



The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Summer/Fall 2021

THE WILDLIFE TREE

In forest ecology, any dead or dying tree is called a “snag”, or a wildlife tree. A snag is at least three inches in diameter (at breast height), and at least six feet tall, often missing a top or most of its branches.

Letting a dead tree stand, if it poses no danger of falling on humans or structures, makes an important impact on wildlife population and woodlands. In the Northeast alone there are 35 species of birds that use nesting cavities in snags. Birds like the Eastern bluebird and Wood ducks evolved with dead and dying trees and so are dependent upon them for their nests. Additionally, snags are essential habitat for amphibians, reptiles and mammals.



A dying tree gives back its nutrients into the forest soil via roots and its underground network of mycorrhizal fungi*. It then becomes a food source for all sorts of insects that live inside the tree like beetles, ants, centipedes, and other wood-boring invertebrates which in turn become “groceries” for birds and mammals. Large woodpeckers like the Pileated, with its superb excavating powers, create nesting cavities for itself and other birds and mammals

like bats and squirrels. A large enough snag can provide nesting sites for raccoons and fisher.

“At the time a tree dies, it has only partially fulfilled its potential ecological function,” writes Dr. Jerry Franklin, a leading forest ecologist from the University of Washington.

The partially detached bark of a snag provides a place to roost and find food for nuthatches, wrens, and brown creepers, a roosting place for butterflies, and a protective shelter in which snakes can shed their skins. Tall snags, with their bare branches, make excellent perches for vultures, eagles, hawks, owls and other predator birds and are used by herons and egrets for nesting.

As our forests become more intensely managed with the cutting of trees for lumber, cordwood, or for clearing land for human activity, they become devoid of snags – an essential player in the ecosystem, which negatively impacts all the wildlife that depends upon them. For our own woodlots, foresters suggest three snags per every one acre. If not possible, add nesting boxes.

“Knowing the local flora and fauna and the interactions between trees, fire, tree-eating insects, primary nesters, sapwood decay, and other requirements of local wildlife are important when making recommendations about snag numbers and density. If you own several acres of forest, this is the perfect question to work with a forester on when creating a wildlife management plan for your property.”¹

When a snag finally falls to the ground, it will create a new kind of ecosystem. Bacteria, tiny organisms and fungi start to decompose the wood which becomes food for insects and other organisms, and they in turn provide food for other animals. The rotting wood is nutrient-rich and supports the growth of new forest plants, mosses, ferns, and trees. These logs are fittingly called “nurse logs” (or “nurse stumps”), attracting salamanders, tree frogs, moles, voles, chipmunks, shrews, mice, foxes and more.

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SPECIAL EVENT: 5th Annual Mount A Trail Challenge



1 Mi/5K Run/Walk

Run it, walk it, just complete it!

Virtual: September 1st-18th

In-Person: Saturday September 18th

We're excited to have you join us for the 5th Annual Trail Challenge, whether it's virtually (September 1st-18th) or in person here at the summit on Saturday, September 18th.

This is NOT your typical trail run or road race! This event is geared toward improving overall health and wellness in our community where participants can run or walk a 1-mile or 5K to establish or improve upon their own personal record. The motto for this event is "Run it, walk it, hike it, just complete it!"

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.

1-Mile

The Big A is a nature trail built in accordance with the principles of universal design providing access to people with mobility disabilities, seniors, trail runners and families with young children and strollers. It is a perfect trail to train on, especially if you are new to trail running, recovering from an injury, or just want to improve or maintain your own personal fitness level.

5K

For those wanting more of a challenge, the 5K will begin on the Big A and then offers steeper inclines taking participants down and around the Ring Trail before climbing and finishing back on the summit of Mt. Agamenticus.

VIRTUAL OPTION: If you're not familiar, participating virtually means you run or walk the course of your choice and self-report your time. We'll ship you the race shirt or make it available for local pick-up (must register by September 6th to receive a shirt). You'll have from September 1st-18th to complete your run virtually.

IN-PERSON OPTION: If you're joining us live on Saturday, September 18th, the 5K begins at 9am and the 1 Mile starts at 9:15am. This challenge is timed the good ol' fashioned way with stop watches, thanks to our local YH Cross Country Team. There are no traditional age category prizes, but there will be a raffle for all participants!

As always, all funds raised go right back into Mount A conservation & education efforts. Thank you for your continued support!

Registration for the Mount A Trail Challenge is through runsignup.com/Race/ME/York/MtATrailChallenge

Volunteers are needed for this event! For more information about the event, to view course maps, or to volunteer please visit agamenticus.org or call 207-363-1040.

Species Spotlight

Eastern Firefly, *Photinus pyralis*



Image by Katja Schulz from Washington, D. C., USA - Common Eastern Firefly, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=81221573>

Also known as lightning bugs, fireflies are neither bugs nor flies; they are actually beetles that light up using a chemical reaction in their lower abdomen (the bottom part of their body). Some of them light up in a specific blinking pattern, like a secret code that they use to “talk” with other fireflies and to find mates.

All fireflies belong to the same beetle family, although three groups have different ways of attracting mates: some fireflies make quick flashes, while other fireflies give long-lasting glows, and still others use invisible chemical signals. In North America, there are more than 150 species of fireflies in 16 genera.

Observing Fireflies

There are two ways to observe fireflies: Watching their flying and flashing patterns from afar, and observing them up close to tell what kind they are and to tell males from females.

