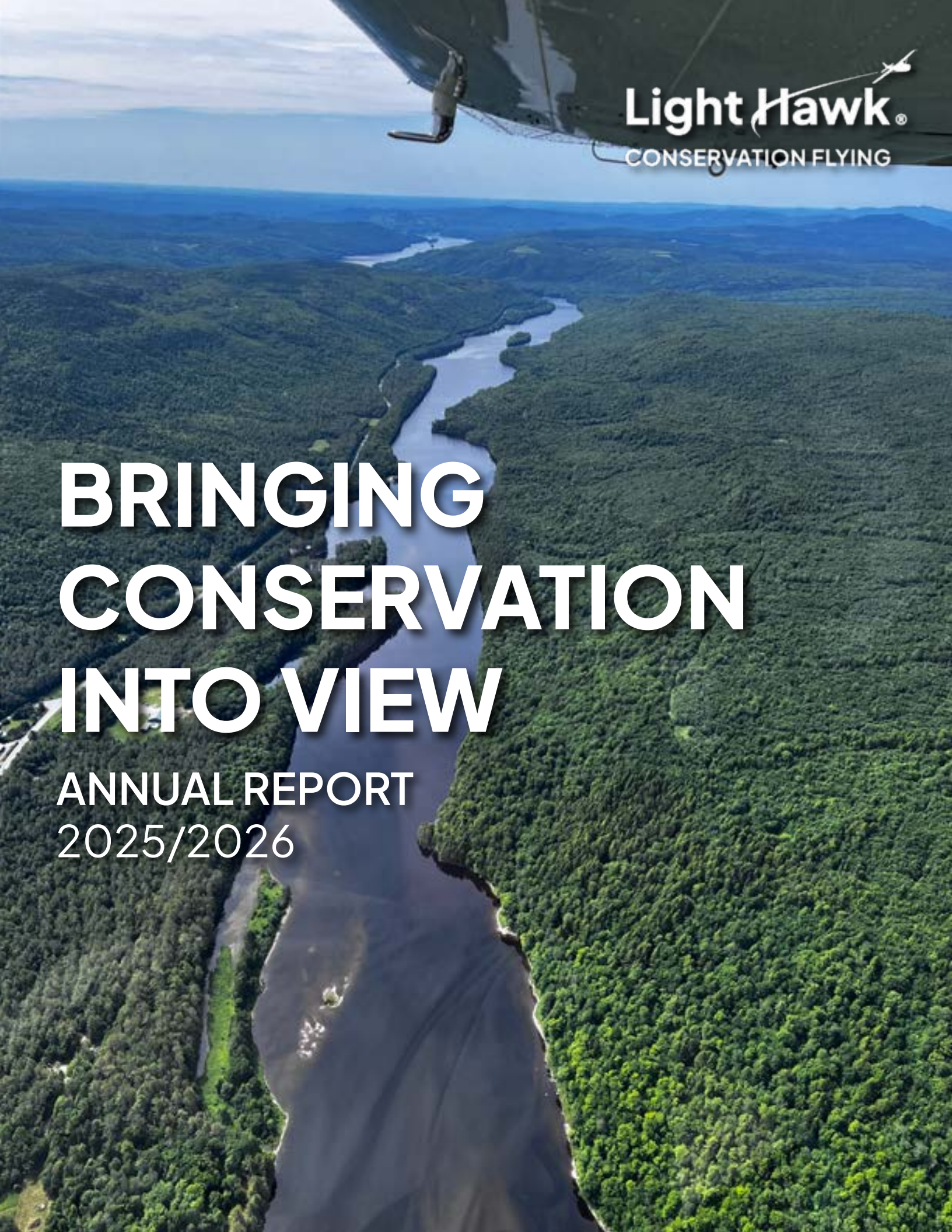


BRINGING CONSERVATION INTO VIEW

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/2026



Maine

Flying over the 78,000-acre Magalloway project area in northwestern Maine. Learn more about the mission on page 8.

Photo: Abby King

A Letter from our CEO

Dear Friends of LightHawk,

I'm honored to join LightHawk as CEO and share the results presented in our 2026 Annual Report.

As a former LightHawk partner, I've long appreciated its power. LightHawk helped us secure so many critical protection and restoration projects.

But honestly, I had no concept of all that LightHawk staff and volunteers do to make these wins happen! As I rediscover LightHawk, I invite you to "Look Again": to see our work with fresh eyes and appreciate what it takes to achieve conservation at scales that matter.

Conservation begins by seeing what's at stake. Progress depends on turning understanding into action: protecting lands and waters, restoring ecosystems, and expanding awareness through journalists, storytellers, and scientists.

In 22 years of conservation work, I've seen what small teams can accomplish when they build relationships and bring experts together to solve real problems.

For nearly five decades, LightHawk has mobilized skilled volunteer pilots to advance conservation. We reveal connections invisible from the ground: wildlife corridors pinched by highways, rivers interrupted by dams, and fragmented habitats connected through protection and restoration. A single hour of flight can reveal change across vast areas, illuminate inaccessible places, and bring decision-makers closer to the communities their choices affect. It changes how we see problems and what we do about them.

The results can be extraordinary. In Maine's Magalloway region, land trusts partnered with LightHawk to advance conservation across a shared landscape. In 2026, they secured permanent protection for 78,000 acres, strengthening a connected landscape of more than 500,000 acres across Maine, New Hampshire, and Québec. This is what perspective, partnership, and commitment can achieve.

As we approach our 50th anniversary, we're building on this work to become an even more effective mission partner: gathering evidence, advancing science, informing decisions, and mobilizing resources. We'll direct our capabilities where they can make the greatest difference.

I'm grateful to the pioneers, partners, pilots, and supporters who make every mission possible. Your generosity gives conservationists more than a view from above. It gives them another way to change what happens on the ground.

