

central & western new york
Nature

FALL/WINTER 2013

Nature Inspires:
Celebrating the year in conservation





Board chair Clayton Millard and director Jim Howe. © JAN MILLER/TNC

What's the Return on Nature?

Another year is ending and once again we are amazed by what you've helped us achieve for people and nature in Central and Western New York.

In this newsletter, you'll read about three essential ways you've made a difference in 2013:

You've helped us use science to figure out how best to **protect and restore nature.**

You've invested in projects and partnerships designed to **use nature more sustainably.**

And you've strengthened our efforts to **expand support for nature.**

But one thread connects all of these efforts. One theme permeates all of the results you've made possible: **Water.**

More than any other feature, water defines our geography. From the Great Lakes and Finger Lakes to our many rivers, water weaves through our forests, our farms and our cities. One way you can measure the returns on your investments in conservation is to look at the benefits for water.

For instance, your support for keeping forests intact and healthy has resulted in secure supplies of clean water for cities like Rochester, Canandaigua and Rome. This year, you helped us protect more of these incredible water-filtering forests, including 510 acres on Tug Hill and two tracts in the Western Finger Lakes.

Your support is also helping us rethink the relationship between our built environments and water. By teaming up with riverfront communities and harnessing the power of green infrastructure, we are reducing vulnerability to flooding, generating clean water and preserving critical habitat for wildlife.

The returns for water are also evident in the Great Lakes, where we're bringing nature back by restoring wetlands and native species. Before pollution, over-fishing and invasive species took their toll, lake herring dominated the middle of the food web in the lakes. Restoring these fish will move us closer toward waters that are resistant to invasives and better-suited for native lake trout and Atlantic salmon.

Front: Field representative Mat Levine collects vegetation data for a coastal wetland restoration project in eastern Lake Ontario © EMILY SHERIDAN/TNC

Our policy work can be measured by its impact on water, too. Working closely with water experts and the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation we're developing a science-based framework that will guide water use and conservation. And by advancing Plan 2014 for Lake Ontario, we're incorporating environmental goals into the management of the Moses Saunders Dam for the first time in history.

Of course to achieve lasting results, we also need a citizenry that understands and supports the connection between water and people's well-being. To that end, The Nature Conservancy is harnessing the power of our 30,000 acres of preserves in Central and Western New York, expanding trails and installing new features. Your support for extending Rob's Trail in the Finger Lakes, for example, will create a lake-to-lake hiking experience that illustrates how healthy lands equal healthy waters.

We hope you will enjoy reading about these and the other results your generous support made possible this year. We also hope you and your families will find time in the New Year to enjoy all the benefits nature provides in return.

Thank you!



This year, The Legacy Club celebrates 20 years of recognizing inspirational commitments to the future of our natural world. Thank you to all our Legacy Club members whose foresight will protect nature for generations to come!

For more information about this special group, please contact our Gift Planning team:

Phone: (877) 812-3698
Email: legacy@tnc.org
Web: nature.org/legacy20

The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult your professional financial advisor before making a charitable gift. Image Credit: © Rosa Mitsumasa Heredia PHOPM201307005

Your Legacy: 3 Questions with Leila Nadir

Leila Nadir and Cary Peppermint included The Nature Conservancy in their estate plans this year, becoming Central and Western New York's newest members of The Legacy Club. **Nadir** is a critic, scholar, artist, and creative writer, and teaches environmental humanities courses in the Sustainability and Digital Media Studies programs at the University of Rochester. **Peppermint** is a digital artist and Assistant Professor of Digital Art at University of Rochester. Working collaboratively as **ecoarttech** since 2005, they study the environmental imagination—from nature and built spaces to the mobile landscape and electronic environments.

Q. How did you first become interested in nature?

Nadir: Cary and I both grew up in semi-rural areas with big tracts of woods nearby. Each of us took for granted that we had places in which to play and imagine. Years later we had lots of weekend adventures backpacking in New York and Maine together. But as artists interested in cultural issues, we were struck by the fact that nature remained something “outside” of our regular work.

At the same time, life in New York City was stressful, particularly after September 11th, and we began to really appreciate nature's role in helping us cope. We both knew then that we wanted nature in our lives in a bigger way.

Q. You and Cary started EcoArtTech to “explore environmental imagination from our place in the modern age.” What role can digital media play in connecting people to their environments?

Nadir: One of our starting points with ecoarttech was to rethink the divide between nature and technology. Instead of thinking of new media as simply a tool, we wondered if it

could also be a means of transformation. We react to our environment, whether natural or digital. Do our mobile devices always take us out of our surroundings or can they take us into them as well? It's a faulty assumption that nature and technology can't work together. What if technology could help us look around, notice and interact in new ways?

