

SUMMIT VIEW

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Winter 2019



Mari O'Neil

Co-existing with Coyotes

Most people think of winter as the perfect time to snuggle up with a good book and warm blanket, but not coyotes. Coyotes are out and about right now searching for a mate, and will start to settle down into their dens around mid-February. You might hear them howling, yipping, and yelping during this active time of year, but the likelihood of seeing a coyote during your visit to Mt. A is exceedingly rare. Coyotes are shy, wary animals and will usually avoid confrontations with humans, and each other. They are also most active at night when humans are usually indoors, which limits encounters and conflicts.

The Eastern Coyote, ranging from Pennsylvania up through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is notably larger than its western relatives, likely due to crossbreeding with wolves and possibly dogs. It occasionally will occupy the niche left vacant by the extirpated wolf, and has even been known to form small temporary packs to cooperatively hunt larger species. Coyotes are also persecuted as the wolf

was, and are often killed in an effort to protect livestock. Ironically, coyotes have more pups per litter in response to predation, and there are now more coyotes in the Northeast than ever before.

The best way to protect our coyotes, our pets, and ourselves is to limit opportunities for human-coyote conflict. Follow these easy tips for coexistence and visit www.projectcoyote.org to learn more.

- **Do Not Feed Coyotes.** Keeping coyotes wild is the key to coexisting.
- **Remove Attractants.** Feed pets inside, contain waste, compost & pick up fallen fruit.
- **Supervise Your Pets.** Walk dogs on leashes & keep cats inside for safety.
- **Keep Coyotes Wary.** If you are approached act big & make loud noises.
- **Appreciate Coyotes.** At a distance.

Picture Posts at Mount A – How and Why to Use Them

Dramatic environmental changes are often in the headlines, but subtle changes are also happening all around us on a continuous basis.

With the assistance of modern technology, you can help us document these important indicators of environmental health, share them with others and compile a record for scientists and others to use.

We could use your pictures to create a time lapse of photos that will show changes 360° around Picture Posts installed within the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region throughout every season and over the years to come. Pictures should be taken each year in the spring, summer, fall and winter.

Become a “citizen scientist” and take part in this important project to help the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region!

How to participate:

- Locate one of the 6 posts (Summit East, Summit West, Rocky Road Vernal Pool, Cedar/Goosefoot intersection, Second Hill Summit, or Third Hill Summit).
- Place your phone/camera on top of the post platform and take one photo pointing skyward (1).
- Place your phone/camera against the side of the octagon that is marked N for North, and take a photo pointing away from the post (2) repeat for the other 7 sides of the octagon going clockwise (3 – 9).
- Take one photo point skyward (10).
- Submit and view at <http://picturepost.unh.edu>; photos are dated, geotagged, uploaded, and shared on this site.



Staying Found at Mount Agamenticus

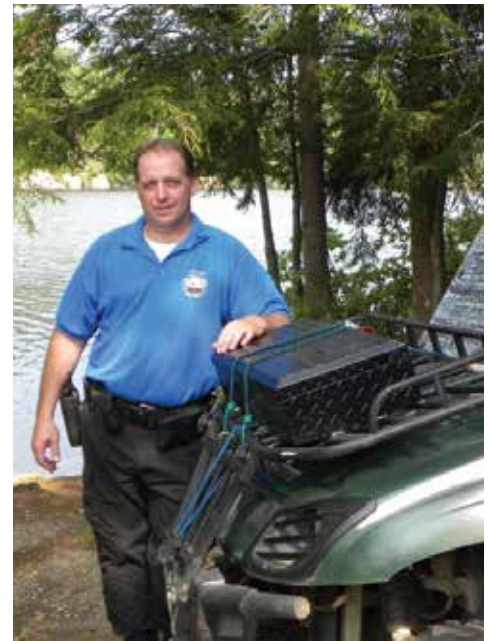
Each year a few visitors to the Mount Agamenticus Region call 911 dispatch to report being lost while exploring the trails. Gary Stevens, York Water District Natural Resource Protection Officer has 20 years of experience in search and rescue in the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region and offered some of the following helpful information.