The challenges facing nature are immense. So is our opportunity. Let's put every mission, partnership, and resource to work for a living planet.

With gratitude,





Elliot Wright
Chief Executive Officer

Conservation Takes Flight

Protecting Wild Places

Wild places filter water, shelter wildlife and hold enduring cultural connections. A forest connects to a river. A wildlife corridor crosses an international border. A cultural landscape extends beyond a national park. Protecting wild places means understanding connections that lines on a map cannot fully capture.

LightHawk brings people above these landscapes to see how they fit together and the pressures they face. Working alongside conservation organizations and Indigenous leaders, we help turn firsthand understanding into informed decisions, donor commitments and lasting protection.

From the Sonoran borderlands to Maine's Magalloway region, from Chaco Canyon to conserved lands in New York, this work spans the life of a conservation effort: identifying places worth protecting, building the case for conservation and helping ensure those protections last.

Washington

An aerial view of Olympic National Park brings its rugged peaks, alpine meadows and forested valleys into one sweeping perspective.

Photo: Mark Erskine

Sonoran Borderlands. The wall interrupts connected habitat. LightHawk brought conservationists and a prospective donor above this landscape to advance land protection. Photo: Ganesh Marin.

Protecting Wildlife Connections Across the Borderlands

A mountain range does not end at an international border. Neither do the grasslands, rivers and wildlife pathways connecting it to the next. Across the Sonoran borderlands, those connections meet a growing barrier: a wall cutting through habitat animals depend on to move.

Protecting this landscape requires understanding how its pieces fit together. A parcel's value extends beyond its boundaries to the habitat it connects and the routes it keeps open. LightHawk brought that larger perspective to a land-protection effort spanning traditional Apache and Ópata lands, where Borderlands Restoration Network (BRN) is working to acquire 10,000 acres.

With BRN staff member Ganesh Marin and a prospective donor aboard, LightHawk surveyed wildlife corridors around the Patagonia, Huachuca and Peloncillo mountains and documented wall construction through the San Rafael Valley. Marin interpreted the terrain below, connecting proposed acquisitions with the surrounding wildlife pathways and grasslands.

LightHawk helped turn firsthand understanding into financial support for land protection. BRN reports that the flights were critical to securing support from two major donors, and the land transfer process is now underway.

The perspective also revealed another remote area that may be worth protecting. BRN later visited it on the ground, carrying what began as a discovery from the air into its next conservation effort.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT CHUCK SCHROLL



A first-hand view of the borderlands. Photo: Ganesh Marin

"One can look at all the maps and map overlays and have an intellectual understanding of where habitats are, where movements take place and where the resistance areas are. As an 'ambassador' for the mission of the project and the organization, this was truly transformative."

— Yunghi Choi
BRN Board Member

Did You Know?

- **Wildlife corridors extend beyond what we can see from the ground.**
  Through 47 corridor missions over the past decade, LightHawk has worked with partners to understand connections across entire landscapes.
- **Wildlife pathways cross boundaries.**
  LightHawk reveals habitat connections across property lines and international borders, including where barriers interrupt them.
- **Connections sustain wildlife across generations.**
  Corridors help animals find food and mates. LightHawk helps identify lands important to keeping those routes open.



Magalloway region, Maine. LightHawk helped conservationists and prospective donors understand the scale of this forest landscape. Photo: Jonathan Milne.

Conserving 78,000 Acres in Maine's Magalloway Region

NORTHWESTERN MAINE

Across Maine's Magalloway region, forests, lakes and rivers form a landscape large enough to protect wildlife habitat, sustain working forests and keep wilderness intact. Securing its future meant helping supporters understand both the land's scale and what its protection could accomplish.

LightHawk helped bring that landscape into view. Flights over Aziscohos Lake and the surrounding forests gave conservationists and prospective supporters a firsthand understanding of the project, while gathering imagery for donor outreach.

"It was very useful for me to be at this altitude in order to truly understand the landscape context and scale of our conservation project," said Abigail King of The Nature Conservancy.

Four organizations secured permanent protection for 78,000 acres in July 2026: Forest Society of Maine, The Nature Conservancy in Maine, Northeast Wilderness Trust and Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust. The project connects more than half a million acres of conserved land. LightHawk helped advance this protection by showing conservationists and prospective donors the land's scale and its role in keeping the larger landscape

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS SCOTT CIANCHETTE, JONATHON HINSON AND JAMIE GAMBLE.

Did You Know?

A larger connected landscape

Magalloway links conserved lands across Maine, New Hampshire and Québec, creating a connected expanse of more than 500,000 acres.

Working forests and wilderness

The project keeps more than 62,500 acres in forest management and protects more than 11,200 acres as a wilderness preserve.

Protection reaches downstream

Conserved river corridors and forested stream buffers help protect water quality and habitat for native brook trout.

Documenting the Landscape Around Chaco

NEW MEXICO

Chaco's cultural landscape reaches far beyond the national park's boundaries. For the Navajo Nation, Hopi and New Mexico's Pueblo peoples, protecting the surrounding lands means protecting a place of enduring cultural significance.

LightHawk worked alongside Native Land Institute to bring Pueblo leaders above Chaco Canyon, revealing the connections between the park, surrounding cultural sites and lands vulnerable to development. Across three missions in August, September and December 2025, participants gained a firsthand understanding of why federal mineral protections beyond the park boundary matter.

The September mission opened a week of advocacy that brought at least 10 Pueblo governors to Washington, D.C., to urge federal officials to retain the surrounding protection zone. LightHawk helped connect what leaders saw from the air with the case they carried to decision-makers: protecting Chaco requires protecting the larger landscape.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT EVAN ANDERMAN



Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. Aerial perspective connects the park with its wider cultural landscape. Photo: Evan Anderman



Cattle trails scar a denuded landscape near Carlin, Nevada, seen from above. Photo by Roberto (Bear) Guerra.

