



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
October 2023**

While September saw a great deal of excitement with the 10th Annual Lighting Event, we kept the forward momentum and energy moving with lots going on right through October 15th. The official end of both our work season and our stewarding season is generally Columbus Day as things can get a bit chilly on a mountaintop after that date. Hunting season closures have gone into effect and we will feature some more great Lighting Event follow up in this newsletter. So read on!

Winner of the October photo contest was this great fall foliage pic of the Randall Tower - Thanks to all who posted photos, voted, and congratulations to Doug, owner of the Randall Tower! Please remember this is private property and request permission from Doug if you would like to visit. Doug's photo is our new Facebook cover photo through November 10th.



Lyon Mountain: On Saturday, September 16th, 2 great volunteers did fall trail work at Lyon Mountain. They lucked out with a decent weather day and got all the water bars cleaned out and the smaller blowdowns removed. There are certainly some larger ones there which we have reported to the DEC and we hope they will be able to take care of them during the fall chain saw window as our hand saws are a bit (I mean a lot) too small for the job! Thanks Dawn and Francis (for the photo too)!



Buck Mt: The official ribbon cutting and grand opening of the tower and trail here was held on September 15th. Unable to attend prior to other commitments, FFLA member and volunteer, Harry Peck attended and was able to read a few words on our behalf. This tower is getting a large number of visitors as we expected it would and that view is certainly wonderful! I must go and bring my binoculars to see how many other towers are visible, I think quite a few! Thanks Harry! Photo by Nancy Battaglia.



Spruce: On Thursday, September 21st we had 5 volunteers and the NYS DEC Forester out on the trail to do some much needed drainage work. While a fairly new trail, some significant rain storms and other issues have contributed to the need for some drainage work before the trail sees erosion, creating the need for major repairs. Under Kirstin's guidance, we cleared many water bars, learned about the local mushrooms, some tree identification and she placed several new trail markers to keep hikers on the correct treadway. At the tower, some took in the views while others picked up glass and looked carefully at the tower structure itself. One issue was noted and after internal discussions, it was decided to close the tower to visitors at this time, pending an engineer's inspection. The trail remains open except for the annual hunting season closure, noted later in this newsletter. We hope the engineer can note needed repairs and they can happen ASAP. Thanks to Kirstin, Sue, Michele, Donna, and Tom!

Stissing: Over at Stissing fire tower a rain date (September 30th) was needed for the official ribbon cutting ceremony, but what a beautiful day it turned out to be! And what a perfect “ribbon cutting” it was with a pair of loppers being used to cut a stick to officially open this fantastic new trail! After visiting Stissing numerous times and either sliding on steep terrain or walking through deep mud, the new switchbacks and steps on this trail are pure pleasure! And the fact that the trail starts at Thompson Pond, encourages you to check out that gem as well! Many thanks to Brian S. and the other volunteers involved in this major effort!



Spruce photo by Laurie Rankin



Stissing Photo by Mary Jenkins

Pillsbury: Meanwhile on Saturday, September 16th, in the southern Adirondacks, a crew of 5 headed into Pillsbury to get the new fire tower safety fencing up along the stairs and landings. Only one thing remains on the tower work there; getting the radio relay box moved to a lower level and the cab opened up to the public! Our volunteers have worked hard on this project for several years and we hope that 2024 will make that final step happen! Thanks to John, Adam, Jeremy, Norman, and Jacob! Photo by Adam Nichols.



Berry Hill: On Friday the 13th we held a thank you gathering for our Berry Hill volunteer stewards and combined it with an Astronomy Presentation that we had been thinking about all year. We hoped the event would provide some exposure for the fire tower and perhaps recruit some new steward interest.

<https://www.wbng.com/2023/10/12/berry-hill-fire-tower-astronomy-night/>

Balsam Lake: The annual end of year meeting and gathering of the volunteer stewards was held on October 15th. The day started with a tour of the Beaverkill Trout Hatchery, a multi-generational business that has existed for nearly 60 years. Visitors to the fire tower from the southern trailhead drive right by this gem and we wanted to learn more about it. We followed the tour with a picnic that included a visit from Smokey Bear.



Fire Tower Stewards

As we wrapped up the Volunteer Fire Tower Steward program for the year, we ask that you consider the trials and tribulations, successes and joys of being a steward by reading some feedback from some of this years stewards:

Kate – At Balsam Lake – “Very windy, thermometer reads 36 degrees, periods of rain then sun then sleet”. She stuck it out, greeting visitors until 2:30 then she made a dash for the car (a 3 mile hike out), a drive home, a hot shower and a pile of blankets before she was warm!

James: James, one of our stewards at Kane became a Dad this year and was not certain how he was going to fit in assisting with the steward program and being a new parent, but as all new parents must do – he adapted and introduced his son, Oscar to the world of stewarding. Welcome Oscar! James, Oscar and Allison in photo.



Paula: From Paula who also stewards at Kane, these words - “Just wanted to share that there were quite a few former locals returning for a visit and several said how thankful they were for the volunteers as they have noticed a marked improvement in the conditions the last few years. I only stewarded twice, but both times it was a real pleasure!”

