

FROM THE FLIGHT LOG

Birds-Eye Perspective Aids Salt Marsh Restoration in New York City

LightHawk partnered with the New York City Chapter of the National Audubon Society last summer to assist the group in their bird and wildlife habitat restoration efforts in Jamaica Bay. VP Mike McNamara took volunteers over five salt marsh areas they are working to restore, including Plumb Beach and Marine Park, to document their progress, guide management efforts, and to help spur federal and city agency action.

Salt marshes play a critical role in sustaining New York's ecosystem, reducing erosion and filtering pollutants and debris that would otherwise contaminate the city's bays. Jamaica Bay is an 18,000-acre wetland estuary that provides a unique environment for wildlife, including more than 325 species of birds.

Industrialization and human activity, however, have destroyed many of the region's marshes. In the last 200 years, New York has lost more

than 80 percent of its original salt marshes. This valuable ecosystem continues to disappear at an alarming rate.

Plumb Beach, part of the Gateway National Recreation Area, has been eroded by wind and tide since its creation through construction of the Belt Parkway. Photos gathered during Audubon's flight with LightHawk will be compared to outdated U.S. Army Corps of Engineer photos and used to document the severe erosion and drift occurring there. Photo-evidence will be shared with the National Park Service in an effort to urge mitigation of the marsh and beach restoration.

"Seeing a familiar marsh from above reveals the proportions and relationship of topographic features that will be very useful in tracking ecological changes." — Ronald Bourque, National Audubon Society, New York City Chapter

Marine Park has been subject to abuse by all-terrain vehicle use and illegal dumping that includes vehicles abandoned and burned on-

site. NYC Audubon had taken photographs of the ecological damage from the ground and registered complaints, but DPR and other city agencies have yet to adequately respond. The group hopes the impact of aerial photographs obtained by working with LightHawk, which document the scope of the damage, will bring some remedy.

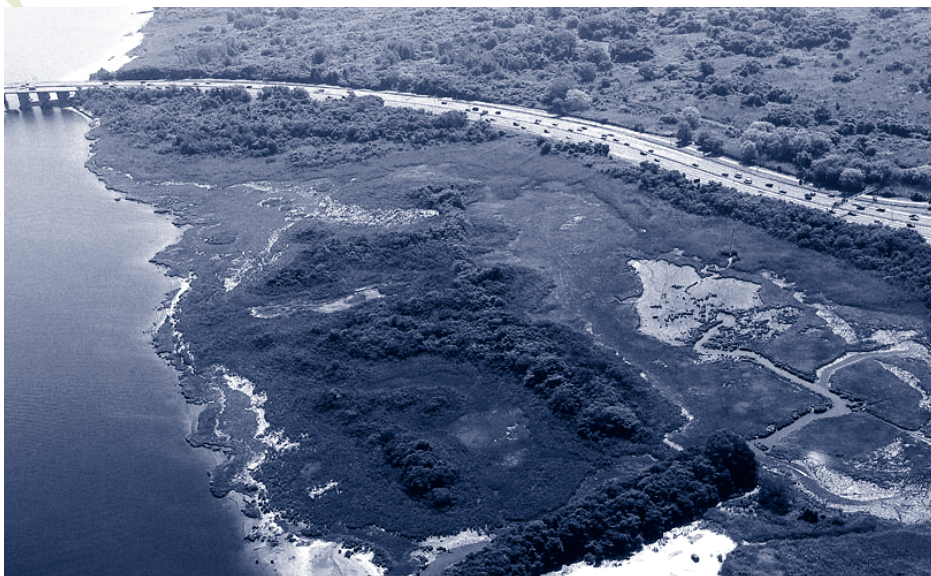
Multi-Flight Event Highlights Four-State Watershed Project

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) approached LightHawk last summer seeking help in educating lawmakers about the Connecticut River watershed. TNC has played a critical role in protecting and restoring the river and supports an entire project office focused on the quality and diversity of life throughout the watershed.

Despoiled by development, poor water quality, and the proliferation of invasive species, detailed planning efforts began in the late 1990s to restore the watershed in all four states through which the Connecticut meanders — Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The public-private partnerships developed through this planning process, however, need continued public support to be successful.

