

## Adirondack Wild meets: Forest friends receive awards

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Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve held its annual meeting on Friday, Sept. 28 at View. About 40 members and supporters attended the meeting, which included an [awards](#) presentation honoring area individuals, and a bird of prey presentation and discussion.

Adirondack Wild is committed to three goals: safeguarding the wild, expanding the wild, and educating for the wild. The non-profit [organization](#) is led by senior partner Peter Brinkley, Partners Ken Rimany, Dan Plumley, and David Gibson, as well as a board of directors.

The environmental conservation group works to strengthen Article 14 of the New York State Constitution, known as the "Forever Wild" clause. The clause reads: "The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed."

The organization's mission is to advance New York's "forever wild" legacy and Forest Preserve policies in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, and to promote public and private land stewardship that is consistent with wild land values through education, advocacy and research. Their [focus](#) is on wild landscapes and advance policy goals consistent with ecological and wilderness values, ethics, and principles.

Following reports by the partners on the finances of the organization, an update on current projects, and an overview of the group's history and mission, the awards ceremony was held to recognize individuals from the area who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and stewardship of wild lands, to ecotourism based upon the area's wilderness, and to educating others about the importance of safeguarding wild nature in the Adirondack Park.

Among those recognized were John Nemjo, founder of Paddlefest, the

largest annual canoe and kayak festival in the Adirondacks, and founder/owner of Mountain-man Outdoor Supply Co. in Old Forge where many have [purchased](#) canoes or kayaks since the first store opened in Inlet in 1993.

Through his efforts and [successful](#) businesses, John has modeled what ecotourism is all about in the Adirondack Park, generated important local economic activity and employment tied directly to the Park's wild lands and waterways, and stimulated a passionate appreciation of the Park's wild lakes and rivers.

Gary Lee of Inlet served as a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Ranger in the Moose River Plains Wild Forest and West Canada Lake Wilderness for over 30 years, and has volunteered as a citizen-steward of the Moose River Plains since his retirement. Through his efforts, projects in our Forest Preserve were accomplished, campers and visitors were contacted and educated, and wildlife and habitats were closely observed and safeguarded for future generations to enjoy. Lee is also a noted birdwatcher, photographer, writer and ecotourism guide who has informed countless people, while contributing substantially to our knowledge of birds and their habitats in the Adirondacks.

Also honored were Shirley Cornish of White Lake and Sheila and Ron Cuccaro of Woodgate and Utica. For decades, Cornish has fought to conserve the scenic beauty and wildlife of her sector of the Adirondacks at White Lake. Together, the three helped organize Save White Lake Trees, a citizen coalition which placed pressure on New York State DOT, APA, DEC and utilities to stop the intended cutting of hundreds of trees during a road and utility reconstruction project. Through their efforts, the Route 28 gateway to the Park remains a scenic corridor which accommodates travelers without compromising the very qualities which attract them in the first place.

Each received a 2012 Wilderness Stewardship [Award](#) which was framed along with a nature photograph taken by Ken Rimany. Following the award ceremony, Steve and Wendy Hall of the Adirondack Wildlife Refuge and Rehab Center presented a few of the birds of prey they have at their refuge in Wilmington.

They discussed the mission of the refuge and introduced a great horned owl, a screech owl and a barn owl. The audience was educated on the role these birds play as indicator species and the overall health of our ecosystem. They also explained the hunting habits of the birds

as well as the connections between Adirondack wildlife and the health of wildlife habitats.

To learn more about Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, visit their website at [www.adirondackwild.org](http://www.adirondackwild.org).