



Dear Friends . . .



**THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING  
HAPPENING AT THE GORGE!**

*Check the Events tab on our website, [www.mianus.org](http://www.mianus.org), to stay informed on all the lectures, walks, and volunteer opportunities going on here.*

*The News tab will keep you up to date on our land protection and management issues, our community involvement, and the achievements of the amazing students in our educational programs.*

*The Publications tab brings you to articles on MRG in the media, papers published by our scientists, and our newsletter archives.*

Coming off a productive year of land acquisition in 2018, Mianus River Gorge focused efforts on restoration and stewardship initiatives to better conserve and permanently protect the lands in its care. A particular highlight of 2019 was the completion of the spectacular new Cliff Trail along the steep slope far above the Mianus River and below the rim of the Gorge. The trail was built completely by hand by professional trail building crews to ensure minimal impact on the land and to fit seamlessly into the natural environment.

MRG staff also built a loop trail at the Taylor Preserve of the Mianus River Gorge, the new 22-acre preserve in Stamford, CT. This beautiful trail winds through a forest of hemlock, maple, and beech trees and along the banks of the Mianus River and its east branch.

MRG completed its work to inoculate over 2,000 eastern hemlock trees against the hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale. Using a hemispheric camera, staff will monitor new growth in the canopy from year to year before resuming a schedule of repeated basal bark spraying in 2021. At the same time, MRG scientists are participating in the New York State Hemlock Initiative to help establish a population of the *Laricobius nigrinus* beetle, a promising biocontrol that feeds on the hemlock woolly adelgid.

Mianus River Gorge began work on a meadow restoration project supported by Westchester Community Foundation and individual and family donors. This project aims to restore the biodiversity and health of three meadows by eliminating detrimental invasive species and re-seeding with a diversity of wildflowers and grasses to support pollinators, birds, and other wildlife species.

MRG wildlife biologists continued to share their wealth of knowledge at local workshops and national conferences, in published research papers, and as active participants in regional conservation partnership organizations. They welcomed a new class of Wildlife Technician Program high school students, mentored Eagle Scouts, and shared their expertise with citizen scientists on a wide array of ecological topics.

Thank you for contributing your time and resources to Mianus River Gorge. We are especially grateful for your support in these times. We hope that the preserves provide space for you to relax, enjoy, and immerse yourself in the natural world and that our research and education programs can provide insight and inspiration.

Sincerely,

Timothy Evnin  
Chairman

Roderick G. Christie  
Executive Director

## Lectures and Presentations

Mianus River Gorge staff scientists are frequently called upon to share their knowledge and expertise in a number of ways. This may come as a request to speak to community organizations or at a conference, serve in a leadership role in a collaboration of conservation organizations, or simply answer an array of interesting questions and queries from community members.

Executive Director Rod Christie continued as a steering committee member and co-chair of the land working group of the Hudson-to-Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H RCP). He also worked extensively on the Bedford Pollinator Pathway launch as part of the Bedford 2020 land and water taskforce. Rod also led walks for the Bedford Garden Club and for donors to the High Tor acquisition and new trail project.

Director of Research and Education Chris Nagy, Ph.D., accompanied three students to the Northeast Natural History Conference where two of them gave talks and one presented a poster. Chris gave a talk at the NY State Chapter of The Wildlife Society and at several other organizations about his work with the Gotham Coyote Project. He also began a term as chairman of the Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA).

Director of Land Management Budd Veverka gave a talk on “HWA Management at MRG” at the New York Botanical Garden’s symposium “A Call to Action: Protecting Earth’s Biodiversity”. He continued to deliver black bear talks to local community organizations. In 2019, Budd began a term as president of the NY State Chapter of The Wildlife Society, chair of the Invasive Species Prevention Zones Committee of the Lower Hudson PRISM, and a regional representative for the NYS Hemlock Initiative.

## Public Programs and Outreach

A highlight of every season, Mianus River Gorge held several well-received public programs including a walk to High Tor, the Gorge’s most recent land acquisition, a preview of the new Cliff Trail; a Bird Walk with Bedford Audubon Society; an old-growth forest walk; a Winter Tree ID; and the ever-popular night-time owl walks in the Preserve.

