

## 2016 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report

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**Photo Credit:** Tyra Olstad

August is here and is almost already gone! This has been a very busy summer, so our apologies for getting this mid-season report out later than usual. The 27<sup>th</sup> season of the Summit Steward Program has been an exciting one, with continued growth and evolution for the program. As the numbers of visitors continue to increase, we've been working on new avenues for education and outreach, and new ways to help protect our fragile wilderness.

Thanks to a stellar crew and phenomenal volunteers, we've been able to accomplish an incredible amount of work thus far this season.

### **Thanks to the help of the 46ers and other donors, stewards are now connecting with a record number of hikers!**

Coming into the season we faced a critical gap in our funding. A major source of funding changed their process and priorities last year. We would not have been able to field a full crew without the generous support of the Adirondack 46ers (<http://adk46er.org/>). The 46ers stepped in at the last minute allowing ADK to maintain adequate staffing for the summer. Other donors came also forward and the impact of their combined efforts saved the Summit Stewardship Program.

We are, once again, grateful for the generosity of the ADKhighpeaks Foundation (<http://www.adkhighpeaksfoundation.org>), whose support provides regular coverage of Cascade Mountain for a seventh year. ADKhighpeaks Foundation has pledged to support this important expansion of the Summit Steward Program through 2018. Last year, Cascade Mountain was visited by so many hikers that we hit an all-time record of 540 hiker contacts in a single day.

The Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund ([www.watermanfund.org](http://www.watermanfund.org)) granted funds to help cover one steward salary through the regular season. One steward speaks to an average of 85 hikers a day, which adds up to about 7,000 hikers over the course of the season.

This year, the #507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship program (<http://507fund.org/>) made its first grant to help fund stewardship of Giant Mountain. Donations to this endowment fund helped ADK provide food and housing for one summit steward position.

Ketch's legacy inspired the publication of the book Adirondack Archangels: Guardians of the High Peaks. More than 35 authors and photographers contributed to this book, which includes essays from hikers, stewards, scientists, and advocates for the Adirondacks, all of whom share a role in the on-going effort

to protect the Adirondack Park. The stories are laugh-out-loud funny and deeply moving. Go ahead and pick up your copy, all proceeds from the sale of this book support the Summit Steward Program.

Finally, we'd like to introduce you to one more Adirondack angel. The Will Cummer Gear Fund was established to honor the memory of Will Cummer, avid hiker and gardener. Thanks to this Fund, the Summit Steward Program was able to purchase needed and long-wanted supplies, including a Kestrel unit that allows us to accurately measure wind speed and temperature on the summits. Will loved gear and gadgets so it is fitting that ADK is now able to provide data to scientists, students, hikers and anyone curious about condition in the High Peaks. This endowment fund will provide much-needed support for generations of Summit Stewards.

Thanks also to the program partners who keep the Summit Steward program running: the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for extensive administrative, logistical, and financial support.

We are really fortunate to have sponsorship from excellent gear manufacturers! Thanks to Brooklyn Camp Supply, Outdoor Research, Darn Tough, Vasque Boots, and The Mountaineer for providing equipment, boots, and advice to all of the stewards. These companies see to it that the stewards have the best equipment and outdoor clothing available. Thank you Bill O'Donnell, Jaeger Shaw, Hal Elms, Chuck Bruja, and Vinny McClelland!

I'd also like to thank Wes Lampman, Erika Edgley, Jim Giglinto, and Tate Connor for their guidance. Thanks also to all the individuals who have volunteered time, including Ian Ellbogen, David Warfield, Jack Coleman, Mike Cady, Mary Lamb, Bob Rock, Stephanie Graudons, Chrissy Dagenais, Dan Kane, John Wood, Seth Jones, Brendan Wiltse, Vin Maresco, Borno Zaman, Sam Boese, Chuck Pacer, Lois Dannenberg, Annie Fogarty, Amy Stafford, Patrick Murphy, and Larry Lepak.

### **Personnel and Scheduling**

The 2016 Summit Stewards are a cheerful crew. They are hard-working, inspiring educators who have a firm understanding of conservation and stewardship. This year's crew is a mixed bunch of returning and new stewards which creates a wonderful and fresh dynamic.

