



# SUMMIT VIEW

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Spring 2018



Jonathan Mays

Blue Spotted Salamander



Patrick Zephyr

Tree Frog

## What's the BIG deal about BIG night?

Every year, during one of the first warm, rainy nights of the spring season, wood frogs and salamanders begin the migration to vernal pools to breed. That evening is referred to as The Big Night. During the first warm rains of spring amphibians, frogs and salamanders, migrate from their upland forest habitat to vernal pools. Many amphibian species require both wetlands and forests for survival. They spend most of the year in the forest, hiding under logs and leaf litter. But in spring they make an epic journey to mate and lay eggs in an aquatic environment. Many animals will return to the place they were hatched to lay their eggs year after year.

The safest and most popular place to lay eggs is in vernal pools. These are temporary wetlands which provide a fish-free environment, making it relatively safe from predation. Vernal pools appear in the spring when depressions in forests fill with melting snow and rains. Many will last throughout spring and into summer, giving amphibians enough time to hatch out of their eggs and grow enough to make their own journey into the forests. Unfortunately, vernal

pools are not the most reliable breeding spots. They aren't always the safe haven amphibians need to survive and thrive. During especially dry springs and summers vernal pools will dry out before eggs have a chance to hatch. The biggest threat to vernal pools comes from human activity. These pools only appear in the spring, making it difficult to make informed decisions when it comes to development which it is why it is so important to be conscious of the different factors that changing seasons bring when development is necessary.

Want to help? Pay attention to the weather and the amphibian road traffic. Wearing a headlamp and reflective gear, you can safely help our amphibian's cross on Big Night, and throughout the year. Also, if you participate on the town level of government, helping to guide thoughtful stewardship of land and development of lands that we share with our wild neighbors. As a citizen scientist you can gather data for environmental studies to provide signs alerting the public to seasonal crossing by wildlife as well.

Get out there and enjoy!

## RESPONSIBLE BIRD FEEDING

Feeding wild birds is an enjoyable pursuit for millions of us, but a few simple steps will provide a better, healthier experience for our feathered friends.

Situate feeders and water stations so they are not too far from shelter (thick shrubs, low branching trees, etc.), but where predators can't easily reach the birds; avoid proximity to windows that frightened birds might accidentally hit as they scatter.

Regular and thorough cleaning of feeders, water containers and areas around them is an absolute must to avoid spreading diseases among bird populations; these stations attract species that don't normally gather together thereby increasing the possibility of disease transmission.

Our expert friends at Center for Wildlife recommend scrubbing feeders and water containers every two weeks using stiff brushes, soap, hot water and 10% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly and air dry completely before refilling; clean up husks and debris frequently from around and under feeders to prevent diseases from spreading in ground feeding birds and reduce growth of mold or fungus.

Research food types and their feeder styles; use one feeder per food type; install in the manner recommended for the bird species each feeder will attract; buy fresh, premium bird food (fillers in "bargain" brands will be discarded by most birds); and store food in secure metal containers.

Consider landscaping with native trees, shrubs and plants that birds, insects and animals naturally feed upon and eliminate pesticides/fertilizers to provide a sustainable food web in your own back yard!

These tips will help avian and human participants to enhance their experience.



Carrie Coltrane Photography

# Plants for Wildlife Habitat & Conservation Landscaping



Joe-Pye Weed

**B**irds and wildlife don't just randomly appear in any given area! They're there because of favorable habitat. What makes the most favorable habitats for our local species? Native plants! Native plants are adapted to local soil, rainfall and temperature conditions and because of this, will grow with minimal use of water, fertilizer, and pesticides (which is good news for our watersheds).

Plant function and structure is more important than appearance when it comes to conservation landscaping, so it's best not to base your planting decisions on looks only. To attract the most wildlife, you need a variety of native trees, shrubs, groundcover, vines and wildflowers, many of which will provide both food and shelter (via Birdzilla.com).