Some of the most common reasons why people get lost are a result of poor planning, not paying attention, and/or overconfidence.

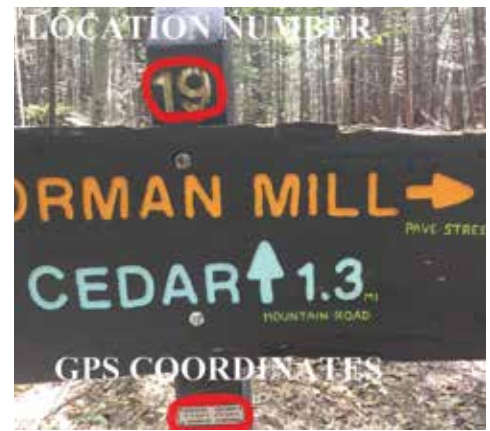
- **No Map Needed:** The most common mistake hikers make is that they can just use their cell phone to navigate around.
 - Paper trail maps are provided free at trailheads. Take, read and orient yourself to the map before you start on the trails and follow along.
 - Although you can access Mount A trail maps online on your phone, it is not recommended. Digital maps are unavailable with a dead battery and online versions of the trail map found could be out dated with inaccurate information.
- **Looking Down:** With loose rocks and roots sometimes hiding under leaf litter, many visitors are keeping their eyes on the ground and missing important intersections.
 - While it's important to watch your footing, it's equally important to look up and around. If you are not able to do so while on the move, stop and slow down. You might be pleasantly surprised by other nature discoveries in the process!
- **In the Dark:** Another trend from lost hikers revolves around missteps that ultimately lead to hiking in the dark unprepared. These are related to not realizing what time it gets dark or underestimating time needed to hike out.
 - In the wintertime, daylight disappears much earlier than in the summer. Darkness can set-in as early as 4:30 PM. Plan your hike around weather conditions, daylight hours and bring a flashlight along.

Inevitably, visitors may still find themselves lost. To help search and rescue professionals find you, here is what you can do and report:

- **If You Think You Need Help, Call, And Don't Wait:** The later it is the more difficult finding you will be and the more search and rescue professionals will be needed.
- **Details:** Report who you are, how many are with you, trail name or blaze color if you know it, any special needs (very old, very young, medical conditions etc.) and where you started from.
- **Stop and Stay There:** Do not leave or move from your location unless directed to do so. Dispatch has the ability to triangulate your location from your cell phone. Never attempt to go off trail if you are lost! Listen for unusual noises, rescuers will be yelling for you, often they will use horns, sirens or even gun shots to get your attention and narrow down your location. If you are able, report those noises, and respond with your own shouts.
- **Trail Signs:** Pay attention to trail markers and trail junctions along major trail corridors. The trail signs located here have been designed to help prevent the need for aid in search and rescue operations. There is a Location Number listed above the trail sign as well as GPS Coordinates located below. Please see the picture below for reference. These Locations Numbers correspond with the numbers included on the trail map as well.



Gary Stevens



Hannaford Helps Friends of Mount A

We are elated to share that the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus has been chosen by the York Hannaford (at 5 Hannaford Drive 440 Route #1, York, ME) as the latest beneficiary of the Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag Program! Every time the reusable Community Bag is purchased at the York Hannaford during the month of January 2019, we'll receive \$1. Donations go directly towards work on our trails and facilities, as well as our education and outreach efforts!

If you're a York resident, please visit the store, find the reusable bag rack by register 5, and support us with a purchase of the Community Bag!



WINTER STORYWALK

The StoryWalk® program combines the benefits of physical activity, time outdoors, and literacy by taking children's books and posting them, in pieces, along a recreational path or hiking trail. This winter, follow along with **Little Brother Moose** by James Kasperson with illustrations by Karlyn Holman. Suggestion reading level: grades K-3.

