



CALL OF THE LOON

Adirondack Council Newsletter | Winter 2024

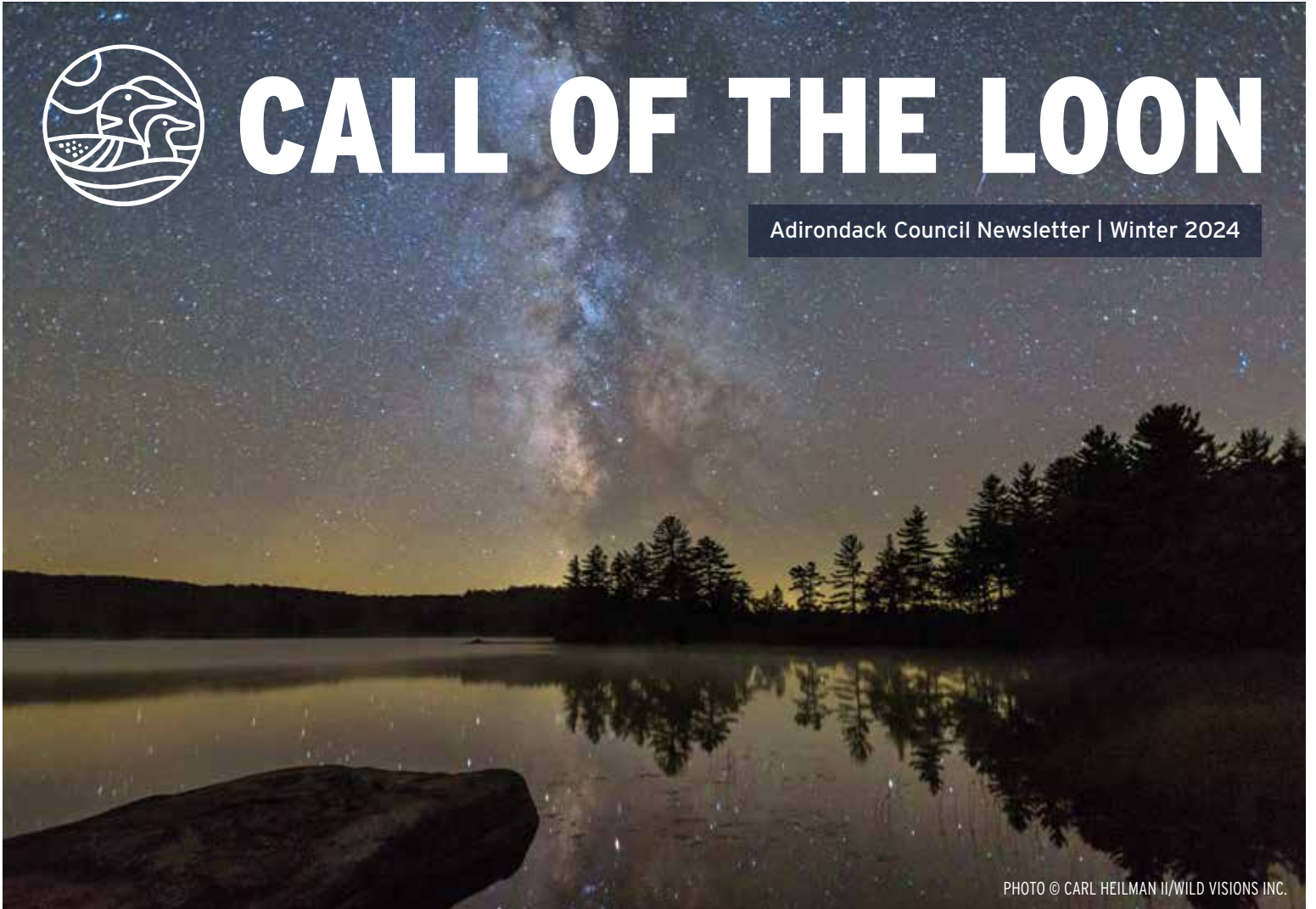


PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Protecting Our Night Skies

Of all the natural wonders of the Adirondacks, the night sky may be the most underappreciated. While many marvel at the wonders of the High Peaks and sparkling lakes and rivers, the cosmos above us can be overlooked. The lands and waters of the Adirondack Park are protected by law, but our night skies are not. This can lead to unnecessary nighttime lighting that not only impairs our ability to enjoy the night sky, but poses a threat to many of the animals that live in or pass through the Adirondacks.

