The Adirondack Council
A SUMMARY REPORT

DECEMBER 1988

2020 VISION

Council Refines Acquisition Plan

With Volume I of 2020 Vision, the Adirondack Council has inaugurated a series of published studies identifying private land of extraordinary biological value in need of permanent protection. The Council's goal: to secure a wild, naturally-diverse, permanently-protected Adirondack Park for the year 2020 and beyond.

Volume I is a 64-page technical document based on the most extensive biological survey ever undertaken on the 3.5 million acres of privately-owned land in the park. The following pages summarize that document and present samples of the maps, photographs and descriptions that comprise the technical report.

The release of a detailed acquisition plan to preserve the park's biological integrity comes at a propitious time. The State now has the funds to acquire much of the critical acreage pinpointed in the Council's survey. The purpose of Volume I is to help guide the State in this urgent effort.

The Council has identified 218,420 acres as outstanding biological treasures that cry out for lasting protection. As the crucial next step, the Council is urging the State to preserve more than half this acreage in a new Boreal Heritage Reserve — a magnificent legacy of lasting benefit to human beings, moose, spruce grouse, rare woodpeckers, quaking bogs, insect-eating pitcher plants, tamarack/spruce swamps, and a wondrous variety of other living things.

The Council also calls for the creation of a Champlain Valley Reserve, a 20,000-acre oasis of scenic woods, mountains, hills, lakeshores and farmlands that will be every bit as beautiful and "unimproved" in the year 2020 as it is today.

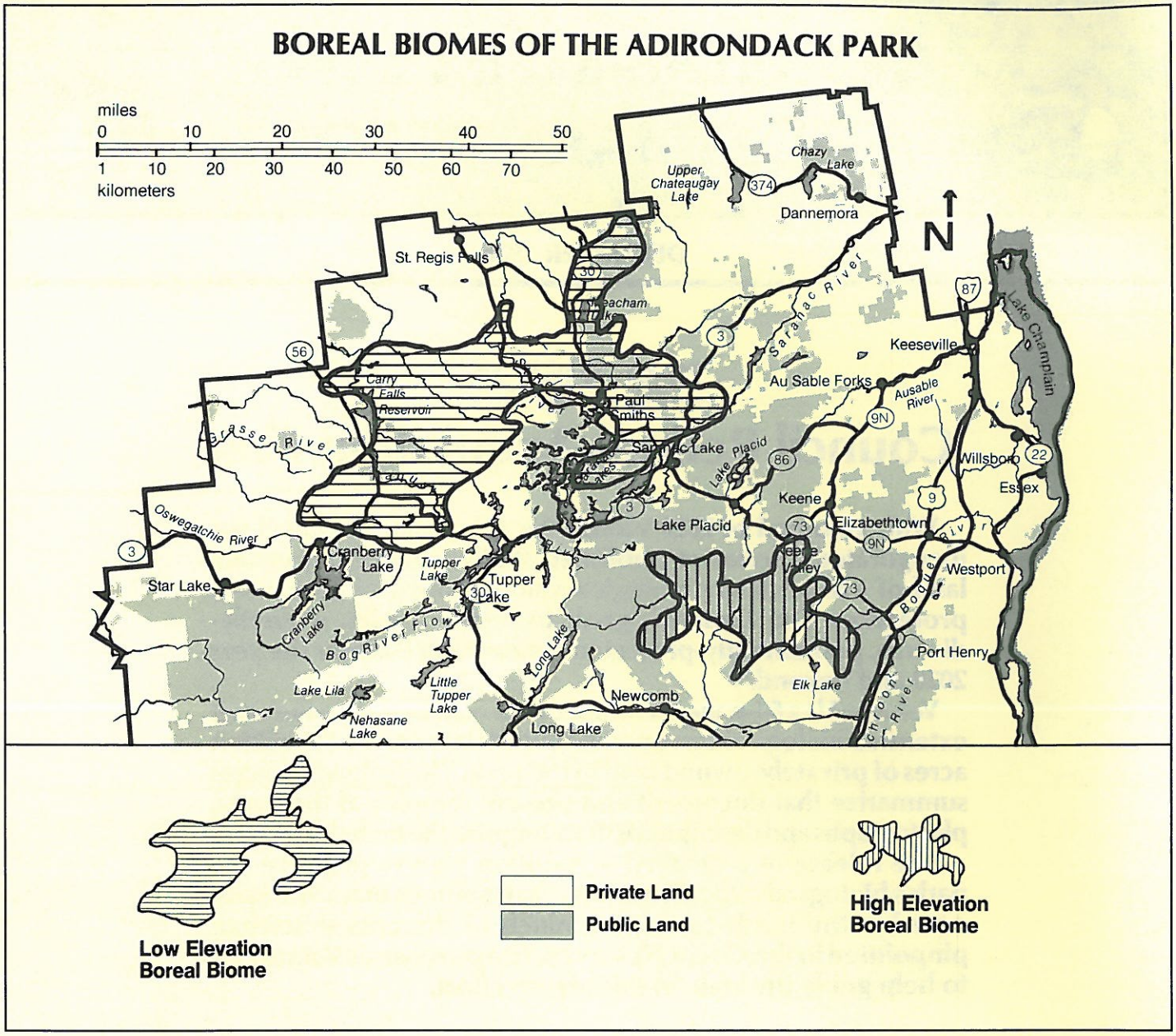
The remaining 74,000 acres covers 46 superb natural sites throughout the park, all of them threatened to some degree and all in need of permanent protection.

The Council makes specific recommendations on how this protection can be achieved. One means is State purchase, another involves conservation easements. State purchase incorporates private land into the "forever wild" Forest Preserve; conservation easements involve State purchase of development rights on a particular tract. Under such easements, the land remains in private hands, open-space uses like forestry and farming may continue, but any kind of disruptive development is precluded.

The Council also calls for studies on the feasibility of restoring healthy populations of such former Adirondack residents as the timber wolf and the moose. Maybe it's possible, maybe it isn't — but the Council believes that *no restoration opportunity should be overlooked.*

George D. Davis prepared Volume I for the Council. An ecologist, land-use planner and distinguished Adirondack conservationist (see page 15), Davis is currently identifying desirable additions to the Wilderness and Wild Forest categories of the public Forest Preserve. The Council will publish these findings next spring in Volume II.

A limited number of Volume I technical reports may be ordered from the Adirondack Council, Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932. To cover production and mailing costs, a donation of $10 per copy is requested.



WILD LEGACY ENVISIONED

Council Proposes Boreal Heritage Reserve

Boreal means northern — from Boreas, the mythological Greek god of the north wind. A biome is a regional community of living things. The words together describe a biological community that is common in northern Canada but almost non-existent in New York State except for portions of the Adirondack Park.

The boreal biome consists of spruces, firs and tamaracks, acidic bogs with cotton grass, insect-eating pitcher plants, the unwary (and rare) spruce grouse, and maybe, once again, the long-gone moose.

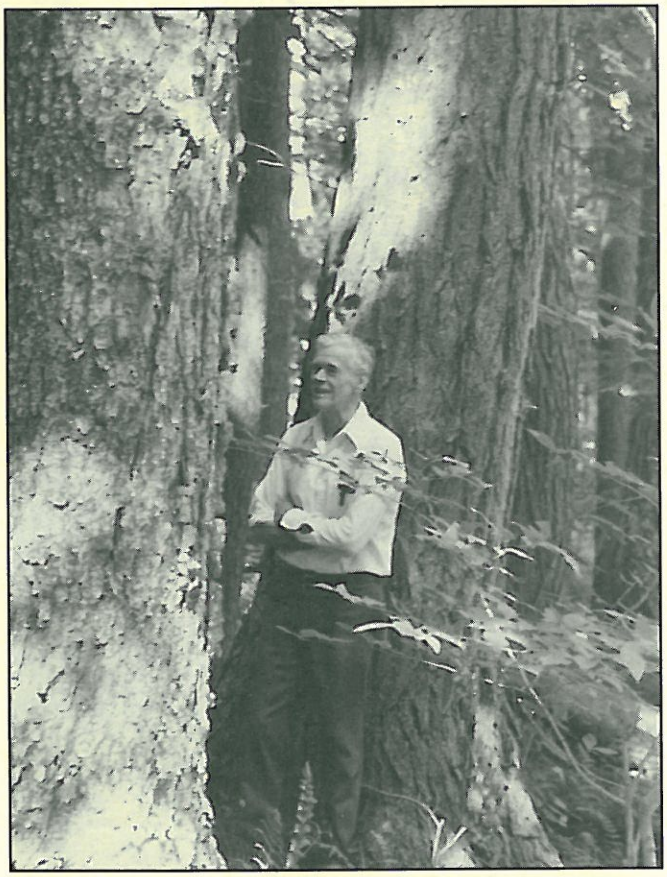
Most of the *high-elevation* boreal biome in the park is publicly-protected as part of the "forever wild" Forest Preserve. But the best of the *low-elevation* boreal biome is in private ownership. To save this exceptional community of life, the Council is urging the creation of a Low-Elevation Boreal Heritage Reserve (see page 4). Some 60,000 acres of adjoining boreal biome is already well on the way to becoming a private preserve through the efforts of The Nature Conservancy, which has been acquiring easements (the equivalent of buying but *not* using development rights) from the landowners.

