



# the greenway

## APPALACHIAN TRAIL ADVENTURES

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# Message from the President

LIDIA SOTO-HARMON, PRESIDENT AND CEO



**THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION** has a long and proud history of inspiring the next generation of conservation leaders. As we usher in the holiday season, it is important to pause for reflection on what we have accomplished and be thankful.

Since 1957, the SCA has provided more than 100,000 young people with valuable opportunities to work outdoors. This milestone would not have been possible without our long-standing partners and donors like you.

We know that youth who are motivated and committed to protecting the planet and the communities we serve will become essential catalysts for change and advocates for environmental justice. This past summer, I was fortunate to see the impact first-hand that you, the SCA and our partners

are having on the lives of young people who are enhancing green spaces, protecting the planet and sustaining the legacy of our public lands for future generations.

Having joined the SCA in April 2023, I am humbled to be surrounded by our partners and staff who are dedicated to the aims and values that have guided the SCA for more than 65 years, including the very mission that has earned your steadfast support. Across the country, I saw our programs changing lives and encouraging young people to explore and push themselves.

As you read about our SCA members' impressive work, please consider including them in your year-end giving plans. Together, we can continue transforming lives and protecting our precious natural resources for generations.

On behalf of all of us at the SCA, we thank you for your continued support and wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season.

*Lidia Soto-Harmon*



# Transforming Trails and Working for Wildlife

**MANY SCA TEAMS AND CREW MEMBERS WRAPPED UP** a successful summer season of improving green spaces and protecting the different species that inhabit them. From essential trail maintenance and preserving habitats to educating the public on endangered or threatened wildlife, crew members significantly impacted public lands. Read on to learn more.

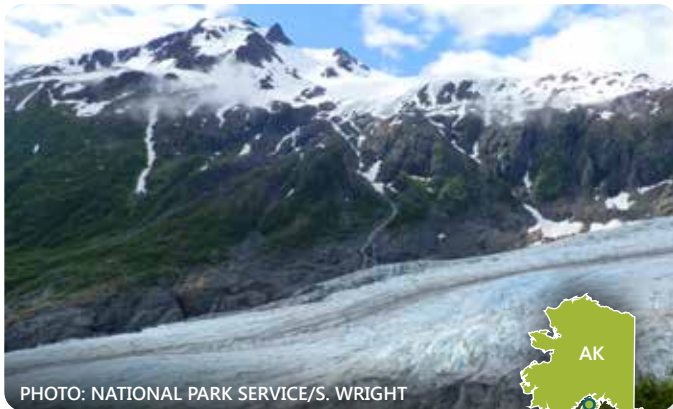


PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE/S. WRIGHT

## KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK

Originally named for the Hoary Marmots frequently seen here, Marmot Meadows offers incredible views of Alaska's Exit Glacier and the largest icefield in the United States. The SCA Katmai & Kenai Fjords Trail Crew worked to fill in gaps in the maintenance department and raised five to six inches of tread, the surface of the trail, vertically over a 200-foot horizontal stretch of the Harding Icefield trail.



PHOTO: U.S. FOREST SERVICE/MATT NICKOLS

## SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST

Most of the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon is dedicated to developing old-growth forests, which are critical habitats for recovering threatened species like the Northern spotted owl. The SCA's Field Ranger Intern led outreach efforts for threatened wildlife species like the Northern spotted owl and more.



## PRAIRIE POTHOLAS REGION

Often called America's "duck factory," the Prairie Pothole Region is home to nearly half of the continent's duck population for at least part of the year. Prairie potholes are essential water sources that help recharge underground aquifers. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, SCA crew members spent 12 weeks improving waterfowl habitat and reducing the risk of wildfires across the region.



## HOUSTON, TEXAS

As part of the SCA's Urban Green program in Houston, participants learned how to work as members of a diverse team of peers while gaining knowledge of public land resources and local and global environmental issues. The SCA Houston Youth Conservation Leadership Corps completed data collections of vegetation and invertebrates at Thomas Bell, Woodlands Park and Little Thicket. They completed trail maintenance at Katy Prairie Conservatory and removed invasive plant species around the city. Overall, the crew improved 1,548 feet of trail.



