

SUMMIT VIEW

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mt. Agamenticus

Winter 2023

Mount A's Early Trail Crew

Have you ever wondered who built the road to the summit of Mount A? Many assume this steep, occasionally precarious, drive is a relic of the Big A Ski area.

Or perhaps constructed by the military during WWII? The answer lies in a lesser known chapter of Mount A's history, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).



MAINE 130th COMPANY

Created as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR) New Deal, the CCC setup camps throughout the country during the Great Depression. The goal was two-fold: conserve natural resources and put people to work.

By the 1930s, the Mount A region bore scars from centuries of hard use. Clear cutting for lumber and charcoal, abandoned homesteads from a begotten era of sheep farming, and a network of poorly drained, heavily eroded, woods roads prompted the CCC to take an interest. The 130th Company CCC worked extensively at Mount A throughout 1935-36. Highlights of their labor include, a well-drained summit access road, erosion controls, picnic areas, fireplaces, latrines, parking areas, foot

trails, trash clean up, white pine blister rust control, revegetation, and surveys for Dutch elm disease. These efforts point to an early vision of balancing conservation and sustainable recreation, Mount A's mission today. FDR would be pleased to see things have come full circle.

The 130th Company went on to have a role in creating Baxter State Park, the Massabesic Experimental Forest, and spearheaded dozens of conservation initiatives in Maine and New Hampshire. Nationally, CCC efforts resulted in the largest natural resource protection initiative in American history and a catalyst for modern conservation.



Species Spotlight North American porcupine, *Erethizon dorsatum*



Bob Dale

Henry, a non-releasable North American porcupine ambassador at Center for Wildlife, Cape Neddick, ME.

While they are often observed in the oak trees on the summit of Mount Agamenticus throughout the warmer months, did you know North American porcupines don't hibernate and they can be found throughout New England year round? During the fall, porcupines eat acorns and other mast, gain weight, and grow a thick winter coat to help prepare themselves for the cold winter months. Their diet shifts to conifers for the winter, primarily Eastern hemlock and various pine species and will shift back to deciduous species come springtime. As our second largest rodent in Maine, they are able to use their hard front incisors to crack open nuts and strip bark off of conifer branches throughout fall and winter.

Instead of sitting up in trees, they may be found in dens under rock ledges, fallen trees, or culverts during the winter time. In fresh snow, you may see their paw prints with a waddle-like gait or walking pattern and a tail drag in between the paw prints. Other signs of North American porcupines are their distinctive musky odor, as well as piles of dime sized, oval feces pellets.

Keep your eyes and nose out the next time you are hiking at the summit, as you may spot the local wild porcupines. As with any wild animal, you should always keep yourself and domestic pets at a safe distance away. Though they cannot shoot their 30,000 quills out of their bodies, we all know pet who has sniffed a porcupine and required a trip to the vet's office to remove them. That's not a fun time for either your pet or the now defenseless porcupine!

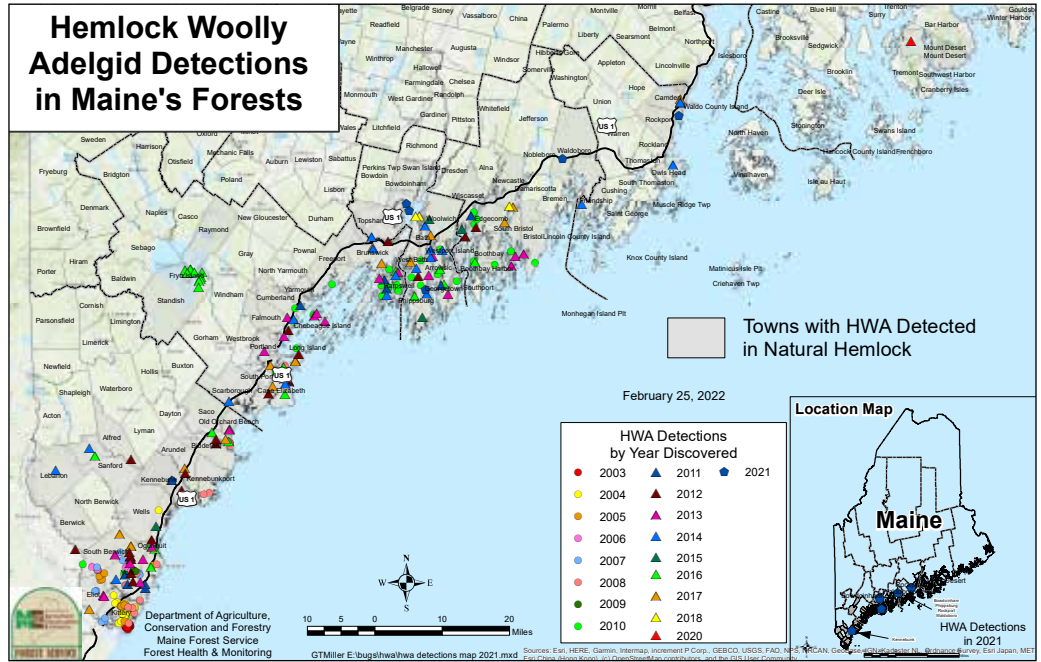
- Kristen Brewster-Melvin

Spread of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) in Maine

According to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (DACF), “Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) appears to be widespread in the towns of Harpswell, Kittery, Westport Island, and York and may be widespread in other communities, especially on coastal peninsulas and islands.”



