

# THE BEARS NECESSITIES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Bears Crossing Community

Issue #5 / April 2024



Home is Where the Heart is

BY AMY SYRACUSE, EDITOR

*They say home is where the heart is. Even on the most dismal of mud season days, there's much to love in Bears Crossing.*

*Spring brings the chance to appreciate small but spectacular signs of a vibrant landscape in flux. On your next visit, notice the soothing sounds of melting snow making its way down the mountain, fledgling fiddleheads emerging from the soil, hordes of orange newts exploring the culverts, chipmunks joyfully frolicking, woodpeckers diligently drilling... And don't forget to look down! Animal tracks embossed in the mud offer a captivating reminder that this forest refuge doesn't belong to us alone.*

*In fact, Bears Crossing's natural harmony and tranquility set it apart from so many other residential developments in the Deerfield Valley. They remind us that our community isn't merely a place to stay; rather, it's a place to live, enjoying each day to the fullest. In that spirit, this edition of The Bears Necessities newsletter includes:*

- A tribute to some of the "neighbors" who visit Bears Crossing;
- Scott Abrams' guide to hiking the Haystack Mountain Trail;
- Tips for keeping Bears Crossing "green";
- A primer on protecting SFH properties from damage caused by the elements;
- Updates from the Board of Directors and W&B Property Management; and more.

*Be sure to check the calendar on page 2 for some important dates in the coming months. Spring in Vermont generally gets a bad rap. But—no matter the weather nor the season—there's always something to look forward to at your Green Mountain home away from home. Enjoy!*

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## Spring into Action: Bears, Beautification & Summer Preparations

BY GEORGE FRIEND, PROPERTY MANAGER

Despite our late March and early April surprise snowstorms, mud season is underway and summer is on the way. Here are a few things to keep in mind during the coming months.

- **The bears are back in town.** According to the National Park Service's website, black bears can smell a food source from over a mile away. And, as they emerge from their winter's nap, they are hungry! Be sure to close and secure the dumpster after use. Please don't put items with food residue into recycling. Avoid leaving unsecured garbage or recycling in the trash area when the recycling bin is full. Never leave trash on your porch or deck. Doing so is an open invitation for these nosy neighbors to stop by for a snack. For everyone's safety, we must do what we can to avoid attracting bears to areas frequented by humans.



Bears visiting an owner's entryway and nosing around the recycling bin.



- **Spring cleaning is on the 'to do' list.** Mud season is when Bears Crossing's spring clean-up and beautification work begins. Crews will be busy removing sticks from yards and power raking stone back onto driveways and roadways. Single family homeowners who had trees fall in their yards should contact a tree specialist to have them removed as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we'll be re-seeding, planting, and mulching so—by the start of summer—the flowers will be planted and the grass will be green and neatly trimmed.
- **There may be short-term inconveniences while we make long-term improvements.** The coming months will bring a lot of construction to Bears Crossing. First, the walkway between the parking area and clubhouse will be replaced. Roads will be regraded. Rot repair and repainting will go on all over the community. And a large job will begin in early May. Following its approval by the community this winter, the conversion of the Har-Tru tennis court to an asphalt surface lined for tennis and pickleball will begin. Tentatively, we're aiming to open the new court for play by the July 4th weekend. Of course, the pool will be reopened in time for Memorial Day.
- **Silence is golden.** Spring is also a time when many homeowners undertake needed home improvement projects. Remember to file Architectural Review Committee paperwork before any projects begin, and kindly remind contractors that construction projects and disruptive work on property are not permitted during the weekend without permission.
- **Fire away!** As we all look forward to cooking, dining, and socializing in the great outdoors, please remember that grills are not allowed on condo decks. All fire pits (including portable units, such as Solo Stoves or similar) require approval by the Architectural Review Committee to ensure safe placement away from residences. The state's Fire Safety Code has clear rules on these matters, and they must be enforced. There are several grills at the pool patio, as well as a gas-operated fire pit, for community use.

Enjoy the warmer weather! I look forward to seeing everyone out and about.



## It's Not Easy Being Green... But it's Worth the Effort

BY CARY GOODMAN

Vermont's fall landscape famously displays a stunning palette of colors. But don't sleep on spring, when the foliage returns in an array of subtly striking hues. This is the season that reminds us why we chose the Green Mountains as a second home, and what that means for our responsibility to protect the local ecosystem.