The Council has identified the need for State acquisition of an additional 115,000 acres of boreal habitat. Public purchase is still a practical possibility; only nine landowners are involved, and property costs are among the lowest in the State.

Along with another 10,000 acres of scattered Forest Preserve parcels, the proposed Boreal Heritage Reserve will insure the survival of one of the rarest biomes in New York State.

Gary Randorf

AT HOME IN THE BIOME — As moose return to the Adirondacks, the park's low-elevation boreal biome can provide essential habitat for these widely-ranging ungulates and for a variety of other rare and unusual plants and animals.

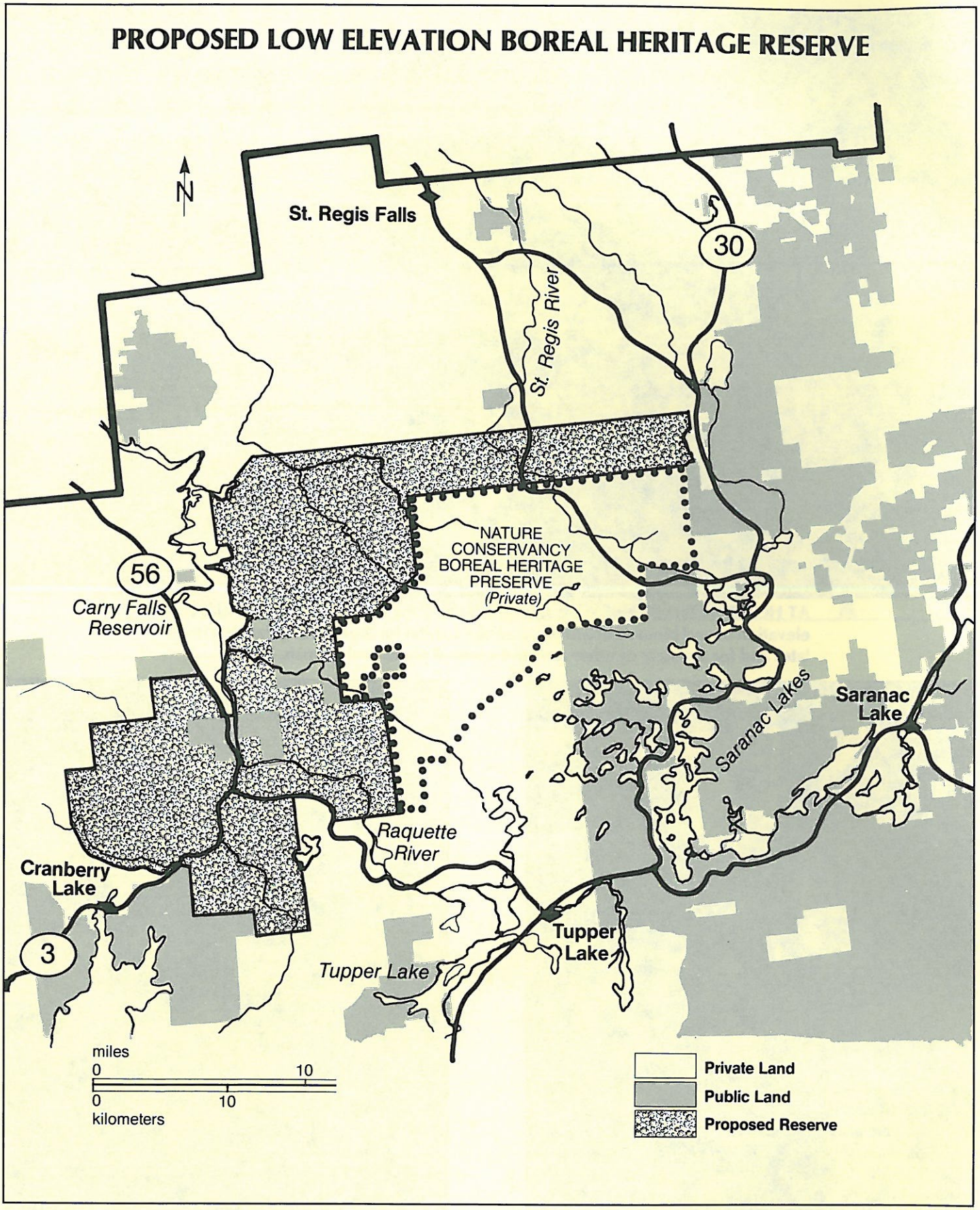


George D. Davis

GREENLEAF CHASE — Distinguished wildlife biologist who assisted with field studies for Volume I of 2020 Vision.

George D. Davis

DR. EDWIN H. KETCHLEDGE — Distinguished plant ecologist who assisted with field studies for Volume I.



A PUBLIC RESERVE AND A PRIVATE PRESERVE — The proposed Boreal Heritage Reserve, to be owned by and accessible to the public, will complement the private natural preserve also pictured above. Together these areas will protect for posterity the State's most important (and now very vulnerable) low-elevation boreal biome.

Champlain Valley Reserve Needed

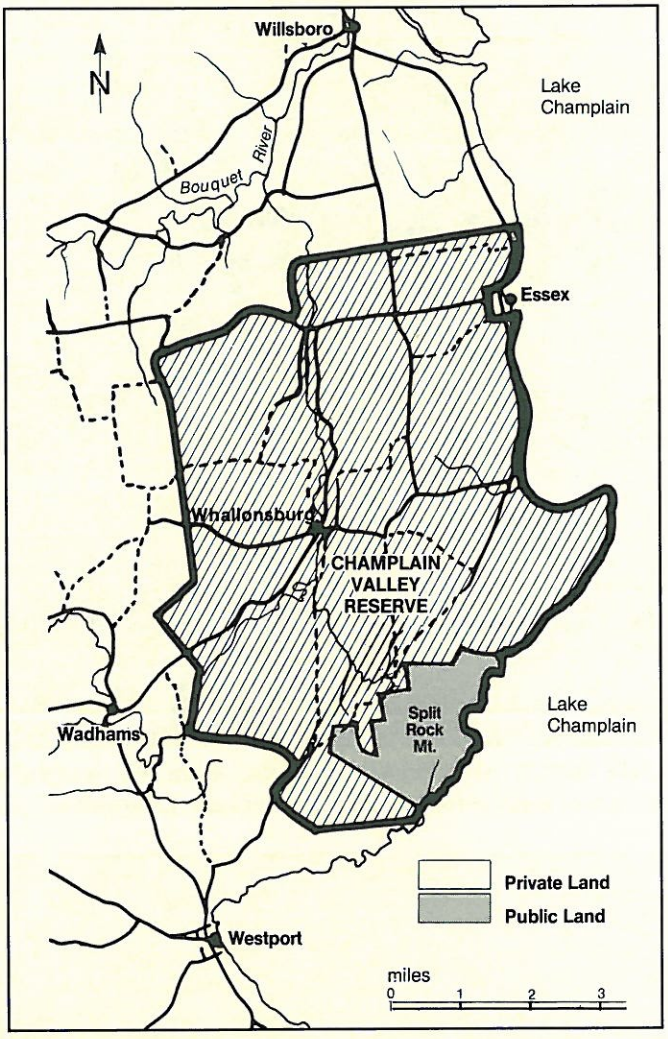
Lake Champlain, one of America's largest, loveliest, least developed freshwater lakes, forms the eastern boundary of the Adirondack Park. On the New York side, the pastoral valley rises gradually to a dramatic backdrop of hills and mountains. For both scenic and biologic diversity, this region is unmatched in the Adirondack Park.

