

**Franklin County by Foot and Paddle
Doug Dunlap**

**Final Progress Report
October 1, 2020**

Walks and Hikes September 15 – 30, 2020

My Final Day

On the evening of September 30, 2020, my wife and I are together on a one-mile walk, making our way along a favorite back road as the sun lowers towards Mt. Blue. The low, glowing light casts a golden hue on the maples, birch, ash, and popple now well-turned to their fall colors, and brighten the rich shades of green on the pine, fir, hemlock, and spruce that also line the road.

Two Purposes

An early evening walk, in our hometown of Farmington is a fitting way to bring to a close my Franklin County adventure for 2020 – nearly seven months of travel by foot and paddle. I held two hopes: One was to encourage our county residents to spend time in the outdoors amidst the extraordinary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Go there to seek peace of mind, and to enjoy the simple gifts of outdoor spaces with you children, your spouse, dear friends, perhaps even your parents. When the news has been difficult to watch or to read, make your own news – go to the woods – or waters – watch for a bald eagle or a heron, listen for the call of a loon, listen to the wind, look for tracks of deer, moose, raccoon, snowshoe hare.

My other hope was to call attention to the heroic work of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area during the pandemic, as that organization has served as a true safety net. United Way agencies of Maine are the primary funders of the 2-1-1 phone number. This is the 24/7 number to call when people known of nowhere else to turn, because of a need for food, clothing, a living space, help with child care, a sick parent, the first weeks and months following birth of an infant, tension in a household, assistance to senior citizens in recovering the tax refund for which they may be eligible even if they did not file an income tax return. During the first six months of the pandemic, calls to the Maine 2-1-1 totaled *36,000* for pandemic-related help alone. That does not count all other calls for other reasons. Franklin County accounted for its share of those calls.

The 1000 Mile Goal

I set a goal of 1000 miles, which I reached – also on an evening walk with my wife - during the third week of August. As our evening walk on September 30 concludes, the sun setting beyond the western hills, my mileage total exceeds 1200. As with the old saying “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”, I

started one day, made an outing by foot or paddle part of my daily rhythm - some of these outings near to home, others at distant parts of our county - and the miles added up.

A short walk of a mile also is fitting for the set apart, simple beauty and joy and peace of a modest outing. On a fall evening of remarkable beauty, in this, one of our nation's most beautifully situated counties, this short walk is all the better. What a gift, a priceless gift.

Here in Franklin County the Northern Forest mixes with the northern extension of the Appalachian Mountains. Expansive lakes, dozens of pristine ponds and streams, great rivers fed by runoff from those mountains - these are around the next corner, virtually anywhere in our county. Here are distant views that extend a hundred miles or more. Here, too, are quiet wood side paths - places to savor silence, watch for birds in all seasons, and the four-legged creatures of the forest: moose, black bear, deer, coyote, bobcat, snowshoe hare, fox, weasel, fisher, marten, porcupine, red squirrel - I have seen all of these over these seven months.

Reflections on the Seven-month Journey

I began counting miles on March 15, when the COVID-19 pandemic made its major impact on Maine, and day-to-day life changed for just about everyone. At first, I sought to remain active as a form of self-care, and I made a point to walk or hike (or, in the early days, to travel on snowshoes or cross-country skis) every day.

Soon I realized that I was accumulating quite a few miles, and the idea came to me that my miles might be put to good use for a cause beyond my own physical well being and peace of mind. I contacted Lisa Laflin, Director of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, learned that UWTVA had quickly become a safety net for people truly suffering from the effects of the pandemic. Some people were out of a job, risked not being able to meet the costs of where they lived, struggled to have enough food for their families, sought a way to provide care and learning support for their children - suddenly attending school remotely from home, or faced the extraordinary emotional toll that the pandemic has wrought.

Here is a group of people dedicated to the well-being of people of Franklin County at great risk during these difficult times. I decided to walk and paddle for the United Way, to help raise funds to pay for the extraordinary life-giving services that they and their partner services provide to us.

You have contributed thoughtfully, compassionately, and generously to the United Way in response to my foot and paddle journey. I thank you, wholeheartedly.

The Final Days of September

In recent days I have been in the far north near the Quebec border, and along the banks of the Androscoggin River in Jay; to high points on the Saddleback Range and the more modest mountains of Weld; to well-established trail not far from Farmington and Wilton neighborhoods; and to a remote former railroad settlement in Lowelltown Township, on Passamaquoddy Nation land near Somerset County. I have explored new ground, and also returned to familiar and favorite territory. Along the way I have met friendly and kind people. That's Franklin County!

