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ADIRONDACK CHAPTER
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MEET THE STAFF

Q&A: Sophie McClelland

Our philanthropy coordinator discovers new things about the place where she grew up

After graduating from Middlebury College with a degree in environmental studies and geography, you moved west for a year. Why did you come back?

I find that no matter where I am, I'm constantly reminded of home, the Adirondacks. Prior to joining the Adirondack staff [in July 2013], I was living in Truckee, California, where I volunteered for Mountain Area Preservation [MAP], a small non-profit smart-growth organization. I quickly realized how I had taken open spaces for granted, growing up in Keene Valley, surrounded by wilderness.

At MAP I found that I loved learning about projects and issues and educating others. When a position opened up at The Nature Conservancy and Land Trust, I saw it as a perfect opportunity to see the Adirondacks in a new light. And it was! Boy was I amazed at how unaware I was of what was happening inside the little white office building only five minutes from where I grew up. I find myself talking differently about the Adirondack Park and yearning to help people learn how they can play a role.

Initially I did struggle with my decision to come back. Keene Valley is a small town, and it's a wonderful place, but I'd been here most of my life. Now I've been back working here almost a year, and I don't regret a second of it.

You clearly like to be outside, grabbing any chance to hike, walk, ski, run.

I love to explore. I organize most of the field trips, of course with the help of other staff. That's one of the best things about this job—you're never alone. Everyone looks out for each other here.



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"I realize that exploring the Adirondack Park is going to take a lifetime."

I owe a lot to my family and friends for making me love playing outdoors. My dad would never let us sleep in on a Saturday. He just loves planning adventures. I am surrounded by people who have that enthusiasm and energy for getting outside.

Now I realize that exploring the Adirondack Park is going to take a lifetime. It's so neat to look at a map and pinpoint places you've been, but it's eye opening how much more there is to explore. This very thought is what excites me the most.

Any recommendations?

Hike in to OK Slip Falls, where the Department of Environmental Conservation is working on a new trail. You end up with a view of a 250-foot waterfall in front of you. Once that trail is completed I think it'll be great. ■

Getting a handle on New Forest Preserve

Highlights of the latest land transfers

It takes only ten minutes to walk to the base of Sugarloaf Mountain's huge rock slab. "But when you're on the cliff you feel like you're in the middle of some place you hiked ten miles to get to. That's what I mean by remote atmosphere," says Jim Lawyer, who describes Sugarloaf in the new edition of *Adirondack Rock*, a climbing guide he co-authored with Jeremy Haas, to be published later this summer.

Lawyer outlines 18 routes up Sugarloaf's granite. "This is high-angle slab. And it's big. It's 450 to 500 feet tall at its height," he says.

The 460-acre Sugarloaf tract, near Indian Lake, is one of 14 ecologically and recreationally significant properties opened to the public this spring when the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy transferred 8,605 acres former Finch, Pruyn & Company land to New York State. Sugarloaf also contains a section of the 122-mile Northville-Placid Trail.

The Nature Conservancy purchased 161,000 acres from Finch Paper in 2007. We are gradually transferring 65,000 acres to New York State. Some 95,000 acres remain in private timber production, under conservation easement and forest sustainability certifications.

FOLLOWING ARE SNAPSHOTS OF SOME OTHER PARCELS IN THE LATEST TRANSFER:

Cedar Ridge (550 acres). In the town of Indian Lake, this tract contains two small ponds and borders the Blue Ridge Wilderness.

Good Luck (418 acres). Also in Indian Lake, this parcel includes Rock Pond and the eastern end of Francis Lake.

Hudson River—Hyslop (301 acres). Near the Harris Lake State Campground in Newcomb, this acquisition could improve access to Lower Duck Hole and Newcomb Lake in the High Peaks Wilderness.

North River (265 acres). Features a mile of Hudson River shoreline, including Mouse Rock, a boulder used by river guides to gauge the water's height.

Blue Ridge Road (77 acres). Abuts the Dix Mountain Wilderness and contains a stretch of Niagara Brook.

