We've brought the wonders of nature to people who never thought they could find them. You can go far into the backcountry to see the Adirondacks. Or you can come to The Wild Center, where more than 900,000 people have experienced the sights, sounds and magic of nature at their own pace.

We've helped bring thousands of visitors to Tupper Lake, stimulating the local economy. The Wild Center has been a major regional attraction even before we opened Wild Walk: In 2011 alone, visitors spent more than $14 million in the North Country and helped support 277 jobs.

We're also intensely involved with our neighbors. Since we opened in 2006, more than 400 Tupper Lake classes and nearly 13,000 Tupper Lake students have visited The Wild Center, making our rich science resources their own.

The Wild Center has sparked interest in climate change across the Adirondacks. We helped start the discussion of climate change within the Blue Line. We’ve hosted eight Youth Climate Summits, attracting 150 students from 25 high schools every year; sponsored several other youth-focused climate programs; and worked with stakeholders across the park to help them understand the impacts they’re likely to face.

We’re inspiring climate change discussions internationally, too. We’ve taken what we’ve learned about motivating action and creating youth leaders and shared that to power youth summits in Detroit, Finland, Seattle,
the Catskills, and several other places.

6 We match big ideas with bold steps. It takes an organization with big vision, and big ambition, to dream and build something as audacious as Wild Walk before even turning 10. And we’re not stopping: In 2014 we more than doubled the size of our campus, and we’re looking forward to more trails, more activities and more things we haven’t even thought of.

7 We put the “ark” in “Adirondack Park.” Our animal collection includes nearly 500 animals from over 40 different native New York species. More importantly, our animal-care techniques are widely respected.

8 Our green building efforts are winning notice – and better yet, winning converts. We built the first LEED building in the Adirondacks and the first LEED museum in the state. We’re just as proud to have sparked a conversation with contractors about how they can incorporate these advances in their own work. By creating a forum for those discussions, we’ve turned one good idea, The Wild Center, into many.

9 100,000 hours. That’s how much time our volunteers have given us since Betsy Lowe had the idea to do this natural history museum. Stuffing envelopes, greeting guests, caring for animals, maintaining our grounds – our volunteers do it all, and we couldn’t do it without them.

10 We’re redefining what a museum can be. We’ve built The Wild Center’s experience around living exhibits and activities designed to connect people to nature. Touch a cloud. Squish a bog. See what living green looks like in action. That makes the natural world seem a little closer. It also means that when we convene discussions on how crucial it is to act on climate change, or to protect wild places, our guests enter the conversation as participants rather than spectators. And likelier to act, rather than simply observe.
“Millennials have their own families, are spending more on travel than any other generation, and seek experiences that combine outdoor adventure with the cultural and culinary aspects of a destination. We have the products that this market is looking for, and now we need to work together to deliver that message.”
- Michelle Clement, ROOST’s Tupper Lake & Hamilton County Marketing Manager.
For the 23 percent of Millennials who consider themselves outdoorsy types, what they think of when they think of the Adirondacks – mountains, lakes, hiking – is instantly appealing.

But it’s harder to convince the other 77 percent it’s not just a remote place for the active set. So we launched a study to learn how to do better attracting the generation born between 1981 and 2000 to the Adirondacks, and provide concrete examples organizations can use in their marketing to get them here.

“There are 83 million Millennials in the United States. Bringing them here isn’t just important to us, but the entire region,” says Hillarie Logan-Dechene, The Wild Center’s director of philanthropy. That’s why we partnered with several other organizations, including the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC), the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) and I Love NY, on the study, which was conducted by Schireson Associates of New York City.

Later, Trampoline Advertising & Design Co., a Glens Falls marketing agency, packaged those findings into a 76-page guidebook we shared in workshops across the North Country this fall. “There really is a lot that Millennials want in the Adirondacks,” Amanda Magee, a Trampoline co-owner, told a group of business owners, tourism experts and others during a September workshop at The Wild Center. “They just don’t know that it’s here.”

Here’s what Millennials want: One-of-a-kind experiences. They’ll travel to get them, but only if there are enough options to keep them busy. And they live to share what they find with their friends on social media.

“The guidebook is an essential read for any business looking to attract the next generation of consumers,” says Ron Ofner, the ARTC’s executive director. “This audience of decision makers is quickly changing the marketing landscape, and will impact visitation here for years to come.”

