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## Mapping summer temperatures across the Adirondacks

June 17, 2022



### Shifting baseline makes it difficult to grasp “normal”

**By Cayte Bosler**

Once fish were so plentiful in American waters that Indigenous populations simply placed baskets in the rivers as a means to catch enough to sustain their kin, according to *The River of Life: Sustainable Practices of Native Americans and Indigenous Peoples*.

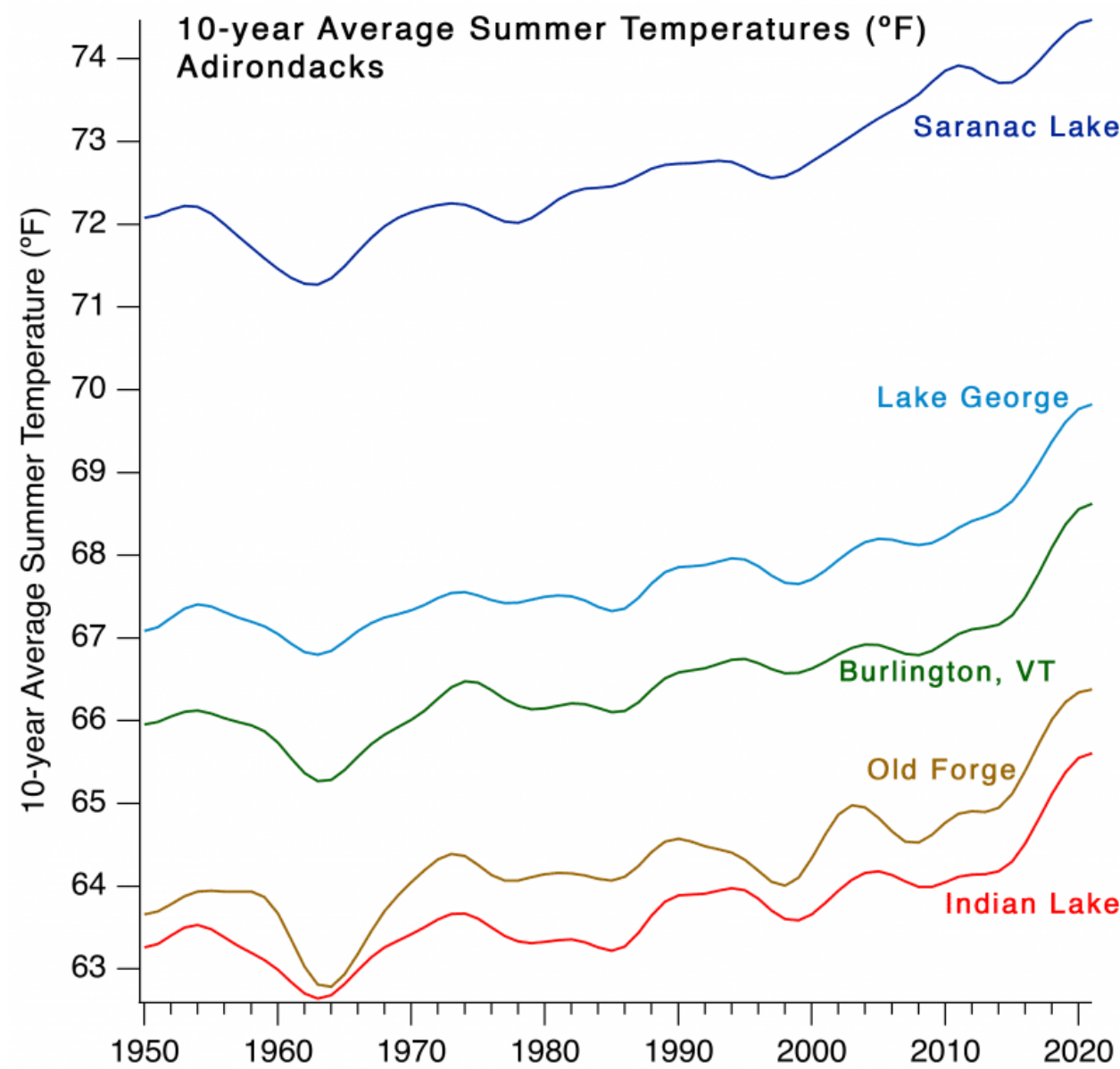
When asked, fishermen in the 20th century would claim that the bounty of fish they caught had “always been so,” despite records indicating declines in total fish catch and even the fish size, without knowledge of how fish existed in their respective environments in previous generations. In 1995, Daniel Pauly coined this “shifting baseline syndrome,” to mean that a generation of people without

connection to the history of a place tend to perceive the environmental condition of their time as “normal.” That many communities look only to the recent past to base their future expectations.

This can be so with temperatures, too, on the rise in the United States, with the Northeast warming the fastest. “Over the past decade, extreme heat events have grown 90 times more common (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41612-021-00202-w>), according to one study,” David Wallace Wells explains in his op ed “Can You Even Call ‘Extreme’ Heat Deadly Anymore (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/opinion/india-heat-wave-pakistan-climate-change.html>).” A child alive now may accept warmer-than-average summer days as “normal” with no perspective to gauge what scientists label “extreme” in a longer time span.

For a deeper analysis on increasing air temperatures and how summer is lengthening in the Northern Hemisphere, [read about record highs in New York expected this summer](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/record-summer-high-temperatures) (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/record-summer-high-temperatures>). This previous article focused on temperature analysis for Saranac Lake.

For a tiny window into these changes over time, we turn to a graph, showing the same analysis for Lake George, Indian Lake, Old Forge and Burlington, Vt.:



Data: Climate Reanalyzer, Climate Change Institute (UMaine) © Cayte Bosler 2022 for ADK Explorer

This graph shows 10-year averages of summer temperatures (June, July, August) in four locations in the Adirondacks and one across Lake Champlain in Burlington, Vt. Data source: [Climate Reanalyzer \(https://climatereanalyzer.org/\)](https://climatereanalyzer.org/), Climate Change Institute, University of Maine. Analysis and plot: Cayte Bosler for ADK Explorer (© 2022)

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### About Cayte Bosler

Cayte Bosler is an investigative journalist covering the intersections of climate change, wildlife and community resilience in the Adirondack wilderness. Throughout her career, she has researched ecology and wildlife biology in protected areas in the Bolivian Amazon and in Cuba, trekked to an extreme altitude ecosystem in the Peruvian Andes, and boated through the mangrove-filled estuaries of Guatemala — all to chronicle solutions for conserving the natural world. She holds a master of science from Columbia University's sustainability program and is a fellow of the Explorer's Club.

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