * [Laurel Mountain](#)



We were able to keep 70 percent of the base from the previous weekend with a few fresh inches during the week. The ground was finally frozen with another fresh inch over night. We were able to groom, trails were nicely covered however we were not able to set track. OPEN THROUGH MONDAY 9-5pm.

Erica Smith 9:46 am 3 February 2023 [All reports for Laurel Ridge](#)

Rock skiing. Doable, but not great. Skis will take a beating. Ground is frozen, for the most part. It's 26° at 10:30.

Denny McDonough 10:29 am 2 February 2023 [All reports for Laurel Mountain](#) JE Miller trail on Laurel Mountain will continue to be the sweet spot at south end of Laurel Mountain. The same lake-effect snow falls at both Laurel Mountain and Laurel Ridge on these winds....which will refresh the trails with a dusting overnight.

Greg Westernik

Yellowstone 2023

by Dick Simmons



Mark and Dick, Riverside Trail on the Madison River

PATC-STS has been to Yellowstone National Park a number of times, but this year was my first time skiing there. It really exceeded expectations. Mark Marszal and I skied the Riverside Trail from West Yellowstone the first day (excellent) then spent three nights at the Snow Lodge at Old Faithful. Skiing was ideal—plenty of snow, exceptional scenery, very few people and a wide variety of wildlife.

Skiing the Upper Geyser Basin around Old Faithful is a must-do. A trail winds among several geysers, thermal vents and crystal clear pools along the Firehole River. The trail to Lone Star Geyser along the river is also very scenic and an easy roundtrip from the Snow Lodge with several options for longer distance. Kepler Cascade, a vigorous cascading waterfall, is on the route.

Roads in Yellowstone are not plowed and the only way to travel in winter is by outfitter tracked or LTP (low tire pressure) van (think monster truck). We took the tour to the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone and skied along

the south rim – outstanding. The canyon is 1,200 feet deep and has two major (frozen) waterfalls—Upper and Lower Yellowstone Falls. We had a lively group of 12 experienced skiers. Along the Yellowstone River we watched an otter sliding on the snow in and out of the water. Looked like great fun.



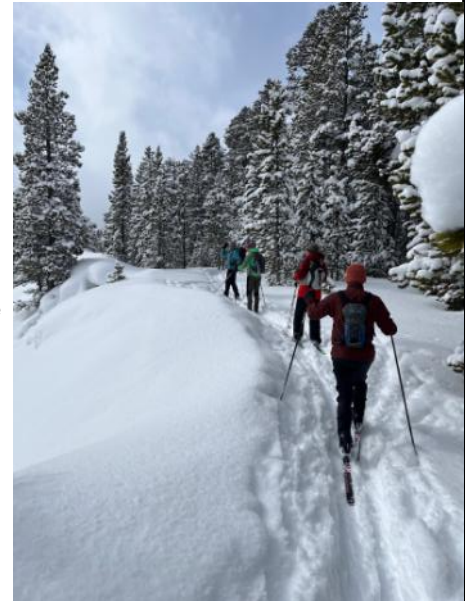
Upper Geyser basin

The last morning, we went out at sunrise and skied past Old Faithful as it was erupting—no one around but a herd of bison that had bedded down along the trail for the night. Quiet and peaceful—only the sound of the water spouting from the geyser.

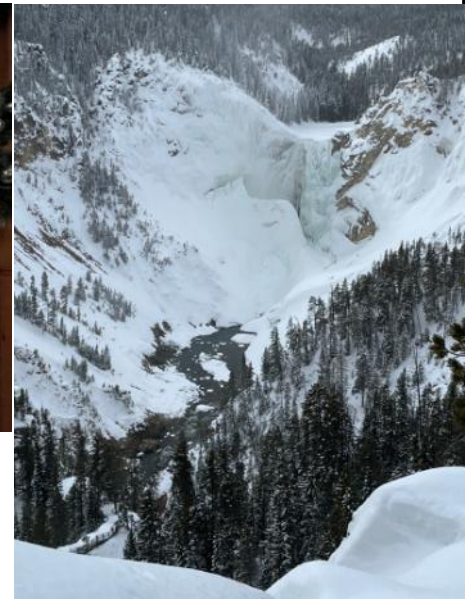
The Snow Lodge is comfortable, well maintained and staffed with very friendly and helpful people. There is a sit-down restaurant open for three meals and a fast food place for lunch. All meals were well prepared, pretty creative and tasty. Hopefully STS will plan another trip. Yellowstone is a unique and beautiful ski destination—well worth the trip whether with the club or on your own.



