

The **Lookout**

June - July 2020



Adirondack Mountain Club — Schenectady Chapter

Dedicated to the preservation, protection and
enjoyment of the Forest Preserve

<http://www.adk-schenectady.org>

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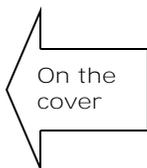
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On the
cover

*Looking for a bright spot close to home? Spring flowers offer an image of renewal and hope, like these creeping phlox, *phlox subulata*. Photo by Sally Dewes*

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June - July 2020

The Lookout

The Newsletter for the Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club

Three Seniors Awarded \$500 Scholarships

The Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club has since 2008 offered scholarships to local high school seniors who will pursue studies in the science and environmental fields. Eight of the area's high schools received invitations from Jacqueline McGinn, project coordinator, to have students submit essays to apply for a scholarship and a one-year membership to ADK. Due to the generosity of the membership at large and to a special \$1,000 anonymous donation, this year we are fortunate to be able to award three \$500 scholarships. We feel that each has shown real commitment to the protection of the environment through both their studies and their actions.

Below are excerpts from each of their essays. We congratulate each of them and wish them well in the future!

Kiana Pearson - Ballston Spa High School

"For as long as I can remember, I have been enamored with animals of all species. As my emotional connection to wildlife has grown over the years as I have matured, so has my understanding of and commitment to protecting the environment in which these animals live. My plan to study marine biology in the fall at SUNY Stony Brook allows me to combine my love for animals with my passion for safeguarding the environment. I am particularly interested in endangered species conservation and injured animal rehabilitation, combining the work of aquariums with work out in the field.

With this in mind, I have tried to involve myself as much as possible with activities and organizations that allow me to take part in this cause. I was an active member of my school's Environmental Club all throughout middle school, and joined my high school's Environmental Club in my junior year, becoming secretary this year. For the past two years, we have organized Earth Week, a week of environment-themed festivities that aims to promote environmental awareness among our student body.

I am currently setting up an internship with VIA Aquarium, which will give me vast amounts of experience with both marine fauna, as well as those who have committed their lives to such a cause. In college, as I plan to study marine biology, I plan to become involved in Stony Brook's Environmental Club and Marine Science Club. With the current state of the world, it is absolutely necessary that we prioritize the wellbeing of our ecosystems in order to ensure any kind of longevity and subsequent wellbeing of mankind and its non-human companions. With this being said, thank you and stay safe."



Kiana Pearson

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Three Seniors Awarded \$500 Scholarships

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Connor McDermott – Niskayuna High School

“Growing up in New York’s Adirondack Mountains, I’ve always had a great appreciation for nature and the environment, which is why I find climate change and mankind’s role in the destruction of ecosystems so alarming. So for the past three summers, I have volunteered as a research intern at the Darrin Fresh Water Institute (DFWI) at Lake George (an IBM/Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute partnership) studying Asian clams. These little clams, the size of one’s thumbnail, pose a threat to freshwater lakes. Asian clams reproduce rapidly, outpacing native clams thus shifting the ecosystem in New York’s Adirondack region. So, I spent my summers trying to better understand Asian clams and how to prevent their spread. This past summer, I was the project lead at DFWI on a study examining clam reproduction and sediment size. We confirmed that Asian clams reproduce in areas with smaller sediment sizes -- they like finer sand particles. Knowing this will enable scientists to determine ways to keep clams from spreading and help improve the health of freshwater lakes and streams worldwide.

As someone with aspirations to make a change in the world and to curb climate change and preserve our wild spaces, I believe engineering is the place to start. However, the solutions to the world’s biggest challenges aren’t just simple technical fixes, they require intense problem-solving approaches from multiple disciplines. Therefore, I seek to continue the research I started at the DFWI in biodiversity and I plan to study engineering at Duke University starting this fall. I want to solve big problems, and at the DFWI I learned that even a 17-year-old reeking of clam guts can, and will, make a difference. It is my goal to apply my engineering degree to build tools and instruments that will help preserve our environment and make great change. I don’t want to just study problems; I want to help solve them.”



Connor McDermott

Erik Mavian - Niskayuna High School

“I have always been fascinated and inspired by wildlife and nature. Growing up, I would spend much of my free time wandering the nearby forest hoping to observe wildlife. When I couldn’t get outside, I’d most likely be watching National Geographic documentaries. It has not only been my passion on a personal level, but it has been the strongest focus of my academic pursuits. My career objective is to become a manager of wild areas or a park ranger. My plan for pursuing this dream is to study wildlife science in college at either SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) or the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at University of Vermont, where I have been accepted.

