

NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN NORDIC SKI PATROL



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A REPRIEVE

by Tom Deam

Beady eyes glared at me as jaws snapped open and shut. On its haunches it was poised, ready to leap and sink sharp teeth into any body part it could reach! I was ready to confront the beast with my weapon.

Ring, ring. The noise startled us both. It scampered left and I went right to answer the phone.

"The Housing Office told me that you offer weekly, monthly, and seasonal rates," said the voice on the other end.

"No, we offer one rate of \$22.00 per night, per site," I said. "This is a tent-only campground; no electricity or water at the sites. After the site is set up, cars are left at the gate and the key returned to the office. Payment in-full is expected at check-in, and there is a max stay of 14 days, total, during the season. Also alcoholic beverages are prohibited."

"Oh, I guess you don't take vouchers from the Housing Office then?"

"No, and I have never heard of such a program. I'll call that Office and speak to them if you give me the number," I said. That ploy is number two on the top ten list for those looking for "seasonal" accommodations on the cheap.

Click. The sound of a broken phone connection. The season was now officially open—those being kicked out of apartments were now fishing for non-existent long term rates and a spot to drink beer. Other tricks would be tried: false addresses, similar but wrong names, and rotating names for reservations.

With the first call out of the way, I was back to my task of ridding the office of a pride of chipmunks that had wrecked havoc with the soft goods stored through the off season. It was an annual ritual, but this year I had a secret weapon which had worked exceptionally well on two victims so far. My method was to use muffin crumbs as bait in strategic locations, mainly corners where there was little room for escape. First, the muffin was 99% consumed by me, the hunter. It was usually an apple cinnamon; more for the crumbs it leaves than the taste.

Three corners in the building have ideal spots for baiting the rodent, but I only had enough crumbs to bait two corners at a time. My final act at closing was to drop a few crumbs in each spot. I knew the crumbs would be cleaned up by morning, with more expected. *(continued next page)*

DATES TO REMEMBER

Saturdays, July 18th & August 15th PATROL PARTY

Rain or shine. Join Bob and Joannie for a day or weekend of paddling, swimming, hiking on local trails, fishing (BYO poles), or just hanging out on the deck at their place on Highland Lake in NH. Group cook-out each Saturday night. Three kayaks and a canoe available, or bring your own thing that floats. Duris Cottage: 1853 Valley Road, Washington, NH. Phone: 603-495-3974. Please RSVP to Joannie at jvduris@charter.net or 978-928-5587 for a head-count and directions (MapQuest and GPS will both send you on roads you can hike but not drive).

Friday – Sunday, September 18th – 20th AMN MEETING

The Eastern Division of the National Ski Patrol will again hold its annual business and training meeting of Avalanche, Mountain Travel & Rescue, and Nordic (AMN) instructors at **Northfield Mountain**. Ski patrol instructors from throughout the northeast will gather here for an organizational meeting and for outdoors skills refreshers. These patrollers will camp out Friday and Saturday nights at Barton Cove and will carry out a simulated search and rescue mission Sunday morning. Visit the event website for more details and contact information for registration or if you are interested in making a presentation: <http://amn09.nmnspp.org/>

Saturday & Sunday, December 5th & 6th

FALL REFRESHER, NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN

Reserve the date! With luck, we'll even have snow. Details will be in the September Rattlebone. ❄️



Trivia Quiz: What year was this Refresher picture taken?

WWW.NMNSP.ORG

Don't forget to check our website for the latest patrol news and dates of upcoming courses and events.

If you don't remember the user name and password for entering the 'patrol room', contact Bill Schweikert at: webmaster@nmnsp.org

A REPRIEVE (continued from page one) Training was the key to luring these chipmunks.

Every day the bait was taken by the wary creatures with no consequence. Ten days of free food had lulled them into a false sense of security. Three days ago, the first brute had been taken. It just sat there enjoying the sweet morsels and suddenly it was lifted skyward by a pair of pincers, carried to the edge of the lawn, and tossed into the woods. My secret weapon: trash tongs about 40 inches long. I had taped the ends to prevent serious injury.

Yesterday morning a second chipmunk took a similar ride into the woods, leaving one more tenacious and street smart brute. It obviously had been observant.

This morning, crumbs from last night were still in place and there was no sign that the rodent had scampered about on a search for food. I had placed a larger portion of the muffin in a corner never baited before.

Eating less of the treat was probably good for me but hopefully not for it. I went about the opening procedures: cash in the till, computer on, and listened to the phone messages. It was still chilly, so windows were just cracked for a bit of airflow. With gray skies and a forecast of rain, business would be slow today, except for phone calls. I had plenty of time to get that rascal!

I refocused on finding the escaped furry fiend. It scampered toward the Personal Floatation Device racks when the phone rang. The bottom row of PFDs touched the floor providing numerous hiding spots. I beat the lower racks but could scare up nothing but dust.

It was time to get more creative.

The office had a shop vac with two hoses I connected together to create a 12-foot long suction tube. The elongated hose was fed behind the hanging PFDs and turned on. To keep the miniature troll moving toward the hose I used a broom, and swept from the opposite end toward the now sucking opening. I spied a slight movement to my side as a small brown mass fled to the corner once more.

Great! This was where the muffin remnants were still scattered, between the wall and hinged side of the main door. I backed off the sweeping, hoping the scared rodent needed a sugar rush from the muffin topping crumbs. The shop vac was left on as a "reminder" which direction was hazardous.

As in all hunting, patience paid off. No customers were expected as it was now raining. I went back to the desk, took the phone off the hook and settled in for a bit. If anyone in the Company had to get hold of me they would use the radio.

Charley Chipmunk appeared to settle down. It polished off the big crumbs and was now fully engaged in searching for smaller morsels with its back turned to me. I quietly took my shoes off and placed them (continued next column)

A REPRIEVE (continued from previous column) on the desk.

A broom was chosen instead of the trash tongs as I really wanted to flatten this creature. I moved slowly and silently to within striking range. Focused on the crumbs, the chipmunk was completely unaware of imminent doom. With the broom held high I sighted on a spot between two small, upright pointed ears and started a fast and hard downward swing.

The door flew open and both hunter and quarry became motionless, not a muscle twitched.

A high pitched, piercing scream cut through my brain.

The rodent ran for its life.

"Mommy, he's killing a baby bunny!" wailed a 3-year-old girl.

Customers! Where'd they come from?

With my head hung in disgust, the broom was carefully lowered and the remaining crumbs swept up.

"There's tomorrow buddy," I muttered softly. ✽

The next issue of the Rattlebone will be published in September.

Please get all articles, information, dates, etc.

to Joannie Duris by September 15th.

36 Lombard Road, Hubbardston, MA 01452

(978) 928-5587 or jvduris@charter.net.

CARTOON CORNER

The pheasant in the photo below visited our feeders and deck on a daily basis for over a month last winter, much to Buddy's delight. Patrollers had trouble taxing their creative funny bones, but a few great captions were submitted after the last issue of the Rattlebone. ✽



Multiple choice captions from Roland Crowl:

"I never like what I see in the mirror."

"What? No winter plumage?"

"I've never understood why we can't catch the game."

From the punny mind of Joannie Duris:

"Sure, the weather may be pheasant outside, but I'm a cat and I don't do snow."

"Forget it! Groom your trails yourself. I'm not that kind of C.A.T." ✽