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New York
2025 Spring/Summer Update



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,



For over 70 years in New York, The Nature Conservancy has protected the lands and waters on which all life depends. At this critical moment, we are energized to drive bold solutions locally, nationally and globally. We are steadfast in our mission: we follow the science, work successfully across party lines, collaborate with partners to drive outcomes, and create solutions that have transformative impact. With our unique approach, we envision a world where our lands, waters and wildlife—and the people who depend on them—are healthier and safer.

This future is possible. We know how to get there. But we can't do it alone. Together, we must:

- Tackle climate change for cleaner air and greater resilience against floods, fires and heat waves.
- Protect nature and wildlife at an unprecedented scale.
- Provide food and water, supporting sustainable farming and fishing while safeguarding our rivers, lakes and oceans.

Between now and 2030, New York must invest in nature like never before and drive the change that's needed to conserve, protect and revitalize all that makes our state so special.

Please join us. Together, we can create a future where all of nature, including humanity, thrives.

Sincerely,

Bill Ulfelder
Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy in New York

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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.

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COVER A school of menhaden, also known as bunker, off New York's coast © Joanna Steidle
THIS PAGE A red fox kit and parent in spring © Megan Lorenz;
© Jonathan Grassi

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The Art and Science of Salt Marsh Restoration

Salt marshes play a critical role in filtering water, supporting the coastal food web, absorbing wave energy and reducing erosion. But many salt marshes, especially on the coast of Long Island, need our help. To understand more about how marshes respond to sea-level rise, nitrogen pollution and other threats, The Nature Conservancy has been monitoring marshes across Long Island. Recently, we learned something from an unexpected source: art.

When one of our collaborators from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service visited the Brooklyn Museum and saw Martin Johnson Heade's painting *Summer Showers* (ca. 1865–70), she noticed that the painting depicted salt hay farming with extensive ditches and berms to control water flow, revealing a history of salt marsh farming on the East Coast dating back to the 1600s. This history, documented in farmers' journals and known to art historians, offered coastal ecologists a new perspective.

Previously, most coastal ecologists thought that significant human changes to marshes began with the extensive mosquito ditching during the Great Depression in the 1930s. However, art has unveiled a much longer history of human impact on these systems.

Heade's paintings and other historical artworks showed that farmers had been modifying marsh landscapes for centuries to enhance the productivity of their farms. These changes included embankments, ditches and tide gates. The realization that these practices predated mosquito ditching by centuries was a significant shift in understanding salt marshes.

"Art has become an unexpected conservation hero, shedding light on the extensive agricultural history of salt marshes," explains Dr. Nicole Maher, senior coastal scientist for The Nature Conservancy in New York. "This newfound awareness has changed the way we think about salt marsh restoration. By recognizing how marshes have been changed over time, we can better understand current challenges like changes to the natural water cycle and sea-level rise."

Using historical knowledge, The Nature Conservancy can now create better and less disruptive restoration methods. Knowing where old embankments and ditches once were helps us restore natural water flow and sediment movement, which supports marsh growth and strength.

"Combining art and ecology has given us important insights," says Maher. "By understanding how humans have influenced these ecosystems over time, we can create better and more sustainable restoration plans to keep our coastal marshes healthy and strong."

LEFT TO RIGHT Scientist Nicole Maher measures a sample of salt marsh as part of a project to assess the health of this habitat. © Anthony Graziano

Modern day landscape artists are still drawn to beautiful coastal landscapes like marshes in this painting of Accabonac Harbor, East Hampton. © Barbara Thomas

Learn more about
salt marsh restoration at
nature.org/newyork



Community, Art and Nature Come Together at the Andy Warhol Preserve

The 2024 Andy Warhol Visual Arts Program was a resounding success, inspiring nature enthusiasts of all ages. Hosted by The Nature Conservancy in New York and supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the program showcased the transformative power of art on communities and individual artists.

