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# AdirondackPEEKS

MAGAZINE OF THE ADIRONDACK FORTY-SIXERS





Front Cover: Lake Durant, Receding Ice

Photo credit: Johnathan Esper #3187W, [www.WildernessPhotographs.com](http://www.WildernessPhotographs.com)

Inside Cover: Heading to Iroquois

Photo credit: Chuck Schwerin #942

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### In this issue:

**Julia Goren** discusses how efforts to revegetate the highest peaks have progressed in a new segment called Talking Points, featuring luminaries who have helped promote and protect the Adirondacks in surprising ways. **Tony Goodwin**, a familiar name in the ADK, reviews the origins of how the High Peaks became public lands. His dad, **Jim**, was one of the first editors of this magazine. His PEEKS reportage of that dramatic day in June, 1963 when the slides on Giant were created is excerpted here, with commentary by those most immediately affected. **Rebecca Bennett**, **Jim Kittleson** and **Rich Alioth**—three more recent additions to the Club—offer personal perspectives on the trials and joys of hiking in the Adirondacks. **Fran Shumway** and **Mike Becker** share comments, stories and statistics from this year's impressive roster of 531 new 46er finishers in The Boulder Report. **David Crews** offers a poem on hiking truisms worth remembering.

Check out Club News to review the Winter 46er dinner and learn of the upcoming Grace Peak celebration this June. I hope you find this issue of PEEKS, my first, entertaining as well as informative.

Chuck Schwerin #942, Editor

AdirondackPEEKs

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President's Report

The largest class of 46ers will be recognized at this spring meeting—over 500! As we
continue to grow we must continue to be responsible stewards, educate, and if possible
give back in some way to the mountains.

We are actively pursuing a relationship with the Adirondack 46er Conservation Trust
that initially will allow us to direct yearly disbursements to various approved entities that
support good stewardship and are pursuant to the Trust's principles. How fortunate we are!

A hardy Thank You to the board and good wishes to those who follow.
I leave you with these little ditties.

WRINKLES OF TIME

We do not belong to her
O Majestic Mountain,
For her regal crown is
Glimpsed
Only in our memory.
She notices our passing with nary a whisper
Yet wrinkles of time tell man's unkind history.
Dare we hope she barely feels our trodden ways?

SANTANONI HOSPITALITY

Cripple brush, cripple brush how do you grow?
Twisting and turning both high and low.
Cripple brush, cripple brush what do you do?
You slash and you carve your name on Sue.
Cripple brush, cripple brush what do you eat?
Flesh from the thighs of dear old Pete.
Cripple brush, cripple brush you are not kind.
You just stabbed me in the behind!

MY HIKING COMPANION

Fire-maker at Colden Dam
Herd path finder on Allen
Observer of nature everywhere
Composer of the flying squirrel ballad
Complainer of bugs and bears and bees
Educator on krumholtz
Creator of delicious mountain food
Taller than me, please
Water bug, teenager
Forty-sixer
Daughter

Sally Hoy #2924W

Talking Points

Summits in Recovery

Results of Revegetation Efforts on the High Peaks

Adirondack Peeks: Julia, I understand you recently
completed a fascinating research project with the
Northern States Research Cooperative regarding revegetation
of endangered plants on some of the most heavily visited
summits in the High Peaks. This project involved the Summit
Stewards, a program the Adirondack 46ers help support.
Which mountains were selected for the study and could you
explain how it was conducted?

Julia Goren: Sure. We used a technique known as
"photopoint monitoring", which permitted us to track
conditions at the same locations over a long period of time.
The project was originally set up on Mt. Marcy, Algonquin,
Skylight, Whiteface, Dix, Gothics, Colden, Wright, and
Cascade. In 1999, a Summit Steward named Matt Scott
worked with Dr. Edwin H. Ketchledge's original photos of
the alpine vegetation and trails on those selected peaks.
Professor Ketchledge was in the forestry department at the
State University of New York in Syracuse and, as you know,
was a past president of the Adirondack 46ers. Many of these
photographs dated back to the 1960s, when Dr. Ketchledge
started his work.

Matt went back to the places where Ketch had taken
the original photos and precisely replicated them. Matt
made note of camera angle, tripod height, focal depth,
and bearing. Finding exactly the right spot and camera
measurements required basically triangulating off of far
distant objects visible in the photographs and then going
out to the locations and doing the triangulation again.
It's a pretty tricky thing to do! Matt was lucky since Dr.
Ketchledge was able to help him figure out approximately
where many of the photos had been taken. Matt put nails
in the bedrock, making it possible for Summit Stewards to
continue taking the photographs in exactly the same spot.

Since 1999, we have been retaking the photos on a

Julia Goren is Summit Steward Coordinator and
Education Director for the Adirondack Mountain
Club. The High Peaks Summit Steward Program is
a partnership of the ADK, the Adirondack Chapter
of the Nature Conservancy, and the New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation.

A Conversation with Julia Goren #5765



Dr. Edwin H. Ketchledge. Photo credit: Nancie Battaglia



Matt Scott. Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program

## Marcy



Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program



Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program



Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program

1981

periodic basis. Some photos show areas that are right along the trail and are continuing to change regularly, so we re-take these images every year or two. Some areas are much more stable, and we only re-take those images every five or ten years.

The thing that made this recent project new and exciting was that, for the first time, we analyzed the photographs to determine whether or not there was a measurable change over time in the alpine vegetation.

**AP:** Did the results show that the presence or absence of Summit Stewards made a difference in terms of restoration of endangered plants?

