



# SUMMIT VIEW

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Summer 2018

## SPECIAL EVENT: September 15th MOUNT A TRAIL CHALLENGE 1Mi/5K Run/Walk

York Parks and Recreation Department and the Friends of Mount A present the Second Annual Mount Agamenticus 5K and 1-Mile Trail Challenge. This event is geared toward improving overall health and wellness in our community. The event will feature a 5K trail challenge and a 1-mile trail challenge that participants can run or walk. The 1-mile course traverses the new Big A Universal Access trail and can accommodate all capabilities and fitness levels, while adjoining trails offer even greater challenges for those navigating the 5K.

“This is a wonderful way to bring folks together and enjoy the trails at the mountain- including our new Big A trail” says Robin Kerr, Conservation Coordinator for the York Parks and Recreation Department. “We celebrated the opening of this remarkable universal access trail two years ago and it’s been rewarding to see so many people of all abilities using it.”

The new Big A Trail, named after the former ski area once located at Mt. Agamenticus, provides access opportunities and improves the quality of life for everyone, including people with mobility disabilities, seniors, trail runners, and families with young children and strollers. The nature trail was built in accordance with the principles of universal design and now guides visitors along the grassy mountaintop and into the summit shrubland, offering resting and viewing opportunities along the way.

“We heard that some folks were feeling a little intimidated at the thought of trail running at the mountain” continued Kerr. “But we really want to stress that this is not a typical road race. We are looking to cater to those hoping to establish their own personal record. The Big A is a perfect trail to train on, esp. if you are new to trail running, recovering from an injury, or just want to improve or maintain your own personal fitness level. Run it, walk it, hike it, just complete it!”



For those wanting more of a challenge, the 5K offers steeper inclines taking participants down along the Ring Trail before finishing back on the summit of Mt. Agamenticus. The 5K will start at 9:00am and the 1 miler will start at 10:00am. Registrants are welcome to run or hike the courses. There will be some lucky prize winners. Race amenities include water, fruit and a special Mount A trail mix. Consider bringing your own picnic lunch to enjoy at the summit after the award ceremony and then join in a celebration of your accomplishments with an after party at SOME Brewing Company.

**Volunteers are needed!** For more information about the Mount A Trail Challenge, to view course maps, register for the races or to volunteer please visit [www.agamenticus.org](http://www.agamenticus.org) or call 207-363-1040.



# Habitat Improvement at the Top – Giving Us Much More than a View



David Tibbetts

Native Bees on a Virginia rose



David Tibbetts

Red elderberry fruiting and black elderberries in bloom

On a clear day, a walk around the summit of Mount Agamenticus reveals spectacular views of our Atlantic Ocean coastline and the White Mountains of Maine and New Hampshire. But during the spring and summer, look more closely and you are likely to see a plethora of flowers buzzing with activity and hear birds singing to declare the piece of real estate they have claimed to raise their young. These are the calling cards of an ecosystem rich in biodiversity.

Historically Mount Agamenticus had a treeless summit, kept clear by weather conditions and fires caused by lightning strikes. Following World War II, the abandonment of a military radar station and later the Big A Ski Area, the summit became overgrown with trees that blocked the scenic vista in nearly every direction.

In 2010, a management plan was started to convert 14 acres of forest into shrubland to

restore the habitat and the view that hadn't been there for nearly 50 years. The shrubland habitat is a thicket of bushes that provides a dense cover for wildlife and, in southern Maine, it is as rare as an old growth forest. After eight years of management, this landscape is now bursting with berry-producing shrubs such as elderberries, blueberries, and Virginia rose that are attracting birds including yellow warblers, catbirds, and indigo buntings along with many native insect pollinators.

The next time you come for the view, be sure to take in the beauty of the landscape that is framing that view.

- David Tibbetts

## Water, Satellites and Poop

Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region sees a growing 40,000 visitors annually which present a significant challenge to balancing human activity, preservation of wildlife habitat, and protection of municipal freshwater supplies. Human activity is impacting and endangering our freshwater wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, and the plants and animals that live within them. They are being degraded and are declining worldwide.