The Adirondack Council, along with key partners, will be working to educate lawmakers and the public over the next year about the need for improved nighttime lighting. This doesn't mean that no lights will be allowed,

rather folks can be more selective about when and where their lights shine. Selective lighting, encouraged through smart legislation, will reduce energy costs, improve nighttime visibility, and help our wild and human neighbors.

Protecting our dark skies from light pollution will keep the Adirondacks wild and increase the amount of essential darkness needed by humans and animals alike.

You can help us keep it dark in the Park! Show your support for protecting our night skies by visiting our website and signing our petition at: AdirondackCouncil.org or scan the QR code.



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ADIRONDACK COUNCIL
PRESERVING WATER, AIR AND WILDLANDS

Keeping it Dark in the Park



Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director

Dear Supporters and Friends,

When I leave the greater Adirondack region for any length of time I am struck by the subtle contrasts between living in the Park and life outside of the Blue Line. Traffic is one, bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Thruway is a different beast than being stuck behind a logging truck or plow going 30mph toward Lake Placid. Noise is another; we take for granted how quiet and still the Adirondack air can be sometimes, especially in the winter. And then there is the darkness. The deep, mythical, star-filled Adirondack night sky that lets you feel like you can peer through the universe, especially on the clearest nights, is unlike night skies almost anywhere else I go.

This lack of light at night in the Adirondacks is not just an imagined absence. Nighttime photographs of the United States from space reveal that there are very few places east of the Mississippi River where artificial lighting doesn't dominate the night sky.

One exception is the Adirondack Park. Because of the expanse of Forever Wild public lands, the Park appears in stark contrast as a large area of darkness in those nighttime images. That's more than a good thing; it is an essential part of the Adirondack's rugged character, and defines our wild skies as much as our wildlands.

First time visitors to the Adirondacks are often stunned by how well the naked eye can sense the depth and enormity of the Milky Way. To some Park visitors, a clear view of the heavens at night is more important than a scenic mountain vista during the daylight. Dark skies are so rare outside the Blue Line that the Adirondack Sky Center and Observatory in Tupper Lake has become an important destination for both scientists and recreational stargazers.

On April 8, people from across the Northeast will converge on the Adirondacks for a clear view of a total solar eclipse. This focus on Adirondack skies during a rare celestial event is an important reminder of just how essential dark and wild skies are, beyond just stargazing and ghost stories around a campfire.

Unnecessary light at night harms wildlife, robbing animals of the natural rhythm of day and night that guides essential behaviors like hunting, sleeping and breeding rituals. Artificial light can drive sensitive species away from their natural habitats and interfere with some seasonal bird migrations. As you can

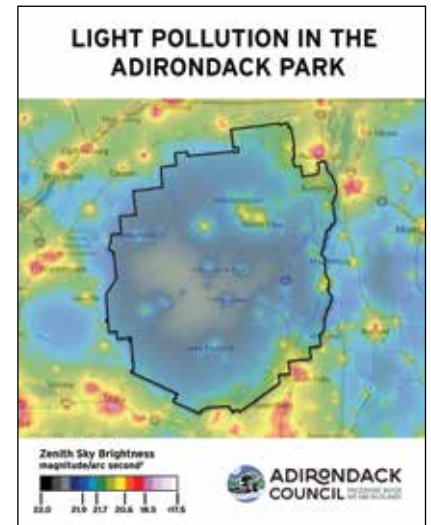
see from visits to any gas station, nighttime lights draw in and trap mayflies, moths and other insects. These insects provide myriad benefits to Adirondack ecosystems, including feeding our fish and birds, and pollinating our native plants.

