

Adirondacks

2026 Spring/Summer Update

IN THIS ISSUE:

600 acres return to Haudenosaunee care

Designing roads that work for wildlife and people

One warbler's northbound odyssey





BOARD MEMBERS

Sarah Underhill, *Chair*
 Charles O. Svenson, *Treasurer*
 Peter S. Paine, Jr., *Secretary*
 Michael Bettmann
 Stephen H. Burrington
 Kristofer Covey
 Hannah Darrin
 Peter J. Falco
 Elizabeth McLanahan
 Amy Vedder, Ph.D.
 Takeyce Walter



The Nature Conservancy is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) international membership organization. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

Printed on 30% PCW recycled, process chlorine-free paper, creating the following benefits:

1.2
trees preserved for the future

81.5
gallons water saved

155.8
lbs. CO₂ prevented

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Nature Conservancy is celebrating a milestone 75th anniversary this year. And though it has become one of the largest environmental nonprofits in the world, the organization got its start simply with one person and their love for a special place.



For centuries, a lush old-growth forest just a few hours south of the Adirondacks stood among a cathedral of towering hemlocks enveloping the Mianus River. This gorge was a place of natural beauty and abundance. But in the 1950s, the land and all the life it harbored faced an existential threat. Forests and other natural areas were quickly being transformed into suburban sprawl to meet the post-World War II demand for housing. Tensions were high. Which places would be paved over and lost? Which ones would be saved?

Enter Gloria Hollister Anable, a scientist and explorer who took it upon herself to take action for nature—to think creatively, rally her neighbors and friends, follow the science and take bold risks to protect Mianus River Gorge. From this place of collaboration and courage, our 75-year-old, million-member-strong organization got its start. And what began as a modest 60-acre endeavor has transformed into a vast network of protected lands, now encompassing more than 125 million acres worldwide.

Here in the Adirondacks, it was Carl George who took action for nature. Alongside his wife, Gail, and Paul Schaefer, Arthur Savage, Wayne Byrne, Winnie LaRose, Bob Hall and other concerned naturalists, they forged the Adirondack chapter of The Nature Conservancy in 1971. They hired Tim Barnett as chapter director, and his conservation legacy changed the map of the Adirondacks. Taking lessons from Mianus, The Nature Conservancy has protected nearly 600,000 acres of forests, lakes, rivers and critical wildlife habitat in the Adirondacks to date.

Our willingness to think big and act boldly—as Gloria, Carl and Tim did—is still the heart and soul of our work. And thanks to your support, we have so much conservation impact to celebrate. I hope the lessons from our origin story, of one person who loved a special place, and the new chapters of our story, which we are writing today with your help, provide the inspiration needed for all of us to meet this critical moment.

Sincerely,

Peg R. Olsen
 Director

COVER Black-throated green warbler © Jeff Lewis

THIS PAGE Gloria Hollister Anable rallied her neighbors to save Mianus River Gorge from development, leading to The Nature Conservancy's first land deal. © TNC

Adirondacks Director Peg R. Olsen © John DiGiacomo

600 acres return to Haudenosaunee care

Land return in the Adirondacks creates new pathways for cultural and ecological renewal.

This winter, The Nature Conservancy in New York's Indigenous Partnerships Program announced one of the largest private land return initiatives in what is now New York State.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the "People of the Longhouse," is a historic, powerful and democratic alliance of six Indigenous nations—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora. With assistance and funding from The Nature Conservancy, the Six Nations Iroquois Cultural Center (6NICC) purchased a 600-acre property from Paul Smith's College for \$1.1 million. The 6NICC, an Indigenous nonprofit focused on Haudenosaunee culture, will manage this land, along with 330 adjacent acres already under their care, according to Indigenous traditions and ecological principles.

"The land ethic of care and preservation has been a central part of the Cultural Center's mission since its founding by Ray and Christine Fadden in 1954," says David Fadden, Cultural Center director. "This acquisition of over 600 acres will serve as a classroom to share and learn Indigenous ecological knowledge for Native and non-Native students alike for generations."

Located in Onchiota and adjacent to the 6NICC, the property has been used as a seasonal camp and retreat center and as a site for teaching forest management practices. The 600 acres are 94% forested and the land is bookended by Big Haystack Mountain and Buck Pond Hill. John Thomas Brook, which supports native brook trout, flows through the wetlands.

The Cultural Center is now collaborating with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and the Akwesasne Seed Hub to provide a gathering

place for Haudenosaunee community members and a home for the Native Earth Program, which brings Indigenous high school students from across Turtle Island to the Adirondack region for community building, reconnecting with the Earth and deepening skills for environmental leadership.

Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, author and founding director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, says: "Land and people will benefit by the revitalization of Indigenous-led land care. Reuniting Haudenosaunee youth with traditional homelands sows seeds for restoring intergenerational relationships to place. I'm so eager to witness the reunion of Indigenous people, knowledge and land."

For Indigenous Nations, relationships with ancestral lands and waters are central to maintaining distinct cultural identity. This return of 600 acres of land in Kanien'keháka (Mohawk) territory, the eastern door of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, recognizes and supports the centuries-long efforts of the Haudenosaunee to reconnect with their traditional territories.

"We are thrilled to be part of this collaborative effort to reconnect Indigenous Peoples to their ancestral lands and to bring Traditional Ecological Knowledge together with western science in support of the land's biocultural restoration," says Peg Olsen, director of the Adirondacks and Indigenous Partnerships Program for The Nature Conservancy in New York.

The 600 acres is located southeast of Buck Pond, seen here at a distance. © Becca Halter/Adirondack Land Trust

Cultural Center Director David Fadden
© Six Nations Iroquois Cultural Center





Designing roads that work for wildlife and people

New approaches across the Appalachians aim to reduce wildlife crashes and rebuild the pathways nature needs.

In 2017, The Nature Conservancy and the New York Department of Transportation installed a simple, inexpensive “critter shelf” in a culvert under a busy road between Tug Hill and the Adirondack Park. Almost immediately, mink, groundhogs, raccoons, weasels and other small animals began scurrying across the steel mesh corridor, safely avoiding traffic.

Developed in Montana and adapted for New York, the shelf demonstrates how good ideas can travel. Recognizing that potential, The Nature Conservancy and partners developed the *Northeast Habitats and Highways* program to amplify local projects that make it easier for wildlife to move and to reduce traffic accidents.

Modeled after a nationally recognized training developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, *Northeast Habitats and Highways* launched in 2025 with a series of videos that spotlight standout examples—from low-cost retrofits like New York’s critter shelf, to road designs that support larger wildlife movement, to policy changes that shape how entire agencies operate—led by partners in eight Appalachian states.

Alissa Fadden, who manages wildlife connectivity projects for The Nature Conservancy, says, “Our goal is to foster cultural change to help transportation and conservation professionals collaborate early, build infrastructure with nature in mind and reduce wildlife-vehicle conflicts.”

Thoughtful design allows roads to support safe movement of wildlife and people across the landscape. Illustration by Liz Burdick Arts

Connectivity Manager Alissa Fadden © Kurt Gardner



Northeast Habitats and Highways promotes practical, wildlife-friendly designs that keep communities safer and habitats connected.

Each year on America's roads, an average of 200 people die and 26,000 are injured in wildlife-vehicle collisions, and an estimated 1-2 million large mammals are killed.

Climate change is driving animals to move north an average of 11 miles and approximately 36 feet higher in elevation each decade, reinforcing the necessity of resources like this series to inform projects that allow species to access expanded habitat. Furthermore, roads and stream crossings designed and adjusted to meet the needs of wildlife can also help communities reduce flooding caused by sea-level rise and extreme rainfall.

The training series has already been approved for continuing education credits for transportation planners and engineers in New York—an early signal that the resource resonates. “We plan to share this proven approach with colleagues and partners throughout the Appalachian region and beyond, speeding up the pace and scale of conservation that supports wildlife migration and thriving communities,” says Fadden.



Scan to explore
the full story
and videos.

If wildlife can't move, we're all affected

Barriers to wildlife movement cause problems for all of us:

- An average of 200 people die and 26,000 are injured in the United States each year in wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- Vehicle accidents involving wildlife cost approximately \$10 billion in the United States annually.
- Swerving to avoid wildlife and collisions can be traumatic to drivers and passengers and snarl traffic.
- Undersized and poorly designed culverts can cause dangerous conditions including flooding and road collapse.





From jaguars to moose One warbler's northbound odyssey

By Kevin Munroe, Long Island preserve director

A tiny black and white bird with a blazing orange throat perches high in the treetops, watching a jaguar prowl in the shadows below. The season is changing, and this Blackburnian warbler feels an urge to leave his winter home in the steamy Peruvian tropics. His mission: to fly 4,000 miles to find a mate and start a family. Dozens of species of neotropical migrants, including Blackburnian warblers, winter in the tropics and spend their summers in the Appalachian Mountains. Their journeys north are filled with hazards, including predators, harsh weather, skyscrapers with deadly glass windows and a lack of stopover habitat that's been lost to development.