There are more ways than ever before to practice environmental responsibility. As Earth Day approaches, I wanted to share a gentle reminder about some simple things Bears Crossing owners can do to keep our Green Mountain community "green."

- **Recycle right.** Make sure your household (including guests) follows [Vermont's rules for recycling](#). Find details in our online [Owners' Guide](#) and on signage in the compactor area. Of course, you can always go directly to the expert on all things Bears Crossing and... "ask George." Take a few moments to rinse recyclables when needed. Don't put food scraps or unclean items in the recycling bin. Collapse boxes so our bin can hold as much recyclable material as possible. (Note: When recycling is "full" with large items, recyclables could end up being diverted to the trash.) If you carry recycling to the trash area in a plastic garbage bag, first empty the contents into recycling. Then put the garbage bag in the trash dumpster. Plastic garbage bags contaminate the recycling container, causing the entire container to go to a landfill. That's the opposite of what we're trying to do!
- **Compost with care.** Compostable bags are a misnomer, only breaking down in the most sophisticated high-temperature municipal composters. So it's essential to avoid putting plastic bags (even if they say "compostable") in our composting barrel. Otherwise, composting is quick, easy, and required by state law. Simply empty food scraps into the composter, add organic pellets from the bucket below, and place your compost bag in the trash compactor. In a relatively short time, your scraps will be transformed into soil used all around Bears Crossing.
- **Keep usable items out of landfills.** It's easy to throw out things you no longer need. But, as they say, one man's trash is another's treasure. Furniture, clothing, sports equipment, and many other items in good condition can be donated to Twice Blessed (call first for large items), re-homed via social media, or even sold at our upcoming Bears Crossing tag sale (see page 3). If all else fails, check with the [Dover Transfer Station](#), which offers disposal and recycling for appliances, special items, electronics, and batteries for free or for a modest fee.
- **Don't use more than you need.** There are many sensible ways to avoid unnecessary resource consumption. Turn off the water when your home isn't occupied. Sign up for the [Eye on Water app](#) to be notified about leaks. Replacing an appliance? Consider ENERGY STAR options. (Bonus: They sometimes come with rebates so you save cash, too!) When available, choose online billing for utilities and reduce paper waste. You'll simplify your life *and* save resources. It's a win-win!
- **'Bee' friendly to pollinators.** Vermont's Fish and Wildlife Department reports that [many species of pollinators are under threat from habitat loss, disease, etc.](#) So why not add flower pots or hanging baskets with native plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees to your front porch, deck, or yard? This enhances the landscape's natural beauty while also nurturing "neighbors" in need. And isn't that what being part of a community is all about?

## Planning Ahead

**April 24** - Tennis/Pickleball Court Uplift Committee Zoom Meeting

**May 25** - Bears Crossing Pool Opens (tentative)

**Mid-June** - Scenic Chairlift Rides Open at Mount Snow (tentative)

**June 22** - Bears Crossing Board Meeting

**July 5** - Wilmington Independence Day Fireworks

**July 26 to Aug. 4** - Deerfield Valley Blueberry Festival

**Aug. 10** - Bears Crossing BOD Budget Meeting & Community Tag Sale

**Sept. 21** - Bears Crossing Annual Owners Meeting

*Check the Bears Crossing Facebook Group for announcements about community outings (e.g., hikes, pub tours, brewery visits, etc.). For upcoming events in the Deerfield Valley, visit the [Chamber of Commerce Calendar](#). Find BOD meeting information [here](#).*

## Eclipsing Expectations

Though southern Vermont fell outside the path of totality, the area's clear skies and hospitable weather on April 8th still offered prime viewing conditions for the North American solar eclipse. SFH owners Will and Alycia Galway and family were among the many people who opted to observe the rare event from Mount Snow. They arrived prepared with garbage bags to lay on, American Astronomical Society-approved eclipse glasses, and celebratory refreshments, setting up camp at the top of Thanks Walt. "Even more noticeable than the light was the temperature. It got legitimately cold and the snow firmed up," reported Will. "It was a 'cool' experience in every sense, and another great family memory from Mount Snow."



