



Asian Outdoors Newsletter Winter/Spring 2011

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Dear AO members,
What a harsh winter and an unrelenting spring it has been for outdoor activities. In spite of a few cancelled activities, we still enjoyed our Christmas party, Lapland and other activities. Looking ahead, we have a full calendar of events planned for the summer and fall. Most events have limit spaces and are first come first served; so sign up early. Our activities are listed on our website, www.asianoutdoors.com. Be sure you check it regularly as new activities may be added.

This issue, we introduce Henry Wong, an avid hiker and an active AO member. He is willing to train new hiker to lead. I am signing up, anyone interested?

Karen Chan, Co-Editor
Kimberly Chan, Co-Editor

AO Member Profile: Henry Wong

I was a native of New York City. I grew up in Sunnyside, Queens and went to grade and junior high school in Woodside, Queens. While I was growing up, I was always outside with the other children in my neighborhood. During the summers, I would spend most of the day outside, sometimes in the neighborhood or at one of the many small playgrounds in the area. When my dad had time, he would take my brother and me to Central Park where we used the playground facilities or played badminton or tennis. On very hot days, we would go to Astoria Park and use the pool there all afternoon. If the weather forecast was threatening, we'd go to South Ferry and take the Staten Island Ferry back and forth (a nickel in each direction) to cool down.

While attending high school, a friend taught me how to ride a bicycle. I spent many weekends while in high school and later in college (went to City College in upper Manhattan) renting a bicycle near and riding around Central Park. On other days, my brother and I would go walking many miles through the streets of Queens. We were both fast walkers and competed. We would start in Sunnyside and walk to Astoria or Flushing Meadow Park and back. We occasionally walked as far as Bayside, Queens or Central Park in Manhattan but would take public transportation back.



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Henry Wong continues...

In the late 70's, I moved to New Jersey and continued bicycling all around neighboring towns. I also did bicycling trips with an outdoor group associated with work.

It wasn't until June of 1988 that a friend introduced me to hiking. Even though I had wondered what it was like to go hiking in the woods, I haven't, up till then, known anyone who actually did it. It was fortunate for me that my friend had just gotten bitten by the hiking bug about two years earlier and wanted to spend as much free time as she could going into the woods. The first hike was an aborted attempt to follow the Dunfield Creek (not the Appalachian (AT) Trail) to Sunfish Pond in Worthington State Forest. At that time, there was no blazed trail along the creek going from the Dunfield Creek parking lot to Sunfish Pond. The AT was the most direct route, but it followed the creek only for a small part of the way. The rest of the way along Dunfield Creek was an unmarked trail. Needless to say, after we had gone about two miles, we lost the unmarked trail and were bushwhacking. We turned around to follow the creek back out. However, even though the attempt failed, I had decided that hiking was not very difficult and I enjoyed it. I was bitten by the hiking bug.

Starting in August of that year, I started hiking with some of the outdoor singles groups in the area. I also challenged myself to find the unmarked trail to Sunfish Pond. After the second failed attempt, I decided to go up the AT to Sunfish Pond and follow the other trail back. I was successful. Afterwards, I was able to do it in both directions. In the meantime, when I had time, I hiked on both Saturday and Sunday with different singles hiking or outdoor groups. I had also bought maps for several of the hiking trails in the NY and NJ area and begun conducting hikes with friends. I did a lot of exploration of trails in Harriman State Park, Worthington State Forest, Stokes State Park, Jockey Hollow area of Morristown Historical Park and other parks that the singles groups I belonged to had taken me to. After about two years, I started leading some of the hikes for one of the singles groups in addition to continuing to lead private hikes with friends.

I joined the Asian American Outdoor Organization (Asian Outdoors, AAOO or AO) in the summer of 1993. My first trip was to Block Island. I enjoyed it very much and soon was doing other activities with the group. Bell learned that I lead hikes for groups and we agreed that because I was not very familiar with the group, I would co-lead one for Asian Outdoors.

The first hike I lead was in the fall of that year. We started along the 1777W trail off Seven Lakes Drive in the Bear Mountain area, followed that to the AT, up West Mountain, to the West Mountain Shelter, to the Timp Torne and then to Bald Mountain and then back along Pleasant Valley Road and Doodletown Road. The people who came appeared to enjoy the hike and dinner afterwards.