Old Faithful Snow Lodge



Canyon South Rim Trail



Lower Yellowstone Falls

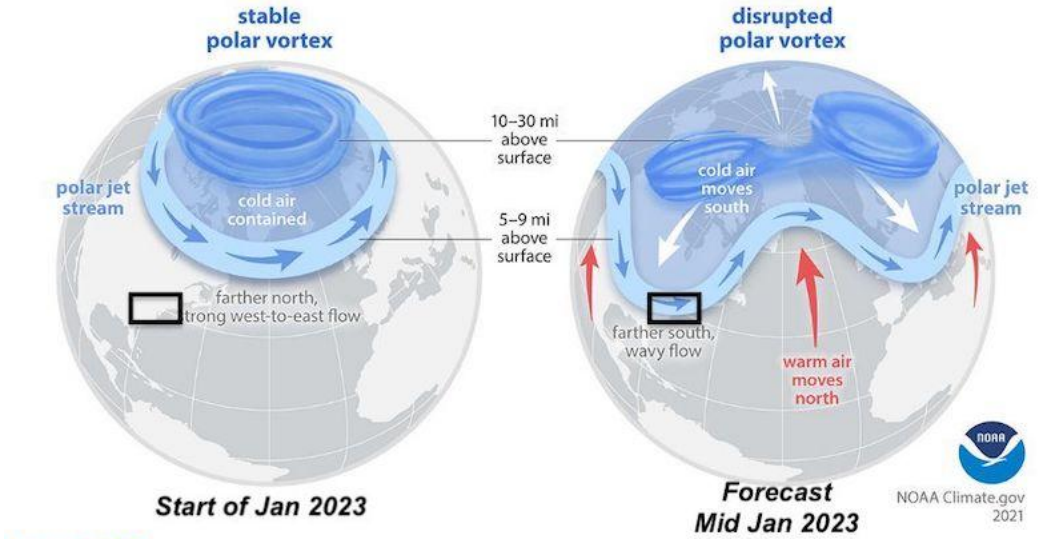
Where Did the Snow Go? (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

that pumped warm, moist Gulf air into our region and held the polar vortex captive in higher latitudes. The resulting weather pattern pushed "our" snowband hundreds of miles north. Very little persistent snow occurred in our usual haunts (Canaan Valley and Laurel Mountain), but carpet-bombed areas further north (northern Pennsylvania, Tug Hill, the Adirondacks, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine). That is abundantly clear in gridded snow accumulation for the season (<https://www.nohrsc.noaa.gov/snowfall/>).

While a reasonable amount of snow fell in the Northeast, and even along the Appalachian ridgeline, bursts of rainfall and unseasonably warm temperatures precluded development of a robust base for us skiers. There was lots more snow in the Sierras, Cascades, and in the Rockies. Unfortunately, prospects for a revived COVID season urged caution on long-distance trips involving air travel, so STS trip leaders avoided traveling to these locations.

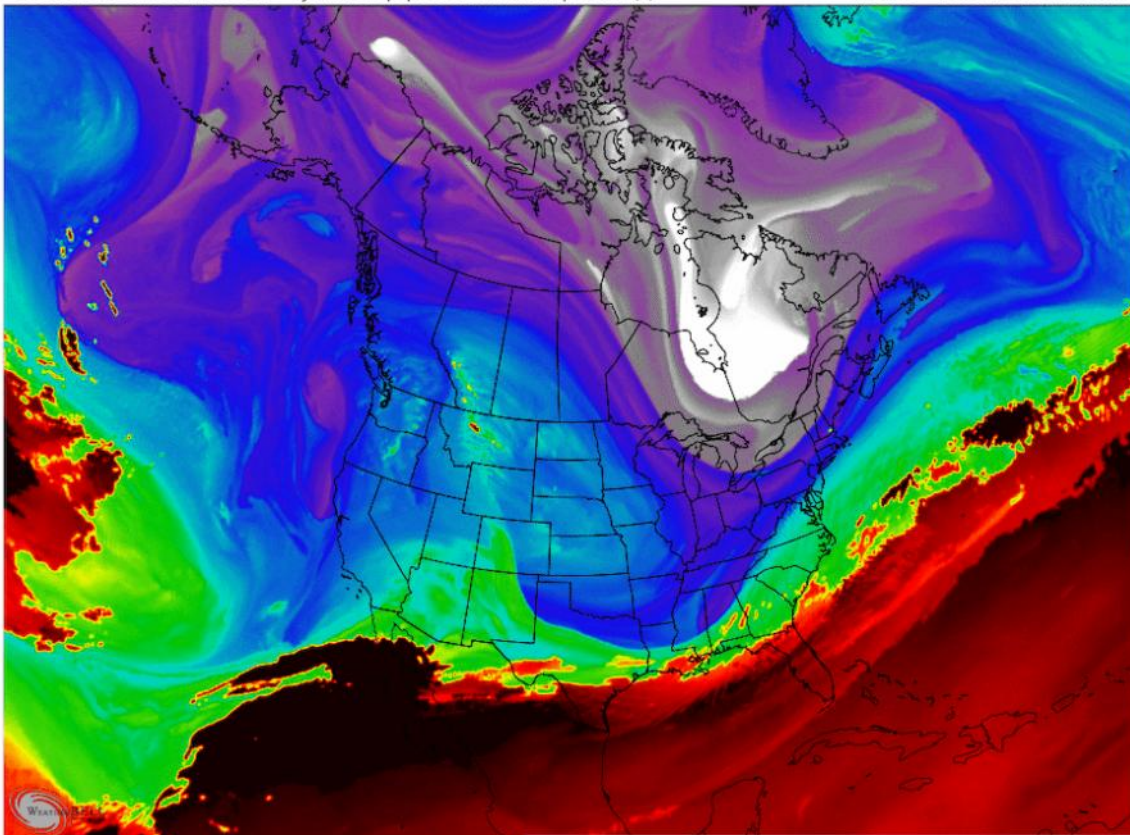
What is the Polar Vortex?—In short, it describes the upper air wind flow 10 to 30 miles up around the North Pole that forms every winter. The stronger these Westerly winds are, the more 'stable' and locked up the arctic air is inside. The Polar Jet Stream is lower between 5 and 9 miles