Revealing the Pressures on Nevada's Public Lands

NEVADA

Across Nevada's open country, grazing lands stretch beyond any roadside view. Understanding their condition means seeing how livestock, waterways and surrounding habitat fit within a much larger landscape.

LightHawk brought that perspective to an investigation by High Country News and ProPublica, providing aerial access to photograph public lands in Nevada. The mission connected journalists with places difficult to document from the ground, helping them examine land conditions and the management of federal grazing allotments.

The resulting December 2025 reporting featured aerial photographs and credited LightHawk's contribution.

What began as a mission over Nevada became part of a published investigation, carrying the aerial perspective beyond those aboard the aircraft.

By connecting on-the-ground reporting with a broader view, LightHawk helped journalists make the use and condition of public lands visible to readers, bringing these landscapes into the public conversation about their care.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT STEPHEN MEYER

Conservation Takes Flight

Protecting Waterways

Every river tells a larger story: where its water comes from, what happens along its course and who depends on it downstream. Dams, drought, pollution and decisions about water use shape that story, with consequences for farms, fisheries, drinking water and communities.

LightHawk follows those connections from the air. Working alongside tribal leaders, conservationists, journalists and emerging regional leaders, we document changing conditions and help people understand waterways as connected systems. That perspective carries into policy discussions, public reporting, donor engagement and conservation decisions.

Across the Colorado River Basin, the Snake River and California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, our work connects what people see with what they can do: make the case for healthier rivers, invest in restoration and lead with a fuller understanding of the watersheds they share.

Utah

Waterways create and wind through iconic landscapes like Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Threats to rivers endanger wild places and the lives that depend on them.

Photo: Dave Showalter



Colorado River Basin. Aerial documentation connects reservoir conditions with conversations about the river's future. Photo: Dave Papineau

The Colorado River: One River, Every Angle

From headwaters to delta, LightHawk's aerial perspective reveals the full story of a river and the people who depend on it.

Documenting a River Under Pressure

A healthy Colorado River sustains communities, agriculture and wildlife across the West. Managing it requires balancing water demands with the health of the ecosystems that make the basin function.

LightHawk worked alongside Western Resource Advocates–Arizona to capture current river conditions for its advocacy campaign. Over two days, the mission covered more than 700 miles, following stretches of the Green River below Flaming Gorge, the confluence in Cataract Canyon and the Colorado through the Grand Canyon between Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Videographer Dave Papineau captured footage along the route.

The footage gives WRA a way to bring the river itself into the conversation, helping audiences understand the need for a management approach that protects both water supplies and ecosystem health.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT STEPHEN MEYER

Connecting Policy to Place

Decisions about the Colorado River reach across state, tribal and international boundaries. Discussions about its future can become more tangible when the people negotiating those decisions experience the landscape firsthand.

Working alongside the Getches-Wilkinson Center and the Water & Tribes Initiative, LightHawk brought participants attending the University of Colorado Boulder's Colorado River conference above the river they were discussing.

Across a coordinated campaign of multiple flights, LightHawk volunteer pilots brought conference participants above the river, connecting policy discussions to firsthand experience of the landscape. That shared perspective gave participants a fuller understanding of the pressures facing the basin and the communities and ecosystems that depend on it.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT RICK TURLEY AND STEPHANIE WELLS



Lake Powell Reservoir. Reservoir conditions documented from above. Photo: Andrew Robb

Connecting Donors to Delta Restoration

At the river's southern end, restoration is rebuilding habitat in the Colorado River Delta. Raise the River, a partnership of six U.S. and Mexican conservation organizations, is working to restore and preserve this watershed.

Flying across the U.S.-Mexico border, LightHawk brought donors above restoration sites throughout the delta. Seeing those sites within the larger landscape gives supporters a firsthand understanding of the partnership's work and its vision for continued recovery.

The aerial tour helped connect supporters to the next chapter of restoration, making the work and the need for continued investment tangible.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT WILL WORTHINGTON

Bringing the River's Story to the Public

The people aboard a LightHawk mission are only the beginning of its reach. Through published photographs, reporting and broadcasts, the river's changing conditions reach audiences across the basin and beyond.

LightHawk worked alongside journalists and storytellers to inform coverage of water supplies, snowpack and the decisions shaping the Colorado River's future. Coverage appeared in media outlets including:

- The Denver Post
- The Arizona Republic
- Inside Climate News

Additional reporting was published and shared through The Water Desk.

This work extends the value of each mission beyond those who fly. Aerial imagery and firsthand reporting bring the river into the public conversation, helping audiences connect complex water debates to the landscapes and communities affected by them.

LightHawk carries the river's story from the air into public reporting, policy discussions, advocacy campaigns and donor conversations. Across the basin, we help turn firsthand understanding into broader awareness and a stronger case for conservation.



Colorado River, Utah
Photo: Dave Rapineau



Snake River. LightHawk brought tribal representatives and conservation donors above the river to understand connections and barriers facing salmon recovery. Photo: Brynne Lazarus

Seeing the Snake River as a Connected System

SNAKE RIVER BASIN

Salmon recovery on the Snake River reaches beyond the water itself. It is tied to the Nez Perce Tribe's culture, fishing rights and access to traditional foods. Understanding that connection means seeing the river as a system, including the four dams, reservoirs and tributaries that shape salmon's journey.

LightHawk worked alongside the Nez Perce Tribe to bring tribal representatives and conservation donors above that landscape. Across multiple flights, participants saw the contrast between the river's dammed reaches and its free-flowing tributaries, gaining a broader understanding of the journey salmon must make.

That firsthand perspective gave tribal representatives and philanthropic supporters a shared understanding of the barriers facing salmon recovery, connecting decisions about the river's future to the landscape and the people who depend on it.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS JUDITH PARRISH, LANE GORMLEY, RICK UTERMOEHLEN, AND DOUGLASS SISK

Connecting Water and Communities in California's Delta

CALIFORNIA

In California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, decisions about water also shape agriculture, wildlife habitat, flood safety and recreation. For emerging leaders, understanding those connections is essential to making informed choices about the region's future.

