



Discover the Power of Parks 2016 Report

Discover the Power of Parks is an interactive series of interpretive programs for visitors to New Hampshire's State Parks. The program is a collaboration between the Division of Parks and Recreation, the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and Eversource Energy with program support from the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps).



Program Overview

Nine college-age interns were recruited and trained by SCA NH Corps to provide guided hikes, interpretive tours, and imaginative environmental workshops for children, families and other visitors. Interpretive programs focus on connecting participants with nature and building appreciation for New Hampshire's natural and cultural heritage.

Figure 1 Left to Right: Katie Steketee, Jake Morel, Jillian Mather, Natalie Strickland, Jamie Samdahl, Rachel Munro, Donny Palumbo, Darren Lu, and Jessie Paulson.

in this year's program were: Greenfield, Pawtuckaway, Bear Brook, South Beach, Clough, Silver Lake, Wentworth, Ellacoya, Moose Brook, Crawford Notch, Echo Lake, Umbagog Lake, White Lake, and Franconia Notch State Parks.

The 16 parks included Monadnock, Wallis Sands, Kingston, White Lake, and Franconia Notch State Parks.

A website and a URL are maintained by the Division for the program, www.discoverpowerofparks.com.

Measuring Success

Conservation Education Program Field Trips

The Discover the Power of Parks interns get their first experience in leading programs by hosting Manchester, Allenstown, and Hooksett 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes that are part of the SCA NH Corps winter environmental education program. In early May, the interns lead 3 weeks of school field trips to Bear Brook State Park and guided 1,093 (a new high) students in an investigation of aquatic and terrestrial life.

State Park Programs

With guidance from the SCA NH Corps Education Coordinator, Davis Brush, and State Park staff, the interns created imaginative programs to connect families with the outdoors. While there are programs that are given at every site like ponding and night hikes, the creativity of the interns make each season special.

The interns provided information and delivered environmental education programs to thousands of visitors, campers, hikers and local citizens. They were asked to keep track of the number of visitors they reached and reported the following:





| 2016 | Program Attendees | Informal Contacts | Outreach Participants |
|---|-------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Bear Brook | 1,474 | 607 | 711 |
| Franconia Notch | 6,203 | 10,876 | NA |
| Greenfield | 1,860 | 616 | NA |
| Monadnock | 2,522 | 1,102 | NA |
| Pawtuckaway | 3,175 | 332 | Included in Bear Brook #'s |
| Umbagog Lake | 715 | 113 | 139 |
| White Lake | 1,076 | 1,709 Includes all Northern Rover Informal Contacts | NA |
| South Beach Wednesday (Southern Rover) | 617 | 879 Includes all Southern Rover Informal Contacts | Included in Bear Brook #'s |
| Rye Harbor - Wed. Evening (Southern Rover) | 44 | NA | NA |
| Wallis Sands - Thursday (Southern Rover) | 678 | NA | NA |
| Kingston - Friday (Southern Rover) | 361 | NA | NA |
| Clough – Saturday (Southern Rover) | 277 | NA | NA |
| Bear Brook Saturday Evening (Southern Rover) | 149 | NA | |
| Silver Lake - Sunday (Southern Rover) | 515 | NA | NA |
| Wentworth - Wednesday (Northern Rover 4 visits) | 50 | NA | NA |
| Ellacoya –Wed. Evening/Thur. (Northern Rover All Season) | 364 | NA | NA |
| Echo Lake Friday (Northern Rover 4 visits) | 86 | NA | NA |
| Moose Brook Friday Evening (Northern Rover 3 visits) | 15 | NA | NA |
| Crawford Notch Sat./Sun. (Northern Rover 3 visits) | 331 | NA | NA |
| Total | 20,512 | 16,234 | 850 |

Total Visitor Contact = 37,596 ~ *The Northern Rover transitioned to deliver programs at White Lake and Ellacoya after the departure of the interpretive ranger at White Lake, on July 5, 2016. This is why some of the parks in the Northern Rover schedule are listed as only having a few visits.*





Social Media Outreach

This summer the interns took turns providing weekly blog posts (for a total of 26). The blogs had 43,276 page views! The top blog post of 2016 was *The Black Bears of Franconia Notch State Park* written by Jessie Paulson. Some of the other posts that garnered a lot of attention were written by Jake Morel and Darren Lu, the roving Interpretive Rangers. The posts included *Mt. Major: Family Friendly Hike*, *Fire Towers & Covered Bridges: Cultural Icons of New Hampshire*, and *Hidden History at Odiorne Point*. These posts, which diverged from discussing nature, included some interesting cultural history and received a whopping 8,038 page views.

The posts were shared through our other social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. The blogs are archived at, <http://blog.nhstateparks.org/category/discover-power-of-parks/>.