Credit: NOAA

aloft, and does influence our weather patterns. These don't always interact, but when they do, the result can be strong to severe storms and

ECMWF 0.1° Init 06z 3 Feb 2023 • Dynamic Tropopause Potential Temperature (K) Hour: 6 • Valid: 12z Fri 3 Feb 2023



or cold events. When the vortex is disrupted, the polar jet stream drops to lower latitudes and forms a "wavy" edge (Rossby waves) that draw down Arctic cold air in a NW to SE direction across the continental U.S. that brings us the so-called Alberta Clippers carrying snow to our region.

Here is an image from early February of Rossby waves in action pulling the polar vortex down into our neck of the woods

(Continued on page 10)

What Does AI Know about Cross-Country Skiing?

by Ralph Heimlich and ChatGPT

By now, we've all heard about the latest tech craze: Artificial Intelligence (AI). The images accompanying this article were generated by a program called DALL-E and FOTOR based on the prompts used as the titles. I can't say much for the bear's technique since he's dropped his ski pole and seems to be using four skis.

You can also generate text with AI. I asked a program called ChatGPT by OpenAI to: **"Write 3 paragraphs on the wonders of cross-country skiing for beginners "** and this is what AI gave me (in about 10 seconds).

"Cross-country skiing is a fantastic way for beginners to get outside and enjoy the winter months. Not only is it a great cardiovascular workout, but it also allows you to explore the beautiful winter landscapes in a way that is not possible with other winter sports. Cross-country skiing is also relatively easy to learn, with many parks and recreation areas offering beginner lessons and rental equipment.

One of the best things about cross-country skiing is that it is a low-impact form of exercise, making it easy on the joints. It is also a great way to build endurance and strength, as the combination of upper and lower body movement provides a full-body workout. Additionally, because it is a self-propelled activity, you can go at your own pace and adjust the intensity of your workout as needed.

Another great aspect of cross-country skiing is that it is a social activity that can be enjoyed with friends and family. Many parks and recreation areas have groomed trails for cross-country skiing, and it is a great way to spend a winter day with loved ones. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced skier, cross-country skiing is a wonderful way to enjoy the beauty of winter while getting in some great exercise.."



A French classical scene of skiers on a Rocky Mountain slope generated by the AI Art App Dall-E

I moved on to this: **"What are the seven most important safety tips for cross-country skiing?"** to which ChatGPT responded:

1. Always wear appropriate safety gear, including a helmet.
2. Be aware of the weather and trail conditions before heading out.
3. Stay on designated trails and obey all posted signs and warnings.
4. Use proper technique to avoid injury and fatigue.
5. Carry necessary equipment, such as a cell phone and extra layers in case of emergency.
6. Let someone know your planned route and expected return time.
7. Always be prepared for the unexpected and know how to handle emergency situations.

Pretty generic and predictable for any sport. Oh, and don't forget your helmet! I moved on to some questions about equipment : **"What are the most important considerations for fitting cross-country skis and ski boots? "** to which Chat GPT responded:

When fitting cross-country skis and ski boots, the most important considerations are:

1. Ski length: The ski length should be based on your weight, ability level, and the type of skiing you will be doing.
2. Boot size and fit: The boot should be snug but not tight, with enough room for your toes to wiggle. It should also have good support for your heel and ankle.
3. Binding compatibility: The bindings should be compatible with both the skis and the boots.
4. Flex: The flex of the ski should match your ability level and the type of skiing you will be doing.
5. Canting: Your boots should be adjusted for canting, which is the angle of the sole of the boot in relation to the ski. This will help with control and balance.

Finally, I asked Chat GPT about where to go skiing : **"What should a beginner look for in a cross-country skiing resort? "** and this is what he (she?, it?) told me:

(Continued on page 7)

AI for Cross-Country (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

“A beginner should look for a cross-country skiing resort with well-groomed trails, a variety of difficulty levels, and a good rental program for equipment. It’s also helpful to find a resort with a ski school or lessons available to learn the basics. Additionally, a beginner should consider the resort’s location and snow conditions to ensure a good experience. “

Pretty good advice, but not very specific to our area or budget. I can’t wait for this to become commercially viable with paid promotions like Google’s search engine now has. I’m expecting to be told how good the skiing is at all the Sandals beach resorts!



Until, then, I suggest you put your regular old intelligence to work when looking for ski equipment and places to go. But it’s ok to get motivated for skiing by AI (or any other means). Just DO IT!