LightHawk brought 19 participants in the Delta Protection Commission's Delta Leadership Program above the landscape. Across flights flown by four volunteer pilots, participants saw how waterways, farms and communities fit together, gaining a regional perspective difficult to grasp from individual sites on the ground.

A subsequent boat tour led by U.S. Geological Survey staff paired that broad perspective with a closer look at local conditions. LightHawk helped participants connect individual water and land-use issues to the wider Delta, strengthening the foundation for their work as regional leaders.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS LOUISE MATEOS, PETER GORDON, MICHAEL VENTURINO, AND GERALD GLASER



California's Delta. Aerial perspective helps emerging leaders see waterways, farms and communities as a connected landscape. Photo: Yuen Lenh



Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California

LightHawk connects regional leaders with the landscape shaping their work.

Photo: Misty Kaltreider



Maine

Maine's coastal areas face growing risks from climate-related storms. Aerial imagery of vulnerable coastal bluffs helps decision-makers assess damage and plan for a more resilient coastline.

Photo: Jonathan Milne, LightHawk

Conservation Takes Flight

Protecting Oceans & Coasts

Along a sheltered shoreline, an underwater meadow can hold an extraordinary amount of life. Young fish find refuge among its blades. Manatees graze its grasses. These habitats help sustain life throughout the surrounding coastal waters.

Protecting our coasts means understanding those connections and recognizing when they are under pressure. LightHawk brings the reach and perspective to document habitat across bays and estuaries, track changing conditions and help conservationists decide where to look more closely.

From Washington's San Juan Islands to the New Hampshire and Maine coast and Florida's Homosassa River, that work is building a clearer picture of the underwater habitats that sustain coastal life. For endangered white abalone, recovery also depends on timely connections between breeding and rearing facilities. LightHawk transports these vulnerable animals through critical stages of their journey toward a return to the wild.

Whether documenting coastal habitat or transporting an endangered species, LightHawk puts flight to work where perspective, access and timing can advance conservation.

Documenting Boating Pressure on San Juan Seagrass

SAN JUAN ISLANDS, WASHINGTON



Anchored boats in the San Juan Islands. LightHawk surveys help scientists assess where boating activity overlaps with sensitive seagrass habitat. Photo: Frances Robertson

The sheltered bays of Washington's San Juan Islands draw boaters from across the Pacific Northwest. Beneath those boats, seagrass meadows provide food and refuge for marine wildlife, including young salmon. Anchoring can damage the vegetation that makes these underwater habitats so valuable.

Understanding that pressure requires more than a single observation. State scientists need to know where boats anchor, how heavily sensitive bays are used and how those patterns change throughout the boating season.

LightHawk launched a two-year collaboration with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to build that understanding. Survey missions count anchored vessels across sensitive bays, while strut-mounted cameras capture images every five seconds for scientists to analyze after each flight.

From above, LightHawk can document multiple bays during the same survey. Repeat missions allow researchers to compare activity across locations and dates, identifying where concentrated boating use overlaps with vulnerable seagrass habitat.

LightHawk is helping turn those observations into a stronger foundation for habitat protection. The growing record gives state scientists evidence to assess recreational pressure and inform decisions about caring for the islands' underwater meadows.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT LANE GORMLEY AND JANE ROSEVELT

Did You Know?

Eelgrass is a flowering plant.

Unlike seaweed, it has roots and forms underwater meadows that shelter young fish and other marine life.

Seagrass connects to a larger food web.

Eelgrass beds provide food and refuge for juvenile salmon. Healthy salmon populations also matter to the Southern Resident orcas that depend on them.

Every five seconds, another observation.

Aircraft-mounted cameras create a sequence of images that researchers can use to study boat activity across surveyed bays.



San Juan Islands, Washington. Repeated aerial surveys document boating activity across sensitive bays, helping state scientists understand pressures on seagrass habitat. Photo: Frances Robertson



California. Bodega Marine Lab staff prepare white abalone for transport with volunteer pilot Douglass Sisk, moving them to continued care before eventual release into the wild. Photo: Bodega Marine Lab.

Moving White Abalone Toward Recovery

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS DOUGLASS SISK, JAMES HANEY, JOHN BAKER, AND MICHIKO SAYLOR

CALIFORNIA

Every spring, UC Davis's Bodega Marine Laboratory spawns white abalone to help rebuild a population now too scattered in the wild to reproduce reliably. But spawning is only the beginning. The embryos and larvae must reach facilities equipped to raise them during a brief window before they settle and attach to a surface. With those facilities hundreds of miles away, timely transport and careful handling are essential.

LightHawk coordinated four missions around the spawning season, transporting 3 million embryos and larvae to partner facilities, including roughly 1 million within the critical first 24 hours after spawning. These transfers connected the laboratory's breeding efforts with the facilities needed to raise the next generation.

The missions also carried 2,000 to 3,000 juvenile white abalone to Cabrillo Marine Aquarium and the Aquarium of the Pacific for continued care in preparation for release into the wild. By transporting abalone at different stages of development, LightHawk connects the critical steps of recovery, from spawning and rearing to eventual release.

> **"The LightHawk staff and volunteer pilots have become integral members of Team White Abalone."**
>
> **Dr. Alyssa R. Frederick**
> *Director, White Abalone Captive Breeding Program*



White abalone spawned and raised in laboratories offer hope for restoring wild populations. Photo: Bodega Marine Lab.



A Bodega Marine Laboratory staff member holds juvenile white abalone that LightHawk will transport for continued care before release in the Pacific. Photo: Bodega Marine Lab.

