



# BLACK ROCK FOREST NEWS

Black Rock Forest, 65 Reservoir Road, Cornwall, NY 12518

Spring 2018

## Celebrating the Life of Sibyl R. Golden

Sibyl Rebecca Golden, board chair of Black Rock Forest Consortium from 2007 -2015 and co-chair since 2015, passed away at her home in New York City on August 12, 2017. She, and her inspiring leadership, will be sorely missed.

Sibyl was the daughter of Black Rock Forest Consortium's founder, William T. Golden, and his wife, Sibyl Levy Golden. She grew up loving nature and her family's property in the Catskills, where she climbed many of the highest peaks and spent treasured hours with her parents, sister, cousins, and other family members and friends.

After graduating from Harvard with a degree in biology, Sibyl was a science editor at McGraw Hill, Academic Press, and Plenum Publishing, and served as the director of publications for INFORM, Inc.

She founded Postcards, Inc. in 1993, an independent record company described by *The Wall Street Journal* as "the most consistently interesting jazz label in America," and met her life partner, Chip White, through this work.

For decades, Sibyl was also a philanthropist — though she did not favor the term. She served on the boards of the American Museum of Natural History, Barnard College, the New York Hall of Science, the Hebrew Free Loan Society, and numerous other institutions, skillfully chairing committees and benefits. But she didn't want to see her name in lights, preferring the aspects of nonprofit leadership that were interpersonal, and quietly fostering the talents of others, particularly scientists and educators.

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## Announcing \$5.5 Million in Gifts, a Challenge, and a More Concise Name

On November 1, 2017, a check arrived in Black Rock Forest's mail. To the great surprise of everyone, that check was for \$3.5 million, and it was from the Golden Family Foundation.

Though it arrived posthumously, the gift had been directed by our late board chair, Sibyl Golden, in closing the Golden Family Foundation. Half of the gift was earmarked for general endowment and half directed to a new postdoctoral fellowship program in forest ecology.

Much had changed in 2017. Sibyl, our enormously dedicated board leader, had died in August, due to ALS. Two years prior, she had made a \$2 million challenge gift, and our board had been quietly responding to that challenge, with \$1.3 million matched to date. Meanwhile, the organization continued to increase its regional impact and serve new constituencies, securing easements and strategic land purchases in the critical wildlife zone west of the forest, beginning construction of the final phase of an ADA-accessible Visitor Access Pathway, and launching a new public hikes program for our tens of

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Sibyl Golden with her father, Bill Golden, at the groundbreaking for the Black Rock Forest Lodge in 2003.

TOP: Black Rock Forest. PHOTO Josh Blank.

## Letter from the Board Chair



When Sibyl Golden asked me to co-chair the Black Rock Forest board with her in the spring of 2015, I agreed, knowing how well the Forest had progressed under her extraordinary leadership. Our two years as co-chairs had many highlights.

We particularly celebrated Black Rock Forest's conservation easement, a major benefit to our region granted

by Sibyl and the trustees of the Black Rock Forest Preserve. Sibyl and I both looked forward to a continued partnership with the Open Space Institute and New York State to protect an essential wildlife zone in the Hudson Highlands centered on the Forest and the lands between Storm King Mountain and Schunnemunk Mountain state parks.

There are still unfinished initiatives in conservation, research, and education at Black Rock Forest that Sibyl would

have liked to have seen completed. That is the core of our work now. As I have the honor of succeeding Sibyl as chair, I also have the pleasure of announcing and responding to a challenge from Sibyl.

In 2015, Sibyl Golden made a \$2 million challenge gift to Black Rock Forest with the condition that we match her gift dollar for dollar. The Campaign for Black Rock Forest ensued — and our board and major supporters have responded with gifts and pledges totaling \$1.3 million. We have thus raised 65% of our goal — and now we invite your participation.

In a memorandum of understanding, Sibyl stipulated that gifts or pledges received for the Campaign for Black Rock Forest by July 31, 2018, would qualify for her 1:1 match. An envelope is included with this newsletter for those who may wish to join with our board, institutional members, and staff in making a contribution to this effort. If you are able to join us in this initiative, we welcome it. I look forward to celebrating the fruits of our efforts this fall, when we will unveil a special new feature named in Sibyl's honor.

