

A photograph of a dense forest. The scene is filled with tall, slender trees, their trunks appearing dark against the vibrant green foliage. The forest floor is covered in a thick carpet of green ferns and other low-lying plants. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a dappled light effect. The overall atmosphere is serene and wild.

# A GIFT OF WILDNESS

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THE BOB MARSHALL GREAT WILDERNESS

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THE BOB MARSHALL GREAT WILDERNESS

BY  
MICHAEL G. DINUNZIO

PRODUCED IN CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENNIAL  
OF THE ADIRONDACK PARK  
1892-1992

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DESIGN BY LISA RICHMOND  
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE BY CHRISTOPHER SHAW



THE ADIRONDACK COUNCIL  
1992



## IN APPRECIATION

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED to the late William M. Preston, in memory of his great love for the Adirondacks, his commitment to protection of wilderness areas, and his devotion to sharing the experience of nature. His generous bequest to the Adirondack Council has enabled us to move forward in our efforts to preserve the wild and open-space character of the Adirondacks.

Special appreciation is extended to George D. Davis for reviving Bob Marshall's vision of a vast wilderness in the western Adirondacks.

The following individuals and foundations helped support our work to bring the dream of a Bob Marshall Great Wilderness closer to reality:

Mr. and Mrs. Saul Z. Cohen, who generously provided a gift toward the preparation of this book;

An anonymous contributor, to whom we are very grateful;

The New Hope Foundation, which contributed funding toward the Adirondack Council's efforts to establish the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness; and

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Scholle, whose generous assistance helped to underwrite production of this publication.

In 1928, Mrs. Scholle's mother, Lenore Marshall (Bob Marshall's sister-in-law and good friend), wrote the following poem, "The Old Guide Spoke," about the guide Herb Clark, who served as a mentor to Bob, George, and James Marshall.

We reprint this poem along with the Adirondack Council's heartfelt thanks to the contributors, members, and friends of the Adirondacks and the Adirondack Council, who help ensure that future generations will also discover the silent spell of the Adirondack wilderness.

## THE OLD GUIDE SPOKE

*The old guide spoke; our voices had been mute,  
Awed by the vast futility of words.*

*The mountains rose above us resolute,  
Streaked swiftly by the dip and lift of birds;  
And subtly, irretrievably, the night  
Poured darkness on the water at our feet,  
Until we lost the final link of light,  
Heard nothing but the lap and the retreat.*

*We drank the hush, we kept our silence well,  
Dreading some tortuous sentence that might fall,  
Yet longed to be articulate and tell;  
Until in answer to our inarticulate call  
The old guide spoke; he did not break the spell:  
"To think that we must die and leave it all."*

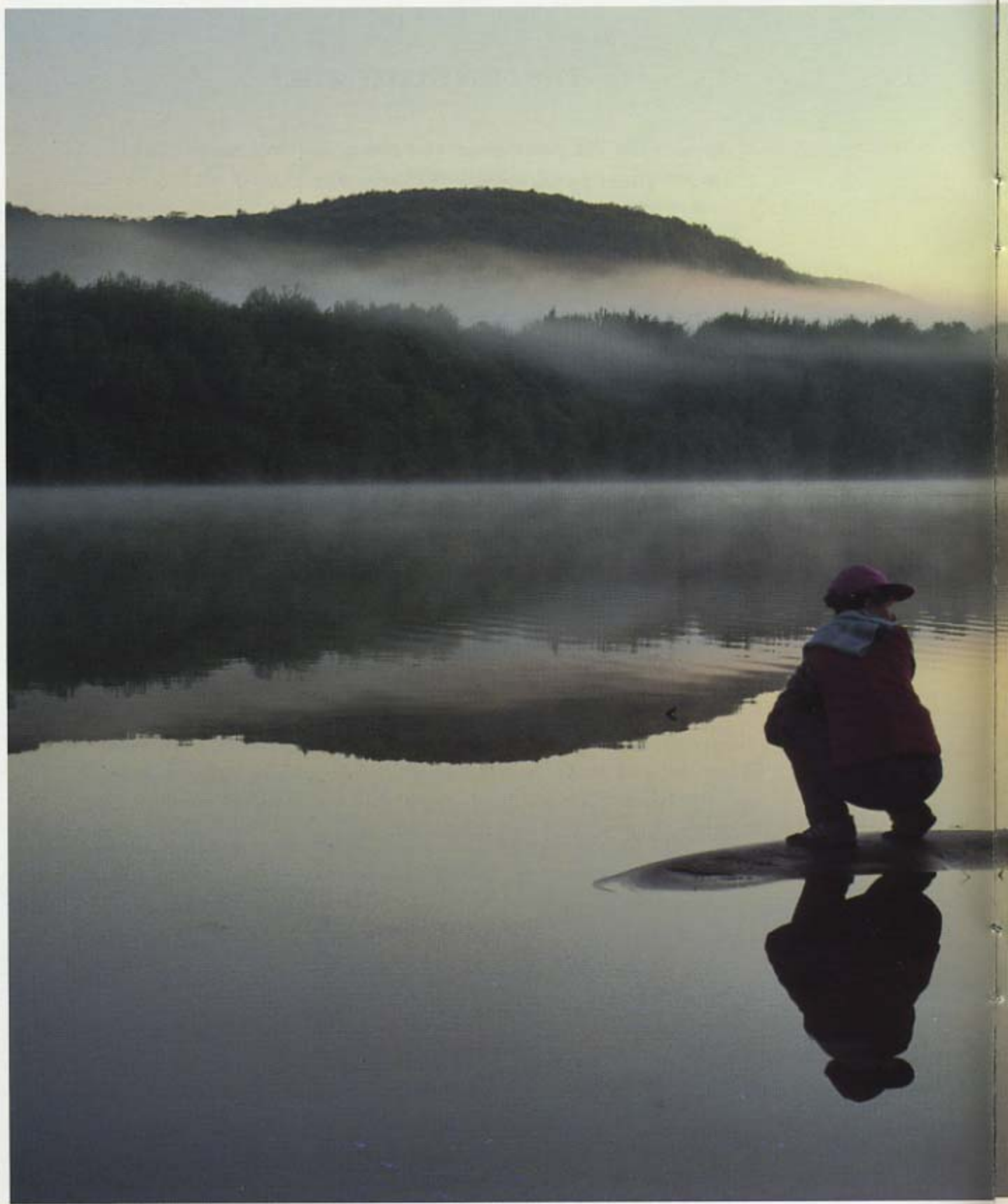
From *No Boundary* by Lenore G. Marshall.

Until his premature death at age 38, Bob Marshall tirelessly explored the wild world. With this publication, we cherish his memory and thank him. Our thanks also extend to the Marshall family for its tradition of advocating and safeguarding the preservation of precious wilderness.



