

2020 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report

This season has been challenging for the program. We all have had to make sacrifices for the safety of our neighbors and loved ones. I want to take a moment to thank you all for your patience, resilience and activism in these trying times. We've all had to adapt and make changes the past few months and the Summit Stewardship Program is no



different. Due to budget constraints, we cut two seasonal positions and delayed the start of seasonal staff to June 18th. This did not mean our commitment to this program dwindled. We altered the work plans of two of our full-time educators, and one seasonal staff member so that they had the ability to steward the peaks this summer. Thanks to this support we've been on the mountains since Memorial Day weekend.

Before stewards started, we developed COVID-19 safety protocols to protect stewards from the coronavirus. Stewards are wearing cloth masks while on the summit and there is signage asking hikers to do the same. Please [spread the word](#) to protect our summit stewards and prevent the spread of COVID-19. We also made the difficult decision, based off of past hiker usage data, to only steward Cascade on the weekdays. We felt that stewards would not be able to properly distance from hikers on the summit on weekends.

While we've had to adapt to these challenges, our core mission to protect the alpine plants has remained the same. We will continue to steward Marcy and Algonquin every day, Wright Peak 3-5 days a week and Colden biweekly. We will be up on Cascade at least once a week. Trail maintenance and research project days are on the schedule thanks to the support of education staff and volunteers.

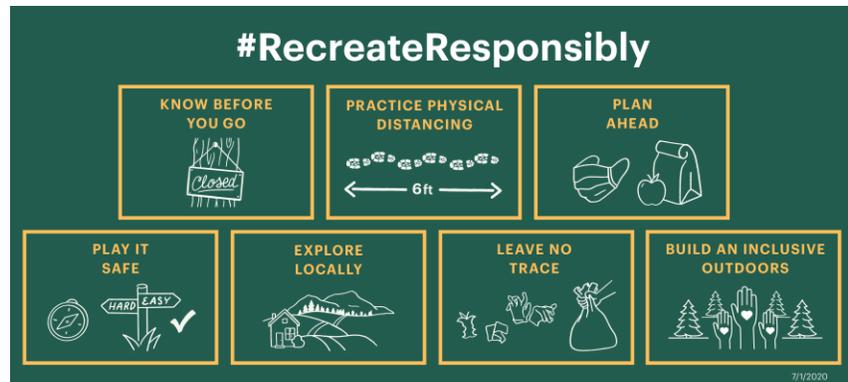
I want to thank the education staff, our rock star crew and devoted volunteers who make it possible to accomplish an incredible amount of work up on our alpine summits. Furthermore, **thank you** for your support. Together we can continue to protect the mountains we call home.

Thank you to our donors, sponsors, and partners!

Amidst a global pandemic and a subsequent void of New York State funding, the [Adirondack 46ers](#) have stepped in to provide crucial support with additional funding. Not only have they given their third installment of \$15,000 as part of their three-year commitment, they donated another \$10,000 this year so the program could run despite budget shortfalls. The 46ers have also pledged another three-year commitment and are

providing \$75,000 of support over the next three years. You can read more about the Adirondack 46er's contribution to the Summit Stewardship Program [here](#). They have also donated to [ADK's Professional Trail Crew](#) to continue working on rebuilding Haystack's cairns in conjunction with summit stewards.

Thanks to the [REI Outdoor Emergency Fund](#) that was established due to the coronavirus, [REI](#) has provided funding to partially cover the cost of one summit steward position. They have also created the campaign [#RecreateResponsibly](#) to promote safe and responsible recreation during the pandemic. REI's goal is to invest in community engagement in the outdoors, support local nonprofits and to advocate for wild places. We are tremendously grateful for their financial support and excited to continue this partnership.



Thank you to [Stewart's Shops](#)/Dake Family who provided money through their Stewart's COVID Relief Grant to help sustain nonprofits through the pandemic crisis. This grant helped support essential staff funding for the Summit Stewardship Program and the Professional Trail Crew.