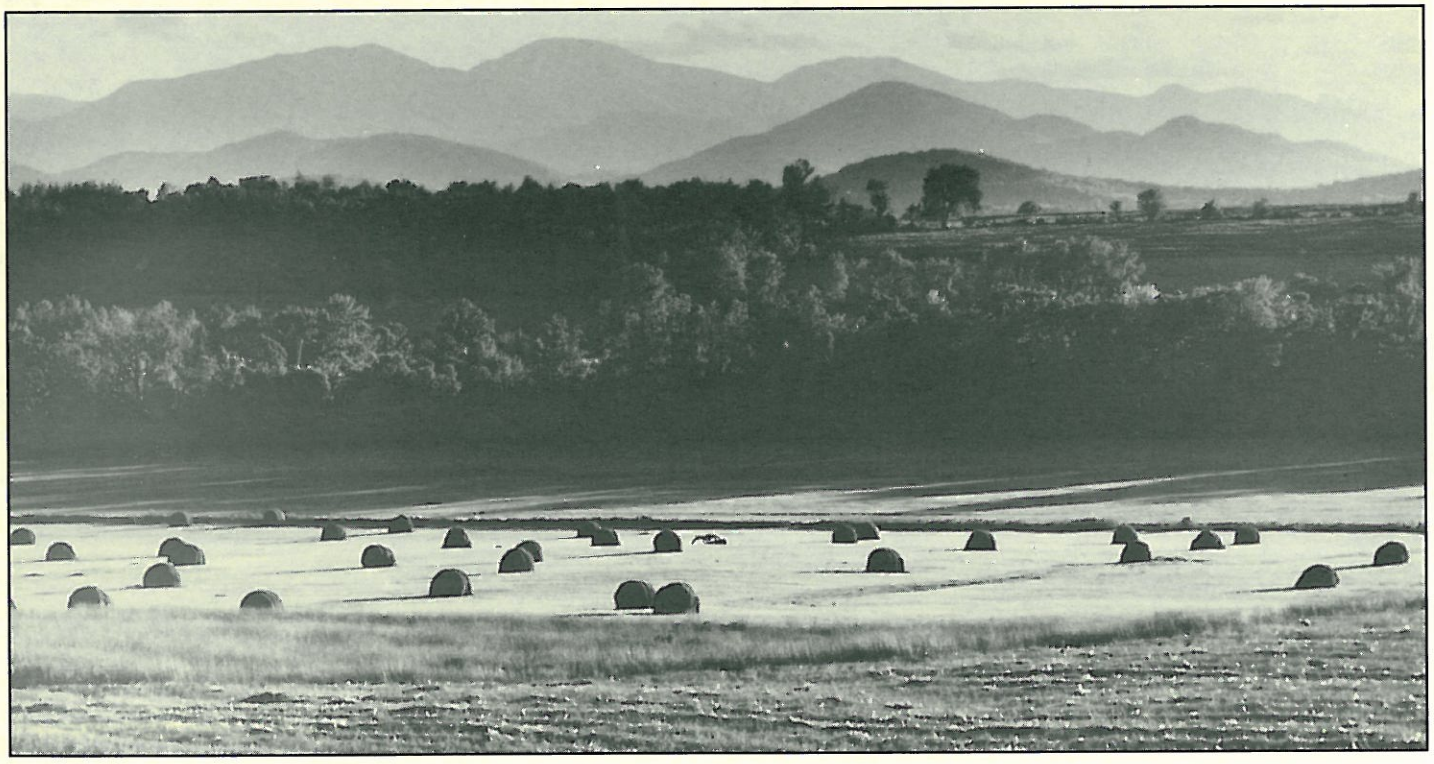
Though the valley comprises only 5% of the park, it is home for 155 of the 193 bird species that nest in the Adirondacks, and for more than half of the 62 tree species native to the Adirondack region.

Yet very little of the Champlain Valley enjoys the "forever wild" protection of the public Forest Preserve. To correct this imbalance, the Council recommends that the State acquire, for the Forest Preserve, Split Rock Mountain, adjacent Coon Mountain, and the nearby Bouquet Mountains. The Council also recommends that the cradle of farmland bounded by these mountains, and by Lake Champlain on the east, be protected with conservation easements.

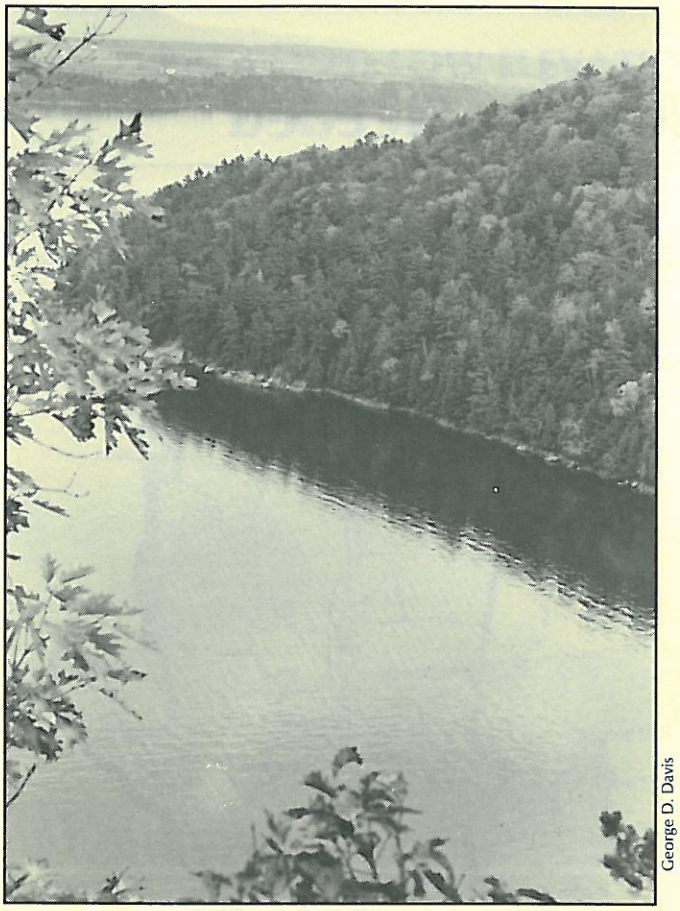
The project area (see map on right) totals 21,505 acres. The public already owns 2,155 acres on Split Rock Mountain. To preserve the valley's natural variety, an additional 8,350 acres should be acquired as Forest Preserve and 11,000 acres, much of it farmland, protected with conservation easements.

Land developers have begun to move into the area, and land values have doubled in the last two years. Not only the biological diversity of the valley, but its pastoral landscapes, scenic roadways, and sweeping views of the Adirondack High Peaks and Vermont's Green Mountains could be permanently degraded if the State fails to act quickly.



