



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
June 2025**

Our June newsletter is now more than a bit late, but rather than send me off to purgatory for my tardiness, how about you read all about how busy the Chapter has been and you will get a sense of why I was tardy.

The monthly photo contest on our Facebook page had to have a second round as we had a three way tie! The winning photo here was submitted by Bruce Hadley, taken in June of 2017, of Hurricane Mt. Fire Tower, and it is a stunning photo! Congratulations Bruce, and many, many thanks to all who participated and voted for the first round and the three who went on to the second round too!



AROUND THE STATE

Delaware County Fire Towers: Two of the Counties Fire Towers that are publicly accessible are mentioned in this great article – <https://www.chronogram.com/explore/must-do-delaware-county-hikes-23354242>. Of the other three, two are on private property and the third one, Rock Rift which we will talk about below, is ready to be restored this summer. Stay tuned to our social media site and our website for updates on work there.

Mt. Morris Fire Tower: The 22' tall Aermotor Fire Tower and the Observers cabin both still stand. Both have had past associations with the Big Tupper Ski Center. That has now been sold and the local developers are beginning to make plans for the ski center and other area sites. We sincerely hope that the tower and cabin will be part of their future plans for any future development. <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/tupper-lake-transformation-trails-end-tavern>

Lyon Mt. Fire Tower: On May 14th, FFLA Volunteers Pete and Adam spent time on the trail getting rid of numerous blowdowns. Some were large and some were full of spiky branches. Thanks so much guys for keeping the trail clear for all! Photos courtesy of Adam.



Bramley Mt. Fire Tower: Community Partnerships and support have always been and continue to be very important to our fire towers. A great example of that partnership is occurring at the Bramley Mt. Fire Tower. Check out this local promotion that they have developed between businesses and Volunteer Bramley Mt. Fire Tower Stewards: *“Visitors can get an “I Climbed the Tower” card from tower stewards that you can show at EIGHTYMAIN in Delhi and get a free appetizer, and at The Andes Hotel and Wayside Cider in Andes you get 15% off your bill. More offers coming soon.”* On the evening of June 2nd, we held another training for new stewards at Bramley Mt. Fire Tower. We had a great turn out and a beautiful evening at the tower. Remember that the tower cab is open on weekends and holidays when Stewards are present.

Salmon Lake Fire Tower: To the best of my knowledge, this tower, a 35' Aermotor erected in 1933 at the Whitney Estate, still remains on private property. The Whitney Estate now has a sale is pending. What will become of this piece of history?

<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/texas-developer-poised-to-purchase-whitney-estate?>

Balsam Lake Fire Tower: From the Catskill Mountain Club June 2025 email news is mention of my discussion with the Deputy Commissioner about the condition of the Balsam Lake Mt. Observer's Cabin. While Ms. Pertonis did answer my first follow up email to our discussions, she has not answered subsequent emails, and no action has yet been taken regarding the building code violation from 2019. Here is the Round Table report. “CMC’s first Catskills Roundtable, held at the Mountaintop Arboretum on May 10, drew almost 40 people and included constructive group discussion. The Club initiated the Roundtable this year to feature speakers and topics of regional interest, foster conversations, and share ideas. Katie Petronis, Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation was our first speaker. Graciously giving her time on a sunny Saturday, she first covered the wide range of her statewide position. After a summary of DEC’s Catskill Fire Tower Challenge (and the conclusion of Ms. Petronis’ presentation), remarks from those in attendance included a summary of the deteriorating condition of the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower Observer’s Cabin and the need for restoration. Potential inclusion of the newly re-erected Bramley Mountain Fire Tower in the state’s fire tower challenge was also discussed.”

Rock Rift: Renovation work is set to begin on the Rock Rift Fire Tower after the July 4th holiday. We hope to have some days available for volunteers to lend a hand during the week and some days on weekends. If you would be interested in helping out with this project, please reach out to me so we can let you know when dates and times have been set for the work.

Belfry Mt. Fire Tower: Thank you Brian, Tom and our DEC rep, Katelyn for your time at Belfry Mt. Fire Tower in the rain on June 9th. We got a lot accomplished and solidified plans for another work day when it will be dry!



