

# Hyde Park Trails Newsletter



Hyde Park, NY

Issue #8

Spring / Summer, 2011

## Lend a Hand on the Trail, Saturday Sept. 24 Join Our Second Annual Seth Lyon Trail Volunteer Day

September 24<sup>th</sup> is National Public Lands Day, which helps keep the promise of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the "tree army" that worked from 1933-1942 to preserve and protect America's natural heritage. On this day, people join with federal, state and local agencies for an annual day of caring for our nation's shared lands.

Locally, the Hyde Park Trails Committee will reflect that spirit by holding our second annual *Seth Lyon Volunteer Work Day* on that date, at Hackett Hill Town Park.

Last year, 40 people joined us for a morning, afternoon, or a full day of fun, camaraderie, hands-on trail work. (Oh, and great snacks!)



Seth Lyon Trail Volunteer day crew, 2010

If you would like to take part in our annual hands-on event in memory our Trail Volunteer Seth Lyon, please call the Recreation Office at 229-8086 ext. 5 or e-mail Kathleen Davis at [recdirector@hydeparkny.us](mailto:recdirector@hydeparkny.us).

Come help us build a world-class system of community trails.

**After all, the Hyde Park Trails belong to you!**

## Hyde Park Trail Turns 20

The first section of the Hyde Park Trail opened June 1, 1991, with a trail walk and a ceremony at Riverfront Park. The original trail was about 3.5 miles long. It linked trails at two National Park sites, the Home of FDR and the Vanderbilt Mansion, via a road-walk along River Road, plus trail easements across two private properties, granted by generous landowners. For several years before, the route had been used for March of Dimes walking events - - a legacy of FDR. But there was no regular system of trail marking, so large numbers of volunteers were needed to make sure walkers could find the route and stay on it.

The trail was created by a partnership that initially included NPS, the Town of Hyde Park, the Scenic Hudson and Winnakee Land Trusts, and local branches of the Boy Scouts and the Adirondack Mountain Club.

The logo chosen for the Hyde Park Trail was the leaf of the tulip tree, reportedly FDR's favorite tree. While other Hyde Park trails are marked with colored paint blazes, the tulip tree logo is used on the main through-route of the Hyde Park Trail, which now extends well beyond the original two NPS sites to also link

with the Roosevelt Farm & Forest, the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Val-Kill), and FDR's Top Cottage.

**We celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on National Trails Day, with an End-to-End hike of today's 9-mile route. Read about it on page 5.**



Sketch of tulip tree leaf and the Hyde Park Trail marker

## Mills-Norrie State Parks Are Newest Trails Partner

We are excited to welcome Mills-Norrie State Parks as our newest Hyde Park Trails partner! The trails at Mills-Norrie State Parks have always been a tremendous resource, and the Blue and White trails of Mills-Norrie are included in the Hyde Park Healthy Trails Walkabout program. The Mills-Norrie State Parks Office, located on Old Post Road, is also a distribution point for Walkabout trail brochures and patches.



**Mills-Norrie State Parks Office** hours are weekdays 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The relatively new Hopeland section of the State park, which was acquired from Scenic Hudson in 2004, also offers a couple of recently-constructed trail loops, including a large section of universally accessible trail with access to Dragonfly Pond. Please visit this beautiful part of the park.

Please also let us know if you think these trails should be added to future Walkabout trail listings.

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## Green Pride: New State Parks HQ Awarded Highest-Level Green Building Certification

The new Taconic Regional State Parks office building was awarded Platinum-level LEED® certification. The transformed 1930 Staatsburgh School building is the first public building in New York State to win LEED Platinum for new construction or major renovation.

LEED stands for “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.” This is an internationally-recognized green building rating and certification system that was first developed in 2000 by the U.S. Green Building Council.

How did the building qualify? Many materials used in the renovation contained high percentages of recycled content. Renewable materials were also used, such as cork for flooring. Indoor air quality was improved by increased ventilation rates, and use of low-VOC-emitting paints, glues and carpets.

A geothermal system helps to heat and cool the building. Rooftop solar panels generate electricity. Energy consumption is reduced by use of energy-efficient windows, innovative insulation methods, and highly efficient lighting. And water is saved by use of low-flow sinks, dual-flow toilets, and waterless urinals.

Even the parking lots are green. Stormwater runoff was reduced by removal of excessive “hardscape” and use of permeable pavement and parking.

The project is an impressive model for adaptive re-use of buildings as well as environmental design. It was made possible by a \$3 million gift from Dr. Lucy Waletzky toward the overall cost of \$7.9 million.