Firefly Watch

Firefly Watch combines a fun summer evening ritual with scientific research. Join a network of volunteers by observing your own backyard all the while helping scientists map fireflies found in New England and beyond. Get involved: <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-involved/community-science/firefly-watch>

COEXISTING WITH WILD NEIGHBORS

We all can think of those pesky, nuisance wild neighbors whose habitat crosses with our own. All animals need to meet their basic needs; otherwise, they must move on.

- If you have a wild friend eating your garden, put up barriers so that they can't get into the buffet that you have laid out for them. You can also offer them a sacrifice food source away from your garden, which will keep them preoccupied and away from the plants you wish to keep.
- If you have a wild friend invading your home, the first thing to do is determine the entry point. Then, you can exclude them so that they cannot get back in. This should not be done during breeding or hibernation seasons. No one wants the smell of decaying animals in their walls because the animals have starved to death. There are also natural ways to deter them, such as particular scents.



You can also build a bat or bird house for them to move into.

- If you have a lingering predator, imagine yourself in that animal's paws. Is there an easy and available food source? How close would you personally choose to approach a tiger for example? We are predators in the eyes of our wild neighbors and they would prefer to not have conflict with us either.

If you cannot coexist with your wild neighbors, there are humane options. Instead of chemicals, use snap traps. Using chemicals also causes the death of your targeted animal's predators, thus making your problem worse. Trapping and relocating leads to starvation, the animal being outcompeted by the local individuals, or the spread of disease. If you have questions about trying to coexist with or deter wild neighbors, please call a wildlife rehabilitator for specific information about the species.

Trail News

Springtime droughts, followed by record breaking rains in July are testing durability of the Mount A Region's trails. The Conservation Crew has been hard at work pruning, clearing drainages, checking for erosion, and making improvements to both trails and at the Summit Park.

Noteworthy accomplishments include:

- Improved emergency ATV access on Ring Trail,
- Additional signage at four-way intersections,

- Learning Lodge painting and trim work replacement with help from United Way's Week of Action Volunteers from Kennebunk Savings Bank,
- New native plantings in the Summit Park with help from the York Rotary Club,
- 70 yards of gravel moved onto Norman Mill trail filling wet and muddy sections with help from local volunteers and donations from the Agamenticus ATV club, York Land Trust, and assistance from Libby & Sons. Special thanks to Jared Stevens, Tommy Pratt, Dan Whittle and

Forrest Henry who collectively contributed 22 hours of labor.

- Boardwalk replacement on Cedar Trail: 38' multi-use boardwalk replaced with largely repurposed material, all pressure treated, for under \$300!

Happy Trails!

Ben Jankowski - Trails, Grounds & Facilities Supervisor

Call For Artists!



1st Annual Mt. Agamenticus Plein Air Paint Out

The event is open to painters in all wall hung media. Artists, pre-register for this event online!

We have scheduled the 1st annual Mt. A Plein Air event for September 25th (rain date of September 26th). The Plein Air event is an outdoor "paint-out" where artists paint on site, completing their paintings within several hours on any trail or summit vista at the mountain.

The public is welcome to spectate while artists paint. Artists will then exhibit their ready to hang paintings during a reception that evening at the York Art Association. The paintings will also be exhibited for the following month.

The French phrase "en plein air" translates to "in the open air." French Impressionists started plein air painting when the paint tube was invented in the mid-1800s. It has since given artists the opportunity to use dazzling pigments to capture the immediate urgency of changing light and weather. Plein air paintings, usually landscapes, have a different "airiness-feel" to them as they are painted rapidly in a few hours capturing the essence of a lasting impression.

Winslow Homer, a well know 19th century plein air artist began capturing Maine's beautiful vistas after moving to Prout's Neck and the plein air painting movement still remains popular in Maine.

To register for this event, please go to our website for more information and the link to the registration form: <http://agamenticus.org/plein-air-event-sept-25/>

Please note: Spots are limited; pre-registration does not guarantee a spot. Submissions, including artwork samples, are due by September 4 and review will begin at that time. There is a \$10 non-refundable registration fee for this event, payable to the "Friends of Mount Agamenticus."

Upcoming Programs & Events at Mount Agamenticus

Mark your calendars! Information about all upcoming programs, events, and Volunteer Community Work Days available on our website.

Nature Journal Club

Thursday, August 19 6:00-8:00pm;
Thursday, September 16 6:00-8:00pm;
Thursday, October 21 4:00-6:00pm

Youth Intro to Hiking & Leave no Trace

Grade K-3: Saturday, August 21
Grade 4-6: Sunday, August 22
9:00am-12:00pm both days

5th Annual Mount A Trail Challenge

Virtual: September 1st-18th
In-Person: Saturday September 18th
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Friends of Mount Agamenticus 1st Annual Plein Air Paint Out

Saturday, September 25 (rain date 9/26)
See story on left

Eyes Like a Hawk

Saturday, September 25 10:00am-12:00pm
with The Center for Wildlife

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Too often humans look upon snags as unsightly, menacing, or worthlessly dead. Closer study and understanding, however, reveal how crucial snags are to our forests, soil, and wildlife. They very much exist among and provide for the living.

*mycorrhizal fungi: mycorrhiza, which means "fungus-root" is defined as a beneficial, or symbiotic relationship between a fungus and the roots of its host plant. -okstate.edu

¹ Habitat Feature: Snags | Habitat Network (yardmap.org)



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