



# PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION NEWS+EVENTS

SPRING-SUMMER 2019



## The Path

*By John Anderson*

Every once in a while, life lulls us into complacency and we think we've seen it all. We think there is nothing an old familiar place can show us. So it was with the trail to the summit of Putney Mountain. I had traveled that path--up in the morning, down in the afternoon--an average of forty times a year for the twenty-three years that I had participated in the fall hawkwatch. I had therefore covered that same ground some 1,840 times. I could, and often did, make that walk on autopilot. I walked it without seeing.

My wake-up call came early one morning when I found a young woman sitting cross-legged in a rather damp spot along the trail. Her back was to me. She was motionless. Her head was bowed as if she was deep in meditation. When I asked if she was okay, she smiled broadly and replied that she was watching a lizard unlike any that she had ever seen. The "lizard" in question was actually a red eft--dead common along the trail, especially after a rain. I had seen them by the bucketful. I had seen so many that they no longer made much of an impression. I wasn't really seeing them even though I moved many off the trail.

After that, I started paying attention.

One day there were thousands upon thousands of pea-size fuzzy tan objects littering the trail. Research proved them to be woolly oak galls. Another day I found a dead mouse and the tail of a flying squirrel beside the path. A barred owl had been at work. Narrow, snaky runways plowed through fallen oak leaves puzzled me until early one morning I surprised a porcupine foraging for acorns there. Mystery solved.

Green oak leaves littering the forest floor caught my attention. Each leaf was partially eaten and then its petiole was cut by a red-humped oakworm. Cutting the leaf and letting it fall from the tree deprives hungry birds of any clue as to where a caterpillar rests. I still marvel at the sheer numbers of oakworms that must have been at work in those trees. The ground along the ridge was carpeted with discarded leaves.

Every day, every step along the path was a possibility. During an October snow squall I was stopped dead on the trail by the realization that heavy wet snowflakes were spangling an entire season's accumulation of spider webs. It happened as I watched. Two seasons combining in a glittering, ephemeral moment. There were spider webs everywhere that I had been oblivious to until that moment. Webs set in motion by and jeweled with lacy flakes. I did not sit cross-legged in the trail to admire them. No one happened along to share the moment. There was just me, the snow and the unexpected. I had passed that point on the trail 1,840 times prior to that moment and yet it was still revealing itself.

How could it be any other way?

*PMA is an all-volunteer organization. Your donations help us make conservation and trail maintenance possible. Please visit [putneymountain.org](http://putneymountain.org) to make a donation or to become a lifetime member. Thank you!*

## Nature Trail Update

The nature trail is being revamped! Some of the trail markers are gone, others are on their last legs or are describing features no longer visible in the woods. PMA volunteers are working to restore and improve the interpretive trail. On a rainy morning in October of 2017, John Anderson, Kai George and Geordie Heller walked the summit loop, identifying spots of particular interest. That walk resulted in nineteen locations well suited for interpretive signs. By spring, John had written the site descriptions, and by the following fall materials for posts were ready and the installation process began. Three markers were in place before weather halted the project; the summer of 2019 will see PMA's new interpretive trail fully completed. •

## An Easy Way to Support PMA

PMA encourages everyone to shop locally, but we recognize there are times when you need to buy something not available locally. Do you know you can support local conservation when you shop online? AmazonSmile is a simple way to support your favorite charitable organization when you shop on Amazon.com, at no extra cost to you. Just visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and search for Putney Mountain Association. Each time you shop on Amazon, a percentage of the purchase price will be donated to PMA, helping our mission to conserve land. •

## Moonlight On The Mountain

Many people love to be on the Putney Mountain summit to see the sun set in the west followed by the rise of the full moon in the east. Louise Garfield has studied the astronomical logistics and offers this advice:

Because the rise of the full moon is in approximate sync with the setting of the sun (which only then illuminates the moon), and because both orbs are clearly visible from the well-pruned top of Putney Mountain, its peak provides a wonderful viewing point on a clear evening on the night before or the night of the full moon. Bring a picnic to enhance the experience!

See the back page for estimated times to view the May 18 full moon from Putney Mountain. And don't forget to bring a flashlight to help navigate the trail back down! •

## New PMA Board Members

PMA is pleased to welcome two new members to the board of trustees! John Barnett and Adam Gilbert joined the board in January. •



Photo: Steve Connor

*Volunteers are needed to help tend to the sheep this summer.*

## Volunteers Needed For Sixth Summer of Buckthorn Control Project

The buckthorn is clearly discouraged, leafing out later in the season, and with less abundance. Andrew Morrison, our invasive plant specialist, is seeking volunteers to dig out buckthorn roots in the area of the summit which has been most grazed by the sheep. It will be very rewarding to see what was once mature buckthorn pulled out by the roots. Training will be available.