Tracking the Habitat Manatees Depend On

FLORIDA

For manatees, healthy underwater grass beds mean food. In Florida's Homosassa River, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico, roughly 90% of native aquatic vegetation had disappeared, replaced by dense algae. Restoration crews began replanting eelgrass in 2020 to rebuild feeding habitat within this connected river and coastal ecosystem.

Working alongside Save the Manatee Club, LightHawk captured baseline photographs and video of existing eelgrass beds, then gathered additional imagery across the Homosassa River watershed for habitat assessment.

This aerial record gives conservationists a foundation for tracking changes in manatee feeding habitat and evaluating recovery over time.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT VAREL FREEMAN



Homosassa River watershed, Florida. LightHawk gathers imagery to help assess manatee feeding habitat. Photo: Varel Freeman



Great Bay estuary, New Hampshire. Healthy seagrass beds shelter wildlife and stabilize sediments. LightHawk helps researchers pinpoint where closer study is needed. Photo: Jonathan Milne, LightHawk.

What Seagrass Can Tell Us in New Hampshire

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Along the New Hampshire and Maine coast, seagrass coverage remains well below historic levels. These underwater meadows shelter wildlife, stabilize sediment and store carbon, making their condition an important measure of estuary health.

Working alongside the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP), LightHawk conducted an overview flight across the Great Bay estuary to help staff locate underwater vegetation and plan closer assessment.

Eelgrass, widgeon grass and seaweed can look similar from an aircraft, but distinguishing among them matters for habitat assessment. LightHawk's overview helped PREP identify where to focus subsequent drone surveys, directing detailed imagery toward areas needing a closer look.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT AND FORMER CEO JIM BECKER

Oklahoma

Biologists feed masked bobwhite quail chicks before loading them for their LightHawk flight. LightHawk flights have virtually eliminated chick mortality during transport.

Photo: Don Wolfe

Conservation Takes Flight

Protecting Wildlife

A rescued sea turtle needs a place to heal. A wolf pup has a brief window to join a wild pack. A flock of captive-bred quail must reach the habitat where recovery can take root. Each journey connects careful conservation work with the possibility of a life in the wild.

LightHawk makes those connections. Working alongside wildlife agencies, breeding programs and rehabilitation teams, we coordinate transport when timing, distance and careful handling matter. We also monitor wildlife across remote landscapes, helping conservationists understand how animals are faring once they are there.

From sea turtle rehabilitation to Mexican gray wolf breeding and fostering, from quail releases in Arizona to swan surveys in Idaho, LightHawk connects the stages of recovery. Our work helps animals reach the care, companions and habitat they need, and helps conservationists follow their progress in the wild.

Flying Sea Turtles Toward Recovery

NEW ENGLAND, FLORIDA & NEW YORK

For a cold-stunned sea turtle, reaching shore is only the beginning of a long recovery. As Cape Cod's waters cool, turtles that have not migrated south can become too weak to swim. Stranded on beaches, they depend on rescuers to find them and veterinary teams to begin treatment.

Once stabilized, these vulnerable animals need space in specialized rehabilitation facilities where their care can continue. Getting them there requires coordination across rescue teams, hospitals and transportation providers.

Working alongside NOAA's Office of Protected Resources, the New England Aquarium and receiving rehabilitation facilities, LightHawk transported 78 cold-stunned Kemp's ridley sea turtles and six loggerheads to specialized care. The Kemp's ridleys traveled from Massachusetts to five Florida facilities, while the loggerheads moved from the New England Aquarium to the New York Marine Rescue Center to continue their rehabilitation.



Coordinated transport connects New England's rescue network with available rehabilitation care. Photo: NOAA



Teams transfer rescued sea turtles aboard an aircraft for transport to continued rehabilitation. Photo: NOAA

For the Florida transfer, LightHawk planned a three-stop route that balanced flight time, animal welfare, aircraft logistics and each facility's capacity. The turtles were distributed among Loggerhead Marinelife Center, Sea Turtle Care & Conservation Specialists, SeaWorld Orlando, The Seas at Disney and The Turtle Hospital in Marathon.

The coordinated flights reduced time in transit and connected vulnerable turtles with available veterinary care, while helping make room in New England's rehabilitation network as newly stranded animals continued to arrive. By linking rescue and initial treatment with longer-term rehabilitation, LightHawk helped both species continue their recovery toward eventual release.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS
CHUCK YANKE AND DAVID MORRISON

Kemp's Ridley sea turtle on a sandy shoreline. Rehabilitation gives rescued turtles a path toward returning to the wild. Photo: National Park Service



Mexican gray wolf in conservation care at ABQ BioPark, New Mexico. LightHawk transports wolves to strengthen breeding efforts and recovery in the wild. Photo: Joanna Weitzel, LightHawk.

The Wolf Pack

MISSOURI, WASHINGTON & NEW MEXICO

For endangered Mexican gray wolves, recovery depends on more than increasing their numbers. Carefully planned breeding and the placement of captive-born pups into wild packs help strengthen the genetic diversity essential to the population's future.

LightHawk's volunteer "Wolf Pack" pilots connect those efforts, transporting wolves between breeding facilities and moving young pups into the wild during critical fostering windows.

Two Mexican gray wolves traveled from the Endangered Wolf Center in Missouri to Wolf Haven International in Tenino, Washington, as part of the conservation breeding program. In a separate mission, LightHawk transported nine pups to join two wild packs, where foster mothers would raise them alongside their own young. These placements give captive-born wolves the opportunity to grow up wild and contribute to the wild population's genetic diversity.

Another journey brought Mittermeier from Zoo New England in Boston to ABQ BioPark in Albuquerque for a potential breeding match, at the request of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' SAFE program. LightHawk's Jonathan Milne and Joanna Weitzel accompanied him.

"After nearly 37 years in conservation, seeing that wolf spring from the crate gave me real hope," Milne said. "It also reminded me of the extraordinary work LightHawk carries out year after year."