Buell Valley (10 acres). An inholding in the West Canada Lake Wilderness. It was once the site of a logging dam on Buell Brook.

Benson Road (3,880 acres). Borders Shaker Mountain Wild Forest, features a stretch of West Stony Creek and regionally rare plants such as Canadian burnet.



"There's definitely more climbing there than I've been able to document."

— Jim Lawyer

©JIM LAWYER

We took a hard look at the Finch lands and consulted with community leaders, foresters and conservation scientists as we considered what would be best protected in state ownership and what should remain private. "The new public tracts do a great job of rounding out the Forest Preserve and improving public access," says executive director Michael Carr.

The first two phases of Forest Preserve transfers were carried out in 2012 and 2013, including the Essex Chain Lakes, OK Slip Falls and Blue Ledge in the Hudson River Gorge. To date, 32,535 acres have transferred.

Donations to the \$35.5 million Heart of the Adirondacks campaign are helping make this landscape-scale project possible. Generous members and friends enable us to act decisively, to be responsible stewards, and to provide biological surveys to help ensure optimal conservation outcomes for each parcel.

Be sure to catch a feature story about this project by Ginger Strand in the June/July issue of Nature Conservancy magazine. ■

Hudson River guides
Linc Marsac, Lori Phoebe
Benson, and Evan Richards.

OK Slip Falls.

Take Me to the River

A NEW WAY TO THE WATER

BY MARY THILL, STAFF WRITER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIKA EDGLEY

HIKE
3.8 MILES
.....
RAFT
6 MILES



Square Eddy, a whitewater outfitter based in North Creek, is pioneering a new approach to the Hudson River Gorge. The company is offering a guided hike-in/raft-out trip that reaches the river via the OK Slip Falls tract, which the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy purchased in 2007 and transferred to New York State Forest Preserve last year.

Owned by Lori Phoebe Benton and Linc Marsac, Square Eddy is the newest and smallest of 11 outfitters running the upper Hudson River. The company starts the excursion with a bushwhack through Linc and Lori Phoebe's property, which borders the new Forest Preserve. (The Department of Environmental Conservation is working on a trail to provide access from State Route 28 to OK Slip Falls overlook, in the town of Indian Lake.) Erika Edgley, conservation easement program coordinator, and I took the trip this spring. Linc led us on foot around Casey

Mountain, a former garnet mine. Tailings and the moss-covered foundations of an abandoned settlement still punctuate the woods.

We reached a gravel road, which connected to the DEC trail. An undertone of moving water heightened in pitch as the path led us to a keyhole view framed by hemlocks. We sat on bedrock and red-needle duff, eating a homemade lunch packed by Lori Phoebe, looking across a narrow valley at a tiny creek leaping 250 feet off a cliff to become one of the highest waterfalls in New York State.



After lunch we crossed OK Slip Brook on a footbridge above the falls and began the .8-mile descent into the gorge. As we neared the river, we saw a blue raft beached on a crescent of sand and driftwood. Next to it stood Lori Phoebe. “Every person that I see coming down that hill is so happy,” she greeted us. “That waterfall is so amazing and so beautiful.” She had rowed 11 miles from the put-in below Lake Abanakee dam, on the Indian River, and had already set up a teepee so we could change from hiking clothes to wetsuits.

Raft guides are an impressive mix of athlete, outdoorsman, historian and raconteur. As we drank almond-milk-oolong tea and ate brownies, Lori Pheobe and Linc talked about how the name OK Slip is probably logger-speak, like the names of many geographical features along the Hudson. Lori imagines that 19th century river drivers penned logs here, where the

brook enters the river, and when time came to let them loose they hollered, *OK Slip!* “This was a working river,” Linc said.

In many ways it still is. The Hudson River Gorge has been one of the most popular whitewater rafting trips in the East since the late 1970s. For thousands of people annually, this is the halfway point of a wilderness river adventure. For this new expedition, it’s where the hike ends and the rapids begin.