Resolute volunteers have made sure the sheep are tended each day from late June to mid-September. What is entailed is hiking to the summit, giving water from the tank, providing a little grain, and hiking back down. Those who are able to work with electric fencing are called upon to move the fence when the sheep need to be moved from one area to another.

Most volunteers choose to work in pairs. Some volunteer once a week, some less often. We make a schedule to serve both volunteers and the sheep. New volunteers will work with someone who is experienced and will find it a wonderful way to enjoy the beauty of Putney Mountain summit, work with animals, and contribute to invasive species control! To volunteer, please contact Claire Wilson at [claire34wilson@gmail.com](mailto:claire34wilson@gmail.com) •

# Upcoming Guided Walks

## **Moss Walk**

With Sarah Cooper-Ellis

*Saturday May 4, 10:00 AM (Rain Date May 5)*

Often overlooked, difficult to specify, mosses and their allies (liverworts and hornworts) nevertheless play a crucial role in our northern forests. Learning about them can enhance your woodland walks and deepen your understanding of ecology at the miniature scale. Bring a hand lens or magnifier if possible. Meet in the Putney Mountain parking lot.

## **Wildflower Walk**

With Pat Shields

*Saturday, May 11, 1:00 PM (Rain Date May 12)*

Explore spring wildflowers of the Putney Central School forest. Meet at the kiosk on School Forest Drive (immediate right off school driveway). The walk may be wet, so boots are a good idea. Co-sponsored by PMA and the Putney Conservation Commission. Please call Pat at 387-8595 with any questions.

## **Spring Birding Walk**

With Cathryn Abbott + Richard Foye

*Saturday, May 18, 7:00 AM (Rain Date May 19)*

Meet at the wetlands on Sand Hill Road in Putney. On our walk last spring we saw more than fifty species in this area! Cathy and Richard will demonstrate how to identify birds by both eye and ear. If time permits, we can continue to the Central School forest in search of woodland birds. If you have binoculars, please bring them.

## **Walking With The Mountain**

With Rich Holschuh

*Date + Time TBA*

Rich Holschuh's "Talking With The Mountain" presentation at PMA's annual meeting was very well-attended. Rich has generously offered to lead a walk on the land introducing Abenaki names for "all of our relations", the flora and fauna of the region. Rich is a researcher of Indigenous culture and linguistics, who serves on the Vermont Commission On Native American Affairs. The walk and talk will take place later in the summer, with the date to be announced. Keep an eye on our website and our Facebook page!

## **Hannum To Summit Hike**

With Dan Kubick + Steve Connor

*Saturday, June 22, 10:00 AM*

Come walk the southern trails of the PMA trail system as we cross streams, traverse a pine forest and make our way to the main trail to the Putney Mountain summit. The round-trip distance is 5.5 miles. Please plan for 3-4 hours with time for observation at the summit. We suggest bringing snacks/lunch, water, and insect repellent. Meet at the Hannum trailhead, 442 Holland Hill Road, Putney.

## **Tree ID Walk**

With Rich Grumbine

*Saturday, September 9, 10:00 AM*

Meet in the Putney Mountain parking lot.

Rich Grumbine, professor of biology at Landmark College, will guide us in identifying trees in the growing season by observing their leaf and twig anatomy. This will be a slow-paced hike, stopping frequently to comment on our observations and to practice using Rich's dichotomous guide.

## **Western Slope Walk**

With Roger Haydock

*Saturday, September 14 (Rain Date Sep. 15)*

Roger Hadock will lead a walk on the western slope land which became part of Putney Mountain Association conserved land last year. Roger has laid out a trail that will be completed this summer. Time and meeting place TBA; please keep an eye on the website.

## **Invasive Plant Walk**

With Andrew Morrison

*Date + Time TBA*

Meet in the Putney Mountain parking lot.

Andrew is an invasive plant specialist and will do a guided walk of Putney Mountain trails to familiarize participants with some of our most common invasive plant species. The walk will include a visit to the Putney Mountain summit to discuss the ongoing project using grazing animals to control glossy buckthorn, and conversation about the history of invasive plants in Vermont, the connection between invasive species and our agricultural history and what the future might bring for invasive plants in New England.



*For the latest updates on all our programs,  
please follow us on Facebook, Instagram,  
and visit [putneymountain.org](http://putneymountain.org)*

Putney Mountain Association  
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Photo: Dan Kubick

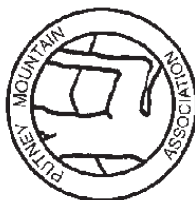
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Prefer to receive newsletters digitally?  
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[mr.a.morrison@gmail.com](mailto:mr.a.morrison@gmail.com)



*Moonlight  
On The Mountain*

May 17th - Moonrise at 6:51 pm, visible at  
7:05; sun sets at 8:08 pm.  
May 18th - Moonrise at 8:01, visible by 8:15;  
sun sets at 8:09 pm.



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Putney Mountain Association is an all-volunteer organization. Your donations help pay property taxes and insurance to make land conservation possible.  
Thank you!

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