Since I entered high school I have had a number of great experiences that have motivated me to pursue an environmental oriented career. This includes being a founding member and leader of my high school’s beekeeping club as well as being a member of our school’s recycling club. In addition, I had the great opportunity to volunteer on two different conservation-focused international programs in Costa Rica and South Africa with the organization Global Leadership Adventures. These programs afforded me real life global experience working with people from other cultures in diverse ecosystems. I was exposed to many fascinating aspects of conservation and wildlife management such as tracking and studying wildlife populations, habitat restoration and invasive plant research and mitigation.

The Schenectady Chapter Adirondack Mountain Club scholarship award would help me to afford and pursue my college and professional interests. I would also greatly value the chapter membership as I have a great affinity for the Adirondacks. I have many fond memories of hiking, rock climbing and camping in the Adirondacks and I am currently working on climbing all 46 high peaks.”



Erik Mavian

New Internet Plans To Help Us Stay Connected

Gosh friends, mud and black fly season is always rough for us folks who like to hang out in New York State's high and wild places, but nothing could have ever prepared us for a spring and early summer like this! COVID-19 and social distancing has brought with it a wealth of contradictions. While we hunger for greater human connection than ever before, many of us (including many millennials) are stepping back from social media. While civic responsibility dictates we need to stay physically apart, many of us have experienced a strengthening of relationships with friends and family. While many of us have experienced heartbreak, anxiety and fear, we've also experienced the incredible possibility of what it means to one common humanity focused on the same problem. And for our practical purposes, while it's been impossible for our chapters (who've continued to meet virtually) to plan our regular schedule of outings, trail maintenance, socials and educational programming, we are also confronted with an amazing opportunity to reach out to folks who might be considering exploring the great outdoors for the first time.

As of this writing, here is just a bit of what is posted on the Main Club's COVID-19 Update Page:

*Following Governor Cuomo's announcement of a more detailed **New York Forward** reopening plan for New York State, ADK (Adirondack Mountain Club) is postponing the reopening of its lodging facilities until the North Country is allowed to reopen its businesses **and** New York reaches Phase 3 of the state reopening process... Though non-essential travel is allowed for parts of the state, we strongly encourage hikers to continue recreating locally until communities in the Adirondack Park fully reopen. Many businesses and amenities will not be available in the North Country for at least another month, perhaps longer.*

Our chapter leadership has agreed to follow the guidance of the ADK Main Club, and thus no pre-planned outings are included in this edition of *Lookout*. If social distancing restrictions continue to ease, we may be able to post some outings on our Facebook Page and email out opportunities to the chapter. The Northville Placid Trail Challenge will also not recognize hikes completed until further notice in support of the ADK's encouragement to recreate locally.

Virtual events

On the other hand, this June we'll be launching virtual Young Member Socials and the beginnings of a virtually speaker series. I very much believe folks are still looking to connect, and many new potential members will be looking for organizations to help them begin exploring the great outdoors. A robust online presence for our chapter will be critical in this time. Additionally, our work of providing scholarships and working on critical conservation issues is more important than ever. Stay safe and I hope to be able to join you all in person again soon!

--Rev. Dustin Wright, Chapter Chair

VIRTUAL EVENTS

Thursdays, June 4 and July 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Young Member Social: <https://zoom.us/j/91891278248>

Our world has changed dramatically in the midst of COVID-19, and a lot of folks are looking to get out and explore the wilderness, perhaps for the first time! If you're someone roughly in your 20s or 30s and are interested in meeting a like minded group of folks to get outside with, join our virtual socials on Zoom! Once social distancing restrictions are eased, we'll restart our monthly tradition of gathering at a local Schenectady watering hole on the first Thursday of the month.

Thursday, June 18 at 7 p.m.

