



Friends of Mount Arab 2010 Newsletter

Directors

Chairman

Richard Bentley

Secretary

Donna Waltz

Treasurer

Bruce Lewis

Robert Acker

Peter Bartoszek

Gordon Batson

Gary Caudle

Raymond Dumas

Carrie Snye

Liaisons

Adirondack Fire Tower
Association (AFTA)

Michael Wilson

Nancy Hess, Tres.

NYS Department of
Environmental
Conservation (DEC)

Will Benzel

John Wood

St. Lawrence County
Youth Bureau, Youth
Conservation Corps
(YCC)

Joanne Sevick

CONTACT:

FOMA
PO Box 185
Piercefield, NY 12973

bentley@northnet.org

Trail Improvements

During the month of August, the Friends of Mount Arab (FOMA), along with the DEC and workers from the St. Lawrence Youth Conservation Corps made improvements to the trail leading to the tower. According to John Wood, DEC Forester, in order to prevent erosion and keep hikers from making additional paths through the woods next to the trail, it was necessary to build plank wood bridges crossing muddy areas.

“In many places you have what starts out as a three-foot wide trail, and suddenly it’s a 20 foot wide trail as people take the easiest way around the mud” he said. FOMA supplied the lumber (costing over \$500) and delivered it to the trailhead. The volunteer workers from the YCC carried the pressure treated 2x8 decking and the 4x4 sleepers nearly two thirds of the way up the mountain to the work site. Then, along with three DEC foresters and Katelin Isaacson (our Summit Guide) the YCC workers built the boardwalks per directions provided by the DEC. This is one example of what your donations are used for.

Map Table and Alidade

Those of you who have climbed Mt. Arab and have been up in the tower in the past two years have probably seen our map table and alidade - the brass rod on top of the map table that turns around a pivot designating the summit of Mt. Arab on the map. When smoke was spotted, the observer would line up the alidade to the direction of the smoke sighting past the two raised projections at each end of the alidade. He would then read the direction in compass degrees *from the near edge of the map table*, the side nearest to his eye, not the side toward the fire. That is why the cardinal points (north, south, east and west) on most tower map tables have been rotated by 180 degrees.

The observer would call in this reading and the supervisor of the fire crews would draw a line on a map starting from the summit of that mountain. Sightings from two or more different mountains are needed to locate a fire. This is called triangulation.

The map table and Alidade were constructed and installed by FOMA in order to enhance your hiking experience. This was paid for by FOMA at a cost of over a thousand dollars.

Iron Ranger Donation Box

Your donations are the only source of funds available to maintain the trail, cabin and fire tower and pay for the college student summit guides who are present during summer and fall months. The donations received as a result of this newsletter have not kept pace with these expenses. We need to substantially increase (at least double) the donations we now receive.

To help this effort we have installed a secure donation box (we call it the Iron Ranger) at the Mount Arab trailhead. This has been placed there with permission from Rayonier Corporation, the owner of the land upon which the trail starts.

The Iron Ranger has already received a few donations despite the fact that the sign soon to stand behind it and explain its purpose has not yet been installed. This last part of the project is currently underway, but may have to wait for snow and frozen ground to leave us before it can be completed. In any case, we hope that all of you who visit Mount Arab will ‘try it out’ by leaving a donation.

FOMA also sells Friends of Mount Arab hats and T-shirts in order to help increase donations. These hats and shirts are available for sale at Fortunes True Value Hardware Store on Main St. (near the railroad station) in Tupper Lake.

Katelin's Mountain Top Experience - July



Katelin Isaacson represented FOMA at the summit of Mount Arab for the month of July 2010. Katelin, who has studied the history of the Adirondacks and Adirondack fire towers, spent the month greeting and educating eager hikers. In her words, "I guided hikers through the history of the Adirondacks and gave them the ultimate experience." Through her conversations she learned that many hikers were locals who were eager to trade their knowledge. This exchange with the local community was an enjoyable part of her month long stay. Visitors new to the area gained the most experience and cultural knowledge of the Adirondacks.

