



CHAPTER MEETINGS

Meetings are at **7:00 PM** at the [Barry Township Hall](#) at 155 East Orchard Street in Delton the second Wednesday of each month, and are open to the public. Meetings through the Second Quarter of 2011 are **March 9, April 13, May 11** (our Chapter's Annual Meeting, and we have another presentation that evening), and **June 8**. For those who can join us, prior to the meeting, we will meet for dinner at 5:45 PM, at the [Grove Street Cafe](#) on the north side of Delton, located at 370 N. Grove Street (just across from intersection of Delton Road and M-43)

At the beginning of our **March 9** Chapter Meeting:

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Chief Noonday Chapter of the North Country Trail will have a presentation of Nature Photography by **Josh Haas**, Co-owner of "*Glances at Nature*" during their March 9th meeting. Josh is a well recognized photographer of all things nature. Glances at Nature offers training programs, field trips, and sales of some phenomenal pictures taken by Josh and his father. Examples of their work can be found at www.glancesatnature.com The presentation is titled "*Enriching your hikes, One photo at a time.*" All interested in hiking or nature photography are welcome to attend! See a couple examples of their photography on our web site "[TRAIL LOG](#)".

Upcoming events (see details in following pages)

- March 19:** Workday at Ott Preserve, Battle Creek; **this is a change**. We will be replacing broken railings on the boardwalk. Breakfast at the [Homespun Restaurant](#); 210 Columbia Ave. E; Battle Creek.
- April 2:** Hike around Sessions Lake in Ionia State Game Area. Breakfast at [Ionia Big Boy Restaurant](#).
- April 23:** Workday to be determined.
- April 29 and 30:** Woodpecker Festival in Middleville, sponsored by Thornapple Trail Association
- May 7:** Hike Paul Henry Thornapple Trail in Middleville with the Volksmarchers. Breakfast at [Big Easy Deli & Bakery](#).
- May 8:** The Kalamazoo Marathon
- May 11:** At our Chapter Meeting, **we have a speaker planned**
- May 21:** Workday to be determined.
- June 4:** Hike Kalamazoo River Trail from the Kalamazoo Nature Center to downtown Kalamazoo. Breakfast at Food Dance Cafe; lunch at Bell's Brewery's Eccentric Café
- June 10 – 12:** **The Allegheny 100 Ultimate Hiking Challenge** held on the North Country Trail
- June 18:** Workday to be determined.

The Chief Noonday Chapter welcomes everyone to join us for any of our meetings, hikes, or workday events. For more information, please contact Larry Hawkins at 269-945-5398 or hawkeyemd@cablespeed.com, or see web site for other contacts.

The Ott Preserve, the Calhoun County Trail Alliance, and the Historic Bridge Trail

Perhaps 8 or 9 years ago (or longer), the NCTA contributed money via a National Parks Cost Sharing Award on behalf of Calhoun County Parks, to help begin funding a study for a multi-use trail from Battle Creek to Marshall and then to Homer. A coalition of supporters became involved, and as Calhoun County reduced personnel, the coalition, now named the **Calhoun County Trail Alliance**, continued with the project. Our Chapter's Past-President and current Board Member, **Tom Garnett**, currently leads the CCTA, and has done a huge amount of work on this project. **Ron Sootsman** is also involved on our behalf.

As the project has progressed, the plan has also. The current plan generally follows the Kalamazoo River from Battle Creek to Marshall, now also to Albion, and then to Homer. Additional historic bridges will be utilized along this trail, which also passes through Historic Bridge Park, and the trail will be called "**The Historic Bridge Trail**". This trail, with perhaps some footpath detours, will be the North Country Trail, in southern Calhoun County. The CCTA brochure:

<http://www.cfa-cc.org/documents/CCTAFinalBrochure.pdf>

Currently [Phase 1 – Segment 1](#) of the plan is gaining funding, and objections are being raised over the trail as planned through the **Ott Biological Preserve**. I think we all want the trail through the Ott (and the rest of our trail) to be done the right way. We don't all agree on what is the right way, and that discussion is happening now. **Please weigh in with your comments**, see comments of others, including links to articles from the Battle Creek Enquirer, on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Calhoun-County-Trailway-Alliance/201010883242661>

Event Details

REMINDER: For updated information on chapter events, especially toward the end of the quarter, please visit our web site: www.northcountrytrail.org/cnd/index.htm at the "[Events Calendar](#)" link.