The flights developed through LightHawk were part of a multi-day field trip that took Congressional staffers from all four states for a tour of the watershed to educate them about management, research, and protection efforts. The tour highlighted several federal-TNC partnership projects, including the Silvio O. Conte Refuge where TNC is helping the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquire lands. Extensive ground tours and briefings followed each flight.

The first tour, out of Keene, New Hampshire, flown by VP Richard Kimball, took passengers along the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire. The second tour, flown by Kimball and VP Ev Cassagneres, originated in East Haddam, Connecticut and followed the River to the tidal marshes of Long Island Sound.



Tracking beach erosion and debris fields at Four Sparrow Marsh, Jamaica Bay, NYC.

Ronald Bourque/NYC Audubon/LightHawk



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Newsletter comments?

Contact Laurie Martin, Editor, at info@lighthawk.org

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LIGHT HAWK

Championing environmental protection through the unique perspective of flight.

WINTER 2006

LightHawk works primarily in western
and northeastern North America
and Mesoamerica

VOLUNTEER PILOT SPOTLIGHT

Larry Swanson Salt Lake City, Utah



A graduate of the University of Minnesota, Larry headed to Utah for work, where he enjoys weekend ski patrolling, mountain climbing, backcountry

ski touring, and of course flying. He has flown in Alaska, Canada, and around the western U.S. for both wilderness protection and for pleasure. His work has taken him to Germany and Hungary, where he supported field tests for the Predator unmanned aircraft—and lived in a tent. Upon retirement, Larry joined LightHawk, and in 2003, after a close brush with cancer, he joined Angel Flight as well. Larry writes, “Long after we are all gone the Wilderness we save today will remain. I only hope that my flying can be of some small help.”

Will Worthington Carefree, AZ



Will's volunteer flying for LightHawk is just one of his many philanthropic endeavors – he also flies regularly for Angel Flight and Flying Paws, an

animal rescue charitable flying organization. A West Point and Army War College graduate, Will served in Vietnam as a combat engineer followed by a career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation. A retired colonel, Will remains active as a consultant in the field of civil engineering. Sandy, his wife of 43 years, and his two sons are the pride of his life. Will enjoys the outdoors, traveling, flying, and the privilege of living in the USA.

LightHawk Seeks a Perch in Alberta

Last year retiree Robin White sought out LightHawk for assistance in documenting the Cheviot Mine, a recently approved open pit coal mine located just one kilometer from Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada that threatens not only the great beauty of the region, but quality habitat for grizzly bears, wolverines, and a number of rare plants. Robin and his wife Marian, both of whom now make environmental education their full-time vocation, recently authored a book entitled “Exploring Wild Alberta” that features the beauty and biodiversity of Alberta side-by-side with the resource development activities that threaten it. Photos gathered on their flight with LightHawk are included in the publication and will be made available to environmental organizations working to oppose the mine.

The following article was written by Robin, excerpted with permission from Alberta

Wilderness Association's journal Wild Lands Advocate, February 2006. Thank you Robin for this glowing write-up of our work, and for your efforts to aid LightHawk in recruiting volunteer pilots.

“I'm Reg Goodwin

and I'm your chauffeur for today. Show me on this map exactly where you want to go and we'll be off.” The cheery greeting came from a man in his late fifties sporting a neatly trimmed beard and wearing a grey cap and coveralls. We were standing on the tarmac of Springbank Airport alongside Reg's plane, an immaculate, single-engine Cessna 182. Reg had left his home in Helena, Montana at day-break and had flown to Calgary for the sole purpose of taking my wife Marian and me up to Hinton to photograph the Cheviot mine.

Reg is a volunteer pilot with LightHawk, ...which was founded on the notion that if you want better land-use decisions, take those involved

— the politicians, bureaucrats, industry officials, scientists, native leaders, media and activists — up in a plane and show them what pollution, habitat destruction or overdevelopment look like from the air.

LightHawk was the brain-child of Michael Stewart who, outraged by the pollution spewing from a coal-fired power plant, formed the organisation in 1979. ... Today, LightHawk isn't into direct advocacy but provides a free service to those who are. A

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Robin White/LightHawk

Cheviot open-pit coal mine June 2005

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small staff, operating from field offices, organises some 400 missions a year, matching up its 140 volunteer pilots with flight requests from environmental groups, universities, land trusts, researchers and others. LightHawk is a dynamic organisation with high standards. As well as owning a well-maintained plane, pilots must have 1000 hours or more as pilot-in-command, an excellent safety record, and a professional demeanour.

