

2015 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report

August is here! With the Summit Steward Program in its 26th year, there has been tremendous growth and exciting new changes. One of the biggest changes has been the reintroduction of the Chief Summit Steward position. Kayla White is our new Chief Steward, and she has been doing a fantastic job, coaching stewards, working with volunteers, managing the schedule, and generally keeping everything running smoothly.

We also said goodbye this year to Doug Munro, who had been the Nature Conservancy part of the program leadership team for more than a decade. Doug, who was himself a Summit Steward in 1993, had real dedication to the summits and the program. We'll miss him! We welcome Erika Edgley to this role.

While we have had a wet June, July has been teetering between tropical and chilly. The 2015 Summit Stewards, both professional and volunteer have been in great spirits, despite the wet weather. As always, they have really gone above and beyond in their work. This summer we have been retaking all 50 photopoints, which are scattered across nine summits. Trail work and regular stewarding of both Cascade and Colden have also been big emphases for the program with additional stewarding days being added on Cascade. None of this would have been possible without the tremendous help and support of the volunteer summit stewards. The volunteer steward program continues to grow with an additional five stewards joining the program, bringing the total up to 15! Overall, thanks to a stellar crew and phenomenal volunteers, we've been able to accomplish an incredible amount of work.

Thank you!

The Summit Steward Program wouldn't be possible without the generous support of program partners, sponsors, supporters, and individuals.

Two different donors made contributions to the Summit Steward program in memory of loved ones this year. These gifts made it possible to hire the same number of Summit Stewards, even though we experienced a gap in our annual funding this year.

Thanks go to the Casselman Family, who donated in memory of their parents Pat and Bill, who taught their family to love the Adirondacks.

Thanks also go to Alex Radmanovich, in memory of Steve Wasylyszyn.

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 sixth year. ADKhighpeaks Foundation has pledged to support this important expansion of the Summit Steward Program through 2018.

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 Campmor, Outdoor Research, Vasque Boots, Darn Tough Socks, and The Mountaineer for providing equipment, boots, socks, 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!

We'd also like to thank the folks at Greymont Stone Quarry and Essex County Department of Transportation for donating stone to the Carry A Rock program.

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, Mary Lamb, Bob Rock, Stephanie Gaudons, Chrissy Dagenais, Dan Kane, John Wood, Seth Jones, Brendan Wiltse, Molly Arnold, and Adrien Vlach.

Personnel and Scheduling



White, and inserted: Jen Maguder.

The 2015 Summit Stewards are a true pleasure to work with. They are hard-working, passionate about alpine stewardship, and are a delightful bunch. This is a very experienced crew; three are in their second season of stewarding, and those who are new to the Adirondacks are very fast learners.

Kayla White—This is Kay's second year as a summit steward but it's her first time in the old/new

position of chief steward. Hers is a familiar face at ADK. Kay has worked at the Adirondak Loj as crew, cook, and with the front desk and has been part of the Johns Brook Lodge hut crew. 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.

Jen Maguder—This is Jen's second year as a summit steward and she is a wonderful asset to the program. She is a recent graduate of Paul Smiths College and is pursuing a career in interpretation. Jen knows the trails very well and is on her way to becoming a Forty-Sixer. Jen brings a passion and excitement to stewarding, a strong work ethic, and boundless amounts of enthusiasm to every interaction she has.

Andrew McDonald—Drew is also returning for his second year in stewarding. Drew just finished his first year as a professor at Paul Smith's College. He completed both his undergraduate and graduate studies at SUNY ESF and has studied recreation perceptions and land management both in the east and the west. Drew's dedication to trail work, deep knowledge of recreation, and relaxed personality make him a wonderful person to meet on the summit.

Cory Tiger—Cory is a new steward this year but has become very much at home at ADK. She is currently a student at Stony Brook University studying Anthropology and Environmental Humanities. Cory is no stranger to analyzing ecological changes and human impacts on the environment; she spent a season in Kenya studying the effects of pastoralism on local ecosystems. Her drive for environmental conservation mixed with her adventurous spirit makes her a wonderful addition to the crew.

Maddie Grant—This is Maddie's first year stewarding but she's no stranger to the Adirondacks. Maddie loves exploring the outdoors and has a passion for working in the mud. We are extremely grateful to a grant from Williams College's Center for Environmental Studies to fund Maddie's work this summer. Her background in education, fluency in French, and drive to help others has made Maddie a major asset to the stewarding crew.

Amy Stafford—This may be Amy's first year stewarding but she's no stranger to the ADK. You may have seen her at the front desk at the Adirondak Loj or out in the woods moving rock with the trail crew. Amy's drive to work in the outdoors has led her to many adventures volunteering on farms, becoming a Forty-Sixer, and building all sorts of contraptions. Amy's knowledge of the area and confidence in public speaking make her a valuable resource to chat with on the mountain.

