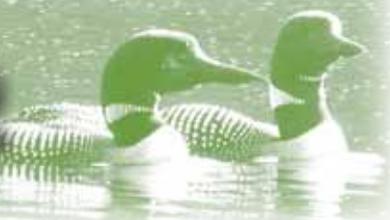




NORTH AMERICA PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2015



CALLING ALL CYCLISTS TO YOUR NEXT BIG ADVENTURE: CYCLE ADIRONDACKS!



WCS is introducing an exciting new event this August—Cycle Adirondacks! This new road-cycling tour promises

to be a memorable ride through one of the great wild areas of North America.

Those of us who know and love the Adirondack Park are no strangers to its meandering rivers and spectacular lakes. The region's deep forests and large wetlands are rich with wildlife, and its landscapes are renowned for their undeveloped mountaintops and valleys dotted with small farms and villages.

One great way to appreciate the region's natural beauty and resources is from the seat of a bike. Cycle Adirondacks riders from around the world will do just that as they immerse themselves in a ride through the Adirondacks and surrounding Tug Hill region. This is a fully supported tour, so all riders need to do is pedal, eat, sleep and enjoy. There are three different route options, to fit a variety of riders:

The Week Ride runs from August 23-29, and starts and ends in Saranac Lake. This is an opportunity to fully immerse in the scenery, communities, and camaraderie of a week-long ride. Daily routes range from 50 to 75 miles.

The Big Four is a 4-day option at the beginning of the week and great for those who like more mileage (an average of 74 miles a day). It starts and ends in the Adirondack Park, and includes a ride through the farmlands of the Tug Hill, adding more variety.

The Easy Three is our 3-day riding option starting toward the end of the week. This option offers as little as 143 miles or as many as 173 miles over the three days. This is classic Adirondack Park riding— three days of forests, lakes, rivers, and rolling hills.

Cycle Adirondacks uses an all-inclusive model, providing full amenities such as three catered meals a day, fully stocked rest and lunch stops, hot showers, baggage service, camping, nightly entertainment, beer and wine garden, a massage and wellness tent, and more.

In addition, WCS naturalists will be on hand throughout the week in camp and along the route to describe natural features and to tell the region's story.

A century after the Adirondacks were protected as "forever wild," there is re-growth and recovery of the forests, a return of native wildlife including moose, black bear, otter, bald eagles and beavers, and a rebound of our water resources.

This August, the treasured landscape of the Adirondack Park and the Tug Hill will be shared with visiting cyclists in an event to benefit wildlife and local communities. To be a part of Cycle Adirondacks, consider one of the three riding options, or sign up as a volunteer. Get more information at www.cycleadirondacks.com.



SAVING WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES WORLDWIDE

Nancy Battaglia Photography

PROJECT TARGETS PREVENTION OF MOTOR VEHICLE/ WILDLIFE COLLISIONS ACROSS US ROUTE 20 IN ISLAND PARK AREA OF IDAHO

Twice a year, elk and moose migrate between summer range in the Island Park Caldera near Yellowstone National Park and winter range near the St. Anthony Dunes more than 60 miles to the southwest. As they make these migrations, they must cross US 20 and Idaho 87, increasingly busy highways through the Island Park region of Idaho immediately to the west of Yellowstone National Park. Between 2005 and 2009, 169 vehicle-wildlife collisions occurred in this region, resulting in wildlife fatalities and millions of dollars in collision damage to vehicles. This is an all-too common phenomenon across the United States. WCS is a leader in developing wildlife conservation solutions including steps to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions. Beginning in 2009, WCS teamed with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) to undertake an intensive, four-year research project to identify what actions are needed to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions in the Island Park region.

Island Park boasts of having the “Longest Main Street in America.” In reality, this “main street” is the busy US 20 and Idaho 87 highways.



Jeff Burrell © WCS

Moose, the largest member of the deer family in North America.

As part of the study, 37 elk and 42 moose were captured and fitted with GPS collars. These devices recorded animal locations and allowed scientists to track migration routes. WCS also enlisted volunteer citizen scientists to conduct wildlife track surveys along the highways to better identify preferred crossing locations. WCS scientists used these data to develop detailed recommendations for where wildlife crossing structures, such as wildlife overpasses and underpasses, would be best placed. These recommendations are included in a recently released report available online at wcsnorthamerica.org/ConservationInitiatives/Connectivity.aspx. WCS, ITD, and IDFG are using this report to plan highway mitigation actions west of Yellowstone National Park.

CANADA NEWS

BATCAVER PROGRAM LAUNCHES IN WESTERN CANADA

Where most of western Canada's bats hibernate is not yet known. White Nose Syndrome (WNS), an invasive fungal disease that kills bats while they hibernate, is devastating bat populations in eastern North America and is spreading westward. The race to identify winter hibernacula for bats is thus underway, and WCS Canada's Cori Lausen is leading the way with the launch of a new program in western Canada this spring. This program, simply referred to as BatCaver, is funded by Environment Canada and Golder Associates, and will see cavers deploy specialized instrumentation into caves and mines across British Columbia (BC) and Alberta to locate overwintering

bats. Data collected through this program will provide vital information such as roosting conditions for predicting impacts of WNS, and provide opportunities for disease surveillance and baseline fungal sampling. As part of this program, cavers are being educated on disease spread prevention, and are being encouraged to help the provinces learn more about where western bats hibernate. Data gathered in this program will also inform the design of BC's largest artificial bat hibernaculum currently being built near Kamloops, BC as a collaboration between New Gold Corporation and Thompson Rivers University. The BatCaver.org website will officially launch later this spring.