The guide urges businesses to showcase all the facets of the Adirondack experience – not just nature, but also creature comforts like good food and culture.

That was valuable insight to Helene Gibbens, a Saranac Lake resident whose new business, Adirondack Riverwalking, leads visitors on guided walks through shallow streams. (Think fly fishing without the rods.) While her business offers the kind of experience that, in theory, Millennials are looking for, at 57, she acknowledges she can use a hand relating. “I have nephews and nieces in this age range that help me a lot, but I don’t grasp it fully,” she says.

But she has a users’ manual now. And she’s ready to put it to use.

Attracting Millennials to your business is no secret. Download a copy of “The Adirondacks & The Next Generation” at wildcenter.org/about-us.
You can paddle directly from The Wild Center to the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation on the Raquette River. Only about 100 miles separate the two.

Now, our communities are looking for ways to get even closer.

The Wild Center is collaborating with several Native American groups to explore ways to incorporate traditional perspectives into our exhibits, programs and interpretive activities. “Our mission is to help find a balance where man and nature can co-exist,” says Stephanie Ratcliffe, The Wild Center’s executive director. “Our Mohawk neighbors are our best teachers in how to do that.”

Our relationship goes back years. When we opened, Mohawk tribal chiefs came to bless the new museum. Since then, we’ve searched for ways to weave traditional ecological knowledge and western scientific interpretation. Our latest collaboration, known as the Two Row project, is a way of weaving that work even more deeply into the Center and sharing experiences with our partners.

The project’s name comes from an Akwesasne concept: Like two boats traveling side-by-side, the partners are equal and acting without interference on the other.

Our shared goal is for all the partners to learn from each other. Through a project planned to start in 2018, The Wild Center will welcome four interns from the Native American community who will lead canoe interpretive programs, help integrate Mohawk partner institutions and Wild Center programs, and enhance the experience we share with our visitors for years to come.

It’s too early to say exactly what will result, but we’re excited to begin. “We do a very effective job presenting the world through a scientific lens. But there is a rich trove of traditional Native American ecological knowledge we haven’t tapped,” Ratcliffe says. “We acknowledge that, embrace it and want to be much more inclusive in the way we frame our exploration of nature and science.”

Illustration David Fadden
As high school students from across the Adirondacks poured into The Wild Center for the eighth annual Adirondack Youth Climate Summit this November, accolades for the program continued to mount. In October, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded $91,000 to back a two-year project so high schoolers and teachers in the Adirondacks can understand how climate change is affecting the region, and launch initiatives to help change behavior.

That honor came on the heels of a $50,000 grant from Underwriters Laboratories earlier this summer. The UL Innovative Education Award, given in collaboration with the North American Association for Environmental Education, honors programs with a track record of “advancing STEM learning through projects involving real environmental problems.”
Tree Sounds

When British composer Pete Wyer, seen here, walked through a wooded portion of The Wild Center’s 81-acre campus last summer, he didn’t see a forest – he saw a concert hall. You can hear the four-part choral work he wrote specifically for us, “I Walk Towards Myself,” when it premieres in May. The aural exhibit, iForest, will play on 24 speakers, giving visitors an immersive experience that changes depending on where they stand. Sometimes, they’ll hear verses sung in the Mohawk language; other times, a single note calling out. To Wyer, the goal is to connect humans more deeply to their environment. Which, not coincidentally, is our goal as well.
Every year at The Wild Center, wild turtles lay their eggs by the shores of Greenleaf Pond, the body of water outside the museum. And every year, newly hatched turtles crawl away from the water and try getting into the museum. (Maybe they know there are some hard-core animal lovers inside?) In any case, this summer, these staff and interns rescued a group of wrong-way turtles and brought them back to the pond.
Seraphina (Hebrew for “fiery-winged”) made her Wild Center debut in November, giving hunting demonstrations with Leah Valerio, the museum’s curator and a licensed falconer. “It’s important for people to appreciate what an animal like that needs in order to survive,” says Valerio of the red-tailed hawk – that is, wide-open spaces and room to fly. “It’s just a really amazing experience to watch her.”

Shows are scheduled for Saturdays through December 17, but visitors can often see Valerio and Seraphina giving impromptu demonstrations on other Saturdays as well.
Tony Provost has been holding out on you. Because if you want to see the cutest creatures at The Wild Center, you’ll have to walk past the otter enclosure – we know, heresy – and take a behind-the-scenes tour.