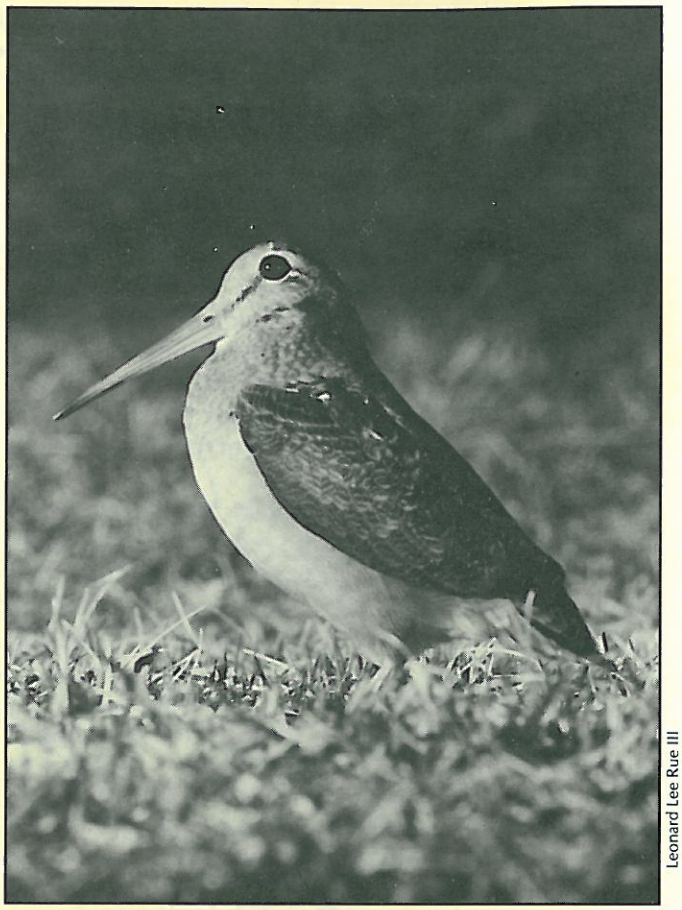


Gary Randorf



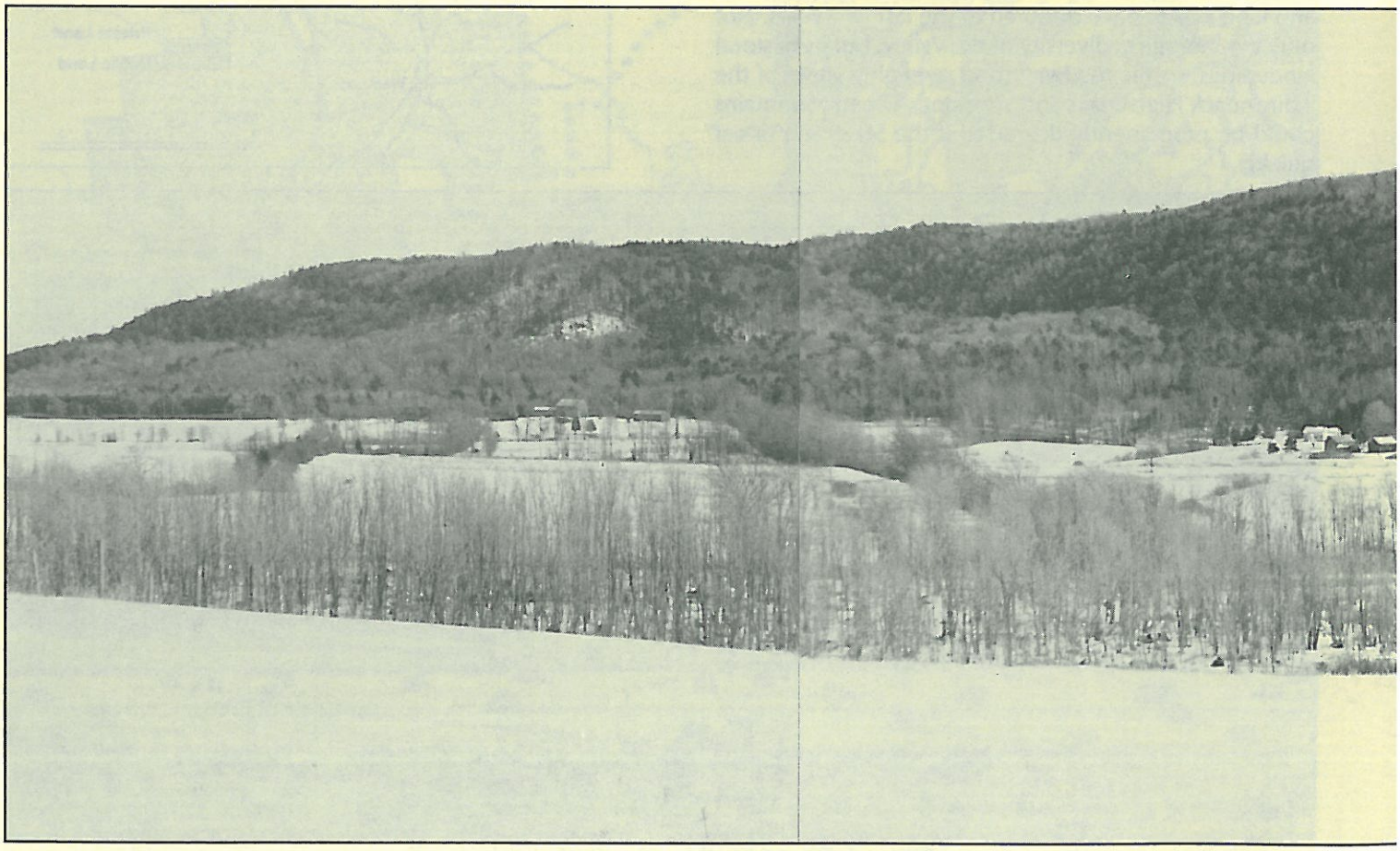
George D. Davis

SPLIT ROCK MOUNTAIN presides over the longest stretch of undeveloped shoreline on Lake Champlain.

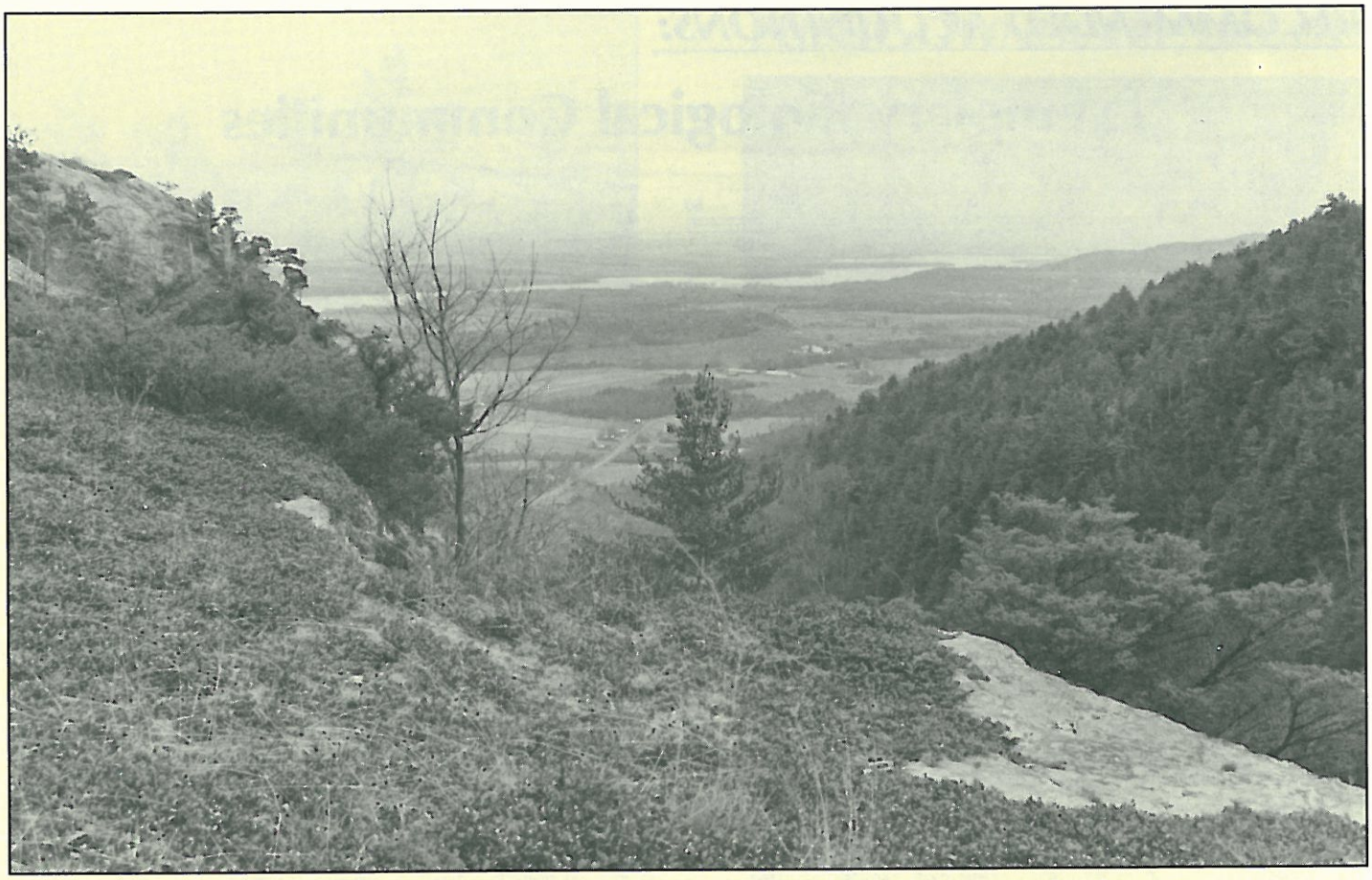


Leonard Lee Rue III

THE ELUSIVE WOODCOCK would be one of many beneficiaries of a Champlain Valley Reserve.

