



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.

Mianus River Gorge could not have imagined a busier, more productive year than 2018 turned out to be. The highlight, of course, was the acquisition of the property known as High Tor, an 11-acre parcel in the heart of the Preserve. The purchase was made possible with help from many generous donors whose contributions ensured this beautiful land will be protected in perpetuity and also enabled us to re-connect the trail to the iconic Havemeyer Falls and other points of interest.

But that wasn't all. MRG acquired over 50 acres of land in total in 2018 through gifts of land and purchase, again thanks in part to extremely generous donors. Other land acquisitions include the new Taylor Preserve in Stamford, CT, a parcel in Pound Ridge, NY, and two others in North Castle and Bedford, NY, all within the Mianus River Watershed. Each parcel is a unique habitat of wetlands, woodlands, or meadow and vital to protect for future generations to enjoy.

MRG began work on a new trail that stretches over 900 feet along the steep slope far above the Mianus River and below the rim of the Gorge. Due to the rugged nature of this terrain and its sensitive habitats, the project is being built completely by hand by professional trail crews. Work continued throughout the year, with an anticipated completion date of June 1, 2019.

MRG continued its work to save the hemlocks in the old-growth forest, arguably the most important aspect of Mianus River Gorge Preserve. With significant support from the Board of Trustees, New York State Department of Conservation / Land Trust Alliance, Westchester Community Foundation, and individual and family donors, MRG is in the middle of its three-year "Campaign to Save the Hemlocks." When all is said and done, over 2,000 eastern hemlock trees in the Mianus River Gorge Preserve will be inoculated against two insidious pests—the hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale—that have destroyed millions of hemlock trees across the eastern US. We are optimistic that the prescribed regimen will save our trees.

Mianus River Gorge hosted a dedicated group of summer interns in 2018 who came from colleges and universities across the country. They added both thoughtful and physical contributions to MRG's ecology research initiatives and stewardship of the Preserve. We also said good-bye to a talented cohort of college-bound high school students in our three-year Wildlife Technician Program knowing we've helped train the next generation of scientists, critical thinkers, and conservation-minded citizens.

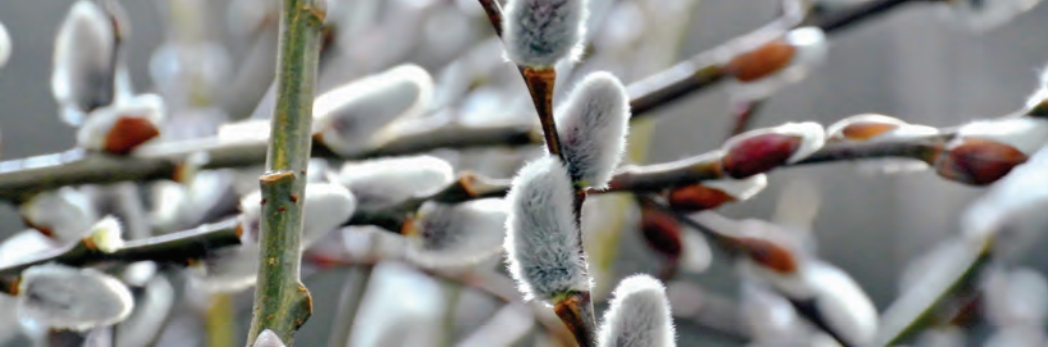
At the same time, MRG wildlife biologists shared their knowledge and expertise on topics ranging from pests to pollinators at more than a dozen workshops and conferences, in published research papers, and as active participants in regional conservation partnership organizations.

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 continued to deliver “Bear Basics” talks in 2018 that provided practical advice about how humans can safely co-exist with the increasing population of this large, charismatic animal in the region. Budd and WTP student Will Maynard worked with staff and volunteer researchers to complete the two-year study looking at black bear occupancy and movement based on remote cameras and reported bear sightings in Westchester, Putnam, and Fairfield Counties.

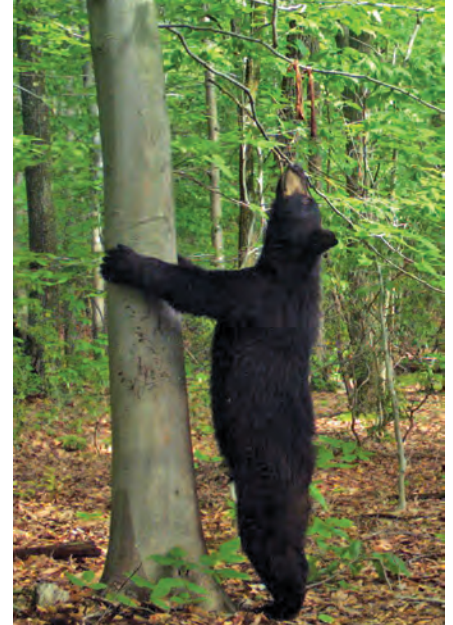
Director of Research and Education Chris Nagy, Ph.D., gave a talk on recent findings from the Gotham Coyote Project at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY and presented a poster at the 2018 Northeast Natural History Conference in Burlington, VT, showing an index of time-of-day that accounts for shifts in sunrise and sunset for use in wildlife studies.