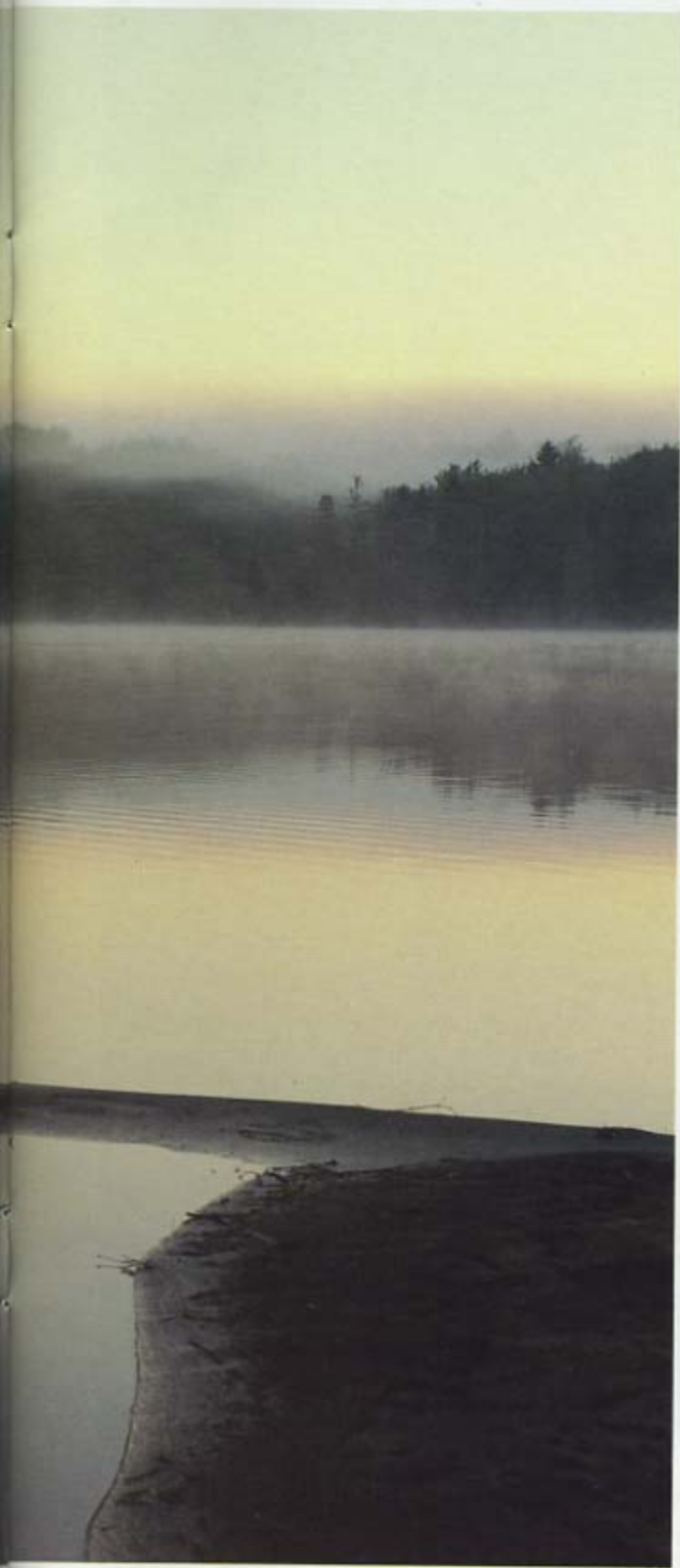
## A GIFT OF WILDNESS

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▲ *On the shore of Lows Lake.*





*Friends at home! I charge you to spare,  
preserve and cherish some portion of your  
primitive forests; for when these are  
cut away I apprehend they will not easily  
be replaced.*

Horace Greeley, 1851

THE VAST, OPEN-SPACE wildlands that characterize the Adirondack region of New York are an anomaly in both space and time. Located within a day's drive of one-quarter of the nation's population, they constitute the largest natural area in the United States outside Alaska.

New Yorkers have worked for over a century to protect this wild heritage, but there is much to be done before the dream of creating a true Adirondack Park can be fulfilled. A key element in this vision is the creation of a six-hundred square mile great wilderness that would be the premier forested wilderness area east of the Mississippi.

## WILD ISLAND IN A CIVILIZED SEA

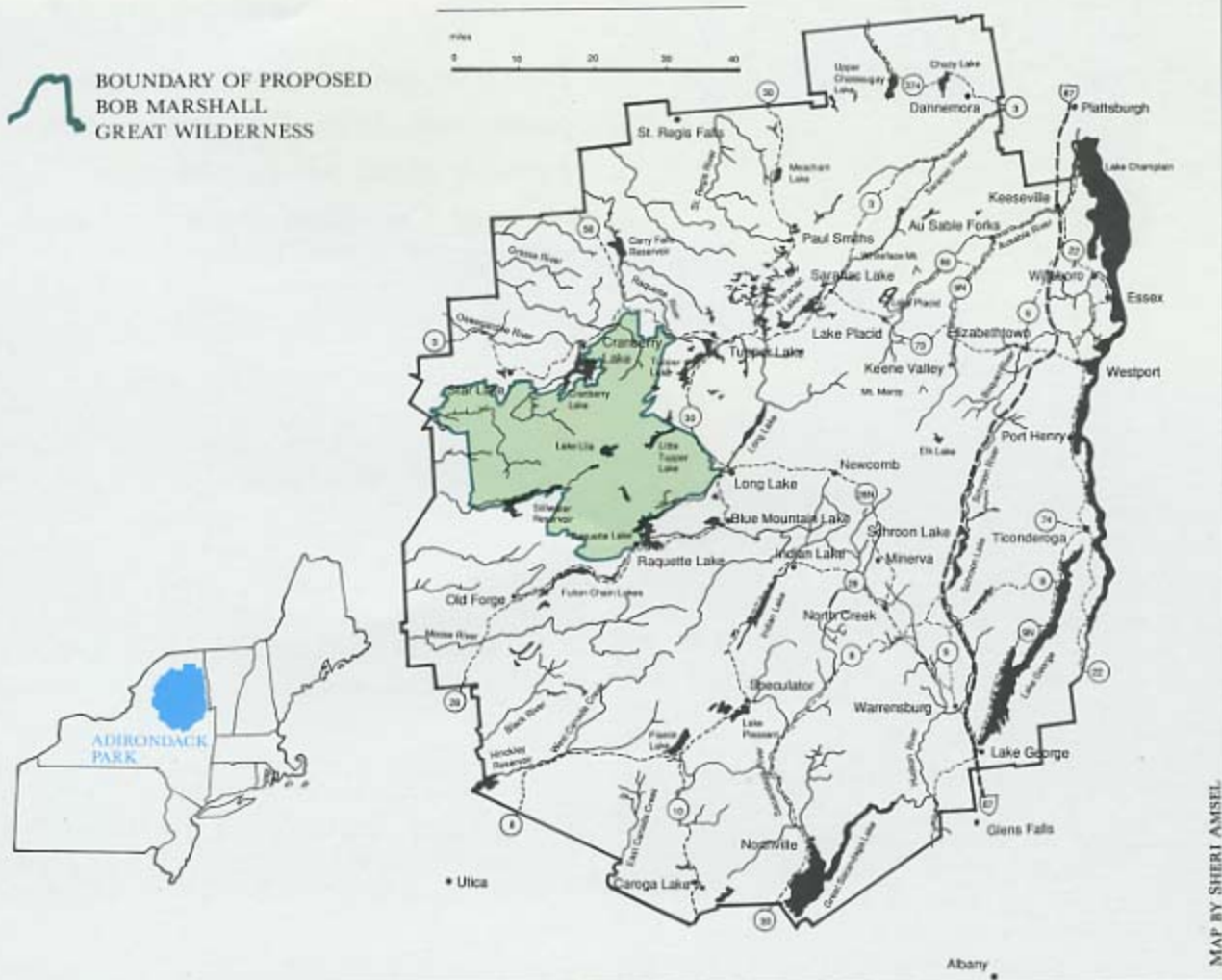
CREATED IN 1892, the Adirondack Park was the first "countryside" park in the world. Its founders specifically incorporated a complex pattern of public and private lands, including thriving communities, within its boundary. It contains six million acres, covers one-fifth of New York State, and is equal in size to neighboring Vermont.