Q. Why did you and Cary include The Nature Conservancy in your estate planning?

Nadir: I feel strongly that there should be places where nature can be itself, where the land can express itself and remain undeveloped. Natural places are so important to people's physical and spiritual health. Most people feel something special when they are in a wild place. Thoreau talks about solitude and quiet in the woods as a key to intellectual growth.

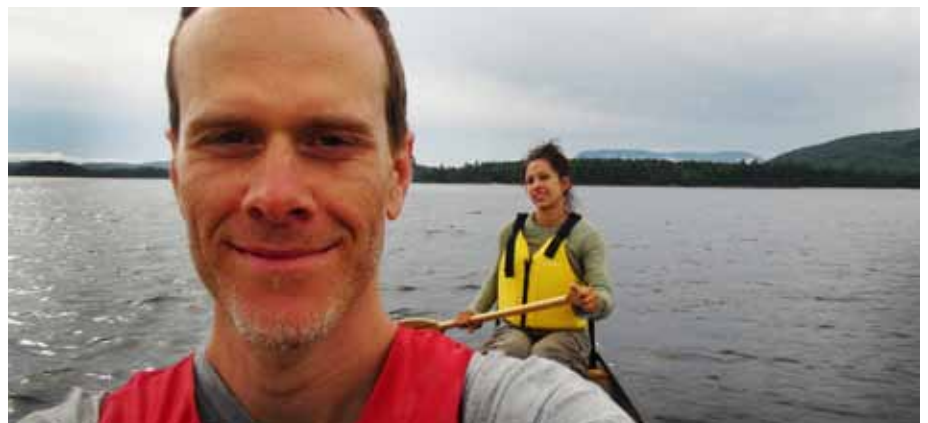
As artists and teachers, it's important to us to keep the creativity flowing. Having a piece of land we love—where we can watch the forest change season by season, see trees get bigger over the years and watch birds live out their life cycles—helps us with that. We need natural spaces that are conducive to imagination. I think all people do.

ON THE WEB »

Discover Leila and Cary's Indeterminate Hikes app and experience nature near you. nature.org/cwny.



CAPTIONS (Clockwise): Spring peeper at Buck Pond © KATIE LITTLE; CARY PEPPERMINT AND LEILA NADIR, PROVIDED; Plant identification with LEAF interns © ROB WILLIAMS/TNC; Wetland restoration in Lakeview © MAT LEVINE/TNC, AERIAL SUPPORT BY LIGHTHAWK



Using Nature More Sustainably

Your support yields a more secure future

Can we make better decisions about where development and infrastructure should be located and where it shouldn't? Give people new opportunities to be close to nature without damaging sensitive areas? Use our forests for products while protecting them, too? Moving the world toward using nature more sustainably starts at home. With your help, we are solving some of the biggest challenges facing people in Central and Western New York, and addressing head-on the major drivers of change adversely affecting nature.

- With our LEAF interns and local hunt clubs, we mapped many of the existing trails on our Tug Hill Conservation area and their proximity to sensitive natural areas—a project that will **help roads and trails avoid fragmenting important habitats.**
- Using data collected through our Lake Ontario Migratory Bird project, we reached out to stakeholders across the region to encourage **better shoreline management and energy siting.**
- Through the Xerox Foundation Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Project, we **enrolled more than 8,000 acres of non-industrial private forest-land** in some of Western New York's most productive forestry counties—Chautauqua, Allegany, and Cattaraugus—into sustainable forest management programs.
- We collaborated with researchers at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry to **examine the conservation implications of using woody biomass** for thermal energy.
- We **advanced Plan 2014, a new strategy for managing Lake Ontario waters** that will boost the ecological health of the lake and shoreline resiliency.

NATURE PROTECTS OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OUR RESOURCES



NATURE NOURISHES

OUR FARMLANDS & OUR COMMUNITIES

Nature's Plate: Finger Lakes

Whether you're a vegetarian, vegan or a meat-eater, it's a good bet the healthiest and tastiest food on your table came from nature. From maple syrup produced in local forests to grapes soaking up the sun at a vineyard down the road, healthy food demands a healthy planet. That's why The Nature Conservancy launched *Nature's Plate Finger Lakes* this fall, a contest to name the people's choice for the area's top sustainable restaurant.

