



WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER



Putney Mountain: A Haven for Wildlife and People Alike

Putney Mountain has always been a treasured place for human beings – where we greet spring with May Day dancers, marvel at summer sunsets, and witness thousands of migrating birds each fall. Putney Mountain is quickly becoming an essential place for non-human beings. Species in North America are adapting to warmer temperatures by moving approximately 11 miles north and 36 feet higher in elevation every decade. Our ridgeline, then, is not just a scenic place but a vital sanctuary in our region's ecosystem.

Thanks to community support, we're now working to conserve a key parcel, Fall Brook, to strengthen this conservation corridor. Your year-end gift plays a critical role in protecting this land, as well as enhancing wildlife habitat, and maintaining trails. Here's an example of how you can help:

- \$500+: Improve habitat, summit views, and update solar chargers for grazing.
- \$250: Support wildlife by tackling noxious weeds and nonnative plants.
- \$100: Help maintain the Summit and other trails.
- \$75: Connect kids and families to nature through programs and outreach.

Every gift, no matter the size, makes a difference. As a community-supported group, we depend on your generosity. Together, we can ensure that Putney Mountain continues to be a place we all love. Thank you for helping us protect and care for this extraordinary place.

Meg

– Meg Mott, Chair, Putney Mountain Association

P.S. Many find that donating gifts of stock saves on taxes and is easy to do. You can do that too. Please visit our website or contact me at putmta@gmail.com.



Our website includes a number of ways you can continue your support of land conservation, whether financial, volunteering, or both. Please scan the code below with your phone camera to learn more, or visit putneymountain.org.



IN MEMORY OF SERVICE

For decades, Steve Anderson and Jacquie Walker were the heart and soul of Putney Mountain Association. To commemorate their vision, their service, and their determination, we recently installed a granite bench along the Summit Trail. The bench reminds all of us to slow down and sit and take in the beauty of the woods. Our progress is ensured when we build upon the strengths of our ancestors.

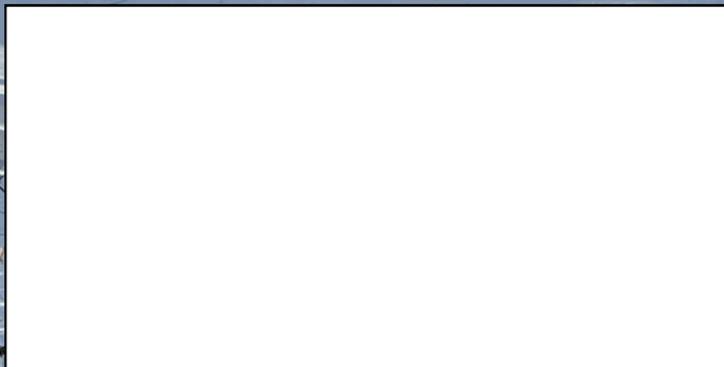
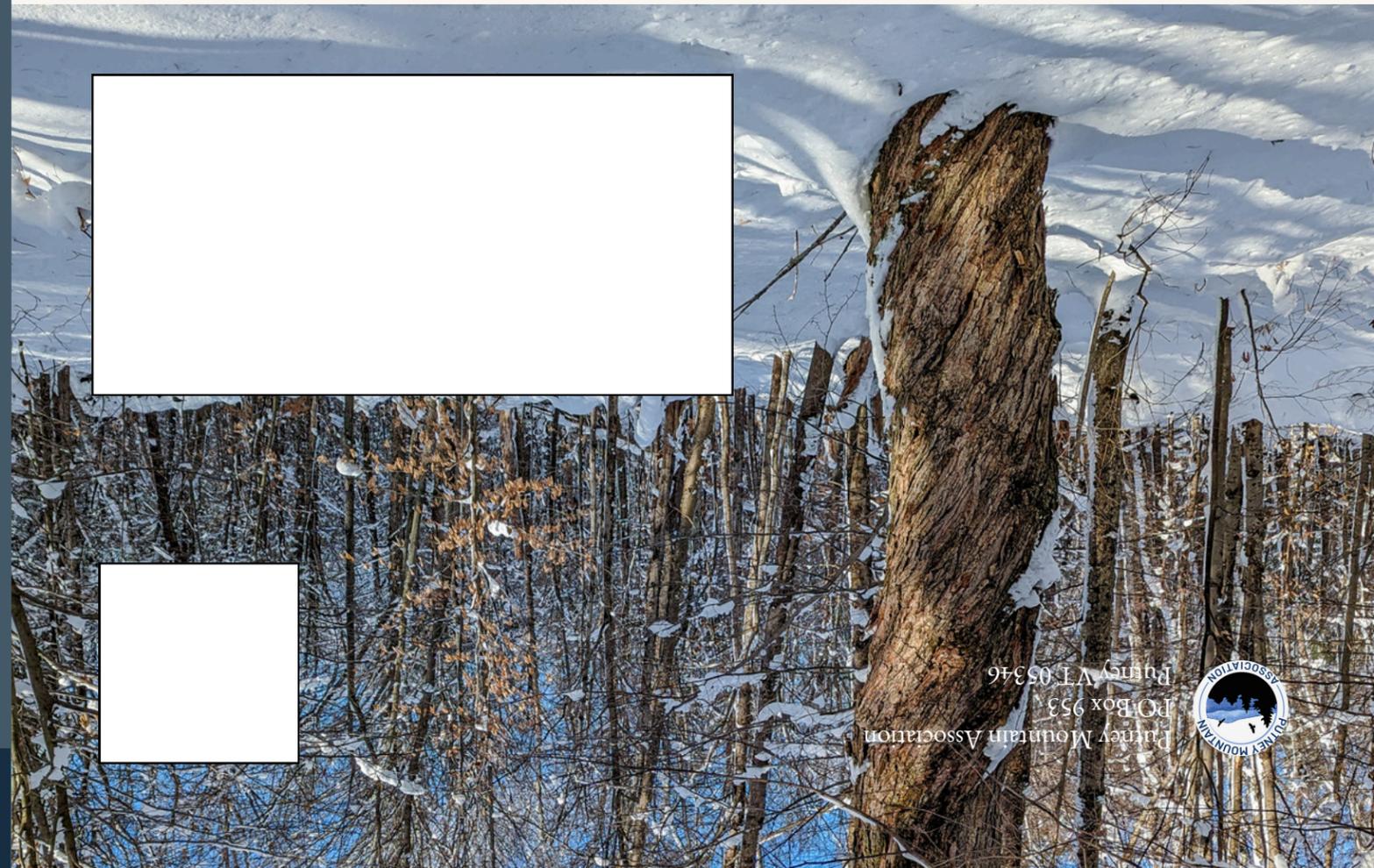


