



CATSKILLCENTER

CATSKILL STEWARDS PROGRAM

2024

MID-SEASON REPORT



The Catskill Center’s Catskill Stewards Program kicked off the 2024 season with a busy start following two weeks of hands-on training.

Our team consists of seven full-time Catskill Stewards and one part-time Ridgerunner. **Each steward is certified in Wilderness First Aid, trained as Leave No Trace educators, and has received instruction from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** on the rules and regulations of the Forest Park and Preserve, as well as invasive species identification.



Our stewards are stationed at five high-use locations: Peekamoose Blue Hole, Kaaterskill Falls, the Catskill Center’s Platte Clove and Thorn Preserves, and along the Devil’s Path, as well as at six Fire Tower locations. They collaborate closely with Forest Rangers to safeguard the Catskill Park and Preserve. **This season, our stewards have engaged with over 23,000 visitors from around the world**, providing information on permit requirements and DEC regulations, removing litter, rehabilitating illegal campsites, protecting water quality, and promoting responsible recreation practices. Additionally, they have begun assisting the United States Forest Service in data collection by conducting social science interviews to better understand visitor demographics and usage trends, which will help inform park management and improve the visitor experience.

The Catskill Steward season runs from May 1 to October 19, 2024. **By mid-July, our stewards had engaged with 23,335 visitors and 1,772 dogs, with a total visitation of 28,223 across all locations.** They turned away 5,000 visitors at Peekamoose Blue Hole due to capacity limits. Our stewards have built connections with a diverse range of park users, including fly fishermen, birders, farmers, families, swimmers, cyclists, and Forest Rangers, and have even encountered a few black bears.

Their efforts are crucial in protecting the Catskill Park, one visitor at a time.

📍 2024 MID-SEASON VISITATION AT A GLANCE

Peekamoose Blue Hole Visitation: 7,822 visitors
 ↑ An increase of nearly 1,100 visitors from 2023

Kaaterskill Falls Visitation: 14,421 visitors
 ↓ A decrease of roughly 3,800 visitors from 2023

Devil’s Path Visitation: 1,163 visitors
 ↑ An increase of 400 visitors from 2023

Fire Towers Visitation: 705 visitors
 ↑ An increase of roughly 185 visitors from 2023

Metrics Data

Location	2024	2023
Blue Hole	7,822	~6,700
Kaaterskill	14,421	~18,200
Devil's Path	1,163	~763
Fire Towers	705	~520



Joining us on the front lines of stewardship and outreach are the Catskill Mountainkeeper Stewards, focusing on high-use areas in the Western Catskills.

In the early part of the season, from May through June 2024, the **Catskill Mountainkeeper Stewards have welcomed 2,158 visitors and 123 dogs, surpassing last year's numbers for the same period.** They cover five locations: Big Pond, Alder Lake, the Beaverkill Covered Bridge, the Peekamoose Blue Hole Lower Field, and the Neversink Fishing Access Point. Like the Catskill Center stewards, they are trained in DEC rules and regulations, Leave No Trace principles, and Wilderness First Aid, and they also collaborate with the United States Forest Service on visitor surveys.



Visitors have expressed appreciation for the stewards' presence at trailheads and the noticeable improvements in site conditions.

This season, popular activities include fly fishing, swimming, boating, kayaking, and simply enjoying the natural beauty of the park. The stewards have interacted with visitors speaking various languages, including English, Korean, Czech, Spanish, Hindi, Burmese, Indonesian, and Lithuanian, and have observed up to 45 bird species in a single day at one location. **These experiences highlight the Catskill Park as a vibrant destination for both people and wildlife.**





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Catskill Center members and donors enable the continued success of this program by ensuring its proper administration. A heartfelt **thank you** to all Catskill Center members.

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