We pushed off into Givney’s Rift, the steepest vertical drop on all 315 miles of the Hudson. We hit a half dozen more sets of frothy rapids before pulling ashore in North River. Afterward, Linc and Lori reflected on how the trip connects the river to the land in a new way. “I love it all,” Linc said.

For information see: squareddy.com

Community Catalysts

The Nature Conservancy is establishing a fund to help communities capitalize on new recreation opportunities on former Finch lands. OK Slip Falls in Indian Lake, for example, is now accessible to the public for the first time in more than 100 years. How can access to one of the Adirondack Park’s most spectacular waterfalls bolster the local recreation economy?

The Conservancy is raising \$500,000 in seed money to help implement new ideas for recreation-based development by host communities. Examples of town projects that could be supported include: shuttle service for hikers, bikers, and paddlers; trailhead parking or waterway access on municipal lands; orientation signs, apps and brochures. This kind of investment can foster closer ties to protected lands while helping to ensure that community prosperity is part of the conservation equation.

We are working with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York Natural Heritage Trust to implement the program. A request for proposals was issued this spring, and grant awards are anticipated to be announced this fall.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, more than 140 million Americans make outdoor recreation a priority in their daily lives—and they spend \$646 billion on outdoor recreation per year. Each year in New York State, outdoor recreation generates \$33.8 billion in consumer spending, \$12.4 billion in wages and salaries, \$2.8 billion in state and local tax revenue, and supports 305,000 jobs. In the Adirondacks tourism generates 17 percent of all employment and brings in \$1.2 billion in visitor spending annually.

Contributions to the fund total \$252,000 toward the \$500,000 needed. To make a donation or to learn more, please contact Connie Prickett at cprickett@tnc.org or (518) 576-2082.



Kathy Kelley and this spring's garlic mustard haul at Coon Mountain.



First-year garlic mustard (above) grows low and has kidney-shaped leaves. Second-year (silhouette, below) has a flowering stalk and heart-shaped leaves.

Preserve adopters make a difference

Teamwork, trailwork and a mountain of love

Coon Mountain is an Adirondack Land Trust preserve of hemlocks, hardwoods, limestone crags and a mile-long trail to a summit view of Lake Champlain and the High Peaks. It's a natural stronghold in the West Champlain Hills, a landscape ecologist Jerry Jenkins describes as "more diverse" and "richer in rare and uncommon species than any other natural community in the Adirondack Park."

Coon Mountain is also rich in people who take care of it, including preserve adopters Mary Burke, John Davis and Kathy Kelley.

All three are close observers of the plants and animals on and around Coon Mountain. So they were quick to notice some unfamiliar kidney-shaped leaves

among the native wildflowers a few years ago. The leaves belonged to garlic mustard, an invasive that can dominate the understory of hardwood forests. With the assistance of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) and other volunteers, the trio have for several springs in a row pulled all of the garlic mustard they can find before it goes to seed.

This May, Burke and Kelley noticed garlic mustard in a new spot. Seeds can last up to seven years, so they put the plants in bags and removed them from the site—"far fewer than the many big and heavy bags of last year," Burke said. They are effectively keeping the fast-spreading plant from crowding out sharp-lobed hepatica, trillium, Dutchman's breeches, bloodroot, blue cohosh

and other early-spring wildflowers that bloom before tree leaves emerge. Visitors can do their part by using a boot brush APIPP installed at the trailhead to remove hitchhiking seeds.

Volunteers: The Heart of Nature

The Gadway Sandstone Pavement Barrens, a globally rare natural community and Conservancy preserve north of Plattsburgh, is in need of adoption. If you are interested in this or other opportunities to volunteer at Adirondack Land Trust or Nature Conservancy preserves, please contact Doug Munro at (518) 576-2082 • dmunro@tnc.org. ■

DIY Conservation

A half dozen ways to get smarter about invasives

Adirondack woods and waterways depend on volunteers to help stop the spread of invasive species. The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) provides opportunities every summer for you to work on aquatic and terrestrial projects.