## Owner Directory Update

At its April meeting, the Board of Directors discussed updating the Owners' Directory, which is available through W&B's password-protected *Owners' site*. The update will include information about properties' rental status with the goal of helping owners who want to host friends or family connect directly with owners of available rental properties in Bears Crossing. Please complete the *Directory Update Google Form* by Friday, April 26th, so the update can be completed promptly. If you do not respond, your current directory listing will remain "as is."



## Community Tag Sale

Your chance to clear out clutter and score some great deals on gently-used items for your condo or single family home is just around the corner! SFH owner Michael Goldberg has graciously offered to organize a Bears Crossing tag sale on Saturday, Aug. 10th, from 12pm to 4pm. Note: The Board of Directors budget meeting takes place at 9am that day. In pairing the events, we hope many owners will be in the neighborhood and available to participate. Please complete this *Google Form* ASAP to let us know that you may be interested in selling items so Michael can plan logistics and create a sale e-mail list. In the meantime, mark your calendars. More details will be shared as the date gets closer.

## Pest Control Reminder

In springtime, ants, bees, rodents, and other pests, become active again. Note that condo associations already receive quarterly service from a pest control company. Condo owners who see unusual activity should contact W&B. SFH owners may wish to work with a local provider, like Aaron's Pest Control (802-464-2800), for regular check-ups and treatment.

## On the Board: Update from the April Meeting

BY DAVE STREETER, BOARD PRESIDENT

Resisting the temptation of freshly groomed trails after April's unexpected snowfall, the Master Association Board of Directors met at the clubhouse for its regularly scheduled meeting on the morning of Saturday, April 6th. For those who hit the trails that morning (or were otherwise unable to join the meeting), here's what you missed:

- W&B is working on replacing a few community signs that have become damaged by sun and weather exposure over the years. The new signs will be installed in the coming months.
- The special assessment proposal to fund a Tennis Court Uplift Project was approved by the majority of homeowners in February. The first of two \$285.24 payments was included in April 1st bills from the homeowners association. You can find an update on project plans on page 4 of this newsletter.
- Our Feb. 24th Community Ski and Snowboard Race, held at Charlie's Chase, had 39 participants. Despite icy conditions, a good time was had by all. Find top finishers' names and times on page 6 of this newsletter and stop by the clubhouse to check out the newly updated winners' plaques. Thanks to Mike Goodman for organizing a great event!
- In order to connect Bears Crossing owners who rent their properties with other owners who may wish to host guests in the community, BOD member Amy Syracuse is updating the Owners' Directory on *W&B's Owners' site* to include rental information and contacts. For details on updating your listing, see the sidebar on this page.
- The Board approved a motion to include landscaping and tree additions for single family homeowners in the Architectural Review Committee approval process. When adding trees or other landscaping elements, SFH owners must submit ARC paperwork, including an aerial site plan with specifications and locations of proposed additions or changes. You can find *ARC paperwork* on BearsCrossing.com.

Note that the next Board of Directors meeting will take place on Saturday, June 22nd, at 9am at the clubhouse. As always, the meeting agenda will be sent to owners in advance. I expect it to include preliminary discussion about several financial items in preparation for the annual budget meeting on Aug. 10th.

All owners are welcome to attend. And, of course, you can access Board meeting minutes and agendas by logging in with your user ID and password on the *W&B Owners' website*. Enjoy the spring, everyone.

## Save the Dates: 2024 Condo, SFH Association Annual Zoom Meetings

Thursday, Aug. 15th, 5pm: Single Family Homes (SFH) Association

Thursday, Aug. 22nd, 5pm: E/F Association (Brumm's Way 7, 8, 9, 10)

Thursday, Aug. 29th, 5pm: C/D Association (Black Bear 5, 7, 8)

Thursday, Sept. 5th, 5pm: A/B Association (Polar Bear North 5, 7, 9)

Thursday, Sept. 12th, 5pm: 400/500 Association (Polar Bear North 2, 4)

Thursday, Sept. 19th, 5pm: 100 Association (Polar Bear South 7)

# Tennis Court Refurbishment Approved, Work Underway Targeting July Grand Opening

In early February, Bears Crossing owners received a ballot to cast their vote on a proposed special assessment to replace Bears Crossing's tennis court with a multi-use asphalt court lined for tennis and pickleball. The proposal requested funding for the project via a \$570.48 per unit special assessment, collected in two payments of \$285.24, due April 1, 2024, and July 1, 2024.