For years, the Adirondack Park Agency has worked with developers to minimize the reliance on outdoor lighting through smarter designs. Permit conditions cite the need to install downward-facing outdoor lights where bright lights are needed. Efforts like this can be expanded to help keep our night skies dark.

During this legislative session, New York lawmakers will explore the idea of a new state law requiring efficient wildlife- and people-friendly outdoor lighting across the state. With your support, the Adirondack Council will work to keep the Park's legendary night sky dark, glorious, and wild.

Sincerely,

Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director



CAPITAL MATTERS

Big Legislative Wins for Wildlife

From pollinators to predators, wildlife won new protections last year thanks to two key legislative victories championed by the Adirondack Council, in partnership with legislative leaders and fellow advocates.

The Adirondack Council worked to secure legislative passage and a signature from Governor Hochul codifying the “*Birds and Bees Protection Act*,” which will ban the sale of corn, wheat and soy seeds containing neonicotinoid pesticides by 2029. The use of these seeds is a primary contributor of neonics in our environment. Neonics are a known carcinogen harmful to the health of humans, wildlife and the native species that pollinate our farm-grown food. Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, D-Manhattan, and Assembly Environmental Conservation Chair Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan, sponsored this legislation.

The Adirondack Council and partners were also successful in securing legislative passage and a signature from Governor Hochul codifying legislation prohibiting contests that award cash and prizes for the taking of wildlife, such as coyotes and other non-game species. The best available science suggests that these contests have not benefited the ecology of New York State. The Adirondack Council supports ethical

and science-based hunting practices, and efforts to restore balance to our wildlands. Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, and Assemblymember Deborah Glick sponsored this legislation.

The Adirondack Council is grateful to the many supporters who acted by writing letters, walking the halls of the capitol, and making donations to support this work. 2023 was a year for wildlife, and it would not have happened without you!



Monarchs and other pollinators will benefit from the ban on neonic pesticides
LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

Federal Air Research Saved, Lake Research Slashed

Late last year, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-NY, saved a long-term federal air quality monitoring program, the Clean Air Status and Trends Network, from shutdown. Just a few months later, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it no longer had the resources to operate another vital research effort, the Long-Term Monitoring (LTM) Program, that tests dozens of lakes each month to track progress on acid rain and other chemical contamination across the Northeast.

The EPA's LTM Program was established in the 1980s to verify whether the pollution controls established under the Clean Air Act were sufficient to protect water quality and fish. Data collected in New York and New England had established the need for the Clean Air

Act Amendments of 1990, the first national acid rain program and the subsequent Cross-State Air Pollution Rule finalized under the Obama administration. It was among the proof cited by the Biden administration in 2023 when it finalized the Good Neighbor Rule that prohibits any state from emitting so much air pollution that it causes a health hazard in another state.

The EPA recently blamed the decision to drop the LTM program on years of budget rescissions, due to pressure from GOP lawmakers to slash all EPA regulatory programs. While lake testing is a scientific effort, not regulatory, it has been targeted for cuts as the foundation of the EPA's clean air regulations.

IN & ABOUT THE PARK

1. Great North American Eclipse

This spring a rare total solar eclipse will pass over the Adirondack Park. Many of the communities in the Adirondacks will host watch parties. We highly recommend these safe viewing locations given the potential danger of venturing into the backcountry and High Peaks at this time of year. Early April may technically be spring, but winter conditions will linger at high elevations. This is also when rare alpine plants and thin soils are potentially most vulnerable to human-caused damage. Additionally, hikers may need to self-rescue in the event of an injury, making Adirondack communities one of the safest places for visitors to enjoy the eclipse.

