

2023 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report



Happy July! Summit stewards have been rocking it. The weather was dry through May and early June, but we got some much-needed rain in June, with some really warm days. The rain was nice the first few days, but right now it looks like it will be a wet summer! We were able to hire a full crew of five summit stewards

and one chief steward. We finished this iteration of photopoint monitoring last summer and are in the analysis process with New York Natural Heritage Program, so we have additional opportunities to work on other research projects like sampling for small mammals and bird monitoring.

Before we get into what summit stewards have been up to this season, I want to briefly introduce myself. My name is Liam Ebner, ADK's Summit Steward Coordinator. I grew up in the lower Hudson Valley and started visiting the Adirondacks while I was attending Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. I started working as a summit steward at ADK in 2021 after my junior year of college. After I graduated in May 2022 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, I returned to the program for a second season and stayed on for the fall as well. I returned to ADK as the Summit Steward Coordinator in February of this year and am extremely proud and excited to be leading such an amazing program! The Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program has had a tremendous impact on me, and I am very fortunate that I can continue to help the program grow, protect the alpine zone, and help others build an appreciation for New York's rarest ecosystem.

I want to thank our rock star crew, devoted volunteers and you, 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 such stalwart supporters of the program. This is their third year of their three-year commitment. You can read more about the Adirondack 46er's contribution to the Summit Stewardship Program and ADK's Trails Program [here](#).

A big thank you goes to our friends at [The Mountaineer](#) for their continued support of the program. Summit stewards have received [SCARPA](#) boots, [Darn Tough](#) socks, and [Patagonia](#) rain pants, 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 necessary gear to keep stewards comfortable on the summits. It's fantastic to have this fund to be able to support the larger equipment purchases (like new tent tarps) and little odds and ends that get lost or broken (like clickers).

The Dr. Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund was created in 2020 to support 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 this endowment.



Summit Stewards at The Mountaineer with their new boots, socks, and rain pants. Photo Credit: The Mountaineer

The [#507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program](#) has continued to help sustain the program, making its seventh donation. 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.

Thank you to [The Waterman Fund](#) who has provided funding to help support the growth of the Summit Stewardship Program and ADK's stewardship efforts. We now have two full-time stewardship staff. This allowed for continuity of this high-quality and established program while continuing to grow our stewardship efforts via trailhead and fire tower stewardship to better protect the Adirondack Park.

[Nine Pin Cider](#) held its bi-annual 26er Challenge which entails trying 26 new hard ciders made exclusively for the challenge over the course of one year. A portion of the sales

from the 26 ciders is donated to the Summit Stewardship Program. We thank Nine Pin for their donation, you can read more about their contributions [here](#).

The Summit Stewardship 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.

Thanks also to the program partners who keep the Summit Stewardship Program running: the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (ANC), and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for extensive administrative, logistical, and financial support. Funding through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. A big thanks goes to Kevin Burns and Tate Connor for their continued guidance.



2023 Crew: L to R Katie Leton, Olive Hunt, Maddy Ten Kate, Liam Ebner (Summit Steward Coordinator), Alex Cherry, and kneeling: Nate Greene, Bridey Ryan (Chief Steward)

Personnel and Scheduling

The 2023 summit stewards are a mixture of returning veterans and new staff this year and are an amazing crew. I am very grateful for all of them, and the alpine plants are lucky to have them!

Maddy Ten Kate— Maddy is returning for her second year with the program. She grew up hiking the fire towers and the High Peaks; her family also maintains lean-tos and has a cabin in Newcomb. Maddy currently attends the University of New England, where she will be a junior this fall. She loves educating kids about alpine plants!

Nate Greene—This is Nate's first year season as a summit steward, but he has been working at ADK since 2021 in the Naturalist Program as well as an Outreach Educator. He graduated from Paul Smiths College with a degree in Recreation, Adventure, and Leisure Management. When Nate is not stewarding, he enjoys exploring the Adirondack Park, checking all the plants and wildlife, and spending time with all of his friends.

Olive Hunt— Olive is brand new to the program, but not to the Adirondacks. Olive met summit stewards on top of the peaks while growing up in Burlington. As a recent graduate of Skidmore College, majoring in Environmental Science with a Geoscience minor, Olive was an active member and trip leader for the Outing Club. When she's not on the mountain, Olive can be found climbing, biking, or studying for her EMT exam.

