

**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
November 2017 Newsletter**

The month of November was traditionally the month that the Observers closed things up for the season in NYS. It was often already pushing the weather with poor visibility, frozen fog, ice and snow already on the tower structure. Occasionally it was a long fall fire season with dry and windy conditions and the Observer was asked to stay longer. The end of the fire tower season was quickly followed by hunting season. I often wondered if the Observer was asked to stay longer if it actually interfered with his/her hunting season plans? I have noticed that in many of the old fire tower photos guns and dogs were included. The tradition of hunting was often referred to in the recollections of Observers. Do you have any hunting stories involving a tower that may have been passed down to you that you would like to share?

November is also the month in which we celebrate Veteran's Day. Many of our Fire Tower Observers were Veterans. They continued to serve their community in that capacity. To learn more about how Veterans continue to serve our community, check out the Sterling Forest follow up and the work of Team Rubicon. Team Rubicon is an international disaster response organization made up primarily of Veterans that responds to disasters world wide free of charge. In between disasters, to keep their skills sharp, they work on community projects such as fire tower restorations. To see what they have done in the past month visit <https://teamrubiconusa.org/blog/operations-update/>

The Fire Tower Observers of NYS worked under the direction of their local and district Forest Rangers. A great partnership and often lifelong friendships developed between these two positions. Today we have no Observers and very few Forest Rangers. There is a call to action involving the numbers of Forest Rangers in the state. Read more about it here:

<http://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2017/11/brighton-is-first-town-to-endorse-forest-ranger-hiring/>

From the November 6th DEC Ranger Report: "New York Wildfire-Fighters Return Home: A team of 20 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Forest Rangers, staff, and volunteers who helped battle and contain wildfires in Sonoma County, California, returned home last week. This is the third New York firefighting crew dispatched to fight wildfires in western states this year. When the New York crew arrived in California, 23 lives had been lost and hundreds of homes were destroyed or threatened by the worst wildfire in California history. By the time the crew departed, a total of 7,010 structures were destroyed and another 487 structures damaged. Currently, the fire is 95 percent contained and full containment is expected by the end of the month. The firefighting team is made up of DEC employees and volunteers, including State Forest Rangers that joined crews from other states to help battle the wildfires." The women of the Forest Ranger force received a special acknowledgment. See the recognition at about 37 minutes: <https://www.glamour.com/story/women-of-the-year-2017-awards-live-blog>

Book of the Month: With the holidays approaching, it seems like a good time to suggest a book for kids. The Adirondack Kids is a series of outdoor adventure fiction for young readers. The settings for many of these fictional books are actual locations in the Adirondacks. Book #2 has a special fire tower on the cover. Rescue on Bald Mountain by Justin and Gary Van Riper would make a great gift for a young person.

Trivia Question for October: How many towers ran and had a USFS Fire Danger Station? No one offered an answer. No stickers were given away. I did have Rick Miller, past Observer at Kane Mountain Fire Tower, send me a note about the September trivia question.. He tells me he thought that Kane had a 2 hole privy. He was going to see if he could find a photo of it.

November Puzzle: How about a puzzle for November rather than the usual trivia question? Try to find as many FFLA related words as you can in this word search. Answers next month!

O	B	S	E	R	V	A	T	O	R	Y	S
D	A	L	E	U	F	X	U	H	X	R	I
O	C	T	R	E	E	E	O	G	E	E	G
O	A	O	D	R	O	C	K	W	Y	D	N
W	L	L	I	T	S	P	O	T	R	I	A
B	F	F	I	R	E	T	O	W	E	R	L
E	N	N	O	H	P	E	L	E	T	T	O

Follow Up

Sterling Forest: On Sunday the 12th a group of a dozen people, including volunteers from the FFLA, the Friends of Sterling Forest, The Park Staff from Sterling Forest and members of Team Rubicon spent the day putting the finishing touches on the Sterling Forest Fire Tower. By the end of the day all of the landings and steps had been replaced, most of the safety wire secured, the tower cab secured for the winter, and the old phone line was mapped out. I can't say thank you enough to all those who gave up their day to hike to the summit and see this project to completion.



Drone Usage: I mention drone usage yet again because there has now been a successful “prosecution” of their use in the Preserve.

<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/outtakes/hiker-pleads-guilty-operating-drone-wilderness>

