

2025 Mid-Season Summit Steward Report



Chief Steward Katie educating a hiker up on top of Marcy

Happy July! The 36th field season of the Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program is in full swing! Summit stewards are out on the peaks educating hikers, monitoring alpine plant recovery, and keeping up with trail maintenance above tree line. This season has been a mix of funky weather, but it feels like we are back to regular summer weather. Victoria Day and Memorial Day Weekends in

May had some nasty weather, with some strong thunderstorms, high winds, below freezing wind chills, and snow. We were able to hire a Chief Summit Steward this season, as well as five summit stewards, and one intern. With a large crew, we've been able to spend some more time doing projects and getting out to peaks with alpine habitat that we had not gotten a chance to in many years.

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. Last year we received a two-year commitment funding the Summit Stewardship Program. The Adirondack 46ers also continues to fund ADK's 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 [LOWA](#) boots, [Darn Tough](#) socks, and [Patagonia](#) rain jackets, 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.

Thank you to [L.L.Bean](#) for donating hiking pants, shirts, and puffy jackets to the Summit Stewardship Program! L.L.Bean has continued to support ADK and the Summit Stewardship Program through gear donations, allowing our program to provide high quality equipment to each summit steward.

Thank you to some of our recurring sponsors of this program:

- The Will Cummer Gear Fund
- The Norton G. Miller Memorial Fund
- The [#507 Fund for the Summit Stewardship Program](#)
- [Nine Pin Cider](#)
- The [Helen and Ritter Shumway Foundation Grant](#)

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) for financial support, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for 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 Chris DiCintio, Allison Rooney, and Tate Connor for their continued guidance.



2024 Crew: L to R, Back: Liam Ebner (Stewardship Manager), Tim Ostap, Eli Steinberg, Ezra Shamy, Christopher Hill.
Front: Katie Leton (Chief Summit Steward), Katie Strutton. Not Pictured: Becca Guetzov

Personnel and Scheduling

The 2025 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!

Katie Leton— This is Katie's third season with the program. Last year Katie was one of our Botany Field Technicians, but this year has taken the role of Chief Summit Steward. She has previously worked at North Country Camps as a staff member. She is a student at Colorado College, majoring in Environmental Studies and History, and is graduating next year. While Katie is not botanizing, she enjoys rock climbing, swimming, and a good book.

Christopher Hill— Christopher is also a returning steward to the Summit Stewardship Program! Originally from Connecticut, Chris came to the Adirondacks often while he was growing up. He is a recent graduate from the University of Notre Dame where he studied Environmental Science and Chemistry. In his free time, Christopher enjoys running, paddling, spending time with friends, and enjoying all the Adirondacks has to offer.

Eli Steinberg— Eli is brand new to the Summit Stewardship Program, but not the Adirondacks as he grew up in Croghan, NY, just on the border of the Park. Eli has spent the last five years with the US Forest Service as a Wildland Firefighter, as well as three years in Conservation Corps positions. Eli often spends time practicing meditation and volunteering at meditation centers around the US, and other parts of the world.

Ezra Shamy— Ezra is also new to the Summit Stewardship Program. Ezra recently graduated from Skidmore College with a degree in American Studies where he was heavily involved in his school's ultimate frisbee team. He has a contagious level of enthusiasm and can brighten a room (or summit!) with his interactions. Ezra loves to have meaningful and memorable conversations with hikers on the summit and never fails to find a connection with a hiker or group.

Tim Ostap— A rising junior studying Wildlife and Fisheries Biology at the University of Vermont, Tim is also new to the Summit Stewardship Program and ADK. Tim is the Treasurer for the UVM Birding Club and also serves as a volunteer on the board for Green Mountain Audubon, so safe to say Tim loves birding in their free time. Tim enjoys connecting with hikers on the summits about rare plants and getting to share some of their alpine knowledge while above tree line.

Becca Guetzov— Becca is new to the Summit Stewardship Program but was a Rt. 73 Trailhead Steward last summer. Becca is a rising senior at Vanderbilt University

majoring in Climate Studies with a Biology minor. Becca has a passion for plant biology and loves to share botanical facts with hikers she interacts with.

Katie Strutton—Katie is a rising sophomore at Haverford College in Virginia and is new to the program and ADK. At school, Katie is a collegiate runner on the cross country and track and field teams. Katie loves to connect with every group she interacts with! She has great energy for educating the public and does so with enthusiasm.

Kayla White—Kayla is ADK's Stewardship Director. It's her eleventh year with the Summit Stewardship Program and her thirteenth year at ADK. This year, Kayla is overseeing ADK's newest stewardship program, the Route 73 Trailhead Stewardship Program. Trailhead Stewards will be stationed along the Route 73 corridor educating hikers and rock climbers on Leave No Trace Principles and trail and trip planning information.

Liam Ebner—I'm ADK's Stewardship Manager. This is my fifth 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 apply!