March 19: Workday at Ott Preserve

Our **March 19** workday plans have changed. We are now planning to repair boardwalk railings at the [Ott Biological Preserve](#) in Battle Creek at about **9:00 a.m.**

We will meet for breakfast at the [Homespun Restaurant](#) at 210 Columbia Avenue East in Battle Creek at **8:00 a.m.** Homespun phone: 269-962-5323.

April 2: Hike around Sessions Lake; Ionia State Game Area; Kent County; about 3.5 miles

Our April 2 hike is a loop trail around Sessions Lake in the Ionia State Game Area at **9:00 a.m.**

We will enjoy breakfast at the [Ionia Big Boy Restaurant](#), 2880 S. State Street; Ionia, MI (616 527-3730) at **8:00 a.m.**

To get to the Big Boy, take I-96 to exit 67. Then head north on M-66 to the restaurant.

April 29 and 30: Woodpecker Festival; Middleville

The inaugural Woodpecker Festival is sponsored by the Thornapple Trail Association, and strongly supported by the Village of Middleville, both partners of the North Country Trail. More details will be available soon, but there will be hikes and other activities.

May 7: Hike on Paul Henry Thornapple Trail; Middleville; Barry County; about 3.6 miles

We will join the Volksmarchers on their May 7 hike on the Paul Henry Trail at about **9:00 a.m.** This hike time is pretty flexible, if you get there late, as the Volksmarch will be allowing start times all morning. After our hike, we can take a quick tour of the proposed section of trail north of Main Street. This hike will count for your Hiker Challenge miles.

Breakfast will be at [Big Easy Deli & Bakery](#), 126 E. Main Street in Middleville, at **8:00 AM**. (Big Easy: 269-795-7777)

May 8: The Kalamazoo Marathon

As part of the **Borgess Run for the Health of It** annual event, the inaugural Kalamazoo Marathon will be held on May 8. As of February 27, 900 marathoners and 800 half-marathoners had already registered. For more information: www.thekalamazoomarathon.com

May 11: Chapter Annual Meeting, and a Speaker

By now you may have figured something is up, and we are announcing our hopes to host a speaker perhaps every 2nd or 3rd Chapter meeting. We have a tentative speaker for May, but details are not yet ready.

Our Annual Meeting this year does not have elections. We are however, required by our new Bylaws to review accomplishments for the past year, and set goals for the next year.

June 4: Hike Kalamazoo River Trail; Kalamazoo County; about 5 miles

We will hike from the Kalamazoo Nature Center along the Kalamazoo River to downtown Kalamazoo on the Kalamazoo River Trail, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast before the hike will be at **Food Dance Cafe**, 401 E. Michigan Avenue; Kalamazoo; 269-382-1888 at **8:00 AM**. We will leave some cars downtown, and drive to the Kalamazoo Nature Center to begin the hike at **9:00 AM**.

Lunch is planned at the conclusion of the hike at the **Bell's Brewery**, at 355 E. Kalamazoo Ave; Kalamazoo 269-382-2332, which opens at 11 am. **Perhaps you missed the hike, but can still join us at Bell's!**

June 10-12: The Allegheny 100 Ultimate Hiking Challenge

Let's say you want to catch up to Ron Sootsman in one weekend. Here is your chance. **You have 50 hours to hike 100 miles**, beginning at 6 PM on Friday night. This is set up on the North Country Trail in Pennsylvania, beginning near the New York border. 25 mile and 50 mile options are also available. For more info:

http://www.visitpago.com/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=772&cHash=ad662824ee09163093aaf7101fc64a9

Wonder if we could do a **Chief Noonday 30 mile Ultimate Challenge** in perhaps 16 hours? What if Ron does the Allegheny 100?

The North Country Trail Association Annual Conference will be held in Dayton, OH on August 11-14. Please note these dates are modified from previously announced dates.

