



PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

A volunteer non-profit conservation organization
P.O. Box 953, Putney, VT 05346 • www.putneymountain.org

New Putney Mountain Trail Network Opens!

Geordie Heller

On June 12, 2016, Putney Mountain Association will celebrate the opening of a whole new trail network on the southern end of our Reserve. The trails, Dine, Hannum, High Road, and Hinton are located between Holland Hill and Putney Mountain Roads. Join us at the new Hannum Trail kiosk on Holland Hill at 1:00 o'clock for an official ribbon cutting, coupled with light refreshments, (1:00-3:00) and go on to explore the new trails. None are difficult and the terrain is gentle; loop distances range from 1.2 to 4.5 miles.

(Holland Hill Road. Parking & Kiosk is on the right, 3/10 of a mile past Parkman Woods Rd. Look for a small trail sign and white pipes.)

Prior to the Hannum purchase the Dine trail was a lonely outpost of trail under PMA management. Though accessible via some old trails we did not have permission to mark, map, or maintain those other parts of the network. Fortuitously, when we purchased the Hannum parcel in 2014 all the elements began to fall in place, allowing us to incorporate the off property, pre-existing trails into our system. Now managed by PMA, the new trail system is a collaboration between PMA, the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, and several members of the Hinton family who graciously gave legal permission for PMA to mark, map, and maintain a trail across their property. (Hinton Trail.) The new Hannum Trail, off Holland Hill Road, runs north through land recently acquired by PMA and extends into the Conte Refuge. It then loops south-east to Parkman Wood Road, or a little further on, to the Dine Trail and south to Holland Hill, or north to Putney Mountain across Hinton family property on the Hinton Trail.



Trail sign on Hannum Trail



John Anderson

Hawkwatch Presentation at the January Annual Meeting by John Anderson

(For the expanded, full text of John's talk, visit the PMA website at www.putneymountain.org.)

In September and October, Putney Mountain. is home to a migratory raptor survey conducted under the auspices

of The Hawk Migration Association of North America. About 40 regular volunteers donate their time to this effort, often taking their vacation days during the migration.

The hawk watch has no fixed membership, and no clearly articulated mission statement other than filling out the Hawk Migration Association's daily reporting forms. It is simply something that an ever evolving, ever unpredictable group of dyed-in-the-wool individualists choose to do. Every day in September and October and into mid-November, people show up, people who know the job to be done and know it well. Responsible people. People who are expert at identifying hawks in flight... often very distant hawks. The history ... stretches back 41 years.

In the fall of 1974 the newly formed Vermont Institute of Natural Science issued the first ever Vermont Hawk Migration Report. From it I took this rather dry and lengthy quote:

"No one ever claimed that Vermont was a hotspot for migrating raptors, and, while the results of this fall's hawk watch substantiate this judgment, they also reveal that Vermont does have its share of raptor movement, including at least a few fairly decent lookouts.

Several of the lookouts reported spectacular views of hawks... [including] an exceptional ten minute view of an adult Bald Eagle at Putney Mountain ..."

There was only the one reported statewide.

That year, watchers were on Putney Mountain... only four days out of the entire season;... 9 Vermont watch sites had been established. Two years later, 26 sites were reporting. Over the years nearly 100 different sites scattered up and down the state reported hawks to VINS. For the 4 days covered in 1974, a total of 2,420 raptors were counted at the 9 active sites. Six hundred eighty two of those were seen from Putney Mountain.

Fast forward to 2015...Of the far flung and numerous Vermont watch sites that had been established, only Putney Mountain maintains a full time watch. Mount Philo in the Champlain Valley reports on a few peak Broad-winged days. All of the other sites have been abandoned. Reporting is now exclusively done to the North East Hawk watch, established in 1971, and to the Hawk Migration Association of North America, established in 1974.

During the fall 2015 watch, Putney Mountain. recorded 9250 raptors. It was our second best year ever, our best being 9866 raptors in 2012. We had 109 sightings of Bald Eagles (up from the one remarked on in 1974). We manned the watch for a total of 551 hours over a period of 73 days. At least 1,818 volunteer hours went into the effort. About 40 watchers participated.

Over the many years during which the watch evolved, our continuous presence on the mountain in September and October came to be expected.... School classes are often on the mountain studying the fall migration. Since I started keeping detailed records we have talked with dozens upon dozens of different classes. Many are annual visitors. Kindergartens, college classes, and every age group in between have enjoyed the natural surroundings, interacted with the watchers, and learned a bit about the greater world.

Many other groups utilize the summit clearing. We have seen numerous weddings, funerals, celebrations of Rosh-Hashanah, Seventh Day Adventist outings, youth groups of various denominations and - years ago - night long all female celebratory gatherings for purposes never confided to any hawk watcher. Geocachers galore roam the area. Bird watchers from around the country find their way to Putney Mountain. Hawk watchers from dozens of other watch sites, some as far flung as the Florida Keys and Golden Gate Park, have spent their vacations with us.

We were often asked by visitors to snap photos. Both on film and digitally, I have beheaded scores of unsuspecting strangers while capturing Stratton or Mount Monadnock in the background. Yoga practitioners, martial artists, circus performers, various

dance troupes, and a capella groups have performed on the summit.

Also in my notes I find reference to a visitor who told unsuspecting strangers that Mount Monadnock must be Mount Washington. Another identified Stratton Mountain as Killington. Many have pointed it out as Ascutney. And one stood facing due east into the early morning sun and - with great authority - told the group he was with that they were looking at New York State.



