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Newsletter Staff

Jack Sheltmire, director
jack.sheltmire@cortland.edu
(315) 354-4784

Rhonda Jacobs, assistant director
rhonda.jacobs@cortland.edu
(315) 354-4631

Mary Jo Carey, secretary
maryjo.carey@cortland.edu
(607) 753-5488

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2009 The Best Winter Alumni Session Yet!

In 2003, a winter camp for alumni was started at Camp Huntington. Over the six-day session, attendees become an extended family in so many ways. The majority of those attending have attended each year. It did not take very long for the new folks to feel a part of the group. This year was the largest session yet, with 35 participants coming from as far away as North Carolina. I have to admit that I was worried about where I was going to house everyone.

Each day prior to the evening meal, a social was held in the Fuge Dining Hall, allowing the new participants to quickly become part of the group. It also provided an opportunity for everyone to get caught up on what has been happening since last year's camp.



Evening social hour

The winter conditions were just what the doctor ordered. We had plenty of snow for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. For some, this was their first time on skis or snowshoes. There was always one person in the group who was willing to provide instruction and lead a short outing. Two years ago, we celebrated a full moon with an illuminated night ski around Big Island. As you can imagine, it was just beautiful. Another activity that many of the attendees took advantage of was ice fishing. It was a beautiful sunny day with little or no wind — perfect above ice conditions. Unfortunately, the fish were not very hungry. So, like most ice fishing expeditions, there was a great deal of standing around telling stories. Peggy Hogan just happened to bring a little snakebite medicine just in case we were attacked by the infamous "Raquette Lake Ice Constrictor." We didn't catch any fish, but we sure had a good time.

In addition to the outdoor activities, Don and Donna Traver '59 provided the group with a travel presentation. Each winter session they have shared slides of their yearly adventures. For them, 2008 was no exception. The presentation focused on three separate trips. The first was a tour titled "Wild Britain," a 12 day cruise around the British Isles. The highlights included Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Scottish Inlands, including St. Kilda and its 5,000 year- old village. The second was to Spitsbergen in Norway's Svalbard Archipelago to view and photograph polar bears, which they did. In addition, they saw walrus and an incredible blue whale very close to their ship. The eight-day cruise was on a converted Russian research vessel. The third was "Wild India," which took place in India's Tiger Preserves. Elephants were used as a less intrusive way to travel through the preserve for sightseeing and photography. This mini expedition resulted in tiger sightings as well as the Indian one-horned rhino. As usual, it was an excellent presentation and enjoyed by everyone.



Enjoying some snakebite medicine!

The Finishing Touch

The proper end to any Raquette Lake sauna is a plunge into the open hole cut into the ice. Groups always ask, "How cold is the water?" Sometimes it takes awhile but they figure



Richard Fey, caretaker, cutting the ice hole

out it is near or just about 33 degrees. The picture above is of Richard Fey, our caretaker, cutting an area about 10' x 15' to accommodate the heated participants. Those using the sauna are told about the extreme temperatures, and safety procedures are explained to each group. Temperatures in the sauna might reach a high of 180 degrees. Some participants have had the plastic frames of their glasses melt.

The sauna and plunge is something of a rite of passage in winter. I can say with pride that I have even done it. In addition to a plunge into the icy water, some of the participants elect to do snow angles to help cool themselves down. It doesn't take very long before they are back in the sauna to warm up.

The question of who holds the record of times into the hole is always asked. We even have categories of faculty, staff and students. If my memory serves me correctly, and it may not, Shufang Shi, childhood/early childhood education, holds the faculty record of 13 times, while Richard Fey, our caretaker, holds the staff record of 16 times going from the sauna to the icy water and back into the sauna. The level of student achievement is even higher but there has been some question as to whether or not they are employing the proper procedure — sauna to hole, sauna to hole. I am sure these records represent milestones only to be broken in 2010. Let's see what happens next winter.