Although [LightHawk] does not have an office in western Canada, [the group] has flown missions in support of a number of

Robin White/LightHawk



LightHawk pilot Reg Goodwin and AWA member Marian White at Springbank Airport

major west Canadian conservation initiatives. These include helping protect the Tatshenshini area from a giant open-pit copper mine, [aiding in] the battle to save Clayoquot Sound from rapacious loggers, and recently [helping] the Wildlands Project...show policy makers and media endangered wildlife corridors and habitat.

But despite the obvious need, LightHawk has not been able to be very active in Alberta. When I first called Sama Blackwell, LightHawk's program manager for the Rocky Mountain region, she said our project met their guidelines and that she would see if there was a pilot available in our area. Later she phoned back to say that there wasn't one, but Reg Goodwin of Helena was willing help us out.

Reg had been a physician in general practice and took up flying in the 1980s. Later he bought the Cessna second-hand and retired from medicine so that he could spend more time flying. In 1995, he met a LightHawk director at a Helena air-show who, after a short test flight, signed him up on the spot. Reg quickly found that buying a small plane is one thing, but maintaining and operating it is quite another. "When I decided a major overhaul was needed," he said, "I found the bills

for parts and labour so large that I had to go back into medicine part-time to pay for it all."

Heavy rain during much of June made us wonder if our flight would have to be postponed. But then the rains stopped, the clouds parted and the Cessna arrived. Reg proved to be a superb pilot and we immediately felt at ease. Within an hour and a half of leaving Springbank we were looking down on that testament to human greed: the Cheviot open-pit mine and the ugly haul road that serves it. From the air the extent of the damage is truly appalling and they have only just started.

What we could see is just the first of a planned chain of pits that will stretch for 22 km. Albertans should be outraged. When the coal boom turns to bust and the mine closes, this once beautiful mountain landscape may be crudely reclaimed, but it can never be restored.

By two o'clock we were back at Springbank and shortly afterwards bade farewell to Reg. As the Cessna roared down the runway I turned to Marian.

"Why does he do this? I mean, I know he likes flying; most pilots do. But he's been on

the go since five o'clock this morning flying two people he's never met before through the mountains of a foreign country in iffy weather, at his own expense, just so we can take a few photos of yet another environmental atrocity. What's more, he's got at least two more hours of flying ahead of him before he gets home."

She didn't answer. It wasn't necessary. Reg does it for the same reason he took up medicine many years ago. He cares, and wants to make a difference.

Flying with LightHawk saved us a twelve-hour drive to Hinton and back plus the high cost of renting a small plane in a place where lack of competition makes this very expensive. LightHawk is aware of the environmental situation in Alberta and would like to help. But we cannot expect LightHawk pilots to keep flying up from the States; we need pilots based here. This is a rich province and there must be some retired, or semi-retired, ranchers, business people or the like...who own small planes, ...have the requisite flying experience, and would like to do something very special to help organisations like the AWA protect wild Alberta. For them I can think of nothing more useful than becoming a volunteer LightHawk pilot.

WHAT'S NEW AT I

Broadening Horizons in Mesoamerica

LightHawk is extending its Mesoamerica flying season this year to better accommodate the needs of our partners and establish us as a more permanent presence in the region. For 19 years, hundreds of conservation partners have relied on LightHawk as a critical resource in the protection of Mesoamerica's rich biodiversity. By extending the season, we will be able to respond to flight requests during the wet season when, for example, conditions like polluted run-off are more evident. Greater availability of LightHawk flights also will help government agencies better manage protected areas, through more frequent monitoring of illegal incursions and documentation of land conditions and land-use activities.

LightHawk Recognized by Nature Photography Association

Executive Director Rick Durden, received a Community Recognition Award on LightHawk's behalf from the North American Nature Photography Assoc. (NANPA) at a ceremony held in Denver, Colorado. LightHawk was selected for its ongoing service to the use of nature photography in environmental protection and its role in furthering the goals of both NANPA and the future of the field.

LightHawk Welcomes Keri Foster who joined LightHawk in January as Membership Manager. Prior to joining LightHawk, Keri was the Director of Member & Volunteer Services for the Green Mountain Club — founder and maintainer of the Long Trail — in Vermont. In addition to her background in membership development, Keri spent seven years working in

GET INVOLVED!