ANNUAL MEETING

We invite all PMA members to attend our annual meeting. Come hear Jeff Nugent, Senior Planner at Windham Regional Commission, paint a "geographic portrait" of the Mountains of Windham County.

January 12, 2025 at 4pm

Putney Community Cares
54 Kimball Hill Road



Putney Mountain Association
PO Box 953
Putney VT 05346





50 YEARS OF HAWK WATCHING

SUMMIT BUCKET LIST

Our Most Traveled Trail

The trail to the summit of Putney Mountain is the most-traveled trail in Windham County. Hawk watchers, through hikers, and families looking for a view and a place to fly kites put a lot of wear and tear on the earth. To handle that traffic, the re-routing project required a lot of crushed stone. Before Zach could commandeer his dream machine, he had to master the Canycom wheelbarrow. The Canycom moves on caterpillar treads, carrying the crushed stone over rocks and roots and then dumping its contents in a pile. While the physical demands of maneuvering mechanized wheelbarrows full of crushed stone were initially challenging, Zach persevered. "I got better at it, and after several volunteer shifts, found myself knowledgeable enough to train others."

Zach was particularly grateful to Adam Gilbert of Tahawus Trails, who provided the equipment and the guidance. Adam "made the project happen and trained us in the process."

From Dad to Wheelbarrow Whiz

Zach was thrilled to develop skills with heavy equipment. "I've been especially grateful for the time away from my computer," he observed. "Operating the mini excavator was just as fun as I expected." And mastering the art of a heavily laden, mechanized wheelbarrow was gratifying. It also won him some points as a dad.

This year when the Grammar School took its annual Hawk Watch Hike, some of the students came across a familiar face. "I showed them how the Canycom worked and even snuck them down the unfinished trail for a behind-the-scenes look at the project," Zack recounted. "They were so wide-eyed and curious, and had so many good questions about trail design and water flow. It was a real joy to share the in-progress project with them."

We are grateful for volunteers like Zach who embody the values and commitment that make PMA a thriving force in land conservation. "I believe that we need to leave the world better than we found it," says Zach.

When Zach Yeskel first accompanied his daughter's second-grade class to the Hawk Watch, he didn't anticipate what PMA could offer him. Zach and his family had recently moved from Brooklyn to Putney. "We have two girls, aged 7 and 10, who have really thrived here," Zach shares. The move to Putney allowed his family to trade "our concrete jungle playgrounds" for the magic of the woods.

Four years later, Putney Mountain offered Zach a very different sort of experience. When he read about the re-routing project on the summit, he immediately volunteered. "My friend Matt [Cherry] had posted about the PMA project, and he was encouraging and helpful when I asked if he'd show me the ropes," Zach explained. The timing coincided with a transition in his job. What really grabbed his attention was the chance to operate a mini excavator.



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A Sense of Purpose

Frankie Knibb, a volunteer for nearly 30 years, described her experience as "a privilege and pleasure that enriches me every day." She highlighted the diverse community that gathers around a shared interest in hawks, attracting visitors from other hawk watches and curious hikers alike. Joanne Russo, a core volunteer for 15 years, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the broader impact and sense of purpose their work provides. These hawk watchers are tied into an international community. Many of the birds counted in Putney will be counted again in Veracruz, Mexico.

A Banner Year

This year was a banner year for Putney Mountain with a remarkable 16,202 broad-winged hawks counted. A westward shift in wind patterns redirected more birds to Windmill Ridge, giving our local chapter a higher count than the Pack Monadnock chapter, which usually breaks all the records. The total count for all raptors and vultures seen from Putney Mountain was a record-breaking 19,428. Each and every one of those birds was counted by a member of Putney Mountain Hawk Watch. For ten weeks every year, between six and ten hours a day, the hawk watchers, with their folding chairs and spotting scopes, keep on counting.

If you're interested in experiencing the hawk watch, plan a visit to Putney Mountain between Sept. 1 and Nov. 10 next year. Volunteers are ready to welcome you, offering opportunities to learn about birds and life itself.

Hawk watching on Putney Mountain began in 1974 when the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) encouraged birders statewide to count hawks at their favorite local spots. Local birders responded enthusiastically, discovering that Putney Ridge was an ideal location. In the early 1990s, Alma and Waldo Beals along with Marshall Wheelock established a consistent presence on the mountain. After Waldo's passing in 2002, John Anderson took over record-keeping. Today, John, along with Candy Hess, Joanne Russo, and Terri Armata, lead the official counts, supported by 10-15 dedicated volunteer observers who ensure comprehensive data collection every season. It's one thing to watch hawks and another thing entirely to capture with scientific precision the actual migration. With the use of spotting scopes, watchers reliably count the thousands of raptors that pass over Putney Mountain each autumn.