Some fifty-eight percent of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to forestry, agriculture, and open-space recreation. The park is home to 130,000 permanent and 210,000 seasonal residents, and hosts an estimated nine million visitors annually.

The remaining forty-two percent of the Adirondack Park is publicly owned Forest Preserve, protected as "forever wild" by the State Constitution since 1894. One million acres

# THE ADIRONDACK PARK

BOUNDARY OF PROPOSED  
BOB MARSHALL  
GREAT WILDERNESS



of these public lands, representing one-sixth of the entire park, are designated as Wilderness, where a wide range of recreational activities may be enjoyed in an incomparable natural setting. Sixteen separate wilderness units, ranging in size from about 7,000 to over 220,000 acres, are scattered throughout the park. Motorized vehicles and equipment are banned from wilderness areas to preserve quiet and solitude, to protect sensitive wildlife, and to help prevent overuse. The majority of public land (more than 1.3 million acres) is classified as Wild Forest, in which motorized uses are permitted on designated waters, roads, and trails.

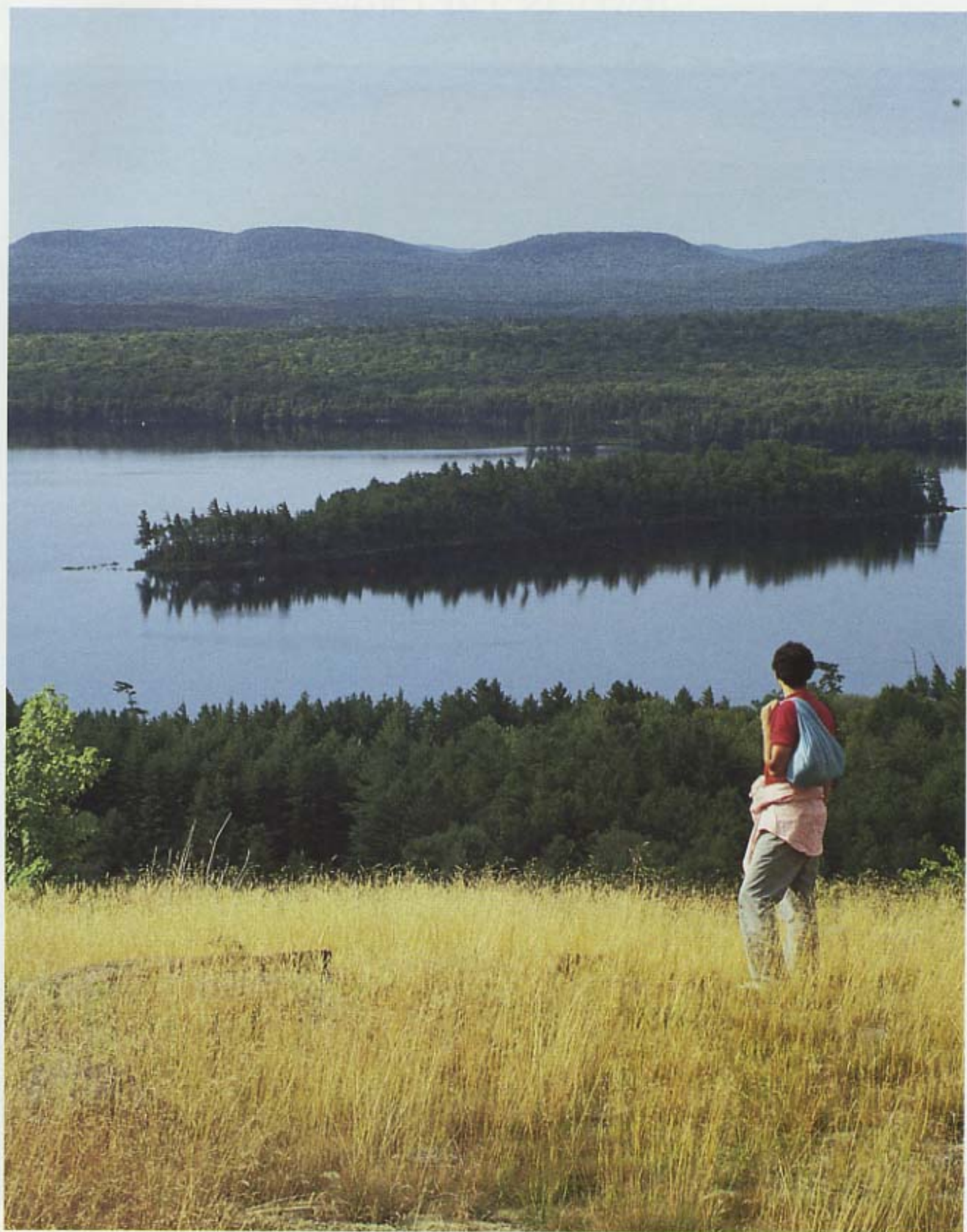
Plants and wildlife abound in the Adirondack Park, including many found nowhere else in New York State. Uncut ancient forests cover tens of thousands of acres. Ironically, much of the park is more wild and natural today than it was a century ago, when irresponsible logging

practices and forest fires ravaged much of the region. Someday, all native wildlife, including those species totally eliminated from the Adirondacks during the last century, such as the wolf, lynx, and moose, may live and breed in the park once more.