The Ice Road

During my tenure, we have been able to travel by truck on our ice road for about two and a half months. In other years, we never got a truck on the ice road. Each year Mother Nature provides us with various forms of natural resources. These might include sub-zero temperatures, above freezing temperatures, wind, snow, freezing rain and rain. What we try to do, and there is a method to this, is use these resources in the most effective way.

This year the ice formed early, which was good; but it was soon covered with a blanket of snow, which is bad. The snow has tremendous insulating qualities that prevent the cold from penetrating and forming ice. The only way to remove the air from the snow cover is to pack it. Nowadays, this is done by driving back and forth to Antlers on snowmobiles. Years ago this was done by walking back and forth to Antlers on snowshoes. Once a track is made, we put out stakes so we know where we have packed the road when we get another snow fall.

This year we had more snow than last year or perhaps it just seemed that way because we did not get nearly as much rain. With all the snow, we ended up with a tremendous amount

of slush on the lake. Unfortunately, these conditions lasted for weeks. The only way to get rid of the slush is a warming trend or rain. The rain saturates the snow and it settles. Once you get cold to very cold temperatures, life is good. This also adds a few inches of ice to the total thickness. What you do not want to happen is for the top inch or so to freeze and then have an additional snowfall.

Around the second week of February we were able to really develop the ice road. The thickness varied from about 15 inches in the back bay to only 5 or 6 inches at Antlers. After a tremendous amount of work, we finally had an ice road. The ice was more than 20 inches thick in most places. We were able to have our "winter truck" from campus drive over with our supplies for the year. Raquette Lake Supply was able to drive their oil truck over to fill all our tanks with fuel oil and gasoline. The ice road makes things easier for the kitchen staff as well; they can drive the food order across and remove the trash at the same time.

As of mid-March, the shoreline began to break up; rising water and the increased heat from the sun started to melt the ice along the shoreline. Just a few days ago I put one of our Polaris Rangers through the ice at Antlers. Fortunately, I was only in two feet of water. We are done with the Ranger and are now back to using snowmobiles. Hopefully, the ice will stay intact at Antlers for another week or two. Then it is time to get our boots on and hike out through Golden Beach. All in all, it was a very good winter with a few speed bumps on the ice roads.



Nature's Fury

Some of you may remember the severe wind storm that hit the Adirondacks back in 1997. That storm actually flattened sections of forest in the Raquette Lake area. Here at Camp Huntington approximately 27 trees came down in the storm. The only building directly affected was the boathouse located in the back bay. A large white pine tree approximately 200 years old fell and flattened it. Fortunately, the two boats inside did not incur much damage. The camp was a total mess with wires down everywhere. During the cleanup process all the electrical and phone lines around camp were buried.

Weather changes here often bring a change in the direction of the wind and its intensity. Early March brought a tremendous drop in temperature and a 180 degree shift in the wind direction. This high pressure system entered the area with 40 mph winds. Trees came down all over the region and caused the electrical power to go out. Thankfully, we have a backup generator to service the camp. As I toured the camp early next morning, the ground was covered with debris and tree limbs. Fortunately, nothing had come down on any of the buildings.

Later that day I walked out to the ropes course to see how it had fared. Unfortunately, we were not as lucky here; one of the elements, the "Giant Ladder" was in shambles. A large pine tree actually split and brought down one side of the element

which resulted in the need for a major rebuild. The section of the tree still standing looks like it will fall in the other direction and take out part of the high ropes course. It must come down but it is not an easy fix. In fact, I do not think we can safely do it ourselves. We may have to have a professional tree service come and do the work. Whatever needs to be done will be expensive, then we have the additional cost to rebuild the "Giant Ladder" in another location.

I guess we should feel lucky it was the challenge course and not the Staff House or the Durant Cabin. High pressure always brings good weather but with that also comes the wind.

One of the Best PE Winter Camps Ever!

Kate Becker, lecturer, Tom Butcher, lecturer, and Jodi Foland, graduate assistant, in physical education taught the 2009 Winter Camp. Lynn Couturier, the new chair of physical education, also participated in the camp. Lynn had been to Raquette Lake previously with the new faculty orientation held by the provost back in early October.