A couple more AI photos. The bear is supposed to be in the manner of Salvador Dali. Personally, I don’t see it. Why aren’t the skis melting or something?



bear on skis ala Dali generated by AI Art App FOTOR

A Hudson Valley school scene of cross-country skiers in New England snowy woods generated by AI Art App DALL-E

Maine Hut-to-Hut (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

Narrow Gauge trail (an old rail bed transitioned to ski and bike trail, we saw many day skiers and folks on the awkward-looking “fat tire” bikes used on snow. The Narrow Gauge was flat, but long and as we approached our turn off, Bela opted to continue on to the parking lot where his SUV awaited, citing discretion as the better part of valor. He would find a very luxurious (even MORE than the Huts) B&B and a therapeutic 30-minute shower over the delights of an 1,880-foot ascent to Stratton Brook Hut.

Stratton Brook had all the usual (by now) amenities of the MH&T huts and the addition of magnificent vistas to Sugarloaf Mountain’s downhill ski trails to the south, and the pristine Bigelow Mountain Preserve, over which the Appalachian Trail crosses, to the north. It also had quite an enthusiastic group of 8-10 year old girls and boys with their Moms on Spring Break, and taking a holiday from their downhill skiing vacation to sample XC skiing in the MH&T. They were a delight, racing around the hut and playing various games. I asked permission of their mother’s to take some pictures to share with my grand daughters, who think Spring Break is all about beaches, not beeches.



Walking down from Stratton Brook photo by Ralph Heimlich

Stratton’s Queen Bee was Agnes, a very fit 20-something lady who we’d first met snow shoeing up the trail to the Hut with her skis strapped to the pack when we’d set up the shuttle. She even remembered us old men (probably wondered if we could make it up the hill!) but was happy to greet us with unmatched hospitality.

After our last hearty breakfast, we set off to ski back DOWN the 1,880 feet we’d climbed yesterday, treating ourselves to beautiful mountain scenery and views of Sugarloaf. We took off the skis and walked several of the steeper pitches (no problems postholing with the frozen base). Finally, we skied off the Narrow Gauge and across the Airport runway to see Bela, waiting for us rejuvenated. After a long reverse of the shuttle setup, we hit the road back down to the Mid-Atlantic.

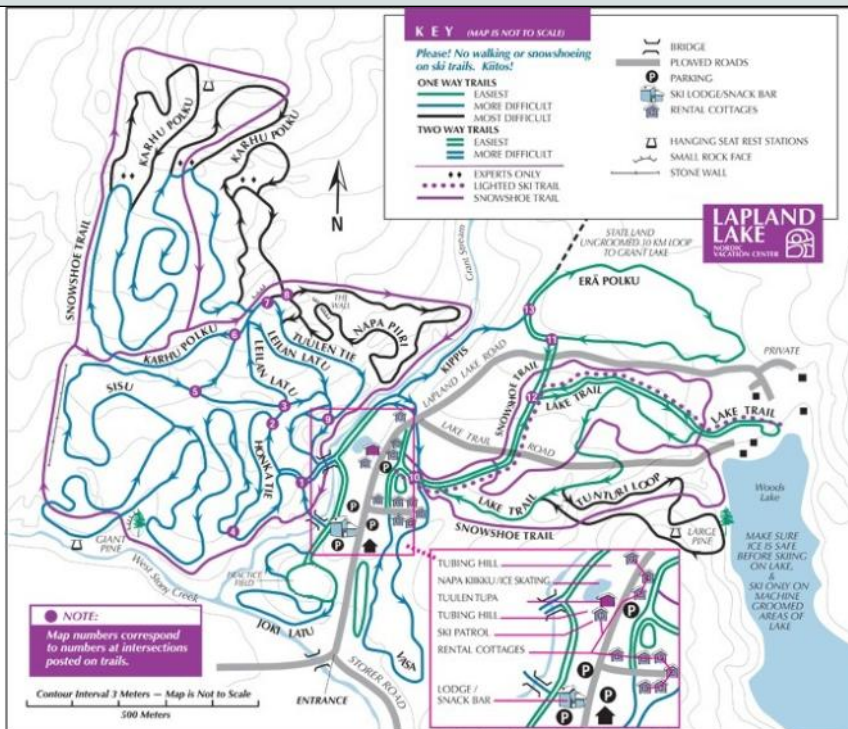
For a great video of our trip prepared by Ed Johnson, click <https://youtu.be/7GtKwnTcGYU>

Stalking the Elusive Snow All the Way to Lapland

by Al Larsen

Lapland is a region in the far north of Scandinavia, including parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and under some definitions, a portion of Russia. Like my Viking forebear Leif Erikson, who “discovered” North America, Ralph Heimlich “discovered” Lapland—that is, Lapland Lake, a year-round recreational resort in the Southeast Adirondacks. A group of 7 STSers spent a week there February 5-10, finding some of the very rare snow in the Eastern US this winter. Equal parts knowledge that this is a snow basin, and luck on weather conditions, led us to be there then for terrific XC skiing.