A big thank you goes to our friends at [The Mountaineer](#) for their continued support of the program. Summit stewards have received [Vasque](#) boots and [Darn Tough](#) socks despite the pandemic, as well as discounts on gear at The Mountaineer. These companies see to it that the stewards have the best equipment and outdoor clothing available. We can't thank them enough for the hard work they do in protecting the Adirondack Park.

The Will Cummer Gear Fund was established in 2016 in honor of Will Cummer to provide gear support for summit stewards. Thanks to this Fund, we were able to buy new tarps for the camps, another water gravity filter, water filters and radio equipment!

We are again thanking the family of Dr. Norton G. Miller who have continued to support the Summit Stewardship Program's work in alpine research. This donation is in honor of the late Dr. Norton Miller, whose life work was bryology and botany research in the Adirondack Mountains. You can read more about their contributions [here](#).

The [#507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program](#) has continued to help sustain the program, making its fifth donation. The website got a facelift this spring so take a look! All proceeds from the sale of [Adirondack Archangels: Guardians of the High Peaks](#), inspired by Ed Ketchledge's legacy, continue to support the Summit Stewardship

Program (half go to our annual fund and half go to the #507 Fund). We are so excited to grow this endowment to cover our costs in the future.

Many ADK chapters have also donated to the program including the Lake Placid Chapter, Glens Falls-Saratoga Chapter (in memory of former summit steward Dan Kane), Niagara Frontier Chapter, North Jersey Ramapo Chapter and others.

Thanks also to the program partners who keep the Summit Stewardship 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. Thanks goes to Jim Giglinto, Sophie McClelland, Bill Martin, and Tate Connor for their continued guidance.

Personnel and Scheduling



Figure 1: 2020 Crew: L to R top: Isabella Padrón, Chuck Pacer, Michaela Dunn, Tyler Socash (EDU), Maggie Newell (EDU); L to R kneeling: Kayla White, Julia Goren (Adirondack Council)

The 2020 summit stewards are all returning staff so they know their stuff! Education staff Tyler Socash, Mary Glynn and Maggie Newell have all stepped in to help steward. I am extensively proud of them and the alpine plants are lucky to have them!

Michaela Dunn—This is Michaela’s third year as a summit steward. She grew up in the Adirondacks in Lake George and has worked at the Wild Center as a Summer Naturalist. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire, majoring in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. Michaela enjoys exploring caves, finding joy on and underneath mountains. She can always be found with a smile on her face!

Isabella Padrón—This is Isabella’s second year as a summit steward and has extensive knowledge of the High Peaks as a 46er and Paul Smith alum. Isabella loves adventure

and has travelled from Puerto Rico to East Africa. She is a kind and gentle soul on the mountain, taking the time to connect hikers with the delicate alpine plants on the summit.

Chuck Pacer—Chuck has switched back between volunteer and professional staff over the past few years, having volunteered in 2016 and 2019 and was a professional steward in the summer of 2017 and fall of 2018. He is very knowledgeable of the area and of the outdoor gear you'll need for the hike. His bag is always heavily filled with lots of gadgets and loves taking time lapses of clouds.



Mary Glynn (EDU) on Marcy

Mary Glynn—Mary is ADK's Outdoor Skills Coordinator and a familiar face at ADK. She worked on our Loj Crew in 2014, and has volunteered as a trip leader for ADK's Northville-Placid Trail Chapter. She was formerly the Field Director at the True North Wilderness Program, a wilderness therapy organization based out of Vermont. When she is not at work, she can often be found on the trail as she works toward her goal of traversing the Northeast 111.

Tyler Socash—Tyler is ADK's Education Programs Coordinator and has worked for ADK on and off since 2009. He has completed the Northville-Placid Trail, the Ninety-Miler, and the Cranberry Lake 50. Tyler has also completed nearly seven thousand miles of through-hiking on the Pacific

Crest Trail, New Zealand's Te Araroa, and the Appalachian Trail in a calendar year. Listen to his podcast, Foot Stuff Podcast that focuses on adventure, antics and activism within the Adirondack Park.