"Fresh water is considered a renewable resource, but most of the water humans drink comes from ground water sources that are being depleted faster than they can be replenished... water resources are facing serious threats by human activities. These activities include pollution, urban growth, deforestation, and climate change."<sup>1</sup>

"What we are witnessing is major hydrologic change. We see a distinctive pattern of the wet land areas of the world getting wetter... and the dry areas in between getting dryer. Embedded within the dry areas we see multiple hotspots resulting from groundwater depletion", states Jay Famiglietti of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California.

"Water is critical to every aspect of life on Earth... "You can't manage it well until you can measure it", says Michael Watkins, of NASA's JPL.

How are scientists measuring Earth's groundwater? Enter, G.R.A.C.E. – the "Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment" – a joint mission with the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ), and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. They launched twin satellites in 2002 and for fifteen years, they tracked the movement of freshwater all around the globe, detecting changes in Earth's gravity field caused by movement and monthly variation in the underground water storage on the planet below.

Because this work is so crucial to human survival, another set of satellites -- GRACE-FO (GRACE Follow On), was launched May 22, 2018. Watkins states that, "when water is underground, it's impossible to directly observe from space. There's no picture you can take or radar you can bounce off the surface to measure changes in that deep water... but it has mass... GRACE-FO is almost the only way we have of observing it on large scales." These satellites are able to measure the amount of water stored in large lakes and rivers, in soil moisture, ice sheets and glaciers, and monitor sea levels caused by climate change.<sup>2</sup>

Protecting water, protects life. Remember, "think globally and act locally"? There are no trash receptacles at Mount A. The conservation area follows strict "Leave No Trace"<sup>3</sup>

practices. Whatever humans bring into the conservation area, we're responsible for bringing it out. That includes dog waste. Human waste is carried out via the Porto-potties.

In 1991, the EPA labeled pet waste a non-point source pollutant, in the same category as herbicides and insecticides; oil, grease and toxic chemicals. A single gram (1/4 teaspoon) can contain 23 million bacteria. "A long list of potentially infectious agents to humans are known to live in dog and cat feces — from E. coli to tapeworms. A lot of these parasites actually become more infectious as the poop ages."<sup>4</sup> According to the U.S. CDC, parasites in pet waste can linger in the soil for years.

Mount Agamenticus maintains 44 miles of trails, and with only 60% of owners actually removing their pet's waste, it becomes concentrated in specific areas. It all travels down the watershed to the municipal water treatment plants which must then implement more strategies to make it safe for drinking.

As cities grow and populations encroach upon wild lands and recreation areas, we must do more than just pick up the litter... We must learn how to maintain the integrity and character of the outdoors for all living things.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/top-natural-resources/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gracefo.jpl.nasa.gov/news/131/nasa-satellites-reveal-major-shifts-in-global-freshwater/>

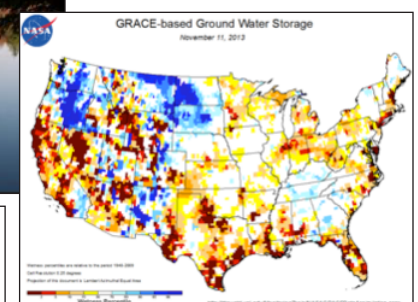
<sup>3</sup> © 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics; [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org).

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/09/dog-poop-scoop-infectious-disease\\_n\\_1138618.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/09/dog-poop-scoop-infectious-disease_n_1138618.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://lnt.org/>



Photo: [yorkwaterdistrict.org](http://yorkwaterdistrict.org)  
Graphic: <http://www.rff.org/blog/2013/using-satellites-understand-drought>



**PLEASE**

Carry in/Carry out all litter.

Control your dog and pick up that poop!