Third Thursdays with the Schenectady ADK:

Norm Kuchar on the History of the Schenectady Chapter

Live on Facebook: www.facebook.com/schenectadyadk

So the good news is we've welcomed so many new members into the Schenectady ADK in recent years... this is awesome! The other news though is that an increasing portion of our members (and prospective members) no longer know much about the decades of work so many individuals in our chapter have put into protecting and promoting our wild places in Upstate New York. With that situation in mind, this June we'll be welcoming Chapter Historian Norm Kuchar to join Speaker Series Leader Sally Dewes and Chair Dustin Wright for an evening of discussion about the history of the Schenectady ADK and how we might build on that history towards a bright future. Everyone will be able to lift up questions live on Facebook as well. If this event is successful, we'll continue offering virtual events until social distancing recommendations ease further.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns at dustingwright@gmail.com or 603-953-8782.

Conservation Report

State Environmental Finance Plans Hit Hard

Big steps toward better funding for conservation and outdoor recreation in the state – including a long term bond issue and renewal this year of the Environmental Protection Fund – regrettably face going off a cliff due to the coronavirus crisis. While countless hikes, gatherings, flat and whitewater trips have been canceled or put on hold already, the financial issues pose even greater frustrations.

The Conservation Committee of the ADK heard this dire discussion from new Executive Director Michael Barrett and Cathy Pedler, director of advocacy, at its May 9 meeting (via Zoom). So a year that rolled out strongly with almost 100 activists from the ADK, the Adirondack Council, Sierra Club and others successfully promoting state environmental programs, now is watching its wheels come off. The disruptions of the virus to business and social life are cratering state tax receipts and placing unprecedented demands on state health and social systems such as unemployment payments and school aid. You know all this. It's grim.

When the state Legislature approved the 2020-21 budget it included \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund, which finances land protection, invasive species management, farmland protection and recycling among a huge list. Prohibition against a raid on the fund for other state purposes was included, Pedler said, which was a real victory. All that is still in the budget, but with a huge caveat: The spending is subject to change during the year. "We're not counting on it," Pedler said.

Separately, the \$3 BILLION "Restore Mother Nature" bond act would provide decades of funding (the last such bond was passed in 1996) oriented toward climate change resilience and mitigation such as modernizing state buildings to reduce energy use, protection of wildlife habitat, water quality and carbon dioxide reduction. It could even be a source for trails development, Barrett said, as its language recognizes these as long-term projects. All are good objectives and most have been on the state environmental agenda for years -- BUT the bond proposal is not yet on the November ballot. Pedler said in an earlier interview that if the economic crisis now facing the state makes passage look unlikely, it is possible the ballot proposal will be delayed.



Michael Barrett

Clearly there are far more unknowns than knowns as Lookout goes to press for June and July. These range from the big financial questions down to any schedule for visitors to use John's Brook Lodge or the High Peaks Information Center, and projects affecting these (**see articles on pages 3, 5 and 7**). Among other things, this crisis is going to be a crash course in staying in touch day-to-day via social media, and watching our step.

--Mal Provost, Conservation Chair

Contact State Legislative Chairmen

It never hurts to write to political leaders to make your positions known, and there are a ton of topics active this year for sure. Over time these will include budget issues such as how many forest rangers are employed. **Your voice counts.**

Following are the chairmen of environmental conservation committees for 2019 in the state Senate and Assembly:

Todd Kaminsky

Chair of Senate Environmental Conservation Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 302
Albany, NY 12247
Phone: 518-455-3401
kaminsky@nySenate.gov

Steve Englebright

Chair of Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 621
Albany, NY 12248
Phone: 518-455-4804
engles@nyassembly.gov

Chapter Trail Work Plans Face Triple Threat

Trail projects planned for the first half of this year have been impacted by three unforeseen factors:

First, COVID-19 has essentially closed the woods to group activities. ADK has closed its facilities and has cancelled group activities (including back-country work by the ADK Professional Trail Crew requiring overnight camping), and all Schenectady Chapter outings (as well as the Northville-Placid Trail Challenge) have been cancelled until further notice. These included our annual spring trail maintenance trip to the Bailey Pond and Hoffman Notch trails.

Second, a 2019 legal decision ruled that excessive tree cutting by DEC to build community connector snowmobile trails in the Adirondack Forest Preserve violated Article 14, the Forever Wild provision in the state Constitution. The state has filed an appeal on the tree cutting issue, to be heard by the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court. Pending the court decision, DEC has banned the cutting of trees of any size, including seedlings, in the Forest Preserve. This has stalled the construction of new trails, including the planned extension of the Jones Hill trail from the summit northward to US 9.

