



Bill Ulfelder © Jonathan Grassi

From Our Executive Director

From Shinnecock Bay to the Adirondacks, New York has so much nature to offer. Some of my favorite places to visit are our preserves. While I may be biased, our latest data confirms I'm not the only New Yorker who enjoys spending time in these special spaces. The Nature Conservancy in New York manages only 3.5% of the Conservancy's total preserve acreage, but I'm proud to share that our state accounts for nearly 10% of all preserve visitors throughout the U.S. Beyond recreation, nature also plays an outsized role in mitigating climate change—and Dr. Michelle Brown, our senior conservation scientist, notes the connection between nature in New York and our ability to achieve ambitious, city- and state-led climate goals. Whether we're stewarding our 81,000 acres of nature preserves or tackling the challenges of the climate crisis, your continued support makes all of our efforts possible. Thank you!

Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director

DONATIONS:

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Latino Outdoors event at Pawling Nature Reserve © Michael Ostuni/Grassi Photography

The Data Is In: New York's Preserves Are the Place to Be

The Nature Conservancy owns and manages 2.3 million acres of nature preserves that offer invaluable ecological, recreational and climate-related benefits across the country. Locally, New York is home to roughly 160 preserves—and recent data collected by the Conservancy illustrates just how important these 81,000 acres are to our communities. New York has the second-highest visitation rate in the United States, with the most popular preserves being Christman Sanctuary and Lisha Kill Natural Area outside of Albany, and Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island. Over 270,000 visitors enjoy our preserves each year, accounting for nearly 10% of all visitors in the country.

“The Nature Conservancy in New York is ensuring that we have healthy, vibrant places to connect with nature,” says Mathew Levine, director of land assets for The Nature Conservancy in New York. “We’re breaking down barriers and constructing innovative solutions—like

modern trail design and partnering with Indigenous-led groups—to provide diverse options for New Yorkers to use and enjoy these spaces. The same lands and waters we steward for biodiversity and climate resilience are providing outdoor access to communities across New York.”

The Nature Conservancy's Equitable Access team is working on the ground to help expand preserve access to populations that have historically been excluded from nature. In the Finger Lakes this summer, the Conservancy will break ground on a multi-use trail system that was informed by a community-driven planning process. These new trails will be constructed to allow more people to access and enjoy all that our preserves have to offer. We're also partnering with and learning from organizations like Latino Outdoors and Hunters of Color to enable even better access to preserves throughout the state.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Dr. Brown in the field © John DiGiacomo; Rugged conditions in Tanzania call for four-wheel drive © Michelle Brown/TNC; Dr. Brown with her team at a demonstration forest © Marian Lindberg/TNC

NATURE
NEW YORK

160

Number of hummingbird
species found in Colombia



A green hermit hummingbird and Heliconia plant in Valle del Cauca, Colombia © Diego Fernando Mejía Navas/TNC Photo Contest 2021

Tapping into Nature's Potential

Q&A with Senior Conservation Scientist Dr. Michelle Brown

New York is often thought of as a leader in the fight against climate change. What makes our state so unique?

As a state, New York has passed aggressive climate legislation and made historic investments in nature and climate mitigation—like the Environmental Bond Act and setting the 2050 net zero emissions goal. These are transformational measures, and they lay out a pathway for New York that requires significant scaling as we mitigate and adapt to climate change. With these policies and goals in place, now it's our turn to work as hard as we can to meet them—and that's exactly what The Nature Conservancy in New York is doing.

How are natural climate solutions affecting New York's ability to meet our climate goals? Which solution has the biggest impact?

We can't meet our climate goals unless we involve nature in strategic and meaningful ways. New York is a large state with a lot of land. Reforestation is the natural climate solution that offers us the biggest mitigation potential. Our data shows that New York has about 1.7 million acres of land suitable for reforestation. But, right now, we're planting less than 1,000 acres annually. That's a lot of opportunity to scale up—and The Nature Conservancy in New York has set a goal of reforesting 130,000 acres by 2030 to meet the moment.

What's special about The Nature Conservancy in New York's approach to this work?

What I love about The Nature Conservancy's approach is we are simultaneously fighting two huge challenges, climate change and the biodiversity crisis. In New York, we have two unique programs, Working Woodlands and the Family Forest Carbon Program, a partnership with the American Forest Foundation. These programs allow us to achieve multiple co-benefits, including climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation. How do they work? Our team partners with private landowners to provide them with tools to improve the health and management of their forests. And in turn, the landowners gain access to carbon finance from the voluntary carbon market. It's a win-win for New Yorkers and the climate.

Finding the Greenest Way Forward in Colombia

Due to its varied ecosystems, Colombia has the highest bird diversity in the world—with nearly 20% of all bird species on the planet, including 160 species of hummingbirds. The Nature Conservancy is focused on conserving the Magdalena-Cauca, Amazon and Orinoquía regions—identified as iconic places of immeasurable value to South America's natural heritage. But industrial use and deforestation threaten these regions and negatively impact birdlife and the rivers that feed the nation and surrounding countries.

The Conservancy is working alongside the Colombian government, Indigenous communities and local partners to share solutions and finance mechanisms to avoid deforestation, protect diverse habitats and strengthen climate resilience. As Colombia emerges from decades of upheaval, we are helping determine the greenest way forward to ensure that people and nature thrive and that Colombia can achieve its climate and biodiversity commitments.