Mianus River Gorge also shares topics of interest to the broader community through Executive Director Rod Christie’s “Outdoor Observer” column. Rod shares his in-depth knowledge, observations, and experience on subjects ranging from the ecological implications of cycles of hard mast (from nut-producing trees) to the contributions of the most efficient pollinators, native bees.



*Cliff Trail Preview walk*



*High Tor walk*



## Land Acquisition

After a busy year of land acquisition in 2018, Mianus River Gorge focused its efforts on conserving and stewarding the land it is now charged with protecting in perpetuity. In 2019, MRG conducted a survey of native and invasive plants on each parcel, developed individual stewardship plans, and began restoration work as necessary.

The 3-acre Rockhill Way old field lot acquired last year is the site of the Restoring Native Biodiversity to Meadows initiative to remove invasives that have taken over much of the woodland edge and old field. The land is being restored to its former function as a meadow that serves to filter pollutants, provide habitat for unique plants and animals, and supply pollinators with food and shelter.

Last year's acquisition of the new Taylor Preserve of the Mianus River Gorge, Inc., is now accessible to the public for hiking and fishing. This beautiful property bordering the Mianus River in Stamford, CT, features a hemlock / oak woodland with mountain laurel understory and is surrounded on three sides by the Mianus River. A newly built trail features a healthy forest and quiet pools, cascades, and rushing flows along the banks of the Mianus River where the main stem meets the east branch of the river.

The parcel acquired last year known as High Tor, previously #1 on the Gorge's priority list of land deemed critical to protect, once again features prominently in the Mianus River Gorge Preserve trail system. The re-opened section of the trail that was closed during negotiations of the sale, connects to the new Cliff Trail described below. The importance of the 11-acre parcel of land that reaches deep into the heart of the Preserve and features a beautiful rock promontory overlooking the Gorge and wetlands, is immeasurable.

We continue to pursue new land projects in 2020.

## The New Cliff Trail

With the support of donors of the Mianus River Gorge and support from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation/ Land Trust Alliance, professional trail-building crews completed construction of the new Cliff Trail. Trail construction was executed with respect for the natural environment through a process that ensured minimal impact, while also creating a trail constructed mainly of stone that is easy to maintain and was naturally and beautifully integrated into the Mianus River Gorge Preserve.

The new trail is a bit more challenging, dramatic, and steeper than the portion of the Red Trail that follows along the ridge above. The Cliff Trail created an opportunity for hikers to better observe rocky outcrops, view the hemlock forest, and further appreciate the breadth and depth of the Gorge. The new trail officially opened to the public in June, 2019.





## Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H RCP)

MRG's Executive Director Rod Christie is on the Steering Committee and co-chairman of the land working group of the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H RCP). H2H RCP is composed of over 40 organizations that are protecting land throughout the region from the Hudson to the Housatonic. H2H RCP works with landowners on land protection and stewardship and is the first RCP to create a parcel-level land conservation model working toward landscape-scale conservation.

In 2019 H2H continued its work to protect land in the region, to amplify the widely recognized "Pollinator Pathway Program," and to work with landowners to better steward their properties.

All who live in the Hudson to Housatonic Region benefit from the work of H2H through the protection of air and water quality, climate resilient landscapes, and the preservation of un-fragmented habitats for native flora and fauna. In total, H2H's reach covers a region of 2,300 square miles, serves a population of about 2.3 million people, and benefits the drinking watershed for 9 million more. To learn more, please visit [h2hrpc.org](http://h2hrpc.org).

MRG also partners with the New York State Hemlock Initiative, the American Chestnut Foundation, Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA), Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and Bedford2020 Land and Water Taskforce in an effort to help protect streams, reservoirs, and preserve habitats throughout the region.



## Restoring Biodiversity to Meadows

Mianus River Gorge completed wetlands and forest restoration projects over the past several years and began work on a meadows restoration project in 2019. With support from the Westchester Community Foundation, the meadows restoration project aims to restore the biodiversity and health of three meadows by eliminating detrimental in-

vasive species and re-seeding with a diversity of wildflowers and grasses to support pollinators, birds, and other wildlife species.