That’s where you’ll find them: Four baby snapping turtles, each no bigger than a golf ball, inside a plastic tank, lolling contentedly under a bright white light.

Sometime next spring, Provost, a staff biologist since 2015, expects to let the turtles loose somewhere in the North Country as part of a pilot project he’s developing to raise and release rare turtles into the wild. He’s starting with snappers as a dress rehearsal for rarer species, such as the Blanding’s turtle.

“I’ve always loved turtles. Ever since I was a little kid. I think it had to do with the Ninja Turtles – I was always a big fan,” he joked. “And their shell. No other animal has a shell like that. And I love all the stories that go behind the shell – Native American stories, for example. They’re just a unique animal.”

Provost, 26, has nurtured a love for wildlife since he was a child, when he grew up literally around the corner from The Wild Center. When he visited for the first time, as a high school junior, he was already considering a career in zoology. While in college at SUNY-Oswego, he interned here for three summers
before heading to Utah for a couple of years, where he worked as a ski instructor and ultimately at a zoo before getting a call: The Wild Center had an opening.

He says he never imagined, during his first visit, that he could wind up working in his hometown. But Provost is excited to be back home doing what he loves. “It’s amazing that this place exists, especially for what field I wanted to go into,” he says. “It’s just a dream come true.”

One of the things Provost appreciates the most about his work at The Wild Center is the opportunity to work directly with visitors. Many zoologists, he says, spend all their time working behind the scenes, feeding and caring for animals and performing other tasks. Provost does all that here, too. But he also gets to develop programs that help him share his love of animals with others, such as demonstrations with radio-tracking gear - initiatives that will serve him well wherever his career takes him.

“I really love teaching the public,” says Provost. “I love going out there and doing a program, and they go away – maybe getting sparked a little bit. That’s always my goal when I’m doing an animal encounter. When I take a kid out to the pond and they catch a frog, and I say to them, ‘You could do this for a living.’”

GIVE THE SNAPPERS A BREAK.

Tony Provost says people have a lot of misperceptions about The Wild Center’s menagerie, especially the snapping turtles. A lot of visitors are afraid they’ll get bitten by them as they swim in lakes and ponds. But that won’t happen, Provost says.

“They just can’t fit into their shells,” says Provost, who explains that snappers’ legs are pinched by their plastron, the underside of the shell. “So that’s why they’re so mad when they’re on land.”

Snappers aren’t the only misunderstood creatures. Porcupines, Provost says, don’t throw their quills. In fact, they’re quite laid back. So leave them alone. “That’s where we come in as conservationists – to help species in the wild, even if we’re not in the field all the time,” he says.
As Ken Reger, a property manager from Cazenovia, framed a photograph at Buttermilk Falls on a bright Sunday afternoon in early fall, everything was in his favor for a great shot.

Gorgeous scenery. Quality camera. Carl Heilman II, one of the best nature photographers in the Adirondacks, ready to give advice as part of an eight-hour workshop.

Reger was hoping to learn more about his feature-packed digital camera and leapt at the chance to work alongside the award-winning Heilman. “A chance to sit with a master photographer? You’d be a fool not to,” Reger says.

Heilman has offered more than 20 of these sessions with The Wild Center, attracting beginners and skilled shooters alike. As water poured over the wide expanse of the falls, kicking up mist and a steady roar, the six students in the class maneuvered to get a shot. Some pulled right up to the water. Others set up on rocks in the middle of the Raquette River for a wide view. Heilman was ready to help.

Marie Haas, a painter who splits time between North Creek and Florida, knows full well the importance of light. When she paints, though, she can adjust the lighting with her paint brush. The camera is less flexible. “I want to get off of auto mode,” she says, explaining why she came out.

Heilman hears that a lot, so he spent two and a half hours reviewing digital camera basics with the class before they ventured into the field. (It takes Heilman a full day, he says, to set up a new camera out of the box.) They also explored the principles that have been at the core of photography since Joseph Nicéphore Niépce took the first picture in the 1820s: Aperture, shutter speed, light. Depth of field, motion, composition.

If you understand each of those, Heilman tells the class, you’ll be in control of all the shots you take.

Heilman also let them in on a somewhat counterintuitive secret: He shoots in some kind of program mode for almost all his shots. Because while it’s important to understand how your camera works, letting a camera handle exposure diminishes a photographer’s skills no more than using a calculator dumbs down a mathematician.