Afterwards, I did about three hikes each spring and fall for AO. In 1995 (or 1996), I decided to lead my first (and last) night hike. We started from the Lake Sebago boat launch parking area in Harriman State Park, went up to the top of Diamond Mountain, then down the Tower trail to Pine Meadow Lake where we had the full moon on the other side of the lake and glistening off the surface of the lake. We went back along the woods roads. Although it was enjoyable and the people liked it, it was my last night hike because I found that the cool evening temperatures fogged my glasses so that it was difficult to see the trail. If it wasn't for that problem, I probably would have continued leading moonlight hikes.

Henry Wong continues...

I have found my association with Asian Outdoors very rewarding. I have made a number of long term friends. However, the real rewards was seeing and hearing the happiness of the members (or is it relief?) after leading a successful trip. I currently have some physical limitations that impact the type and amount of activities that I can participate in. Otherwise, I would be much more active.

I hope that I can convince some of the other members to lead hikes. I am available to give guidance and training if you feel you need it.

Ricketts Glen Camping Trip

Karen Chan

One month prior to our camping trip, astronomers have updated the number of stars in the sky to be in the trillions, 3x the previous estimate. That first night while camping at Ricketts Glen, which just happened to coincide with the annual meteorite showers, I looked up and there they were, all trillions of them, staring down at me. Being a city gal, I was mesmerized by the twinkling little stars, millions of miles away as I glazed up at the heavens.

Ricketts Glen was definitely a natural beauty - the beautiful waterfalls, the pristine lake and well groom trails. I'd always enjoyed the serenity of waterfalls and on the day of our hike, the beautiful autumn day added to the pleasantry. We hiked down one side of the fall, had lunch at the bottom and hiked back up the other side. The leisure hike took over three hours. We took a lot of pictures along the way.

Yet, in spite of the natural beauty, the best part of the trip was the chemistry of the participants. A couple of AO old timers (membership-wise, not age wise) joined the trip to catch up with each other. After a hearty dinner of beef stew and braised chicken, these old timers filled us newbies with stories of AO's past - the romance, the drama, the comedies and the tragedies. We laughed so hard that some of us were in tears. A campfire was started for those of us who brave the cold and sat outside, toasting marshmallow and enjoying some more. I meant s'mores.





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Lapland Lake Trip 1/29-1/30/2011
Choya Chiu

This is my third trip to Lapland Lake. The Saturday morning weather on the drive up was a bit overcast, and the temperature was in the high 20s. My carpool driver was Michael. We met the rest of our group at the Best Value Inn, Amsterdam at 11am. After checking into our rooms, and changing into our ski gear, we drove over to the Olympic Diner and had lunch. I ordered a grilled chicken sandwich with cole slaw and fries. It was cooked just right, but the cole slaw tasted a bit funky.

After lunch we headed up to Lapland Lake which was a 45 minute drive from Amsterdam. We arrived after 2pm to take advantage of the \$2 trail pass discount. Renting the equipment was quick and easy. I headed out to my favorite ski trail on Woods Lake. Part of the group went offsite to try out the snowshoe trails.

The trail on Woods Lake goes around in a circle, and is very beautiful. That afternoon it was cloudy with light flurries. The trail on the right side of the lake was well groomed, but on the left side, the snow was deep, and the trail was less traveled by skiers. Later I found out that there was a beaver living in the far left side of the lake, and it was not recommended to ski in that area. I went all the way around anyway... the views were spectacular. It would have been even better if it was a sunny day.

Afterwards, we had dinner at Ruby Tuesdays in Amsterdam, and then went back to the hotel to relax.

On Sunday, I was ready for another day of skiing. I decided to check out the other easy trails. I have been to Lapland Lake a couple of times, and only skied on the trail to and from Woods Lake. This time Jodie joined me, and we went exploring after spending about 45 minutes skiing around the lake. The trails are not well marked, and the signs are a bit small, so you really need to carry the trail map with you. It also helps if you can read the trail map. There are lots of squiggles on the map, and can be very confusing depending on what trails you might be looking for. The easy trails were easy to find, so I stuck with those. We went on the Lake and Era Polku Trails which are forest trails. On the way back to the lodge we tried out the Vasa Trail, which was marked as an intermediate trail. I fell at the top of the hill and Jodie fell on the middle of the hill. We both had trouble getting our skis back on so we called it a day. We went back to the lodge to return our equipment, and then headed home.

I got a very good workout on this trip, and was sore for a couple of days. It was all worth it for the great scenery, and good company.