The western and southern Adirondacks are a gentle landscape of hills, lakes, ponds, and streams. In the northeast are the High Peaks, forty-six of them four thousand feet or higher, eleven with alpine summits that rise above timberline.

The Adirondacks include the headwaters of five major drainage systems: the Hudson, Black, St. Lawrence, and Mohawk rivers, and the New York portion of the Lake Champlain basin. Within the park are 2,800 lakes and ponds and more than 1,500 miles of rivers fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams.





▲ A hiker in the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness. Each year thousands hike, canoe, and ski in Adirondack wilderness areas.



## JEWEL IN THE CROWN

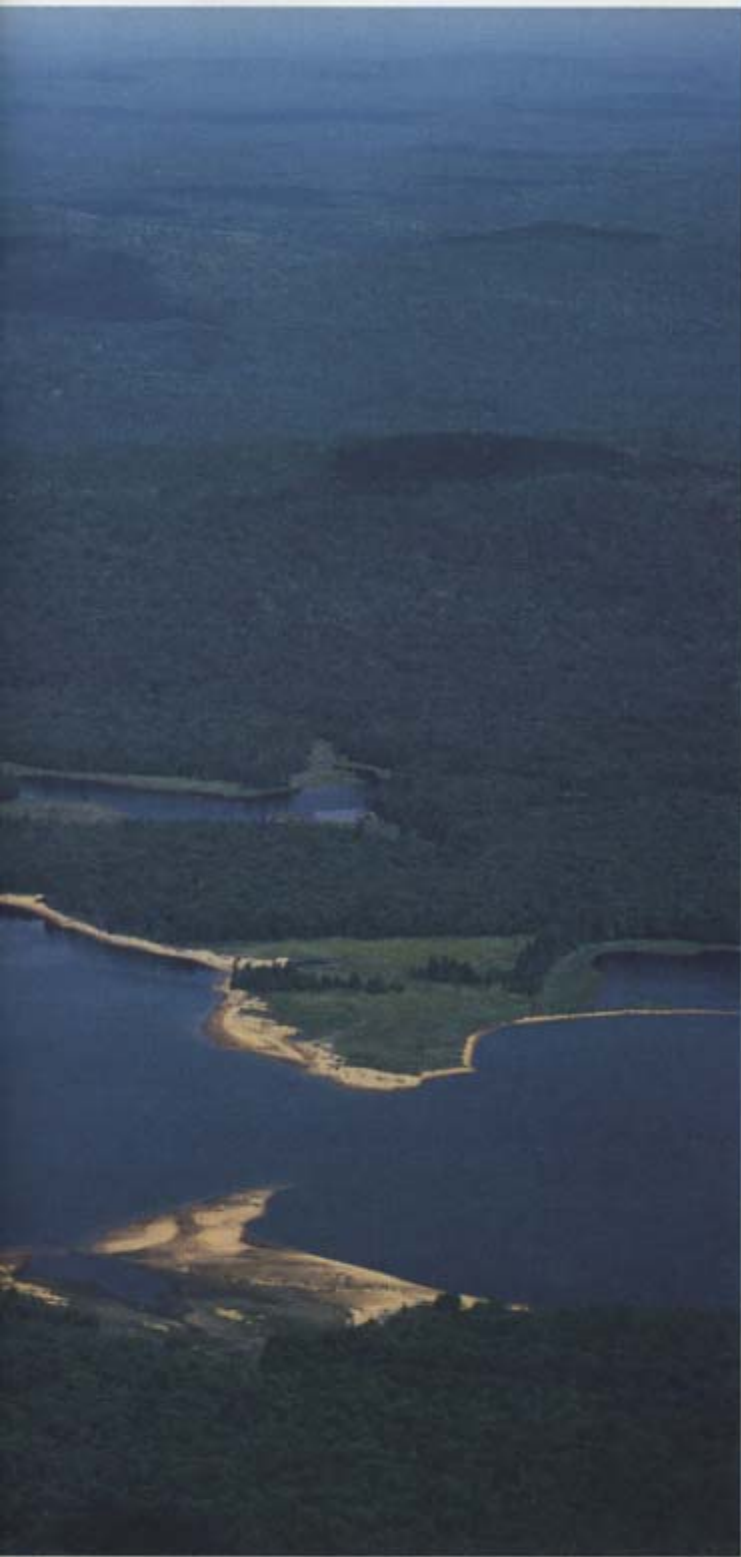
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▲ *An unbroken expanse of state-owned wild land stretches north from Stillwater Reservoir for nearly 20 miles. Low-slung hills punctuate*

*a landscape dominated by scores of lakes and a maze of wetlands that drain ancient forests and second-growth woodlands. These are the*

*headwaters of the Oswegatchie River. And they form the heart of the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness.*



*. . . The stars go down  
To rise upon some other shore,  
And bright in heaven's jeweled crown  
They shine forevermore.*

John Luckey McCreery, 1863  
*There Is No Death*



COURTESY OF THE ADIRONDACK MUSEUM

◀ *Young Bob Marshall at Knollwood, his family's Adirondack summer camp on Lower Saranac Lake.*

## ONE MAN'S VISION

IN THE SUMMER of 1922, a forestry student named Robert Marshall attended sophomore summer camp on Cranberry Lake in the northwestern Adirondacks. It was his first exposure to this region of the park, although he had spent all his previous summers at his family's camp on Lower Saranac Lake, scarcely thirty miles away. An inveterate hiker, Bob spent all his free time exploring the remote ponds and woodlands of the region. Marshall was intrigued by what he saw during his weekend tramps afield, especially by the multitude of wild, pristine lakes and the seventy-eight square miles of virgin forest for which the area is famous.

Seventeen years later, at the age of thirty-eight, Bob Marshall died in his sleep. Despite the brevity of his career, he played a major role



in forging national land-use policies, especially as they pertain to the permanent protection of wild lands. Throughout the last decade of his life, Marshall was an articulate, tireless, uncompromising advocate of wilderness. While serving as Chief of the Division of Recreation and Public Lands for the United States Forest Service, Bob drafted regulations for the administration of wilderness areas. He had previously established sixteen such areas while directing the forestry program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Along with Aldo Leopold, Robert Sterling Yard, and a few other colleagues, he helped to found The Wilderness Society.

Despite his far-flung adventures in the nation's wild places, Bob never forgot his Adirondack roots. Writing in the November, 1936, issue of *The Living Wilderness*, Marshall noted, "The fight to save the wilderness has grown during the past ten years from the personal hobby of a few fanatics to an important, nationwide movement. All over the country, people are beginning to protest in a concerted manner against the invasion of roadless tracts by routes of modern transportation." As an aid in this work, Marshall surveyed all forest areas in the United States embracing 300,000 acres or more, which were devoid of public roads. He found forty-eight such areas, one of them being the 380,000-acre Cranberry Lake-Beaver River tract he had explored in his youth.

