



Dear Friends . . .



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

To stay informed on MRG's lectures, walks, and volunteer opportunities, check out UPCOMING EVENTS on the website homepage, www.mianus.org, or click on the calendar icon.

Scroll down to the Quick Links section and click on MRG News to stay up to date on our land protection and management initiatives, community outreach involvement, and the achievements of the amazing students in our educational programs.

You'll find MRG's ecological consulting services under the Land & Water Protection tab; papers published by our scientists under the Research & Education tab; and resources for land owners under the Stewardship & Land Management tab.

The Mianus River Gorge's 68th year was very productive and gratifying. With generous support from individual donors, local private foundations, and trustees, the Mianus River Gorge added three parcels and 32 acres to the more than 1,200 acres that it already protects. Each of these parcels is adjacent to MRG-owned property and the main Preserve and will now be preserved in perpetuity, connecting vital habitats for plants and wildlife.

The busy year of land acquisition included the purchase of three-plus acres of beautiful wooded land that slopes down to the Mianus River, a 4.65-acre lot that was the final piece of a 73-acre property purchased in 2014 and, finally, the acquisition of 17.5 acres of land previously owned by one of the original co-founders of Mianus River Gorge, Jim Todd (plus the donation of a 5.7-acre conservation easement). Our organization had been attempting to protect or buy this parcel for over 50 years! Persistence and patience finally paid off. Our sincere "thank you very much!" to the many supporters who helped fund these transactions.

Our team also continued work on a long-term riparian corridor restoration project supported by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation/Land Trust Alliance and individual and family donors. This work aims to restore the biodiversity and health of the main stem of the Mianus River and its tributaries by eliminating detrimental invasive species and re-planting with a diversity of native shrubs and trees.

MRG wildlife biologists shared their knowledge at local workshops and national conferences, in published research papers, and as active participants in regional conservation partnership organizations. The Gorge also welcomed a new class of Wildlife Technician Program high school students, mentored Eagle Scouts, and shared their expertise with private land owners to answer questions about ecology, natural history, and improving habitat.

Thank you to our steadfast supporters who stepped up in 2021 and helped Mianus River Gorge return to some semblance of normalcy. In these uncertain times, we feel very fortunate that we are able to pursue our work and that people understand the importance of helping Mianus River Gorge permanently protect, conserve, and steward land.

We welcome you to visit the Mianus River Gorge and Taylor Preserves or to visit www.mianus.org to learn more.

Sincerely,

Timothy Evnin
Chairman

Roderick G. Christie
Executive Director



Building Strong Relationships in the Community

Lectures and Presentations

Part of MRG's mission is to share our conservation ethic and expertise with the community. For our research program, this means disseminating our findings with other professionals in the field and with the public at large.

Rod Christie Executive Director

- continued his work on the steering committee and land working group of the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership
- joined the steering committee for "Planting Westchester," a Westchester County program addressing restoration of riparian habitats, invasive species, and other watershed issues
- gave a presentation at St. Mary's Church on what factors have led to the structure of our existing forests – linked to our agricultural past – and how these conditions are changing radically with the influx of invasive species and changes in our climate.

Chris Nagy Director of Research and Education

- lectured on coyotes in NYC in August for the Harris Center for Conservation Education
- advised the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation on measuring deer impacts and abundance
- joined the Long Island Coyote Study Group to devise and perform research revolving around the eastern coyote's range expansion into Nassau and Suffolk Counties
- worked with Teatown Lake Reservation, Westchester County Parks, Blackrock Forest, and other members of the Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA) on a white paper on deer management strategies and assessments for the eastern and southern NY region.

Budd Veverka Director of Land Management

- took the lead in the New York State Chapter of The Wildlife Society as the Chapter's president and was on the steering committee of the Lower Hudson Partners in Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM)
- gave talks on the ecology of black bears
- gave a talk on "Falcons along the Hudson" and their nesting habits

Public Programs and Outreach

Mianus River Gorge led an array of walks, including the always-popular nighttime owl walks and several special walks to protected areas not normally open to the public. Rod Christie hosted the Bedford Garden Club for an "Ecology of the Old-growth Forest" lecture and walk.