Across these missions, LightHawk connects carefully matched animals, breeding facilities and wild packs, helping turn recovery plans into opportunities for the next generation of Mexican gray wolves.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS KENNETH ADELMAN, JACK LONG, AND THOMAS HAAS

Lighthawk's Role in Mexican Wolf Recovery

51
Conservation Flights

169
Mexican Wolves Transported

2020
Cross-fostering transports began

Did You Know?

Wildlife recovery crosses borders.
LightHawk has transported black-footed ferrets between Canada and Colorado for conservation breeding and preparations for release.

Some nests are hidden deep in wetlands.
LightHawk conducts aerial surveys to help researchers locate and monitor whooping crane nests in Wisconsin marshes that are difficult to survey from the ground.

Recovery requires monitoring animals in the wild.
LightHawk's pronghorn surveys in California and Oregon help researchers assess population numbers, distribution and recruitment of young animals.

Tracking Trumpeter Swans in Idaho

IDAHO

For trumpeter swans, recovery depends on wetlands that provide places to feed, nest and raise their young. Understanding how birds use those habitats helps conservationists assess the population beyond any single wetland.

LightHawk worked alongside Teton Regional Land Trust on a series of summer and fall surveys to better understand the resident swan population across lands the trust cooperatively manages. From above, the surveys connected individual wetlands within the larger Teton Valley landscape, helping the team look for birds across dispersed habitat.

This monitoring connects wildlife recovery with land stewardship. By helping the trust assess where swans spend the season, LightHawk contributes information to the ongoing work of caring for both the birds and the wetlands they depend on.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT RAY LEE



Teton Valley wetlands, Idaho. Aerial surveys connect dispersed swan habitat. Photo: Zane Lance.

Returning Masked Bobwhite Quail to Arizona

ARIZONA

For endangered masked bobwhite quail, recovery depends on connecting captive breeding with efforts to rebuild wild populations. Moving hundreds of juvenile birds between those stages requires careful handling and coordinated transport.

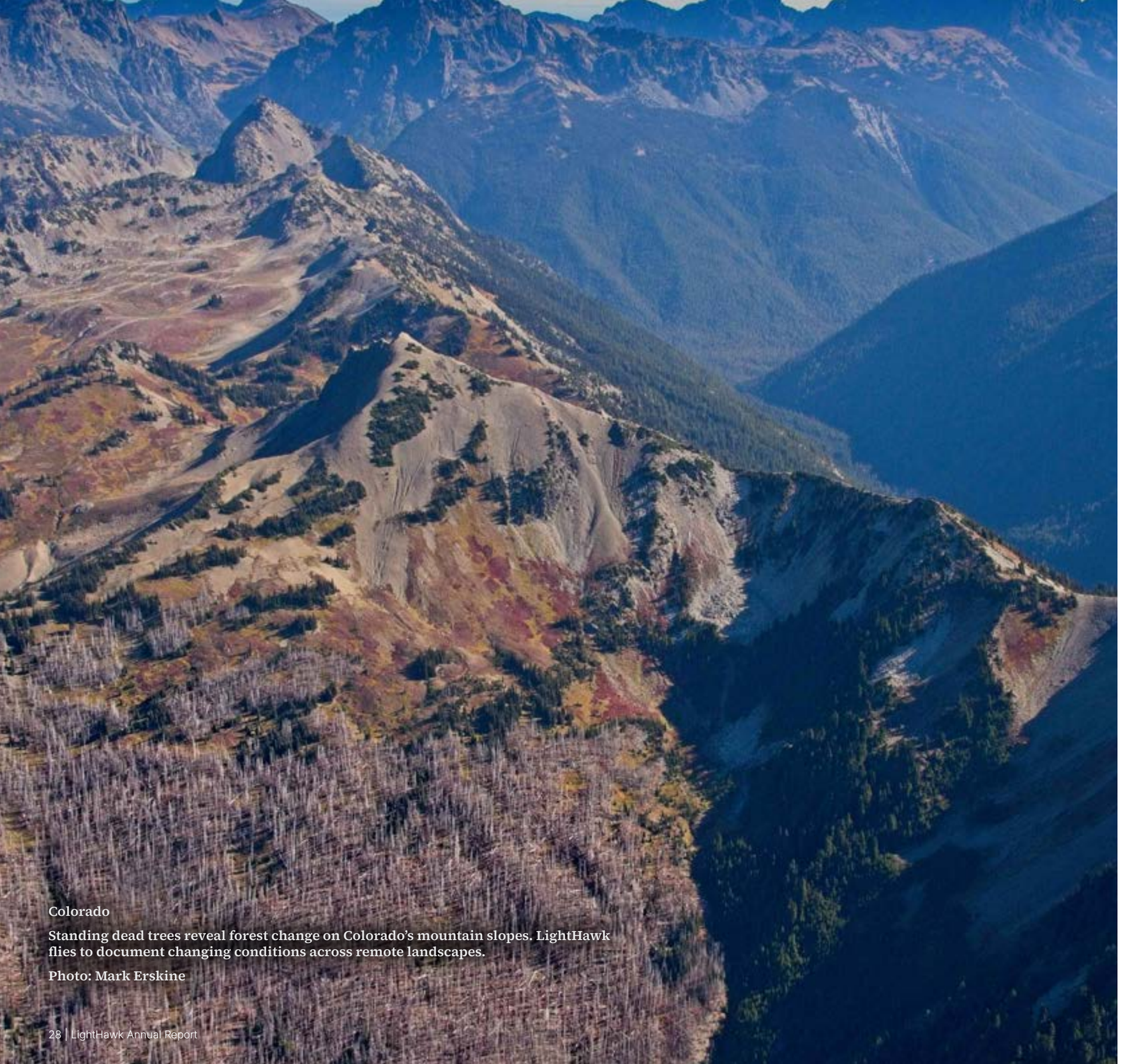
Working alongside the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center, LightHawk transported approximately 300 juvenile quail in 24 crates from a breeding facility in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, to Tucson, Arizona. The birds were destined for release at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.