MAP CREDIT: NASA'S SCIENTIFIC VISUALIZATION STUDIO



2. Follensby Pond Agreement Reached

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and The Nature Conservancy announced a conservation easement agreement on the historic Follensby Pond tract (14,600-acres) near Tupper Lake that will create a first-of-its-kind Research Preserve. Follensby Pond is one of the most pristine lake trout fisheries in the Adirondack Park, and the agreement will allow long-term scientific research and public education while protecting the valuable freshwater habitat. The public will gain access to 6,000 acres, including a 10-mile section of the Raquette River, a part of the historic Northern Forest Canoe Trail. The agreement will create an innovative conservation and research strategy with key partners to help manage the property going forward.

FOLLENSBY POND | PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



3. Students Support Raquette Headwaters

The focus of the Headwaters Campaign has been on convening lake associations in the Raquette River headwaters to share concerns and strategies for addressing those concerns. Through a partnership with students from the University of Rochester, digital content is in development that will help promote the work of lake associations and highlight community connections with story-telling tools, including social media. The students had an opportunity to visit the headwaters back in November and learn about the history of the Adirondack Park and Raquette Headwaters, the qualities that make these places unique, as well as their ecological importance to surrounding areas.





4. Debar Lodge Future Remains Uncertain

The Debar Lodge faced demolition when the property was added to the Forest Preserve in 2004. However, in 2014 the buildings were listed in the state's historical registry, throwing the future of the deteriorating buildings into limbo. The state proposed a Debar Lodge Day Use Area, which was countered with a 406-acre land swap for the 6-acre lodge parcel. The latter required a constitutional amendment that was advancing in the legislature. However, in December 2023, the Town of Duane rejected this proposal, citing tax revenue losses as the reason for opposition. Without a constitutional amendment, Debar Lodge and its accessory buildings will need to be removed to comply with "forever wild" protections.

5. Unusually Important Wetlands

Following recent amendments to the state's Freshwater Wetlands Act, which lowered the automatic threshold of regulated wetlands from 12.4 acres to 7.4 acres, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation has begun a comprehensive process to develop regulations to implement these changes. In addition to increasing protected wetlands across the state based on acreage, the prospective regulations will also address how to protect wetlands of "unusual importance." This assessment will be based on meeting one of eleven proposed criteria that recognize the role that wetlands, such as vernal pools, play in climate resiliency and habitat integrity.



6. Connecting Habitats

The reasons for protecting and restoring connected wildlife habitat are many, and center largely around animals' need to be able to move or migrate daily or seasonally to meet basic needs, particularly for food, shelter, reproduction, and climate adaptation. In New York today, we have the chance to pass a Wildlife Corridors bill directing state agencies to study where safe wildlife crossings are needed on busy roads. As well, we have the opportunity to implement the 30x30 legislation that NY recently passed, which should ensure that at least 30% of New York's lands and waters are fully protected as wildlife habitat. We urge fellow New Yorkers to tell your elected officials and neighbors that you support the construction of wildlife overpasses and underpasses, the right-sizing of culverts, removal of derelict dams, and protection and restoration of broad wildlife corridors linking big wild core habitats.



CONSERVATION MATTERS

Wildlife Action and Open Space Conservation Plans Offer Public Comment Opportunities

New York State is moving several multi-year plans forward that will shape wildlife and habitat protection for the next ten years. The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) - a ten-year federally required plan - seeks to proactively identify species that should receive additional attention and care as a preventative measure to stop at-risk species from being listed on the threatened or endangered species list. The SWAP includes sensitive species like the American eel and lake trout, but could - and should - include extirpated species like wolves and pumas. A final SWAP is expected by summer 2025.

The Open Space Conservation Plan (OSCP) is also being updated by the state and Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The OSCP is a state plan that identifies parcels for protection for water quality, species habitat and biodiversity, and climate change purposes. Environmental Protection Funds can be utilized for acquisition and/or protection of lands listed in the plan. The SWAP and OSCP both present important opportunities for the public to weigh in about habitat and species protections.

The DEC also recently released its bobcat management plan, which outlines requirements for tracking bobcat



L-R: The presence of keystone species like the American eel and bobcats are indicators of healthy, biologically diverse ecosystems

USFWS AND LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

harvesting and related population trends across the state. The new nine-year plan is still largely focused on the hunting of bobcats and minimizes the equally important ecological role key carnivores, such as the bobcats, play in diverse ecosystems across the State. With the right changes in this plan, New York can be a leader in protecting the rich ecological diversity we have in the Adirondacks and across the state.

