



2017 Annual Report

Dear Friends . . .



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

Check the Events tab on our website, 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.

Protecting biodiversity is a thread that runs through the collective work of Mianus River Gorge staff, student researchers, and volunteers. In 2017, much of the work to preserve and protect the Mianus River Watershed focused on restoration projects to ensure the diversity of myriad species within the ecosystems that comprise the Gorge and the entire region.

Mianus River Gorge completed two conservation easements in 2017 protecting over 11 acres of diverse wetlands and is working on other land projects that will close in 2018. A generous renewal grant from Westchester Community Foundation helped fund a complete restoration of a wetlands system that was categorized as compromised.

Another highlight of 2017 was the success of the native species nursery in which MRG grew now-rare wildflower species from seed in raised beds with animal-resistant covers. Some were then re-planted into the protected enclosures in the Preserve to begin re-establishing herbaceous communities and help restore the forest understory.

Mianus River Gorge welcomed a new cohort of students to its award-winning Wildlife Technician Program that offers high school students the opportunity to undertake a three-year research project in the natural sciences. Mentoring high school, undergraduate, and graduate students throughout the year continues to be a highlight of the three-tiered Research and Education Program that helps train the next generation of scientists, critical thinkers, and conservation-minded citizens.

MRG staff shared their knowledge and expertise with local residents through Wildlife & Habitat Consultations. From advising on butterfly-friendly native plantings to identifying wildflowers and trees, MRG launched this service to answer questions and offer solutions to backyard challenges. In guided walks throughout the Preserve, visitors learned to identify trees by their bark, leaves, and fruit; explored the hidden habitats of bobcats, minx, and coyotes; and set out early in the morning to catch a glimpse of a suite of interesting breeding birds.

Finally, Mianus River Gorge continued its work to serve our community and the region through partnerships such as the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H RCP), Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA), Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and Bedford2020 Land and Water Taskforce.

Thank you for contributing your time and resources to Mianus River Gorge. Please visit our web site, www.mianus.org, for updates, news, and the calendar of events. We are truly grateful for your support and look forward to welcoming you to the Preserve.

Sincerely,

Timothy Evnin, Chairman

Roderick G. Christie, Executive Director



Building Strong Relationships in the Community

Lectures and Presentations

Director of Land Management Budd Veverka gave the first of many scheduled talks about the “Bear Study” that involves volunteer researchers from Teatown Lake Reservation, Great Hollow Preserve, Highstead, and other agencies and organizations. The Bear Study looks at black bear occupancy and movement based on remote cameras and reported bear sightings in Westchester, Putnam, and Fairfield Counties. Budd’s talks include practical advice about how humans can safely co-exist with the increasing population of this large, charismatic animal in the region.

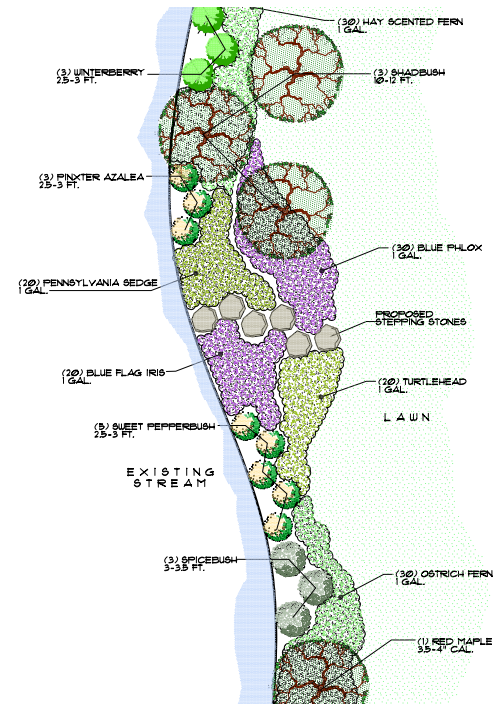
In May, MRG Director of Research and Education Chris Nagy, Ph.D., gave a talk on recent findings from the Gotham Coyote Project at the International Urban Wildlife Conference in San Diego, CA.

Executive Director Rod Christie gave several presentations associated with protecting land to the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership members as well as a presentation to the Bedford Garden Club on strategies to maintain a healthy forest.

