



GIANT NEWS

Newsletter of the Sleeping Giant Park Association
Winter 2024/2025 • Issue 133

Celebrating 100 Years of Conservation, Community, and Connection

—by Aaron Lefland, *Vice President*

On October 12, 2024, hundreds of nature enthusiasts, history buffs, and devoted fans of Sleeping Giant State Park gathered at the Giant to commemorate a momentous occasion: the park’s centennial anniversary. This beloved landmark, shaped over millennia by natural forces and revered for generations, opened its gates as a state park exactly 100 years prior, on October 12, 1924. Its journey from sacred Indigenous lands to a battleground for conservation exemplifies a legacy worth celebrating.

Organized by the Sleeping Giant Park Association (SGPA), Connecticut’s oldest park “friends group”, the Centennial Celebration offered something for everyone. From guided hikes exploring the Giant’s history to musical performances by Quinnipiac University professors and students, the festivities highlighted the park’s multi-faceted importance to the community. Local vendors and food trucks provided sustenance, while Cheshire-based Counter Weight Brewing Co. crafted a limited-release Sleeping Giant Pale Ale, with all proceeds supporting SGPA’s mission. Visitors also witnessed live rescue demonstrations by the Hamden Fire Department and engaged with more than a dozen other community groups who joined the celebration.

A Legacy of Preservation

The celebration also honored the park’s storied past. The Giant’s silhouette, known as Hobbomock to the Quinnipiac people, is not just a striking geological feature but a cultural symbol imbued with centuries of Indigenous storytelling. Generations later, SGPA was formed in 1924 with the visionary goal of protecting the Giant by establishing it as a public park. In the years that followed, the association successfully led efforts to halt quarrying that threatened to destroy the Giant’s distinctive profile.

Their dedication not only saved this iconic landscape but also laid the foundation for the park’s preservation and the establishment of its expansive 32-mile trail system, which continues to delight hikers today.



Front row: L-R: Michelle Piper-Mitchell, Lauren Garrett, Josh Elliott, Luis Arata. Back row: L-R: Mike Lambert, Jeremy Hall, Aaron Lefland.
—photo submitted by Helen Pappas

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Happy Oaktober!

Let's Celebrate our Oak Trees

—Joseph P. Barsky, *Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station*

Whether you realize it or not, humans share a close connection with oak trees. They are revered above other species and from mythology to modern song, they have become engrained in our culture. Cities and athletic teams bear their name, fine furniture is constructed from them, their wood heats our homes, and they also flavor our wine and distilled spirits. Oaks are everywhere, all around us. It is a giving tree; humans have been living among and using oak trees for millennia. Ancient Greeks prepared an oil from acorns, tribal groups in California consumed acorns as a staple of their diet, and southeast Asian cultures consume a jelly prepared from acorns.

As someone who studies our forests, I'm passionate about oak trees. They are the keystone species of many forest ecosystems in our region, and their health is synonymous with the health of the forest. However, there are several well documented challenges that we face in perpetuating oak trees across the landscape. One challenge is that acorns are a primary source of food for approximately eighty wildlife species in our area. Animals love acorns, and they love them to death—most acorns are consumed before springtime. Another challenge is a scarcity of oak seedlings and saplings across the state, which will comprise our future forest. The few that do germinate must compete against interfering vegetation. Plants such as hayscented fern, Japanese barberry, mountain laurel, or black birch outcompete oak seedlings for sunlight and growing space—the same way the tomatoes shade out my basil in my garden. Additionally, fire exclusion from the landscape has led to the buildup of leaf litter, preventing emerging oak roots from penetrating into the soil bed. Acorn weevils, a small insect, also feed upon acorns. Lastly, caterpillars love to feast on oak leaves and widespread defoliation has caused many oak trees to die across the state. Take a drive along Interstate 395 in eastern Connecticut and you'll see dead oak trees scattered across the land. This year, eastern New York also experienced massive defoliation from an invasive forest pest, spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*).

To address these some of challenges, land managers need timely data on oak mast abundance to make informed decisions. In 2007, the Wildlife Division at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection began a surveillance program to quantify oak mast abundance along with several states throughout the region. Fifty mature trees (25 red oak group, 25 white oak group) were identified in locations across Connecticut and mast abundance assessed annually. This program,

now led by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, continues to offer valuable insight into the potential for oak regeneration and helps guide management strategies to ensure the future health of oak species and help predict wildlife population trends. One of these research areas is on the green trail off Chestnut Lane, in Hamden. You may have noticed some trees that have large white or red circular dots at eye level and a red band at 4.5 feet above ground level. Those are our study trees. Every August, tree diameters are remeasured, the canopy is scanned for thirty seconds to tally acorns, and the trees are repainted.