Location: Our story starts at the lowest parking lot on the ring trail, continues on the west side of Ring, and up the Witch Hazel trail to finish on the summit. There are 24 stations.

Difficulty/Distance: The trail is somewhat steep in places but comfortable at easy stroll pace with stops at the reading stations. Terrain varies from gentle slope on dirt trail to rocky sections with short climbs or descents. Distance is 1.3 miles. Allow 1 ½ hours for younger children. For good hikers just stopping to read, time can be reduced to about half an hour.

Species Spotlight

Reindeer Lichen, *Cladonia rangiferina*



Denise Johnson

The sole reindeer left in the state is its namesake, “reindeer moss”. Though it grows in clumps and carpets like moss, it is lichen. Reindeer lichen, *Cladonia rangiferina*, is an ancient partnership of fungus, green algae and/or cyanobacteria, and yeast cells. Several species of Reindeer lichen can be found in the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Area – sometimes growing in trees, oftentimes right underfoot, which is a bit of a heartbreak because these lichen are so intricately beautiful and grow very, very, slowly. Average growth rates are about an eighth, to a half inch annually! Average ages of reindeer lichen are over 100 years old and can take decades to return once overgrazed, burned, or trampled.

Lichens are most noticeable on tundra where it helps to insulate the ground, and provides forage for grazing animals like reindeer and caribou. Lichens are self-reliant in feeding themselves through photosynthesis. They are not parasites. They absorb water and minerals from the air so they’re not dependent on soil like vascular plants.

Lichens may dry completely when moisture is unavailable. They become quite brittle but this is not like the dehydration we’re familiar with. It’s a complete loss of body water. When moisture returns, they quickly absorb water, becoming soft and fleshy again. Not only can lichens undergo this drying, but while they are dry and brittle, pieces flake off and grow into new lichens.

Lichen are sensitive to air pollution, ozone depletion, and metal contamination and are used as air pollution load indicators. Reindeer lichen tissues pick up heavy metals and sulfur oxides as far as 15 miles downwind from pulp and paper mills. The concentration of pollutants is lower in terrestrial reindeer lichens than in arboreal lichen species. Increased pollution of this century is the greatest threat to the health of lichens.

Some 20,000 known species of lichens have adapted to survive in a vast array of extreme conditions from arctic tundra, to hot dry deserts. They can live inside solid rock, growing between the grains! And an impressive 71% of lichens exposed to space conditions for one and a half years on the International Space Station, remained viable after returning to Earth! This research provides insight into a process known as lithopanspermia – the transfer of life from one celestial body to another inside rocks.

We humans only know a mere fraction of what there is to know about the complex life under our feet. So, step mindfully when you’re hiking off-trail, and take some time to look for lichens growing on trees, leaves, rock, exposed soil surfaces, mosses, on other lichens, and hanging from branches “living on thin air”.

Outdoor Survival by Paul Clauson

The outdoors can provide health and wellbeing benefits, nature study, and be a fun way to spend your time. However, if we do not plan ahead and become too complacent, we can find ourselves in unpleasant situations or worse.

To make the most of your time in the wilderness, consider preparing and learning some survival tips in advance:

- Review maps to understand terrain, distances and other resources
- Learn how to use a map and compass, practice ahead of time
- Take inventory of your outdoor gear
- Research strategies for building emergency shelters
- Study field guides to learn about edible plants in the area
- Check forecasted weather conditions and plan accordingly
- Let someone know where you intend to go and when to expect your return

Once in the wilderness, stay alert and aware of your surroundings:

- Know where water is in relation to your location at all times (rivers, streams, lakes); water is life.
- Be observant of your surroundings and reference your map and compass
- Don’t over extend yourself physically or mentally.
- Know your limitations and take your time doing your outdoor activity.

The more you prepare and learn ahead of time, the less likely you will find yourself in a bad situation.

