



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
September 2022**

The 9th Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event was held on Saturday, September 3rd with 34 towers participating state wide. This event is held to remember the Observers who once served in these towers, keeping watch over the nearby communities, homes, businesses and forests. Community members are invited to find locations near a tower they want to see and be prepared to look up at 9 PM and see the light come on to honor those Observers from the past.

It is a rather simple concept, but there is truly a lot involved behind the scenes of this event. An Illuminator must register in order to participate. This is so that communities will know if a nearby tower will be lit or not, or if any associated activities are happening, or for safety reasons, and to spread the wealth as much as possible, rather than having 34 people lighting one tower, instead of having 34 different towers lit. Illuminators must plan who will be on their team. Team members will need to help them carry lights and other necessary items and be well versed in night hiking, as you will be descending in the dark. Illuminators must circulate press releases and posters about the event around their community. That information must include locations where people can look up and see the light. If they don't, who will be there to look up at 9 PM? They must encourage local businesses to participate in various ways if they can. The Illuminator must be willing to give up two evenings of the holiday weekend – the planned event date and a rain date. And they need to let us know when they are off the mountain safely. We are so very grateful to all of the Illuminators.

There were some fabulous stories shared about how this event truly captured the connection to Community. One such example was from Snowy Mt Fire Tower. Jenny Lynne shared her experience with us; “Back in the late 40s/early 50s, my dad (who wasn’t even 10 yet!) and his buddy Burgess McArdele would pack their pack baskets and hike Snowy Mountain to bring supplies to Burgess’s uncle, Earl Burgess, who was an observer on Snowy. What an amazing experience to see Snowy lit up last night and hear Dad’s stories! Thank you for that memory!”

We had three generations of a family hike to Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower the day before the lighting. During their visit the work of an Observer was explained as was the fact that the next night there would be a light in the tower and they were going to go see the light come on! It was a big WOW moment for those young children to be alongside the road in the dark and see the light come on!



Balsam Lake by Barb G.



Snowy by Jenny L.



Snowy by Jenny L.

From Retired Forest Ranger Louis Curth, “As we look skyward and pay homage to our dedicated fire tower Observers during this year’s 9th Fire Tower Lighting Observance, I would ask you to join me in also saluting the memory of a distinguished forest ranger – Capt. Donald G. Perryman (ret.) who just passed from us on Aug. 10th. Donald Perryman began his career at Blue Mountain Lake in 1961. During the drought years of the 1960s, all fire towers, including the tower on Blue Mountain, supervised by Don, were operational AND essential to forest rangers, both for reporting fires and also for relaying communications. Let this year’s fire tower lighting also be an occasion to remember an outstanding forest ranger, a talented supervisor and a true friend. Rest in peace.”

At Wakely, past NYS Director Fred Knauf was the Illuminator with Sue (from Connecticut) helping him out. Fred says, “Fun night and safe getting down off of that "beast" without any crazy slips or animals! Bear scat was seen on the trail heading up. From below the cab, we saw Blue, Vanderwhacker, we think Goodnow, OwlsHead (came on and off a lot), Snowy, Woodhull, Bald and right near the end, the haze cleared enough to see Stillwater. All observers of Wakely’s names were read once we lit the tower in thanks for their service through the century.” Fred included a moment of silence for Retired Forest Ranger Don Perryman per Louis Curth's request. He also connected with the Raquette Lake Navigation Dinner Cruise and turned the light on a bit early to accommodate their passengers ability to see the light.



Kane by Debi Tebano

Debi and Pat Tebano, Illuminators at Kane Fire Tower, got to see the annual end of season flare lighting (they actually use led lights, not flares) on nearby lakes. The lighting of the tower had many in surrounding camps and on the lakes looking up and remembering. The Canada Lakes Conservation Association's annual end of season event pairs well with our event!



Wakely by Sue Kirk

Once again our friends to the south in New Jersey joined the event, lighting up Catfish fire tower.

As always, we are open to suggestions and adjustments to improve things next year. Next year we plan to provide a google pin map of all fire tower locations. We may be able to include viewing sites too, or will at least try. Next year we plan to provide the Illuminators with the list of Observers who served at the tower and ask that they be read aloud. Let us know of any suggestions please.

AROUND THE STATE

Presentations: Our friends at the Adirondack History Museum in Elizabethtown were very busy promoting fire towers through some great presentations. Author Marty Podskoch was there on August 18th doing a slide show <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2022/08/event-history-and-lore-of-the-northern-adirondack-fire-towers.html> and historian Sharp Swan did a history of fires in the Adirondacks <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/historic-fires-adirondacks>. The museum also participated in the Lighting event this year.