Golden Eagle

One warmish September day we were approached by an elderly lady with a pronounced Long Island accent (and a heavy fur coat) who had noticed the copious sheep droppings and rather scornfully offered the opinion that, "In Vermont there must be a lot of bunnies!" This year a man stood by the sheep fence staring intently at the 9

rams for at least five minutes before approaching us - and berating us at some length for not taking better care of those animals. In his somewhat confused view the sheep needed attention because they had "extended udders."

Anyone might show up and anything might happen on the mountain on any given day. Putney Mountain is a destination.

On August the 26th, 2015 I wandered up Putney Mountain to kick off our most recent hawk watch. Within a few days, I was joined by other watchers. Over the next 2 1/2 months, 9,250 raptors, 2051 Blue Jays, approximately 12,000 Canada Geese, 351 Crows, 117 Ravens, 21 Common Loons, 36 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 37 Double-crested Cormorants, 7 Great Blue Herons, 2 Nighthawks, 2 Cackling Geese, 38 assorted sea gulls, 12 Snow Buntings, 106 Monarch Butterflies, 1 small skein of White-winged Scoters, another of Black Scoters, as well as an assortment of dragonflies, a nest of yellow jackets, flying aphids, Bumble bees, ballooning spiders, an array of Warblers, 1 Olive-sided Flycatcher, a single Smooth Green Snake, a few Garter snakes, various moths, Mylar balloons, and 2 motor-propelled parachutes were among the things recorded. Every imaginable kind of weather was experienced. Sheep gender was discussed at some length. Trees were cut. Hawk watchers applauded enthusiastically... And repeatedly.

On November the 13th, we closed the books on the 41st annual Putney Mountain Hawk watch. It was raining, raw and blustery. The last recorded bird of the year was a Golden Eagle. Two of our watchers, following impulses known only to themselves, were there to record it.

Next year watchers will - I assume - once again appear on Putney Mountain. With a few key exceptions, I'm not sure who they will be. I'm not sure when they will appear. I'm never sure why they come back.

As for the hawks ... we will count them ... and ... we will count whatever else flies, runs, walks, hops, or crawls within the range of our optics. Including humanity with all of its quirks and foibles.

Before I let you go, I'd like to thank the Putney Mountain Association for preserving and maintaining such an irreplaceable piece of the natural world, and after 41 years we of the hawk watch are still learning the true scope of what it has to teach us.

Upcoming Events: Spring/Summer 2016

**Grand Opening Southern Tier Trails,
Saturday June 12, 1:00 PM**

See the full article on page 1.

Tree Walk, Saturday June 18, 10:00 AM

Come join Rich Grumbine for another tree adventure on Putney Mountain. This time we will use a summer dichotomous key to guide us in identifying trees in the growing season by observing their leaf and twig anatomy. Rich will have guides and resources to share. This will be a slow hike, stopping frequently to observe trees and identify them using the guide. Meet by 10:00 AM at the main Putney Mountain parking area and kiosk.

Spring Geology Walks June 20/July 23

Roger Haydock, formerly with the Nova Science Program, will present a three-part Local Geology Program this spring. These will consist of two field walks exploring the different geology of two local mountains, Black Mountain and Putney Mountain.

Dummerston Geology Walk: Monday, June 20th, 6:00 PM

Field Walk on Black Mountain to explore signs of Glacial Lake Hitchcock. Meet at Dummerston Covered Bridge parking lot to carpool to site.

Putney Geology Walk: Saturday, July 23th at 9:00 AM

Field walk to explore the geology of Putney Mountain. Meet in the Putney Mountain parking lot on Putney Mtn. Rd. This program is co-sponsored by the Putney Mountain Association, the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, and the Southeastern Vermont Audubon Society. The program is free and open to the public.

Meet a Fern , Saturday, July 30th, 10:00 AM

PMA Hannum Trails, Holland Hill Rd
If you've ever wondered about the ferns you see in the woods, come walk our new Hannum land on Saturday, July 30th at 10:00 AM. We'll stroll from the Hannum kiosk to Salmon Brook and back (approximately 1.5 miles RT) and check out a sampling of woodland and wetland ferns, and maybe a few clubmosses, as we go. This walk is not intended for fern aficionados (you can see a much wider variety of ferns at the Aiken Sanctuary off Old Route 5 in Putney), but is a gentle introduction for folks who'd like to get to know them. The kiosk is off Holland Hill Rd, 3 tenths of a mile on the right past Parkman Woods Rd. Look for a small trail sign and white pipes. Call 387-8595 if the weather looks iffy.

Memberships, Donations and Items for Sale

Putney Mountain Association is an all volunteer organization. Your donations help pay property taxes and insurance, and make conservation of Putney Mountain lands possible. Thank you for contributing.

I would like to give a Putney Mountain Association lifetime membership to: \$25 ea _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____e-mail and phone _____

I would like to give a contribution. \$ _____

Rugged, waterproof trail maps showing trails on PMA and Windmill Hill Pinnacle Lands @ \$7 _____

Adjustable Putney Mountain baseball caps @ \$15 _____

Tick Ankle Guards @ \$10 _____

Please include \$1 shipping for the maps, and \$3 for the other items @ \$ _____

Make checks to Putney Mountain Association **Grand Total** \$ _____

Mail to: Claire Wilson, 26 Spring Hill Road, Putney, VT 05346

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Putney Mountain Upcoming Events Spring/Summer 2016

(details inside)

June 12: GRAND OPENING - Putney Mountain Southern Tier Trail Network

June 18: Tree Walk with Rich Grumbine

June 20/ July 23: Geology Walks with Roger Haydock (Dummerston/Putney)

July 30: Meet a Fern with Pat Shields

*This summer, to control invasive buckthorn,
sheep will again be grazing on the
Putney Mountain summit!*

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