Finnish-American Olympic skier Olavi Harvonen founded Lapland Lake Resort in 1978, and designed its trail system. That was just two years after Bill Koch became the first US Olympian to win a medal (silver) in cross country skiing (Men’s 30km). It was therefore a time when XC skiing was just becoming known and popular outside of a small niche group, arguably in no small part because of Koch’s achievement seen on network TV. Remember the thrill of victory and the agony of da feet? By the way, it would be four decades until the US would win another Olympic medal in XC skiing. Bonus points if you can name who it was and the event. *[see answer at the end]



Lapland Lake has 50 kilometers of on-site ski trails, with classic and skate-skiing, plus connecting trails to adjacent off-site wilderness trails, the Northville-Lake Placid Trail, as well as separate snow-shoe trails. The Lake Trail is lit at night, for starlight skiing. It has 11 separate housing units (cottages) called by the Finnish term *tupa*, that accommodate groups ranging from 2 to 10 people. Of course, they have an authentic Finnish sauna (more on that later), an outdoor fire pit, plus a full-service rental and sales shop called—wait for it!—The Finnish Line.



Lapin Farmhouse photo by Al Larsen

resort that week, blithely walked in during the, um, *wrong time*. A good time was had by all, apparently.

As noted, we really hit the sweet spot for this winter’s snow conditions. As with much of the ADK and New England, there was some decent snow in mid-December, followed by very cold temperatures, followed by warm weather with rain. Pretty desultory heading into mid-January, with our outing dates approaching. Then, they got about a 12 inch dump of snow, followed by temps that remained cold. So, we showed up with that foot of snow intact, and with the folks at Lapland Lake able to groom it without worry of scraping it too thin. Frankly, out on the trails, it appeared to be more like two feet, but Lapland Lake listed their trail coverage as 12 inches. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday had terrific skiing conditions. Some chose more, some less, but having finally found the elusive Eastern snow, we would ski 10, 12 or 15 miles each day.

Our STS crew arrived by cars, all of us driving from the DC-Baltimore area. Most arrived in time for a short ski outing on Sunday afternoon. Many of us also went out on the trails after dinner to take advantage of the section of trail that is lighted, and ends up at the shore of frozen Woods Lake (more on the night skiing later, as well). Ralph had reserved the largest unit, Lapin Farmhouse, with full kitchen (where we cooked all of our own meals), full dining room plus a kitchen nook, a large living room with fireplace and seating to allow after dinner story-telling about

exploits on the trail, or at the sauna. In regard to the latter, and to protect the guilty, let us just say that we had great, and recurring, fun recounting how one of our members provided incorrect information to the rest of us about which hour the men would be in the (clothing optional) sauna, and which hour was designated for the women. Then, another of our group who shall go un-named, but who achieved renown throughout the



Lapland Trails photo by NotAl Larsen

(Continued on page 9)

Lapland Lake (cont.)

(Continued from page 8)

Our gang headed off in various directions, either individually or in pairs or small groups. By mid-day on Thursday, some light rain arrived, but the trails held up well. Heck, even that was considerably better than most snows we get in the DC/Balmer area, where it drops six inches of snow, and then turns to rain, and we have to scramble out while there is still something on the ground. A nice feature at Lapland Lake is that the trails are not long out and backs, but rather create a series of connecting loops. So, one can go for 30 minutes, one hour, four hours or whatever seems appropriate. That also allows for returning to the cottage for lunch if depositing your butt in a snowbank isn't what you prefer.

There are basically two sets of trails at Lapland Lake, with a very large set of combinations and permutations using those two. One is flatter and referred to as the "Lake Side". Very scenic, including a wide-open view from a lake edge. The other set is referred to as the "West side", and has more intermediate and expert trails. By choosing one turn instead of another, one loop instead of another, we could cover much the same territory on a subsequent day but have it seem totally new. The trail system was well thought out by ol' Olavi. A whimsical and fun feature was coming across a giant swing that served as a resting spot on one of the trails. I called it the "Edith Ann" swing after an old Laugh-In character who had her giant chair from which she spouted her wisdom.

One day, I decided to follow the non-maintained Grant Lake Wilderness Trail that led offsite and connects to the Northville-Lake Placid Trail. It was a nice enough trail, but the weekend before we arrived, they had below zero temperatures with howling winds that had brought down a lot of debris—branches and such. After a few miles of very pretty single track, I thought, you know, I'm out here by myself, no one knowing that I chose to do this, scrambling over downed branches, and there are beautifully groomed trails back on-site. So, I did my best leg-lift parallel reverse ski maneuver, and returned to Lapland Lake.



The next day, Ralph and Ed Johnson drove offsite for a snow-shoe adventure at Ferris Lake Wild Forest area, trampling from the trail head to Dexter Lake, and (most importantly) return.