Unique Programs Developed in 2016

The SCA NH Corps members update and utilize some staple DPP programs that have been honed over the past ten years of the program. However, due to the addition of the roving Interpretive Rangers and some unique ideas members had they also developed some new and exciting programs. These include Shorebirds Galore!, Tidal Treasures (tide pooling), Ghosts, Ghouls, and Good Times (campfire stories about NH), Seacoast Pre-History (natural and cultural history of the seacoast), Midnight Meanders (included moth identification), and a newly developed scavenger hunt at Greenfield State Park.

At Monadnock State Park Natalie Strickland did some tabling at the back trailheads, which helped reeducate the public about safe hiking, Leave No Trace principals, and park policies. She also headed to Rhododendron State Park where she did some programming about the bloom.

Program Marketing

The most frequent way for guests to find out about the program is signage in the park and a visit by the interpreter to campsites and beach areas.

At White Lake Jake Morel wrote program schedules on sandwich or A-frame message boards which were stationed at campground loops, the toll booth, and on high traffic roads. These message boards lead to increased program awareness and attendance, which we hope to replicate at all DPP Parks in 2017.

At Umbagog Donny became a campground ambassador. He got to know every camper and his great rapport within the campground really enhanced the visitor experience while decreasing the questioning park staff receives from patrons.

Building on a Successful Program

DRED has committed to contract for nine interns for program year 2017. These interns will be based at the usual DPP parks including those of the Northern and Southern Rovers. However, due to construction of a new bathhouse at Umbagog Lake State Park the North Country interpreter will be moved to Wellington and service both Wellington and Ellacoya. This change led to an adjustment in the weekly northern rover schedule. The northern rover will head to Echo Lake, Jericho Mountain, Moose Brook, and Crawford Notch and not service Wentworth and Ellacoya, which were the two Southern most parks in the 2016 rotation. Per usual the program will continue to offer a mix of campground and day-use programming to a broad range of visitors.





Some programmatic goals we will be working on include:

1. Administration

- a. The SCA will continue utilizing its SCA outreach email addresses in order to allow the interns to professionally interface and connect with the public building off the successes of 2016.
- b. The SCA/DRED will work to acquire relevant educational materials, such as pelts, skulls/bones, and other interesting place-based items that will be used for DPP programs.
- c. SCA/DRED will send interns into the field with most of the educational supplies they need for the entire season. This will decrease the need for park managers to purchase supplies throughout the season.
- d. SCA/DRED will ensure intern housing is up to SCA standards and has appropriate safety features including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers.
- e. Park managers will come up with a list of other projects that they want the interns to tackle when there is inclement weather, water quality issues, or down time to enhance the park visitor experience.
- f. The SCA will add two additional trainings for the DPP interns during the summer, which will culminate in them conducting volunteer days at some of their parks. This will help SCA meet its AmeriCorps grant goals while assisting parks with much needed trail related projects. Current volunteer project ideas consist of interpretive walks that include trail brushing (simple maintenance and documentation of trail conditions), replacing or adding new trail signs, and GPSing park trails to bring the trail catalogue up-to-date.

2. Advertising and Marketing

- a. During fieldtrips to Bear Brook in May all students will receive a DPP rack card and an invitation to attend DPP programming over the summer and fall.
- b. DPP Interns will email fall outreach participants throughout the DPP season starting as early as possible.
- c. Park staff will have a suitable space for the interns to table during check in. This will distract park patrons from potentially long check-in lines, assist park staff with answering questions, and inform patrons about the slate of upcoming DPP programs.
- d. DRED/SCA will continue with blog posts and videos but not all interns will be involved with each. Blog posts and videos from willing participants will hopefully yield higher quality content and increased public viewership.
- e. DRED will have more A-frame sandwich chalk boards created so each intern can have several for program advertising purposes.

3. Programming

- a. Reach out to partners and other community resources to collaborate in sharing resources and programming.





- b. Programs should grow and change as the season progresses to stimulate the interns and guests alike. Returning 2016 patrons should see some new programs in 2017 to maintain or increase interest in heading to state parks for recreational and natural/cultural history programs.
 - c. Develop self-guided quests/nature walks for properties in the region.
 - i. Working with park managers, develop interpretive materials (brochures, signs, guide) or exhibits.
 - d. DPP interns will run volunteer days to enhance park trails.
4. Communication
- a. During May, when the interns are conducting field trips, interns will have time available to contact park managers and explore their assigned parks. This will enhance any planning time they have before they move to their parks in June, which will increase their preparedness and decrease uncertainties/questions they might have when parks are busier.
 - b. Continue to improve communication among interpreters, park managers and SCA's Education Coordinator.
 - i. SCA's Education Coordinator will conduct bimonthly calls with the interns throughout the season, on top of current communication, to troubleshoot program challenges and discuss building upon successes.
 - ii. SCA's Education Coordinator will conduct a mid-season check in with the interns' park supervisor(s) to ensure the program is running smoothly from their end.