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## Hyde Park Healthy Trails Walkabout - 2011

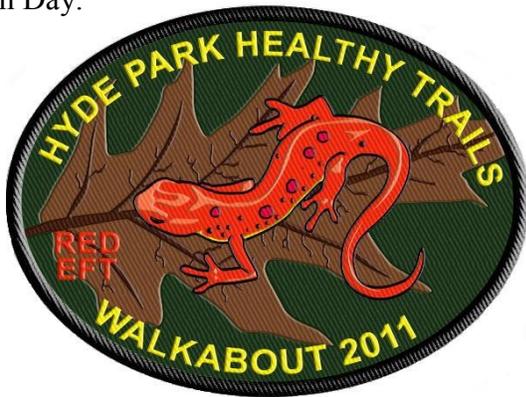
Walkabout is a program that encourages people to get outdoors on Hyde Park’s trails. We all know that walking is recommended as exercise for all ages, and that walking by itself brings important health rewards.

Walking Hyde Park’s trails brings even *more* rewards. First and foremost, you get to enjoy great places, whether faraway views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains, or close-up views of woodland pools, streams, waterfalls and beautiful rocky outcrops. You can visit deep

### *Walkabout, continued*

woodlands, historic forest plantations or carefully-maintained ornamental gardens. You can retrace the footsteps of visiting world leaders, of CCC camp workers, or those of free and enslaved African Americans who lived here in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

A second reward is that anyone who walks at least five Hyde Park trails during the year can earn a free sew-on trail patch. Each year, a new patch features a special aspect of Hyde Park and its trails. The Walkabout begins every year during National Park Week, which also coincides with Earth Day.



This year's trail patch features one of our most prominent trail residents - - the red eft salamander.

A celebratory first hike kicks off the Walkabout season, which runs through the summer and winter to the next Earth Day, the following spring. This helps encourage people to keep hiking through the winter - - depending upon snow and ice conditions, of course.

### **How to begin your Walkabout**

The Walkabout program has run every year since 2006, and about 200 people complete it each year. You can start anytime. Pick up a Walkabout brochure at any of the National Park Service visitor centers, at Hackett Hill Town Park, or now at the State Park headquarters in Staatsburgh - - and come join us on the trails!

Visit Hyde Park Trails online:  
[www.hydeparkny.us/recreation/trails](http://www.hydeparkny.us/recreation/trails)



During the Walkabout's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, nearly 100 people completed all 11 trails listed in the Walkabout, and claimed all 5 patches, as part of our one-time special offer. Here was the prize:



As far as we know, the youngest to complete all 11 trails was Sophia, age 5. **Congratulations, Sophia! We hope to see you again this year!**

\* \* \*

## **New for 2011: She turned me into a newt!**

The Walkabout patch for 2011 is a bright orange salamander called the red eft. Red efts are common in the woods during the warm season, especially during moist times. The red eft is the land-dwelling stage of a salamander called the red-spotted newt.

The red-spotted newt's name comes from the many bright red spots on its back, each spot circled in black. The red-spotted newt differs from most salamanders in that it undergoes *two* metamorphoses during its lifetime, instead of just one. Like most salamanders, its life begins as an aquatic tadpole with gills, having hatched from an egg in water. Through the spring, the tadpole grows legs and loses its gills, grows sac-like lungs, and turns from a neutral dark color to bright red-orange, metamorphosing into the land-dwelling red eft.

For most salamanders, the land-dwelling stage is the final, adult stage. But the eft is an immature stage that lives on land for two to seven years. During that time, its bold orange color and bright crimson spots make it highly visible on the forest floor. It typically walks around in the open, in wet woods, completely exposed to potential predators. But the eft's bright coloration is also a warning to critters who might be tempted to snack, because its skin is toxic when eaten (although not when touched).

### ***Newts, continued***

After its years on land, the red eft returns to water, where it will live its adult life. This is the newt's second metamorphosis. It turns from bright orange to a yellowish-green except for the bright red spots, which remain. The shape of the tail also changes, becoming taller with flattened sides to enable swimming.



The adult newt changes color and returns to water, but keeps its telltale spots

Because their skin remains poisonous (notice the warning red spots!), newts can coexist with fish that normally eat other salamanders. In the spring, newts lay eggs on aquatic plants, once again beginning the life cycle. The total life span of a red-spotted newt may be 12-15 years.