## Species Spotlight Cedar Waxwing, *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Cedar Waxwings are named for the waxy red tips on the end of their secondary feathers. The number of wax tips and their size increase as the bird gets older. They are hard to miss with their beautiful crests and masks.

Cedar Waxwings LOVE fruit. They can even survive on fruit alone for several months!

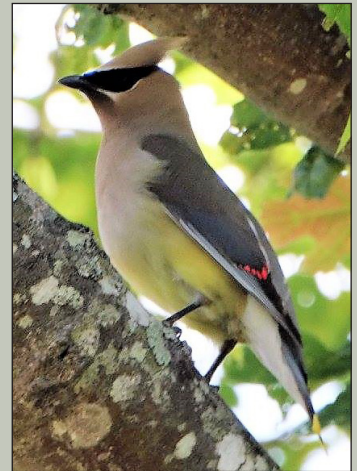
Cedar Waxwings don't have a real song. Instead they make a quiet trilling or buzzing sound.

The tail of a Cedar Waxwing usually has a yellow band at the end, but in the 1960s birds with orange bands started to show up in the northeastern United States. The orange color is a result from red pigment found in non-native honeysuckle fruits introduced to their diet.

Waxwings are very social and even eat in shifts. One group will eat first and then will move out of the way for the next group to come in. This is very polite compared to most birds, who just try to grab what they can individually.

A group of waxwings is called an "ear-full" or a "museum" of waxwings.

Be sure to keep your eyes open for an "ear-full" of waxwings at the summit of Mt. A on the elderberries and stag-horn sumacs!



## Perseids Meteor Shower 2018

Every August, as Earth passes through the debris trail from Comet Swift-Tuttle, we experience the meteor shower known as the Perseids. What is a meteor? According to NASA, "little chunks of rock and debris in space are called meteoroids; they become meteors—or shooting stars—when they fall through a planet's atmosphere leaving a bright trail as they are heated to incandescence by the friction of the atmosphere."

This year, the Perseids meteor shower is predicted to reach its maximum rate of activity on or around the date of August 13, 2018, but these "shooting stars" may be visible from the third week of July through August 20th.

The Perseids are best viewed in the Northern Hemisphere, away from artificial lighting and during the pre-dawn hours, though it is possible to see meteors as early as 10 PM.

NASA's website states, "The Perseids, which peak during mid-August, are considered the best meteor shower of the year. With very fast and bright meteors, Perseids frequently leave long 'wakes' of light and color behind them as they streak through Earth's atmosphere. The Perseids are one of the most plentiful showers (50-100 meteors seen per hour) and occur with warm summer nighttime weather, allowing sky watchers to easily view them."

"The color of meteors is caused by light emitted from metal atoms from the meteoroid and light emitted by atoms and molecules of the air," per NASA.

For more information, visit:

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) - <https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/small-bodies/meteors-and-meteorites/perseids/in-depth/>

TimeandDate.com - [https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/meteor-shower/perseid.html?hc\\_location=ufi](https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/meteor-shower/perseid.html?hc_location=ufi)



### Upcoming Programs:

**Saturday, August 11th** | 9:00am-12:00pm | Summer Stroll and Simple Tree ID – Learn the common names of popular tree species on a gentle stroll following the Big A and Ring trails. We will take a second look at leaf evidence, bark, buds, seeds, and more to assist in identification. The Center for Wildlife will be joining us for a live animal demonstration with their resident porcupine ambassador, Henry! Come and learn about Henry's favorite foods like black birch, oak, hemlock, maple, and of course acorns! Program and walk open to all ages; may break walk into two levels based on signups. Meet outside the Mount Agamenticus Learning Lodge. Your donation of \$7/person makes this program possible.

**Saturday September 22nd** | 10am-12pm | Eyes Like a Hawk – The summit can be a great place to watch the annual hawk migration. Come to the Learning Lodge to watch the Center for Wildlife present an environmental education program about Maine birds of prey with their live raptor education ambassadors. Come and meet these amazing animals up close and learn about their natural and personal history. Open to all ages. Bring your binoculars! Your donation of \$7/person makes this program possible.

