

SUMMIT VIEW

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Winter 2018

EYES TO THE SKY

There have been some noteworthy events happening that are out of this world and Mount A continues to be a great place to capture visual accounts!

The first was a possible fireball, which is defined as a meteor brighter than the planet Venus, that lit up the skies on Tuesday, December 26th at 5:52pm. This was captured on the Mount A webcam and generated interest on social media, local and national news outlets and even NASA!

Next, there was the Supermoon on the first day of the new year. A supermoon happens when a full moon is also at or near its closest point in its orbit around Earth. Although the difference is hard to spot, they appear a little brighter and closer than normal full moons. This coupled with the “moon illusion” (when the moon and sun look larger near the horizon than they do high up in the sky due to size/depth perception in the brain) made the moonrise spectacular. Not only that, but the timing of this supermoonrise (4:13pm) coincided with the sunset (4:17pm). This provided a unique viewing experience to those brave enough to battle the bitter cold winds during the recent arctic freeze at the summit.

Feel like you missed out? No worries! You have another chance to see something from the celestial stage in the coming weeks. On Wednesday, January 31st there will be a full Super Blue Blood Moon. “Super” - because it will also be at or near its closest point to Earth. “Blue” - because it will be the second full moon in the month. This only happens every two and half years or so. “Blood” - because it will take on a reddish glow during a total lunar eclipse (only visible as a partial eclipse to us here in Maine). A lunar eclipse is when a full Moon lines up perfectly with the Earth and the Sun. As a result, the Earth’s shadow blocks most of the light from the Sun, which would normally reflect off the Moon. In the Eastern United States, this will be visible as a Partial Eclipse as the moon sets with the best viewing during a ten minute window that morning from 6:48am until the moonsets at 6:59am on Jan. 31st. Unfortunately for us, most of the eclipse will occur after it is below the horizon and out of view. The summit vantage point will maximize viewing opportunities. To get more details on the timing and how the eclipse will look in our area check out this site: <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/in/usa/wells>

WINTER BIRDS

You will start to notice different “gangs” of birds around your feeders during the winter, and they are made up of a mix of species that tend to fly in the same circles. Below are a few of the most common species and some fun facts about them.

Tufted Titmouse - Tufted Titmice look large among the small birds that come to feeders, due to their large head and eye, thick neck, and full bodies. The pointed crest and stout bill help identify titmice even in silhouette. Soft silvery gray feathers above and white below, with a rusty or peach-colored wash down the flanks and a black patch just above the bill are telltale markings of these beautiful birds.

Black Capped Chickadee - While considered “cute” because of their curiosity and oversized round head, chickadees are tough little cookies. The chickadee’s black cap and classic “chick-a-dee-dee-dee” call, along with its habit of investigating everything, including bird feeders, make it one of the first birds that people learn.

Dark Eyed Junco - The Dark-eyed Junco is a dark gray medium-sized sparrow with a rounded head, a short, stout pink bill and a fairly long, conspicuous tail with outer tail feathers that periodically flash open, particularly in flight. These birds spend much of their time on the ground and are generally in large flocks.

White Breasted Nuthatch - White-breasted Nuthatches are gray-blue on the back, with a frosty white face and underparts. The black or gray cap and neck frame the face and make it look like this bird is wearing a hood. White-breasted Nuthatches are agile birds that upside down along trunks and large branches, while chattering away.

You will also see many other species intermingled in these flocks including cardinals, a variety of woodpeckers, and more. If you choose to feed the birds, be sure to feed responsibly and clean your feeder once a week with a mix of bleach to water – 1 to ten parts, allowing it to dry completely before filling it and placing it back out again. Enjoy your birds!



Grandfather Sun and the Dark Days of Winter – A Native American Story



For many indigenous North American people, winter is the season for telling stories. It is a dark and foreboding season that for millions of years has inspired myth and folklore, celebration, and respect among all living things.