— David N. Redden, Board Chair, Black Rock Forest

## New Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in Forest Ecology

The effects of environmental and climate change are increasingly well documented, and include changes to our planet's biogeochemical cycles, loss of biota, and the growing concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. What is less well understood is how those changes will affect life on Earth. For ecologists and environmental scientists, this race of discovery is on.

Recent research at Black Rock Forest has been addressing two of the highest priority problems in ecology, known as "grand challenges:" quantifying how global cycles of life-critical elements like carbon and nitrogen are changing, in the effort to strengthen the predictive power of climate change models; and improving understanding of biodiversity and how this multi-dimensional feature of natural systems promotes ecological health and resilience.



The tamarack, a deciduous conifer, in Black Rock Forest.

What we've actively sought in the past several years is the opportunity to increase the pace and productivity of Black Rock Forest's research program to better address ecological grand challenges in New York, where we continue to confront

the effects of environmental and climate change. In the fall of 2018, thanks to Sibyl Golden's \$1.7 million gift to complete an endowed fund, Black Rock Forest will announce a new postdoctoral fellowship program in forest ecology.

"Black Rock Forest's historical role in forest research since the late 1920's will now be extended into the future and supported as never before" said William Schuster, Ph.D., executive director of Black Rock Forest. "In particular, the emphasis on environmental change and global challenge issues will highlight for the public how important this research is for our future, not just in places like the Arctic and the tropics, but also in our own backyards."

***"What we've actively sought in the past several years is the opportunity to increase the pace and productivity of Black Rock Forest's research program to better address ecological grand challenges in New York."***

— William Schuster, Ph.D., Executive Director, Black Rock Forest

The two-year postdoctoral fellowship will be offered by Black Rock Forest in association with Columbia University's Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory, where the fellow will have an appointment in the Biogeosciences group. We deeply appreciate early support for this program from Michael E. Gellert, Anne P. Sidamon-Eristoff, and the G. Unger Vetlesen Foundation, and we thank the Golden Family Foundation for its leadership-level gift to complete this fund.





Sibyl Golden at Black Rock Forest's benefit luncheon in May of 2016

### Celebrating the Life of Sibyl R. Golden (continued from page 1)

"Sibyl was our presiding genius and guiding spirit," said David N. Redden, board chair of Black Rock Forest Consortium. "Like her father before her, she was determined that the Forest succeed. What she wanted above all was to secure our future. She drew upon her own resources and helped us to find others so that the Forest would be well protected from all storms by its own permanent endowment. That she succeeded so well only adds to the poignancy of her loss," Redden said.

"Under Sibyl's leadership, our organization nearly doubled in size," said Bill Schuster,

Ph.D., the Consortium's executive director. "We enacted a bold strategic plan, built up our board, and implemented improved nonprofit management practices. Student visitorship increased by 30 percent, and we supported science research resulting in 60 peer-reviewed journal papers and graduate theses during her tenure. The region also benefited greatly from Sibyl's pivotal role in establishing a conservation easement with New York State and the Open Space Institute covering 3,777 acres of Black Rock Forest, the largest easement of this kind in the Hudson Highlands," Schuster said. 🌲

***"Sibyl was our presiding genius and guiding spirit. Like her father before her, she was determined that the Forest succeed."*** — David N. Redden, Board Chair,

Black Rock Forest



Sutherland Pond, Black Rock Forest

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### Gifts, a Challenge and... (continued from page 1)

thousands of annual visitors.

In October of 2017, Black Rock Forest Consortium's board voted to begin operating under the more concise name of Black Rock Forest. The Consortium name had been confusing to some and many already referred to the organization simply as Black Rock Forest. The name shortening did not entail any change to the highly successful consortium of academic institutions that jointly use the forest as a field station. But it better reflected our commitment to serve the region through conservation, a public summer science camp, and programs for recreational visitors, whose numbers have increased by an estimated 20 percent in the past decade.