Alex Cherry— Alex is also a first-year summit steward, but he visited the Adirondacks with his family growing up in the Capitol Region. He recently graduated from the University of New Hampshire majoring in Environmental Conservation and Sustainability. Alex loves to talk about the alpine plants and show them to as many people that will let him!

Katie Leton— Katie is brand new to the program, but not the Adirondacks. She has previously worked on the North Country Camps as staff. She is a student at Colorado College, majoring in Environmental Studies and History. While Katie is not stewarding, she enjoys rock climbing, swimming, and a good book.

Bridey Ryan—Bridey has been Summit Steward for two seasons before assuming the role of Chief Steward this year. She graduated with a major in Cultural Studies at McGill University. Bridey previously worked in bird conservation in New Zealand. She's a natural up on the summits and feels passionately about protecting alpine plants.

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—Kayla is ADK’s Stewardship Manager. It’s her tenth year with the Summit Stewardship Program and her twelfth year at ADK. Kayla is excited to continue working with all the stewards and volunteers and has been an amazing mentor as I am learning how to run the Summit Stewardship Program during this transition.

Liam Ebner—I’m ADK’s Summit Steward Coordinator. This is my third year with the Summit Stewardship Program and with ADK. When I’m not with the program I can be found paddling, out birding, or on my bike.

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. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer summit steward for next year, you can reach out to me, and follow this [link for more information about the program](#) and to apply!

- Mary Lamb—11th year
- Jack Coleman— 10th year volunteer, 1 year staff
- Lois Dannenberg—8th year
- Ann Fogarty—8th year
- Jen Denny—8th year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Jim Schneider—7th year
- Ryan Nerp—4th year volunteer, 4 years staff
- Tom Collins—4th year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Drew Benware—4th year
- Tony Canike—4th year
- Bob George—3rd year
- Kevin Douglass—3rd year
- Klarisse Torriente—3rd year
- Lucas LaBarre—3rd year
- Matt Szopa—3rd year
- Tanner Burt—3rd year
- Ryan Andrews—3rd year
- Angela Ranzini—2nd year
- Tyler Lucero— 2nd year
- Tony Goodwin— 2nd year
- Kristin Kaye—2nd year
- Tony Goodwin—2nd year
- Caitlin Glynn—2nd year
- Esther Seacord—1st year

- Piper Warren— 1st year
- Michael Sweeny— 1st year
- Caitlin Porter—1st year
- Carla Denn—1st year
- Sean Gunderman—1st year
- Mark Epstein—1st year
- Summer Harris—1st year
- Rebecca Collins—1st year
- Adora Race—1st year
- Kim Brown—3rd year, SSP & Hurricane
- Bob Hunter—3rd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Don Pachner—3rd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Beth Drohan —3rd year, Hurricane
- John Loughlin—2nd year, Hurricane
- Kristy Martin—2nd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Pamela Gothner—2nd year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Peter Slocum—Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Mary Jean Bland—Friends of Hurricane Mountain

Training

The stewards arrived on Friday, May 26th, and were greeted with orientation and introductions, equipment was distributed, and we did a property tour. Returning stewards hit the mountains for Memorial Day weekend and new stewards began with two days of Wilderness First Aid.

Monday, May 29th, 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, some natural and cultural history of the Adirondacks, and spent time role playing. Stewards also got an introduction to cairn building!

Tuesday, May 30th, 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. Forest Ranger Pete Evans, joined by Lieutenant Chris DiCintio, went over radio protocol and personal safety training. Kayla, Bridey, 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 alpine ecology.

Thursday, June 1st, everyone participated in ADK's All-Staff Training. Kayla gave a short presentation for the staff on alpine ecology, the Summit Stewardship Program, and other ADK stewardship programs.

Saturday, June 3rd, and Sunday, June 4th 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 5th, and Tuesday, June 6th stewards participated in a Leave No Trace Trainer course taught by ADK staff: Mary Glynn, Henry Liebers, Maggie Newell, and Daria Stacy. Bridey, Maddy, Nate, Kayla, and I quarried rock on Hurricane and built a second cairn.



Botany hike on Wright

Wednesday, June 7th, we did a botany training hike up Algonquin Peak. SUNY Oneonta Professor and former summit steward Dr. 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.

Saturday, June 10th and Sunday, June 11th were spent team stewarding on Marcy, Algonquin, and Wright. With two weekends of team stewarding, everyone had the opportunity to observe other stewards in action.