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

Volunteer Stewards: As always, we couldn't do the work that we do without our volunteers. Volunteers have provided 13 coverage days this season, plus an additional 15 days of help in the pre-season.

Ian Ellbogen— Ian has been with the volunteer program for six years. His help extends during the off-season as well, during which he helped plan the inaugural Winterfest this past January.

David Warfield— This is Dave's fifth 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 multiple times and can frequently be found cycling the area.

Mike Cady—Mike is back for a third 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 is the guy that you want operating the camera when you ask a steward, "Would you mind taking a photo?"

Jack Coleman—Jack is also back for his third season as a volunteer, despite stewarding in extremely ugly weather last year. Jack is treasurer of the ADKhighpeaks Forum, a 46er and winter 46er, an inspirational hiker, and never to be found without a smile on his face.

Cynda Lamb—Cynda is also returning for a third season. She is the Director of Membership Development for the ADKhighpeaks Foundation, a 46er, winter 46er, and exceedingly enthusiastic.

Mary Lamb—Mary is returning for a third season as a hard core steward volunteer, although she's had to take a break for much of the summer while she recovers from 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 third 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 third 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 a second year. She is an enthusiastic hiker, paddler, and cyclist. She is a 46er and trip leader for the Cornwall Outing Club.

Stephanie Gaudons—Stephanie is returning for a second year. She is a very experienced hiker, a 46er, a Leave No Trace Master Educator, and recently joined ADK as the Young Adults Outreach Coordinator.

Dan Kane—Dan is returning for a second year. He is a familiar face around the Loj, having served as Campground Host for three 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 a new volunteer this 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 new to the Summit Steward program. He's a recently retired botanist for NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Molly Arnold—Molly is also new to the Summit Steward program. She came out early and spent the month of May helping Kayla get the camps, equipment, etc ready for the start of the season.

Training

We were joined for various parts of training by stewards from the Mt. Monadnock stewardship program in Keene NH, the DEC Assistant Forest Rangers, and the LNT Travelling Trainers.

The stewards arrived on Friday, May 22nd, and started their training with an overview of alpine ecology and the summit steward program. Training began in earnest with two days of Wilderness First Aid.

Monday, May 25th, we did a combination of geology, radio protocol, and interpretive communication training at the Adirondak Loj. Dr. Mary Roden-Tice gave her signature thorough and informative

presentation on Adirondack geology. Forester Tate Connor gave a presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan. Ranger Jim Giglinto went over radio and personal safety training. The Leave No Trace Travelling Trainers presented on 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 Monadnock Summit Steward Jenifer Dickinson and new summit steward volunteers Vin Maresco and Larry Lepak. We also did an overview of alpine ecology.

Tuesday, May 26th, 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 Monadnock Summit Steward Jenifer Dickinson. Afterwards, we stopped by the Nature Conservancy in Keene to meet the staff there and then went to the Mountaineer in Keene Valley to get fitted for boots.

Wednesday, May 27th, we did a training hike up Algonquin peak with Sean Robinson from SUNY Oneonta. Due to thunderstorms, we summited Wright instead. We were joined by Monadnock Summit Steward Jenifer Dickinson. Sean provided an overview of the ecological succession that we see as we hike from trailhead to summit as well as grounding in alpine plant community ecology.

Saturday, May 30th, and Sunday, May 31st 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 1st, and Tuesday, June 2nd Cory, Maddie, and Amy participated in a Leave No Trace trainer course taught by ADK Education staff Ryan Doyle, Seth Jones, Tom Manitta and Chief Steward, Kayla White.

Wednesday, June 3rd, everyone participated in an ADK All-Staff Training. I gave a short presentation for the staff on alpine ecology and the Summit Steward Program.

Saturday, June 6th, and Sunday, June 7th, 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 8th, I gave a presentation on the research related to the photopoint monitoring project. We then headed to Whiteface for an alpine plant identification trip, where we completed photopoint monitoring with volunteer John Wood. Paul Casson from the Atmospheric Science Research Center showed everyone the research that takes place on Whiteface. The folks at ORDA kindly allowed us to utilize the highway free of charge.

Tuesday, June 9th, we had planned a trail work day on Algonquin but with rainy weather we opted for a cairn building exercise by the Adirondack Loj in the morning. Then the stewards went on a staff hike through Avalanche Pass to familiarize the new stewards with that area.

Thank you to everyone that participated in the training: Sean Robinson, Mary Roden-Tice, Ryan Doyle, Seth Jones, Tom Manitta, Kayla White, Wes Lampman, Erika Edgley, Jim Giglinto, Tate Connor, and Paul Casson.

Weather and Usage

We've had a little bit of everything this year—sunshine, blistering heat, frigid temperatures, but above all, lots and lots and lots of rain. Trails remain wet and muddy, with conditions more akin to early June than late July.