Pillsbury Fire Tower: Pillsbury was in the news once again in the May 20th NYS DEC Bulletin - "Please be advised that due to a partial collapse, the Pillsbury Mountain Observer's Cabin has been removed from the summit of Pillsbury Mountain. The former cabin site will be cleaned up by year's end." I guess burned to the ground means removed.

Kane Mt. Fire Tower: On June 14th, we held an orientation session for new fire tower stewards at Kane Mt. Fire Tower. Along with 5 new volunteers, 2 of the local Caroga Lake Fire Department members joined us to learn more about what we do at Kane. It is always great to connect with these wonderful volunteers! Those 5 new stewards found they had some blowdown to remove on the trail. At the summit, they met Volunteer FFLA Steward James C, who was making a young hiker very happy with some Smokey items! Thanks to all for joining the crew! We will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Kane Mt. Fire Tower on August 14th thru 17th, including the "Dessert and Diaries" discussions with past Observers and Forest Rangers. This will take place at the Caroga Lake Fire Hall. For all of the centennial details, check out the Kane Mt. Website: https://www.carogamuseum.org/?page_id=4849.

Lowville Demo Tower: The former Number 4 fire tower is on the grounds of the Lowville DEC offices. This tower is part of our new VSA with the DEC. Two of our Stillwater Stewards, Rhondalee S. and Jim F. spent June 14th there as part of the 'Get Outdoors Day' Event. Rhondalee says *"It was a nice day at the DEC site in Lowville for the Get Outdoors event! Jim Fox, Brian Eichhorn, and I were there representing FFLA. A fun time! Beautiful location too!"* Photo courtesy of Rhondalee.



Stillwater Fire Tower: The FFLA received their new VSA for Stillwater in May. It was just in time for our annual National Trails Day Trailwork and was led by one of our Executive Committee Members, Sue K. along with Retired Forest Ranger Terry P. and Steward Rhondalee S. They made their way through all of the bugs and cleared the blowdown on the trail, and the water bars. Many thanks to the three of you! One of the problems that was discovered is that someone stole the bog bridging along the trail! We hope to get that replaced soon. Sue and Rhondalee know about a real nice camping spot when they are working at Stillwater. We find some additional info about the Stillwater Dam in this article: <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/an-inside-look-into-stillwater-dam?> Photos courtesy of Sue



AROUND THE COUNTRY

In recent news I read some very interesting articles. Some of them are about ways in which technology has changed the way we manage fires and the aftermath of fires. Replanting by rapidly shooting out seeds from a human sized drone? <https://www.skyhineews.com/news/canadian-company-uses-drones-to-replant-forests-decimated-by-east-troublesome-fire/>

How about thinning and burning programs that will reduce community fire risks? How would this apply in NYS? And would it be legal or allowed? <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2025/05/11/thinning-arizona-forests-helps-but-experts-say-controlled-burns-are-critical/83519561007/>

Can we throw some politics into our forests? Should we be prioritizing locally grown timber in our public buildings over other materials? <https://woodcentral.com.au/new-mass-timber-act-to-target-all-federal-buildings-us-congress/>

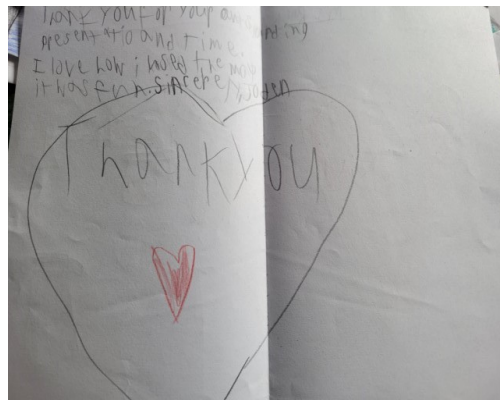
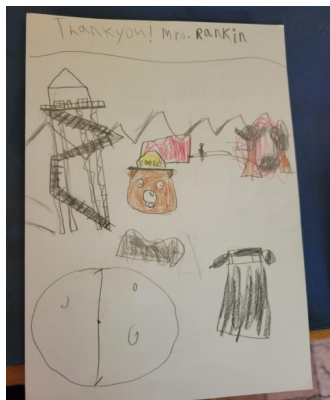
STEWARDSHIP