Restoration projects are a particular focus of land management and stewardship projects that have been completed by Mianus River Gorge. They are intended to both learn about and share best practices throughout the region. Mianus River Gorge will embark upon a riparian corridor restoration project in 2020.



## Campaign to Save the Hemlocks

MRG completed its work to inoculate over 2,000 eastern hemlock trees against the hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale. Using a hemispheric camera, staff are monitoring new growth in the canopy from year to year before resuming a schedule of repeated basal bark spraying in 2021. Direct observation of new growth on the trees within the old-growth forest gives us reason to be optimistic that the treatment regimen is working. At the same time, MRG scientists are participating in the New York State Hemlock Initiative to help establish a population of the *Laricobius nigrinus* beetle, a promising biocontrol that feeds on the hemlock woolly adelgid.

Mianus River Gorge also contributed hemlock seeds and cones to SUNY ESF for their eastern hemlock collection. This collection is used to preserve the genetic diversity from across the region and as a potential seed source for restoration.

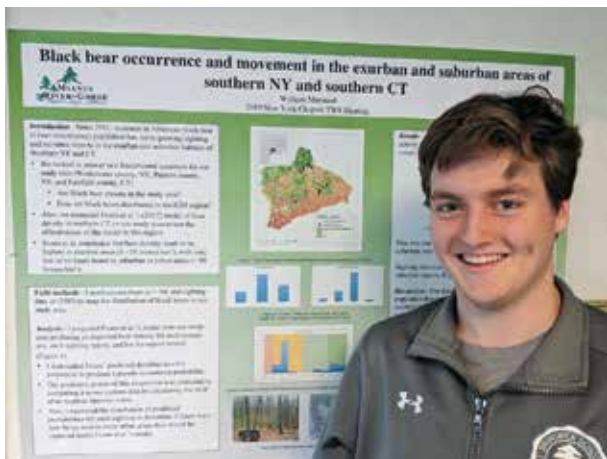


## Research Updates

Based on his work with the Gotham Coyote Project, Chris Nagy, Ph.D., co-authored two papers with collaborators from Princeton and Fordham Universities. These papers examine the genetic diversity and relationships of New York coyotes. The first looks at the diversity across New York and New Jersey, and found that overall gene flow is high among coyotes across the region, though there is greater relatedness among individual animals in more urban areas. The second paper looks at coyotes in NYC specifically. The coyotes that are currently making their way through the Bronx and Queens appear to all be members of an extended multi-generation family. Both of these papers relied on many years of cooperation among MRG and several partners and represent a portion of Carol Henger's dissertation research at Fordham.

Two high school seniors in MRG's Wildlife Technician Program gave lectures at the Northeast Natural History Conference. Will Maynard evaluated a model of black bear distribution in Westchester and found that bears are, in recent years, being seen in areas with greater housing density than expected. William Cranier gave a talk on the bacterial microbiome found on the skin of frogs at several sites in the Mianus River Gorge Preserve, and whether the suite of "good" bacteria on these frogs might provide some resistance to an invasive fungal pathogen. Will, who was mentored by RAP awardee Zach Gajewski at Virginia Tech, found that the microbiome on frogs within the Preserve differed across the age of the frog (i.e., tadpoles vs. adults) and somewhat by species.

Mianus River Gorge planted American chestnut 'mother trees' in preparation for cross breeding with new genetically blight-resistant chestnut trees developed by the American Chestnut Foundation and SUNY ESF.



*MRG Wildlife Techs study urban and suburban ecology including coyote distribution in NYC and vernal pool conservation in Westchester county.*





## 2019 Financial Summary

### OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$336,708	53%
Grants	\$97,519	15%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$201,572	32%
Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$635,799	100%

### OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	\$492,821	75%
Administrative Expenses	\$94,602	14%
Fundraising Expenses	\$72,557	11%
Total Operating Expenses	\$659,980	100%

# Annual Giving

## 2019



Annual Giving is comprised of generous support to our annual fund and special projects here at Mianus River Gorge, Inc.

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Thank you!

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