Title: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation’s Educational Exhibits, Outreach, and Donor Satisfaction

Community Partner: Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation

Project Description:
The Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation will host a Field School Fellow to help them determine if their educational and outreach programs are meeting their objectives. A Fellow will help to assess visitor experience to the Loon Center to determine if visitors to new educational exhibits are obtaining a better understanding and awareness of loon ecology, and of conservation concerns affecting Adirondack ecosystems and wildlife. The research project will also determine the effectiveness of the Center’s outreach materials (e.g. newsletters, social media posts, website) at making the public and the Center’s mailing list constituents aware of the Center’s loon research, conservation, and education projects, as well as upcoming events. Finally, the research will evaluate the satisfaction of the donors to the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation.

The Fellow will design and implement pre- and post-viewing surveys for visitors to the Adirondack Loon Center, as well as online surveys for clients on the organization’s mailing list and in-person surveys for selected donors. The Fellow will then analyze the data and present the results in written and oral presentations to the staff and Board of Directors. The survey results will be utilized by the ACLC to help guide its future educational exhibits, outreach materials, and donor interactions.

With the addition of museum-quality educational exhibits to the Adirondack Loon Center, the organization anticipates that the Center will also contribute to the attractions of the Adirondack Park in general and help to enhance the economic vitality of the region. This project will also help advance the work of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation by guiding the organization in how best to further refine and enhance the current educational exhibits at the Adirondack Loon Center and design future exhibits. It will also help the center enhance their understanding of how to best meet the interests of their visitors and donors, and how to better interact with them throughout the year.

About the Community Partner:
The mission of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation (ACLC) is to promote the conservation of Common Loons in and beyond New York’s Adirondack Park. With the loon as their centerpiece, their work encompasses scientifically driven research on loon health and population dynamics; educational outreach to residents and visitors in the Adirondack Park; wildlife biology and conservation training for college students and volunteers; and conservation and management activities related to maintaining robust populations of Common Loons in New York State and throughout North America.

Required Skills:
A student well-suited for a Summer Field School Fellowship with the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation will have an outgoing, engaging personality, and enjoyment of interacting directly with people; proficiency with Microsoft Office, especially Word, Excel, and Powerpoint; an ability to analyze survey results through statistics, and an ability to present results of surveys through reports and powerpoint presentations.
The Fellow can expect to enhance and/or acquire an enhanced ability to interact with the public through working with this project, as well as an enhanced understanding of common loon ecology and conservation, exposure to field research on common loons, and experience with working with a small wildlife conservation nonprofit organization.

**Logistics:**
This is a full-time paid research position (35 hours per week) to last approximately 10 weeks, conducted under the joint supervision of the Upstate Institute and the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation in Saranac Lake, NY. In Saranac Lake, the Fellow will be supervised by Dr. Nina Schoch and Dr. Valerie Buxton, Research Scientist. The Fellow will need a laptop computer for this project. Field School Fellows receive a research stipend of $4500. The cost of transportation will be covered by the Upstate Institute, but a Fellow will need a U.S. drivers’ license to complete this work. Housing will also be provided and paid for by the Upstate Institute.