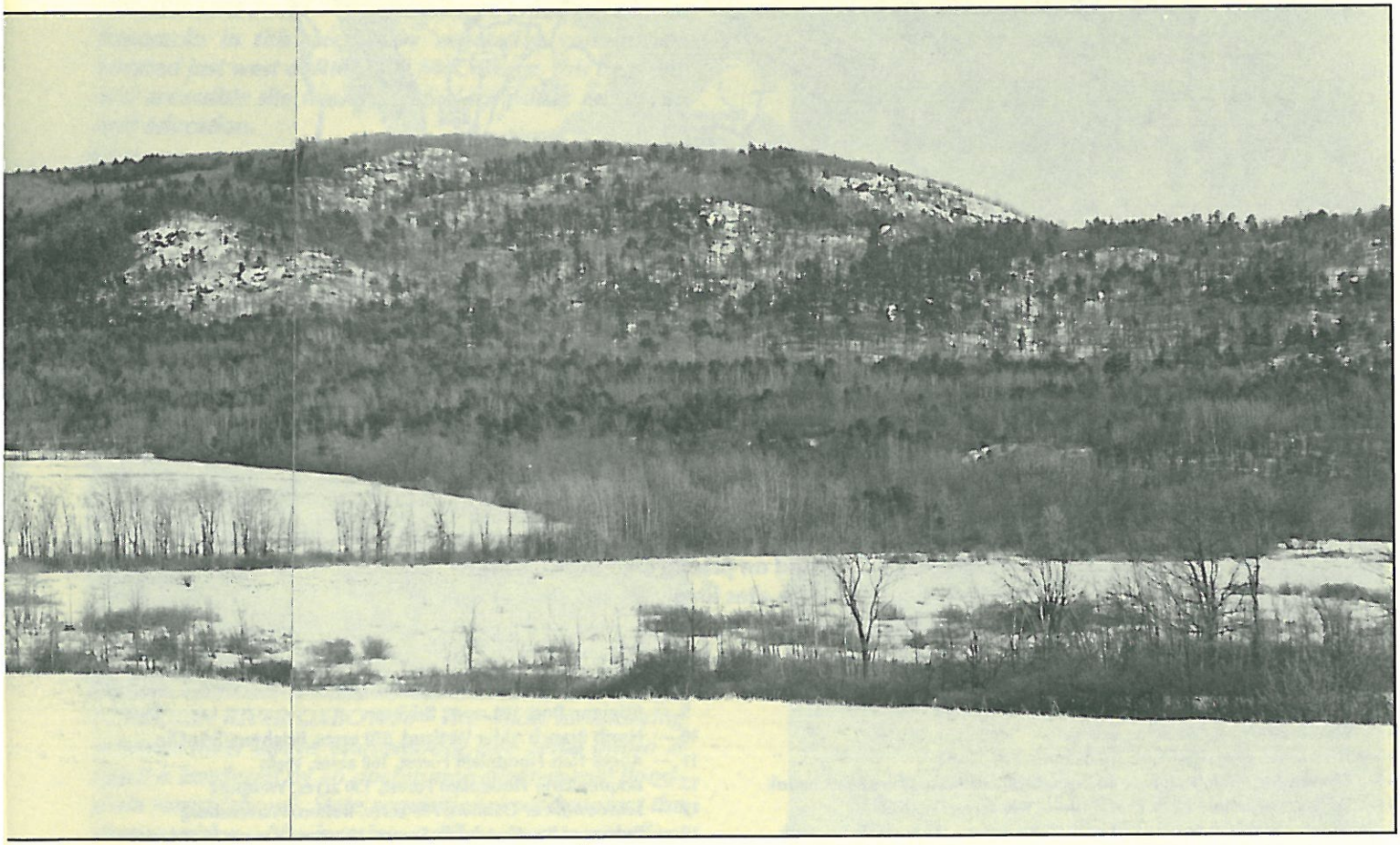


SPLIT ROCK MOUNTAIN WITH WEBB ROYCE SWAMP IN FOREGROUND —



George D. Davis

COOT HILL HAWK WATCH — Farther south, Coot Hill offers spectacular views across Lake Champlain plus the best hawk-watch site in the park. (See page 10.)

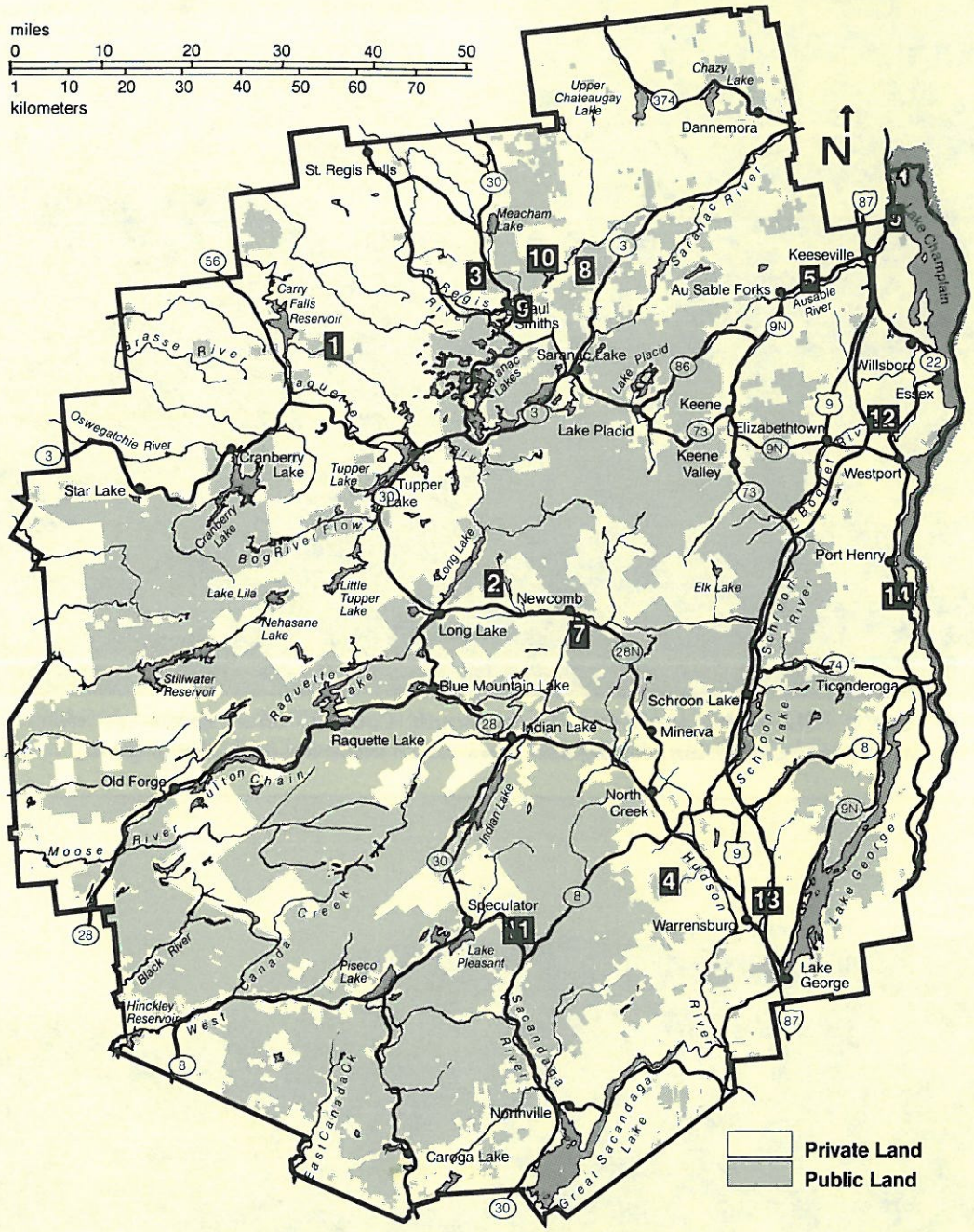


Gary Randorf

Essential ingredients of the proposed Champlain Valley Reserve.

RECOMMENDED ACQUISITIONS:

Exemplary Biological Communities



EXEMPLARY COMMUNITIES

Outstanding examples of biological communities (plants and associated wildlife) not well represented in the public Forest Preserve are found on private land in the Adirondack Park. Fourteen such sites involving 11,520 acres are listed here and described in Volume I.

1 — Kildare Old Growth, 4,600 acres, Hopkinton
2 — Huntington Forest Natural Area, 1,000 acres, Newcomb/Long Lake
3 — Forestmere Pine, 350 acres, Brighton
4 — Huckleberry Mt. Red Pine, 1,220 acres, Johnsburg
5 — Clintonville Pitch/Jack Pine Barrens, 1,230 acres, Ausable/Black Brook
6 — Wickham-Ausable Pitch Pine Barrens, 400 acres, Ausable
7 — Newcomb White Spruce/White Cedar Swamp, 310 acres, Newcomb
8 — Rockdale Bog, 70 acres, Franklin
9 — Brighton Bog, 100 acres, Brighton
10 — North Branch Alder Wetland, 870 acres, Brighton/Franklin
11 — Auger Flats Floodplain Forest, 160 acres, Wells
12 — Boquet River Floodplain Forest, 130 acres, Westport
13 — Schroon River Oxbows, 790 acres, Bolton/Warrensburg
14 — Bulwagga Bay Floodplain Forest, 290 acres, Crown Pt./Moriah