The conditions at Camp Huntington were the best in years, more than 20 inches of snow was on the ground for skiing and snowshoeing. The cold temperatures created perfect ice conditions on Raquette

Lake for the group's walk across the ice. The route from Camp Huntington to Antlers froze over November 23. I remember



Physical education students lighting stoves

because it was the day I was going to start my vacation. Richard Fey, our caretaker, and I broke ice in his boat all the way to Antlers in the dark. I was very surprised the lake had frozen over completely during the night.

The student group was small compared to previous summer sessions. Each of the students exhibited a "can do" attitude with each and every activity. The group cross-country skied and snowshoed, many for the first time. Like with most activities, their skills increased in time. The group demonstrated their expertise in the various skill areas later in the week.

Like the winter physical education groups before them, the group gathered, packed and hollowed out sleeping quarters in their quincy hut snow shelters. Construction was easy due to the amount of snow on the ground and the consistent cold temperatures which allowed the snow mounds to harden for hollowing out. The students and staff then prepared the snow shelters for their overnight stay.

The group had excellent conditions for their mountain climbing activities as well. All of the students and staff climbed Blue Mountain, located 12 miles to the east of Camp Huntington. Once they got to the summit, they took advantage of the view from the old fire tower. It was a beautiful sunny day to climb; one could see almost 100 miles in any direction. Two days later the group split up and climbed Goodnow Mountain while the others climbed Cascade Mountain. Goodnow Mtn. is located in the Huntington Wildlife Forest located between Long Lake and Newcomb, N.Y., owned by the SUNY College of

Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse.

The staff did an excellent job and the students were eager to learn. The group made me feel very proud to be a SUNY Cortland alumnus and part of the Raquette Lake experience. I am already looking forward to Kate's group in January 2010.

Winter Survivor

Theta Phi and the Environmental Management Council from St. Lawrence County squared off in their annual winter contest. The sisters of Theta Phi were responsible for determining the theme and developing the various activities. Four tribes were identified; two from Theta Phi and two from St. Lawrence.



Marble madness

After the annual Yankee Swap, Nels from Theta Phi, outlined the weekend's activities. Scarfs were used to identify the various tribe members. The first activity took place in Fuge Dining Hall utilizing quite a bit of ice. Each team was given two dishwashing tubs. One was filled with ice cubes and water, the other was empty. Then each of the tribe members had to remove one shoe and sock. Once that was done, a bag holding 75 marbles was put into the container with the ice water. The task was to use their toes to remove the marbles from the ice water and put them in the empty container. Each member of the tribe had 30 seconds to remove as many as they could. The team members kept rotating until all 75 marbles were in the empty container. Some of the contestants were gifted with tremendous dexterity in their toes while others might as well have kept their shoe on. Needless to say, everyone was totally engaged in the activity and a good time was had by all.

On Saturday, a number of traditional winter activities took place in the back bay. As always, the frozen turnip fling was a real hit. The deer enjoyed each and every one of the leftovers. That was followed by a three-legged race with a twist, snowshoes. It was a very enjoyable and entertaining activity to watch.

At the Sunday morning brunch, the results were shared. It was close, very close, but the sisters of Theta Phi won by a slim margin. In 2010, the activities will be planned by the Environmental Management Council. As always, I am looking forward to it.

Thirty-two Years and Counting

For 32 years the College of William and Mary located in Williamsburg, Va., has returned for their winter class at Camp Huntington. The group leaves their campus in the early evening and travels through the night via motor coach. Saturday morning they stop in Old Forge for breakfast and then head up to Raquette Lake.

The group this year was smaller than in previous years, but there was certainly no lack of enthusiasm. Randy Drake '77 and Tim Ramsey '73 put together an activity-filled agenda. Snow conditions were not the best, but they made the most of it. Coming a week later than usual may have played a minor role in

the weather. From freezing rain, to rain, sleet and snow, they saw it all and eagerly participated in every activity.