Executive Director Rod Christie gave several presentations throughout the year to local planning and town boards with regard to proposed development projects. He presented at the land working group and the steering committee meetings of the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership and was a featured presenter at the group’s “Land Protection 101 Workshop”. Mr. Christie also gave several presentations on land protection and protecting pollinator habitat to the Land and Water Taskforce of Bedford 2020 and local garden clubs.

Public Programs

Mianus River Gorge held several well-received public programs including a Tree ID; Invasive Species ID; a Bird Walk with Bedford Audubon Society; an old-growth forest program; and a walk in Castlebrook, a management unit of Mianus River Gorge Preserve that is only open to the public by guided tour. MRG also organized several Volunteer Work Days to get the trails in shape early and get them ready for their winter rest late.

Chris Nagy and Budd Veverka each led night-time owl walks in the Preserve, giving participants an exclusive perspective of the Preserve and the sights and sounds only seen and heard in the dark.



One of many black bear photos captured on trail cameras used during the regional black bear study conducted by MRG staff and WTP students.



Director of Research and Education, Chris Nagy, speaks at Canisius College in January 2019.



Director of Land Management, Budd Veverka, leads a Tree Identification workshop, October 2018.



Several Volunteer Work Days took place in 2018.

Conserving Land and Protecting our Watershed



Land Aquisition

2018 was an astounding year for land protection at Mianus River Gorge with five new properties added, totaling over 52 acres. A gift of land from a nearby property owner added almost 12 acres to the Preserve along Mianus River Rd. including a beautiful sugar maple grove and old farm woodlands. With this gift this watershed will be protected forever. A 5-acre parcel of land comprised of a sizeable wetland complex that is the headwaters of a tributary that flows into the Mianus River was also donated. Riparian wetlands like this one help dissipate floodwaters, recharge groundwater supplies, filter out pollution, provide fish and wildlife habitat, and sustain the health of downstream water sources.

Mianus River Gorge purchased in a bargain sale a 3-acre old field lot off Rock Hill Way in Pound Ridge, NY. This parcel connects to the Mianus River Gorge from the east side and provides easy access for staff to interior Gorge lands. The parcel is in need of restoration to remove invasives that have taken over much of the woodland edge and old field. The land will be 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.

An anonymous foundation donor and a donation from the Stamford Land Conservation Trust helped Mianus River Gorge purchase 21 acres of property bordering the Mianus River in Stamford. This beautiful hemlock / oak woodland with mountain laurel understory is surrounded on three sides by the Mianus River and provides crucial protection where the east branch of the Mianus River meets the main stem of the river. Known as the Taylor Preserve of the Mianus River Gorge, Inc., this parcel is in the process of being made accessible to the public for hiking and fishing. This is one of our most significant additions in CT and is a critical piece of our longer term plan to help protect the lower Mianus River as it heads to Long Island Sound.

Finally, just before year end, Mianus River Gorge purchased the parcel known as High Tor, which has long been #1 on the Gorge's priority list of land deemed critical to protect. The 11-acre parcel of land that reaches deep into the heart of the Preserve features a beautiful rock promontory overlooking the Gorge, wetlands, vernal pools, and underground streams that feed the Mianus River. This purchase

will not only protect High Tor from development but will preserve a strip of land that bisects the Preserve and buffers the old-growth forest. All these lands make up an important corridor for the movement of wildlife throughout the area.



Red Trail

2018 marked a milestone in MRG history not only with the acquisition of the High Tor property which re-opened a section of trail that had been closed for more than a year, but also with the creation of a new trail that like no other allows the hiker to experience the feeling of the Mianus River Gorge. The new trail, to be known as the Cliff Trail, will be a bit more challenging, dramatic, and steeper than the portion of the Red Trail that goes along the ridge. The Cliff Trail creates an opportunity for hikers to better observe rocky outcrops, view the hemlock forest, and further appreciate the breadth and depth of the Gorge. This new trail will officially open 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 2018 H2H made great progress toward solidifying and broadening its partnership of regional organizations while defining its role and working out many of the logistical issues of sharing GIS maps and other information it has created. The partnership also has made great strides in protecting land in the region and is partnering with other initiatives like the "Pollinator Pathway Program" 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.

