

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT END OF SEASON REPORT WINTER 2025-2026

The Adirondack Mountain Club's (ADK) Education Department had a successful and snowy '25-'26 winter season. Collectively, our department members wore a lot of different hats. We taught winter backcountry skills workshops, guided snowy hikes in the High Peak, provided naturalist programs to the public, taught *Homeschool in the Woods*, and led the winter season of the *Marie L. Haberl School Outreach Program: Three Seasons at Heart Lake* for local fourth graders. For a deeper look into the department's projects, progress, successes, and hurdles this winter season, keep reading!

MEET THE EDUCATION TEAM



Certifications:

Wilderness First Responder
Leave No Trace Level 3
NAI CIG
NYS Licensed Guide

(DRIFTWOOD) DARIA STACY **Education Director**

Daria started as a seasonal Naturalist Intern in 2021 and has had many titles at ADK since. She served as a seasonal Outreach Educator in 2022, helping with Three Seasons at Heart Lake. She then held full-time positions as Outdoor Skills Coordinator for two years and Interpretive Facilities Manager for one year before stepping into the role of Education Director in June 2025. A Rochester native, Daria graduated from SUNY Cortland with a master's degree in Outdoor and Environmental Education. Her thesis focused on outdoor navigation in the Adirondack Park.



Certifications:

Wilderness First Responder
ACA Swiftwater Rescue
Mental Health WFA
Leave No Trace Level 3
NAI CIG
NYS Licensed Guide

(LADYBUG) LORELEI MEIDENBAUER **Education Manager**

Lorelei has been with ADK since September of 2024. At ADK, she guides and teaches many backcountry skills workshops. She is passionate about helping everyone responsibly enjoy outdoor spaces, whether they are going hiking for the first time or are an experienced backcountry enthusiast. She has a bachelor's degree from Cornell University in Development Sociology and a Master of Urban Planning degree from New York University. Prior to joining ADK, she was a lead instructor for the Philadelphia Outward Bound School and led a cross-country cycling trip with the nonprofit organization Bike & Build.



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(KATYDID) KAYLA BECK

Environmental Education Coordinator

Kayla has worked for ADK since February 2025 and currently serves as the Environmental Education Coordinator. She holds a bachelor's degree in Conservation Biology from St. Lawrence University and brings experience in environmental education and habitat restoration.

In her role, Kayla leads the coordination and instruction of ADK's 4th-grade outreach program, Three Seasons at Heart Lake, and facilitates a variety of public interpretive programs. She is especially passionate about inspiring others to care for the environment through education, adventure, and art, and enjoys teaching about lesser-known fauna such as reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

(ERMINE) ELAINA LANPHEAR

Outdoor Educator

Elaina graduated from Appalachian State University in 2024 with a B.S. in Outdoor Experiential Education. During her time in North Carolina, she gained experience working with teenagers and young adults in a wilderness therapy setting, spending more than 150 nights in the field.

Elaina joined ADK in May 2025 as a seasonal Wilderness Trip Leader and now serves as one of our two Outdoor Educators. Elaina is passionate about empowering participants and sharing the wonders of the natural world.

(NUTHATCH) NOELLE WOBIG

Outdoor Educator

Noelle joined ADK in September 2025 as an Outdoor Educator. In this role, she divides her time between facilitating school programs, guiding trips, developing and delivering public interpretive programs, and teaching skills workshops.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Archaeology and Anthropology from the University of Virginia and brings experience in archaeological excavation and education across classroom, museum, and outdoor settings. Noelle especially enjoys hiking on the clock, doing cartwheels on summits, and talking about rocks.

WINTER GUIDED TRIPS AND WORKSHOPS

In the 2025/2026 winter season, ADK's Education Department **more than tripled the number of guided trips** and increased **skills workshops by 80%** in comparison to the 2024/2025 winter season.

Guided Trips

- Esther Mountain
- Street and Nye
- Mount Colden
- Hurricane Mountain
- Sawteeth Mountain
- Tabletop Mountain
- Phelps Mountain

Workshops

- Backcountry Snowshoeing for Beginners
- Leave No Trace Awareness Workshop
- Winter Survival 101 Online Workshop
- Map & Compass Fundamentals
- Winter Survival
- Outdoor Leadership 101



Ermine Elaina and participants on a guided hike up Sawteeth Mountain



**The Education Team
spent a total of 161 hours
guiding and 140 hours
teaching workshops!**

THREE SEASONS AT HEART LAKE

ADK's *Marie L. Haberl School Outreach Program: **Three Seasons at Heart Lake*** helps local fourth grade students experience the seasonal transformation of the Adirondacks with four educator-led classroom sessions and three field trips to the Heart Lake Program Center each year. This winter, our educators traveled to **10 local elementary schools** to teach students about winter animal adaptations and animal tracking. The students then came to the Heart Lake Program Center where they either snowshoed or hiked around the property to learn through exploration and practice identifying animal tracks.