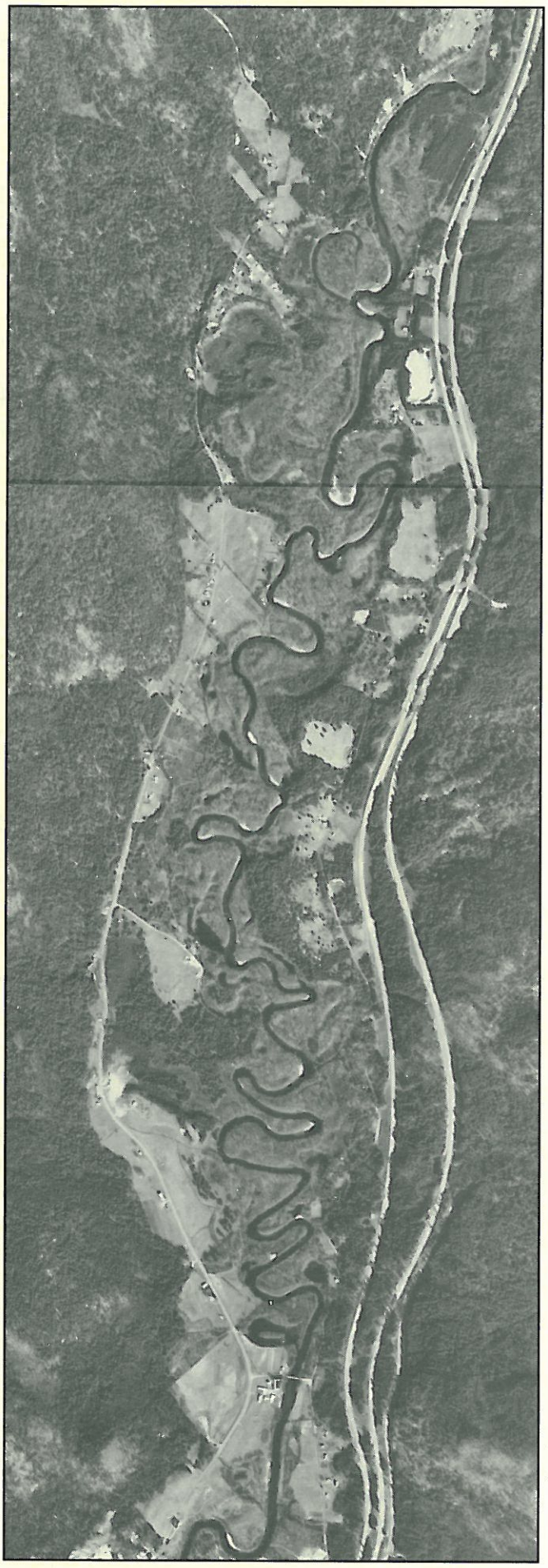
George D. Davis

FORESTMERE PINE — White pines tower above lakeside tamaracks in this exemplary vegetative community. Located just west of Rte. 30 at McCollums, this beautiful and accessible site would be ideal for public recreation and education.

George D. Davis

SCHROON RIVER OXBOWS — The wildly meandering Schroon River above Warrensburg (see aerial photo at right) is bordered by an uncommon silver-maple flood-plain forest (above). State acquisition would protect the river corridor while insuring public access to excellent canoeing.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP URGED



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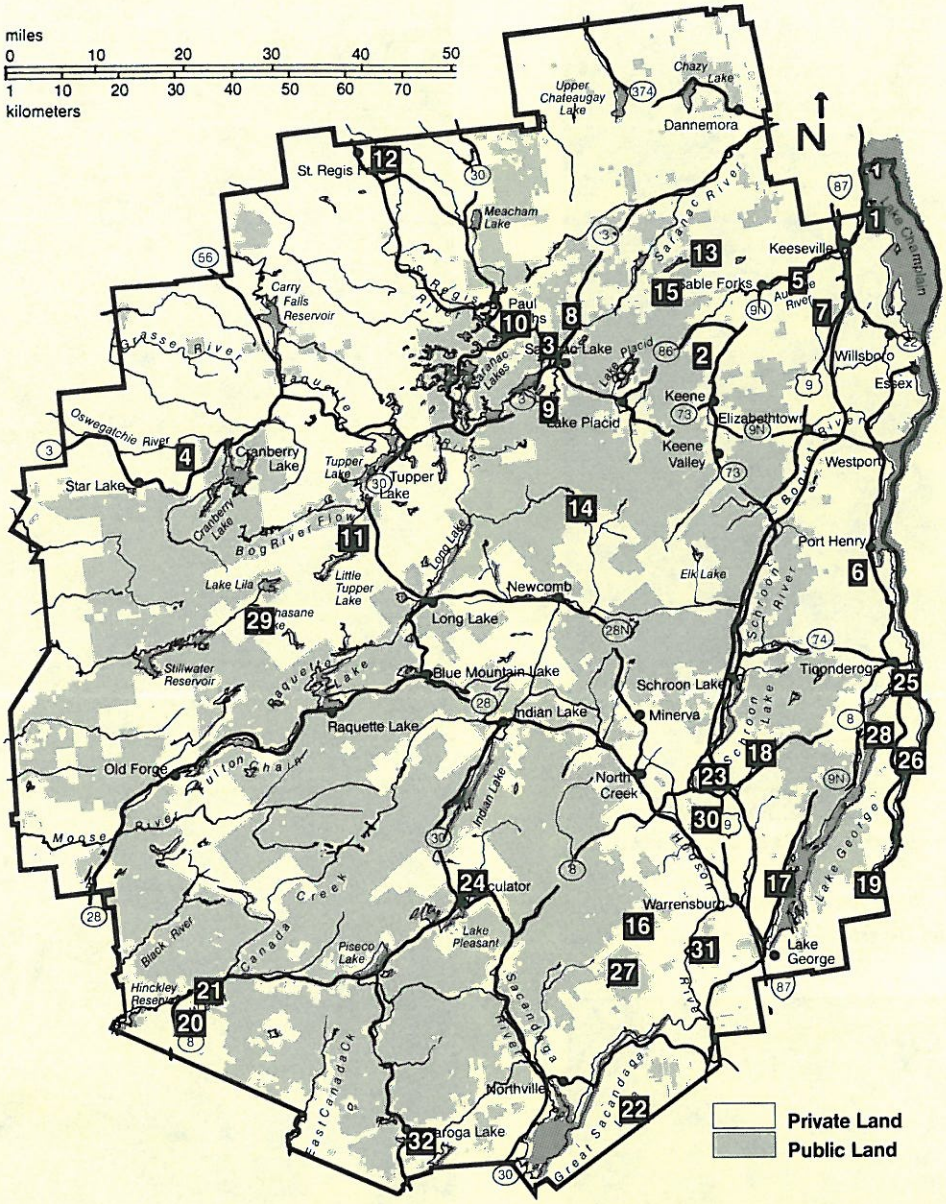
RECOMMENDED ACQUISITIONS:

Biologically Rich Or Unusual Sites



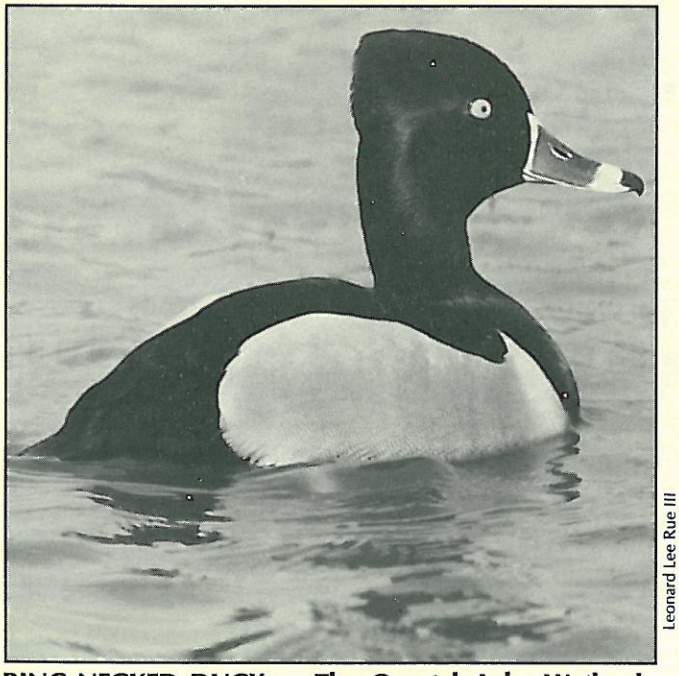
RICH OR UNUSUAL SITES

Thirty-two sites, totaling 62,550 acres, were identified for their biological richness or distinctiveness. These sites are mapped and described in Volume I.