# Restoring the Appalachian Trail



**THE SCA'S NATIONAL CONSERVATION CREWS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS OFFERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS A CHANCE TO VISIT PLACES THEY'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE AND ENJOY NATURE AT ITS BEST.** While working on the crew, participants live on-site in tents, cook their own meals and get to explore local outdoor recreation opportunities on non-workdays.

This summer, the 2023 Appalachian Trail National Crew spent four weeks along mile 1,977 of the Appalachian Trail near Rangeley, Maine, in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The crew of six high school students worked on several projects across a two-mile stretch of trail that needed numerous stepping stones and water bar installations to prevent erosion and improve safety. In some boggy areas, the crew removed previously installed wooden log bridges that had decayed, replacing them with stepping stones that will last for decades.

"I've always lived in big cities and am not used to a lot of nature. I just loved it. It was the best summer experience I have ever had," said crew member Clemence Gaume, 16, who made the trek to Maine from Singapore. "Setting a stone on the trail is like setting your mark. At first, it was really hard. But once I put in my first stone, I knew I could do it. The hard work brings you closer because you must work together to complete the work. You get to leave with a deeper connection to the outdoors and friends for life."

With every SCA experience, participants complete projects that solve real conservation challenges and see the tangible results of their labor. Following unprecedented amounts of rain during the summer season, through this work, the crew members learned first-hand how to impact the world around them while learning to explore and grow.





“I am endlessly grateful to have had the opportunity to understand the pivotal role that human connection plays in conservation—from the universal joy expressed by hikers that have spent weeks or months with a chorus of woodpeckers and rustling leaves harmonizing with their steps to the unending kindness shared by Rangeley folk both on- and off-trail,” said Megan Miller, 16, of New York.

The Appalachian Trail is a 2,180+ mile long public footpath that traverses the scenic, wooded, pastoral, wild and culturally resonant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. Conceived in 1921, built by private citizens, and completed in 1937, the trail is now managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, numerous state agencies and thousands of volunteers.

“What I’ve taken from the SCA is how environmental conservation impacts people. Helping people feel safe and included in the outdoors is a big reason I keep returning to the SCA,” said multiple crew member turned crew leader Ingrid Piña, 23, of Houston. “Working with the SCA has given me great confidence that has helped me in all realms of my life. If I ever feel shy or nervous, I can think back to my time with the SCA, pushing through uncomfortable moments and knowing I can do hard things. You can see that same confidence building in the crew members.”

The crew was nestled in the shadow of Mount Katahdin, just south of Baxter State Park in Maine, where The Nature Conservancy’s Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area manages nearly 500,000 acres of contiguous conservation land. Debsconeag means “carrying place,” named by the people of the Penobscot Nation for the portage sites where

### ... BY THE NUMBERS ...



**2,600**  
feet of Appalachian  
Trail improved



**84**  
thru-hikers and day-hikers  
educated about trail work



**46**  
stepping  
stones set



**2**  
waterbars  
built



**1**  
turnpike  
built

they carried their birch bark canoes around rapids and waterfalls. The area contains the highest concentration of pristine, remote ponds in New England and thousands of acres of mature forests.

Before joining the crew in the field, crew leader Ma’yet, 47, of Portland, Oregon, backpacked 100 miles solo along the Appalachian Trail. Despite the continuous rains, the former science teacher was impressed with how the crew members battled the elements from heavy rains and smoke from the Canadian wildfires and disconnected from technology.

“Hiking, camping, and backpacking are something I do regularly. The hardest part was all the rain. It was a constant battle. Everything was green and wet,” they said. “It was nice to see the crew members develop and grow. Everybody acted as a community. This is a life-changing experience that, if you lean into it, will fundamentally change your life in a positive way. It helps you learn more about yourself and what you’re capable of and that there is beauty outside of technology.”





STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

# 2023 IMPACT



**2,024**

SCA members  
in 2023



**757** Interns

**660** Urban Green & National Crew Members

**549** Corps & Leader Crew Members

**58** Conservation Work Skills, Training,  
& Event Members



**884,366**

total hours of  
conservation service



**157,535**

acres of land or  
wetland improved



**451,718**

people received  
education & outreach



**42,704**

trees planted

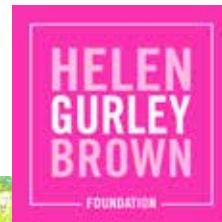


**1,640**

miles of trail built  
or improved



# BridgeUP: Environment



THANKS TO GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE HELEN GURLEY BROWN FOUNDATION, the SCA can provide the BridgeUP: Environment program for high schoolers. This summer, 30 New York City BridgeUP: Environment students were part of three crews that worked on several projects, including trail maintenance, invasive species removal and minor construction tasks.