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 spring of 2017, MRG embarked on a treatment 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. MRG repeated the spraying regimen as recommended by scientists at Cornell Cooperative Extension to treat the hemlocks with a combination of two insecticides that kills hemlock woolly adelgid and hemlock scale, a second non-native pest. The last section of trees will be treated in 2019, thus completing the original plan to treat a total of over 2,000 trees. 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 control.



Restoration Garden Update



2018 was a great year for Mianus River Gorge's restoration garden. We have 28, 3X6' raised beds and one larger wetland bed

planted with seeds and/or rhizomes locally collected from sustainable sources. All beds are protected from predators and represent over 27 different species to date. Many species that were planted several years ago are now bearing seed that we can use to plant in the Preserve. This year we planted back into the Preserve over 2,456 seeds representing four species. Each year, as more plants mature, we will have more seed to use for restoration activities.

In addition to seeds, another 40+ mature plants representing 5 different species were planted in the Preserve. We also collected thousands of seeds from other local wild and sustainable sources to plant back into our garden beds (to increase the genetic diversity) and to use for restoration projects.



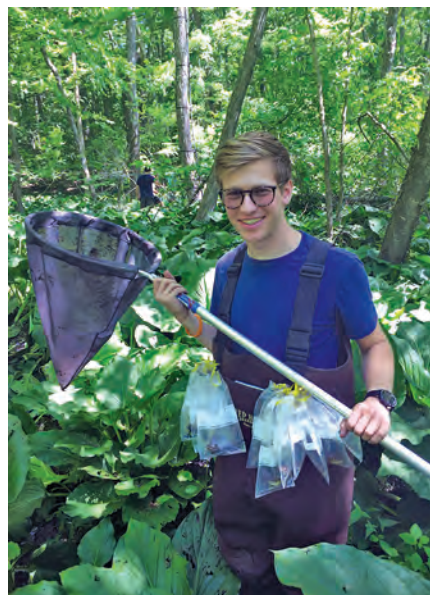


Research Updates

A new and exciting component of the Gotham Coyote Project (GCP) began in 2018. The Gorge and our GCP partners, the NYC Parks Wildlife Unit and the American Museum of Natural History, launched a GPS telemetry study. Coyotes were trapped humanely and fitted with telemetry collars that use the cellular network to send regular location points for each collared animal.

While very preliminary, the data are painting a picture of animals that show a clever ability to navigate the city streets while taking tremendous steps to avoid people, residential areas, and remaining highly nocturnal.

Learning about the fine-scale movement patterns of NYC coyotes will help researchers and officials determine what landscape factors may contribute to human-coyote interaction, what habitat and movement corridors are important for coyote persistence, and how the City can plan for both human and wildlife coexistence.



At the same time, Mianus River Gorge's peerless, three-tiered education program, led by Chris Nagy, Ph.D., continued to provide high school, undergraduate and graduate students with an unparalleled, experiential ecology research opportunity at the Gorge. Chris and other staff and graduate students mentor and advise students throughout their projects, which has resulted in awards, published papers, talks, and advanced degrees in the field of science.

The Research Assistantship Program (RAP), which helps fund the

research of Ph.D. and M.S. students, welcomed two new RAP students. One student will examine the below-ground mycorrhizal community associated with old-growth and secondary growth forest, and how it may change according to the health of the hemlock stands. This work supports our Campaign to Save the Hemlocks, benefits MRG's mission, and contributes to our conservation goals. RAP students have published several scholarly articles supported by their RAP grant and using data collected at MRG. Please visit <http://www.mianus.org/publications/journals/> for a complete listing and links.



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





2018 Financial Summary

OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$285,804	43%
Grants	\$175,526	27%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$195,267	30%
Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$657,475	100%

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	\$491,901	74%
Administrative Expenses	\$95,729	15%
Fundraising Expenses	\$74,492	11%
Total Operating Expenses	\$662,122	100%

IN ADDITION TO REGULAR OPERATING CONTRIBUTIONS

Additional support of more than \$2,000,000 was raised for land projects, including Rock Hill Way, Taylor Preserve, and High Tor.

Annual Giving 2018



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

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Many of the donations helped to fund the High Tor acquisition and the Campaign to Save the Hemlocks. Thank you!

We also thank all our volunteers for their generous support throughout the year.



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Your donation to Mianus River Gorge helps us fulfill our mission to preserve, protect and promote appreciation of the natural heritage of the Mianus River watershed through land acquisition and conservation, scientific research and public education throughout the region.

To donate, please visit our web site, www.mianus.org or send your check to 167 Mianus River Rd., Bedford, NY 10506.

Thank you!





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