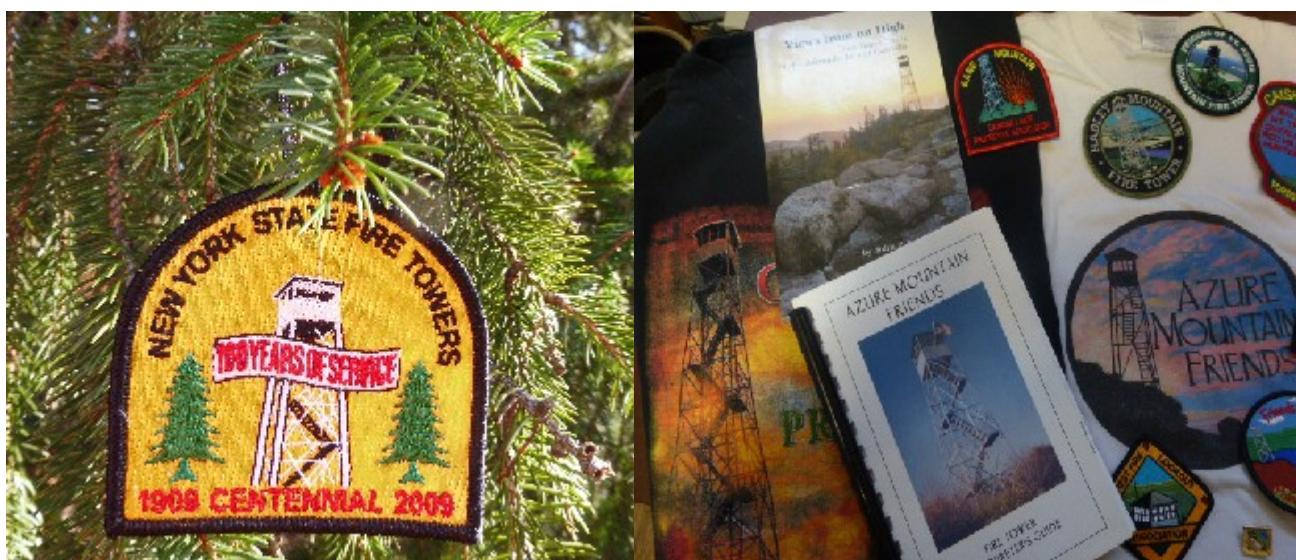
General Statewide Fire Tower Notices

Hunting Season Closures are in effect at Spruce Fire Tower which is closed until December 3rd and Stillwater Fire Tower remains closed through December 20th.

Winter Parking: Planning a winter visit? Many of the parking areas are not plowed in winter and some are located on roads that are not plowed. Have a back up plan in case you cannot park and PLEASE respect local ordinances that say no parking at snow plow turnarounds. The driver of a large snow plow truck may not be able to get around your vehicle in the snow plow turnaround and/or parked alongside the road. They may have to back their truck up for several miles and you may find your car towed when you get back from your fire tower visit.

Grant Opportunity Still Available – Remember the deadline is December 8th. NYS Parks and Trails Partnership program is offering matching grant funds for certain circumstances. Does it work for your fire tower group? To be eligible for the matching grant funds, you must be a 501c(3) and you must have a VSA with the DEC. Carefully read all of the details. If I can help you look through the information, please let me know. All details are here: <https://www.ptny.org/our-work/support/park-trail-partnershipprogram>.

Holiday shopping ideas: Support the FFLA and/or your favorite fire tower. Patches, caps, t-shirts and other items make great holiday gifts for yourself, family, and friends. They even make nice Christmas tree decorations too! (A short piece of ribbon was safety pinned on the back. You can add several fire tower patches to your tree)



Digitizing old photos: Red Hill and Balsam Lake Fire Tower Volunteer John Gunther, and his Dad, Martin, put together this short video using old home movies of a trip to Red Hill. Observer Claude Depew who had a wooden leg gives the hikers a lift in his truck as well as a tour of the view. What a great idea for a holiday gift. Thanks for sharing John.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By_wiShWky5EUjJFMGs3VVpNeGs/view



Centennial Tower of the month is Blue. The State of NY first built a wooden tower on the summit of this peak in 1911. It was replaced by the current steel tower in 1917. The history of the summit includes many other structures in addition to the 100 year old tower. In appreciation of the historic structure, an amendment to the Blue Mountain Wild Forest UMP does include returning the tower to a condition approximate to its historic appearance. Over the years there were 4 different cabins, a radar building and tower, and other communication equipment at the summit. In 1990 the fire tower was closed. By 1994, a group of local citizens had organized the Blue Mt Fire Tower Restoration Committee and the structure was restored and reopened with a volunteer on site. In addition to the usual fire spotting duties, it has been reported that a few dollars were made on the side at the summit of Blue over the years. Keychains, sodas and water were all reported to be given to hikers in exchange for some cash. In the early cabin photo there appears to be a sales counter on the porch, don't you think? There were 26 different Observers who served on Blue over the years. Happy Birthday!



For an interesting perspective on time spent at Blue Mountain, you should read Towerman Reflections of a Season on the Top by Chris Saunders, a June 1995 Adirondack Life Article.

The final item for the month of November is to take a moment to think about who we should offer our gratitude to on Thanksgiving Day. There is a great deal that goes on regarding fire towers in NYS that is not noted here in this newsletter. It would require a full time staff and a printing press to mention everyone who has worked on restoring a fire tower, been employed at a fire tower, volunteered at a fire tower, done research on the history of fire towers, been part of a fund raiser or a committee, and more. Just this month alone behind the scenes, Barb, Joyce, Marty, Ann and Bob have been hard at work on developing projects, NVV's initials came up on an old map, Sonny went rummaging and found a treasure to share, Paul took a walk with Tom and I and shared insights, Jon kept at an old project. I am grateful to each and everyone of you who care enough about fire towers, their history and their future that you have taken the time to either be a member or at least have read this newsletter. I hope your Thanksgiving is shared with others who are as sincerely grateful for your dedication to fire towers as I am. Thank you.

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