Monday, June 12th, we drove up Whiteface for a second botany hike led by ADK Deputy Executive Director Julia Goren. While on Whiteface, we also met with Matt Schlesinger from the New York Natural Heritage Program to learn about small mammal and Bicknell's Thrush monitoring on alpine summits. Staff from the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) joined us for the botany lesson as well. While on Whiteface, we got a chance to tour the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center (ASRC) silo on the summit and learn about all the research that goes on there. In the afternoon, we drove over to The Mountaineer to pick up boots, socks, and rain pants!

Tuesday, June 13th, we did additional training at the Education Yurt on non-violent communication, inclusion in the backcountry, and Mountain Watch, a project that summit stewards have been participating in for the past 17 years. Mary Glynn gave a presentation on Mental Health Wilderness First Aid for the summit stewards. After lunch, summit stewards, summer naturalists, wilderness trip leaders, and Education Department staff drove to the [Six Nations Iroquois Cultural Center](#) to explore the cultural center and listen to a presentation by David Fadden on Haudenosaunee culture and history.



ADK Deputy Executive Director Julia Goren showing stewards Bearberry Willow on Whiteface

Wednesday, June 14th, we did a training hike up Cascade Mountain. Going up Cascade we looked at and discussed the trail conditions we saw, brushed in undesigned trails, repaired scree walls, learned about rock packing, and rebuilt the cairns on the summit. We also went over education techniques specific for stewarding Cascade.

Thank you to everyone that participated and put the training together: Seth Jones, Mary Glynn, Henry Liebers, Charlotte Staats, Tom Manitta, Daria Stacy, Maggie Newell, Julia Goren, Sean Robinson, David Fadden, Matt Schlesinger, Julie Hart, Scott McKim, Tate Connor, Pete Evans, Chris DiCintio, and Kevin Burns.

Weather and Usage

The snow was still around during the first few weeks of the season in some shady areas of trail and there were still some snow patches lingering high on Marcy until mid-June! Marcy showed lower average contacts than other peaks stewarded for the month of May. Hikers spending time in the High Peaks were encouraged to stick to lower elevations as it was still mud season up high. As of Victoria Day Weekend, there was still a lot of rotten snow on Marcy which made stewarding difficult. These conditions may have led to the lower numbers we had on Marcy in May. ADK High Peaks Information Center staff were in contact with stewards in the field to receive updated trail information and guide hikers to peaks that did not have snow on them still, like Cascade, Wright, and Phelps. The end of May and beginning of June was very dry, and stewards dealt with a few days of smoky air blowing down from the wildfires in Quebec. Mid-June we started

to get some much-needed rain, and the rain stuck around almost every day for the rest of June, which likely caused some lower numbers of contacts for that month. Despite some slow days, all average contacts in May, besides Marcy, have increased, while at the same time, increasing the number of days we have been on the summits for the month. One weekend in June saw no coverage on Marcy. Heavy rain on a Friday night raised stream levels to a dangerous level, preventing the Marcy Summit Steward from making it to Marcy for the weekend.

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

<u>May 2022</u> (weekends only)				<u>May 2023</u> (weekends only)			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	378	4	95	Algonquin	514	5	103
Marcy	362	4	91	Marcy	364`	5	73
Wright	140	2	70	Wright	350	4	88
Cascade	490	5	98	Cascade	1369	8	171
Total	1370	15	91	Total	2304	22	104
<u>June 2022</u>				<u>June 2023</u>			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	994	17	58	Algonquin	1127	19	59
Marcy	1197	17	70	Marcy	762	16	48
Wright	236	6	39	Wright	544	17	42
Cascade	725	7	104	Cascade	1459	14	104
Total	3152	48	66	Total	3892	66	59

Equipment and Campsites

Summit steward equipment receives constant use, which means that something is always in need of repair or replacement. Bridey spent time waterproofing tarps and tents and repairing uniforms at the beginning of the season. Repairs made to the tent platforms last season held up wonderfully!

Thanks to the Will Cummer Gear Fund, we were able to purchase work gloves, water filters and purification tablets, a new tent tarp, loupes, compasses, dry sacks for first aid kits, waterproofing spray, uniform shirts, and clickers.

[Darn Tough](#) donated socks, [SCARPA](#) donated boots and [Patagonia](#) donated rain pants to the stewards through [The Mountaineer](#). These items make it so summit stewards stay warm and dry, even in a dry year. We couldn't do our jobs without such necessary gear items.

Many, many thanks go to the Will Cummer Gear Fund, Darn Tough, SCARPA, Patagonia, and The Mountaineer for their generous support of the Summit Stewardship Program.