Steven Katovich Bugwood.org



The Maine DACF created this map illustrating the extent of HWA detections from Kittery to Bar Harbor covering the period from 2003 to 2021.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension notes, “Over one-third of the native range of hemlock in the eastern US is now infested with HWA.”

Because Hemlock foliage is an important source of food

and shelter in Eastern forests, particularly in winter when hardwood trees are dormant, entire ecosystems are adversely affected when hemlock trees succumb to HWA.

FMI, please visit: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/insects/hemlock_woolly_adelgid.htm, <https://extension.umaine.edu/home-and-garden-ipm/fact-sheets/common-name-listing/hemlock-woolly-adelgid/>

National Weather Service Snow Survey Program

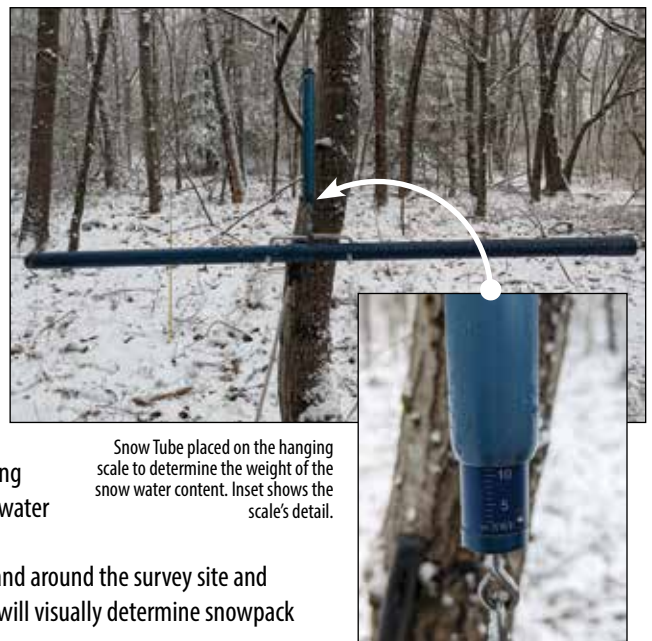
When people see snow on the ground it means many different things for each person. The National Weather Service (NWS) is tasked with monitoring snow conditions to estimate what the runoff will be when it melts. When water is runoff and not absorbed into the ground or evaporated into the air it will flow over the ground and into lakes and rivers that can cause flooding issues. For the prediction of the annual runoff of melted snow, the NWS in cooperation with other federal, state, town, and private organizations manages a comprehensive network of manually measured snow monitoring sites throughout Maine and New Hampshire. The snow survey program provides the best estimate of snow water equivalent, snow depth, and other snowpack characteristics used to assess flood risk and spring runoff.

In 2022, the NWS in Gray worked with Mount Agamenticus Staff to add a snow survey site on top of the mountain. The collection of snow measurements will be conducted every two weeks in January and February, and weekly in March, April and May until the snow is gone. This process is done with a snow tube sampler and hanging scale calibrated to the snow tube sampler, which can measure the snow depth and snow water equivalent of the snowpack.

The observer will take between 5 to 10 measurements within a representative area in and around the survey site and average all the readings to determine the measurements at the survey site. The observer will visually determine snowpack coverage and calculate snowpack density.

All the reports are collected and sent to the Maine Geological Survey and the National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center (NOHRSC). NOHRSC is a part of the NWS and produces a daily National Snow Analysis and distributes a variety of snow summaries and data sets of both observed and modeled data. From the reports, river, ice, soil moisture, water supply, climate and forecast conditions, the NWS in Gray writes a biweekly Hydrologic Outlook. The Outlook is to provide guidance to decision makers to protect life, property and promote commerce throughout New Hampshire and Western Maine.

- Nikki Becker, Observing Program Leader, NWS Gray, ME



THE BELT OF VENUS

Sometimes called the “the magic hour,” or “the golden hour” by photographers, it’s the daylight time shortly after sunrise or before sunset.