In addition to skiing and snowshoeing, the group made their traditional snow shelters and slept in them. The overnight rain did not damage the snow shelters, and everyone had a good night's sleep. Two nights later they camped at Tioga Point and experienced zero degree temperatures. The cold, crisp, clear night sky was filled with stars and Venus was clearly visible in the south western sky. With no artificial light at Tioga Point, they were able to see the sparkling stars clearly. The group reported seeing a number of shooting stars that evening while they listened to the ice talking. The expansion and contraction of the ice creates a variety of groans and cracking sounds.

Another day was spent climbing Blue Mountain. In the morning we were experiencing rain at Camp Huntington that later subsided. As the group climbed, conditions got better. The wet branches changed to ice covered and then to snow covered. Once they arrived at the summit, the clouds parted and they were able to enjoy the beautiful view. Everything just seemed to fall into place for them.

The night before their return to Williamsburg, they held their talent show filled with jokes, songs, skits and music on the piano. Each person had to perform individually followed by group skits. As always, these were very creative and enjoyable.

Randy and Tim do an excellent job with the students who choose to spend their spring break at Raquette Lake rather than Mexico or Florida. Some of the students said they had such a good time they would be back next year.

Cortland College Recreation Association

Students from the Cortland College Recreation Association (CCRA) came the weekend of Feb. 21. Many of the College's student major clubs utilize Antlers and Camp Huntington throughout the year.



CCRA has a special place in my heart. Throughout my tenure on the recreation, parks and leisure studies faculty in the 1970s, I served

as the faculty advisor for CCRA. It was a great opportunity to work with students, promote professionalism, attend professional conferences and go to Raquette Lake.

Several of the students attending the weekend get-away had been before as a result of their required two-week outdoor education practicum. Others had come as part of their College Experience course or had participated in the Wilderness First Responder course held in January.

The students had a fantastic weekend. Snow conditions could not have been better. The group skied, and skied, and then skied some more. Snowshoeing was made easier by the ample amount of snow in the woods. The group bushwhacked to various locations such as St. William's Church, Camp Marion

and Kirby Camp.

Like most winter groups, they spent the last evening in the sauna. The temperature in the sauna usually reaches about 185 degrees. After awhile, the individuals exit the building and head for a hole cut in the ice, plunge into the water, cool down, hop out of the lake and run to the sauna. The record number of trips from the sauna to the water and back again exceeds 20 times. Many would think once was enough.



Students using the ice saw

Education Majors Take First Place

For the first time, the numbers of childhood/early childhood education majors exceeded the number of physical education majors in 2008-2009. Nearly 300 education majors came to Camp Huntington during the fall and winter. Andrea Lachance, associate professor and chair of childhood/early childhood education, and Beth Klein, associate professor of childhood/early childhood education, spearheaded this initiative in the fall of 2000. Since then, more than 1,000 education majors have boarded SUNY Cortland's buses to Raquette Lake.

While here, they participate in traditional seasonal outdoor activities but also have added a number of unique programs. One component I enjoy is the lesson I teach about the ice on Raquette Lake. We cut a core sample out of the ice to show the students how ice has developed during the winter. The sample shows growth rings similar to tree growth rings as well as the different qualities of the ice. Usually the bottom of the sample ice is clear. Later in its development we see numerous air bubbles in the layers which usually develop from slush ice. There also are places where you can separate the layers of ice because they have not frozen together. This is caused by layers of insulating snow that does not allow the cold to penetrate.

In addition to the ice sample, we discuss how ice cutting was one of the few opportunities for winter employment in the Raquette Lake area. The group uses some of the traditional tools such as the ice saw and ice tongs. Comments usually focus on how hard it is to cut ice and how heavy the ice is once it is out of the hole. In the Barque there is an actual ice box where they can see how the ice kept things cool during the warmer months.