**Kayla White**— This is Kay's third year as a summit steward and her second in the role of chief steward. Hers is a familiar face at ADK. Kay has a philosopher's mind, very much at home on the peaks and with the program. She brings dedication, drive, and thoughtfulness to everything that she does.



Figure 1: 2016 Crew: L to R (front): Wade Bastian, Addie Clayton, Ryan Nerp, Kayla White, and Tyra Olstad

Tyra Olstad— Tyra has returned from a brief hiatus from stewarding to join us back for a third year. She is never to be found without a smile on her face and a sketch pad in her bag. Tyra is fascinated by clouds, mountain weather, and connection to place. She brings her experience (from Petrified Forest to Denali), her thoughtful perspective, her enthusiasm for the alpine, and her artistry to all her interactions, both with fellow stewards and visitors.

Addie Clayton—Addie is new to stewarding but not to ADK. She was a Summer Naturalist last year and couldn't stay away. She just got back from a conservation internship in Patagonia where she collected data on both flora and fauna of the area. She is finishing up her last year at University of Vermont in Environmental Studies and Forestry with a concentration in Ecology and Conservation. Addie brings with her a passion for wilderness and wild places wherever she goes.

Ryan Nerp—Ryan is brand new to the stewardship program but not to the area. As a Paul Smith's Alumina, Ryan has worked and went to school in the Adirondacks for the past five years. When not chatting with hikers on the mountains, you can find Ryan paddling on some Adirondack body of water or working the ropes course at Paul Smith's. On the mountain, he is always happy to point out alpine plants or eagerly listening to a hiker tell of his or her latest adventure.

Wade Bastian—Wade is another new summit steward and Paul Smith's graduate. He's just returning to the area after working at a resort in Alaska. An avid hiker and 46er, Wade brings not only a knowledge of the area but a passion for everything outdoors. Whether he is excitedly chatting to hikers or hard at work brushing in herd paths, you can always find Wade with a grin on his face.

Julia Goren—I've been a part of the summit steward program since 2006. I'm so grateful for this amazing crew!

**Volunteer Stewards:** There aren't words to describe how amazing our Volunteer Stewards are—their dedication is unmatched. Volunteers have provided 25 coverage days this season, plus an additional 12 days of help in the pre-season.

Ian Ellbogen— Ian has been with the volunteer program for seven years. When not stewarding, you can find Ian taking his grandchildren hiking, and in the winter, you're sure to find him skiing.

David Warfield— This is Dave's sixth year with the steward program. He has spent a great deal of time hiking above treeline here and in the White Mountains. He has climbed Chamonix, Mt. Blanc, and Mt. Rainier, and can frequently be found cycling the area.

Mike Cady—Mike is back for a fourth season of volunteering. He is a member of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a professional photographer, a 46er in summer and winter, and a Saranac Lake Ultra 6er. Mike recently completed his second round of the 46 with his son Eli, who just completed his first round.

Jack Coleman—Jack is also back for his fourth season as a volunteer. Jack is treasurer of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er and winter 46er, an inspirational hiker who helps leads challenge hikes for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and he is never to be found without a smile on his face.

Mary Lamb—Mary is returning for a fourth season as a hard core steward volunteer. We're thrilled to have her back after last summer's ACL surgery. Mary is also a member of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er, winter 46er, and boundlessly energetic.

Bob Rock—Bob is also returning for a fourth season as a volunteer. He, too, comes to the program through the ADKhighpeaks Forum and as a 46er. Bob has the endless patience that comes, among other things, with years of experience as a Boy Scout troop leader.

John Wood—John is also returning for his fourth year. John is a former student of Dr. Ketchledge; he did some of the first trail work on these summits to help protect the alpine plants. John has the incredible patience to spend hours combing the summits looking for tiny nails as part of our photopoint monitoring project.

Chrissy Dagenais—Chrissy is returning for her third year. She is an enthusiastic hiker, paddler, and cyclist. She is a 46er and trip leader for the Cornwall Outing Club.

Stephanie Graudons—Stephanie is returning for a third year. She is a very experienced hiker, a 46er, a Leave No Trace Master Educator, and is ADK's Young Adults Outreach Coordinator.