Third, DEC has delayed revising and issuing a new ADK Umbrella Volunteer Stewardship Agreement (VSA), under which about 70 volunteer stewards have adopted over 120 trails. Participants in this program agree to follow DEC' trail standards and are provided with the same liability and workers compensation protection as salaried state employees. An active VSA is required for trail work in the Adirondacks, so it is hoped that the new agreement will be issued soon.



Violet Smith, left, and her dad David Smith use a crosscut saw on a deadfall tree on the Bailey Pond Trail during maintenance in May of 2019. Ray Sergett assists. Photo by Mal Provost

Boots on the Ground

Despite these hurdles, revised work-around plans have been proposed for several projects. In the Hoffman Notch Wilderness, maintenance of the Bailey Pond and Hoffman Notch trails will be rescheduled as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Work on the Jones Hill trail by the ADK Pro Crew, funded by a North Country Trail Association grant, will focus on construction of two bridges, thus avoiding the need to cut any trees to establish the trail tread. This is planned for late August as a "front-country" project, with COVID-19 protocols and the crew commuting daily to the work sites.

In the Hammond Pond Wild Forest, Schenectady Chapter volunteers led by Walt Hayes plan to clear several trails by side cutting and blowdown removal, without cutting any seedlings or saplings from the tread. This would probably not require close contact among the volunteers at the worksites, although carpooling to the trailheads is still an issue.

--Norm Kuchar, Trails Chair

Lesser Known Hikes In Southern Adirondacks

Earlier this spring, the Adirondack Explorer asked the state Department of Environmental Conservation for a list of lesser known hikes in the Adirondacks in an effort to provide people with options outside of the more popular trails. Part of that list ran in the May-June issue, *but the entire list can be found below. Many of the trails are relatively flat and go to ponds, a type of route that tends to attract few people but can be just as rewarding as a summit hike.*

This list will provide you with the hikes. You can use other tools to find the details of each hike, such as maps, guidebooks, and the [DEC's website](#). The following is a list of lesser used trails in the southern Adirondacks provided to the Adirondack Almanack by the DEC:

- **Twin Lakes Dam Trail**, Town of Ohio, Black River Wild Forest – 6 miles round trip
- **Brewer Lake Trail**, Otter Lake, Black River Wild Forest – 4 miles round trip
- **Vista (Keegan's) Trail**, Town of Ohio, Black River Wild Forest – 2 miles round trip
- **Bullhead Pond**, Indian Lake, Blue Mtn Wild Forest – 1.2 miles round trip

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Remembering Hiker Norman Clark Gittinger

Long-time Schenectady ADK member Norman Clark Gittinger passed away on March 28, at the age of 89. Born in Pueblo, CO, Clark graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in electrical engineering. After graduation, he moved to Schenectady and began a 37-year career with General Electric's General Engineering Laboratory and Global Research & Development Center. He also received a master's degree from RPI and was elected a member of Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society. In Schenectady, Clark met and married his wife Millie, an outdoor enthusiast who shared many adventures with him.

A man with a wide range of interests, Clark loved music and volunteered in set construction and stage crew for the Schenectady Light Opera Company. He was an amateur radio operator and a member of the Schenectady Amateur Radio Association, frequently volunteering for public service events. Following retirement, he joined the GE Volunteers (formerly GE Elfuns), repairing talking book machines for the New York State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. He and Millie enjoyed traveling and visited all 50 states and seven continents (including three trips to Antarctica).

Early 46er

But we most remember Clark as an avid outdoorsman. He enjoyed hiking, mountain climbing, canoeing and cross-country skiing. A long-distance hiker, Clark completed the Northville - Placid Trail and, with Millie, the Appalachian Trail. He was an Adirondack 46er (#103) and among the first Winter 46ers (#8), who climbed the snowy peaks before the days of modern equipment and before today's numerous climbers packed the trails and posted trip reports about day-to-day conditions.

He also hiked the Northeast 111 (4,000-ft peaks in New England and New York) and all of the Catskills over 3,500 feet. In the West, he climbed 39 of the 55 peaks topping 14,000 feet in Colorado, as well as Washington's Mt. Rainier and California's Mt. Whitney, highest peak in the contiguous United States.

Clark joined ADK's Schenectady Chapter in 1960 and served on the chapter board as chair of the Trails and Outings committees and as a chapter director. Clark and Millie were also instrumental and generous in establishing the Dudley T.F. Marple Trail Maintenance Fund.