The Van Cortlandt Park Crew spent the summer in the Bronx restoring a hazardous section of a beloved hiking trail, picking up trash and removing invasive plants before moving to Alley Pond Park in Queens, where they re-routed nearly 200 feet of trails. The program also featured environmental education presentations throughout the week, covering topics from stormwater management to wetland ecology and restoration.

“This has been one of the greatest times of my young life. I love being able to work outside and just enjoy nature in all its glory,” said Adrian Rosado, 15, of the Bronx, adding that he would like to become a crew leader in the future. “I have learned many important life skills, like using tools, communication and social skills. It has been an honor to be selected for the SCA and have such a great chance to make a change.”

Powered by the Helen Gurley Brown Foundation, BridgeUP is a multi-year, multi-disciplinary after-school and summer educational program founded and based in New York City, with new branches in Houston and San Francisco. Together, we are exposing young people to the great outdoors and creating a pathway to future careers in conservation.

“Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity to be a part of something so much bigger than myself. I’ve enjoyed

bonding with my crew mates and working together with them,” said Bella Anglade, 14, of the Bronx. “I have many fond memories from this experience and am incredibly grateful for this opportunity.”

Through BridgeUP: Environment, the SCA can continue to deliver opportunities in community conservation service, environmental education, workforce development, and leadership and career training for participants.

“Working with our crew truly impacted me physically and mentally. Physically, it has made me stronger and mentally, it made me realize I can do more than what I knew,” said Delilah Medina, 15, of the Bronx. “All the activities gave me an experience and knowledge I can use in the future as an adult. I truly learned to enjoy the nature around me, and I’m grateful for that experience. I hope to return again next year.”

## SCA VIRTUAL CONSERVATION CAREER FAIR IS COMING FEB. 20!

Mark your calendar for the SCA Virtual Conservation Career Fair on Feb. 20. If you are looking for a job, seeking professional development or hoping to network, be sure to join us. Save the date and learn more today!

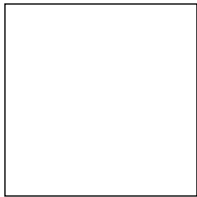




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The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's largest and most effective youth conservation service organization. SCA conserves lands and transforms lives by empowering young people of all backgrounds to plan, act, and lead, while they protect and restore our natural and cultural resources. Founded in 1957, SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders.

BOARD CHAIR: Gail Carmody  
PRESIDENT/CEO: Lidia Soto-Harmon  
EDITOR: Sarah Hoyer  
GRAPHIC DESIGN: Julia Eva Bacon



# Alumni Spotlight

## KYLE YARUSSO

WHEN KYLE YARUSSO RESPONDED TO A COLLEGE BULLETIN BOARD posting for internships with the SCA, he didn't expect his environmental and ecology studies to lead him on a path to event and volunteer management.

"I thought I would end up at a state Department of Natural Resources or something more science-based, doing studies, research or lab work," Yarusso said. "The SCA (programs) helped me realize I could take that degree and make a career out of being a people person."

Through two terms of service with the SCA, Yarusso interned with the Centennial Volunteer Ambassador program—a collaboration with the National Park Service and the SCA to prepare for the parks' centennial celebrations in 2016—where he coordinated large-scale volunteer events at the White House and the National Mall.

That experience led to work at President's Park, which includes the public lands surrounding the White House, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, both in the nation's capital. Yarusso is now the Volunteer and Youth Programs Coordinator at Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., where he oversees a volunteer program that engages many partner organizations and over 5,000 volunteers annually.



Additionally, he works with youth organizations to provide internships and trail crew opportunities within the park.

"The National Park Service, through the SCA, allowed me to see a different side of myself. SCA internships take our degree, schooling, or previous life experience and help translate them into a career and future in the environmental movement," he said. "It's allowed me to connect with others, share my experiences, and has left me better positioned to have conversations about climate change and our environmental impacts."

### MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT!

Contributions made by **December 31** will be **matched** by a generous group of donors! Your gift will make a lasting difference in the lives of our young members and the public lands we are working hard to protect.

Make your gift today at [thesca.org/match23](https://thesca.org/match23)

