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Red Lining the Blue Hills

By Jeffrey Dyer

One rainy evening in the summer of 2006, Bob Vogel and 14 others donned rain gear and eagerly embarked down a Blue Hills trail, doing their best to remain dry in the pouring rain. This was one of the weekly hikes that Bob leads in the Reservation. Week by week, mile by mile, he and his participants are hiking every trail in the Blue Hills, a goal they call “Red Lining the Blue Hills.” The idea of hiking all the trails began in 2001, when Bob noticed that a participant on some of his hikes would always mark his trail map in red. “He said he had a goal of hiking all the trails in the Blue Hills,” Bob explains. “Every time he hiked a new trail he marked it in red so he could remember.” The name stuck, and the “Red Line the Blue Hills” hikes developed into a weekly tradition for Bob and his fellow hikers. So far they have hiked 120 miles of trail, and when the weather warms up this spring they’ll tackle the final 25.

Bob says that unlike the Appalachian Trail, which is one continuous line, the Blue Hills is not laid out for red lining: “In order to hike every trail (in the Blue Hills), you need to duplicate many trails. With all those 3-way intersections, there is no real efficient way to do them. But that just means we get to do it for a few more weeks before we finish, and that is not a bad thing.” Their main goal is certainly not to hike all the trails and stop. It’s more like a continuous exploration of places they love. While hiking these trails, the group has learned much history, especially about how Routes 128 and 24 have affected the reservation. They’ve also seen a lot of nice spots that they’d never seen before.

Bob says that some of his favorite spots in the Blue Hills are along the smaller trails that provide quiet, secluded alternatives to the much-used Skyline Trail. In general, though, he just likes to hike. “I think everyone has a favorite part of any place,” Bob says. “Mine changes based on where

I’ve been lately, who I was with, and the memories each place brings back.” For Bob, the memories don’t get any better than a wet summer evening when he drove up to a trailhead and found 14 people putting on rain gear and preparing to hike. “You know people are having fun when they’ll show up to hike in the rain,” he says. Those good memories are sure to increase as Bob and his hiking compatriots continue to explore the woods they love.

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