Ed and Ralph at Dexter Lake photo by Ralph Heimlich

On Wednesday evening, most of us went back out after dinner and skied the lighted trail to the lake. The lights (wisely) end somewhat before arriving at the lake, so the night was totally dark and clear (good luck finding anything approaching it in the DC-Baltimore area). The stars were amazing. We all just soaked it in—Orion, Sirius, Cassiopeia, the Pleiades (Subaru's Seven Sisters for you city folks), Gemini, the Dippers. Oh my! I have burned that into my memory and my psyche and will remember it forever (well after I've forgotten what I had for dinner two days ago). We eventually and reluctantly returned to the cottage, where I pulled out my book for the trip, The Viking Heart, and thanked Olavi for his vision for this special place.

For a great video of our trip by Ed Johnson see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtnxwmxWf1Y>

For a great video of our trip by Ed Johnson see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtnxwmxWf1Y>

* Jessie Diggins and Kikkan Randall won the team sprint in 2018 in one of the most amazing and determined come-from-behind efforts I've ever seen.



Yvonne on the "Edith Ann" swing



End of the trail at Woods Lake photo by Al Larsen

Where Did the Snow Go? (cont.)

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2023/02/03/new-england-polar-vortex-cold/>). The time-lapse image in the article is well worth viewing because it shows the swirling movement of the lobes as they pass across the northern part of the U.S. over a period of hours. This system dumped lots of late-season snow on New England and the northern Mid-Atlantic, extending our ski season late into March.

If you have a home altar to Ullr, during the next snow season you should pray for the polar vortex to disrupt the usual high-latitude entrapment of polar air and bring us plenty of snow.

But if it doesn't work, pray for a ticket out West to the Rockies, Sierras or Cascades.

At least you don't have to shovel sunshine!

Membership Listing Available

A current list of paid-up STS members is now available, to PAID UP SECTION MEMBERS ONLY. If you are a paying member and desire a list, please reply to me by personal email link below. Specify whether PDF or Excel formats are desired (Word or text files are too difficult to generate from the membership maintenance software).

[Doug Lesar](#)

PATC-STC membership coordinator and groups.io admin

Another Northern Ski Venue

Since this season requires going NORTH rather than WEST, and some don't want to travel all the way to Tug Hill, the Adirondacks, or New England, Greg Westernik, John Ausema, and Althea Johnston suggest looking at northern Pennsylvania.

Greg Westernik—STScers looking for alternatives with possible skiable conditions may want to consider traveling farther to some northern Pennsylvania locations if they have the time to do the 6+ hour trek to these two places in this article. Back in February 2020, a few STScers like Dick Simmons and Izabella Zandberg did have the time and reported on their adhoc skiing trips to Denton Hill State Park. Here is some followup detail on these two sites:

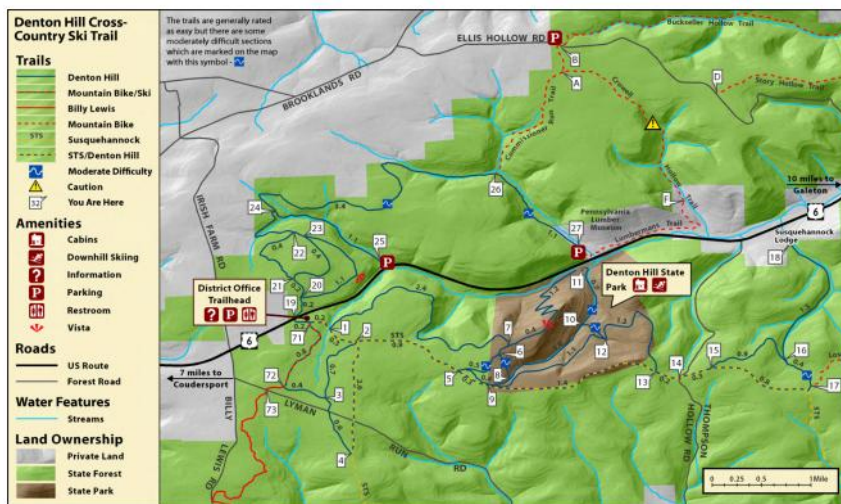
The Denton Hill Cross-country Ski Trail is a system of interconnecting loops totaling 29 miles, which includes portions of the Susquehannock (STS) and Billy Lewis Trails. The trail system utilizes old logging roads that offer gentle curves and hills. Denton Hill, located on the Allegheny Plateau at over 2,400 feet, may sometimes enjoy lake effect snow. Website reports typical snowfall, providing over 60 days of skiing, coupled with periodic grooming (for classic style). Six to twelve inches of snow are recommended for the best skiing conditions. Per the enclosed attached map (the brochure can be downloaded by clicking on the map), the trail can also be accessed at Denton Hill State Park, the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum and the Susquehannock Lodge (private). Local weather conditions may be found at following webpage: [NOAA weather](#).

Current snow conditions at DH SP are on a link at this site:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/DentonHillStatePark/Pages/Skiing.aspx>

Allegheny National Forest Ski Trails—Tucked in the northwest quadrant of Pennsylvania, there are several designated ski trails in the Allegheny National Forest with numerous entry points. XC ski trails are not set or groomed. See the table for downloading ski trail maps.

John Ausema—I skied in the Denton Hill area annually when I lived in Delaware, but I have not been there in ~15 years. It's a great place to ski when they have decent snow coverage. Wide trails with gradual gradients make it possible to ski all the way to the top of the downhill ski area, so there are some similarities to White Grass.