Fortunately, The Nature Conservancy's network of preserves offers refuge, shelter, clean water and ample food. Hundreds of sites, including 160 preserves in New York alone, are critical migration stopovers as these tiny jewels make their seasonal expeditions. The spring destination for many is the Appalachians, which stretch from the hills of Alabama north into Canada, with New York as a key connecting point.

Migratory rest stops: critical places to rest and refuel

Together, let's imagine what this extraordinary northbound flight might be like. The Blackburnian warbler survives a stormy trip across the Gulf,

then settles in before dawn for a life-saving rest on the Georgia coast. He falls asleep next to an Eastern whip-poor-will who makes her spring home in The Nature Conservancy's Calverton Ponds Preserve on Long Island. A cluster of monarch butterflies, like the thousands he saw gliding north in Mexico, vibrate their wings to stay warm as they prepare to fly to Moody Forest Preserve in Georgia.

After traveling through the southern Appalachians for weeks, often flying all night and into the morning, the winged wonder lands in Virginia's highlands. He's joined by flocks of other neotropical warblers, including bay-breasted, chestnut-sided and cerulean warblers he met over farmland in North Carolina.

They are also joined by several northbound hoary bats whose 16-inch leathery wingspans dwarf those of the warblers and whose sharp white teeth shine in the moonlight. Luckily, hoary bats eat only insects, so bats and birds briefly share the same nocturnal flight.

Just days away from his destination, the Blackburnian makes one last rest stop in central New York to nap and feed before his final flight north.

Because of their large migratory range, the Blackburnian warbler shares habitat with an incredible array of animals including the jaguar. © Kim Sullivan

The tiny Blackburnian warbler is a strong flier who travels between North and South America twice each year. © Larry Master

He lands and recuperates in the West Branch Preserve with hundreds of other colorful (and exhausted) neotropical migrants: orioles, flycatchers, vireos, hummingbirds, thrushes and even a pair of broad-winged hawks that wintered in Venezuela. He rests in forests of maple, oak and pine trees above a fast-moving stream and hunts in the treetops for early-season insects like gnats, flower flies, tiny native bees and tumbling flower beetles.

He also practices his bright, high-pitched, buzzy song, throwing his head back, spreading his mouth wide and shaking his chest and sides to throw his song as far as possible from his sunlit perch. For many birders, spring has not arrived until they've witnessed this spectacular show. Body rested and belly full, he completes his last leg north in May and lands in a towering black spruce tree.

He was born here in the Adirondacks four years ago and has made it back three times to raise a family, each time meeting an equally astounding and well-traveled mate. He's returned to The Nature Conservancy's Spring Pond Bog Preserve, the second largest open expanse of peatland in New York, which is surrounded by a mixture of coniferous and deciduous forests and is a refuge for moose, bear and spruce grouse. The globe-trotting Blackburnian is finally home.

But in just a few months, he and his new family will point their sharp bills south, join millions of other birds and throw themselves into yet another, millennia-old odyssey back to the land of the jaguars.

Conservation status

Although Blackburnian warbler populations are currently stable, they face growing threats, including the loss of South American forests where they overwinter, disruptions along their migration routes and climate-related impacts in the Appalachians where they spend their summers. They aren't alone: some models predict that birds could lose over 50% of their breeding range if the average global temperature increases by 1.5 degrees Celsius. Nature Conservancy preserves and other protected lands are critical, as many are climate-resilient strongholds that will provide resting and refueling habitat even as the climate changes.

Spring Pond Bog and surrounding forest provide habitat for more than 130 species of birds.
© Charlie Reinert's Twolined Studio LLC





 The Nature Conservancy in New York

 @tncny

 @nature_ny

 @nature.ny


 nature.org/newyork





Support nature
in New York

Protect your Adirondacks

The Nature Conservancy's Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program is working to minimize the impact of invasive species on the region's communities, lands and waters—and you can help! As summer begins, here are some tips that can help all of us protect our favorite places.

 Clean dirt and debris from footwear, pets, bikes and gear after every outdoor adventure and stay on designated trails.

 Clean, drain and dry your boats, trailers and fishing gear and dispose of unwanted bait in the trash to stop aquatic hitchhikers. Free boat wash stations are available throughout the Adirondacks.

 Don't move firewood. You can prevent the unintentional spread of tree-killing diseases and insects, like the emerald ash borer, by simply buying firewood where you'll burn it.

Together we can conserve the recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat and economic vitality of the Adirondacks.

Learn more at [adkinvasives.com](https://www.adkinvasives.com)

Free boat wash stations are available throughout the Adirondacks.
© Jacob Allen Sporn