The mission connected the breeding program in Oklahoma with recovery work in Arizona, moving a new group of birds toward a return to the wild as part of LightHawk's ongoing partnership.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT JACK LONG



Coordinated wildlife transport of masked bobwhite quail improve mortality rates before release. Photo: Don Wolfe.



Colorado

Standing dead trees reveal forest change on Colorado's mountain slopes. LightHawk flies to document changing conditions across remote landscapes.

Photo: Mark Erskine

Conservation Takes Flight

Building Climate Resilience

The future of a landscape is shaped by how we respond to change. After wildfire, understanding a forest's recovery can guide its care. Before the next fire, seeing how communities meet wildlands can inform preparedness. During drought, documenting a reservoir's decline can help people understand the pressures on their water supply.

LightHawk brings the reach and perspective to connect those changes with the decisions they demand. Working alongside conservation organizations and community leaders, we document conditions, follow recovery over time and bring people closer to the landscapes they are working to protect.

Resilience takes shape through informed choices and sustained care. By revealing connections across forests, watersheds and communities, LightHawk helps turn an understanding of change into a clearer path for conservation action.



Hells Canyon, Oregon. LightHawk's repeated aerial observations help track forest change and recovery over time. Photo: Ellen Morris Bishop.

Tracking Fire and Recovery in Oregon

OREGON

After wildfire, a forest's story keeps unfolding. New growth emerges within burn scars, and patches of surviving trees stand beside areas more deeply changed by fire. Understanding that recovery takes repeated observation, across a landscape too large and complex to grasp from any single point on the ground.

LightHawk returned to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest with Oregon Wild to document that unfolding story. Building on a 2023 survey, the mission marked Year 3 of a planned monitoring effort, with additional observations envisioned for Years 5 and 10. Photographer and scientist Ellen Morris Bishop captured imagery to help build a record of how the landscape changes over time.

The surveys follow the footprints of three large fires that burned in 2022. Two burned within the protected Eagle Cap Wilderness and were allowed to continue burning; a third, in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, was aggressively fought.

Documenting these landscapes gives Oregon Wild a broader perspective for examining recovery across different terrain and fire-management histories. Ground observations add detail to what the aerial imagery reveals.

The mission also documented nearby logging activity and lands being considered for permanent protection. These issues intersect in a forested corridor linking the Rocky Mountain and Cascade ecosystems south of the Columbia River, where decisions about individual sites can affect connections across a much larger landscape.

By returning above the same landscape, LightHawk helps turn a moment of observation into a record of recovery. That record gives Oregon Wild material for public education and discussions with decision-makers, grounding conversations about fire, forestry and protection in the places those decisions will shape.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT ERIC BERMAN



Colorado. Aerial views connect mitigation projects, wildfire scars and nearby communities. Photo: Aaron Johnson

Strengthening Wildfire Preparedness in Colorado

COLORADO

Where homes meet forests, wildfire preparedness becomes a landscape-wide challenge. Mitigation projects address specific places, but understanding how that work fits together requires seeing beyond an individual neighborhood or stand of trees.

LightHawk coordinated six flights with Fire Adapted Colorado, bringing local leaders above wildfire scars, significant mitigation projects and areas where development meets wildland vegetation. Participants saw treated and untreated areas within the same landscape, gaining a clearer understanding of the scale of wildfire preparedness.

That firsthand perspective connected the board's work to the places it seeks to make more resilient. LightHawk made the relationship between wildfire exposure, mitigation and communities tangible, giving participants a shared reference point for guiding the organization's work.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOTS CHARLES HEYWOOD, JOHN LACEY, AND RICK TURLEY

"The flight provided a sense of scale that would have been impossible otherwise."

Julie Klett
Fire Adapted Colorado

Documenting Drought in New Jersey's Highlands

A shrinking reservoir tells a story that rainfall statistics alone cannot. In New Jersey's Highlands, where roughly 70% of residents receive some or all of their drinking water, declining water levels make the pressures on a shared resource tangible.

Working alongside the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, LightHawk captured aerial footage of targeted reservoirs to assess current water levels. The mission gave the Coalition a broader view of reservoir conditions and a visual record for communicating the strain on the region's water supply.

That record connects water policy discussions to the reservoirs communities depend on. With imagery gathered through LightHawk, the Coalition can bring those conditions into public outreach and discussions about how the region's water is managed and protected.

FLOWN BY VOLUNTEER PILOT PILOT TOMER REGEV



Flying over targeted reservoirs, LightHawk and New Jersey Highlands Coalition captured imagery to monitor drought conditions. Photo: Tomer Regev



Volunteer pilot Jim Cameron flying over the mountains of British Columbia. Photo: Raven Eye Photography

Our Volunteer Pilots

Every mission begins with people who give their time, aircraft and skill to conservation. Thank you to the volunteer pilots whose generosity brings LightHawk's work into reach.

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Kenneth Adelman*
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Chuck Yanke*
Julie Yeates*
Andy Young
Scott Young

** Volunteer Pilots who flew during FY2025/2026.*

Gone West

Steven Garman
Ketchum, Idaho



LightHawk

Honoring Excellence

2025-2026 Volunteer Pilot Awards



Jamie Gamble

President's Award



Alan Kinback

Spirit of LightHawk



Lane Gormley

Rockwell Award



Ken & Gabrielle Adelman

Carpenter Award



Eric Berman

Rookie of the Year



Flatirons in Boulder, Colorado. The aerial perspective gives donors a better understanding of past, present and future conservation work in the area. Photo: James Murphy

Partners In Conservation

LightHawk and our conservation partners combine expertise, aerial access and shared commitment to protect landscapes, restore wildlife and inform decisions.