I certainly tip my hat to Andrea, Beth, Cindy Benton, Gail Tooker, Kim Rombach, Orvil White, Renee Potter, Shufang Shi, Susan Stratton and Tony Lee for continuing to provide the excellent learning experience. I am sure the day will come when these future teachers will inquire about how they can bring their classes to Raquette Lake. You all do a fantastic job. Thank you!

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Photo Courtesy of Orvil White

Ted Caldwell Retires

For more than sixteen years Ted Caldwell has brought students from Bolton Landing, Minerva and Newcomb to Antlers



and Camp Huntington. Ted served as the Outdoor Education Coordinator for the Washington, Saratoga, Warren, Hamilton, and Essex (WSWHE) BOCES. He also has organized and led a variety of outdoor/environmental education trips within this very large region. Teachers and students alike have been very fortunate to have had such an innovative leader. Ted will leave some very large moose slippers for someone to fill.

While at Camp Huntington, one of Ted's most successful lessons for his students focused on the amount of wasted food produced at each meal. The leftover food, ort, on the plates after each meal is weighed and charted. The students are not aware that this is going to take place so naturally the highest amount of ort is after their first meal. A graph is kept showing the amount of waste at the end of each meal and a report of the previous meal is made at the next meal. It is not surprising that after a meal or two there is little or no food waste.

Ted Caldwell and his Bolton Landing students hold the Camp Huntington record for the coldest crossing of the lake. Ted and his staff did an excellent job of preparing the students prior to their arrival at Antlers with hats, scarfs, mittens, snow pants and warm jackets for the one mile ski across the lake. The estimated temperatures on this particular afternoon with the wind chill were around 40 degrees below zero. Now that's cold, even for Raquette Lake. I wish all our groups were as prepared as Ted's have been.

Ted and his staff keep the students moving no matter what the weather. They are divided into smaller groups and go out cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. In Bolton, the physical education program teaches skiing, so the students bring their own skis with them.

There are teachers in the wings identified to continue Bolton's presence at Camp Huntington. Ted might even be able to work on a part-time basis to help train his successor. I am sure they will do an excellent job. All of us at Raquette Lake want to wish you a healthy and happy retirement!



NOLS Delivers WFR at Camp Huntington

Amy Shellman, a new assistant professor, recreation, parks and leisure studies at SUNY Cortland, organized and help administer the first Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course taught by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) at Camp Huntington. A total of 18 students took the nine day intensive wilderness first aid course. The two NOLS instructors that delivered the course were Liza Howard from San Antonio,

Texas, and Larry DeNucci from Steamboat Springs, Colo.

A WFR certification for individuals leading outdoor groups and activities is considered a "must have" by the profession. Unlike the traditional American Red Cross First Responder course which focuses on urban medicine, WFR focuses on the tools needed to make critical medical and evacuation decisions in remote environments. The course was a combination of classroom, practical skills and role-playing scenarios.

The course highlights many content areas, including: CPR, common wilderness medical problems, environmental hazards, medical legal issues, oxygen and airway maintenance, patient assessment and basic life support, pediatrics, traumatic injuries, as well as search and rescue. Again, remember that the focus is on medical emergencies that occur in a wilderness environment.

The simulated accidents were made as realistic as possible. Students shared the responsibility of being both the patient and the medical responder. Under careful supervision certain medical conditions, such as mild hypothermia, were induced. The students then observed the involuntary conditions of the body resulting from the cold.

The course was a huge success. Each of the students enrolled successfully completed the written examination and practical components. The WFR course may be offered at Camp Huntington in January 2010. If not, it will be offered again in January 2011.

Rome Enjoys Another Winter Trip

Nick Stagliano and his staff brought a group of people from the Central New York Developmental Services Office to Camp Huntington. The individuals all enjoyed the annual trip and for some, was the highlight of their year. A number of them have come to Raquette Lake for more than a decade.

The participants chose activities based on their ability level and comfort. Choices included walking on the ice road, cross-country skiing, hiking to St. Williams Church and snowshoeing. Two activities that had a great deal of involvement were ice fishing and roasting marshmallows. Nick has a group license so everyone is able to fish. Unfortunately, our luck in the back bay was not very good. With the tip-ups in and fishing slow, their interest turned to the campfire and roasting marshmallows. My experience tells me that if you want everyone to participate in an activity, it just needs to involve food.