New Cap-and-Invest Program for Greenhouse Gas

This year, New York State will unveil a new Cap-and-Invest Program to comply with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Cap-and-invest has been used successfully since 1984 in New York to control air pollution and incentivize pollution reductions and efficiency investments by making businesses pay for emissions. It was instituted to define the maximum allowable level of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollution from coal-fired power plants, which are the two main components of acid rain.

The new program is expected to address carbon emissions from all sources, not just power plants. Participants must purchase government-issued allowances for emissions. Those who clean up emissions faster than the law requires can sell their leftovers to those who cannot clean up as quickly. Proceeds from the sale of allowances will go into a Climate Investment Account administered to encourage energy conservation, renewable energy development, green-energy jobs, and job training.

SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL



Join the Next Gen Council

Do you love the Adirondacks? Are you a young professional? If so, good news: the Adirondack Council is currently accepting applications for new members to join our Next Gen Council. Through volunteering to serve as part of Next Gen, you will work with our current members to bolster support for, expand, and diversify the constituency that advocates for the preservation of the Adirondack Park's wildlands, clean water, clean air, ecological integrity, and wild character.

"I am enthusiastic about helping young people find platforms for their voices to be heard and taken seriously. By creating a direct avenue for them to participate in decision-making and advocacy, my goal within the Next Gen Council is to empower them with a sense of agency over their future in the Adirondacks."

— Natalee Wrege, Next Gen Chair



By joining the group, you will have the opportunity to:

- Gain valuable experience volunteering in the nonprofit world through high-quality interactions with the Adirondack Council's staff, board members, and partners
- Foster education surrounding the importance of the Adirondack Park and the challenges it faces in your networks, both within and outside the region, and be advocates for the Council through social media
- Provide input and generational perspectives to Council staff

To learn more about our Next Gen Council and to apply, please visit adirondackcouncil.org/nextgen by April 1, 2024. For questions, contact Nicholle Gotham, Assistant Director of Development, at ngoatham@adirondackcouncil.org.

Save the Date | Forever Wild Day 2024

We look forward to celebrating the Adirondacks with our members and guests, at **Heaven Hill Farm in Lake Placid, NY on Saturday, July 13, 2024**. Details to follow in the coming months.



Whoops! Sorry We Missed You

Correction: After a review of our 2022-2023 Annual Report we would like to recognize and thank the following donors who were inadvertently not listed.




Advocates

(Gifts of \$500 - \$999)

Charles Kemp & Brian Boyer
Don & Martha Kent
Howard & Suzanne Kern
Scott & Wesley Kevelson
Katherine & Paul Krier
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An updated copy of the 2022-2023 Annual Report can be found at AdirondackCouncil.org

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Behind the Loon

In January, the Adirondack Council team welcomed two new, incredibly talented staff members to the organization, Elizabeth Rogers and Janine Scherline.

Elizabeth Rogers, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Engagement

Elizabeth is a North Country native and returned to the Adirondacks in 2019 after more than a decade with the National Park Service as Public Affairs Specialist. Throughout her career, she has worked to connect ideas, people and resources to support healthy natural and human communities. When she isn't working, Elizabeth is likely to be found rediscovering the wonder of nature with her husband and two young children.



Janine Scherline, Director of Development

Originally from western New York, Janine settled in the region after meeting her spouse, an Adirondack native, more than two decades ago in graduate school at Ithaca College. Since that time, she's learned to love the Adirondacks and especially the people who care about the landscapes and communities here, leading to development positions at several regional organizations including Mountain Lake PBS, SUNY Plattsburgh and most recently at Adirondack Foundation. When not engaging with donors, supporters and the team at the Council, Janine can be found performing in chamber groups throughout the region; on snow-shoes in the backcountry or spending time with her husband and their feline companions.



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