



“Blues Skies Shining on Me” - Weather Affects on Humans

There's something to be said about a “sunny disposition”, or feeling “under the weather”. People just seem to be more cheerful, friendly and helpful when there are bright, clear sunny skies than when it's cloudy, cold, and wet. Weather seems to have a real impact on many people's mood and health.

In France, Vinita Mehta PH.D., Ed.M. conducted an experiment which entailed four researchers to pose as hitchhikers on cloudy and sunny days. “Out of the 2,864 instances, more drivers were willing to pick them up on sunny days compared to cloudy days.”

Economist Marie Connolly found in a 2013 study, a link between high temperatures and rain and decreasing life satisfaction levels among women she interviewed. She found that on days when the temperature rose above ninety degrees, the negative impact on happiness levels was greater than the consequences of being widowed or divorced.

Jaap Denissen of Humboldt University in Berlin conducted a study to determine how wind, temperature, sunlight, rain, snow and air pressure affected people's moods. The results showed that “winter brings people down, extreme weather events contribute to mental health problems, extreme weather brings out empathy, violent crimes rise with the heat, suicide incidences are tied to seasonal factors, and warm climates have a lower risk of death”.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a very real depressive disorder

that is connected to a specific season, usually the fall and winter, reports the Mayo Clinic, but that some people experience SAD in spring and summer, though these cases are less common.

Now what about the human body predicting the weather, like Granny's knee that acts up whenever there's an oncoming weather

front? A drop in barometric pressure also seems to be a trigger for migraineurs or people prone to getting headaches. In fact, many would swear by it. When the drop in atmospheric pressure decreases, body tissues swell slightly. This can increase the pressure on joints and sinuses. Add a drop in temperature, and the blood vessels constrict, raising blood pressure and adding viscosity, or thickness to the blood. Joint fluids thicken too, activating that stiff, throbbing feeling.

An ongoing project in the Netherlands found that two people can react very differently to the very same weather and grouped people into four personality types based upon which seasons they are drawn to. The groups are: Summer Lovers, Summer Haters, Rain Haters, or Unaffected by the weather (that study yielded 48% Unaffected). It seems these personalities appear to run in families, whether it's genetic or

attitudinal, they couldn't say.

Various theories and many scientists claim, the medical evidence correlating weather to human mood and health is still unclear and hard to prove. The weather doesn't affect all people and some dismiss it as being all in the mind. Yeah well, tell that to Granny and her aching knee.



MOUNT A 5K/1Mi TRAIL CHALLENGE

The York Parks and Recreation Department and the Friends of Mount A presented the third annual Mount A 5K/1Mi Trail Challenge on Saturday, September 21st!

Finally, the weather cooperated, and we enjoyed warm sunny conditions evident in the bright cheerful photos taken that day. The event brought approximately 110 people along with their friends and family together to enjoy the trails, mountain park and picture-perfect weather.

The goal of this event is to improve overall health and wellness in our community and features the new Big A Universal Access Trail. Roger Clements, Trail Crew Leader Alumni, Race Director, Cross Country Coach and Volunteer Extraordinaire developed both the 5K trail challenge and the 1-mile trail challenge for running or walking.

The top male 5K finishers were Steve Folkerts, Dillion Lucier and Rich Adam. The top female 5K finishers were Alexandria Turcotte, Colie Haahr and Bethany Boksanski. The top male 1mi finishers were James Curtis, Alexander Curtis and Jeffery McDonough. The top female 1mi finishers were Nanci Sirois, Mariya Curtis and Lindsey Hrubala.

It's also important to note that there were 6 participants that beat their times from the 2018 5K Challenge and they included: John McClain, Colie Haahr, Nicholas Addivinola, Sue Friborg, Brian Nagle, and Christine Campbell. There were 5 participants that beat their times from the 2018 1mi Challenge and they included James Curtis, Alexander Curtis, Mariya Curtis, Faye Kerr, and Linda Cieslowski. Congratulations to these folks who have established their new personal records!

The Trail Challenge is a success due in large part to the support from wonderful volunteers, including the York Cross Country team. Coaches and team members even timed the Challenge for us, traditional stop-watch style! Volunteer hours for the day totaled an impressive 75 hours.