Botany and Research Projects

This is the 16th year that we will be participating in the Appalachian Mountain Club's (AMC) Mountain Watch phenology monitoring program. Mountain Watch monitors the phenology of four species found on Adirondack High Peaks Summits: *Diapensia*, Bigelow's Sedge, Bog Bilberry, and Labrador Tea. All four species are monitored at standardized monitoring sites in accordance with the National Phenology Network (NPN). AMC uses this data to observe and analyze long term trends in the timing of blooming phases of alpine species, which can indicate effects due to climate change in the alpine communities across the northeast. In addition to Mountain Watch, AMC also created the citizen science based [Northeast Alpine Flower Watch](#) project. Hikers can take pictures of alpine plants and upload them to iNaturalist to get more data on their flowering and fruiting phenophases. Taking a picture of some flowering plants can help out a lot in monitoring trends on the summits! Feel free to download iNaturalist and upload photos from your mobile device or desktop!

This summer we are working with the New York Natural Heritage Program for small mammal and bird monitoring. Matt Schlesinger, NYNHP's Chief Zoologist created a set of protocols to [monitor small mammals](#) on several rocky summits in the High Peaks. We have six monitoring stations set up on several high peaks, focusing on rocky slope habitats in order to find evidence of small mammals including bog lemmings, voles, mice, shrews, and whatever else we find! Stewards check these bait boxes every two weeks and collect scat and soil samples from in and around the bait boxes. The bait boxes are standard rodent traps (without the trapping mechanism), using nonviable seed and dried meal worms as bait. In addition to monitoring mammals, stewards are also collecting information on Bicknell's thrush breeding sites. This research is conducted using citizen science-based platforms like eBird and Merlin, developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Stewards are inputting their bird observations to the third [New York Breeding Bird Atlas](#). The hope of both projects is to update historical records of species that are living on the higher summits.



Summit Stewards doing their best impression of alpine sweetgrass on Whiteface!

Trail Maintenance

Thanks to a highly motivated crew and dedicated volunteer coverage, we've been able to get a lot of work done. Trail work has been done on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Cascade, Hurricane, Giant, Skylight, Saddleback, and Iroquois. 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	250	53	4	30	2	0
Algonquin	103	220	14	83	0	0
Wright	34	15	5	17	0	0
Cascade	253	40	11	35	1	0
Colden	0	0	0	0	0	0

Totals as of July 1st

Brushing (feet)	Rock Pack (feet ²)	Scree Wall (feet)	Cairn Rocks removed	Cairn repaired
624	35	892	303	6

Outreach

Our outreach has started to pick back up since the pandemic began. Camps, colleges, and organizations who bring groups into the High Peaks have started leading trips more often, and we have worked with a few groups we spoke with on the summits last year. Kayla gave a Leave No Trace Awareness workshop to Echo Lake Camp and an alpine presentation to La Vida Expeditions from Gordon College. Kayla also gave a presentation on the Northeast Alpine Flower Watch and alpine research to Mount Abraham High School. Kayla, Nate, Daria, and I went to Camp Chateaugay to present a Leave No Trace Awareness Workshop for their entire camp community. We've already been able to educate 480 camp counselors, camp youth, high schoolers, and college students with more programs scheduled to come.

Kayla participated in Adirondack Day where we educated legislators on issues pertaining the Adirondack Park, thanked them for investing in stewardship, and told our field stories. Thank you to the Environmental Protection Fund for helping to fund this program.

We trained new and returning trailhead stewards for the 46er Trailhead Stewardship Program. We also trained new and returning volunteer summit stewards. Danna and Kayla trained ADK's Trailhead Stewards. Maggie and Kayla trained ADK's Campground Hosts. Kayla facilitated training for Buck Mountain Trailhead Stewards. Kayla and Bridey trained DEC's Natural Resource Stewards in Leave No Trace. We have also been working with ADK's Communication Director Ben Brosseau to expand our outreach through social media.

This is the third year we've been educating on Hurricane Mountain regarding fire tower stewardship. This 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 and the importance of protecting the Forest Preserve. For some hikers, Hurricane is a steppingstone to the high peaks and we're there to educate them accordingly. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming a fire tower volunteer next year! Follow this link to learn more about the [volunteer fire tower steward program](#)!

Conclusion

The Summit Stewardship Program is still going strong. Thank you for all your support. Without you, our partners, donors, and volunteers, none of our work would be possible. 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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