





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.

While 2021 year was a busy year for land acquisition, 2022 focused on restoring and stewarding that land, conserving biodiversity, and sharing knowledge and expertise with a broader community. The Gorge’s 69th year was filled with productive new partnerships, interesting research findings, and advances in land and water protection efforts.

The acquisition in 2021 of 17.5 acres of land adjacent to the main preserve allowed us to build a new trail loop that highlights a beautiful farm pond, deep valley, and impressive rock outcroppings. The old stone sheep paddocks tell the history of land use from centuries ago.

Thanks to a grant from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Mianus River Gorge amplified its care and interpretation of the unique old-growth forest. MRG is following the prescribed regimen to treat thousands of hemlocks to save them from the devastating hemlock woolly adelgid. At the same time, we are collaborating with the NYS Hemlock Initiative to test promising biological control options. These efforts seem to be having a significant positive impact and MRG will likely be publishing a paper on our work.

MRG wildlife biologists also 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 landowners to answer questions about ecology, natural history, and improving habitat.

A professional development grant supported by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation/Land Trust Alliance allowed MRG to expand our preserve steward position from part-time to full-time. A very necessary addition as the work of properly stewarding our preserves is ever growing. With this position, we are now better able to care for our trails, battle invasive species and complete ecological restoration projects.

With generous support from individual donors, local private foundations, and NY State, the Mianus River Gorge continues to be a hub for the scientific aspects of applied ecology, wildlife management, land protection, and forest conservation in the region.

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

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
- served on a panel for Bedford 2030 advising work on town tree canopy protection and restoration
- led contractual arrangement with Bedford Garden Club to conduct 20+ invasive species consultations with private landowners and train landscapers
- led several contractual projects with large land owners conducting flora and fauna inventories and making management recommendations
- worked on development of a program partnership with Christodora, Inc. serving under-resourced children from NYC
- worked with private landowner on management of 14-acre parcel including invasive species control and meadow restoration
- led walks focusing on watershed protection and old-growth forest ecology

Chris Nagy Director of Research and Education

- co-authored six published papers in 2022 (see the Research and Education section or for full details visit our web site)
- presented a seminar at Western CT State University on NYC coyote research
- served as lead on the Christodora/MRG program partnership implementation

Budd Veverka Director of Land Management

- elected president of the Northeast Section of The Wildlife Society in October (term May 2023 – April 2025)
- member of steering committee of the Lower Hudson Partners in Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM)
- gave presentation on mitigating black bears-bird conflict for Bedford Audubon at Katonah Library
- gave a presentation of MRG Deer Research at The Wildlife Society conference in Spokane, WA



Rod Christie leads a guided walk at the Samuel J. Barch Reservoir



Chris Nagy works with Christodora students



Budd Veverka presents at Katonah Library



Public Programs and Outreach



MRG wildlife and habitat consultation

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. We held a community River Clean-Up to help keep the Mianus River classified as AA-Special, a clean drinking water supply for many. Later in the year, we explored the Bargh Reservoir and the southern Mianus Greenway for a downriver perspective of efforts to protect the Mianus River watershed.

Mianus River Gorge partnered with the Bedford Garden Club to help private land owners identify, remove, manage, and dispose of invasive species located on their property. In an initial consultation, MRG staff helped identify invasive species, provided information about control, and made next-step recommendations. Since 62.9 percent of the land in NYS is privately owned, we believe that this focus on private landowners is an effective way to begin to control the introduction, spread and harmful impact of invasive species.

MRG and BGC visited over 20 households with very positive feedback. Many of these landowners have already put what they learned to use and made significant strides toward controlling invasive species on their properties.

Partnership with Christodora, Inc.

For three weekends over the summer, 17 under-resourced students from NYC came to the Preserve to learn from our staff about ecological research and participate in several ongoing projects. MRG research staff led the students on a number of ongoing projects at the Gorge such as experimenting with entryways to our deer exclosures that keep deer out but allow foxes and bobcats to go through. They also helped sample our long-term vegetation plots and learned to identify and measure the diameter of native trees. The data will show how our forests change over time. Lastly, the students gathered data on fish populations in two of our ponds. They learned how to quickly identify fish, amphibian, and crustaceans by distinguishing characteristics. MRG is doing these inventories to provide baseline information on what species are present so we can determine possible future management strategies.



Identifying fish species collected from ponds on MRG Preserve



Christodora Inc.