Maggie Newell—Maggie is currently ADK's Backcountry Water Monitoring Trip Leader. She's worked at ADK on Loj Crew, as a Summer Naturalist and as a Community Outreach Educator since 2016. She graduated from Connecticut College with degrees in Environmental Studies and Film Studies.

Seth Jones—Seth started his career here at ADK as a summit steward in 2008, which he did for three years. After spending a year running Johns Brook Lodge, he became part of ADK's Education Department. Seth is currently ADK's Educational Director, and has brought the Summit Stewardship Program back into the education department.

Kayla White—This is my fourth year as Summit Steward Coordinator, my seventh year with the Summit Stewardship Program and my ninth year at ADK. I'm so excited to be on this journey with such an amazing group of people!

Volunteer Stewards: Our volunteers are a wonderful group of devoted stewards, many of them have been with us for multiple years. They are always willing to fill in and we could not fully staff the peaks or do much needed trail work or research without them.

Ian Ellbogen— Ian has been with the volunteer program for a decade now. When not stewarding, you can find Ian taking his grandchildren hiking, and in the winter, you're sure to find him skiing. He enjoys doing trail work and recently hiked up Rainer!

Jack Coleman—Jack is back for his eighth 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 also returning for an eighth season and is an amazing volunteer. Mary is also a member of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er, winter 46er, and has boundlessly energy.

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

Lois Dannenberg—Lois is returning for her fifth year. She has a passion for botany and currently works for a tree and lawn care company. She's a 46er and brings her love of the outdoors and botany to everything she does.

Ann Fogarty—Ann is also returning for a fifth year. She is very active in the Genesee Valley Chapter and hikes frequently in the Adirondacks. Ann has a friendly demeanor, enjoys traveling, and loves talking to hikers about doing the 46 High Peaks.

Jen Maguder—This is Jen's fifth year volunteering but her face is a familiar one at ADK. Jen was a summit steward for two years and brings enthusiasm, knowledge, and positivity to the program. Her dedication to the mountains is extremely admirable. She currently lives in Saranac Lake and works at Great Camp Sagamore.

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.

Jim Schneider—This is Jim's fourth year as a summit steward who wanted to be part of the solution. He is a very experienced hiker, hiking throughout the Northeast and out

west. A summer and winter 46er, Jim loves talking with hikers about their experiences on and off the mountain. Check out his Adirondack Firetower book: [Views from on High](#).

Bill Paradies—This is Bill's third year with the program. Half way through his 46, Bill is working on becoming a 46er. He's excited to give back to the mountains that give him such joy!

Brian Coville—This is also Brian's third year with the program and he's excited to get out on the mountains. He works as an auditor and therefore spends a lot of time inside. Summit stewarding is a great excuse for him to come enjoy the Adirondacks and it's a short drive from Saratoga Springs.

Wayne Hayes—This is Wayne's second year as a summit steward and is also a 46er Trailhead Steward. Wayne loves sharing his experiences hiking the 46 with other hikers. He is a thoughtful person to have on the mountain and loves learning more about the alpine zone.

Charlie Blanchet—Charlie is another 46er Trailhead Steward turned second year summit steward. While his wife is volunteering at Cascade's trailhead, Charlie will be up top stewarding. He's a teacher and a natural at building rapport with hikers.

Audrey Fatone—Audrey volunteered last year when she was a Summer Naturalist at ADK. She is currently going to SUNY ESF but missed her time in the Adirondacks and has come back to volunteer. Audrey loves running and protecting wild lands.

Ryan Nerp—Formally a summit steward for four years, Ryan is now working for the Adirondack Council and volunteering when he can. As a Paul Smith's alum, Ryan has worked and went to school in the Adirondacks for the past eight years. Ryan enjoys paddling, tinkering with his hand radio, or developing his own film. He's happy to point out plants for hikers, just ask!

