

Northern Woodlands Writers & Readers Conference

October 16 – 18, 2015

Hulbert Outdoor Center, Fairlee, Vermont

Conference Schedule

Friday, October 16

- 4:00 – 6:00 pm** **Registration**
Pick up your informational packets and cabin assignments. Admire the lake and meet staff from Northern Woodlands, Hulbert Outdoor Center and The Trust for Public Land.
- 5:00 pm** **Social Hour**
Hors d'oeuvres, lemonade, and hot chocolate. Bring your own beer or wine.
- 6:00 pm** **Dinner**
- 7:15 pm** **Presentation**
Presentation by **Ben Kilham**, bear biologist and author of *Out on a Limb*. This presentation will include photos and time for discussion.
- 8:30 pm** **Hang Out by the Fire**
Converse by the fire while enjoying s'mores and live music by **Celia Evans**, Paul Smith's College professor and Adirondack folk singer/songwriter.

Saturday, October 17

- 7:00 am** **Early Bird Activities**
 - **Sunrise Yoga** with a Hulbert Outdoor Center instructor.
 - **Woods Walk** with *Northern Woodlands* editor **Dave Mance** and founder/columnist **Virginia Barlow**.
- 7:30 am** **Breakfast**
- 8:30 am** **Welcome and Keynote Address**
Welcome by conference sponsor **The Trust for Public Land**, and keynote address by **Peter Forbes**, author and creator of the Center for Whole Communities, and most recently, co-author of, *A Man Apart, Bill Coperthwaite's Radical Experiment in Living*.
- 9:20 am** **Break**

9:30 am

Morning Workshop Sessions (choose one 2 hour session, or combine two 1 hour sessions)

- (2 hours) **Writing Workshop with Bob Kimber** (limit 20 people): "Reading Like a Writer," this workshop will examine two essays and focus on how the authors win attention with their first few words and lead farther and farther into the world they're opening up, building interest, seemingly in an effortless, conversational way. What can writers learn from each of these pieces? Copies of the texts will be sent to each registered participant a few weeks before the conference. (*This workshop will use the same texts from the 2014 Writers' Conference. Returning participants interested in Mr. Kimber's workshop are advised to select his afternoon session*).
- (2 hours) **Nature Illustration with Adelaide Tyrol and Nona Estrin** (limit 20 people): Anyone interested in the outdoors and willing to put some effort into acquiring some basic art skills is welcome to this two hour field drawing workshop. The class will be an introduction to drawing using gesture, contour, and watercolor techniques to quickly record one's experience and observations of nature. We encourage people to bring a simple set of watercolors and/or watercolor pencils, a pad, and pencils. The workshop will focus on connecting visually with nature. We will talk about the importance of using art as a communication tool to inform and elucidate the things we see as important. Field science and field drawing are fabulous mates: both take curiosity, patience, and attention to detail. There is such a need to slow down, to be patient, in order to really experience the world around us. Drawing outdoors cultivates a kind of profound attention to the natural world and our place in it.
- (1 hour A) **Writing Workshop with Stephen Long** (limit 20 people): "Covering the Nature Beat" - A love of the outdoors has sparked many writers, but it can be tough to figure out how to turn that love into a story. Do you want to save the world or show how to catch smallmouth bass? Maybe both? Do you see the outdoors as nature or as natural resources? In this workshop, Steve Long will explore the different approaches to covering the natural world, and will help writers find their stories and their voices.
- (1 hour A) **Reading and Discussion with Ted Levin** (limit 20 people): This workshop will examine different stages of the writing process, and will include a discussion of how writers can effectively incorporate scientific literature into a narrative. Ted will also talk about incorporating dialogue, humor, first hand field work, as well as elements of fiction and poetry. The workshop will focus on the example of Ted's work-in-progress, *America's Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake*, to be published by the University of Chicago Press in spring 2016.
- (1 hour A) **Tree Discovery Walk with Michael Wojtech**: On this walk we will follow our curiosities in the forest around the Hulbert Outdoor Center, examining individual trees and exploring their identifying characteristics, physiology, and ecology.

- (1 hour B) **Presentation by Susan C. Morse:** "The Cougar Returns to the East" - There is no question about it. Cougars are not only being seen in eastern North America, some are attempting to recolonize their former habitats. Where once it was flatly dismissed as impossibility in the so-called "developed" east, scientists have now documented cougar dispersals and even occupancy of a growing list of eastern states and provinces. Join us for a magnificently illustrated introduction to cougar biology and ecology in the broad diversity of habitats where Sue has studied them, from Alberta to the Arizona/Mexico border. We will also get the low-down regarding the latest confirmations of cougars in the east, including the recently documented suitability of a substantial amount of wild habitats from Manitoba to Louisiana and Maine to Georgia. It is only a matter of time!
- (1 hour B) **Discussion with John Warren:** "Adirondacks 101: The Wilderness Next Door" - At about 6.1 million acres - about the size of Vermont - the Adirondack Park is the largest park in the lower 48 states, larger than Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks combined. Adirondack Almanack editor John Warren's talk will focus on opportunities for writers in the region, including timely issues of the environment, development, natural history and outdoor recreation.

11:30 am **Lunch**

12:15 pm **Break**

12:45 pm **Presentation**

Presentation by author and illustrator **David Macaulay**, focusing on how to engage readers in natural history and science, using examples from his work.