In an open letter to the Conservation Commissioner of New York, published in *The Living Wilderness* in 1935, Bob Marshall argued against building truck trails in remote regions of the Adirondack Forest Preserve. He specifically mentioned the roadless area between Cranberry Lake and the Beaver River, and made a plea for the protection of its fragile resources. "It is almost the rarest thing a human being can do today to escape the signs of mechanization," he said. "It is of inestimable value to make it possible for people to get where they know they must be competent to cope with nature without any possible help from the machine. The values which exist in such wilderness areas are very delicate. The mere knowledge that mechanization lies over the top of the hill is enough to destroy some of the finest inspirational values of the wilderness."

Amazingly, the Cranberry Lake-Beaver River country is still virtually devoid of public roads.

We can still protect this magnificent wilderness from the fate of development that has destroyed most of the world's wild places. And it is fitting that this wilderness should be named after Bob Marshall, who first conceived its creation. But time is running short, for the situation is changing rapidly and irreversibly. After decades of relative stability, land holdings in the region are beginning to break up. New York's coffers are empty, and at this critical juncture the state cannot bid against speculators and vacation home buyers for available tracts. We must act decisively and soon, if we are to preserve this priceless natural treasure and make Bob Marshall's dream a reality.

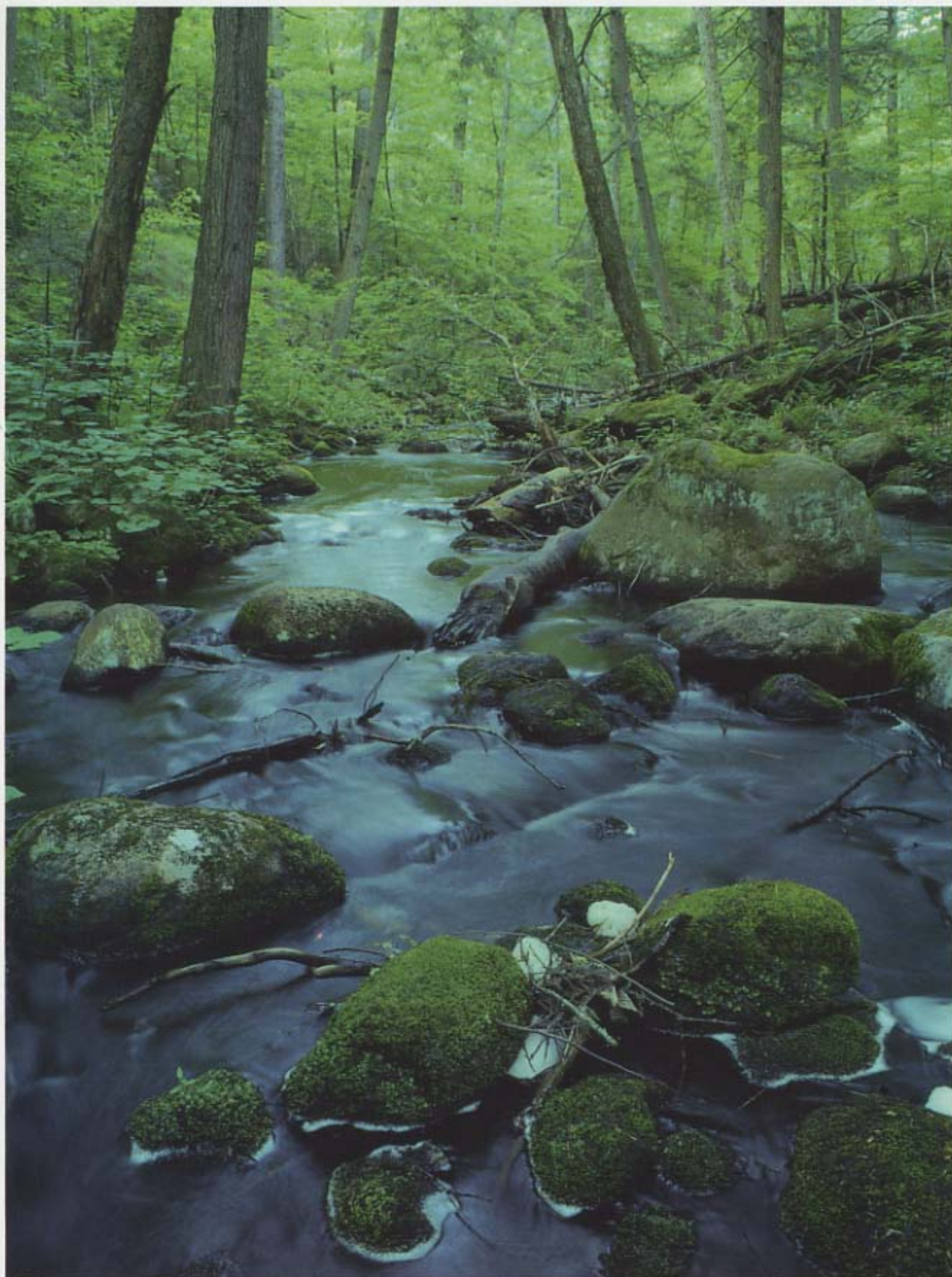
## AN ARK IN THE FOREST

ADIRONDACK COUNCIL RESEARCHERS spent hundreds of hours in field investigation, aerial surveys, air-photo interpretation, and map study to design the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness (the Bob). Boundaries were drawn primarily to preserve the ecological integrity of the area. In keeping with this principle, entire watersheds were included where possible.

The extent of roadless areas is the key factor in providing suitable habitat for missing Adirondack predators such as the cougar and wolf. Therefore, maximizing total acreage of the Bob became a major goal. Nevertheless, about 50,000 acres of productive timber lands were excluded from the wilderness because of their importance to the local forest industry. Boundaries were chosen to minimize impacts on existing uses such as snowmobile trails and public roads. Rivers, highways, and lake shores were used as borders to facilitate management of the area. The Bob would total over 408,000 acres. It would be the largest wilderness in the eastern United States, north of the Everglades.

If the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness becomes a reality, it would achieve status as a world-class nature reserve. It could sustain virtually all native Adirondack animals and ecosystems. It would include 441 lakes and ponds and 71 miles of waterways in the state's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System. And it would be a legacy of wildness . . . a gift from our generation to posterity . . . befitting the celebration of the park's centennial in 1992.

