



Bill Ulfelder © Jonathan Grassi

Dear Friend,

Across New York and the Appalachians, healthy rivers, streams and wetlands are essential for clean water, wildlife habitat and protecting local communities from flooding and climate change. Yet these natural resources are threatened by pollution, development and fragmented habitats.

With your help, The Nature Conservancy is safeguarding these landscapes—reconnecting rivers and restoring wildlife pathways. In the Adirondacks, we protected the remarkable Follensby property (see p.52), reconnected 90 miles of the Boquet River, and partnered with transportation agencies to design infrastructure around nature and wildlife.

We're advocating for smarter policies, upgrading roads, bridges and other infrastructure to withstand more intense storms, and securing greater protections for vital waterways. Together, we're leading the way toward a livable climate, healthy communities and thriving nature.

We couldn't do this work without you—thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Ulfelder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director



As the climate changes, wildlife must seek new habitats—often navigating dangerous road crossings. © Gordon Ellmers

## Rethinking infrastructure to help wildlife and people

Protecting nature for future generations requires rethinking where and how we build our communities. As climate change reshapes the habitats animals depend on, they must move to survive—but roads, poorly designed culverts (tunnels that carry water under roads) and other barriers often block their way. In the Lake Champlain region alone, nearly 3,000 culverts are too small for today's wetter climate and are overwhelmed by more frequent and severe floods.

The Nature Conservancy is leading a regional effort to upgrade this infrastructure so animals can move safely and water can flow naturally—reducing flooding and protecting wildlife.

“Poorly designed stream tunnels block water and animals,” says Wildlife Connectivity Manager Alissa Fadden. “Replacing them helps rivers flow, lowers flood risk and makes roads safer for everyone. We're not just fixing roads—we're restoring vital pathways for nature. By reconnecting rivers, we're enhancing public safety so roads don't blow out during floods, protecting wildlife and safeguarding the places we call home.”

After heavy rains, Cold Brook in the Adirondacks once surged against outdated culverts, flooding roads and stranding families. Today, clear water flows through restored streams, trout glide beneath rippling currents, and dragonflies and warblers thrive along the banks.

“These upgrades also save money,” Fadden adds. “Better-designed culverts mean fewer road washouts and expensive repairs. By making infrastructure more nature friendly, we're solving climate and safety challenges at the same time.”



Alissa Fadden paddles through a new stream tunnel, scaled to handle the right volume of water and keep this stream from overflowing its banks. © Kurt Gardner

## NATURE NEW YORK

The New York Division supports conservation initiatives around the globe. Here is a recent highlight:

**30%**  
of Gabon's land, ocean  
and freshwater will be  
protected thanks to a  
new partnership



In Gabon, we will help protect 24,000 square kilometers of forestland (about the size of Vermont), 8,000 square kilometers of ocean and 4,800 kilometers of rivers. © Roshni Lodhia

# Helping nature move freely

## Q&A with Alissa Fadden, wildlife connectivity manager

**What first drew you to habitat restoration?** In 2010, I joined an effort linking habitats across the northern Appalachians into Canada and discovered I felt a deep commitment to helping wildlife move safely through human-shaped landscapes. Installing a “critter shelf” in 2017 showed me how small changes can make a big difference. I saw firsthand how many animals, like bobcats, used it to safely cross under a road. Since then, I've led larger-scale regional work with transportation departments to champion wildlife-friendly infrastructure, leveraging science, training and public investment to create lasting impact.

**What results are you seeing?** Reconnecting rivers restores natural water flow, which helps fish and other aquatic animals return to habitats from which they were cut off. Brook trout and freshwater mussels are now being observed in places where they haven't been seen in decades. These changes also benefit land animals—bears, deer, otters and bobcats regularly use safe passageways under roads, reducing deadly collisions between animals and vehicles.

**Why does this matter to people?** By designing infrastructure that works better for wildlife, we're not only improving climate resilience and public safety—we're also making smart economic investments. Wildlife-friendly stream crossings reduce costly road damage, lower maintenance expenses, and help prevent vehicle collisions with animals, which carry significant financial and human costs. This is central to our work in the Appalachian region—which stretches from Alabama to Canada and is one of North America's most biodiverse and climate-resilient areas. We help direct funding to projects that benefit both human and natural communities.

**What stands out most from your experience?** Partnerships. Real change is happening because conservation and transportation experts are working together—and thanks to our supporters, we are uniquely positioned to lead that collaboration.

Gabon and Kenya are home to incredible wildlife and diverse ecosystems, from cloud forests to savannas. Gabon has more than half of the world's forest elephants and more than a quarter of its lowland gorillas, while Kenya is home to the “Big Five” (lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant and buffalo) as well as 25,000 other animal species.

Through the Enduring Earth partnership with four other leading global conservation organizations, we are funding Gabon and Kenya's ambitious conservation goals. In Gabon, we are helping to protect 30% of its land, ocean and fresh water while supporting community livelihoods and reducing human-wildlife conflict. In Kenya, we are building on the country's impressive network of community-led conservancies to create new protected areas, support livelihoods for 1.3 million households and contribute to climate mitigation and resilience.