Yellow Trail Completed – Pond section built by scout for Eagle Scout Award

In early July, staff, interns, and volunteers completed the nearly one-mile Yellow Trail, also known as the Pond Trail. The trail was built on land purchased by MRG in late 2021 and took several months to complete. We removed invasive species and installed deer exclosures along the trail to help restore the forest, which had been significantly manipulated prior to its purchase. In total, we spent over 650 hours working on the trail over four months, moved and placed nearly 30 massive stones, and built 20 log stairs and 10 water bars.



Volunteers were essential to this project. Julia Oliver, 16, of Katonah, proposed to build the pond-side section of the Yellow Trail for her Eagle Scout Project. Along with her family and her BSA Troop 301, she spent many hours cutting the trail path, laying stepping-stones across the pond outlet, installing retaining walls, removing invasive plants, and constructing the rustic log bench that overlooks the pond.

A grant from Athletic Brewing Company’s Two For The Trails program helped support this trail-building project.



Julia Oliver, Eagle Scout

Full-time Preserve Steward Added

The importance of protecting fragile and sensitive land in the Mianus River Watershed benefits each of us. Maintaining healthy ecosystems contributes to the clean air and water we enjoy, provides habitat for area wildlife, sequesters carbon, provides opportunities for visitors to connect with nature, and is the essence of why Mianus River Gorge exists.

As MRG adds properties annually, it became more difficult to take care of them with a small staff. While MRG has added 194 acres to the Preserve and 26 acres of conservation easements in just the last ten years, we had not added stewardship capacity. Thanks to a grant from NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation / Land Trust Alliance, we were able to expand the part-time preserve steward position to full-time.



Jean-Luc Plante, Preserve Steward



Banner Year for MRG Research

This year has been an especially productive one for our research program, as our staff and students have co-authored and contributed to six scientific papers that were published in 2022 (see below). These studies collectively involved MRG staff, a former WTP student, and colleagues from the American Museum of Natural History, Fordham University, Princeton University, Queens College, and many other institutions across the region, and, in one paper, across multiple countries. Many of the papers were associated with our ongoing Gotham Coyote Project (gothamcoyote.org) that studies the ecology of coyotes and other wildlife in the NYC area.

- Coyotes in New York City Carry Variable Genomic Dog Ancestry and Influence Their Interactions with Humans.
- DNA metabarcoding reveals that coyotes in New York City consume wide variety of native prey species and human food
- SNAPSHOT USA 2020: A Second Coordinated National Camera Trap Survey of the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Predictors of Mammalian Diversity in the New York Metropolitan Area
- Human presence drives bobcat interactions among the U.S. carnivore guild
- Assessment of a 15-year white-tailed deer management program and woody recovery in a suburban forest preserve

Click on the MRG Publications tab in the Research and Education section of our website, mianus.org, to learn more and access copies of the papers.

Wildlife Technician Program

Three seniors “graduated” from our Wildlife Technician Program: Eileen Dockery (Harrison HS), Charlotte Klurfeld (Ossining HS), and Jenna Lombino (White Plains HS).

Eileen monitored roadkill around the MRG Preserve for two years and identified a number of roadkill “hotspots” that MRG will try to address. Eileen is currently attending Bates College.

Charlotte monitored camera traps set both on and off the hiking trails to determine how hiking activity and trail presence affected wildlife. She gave a talk on her project at the New York Chapter of The Wildlife Society’s Annual Meeting and the Northeast Natural History Conference. Charlotte is currently attending University St. Andrews.

Jenna studied bobcats and how best to monitor individuals with camera traps at the MRG Preserve. She found that up to seven different bobcats used the Preserve from 2020 through 2021, but only three appeared to be permanent residents. She presented her work at the Blackrock Consortium Annual Conference. Jenna is currently attending Colorado State University.



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 Bedford, NY 10506.

Thank you!

OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$440,632	46%
Grants	\$297,449	31%
Other income	\$34,538	4%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$176,794	19%

Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$949,413	100%
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OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services		
Land Protection	\$181,047	
Research & Education	\$278,065	
Land Management & Stewardship	\$188,136	
	\$647,248	78%
Administrative Expenses	\$112,104	13%
Fundraising Expenses	\$78,158	9%

Total Operating Expenses	\$837,510	100%
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Excess of Public Support and Revenue over Expenses	\$90,812	
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Annual Giving
2022

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



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