**ADK staff spent a total of 117 hours
instructing fourth graders this winter!**

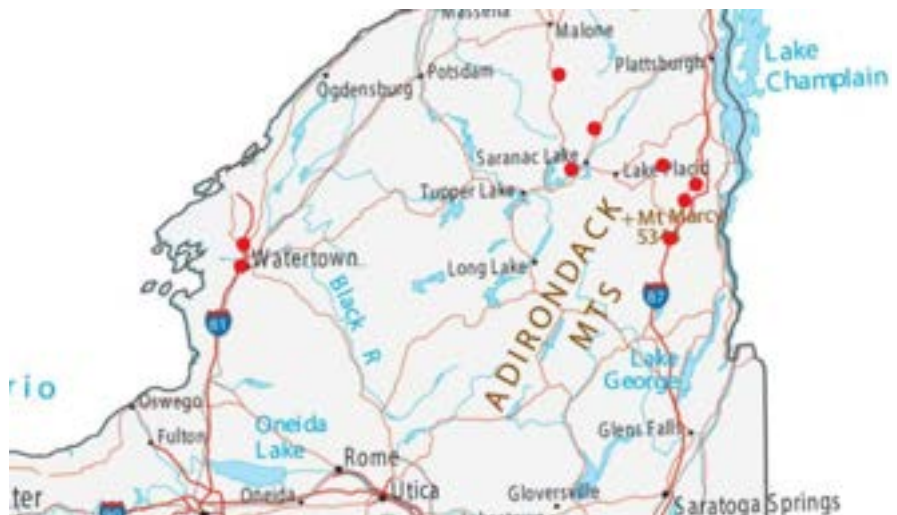


*Katydid Kayla facilitating the game
Wagon Wheel with fourth graders*

HOMESCHOOL IN THE WOODS

Homeschool In the Woods is our program for youth ages 5–12 who are homeschooled and seeking a social, place-based, hands-on learning experience. This program now runs twice a year, one session in fall and another in winter. The sessions are made up of six three-hour classes that meet biweekly. This program reaches students and parents across the North Country who travel hours for this resource. Below is a map of Northeast New York. Each red dot on the map represents where our students travel from to reach our program site in Lake Placid. In the Adirondack winter, this is no easy task.

**ADK staff spent 18 hours instructing
homeschool students this winter!**



NATURALIST PROGRAMS

This winter season, we reached **164 people** through our Naturalist Series and explored a multitude of topics relating to the Adirondack Park. We offer many of our naturalist programs for free to increase accessibility to any and all interested in learning about the natural world with us! The naturalist programs we led this winter season are listed below.

- Cozy Eco-Conscious Crafting
- Winter Solstice Celebration
- The Art of Exploration: An Introduction to Nature Journaling
- Gear Up for Winter
- Beginner Winter Tree Identification
- Nighttime Winter Hike
- Naturalist Hike Series
- Beginner Winter Animal Tracking
- Learn to Build Snow Shelters

Naturalist Winter Hike Series

In this beginner-oriented series, ADK Outdoor Educator Noelle Wobig led participants on three hikes of increasing difficulty. The first two hikes focused on building strength, knowledge, and confidence, and the series culminated in a winter hike up Hurricane Mountain. In addition to developing outdoor skills, participants learned about winter wildlife adaptations, dormant plants, winter preparedness, and the seven principles of Leave No Trace.

**ADK Naturalists spent 30 hours
teaching naturalist programming
this winter!**



The Naturalist Hike series was an excellent idea. I learned so much about animal behavior in winter, recognizing animal tracks in the snow, recognizing trees in winter by their bark and evergreen leaf shape, layering for winter hiking, and safe winter hiking. I loved that each hike over the series was progressively harder. Noelle is a talented naturalist, educator and excellent trip leader. Sam led our third hike and was attentive to our safety, answered all of our questions and was kind and patient. I hope the series will be offered again—a great add to ADK's programming!



Nuthatch Noelle with Hike Series participants



A BITTERSWEET FAREWELL TO EARTHWORM ELIZA!

Eliza has worked with ADK since 2023 when she started as the Outreach Coordinator managing the *Marie L. Haberl School Outreach Program: Three Seasons at Heart Lake*. In 2024, Eliza was promoted to Education Manager. Eliza is a lover of trees, an impactful educator, and her positivity radiates to those around her. During her time at ADK, she has taught over 1000 fourth graders, developed our Homeschool in the Woods program from the ground up, and spent countless hours sharing her love for nature with others. Although Eliza has loved her time at ADK, she has accepted a position as the Education Specialist and Manager at ESF's Adirondack Interpretive Center. We wish her all the best and appreciate all she has done for the Adirondack Mountain Club!

“From November to March, ADK’s Education Department spent over 470 hours in the field, teaching and guiding.”

We take pride in our goal of educating the public. We continue stay true to ADK’s mission to protect New York’s wild lands and waters by promoting responsible outdoor recreation and building a statewide constituency of land stewardship advocates. We continue to look forward to the upcoming summer season and for all of the outdoor adventures ahead.

ADK’s Education Department would like to thank our collaborative partners, ADK members, donors, and Chapters. You make all of this possible. Thank you!