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ADVENTURE AFOOT:

Ringling Rocks Park, Pennsylvania

by Carolyn Foote Edelmann, Central Jersey Group
Excerpted from US1 Newsletter, with permission

It's a little odd to drive along with hammers at your feet, odder still to walk into the woods with a hammer. But there's a purpose to it - revealed in tiny but unique Ringing Rocks Park. This 37-acre Pennsylvania site lies uphill from the Delaware, above the bridge at Upper Black Eddy. Take Route #32, - River Road on the Pennsylvania side - north from Lambertville, or Stockton or Frenchtown until you come upon tiny blue signs pointing left toward the park. Ascend Bridgeton Hill Road past the Bridgeton AA athletics field to a sudden right at Ringing Rocks Road. The park soon appears on your right. Best to be in long pants and long sleeves for deer ticks. Wise to wear sturdy shoes or boots. Remember water. Choose your (mostly metallic) hammer, and you're off.

At the end of the short trail to the left stretches a moraine of wan bald boulders, almost blinding in bright sun. Carefully place your feet between these giant's cobbles. Part of the excitement is that you've never been here. You don't even know exactly what you're looking for. It'll be something about clarity, something about pitch. And, yes, about being outrageous. You'll get it, really you will. Expect the unexpected.

Hold the hammer lightly, fingers as fulcrum. Hammers with rubber handles won't do it, and don't let your own fingers muffle results. Let the tool bounce, lightly. Yes, it feels silly, but hammer away. The rocks will teach you. And, like life itself, some will be duds, others thuds. Then, amazingly, you'll be coaxing tones from stones. Exuberantly, even in concert. Next thing you know, you're hooked. First, you'll be rewarded with resonance, even echoes. Then, with no apparent reason, your hammer will call forth a peal that would do justice to the Liberty Bell. You're caught up in the game, nearly leaping from

rock to rock, seeking the perfect tone. Then, you'll go in quest of variations. Other ringers on distant fringes will work in counterpoint. The Anvil Chorus will be born anew, out under the skies.

Just don't think of taking a Ringing Rock back with you. Word has it that, deprived of their fellow boulders, the rocks remain mute. Scientists cannot seem to agree on the reason. High levels of iron, aluminum and other minerals explain their ringing on site, but not their subsequent silence. At least, as you leave the rock field and set out for the falls, you'll have a new answer to the challenge, "When was the last time you did something for the first time?"

Most of the time, these waters will be trickle more than falls. But the walk to them is "worthy of the journey." You're in dense mixed woods, rocks of Stonehenge caliber now looming on either side of the trail. Again, as in the Sourlands, you can picture Lenni Lenapes in council in these stony circles. Some of the power, whether from native wise men or from the rocks themselves, still emanates. You could convince yourself of shamans among these elephantine presences. You'd love to be circled by them in moonlight...

Of course, you won't. Because, up ahead, tall trees and downed trees materialize - strangely light, even glowing. This, my fellow hikers, is bear sign. From the height of the claw marks, I'd say young bears; but I'm not an ursine expert. If the trees look seriously combed, their vivid golden hue startling, someone in a thick fur coat has been standing tall to scrape up an insect banquet not too long ago. You may be surprised by the quality of bear sculpture. "Nature raw in tooth and claw" is talented, indeed.

Ahead, in a clearing, stretches something that resembles a terrace. Once

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New Chapter Leadership

The Club's Feb 8 Executive (ExCom), Political and Conservation Committee meetings, in addition a two hour visit with Commissioner Campbell (see story



on page 2), saw **Sunil Somalwar** nominated and approved as our new Chapter Chair. Sunil has been Chapter Vice-Chair, under

Tina Schvejda, for the last four years. He is a physics professor at Rutgers University, conducting experimental research on high-energy particles, and teaching an undergraduate course on energy. He has also initiated and led an effort to support the conservation of endangered tigers in his native India.

Sunil recommended that the Chapter's new Vice-Chair be **Ken Johanson**, a retired attorney from New Providence.

Ken has participated for many years in our Legislative Committee, and also chairs our Litigation Oversight Committee. His role as Vice-Chair



includes responsibility for supervising the Chapter staff (currently Jeff Tittel, and Dennis Schvejda, but soon to be expanded). Sunil thought that he and Ken would function largely as Co-chairs.