"With so many people who care about nature and food in the Finger Lakes, we were excited to help raise awareness of how bite-sized actions can make a difference for people and the planet," said Jim Howe, The Nature Conservancy's Central and Western New York director.

ON THE WEB »

Nature's Plate finalists included The Copper Oven, Lento, Moosewood Restaurant, Next Door Bar & Grill and Upstairs Bistro. Find out which Finger Lakes restaurant took the crown at nature.org/newyork.



© TNC



© TNC



Freshwater conservation practitioner Stevie Adams developed Stream Smart, Flood Safe to help flood-prone communities plan for the future © MAT LEVINE/TNC

Towns Get Stream Smart, Flood Safe

With your support this year, we launched *Stream Smart, Flood Safe*, a project that will bring together three communities to tackle the challenges of living with a lot more water. Greece is a densely populated suburb of Rochester. Parma is a rural farming community. Hilton is a small, densely populated village. But they all share Lake Ontario tributaries and regularly experience flooding.

Historically, haphazard land use has caused some challenging and expensive situations for flood-prone towns. As suburban development pushes westward from Rochester, this project gives communities a chance to consider their future and create a shared, flood-ready land-use plan. This could include keeping development out of flood prone areas, restoring "green infrastructure" like wetlands, or installing rain gardens to absorb storm water.

We hope to generate solutions that last because they were developed with input from everyone—from transportation experts to emergency personnel to farmers. With your help these towns and others will become better prepared for a future with more frequent and intense storms.

ON THE WEB »

Watch Stevie Adams discuss the benefits of Stream Smart, Flood Safe at nature.org/newyork



NATURE STRENGTHENS OUR HEALTH AND OUR FUTURE.

Seasonal staffers Michelle DiBlasio and Cody Mendoza remove fish traps from Lakeview Wildlife Management Area © EMILY SHERIDAN

Protecting & Restoring Nature *Your investment in places pays off*

Nature is essential to all life. That is why protecting and restoring lands and waters while improving people's lives is the core of our work. We do this by investing in places, in science and in partnerships. But what sets us apart is the way we ensure that each conservation project we undertake has positive impacts locally as well as for larger landscapes and watersheds. This year, you allowed us to protect new lands, while also bringing back lost habitats on our current preserves. You helped us fight invasive species from Tug Hill to Buffalo, while using cutting-edge research to stop their spread across the region.

- At our Chaumont Barrens Preserve, **45 acres of historical agriculture fields were managed to improve grassland bird habitat** for species like the endangered short-eared owl and threatened Henslow's sparrow and upland sandpiper.
- At our Rome Sand Plains preserve, **we restored 229 native lupines to help return an old sand mine to an inland pine barren.** Lupine are the host plant for the state threatened frosted elfin butterfly.
- Northern pike, yellow perch, largemouth bass and other species were able to access spawning grounds along the eastern Lake Ontario shoreline through **new and improved wetland channels and potholes.**
- **Nearly 200 acres of land and water in the Finger Lakes were protected** thanks to new acquisitions that safeguard forests, gullies and other sensitive habitats.
- **We initiated a water quality study of the Honeoye Lake Watershed** that will identify target places on tributaries where stream restoration can help remove nutrients and sediment before they reach Lake Ontario.
- We conducted research and collected user interviews that will help researchers determine what data, features and formats will make our **new Climate Toolkit most usable and useful.**
- We began **removing a dam** on Reynold's Gully (a tributary of Hemlock Lake), opening up access for brook trout and other fish.

Solving Conservation Puzzles



Northern pike © MAT LEVINE/TNC

How to Re-Build a Wetland

Two seasonal staffers spent the summer collecting environmental data from Buck Pond in the Braddock Bay Fish and Wildlife Management Area for a wetland restoration project with Ducks Unlimited. By studying groundwater at Buck Pond we are gaining a better understanding of how water moves through the marsh. This work will inform the design of channels and potholes that will provide spawning habitat for northern pike and nesting and foraging habitat for ducks.



eDNA sampling on the Oswego River © ROB WILLIAMS/TNC

Freshwater Forensics

We worked with Grand Valley State University in Michigan this year on DNA sequencing for Hydrilla verticillata that may provide clues to where New York's hydrilla came from and how it arrived here. Over the next year, we'll be focused on DNA surveillance on the Erie Canal for 37 other high risk non-native species, including notorious invaders like northern snakehead, round goby and quagga mussel.

The Search for Spawning Grounds

Where do lake herring spawn and what predators and obstacles do they encounter on the way? Thanks to you, we launched a project with Cornell University to find out. This year, a Cornell researcher will collaborate with Conservancy staff to radio tag and track adult lake herring, revealing critical information about factors limiting their reproduction in Chaumont Bay.



