

A Record Season for Hawk Watch

If you hiked up Putney Mountain this fall, you probably saw binocular hawk watchers scanning the skies. Since 1974, from late August until early November, Putney Mountain Hawk Watch has counted and documented migrating raptors. This year, weather, winds, and flight paths contributed to a rewarding and record-setting season. Daily counts ranged from a disappointing zero birds, to an astounding site-record of 6,680 migrating raptors in a single 10-hour day. Every year Broad-winged Hawks are far-and-away the most plentiful bird counted. This year Broad-winged Hawks, Turkey Vultures, and Bald Eagles appeared in record numbers. By season's end the existing site-record total count of 15,971 migrating raptors was shattered by this year's 18,649 birds.

Along with spotting, identifying, and counting migrating raptors, the hawk watchers tallied 2,372 migrating Monarch butterflies.

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
2020	0	327	103	172	70	1255	72	15	44	5958	552	0	11	187	51	40	8857
2021	2	935	161	206	71	1573	95	7	53	14668	573	1	11	211	48	34	18649

New ways to give

The nature of land conservation is that, when the iron is hot, we need a big pile of money to ensure we can preserve pristine habitat and contiguous forest space for all. Your gifts of stock can help save you on taxes and help PMA have the agility it needs to conserve our highest priority parcels. In addition, including PMA in your will or estate plan can have a profound impact on the long-term financial stability and viability of the organization. The idea of land conservation is that it is a permanent arrangement - we hold and steward these lands in perpetuity for the enjoyment of all. Your gift can both enable the expansion and continued responsible management of these areas, and also in many ways make your legacy part of this precious shared resource.

Annual Meeting Announcement

PMA will hold its Annual Meeting virtually this year on **Monday, January 24, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.**

Zoom link bit.ly/PMA2021Meeting

More details for meeting on PMA website.

Go paperless! Receive your spring PMA newsletter by email - visit putneymountain.org and sign up for our mailing list

Putney Mountain merchandise

Show off your love of PMA and support land conservation with shirts and caps sporting our new logo. Visit store here: putneymountain.secure-decoration.com

PMA Board Members

Cat Abbott, *Co-chair*
Steve Anderson
John Barnett
Elizabeth Bissell, *Treasurer*
Steve Connor, *Vice-chair*
Hugh Davis
Richard Fletcher

Kai George, *Secretary*
Hector Galbraith
Adam Gilbert
Geordie Heller, *Co-chair*
Noah Hoskins
Libby Mills
Andrew Morrison

Sam Quintal
Linda Renfro
Pat Shields
Claire Wilson

putneymountain.org
Putney Mountain Association
PO Box 953 Putney, VT 05346



PUTNEY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION, December 2021

NEWSLETTER & APPEAL

Celebrating 75 years of conservation

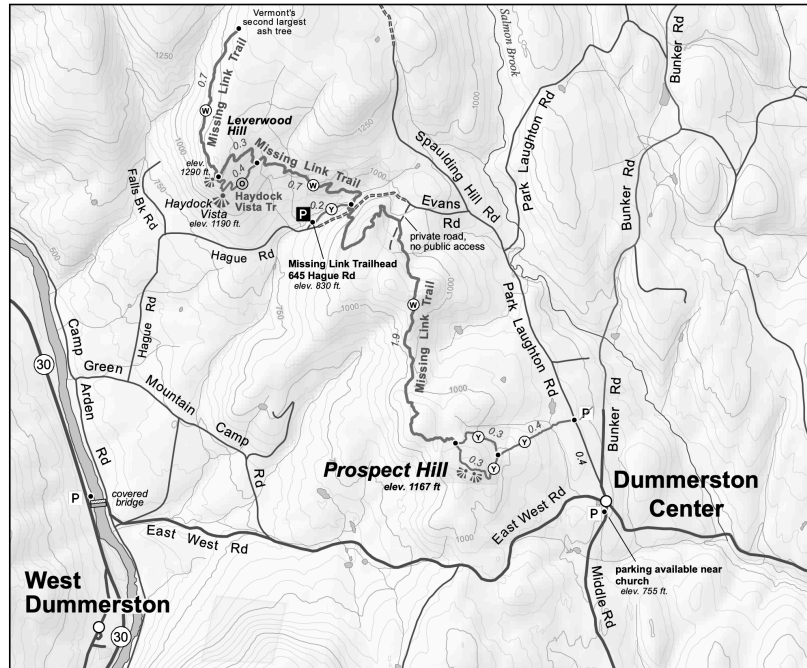
Wild space is always shared

This is the animating idea that drives us to land conservation. Going back centuries, before European concepts of land ownership, this whole amazing continent was a shared public resource, managed by communities for the good of all. It may sometimes seem impossible to get back to the mutual trust that these shared public spaces require. Our present society lives in a fractured land, parceled into lawns and developments but there is still time to change course. There are untouched places still left, and places can be returned to the healthy whims of natural forces. You are part of this effort; your volunteer hours shepherding sheep, your help clearing a trail of a downed limb, directing a fellow hiker, or building a new trail. Your generosity supports our shared vision of land serving the needs of the many, not the few.