Dan Kane—Dan is returning for a third year. He is a familiar face around the Loj, having served as Campground Host for four years. Dan's previous experiences are too numerous to name, but include teaching, interning at the APA, and regional planning. Among many other interests, Dan is an enthusiastic hiker and 46er.

Vin Maresco—Vin is returning for his second year. He is a geologist, avid hiker, ski patroller, and former JBL hut crew member. He brings tremendous enthusiasm and energy to the program.

Larry Lepak—Larry is also returning for his second year. He's a recently retired botanist for NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Lois Dannenber—Lois is a new volunteer this year. She has a passion for botany and currently works for a tree and lawn care company. She just finished becoming a 46er and brings her love of the outdoors to everything she does.

Chuck Pacer—Chuck is an enthusiastic new addition to the Summit Steward program. He is very knowledgeable of the area and of the outdoor gear you'll need for the hike. His energy and willingness to share his experiences makes him a friendly face to find on the mountain.

Ann Fogarty—Ann is a new volunteer this year. She is very active in the Genesee Valley chapter and hikes frequently in the Adirondacks. Ann has a friendly demeanor and loves talking to hikers about doing the 46 High Peaks.

Jen Maguder—This is Jen's first year volunteering but her face is a familiar one at ADK. Jen was a summit steward the previous two years and brings enthusiasm, knowledge, and positivity to the program. Her dedication to the mountains is extremely admirable.

Patrick Murphy—Pat is another previous summit steward turned volunteer. Pat was a steward in 2012 and a botany steward in 2013. He has a wealth of knowledge of the alpine vegetation, the High Peaks area, and anything outdoors related. He is currently employed at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake.

**Volunteer Borno Zaman proudly standing by the Cascade privy sign**



Borno Zaman—Borno is a new volunteer to the program. He recently graduated from Ithaca College and has been working for several years in web design. Borno has an easy going disposition and dry humor that makes spending time on the mountain with him a treat.

Sam Boese—Sam is a new volunteer this year. He just graduated from the University at Buffalo with a degree in Civil Engineering. Sam is passionate about the outdoors and hopes to do environmental engineering in the future. He loves exploring and recently took a trip to Iceland.

Andrew Wood—Andrew is another new addition to the Summit Steward program. He went to school for Global Economics. His indoor job makes him want to come and explore the Adirondacks in his free time. He is a natural at stewarding and a great conversationalist on the peaks.

## Training

The stewards arrived on Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, and started their training with an overview of alpine ecology and the summit steward program. Forester Tate Connor gave a presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan. We were also joined by volunteer steward Chrissy Dagenais. Training then began in earnest with two days of Wilderness First Aid.

Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, we did a training hike up Cascade. We focused on trail work including brushing, scree wall, and rock packing techniques, as well as cairn building. We also discussed various techniques for stewarding on Cascade. We were joined by the Catskill stewards and volunteer steward Vin Maresco.

Tuesday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, we did a combination of radio protocol and interpretive communication training at DEC's Headquarters in Raybrook, NY. Ranger Jim Giglinto went over radio and personal safety training. Julia went over interpretive communication, coaching techniques, and the Authority of the Resource. We practiced some role-playing so that all could get comfortable using these interpretive techniques. We were joined for this by the Catskill stewards and summit steward volunteers Dan Kane and Sam Boese.

Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, we did a botany training hike up Algonquin peak. Julia provided an overview of the ecological succession that we see as we hike from trailhead to summit as well as an in depth look into alpine plant community ecology.

Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> were spent team stewarding on Marcy and Algonquin. Team stewarding is an important part of the training process because it allows new stewards to learn techniques and receive constructive criticism on their own educational approach.

Monday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> Tyra, Ryan, and Wade participated in a Leave No Trace trainer course taught by ADK's Advocacy staff Cathy Pedler and Paul Gallery as well as Senior Naturalist Tom Manitta and Chief Steward Kayla.

Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, everyone participated in an ADK All-Staff Training. Kayla gave a short presentation for the staff on alpine ecology and the Summit Steward Program.

Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, were spent team stewarding on Marcy and Algonquin. With two weekends of team stewarding, everyone had the opportunity to observe 3 other stewards in action.

Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, we headed to Whiteface for ant training and alpine plant identification trip. We were joined by volunteer John Wood and ant research assistant Grace Barber. We stopped at various elevational points to collect and identify ants. The folks at ORDA kindly allowed us to utilize the highway free of charge. Afterwards, we went to the Mountaineer in Keene Valley to get fitted and took home Vasque boots that day!