**JG:** We found that the presence of Summit Stewards made a considerable difference in terms of restoration of the alpine plants. In statistical terms, the difference was significant. From our perspective within the program, the fact that peaks that have a Summit Steward on them have recovered better than the peaks without a Summit Steward is phenomenal. It means that the educational work that we do really impacts the plants. There's nothing better than believing that you're making a difference and then actually being able to measure that change.

**AP:** I was puzzled by some of the results in the study. Three of the metrics you examined were changes in soil cover, rock exposure and vegetation cover. Between 1992 and 2008 the results from Algonquin appear to show that vegetation cover doubled but during that same period rock exposure went up more than 30% while soil cover dropped by 75%. Did I interpret those results correctly and how do you explain them? They seem contradictory.

2011

**JG:** Right. That's a great example, actually. In each photograph I divided the area up into about 12 squares and estimated the percent cover of each of those categories (basically brown, gray, and green).

What you see on Algonquin is a big increase in the amount of vegetation (green), which is great! Vegetation cover doubled, meaning way more of what had been bare soil (brown) became covered in plants. That's what we Summit Stewards really like to see, and that is a result of the care that hikers are taking when they're up above treeline.

But not all of the area recovered. Some of the bare soil blew away in the wind, exposing the bedrock

## Algonquin



Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program



Photo credit: ADK Summit Steward program

1971

underneath (the gray). So that accounts for the 30% increase in rock. The combination of new plants and new exposed rock accounts for the change in soil cover. The exposed soil either became covered in plants and became green, or it blew away and became exposed gray rock.

**AP:** I have long been under the impression that most of the rocky summits in the High Peaks became that way due to fire, not erosion or human trampling. Is that true and do you see evidence of the forests reclaiming more of the summits?

**JG:** This is a great point! Some of the rocky summits are a result of fires, but not all. Cascade and Ampersand are two mountains that have exposed, rocky summits as a result of fires.

Our alpine peaks, though, like Marcy, Algonquin, and the other summits that have alpine vegetation, were always bald. (Or at least, have been for the last 10,000 years or more.) They are that way because of the glacial history of the Adirondacks. Basically, once the last glaciers retreated about 14,000-10,000 years ago, all of the Adirondacks was covered with alpine tundra. Actually, all of the area where the glaciers had been had alpine plants (including places like New York City, Albany, Rochester, and Buffalo).

Anyway, in the Adirondacks we had vast, unbroken tundra. As the climate warmed up after the ice melted, trees started to make their way further north, and eventually farther and farther up the mountain sides. But the trees couldn't survive on the highest summits; the wind, ice, temperature, and soil conditions are too harsh for them. As a result, the alpine plants continued to survive on these summits, where we find them today. (Being on one of our alpine summits is like stepping through a doorway back in time 10,000 years.)

So, on those summits, trees haven't ever been growing. The views have always been spectacular up there.

**AP:** Are there plans to continue the study or visit other areas? In light of the findings will there be any change to the Summit Steward program?

**JG:** One of the first changes to the Summit Steward program as a result of our findings was to increase our presence on Cascade. We had always wanted to have a steward up there, but we hadn't been able to make it happen. The findings of the study convinced us a

steward was a critical resource to help slow down the damage to Cascade. Thanks to the generosity of the ADKhighpeaks Foundation (many of whose members are 46ers) we were able to start having a steward up on Cascade.

Another neat thing about our study is that it was the first of its kind in the northeastern alpine areas (which include the Adirondacks, the Greens in Vermont, the Whites in New Hampshire, and Katahdin in Maine). Now other alpine areas are starting their own photopoint monitoring, so soon we'll be able to compare changes not just within our own mountains, but across the Northeast. We're also hoping to use these photographs to help document how the plant communities are changing. For example, are we seeing more of one type of plant and less of another as the impact of climate change is felt on our summits.

In the long term, we definitely plan to continue the study. One of the interesting things about this project is that some areas are recovering so well that the nails are disappearing, as vegetation keeps growing. For these areas, we're soon going to have to consider some changes, since we certainly don't want to stand on any plants in order to take our photographs.

For me, the biggest take-home message from this research is that our individual actions really do make a difference. The recovery that we see is the result of each hiker's choice of where to place his or her feet. Collectively, we can help these mountains recover and we can ensure that our alpine zones continue to thrive for the next generation of 46ers, as long as we make the simple choice to walk on the rocks and not on the plants. Each of us has the ability and the responsibility to be a steward. ■

The entire study is available online at:  
<http://www.ajes.org/v17/goren2011.php>

Julia Goren can be contacted at [summit@adk.org](mailto:summit@adk.org)



Ketch doing diapensia training. Photo credit: Jim Ketchledge



Julia Goren. Photo credit: Tony Backus

## Fourteen High Peak Facts

*There's no such thing as showers in the High Peaks, only rain. No mountain of four thousand feet is a small mountain. Talking to yourself, a sign of intelligence. Waterproof is not a real word, everything's soaked by mile four. Your boots the most important piece of gear. The best twelve bucks you'll ever spend, a headnet. Rocks are almost never slippery (even when wet). Maps don't lie, the way up's longer. A songbird will alert you to the summit, perhaps a blackburnian warbler, a wood thrush, or if you're lucky, a field sparrow. By mile ten you and your clothes will smell like swamp. Every trail has its own personality. The herdpath up Table Top must be a river most the year. I bet the view from Phelps gives a good payoff. On many hikes in the High Peaks expect the clouds to break and the sun to shine roughly eight tenths of a mile from your car.*

— David Crews #8385

"Fourteen High Peak Facts" from *High Peaks*, a collection of poems by David Crews ([davidcrewspoetry.com](http://davidcrewspoetry.com)) that details his hiking of the ADK 46ers. *High Peaks* is now available through RA Press ([www.rapressrafilms.com](http://www.rapressrafilms.com)).



Photo credit: Susie Runyon