Laura Lynch will continue to serve as Chapter Conservation Chair, and **Ruth Prince** will assist her as Conservation Vice-Chair. Other assignments to Chapter officer positions are largely unchanged from last year, and listed on the back page of

this Newsletter. Laura's role includes designation of all our Issue Coordinators, also mostly unchanged from last year, and listed on the back page.

Our new Trenton office can now be revealed: it's at 139 W Hanover St, only a block from the State House, in a newly renovated building shared by New Jersey Future. Our monthly ExCom meetings will be held there starting in April.

The ExCom approved a new lawsuit: appealing a DEP permit for stormwater discharge from a development in Riverdale, into the protected (C-1) Pequannock River (Morris County). It also approved early political endorsement, for the 2003 Primary and General Elections, of State Senate heroes Leonard Lance (R, 23rd District), and Robert J. Martin (R, 26th District), and State Assembly heroes George Geist (R, 4th District), and Loretta Weinberg (D, 37th District). The main round of political endorsements will follow a process of questionnaire responses and interviews that will start after the April filing deadline for the June primary election.

A new benefit to members will be a Theater Party, to include brunch, for a performance in New York City of *Gypsy*. The date is Oct 18 and the cost will be \$150.

The Political Committee approved a questionnaire that will be sent to candidates for State Assembly and Senate, and that will seek candidate willingness to sponsor and approve legislation on Clean Air (California car emissions standards), reinstatement of a Public Advocate, campaign finance reform, a battery of anti-sprawl initiatives, opposition to dredging the Delaware River, adding contraceptive coverage to health insurance, and protecting horseshoe crabs. Members are especially encouraged to contact their Group Political Chairs (see Group News elsewhere in this Newsletter) to participate in the interviews of candidates. ♪

Statewide Conservation Efforts by Sierra Club Groups

compiled by Laura Lynch, Chapter Conservation Chair

Sprawl. You've seen it: the farm field with the sign that reads, "800 Acres Available." The next time you pass by, the sign reads, "Future Site of The Oaks at Cedar Ridge: 1600 Luxury Homes Starting in the Low Zillions." Soon your property taxes go up as the township is forced to build new roads, new schools, new sewers, and other essentials for the 5000 new residents and their 3000 new cars. Then the farm next door to The Oaks puts up a sign, "1600 Acres Available."

While Governor McGreevey and the DEP work on their Big Map, the 11 Groups of the Sierra Club's New Jersey Chapter are working to stop sprawl at the county and municipal levels, and to improve public transportation as an alternative to roadway construction. What follows is a just a sample of the many projects we've taken on:

The **North Jersey Group** is working to have Bergen County re-instate its Open Space Trust Fund, which provides money for open space purchases and allows the County to use statewide Green Acres funds to offset the cost of any land it buys. The North Jersey Group

is requesting that the Bergen County Freeholders double the Trust Fund levy to one cent per \$100 of assessed property value. Meanwhile, the Group is working to stop a developer in Oakland from building 24 luxury homes on 73 acres at Camp Todd. The development hinges on County permission to build an access road through County-owned parkland. If the County says "no," the development will be stopped.

The **Northwest Group** is keeping an eye on Sussex County, which is wary of future State control of the Highlands region. The Sussex County Freeholders have passed a resolution stating that any agency overseeing development in the Highlands must be composed primarily of local officials. The Open Space and County Strategic Growth Advisory Committees have been meeting, as have the Freeholders. The Northwest Group welcomes any interested Sierra Club

members to join them at these meetings.

In Morris Township, St. Mary's Abbey wants to develop 200 acres next to the Morristown National Historical Park. Without sewer service, this land would

be better off preserved. Morris Township, the DEP, and our Loantaka Group oppose the project, but the local planning board is in favor of it. The **Loantaka Group** has also spoken publicly against development at the ExxonMobil site in Florham Park. At several hundred mostly undeveloped acres, the land sits on the Hidden Valley aquifer. The proposed development would cover nearly 50 % of the land with impervious surfaces. The surrounding townships of Madison, Chatham Borough, and Chatham Township have joined to oppose the development.

The **Essex Group** also has its hands full as they monitor three parcels of open space threatened by development. The

Kean estate, at over 200 acres, is slated to become 250 townhouses. Club members have created an alternate plan for the site and are asking the Governor to help stop the construction. In Roseland Township, a park may soon contain even more ball fields. The Hatfield Swamp may soon be overrun by an extension of the Eisenhower Parkway.

The **Raritan Group** is keeping an eye on several development plans: expansion

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