STS Quartet Skis Maine Hut-to-Hut

In February, four of us from the Washington region went to Western Maine for a stag version of the Maine Huts and Trail hut-to-hut experience. After a sketchy self-service existence during COVID, MH&T was back to full-service on weekends. The self-service week day and full-service weekend Huts [hosted](#) over 1,500 adventurers from 20 states and 3 countries, including 4 intrepid PATC-STS skiers (Bela Mariassy, Ed Johnson, Larry Schoen and Ralph Heimlich). We travelled in two heavy-duty 4WD vehicles and set up our shuttle, driving over 30 miles on back roads. We skied into our first stop, Flagstaff Hut on lovely, frozen Flagstaff Pond, a mere 2 miles into the backcountry over forested, rolling level terrain.

Flagstaff was everything we'd hoped. A roaring fire in the soaring dining hall greeted us, as well as a toasty drying room to wring the moisture out of our ski clothes. Our hut with four bunks was warmed by the circulating heat from the central wood furnace flowing through pipes in the floor. There was plenty of hot water in the showers. Beer and wine were on sale by the eager staff...Life Was GOOD! After a delicious meal of chicken and eggplant Parmigiana and dessert, we settled in for a nice evening of conversation, and a tour of the ecologically-significant features of our hut's Leeds 4 design (the water, heating and clivus multrum sewerage composting system).



Ralph, Ed, and Larry at Stratton Brook

After a hearty breakfast and packing up our bag lunches, we headed out to the Pond shore for a picture, then started on our way to the next Hut in the system. Today would be our longest haul: 11 miles to Poplar Hut, broken by lunch in the wood-stove heated halfway yurt. The morning started cold (about 10 deg F), but warmed quickly to the high 20's and the trails were snowy and well groomed by snowmobile. We thoroughly enjoyed our morning ski to the yurt, but leaving the nicely warmed interior for the second half of our journey took moral fortitude. The afternoon skiing was harder as the terrain rolled more and the melted and refrozen base on the trail was often pitched at an angle side-to-side, making you feel like you could slide off the trail. As the shadows lengthened, the last few uphill miles to Poplar Hut did too, and we were tired puppies when we finally arrived.

Each of the Huts in the system has its own unique design, but share the same basic amenities. Poplar's warm fire, drying room, showers and warm sleeping huts were complemented by another fine meal, a well-stocked bar, and good conversation. I was somewhat surprised by the number of guests at the Hut. On our last trip in 2019, we had stayed on weekdays, with relatively few skiers. On this long holiday weekend, many groups came to avail themselves of the full-service huts. We swapped stories with some (much) younger folks who were skiing the opposite trail to us, getting some tips for our next leg.



Kids on Spring Break at Stratton Brook Hut photo by Ralph Heimlich

Next morning, after suitably stocking up on breakfast and packed lunches, we set off downhill, descending from Poplar Hut to the valley floor. I was dreading a long icy downhill ski, but conditions were good and my fears were unfounded. As we reached the



Larry, Bela and Ed on frozen Flagstaff Pond photo by Ralph Heimlich



Plenty of snow in Maine



Ed and the "fat tire" bikers photo by Ralph Heimlich

(Continued on page 7)

Another Northern Ski Venue (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

The downhill ski venue (which is in the state park but was run by a concessioner) has been closed for several years. There is a development plan posted on the park website but the status does not appear to have changed for several years. (<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/DentonHillStatePark/Pages/default.aspx>). The park is looking for a private partner to upgrade equipment, operate the facility, and possibly build some lodging.

There is an updated winter conditions report for PA state parks. The Denton Hill entry is not posting updated info, presumably because the downhill area is closed. But it could be useful for other PA state parks: <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/WinterReport/Pages/default.aspx>. Cherry Springs State Park (famous as a "dark sky" park) is not too far away so that could be a good reference.

Otherwise one could check on conditions by contacting Susquehannock State Forest <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateForests/FindAForest/Susquehannock/Pages/default.aspx>. The Pennsylvania Lumber Museum might be able to give updated conditions too; it's across the street from the ski area (<http://lumbermuseum.org/>)

I never saw groomed trails in the times I have skied there, and it's in the middle of nowhere, so particularly with the downhill area closed, I would at least be prepared to break trail if you travel out that way.

Susquehannock Lodge is a nice place to stay but is primarily oriented towards groups. You can get meals there too. (<https://susquehannock-lodge.com/>). There used to be a small hotel across the street too; I am not sure if it's still there. Otherwise you would probably need to stay in Coudersport or Wellsboro.