However, no one but the Golden Family Foundation's administrators knew about Sibyl Golden's plan to support the board's vision with an additional major gift, bringing her total gift commitment to \$5.5 million. "Opening the mail on November 1 was a surprise that I will always cherish. With that letter came the certainty of a new research program, and the assurance that Black Rock Forest would advance scientific understanding of the natural world long into the future," said Bill Schuster, Black Rock Forest's executive director. 🌲

## The Campaign for Black Rock Forest: Initiatives That Qualify for a Matching Gift

*New or increased gifts to Black Rock Forest for the initiatives below qualify for a 1:1 match from the Golden Family Foundation. The minimum gift size to qualify for the match is \$100, and all gifts or written pledges must be received by July 31, 2018. Pledges may be made over a period of one to five years.*

■ Gifts to the William T. Golden Endowment, a board-designated fund, help ensure a balanced annual operating budget and improved financial security.

■ Gifts to the Educator Fund support the creation of a master science educator position, helping to make Black Rock Forest a regional center for innovative field, laboratory and public science education experiences.

■ Gifts to the Facilities Fund improve our facilities and infrastructure, allowing all to pursue more complex and varied studies at the Forest, and increasing housing capacity for overnight visits.

■ The new Postdoctoral Fellowship Fund ensures robust, forest-based research addressing grand challenge issues in the ecological and environmental sciences.



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## Inside This Issue

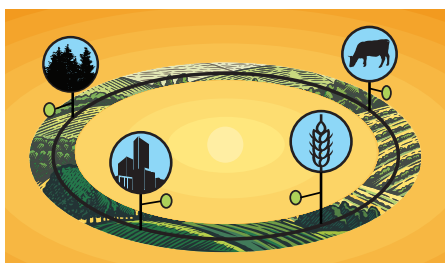
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Announcing \$5.5 Million in Gifts  
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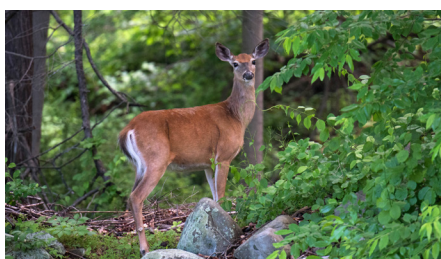
## Forest News in Brief

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**For information and to RSVP** for hikes and volunteer activities,  
contact Brienne Cliadakis at [bcliadakis@blackrockforest.org](mailto:bcliadakis@blackrockforest.org)



**Celebrate with us at Black Rock Forest's annual benefit luncheon on Tuesday, May 1, 2018.** This year's Science and Habitability luncheon is co-chaired by David and Jeannette Redden and Valerie Colas-Ohrstrom. We are honored to present the E.G. Stillman Award to Marjorie L. Hart and Gurnee F. Hart for their public service and philanthropy in conservation, education and science. Black Rock Forest is delighted to welcome keynote speaker Dr. Ruth DeFries, Denning University Professor at Columbia University and author of *The Big Ratchet: How Humanity Thrives in the Face of Crisis*. To purchase a table or tickets contact the Development Office at 845-534-4517 ext. 26 or ext. 11.



**Calling all adults, student groups, and scouting troops! Volunteer for our Annual Deer Survey on Saturday, April 7, 2018.** Help evaluate the health of the herd. Join our executive director, William Schuster, Ph.D., for a morning (9 AM) walk along a transect in the wilderness, learning to conduct a deer pellet count or helping new volunteers get the hang of it. New this year: student or scouting groups can participate in the survey and a mini-workshop on sampling and survey techniques for ages 6 and up, led by Black Rock Forest volunteer Bob Fuller and assisted by our associate director, Emily Cunningham.



**Can't wait until April to volunteer?** Join the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's team of volunteers (a.k.a hikers with pruners), who go out at least twice a year to keep the trail corridors clear and the painted blazes refreshed. Contact them at [volunteer@nynjtc.org](mailto:volunteer@nynjtc.org), and keep a look out for their upcoming Intro to Trail Maintenance workshop this spring on [nynjtc.org/events](http://nynjtc.org/events).

**Summer hikes! Save these dates.** Saturday, June 2nd, Birding by Ear walk with Dr. Terryanne Maenza-Gmelch, 8:30 — 11:30 AM. Saturday, July 14th, High Peaks Hike with Bill and Eileen Glaser (9 AM start time).