After the longest night of the year – the Winter Solstice on December 21st, the nights begin to shorten minute by minute until mid-June when the days become longer than the nights. But, according to Native American Wampanoag storyteller, “Manitonquat”, Grandfather Sun didn’t always return and the winter nights just kept getting longer and longer. The nights became so long that when the sun came up in the morning, the people would rush to get dressed then run outside only to see that the sun was already setting. So that was the end of their day!

“How are we going to go hunting and fishing to feed our families,” the people asked? “What about the planting of corn, beans, and squash in the spring? How will we do that?” they lamented.

Well, they decided to talk to Grandfather Sun to see what was wrong. Now since they lived in the East, as we do, the sun comes up out of the ocean in the morning. So, the people waded out into the ocean and as soon as the sun popped up they all began to ask questions. But they didn’t get a chance to say much because the sun dropped right out of sight and it was dark again. This went on for three days until one wise Elder decided to make a fish net out of the long Sugar Kelp that grew in the ocean. All the people helped

and the next day, they whirled their gigantic net around and around, and threw it right into the sun at his coming up place.

They pulled the net tighter and tighter until Grandfather Sun said, “Hey! What’s going on here? What is this thing tied all around me? Please take it off!”

“Not until you promise to listen to us”, shouted the Elder. “We’ve been trying to speak with you for three days and you keep disappearing. Our people are very worried that you’re not here very much. What’s up with that, huh?”

Grandfather Sun said, “You know, it’s funny you should mention that, because those people don’t even bother to get out of bed when I get here in the morning. They don’t say “hello” to me, or talk to me, and they never say “thank you” or “good-bye” in the evening. So I’ve been spending more time in the Southern Hemisphere where I feel appreciated.”

Now the people felt ashamed that they had never considered the sun’s feelings. So they built a huge fire and threw little bundles of tobacco into it, which is their way of offering thanks. The next day, as the sun came up, they all said, “Thank you, Grandfather, for coming back, for giving us another day of sunlight.” Throughout the day the people would look up at Grandfather Sun, smile at him, speak with him, and even told him stories. At day’s end, they all gathered together up on a hill and waved good-bye, thanking him, and reminding him to hurry back again tomorrow.

Well, Grandfather Sun liked that very much. He started staying longer and longer until about mid-June when he thought he’d spend more time with the folks on the other side. But he never again went back to the way it was before because the people continued to tell this story. And because being thankful every single day, became their way of life.

Wampanoag means “Easterners” or literally “People of the Dawn.” Wampanoag, Algonquian-speaking, North American Indians, who formerly occupied parts of what are now the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, including Martha’s Vineyard and adjacent islands.

Image Credits: Painting with the campfire and storytelling circle of Native Americans: “The Storyteller” Painting by Martin Pate, Newnan, GA. Courtesy Southeast Archeological Center, National Park Service www.pateart.com <http://www.nps.gov/history/seac/index.htm> “The Storyteller”

Painting of Native American with drum: “Inside Out” by Frank Polson - Algonquin, Long Point First Nations, QC. A Native North American Algonquin, born in Ville-Marie, Quebec in 1952, Frank Polson is a member of the Long Point First Nation (Northwestern Quebec).



Vernal Pools in Winter



Vernal pools are shallow depressions that usually contain water for only part of the year. Vernal pools represent an important wetland type because of their ecological importance as habitat for a number of rare species in the state. In the Northeast, vernal pools may fill during the fall and winter as the water table rises. Rain and snow melt contribute water during the spring, and the pools typically dry out by mid to late summer. Species that require this habitat in order to survive and reproduce are known as obligate vernal pool species. Maine’s obligate vernal pool species include wood frogs, spotted and blue-spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp.

Unlike their amphibian neighbors, who will eventually move upland, fairy shrimp spend their entire life cycle in vernal pools. They have adapted to constantly changing environmental conditions. At the end of summer, mature females produce special eggs with thicker shells, capable of surviving long periods of drying and freezing. These eggs fall to the bottom of the pool and will hatch in late winter or early spring, when water returns. Fairy shrimp eggs have been known to remain dormant for up to 15 years, and can repopulate a pool of water within a matter of hours.

