

2021 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report

Happy August! Summit stewards have been going strong this year despite heat waves, thunderstorms and a rainy July. Last year taught us how to adapt to a pandemic and



we've continued to do so as state and federal guidelines have changed. We feel confident in our safety protocols and therefore have been able to hire a full crew of five summit stewards and one Photopoint Monitoring Field Tech. Our Photopoint Monitoring Project has been the focus of our research this year as we've revamped our methodology, have started to

add new photopoints and focused on recently damaged areas. These photopoints will give us a baseline to see how management actions in the alpine zone are aiding with our revegetation efforts.

We've also partnered with Friends of Hurricane Mountain to manage the Hurricane Fire Tower Stewardship Program. Hurricane Mountain is a great peak to introduce hikers to the high peaks region and educate them on Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics. This expansion has been an exciting opportunity for our staff and volunteers to try something a little different. We've even found some rare plants up there!

I want to thank our rock star crew, devoted volunteers and all of our supporters who make it possible to accomplish an incredible amount of work up on our alpine summits.

Thank you to our donors, sponsors, and partners!

The [Adirondack 46ers](#) have continued to be staunch supporters of the program. Last year they provided us with additional funding to help us run the program when the coronavirus caused budget shortfalls. They also pledged another three-year commitment and are providing \$75,000 of support starting this year. You can read more about the Adirondack 46er's contribution to the Summit Stewardship Program [here](#).

A big thank you goes to our friends at [The Mountaineer](#) for their continued support of the program. Summit stewards have received [Vasque](#) boots, [Darn Tough](#) socks, and [Patagonia](#) rain gear 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 happy to announce the creation of the [Dr. Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund](#) in support of the Summit Stewardship Program and ADK's science and science outreach efforts. The fund was established by the family of Dr. Miller to honor his lifelong love of natural history and his esteemed career in botany research, particularly in the Adirondacks. The Miller family has previously contributed funding for alpine research and we are thankful for the creation of this endowment. You can donate to the Dr. Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund [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.

The program was awarded a matching grant from the [Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership Grants program](#) to staff one summit steward through the summer and fall. The grant is one of 30 awards totaling \$900,000 for organizations dedicated to the stewardship and promotion of New York's state parks and historic sites, trails and public lands. The grants will be matched with private and local funding and will support projects to strengthen Friends groups and enhance public access and recreational opportunities.

[The Waterman Fund](#) has generously awarded two grants to ADK to fund the Professional Trail Crew and the Summit Stewardship Program. The trail crew is just finishing up the three week project of alpine trail work on Boundary and Iroquois in conjunction with summit stewards. The Waterman Fund also covered the cost of one summit steward position through the summer.

The Summit Stewardship Program and Trails Program also received a grant from the [Helen and Ritter Shumway Foundation Grant](#) through Bank of America. The grant supports conservation and historic preservation in Rochester, New York and its surrounding areas, as well as to support the charities and other causes she and her brother Ritter Shumway supported during their lifetimes.

ADK also received funding from the [FEMC's Ecosystem Monitoring Fund](#) for our Photopoint Monitoring Project. These funds will be used to cover equipment costs like a new camera and for analysis work done by New York Natural Heritage Program.

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. Funding from our partners is through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

A big thanks goes to Megan LaPierre, Kevin Burns, Sophie McClelland, Bill Martin, and Tate Connor for their continued guidance.

Personnel and Scheduling



2021 Crew: L to R top: Abi Charlebois, Kai Scarangella, Bridey Ryan, Liam Ebner, Audrey Fatone, and Maddie Conway

The 2021 summit stewards are all new staff this year but are no strangers to the Adirondacks. I am extensively proud of them and the alpine plants are lucky to have them!

Audrey Fatone— Audrey is a familiar face at ADK. She was a Summer Naturalist in 2019 and has volunteered with the Summit Stewardship Program in the past. Audrey just graduated from SUNY ESF with a major in Environmental Biology and a Minor in Environmental Writing and Rhetoric. Audrey loves running and protecting wild lands.

Kai Scarangella—Kai volunteered with the program in the fall of 2018 through the Hamilton Adirondack Program. Kai recently graduated from Hamilton College with a

major in Environmental Studies. Kai loves photography and research which made her a huge asset with photopoint monitoring. She is cheerful and hard-working no matter the weather conditions.

Abi Charlebois—This is Abi's first year as paid staff but isn't new to the program. Abi was a volunteer steward last year and is very familiar with the Adirondacks. She is currently a student at Paul Smith's College and enjoys the paleo ecology 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.

Liam Ebner—This is Liam's first year being involved with ADK. He is currently majoring in Mechanical Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Liam enjoys ultimate frisbee, climbing, and nature photography. He enjoys connecting people to the outdoors and the natural history of the Adirondacks.