Acorn production varies greatly from year to year and place to place. This year was no different. It also happens to be a tree-mendous year for red oak acorn production and an absolute failure for white oak acorn production. Red oak trees tend to produce acorns more routinely and prolifically than white oaks. On average, larger red oak acorn crops occur every 3-5 years and roughly every 5-8 years for white oaks. Red oak acorns, which are not eaten by weevils, deer, or squirrels, can persist in the



Joseph Barsky in action

—continued on next page

understory for decades until suitable conditions permit them to ascend into the canopy and become part of the future forest.

Counting acorns help us understand and address some of the challenges facing oak trees. These data help us develop strategies to preserve oak populations and maintain biodiversity in our forests. Lastly, this work highlights the need for cooperation among scientists, landowners, and the public to ensure that future generations will continue to benefit from the ecological and cultural significance of oak trees. Joseph.Barsky@ct.gov

Check out our upcoming guided hikes!

~Please visit sgpa.org/program-calendar for more information about each hike, including registration, meeting location, and other considerations.

For questions, contact hiking@sgpa.org.

All Guided Hikes and Trail Crew days will meet at Sleeping Giant State Park – Main Parking 200 Mt. Carmel Ave., Hamden, CT

Sunday, February 23rd @ 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Winter Tracking Hike

Sunday, March 16th @ 11:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Spring Hiker's Hike

Tuesday April 1st @ 9:30 a.m.

Trail Crew 2025 Begins!

Every Sunday, April – November

SGPA will supply any tools or equipment needed.

Sunday, April 6th @ 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Spring Wildflower Hike

Please see our website for more information on Guided Hikes. www.sgpa.org

Always dress appropriately for the weather with comfortable, supportive shoes with good traction. A day pack with snacks, water, sunscreen and other essentials is recommended.

Out of consideration for other hikers, dogs are not permitted on SGPA guided hikes.

In Memoriam

In loving memory of

Gil Spencer, SGPA Historian

October 15, 1935 ~ January 16, 2025



—photo courtesy of Counter Weight Brewing Company

Hopefully you got to experience this special, limited edition beer crafted especially for *Sleeping Giant Centennial Celebration!*

Sleeping Giant Hazy Pale Ale

A huge, hoppy THANK YOU to Counter Weight Brewing Company of Cheshire, CT!



Brewers at Counter Weight Brewing Company making the *Sleeping Giant Hazy Pale Ale*

—photo submitted by Kari Vecchitto

Remembering Ned

—by Abe T. Allen, *Giant Master #616*

When you look carefully at a map of Sleeping Giant State Park, you see a notation; the trail system was designed by Norman A. Greist and Richard D. Elliot. If you delve deeper, you will learn that Norman Griest was president of the Sleeping Giant Park Association from 1962-1982. Those accomplishments represent only a small part of the story of a remarkable man. This article reflects only a few of my memories of him.

As a youngster, Ned joined the Boy Scouts and became an Eagle Scout and later a Scoutmaster. In 1939, he was the recipient of the Silver Beaver... a distinguished service award given to those who have made an impact on the lives of youth. Ned donated sixteen acres of his land and built Camp Wah Wah Taysee for the Scouts (recently purchased by the North Haven Land Trust). He was the driving force in the establishment of the Backpacking Merit Badge in 1982, which has since been earned by over 234,000 boys.

In the mid-1960's, Ned was a corporate executive and deeply involved in numerous trail clubs, outdoor organizations and conservation groups in the region. I was a floundering youngster in the Boy Scouts and knew of Ned Greist; practically everyone in Scouting knew of the legendary Ned Greist. As luck would have it, in the fall of 1966, I was with Ned working on the requirements for the Camping Merit badge. Days later, my father suddenly died and Ned reached out to my mother asking if there was anything he could do for me. "Maybe you could take him hiking sometime," my mom responded.

From 1967 thru 1972, I climbed many mountains with Ned (and the wonderful folks he attracted on his trips) in the Adirondacks and northern New England. We hiked together on the Appalachian Trail in most of the fourteen states it goes through. Beautiful weather, rain and thunderstorms, heat, cold, blizzards, days and weeks, several hundreds of miles; so many unforgettable experiences. Ned Greist changed my life.