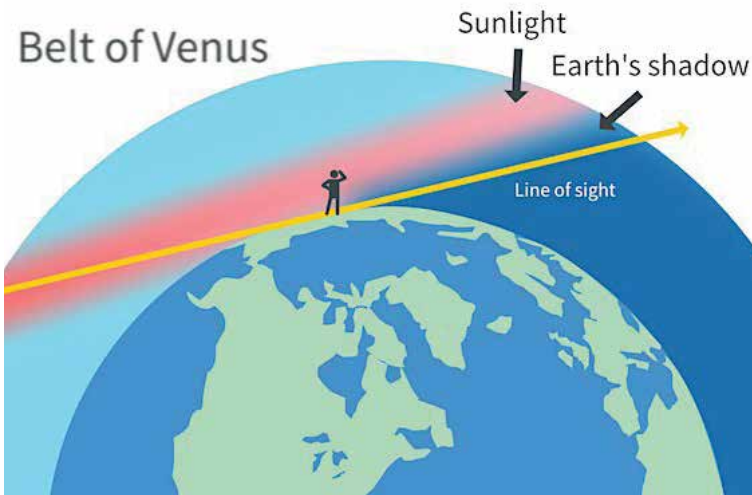
Cameras capture the light in ways the human eye cannot, still the subtle pastels are visible to us, especially when the sky and the horizon are clear. Every day, all over the world, on land and sea, mountaintop to valley, this atmospheric phenomenon creates a magical, though brief light show.

Both evening and morning, the Earth’s blue-gray shadow is cast into its atmosphere and appears in the direction opposite the sun ~ the antisolar point. The rosy pink band above the shadow, in the east after sunset, or west before dawn – is called the Belt of Venus; sometimes Venus’s Girdle. The terms have nothing to do with the planet, Venus, likely only the color. The phenomenon is also termed, the Anti-twilight Arch, or Anti-twilight. Winter months make the pink band appear much deeper in color than in summer months.

All the light from the Sun is progressively being tilted more and



PHOTOS: From Mt A Lodge summer and Ogunquit Beach winter; Denise Johnson.
DIAGRAM: EYES ON THE NIGHT SKY - JUNE 2019 | Elan Valley - www.elanvalley.org.uk
Belt of Venus Diagram - Bing images



more with respect to our observed horizon. The sunlight that passes through minute particles and haze in the atmosphere appears red because of the scattering of the red wavelengths of light. This is also known as “backscattering”.

As the sun sinks lower and lower, the Belt of Venus seems to lift up off the horizon higher and higher until it moves beyond the point of the observer’s line of sight. Meanwhile, Earth’s dark shadow, or “twilight wedge”, rises quicker than the sun sinks below the horizon and overtakes the pink band until its lovely light is extinguished. Earth’s shadow gradually smooths out with the evening sky until the dark of night ensues.

For photographers, fortune abounds in this atmospheric pageant when the Moon rises exactly opposite the setting sun. That is, exactly 180 degrees opposite the sun in ecliptic longitude. In this instance, the Moon will always be full.

Wintertime around Mt. A...



Grady Weed



Porcupine trail from Henry, Center for Wildlife’s Porcupine Ambassador.



Announcing the Mt. Agamenticus Online Gift Shop!

The Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program's online gift shop was a success thanks to everyone, near and far, who chose to shop small and support



conservation work over the holiday season! The shop will reopen later in January, with a variety of items available for sale. T-shirts and small accessories are available for shipping within the US, while other items (bulkier items and products from wholesale partners) are available for local pick-up only. Local orders will be available for pick-up at your convenience outside on the porch of the York Parks and Recreation office in York, twice weekly through the winter and spring.

Details about the shipping and drop-off schedule for 2023 will be available at Agamenticus.org. If you have questions or are itching to buy something you saw over the summer that doesn't seem to be listed online, please reach out to our Outreach and Education Coordinator directly: ndensmore@yorkmaine.org.

Visit <https://mount-agamenticus.square.site/> to shop! All purchases directly support conservation work at Mount Agamenticus, including outreach and education efforts.

SAVE the DATE for WINTER PROGRAMS!

Mark your calendars for the following guided educational programs:

January 23 | 10:30-11:30am

Winter Nature Journaling at the Center for Active Living (Ages 50+)

February 18 | 10:00am-12:00pm

Winter Adaptations at the Center for Wildlife

February 13 | 10:30-11:30am

Introduction to "Leave no Trace" at the Center for Active Living (Ages 50+)

March 20 | 10:30-11:30am Location TBD

Early Spring Tree ID with the Center for Active Living (Ages 50+)

For full program descriptions and information about registration, visit Agamenticus.org.



David Tibbetts

A beautiful shot taken last fall from the Mt. Agamenticus summit.

The Friends of Mount Agamenticus

The Friends of Mount Agamenticus is a volunteer advocacy and stewardship group for the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program. We assist program staff in carrying out educational, interpretive, community outreach, and public use objectives without compromising the integrity of the region's sensitive ecological habitat.

We are currently seeking Friends that can assist with any of the following tasks:

- Orienting and coordinating with new volunteers
- Researching fundraising opportunities
- Writing grants and newsletter articles
- Developing and managing website and social media

Scan the QR Code to "Like" the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region on Facebook!



Please email friends@agamenticus.org if interested. To learn about additional Mt. A conservation opportunities, please visit our website agamenticus.org.

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