We are also appreciative of the support from the following sponsors who donated their time, services, space and items for raffle:

- ♦ York Wild Kingdom
- ♦ SoMe Brewing Company
- ♦ Runner's Alley
- ♦ Coastal Fitness
- ♦ Bob the Screen Printer
- ♦ Emily Lord Photography

This is a quintessential fun community event and we look forward to celebrating the remarkable trails at Mount A with you again next year! Save the date for the 4th annual Mount A Trail Challenge: September 19, 2020 (always the third Saturday in September)!



Why You Should Leave the Leaves

Savvy gardeners know that keeping fallen leaves on their property benefits wildlife and the environment

By Laura Tangley, senior editor of National Wildlife magazine.
Reprinted with permission

It's that time of year again: The air turns crisp, the leaves turn red and gold and homeowners

turn to the annual chore known as "fall garden cleanup"—including disposal of those leaves after they fall to the ground.

Traditionally, leaf removal has entailed three steps: Rake leaves (or blast them with a blower) into piles, transfer the piles to bags and place the bags out to be hauled off to a landfill. Yet, increasingly, conservationists say these actions not only harm the environment but rob your garden of nutrients while destroying wildlife habitat. The alternative? "Let fallen leaves stay on your property," says National Wildlife Federation Naturalist David Mizejewski.

Leaves in Landfills

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, leaves and other yard debris account for more than 13 percent of the nation's solid waste—a whopping 33 million tons a year. Without enough oxygen to decompose, this organic matter releases the greenhouse gas methane, says Joe Lamp'l, author of *The Green Gardener's Guide*. In fact, solid-waste landfills are the largest U.S. source of man-made methane—and that's aside from the carbon dioxide generated by gas-powered blowers and trucks used in leaf disposal.

For gardeners, turning leaves into solid waste is wasteful. "Fallen leaves offer a double benefit," Mizejewski says. "Leaves form a natural mulch that helps suppress weeds and fertilizes the soil as it breaks



down. Why spend money on mulch and fertilizer when you can make your own?"

Removing leaves also eliminates vital wildlife habitat. Critters ranging from turtles and toads to birds, mammals and invertebrates rely on leaf litter for food, shelter and nesting material. Many moth and butterfly caterpillars overwinter in fallen leaves before emerging in spring.

Need one more reason to leave the leaves? "The less time you spend raking leaves," Mizejewski says, "the more time you'll have to enjoy the gorgeous fall weather and the wildlife that visits your garden."

Every Litter Bit Counts

What should you do with all those fallen leaves you're not sending to the landfill? Here are some tips:

- Let leaves stay where they fall. They won't hurt your lawn if you chop them with a mulching mower.
- Rake leaves off the lawn to use as mulch in garden beds. For finer-textured mulch, shred them first.
- Let leaf piles decompose; the resulting leaf mold can be used as a soil amendment to improve structure and water retention.
- Make compost: Combine fallen leaves ("brown material") with grass clippings and other "green material" and keep moist and well mixed. You'll have nutrient-rich compost to add to your garden next spring.

Please note: ticks can also overwinter in leaf litter; as a precaution, move leaves away from areas frequented by people and pets to outer property margins instead.



David Tibbetts

Woolly Bear Caterpillar

"Folklore tells us that if the rusty band is wide, then it will be a mild winter. The more black there is, the more severe the winter.

- Woolly bears, like other caterpillars, hatch during warm weather from eggs laid by a female moth.
- Mature woolly bears search for overwintering sites under bark or inside cavities of rocks or logs. (That's why you see so many of them crossing roads and sidewalks in the fall.)
- When spring arrives, woolly bears spin fuzzy cocoons and transform inside them into full-grown moths.
- Typically, the bands at the ends of the caterpillar are black, and the one in the middle is brown or orange, giving the woolly bear its distinctive striped appearance."

Mike Peters, an entomologist at the University of Massachusetts says, "There's evidence that the number of brown hairs has to do with the age of the caterpillar—in other words, how late it got going in the spring. The band does say something about a heavy winter or an early spring. The only thing is . . . it's telling you about the previous year."



Top photo: Woolly Bear Caterpillar. Photo by SillyPuttyEnemies/Wikimedia Commons.
Bottom photo: The banded woolly bear, is the larval form of *Pyrrhactia isabella*, the Isabella tiger moth.