Tom Collins—Tom is another former steward turned volunteer and was also a Summer Naturalist Intern with ADK in 2018. Currently, Tom works at the Lake Placid Pub & Brewery as a brewer. He's a natural on the mountain who loves to share fun facts about the alpine zone.

Drew Benware—This is Drew's first year as a summit steward and is also a 46er Trailhead Steward. He is very active in his church and plays the organ. Drew is a music teacher at Saranac Lake, making him a natural educator on the mountains.

Abigail Charlebois—Abi is new to the program but is very familiar with the Adirondacks. She is currently a student at Paul Smiths and enjoys the environmental classes she's taking there. Abi loves running for the sheer joy of it and is a strong advocate for the mountains she calls home.

Tony Canike—Tony is also new to the program but has volunteered as a 46er Trailhead Steward. Tony enjoys volunteering for a cave and karst conservancy in Virginia. He is a winter 46er and loves regaling hikers with adventure stories.

Agnes Anderson—This is Agnes's first year as a summit steward but she loves the Adirondack Park. She is currently employed as a rafting guide in Indian Lake. Living in her grandparent's rustic cabin there, Agnes enjoys being on the water and swimming in it. She is a joy to meet on the mountains.

Ethan Johnson—Ethan was supposed to join us this year as a professional summit steward but unfortunately the coronavirus disrupted that. We are happy that he could still join us as a volunteer. Ethan loves camping, paddling, and living in his cabin in Saranac Lake. He is a friendly face on the mountains and has a lot of enthusiasm for the area. He is currently enrolled in Paul Smiths College.

Sarah Czapranski—Sarah is new to the program but loves hiking in the Adirondack Park. Sarah began hiking the High Peaks in 2012 and is a 46er in both the summer and winter. She made the move to Albany last year but was active in ADK's Genesee Valley Chapter when she lived in Rochester. Sarah is excited to learn all she can about the alpine plants.

Training

Due to the coronavirus, a majority of our training was virtual this year. We sent volunteer and professional summit stewards training videos and documents to review. They then had to take an online Leave No Trace Awareness Workshop refresher course and an online assessment on the materials we sent out. We then did a zoom meeting to go over coronavirus protocols and answer any lingering questions. We were joined by DEC Forester Tate Connor who gave his presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan and Forest Ranger Jim Giglinto went over radio protocol and personal safety training. Other virtual trainings that stewards participated in was ADK's All-Staff Training Day, Wilderness First Aid Refresher, and Sexual Harassment Training.

The stewards arrived on Thursday, June 18th, and were greeted with orientation and introductions and equipment was distributed. We went over safety protocols again to reinforce the safety of our stewards.

Friday, June 19th, we headed to Whiteface for an alpine plant identification trip with Julia Goren from the Adirondack Council. Afterwards, we went to The Mountaineer in Keene Valley to get fitted and took home Vasque boots that day!



Julia Goren teaching summit stewards about alpine plants on Whiteface. Photo by Seth Jones

Thursday, June 25th, stewards participated in the Empire State Pollinator training. Matt Schlesinger from the New York Natural Heritage Program led the training.

Thank you to everyone that participated and put the training together: Bobby Clark, Matt Schlesinger, Julia Goren, Tate Connor and Jim Giglinto.

Weather and Usage

With extended snow into June, the weather surprisingly turned hot and extremely dry. May and June saw a decrease in hikers with the pandemic still underway with parts of New York State still shutdown and the Canadian border closed. We've seen that transition to being just as busy as last year for July however.

The chart highlights these usage summaries below. The average represents the average number of people contacted per day.

May 2020 (weekends only)				May 2019 (weekends only)			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	232	4	58	Algonquin	370	4	93
Marcy	315	4	79	Marcy	212	4	53
Wright	195	4	49	Wright	168	3	56
Cascade	N/A	N/A	N/A	Cascade	1022	6	170
Total	742	12	62	Total	1,772	17	104

June 2020				June 2019			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	958	15	64	Algonquin	1656	22	75
Marcy	1058	15	71	Marcy	1677	21	80
Wright	428	9	48	Wright	889	15	59
Cascade	60	1	60	Cascade	1623	11	148
Total	2,504	40	63	Total	5,812	69	84

Figure 2. Summary of usage data for May and June of 2020 and 2019.