Seasonal staffer Erica Burgeson removes invasive water chestnut at Buck Pond © KATIE LITTLE/TNC

Battle Waged Against Great Lakes Invaders

10,000 MILES

were logged by our Aquatic Invasives Surveillance (AIS) teams this summer as they surveyed more than 300 boat launches in the Finger Lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario for hydrilla and other aquatic invasives.

2,800 POUNDS

of invasive water chestnut were hand-pulled by our crews in eastern Lake Ontario wetlands. The floating invasive blocks boat access and degrades fish and wildlife habitat.

32 GIANT HOGWEED SITES

were eradicated in northern New York. Giant hogweed is a noxious weed with sap that can cause severe skin and eye irritation, painful blistering and even blindness.

50 ACRES

of globally rare alvar communities on the eastern Lake Ontario coastline were restored by eradicating a population of invasive swallow-wort.

ON THE WEB »

Join the hunt for invasives and learn where to report your findings at [nature.org/aquaticinvasives](https://www.nature.org/aquaticinvasives)

Expanding Support for Nature

Your partnership creates new connections

People have always been crucial to our conservation mission. We are the ultimate beneficiaries of nature's bounty and continued health. Today, as more of the world's growing population migrates to urban centers and nature seems more distant, you are helping us call attention to the many ways people—all people—depend on nature. With your help, we're re-imagining the types of partners and relationships that will be needed to expand interest and involvement in conservation.



Volunteers from The Nature Conservancy, Lexmark and the PGA planted 33 trees at Penfield's Rothfuss Park, adjacent to our Thousand Acre Swamp preserve, to offset paper use at the PGA Championship. The trees included disease-resistant American elms that will return the benefits of shade and beauty to the urban landscape. © PHIL MARR



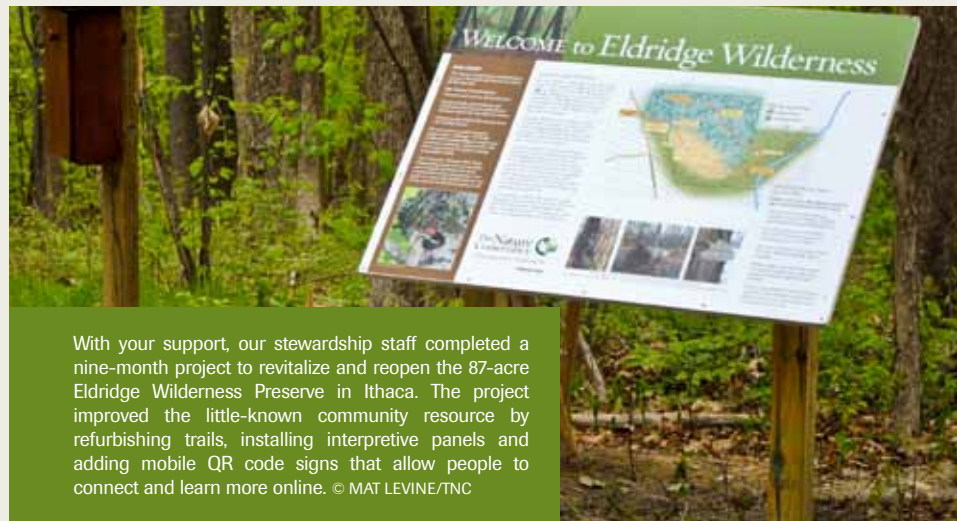
With support from Fulton Boiler, LEAF interns, Pulaski High school students and preserve hunters, we installed 850-feet of boardwalk at El Dorado Beach Preserve, restoring visitor access to a section of rugged Lake Ontario coastline that is important for migratory birds. © CARLOS HERNANDEZ



Hundreds of people—from college campuses to a U.S. Army base—learned about the emerald ash borer through citizen science projects, tree-tagging events and community preparedness planning. © ROB WILLIAMS/TNC



LEAF interns also built a boardwalk at El Dorado Beach Preserve © MAT LEVINE/TNC



With your support, our stewardship staff completed a nine-month project to revitalize and reopen the 87-acre Eldridge Wilderness Preserve in Ithaca. The project improved the little-known community resource by refurbishing trails, installing interpretive panels and adding mobile QR code signs that allow people to connect and learn more online. © MAT LEVINE/TNC

Eldridge Wilderness— Revamped and Revisited

This spring, The Nature Conservancy welcomed visitors back to Eldridge Wilderness in Ithaca after a nine-month project to improve trails and install interpretive signs that help visitors learn about the preserve's unique forest and birds.