The bears in the above photo were caught on camera at the Preserve

MRG Wildlife & Habitat Consultations

MRG staff scientists launched a new service that offers a one-hour free consultation with homeowners to answer specific questions about plant and animal identification, wildlife management, natural history, invasive species, or woodland, field and pond management solutions. More in-depth follow-up visits can be arranged for a fee, such as recommending native plantings to benefit butterflies and other pollinators, making suggestions to manage the health of trees, fields, or ponds, or providing details about how to fix a problem area in one’s yard. The MRG Wildlife & Habitat Consultation program has proven very popular with dozens of consultations done so far.



MRG Wildlife & Habitat Consultation program helps property owners learn how to provide optimal habitats for native species.



River clean-up

headwaters of the Mianus River and remove any garbage that has flowed downstream.

Chris Nagy also held two night-time owl walks in the Preserve, again giving participants an exclusive perspective of the Preserve and the sights and sounds only seen and heard in the dark.

Public Programs

Mianus River Gorge held several well-received public programs including a tree ID, wildflower walk, a bird walk with Bedford Audubon Society, and an early winter walk in the Twin Lakes Preserve of Mianus River Gorge, Inc. led by Rod Christie that allowed people to see areas of the Preserve not normally open to the public. MRG also organized a river clean-up in July that brought together volunteers, board members, staff, and our student interns to walk the



Tree ID walk



Twin Lakes Preserve walk in early winter

Conserving Land and Protecting our Watershed



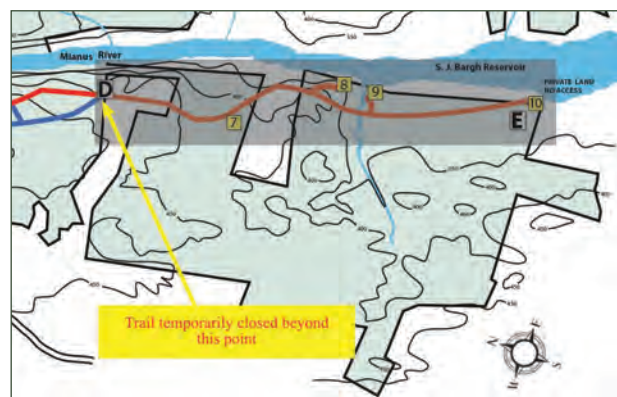
Conservation Easements

In December, MRG closed on two conservation easements in the Piping Brook corridor that added almost 10 acres of critical headwater wetlands and uplands under protection. These wetlands border two important tributaries to the Mianus River and the Bargh Reservoir.

MRG also has been laying the ground work throughout the year – surveys, assessments, meetings, and negotiations – to close on almost 50 acres of acquisitions of properties deemed critical to protect within the watershed. We anticipate reporting on these transactions in the 2018 annual report.

Red Trail

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the Red Trail was closed at Point D. As it had been for many years, the trail beyond Point D crossed over private property for about 350 yards before continuing back on to Mianus River Gorge Preserve land. Unfortunately, the property



owner decided to suspend this privilege necessitating closure of the trail. Mianus River Gorge is consulting with and obtaining bids from professional trail-building companies to help us re-route the Red Trail. Due to the rugged nature of this environmentally sensitive terrain, this project will take an extended amount of time and a major financial commitment by Mianus River Gorge. The end-goal is to provide visitors with the best possible hiking experience.

Source to Sound Initiative Phase II

Mianus River Gorge completed the second phase of its Source to Sound Initiative in 2017, funded by a renewal grant from the Westchester Community Foundation and a grant from Patagonia. In Phase II, MRG scientists evaluated the health and functionality of the wetlands in the lower watershed and completed a major wetland restoration project.



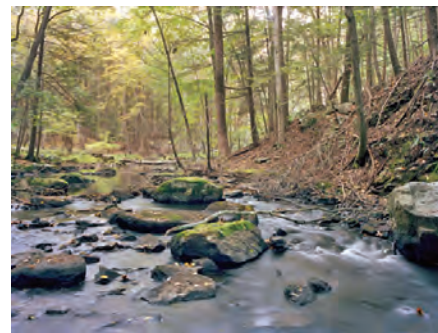
Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H RCP)

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.