Mianus River Gorge staff shared their expertise with landowners as well. They met with private landowners to help identify wildlife, suggest native pollinator-friendly plants for gardens, and offer solutions to backyard challenges. Several large property owners contracted with MRG staff to conduct wildlife and vegetation surveys that will be used as a baseline for further large outdoor landscape plans. Included in these extensive inventories is information on how landowners can reduce their impact on natural systems and make their property better habitat for wildlife.



New Partnership with SUNY Purchase

MRG began a new partnership with Dr. Stephen Harris of SUNY Purchase. Dr. Harris and his students study a variety of species and systems in the broader field of ecological genetics. Briefly, the Harris lab can perform lab and genetics work that MRG does not have the facilities or expertise for, while MRG can provide a 'natural laboratory' and field support for the academics.



Land Acquisition

2021 was a great year for land protection at Mianus River Gorge. Working with private landowners, MRG successfully protected five new properties totaling almost 31 acres. Mianus River Gorge had long sought to acquire the former Todd Family lands adjacent to the main Preserve. Jim Todd was one of the co-founders of the Mianus River Conservation Group in 1953. His land abutted the original 60 acres that the group helped purchase from a development company to create what is now Mianus River Gorge Preserve.

Many years later when the land became available, Mianus River Gorge raised \$1.6 million toward the full purchase price of \$1.7 million and saved the land from proposed development. We purchased three parcels comprising 17.5 acres and will manage a conservation easement on an adjacent 5.7-acre parcel, adding a total of 23.2 acres to the Preserve's protected lands.

Mianus River Gorge also added another parcel of three-plus acres of beautiful wooded slope that runs from Long Ridge Rd. down to the Mianus River. This parcel was also slated for development, but we were able to reach an agreement with the owner to sell it below market price to the Gorge. The river runs almost to the edge of the property's steep slopes, so construction would likely have caused significant sediment runoff into the river and any development would have been visible from MRG trails.

In December 2014, Mianus River Gorge raised funds to acquire a 73-acre parcel of land known as the Levene Property. At the end of 2021, the family gave us an opportunity to complete this protection project through an offer to sell the final 4.56 acres. MRG's acquisition of this final piece protects a critical wildlife corridor and allows us to undertake a restoration project that will safeguard the ecological health of the entire 250-acre Castlebrook-Levene complex of diverse lands. MRG hopes to complete this restoration in 2022.



Todd Family land

Levene Property

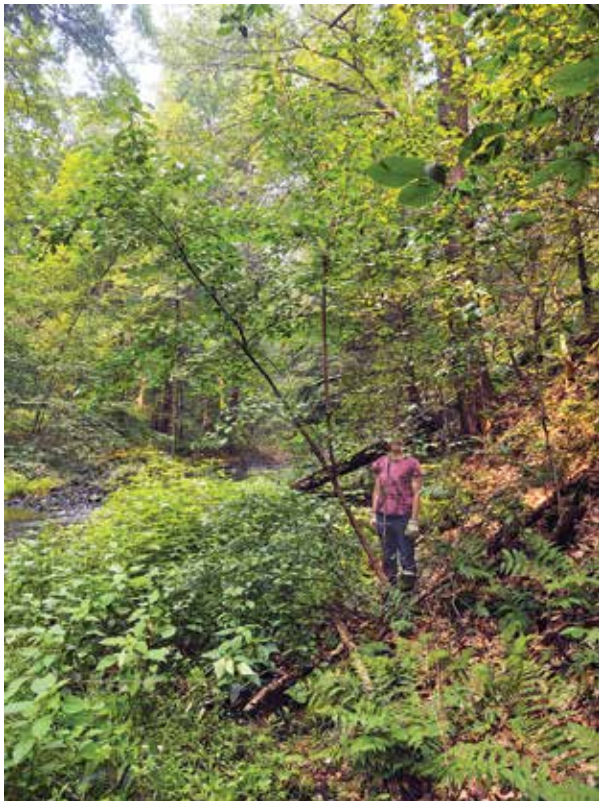




Riparian Corridor Project

With the assistance of part-time staff, seasonal interns, and contractors, and thanks to a grant from NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation / Land Trust Alliance, we made excellent progress on our riparian corridor restoration in 2021. Riparian corridors are areas of land adjacent to rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds. These areas tend to be biologically diverse, protect water resources, and are important for wildlife movement.