The special assessment was approved, and announced to owners via e-mail on Feb. 20th. The final tally of votes received was 71 in favor of the project, 35 against, and 21 no response.

Since receiving approval, members of the Pickleball/Tennis Court Uplift Committee have been working with Onsite Property Manager George Friend and Master Association Board of Directors President Dave Streeter to make arrangements for court demolition and construction work. Work will take place in late spring and early summer. The court is tentatively scheduled to open for play for the 4th of July holiday weekend.



As the project progresses, the Committee is also working with W&B and the Board of Directors to arrange court locks and reservation systems, in addition to establishing facility hours and rules. Committee meetings take place on Zoom and are open to owners. The next one is set for Wednesday, April 24th, at 7pm. Find the Zoom credentials in your e-mailbox. -AS



## Preparing for the Annual Budget Meeting

As part of February's vote on the special assessment to refurbish Bears Crossing's tennis court, the Board of Directors provided owners with the following information about the Community's capital reserve status and a forecast of capital projects and possible special assessments. We are reprinting it here for those who haven't yet reviewed it.

### *What is a capital reserve fund?*

A Homeowners Association (HOA) capital reserve is a fund used by the community to pay for capital projects (e.g., replace the pool, road or water system), as opposed to operating budget expenses (e.g., repair the pool, road or water system).

### *What's considered a "healthy" capital reserve?*

There are several factors that go into determining what a "healthy" capital reserve is. Some communities want to keep regular HOA fees as low as possible. To accomplish this, they keep a minimum in reserve and special assess (i.e., charge a special fee to homeowners) to cover unexpected expenses, major repairs, or any other project that arises.

Bears Crossing has always maintained a healthy capital reserve with the goal of minimizing special assessments. That way, owners can be confident in what their HOA costs will be year to year.

A healthy capital reserve is important to lending institutions. When financing a property at an HOA or lending money to an HOA, the capital reserve is one of the factors banks look at in determining their risk. Among lending institutions, a healthy reserve is generally considered to be between 80% to 100% of an HOA's operating budget.

### *How much capital reserve does Bears Crossing have?*

Our starting reserve for 2023/24 was \$286,000 (or 74% of the HOA operating budget). Currently, we collect \$40,000 annually from ownership to replenish and grow the capital reserve as part of our Master Association Operating Budget.

### *Is that enough?*

Recent capital expenses include the repair of storm damage to roads and drainage culverts, shoring up of support for Bears Den Road near the top of the community, fiber conduit installation, repairs to the clubhouse stairs to ensure safety, replacement of a failed control for the water system, etc. In addition, we expect Bears Den Road will need to be replaced in approximately five years. We've already secured estimated quotes in order to plan for the expenditure. Depending on the scope of work, inflation, and other factors, we are projecting that the road replacement could cost somewhere between \$260,000 and \$400,000. This will require funding in excess of the current capital reserve.

### *How do we plan now to address future capital needs?*

There are several ways to proactively address anticipated capital needs. The Board can special assess, as needed (e.g., \$3,000 per owner over several years). It can raise the annual capital reserve contribution rate in the operating budget—for example, from \$40,000 to \$60,000. This would increase HOA fees accordingly. Or it could do some combination. No decisions have yet been made.

*To stay up to date, see Board of Directors meeting minutes and agendas [online](#) and attend the Sept. 21st annual owners meeting.*

# Single Family Home Maintenance: Common Challenges and What to Look Out For

Isn't it ironic? The same conditions that make Vermont a preferred ski and snowboard destination also make it a challenging place to own a home. Snow, ice, wind, trees, rain, runoff, and other attributes of our beloved Green Mountain State contribute to wood rot, roof damage, and so much more.

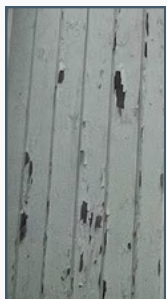
The good news is: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Proactively checking for warning signs and taking action before manageable problems become unmanageable ones can reduce home ownership headaches and help you make the most of your down time in Bears Crossing.