The program featured dynamic, free, public art-making workshops at the Andy Warhol Preserve in Montauk, New York, led by Michele Brody, Jasmine Gutbrod, Christie Jones and Ria Rajan.

Michele Brody's workshop on making paper from milkweed plants highlighted the plight of monarch butterflies and the importance of native plants. Jasmine Gutbrod introduced participants to Japanese paper marbling with eco-friendly materials, emphasizing sustainable practices. Christie Jones' plein air workshop featured painting with handmade watercolors, while Ria Rajan's Polaroid emulsion lifts blended traditional and modern photographic methods.

Now in its 20th year, the Andy Warhol Visual Arts Program fosters a sense of community, enhances artistic skills and deepens connections to nature—embodying Andy Warhol's legacy and leaving a lasting impact on all who attend. Visit nature.org/newyork for information on our 2025 program!

“I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want.”—Andy Warhol

Participants enjoyed beautiful scenery while creating art during this year's programming. © May Yeung/TNC

Celebrating 45 Years of Mashomack: A Jewel of Conservation

Nestled on picturesque Shelter Island, Mashomack Preserve stands as a shining testament to the power of community and the enduring spirit of conservation. As we celebrate the preserve's 45th anniversary, it's the perfect moment to reflect on the rich history and profound impact of this natural haven.

The Birth of a Preserve

In 1980, The Nature Conservancy made its largest land purchase at the time, acquiring 2,039 acres that would become Mashomack. This monumental effort was made possible through a partnership between the Shelter Island community and The Nature Conservancy. Later that year, the preserve officially opened its doors and trails to the public, marking the beginning of a new chapter in conservation.

“We are so grateful to the supporters who have ensured Mashomack’s protection—and we look forward to many more years of stewarding this incredible natural treasure.”
—Rebecca Mundy, Mashomack operations manager

Mashomack's rich coast is full of marine life and opportunities to learn.
LEFT TO RIGHT © Rebecca Kusa/TNC;
© Anthony Graziano

Often referred to as the “Jewel of the Peconic,” Mashomack now spans over 2,350 acres of diverse ecosystems, including tidal creeks, mature oak woodlands, fields, freshwater marshes and underwater lands. This land, the ancestral home of the Manhasset people, carries a storied past. Its name, meaning “where they go by water,” reflects a deep connection to the surrounding waters. Indigenous communities held continuous presence on Shelter Island for a profoundly long time, potentially some 12,000 years.

A Sanctuary for Wildlife and People

Just 90 miles east of New York City, Mashomack is home to a rich array of wildlife, including eagles, ospreys, plovers, spotted salamanders, river otters and more. Its diverse habitats provide a sanctuary for these species, ensuring their survival and thriving populations. The preserve also offers a peaceful retreat for people, with 11 miles of coastline and numerous trails that invite visitors to connect with nature.

Education and Community Impact

Mashomack serves as a hub for environmental education and community engagement. Programs and events here engage visitors around the importance of conservation. Dedicated staff and volunteers maintain trails, protect wildlife and foster a sense of community among visitors.

Looking to the Future

As we celebrate Mashomack's 45th anniversary, it's essential to look forward to its future. The challenges of climate change and habitat loss make our work more critical than ever. Continued projects to study marsh health and restore creeks, meadows and forests, as well as education and community involvement, will ensure that this special place remains a sanctuary for both wildlife and people for generations to come.





An Outdoor Adventure for Everyone

Discover Our Preserves

For over 70 years, The Nature Conservancy has been at the forefront of land conservation, safeguarding and restoring vital landscapes across the globe—including more than 800,000 acres in New York. From our first-ever land acquisition at Mianus River Gorge in Bedford, our mission has been rooted in protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends. Today, our network of conserved lands represents this enduring legacy. They are places where wildlife thrives, ecosystems are restored, and people can connect with nature in meaningful ways.