Althea Johnston—Another place to check is Crystal Lake, Pennsylvania. They often have different snow from Canaan or Laurel Mountain! Crystal Lake may be having trouble finding help this year, but in past decades I have had some great snow there and some great times!! Their website currently says: "The Crystal Lake Ski and Outdoor Center is open for day use activities such as hiking, boating, and fishing during the week this fall. Due to staffing, we're not able to open for day use activities on weekends or for lodging." See <https://crystallakeskiandoutdoorcenter.com/skiing/>. A trail map is at this website.

| Cross-Country Ski Trails on the ANF | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--|
| Trail | Miles | Other Trail Uses |
| Brush Hollow | 7.7 | skiing, mountain biking, hiking |
| Buzzard Swamp | 11.2 | skiing, mountain biking, snowshoeing, hiking |
| Hearts Content Trails | 7.8 | skiing, snowshoeing, hiking |
| Hickory Creek | 12 | skiing, hiking |
| Laurel Mills | 10.7 | skiing, hiking |
| Little Drummer Historical Pathway | 3.1 | skiing, hiking |
| North Country National Scenic Trail | 96.3 | skiing, snowshoeing, hiking |
| Rimrock | 1.3 | snowshoeing, hiking |
| Tracy Ridge | 33.69 | skiing, hiking |
| Twin Lakes | 15.8 | skiing, mountain biking, hiking |
| Westline | 9.8 | skiing |

These and a large number of other cross-country ski locations are available on the interactive map at <https://patcskitouring.us/resources/xc-ski-areas-conditions/>

If you notice any discrepancies on this map, please notify Ralph Heimlich at heimlichfamily@comcast.net.



North Trails Susquehannock SP photo by Dick Simmons

Here are some website links to maps for some of these AFN trails:

- Beaver Meadows Area Trail System (2006) ([pdf](#))
- Brush Hollow/Mill Creek Cross Country Ski/Hike Trail (2016) ([pdf](#))
- Bullis Hollow Trail ([pdf](#))
- Buzzard Swamp Trail System ([pdf](#))
- Hearts Content Orienteering ([pdf](#))
- Interpretive Trail/Cross-Country Ski Trail ([pdf](#))
- Hickory Creek Wilderness ([pdf](#))
- Laurel Mill Cross Country Ski/Hike Trail (2016) ([pdf](#))
- Minister Creek Hiking Trail ([pdf](#))
- Morrison Hiking Trail ([pdf](#))
- North Country National Scenic Trail ([pdf](#))
- Rimrock Hiking Trail (2015) ([pdf](#))
- Spring Creek Horse Trail ([pdf](#))
- The Old Powerhouse - Oil Country Heritage ([pdf](#))
- Tracy Ridge Hiking Trail System ([pdf](#))
- Timberdoodle Flats ([pdf](#))
- Twin Lakes Hiking Trail (2016) ([pdf](#))
- Westline Cross Country Ski Area ([pdf](#))

PATC-Ski Touring Section

c/o Doug Lesar

2507 Campbell Place

Kensington, MD 20895



To:

PATC Ski Touring Section Membership Form

The PATC/STS provides quality services and benefits to its cross-country skiing members while promoting and supporting the PATC and cross country skiing in general. Whether a novice, recreational, citizen racer or telemark skier, STS has something for every XC skier. Imagine yourself floating on the snow, climbing across hill and dale in the quiet of winter, stopping for lunch in brilliant sunshine on a vista with a view of snow-covered ridges and valleys stretching to the horizon, and then making a descent back to home. Our membership enjoys ski touring in the hills with the comradeship and safety of a group. When you become a member, you receive all issues of the club's newsletter UPSLOPE and other useful information. UPSLOPE is published 3-5 times a year by PATC/Ski Touring Section, a non-profit, educational and recreational group of cross-country skiing enthusiasts based in the Maryland, DC, Virginia, PA and West Virginia areas. UPSLOPE provides information about STS trips and events (e.g., Learn-To-XC-Ski weekends, Telemark instructional clinics, and mini-week ski trips). One year membership runs from October 1st through September 30th of the next year. If you join in April or later, your one year membership will run through September of the next year. To insure uninterrupted membership for more than one year, you may provide advance dues for up to three years. To join, select your desired membership category and term from the table below, complete this Form legibly, and send it with a check appropriate to your membership choice (payable to PATC Ski Touring Section) to:

PATC-Ski Touring Section, c/o Doug Lesar, 2507 Campbell Place, Kensington, MD 20895

Membership Classes

| <u>Membership Categories</u> | <u>1 Year Only</u> | <u>2 Years</u> | <u>3 Years</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Individual | \$ 9 | \$17 | \$25 |
| Family | \$13 | \$24 | \$35 |

PLEASE PRINT or TYPE THE INFORMATION BELOW !!!

Name(s): _____ Request is for: - NEW Membership: _____

Address: _____ Today's Date: _____ - New Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ - Renewal: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

- Add me to Annual member directory but do not list my: Home Ph.: ___ ; Work Ph: ___ ; Email: ___;Postal Address: ___
- If checked, add me to New Yahoo Group so I can get infrequent, adhoc announcements of local XC Ski activities: ___
- If checked, send my UPSLOPE only electronically (no paper copy) to save the club copying and postage: ___

STS is an all-volunteer organization. We cannot function without the assistance of our members. If you are interested in volunteering to help STS in any of the following areas, please check the box and you will be contacted:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> STS Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> XC Ski Instructor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Web Content Assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Ski Trip Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Coordinator |