ABQ Bio Park
Agricultural Stewardship Association
Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative
Alianza Revive el Rio
Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Aquarium of the Pacific
Archaeology Southwest / Safford BLM
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Bailey Images
Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center-USFWS
Bobolink Foundation
Borderlands Restoration Network
Boston University
Braided River
Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge-US Fish & Wildlife Service
Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
California Institute of Environmental Studies
Capital & Main
Capital and Main
Cascades Wolverine Project
Clean River Advisory Council
Colorado Natural Heritage Program
Colorado State University
Connecticut River Conservancy
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Conservation Law Foundation
Cuenca los Ojos
Dave Showalter Nature Photography
David Moskowitz, photographer
Delta Leadership Program; Delta Leadership Foundation
Delta Protection Commission
EarthJustice
Everglades National Park
Fire Adapted Colorado
Florida International University
Flower Hill Institute
Forest Society of Maine
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of Penobscot Bay
Friends of the Upper Delaware River
Gallatin Forest Partnership
Gallatin Valley Land Trust
George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center
Gonzaga University
Greater Hells Canyon Council
Greater Lovell Land Trust
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
High Country News
Hudson Taconic Lands
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Inland Northwest Land Conservancy
Inside Climate News
International League of Conservation Photographers
Iowa Public Radio
J Henry Fair, Photographer
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Legacy Forest Defense Coalition
Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Forest Society
Maine Rivers
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Massachusetts River Alliance
Mexican Gray Wolf SAFE Program
Mexican Wolf SAFE Program
Miami Waterkeeper
Mirage Podcast
Mono Lake Committee
Montana Environmental Information Center
Montana Free Press
Nathaniel Gruen
National Geographic Society grantees
National Parks Conservation Association
Native Land Institute
Natives Outdoors
Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife
New Jersey Highlands Coalition
Nez Perce Tribe
NOAA, Office of Protected Resources
Northeast Wilderness Trust
Oregon State University
Oregon Wild
Park County Environmental Council
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Pinnacles National Park
Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership
Pro Publica
Puget Soundkeeper
Raise the River
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Rivers Coalition
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Rogue Heart Media
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Save the Manatee Club
Scarborough Land Trust
Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter
South Florida Water Management District
Staying Connected initiative
Teton Regional Land Trust
The Arizona Republic
The Bay Foundation
The Everglades Foundation
The Home Place Team
The Nature Conservancy-New Jersey, The Delaware Bayshores Office
The Redford Center
The Trustees of Reservations
TNC Maine
Trout Unlimited
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
University of Colorado, Boulder - Getches-Wilkinson Center School of Law
Upper Valley Land Trust
US Fish and Wildlife Service-National Office
Utah Dine' Bike'yah
Ventana Wildlife Society
Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
Washington's National Park Fund
Wendel Raymond, Frances Robertson
West Region Wildfire Council
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Resource Advocates
White Abalone Captive Breeding Program, UC Davis Bodega Marine Lab
Wild Montana
Wildlands Network
Winter Wildlands Alliance
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Wetlands Society
Yaak Valley Forest Council
Yosemite National Park, Terrestrial Wildlife, Resources Management and Science Division
Zoo New England



Our Supporters

Your generosity makes this conservation work possible. Thank you to everyone who gave to LightHawk between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026.

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LEADERSHIP

The People Behind the Work

LIGHTHAWK STAFF

Elliot Wright	*CEO*
Joanna Weitzel	*Chief Advancement Officer*
Chelsea Baird	*Office Manager*
Chris Boyer	*Northern Rockies Program Manager*
Clint Burson	*Strategic Communications Manager*
Betsy Daub	*Western Program Manager*
Brooke George	*Wildlife Program Manager*
Jonathan Milne	*Eastern Program Manager*
Jim Becker	*Former Chief Executive Officer*

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Financial Overview

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2026

Revenue

Grants and contributions	$816,338
Interest and dividends	$27,623
Investment gains	$160,489
Other income	$759
Total	**$1,005,209**

Expenses

Program services	$669,355
General and administrative	$160,218
Fundraising	$127,544
Total	**$957,117**

Revenue and expenses exclude $1,598,173 in in-kind contributions and donated flight services. Financial figures are based on preliminary audited financial statements. Figures are subject to change.



203 MISSIONS

215 FLIGHTS

791 FLIGHT HOURS

332 PASSENGERS FLOWN

74 VOLUNTEER PILOTS

24 STATES (PLUS CANADA & MEXICO)

Missions by Purpose

Imagery	83
Management	39
Education & Outreach	30
Research	23
Wildlife	15
Media	10
Philanthropy	9

A mission may include multiple flights and purposes.

The Work Continues. Your Support Matters.

Conservation work takes time, trust and persistence. Protecting a landscape can require years of effort. Recovering an endangered species means caring for one generation while preparing for the next. Understanding a changing forest or river means returning to it, documenting what has changed and using that knowledge to guide decisions.

LightHawk is part of that ongoing work. We work alongside partners to protect these places and species, using aviation to reach farther, see more clearly and act when timing matters.

Our volunteer pilots give their expertise, aircraft, time and fuel. Your financial support makes it possible for LightHawk to plan those missions, coordinate the people involved and sustain the relationships that make each flight useful for conservation.

There is much to be grateful for in these pages, and there is also more to do. The places and wildlife you care about need people willing to sustain this effort before opportunities are lost and long after the first signs of progress.

Please help us carry this commitment forward. Your support keeps us ready for the next mission and the work that follows.

Make a gift at LightHawk.org.

LightHawk®
CONSERVATION FLYING

LightHawk | PO Box 2751, Grand Junction, CO 81502 | (970) 797-9355

Cover and Back images: Capturing video and still imagery of Maine's Hundred Mile Wilderness. The aerial view helps staff identify changes or activities that may warrant closer ground assessment. Photo: Jonathan Milne, LightHawk