Thank you to everyone that participated in the training: Cathy Pedler, Paul Gallery, Tom Manitta, Kayla White, Wes Lampman, Erika Edgley, Jim Giglinto, Grace Barber, and Tate Connor.

### **Weather and Usage**

The story of usage continues to be a story of increasing numbers and new records set. **We are BUSY!** More and more people are coming to the High Peaks every year.

We've had a little bit of everything this year—sleet, thunderstorms that produce hail, blistering heat, frigid temperatures, but above all mostly hot, sunny days. Trails are bone dry and the plants are begging for water. With beautiful sunny days comes an increase of fair weather hikers. Our numbers continue to climb and we are well on our way to having this be the sixth year in a row where we greatly surpass the number of contacts from the previous year.

The chart below highlights the usage summaries for May, June, and July for this year and last year. The average represents the average number of people contacted per day.

<u>May 2016</u> (weekends only)					<u>May 2015</u> (weekends only)			
<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average		<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	371	3	124		Algonquin	560	7	80
Marcy	591	4	148		Marcy	506	6	84
Wright	183	2	92		Wright	5	1	5
Cascade	1129	5	226		Cascade	793	3	264
<b>Total</b>	<b>2274</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>162</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>1864</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>110</b>

<u>June 2016</u>					<u>June 2015</u>			
<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average		<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	1412	21	67		Algonquin	1229	20	61
Marcy	1488	21	71		Marcy	1337	19	70
Wright	446	10	45		Wright	565	13	43
Cascade	1451	6	242		Cascade	878	6	146
<b>Total</b>	<b>4797</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>4009</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>69</b>

<u>July 2016</u>					<u>July 2015</u>			
<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average		<b>Mountain</b>	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	2614	28	93		Algonquin	2410	30	80
Marcy	3494	31	113		Marcy	2666	31	86
Wright	1077	17	63		Wright	1102	25	44
Cascade	2868	15	191		Cascade	1495	8	187
Colden	116	5	23		Colden	199	7	28
Iroquois	12	1	12		Gothics	525	2	
Giant	100	1	100		Giant	46	1	
<b>Total contacts</b>	<b>10281</b>	<b>98</b>			<b>Total</b>	<b>8465</b>	<b>105</b>	

## Figure 2. Summary of usage data for May, June, July of 2016 and 2015.

### Equipment and Campsites

Summit Steward equipment receives constant use, meaning that something is always in need of repair or replacement. Kayla spent significant time repairing tarps, tents, uniforms, and trekking poles at the beginning of the season this year. That said, thanks to the generosity of the Will Cummer gear fund, we were able to replace some equipment, and thanks to our gear sponsors, we made sure that the stewards are properly equipped for the conditions on the summits.

Outdoor Research (OR) donated rain jackets, fleece jackets, moisture wicking shirts, pants, and hats. As always, we are so grateful for the support of Jaeger Shaw and the fine folks at OR—no one likes to stand on a mountain summit in the rain day in and day out, but being able to do so and stay dry makes life much better.

Darn Tough donated socks and Vasque donated boots to the stewards. Waterproof boots and wool socks are always a must even when the summer has been uncharacteristically hot.

Andrew Flynn from Arete designed and donated awesome moisture wicking shirts for the professional and volunteer summit stewards to wear. A portion of the proceeds from sales of the shirt are being donated to the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Many, many thanks go to Outdoor Research (OR), Darn Tough, Brooklyn Camp Supply, Arete, and Vasque for their generous support of the Summit Steward Program.

Special thanks go to Kayla White and Seth Jones for setting up the Marcy and Algonquin camps.

### Botany and Ant Projects

This year we are collecting ants mainly in and around the alpine summits to help develop a species list for the High Peaks. Collecting ants is harder than it seems since we first need to locate ant colonies to collect instead of grabbing any rogue ant you see. Little is known about the ant species in New York so we are excited to contribute data to Dr. Aaron Ellison's collection. Aaron is the Senior Research Fellow at Harvard Forest and an Adjunct Research Professor at University of Massachusetts. He recently published [A Field Guide to the Ants of New](#)

England and spent time last summer working on ants on Maine's Katahdin. We met him when he gave a presentation on ants at the Northeast Alpine



Photo Credit: Addie Clayton

Stewardship Gathering which Kayla, Julia, Tyra, John Wood, and ADK Education Programs Coordinator Seth Jones attended last November.

