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GUIDE

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THE GREAT OUTDOORS IN THE CATSKILLS

By Jeff Senterman



Left: New Mid-Mountain Trail in Elm Ridge Wild Forest, designed by IMBA and NYS-DEC, built by ADK Trail Crew, and maintained by the Windham Mountain Bike Community. Right: Adam Coppola, IMBA, Frank Parks, NYS-DEC, Wes Lampton, ADK Trail Crew Coordinator. Photos by Adam Coppola

The cooler temperatures of September make it a great time to get your hiking boots on and enjoy the great outdoors of the Catskill Mountains. Not only that, but towards the end of the month, we all get to enjoy nature's fireworks as tree leaves begin to change from green to bright oranges, reds and yellows.

The 10th Anniversary of Lark in the Park!

The 10th Annual Lark in the Park will offer exciting hiking, paddling, cycling, fishing, nature walks and lectures as well as cultural events throughout the entire Catskill Mountain Region. From October 5 through October 14 you will be able to enjoy over 50 outdoor activities during the 10-day "Lark" celebration, sponsored by The Catskill Mountain Club (CMC), New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (Trail Conference), and The Catskill Center.

Celebrating the creation of the Catskill Park, you can help us mark the anniversary by hiking to a Catskills fire tower, paddling the Pepacton Reservoir, cycling on the Catskill Scenic Trail, learning about the region's ecology, and much more. Lark in the Park group activities are typically free of charge: everyone is welcome and they are a great opportunity to meet like minded outdoor enthusiasts and lovers of the Catskill Mountains!

The entire schedule of activities for the 10-day Lark in the Park is available online at www.catskillslark.org. Events continue to be added to the on-line schedule right up to the start of the festivities, so be sure to check back frequently.

Lark in the Park was originally celebrated in 2004 when the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) marked the 100th anniversary of the Catskill Park's founding. The DEC is again a key supporter of this important anniversary.

Another important part of the Lark is the Catskill Mountain Club's (CMC) Annual Dinner! Everyone is invited to join the fun which will include speakers, raffles, door prizes and auctions. For details, stay tuned to www.catskillmountainclub.org.

For more information on Lark in the Park, call the Catskill Center at 845 586 2611, e-mail cccd@catskillcenter.org, or follow the Lark in the Park on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CatskillsLarkinThePark).

Adopt a Trail for Maintenance

The Trail Conference has several openings for Trail Maintainers throughout the Catskill Mountain Region. Individual trail segments for adoption range from less than a mile to about two miles in length, depending upon the difficulty and location of the trail.

After adopting a trail, the volunteer trail maintainer visits their trail at least twice a year and performs basic trail maintenance tasks such as weed and branch clearing, small blowdown removal and report on larger problems that will need the Trail Crew or additional work. If you are interested in adopting a trail and becoming a volunteer Trail Maintainer, just fill out the interest form here: www.nynjtc.org/vop/trail-maintainer-catskills-south or email the Trail Conference at catskills@nynjtc.org to let them know that you are interested. They will provide you with more information and what trails are available for adoption.

Invasive Species in the Catskills: Propeller Seeds and the Emerald Ash Borer

It can be hard to identify trees while walking. There are several things to contend with: rocks, mud, low lying branches, roots and, of course, the mosquitoes. Some trees, however, make it easy for us. The White Ash tree in particular makes it simple. It sports ridges that resemble diamonds and in the fall, its seeds fall to the forest floor using one propeller like wing. The fruit or seeds are called samaras. They are oar shaped seeds designed to scoot to new locales. Put three pennies side to side and you have a good-sized samara. When not found on the ground, they can be found in children's art projects, replacing the thick lines of

marker or crayon as eyebrows and moustaches. In coming years, it will become easier to identify ash trees thanks to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). This tiny bug will cause ash trees across the Catskill Mountain Region to develop unique but unsettling characteristics, a couple of which will be noticeable at eye level. Ash trees infected by EAB larva will develop nasty splits in their bark. Along the base and the trunk of infected trees sprouts will sometimes shoot up. If you peel back the bark of an infected tree, you might find a distinctive S shaped pattern. This is the mark of EAB larva munching their way through the tree. The EAB, a metallic green beetle that can sit comfortably on a penny, is well on its way toward destroying the ash trees of the Catskills.

For information on invasive species in the Catskills, contact the CRISP program, hosted by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development at 845 586 2611. You can also check out www.stopthebeetle.info for more information.