End of September walks:

- **Jay:** Whistle Stop Trail and the trail system at French Falls along the Androscoggin River
- **Farmington and Wilton:** Whistle Stop Trail, East Walker Hill, Orchard Drive
- **Weld:** Blueberry Mountain – thereby completing a hike on every marked mountain trail in the Weld Region: Mt. Blue, Bald, Saddleback Wind, Little Jackson, Tumbledown
- **Madrid:** The Horn on Saddleback, 4041'. This summit is one of eight peaks of an elevation of 4000' or higher in Franklin County. When I topped out o The Horn, I completed a climb of all eight in 2020. (The list: Saddleback, The Horn, Mt. Abraham/Abram. Spaulding, Sugarloaf, South and North Crocker, Redington). I hiked The Horn by a combination of the Fly Rod Crosby Trail, Berry Pickers Trail, and the Appalachian Trail.
- **The Far North:** I walked in the remote townships of Beattie, Merrill Strip, and Lowelltown; and explored the site of the former railroad settlement in Skinner, 25 miles from the nearest highway on the Moose River.
- **Local walks and bushwhacks:** I explored old roads, forest trails, and stretches of forest, watching for animal signs, the workings of birds, discovering old cellar holes and rock walls, watching the hardwoods begin the process of color change.

October, and Beyond

I will continue to explore our Franklin County countryside. There are corners of our county I have yet to see, many ponds yet to paddle, mountains remaining to be hiked.

And you?

There is a part of our county awaiting your visit! Start small. No need to travel far or hike to one of our highest peaks. Make a habit of moving out on a woods path. Head out each evening, or every morning, making it part of your daily rhythm. Bring your kids along. Discover a quite different news of the day: a sunrise or sunset, changes in the forest colors as fall advances, an animal print, the sound of the wind, peace of mind.

Public Walks and Talks

In October, and beyond, I will be co-hosting, with the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, community events including a public walk and one or more public discussions, live or virtual.

Watch the United Way of the Tri-Valley website, facebook page and local media, for announcements of these events.

As always...

*I will still be making a way around our county...
Do wave and say **Hello** as I pass by!*

*My hope for you:
Be safe and well during this pandemic.*

*A way through:
We will get through this and all difficult times by helping one another,
and holding a positive outlook.*

*Peace of mind:
May you find peace of mind in our Franklin County outdoors.*

*Shop locally
Kindly remember to make some of your purchases this summer and fall – all
year round, truly – at the local retailers and gas stations in our smaller towns. They
serve our communities throughout the year.*

Towns/Townships Visited on the Journey

I set foot or paddle in every township in Franklin County, except for Gorham Gore, an unorganized territory located at the extreme northern tip of the county, bordered by Quebec on the west and north, and Somerset County to the east. Plans are in place to reach there later this fall, or in the summer of 2021.

*** = September 15-September 30**

Alder Stream
Avon
Beattie*
Carrabassett Valley
Carthage
Chain of Ponds
Chesterville
Coburn Gore
Coplin
Dallas Plantation
Davis Township
Eustis
Farmington*
Freeman
Industry
Jay*
Jim Pond
Kibby
Kingfield
Lang
Lowelltown*
Madrid
Massachusetts Gore
Merrill Strip*
Mount Abram
New Sharon
New Vineyard
Perkins Plantation
Phillips
Rangeley
Rangeley Plantation
Redington
Salem
Sandy River Plantation*
Seven Ponds

Skinner
Stetsonville
Strong
Temple
Tim Pond
Township "D"
Township "E"
Township 6 North of Weld*
Washington Plantation
Weld*
Wilton
Wyman

Points of Interest

Abbott Park
Appalachian Trail*
Bailey Hill
Bald Mountain (south of Weld)
Barker Hill, New Vineyard
Blanchard Ponds
Bigelow Preserve
Blueberry Mountain Trail, Weld*
Canadian Pacific Railroad*
Caribou Valley
The Cascades (Farmington Fairgrounds vicinity)
Cascade Gorge – Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Chain of Ponds
Chesterville Esker
Chesterville Hill/Blabon Hill
Chesterville Wildlife Management Area (Little Norridgewock Stream)
Clifford Woods
Cook Hill
Cowan Hill
Cranberry Peak
Crosby Pond
Daggett's Rock
Dead River Pond
East Kennebago Mountain
Flagstaff Lake – North Branch Dead River
Fly Rod Crosby Trail
Foothills Conservancy, Wilton
French Falls, Jay*
Haley Pond
Herrick, Hunter, Pratt Mountains

Jane's Pond
Kennebago Lake
Kennebago River
Kibby Mountain
Kibby Stream
Kimball Pond
Little Jackson Mountain
Madrid
Massachusetts Bog*
McIntire Pond
Canadian Pacific Railroad
Carrabassett River
Clearwater Lake*
Moose River
Mosher Hill
Mount Abraham
Mount Abraham Public Lands
Mount Blue
Mount Blue State Park
Nina's Woods
Orbeton Stream Conservation Area
Owls Head
Passamaquoddy Nation Territory
Penobscot Nation Territory
Perham Hill
Pico Peak/Ledge
Porter Lake
Powder House Hill Trails
Quill Hill
Rangeley Lakes Trails Center
Rapid Stream
Rock & Midway Ponds
Sand Pond
Saddleback Lake
Saddleback Mountain
Saddleback northern foothills – Oakes Nubble area
Saddleback Range*
Saddleback Wind Mountain (Carthage)
Sandy River Intervale
Sarampus Falls
Shadagee Falls
Skinner Settlement*
Snow Mountain
South Bog Stream – Forrest Bonney Stream Restoration Section
Spaulding Mountain
Sugarloaf