Below is a primer on what to look out for. If you notice problems on your property and would like contractor recommendations, don't hesitate to e-mail on-site [Property Manager George Friend](#).

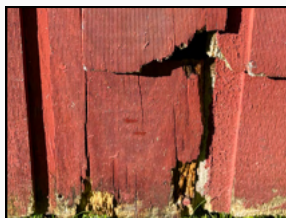
## Paint /Stain Damage

**What You'll Notice:** Exposed bare wood, peeling or bubbling paint, discoloration.

**Why it Matters:** Well-maintained exterior paint is your first line of defense against wood rot. Repainting every three years or so—and touching up spots with damage—is essential to protect siding, trim and other exterior wood.



## Wood Rot



**What You'll Notice:** If you see paint damage, you'll want to look closer to check for wood rot, which is a very common issue in Vermont. Press against the wood where it's peeling. If the wood feels soft and spongy, it's rotted and needs to be replaced.

Pay close attention to window sills, fascia boards, low-lying siding (anything close to the ground), trim under doors, and siding where the house has an interior corner, like the chimney.

Exposure to sun and water also matters. The south and west sides of a home will be dryer, and less prone to rot—unless boards dry out and curl. If they stay curled for a long time, water can seep behind them. On the north side, pay extra attention for warning signs. It tends to be wetter and doesn't dry out as well. The eastern exposure will be similar, though not quite as bad.

**Why it Matters:** The sooner wood rot is detected and remediated, the simpler and less costly the repair usually is. Wood rot gets worse every year. If you find a small spot, you can replace the board quickly and prevent more damage. When a board is rotted, it's wet behind it. With time, that dampness will cause what's behind that board (sheeting or plywood) to rot, too. Then you'll have a much larger scope of work and higher costs to address it.

## Deck / Stairs Damage

**What You'll Notice:** You may see wood rot, especially in areas where snow accumulates throughout the winter. Also, check the connections of stairs and decks to the home. The structures should be sitting fairly flat. Posts can be pushed up out of the ground, which may cause heaving.

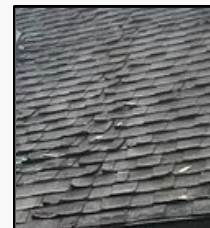


**Why it Matters:** These are places where snow and ice build up over the winter, creating the potential for problems. There are safety concerns when connections to the home are compromised and/or when wood becomes fragile.

## Roof Damage

**What You'll Notice:** When shingles are missing or curled, it should be addressed before the next winter arrives. Curled shingles indicate your roof is nearing the end of its life. It's common to see curling on roof sides with the most sun exposure. Missing shingles can be caused by roof shoveling or strong winds, and may be an easier "patch" fix.

**Why it Matters:** The life span of a roof in Vermont is typically shorter than in other areas due to our harsh winters. With careful monitoring and patch repairs as needed, you can help extend that life span while also protecting your home from leaks and wood rot.



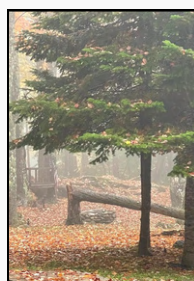
## Window / Skylight Problems

**What You'll Notice:** Rotted sills, trim separating from the building, water leaking into your home from outside.

**Why it Matters:** Water always finds a way, and skylights and windows are common fail points. You don't want to return to your home to find a leak, especially if the property is left vacant for any significant period of time.

## Trees / Grounds Issues

**What You'll Notice:** Walk your yard after a heavy rain and check to see if water is puddling. In particular, check for puddled water near or against the house. For trees, look for signs of disease or fungus (e.g., discoloration or spotting of leaves, growths on bark, thinning crown, dead branches), broken branches, root rot, fallen trees, etc.