- Mary Lamb—13th year
- Jack Coleman— 12th year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Lois Dannenberg—10th year
- Ann Fogarty—10th year
- Jen Denny—10th year volunteer, 2 years staff
- Jim Schneider—9th year
- Ryan Nerp—6th year volunteer, 4 years staff
- Drew Benware—6th year
- Klarisse Torriente—5th year
- Matt Szopa—5th year
- Angela Ranzini—4th year
- Tyler Lucero— 4th year
- Tony Goodwin— 4th year
- Caitlin Glynn—4th year
- Esther Seacord—3rd year
- Caitlin Porter—3rd year

- Carla Denn—3rd year
- Mark Epstein—3rd year
- Kristen Peek— 2nd year
- David Palat— 2nd year
- Peyton Riegel— 2nd year, Hurricane
- Kim Brown—5th year, SSP & Hurricane
- Bob Hunter—5th year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- Don Pachner—5th year with ADK, Friends of Hurricane Mountain
- John Loughlin—4th year, Hurricane, 2nd year SSP
- Pamela Gothner—4rd 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 23rd, 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 26th, 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 their first taste of cairn building but got a more in-depth experience later this week.

Tuesday, May 27th, we did a combination of radio protocol and interpretive communication training at ADK's Education Yurts. Wilderness

Land Manager Tate Connor gave a presentation on the High Peaks Unit Management Plan and all of the new changes to come. Forest Ranger Allison Rooney went over radio protocol and personal safety training. Kayla and I went over interpretive communication, coaching techniques, and Authority of the Resource Technique. We



Steward crew building a cairn on Cascade

practiced some role-playing so that all could get comfortable using these interpretive techniques. We finished with a presentation on alpine ecology. The Poke-O-Moonshine Fire Tower Steward joined us this day as well.



Algonquin Botany Hike with Sean Robinson

Wednesday, June 28th, we spent the day up on Cascade focusing on learning how to build cairns as well as other trail maintenance tasks in the alpine zone. Cascade is an important mountain for us to be on since there are a lot of first-time hikers to the High Peaks region. We hope to prepare these hikers for the next time they hike up to an alpine summit in the region.

Saturday, May 31st, and Sunday, June 1st 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. It was a cold and wet weekend up there, so we did not see too many people. Stewards definitely got a feel for what kind of conditions we could deal with at any point during the season.

Monday, June 2nd, we drove up Whiteface for a botany training day led by Julia Goren (Adirondack Rail Trail Association) and Tim Howard (New York Natural Heritage Program). While on Whiteface, stewards got an in-depth view of the alpine community. We also took some time to go over photopoint monitoring transects so we can work on taking some images this summer. In the afternoon, we drove over to The Mountaineer to pick up boots and socks!



Whiteface Botany Day with Julia and Tim

Tuesday, June 3rd, we did a second botany training hike up Algonquin Peak, led by Dr. Sean Robinson, former summit steward and SUNY Oneonta professor. We talked about the changes we see in the forest ecology as we hike up the mountain and increase

elevation, alpine plant identification training, as well as an in-depth training on moss and liverwort identification. Bryophytes are mossome!

Wednesday, June 4th, everyone participated in ADK's All-Staff Training Day. I gave a short presentation for the staff on alpine ecology, the Summit Stewardship Program, and the rest of ADK's stewardship programs

Saturday, June 7th and Sunday, June 8th 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. This time, we had good weather for it.

Monday, June 9th and Tuesday, June 10th, new stewards participated in the Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor Course. The stewards went in depth on learning the seven principles of Leave No Trace, as well as education practices on teaching them. Thank you to Daria, Eliza, Lorelei, and Josh for teaching this course! Katie L, Christopher, Becca and I were up on Wright and Algonquin. We planned to do some more photopoint monitoring training, but because of the weather we did a lot of brushing.

Wednesday, June 11th, 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 18 years. Kayla gave a presentation on Mental Health Wilderness First Aid for the summit stewards. After lunch, summit stewards and Rt. 73 Trailhead Stewards 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.

Thank you to everyone that participated and put the training together: Tom Manitta, Daria Stacy, Will Cole, Eliza Phillips, Josh Ellis, Lorelei Meidenbauer, Julia Goren, Sean Robinson, David Fadden, Tim Howard, Aaron Kellet, Tate Connor, and Allison Rooney.



Stewards at the Mountaineer with their new rain gear and boots!

Weather and Usage

Victoria Day and Memorial Day Weekends in May saw some nasty weather. Victoria Day had strong thunderstorms and hail on Saturday, with air temperatures in the 40s at the summits with the windchill dipping into the teens, while plenty of snow remained on the trail high up on Marcy. Memorial Day was not much better with snow all day long on Saturday, though the weather got a little better on Sunday. Snow spines, and in a few places snow fields, were extremely rotten and unstable, necessitating snowshoes to navigate them safely and responsibly. Late May, shoulder season, is one of the times of year that the alpine plants are most susceptible to damage because of saturated soils from snow melt, and off trail travel to avoid icy areas of trail that could be navigated by wearing traction devices on one's feet. Due to the less than desirable hiking weather on these two typically busy weekends, there were not many hikers out there. The cool and wet weather stuck around for the first part of June, as did the snow on Marcy. Snow melted out of the bowl on June 28th this year, two weeks later than last season. Due to the snow lingering in high elevation, hikers were urged to stick to low elevation trails. Last year we noted the phenology of the plants was early last year, but with the heavier snow pack this winter, the plants behaved similarly to what we would normally expect. The alpine azaleas are one of our indicators of phenology since they have a short window. They typically bloom June 6th, plus or minus a few days, and they were about 50% in flower on June 5th.