Simple Tips to Improve Outdoor Nature Observation by Paul Clauson

Every woodland walk is different, and you never know what you might discover! We tend to miss details, clues and activity by going too fast, being tuned out and/or scaring wildlife. To help improve your experience and level of awareness of the wild around you, consider practicing the following:

- Walk slowly, watch your footing.
- Try not to make much noise while walking.
- Stop, listen and observe; that is how you will pick up wildlife movement and sound.
- Calm your body and mind; consider turning cell phones off to eliminate distractions.
- Consider bringing a journal or sketch pad to capture your experience.

However you do it, make it fun and above all, safe.



Tom Olson



Winter Photography in York By Tom Olson

Despite the frigid temperatures in winter, York provides fabulous opportunities to photograph the beautiful land, sea, nature, and wildlife we have right outside our door. Below are some of my favorite spots to photograph in winter.

- 1) Nubble Light - The snow-covered ground surrounding our iconic lighthouse is deservedly the number one spot in Maine for photographers from all over the world. With that said, my personal favorite image occurred during a February blizzard when I was the only human visiting on that day. The snow was falling sideways, the wind was ferocious, and I was smiling like a little kid at Christmas. I do not recommend traveling in that kind of weather, BUT, I live very close by and it is usually the ONLY time I have the place to myself.
- 2) Mt. Agamenticus - Birds, porcupines, sunsets, snow-capped mountain ranges, the horse barn, and more provide spectacular image opportunities for the adventurer willing to trudge around the summit in deep snow.
- 3) Wheeler Wildlife Refuge - Most people around town do not know the large salt-marsh area between the Town Docks and Rte 103 by its name, Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. On any winter day, you can spot several winter birds including Bufflehead Ducks, Common Eiders, American Black Ducks, 3 types of Scoters. 3 types of Mergansers, an occasional Alcid, Canada Geese, and a wintering Belted Kingfisher and occasionally surprise rarities that visit when the marsh is flooded over. The biggest attraction, however, is the York River Eagles who have built and occupied a nest across from Town Dock 1 and Route 103 for the last two winters.
- 4) York River at Sewall's Bridge - This is my favorite spot for sunsets in York. Looking west from the bridge at sunset is a photographer's dream. Throw in a working dock with lobster boats, a weathered boathouse, the 1700's Elizabeth Perkins historic house, and the historic Hancock Wharf and you can keep busy for hours shooting to your heart's content or until the wind off the river begins to make your lips crack, whichever comes first.
- 5) Sure, I have more locations I could divulge, but I have to keep some for myself, right?



Mark Your Calendars for More Upcoming Events and Programs:

Saturday, March 23rd 10a-12p | **Nature's Nesters** with the Center for Wildlife
Saturday, April 6th 9a-12:30p | **Volunteer Work Day: Trail Clean-up** | Grant House
Saturday, April 13th 1-4p | **Spring Time Surprises** | York Parks & Recreation
Saturday, April 27th 9a-12:30p | **Volunteer Work Day: Earth Day Litter Clean-up** | Mt. A
For detailed information on individual programs: www.agamenticus.org.
Registration for all events is required.

Program: Seeking Sweethearts

Saturday, February 9th, 5:30 - 7:30PM

Celebrate the Great Maine Outdoor Week with a fun owl courtship and nesting program followed by a snowshoe or hike owl prowl at the summit of Mt. A! This is the perfect pre-Valentine's Day event, connecting friends and families with the natural world of Mt. Agamenticus 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! Come meet the Center for Wildlife's live owl education ambassadors inside the Learning Lodge, and then see if we can hear their calls in the night. Open to all ages, moderate hike/snowshoe.

Where: Mount Agamenticus Learning Lodge

When: Saturday, February 9th, 5:30-7:30pm

Fee: Your donation of \$7/person makes this program possible.

Info/Registration: Reservations required. To register, email fellow@thecenterforwildlife.org.



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