1 — Ausable River Delta Floodplain Forest, 270 acres, Ausable/Peru
2 — Beaver Brook Valley, 2,790 acres, Wilmington
3 — Bloomingdale Bog, 1,110 acres, Harrietstown
4 — Chaumont Pond Wetlands, 4,750 acres, Clifton
5 — Cook Mountain, 1,980 acres, Ausable
6 — Coot Hill Hawk Watch, 440 acres, Crown Pt./Moriah
7 — Lime Ledges/Pok-O-Moonshine, 5,040 acres, Chesterfield
8 — Oregon Plains/Cold Brook, 2,150 acres, Franklin
9 — Oseetah Lake Wetlands, 460 acres, Harrietstown
10 — Rickerson Brook Headwaters, 5,580 acres, Brighton/Harrietstown
11 — Round Lake Wetlands, 3,090 acres, Long Lake
12 — St. Regis Falls Wetlands, 650 acres, Waverly
13 — Silver Lake Mountains, 2,210 acres, Black Brook
14 — Tahawus Talus, 160 acres, Newcomb
15 — Third Burnt Hill, 1,070 acres, Black Brook
16 — Baldhead Mt./Wolf Pond Wetlands, 1,540 acres, Stony Creek/Thurman
17 — Boon Bay/Huddle Bay Wetlands, 150 acres, Bolton
18 — Brant Lake Bog, 100 acres, Horicon
19 — Diameter and Pinnacle, 5,220 acres, Dresden/Fort Ann
20 — Kettle Lakes, 530 acres, Ohio
21 — Wilmurt Esker, Kettle Holes, Wetlands, 480 acres, Ohio
22 — Ireland Vly, 7,180 acres, Edinburg/Providence
23 — Jenks Swamp, 980 acres, Chester/Horicon
24 — Kunjamuk Wetlands, 2,220 acres, Lake Pleasant
25 — La Chute River Delta Wetlands, 220 acres, Ticonderoga
26 — Lake Champlain Narrows, 1,050 acres, Dresden/Putnam
27 — Lens Lake Bog/Livingston Lake, 780 acres, Stony Creek/Day
28 — Putnam Rookery, 200 acres, Putnam
29 — Shingle Shanty Brook Wetlands, 3,150 acres, Long Lake
30 — Sullivan Pond Wetlands, 270 acres, Chester
31 — Three Sisters-Number Seven Mountains, 2,830 acres, Warrensburg
32 — West Stony Creek Headwaters, 3,900 acres, Bleeker/Caroga

George D. Davis

BEAVER BROOK VALLEY — Here one of the most productive brook-trout wetlands in the park is surrounded by extraordinarily diverse upland communities. The pastures and hay fields still in use add to the diversity. The spruce-fir on Bassett Mountain, along with the white spruce and white pine at lower elevations, are boreal in nature — but in this valley they meet the more southerly red oak, basswood, and white ash. In all, 32 tree species are found here. The rich mix of habitats supports a wide variety of wildlife.

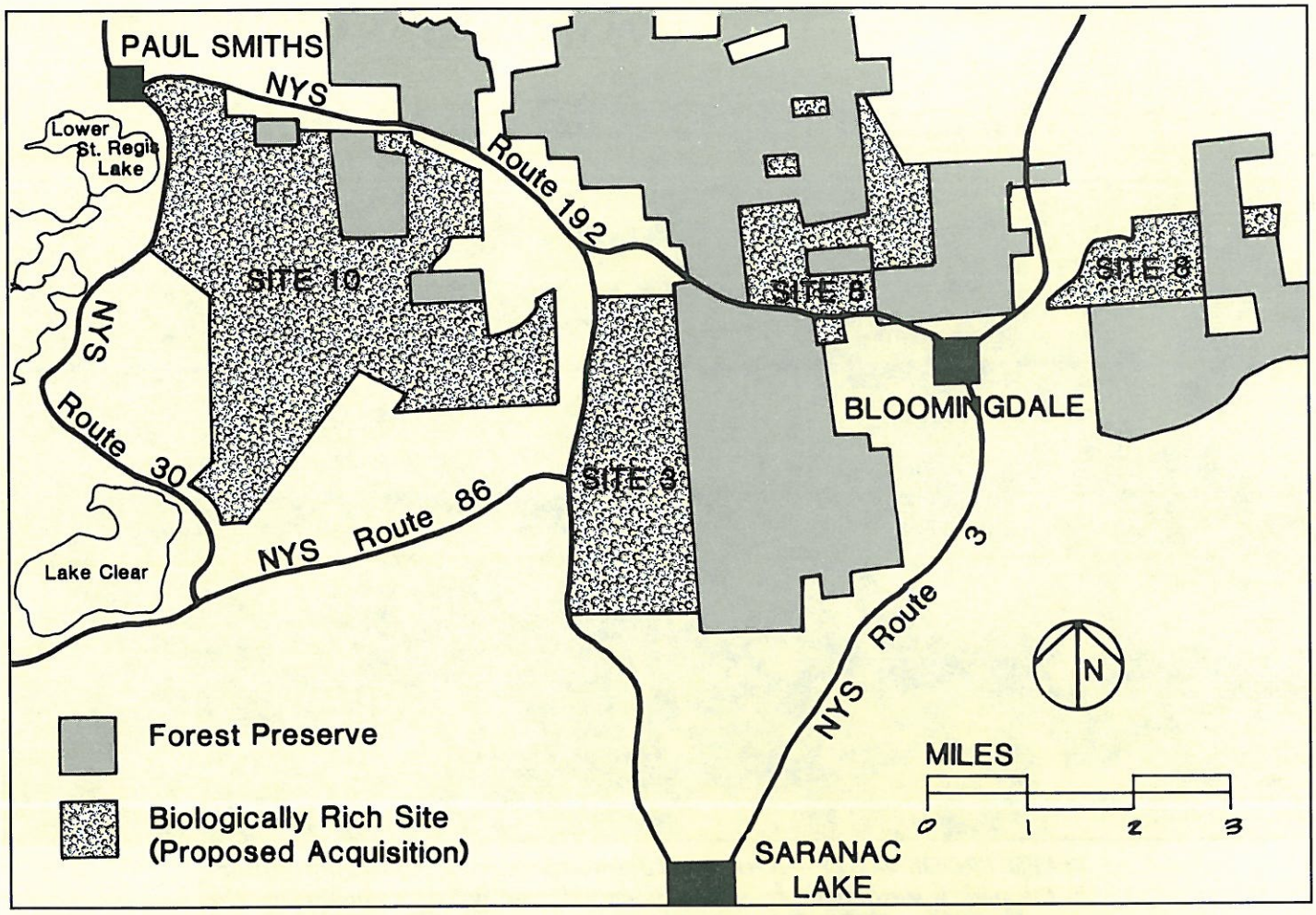


Leonard Lee Rue III

RING-NECKED DUCK — The Oseetah Lake Wetlands (site #9 on page 10) provide one of the few nesting areas for this bird in the Adirondack Park.

Mark Wilson

IMMATURE PEREGRINE FALCON — The spectacular rock ledges of the Silver Lake Mountains (site #13 on page 10) are ideal nesting habitat for peregrine falcons, golden eagles and ravens.



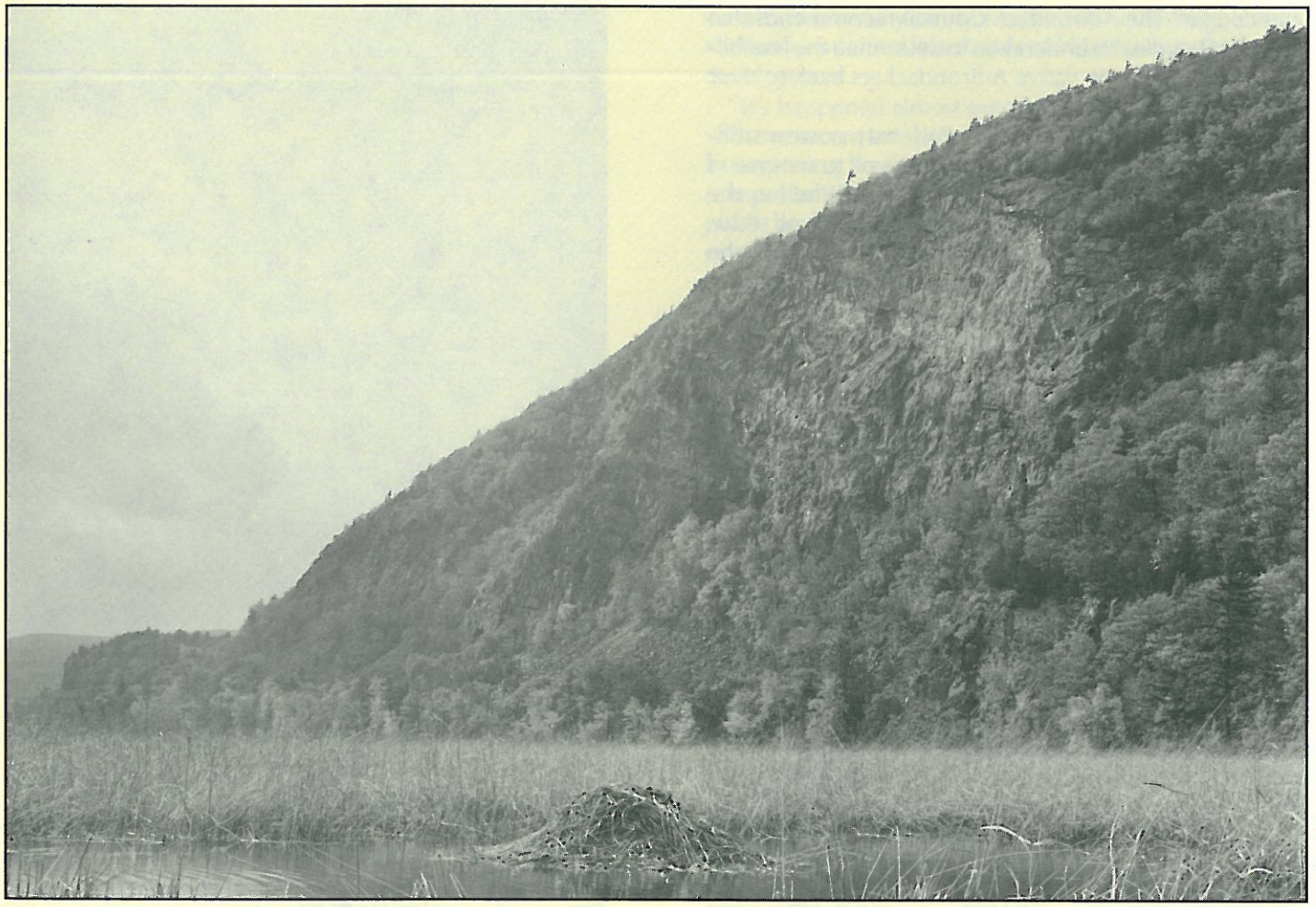
BIOLOGICAL TREASURE TROVES — The Council has identified three biologically-rich areas clustered just north of Saranac Lake Village: Rickerson Brook Headwaters (site #10), Bloomingdale Bog (site #3) and the Oregon Plains (site #8).