**Why it Matters:** Bears Crossing has natural swells in its landscaping. With time, these flatten and don't do their job of diverting water away from homes. But it's possible to reshape them. We also have beautiful, old trees that become vulnerable with age. SFH owners are responsible for trees on their property, but must get ARC approval before removing or replacing them. -AS

## 2023-2024 Snowman Contest: Frosty Friends Warmed Hearts



**Polar Bear North**  
"Best Traditional Snowman"



**Cub Ridge Lane**  
"Most Creative Snowman"



**Cub Ridge Lane**



**Brumm's Way**  
"Manager's Choice"



**Cub Ridge Lane**

A shortage of early and mid-season snow (and frequent rain) put a damper on this year's Snowman Contest. Even so, we received five wonderful entries from four households. Winners will receive two Bears Crossing t-shirts in gratitude for the smiles their snow creations brought to the community. Congratulations on a job well done, everyone!

## 2024 Ski Race Results

The Bears Crossing Ski & Snowboard race has been a much-loved community tradition going back decades. And this year's event, enthusiastically organized by Mike Goodman, did not disappoint. Braving icy conditions, thirty nine athletes showed up at the gates of Charlie's Chase for the Feb. 24th race. Participants were allowed one timed run on each course, with results on the blue course running slightly quicker. As always, the race was followed by a celebratory pizza party in the clubhouse. Kudos to all who came out, and congratulations to the top finishers listed below.

### Skiers

<u>Youth/Female</u>	<u>Adults/Female</u>
(1) Avery L. (30.63 sec)	(1) Michelle P. (29.21 sec)
(2) Gianna P. (33.66 sec)	(2) Talia P. (29.98 sec)

<u>Youth/Male</u>	<u>Adults/Male</u>
(1) Henry H. (24.06 sec)	(1) Paul Goodman (27.71 sec)
(2) Jake L. (34.24 sec)	(2) Brian T. (28.3 sec)

### Snowboarders

<u>Adults/Male</u>
(1) Dave S. (39.42 sec)



Owners and friends gathered for the traditional post-race pizza party and announcing of race results.

### Bears Crossing Hibernation Libation

2 oz Metcalfe's Vermont  
Maple Bourbon  
3-4 dashes  
Angostura bitters  
1/2 tsp Vermont  
maple syrup

Serve on the rocks  
and garnish with  
orange peel, cherry



### And the Winner is... News from Our Trail 87 Signature Cocktail Contest!

It turns out Bears Crossing is an "old fashioned" community at heart. The majority of respondents in our signature cocktail contest named "Hibernation Libation," a classic old-fashioned with a Vermont maple twist, as their preferred drink. As promised, we randomly drew one name from all responses. Peter and Leslie Anguilla of Bears Den Road are the raffle winners, and will receive a \$100 gift certificate courtesy of our friends at Trail 87.

Though Trail 87 is now closed for mud season, you'll be able to order a Hibernation Libation when it reopens this summer with an exciting seasonal menu and weekly specialty nights (think "tiki night" or "taco night"). This summer, Trail 87 will also expand their hours to serve breakfast and lunch, and offer "grab and go" options and specialty catering. [Editorial note: If you haven't tried Trail 87's Thanksgiving dinner, put it on your bucket list now! It's delicious and the perfect excuse to spend the day on the slopes instead of in the kitchen.]

Special thanks to Trail 87 for sponsoring our contest and to everyone who voted.



This year, the Vermont State Parks organization turns 100! Celebrate by enjoying one of these state parks within an hour's drive from Bears Crossing. Visiting with kids? Be sure to request a Junior Ranger Activity Booklet from the park office. Click on park names below or find visitor information [here](#).

### [Molly Stark State Park](#)

Wilmington (~10 miles away)  
Opens Memorial Day Weekend  
Activities: Camping, hiking, picnicking, horseshoes, volleyball

### [Woodford State Park](#)

Woodford (~15 miles away)  
Opens Memorial Day Weekend  
Activities: Camping, hiking, swimming, boating, fishing, stand-up paddleboarding, picnicking, horseshoes

### [Jamaica State Park](#)

Jamaica (~20 miles away)  
Opens May 3rd  
Activities: Camping, hiking, swimming, picnicking, biking, horseshoes, volleyball

### [Townshend State Park](#)

Townshend (~24 miles away)  
Opens Memorial Day Weekend  
Activities: Camping, hiking, swimming, fishing, picnicking

### [Fort Dummer State Park](#)

Guilford (~26 miles away)  
Opens Memorial Day Weekend  
Activities: Camping, hiking, picnicking, horseshoes, volleyball