Gary: Gary Lee stewards at Stillwater Fire Tower and he writes eloquently about it in his weekly column. I strongly encourage you to read his column as he describes the sunrise, the birds, the view, and the visitors. “*As the sun melted the fog that was in every valley, the true fall colors of the trees took over the landscape.*” Thank you Gary! <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2023/10/shooting-fall-foliage-visiting-buttermilk-falls-with-grandson-nathan.html>

Graffiti Remover: From our friends at Mt. Arab comes a suggestion that has worked for them for some graffiti. It is one that is fairly inexpensive, lightweight, and may work so give it a try. Mr. Clean Magic Eraser, wet and wipe. If it can be that easy and less than \$5, give it a try. You may have to use a small amount of your drinking water to wet the eraser with. Thanks for the suggestion!

Beebe Hill: If you see something, please say something. From the Ranger Report 10-12: Town of Austerlitz, Columbia County, Law Enforcement: On Oct. 6, Forest Rangers Jackson and Peterson investigated an illegal camping complaint on Beebe Hill State Forest. Rangers discovered a tent just off trail with rubbish strewn nearby. The tent was unoccupied, but a propane space heater was still lit, suggesting continued use. On Oct. 7, Rangers Jackson and Russo returned to check on the site and discovered an individual walking to the camp. The individual claimed they were living out of the tent for more than a month. Rangers issued three appearance tickets for camping within 150 feet of a trail, failure to maintain a neat and sanitary campsite, and camping for four nights or more without a permit. The subject was advised to clean up the campsite and move off the premises.

Around the Country

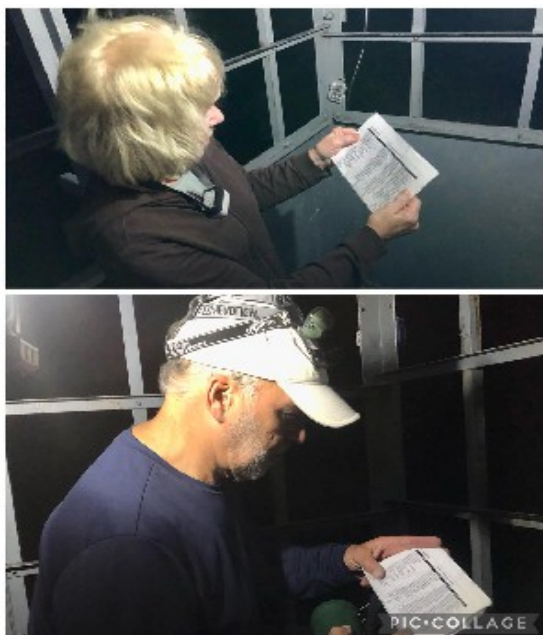
This podcast about fire towers in neighboring Vermont is a great listen. Along with others, Hugh and Jeanne Joudry are featured. <https://www.vermontpublic.org/podcast/brave-little-state/2023-09-21/vermont-fire-towers-from-smoke-spotters-to-thru-hikers>

Another interesting article was sent to me by Fred Knauf about the tragic fires that occurred in Minnesota in 1918 that left over 450 dead. As you read this article it sounds a great deal like a 2023 article about Maui. Could these same drought conditions and weather conditions happen again in the future? What can we do to lower the possibility of it recurring?

<https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2015/10/worst-natural-disaster-minnesota-history-was-forest-fire/> and <https://apnews.com/article/hawaii-fires-timeline-maui-lahaina-road-block-c8522222f6de587bd14b2da0020c40e9>

More Lighting Photos and Notes

Pat and Debi at Kane: “Success!! Made it down the mt (10:30p) & home safely. We had several visitors including fellow steward Megan & her boys. We watched Canada Lake’s red flares, observed the wind turbines all aglow in Herkimer County & Caroga Lake’s fireworks. And the weatherman lied...it rained. Not horrible but several good showers. Thank you soo much Laurie for let us participate in this wonderful event!!!!”





Hurricane by Kristy Lee



Owl's Head by Forest Ranger Milano



Adirondack History Museum by Peter Slocum



Cornell Hill by Trish Watkins



Arab by Sheila Young



Adams by Ken Trischuck



Belfry by Brian Collupy

Calendar

October 18: Author Marty Podskoch will be doing a presentation on the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) at the Saratoga Springs Public library. The CCC was very involved in the building of fire towers, fire tower roads, and ponds. <https://sspl.libcal.com/event/10529507>

Hunting Season Closures:

Swede tower and trail closed, reopens 12-16

Spruce trail closed 10-21 thru 12-3

Stillwater tower and trail closed 10-10, reopens 12-21

Tower and Trail Closures:

Spruce, Beebe Hill, Sterling Forest, Jackie Jones – tower closed. Goodnow – tower cab closed.

Would you like to join the fun? If you are not already an FFLA member, please think about becoming one. It's easy, just visit <http://ffla.org/index.html> and click on join now! Thank you for your support!

Laurie
www.nysffla.org