



PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Annual Meeting Announcement

PMA will hold its Annual Meeting virtually this year on **Sunday, January 10, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.**

Zoom link <https://bit.ly/PMA2020Meeting>

More details for meeting on last page.

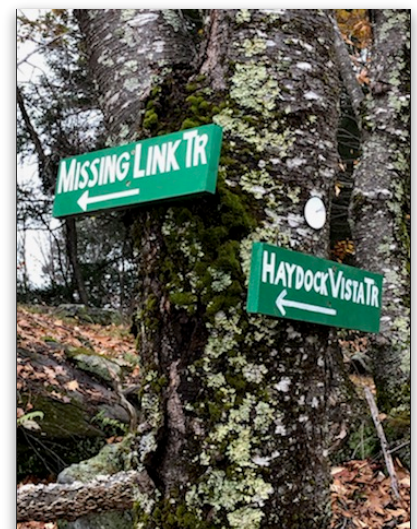
Go paperless! Receive your spring PMA newsletter by email - send a message to putmta@gmail.com or visit putneymountain.org

Greetings Putney Mountain Association members!

It goes without saying that 2020 was an unusual and arduous year for all, but PMA weathered the challenges with patience and resilience. In particular we were pleased to see a marked increase in trail usage, on both established and new trails, bringing home to us the importance of land conservation. The ability to get a breath of fresh air and leave behind for a moment the sadness and worries of the world seems even more important in these times. As you can see from this newsletter we have been pushing ahead with those projects which best support our goal of conserving land for wildlife habitat and public use and enjoyment.

PMA Opens New Missing Links Trail in Dummerston

Once again, you did it! A BIG thank you to all our members and supporters. The recently completed PMA fund-raising effort brought a hearty response from our members, new and old. We raised all of the funds needed to purchase two parcels of undeveloped land in Dummerston. We have closed on one and are targeting closing on the second by the end of the year. A Conservation Easement protecting the two new properties will be jointly held by the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board,



which provided a generous grant for the project. In addition, funding was provided by the Fields Pond Foundation, the Davis Conservation Fund and over 200 private donations. Several public spirited neighbors provided trail easements which will allow the new Missing Links trail to extend south to Dummerston and north toward Putney Mountain, a long-held dream of connecting Prospect Hill to the extended trail system of PMA and the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association.

A big thank you to Roger Haydock who has now designed 5 spectacular trails for PMA!

We are happy to announce the opening of a prominent section of this trail. Laid out by Roger Haydock, the trail was built by a crew of hardy local volunteers who worked through the summer, completing the last stretch in late October. Trail-building will resume in the spring and the full trail to Prospect Hill will be complete by fall 2021. Please contact Richard Fletcher at 387-6017 or rafletch5@gmail.com if you are interested in helping.

You can find the new trailhead at 645 Hague Rd in Dummerston. The trail extends north for about 2 miles gently climbing through hardwood forests, passing several vistas opening to an expansive southern view and continuing onto the west side of the ridge line where the trail winds through stands of hemlocks and ends for now at Vermont's second largest ash tree. You can also explore the southern branch that will eventually connect to Prospect Hill and currently terminates at the high point of the former King parcel 0.6 miles from the trailhead.

The Missing Link project has visions for the future: connecting to Black Mountain and the West River Trail are on the horizon. For this winter we have added a gorgeous section of trail and we are one good season of trail work away from linking up with Prospect Hill. We invite all to explore the trail from our new parking area about 150 feet before the end of Hague road on the left side. Maps and access information are available on our website at putneymountain.org.

Stewardship

At the micro level Stewardship accomplishments year over year seem to vary considerably, but zoom out to a broader view and consistency is apparent. New trails with signage, marking, and mapping make the list, as do trail improvements and



maintenance. For trails, 2020 saw Parsons Cutoff completed as well as Phase One (a major undertaking) of the new venture on Missing Links.

For improvements on existing trails there are two permanent bridges on Beaver Pond Loop and a significant start on turnpike construction for the wet areas on the Main Trail. There are always the ongoing efforts to keep the summit view open, remove downed trees from trails, and address graffiti and other vandalism issues. Perhaps different in 2020 for the pandemic was the need to encourage use of a one-way travel loop for summit visitors which, anecdotally, was fairly well respected. Seemingly also pandemic related was a marked increase in the number of summit visitors compared to previous years. For the most part the hiking public was mask-wearing, socially distanced, and generally respectful of others and of the Mountain. As acquisitions continue, we find a need to put together a cohesive long-range plan for trail maintenance and invasive species control.



Grazing the Invasive Glossy Buckthorn

In May, with the pandemic becoming ever more serious, it seemed impossible to organize volunteer shepherds to tend sheep on the summit this summer. However, with some ingenuity and luck the sheep returned. There were enough trained shepherds from previous years that, with the addition of 4 individually trained new volunteers, we had an ample crew to tend the sheep grazing the summit for the 7th year running.