New Mountain Bike Trails Taking Shape in Windham Thanks to a Team Effort

The Windham Community of Mountain Bikers, the New York State DEC, The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), and the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) have been working together to develop new multi-use trail in Elm Ridge Wild Forest in Windham, NY. This partnership between IMBA, DEC, ADK, and the Windham Community has already created some new singletrack trail in Elm Ridge Wild Forest with plans to increase the multi-use trail development in coming years. The Key goal here is to demonstrate Beginner and Intermediate level sustainable singletrack trail in the Catskill Park.

Take a Hike!

If you are looking to get out on the trails, but are looking for some guided hikes to help you get your bearings on Catskill Mountain trails, the region has several different groups that lead guided hikes. The Catskill Mountain Club (CMC) offers members and non-members the opportunity to go hiking, paddling, biking and skiing throughout the Catskills. More information on the CMC and schedules of their activities can be found at www.catskillmountainclub.org. The Catskill 3500 Club leads hikes up the 35 peaks in the Catskills that reach above 3500 feet in elevation. Visit the 3500 Club's website at www.catskill-3500-club.org for information on their activities. The Rip Van Winkle Hikers also lead hikes throughout the region and you can find out more information about the club check out their website at www.newyorkheritage.com/rvw.

Outdoor News, Events and Updates

Five Restored Fire Towers in Catskill Park Are Focus of New Hike Brochures and Maps

To help visitors find their way to the fire towers and understand their history, the Trail Conference developed a trail map and brochure for each of the restored Fire Towers of the Catskill



Trail Maintainers clearing a trail in the Catskills. Photo by Jeff Senterman

Park: the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower; the Hunter Mountain Fire Tower; the Overlook Mountain Fire Tower; the Red Hill Fire Tower; and the Tremper Mountain Fire Tower. Each brochure includes a map of the area surrounding the fire tower and a description of the most direct hike to the fire tower. All five brochures and maps are available at www.nynjtc.org/news/catskill-fire-tower-brochures.

What's happening at the Balsam Lake Fire Tower?

On Saturday, September 7, avid hiker and photographer Tony Versandi will be at the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain from 12 noon to 2:00 pm and will provide visitors with an outdoor photography workshop. Tony will focus on techniques that you can learn using a simple point and shoot camera when you are in a beautiful outdoor setting such as the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain. Tony will help you to learn how to get the most out of your camera for both distant views and landscapes as well as for close ups of nature such as plants and animals. The workshop will cover lighting and framing, under cloudy skies or sunny skies. Heavy rain will move this event to Sunday, September 8. For questions or more information, please contact Laurie Rankin, the Volunteer Coordinator for the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower via e-mail at laur090@yahoo.com. You can also learn more about the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower at www.viewsandbrews.com/balsamlake.



Hikers during the 2012 Lark in the Park. Photo by Jeff Senterman

Woodland Valley/Romer Mountain Long Path Relocation

Throughout this summer volunteers have been working on what will be over nine miles of new backcountry hiking trail in the Catskill Mountains between the village of Phoenicia and the existing Burroughs Range Trail. If you are interested in joining a trail crew to work on this trail (no experience is necessary—the crew provides the tools and the training), want to learn how you can support this program or just want more information about the work that is being done, please visit www.nynjtc.org/content/new-long-path-construction-catskill-mountains.

Getting Involved

If you are interested in learning more about hiking the Catskill Mountains, joining a trail crew, adopting a trail for maintenance, or just finding out more information about stewardship of our recreational facilities in the Catskill Mountains, please contact the Trail Conference at 518 628 4243 or via e-mail at catskills@nynjtc.org.

Jeff Senterman was formerly an Assistant Forest Ranger for the DEC in Greene County, graduated with a degree in Environmental Science from Lyndon State College, has worked in the Environmental Planning field, is currently the Catskill Region Program Coordinator for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Catskill Mountain Club and the Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference partners with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of 2,000 miles of public trails, including 29 lean-tos and over 200 miles of trails in the Catskill Mountain region. They offer volunteer opportunities for people who love the outdoors, as well as publishing detailed hiking maps for the Catskill Mountain Region, along with a number of other regions. For more information on our maps and our Catskill Community Trails program please visit us on the web at www.nynjtc.org/catskills and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NYNJTC.Catskill-Region.