What manner of man was he? A leader, a visionary, a meticulous organizer (look at the way the trails on the Sleeping Giant are structured), kind and pleasant, a patient and exceptional mentor. Norman Greist lived the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. He imparted the principles of character and leadership development. He taught by word and example the proper methods of hiking, camping and backpacking. He believed in the nurturing and preservation of outdoor land and wilderness.

One sunny Sunday morning in 1967 on Little Haystack Mountain in the Adirondacks, Ned started talking to the Scout group he was leading. This was the poem he recited and interpreted. "I would be true, for there are those who trust me; I would be pure, for there are those who care; I would be strong, for there is much to suffer; I would be brave, for there is much to dare; I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless; I would be giving, and forget the gift; I would be humble, for I know my weakness; I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift."

Years later, at his memorial service in 1989, these words were spoken in his memory. "I will rest peacefully, no matter how long, If the pines will bend over to sing the wind's song. If the birds and chipmunks will play over me still. In the forest I loved, near the spring on the hill."

To this day, I have never known a greater man than Ned Greist. "I shall not look upon his like again."



Norman A. Greist
—photo submitted by Abe T. Allen

Submitted by Deborah Johnson on behalf of Jane Bartlett Kellogg

This poem rests in the archives of the New Haven Museum

To The Sleeping Giant

You seem to be asleep among the hills
 And yet, I think you are in your Alpha,
 conscious and aware
 You hear the birds sing there
 And the water rush through your rocks
 You hear, too, the conversations of those
 who walk along your trails
 You hear their memories, sad ones, happy ones
 and some whose meaning is not yet clear
 You are our Great Mother, Our Giant Mother
 You gather up all the stuff of our lives
 You sift and stir until all is smooth,
 like the tops of your flat rocks
 Today I walk the trail alone
 My memory of our earlier walks is vivid and clear
 like the stream I just passed
 I yearn to have a conversation again
 And then, in a flash, I know that I can talk to
 our Giant Mother
 For she knows my footstep along the trail
 She knows that, in the end, I must walk alone
 This Giant sleeps not; she echoes my soul's desire.

August 1991; *Jane Bartlett Kellogg*

Jane celebrated her 99th Birthday on December 18, 2024 and we would like to express our heartfelt wishes for a wonderful, healthy, happy year ahead.

Also celebrating her 100th Birthday, Ms. Betty Sumner!

Born on October 6th, 1924, we celebrate a life full of adventure, kindness, and remarkable achievements. The beloved wife of the late Dr. Martin Sumner, and a longtime resident of Hamden, CT, Betty has spent 30+years volunteering and traveling saying, "I've covered a lot of territory in this world." An active and adventurous spirit, she talked about skiing, swimming, and climbing.

As a young girl her grandmother used to call her "Monkey."

Reflecting on her life, Betty also shared

"I have been in love with The Giant for many, many years."

A testament to her enduring connection with the beauty and grandeur of life.

Here's to celebrating a century of inspiration and joy!

Celebrating 100 Years continued from page 1

Marking Milestones

The event also featured a lineup of distinguished speakers who shared their appreciation for Sleeping Giant and their commitment to its preservation. Luis Arata, SGPA President, underscored the importance of community support in maintaining the park's natural beauty and accessibility. Michelle Piper-Mitchell, Chairwoman of the Golden Hill Paugussett Tribal Nation, reflected on the land's sacred significance to Indigenous peoples, while Mike Lambert and Jeremy Hall from CT DEEP, highlighted the park's role in connecting residents to the outdoors.

Other speakers included Josh Elliott, State Representative for Connecticut's 88th District; and Lauren Garrett, Mayor of Hamden. Although unable to attend, Senator Martin Looney issued a citation from the Connecticut General Assembly, commending SGPA for its dedication and celebrating the association's own centennial milestone earlier in the year.

Looking Ahead

Sleeping Giant is a place of shared meaning. It represents community, history, and the beauty of the natural world. As we begin the park's second century,

the work of the SGPA is more critical than ever. With record numbers of visitors flocking to the park each year, climatic changes affecting its delicate ecosystems, and the ongoing need to preserve its trails and habitats, SGPA's efforts are vital to ensuring the Giant remains a treasured resource for generations to come.

Thanks to the generous support of our members and partners, SGPA's impact continues to grow. In collaboration with the state, plans are underway to construct a new welcome center, offering visitors a place to learn about the park's history, ecology, and recreational opportunities. This year, SGPA also secured one of the largest remaining privately owned parcels of land adjacent to the park, which will soon be transferred to the state to expand Sleeping Giant's protected boundaries.