Species Spotlight

Eastern Red Cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*



It would be easy to pass by this unassuming evergreen, but taking a closer look at the tall, long limbs of the eastern red cedar, aka eastern juniper, can yield spectacular results. Its dense, scaly needles and small berries provide both cover and food in the bare winter landscape, and several species of birds and mammals take refuge in its branches. Songbirds that are known to rely on juniper include many species of waxwings, finches, juncos, chickadees, grosbeaks, flickers, bluebirds, and jays. By digesting the berries and defecating seeds, these birds improve the germination of the seeds threefold!



Juniper isn't just for the birds, though! The dried berries are included as a spice in many European dishes, and are famously added when distilling gin to create a botanical flavor profile. The red heartwood of the trunk is very fragrant and is often used to line chests and closets, and the oil from the wood can be extracted and used in homeopathic remedies.

Fun fact: Bohemian and cedar waxwings are famous for their appetite for juniper and can consume as many as 900 berries in an hour!

Winter Clothing Guide for Hiking Comfort and Safety

When hiking in winter, it is especially important to stay hydrated, eat enough calories and avoid excess loss of body heat in order to stay comfortable and safe. Think of your body in zones—feet, legs/lower body, torso, hands, head and neck which all need their own particular method of retaining heat.

Experts recommend wearing (upper and lower) – a base layer next to skin (never cotton), an insulating layer (wool, fleece or down) and an outer layer (waterproof/windproof and breathable with sealed seams and zippers). Depending on temperature, wind chill, elevation, etc. you may need to add to or adjust these layers accordingly.

Insulated boots and a couple of layers of socks are also recommended; be careful to avoid over layering where clothing or footwear becomes too tight or restrictive of movement; these can cause reduction of your circulation, leading to increased chances of cold related discomfort or injury.

Warm, secure head/neck and hand protection are a must as these areas experience great heat loss potential and susceptibility to frostbite. There are many choices available, but using a close fitting wool, polyester or fleece base layered with a waterproof/windproof covering offers the greatest protection.

If your feet and/or hands are feeling cold, have something to eat and drink; adding extra head protection and a torso layer can help too.

Excessive sweating during exertion and exposure to moisture should be minimized; wet skin and clothing can rapidly increase body heat loss through evaporation. Always have extra warm, dry layers to change into if necessary.

For a comprehensive list of winter clothing layers from Joe Lentini, professional mountaineering guide, climbing instructor, certified EMT and experienced leader for the New Hampshire Mountain Rescue Service, visit: <http://www.climbwithjoe.com/winter-mteering-eq-list.html>

Also, see the Appalachian Mountain Club article about hypothermia warning signs: <https://www.outdoors.org/articles/amc-outdoors/warning-signs-of-hypothermia-know-your>



Joe Lentini

Upcoming Guided Programs and Adventures:

Making Tracks with Wildlife

Saturday, January 20th, 10AM - 12PM

What happened here? Whose footprint is that? Join the Center for Wildlife and Mount Agamenticus to answer these questions and more! Following an environmental education program including live animal ambassadors from the Center for Wildlife, we will take a hike and identify the tracks of our local wildlife as well as the evidence of several telltale wildlife encounters! By recognizing the wing-prints of an owl catching its prey, or the midden left over by a red squirrel's snack, we can learn so much about our wildlife's



winter habits! We will also practice making our own tracks and seeing how our actions look in the fresh fallen snow! Open to all ages, moderate hike. Author Lyn Smith will be joining us for a reading of her book, *Porcupine's Promenade* as well!

Seeking Sweethearts

Saturday, February 3rd, 5:30 - 7:30PM

Join us for a fun owl courtship and nesting program followed by a snowshoe (or hike) owl prow! This is the perfect pre-Valentine's Day event connecting friends and families with Mt. A's natural world while promoting outdoor physical activity and good health during a time of year when we may all need extra motivation coming out of our own hibernation! The environmental education program in the lodge with the Center for Wildlife's live owl education ambassadors is open to all ages; hike recommended for 10+ (or parental discretion).