Interview with CND Hiker Challenge Champion Ron Sootsman

Ron Sootsman is our Chief Noonday Hiker Challenge Champion for 2009 and 2010, by hiking 287+ and 310+ unique miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail for those years.

Equally amazing to me, Linda Sootsman, Ron's wife, finished in 3rd place in 2009 with 71+ unique miles, and also finished in the top 10 in 2010. Linda usually gets around best with her wheelchair, and Ron usually pushes on their hikes.

Q Ron, when we started the Hiker Challenge contest in 2009, you really embraced it from the beginning. You blasted off to a big lead, and never looked back. What motivated you to pile up so many miles, when clearly no one was coming close to catching you?

Ron: A week or two before the Challenge was started, I was asked by some one at work, "so how many NCT miles have you hiked" and I didn't have a number to use. The challenge seemed to be a great way to start keeping track of the miles. Winter hiking seems easier to regulate heat -- more layers can be added. In summer, there are layers that can't be removed. So the big jump started when others aren't hiking yet. Winter hiking also has vistas that can't be seen when leaves are on the trees. Once I got into the hiking, it was great to be in the outdoors and the scenic areas of the trail allow for understanding how small we are and how much can be done by putting one foot in front of the other. I also get a rush after exerting myself and am able to sleep a lot better the days that I have long hikes.

Q If you had to guess, how many unique miles on the NCT did you hike in 2007 and 2008?

Ron: Those years I tried to cover the entire Chief Noonday section and did other areas during work sessions and hiking vacations. For a number maybe 125 to 150 miles.

Q How many of the 7 states have you hiked portions of so far?

Ron: I have hiked the NCT in 5 states so far, Pennsylvania and New York have not had a trip yet. Linda is missing miles in Minnesota, Pennsylvania and New York.

Q What are a couple of your favorite hikes?

Ron: There are many hikes that have been unique in their own ways.

Hikes with Linda at Petosky and Marquette are some of the most memorable for the two of us; they were bright sunny days overlooking Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. The Brule Bog section near Solon Springs Wisconsin is another unique area, the bog is almost like a fairyland with many kinds of mosses, ferns and trees. The Black River area has some great waterfalls. The Paul Henry trail in Middleville, the Battle Creek Linear Trail and Marshall Riverwalk are places we like to go together in the Chief Noonday section. We also hiked together at Fort Ransom at the 2009 National Conference, it was our first occasion to use a wheelchair not on a multipurpose trail. It was a lot of fun however a bit bumpy and worth the effort.

The north woods area of Michigan reminds me of the hiking that I did as a kid. The walks through farmlands and the work going on there seem interesting.

Q I'm sure you have a few interesting stories to share?

Ron: I remember getting out early in the morning hiking in the fall with the air crisp and clean and being amazed at the color all around. Many of the hikes through the woods remind me of the many times being on trails as a kid out exploring. I remember starting out with the temperatures below zero and the air so crisp and the snow creaking and hiking to get warm because I started with one too few layers and the others I was hiking with complaining. There was a time hiking when freezing fog was attaching to the pine trees and making a strange sight.

In 2009 over the 4th of July weekend we went to Tahquamenon Falls. The mosquitoes were swarming all around and I had started in shorts and T-shirt. I ended up with rain gear on and sweating like I was in a sauna suit. I invested in a net after returning. In 2010, I was prepared with netting and bug repellent and it worked, the mosquitoes were not bad.

Q Tell us about some of your tricks to avoid the two way hike, when you don't have a second car at the other end.

Ron: In 2009 the one way miles were chapter hikes, hikes at the national conference, talking someone into dropping me off on work days and hiking with T-man. A bike in a bike carrier on the back of the car or motor home is another technique. In 2010 hiking with the Fortune Bay Hiking group really got me off to a good start and they positioned cars. The Battle Creek bus system was also used to hike one way on the linear trail. In 2011 I started hiking with the Buckeye Trail Circuit hikers, they carpool and position vehicles.

Q You have looked into getting modified equipment to increase opportunities for Linda to join you. How is that going?