In addition to the winter outing, Nick brings approximately six participants plus staff to Camp Marion in the summer. The focus is on camping out and fishing. It doesn't matter if it is a four inch perch or a 5 lb. large mouth bass, everyone is excited when they catch a fish. The group rents a pontoon boat from a local marina

It is a group of very special people, and I am pleased that Raquette Lake has been able to continually accommodate them over the years.



Roasting marshmallows

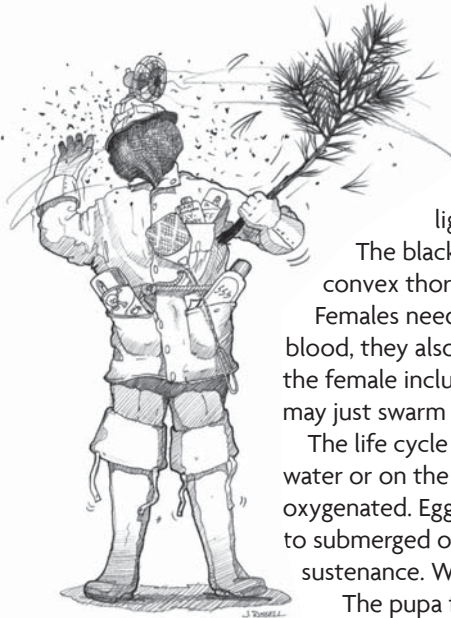


Illustration by Jerry Russell
Originally appeared in
The Adirondack Explorer

Nature Nook

Up to 150 species of black flies are found across North America, thankfully, only a few are found the Adirondacks. The most common local species include the buffalo gnat, turkey gnat and the white stockinged black fly.

Black flies are attracted to carbon dioxide, which explains why we often find them around our arms, faces, hairlines or any exposed skin. The flies are most active during day-light hours, in shade, on windless days, with temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees.

The black-gray colored, little broad-winged insects are only an eighth of an inch long. The flies have a convex thorax (middle body) that gives the appearance of a humped-back and short legs.

Females need a protein-rich diet, that's where we come in. The black flies can lay 150-500 eggs. Along with blood, they also ingest nectar. Males black flies are only interested in nectar and pollination. Mouthparts for the female include a mandible jaw that the males do not have. Most species feed on the blood of birds or may just swarm and crawl, not bite.

The life cycle begins as a small creamy white egg that has either been deposited on the edge of running water or on the surface of flowing water. Swift water provides an ideal environment because it is highly oxygenated. Eggs of the Adirondack species tend to winter over. Hatching larvae use small hooks to attach to submerged objects such as rocks or logs. The larvae filter organic particles from the passing water for sustenance. When the larvae is fully grown, it spins a cocoon.

The pupa fills with gas as it readies itself for hatching, which takes about a week. The adult emerges from the cocoon surrounded by a film of gas. It floats to the surface of the water where it can stand and take flight. The black flies mate shortly after emerging and can live for two to four weeks.

People have come up with many ways to combat black flies. Some use lotions and potions that disorient the flies, while others rely on ingesting large amounts of garlic or vitamin D (not conclusive in research). *Bacillus thuringiensis* var *israeliensis* (BTI) is a natural occurring insecticide found in soil, used in rivers and streams to combat the black flies in early spring. In order for BTI to be effective, it must be added to water during the larvae stage of growth. The larvae ingest the BTI and die. BTI has not been found to harm other aquatic insects or fish. The cost associated with BTI prohibits wide use. It is used primarily in highly residential and outdoor-based business rich communities. The best defense is to cover up exposed skin. Tuck your pants into your socks, shirt into your pants and wear a head net or bug jacket.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education
Miller Building, Room 230
P.O. Box 2000
Cortland, NY 13045-0900



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