Besides technique and equipment, preparation is just as important. Heilman scouts for location, he scouts for light, and while kismet helps, most great shots don’t happen by accident.

Besides technique and equipment, preparation is just as important. Before starting the workshop, Heilman had been shooting for hours; he wanted a shot of the stars over Buttermilk Falls, so he slept in his Subaru to get there by 5:15 a.m. He scouts for location, he scouts for light, and while kismet helps, most great shots don’t happen by accident.

Heilman, too, is always learning. Even from his students. “Everybody has a unique perspective of what they see and how they shoot,” he says. “I enjoy seeing the Adirondacks through everybody else’s eyes.”

Carl Heilman II offers several workshops a year through The Wild Center. Go to wildcenter.org/calendar to find the next.
Lynn Birdsong recalls the first time his wife, Terry, told him about a new museum being built in Tupper Lake. “We should be a part of it,” she said. Since then, Lynn has had as good a view as anyone to The Wild Center’s inner workings. He served on our board for nine years, including five as president.

This summer, though, he got an even better sense of the crucial role The Wild Center plays for our guests when he became a volunteer.

“How people learn things here,” Birdsong says. “No matter how knowledgeable they might be, I think the exhibits that are inside the museum, and now outside on Wild Walk, really inform people about what is going on in the Adirondacks.” And none of it would happen, he’s come to realize, without the volunteers and staff, who embellish the visitor experience in countless ways. “You hear about it when you’re on the board, but until you see it, it’s just different,” says Birdsong. While his wife, Terry, has been a long-time volunteer, he didn’t volunteer until his board responsibilities began to wind down. And joining the team on the ground floor provided a new perspective. “You learn what it takes to keep that place going. And it takes a lot.”

Seeing the Center’s impact in person reinforced the decision the Birdsongs made to include us in their will, becoming members of our planned giving club, the Linda Vaughan Society. Their generosity will
ensure that the experiences enjoyed by thousands of people every year are available for generations to come.

“If you really are enjoying your experience here and think it’s playing a useful role, the best thing one can do is assure its long-term staying power by including it in your estate plan,” Birdsong says.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene, The Wild Center’s director of philanthropy, says planned gifts play an important role in building the museum’s endowment. “While donations to our Annual Fund cover roughly half the cost of our yearly operations, gifts to the Linda Vaughan Society ensure our long-term financial health,” Logan-Dechene says. “Lynn and Terry have done so much for us over the past decade, and I am touched not only by their generosity but by all who will provide for us in the future.”

Our planned giving society was named for Linda Vaughan, an Ohio native who had a summer home in Long Lake and supported The Wild Center with membership dues for 10 years. When she died in 2009, she left $2.5 million to support our ongoing operations. Her gift came as a remarkably generous surprise – and to honor her, we named our legacy society after her.

The Birdsongs’ gift, on the other hand, won’t come as a surprise. They’ve informed The Wild Center what to expect. They’ll continue to give, and volunteer, in the meantime.

“What I’ve found is, our guests love nature. And they’re smart about it,” he says. “A lot of them are really quite knowledgeable. I was probably learning as much or as more from them as they learn from me.”

There is no minimum gift to join the Linda Vaughan Society. Just let us know that you’re planning to leave a bequest to us, and we’ll welcome you by name or anonymously. In addition to the satisfaction you’ll gain of supporting the Center well into the future, Society members gain other benefits as well. Visit wildcenter.org/belong/join-the-linda-vaughan-society to learn more.

For more information about joining the Linda Vaughan Society, contact either Hillarie Logan-Dechene at (518) 359-7800 ext. 103 or hlogan-dechene@wildcenter.org, or Robin Ellis at (518) 359-7800 ext. 129 or rellis@wildcenter.org.
It’s pretty hard to fit everything you love about The Wild Center into a 36-page book. But we did it! The result is this glossy, photo-packed book that recaps our first 10 years and illustrates how a community came together to create this place and continue its evolution. Re-live how our community came together to make this place happen. Get a bird’s-eye view of our spectacular Wild Walk. Learn about the ways we champion the environment every single day. And, of course, look at some really cute pictures of otters, not to mention all the other animals that are part of our Wild family.