To restore these sites, we began removing all invasive plants, using a combination of chemical and mechanical methods, from land within 10 meters of each body of water within the project area. We removed sixteen different species of invasive plants such as barberry, wine berry, and oriental bittersweet, and less common species like fig buttercup, common reed grass, and yellow iris. Mianus River Gorge will plant native shrubs, seedlings, and herbaceous plants into some areas following invasive plant removals.



Before invasive plant removal ...



... and after



THE
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HELP KEEP THE GORGE GOING STRONG!

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 Road
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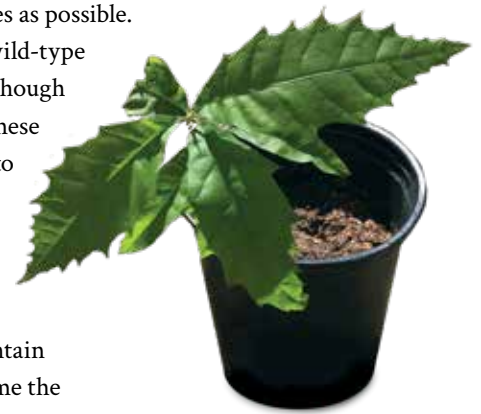
Thank you!

Restoration of the American Chestnut Tree

Since 2019, MRG has been involved in a partnership with the New York Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation and SUNY ESF to begin the restoration of the iconic American chestnut. American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) was a keystone species of the eastern hardwood until it was all-but-eradicated by an invasive fungus, *Cryphonectria parasitica*, known as Chestnut blight. The blight arrived in New York in 1904 and within a few decades nearly exterminated the species.

There have been many efforts to find or breed blight-resistant chestnut trees over the years. Most recently, the American Chestnut Foundation and researchers at SUNY ESF have developed a version of the American chestnut that contains a single gene taken from wheat that provides protection from blight. Next, they plan to cross the new, single trans-genic line with as many wild chestnut lineages as possible.

MRG and other partners across NYS are planting wild-type (non-resistant) chestnut seedlings every spring. Although they will ultimately die from blight, we hope that these “mother trees” will grow and survive long enough to produce flowers. When the USDA approves the trans-genic tree for release (it is currently being evaluated), we can cross its pollen with these mother trees. Approximately half of the seeds subsequently produced by the mother trees will contain the resistant wheat gene, and these seeds will become the next generation of American chestnuts.



Wildlife Technician Program

In April, six of our graduating high school seniors presented their work at the Northeast Natural History Conference. Chloe Ng (Blind Brook HS) gave a lecture on her summation of 15 years of data from our long-term vegetation plots and what it means for the health of our forest and, specifically, as an assessment of our deer management program. Allison Lyubomirskaya (Irvington HS) spoke about her work examining the mycorrhizal community of the Gorge’s forest. Madeline Buehrer and Sydney Lonker (Pelham HS and White Plains HS) spoke about their work on cataloguing MRG’s pollinator species on four of our meadows. Cara Galli presented a poster on her habitat model and map projections of potential coyote breeding habitat in NYC and Long Island. Krissy Reiss presented a poster on her work identifying invasion corridors and facilitory microhabitat features for the exotic grass, Japanese stiltgrass.

In addition, Caroline Bayer (Dobbs Ferry HS) gave a talk on her research on river otters at the Hudson Highlands Research Symposium at Black Rock Forest in June. Caroline also won 1st place at the 2021 Westchester Science and Engineering Fair.

2021 Financial Summary

OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$332,160	45%
Grants	\$68,311	9%
Government Grants	\$158,875	21%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$182,301	25%

Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$741,647	100%
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OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services		
Land Protection	\$206,965	
Research & Education	\$179,733	
Land Management & Stewardship	\$157,947	
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	\$544,644	73%
Administrative Expenses	\$110,369	17%
Fundraising Expenses	\$68,005	10%

Total Operating Expenses	\$723,018	100%
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LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Contributions for Land Acquisitions	\$1,618,493	
Released from Long-Term Funds	\$900,791	
Land Acquisition Costs	\$2,519,284	

Special Land Project Giving 2021

Mianus River Gorge raised nearly \$1.6M toward the land purchase of the former Todd Family lands described above.

Thank you to each one of you who donated toward this historic purchase. More than 90 donors contributed to this project, many giving unrestricted gifts in conjunction with their annual gift.

We are truly grateful.

Annual Giving

2021

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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