photo at left by J. Acorn; all others by Cori Lausen

DO WE ONLY LEAVE FOOTPRINTS? WCS EXAMINES THE EFFECTS OF RECREATION ON WILDLIFE

More than 90 percent of the seven to ten million visitors who come to the Adirondack Park each year participate in outdoor recreation, not to mention those of us who live here year-round and revel in access to truly great outdoors. We use outdoor recreation to reconnect to the natural world, “recharge our batteries,” exercise, relax, and de-stress. The majority of parks and preserves around the world were established with a dual mandate to protect plant and animal species and habitats while also providing access to the public. The assumption is that most recreation activities are relatively harmless and that these two goals are compatible. However, the extent to which protected lands can simultaneously support human recreation and ecosystem health is an open question.

A growing body of scientific research demonstrates that outdoor recreation can negatively impact wildlife. In fact, recreation is the second-leading cause of endangerment to species on U.S. federal lands and has been linked to many adverse effects on wildlife—including species decline, changes in habitat use, increased stress, reduced reproductive success, and negative behavioral effects. In a review of published studies investigating the impacts of recreation on wildlife (conducted by WCS and partners at Colorado State University and University of California-Berkeley), 93 percent demonstrated at least one, typically harmful effect on wildlife.

This summer, WCS scientists, Drs. Michale Glennon and Sarah Reed, are working with citizen scientists to understand how we can inform decisions to ensure a balance between protection and recreational access. Sarah Reed has conducted prior research on the impacts of quiet recreation on carnivores, the effect of visitation levels and dog management policies, and the effect of traffic level and noise from motorized recreation on wildlife in protected areas in California. In the Adirondack Park in northern New York State, Michale and Sarah have recently launched a study to determine the potential impacts of recreation on wildlife. Using technology like smartphone apps that document hikes, dog walks, and trail runs, data from boaters (paddlers and motorboaters) will be used to help understand the timing and spatial distribution of recreation in Adirondack lakes. If you see them at a boat launch this summer and would like to help, stop and say “hello!” This study will help strike a balance between using and enjoying open spaces while protecting natural resources that make our parks and protected lands so special.



ARCTIC BERINGIA NEWS

WCS EXPANDS RESEARCH IN COASTAL ARCTIC LAGOONS

Coastal Arctic lagoons represent important habitat for a diversity of fish species and sustain a vital subsistence fishery for Alaskan villages. Despite the ecological and cultural importance of coastal lagoons, very little research has been conducted on lagoon fish communities in the western Arctic.

WCS scientists in Arctic Beringia have just secured a two year, \$372,000 grant from the National Park Service for work on coastal lagoons and conservation concerns for fish species critical to Alaska Native food security. WCS was one of 5 funded out of over 40 applicants. Arctic Beringia is one of the world’s great ancient crossroads and is the gateway between the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific. “Wildlife support the food and cultural security of numerous indigenous communities that have thrived in this area for thousands of years,” said Dr. Martin Robards, Director WCS’s Beringia Program. “Our research addresses the need for a better understanding of fish ecology in these lagoons, and aims to collect critical scientific information about the fish resources used for subsistence”.



photo by Martin Robards

Without a clear understanding of how lagoon ecosystems function, it is impossible for managers to detect long-term changes resulting from climate change, to quantify the impacts of development, or to implement appropriate management strategies to sustain this system.

Starting in 2015, Robards and his team will begin sampling fish communities in the coastal lagoons of Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve.



Julie Larsen Maher © WCS

HELP COUNT LOONS

Volunteers are needed to help WCS survey the loon population in New York State's Adirondack Park. This year's 15th annual Loon Census takes place Saturday, July 18th from 8:00—9:00 AM. You can participate by observing loons by boat or on foot for one hour on census day. The data you send back to us will be used to assess New York's loon population.

Please contact us to sign up for a lake by calling us at 518-891-8874, ext. 106, or sending an email to accp@wcs.org. Please be prepared to tell us your name, contact information, and the pond or lake that you are interested in, including the township and county. More details for this year's census can be found online at wcsadirondacks.org. The census is a partnership between WCS and the Biodiversity Research Institute.

WELCOME AMERICORPS MEMBER, SARA MOORE

Join us in welcoming Sara Moore to our Livelihoods and Conservation Program in the Northern US Rockies. She is a member of the Big Sky Watershed Corps, a program of



Americorps. While she works with us over the coming year, she'll coordinate year three of our popular "Get to Know Your Wildlife Neighbors" speaker series, assist us with communications in our riparian restoration projects in SW Montana, increase our social media presence, and help with wildlife coexistence projects. Sara holds a B.S. from Cornell University in Natural Resources Management. She has worked in the past as a field biologist, a Peace Corps member, at

the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and is an Adirondacks High Peaks 46er. To learn more about our work, visit wcscommunitypartnerships.org, or look for us on Facebook and Instagram.

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SAVING WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES WORLDWIDE

The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education and inspiring people to value nature. WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on earth.



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