--Norm Kuchar, Chapter Historian

Lesser Known Hikes In Southern Adirondacks

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- **Sawyer Mountain**, Indian Lake, Blue Ridge Wilderness – *2.6 miles round trip*
- **Slim Pond**, Arietta, Blue Ridge Wilderness – *5.8 miles round trip*
- **Watch Hill**, Indian Lake, Jessup River Wild Forest – *2.4 miles round trip*
- **Chase Lake Trail**, Benson, Shaker Mtn Wild Forest – *5.6 miles round trip to lean to on Chase Lake*
- **Broomstick Lake**, Arietta, Ferris Lake Wild Forest – *1.4 miles round trip*
- **Stewart and Indian Lake Trail**, Caroga, Shaker Mountain Wild Forest – *2.2-mile hike to scenic overlook on lake*
- **Lassellville State Forest**, Oppenheim/Ephratah – *6.6 miles of trails. Parking on Fical and Schullenburg Roads*
- **Rockwood State Forest**, Ephratah/Johnstown – *1.69 miles of trails. Parking on Route 29*
- **Wolf Pond Trail**, North Hudson, Vanderhacker Mt. Wild Forest – *2.6 miles round trip*
- **Big Pond Trail**, Schroon Lake, Hoffman Notch Wilderness – *1.7 miles to Big Pond. Trail continues 4.1 miles to Hoffman Notch Trail intersection.*
- **Ushers Road Trail**, Clifton Park/Half Moon, Ushers Road State Forest – *1.5-mile loop trail*
- **Folded Rock Trail**, Jackson, Batten Kill and Goose Egg State Forests – *5-mile loop trail*
- **Carters Pond Wildlife Management Area Accessible Nature Trail**, Greenwich – *0.5-mile loop trail*

--Reprinted courtesy of Adirondack Almanack



Ididaride Tour In Question, Boreas Route Cut

As Lookout goes to press, the status of the Ididaride bicycle tour that was scheduled for July 26 is indeterminate. The tour – a scenic road route and a new dirt/gravel ride – was looking forward to its 15th anniversary. The ride has drawn hundreds annually and has been a major fund-raiser for the Adirondack Mountain Club. As ADK officials sort out what to do, information will be made available on social media.

Boreas Ponds Road Cut

And as if all the trips, events and ADK main facilities closures were not enough bad news, there is more regarding access to the Boreas Ponds via Gulf Brook Road. That "jewel of the Adirondacks" is definitely a jewel in the rough for a while, though unrelated to the pandemic. Culverts carrying the Gulf Brook under the road sustained serious damage during the record deluge that hit the North Country around Halloween last year. That was followed by a severe localized ice storm around Christmas and New Year's, which brought down trees and blocked the road. DEC Region 5 Spokesman David Winchell reported early this month that the road is now closed to all vehicle traffic until further notice. There is parking for access to the road just off Blue Ridge Road, but only hikers, bikers or horse travel are permitted at present. Winchell advises caution, as there is serious erosion still around the culvert damage, though the small bridges on the road are intact. No schedule for completion of repair work or cost estimates were available.

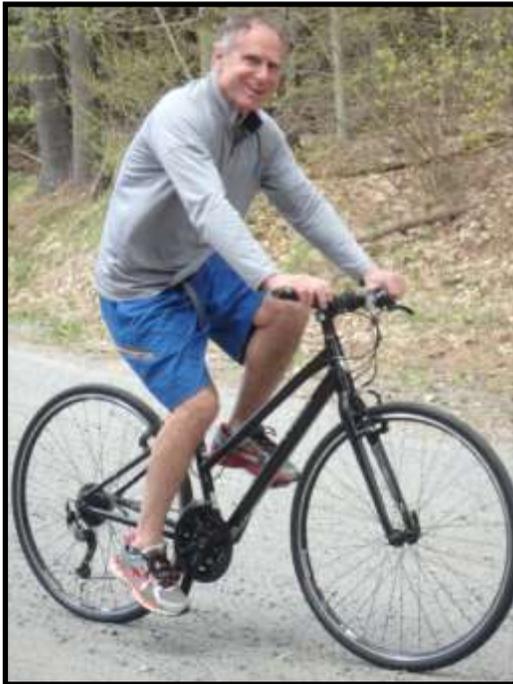


Riders on the 2019 "Gravel Grinder" course of the Ididaride.