“We want to make Eldridge Wilderness a place where the community can experience nature, learn, exercise and connect to the vital benefits our lands and waters provide,” said Jim Howe, The Nature's Conservancy's Central and Western New York director.

Ithaca College Environmental Studies Professor Jason Hamilton says the project also brings new research and stewardship opportunities for students, citizen scientists and volunteers. “Ithaca College students have helped maintain trails here for many years,” he said. “We look forward to staying involved and using Eldridge as an outdoor lab.”

The revitalization project was made possible through grants from the Helen Thomas Howland Foundation and Constellation Energy.

ON THE WEB »

See photos from our Eldridge Wilderness “Open Woods” celebration at nature.org/cwny



Wild geranium. © GREG GORE, Installing trail markers at Eldridge Wilderness © MAT LEVINE/TNC, Conservation assistant Raymond Waweru managed the Eldridge Wilderness preserve revitalization © MAT LEVINE/TNC



American Elms Return to Rochester

This summer, volunteers from The Nature Conservancy, the PGA, Lexmark and the community planted 18 oak trees and 15 disease-resistant elm trees in Rothfuss Park, which sits on 70 acres of former farmland adjacent to The Nature Conservancy's Thousand Acre Swamp Preserve, one of Monroe County's largest and most biologically diverse wetlands. Rothfuss Park serves the community's open space and recreation needs while providing access to nature. The new trees add to 1,000 planted at the park's founding in 2007 and are part of the Conservancy's work to bring back one of the most beloved trees in the eastern United States: the American elm.



Trees ready to be planted at Rothfuss Park in Penfield © PHIL MARR

NATURE INSPIRES ACTION AND
COLLABORATION



Drinking water © THE NATURE CONSERVANCY AND KENT MASON

Hemlock and Canadice H₂O

You can write the next chapter for water

In the 1850s, the City of Rochester was poised for growth. It just needed one thing: a reliable source of clean drinking water. City planners set their sights on forests 30 miles away, on Hemlock and Canadice Lakes. By 1876, pristine water was flowing from those forests through a conduit system and into Rochester households.

Shortly after the City constructed its water system, Hemlock Lake experienced a boom in cottage and hotel development along its shoreline, which threatened the very supply that had spurred its growth. The City quickly began acquiring lakeshore properties to safeguard its investment and by the 1950s owned 7,100 acres of land in the watershed, including the entire shorelines of both lakes.

The story could've ended there. But in the mid-1980s, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency required the City to build a treatment plant to filter water from the two lakes, prompting concerns that the forested lands would no longer be essential for filtering water and could be sold for revenue.

And so began two decades of discussion and dialogue. Thanks to you, our members, The Nature Conservancy was able to facilitate this transaction over the course of four gubernatorial and three mayoral administrations, keeping

the parties informed and at the table. We even stood ready to buy the lakes ourselves if negotiations fell through.

In 2010, the City sold the lands to the State of New York for \$13.7 million, concluding a 20-year effort to permanently protect these two Finger Lakes.

Today, Hemlock and Canadice Lake are still the only place in the Finger Lakes where one can venture back in time and ponder what Central and Western New York looked like long ago. To see them yourself, you can visit Rob's Trail, a Nature Conservancy preserve with a trail over a ridge and down to the shoreline of one of only two undeveloped Finger Lakes.

The story is not over. With your help, we continue to protect sensitive lands in the watershed and work closely with the State to ensure that land management around the lakes remains sustainable. Thanks to you, brook trout and other fish will soon be able to access habitats that have been blocked for decades as we remove a small dam on Reynolds Gully, an important tributary to Hemlock Lake. And with your support, we will break ground this fall on a new six-mile trail that will provide access to Hemlock Lake.

Our commitment to these lakes—and to all of the places you've helped us to protect—is forever.

NATURE QUENCHES



Where Does Your Water Come From?

All water comes from nature—rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater. And the world could soon need 40 percent more water than is currently available. Knowing your water source is the first step in protecting it.

ON THE WEB »

Calculate your water footprint, find your source and get tips for reducing your water use at nature.org/water



Hemlock lake © FLICKR USER GXGN UNDER A CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE

Drink up, Rochester!

Forests are our best water filters. At the New York State fair this summer, The New York State Department of Health announced that the City of Rochester has claimed the top spot in the New York State Drinking Water Taste Test. Did your city make the top 10? Find out at nature.org/cwny

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Celebrating
Your Impact for Nature and People