Katelin found that engaging small groups of people was a challenging task. But, she found ways to make her words stick. She used small gestures or snappy questions to get hikers involved. Sending hikers on their way with a smile and new found love for the Adirondacks was her ultimate reward. "I asked a group of Boy Scouts if they knew what the towers were originally used for. This sparked their interest and they kept giving me answers. I thus began to describe their purpose first in the Catskills and then in the Adirondacks to reduce forest fires. I remember how excited they were when they went to climb the tower."

In addition to meeting summit visitors, Katelin also helped to maintain the trail, tower and cabin. Now a senior in college, Katelin has also contributed to reshaping the FOMA 'Interpretive Trail' brochure

and helping to choose stations along the trail that will allow for human and nature interactions. This was done in conjunction with Michelle Davis, the August Summit Guide.

This experience, working with the nonprofit group Friends of Mount Arab and NY State DEC personnel, has reinforced her pursuit of a career in educating the public about the outdoors and brought her one step closer to this goal. She already has her New York State Guide's License in hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping. She sees a future guiding small trips throughout the Adirondack forests and streams. "I want my clients to not only seek their outdoor experience, but also to gain a sense of the history of these lands set aside for the public to enjoy."

Michelle's Mountain Top Experience - August



Michelle Davis, senior at SUNY Potsdam, was the fire tower summit guide on Mount Arab for the month of August. She went with the goal of facilitating and furthering the Friends of Mount Arab's interpretive program, sharing her knowledge of Adirondack and Mount Arab history with summit visitors. The job completes a junior year capstone experience that is a major requirement for a B.A. in Environmental Studies at Potsdam

In addition to welcoming and informing visitors, Davis helped to maintain the tower, observer's cabin, and trail as well as doing research for the new FOMA Interpretive Trail brochure. Her contribution to this work will become a valuable addition to her resume.

Davis lived on the mountain five days a week, hiking up food and water to last. While she hiked up and down almost every day to check on the trail and trail register, she spent four nights a week in the restored observer cabin. "There was a lot of alone time after the mountain quieted down for the day, sometimes too much time," Davis mused. "But I really enjoyed getting to know the mountain and the people who

came to visit. It was an amazing experience. When else would I have the opportunity to live on top of a mountain for a month?" Her determination to stay on Mount Arab and learn as much about it and herself as she could was encouraged and helped by family and friends hiking up to visit. Though she really looked forward to seeing people she knew, she said she met a lot of very interesting people while stationed up there, and hopes that she positively impacted their visit as much as they impacted her stay.

The New Neighbor

excerpt from an essay by Michelle Davis

Sitting on the observer cabin porch atop Mt. Arab in the early mornings I watch the mountain wake up. It stretches its wings with the twitter of small birds, flitting from berry bush to berry bush or cheerfully bathing in puddles from last night's rain. It chatters with the buzz of today's gossip, relayed by chickadees and hermit thrushes. Blue darner dragonflies zip around as if on their morning commute. On occasion I see osprey passing over or turkey vultures circling hopefully, looking for their next meal.

I came up here with the intention of immersing myself as thoroughly as possible in the daily ebb and flow of

the mountaintop ecosystem. I wanted to become as much a part of the mountain as I presumed it would become a part of me. I hoped to observe as many patterns and processes as I could. I'd now become enough of a regular presence that I no longer got the suspicious glances of the chipmunk that resides humbly in the raspberry patch in front of the cabin. I didn't get a scathing glare anymore from the resident hummingbird; she merely hovered in front of me, as if saying hello, and then darted off on her way. The mountaintop sustained its humming chatter of birds, dragonflies, and other mountain residents despite my presence. I'm now just another neighborhood resident, but this conversation ceases once hikers start arriving.

FOMA Interpretive Trail Brochure

If all goes as planned, visitors to the Mount Arab fire tower this coming summer will find a new and updated 'Interpretive Trail' guide full of information about Adirondack flora, wild life, and foliage and which highlights various points of interest along the climb to the summit. The guide was prepared by the mountain stewards from the summers of 2009 and 2010, Crystal Decker, Katelin Isaacson, and Michelle

HISTORY of FOMA

On Earth Day 1997 a small group of citizens and DEC officials gathered at the summit of Mount Arab. With the common desire to save and to share this historical facility and its magnificent views with future generations, they resolved to restore and maintain the sadly decaying fire tower and fire observer's cabin located there.