May and June are usually a good preview to what the visitation might look like for the rest of the summit steward season. With Victoria Day (a Canadian holiday), I was hoping to get a gauge on if there would be a significant impact on visitation due to less Canadians visiting New York. Unfortunately, the bad weather on our two holiday weekends prevented looking at accurate trends and the averages for May are severely impacted by the weather. Weekends in May saw significant drops in the average number of hikers visiting the summits, while June is very similar to last year. The beginning of June was still slow due to the weather, but as it got warmer and less wet, we saw more hikers. Even though the averages are very similar for Marcy and Algonquin in June, the peaks still feel a bit slower. There have not been many days where a steward talked to more than 100 hikers in a day. This June, we only broke counts for 100 hikers on seven days, and all but one of those days were on Cascade. Now that we are in July, we've had some very hot days. Going forward for the rest of the season, it will be interesting to see what the visitor usage looks like for July, August, and the fall hiking season.

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

May 2023 (weekends only)				May 2024 (weekends only)			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	694	6	114	Algonquin	157	5	31
Marcy	641	4	160	Marcy	58	4	19
Wright	185	2	93	Wright	0	0	0
Cascade	905	5	181	Cascade	421	5	84
Total	2425	17	143	Total	636	14	45
June 2023				June 2024			
Mountain	# People	# Days	Average	Mountain	# People	# Days	Average
Algonquin	1083	20	54	Algonquin	896	21	43
Marcy	827	19	44	Marcy	999	20	50
Wright	424	15	28	Wright	332	12	28
Cascade	1280	12	101	Cascade	1136	12	95
Total	3614	66	55	Total	3363	65	52

Botany and Research Projects

This is the 18th 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 community 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. A picture of some flowering plants can help monitor trends on the summits! Feel free to download iNaturalist and upload photos from your mobile device or desktop!

In June, Tim joined me up on Saddleback to complete a Mountain Bird Watch survey. Mountain Bird Watch (MBW) is organized by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. In MBW, ten focal high elevation bird species are monitored, as well as red squirrels, in

order to observe how populations may be shifting over time. MBW is always a great time! An early wake up, mountain sunrise, and a day listening to birds is always a treat.

This summer, summit stewards are also retaking our photopoint monitoring transects. Normally, we do photopoint monitoring every five years, but in 2021/2022 we added line transects into our methodology. The transects focus on herd paths or social trails in the alpine zone. Unlike the oblique photography we have been doing since 1999, transects allow us to get a more accurate picture of the vegetation. Because the set-up process is a bit simpler than oblique photography, we can resample more often as well as have the entire team trained on the methods, instead of hiring a field technician that dedicates a summer to the project. We will be resampling all the rest of the photopoint, and transects, in a couple seasons.

Trail Maintenance

Thanks to a highly motivated crew and dedicated volunteer coverage, we've been able to get a lot of work done. Trail maintenance has been done on Marcy, Algonquin, Wright, Iroquois, Gothics, Saddleback, Cascade, Hurricane, and Giant. 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
Marcy	570	75	16	165	1
Algonquin	270	78	19	102	0
Wright	107	35	2	30	0
Cascade	459	130	8	102	4
Giant	0	45	0	15	0
Hurricane	34	65	3	18	2
Gothics	0	95	0	0	0
Saddleback	0	80	2	0	0
Iroquois	45	30	0	10	3

Totals as of July 1st

Scree Wall (feet)	Brushing (feet)	Rock Pack (feet ²)	Cairn Rocks removed	Cairns repaired
1485	633	50	442	10

Outreach

Summit stewards encounter many different organized groups on the summits whether they be summer camps, college outing clubs, sports teams, or anything else. For those groups that bring trips into the High Peaks often, I provide free Leave No Trace Awareness Workshops and presentations on alpine ecology, so their trip leaders are prepared once they enter the alpine zone in the summer. This year, I gave presentations on the Summit Stewardship Program, the alpine zone, and Leave No Trace to La Vida Center for Outdoor Leadership, North Country Camps, Camp Dudley, and Camp Chingachgook.

Kayla and I traveled to Albany this spring to participate in Adirondack Park Lobby Day and the Environmental Protection Fund Lobby Day. We met with legislators and discussed key budget items pertaining to 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.

This is the fifth 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,

Liam Ebner
Stewardship Manager
liam@adk.org

and

Kayla White
Stewardship Director
Kaylaw@adk.org