$8.95. Find the book, and all kinds of other merch, at The Wild Supply Co. Or shop online at shop.wildcenter.org.
We asked for your #WILDCENTER pix on Instagram, and you delivered! Here are some of our favorites. To the winners, keep an eye out for a message from us so we can send you a copy of our new book, “A Wild Journey.”

Top row: @hanchia, @stanhoraczek; middle row: @pourkeepyne, @leanne_eberhart; bottom row: @hollyriver7, @jenstarr
When it comes to improving our environment, change happens one person at a time. Over the past few months, The Wild Center’s Adirondack Youth Climate Summiteers have taken on weekly challenges to do their part for the environment. You can help, too. Meghan Byrne, a student at Lake Placid High School, suggests a few ways you can get in on the action!

**DITCH THE PLASTIC**
We challenged ourselves to go an entire week without using any disposable plastic bottles. That can have a real effect. Americans are projected to drink more bottled water than soda this year, for example, and all those plastic bottles require millions of barrels of oil. So start using a reusable water bottle.

**SOCKS AREN’T JUST FOR FEET**
The average American throws away 65 pounds of clothing every year. Almost half of that, though, could be used for something else, a practice known as upcycling. A worn-out sock, for example, can be turned into a cup holder, dish rag or a bookmark. What can you upcycle?

**DRIP DRIP DON’T**
As Arctic glaciers disappear, we’ve begun to appreciate how precious water is. So we each
looked for three ways to cut water use in our daily lives. Some ideas: Take shorter showers, go vegetarian, or even skip wetting your toothbrush. (Did you know that toothpaste works better if you don’t wet it? Look it up!)

**GHOST POWER**
When you leave your computer, phone charger or cable box plugged in, they draw energy even when idle. That’s known as “ghost power,” and 10 percent of a typical American household’s electric bill goes to those phantom electrons. What can you unplug, or put into a special energy-saving power strip?

**VEGGIE POWER**
It takes a lot of water to raise animals for food, and herds of grazing cattle produce methane, a greenhouse gas that causes climate change. Being vegetarian can make a difference in your environmental footprint. If giving up meat entirely is too hard to consider, you can go partway: Try a Meatless Monday or commit to one vegetarian meal a day.

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Try a challenge or two and let us know how you fared on social media:

Facebook: /ADKYouthClimateSummit

Instagram: @youthclimate

Twitter: @ADKYouthSummit
2016-2017 Winter Events and Programs

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Soaring Saturdays
Every Saturday through December 17, 1 p.m.
Join licensed falconers as they talk about the ancient sport of falconry.

Family Game Night
Friday, December 9, 4-6 p.m.
Test drive board and card games, books and puzzles from the Wild Supply Company and take advantage of special offers at this after-hours event. The Waterside Cafe will be open. Free and open to the public.

Family Weekends
Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, January 13-March 26
Try watercolor painting and snowshoeing, watch a featured film and experience an animal encounter. Free for members.

Night Owls: A Wine Painting Party
Friday, January 20, 6-8:30 p.m.
Relax and explore your artistic talents while enjoying step-by-step instructions and a complimentary drink. Must be at least 21 years old to register. Members, $30; non-members, $40. Space is limited.

Winter Week: Explore the Mysteries of Predators
Friday, February 17-Sunday, February 26
Join us all week long as we offer guided snowshoe walks, live animal encounters and watercolor art projects. Free for members.

Ski Movie Night: Ruin and Rose, and The Last Chance
Saturday, February 18, 6-8:30 p.m.
Audacious athleticism and stunning cinematography in spectacular locales. Raffle for gear and other goodies. $10 per person.

Celebrate Maple Weekends with a Pancake Breakfast
Saturday, March 18 & March 25, 8:30-10:30 a.m.
Have breakfast and celebrate maple sugaring. $5 for members, $7.50 + admission for non-members. Reserve a spot at (518) 359-7800.

Sugar Shack Soirée
Saturday, March 18, 4-8 p.m.
Get a taste of the authentic sugaring experience from sap to syrup. Taste freshly made syrup and enjoy maple-themed refreshments and live msic. (You can bring your own instrument, too.) $15/person with cash bar.

Build a Greener Adirondacks Conference
Thursday, March 23
Daylong conference and vendor exposition. Explore adaptive reuse and ways to reduce construction waste.

Otter Birthday
Sunday, March 26
Celebrate with games, crafts and birthday cake.

Find updates and additional event info at wildcenter.org/events