This year marks the ninth year of our participation in the AMC Mountain Watch phenology program. We monitor the phenological stages of four species: Bigelow's Sedge, Diapensia, Labrador Tea, and Bilberry. These species are monitored at standardized monitoring areas. The AMC switched the way they collected their data to be in line with the National Phenology Network (NPN). This will ensure the data can be used in broader studies that look at global trends. The data collected is being stored in hard copy here at the Adirondack Mountain Club and being submitted electronically to NPN's website. AMC uses these data to analyze long term trends in the timing of the different phenological stages, which could be an indication of the effects of climate change on the alpine ecosystem.

### **Trail Work**

This year we've been working on completing a number of needed trail projects. With such a sizable crew and so many volunteers, we have been able to focus the crew's attention on Colden, Giant, Wright, Cascade, Marcy, Gothics, and Algonquin.



New privy on Cascade

One of our major projects this year is focusing on the human waste issue we have on our heavily used trails. Human waste is the number one contributor to poor water quality. The Adirondack Mountain Club has teamed up with the Ausable River Association (AsRA) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to combat this issue. During National Trails Day, ADK staff and volunteers installed a box privy at the Wright/ Algonquin junction and two privies near the register at the Cascade trailhead. Both professional and volunteer stewards have put in a box privy just below treeline on Cascade with another one to be

installed later in the season at the Cascade/ Porter junction.

Other projects have included installing a new alpine sign on the backside of Marcy, a large revegetation sign on Cascade, and digging out drainage ditches on Marcy. The DEC was kind enough to drop via helicopter several tons of rock on Colden and Gothics for the making of scree walls and rock packing. As always we have been hard at work with regular brushing, scree wall work, cairn repair, and rock packing.

	Scree Wall in feet	Brushing in feet	Rock Packing in square feet	Cairn repair	Sign repair
Marcy	323	523	79	11	1
Algonquin	408	469	89	7	
Wright	260	225	49	5	
Cascade	225	95	28	1	
Colden	160	275	95		

Totals as of 8/6/16

	Brushing (feet)	Rock Pack (feet <sup>2</sup> )	Scree Wall (feet)	Cairn repair	Drainages		
	1717	340	1396	25	11		

Peak Health reports have been started and will become more of a focus throughout August and September.

### Outreach

A continuing goal has been to increase the amount of outreach that we do to groups before they arrive at the summits. This year I gave pre-season presentations to ADK's Binghamton Chapter, North Country Community College, and an early season presentation to Gordon College's La Vida Program. I also represented the Summit Steward Program at the University of Vermont's Northeast Mountain Science Conference in April. I also conducted training for the Catskill Summit Steward Program, the Hurricane Mountain Firetower Steward Program, the 46ers Trailhead Education program, and we were also joined by stewards from the Green Mountain Club. During the summer, I've also given a presentation at the Adirondack Museum in conjunction with the release of the book Adirondack Archangels. Kayla has given a presentation on the Summit Steward Program at Johns Brook Lodge.

During all-staff training Kayla gave a presentation on alpine ecology and the Summit Steward Program to the ADK Staff. Many of the Loj Crew, Trail Crew, and HPIC staff now have a better understanding of our program. As such, Loj Crew and HPIC staff have become front country educators about the alpine summits. I believe this front country education is a key part to protecting the alpine ecosystem. It is not uncommon to have hikers approach us on the summit asking about the plants and stating they heard about the Summit Steward Program from other ADK staff members.

This spring we also worked to expand our outreach via social and traditional media thanks to Seth Jones, ADK's Education Programs Coordinator.

## **Conclusion**

It's because of donors and friends like you that we are able to be out there every day talking to hikers. Thousands of people now know how important it is to do the rock walk. We'll share results from the 2016 season in late October, but please feel free to reach out to us via phone (518-523-3480 x 20) or email with any questions or comments. This year more than any other, we owe it all to people like you who care enough to protect alpine plants.

In gratitude,

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