



THE WILD CENTER STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Tim Holmes, Membership and Appeals Officer

Tim Holmes joined the staff in 2011 and is responsible for the design and management of the Membership and Annual Fund programs. He works to build member and donor appreciation of the Center's exhibits and educational programs, and to encourage a long-term commitment to the mission of The Wild Center. Holmes produces communications for keeping members and donors engaged year-around, and works with other staff to develop events and activities that educate and inspire our supporters. His past experience includes work throughout the Northwest and Alaska on a number of wildlife and ecology-based research projects, including commercial salmon fishery research on the Olympic Peninsula, and a three-year study of Native subsistence activity in Barrow, Alaska. In the Adirondacks, he directed a recreation study of Lake George, an economic analysis for the Lake Champlain basin, and a marketing assessment for the region's 14 Scenic Byways. Holmes holds degrees in sociology from the Universities of Iowa (BS) and Idaho (MA), and has certification as a Project Management Professional (PMP).

Jennifer Kretser, Director of Programs

As Director of Programs for The Wild Center, Jen Kretser oversees all education program development and interpretive programs. Her major initiative at the Center includes leading the Adirondack Youth Climate Program. Prior to her work with The Wild Center, Kretser served as Director of Education for the Adirondack Mountain Club for 7 years focused on educating for responsible recreation, stewardship, and interpretive planning. For her work in the Adirondacks, she was the 2006 recipient of the ADK Education Award and the 2007 EPA Region 2 Environmental Educator Award. Her past experiences include teaching and developing programs at the Cincinnati Zoo, the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, the Adirondack Park Visitor's Interpretive Center, and Zoo New England in Boston. Through her strong interest in international conservation, Kretser has participated in two professional exchanges to Siberia to work with park officials on creating education programs for their National Park system. In addition to her work in Siberia, she has traveled extensively in Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Nepal and India – exploring parks and meeting people. Kretser graduated from Cornell University with a BS in wildlife ecology and an MS in environmental science and education from Antioch University New England.

Robert J. Kronenberger, Director of Finance and Administration

As Director of Finance and Administration since 2007, Robert Kronenberger is responsible for all of the financial operations of The Wild Center, including The Wild Supply Co. and Waterside Café. After earning his BS in accounting from the State University of New York at Albany, he began as a junior accountant at Mahoney, Cohen & Company, P.C., and made partner in nine years. He has held Chief Financial Officer and President positions with Petty Printing Company and Kingston Capital Corporation, successfully negotiating multi-million dollar agreements, securing financing and overseeing over 800 employees. He is a Certified Public Accountant.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Deputy Director

Hillarie Logan-Dechene's career has been about building the capacity of non-for-profit organizations. After studying at The American University in Paris and earning her BA from the State University of New York at Albany, she worked in for-profit marketing and public relations and then joined the Development Department at the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake where she worked for more than sixteen years. She progressed from Development Assistant to the Director of Institutional Advancement. Upon leaving the

Adirondack Museum in 2006, Logan-Dechene became the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Paul Smith's College, a private college in the Adirondacks. After nearly four years, Logan-Dechene left the college in 2010 to become Director of Philanthropy at The Wild Center and led the Center through a successful \$20 million fundraising campaign. In 2018 she was named Deputy Director of the Center. She has been a guest lecturer in Marketing, Fundraising and Non-Profit Management for Skidmore College, Adirondack Community College, and NYU.

Logan-Dechene is also Chair of Governor Cuomo's New York State Commission on National and Community Service, which administers the AmeriCorps program in New York State, an active board member of the Adirondack Health Foundation, and the Museum Association of New York. She has a Bachelor of Arts from The State University of New York at Albany and a Masters of Arts in Non-profit Leadership and Community Sustainability from Skidmore College.

Stephanie Ratcliffe, Executive Director

Stephanie Ratcliffe became Executive Director of The Wild Center in June 2007 after joining the launch team four years before its opening in 2006 as the Director of Operations and Programs. She was recruited to join the Center team from her position of Senior Director for all exhibitions at the Maryland Science Center, where she worked for 13 years. Ratcliffe began her career in museums at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. Ratcliffe earned a BA in art marketing/museum management and a MA in museum education from George Washington University. Prior to joining The Wild Center team, Ratcliffe also worked for the Brooklyn Children's Museum.

Ratcliffe played a leading role in the creation of the Center's current exhibits and programs, including all of the interior live exhibits and the multimedia presentations. She was responsible for a number of the major initiatives for future exhibits, including the development of the Wild Walk and creation of the Adirondack Climate Action Plan (ADKCAP).

Ratcliffe was one of 17 international science museum directors to participate in a year-long leadership program funded by the Noyce Foundation. Noyce Leadership Fellows (NLF) seeks to enable chief executives of science centers to deepen their institutions' involvement with their communities. She also serves on the Board of the Association of Science Technology Centers based in Washington DC serving science center internationally.

Nancy K. Simpkins, President

Nancy Simpkins graduated from Miss Porter's School in 1973 and Smith College in 1977. She has a strong interest in the Adirondacks and education. She is currently on the Boards of the Klingenstein Center at Teachers College, Columbia University - a center for developing leaders among independent school educators; The Klingenstein Third Generation Foundation, which focuses on child and adolescent depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); The Harry and Sadie Davis Foundation, which promotes pediatric health care in Maine; and The Habe Foundation where she is developing a program area around improving the quality of public school teachers and is also a Trustee at Miss Porter's School. She bought property in Tupper Lake in 1994 and she has two sons, Hank and Ben.

Leah Valerio, Curator

Leah Valerio is responsible for the living collection of native Adirondack animals at The Wild Center. She and the animal care staff care for more than 60 animal species, including otters, porcupine, owls, ravens, snakes, turtles and trout. After becoming hooked on the outdoors and animals at an early age, Valerio earned a BS in biology from SUNY Geneseo, where she gained her first professional ornithology experience when she updated a bird checklist for a local nature park. After graduating, she worked at a Raptor Center in Ohio where she cared for and rehabilitated over 250 birds of prey. Wanting to learn more about bird biology, she focused her graduate studies at Antioch University on migratory bird research, including bird branding, breeding bird surveys and teaching about birds. Since earning her MS in environmental biology she has held various positions in the field including bird keeper, park ranger and environmental educator.

Kerri Ziemann, Experiential Programs Manager

Kerri joined the education staff at The Wild Center in the winter of 2007. As Experiential Programs Manager, she provides daily programming to museum visitors and students of all ages as well as coordinates The Wild Center's Farmers Markets, Visual Thinking Strategies initiatives, and mentors and coordinates the seasonal Intern program. Ziemann completed her MS in environmental education from Antioch New England Graduate School where she enriched her prior knowledge as an environmental educator and interpreter. She brings leadership experience from her work with the Teton Science Schools, AmeriCorps NCCC and the Minnesota Conservation Corps. No matter the location she continues to enjoy exploring natural history through an art lens and is interested in fostering curiosity and wonder through innovative environmental teaching strategies.