## **Plant This**

If you want to invite wildlife to your property, consider some of the following plants when planning your next landscaping project (based on recommendations for Maine habitats from the WindStar Wildlife Institute and Maine.gov):

Trees: Red, Sugar, Rock, Mountain and Swamp (Goosefoot) Maple; Yellow, Paper and Gray Birch; White and Northern Red Oak; Green and White Ash; Bigtooth and Quaking Aspen; White and Black Spruce; White Pine; White Cedar; Eastern Hemlock

Shrubs: Downy (Shadbush) and Allegheny Serviceberry; Flowering Dogwood; American Hazelnut; Bush Honeysuckle; Winterberry; Northern Bayberry; Pussy Willow; Highbush Blueberry; Highbush Cranberry; Nannyberry

Wildflowers: New England and New York Aster; Columbine; Jack-in-the-pulpit; Joe-Pye Weed; Milkweed; Marsh Marigold; Blue Flag; Solomon's Seal; Foam Flower; Wild Oats

Vines and Groundcover: Fox Grape; Cranberry; Lowbush Blueberry; Wintergreen; Creeping Juniper; Bunchberry; Bearberry, Running Serviceberry; Virginbower; American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*); Partridgeberry

## **Not That**

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension recommends avoiding these non-native invasive plants (via <http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2500e/>):

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)  
Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)  
Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)  
Burningbush (*Euonymus alatus*)  
Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)  
Smooth and common buckthorn (*Frangula alnus* and *Rhamnus cathartica*)  
Non-native honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.)  
Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicari*)

# Tips From the Trail

## Three simple tips to help protect trails

- 1. Wait until trail surface has firmed up. Do more by doing less!** Activities like biking and running have a higher impact during mud season. Bike tires sink into the mud, leaving deep ruts and causing water to pool up. Running impacts the trail more than walking because of the force of your body's weight coming down on the trail.
- 2. Walk single file and in the middle of the trail.** Bring footwear to match trail conditions. Stick to rocks whenever possible and go through, not around, muddy sections to help preserve the natural environment of the trail. Going around muddy areas widens the trail, causes erosion, and negatively impacts tree roots and vegetation.
- 3. Get involved!** Become a Trail Adopter or volunteer for a Community Work Day. The best and most needed time to get out and start caring for trails is in the spring. Clean up downed branches/trees and clean out drainages so that water moves more quickly and efficiently off trail.

# Commemorative Bench Fundraiser

**A** limited number of resting areas were installed along the new 1-mile Big A Universal Access Trail, creating a unique opportunity to sponsor your own stone bench. There are currently only 3 sites left! If you would like to honor a friend, celebrate an event, or preserve your legacy- now is the time! Can you envision it? A place to stop, rest, contemplate and take in the scenic vistas or quiet beauty of Mount Agamenticus. Your own lasting gift to the community.

Attractive yet rustic stone benches are durable, fit in well with the summit landscape and will provide important resting and observation areas that are sure to enhance visitor experiences.



An optional 2" x 8" bronze plaque with a short inscription can be recessed into the front face of the stone. (Inscriptions will be a maximum of three lines and 18 characters per line- including letters and spaces). All language must be preapproved.

Sponsored Big A Benches are \$2,500. Other than the cost of the bench, installation and engraving, all proceeds go toward the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program - the hub for stewardship formed to create and carry out management plans that sustain the area's great diversity of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

Contact the Conservation Office to discuss your options and complete an application today. Call 207-361-1102 or email [Robin@agamenticus.org](mailto:Robin@agamenticus.org).



## Species Spotlight Fiddlehead Fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris*



As the weather warms and we find ourselves itching to get outside after a long winter, there are certain signs that spring is indeed on its way. Crocuses, snow fleas, hyperactive squirrels and birds all give us hope that soon the cold will be gone. Along with these the beautiful fiddleheads of our local ferns peak up from the muddy forest floor and will soon unfurl their large feathery boughs. Named for their resemblance to the scroll at the top of a fiddle, these little sprouts were traditionally harvested in the Northeast by the Maliseet, Mi'kmac and Penobscot peoples and were introduced to Acadian settlers. Fiddleheads are still a part of local cuisine in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, and are enjoyed steamed, boiled, sautéed or in soups. Harvesting should be left to the experts, however, as not all fiddleheads are created equal and the fiddleheads of some fern species, notable the bracken fern, are toxic if not cooked properly.

## Step Away from that Fiddlehead! *Message from the Friends of Mount A*

We would like to take this opportunity to discuss the “growing” interest in foraging for and harvesting of wild edible and medicinal plants. While the Mt. A Friends encourage all of our visitors to learn more about the wonderful plants that surround them, we must ask that our visitors follow the landowner guidelines and NOT pick or harvest any plants, flowers, leaves, etc. from the Mt. Agamenticus Conservation Region. The mountain hosts over 40,000 visitors per year, and while a few fiddleheads, or other plants, may not seem like a lot for one person to pick, the mountain would soon be barren if everyone did this. Additionally, the mountain supports many endangered species and rare habitats that are incredibly fragile and vulnerable to disturbance. We ask all of our visitor to please respect our “Leave No Trace” philosophy so that the beauty of Mt. Agamenticus may be here for generations of people and wildlife to come.