2010 Christmas Party

Doris Chau

Wow I had an early Christmas gift from AO. It surprised me that I got the 2010 Member of the Year Award at the Christmas Lunch Party. I joined AO as a participant and afterward I became an organizer. I thank AO for giving me the opportunity to organize events, and to participate too.

This was my second year to organize our traditional Christmas Party at Flushing. This year we tried a new variety lunch called Shabu Shabu. What is it?

Shabu Shabu starts with a pot filled with boiling soup. The ingredients (uncooked) include sliced meats, udon noodles, tofu and vegetables. People all sit around the bubbling pot and cook their meat by dipping it in soup with their chopsticks, swishing back and forth. Dipping meat into boiling soup substantially cuts down fat content (healthiness). The final step before eating is dipping the meat & vegetables in different kinds of special sauces.



I felt the members enjoyed the lunch and the atmosphere. I was glad to see all members were having a good time. When they tasted the food that they've cooked, they all had a nice smile on their face. I was a good chef and have fun too ha...ha. After lunch we went to a nearby café to have bubble tea. We made use of the time continue chatting and the event end up at 5:00pm.

Looking back, my first event I joined was Minewaska Foliage. I still remembered after walking a couple of miles we end up on top of the mountain. We had our lunch there and a nice view under my knee. The different color foliage formed a beautiful carpet. We took group pictures and visited a gorgeous waterfall. I like the fact that you may to join AO events even if you don't drive and they can arrange car pool for you. The car pool idea reduces traffic on the road and seen as a more environmentally friendly. Small changes can make a big impact on our environment, and we should give AO credit.

After I joined AO I met friends with different characteristics through talking, exchanging working experience and comprehending different kind of careers. Friday Night Dinner is a welcome event every time as a lot of members join. For me, I love Friday dinner too after a week of hard work and stress. A nice talk and laugh are a good therapy to reduce stress, and I enjoyed trying a variety of food.

Last Friday dinner we tried La Bonne Soupe, a French restaurant in Midtown Manhattan. When we arrived, the restaurant was already full house. I am sorry that I had to turn down four people who sign up late because it reached a target number I had reserved. I reserved for 15 people and they reserved an intimate back room for us. It seems we had a private setting, and a good place for us to gossip. Some members enjoyed their Pre-Fixe meal and other enjoyed their variety meal. Of course, I tried French famous onion soup. It tasted delicious. At the time, we left the restaurant still full house.

Being an organizer gives me an opportunity to work with other co-organizers and practice my skill in dealing with people with different characteristics. Thank you.



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Lake Minnewaska Hike – May 14, 2011

Jean Lee

When you volunteer to lead an AAOO event, the toughest judgment call, in my opinion, is when to, or not to, cancel an event due to weather. I monitored the forecast, days leading to the hike, hoping to see some sort of trend. On the one hand, you want to hold the event because you've got enthusiasts who've scheduled their day for the hike. On the other hand, you don't want them to be drenched in rain.

The forecast leading to the hike wasn't helpful at all. 40% chance of showers. What on earth does 40% chance of showers mean? I know, it means there's a 60% chance that there won't be showers. Not helpful to me at all! Well, I threw my hands up in the air and decided "Okay, in the spirit of AAOO, let's do it!"

13 hikers braved the weather. Clouds hung over the sky. The temperature was comfortable low 60's.. By the time we were approaching our lunch spot, a light drizzle started but stopped soon enough for us to find dry rocks to settle on. We managed to enjoy lunch with only an occasional light shower. Along with the showers, the temperature dropped a bit and a slight wind kicked in. Well, maybe it was stronger than a slight wind. Karen said she could smell the aroma of my roast pork lunch – and she must have been sitting at least 50-feet away from me!

As we lunched with Lake Awosting below us, I couldn't help but notice the mist hovering over the lake and enveloping the distant trees. There is a mysterious peace and beauty different from that that is experienced when hiking Lake Minnewaska on a clear, sunny day. I learned today that hiking can be as wondrous an experience even in such overcast weather. It even inspired a few of our hikers into yoga poses.

Along the way, fresh rocks carpeted portions of the trail. Apparently, park rangers determined that snow and rain from the past season deteriorated the path enough to require this drainage technique. These patches of rocks can be uncomfortable to hike on. I was especially humbled to be in the company of fellow hiker, Miko. Miko hiked on all fours from start to finish. She really toughed it out navigating these rocks patches. She did it with grace. Never a complaint. Such a super sport. I'm so proud of Miko – our malamute. Good girl, Miko.