Equipment and Campsites

Summit steward equipment receives constant use, which means that something is always in need of repair or replacement. I spent time waterproofing tarps and tents and repairing uniforms at the beginning of the season.

[Outdoor Research](#) (OR) is unfortunately no longer a sponsor of the Summit Stewardship Program. We thank them for their many years of support. Thankfully, with a decrease in staff there wasn't much to replace.

[Darn Tough](#) donated socks and [Vasque](#) donated boots to the stewards through [The Mountaineer](#). Waterproof boots and wool socks make it so summit steward's feet stay nice and dry. We couldn't do our jobs without such necessary gear items.

Many, many thanks go to the Will Cummer Gear Fund, Darn Tough, The Mountaineer, and Vasque for their generous support of the Summit Stewardship Program. Special thanks go to Mary Glynn and Tyler Socash for setting up the Marcy and Algonquin camps.

Botany and Research Projects

For a second year, we are partnering with the New York Natural Heritage Program on their [Empire State Native Pollinator survey](#). This survey will assess the current state and distribution of native pollinators and serve as the foundation for developing and implementing future conservation practices. To survey, summit stewards set up cups to catch different alpine pollinators, as well as periodically net insects on the summits. Summit stewards have been surveying on Boundary, Gothics, Haystack and Skylight.

This year marks the thirteenth year of our participation in the Appalachian Mountain Club's (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 in line with the National Phenology Network (NPN). AMC uses this 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. This year, AMC implemented the [Northeast Alpine Flower Watch](#), a citizen science project which asking hikers to use iNaturalist to take pictures of those four species in their blooming and fruiting phenophases. Hopefully, this will help create a more robust and complete data set. Feel free to download iNaturalist on your mobile device and participate!

For a fourth year in a row, stewards participated in Vermont's Center for Ecostudies [Mountain Birdwatch](#). Mountain Birdwatch focuses on monitoring high elevation birds in the spruce/fir and alpine zone. Summit stewards went up the north trail of Algonquin and Porter while stopping at specific points to listen to bird calls and map their locations.

Trail Work

Thanks to a highly motivated crew and dedicated volunteer coverage, we've been able to still get a lot of work done. Trail work has been done on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Cascade, Colden, Gothics, Iroquois and Giant. We will again be working with ADK's Professional Trail Crew to repair cairns on Haystack. 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 Rocks removed	Cairn repair	Privy holes dug
Marcy	225	250	32	123	2	
Algonquin	55	125	48	57	1	
Wright	18	56	5	23		
Cascade	5					2
Colden		55	15			

Totals as of 7/15:

Brushing (feet)	Rock Pack (feet ²)	Scree Wall (feet)	Cairn Rocks removed	Cairn repaired
796	105	308	223	3

Outreach

Our outreach has been severally limited due to the pandemic. Not only have we not been able to do in-person Leave No Trace Awareness workshops and alpine presentations to camps, colleges and organizations who bring groups into the High Peaks, most groups have cancelled their trips to the High Peaks all together. Instead, we've been trying to reach out to hikers virtually. I did a presentation on the alpine zone and Summit Stewardship Program in the beginning of June.

I assisted the High Peaks Information Center in virtually training their Trailhead Steward volunteers. These volunteers aid HPIC and DEC staff in educating hikers at the trailhead.

We've also been working with ADK's Content Strategist Ben Brosseau to expand our outreach through social media.

Conclusion

Although this year is filled with challenges, the Summit Stewardship Program is going strong. Thank you for all of your support. We would not be able to do it without you, our partners, donors, and volunteers. Please feel free to reach out via phone (518-523-3480 x 117) or email with any questions or comments on how we can continue to improve the program and protect our fragile alpine ecosystem. Thank you.

Most sincerely,

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and

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