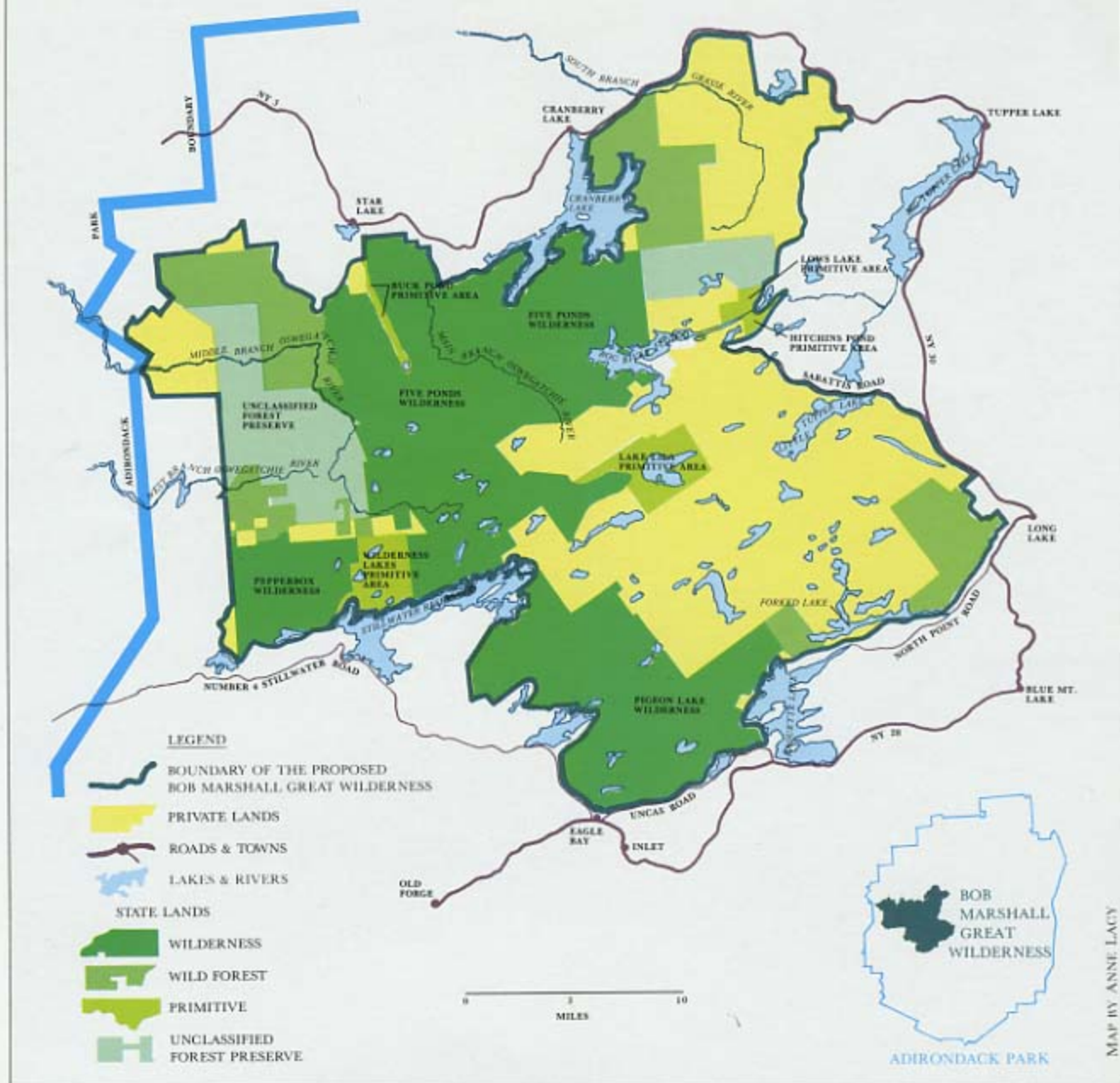




▲ Wolf Pond outlet, within the Five Ponds Wilderness,  
lies in the shadow of some of the oldest and tallest trees in the Northeast.



## BOB MARSHALL GREAT WILDERNESS



THE STATE OF New York already owns more than 230,000 acres in the Bob, accounting for fifty-six percent of the total area. Most of these holdings (forty-four percent) are located in three separate wilderness areas. Another 16,000 acres of state land are classified as Primitive, which will become wilderness when private in-holdings are acquired from willing sellers.

Wild Forest lands account for most of the remaining state land within the boundaries of the Bob. This land, along with 16,000 acres of recently purchased Forest Preserve, should be

consolidated and classified as wilderness.

There are twenty-two private ownerships, totalling about 178,000 acres, in the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness. It is unlikely that all of this land will be offered for sale in the near future. Nevertheless, the state should actively promote long-term private stewardship and should work to prevent subdivision and development of these private lands by purchasing conservation easements from willing sellers. This strategy would help to keep the dream of creating the Bob alive.



◀ More than forty lakes and ponds lie within the 51,000-acre Whitney Estate, the largest private holding in the proposed new wilderness. Soon, portions of the parcel may be subdivided and sold to individuals who want their own, exclusive piece of the park. There are only about two dozen private ownerships in the Bob, mostly in the form of corporations and family vacation estates.



▲ Looking east along Stillwater Reservoir toward the High Peaks. Twenty miles of private lands lie

between the end of the reservoir and the eastern boundary of the Bob near Long Lake. An equivalent

swath of State Forest Preserve stretches southeastward, past Big Moose, to the Fulton Chain Lakes.







◀ *Lake Lila from Mt. Frederica in the Lake Lila Primitive Area. Five other primitive areas lie within the Bob, along with three separate wilderness areas and some recently purchased Forest Preserve. Fifty-six percent of the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness is already owned by the state.*

*The Bob would total over 408,000 acres, becoming the largest wilderness in the eastern United States, north of the Everglades. It would include 441 lakes and ponds and 71 miles of wild and scenic rivers.*



## WHERE MAN IS A VISITOR

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*A wilderness. . . is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.*

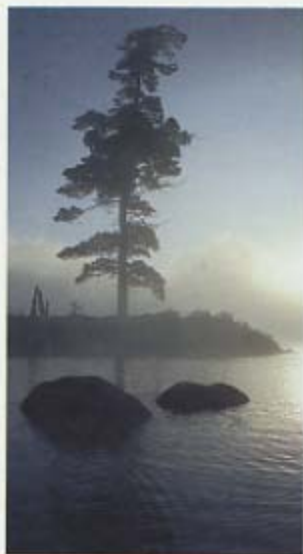
National Wilderness Preservation Act, 1964

◀ *A hunter and his guide on Lows Lake. Individuals will be able to hunt, fish, and trap in a setting of unparalleled beauty and solitude in the Bob.*

*Wilderness in the Adirondack Park is accessible to virtually anyone. The only caveat is that motorized vehicles and bicycles are prohibited. On some trails, horses are allowed, including horse-drawn vehicles carrying sightseers, hunters, and the physically impaired.*

*But wilderness is primarily a place where nature holds sway . . . where visitors do not remain, and where the works of humans are minimal and unobtrusive. It is a place of tranquility and peace, removed from the sight, sound, and smell of the internal combustion engine and the lights of civilization.*





▲ Solitary pine



▲ Winter trekking in the wilderness



◀ Most of the Adirondack region, including the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness, was subjected to varying degrees of human disturbance in the past. Fortunately, natural processes can usually heal such wounds in a few decades.