Finding invasive species early, before they have a chance to spread, provides the best opportunity for successful management and control. Learn more or sign up for the LISTSERV by visiting the new-and-improved adkinvasives.com.

TRAINING SESSIONS

1. Aquatic Invasive Plant Identification and Survey Techniques

Learn how to search for and report invasive plants in Adirondack waters.

June 24, 10 am–2 pm, Darrin Fresh Water Institute, Bolton Landing

June 26, 10 am–2 pm, Paul Smith's College, Paul Smiths

RSVP by June 13 to APIPP director Hilary Smith, hsmith@tnc.org or 518-576-2082

2. Aquatic Invasive Animal Identification

Learn about aquatic invasive animals on the move in the region. Also learn the skills to identify them and perform a quick scan of your favorite lake.

July 29, 1–3 pm, Hollywood Inn, Chateaugay
RSVP by July 22 to hsmith@tnc.org or 518-576-2082

3. Terrestrial Invasive Plant Identification and Management for Landowners

Information on identification and management of common invasive land plants.

July 1, 10 am–12 pm, Indian Lake Ski Hut, Indian Lake

RSVP by June 27 to Brendan Quirion, terrestrial invasive species project coordinator, bquirion@tnc.org or 518-576-2082. Walk-ins also welcome.

4. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Balsam Woolly Adelgid Symposium

Learn about these damaging insects: biology, signs, hosts, control, management, reporting and resources.

July 8, 9:30–12:30, Indian Lake Ski Hut, Indian Lake

5. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Citizen Science Survey & Detection

Join this early-detection initiative to learn how to search your favorite hemlock stands for signs and symptoms of hemlock woolly adelgid.

July 31, time tbd, Adirondack Mountain Club, Lake George

6. New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week

July 6–12

Information at ny.info/blog

If you or your volunteer group are interested in assisting with an invasive plant removal project, please contact bquirion@tnc.org or 518-576-2082.

For other ways to get involved see adkinvasives.com.



Staff News

APIPP is delighted to announce that Erin Vennie-Vollrath has joined the team as aquatic invasive species project coordinator. Erin was the water resources management specialist with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, where she worked on early detection and rapid response to new invasions around the state.

Annual Meeting and Conservation Update

Saturday, August 9
View – Old Forge, NY

2:30 pm • Arrival

3 pm • Annual meeting

5 pm • Cocktail reception

Includes admission to the Adirondacks National Exhibition of American Watercolors.

SPEAKER: Mark Burget, managing director of The Nature Conservancy's North America Conservation Region.

TOPIC: Nature Really Matters

REGISTER: ewalkow@tnc.org

✦
Drawing
for a
custom-built
Hornbeck
canoe!



Hudson River at Blue Ledge, Essex County (1889) by Winslow Homer

The Nature Conservancy purchased Blue Ledge from Finch Paper in 2007 and transferred it to Forever Wild Forest Preserve in 2013. The logs Homer painted may have been on their way to the Finch mill, downriver in Glens Falls. The painting is in the collection of Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL.

Boreal Photography Field Trip

Join Erika Edgley for a fall trip to the Conservancy's Spring Pond Bog preserve. Erika is conservation easement program coordinator as well as a talented photographer who participated in the Rocky Mountain School of Photography 2013 summer intensive. Spring Pond Bog is the second largest expanse of open peatland in New York and features boreal species at their southern limit. Erika encourages people of all abilities (and cameras) to join.

DATE: Monday, October 6. A half-day on site, not including travel. For more information or to reserve a spot, contact Sophie McClelland: smcclelland@tnc.org • (518) 576-2082.



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Your legacy for generations to come.

Making a bequest to the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy or Adirondack Land Trust is a simple way to protect the places you value. You can name either or both as a beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, life insurance policy or financial accounts. Anyone can make a difference and no amount is too small.

To learn more

CONTACT: Erin Walkow

E-MAIL: ewalkow@tnc.org

PHONE: (518) 576-2082 x 133

WEB: nature.org/bequest

Please consult a qualified financial advisor before making a planned gift.