Registration is required for all programs. Your donation of \$7 makes programs like this possible! To register, email Katie at fellow@thecenterforwildlife.org.

Friends of Mt. Agamenticus Mission: To establish Mt. A as a beacon for understanding the need to actively preserve our natural resources; guiding our community to explore the relationships between people and nature.

To sign up for a workday, or to learn about additional Mt. A Conservation Program opportunities, please visit our website: agamenticus.org or contact the Conservation Office at 207-361-1102.



Newsletter written and designed by the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus. Scan here to Like Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region on Facebook!



Beginner's Guide to Hiking Mount Agamenticus in the Winter



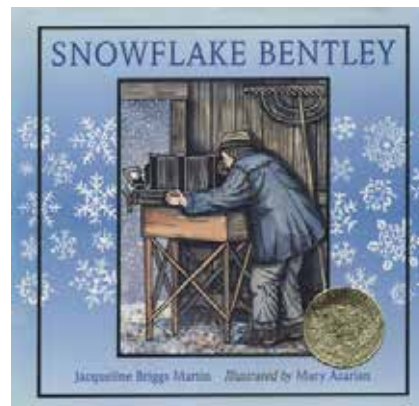
The snow, ice and cold of winter have arrived but that does not mean the hiking season has to be over. With planning and proper preparation, a winter hike can be a safe and enjoyable experience. Please keep the following in mind when planning an outing:

- Check the Weather. Look specifically for **Precipitation, Wind Speed and Daylight Hours.**
- Start Small and Start Early. Be reasonable about the distance and difficulty of the trail. While it may be easy to hike 10 miles in summertime conditions, you may run into ice or deep snow on the same trail in the winter.
- Have Safety Gear. Put these in your backpack: 1st Aid Kit, Trail Map, Compass, Multi-Tool, Hand Warmers, Full Water Bottle, Granola Bars and a Headlamp.
- Crampons/Snowshoes. For icy trails such as Sweet-fern and Vulture's View, use crampons, which are a traction device that is attached to footwear to improve mobility. For snow over 4 inches, use snowshoes which distribute weight so you don't sink in the snow.
- Use the Buddy System. Hike with a friend and make sure to tell another of your hiking plans. Remember to also let them know when you have returned from the trail safely.
- Wintertime Navigation. Use Trail Blazes, which are the rectangular paint markers found on the trees on the trail route. The trail map will indicate the blaze color of the path you choose. Distance between blazes varies, however if you have gone as much as a quarter mile without seeing a blaze, STOP. Retrace your steps back to find the last blaze. After a new snow, or on more remote trails within the management area you may find that trail blazes are the only way to be certain you are on the correct path.
- Hot Tea or Cocoa. Having an insulated thermos of a hot drink will warm you up and provide a nice break.

Follow the Winter Story Walk™ featuring *Snowflake Bentley*

The Story Walk™ program combines the benefits of physical activity, time outdoors in nature, literacy and family time by taking children's books and posting them, in pieces, along a recreational path or hiking trail. Discover this winter's feature at Mount A: *Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and illustrated by Mary Azarian. This book tells the story of Vermont farmer Wilson Bentley, who devoted his life developing a revolutionary technique of micro-photography to capture the intricate details of single flakes of snow.

"The average dairy farmer gets up at dawn because he has to go to work in the cow yard. I get up at darn, too. But it is because I want to find some leaf, hung with dew; or a spider web which the dew has made into the most delicate ropes of pearls ... I take my camera with me, get down on my knees in the wet grass, and photograph these exquisite bits of nature. Because I do this I can show these lovely things to people who never would have seen them without my help. They will get their daily quart of milk, all right. Other farmers will attend to that. But I think I am giving them



something which is just as important." - W.A. Bentley
To find this story, begin your walk at the base parking lot (where Mountain Road meets Ring Trail) and follow the pages along the western side of the Ring Trail (left at first fork) to Witch Hazel Trail, and finish near the summit. Enjoy!