### [Lowell Lake State Park](#)

Londonderry (~30 miles away)  
Opens May 10th  
Activities: Hiking, fishing, picnicking

### [Lake Shaftsbury State Park](#)

Shaftsbury (~36 miles away)  
Opens May 27th  
Activities: Camping, hiking, swimming, boating, fishing, stand-up paddleboarding, picnicking

### [Emerald Lake State Park](#)

East Dorset (~38 miles away)  
Opens Memorial Day Weekend  
Activities: Camping, hiking, swimming, boating, fishing, stand-up paddleboarding, picnicking, horseshoes



## Needle in a Haystack: Nearby Hike Offers 'Just Right' Mix of Beauty Convenience, Challenge, Accessibility

BY SCOTT ABRAMS

As I write this article, our surprise April snowfall is rapidly melting away, and sunny skies are heralding the much-anticipated arrival of Vermont's hiking season. Luckily, you don't need to travel far from Bears Crossing to enjoy some exercise, fresh air, and incredible valley views. Just give it a few weeks for the remainder of the mud to dry up, and it'll be time to hit the trails.

If you're not sure where to go, [BearsCrossing.com](#) includes details for local hikes. For those looking for a family- and pet-friendly trail, with just the right amount of challenge, I highly recommend heading up to the summit of nearby Haystack Mountain. It's the most popular mountain hike in the area and you will rarely be alone on the path.

From the trailhead you'll climb just over 1000 feet of elevation over 2.1 miles to the summit, but it's not particularly steep. The trailhead for this adventure is located in Chimney Hill, about seven miles from the Bears Crossing clubhouse. It can be a little tricky to find due to the curvy roads and turns in the development, but you can find detailed directions and complete hike stats on the [Trailfinder website](#).

The trailhead is located on Upper Dam Road. It's typically easy to find space to park your car on the roadside nearby. First, you'll start up an old gravel road before turning left into a more normal woody trail.

As you approach the top, you'll come to a spot where the trail splits. You can either take a side path up to the summit, or continue going straight along a ridge trail that eventually reaches Mount Snow.

A word of caution... That ridge trail hasn't been maintained for a while, so I don't recommend taking it far unless you have serious trekking expertise. But I definitely recommend heading to the Haystack Mountain summit for some of the area's most spectacular sights. If that final ascent doesn't take your breath away, the stunning 180-degree panoramic views of the Deerfield Valley almost certainly will!

Be sure to wear hiking shoes—not sneakers—as there will be rocks, roots and probably some muddy spots to traverse. Hiking poles are helpful, but not necessary. The trail is very dog friendly and you're likely to come across other hikers traveling with furry friends on your way up or down, or at the summit.

Once you reach the top, there are plenty of spots to sit and rest up, while you take pictures, eat a snack or refresh yourself with a local craft beer. Definitely bring something to eat and drink, but don't forget to pack up all of your trash and take it with you on the way down. As always, it's essential to follow hiking and outdoor etiquette. Leave no trace, and help preserve the tranquility of this special space for the next visitor.

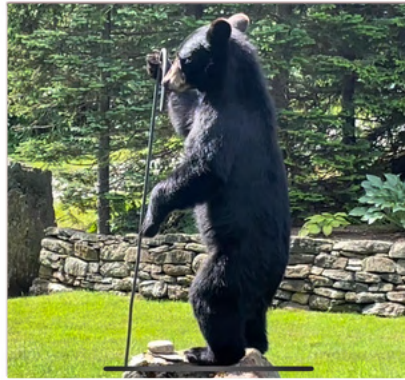
# Meet the Neighbors!

*As the snow melts away, local wildlife come out to play.  
Check out some of the past visitors to Bears Crossing.*

## *Black Bear*



*Cub Ridge Lane*



*Bears Den Road*



*Brummi's Way*

## *Moose*



*Bears Den Road*

## *Red Fox*



*Bears Den Road*

## *Barred Owl*



*Brummi's Way*

## *Spotted Salamander*



*Bears Crossing Pool Deck*

## *Eastern Newt*



*Bears Den Road*

## *Eastern Garter Snake*



*Bears Den Road*