<https://www.almanac.com/content/woolly-bear-caterpillars-and-weather-prediction>

Species Spotlight



New England Aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*

The magnificent blooms of New England Aster highlight the fall landscape by the viewing platform at the Mt. A summit. With rich colors ranging from deep violet to lavender-pink, with yellow-orange centers, this aster can grow up to six feet high and has a critical role in the survival of our native pollinators. Like most asters, it blooms late in the season and provides a critical fall nectar source for monarchs, bees, and other butterflies after summer blooms have faded. It is also a host for the larvae of the Pearl Crescent and Gorgone Checkerspot butterflies, and the Northern Flower moth. The next time you visit the summit, be sure to admire this beautiful and essential fall flower!" - Katie Brodeur, Center for Wildlife Environmental Educator

MT. AGAMENTICUS VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS

This summer, we conducted a Learning Lodge visitor survey in order to learn a little bit more about what our seasonal visitors to the Lodge are interested in. This information will help us develop more engaging exhibits and programming for all! Thank you to everyone who filled out a survey or took the time to chat with our docents!

We gathered data from a total of 93 surveys, collected over the course of seven weekends from mid-August through the end of September. We asked visitors a variety of questions, including how often they came to Mount A, how they heard about the Learning Lodge, and what particular topics they'd be interested in learning more about.

We found out that about half of our survey participants (50.5%) were here visiting Mount A for the first time! Of the 91 people who answered this particular question, 46 were first-time visitors; 36 people visited less frequently than once a month, and only nine people were considered "regular" visitors to the mountain, visiting at least once monthly or more often. Twenty-nine out of 91 respondents (31.8%) had never heard of the Learning Lodge before, and 65 total respondents (71.4%) were either local, or heard of us through friends, family, or just word of mouth. Only 14 people (15.3%) had heard about the Learning Lodge through either our website, Agamenticus.org, or through the Town of York Parks & Recreation catalog.

When asking people what they were interested in learning more about, we gave survey participants a list of subject matter to choose from that included the history of the ski area, geology, vernal pools, and more about native and non-native species. We also included an "other" category for participants to write in their own responses! Eighty-two survey participants answered this question, and of those responses, fifty-two people expressed interest in multiple subjects! Fifty-three people (64.6%) were interested in learning more about the history of the ski area. The second most popular subject was geology at 58.5%, followed by native species at 51.2%. Thirty-four people (41.4%) expressed an interest in learning more about vernal pools.

To wrap up the survey, we asked visitors what they enjoyed most about their visit to the Learning Lodge. Leaving this as an open-ended question gave us a wide variety of responses, but what stood out most was that visitors enjoyed hands-on exhibits, the view from upstairs in the Lodge, and talking to staff and volunteer Learning Lodge Docents!



TIPS FOR DOG HIKING AT MT. A

York resident David Middleton along with his dog Pixie are frequent hikers of Mount Agamenticus and were kind enough to help share a few tips to consider for dog hiking. David loves hiking at Mt. A not only for exercise but for the beauty that comes with the seasonal changes. Favorite trails to traverse include Ring Trail, Big A Trail and hiking out to 2nd Hill & 3rd Hill areas.

A Few Things to Consider Bringing:

- Bring Water All Year Around with Collapsible Bowl
- Dog Food or Treats for Rewards
- Current ID Tags on Dog Collar
- Doggie Poop Bags (Double bag to help reduce odor)
- Paw Protection During Road Salt Season
- Short Leash for Training & Long Leash for Trained Dog
- Orange Vest during Hunting Season
- Flashlight & Phone in case of Emergency
- Tick Prevention Tick Collar or Chewable Tablet

The **BARK** rule is a handy acronym for dog hiking:

Bag Your Pet's Waste: Dog poop contains harmful levels of bacteria that harm & disrupt local wildlife, native habitats and groundwater supplies.

Always Leash your Pet: Town of York has a leash ordinance that pertains to Mt. A. Leashes prevent lost dogs and unwanted interactions with other visitors. Not everyone is a dog person; some have allergies or are fearful.

Respect Wildlife: Dogs can chase and threaten wildlife like migratory birds and threatened nesting turtles. Danger of porcupine encounter.

Know where you can go with Dogs and what the rules are: Dogs are allowed on all Mt. A Trails. Not all parks allow dogs, research before visiting. Mt. A has a Carry Out trash policy to include pet waste.

To learn about additional Mt. A conservation opportunities, please visit our website: agamenticus.org or call 207-361-1102.

Scan Here To Like
Mount Agamenticus
Conservation Region on
Facebook!



Newsletter written and designed by volunteers at the Friends of Mt. A.