Ron: We did get a new wheelchair in November that is supposed to be able to tolerate trails better. It has tires that are sized for softer terrain, a more comfortable back, the handles are adjusted for me and it is balanced differently. We are waiting for the snow to disappear so that we can start to find out if it really works. The new wheelchair is candy apple red.

Q Linda also has some interesting stories to share?

Linda: Two weeks ago we went to Tahquamenon Falls. The trail group and the DNR naturalist helped to organize a sled with a bale of hay in the back to keep me upright. Ron pulled the sled on the trail to overlooks of the ice on the falls.

I have been sitting a couple times in the wheel chair and car waiting for Ron to come back and people have stopped and asked if I was OK. It's nice to talk to the people.

Q A second portion of the Hiker Challenge encourages lifetime unique miles, with our Hiker of Note awards. How far do you need to travel to get to new unique lifetime miles?

Ron: The hiker of note miles are currently at Baldwin Michigan toward North Dakota, which is about 150 miles and 2 1/2 to 3 hours of drive time. Toward New York there is a 5 mile road-walk at Alvordton OH -- about 100 miles and 2 hours drive. The real open spot starts almost 75 trail miles later at Florida OH -- 125 miles 2 1/2 hours away. Today I am at 495.83 miles -- looks like I need the five miles at Alvordton.

Q Tell us what your goals are for 2011 and beyond, as far as the Hiker Challenge.

Ron: I would like to exceed the miles I did in 2010 and get Linda to be a hiker of note.

Q When are you going to do a presentation at our Chapter meeting?

Ron: The program committee seemed to have other people lined up and there is work that should be covered. Although I am not a big talker I am not sure if I can talk more than a half hour unless

there are questions.

More Chief Noonday Hikes coming in 2011

The following additional hikes are scheduled for 2011:

July: Kellogg Biological Station

August 6: Fort Custer National Cemetery

September 5: Mackinac Bridge Walk

September 10: Barry State Game Area

October 1: Art Prize Hike in Grand Rapids

November 5: Ott Preserve / Kimball Pines

December 3; Kellogg Forest

2010 Chief Noonday Hiker Challenge Results

Ron Sootsman logged **310.15** non-repetitive miles on the North Country National Scenic Trail in 2010 to win the 2010 Hiker Challenge **and** the 2010 CND Hiker Challenge Cup. Ron exceeded his winning total from last year of 287.71 unique miles. The rest of our top 10:

Robert Sulaski: 152.1 miles

Jason Buckner: 140.8 miles

Jim Burgess 92.35 miles

Mick Hawkins: 58.34 miles

Mary Rebert: 50.84 miles

Mike Wilkey: 49.24 miles

Linda Sootsman: 36.73 miles

Bob Cooley: 30.8 miles

Linda Wilkey: 30.14 miles



Ron Sootsman, Robert Sulaski, Jason Buckner, and Jim Burgess also win polo shirts with the CND logo, etc. Jim Bronson also won a polo shirt as winner of our drawing among the rest of the participants. Our final tally of total miles hiked by our Chapter: **1121 miles**.

2011 Chief Noonday Hiker Challenge

The rules are the same as last year, and were published in our January Email only Special Edition. The current leaders, and I know there are a lot of unreported miles out there:

Ron Sootsman: 100.58 miles

Jeff Fleming: 50 miles

Larry Pio: 47.36 miles

Robert Sulaski: 12 miles

Mary Rebert: 11.89 miles

Mike Wilkey: 7.5 miles

Eric Longman: 6.35 miles

Jane Norton: 6.35 miles

John Merry: 6.35 miles

Steve Hicks: 5.3 miles

2011 Virtual North Country Trail Hike – Your chance to Catch Up!

We are measuring all miles walked and seeing how far we progress on the North Country Trail. This is not really a competition, but if you want to get comparable results, you will need to wear a pedometer. I really like my double axis Omron version I got on Amazon.com, which can be carried in a pocket. I have learned a lot about my habits with this device. So far we have about 5 entries into our contest, and I want to see a lot more. **To get you caught up, I will apply April miles for both April and January. May miles for both May and February. June miles for both June and March.** Our leaders:

Larry Pio: 510 miles currently in Minnesota

Ron Sootsman (just got his pedometer): 178 miles near the end of the New Rockford Canal, ND

Robert Sulaski: 109 miles approaching the Lonetree Wildlife Management Area, ND

Web Site Trail Log Reports

Mick Hawkins has included detailed reports, with pictures, at the [TRAIL LOG page](#) on our web site on some of our recent activities. In the last quarter he has included reports on:

- Our January hike in the Rogue River State Game area in Kent County, braved by 6 of us.
- The 2010 Hiker Challenge winners

- A promotional effort at Western Michigan University, and a thank you note from Bruce Matthews. Thanks to **Ron Sootsman, Linda Sootsman, and Larry Pio** for helping with this promotion.
- A survey request from our Hiking Committee, led by **Robert Sulaski**.
- Our Trail Log Box building day at **Steve Hick's** garage. Thanks Steve, **Jim Bronson, Jeff Fleming, Mick Hawkins, Jason Buckner, Jeff Leigh, Kevin Green, and Larry Pio** for the great job on these beautiful boxes. Lots of pictures for this one.
- Our February hike on the Battle Creek Linear Trail.
- Our speaker for this Wednesday's meeting, with some examples of his photography.

Robert Sulaski and I have begun using this Hike Planner, and are sending it monthly to our email subscribers. Please make sure we have your email address, to receive this info.

Ionia State Recreation Area Hike; Sessions Lake

Date: 4/2/11

Hike Length	<i>About 3.5 miles</i>
Description	Loop trail around Sessions Lake, primarily flat; Kent County
Breakfast location	Big Boy; 2880 S. State Street; Ionia, MI 616 527-3730
Breakfast time	8:00 AM
Best way to get to breakfast	From Grand Rapids, take I-96 to exit 67, then head north on M-66. From Battle Creek, head north on M-66 to Ionia.
Hike time	9:00 AM
Car spotting location	No car spotting on this one; it is a loop trail.
Hike start location	From parking lot described below, in next section.
Best way to get to hike start location	From Big Boy, head south on M-66 0.7 miles. Turn west on David Highway; go 3 miles to Ionia State Rec. Area entrance. Head north into ISRA to first road on right AFTER headquarters road. Proceed to right parking lot.
Lunch time	Not planned
Lunch location	Not planned
Things to bring	sunglasses, sunscreen, sun hat, water, snack, cell phone, camera, gps, first aid kit, rain gear (if needed)
Cancellations	This hike will not be cancelled; if conditions warrant, we will start closer to our end point.
Updates	www.northcountrytrail.org/cnd/index.htm
Contacts	Robert Sulaski – rlsulaski@sbcglobal.net 616-538-4827
	Larry Pio – nalcoman1@aol.com home: 269-327-3589 cell: 269-341-5964
	Mick Hawkins – webmaster.ncta-cnd2@comcast.net

On line map	http://www.michigandnr.com/Publications/PDFS/RecreationCamping/ionia_map.pdf

Receive the Chief Noonday Chapter newsletter via email. Contact Larry Pio at nalcoman1@aol.com. Share your newsletter with a friend, and tell someone about Chief Noonday Chapter and the NCT. [Past newsletters are available on our web site.](#)

New Members

We want to welcome new members to the Chief Noonday Chapter in the 1st Quarter:

William Eisenman – Beverly Hills

Ellen Robinson – Mendon

James Huskinson – Fenton

Rick Moore - Hastings

Martin Birchmeier – Galesburg

Alan Wiseman – Battle Creek

Jim Bruce - Hastings

Chief Noonday Chapter now on FACEBOOK

We have started a page on Facebook for the North Country Trail Association, Chief Noonday Chapter. Please find our page, and “like” it to get updates from the page. You can also add comments, as well as uploading video and photos of your hiking experience. See if you can figure out “Where on the NCT is Larry P.?”

The picture on the right shows a deer on the windmill’s tail piece, and happens to be in the Chief Noonday Section.



Above are the Trail Log Box building crew. Photo by Mick Hawkins.



**North Country Trail Association
 Chief Noonday Chapter Newsletter
 2409 Woody Noll
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