1:45 pm **Break**

2:00 pm **Roundtable Sessions** (*choose one*)

- **Editor and Publisher Roundtable:** What are editors and publishers looking for? How can you pitch to them effectively? What are common mistakes writers make? Moderated by Chuck Wooster. Panelists include Dave Mance, Chip Fleischer, Dede Cummings, Jack Rodolico, Jim Collins, Jim Schley, and Ruth Hare.
- **Educator Roundtable:** "Writing in Place" - Grounding the aspirations of the writing curriculum in the local landscape and community, and using woodlands, streams, meadows and the built environment to invigorate writing. Examples will include Farm to School, Forest Fridays, disaster stories. Moderated by David Sobel. Panelists include Celia Evans, George Steele, and Jen Kramer.

3:15 pm **Break**

3:30 pm

Afternoon Workshop Sessions *(choose one)*

- **Writing Workshop with Bob Kimber** *(limit 20 people)*: "Reading Like a Writer," this workshop will examine two essays and focus on how the authors win attention with their first few words and lead farther and farther into the world they're opening up, building interest, seemingly in an effortless, conversational way. What can writers learn from each of these pieces? Copies of the texts will be sent to each registered participant a few weeks before the conference. *(This workshop will use different texts from the 2014 Writers' Conference. Returning participants from Mr. Kimber's workshop last year are advised to select this session instead of the morning session).*
- **Educator Workshop with Anita Sanchez and Robin Brickman**: a reading and discussion of children's nature book, *Leaflets Three, Let it Be!: The Story of Poison Ivy* by author Anita Sanchez, and accompanying hands-on art project with artist and illustrator Robin Brickman. Anita Sanchez will discuss the unique challenges of writing for a crucial audience: the next generation of environmentalists. We'll wrestle with baffling questions like: how to intrigue kids to engage with nature? How can you compete with video games and use the power of writing to get kids excited about the outdoors? Can children's books help defuse kids' increasing fears of the natural world? We'll discuss the challenges of the children's publishing world, and offer some practical suggestions for learning more about "kidlit." Following the workshop with Anita Sanchez, Robin Brickman will give a visual presentation about her process for illustrating *Leaflets Three, Let it Be!* and her other natural science picture books. Then, participants will be able to create a small three-dimensional paper sculpture of their own based on Robin's techniques.
- **Writing Workshop with Jim Collins** *(limit 20 people)*: "Narrative Nonfiction and the Tools of the Storyteller" - The difference between an article and a story can be measured in the reader's emotional response. This workshop explores the tools that storytellers use to create emotion — those elements that create the power to get inside people and make them think, make them sad, or angry, or hopeful, or make them care. From the voice and stance of a trusted host to a structure that includes foreshadowing and climax; from vivid scenes to metaphor to timely digressions and conversational tone, we'll identify and analyze what narrative nonfiction has in common with novels and short stories — and why it works. Level: For working and mid-career journalists. Excerpts and hand-outs provided.
- **Writing workshop with Terry Osborne and Northern Woodlands assistant editor Patrick White**: *(Limit 20 people)* This workshop will be focused on developing short personal narratives about place. With *Northern Woodlands'* "Place in Mind" essays as guides, we will use indoor and outdoor writing exercises to explore specific aspects of successful place narratives. The "Place in Mind" samples will be available to read beforehand, and if you come to the workshop with your own "place in mind" —a

location you'd like to write about, and even a reason you'd like to write about it—you'll have material to develop in the workshop.

- **Presentation and Walk with Michael Wojtech:** “Bark: A Multi-Sensory Experience of Trees” - The leaf, twig, and bud traits typically used to describe trees are often hard to see or seasonally absent. Join Michael and explore the wonderful variety of bark textures, shapes, thicknesses, and colors, which are always visible, in any season. Through presentations and a series of participatory exercises we will learn how to identify tree species by their bark, and uncover why such a variety of bark characteristics exist. Why do some species have smooth bark, while on others it is thick and broken? Why does bark peel? As we practice seeing, touching, smelling, and tracing the contours of bark, we will hone our perceptive skills and deepen our intimacy with trees and the forests they grow in. We will also investigate how these deep immersions in nuanced detail can form a springboard for creative expression. We will begin indoors, and then head out to explore the trees. Open to naturalists at all levels of experience. Bring camera and sketchbook! **Please note, this class is likely to overlap with the social hour, below, although you're welcome to break away early (we don't think you'll want to...)*

5:00 pm **Social Hour**

6:00 pm **Dinner**

7:15 pm **Reading and Discussion**

Celebrated author **Bernd Heinrich** will talk about his life and writing process. Most of Heinrich's twenty books were inspired by a plot of land in western Maine that he first knew as a boy, and where he now lives full time. “For me the writing process starts from gaining closeness, to having questions or trying to solve enigmas, leading to formal studies of sufficient depth for scientific publications. I then like to telescope back out to perhaps see a larger picture of connections, and then write to share with a broader audience.” He will describe how several of his books developed, and share images related to this work.

8:00 pm **Party in the Barn!**

S'mores and open mic readings emceed by **Dave Mance** and **Elise Tillinghast**. Bring your own beer or wine.

Sunday, October 18

8:00 am **Breakfast and Thank You**

8:45 am **Presentation**

Presentation by **Kent McFarland**, conservation biologist with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies

11:00 am **Check-out**