New information on reopening of Gulf Brook Road will be posted on the Backcountry Information for the Eastern Central Adirondacks and in the weekly Adirondack Outdoor Recreation bulletin.

--Mal Provost, Lookout Editor

Getting Out Safely During The Pandemic



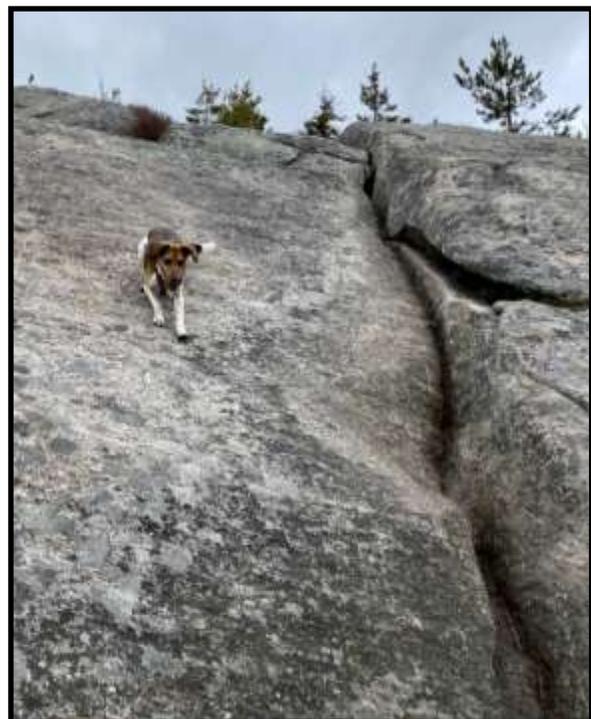
No car pooling for an informal group of river runners meant biking back to the Schroon River put-in for Tom Flynn to retrieve his vehicle May 16. Photo by Mal Provost



A lot of good spring activities are curtailed as the ADK and other groups navigate the pandemic, but social distancing is easy on the river, so paddlers get out informally. Don Orr on the Schroon River May 16. Photo by Mal Provost



Kayaker Clarke Darlington in personal protection gear as he gets ready for an independent run on the Schroon River May 16. Photo by Mal Provost



Willard E. Bear, the constant companion and hiking partner of Schenectady Chapter Chair Dustin Wright, descending Catamount on May 16. Photo by Dustin Wright.

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CHAPTER BOARD MEETINGS: Are held regularly on the 4th Tuesday of the month. No meetings are held in July or August. Any concerns members have may be expressed to any board member listed on the inside front cover, or attend the meetings which are open to the membership. Call a board member for date, time & directions.

CHAPTER DISCLAIMER: People who attend outings reminded that such activities entail a certain degree of danger; and persons participating do so at their own risk. This disclaimer is for both whitewater and regular outings of the chapter.

SCHENECTADY CHAPTER PATCH: This lovely patch (shown at right) can be purchased by mailing a check (payable to Schenectady Chapter ADK) to Mary MacDonald, 27 Woodside Drive, Clifton Park NY 12065. The cost is \$3 per patch, which includes the mailing cost.

TRIP LEADERS: If you do not want your trip listed in the local newspapers, call Publicity Chair Richard Wang at 518-399-3108 or publicity@adk-schenectady.org. This newsletter goes out over the internet.

EQUIPMENT RENTAL: The chapter has hi-tech snowshoes and one pair of universal fit crampons available to rent at \$5/trip. Call Stan Stoklosa at 383-3066 to arrange for pick-up.

WEBSITE: <http://www.adk-schenectady.org> — All of the latest information will be posted on the Web, i.e. any changes or corrections. Please review our website and related Internet resources Acceptable Use Policy.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: If you move, you must inform the ADK in order to continue receiving The Lookout. The Lookout is sent via bulk mail, which the Postal Service will not forward. Send changes of address to the Main Club to ensure uninterrupted delivery.

Membership Application

To join the Schenectady Chapter, send this form with payment to:

Adirondack Mountain Club 814 Goggins Road, Lake George, NY 12845 or drop it off at Adirondack Loj or Headquarters.

Check Membership Level:

- Family Life \$1950
- Individual Life \$1300
- Adult \$50
- Family \$60
- Senior (65+) \$40
- Senior Family(65+) \$50
- Student (full time 18+) \$25
- School _____

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List spouse & children under 18 and birth dates

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Signature (required for charge)

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the Lookout

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