Stay tuned for fun fall programs in October & November to include: Halloween in Nature, Mother/Son Hike, a NEW Family Camp Out and the annual Three Hill Hike!

Program Registration: [kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org](mailto:kbrodeur@thecenterforwildlife.org).

### Volunteer Community Work Day Dates:

Saturday, August 18th | Saturday, September 15th\* | Saturday, October 13th | All work days run from 9am to 12:30pm, with light refreshments after. Please plan to bring your hiking/work boots, water and work gloves. Work Day Registration: [dradatz@yorkmaine.org](mailto:dradatz@yorkmaine.org).

\*volunteer times vary on Sept. 15th and will assist the Trail Challenge event.

## Meet the 2018 Conservation Crew

This summer Mount Agamenticus has added four enthusiastic members to the Conservation Team: David Tibbetts, Lily Orr, Alyson Demerchant and Cameron Lynch.

**David Tibbetts** is a York resident with an education background from the University of New Hampshire studying Environmental Studies and Granite State College with advanced studies in Native Plants and Floristic Inventory. David fancies himself as a blood hound when it comes to finding new invasive plant populations.

**Lily Orr** is from Thompson Connecticut and is a recent graduate from the University of Connecticut studying Environmental Science with a focus on Natural Resources. Lily is a wildlife magnet and has already had encounters with skunks, woodchucks, porcupines, black bear and a Blanding's turtle.

**Alyson DeMerchant** grew up in Napanee, Ontario in Canada and is a recent graduate from Houghton College in New York studying Biology with a concentration in Environmental Studies and a minor

in Education. Alyson was a 4-year NCAA athlete in Field Hockey for Houghton College.

**Cameron Lynch** originates from Woodstock Connecticut and he is currently attending the University of New Hampshire with a focus on Wildlife and Conservation Biology. Cam can appreciate a good pun and can't help himself when given the opportunity.



The crew has already been busy leading volunteer workdays, removing invasive plants, brushing back trail corridors, paint blazing, assisting with the construction of a new accessible overlook for the Big A universal access trail, and so much more! Be sure to say hello if you see them around the hills!

The seasonal crew is joined by alum year-round staff. Pictured left to right:

Cameron Lynch, Alyson Demerchant, Lily Orr, Naomi Densmore, Darin Radatz, and David Tibbetts.

## Mt. A Gift Shop Has Grown!

This season, the Mount A Gift Shop has grown its little corner inside the Learning Lodge! We still have hats and t-shirts aplenty in a variety of colors and fits, but new this summer:

- Want to take the Story Walk home with you? Featured StoryWalk® books from Dawn Publications are now available! This summer's Story Walk is *The Mouse and the Meadow* by Chad Wallace.
- Certified natural sunscreen from Raw Elements is here! This zinc oxide based sunscreen is water (and sweat!) resistant for up to 80 minutes. There are different options available up in the shop, including some with eco friendly packaging. Pocket-friendly SPF lip balms, too!
- Products from local artists include magnets by Maine artist Danielle Lehoux and handmade soaps from Sarandipity Soaps out of Berwick, ME!
- The Mount A summit has its very own custom coordinate bracelet from Wanderer Bracelets! We're also selling simple mountain and compass motif designs, as well. Wanderer Bracelets are handmade under Fair Trade practices.



The Learning Lodge at Mount Agamenticus is open on weekends from 11:00am-3:00pm, from Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend. Proceeds from gift shop sales go back into finding new product and developing our Learning Lodge educational displays! Thanks to everyone who has stopped in and helped us grow!

**Want to help out? The Learning Lodge still needs volunteer docents to greet visitors and answer questions, interpret educational displays, and help run the gift shop. Visit [agamenticus.org/support-our-work/volunteer](http://agamenticus.org/support-our-work/volunteer) to learn more and get in touch!**



Newsletter written and designed by the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus.

Scan Here To Like Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region on facebook!



**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.