The centennial celebration serves as a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished through vision, collaboration, and passion. Together, with the support of our community, SGPA is not only honoring the park's legacy but also shaping its future, ensuring that Sleeping Giant remains a source of awe and inspiration for the next 100 years and beyond.

Giant Master Program

—by Manju Prabhu, *Giant Master Coordinator*

Congratulations to New Giant Masters!

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------|------|-------------------|
| #602 | Joshua Romano | #615 | Jennifer Carvalho |
| #603 | Danie Caro | #616 | Abe T. Allen |
| #604 | Karen West | #617 | E. Glatt |
| #605 | Rose Parady | #618 | David M. Corcoran |
| #606 | Kimberly Roy | #619 | Kathy Jerome |
| #607 | Linda Irish-Simpson | #620 | Ken Lovell |
| #608 | Birgit Gillman | #621 | Richard Levy |
| #609 | Ian Michael Dudley | #622 | Susan Connell |
| #610 | James Kulpa | #623 | Chris Dickerman |
| #611 | Kait Gallow | #624 | Patrick Tuxbury |
| #612 | Patrick Staub | #625 | Peter Lynch |
| #613 | Lisa DeRosa | #626 | Thomas Mieldzioc |
| #614 | Marion Boyns | #627 | Jessica Patrick |



Looking for a Challenge?
Become the next

GIANT MASTER

A program of



Hike all 32 miles of blazed trails at Sleeping Giant State Park to complete the challenge.

Learn More & Register:



sgpa.org/giant-master

Looking for more?
Once you've become a Giant Master, you're eligible for the Advanced Programs.

- **4-Season:** All trails in each of the four seasons
- **12-Month:** All trails, each month, for 12 consecutive months
- **Marathon:** All trails in one day

SGPA Goes Green with Battery-Powered Trail Tools

This year, the SGPA made a bold move toward sustainability and climate action by swapping gas-powered trail equipment for cleaner, battery-powered tools. Thanks to a generous grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, SGPA's all-volunteer trail crew was able to equip themselves with battery-powered chainsaws, brush cutters, string trimmers, pole pruners, and an array of batteries and chargers.

The shift is more than just a convenience—it's a step toward a greener future. By reducing reliance on fossil fuels, SGPA is actively cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions and promoting a healthier, cleaner, and quieter park experience for visitors. The new tools eliminate the exhaust fumes and the roar of gas engines, creating a more peaceful atmosphere for hikers, wildlife, and volunteers alike.

Trail crew members were impressed by the performance of the battery-powered equipment. "The power was on par with gas tools, and we were

blown away by how long the batteries lasted," shared Mike Miller, SGPA's Trail Crew leader. Even better, the tools start with the simple push of a button—no more yanking on stubborn pull cords. Passing hikers also took notice, remarking on the quieter tools and lack of exhaust fumes.

This initiative is a powerful example of how small, local actions can have a broader environmental impact. By demonstrating the effectiveness of electric-powered landscaping equipment, SGPA is encouraging homeowners to consider greener alternatives for their own yards and gardens.

The work done on the trails today echoes far beyond the park's borders, highlighting the role each of us can play in reducing emissions and protecting the natural world.

The Sleeping Giant Park Association wishes to thank the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven for the generous grant that made this project possible.

From CT.gov website: Connecticut State Parks, A Centennial History by Alan Levere, published by DEEP's State Parks & Public Outreach Division. This book presents the history of Connecticut State Parks through the celebration of its first hundred years.

Available on the CT DEEP store (<https://ctdeepstore.com>). You'll be delighted to hear that there are stories from Sleeping Giant woven into the book.



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Carl from the Trails Crew wielding a Battery-Powered Trail Tool
—photo submitted by Peggy Nightingale

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Giant News is a seasonal publication of the Sleeping Giant Park Association, an all-volunteer nonprofit organization. The mission of SGPA, in partnership with the State of Connecticut, is to build upon a legacy of conservation and stewardship to expand the park and the opportunities it offers for physical recreation, spiritual renewal, and enjoyment of and learning about the natural world.



Connect with us online at sgpa.org, or on Facebook and Instagram. Feedback on the *Giant News* can be sent to giantnews@sgpa.org.



Members of the Trails Crew taking a break to pose for this picture
—photo submitted by Peggy Nightingale