



Newsletter

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Utes = Alta Stewards! - By Marley Hill-Filben

Over the past few years the Alta Environmental Center (AEC) has been working closely with both graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Utah (the U). This August 500 native plants were planted in a riparian restoration area under Collins Lift with a group of graduate students from varying areas of study within the [Global Change and Sustainability Center](#). While they all have unique studies, it was apparent that they all shared one common interest—conservation and preservation of the environment. Our shared interest further enhanced the ambiance of Alta, enriching it with fun, care and fulfilling work.

Last weekend, September 12-13, the AEC hosted the [Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program's](#) orientation. Comprised of all ages and undergraduate levels, the group of 59 came up Saturday morning and spent the day exploring Alta, then a sleepover at Alf's Restaurant, some students camping for their first time.

The next day they were hard working stewards, planting and GPSing 100 seedlings for an ongoing tree survival study, harvesting over 250 trees from groomed runs, and maintaining and sowing tree seed in the nursery. Next year these activities will be revisited and monitored by the incoming program students. Their ongoing projects seek to bridge the gap between academia and business by building a long-term, hands-on, educational field experience.

The AEC hopes their partnership with the University of Utah will continue to grow and be beneficial in preparing future stewards. It is was a great privilege for me to be a part of Alta and the U's partnership, working with tomorrow's leaders in environmental activism and seeing their passion really gives me hope for the future.



Extreme Data Collection - By Kristine Ereneta

The summer of 2015 offered new challenges for the Alta Environmental Center (AEC) crew. Maura Olivos—AEC's coordinator, led the team into the field this summer, which comprised of Marley Hill-Filben—Summer 2015 AEC Intern, Ellie Johnson—Friends of Alta Bill Levitt Fellowship, and myself. Along with the usual workload we took on two new projects. The first, a bird breeding survey, partnered with the Tracy Aviary, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Friends of Alta. The second, a forest health assessment partnered with the US Forest Service—Ogden Office and Friends of Alta.

The bird breeding survey is a citizen science project that included surveying for birds with trained volunteers mid-June through mid-July. Our crew then followed in mid-July conducting vegetation surveys that accompanied each bird survey point. The mountain was split up into 1 kilometer square grids, each grid had up to 16 survey points. Each point was 250 meters apart and the survey plot area had a 50 meter radius. Data collection for overstory, woody understory and a herbaceous layer had us weighed down with clip boards, pencils, rulers, GPS Units, range finders, compasses, water and lunch. The vegetation data will help correlate...*Continued on next page...*





"I learned the value of hard work by working hard."

Margaret Mead



Extreme Data Collection Continued...

...bird species to habitats and identify dominant plant species for these habitats. It also gives Alta Ski Area a better understanding of the ecology to help guide management of the varying habitats for future feeding and nesting birds.

The labor intensive nature of the work had us hiking all over the mountain everyday. Some of the habitats we encountered included meeting less than pleased moose in boggy wetland and riparian areas. Others left us navigating steep rocky terrain demanding strong toes and surefooted steps. My favorite habitat was the mountain meadows full of wildflowers over 5 feet tall! Whether we were in the field under sunny blue skies or hunkering in the hoods of our rain coats the work continued. From the Peruvian Ridge to Point Wolverine a thorough account of the vegetation was submitted to the study.

The AEC crew by now had covered the ski area by foot a couple times. Limber pine tree protection, planting, weeding, and vegetation surveys kept our ski legs strong. Our forest health assessment survey had us grappling with very familiar terrain loaded down with more data collection tools than before. We climbed, wallowed and hiked our way around the mountain, again. There were more points to cover than in the previous survey, but we had help from the Forest Service. Teams were sent to multiple locations to collect tree species identification, widths, heights, and regeneration counts. We looked at the trees' stress levels by observing pest infestations, environmental damage, and discoloration of needles. Additionally, we meticulously noted fire fuels data at random points. Sap covered clothes, a few bruises and blisters found at the end of a day reminded us of what was again in store tomorrow. Rain or shine, frost or heat the work continued. As the summer faded into fall the anticipation of

winter and the urgency to finish the work we started pushed us through.

I'd like to thank my summer crew for the opportunity to experience the value of hard work. I believe the closer we connect ourselves to this special place the more determined we are to manage it properly. Understanding the big picture here is the key to our success. The miles we log in our boots collecting data give us the vital signs of our environment. Tangible resources to make educated decisions now for the future, endeavoring a long-standing forest, watershed and ski area.

September - October Sustainability Events

Check out the full calendar of sustainability events at alta.com/alta-environmental-center/resources#sustainability-events

- **October 1—Sustainable Startups:** "Get Your Green Learn On!" workshop for aspiring entrepreneurs. More info at www.sustainablestartups.org.
- **October 3—Project Oxygen Tree Planting:** Join TreeUtah and Mark Miller Subaru at Solitude. Info at treeutah.org/volunteer/upcoming-events/project-oxygen.
- **October 12—Non-Breeding Bird Survey:** Join Tracy Aviary in Alta to search for the birds that decided to see what winter brings. To register email environment@alta.com.