The Role of Nature in Our Lives

Whether you enjoy hiking, birdwatching or simply observing nature, our preserves are great places for getting out and enjoying the outdoors. They also provide clean air and water, build community resilience against climate change and offer refuge for species facing habitat loss.

A Place for Every Outdoor Enthusiast

Nature is closer than you think. With more than 160 nature preserves across all types of New York landscapes, there's a preserve near you waiting to be explored. Each site is as diverse as the people who visit.

Whether you're a solo adventurer looking for a thrill, a family looking for trails to enjoy together, or someone who simply seeks to escape the hustle and bustle, there's almost certainly a place that aligns with your interests.

Making Nature Accessible to All

With your support, we are continuously working to improve accessibility at our preserves by implementing features such as improved trails with boardwalks, better trail markers, and high-contrast signage for people with visual disabilities.

We have preserves across New York with a variety of accessibility features. Here are a few to check out.

- Boquet River Nature Preserve in Willsboro
- Thompson Pond Preserve in Pine Plains
- Uplands Farm Sanctuary in Cold Spring Harbor
- Wolf Swamp Preserve in Southampton
- Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island
- Moss Lake Preserve in Houghton
- Hickory Ridge Preserve in Naples

Plan your trip to a preserve today



**Learn more about
accessible trails at
nature.org/newyork**

LEFT TO RIGHT Designated a National Natural Landmark in 1973, Moss Lake Preserve features a 15-acre bog lake. A new boardwalk traverses through this unique habitat. © Dana Geller/TNC

Thanks to extensive trail improvements, access to our Boquet River Nature Preserve is better than ever. Tim's Trail, named in honor of Tim Barnett, who founded The Nature Conservancy's Adirondacks chapter, is a 1.15-mile Universal Access loop that has a crushed stone surface that can accommodate walkers, runners, strollers and wheelchairs. © Charles Gleberman/TNC

By the Numbers

200,000 oysters sourced from local farmers have been restored to a new oyster reef next to our Pine Neck preserve on Long Island. Oysters are more than just a delicacy—they are an environmental powerhouse. A single oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water every day, removing pollution from the water. This project was made possible by an incredible partnership between The Nature Conservancy and The Pew Charitable Trusts through the Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) program, and Stony Brook University's Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program.

1 million acres of critically important freshwater wetlands are now protected thanks to a new law in New York State. This huge win for New York and the country is one we have been advocating for. Wetlands are nature's multi-taskers: they keep our drinking water clean, provide habitat to wildlife, and reduce flooding risks for our homes and businesses.

\$550,000 in funding is available in New York through our Climate Resilience Grant Program this year. This funding helps organizations protect lands that connect with important floodplains and shorelines that mitigate flooding and erosion. Projects that protect land; restore natural infrastructure like floodplains, streams and wetlands; and support communities at high risk from climate impacts are eligible for grants up to \$50,000.


624 acres have been protected in the Finger Lakes to help ensure clean drinking water for some 40,000 people while enhancing recreation and supporting natural habitats. Since 2019, we've partnered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through the Water Quality Improvement Project to protect lands in the Owasco Lake watershed that our team identified as critical for conservation.

768 acres are now protected under a conservation easement in the Black River Valley, thanks to a partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through the Water Quality Improvement Project. This acquisition will have lasting impacts on the water quality and habitats in the Black River Valley and surrounding landscape between the Tug Hill Plateau and the Adirondack Park.

TOP TO BOTTOM A ruby-throated hummingbird © Yvonne Sufronko
Monarch butterflies roosting during migration © Kara Jackson/TNC





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Support nature
in New York

Our Thriving Planet, Our Beating Hearts

Today, the stakes for our planet have never been greater—and neither has our ambition to find a way toward a future where people and nature thrive. This new short film is a stirring testament to the power of The Nature Conservancy and an inspirational anthem for anyone who loves nature enough to want to protect and preserve it for generations to come. Check out the video bit.ly/ourbeatinghearts

A heart-shaped pond viewed
from above © Joanna Steidle