Robin J. Brown

BLOOMINGDALE BOG — An outstanding example of a climax flat-bog community, extremely rare in New York State. The bog contains at least four rare plant species — ground fir, mountain rice, Vasey's rush and dwarf birch. Boreal birds of special significance breed here, including the spruce grouse, black-backed three-toed woodpecker, grey jay, boreal chickadee, rusty blackbird, Lincoln's sparrow, and white-winged crossbill. The proposed acquisition would protect the bog, its surroundings, and the spectacular scenic vista from Rte. 86 at Donnelly's Corners.

George D. Davis

AUSABLE DELTA FLOODPLAIN FOREST — Much of the wooded wetland at the delta of the Ausable River, where it enters Lake Champlain, is privately-owned and undeveloped. Here old-growth silver maple and cottonwood trees provide key ingredients in an unusual floodplain forest.



Alan Cederstrom

DIAMETER AND PINNACLE — The Diameter's rock face, the inlet of South Bay in the foreground, and the Pinnacle ridge to the south, create a dramatic landform in the southeast Adirondacks. The inventory of natural features includes maple-basswood rich mesic forest, floodplain forest, deep emergent marsh, shallow marsh, inland calcareous lakeshore, shrub swamp, calcareous shoreline outcrop, cliff community, talus slope, and Appalachian oak-pine forest.

Council Advocates Restoration Studies

Unlike most of our increasingly crowded and exploited planet, the Adirondack Park is wilder today than a century ago. About 40% of the park is now Forest Preserve, an incomparable public resource that must be kept "forever wild." Much of the remaining private land is managed responsibly by timber companies for a sustained yield of trees — in contrast to the destructive "cut and run" logging practices of the 19th century.

In a natural environment, wildlife is the hallmark of quality. The Adirondack Park could be further improved by the re-establishment of wildlife species extirpated by human activities during the past 150 years.

Such efforts already appear to be working for the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle. An effort to restore the Canada lynx is currently underway. The moose, meanwhile, has begun a tentative restoration effort of its own.

But the moose needs all the help we can give it if a healthy breeding population is to be restored by the year 2020. And what of other extirpated species like the wolf and cougar? The Adirondack Council recommends that biological studies be underaken to determine the feasibility of bringing these native Adirondackers back to their former home.

For example, the Adirondack Park may possess sufficient wildness and range for the timber wolf to return and survive here (see map on opposite page). Whether the biological and political conditions are right for wolf restoration should be the subject of an immediate study by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, in cooperation with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Len Rue, Jr.

BALD EAGLE — On the way back in the Adirondack Park.

Len Rue, Jr.

TIMBER WOLF — Is there still a place for this former resident of the Adirondack ecosystem?

Looking To The Year 2020 And Beyond

What kind of Adirondack Park do we want in the year 2020 and beyond?

The Council's answer to that question is being developed in a series of studies entitled 2020 Vision — Fulfilling the Promise of the Adirondack Park.

George D. Davis, former program director and now a land-use consultant for the Council, has finished Volume I, the first of these technical reports (summarized in this special newsletter) and the most comprehensive survey yet undertaken of outstanding biological resources in the park. Davis and his associates, including biologists Greenleaf Chase and Dr. Edwin H. Ketchledge, have identified important plant and wildlife communities on the park's private lands that require permanent protection if the wildness and natural diversity of the region are to be preserved.

A second study, to be completed next spring, will show where the publicly-owned Forest Preserve should be expanded and consolidated to protect ecological and public recreational values.

"We have here the biggest and most naturally varied park — a truly unique combination of forests, mountains and waterways — in the lower 48 states," says Davis. "The park is also unique in being a fragmented hodge-podge of public and private lands. Until now, the private pieces, about 60% of the park, have remained more or less natural. But that's changing fast."

In his travels around the park, Davis has always marvelled at how easily an undisturbed mountainside, scenic roadway, or natural lakeshore could be forever altered by development.

"It's happened almost everywhere else," he says, "and with the recent invasion of subdividers and developers, it is beginning to happen here. Our greatest need is a comprehensive plan for the park that makes sense to the public and to the public officials who are supposed to be protecting the Adirondacks."

Earlier this year, the Council released its initial acquisition plan recommending that some 300,000 acres of private lands be permanently preserved through outright purchase by the State and also through the acquisition of conservation easements. Volume I of 2020 Vision carries that process a step farther by adding to the list of essential acquisitions and providing biological data to reinforce some of the earlier recommendations.

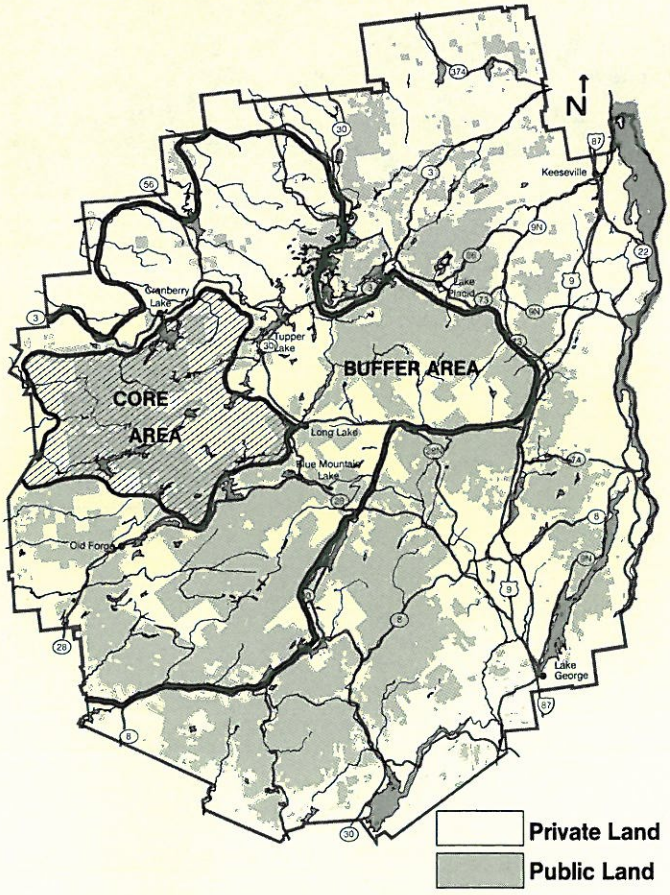
George Davis has long been involved in preservation efforts at both the state and federal level. In the 1970s, he served as the first director of planning for the Adirondack Park Agency and as principal staff architect of the APA's parkwide zoning plan. Prior to that he was staff ecologist for Governor Rockefeller's Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks. He has been executive director of The Wilderness Society, a citizens' group based in Washington, D.C., and national coordinator for RARE II, the U.S. Forest Service's roadless area review and evaluation of 62,000,000 acres of public land.

To Be Continued . . .

The 46 sites and two project areas highlighted in Volume I represent much of what is biologically significant on the private lands of the Adirondack Park. But other areas of equal or even greater significance may well exist — and these areas, too, must be identified and protected.

The Adirondack Council will continue to update this biological survey. In the meantime, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation should move quickly to provide lasting protection for the sites and project areas identified in Volume I.

MOST PROMISING WOLF RESTORATION HABITAT



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Urge Governor Cuomo to do everything in his power to protect the biological treasures identified by the Adirondack Council in Volume I of 2020 Vision. Remind the Governor that we have no time to lose. WRITE: Governor Mario Cuomo, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12244.

Leonard Lee Rue III

CANADA LYNX: RESTORATION EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY

The Adirondack Council
Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932
(518) 873-2240

A coalition of the National Audubon Society; The Wilderness Society; Natural Resources Defense Council; Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks; National Parks and Conservation Association; and other concerned organizations and individuals.

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