Temple Stream
Titcomb Mountain Trails
Tree of Life Trail – Franklin Memorial Hospital
Tumbledown-Jackson Maine Public Lands
Tumbledown Pond
Voter Hill
Walker Hill/Orchard Drive area – Wilton*
Walker Hill/Morrison Hill – Wilton*
West Kennebago Mountain
West Mountain Brook Falls
Whistle Stop Trail – Wilton and Farmington
Varnum Pond

Established Trails Walked

Appalachian Trail*
Berry Pickers Trail*
Bigelow Range Trail
Bald Mountain/Saddleback Wind Trail
Blueberry Mountain Trail*
Cascades, Mosher Hill
Firewarden Trail, Mt. Abraham
Fly Rod Crosby Trail*
French Falls Trails*
Hatchery Brook Conservation Area
Hunter Cove Upland
Hunter Cove Wildlife Preserve
Kibby Mountain Trail (maintained but not signed or blazed)
Little Jackson Trail
Longfellow Mountains Trail, Chain of Ponds
Maine Forestry Museum Trails
Mingo Spring Birding Trails
Mount Abraham Spur Trail
Mount Blue State Park Sinnett Cemetery Trail
Mount Blue Trail
Narrow Gauge Bypass
Narrow Gauge Pathway
Narrow Gauge Railroad Path, Farmington*
Pico Ledge Trail
Quill Hill Wheelchair Trail
Rangeley Lakes Trails Center
Rangeley River Trail
Rangeley State Park: Shore Trail and Moose Corridor
Saddleback – Gray Ghost/Tricolor

Sandy River Intervale
South Bog Stream (2)
Sugarloaf Mountain Connector Trail (South Side)
Sugarloaf Tote Road Trail
Tim Baker Nature Trail
Tree of Life/FMH
West Kennebago Mountain Trail
West Mountain Brook Trail
Whistle Stop Trail – Wilton, Farmington, Jay*

Lakes, Ponds, Rivers, Streams Paddled

Dead River, North Branch (arm of Flagstaff Lake)
Haley Pond
Hunter Cove, Rangeley Lake
Kennebago River
Little Kennebago Lake
Massachusetts Bog*
Saddleback Lake
Wilson Lake

Wildlife

Birds (Partial list)

Bald eagle
Black duck
Bluebird
Blue jay
Broad winged hawk
Brown Thrasher
Canada goose
Catbird
Chickadee
Goldfinch
Gray Jay
Great Horned Owl
Ruffed grouse (“partridge”)
Hairy, Downy, Pileated woodpeckers
Great Blue Heron
Junco
Loon
Mallard
Mourning dove

Nuthatch
Osprey
Red-winged blackbird
Song sparrow
Tree swallow
Towhee
Wigeon
Wild turkey
Wood duck
Wood Thrush
Yellow rumped warbler

“Critters”

Beaver
Black bear
Bobcat (First sighting ever!)
Chipmunk
Coyote
Guinea Fowl (domestic)
Mink
Moose (bull and cow))
Pine marten (track)
Red fox
Red squirrel
Skunk
Snowshoe hare
Tortoise
Weasel
Whitetail deer

Wildflowers/plants/mosses (Partial List)

Azalea (wild)
Bluebead lily
Blueberry
Bunchberry
Bluet
Canada Mayflower
Club moss
Coltsfoot
Cotton sedge
Dandelion
Diapensia
Fireweed

Goat's beard
Goldenrod
Hawkweed
Lady Slipper (white)
Lousewort
Milkweed
Mountain Ash
Mullein
Old man's beard lichen
Pearly everlasting
Peat moss
Queen Anne's Lace
Red maple
Mountain rue
Saint Johnswort
Saxifrage
Serviceberry (aka June berry)
Starflower
Sumac
Trillium - painted
Trillium - purple
Trout lily
Violet
Water Lily and Bull's eye water lily
Wild oat
Wintergreen
Wood sorrel
Yellow rocket

Trees

Apple
Alder
Ash, black
Beech
Birch, alpine
Birch, white
Birch, gray
Birch, yellow
Cedar, white
Elm
Fir, balsam
Hemlock
Hawthorn
Hobblebush

Larch
Maple, rock (sugar)
Maple, red
Maple, striped (moose)
Oak, red
Pine, red
Pine, white
Popple (Aspen); big toothed and small-toothed
Spruce, black
Spruce, red

End of Reports for 2020

Doug Dunlap