Bridey Ryan—Bridey is also new to the program but not to the Adirondacks; she has been coming up to the area since she was a kid. She currently majors in Cultural Studies at McGill University and previously worked in bird conservation in New Zealand. Bridey loves engaging with hikers on the summits especially with kids.

Maddie Conway—Maddie is also new to the program but not the Adirondacks. She is a 46er and has hiked throughout the Northeast and out west. She graduated from University of Massachusetts with a major in Anthropology. She enjoys engaging with novice hikers and introducing them to Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics.

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 Education Director.

Kayla White—I'm ADK's Stewardship Manager. It's my eighth year with the Summit Stewardship Program and my tenth 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.

- Jack Coleman—9th year
- Mary Lamb—9th year
- Lois Dannenberg—6th year
- Ann Fogarty—6th year
- Jen Denny—6th year volunteer, 2 years staff

- Jim Schneider—5th year
- Ryan Nerp—2nd year volunteer, 4 years staff
- Tom Collins—2nd year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Drew Benware—2nd year
- Tony Canike—2nd year
- Sarah Czapranski—2nd year
- Craig Hurlbut—1st year
- Bob George—1st year
- Caitlin Glynn—1st year
- Kevin Douglass—1st year
- Klarisse Torriente—1st year
- Lucas LaBarre—1st year
- Matt Szopa—1st year
- Tanner Burt—1st year
- Tammy Loewy—1st year
- Ryan Andrews—1st year
- Kim Brown—1st year, Hurricane
- Bob Hunter—1st year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Don Pachner—1st year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- John Gallagher—1st year, Hurricane
- Judy Murphy—1st year, Hurricane
- Beth Drohan —1st year, Hurricane
- Peter Slocum—Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Mary Jean Bland—Friends of Hurricane Mountain

Training

The stewards arrived on Friday, May 28th, and were greeted with orientation and introductions, equipment was distributed and we did a property tour. Then I went over alpine ecology. Training then began with two days of Wilderness First Aid.

Monday, May 31st, we did a training hike up Cascade Mountain. We focused on trail maintenance including brushing in undesigned trails, scree wall construction, rock packing techniques, and cairn building. We also discussed various techniques for stewarding on Cascade. The Poke-O-Moonshine Steward joined us.

Tuesday, June 1st, we did a combination of radio protocol and interpretive communication training at ADK's Education Yurts. Forester Tate Connor gave a presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan and all of the new changes to come. Lieutenant Megan LaPierre went over radio protocol and personal safety training. Seth and I went over interpretive communication, coaching techniques, and Authority of the Resource Technique. We practiced some role-playing so that all could get

comfortable using these interpretive techniques. We finished with a presentation on Mountain Watch & the Northeast Alpine Flower Watch. We were joined by the Poke-O-Moonshine Steward.

Wednesday, June 2nd, everyone participated in ADK's All-Staff Training. I gave a short presentation for the staff on alpine ecology and the Summit Stewardship Program. Afterwards, we went to The Mountaineer in Keene Valley to get fitted and took home Vasque boots and Patagonia rain gear that day!

Saturday, June 5th, and Sunday, June 6th 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 feedback on their own educational approach from returning stewards.

Monday, June 7th, and Tuesday, June 8th stewards participated in a Leave No Trace Trainer course taught by the full-time Education team: Tyler Socash, Mary Glynn, Maggie Newell and Tom Manitta. Audrey went through Photopoint Monitoring training in the office and on Algonquin with ADK's Ben Brosseau, Adirondack Council's Julia Goren and New York Natural Heritage Program's Tim Howard.

Wednesday, June 9th, we did a botany training hike up Algonquin Peak. SUNY Oneonta Professor and former steward Sean Robinson 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.



A buggy botany hike up Algonquin

Saturday, June 12th and Sunday, June 13th were spent team stewarding on Marcy and Algonquin. With two weekends of team stewarding, everyone had the opportunity to observe other stewards in action. Thank you Ryan Nerp and Tom Collins for helping train the new stewards!

Monday, June 14th, we did a training hike up Hurricane Mountain and went over special considerations for being a fire tower steward. We went over the history of the fire tower and spent time role playing.

Tuesday, June 15th, we headed to Whiteface for an alpine plant identification trip and Photopoint Monitoring training. Julia Goren and Tim Howard led the training. The folks at ORDA kindly allowed us to utilize the highway free of charge.

Thank you to everyone that participated and put the training together: Tom Manitta, Tyler Socash, Maggie Newell, Mary Glynn, Ben Brosseau, Tim Howard, Julia Goren, Tom Collins, Ryan Nerp, Tate Connor and Megan LaPierre.

Weather and Usage

The snow melted fast at the end of May and it was a dry and buggy June. July saw lots of rain and thunderstorms. Due to weather, the Canadian border remaining closed, and parts of the country opening back up, we saw an increase in average steward contacts on the weekends in May and a decline in June and July!