Sheep breeder David Major, with help from a few volunteers, was able to install a stationary charger for the electric fence, making it possible to contain the sheep more reliably than in previous years. As a result, tending the sheep was easier than ever.

The sheep continue to enjoy eating the invasive buckthorn in preference to anything other than grass or their daily ration of grain, so within the area grazed the buckthorn is progressively weakened. Invasive glossy buckthorn can grow to 20 or 30 feet if allowed to flourish. In addition to crowding out native plants it would make visibility difficult or impossible for visitors to the summit and for the annual Hawk Watch.

In November Kimberly Hagen, grazing specialist at the University of Vermont extension service, came for a look at the grazing site. It was her encouragement in 2014 which prompted us to try grazing as a means of controlling buckthorn. She was pleased to see the results at this point and had some suggestions for going forward including manual trimming of some areas and hand removal in others. Stay tuned for developments.



New Logo - a nod to Hawk Watch



The recent spectacular demise of the beloved Elephant Tree which had graced our logo since the 1990's inspired us to consider creating a new logo. We decided to salute the Putney Mountain Hawk Watch, which has been

providing an accurate and valuable census of raptor migration over the summit every fall since 1974. This year, despite COVID-19, the hardy band of Audubon Society daily watchers identified 14 species, for a total of 8857 birds. Below is a comparison of counts from this year and last.



PMA logo 1998 to 2020



The beloved Elephant Tree; age and fire took their toll

The new logo honors their work and was designed by local artist Briony Morrow-Cribbs. If you love the new logo as much as we do and can't wait to have your hat or shirt emblazoned with a tribute to the raptor survey, keep an eye on the PMA website for availability in the spring.

Hawk Count	Black Vulture	Turkey Vulture	Osprey	Bald Eagle	Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cooper's Hawk	Northern Goshawk	Red-shouldered Hawk	Broad-winged Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk	Rough-legged Hawk	Golden Eagle	American Kestrel	Merlin	Peregrine Falcon	TOTAL
2019	2	331	95	83	59	1075	57	8	27	5721	393	0	6	164	48	22	8091
2020	0	327	103	172	70	1255	72	15	44	5958	552	0	11	187	51	40	8857

Annual Meeting Notice and Voting

PMA will hold its Annual Meeting virtually this year on Sunday, January 10, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

The Zoom link is: <https://bit.ly/PMA2020Meeting> (Link will be posted on our website putneymountain.org)

This will be a brief business meeting (without a speaker) during which we will vote to re-elect board members whose terms are expiring and elect two new board members. In addition, we will vote to ratify changes to the PMA by-laws which will change the length of time board members serve from 2 to 3 years. (See the PMA website for a complete description of the by-law change and election of board members.) We look forward to having an in-person Annual Meeting in 2022.



We are thrilled to introduce two prospective new Board members: **Sam Quintal** and **Linda Renfro**. Sam grew up in a log cabin in Alaska and became the founding violist of the Jasper String Quartet with whom he performed for 17 years. He and his family are new residents of Putney, though his wife spent her early years here. Because of his enjoyment of the PMA trails, he is interested in working on education and outreach for PMA as well as invasive species management. Linda and her husband built a house in Dummerston in the '80's and are currently in the process



of making it their permanent home. She brings 25 years of bookkeeping and accounting experience as well as volunteer work in the non-profit sector. She is interested in participating in PMA's initiatives as well as offering her clerical skills.



Giving to Putney Mountain Association

We are proud of our work to conserve and care for the 16-mile Windmill ridge-line for the benefit of wildlife habitat and public access and recreation. The "we" in that statement could as easily refer to the board, the volunteers, the general membership or the broader community of Putney or Windham County.

Hopefully you feel included in that "we", and take pride and ownership of this incredible resource. The surge in foot traffic on the PMA trails this year, the continued successful sheep grazing, the ongoing hawk watch, and the expanding trail system this year are all markers of success towards our shared mission. With your help we are expanding the vision for what PMA can do. As we expand that vision, we also expand our responsibility and ambition to conserve the lands we manage. Buckthorn and other invasive species threaten the wellbeing of our forests, and trails need continual maintenance and care. Most importantly we always dream of protecting more land, safeguarding this incredible public space for the enjoyment of wildlife and the public alike. Your gifts allow us to think big and take on ambitious new projects. We know there are many important causes to consider in this most unusual year, but we hope you agree that one of the best antidotes for all the sadness and difficulty we have witnessed or experienced this year is to be able to go out and take a walk in the woods. Please visit our website at putneymountain.org or return enclosed envelope with your gift. Thanks for joining in!

Wishing you a healthy and happy 2021!

Warmly,

The Putney Mountain Association Board

PMA Board Members

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John Barnett
Elizabeth Bissell, *Treasurer*
Steve Connor
Hugh Davis
Richard Fletcher
Kai George, *Secretary*
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Noah Hoskins
Libby Mills
Andrew Morrison
Pat Shields, *President*
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