The chart below highlights the usage summaries for May and June for this year and last year. The average represents the average number of people contacted per day. Our numbers for the rainy month of June are slightly lower than the same period last year, but this isn't surprising given the weather. Additionally, there was a massive manhunt for two escaped convicts for three weeks during the month of June. The search received national news coverage and scared away some of the visitors to the area.

May 2015 (weekends only)				May 2014 (weekends only)			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	560	7	80	Algonquin	195	3	68
Marcy	506	6	84	Marcy	407	6	65
Cascade	793	3	264	Cascade	591	2	296
Total	1859	16	116	Total	1193	11	108

June 2015				June 2014			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	1229	20	61	Algonquin	1766	25	71
Marcy	1337	19	70	Marcy	1424	22	65
Wright	565	13	43	Wright	650	12	54
Cascade	878	6	146	Cascade	1471	9	163
Total	4009	58	69	Total	5311	68	71

Figure 2. Summary of usage data for May and June of 2014 and 2015.

Equipment and Campsites

Summit Steward equipment receives constant use, meaning that something is always in need of repair or replacement. Kayla and volunteer Molly Arnold spent some significant time repairing tarps, tents, uniforms, and trekking poles at the beginning of the season this year.

Thanks to the generosity of Campmor, the Algonquin site received a new, much needed tarp and dromedary bag. Tarps not only keep Summit Stewards dry as they are putting on their boots in the

morning; they also protect the tent from harmful UV which causes the nylon to break down. We are tremendously grateful to Bill O'Donnell and Campmor for their support!

Radios and raingear were the other big items needing repair and replacement this year. Thanks to Tate Connor we were able to get our radios repaired and reprogrammed in time for the first weekend out on the peaks.

New rain jackets, rain pants, and gaiters arrived just in time for the start of an epically wet June. 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. In this very wet summer, extra socks and waterproof boots have kept steward feet from blistering!

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

Special thanks go to Molly Arnold, Kayla White, Amy Stafford, and Seth Jones for helping me pack in and set up the Marcy and Algonquin camps.

Botany Projects



Figure 3 Lining up a photopoint on Dix

This summer we're retaking all 50 photopoints as part of our long term Photopoint Monitoring project. This project has allowed us to compare specific alpine images from the past with images from today to compare for signs of regrowth. This fall and winter we'll analyze the images to see what kinds of changes are visible. Photopoint monitoring is tricky work—nails embedded in the rock must be relocated and camera angles lined up precisely right in order to get a good comparison. We're very fortunate in that the 2015 crew are both excellent at finding the nails and competent photographers to boot!

This year marks the eighth 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 established last year. The data collected is being stored in hard copy here at the

Adirondack Mountain Club and being submitted electronically to the AMC's Mountain Watch Program. 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.



Figure 4 Diapensia in bloom. Photo by Brendan Wiltse

One additional botany project that has been taking place this summer is a photography project by former Summit Steward Brendan Wiltse. Brendan has been taking high-quality macro photographs of the alpine species in order to raise awareness about the fragile alpine vegetation. You can read more about his project here: <http://www.brendanwiltse.com/> Proceeds from Brendan's project go to the support of the Summit Steward program through the #507 Fund for the Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program <http://507fund.org>.

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 Haystack, Colden, Cascade, Marcy, and Algonquin.

Other projects have included installing signs on Wright, regular brushing, scree wall work, and rock packing. Thanks to some very enthusiastic crew members, hundreds of feet of brushing and scree walls have been put in place on Colden, Marcy, Algonquin, Cascade, Haystack, and Wright.

Thanks to the SCA Backcountry Stewards, we have lumber in place to (once again) lift the bog bridges on the Marcy Plateau up out of the water. This work will be completed in the fall, but having the lumber in place makes it a much, much easier task.

	Scree Wall in feet	Brushing in feet	Rock Packing in areas	Cairn repair	Sign repair
Marcy	182	351	24	3	
Algonquin	187	342	62		
Wright	172	200	15		1
Cascade	115	20	2	1	1
Colden	70	60	2		

Totals as of 7/25/13

	Rock	Scree	
Brushing	Pack	Wall	Cairn repair
(feet)	(areas)	(feet)	
600	183	799	11

Thanks to Greymont Quarry and Essex County Department of Transportation, truckloads of rock were placed at the Loj trailhead and Cascade as part of the Carry-A-Rock program. 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 the Niagara Frontier Chapter, North Country Community College, Montrose Area Adult School, and early season presentations to Gordon College's La Vida Program and the 46R Outdoor Skills Workshop. I also represented the program at the Grace Peak Celebration in North Hudson. As mentioned above, stewards from New Hampshire joined us for training again this year.

During all-staff training I 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, ADK released a mud season Public Service Announcement video focused on keeping people off of the alpine vegetation and trails during mud