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

May 2021 (weekends only)				May 2020 (weekends only)			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	313	4	78	Algonquin	232	4	58
Marcy	437	4	109	Marcy	315	4	79
Wright	57	2	29	Wright	195	4	49
Cascade	197	3	66	Cascade	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	1004	13	77	Total	742	12	62

June 2021				June 2020			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	946	19	50	Algonquin	958	15	64
Marcy	1331	19	70	Marcy	1058	15	71
Wright	524	13	40	Wright	428	9	48
Cascade	261	3	87	Cascade	60	1	60
Total	3062	54	57	Total	2504	40	63

July 2021				July 2020			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	1538	31	50	Algonquin	2736	31	88
Marcy	2033	31	66	Marcy	3284	31	106
Wright	835	18	46	Wright	880	15	59
Cascade	1489	14	106	Cascade*	1467	7	210
Total	5895	94	63	Total	8367	84	100

* Cascade was stewarded only midweek in 2020, 2021 Cascade was stewarded on weekends and midweek

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.

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

We also bought film, a new digital camera, batteries, SD cards, and drill bits through the [FEMC's Ecosystem Monitoring Fund](#) for our Photopoint Monitoring Project. Having a digital camera will be especially useful moving forward for clarity of the photos.

Many, many thanks go to the Will Cummer Gear Fund, Darn Tough, Patagonia, The Mountaineer, Vasque and FEMC's Ecosystem Monitoring Fund for their generous support of the Summit Stewardship Program. Special thanks go to Seth Jones and Tyler Socash for setting up the Marcy and Algonquin camps.

Botany and Research Projects

The program established a photographic monitoring system in 1999 to better quantify the interplay among hiker trampling, vegetation growth and persistence, and hiker education and outreach. We were supposed to retake our photopoints in 2020 but the pandemic caused us to go back to basics and mainly focus on education. This year we decided to revamp the project by not only resampling, analyzing, and archiving our 59 established photopoints, but reevaluate and update the design of the monitoring project to improve the sampling strategy and statistical rigor. We added new photopoints at

newly damaged areas on some peaks with existing photopoints and new summits that historically haven't had photopoints. We've incorporate a scale measurement in photopoints and have introduced the line transect method to give us more quantitative data. Overall, our goal is to continue building a photo monitoring system that is straightforward to maintain, provides accessible data to address our questions, and is easily transferrable to other locations and partner organizations.

This year marks the fourteenth 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. AMC also 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!

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, Boundary, Iroquois, Dix, Skylight, NW Wright, Giant and Hurricane. Thanks to The Waterman Fund, we are working with ADK's Professional Trail Crew to repair cairns on Boundary and Iroquois and input a ladder on Iroquois to protect alpine vegetation. 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	769	538	35	260	5	1
Algonquin	453	157	30	261	8	1
Wright	410	194	31	206	12	
Cascade	540	75	29	147	4	
Colden	38	95	32			

Totals as of 8/10:

Brushing (feet)	Rock Pack (feet ²)	Scree Wall (feet)	Cairn Rocks removed	Cairn repaired
1671	161	2218	880	36

Outreach

Our outreach has continued to be limited due to the pandemic but we've been able to accomplish a lot virtually. During the winter, I did two programs for North Branch Nature Center on Winter Alpine Ecology and Humans, Phenology and Climate Change. I also did Leave No Trace/ Alpine presentations for ADK's Niagara Chapter, North Jersey Ramapo Chapter and the [ARTC Falconer Lecture Series](#). This year camps, colleges and organizations who bring groups into the High Peaks have started leading trips again but we've waited to give these groups time to get back on their feet after last year. We were able to do an alpine presentation for Frost Valley YMCA and then took them to the MacIntyre Range to do trail maintenance in the alpine zone.

We virtually trained new and returning trailhead stewards for the 46er Trailhead Stewardship Program. I also assisted the High Peaks Information Center in training their Trailhead Steward volunteers. We've also been working with ADK's Communication Director Ben Brosseau to expand our outreach through social media.

Furthermore, taking on the Hurricane Fire Tower Stewardship Program has been an amazing outreach opportunity. Hurricane Mountain has been recommended by the DEC as an alternative hike to the high peaks, it is a family-friendly mountain and is part of the Lake Placid 9er and Fire Tower Challenge. While we are up there to educate about the cultural history of the fire tower, our real focus is to help prepare hikers by teaching them Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics. For some hikers, Hurricane is a stepping stone to the high peaks and we're there to educate them accordingly.

Conclusion

Although this year has had its 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,

Kayla White
Stewardship Manager
Kaylaw@adk.org

and

Seth Jones
Education Director
Seth@adk.org