Within the brief span of twenty years, around the turn of the twentieth century, A. Augustus Low built and lost an empire in the Adirondack wilderness. An entrepreneur with boundless energy and an uncanny sense of marketing, he dedicated himself to designing a natural resource-based economy. Under the banner of his Horse Shoe Forestry Company, and with foresight uncommon in his time, Low "added value" to the products of his 45,000-acre holding in the Bog River Valley.

In addition to a sawmill, he established a cooperage shop. Having

the prerequisite crates and barrels, he packed some with maple syrup and others with bottles of spring water, which were then shipped to New York City by train. Dams were built, and power generated. Low even made wine from local elderberries and wild cherries.

Following two years of devastating fires, Low began to sell out. It was the end of an era and a way of life that has never returned. But the forest has risen from the ashes, and a new age has begun. The seat of Low's empire is now Forest Preserve and is a popular canoe area within the Bob. As other private lands come on the market and are sold to the state, they can also be made part of the wilderness. They will return relatively quickly to a pristine condition, just as the Bog River country has regained its wildness.





◀ *Wetland near Beaver River. The Bob Marshall Great Wilderness will include almost all the native plant and animal communities of the Adirondack Region. Hardwood forests will blend with bogs, marshes, and coniferous swamps in a land of infinite variety, where forces of nature produce kaleidoscopic change in rhythm with the seasons.*



▲ *A grove of mature conifers dominates a gravelly ridge of glacial debris in the ancient forest of the Five Ponds Wilderness, which lies*

*within the Bob. Covering approximately 50,000 acres, this is the largest contiguous tract of old-growth woodland in the eastern United States.*

*Trees grow in all ages and sizes, from seedlings to venerable giants of 300 years or more. The dynamic stability of this ancient forest took*

*about half a millennium to develop. It is a national, natural treasure, which for all intents and purposes is non-renewable.*





▲ *Wolf*



▲ *Cougar*

LEONARD LEE RUE III



▲ *Moose*





LEONARD LEE RUE III



NANCY BATTAGLIA

## RETURN OF THE NATIVES

MOOSE ARE NOW returning to the Adirondacks a century after the last of their resident ancestors were slain. They herald a return of our wildlands to a more primeval, healthy condition. They may need our help, however, to boost their numbers high enough to sustain a local population.

Coyotes returned to the area on their own several decades ago, and their population has now stabilized. Timber wolves and eastern coyotes probably coexisted in the primeval Adirondacks. Cougars were certainly present, although their numbers were always very limited. Each of these predators played an important role in the food web. They were not the vicious man-eating monsters immortalized in age-old fables. By culling the weak and infirm, they kept populations of prey such as deer, rabbits, and even mice in check. The Bob would be incomplete without them.

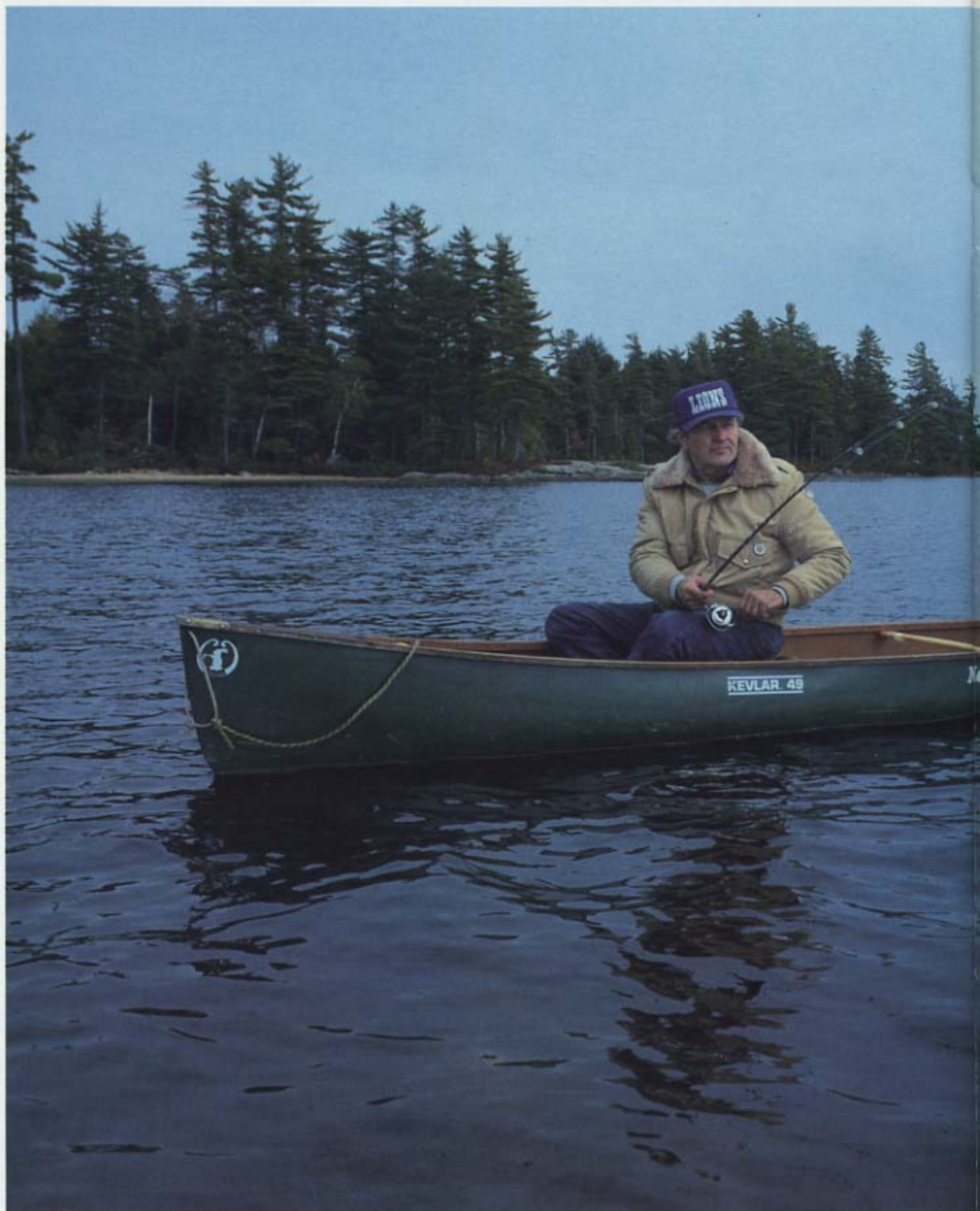
Wolves were extirpated from the entire Northeast and will probably never be able to return without assistance. Even with the aid of a full-fledged restoration program, wolves would be hard-pressed to find enough suitable habitat to thrive here under present conditions. Creation of the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness would, however, give the wolves a fighting chance. Experts estimate that 400,000 acres is just about the minimum roadless area a self-sustaining wolf population would require. Coincidentally, that is just about the size of the Bob.