\* \* \*

## **Thanks to Our Hyde Park Trail Volunteers**

*Our thanks go to those who helped out for part or all of a day, or who adopted a section of trail to maintain year-round:*

Miriam and Tom; Sharon; Susan; Margaret and Tim; Linda; Bob; Michael; Van and Emily; Teresa; Karen; Joe; Barbara; Jeff, Kathy and family; Vic and Bonnie; Marisa and Girl Scout Troup 10117; Bill; Bob; David; Gary; Richard; Melissa and her fantastic crew of Marist students; LeeJohn; Pompey and Margi; Hyde Park Rotary Club; Tatiana and Carney; Jaqualyn; Charles; Mary; Christian; Shawn; Betsy; Jim and Boy Scout Troop 80; Boy Scout Troop 17; Andrew; and the Fats in the Cats mountain bike club.

*...And there were no doubt more; please accept our apologies if we left out your name!*

National Park Service Education Specialist Susanne Norris said, "We may not see salamanders often, but their life cycles really depend upon the weather and quality of the environment around them, and around us. They are indicators of our environment's health."



Under Susanne's guidance, many children from area schools visit the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites each year to help monitor salamander populations, learning about ecology and scientific methods as they go.

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## **Heard from the Trails:**

*Many people provide feedback on their Walkabout cards, and some even send e-mails or letters. Here are a few samples:*

Great hikes, great exercise! Very nice. - *David*

Winnakee trails are great! - *Anthony*

Beautiful forests, even in the rain. - *Karen*

Good trails worth seeing. - *Gerald*

They are all great. Loved the blue & white trails (at Mills-Norrie) - *Don & Joan*

I liked Hackett Hill Trail the most - *Veronika*

Hey, I had only one day to do it ... great idea! - *Rosemary (hiked 5 trails)*

Lovely views at Mills State Park - *Kristen*

I enjoyed the walks with my family - *Wilma (hiked all 11)*

I loved the Roosevelt Woods Trail - *Isabelle*  
(hiked all 11)

I think it's great for everyone to see the natural  
part of Hyde Park - *Rachel* (hiked all 11)

The walks were beautiful & we will keep doing  
them. We want to walk them in every season  
- *Kathy* (hiked all 11)

I have informally started "Sal's Pals," a hiking  
group of mostly family members of all ages who  
pick a Hyde Park trail each Sunday to walk. I am  
now familiar w/all 11 trails. Can't pick a favorite,  
but Top Cottage is up there. - *Sarah* (hiked all 11)

... And this one is a true "hats-off" to our great  
volunteer trail maintainers:

I think the Hudson Valley has some of the most  
beautiful trails. Well kept. Great job! - *Janine*  
(hiked all 11)

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## Trails Master Plan for NPS Sites

The National Park Service has begun a plan to  
guide development and use of the trails at the  
Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites in  
Hyde Park. The project includes the trails at the  
Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt NHS, Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS (Val-Kill), and the Vanderbilt  
Mansion NHS. The goal of the Trail Plan is to lay  
the groundwork for a comprehensive, well-  
designed, sustainable trail system which provides  
a variety of visitor experiences that support the  
parks' missions. The planning process started with  
a series of workshops and a public meeting April  
18-20. A draft plan is expected this fall.

To follow the plan online, and watch for public  
comment periods, go to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=23682>

\* \* \*

**Eleanor Roosevelt was fascinated by the red eft**  
she saw on her walks around Val-Kill - - enough to  
mention them in seven of her *My Day* newspaper  
columns. But she referred to them as "little orange  
lizards." How might you have corrected her?

### NEW: "Hyde Park Trails - Hike Through History" All-cotton HATS

Keep cool and wear yours  
with pride! \$10 each from  
Hyde Park Recreation, at  
the Hackett Hill office.

Your purchase helps support Hyde Park's trails.



## Hyde Park Trails Turned 20 on National Trails Day, Celebrated with an End-to-End Hike

by Kathleen Davis

This was the first time in many years that a  
public, End-to-End hike had been planned for the  
Hyde Park Trail, and in the meantime the trail had  
grown in length. Preparing for the hike was more  
involved than our typical mile-or-so hike along  
one of its trails. As the day of the event neared, it  
seemed like the "to do" checklist was getting  
longer and longer, so I couldn't wait till Saturday  
morning to just *hit the trail!*

Shortly after 8:00am, twenty-six enthusiastic  
runners, hikers and walkers had checked in at the  
Vanderbilt parking lot, and were ready to catch  
the "Roosevelt Ride" shuttle up to Top Cottage,  
our starting point. The runners had their work cut  
out for them at the very beginning of the course  
(oddly enough), as the trail starts with a very  
steep and rough downhill towards our first  
checkpoint: Val-Kill. The route leveled out at  
Val-Kill and we crossed Rte 9G with no problem.

