



## PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

*A volunteer non-profit conservation organization*

*P.O. Box 953, Putney, VT 05346 • [www.putneymountain.org](http://www.putneymountain.org)*

A S E M I - A N N U A L N E W S L E T T E R

W I N T E R 2 0 1 5

### You DID It!

Pat Shields

The challenge was – raise over \$400,000 in just six months. Talk about jitters... When PMA signed the purchase and sales agreement on the Hannum – O'Connor land in July 2013, we did not know how we could succeed; we only knew we must. The property was too important and too special to lose, and if lost to development, there would be no going back. Happily, very many people agreed and stepped up in support – PMA members, Holland Hill neighbors, our invaluable local lead donors, and our wonderful community who were there for us with support letters, donations, & fundraisers. We thank you all!

The Hannum-O'Connor family graciously extended our purchase contract by six months and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board gave us a critical \$200,000 grant to propel us on our way. The Davis Conservation Fund, the Windham Foundation, the Fields Pond Foundation and the William P. Wharton Trust awarded sizable and spirit-lifting grants. It could not have happened without them. If you know anyone from these organizations, please echo our thanks. Vermont Land Trust staff provided crucial support and guidance from start to finish, and applied on our behalf for the final grant from the Open Space Institute that sealed the deal. It was totally fitting that our own local stars, The Devil Makes Three, gave a rousing benefit concert, hosted by the Putney School, that raised over \$9,000, putting us 'over the top,' and providing needed funding for land stewardship.

Here's what we've done with your money. We closed on the property in June 2014 and placed a conservation easement on it. It is now preserved forever and you, your grandchildren, and their grandchildren, can enjoy it. Because it abuts several other preserved properties,

the protected wildlife habitat block and crucial movement corridor is significantly expanded. Benefits extend to the plant community as well. Micro-climates resulting from the land's diversity of physical features, and the presence of limestone-enriched soils, can provide a variety of species migrating north with protected refuges as the climate changes. You made that happen. We also deposited, as planned, \$35,000 into our endowment account to support annual stewardship costs.



*Pete Bernhard, Cooper McBean and Lucia Turino of The Devil Makes Three performed a benefit concert at the Putney School on a beautiful evening in late July. Proceeds from the sold out concert gave the final push needed in the acquisition phase for the Hannum O'Connor property; it was a benefit and a celebration combined.*

In the fall, we brushed in the logging roads, improved or built new water bars and graded a small parking area. Our original plan was to keep one or two logging roads open for recreational use, but upon closer examination, this was not feasible as both the land and roads need time to recover from the logging. Instead, we marked a new trail from the new parking area on Holland Hill to a trail on the Conte F&WR. From here, one can loop around to the Dine trail and then walk a very short distance down the road to the parking area. We will cut the trail this spring and open it in May or June. Stay tuned. Once the land has recovered a bit, we will build another trail that will connect more directly with Dine. We welcome anyone interested in helping with trail building. Please

contact Dan Healey at [danhealey.treework@gmail.com](mailto:danhealey.treework@gmail.com), 802-387-6128; we will get back to you with details in the spring.

Again – a big thank you – and congratulations – to All. You did it!

### Sheep and Goats on Putney Mountain

Claire Wilson

In late September a flock of 38 sheep, accompanied by shepherds David, Yesenia, Marion, Sam, Danielle and Johnnie, border collies Joni and Cookie, and the Maremma guard dog Phantom, walked more than seven miles, from David Major's farm in Westminster West to Putney Mountain. Once arrived, the sheep quickly set

themselves on a diet of glossy buckthorn. In short order, the sheep demolished its last-of- the-season growth.

Until the 1940's the top of Putney Mountain was regularly used by local dairy farmers as a summer pasture for their young stock. When the Putney Mountain Association (PMA) took ownership of the land in 1947, much of the ridge line was essentially open, with clear views west to the Green Mountains and east to Monadnock.

As has happened all over Vermont, when livestock moved out the forest moved in. But the bare ledges of the summit were inhospitable to seedlings; those that took hold were easily controlled by lopping and pruning, and hayscented fern established itself in the hollows.

Then came glossy buckthorn, *Frangula alnus*, the invasive which plagues our forests in southeastern Vermont. The Vermont invasives website describes buckthorn as "an aggressive invader that can form dense thickets which shade and displace native understory plants, shrubs and tree seedlings." Left to do so on Putney Mountain's summit, it would grow twenty or thirty feet high, blocking prized vistas, and the sight lines for dedicated hawk-watchers who monitor hawk migration each autumn. In addition, as buckthorn displaces native plants, habitat for native wildlife is threatened. For more information: <http://www.vtinvasives.org/invasers/glossy-buckthorn>

For many years, PMA members attempted to control buckthorn by cutting it back once a year. This only seemed to serve as pruning, encouraging vigorous re-growth, and the development of deeply entrenched roots. Cutting three times a year had been recommended, but the extent of infestation was more than volunteers could handle.