PILOTS: Join our volunteer pilot team; the minimum requirement is 1000+ hours as pilot-in-command.

DONORS: A gift of \$35 or more makes you a member of LightHawk!

IN-KIND DONORS: We are in need of certain airplane and office supplies. Visit www.lighthawk.org for further information.

FRIENDS: Please share this newsletter with your family and friends.

MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS: Double your gift; does your employer offer a matching gift program?

HONOR SOMEONE: Consider giving a gift to LightHawk in honor of an avid pilot or environmentalist among your friends or family.

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WHAT AT LIGHTHAWK?

eastern Nigeria on primate conservation projects. She will be full-time in the Lander office and is looking forward to exploring Wyoming's mountains and rivers!

A Warm Welcome to Barbara Hayden-Potts, our new Director of Development. Barbara is a seasoned development professional with extensive non-profit experience, having held positions ranging from volunteer to executive director. Most recently, Barbara ran her own grants consulting firm where her fundraising efforts garnered both corporate donations and foundation grants. Barbara is based in Lexington Park, Maryland and will soon welcome her first grandchild into the world.

THANK YOU We wish to thank the many donors who contributed to LightHawk between October 11, 2005 and February 3, 2006 including:

Foundations Cinnabar Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Gilbert & Ildiko Butler Foundation, The Deer Creek Foundation, Trillium Family Foundation, Wiancko Charitable Foundation

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Volunteer Pilots Our heartfelt thanks to the many volunteer pilots who donated their time and the use of their aircraft to fly for LightHawk during this period.

We received gifts in honor of:

Dan Meyer, Gregory Gund, James Roush and Cynthia Wayburn, Mr. and Mrs. Matt Brinker, Patricia Kay, Peter and Lucy Read, Tom Waldo, Richard Durden, Saul Chaikin

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LightHawk • P.O. Box 653 • Lander, WY 82520
Phone (307) 332-3242 • Fax (307) 332-1641 •
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LightHawk Warmly Received at 8th World Wilderness Congress

Last October, LightHawk participated in the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska. The World Wilderness Congress (WWC), launched by the WILD Foundation in 1977, has become a high-profile gathering of conservation leaders and funders from across the globe. This year more than 1000 delegates from 40 nations participated in the weeklong event.

The Congress provided an opportunity for LightHawk to introduce itself to a new, worldwide audience and for staff to learn more about new efforts and trends in wilderness protection. LightHawk Executive Director Rick Durden and Western Region Program Manager Sama Blackwell participated in two wilderness working sessions, entitled, "Flying for Conservation." The workshops were held collaboratively with representatives of the Bateleurs (<http://www.bateleurs.org/>), the South African volunteer-pilot organization modeled after LightHawk. The workshops allowed the groups to share stories about their development, their methods, what they have to offer conservation work, and their successes. VP Michael McBride (AK), largely responsible for developing LightHawk's participation at the Congress, joined the speaker's panel. VPs Chuck Schroll (AZ) and Kirk Johnson (AK) took part in the discussions as well.

VPs McBride and Johnson additionally conducted flights for local conservation organizations and WWC dignitaries that included conservation professionals from South Africa,

India, Australia, and Germany. One of the flights, developed by LightHawk and The Wilderness Society, highlighted the impacts of oil and gas drilling on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Passengers viewed an area of the Refuge where new gas wells are proposed, lands that are central to brown bear and salmon survival. The Kenai NWR is an excellent case study for drilling in other Refuges.

These flights provided a good example of LightHawk's work, allowing the landscape to speak for itself while providing expert local guides to elucidate complex land and water issues. Our passengers came away with a better understanding of the environmental issues in this region and a greater appreciation for LightHawk.

"I have come away from this experience with a clear understanding of what's at stake in this Alaska wilderness – and it has helped formulate my thinking of what must be at risk in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This helps inform me as a journalist and motivates me to do more careful research and eventual reporting. It helps me to be a more thoughtful and responsible reporter. I was profoundly moved by the experience of this wilderness, achieved in probably less than 2 hours yet giving me a remarkable overview of a vast and magnificent place.... Thank you for this opportunity."

— David Braun, Director,
National Geographic News



Carl Johnson/LightHawk

VP Michael McBride takes 8th World Wilderness Congress delegates over Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.



Our thanks to Continental Airlines for providing free travel vouchers for our Mesoamerica program.