The mission of the H2H partner network is to advance the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship from the Hudson to the Housatonic by collaborating across boundaries to enhance the connection between people and nature.

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.

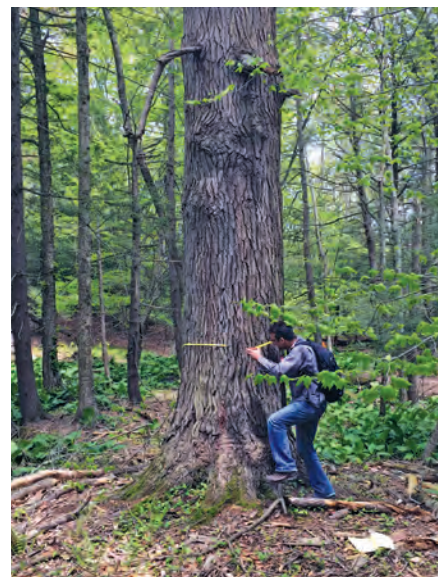
MRG also partners with the Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA), Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), and Bedford2020 Land and Water Taskforce in an effort to help protect streams, reservoirs, and preserve habitats throughout the region.



Campaign to Save the Hemlocks

In the fall of 2017, MRG embarked on a campaign to Save the Hemlocks, a multi-faceted approach to saving the extraordinary old-growth forest in our midst. Weakened by increasingly violent storms and aggressive non-native invasive plant species, the 400-year-old hemlock trees have become more susceptible to the attack of the hemlock woolly adelgid.

To stem their recent accelerated decline and to save our hemlocks now, MRG began a regimen recommended by scientists at Cornell Cooperative Extension. This intervention program is being undertaken only after careful consideration and with thorough vetting of the methodology for safety and scientific appropriateness. This two-year campaign aims to treat the hemlocks with a combination of two insecticides that kills hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale, a second non-native pest. At the same time, and to ultimately replace the spraying regimen, the Gorge is monitoring the development and availability of new biological control agents for hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale.





Research Updates

Mianus River Gorge's peerless, three-tiered education program, led by Chris Nagy, Ph.D., provides high school, undergraduate and graduate students with an unparalleled, experiential ecology research opportunity at the Gorge. Chris mentors and advises them throughout their projects, which has resulted in awards, published papers, talks, and advanced degrees in the field of science.

Now in its 10th year, the Research Assistantship Program (RAP) helps fund the research of Ph.D. and M.S. students doing work that benefits MRG's mission or contributes to our conservation goals. We are proud to share the accomplishments of the students the program has supported, including advanced degrees earned from Cornell University, Fordham University, SUNY ESF, CUNY, and Yale University. RAP students also have published several scholarly

articles supported by their RAP grant and using data collected at MRG. Please visit www.mianus.org/publications/journals/ for a complete listing and links.

With the help of our 2017 summer interns in the College Internship in Suburban Ecology (CISE), we completed our summer land work and were ably assisted on several research projects including the Gotham Coyote Project, Bear Project, watershed-wide wetlands assessment, and wood turtle nest site study.

The talented group of high school researchers in the Wildlife Technician Program (WTP) continued to impress through their initiative, dedication, and accomplishments in their work at Mianus River Gorge. In 2017, the students

Top photo: Testing for parasitic fungus in the skin of a wood frog.

Bottom photo: MRG graduate, high school, and undergraduate researchers record the health and condition of amphibians collected in the Mianus River Gorge Preserve.

conducted hands-on field experiments, learned first-hand about the complexities of natural systems, and received expert guidance from Mianus River Gorge staff, graduate students, and professional partners.



MRG interns and Pound Ridge Land Conservancy intern hanging a wildlife camera at the Morgenthau Preserve.



2017 Financial Summary

OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$356,008	53%
Grants	\$111,189	16%
Other income	\$1,710	1%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$206,016	30%
Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$674,923	100%

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	\$444,882	70%
Administrative Expenses	\$116,546	19%
Fundraising Expenses	\$72,009	11%
Total Operating Expenses	\$633,437	100%

Annual Giving 2017



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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