Many PMA board meetings have included thoughtful discussion of the buckthorn problem. Finally a decision was made to use glyphosate, a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide, as a foliar spray on a small test patch. For more information: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Glyphosate>

At the same time, investigations began into the possibility of using grazing animals. Many websites depict present-day use of goats for clearing invasives, both on agricultural land and in cities. Grants were applied for, and funds were awarded to PMA for the grazing alternative by the New England Grassroots Environment Fund, Vermont Grass Farmers Association, The AnJeL Advised Fund of RSF Social Finance and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

Granted funds were sufficient for two 2-week visits by the Goat Girls of Amherst, MA. In late May fifteen goats and two herders equipped with hundreds of feet of solar powered electric fencing were welcomed to the Putney Mountain summit, and the goats began to chomp. It was splendid to watch the goats devouring buckthorn leaves,



*David and Randy Major stand in an area where the sheep have just finished eating the buckthorn, and prepare to move the fencing to the next area awaiting munching.*

and astonishing to see how quickly new leaves sprouted. Visitors to the summit were full of questions, finding the grazing project a source of great interest. A second two-week session, with the goats covering the same area, began in late July. Again there was regrowth of leaves, though a bit less vigorous.

With insufficient funds for a desired third visit from The Goat Girls, the question became how to proceed. Was there a local herd of goats that could be employed? None was found, but in casual conversation with David Major, producer of prize-winning Vermont Shepherd cheeses, we learned that sheep control buckthorn on his farm. A flock of 38 ewes was about to be dried off from the milking parlor and could be made available.

This local source of grazing animals proved affordable, and the sheep proved equal to the task. With the increased number of animals and their stay of almost three weeks, the sheep covered more than the area grazed by the goats. To see sheep, shepherds and dogs leaving the mountain October 14th, watch the film Greg McAllister made for Brattleboro Community TV. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7cIDGa\\_u-Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7cIDGa_u-Y)

With just one summer of grazing, buckthorn has been significantly impacted, and the area is already more accessible for people and animals. However, buckthorn has not been eradicated from the summit. Leaf-out next spring will indicate what degree of progress has been made. Our hope is to be able to continue this method of control.

In any case, after nearly seventy years grazing animals have returned to the summit of Putney Mountain, and kept it clear and open for the summer of 2014.

## Hawkwatch Report 2014

John Anderson

Volunteers have been monitoring migrating raptors from the Putney Mountain summit for decades. Data is compiled and sent to the Hawk Migration Association of North America, *hmana.org*. Data for Putney can be seen on *putneyvermont.org/hawks/*.

(10 year averages in parentheses)

- Of note - 1 Swainsons
- Turkey vultures - 357 (115)
- Osprey - 131 (185)
- Bald Eagle - 74 ( 50)
- Golden eagle - 6 (6.8)
- Northern Harrier - 76 (58)
- Sharp-shinned - 1560 (1160)
- Cooper's hawk - 176 (110)
- Goshawk - 28 ( 21)
- Red shouldered hawk - 31 (30)
- Broad winged - 2297 (3531)
- Red Tailed - 580 (501)
- Kestrel - 219 (183)
- Merlin - 46 (34)
- Peregrine - 41 (33)
- Rough legged - 1 (3)



Photo: *Swainson's Hawk: Buteo swainsoni Colorado.jpg*  
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<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

Of the 15 species we regularly see Broadwings and Ospreys were greatly underrepresented. Both are September migrants. Rough legs and Golden's are not seen in sufficient numbers to make their numbers statistically meaningful. The Swainson's was only our second sighting in the entire 40 year history of the watch.

All other species were well represented. And, our sheep count was a site best!

## PMA Finances: Challenge and Opportunity

Steve Anderson

2014 was an extraordinarily successful year for our Association. With tremendous public, foundation and state support, we were able to raise well over \$400,000, enabling us to purchase the Hannum-O'Connor parcel on Holland Hill Road, and at the same time add almost \$40,000 to our Endowment/ Reserve Funds. We now own, conserve, and manage a total of 540 acres of undeveloped ridgeline woodlands in Putney, Brookline, and Westminster.

With this growth come increased financial responsibilities for taxes, insurance, land restoration, and outreach programs. For many years we have relied upon new "lifetime" memberships and a gentle year-end appeal to old members, plus income from sales, fundraisers, and our modest endowment, to meet each year's expenses. The time has come to urge all of our 750-odd members to consider yearly contributions to our budget. If each of you gave just a few dollars we would be well on the way to meeting our expenses in 2015. The attached donation form makes this an easy job.

On a larger note we took a good look at our investment strategy last fall and decided to invest the bulk of our assets with the Vermont Community Foundation, an organization which both offers a reasonable rate of return and invests its assets in Vermont non-profits, through loans and grants. The funds placed with the Foundation will be our Endowment Fund and held there permanently. Only the yearly income will be available to us. The remainder of our assets will be placed in a Reserve fund held by Vanguard, to provide a somewhat higher return, and be immediately available in case of emergency.

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ Postcards (4), 1 each of Pete Guenther's lovely photos of the 4 seasons on the reserve @ \$5 \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Grand Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks to Putney Mountain Association**

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

**PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION**

**P.O.BOX 953**

**PUTNEY, VT 05346**

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**PMA ANNUAL MEETING – come one, come all!**

**Sunday, January 25, 2015 - 4:00 PM**

**Putney Community Center, Christian Square**

**Our speaker will be Kimberly Hagen, Grazing Specialist, Center for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont Extension Service.**

Kimberly will discuss the use of livestock and mechanical means to control invasive species, rather than herbicide treatments, when appropriate. If plants we consider to be invasive can provide nourishment to grazing livestock, keeping the populations of these invasive plants from spreading, the benefit for both animals and environment is a good one. How does it work? Kimberly will share a few examples of where she has implemented this work in Vermont. There will be time for discussion and questions about our projects on Putney Mountain - what we are trying to do, what's been accomplished so far, and what's next.

Visit [www.putneymountain.org](http://www.putneymountain.org) for more details.

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