Partners in stewardship and in flight: Our FFLA Chapter was mentioned in the May issue of The Belted Kingfisher, the newsletter of the Delaware – Otsego Audubon Society, Inc. Our connections to towers and caring for nature, the care of the land, quiet observation, high elevation birds and their changes over time, and a focus on education make us ideal partners. As volunteer organizations, it is beneficial to work together and support one another's goals. <https://doas.us/the-belted-kingfisher/>

The Next Generation: One of the items on our agenda since the last newsletter in mid-May has been the very important time that we have spent with the next generation, our future fire tower stewards! We did classroom presentations for 4 more groups. We followed each of those presentations with a field trip. We were fairly lucky with the weather and the bugs. DEC permits were issued, bus transportation was secured along with parental permissions, chaperones, teachers, and FFLA Stewards for these trips. We took Grades 3, 4, and 5 to different locations; Mt. Utsayantha, Kane Mt. and to Makomis at Speculator. Thank you to FFLA Executive Committee Members Pat and Debi T. for helping out with the trips and the photo from Chelsea at Northville Central School.



Heartfelt Thanks: To illustrate their appreciation for the fire tower presentation, the kids at Northville Central School made me thank you cards. Each and everyone of them had amazing artwork and each wrote their own words inside the cards. If I could, I would share each and everyone inside and out. For now, I randomly pulled one out and made a circle of the 40 some cards. My sincere thanks to each of these students, their teachers, parents, and the Elementary School Principal for having me and for these absolutely precious cards!



HISTORY

Due to time and space constraints, I am simply going to tie in a brief news article that was shared with me following the school presentations and field trips. From the Catskill Mountain News on October 21, 1960: *"The 71st birthday of Gus Stewart was observed Friday evening. Larry Baker, fire warden at the Balsam fire tower, entertained the group by showing colored slides taken at the tower. Mr. Stewart had served as warden at the tower from 1949 until 1957."* I guess my Dad did presentations too! From this website: <https://easternuslookouts.weebly.com/new-york.html>

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Due to the lateness of this newsletter, we will provide a conference wrap up as part of the July newsletter. Stay tuned for all of the details and photos from a great conference. One attendee summed it up very well; "I came home very motivated and inspired."

CALENDAR

June 29, 30: Lyon Mt. Trail Work

July 10, 11: Work at Owls Head Fire Tower - Note tentative dates

July 12, 13: ADK46ers will be working on the Poke O Moonshine Trail <http://adk46er.org/trailcrew>

July 19: Presentation at Bowman Lake State Park

July 24: Presentation at Fayetteville Library*

July 31: Kick off Event for 100 Years on Top: The Kane Mountain Fire Tower in Caroga Lake

August 14 - 17: Kane Fire Tower Centennial in Caroga Lake <https://www.carogamuseum.org>

August 30: Annual Lighting Event 8:30 PM to 9:30 PM

September 18, 19: Spruce Fire Tower Work

September 20, 21: Lyon Mt. Trail Work

October 3: Berry Hill Astronomy program

October 4: Berry Hill Astronomy program - Rain date

October 5: FFLA Volunteer Appreciation Picnic – Location to be determined.

***Mark your calendars for a new opportunity to learn about fire towers!**

NYS Fire Towers: The Past, the Present and the Future.

Climb the stairs as the fire tower system was developed in New York State, had great success, then adjusted to changes in our society. Have we gotten to the top of the tower yet? What will the future view hold?

Thursday, July 24th at 1:00pm

Where: Fayetteville Free Library

300 Orchard Street

Fayetteville, NY 13066

Presented by Laurie Rankin, Director of the NYS Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association

Finally, from Retired Forest Ranger Gary Lee: *“If you see Loons, ducks, geese, or gulls with young ones on the water give them some space and take your pictures with a long lens or zoom your cell phone. If you separate the families, it is a time when predators can come in and take the babies. Don’t linger around these families as these babies need time to be fed and the adults can’t do that when they are defending their young. This goes for wildlife in the woods; turkeys, grouse, and deer. Keep your dogs leashed as they can catch the babies and even separate them so they can’t find their moms again. So be aware as these babies are out there at this time of the year both on the water and in the woods.”* Gary is still busy taking care of the great outdoors and those who inhabit our natural spaces.



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