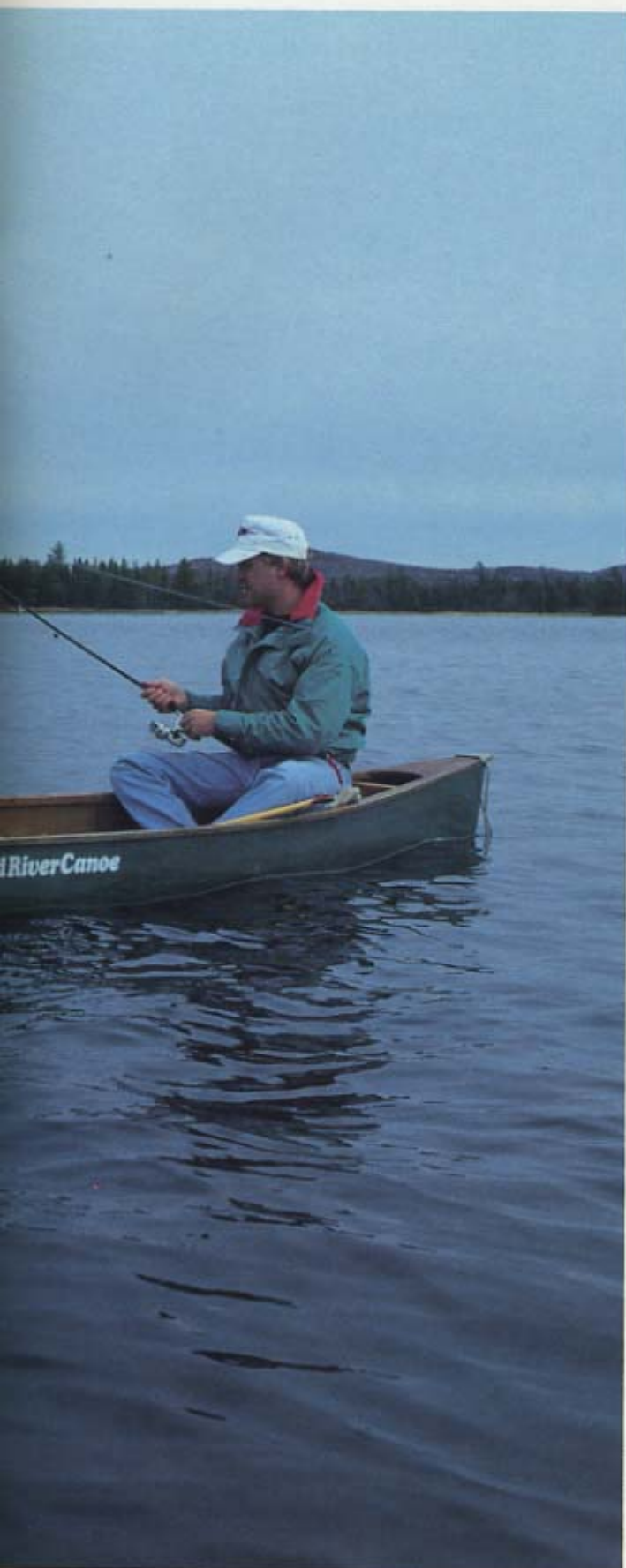
Whether or not the cougar can ever become re-established in the Adirondacks is a more problematic proposition, sporadic sightings of the big cat notwithstanding. But advances in wildlife management and innovative conservation of lands around the Bob may some day result in the successful return of this long-lost native. We owe it to the cougar—and to ourselves—to protect its habitat in the meantime.



## OUR LAST, BEST HOPE

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**T**HE BOB IS a dream that may take generations to fulfill. What is desperately needed at this point is a commitment to that dream . . . a determination to focus our energies and our resources to make it happen.

We still have time to meet the challenge if we seize the moment and act decisively. When private lands within the Bob are offered for sale, they should be acquired by the state. Acquisition of fee title should be the goal, but purchase of development rights through conservation easements is an acceptable alternative in the interim.

Subdivision of lands within the Bob should be discouraged whenever possible, since this usually leads to development.

The use of eminent domain to acquire land or conservation easements should be used only in extreme circumstances when critical, irreplaceable natural resources are threatened with imminent destruction.

◀ *Fishing in the Bob.  
Creation of the Bob  
Marshall Great Wilderness  
would open many  
miles of canoe routes that  
have been closed to the  
public for nearly a  
century. It would also  
provide access for sports-  
men and other recrea-  
tionists to lands and  
waters from which they  
are now excluded.*



## KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE



▲ *The Massawepie wetland complex is a world-class natural treasure. Many of its sensitive ecosystems are protected by a combination of conservation easements, voluntary agreements, and*

*private conservation initiatives. While these arrangements fall short of the eventual goal of public ownership, the Adirondack Council applauds such examples of private land stewardship.*



▲ *Canoeist on the Oswegatchie. Three separate branches of the Oswegatchie River rise within the Bob and flow for nearly 60 miles through its forests and wetlands. Their waters drain conifer flats and boggy heathlands, leaching tannins from the soil and giving the river its characteristic tea-stained hue. Oswegatchie is a Native American name meaning "dark waters".*

AS WE LOOK upon the urbanized landscape that stretches out in every direction from the Adirondack Park, it is encouraging to think how close we are, right now, to achieving the dream Bob Marshall envisioned nearly sixty years ago. It is time to protect this enduring legacy of wildness. No generation that follows will ever know the opportunity before us today. We must act to keep the dream alive.

EMBODIED IN THIS and other Adirondack Council studies is a vision of an Adirondack Park that will serve as a global model for integrated land use and conservation. In the next century and beyond, the park must retain its vast areas of undisturbed open space. It must remain a sanctuary for native plant and animal species, and serve as a natural haven for human beings in need of spiritual and physical renewal. It must also provide for sustainable, resource-based local economies and for the protection of community character and countryside values.

Through public education, interaction with government agencies and lawmakers, and by advocating the protection of the Adirondack Park's natural character, the Adirondack Council works to safeguard this last remaining great expanse of open space and protected wildlands in the eastern United States.

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THE ADIRONDACK COUNCIL