Grant Opportunity: Preservation League Technical Assistance Grants are now open. These are grants which may help you fund a professional such as an engineer to inspect a fire tower. It may be worth looking into for your group. <https://www.preservenys.org/> Please note the deadline is Oct 21st.

Ranger Reports: Since our newsletter last month we have had some rain state wide, causing a dramatic drop in wildfires in the Weekly Ranger Reports.

Report 9/8: **Towns of Mamakating, Wawarsing, and Millerton, Dutchess, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties Wildland Fires:** Forest Rangers worked on suppression efforts at five different fires estimated at 221 acres. The largest fire was the Napanoch Point fire in Ulster County, which was started by a lightning strike and burned 142 acres of land. Forest Rangers led the incident response in cooperation with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, New York State Police, Ulster County, and other State and local partners. Eight days after the fire started, the [teams of firefighters had the fire under control](#).

St. Regis: One of our Affiliate Members, the Friends of St. Regis Fire Tower, did another superb job of creating additional events around the annual Lighting. Thank you! You can see all the details here: <http://www.friendsofstregis.org/lighting-of-the-tower-2022/>

Cathedral Rock: Students and Faculty from the Ranger School at Wanakena lit up Cathedral Rock and offer us a great look at two nearby towers; Mt. Arab and Owls Head.



St. Regis by Mark Boyce



Hurricane from Elizabethtown by Kim Dedam



Arab and Owl's Head by Jane Ellis from Cathedral Rock

AROUND THE COUNTRY

Western Conference: After three years, the western conference was back in action with lots of great presentations, conversations, and lookout tours. Thanks to the local VFW Hall in Enterprise, Oregon for the meeting space. Numerous lookout tours were conducted. It is always a challenge picking a good time of year to accommodate active lookout staffers, enthusiasts, and fire season. Every year is different and we always try to pick a date that will work for as many people as possible. See you again next year!

I was sad to have missed the conference, but we already had a vacation planned and could not afford the time to take a second one. A bit more about my vacation as food for thought. We were blessed to be able to visit the states of Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Colorado on our vacation. We immediately saw the effects of fires with the day's weather forecast. Here in NY, we hear about how much rain is predicted. In Colorado the weather forecast is all about the danger of a “scar” sliding due to precipitation! In New Mexico we drove through what was the Ute Park Fire in 2018 – steep mountainous terrain on both sides of the road, burned from the roadside to the tops! In New Mexico, extensive logging is occurring to try to mitigate fire danger following a wind event that took down numerous trees. Some small controlled burns to help remove the litter on the forest floor is also happening. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ute_Park_Fire. We drove right by some fire mitigation projects near Silverthorne, Colorado. <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/wildfire/silverthorne-firebreak/73-b2d511da-3e07-4d64-b49f-4b8fdb93ea35>. Wildfire is part of daily life in the western United States. It was interesting to see and makes me very glad that we have restored so many fire towers in NYS. If our fire danger here climbs to the same levels as out west, we will have a head start on the problem.



Four fire tower lighting photos



Berry Hill by Jerry Falletta



Cornell Hill by Jill Litchfield



Makomis (Speculator) by Jeannette Barrett



Stillwater by Meg Wheadon

Calendar

Trying to wrap up our work projects, and now it rains, the days are shorter, the weather cooler so we have to pick our days carefully! Still looking to do Lyon Mt. trailwork, painting Buck Fire Tower, and one other special project we are trying to get underway in October.

Closures

Swede – Hunting season closure from Sept 10th through Dec 15th

Spruce – Closed for hunting season on Oct 22 to Dec 4th

Stillwater – Closed for hunting season from October 11th to December 20

Goodnow – Cab is closed pending repairs

Mt. Tremper - Cab is closed pending repairs

Sterling Forest – Tower is closed pending inspection

Jackie Jones – Tower is closed pending inspection

Beebe Hill – Tower is closed pending repairs

Please note there was no monthly photo contest in September due to the Lighting Event. We will return to these in October. We are not able to fit all of the lighting photos in one newsletter and plan to spread them out over the next few newsletters. A full album of all of the towers can be found on our webpage. <http://nysffla.org/lightp.html> Thanks to all who posted the photos on our Facebook page.

We'll close this months newsletter with one more item of how things are done a bit differently out in the western US regarding fires. “The Washakie Park Fire (Wind River Agency is adjacent to the Shoshone National Forest) is the classic Labor Day "Man" caused "Forest Fire". No official stated cause of ignition - but there was no lightning and the number of people out on the mountain over Labor Day weekend is almost mind boggling. But better hunting is on the way” – Thanks to Karl Brauneis for this. <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2022/09/07/wyomings-wildfire-haze-to-lift-better-hunting-weather-on-the-way/>

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