To learn more about the seven principles of the Leave No Trace program and how to enjoy our natural world in a sustainable way that avoids human-created impacts please visit [lnt.org](http://lnt.org).



## Spring Pools *by Robert Frost*

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect  
The total sky almost without defect,  
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,  
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,  
And yet not out by any brook or river,  
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds  
To darken nature and be summer woods -  
Let them think twice before they use their powers  
To blot out and drink up and sweep away  
These flowery waters and these watery flowers  
From snow that melted only yesterday.

## Upcoming Programs & Events

### Big A 50 K

**Saturday, May 7th, 7:30AM start (heavy rain date May 6th)**

Local runners and volunteers host this annual event to benefit trail maintenance at Mount A! The course is single track and ATV trails in the Mount Agamenticus Conservation area with moderate to technical footing. A free cookout after the race is an important social part of the event and is an opportunity to relax with new and old friends, and enjoy the wonderful 360° views from the summit. For more information and to register please visit <http://www.bigA50k.com/>

### Breakfast with Birds

**Saturday, May 19th, 9-11:30AM**

Shed that winter jacket, feel the warmth of the sun, smell the emerging flowers, watch those critters scurry and listen to their calls. Join educators and animal ambassadors from the Center for Wildlife for a casual outdoor breakfast on the summit to learn about local wildlife including native birds and how to identify them in the wild. Then, test your new skills on a hike around the trails at Mount Agamenticus as we search for birds and other indicators of the changing season. Finish up your morning with a trip to the Center for Wildlife and a behind the scenes tour of the baby bird room! Open to all ages, moderate hike. Your donation of \$7/person makes this program possible. Space is limited and advance registration is required. To reserve your spot please email [kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org](mailto:kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org).



### Self-Guided Community Work Day

**Saturday, May 19th, 9AM - 12:30PM**

Join us for the first trail workday of the season. This year you will be given a trail map and directions for an assigned route to follow. After a fun morning of hiking, monitoring, litter pick up, and some light trail maintenance, you will report back to the summit to exchange information. Please bring work gloves, sturdy shoes, and snacks. And please register in advance by emailing [dradatz@yorkmaine.org](mailto:dradatz@yorkmaine.org)

### National Trails Day and Community Work Day

**Saturday, June 2nd, 9AM - 12:30PM**

Join us in celebrating National Trails Day and the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act! The first Saturday every June is designated American Hiking Society's National Trails Day® (NTD) in the United States. Each year, more than a million hikers, bikers, equestrians, and others take part in nationwide events to celebrate America's trails. We'll celebrate NTD on Mt. Agamenticus with a Community Work Day and re-launch of the Adopt-a-Trail program! Register by emailing [dradatz@yorkmaine.org](mailto:dradatz@yorkmaine.org).



### Wetland Walk

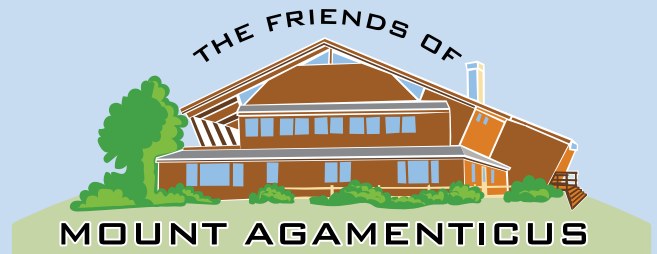
**Saturday, June 9th, 10AM - 12PM**

The Mount A region has the highest concentration of vernal pools in the state and is home to three threatened and endangered species. Join us and the Center for Wildlife with live turtle ambassadors to learn about seasonal life cycles, critical habitats, and the difference between facultative and obligate species. Then hike to nearby vernal pools, ephemeral streams, and wetlands. Open to all ages, moderate hike. Your donation of \$7/person makes this program possible. Space is limited and advance registration is required. To reserve your spot please email [kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org](mailto:kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org).

### Become a part of our Team and greet visitors!

#### Become a Learning Lodge Docent!

The Friends of Mt. A are seeking individuals to help staff the new environmental education facility at the summit. Volunteers will greet weekend visitors as they explore the Learning Lodge, answer questions, and promote our current work and conservation goals. If you are interested, please contact the Conservation Office at 207-361-1102 or visit our website at [agamenticus.org](http://agamenticus.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.**



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