The sun casts long shadows over the Green Mountains, seen from the Putney Mountain Summit

75 Years of Putney Mountain Association

It seems like an odd rhyme of history that when the Putney Mountain Association was formed in 1946, the summit was a cow pasture, and now every summer we bring sheep to the summit to graze. The shape, priorities, and scale of what the association stands for have evolved a great deal since then, but the fundamental idea, to preserve public access to extraordinary places and to share in their care and management, has remained unchanged. We've replaced annual chicken-picnics with annual appeals sent to nearly 900 members. We've expanded from an "approximately 35 acre" parcel into over 765 acres of conserved forest land. A dirt road that led to the summit has morphed into a shared 26+ mile network of trails. And annual trash collection has been (mostly) replaced by invasive buckthorn management, which of course, is why the sheep are there.



of PMA's holdings and we hope you can visit them. There remains one final section of trail to complete, the keystone of the missing links, that will connect the northern and southern trail systems. There has been much activity and excitement recently - it is possible that we have secured a way forward, and we will keep you posted as things progress.

The sheep don't quit, and neither do we!

The grazing program completed its 8th season this summer, with two rams from David Major's flock spending what appeared to be a very enjoyable couple of months stationed at the summit. The combined efforts of digging weakened plants out by the roots and cutting the buckthorn back during the off-season resulted in big gains in the area that the sheep are tackling. However we (and the sheep) can do more. Our goal for next season is to have 6 rams for 100 days. This is obviously a big increase and will require a big commitment from our team of dedicated volunteer shepherds. It will also require more fencing, so that we can move the sheep around and graze areas multiple times. Finally, it will need some ingenuity - our current source of water from a neighbor's property will not be available, so we have devised an alternate system. A solar-powered pump will lift water from a spring near the base of the Banning Rd Trail to the Summit, where it can be dispensed to the sheep. If you're thinking this all sounds expensive, you're right - to a certain



Building trails from the past into the future

It was in the early '80s, shortly after Putney Mountain Association had been hastily resurrected to save the summit parcel from a tax sale that the idea of making a trail south to Prospect Hill in Dummerston first arose. Long considered a pipe-dream, it was only recently that this goal started to seem possible. This season marked the completion of the trail south on the Missing Links project completing the connection to Prospect Hill. A very diligent volunteer trail crew completed work in September, which included cutting through several dense thickets of invasive shrubs and vines, as well as constructing a number of bridges over wet, boggy areas. In addition to working toward a connection 40 years in the making, the Missing Links Trails are some of the most picturesque in all

extent. Actually the costs are much less than we had expected but it will be an investment, and with your help we're sure we'll be able to raise the funds we need to continue the vital service the sheep provide.

Claire Wilson - PMA board member 1997-2021

If you have donated to PMA any time over the past 20 + years, chances are you have received a thank you note written and sent by Claire. If you attended a guided walk, visited the sheep on the summit, or received a piece of correspondence at the correct address, these are things Claire accomplished as well. In many ways Claire, who is retiring from the board in January, has been the embodiment of Putney Mountain Association since she joined the board 24 years ago - not flashy, but practical, determined and deeply committed to conservation. This past summer, I had the great pleasure of hiking up to the summit with Claire who passed her 90th birthday some time ago. Her spirit, practicality, and dedication shine through on a short hike or a long board meeting - she has left her mark on every part of PMA and probably every part of Putney too. When she, David Ritchie Libby Mills and Diana Wahle started Green Mountain Spinnery in the early '80s, it was to solve a problem - good yarn was hard to find. Says Libby, "To Claire the enormous challenges never seemed to be insurmountable - she would just dig in, stay the course and make it happen." David reflects "In [Claire's] way of doing things, that word hope isn't meant to be a noun." When Claire was working on the vernal pool monitoring program for PMA in the '90s it was this same determination that helped her bring people on board. Cat Abbott remembers when Claire recruited her to the PMA board; "At the time I was super busy teaching and dorm-heading full time at the Putney School, but somehow Claire talked me into it. I have wonderful memories of helping her with the vernal pool program. Claire coordinated an enthusiastic crew of amphibian supporters who would traipse out to various vernal pools, identify and count egg masses, and record water quality metrics. The monitoring trips inevitably involved biting flies and slippery mud, but Claire made it fun and never had trouble recruiting willing volunteers." Claire is the kind of board member, no, the kind of human we all aspire to be. Kind, assertive, hard-working, dedicated, thoughtful, smart and she won't quit doing something she believes in. We will all miss her contributions to discussions and to this organization, and we have big shoes to fill taking on the many things she excelled at. We are also happy she will still be a phone-call away, and we wish her a very relaxing evening especially on the 4th Monday of every month.

An organization that will last

Putney Mountain Association is at a crossroads. With over 765 acres conserved, we are not a small organization anymore. We're still an entirely volunteer-run organization, and we cherish the connectedness and commitment that instills in our members. However, as we grow, we want to put in place systems and policies that will make our organization sustainable. In addition to the countless hours spent building trails, organizing and presenting summer walks and programs, controlling buckthorn, feeding sheep, observing and cataloguing plants and animals, the board and volunteers of PMA have been hard at work over the past year building a more robust and healthy organization to carry out the work that we do. This has included a formal review of financial and legal policies and procedures, drafting a hunting policy for PMA lands, and hiring a forester to carry out a small pilot of what will grow into a comprehensive assessment of PMA forests. We also carefully considered options for invasive species control at the summit and elsewhere and set up stations for a bird survey to get a sense of biodiversity as linked to different forest habitats. Finally we are modernizing the way we keep records so that the knowledge and experience of people like Claire can be passed more effectively on to the next generation of board members. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we joined an effort to understand and integrate what the lands we steward mean to their original inhabitants and descendants