Hiking along the Roosevelt Farm Lane Trail was  
pleasant as the air was pleasantly cool, and there  
were no signs of mosquitoes. We crossed easily at  
Rte 9 partly because County Sheriff's Dept. had  
kindly installed a digital traffic sign with a  
message warning of the hike event on the  
Wednesday BEFORE the hike to prepare traffic  
for the day of the event. It worked, and we are  
very grateful for their support; drivers were  
friendly and courteous as they slowed and stopped  
for us to cross the highway. I felt like the Queen  
of England visiting FDR and Eleanor, as I gave a  
friendly wave to the folks stopped in their cars.  
(Would there be hotdogs on the menu too, at Mrs.

Nesbitt's Café, at the Wallace Visitor's Center? That would be our next stop, for lunch.)

We followed the trail markers through Bellefield, which also led us through the 100-year-old Beatrix Farrand Garden, another highlight of the hike. The garden was in full bloom with white peonies, white astilbes, white irises and green, green ferns, and much more.

An order of two hotdogs was indeed listed on the menu at Mrs. Nesbitt's. However, as planned, I pulled out my peanut butter and jelly sandwich from my backpack, but topped it off with a frozen Edy's Raspberry Fruit Bar from their ice cream freezer (highly recommended). Onward!

After lunch, we checked the "End2End Hike Map" provided by the NPS and I realized I had made it to the 3.5 mile mark, creeping up on the halfway point. (Hey, this is do-able after all, I thought.) The trail leading down into the woods below the FDR Home was historically a road that led to the Roosevelt family's ice house and ice pond. I tried to imagine the grounds-keepers cutting ice blocks out of the pond in winter and carting them by sled or wagon to the ice house for storage, and for nice cool drinks in the summertime - - but it was hard to imagine as my feet began heating up and I was now on a part of the trail that was new to me.

The mile of trail between the FDR site and River Road had still more history. We came to the section of trail closest to Crum Elbow Point on the Hudson, near where Henry Hudson dropped anchor in September 1609! Thinking back to the image on our 2009 trail patch, I imagined myself there as an Indian, peering through the trees to see the strange vessel and even stranger-looking people gawking back at me. I wish I had on a soft pair of those suede moccasins right about now, instead of my stiff hiking shoes, as the bottoms of my feet were definitely beginning to feel like I was walking on hot coals.

Our next stop was Riverfront Park where the historic Hyde Park Train Station and nice view of the river awaited us, along with a cooler of cold lemonade and a shaded pavilion! Six miles down with three more to go. It was 1:00pm; my goal

now was to be done by 2:00. No problem, we set out for the final leg, completely re-hydrated and ready for the final leg, which included the uphill hike from Bard Rock to the Vanderbilt Mansion.

We entered Vanderbilt from the lower gate off of Dock Street, and took the woods trail along the river – a pleasant hike with tall tulip trees and woodland flowers that I could identify (asters and columbine). A gentle breeze off the river lifted me along the trail towards Bard Rock and to our starting/end point, the Vanderbilt parking area.

While signing out at the end, I thought to collect my reward: the new 2011 Red Eft Walkabout patch! All in all, it was a super hike.

Let's do it again, next year!

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## Mills-Norrie State Parks Begin Master Plan

The comprehensive Master Plan for the Mills-Norrie-Staatsburgh State Parks & Historic Site started with a public scoping session June 2. To follow the plan online, and watch for public comment periods, go to:

<http://www.nysparks.com/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>.

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### Trail Call:

The Hyde Park Trails audio podcasts are now available by cell phone. Watch for signs like this along the trails. And call.

The cell tours will run on an experimental basis this summer. Regular minute rates apply.

The podcasts are part of the *Hyde Park Explorer* series of multimedia tours, sponsored by the National Park Service.

You can also still hear them online, at: [www.nps.gov/hofr](http://www.nps.gov/hofr) and click on "Photos and multimedia."

The advertisement for Hyde Park Explorer features a green background with a white border. At the top, it says "Hyde Park Explorer" next to a globe icon. Below that, a smartphone displays the phone number (845) 475-3819. Text reads "Use your Cell Phone to Discover the Hyde Park Trails!". The word "Dial" is written in a large, dark green font, followed by the number "845-475-3819". A large "0" is inside a rounded square with the word "Press" above it. To the left is a "Search OnCell in iPhone App Store" button, and to the right is a QR code with "myoncell.mobi" below it. At the bottom, there are four buttons: "1 Rewind", "2 Pause/Play", "3 Fast Forward", and "# Stop". A "0" button is labeled "Leave a Comment" with an OnCell logo. A small note at the very bottom states: "Note: The cell phone tour is free, normal usage rates apply."