Beginning with the incorporation of 'Friends of Mount Arab' (FOMA), a non-profit organization in partnership with DEC, and now affiliated with the Adirondack Fire Tower Association, this small group has progressed steadily toward their goal. Restoration of the tower is well underway, and the fire observer's cabin is nearly complete. FOMA has created an exhibit of text and photos summarizing fire tower history and highlighting the restoration effort. Additionally, there has been extensive trail work assisted greatly by AmeriCorps work crews.

Yes! I want to become a friend of Mount Arab, to help save and maintain the tower and ranger cabin, improve the trail, and interpret the natural and cultural history of Mount Arab.

- Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution for: ____ \$10 ____ \$25 ____ \$50 ____ Other.
- I would like to order ____ caps at \$15 each plus \$1 postage per order.
- I would like to order ____ patches at \$5 each plus \$1 postage per order.
- I would like to order ____ shirts at \$15 each plus \$2 postage per order. Specify sizes:

Medium _____ Large _____ X-Large _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

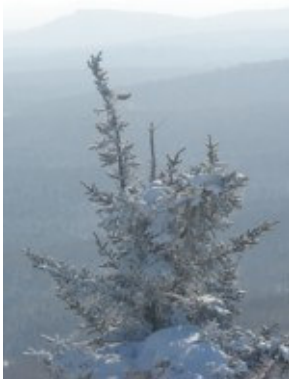
Please make checks payable to: **FRIENDS OF MOUNT ARAB**
Mail to: Friends of Mount Arab, PO Box 185, Piercefield, NY 12973

Davis under the guidance of Dr. Michael Wilson and Dr. Robert Badger of SUNY Potsdam as a project in their Environmental and Geology studies. The authors were assisted by naturalist Peter O'Shea, John Wood of the NY State DEC, and members of the FOMA board. FOMA is very grateful for the hard work of all contributors. This high quality handsome brochure will be printed on 11x17 stock, and will be available to hikers when they register at the DEC sign-in at the trailhead. We are certain that this new guide will enhance the experience of climbing Mount Arab.

Ingeborg has retired from FOMA Board

Long time board member Ingeborg Sapp resigned from our board this past year due to medical problems and other difficulties she had attending meetings at this stage of her life. But if you look to the right, you will see that she is still contributing to our effort.. We truly thank her for the years she has been part of FOMA.

Laurentian Chapter of the ADK climbs Mount Arab in the depths of winter.



Photos by Blair Madore and Jeff Miller

One more Trip

by Ingeborg Beyer Sapp

It's November- the glorious fall colors have faded and the wind has blown the leaves to the ground. It is silent, so silent—no more birds claiming their territory with their beautiful songs. There is an occasional flash of color as the winter birds fly through the branches of the bare trees. The Finches the Blue Jays, Chickadees and Crows will stay with us through the winter. The last flocks of Canadian Geese announce their presence with their raucous call. They are heading south to warmer climes. The sky is of a faded blue and the trees present their skeletons of twisted branches. We rarely see their severe patterns under the cover of the leaves.

I love to hear the crunch of the leaves under foot- it reminds me of my childhood when we piled them up and dove into the piles of leaves after raking them. Pine needles, also fallen to the ground, provide a silent cushion under my foot. It is so peaceful, so silent. Rock shelves are exposed. The bare trees open up vistas not seen during the summer. Lakes and mountain ridges present spectacular views.

The mountain is getting ready for its winter sleep and the deep cover of snow to rest before the days get longer. The returning warmth will wake it up again and the melting snow will provide the moisture. Ferns and wild flowers will again break through the fallen leaves to delight us with their fragile beauty. And so the circle of life will start again and birdsongs will again fill the air.

**Friends of Mount Arab
PO Box 185
Piercefield, NY 12973**