



DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

APRIL, 2015

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West of this natural dune system at Milford Neck (Kent County), DWL and DU are restoring freshwater wetlands.

DWL Expands Wetlands Restoration Successes

*On-the-ground projects complement current
restoration planning*

Located in eastern Kent County and along the shores of the Delaware Bay lies Delaware Wild Lands' Milford Neck Preserve: 3,500 acres and one-and-a-half miles of undeveloped shoreline characterized by shifting beaches and sand dunes backed by vast tidal saltmarsh, coastal forests, and upland agricultural lands. **This expanse serves as vital resting and foraging habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl migrating along the North Atlantic Flyway and an exceptional array of songbirds and raptors, marsh birds, migrating horseshoe crabs, rare plants, and reptiles and amphibians.** Recent radar data collected by researchers at the University of Delaware indicate that Milford Neck ranks among



Saltwater intrusion is killing trees and negatively impacting valuable agricultural lands. Once completed, this project will protect wetlands, forests, and agricultural lands at this site and areas further inland.

the highest and most persistent areas in the state used by migratory songbirds during spring and fall migration.

In the past decade, DWL staffers have noted substantial die-off of the hardwood trees and pines at Milford Neck and increasing salinity in soils and freshwater wetlands resulting from storm water over wash associated with large storms and sea level rise. To address these trends,

Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) began investing in this critical resource in 1985 with our first purchase of 1,775 acres from the Delaware Bay Transport Company. In the years since, Delaware Wild Lands has nearly doubled the size of our original holdings at Milford Neck.

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Aerial view of DWL's "Dead Woods" wetlands restoration site.

DWL is again joining forces with DU to restore 12 acres of freshwater wetlands that will complement our large-scale restoration planning work underway at Milford Neck (see the front-page article of our Fall 2014 newsletter).

Protecting waterfowl and songbird habitat, species diversity, and productivity of agricultural lands at Milford Neck is a top priority for Delaware Wild Lands.

This project is an integral part of DWL's commitment to safeguard the natural beauty and bounty of the region and benefits provided by the critical landscapes we own.

Site survey and project designs are in progress and earthmoving and planting will be completed before year end. As a result of the project wetland-dependent species, upland coastal forests, and agricultural lands will revive and regenerate, and the DWL-DU partnership will improve surface and ground water resources in the Delaware Estuary and Bay and protect the upslope agricultural fields from further saltwater intrusion.

Truly, this project is a win-win for people and nature: it takes a systemic approach to restoring and enhancing Delaware's critical natural resources, *and* enhances the resiliency of our coastal habitat and productivity of Delaware's coastal farmland.



DWL Launches Spring Projects — What's Underway at DWL

As snowflakes flew in February and ice blanketed, well, nearly everything in March, DWL staffers prepared additional projects for the spring:

- In April, with the help of the Appoquinimink Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, DWL will host more than 70 boy scouts and volunteers for a weekend of work (and play!) at the Sharp Farm (New Castle County).
- Planting of 50,000 tree seedlings at the Great Cypress Swamp (Sussex County) that will bring us to a total of more than 115,000 trees planted in the past five years.
- Butterfly and pollinator habitat plantings at the Great Cypress Swamp and on-going nurturing of our Sharp Farm honeybee hives.

For updates about these projects, subscribe to our email announcements (visit www.dewildlands.org and scroll to the bottom of the page), follow us on Instagram, visit our Facebook page (facebook.com/delawarewildlands), or watch for our fall 2015 newsletter!

DWL's Shares the Prolific Beauty & Bounty of Delaware's Natural Resources

Though Delaware Wild Lands' properties are not generally open to the public, we are working diligently to foster continued education, restoration, and appreciation of the health and productivity of Delaware's natural resources. Each year we welcome a wide variety of organizations to share the abundant beauty and bounty of our properties and the successes of our research and restoration efforts. **We have a renewed commitment to and interest in training the next generation of conservationists and reconnecting people to Delaware's critical land and water resources.**

Last fall, we welcomed the Garden Club of Wilmington, a long-time supporter of our conservation work with ties that date back to the founding of Delaware Wild Lands. Over 50 Club members, including relatives of many of our founding members, journeyed by bus to the Swamp and enjoyed a walking tour of the unique Bald cypress wetland behind our Roman Fisher Farm and a driving tour of our 300-acre restoration site within the Great Cypress Swamp. Graduate and undergraduate classes from Delaware State University and Salisbury University joined us at the Swamp to learn about restoration ecology, environmental science, and wetlands and forest restoration. To the north at the Sharp Farm, among other groups, we hosted both the young and old(ish) including the Osher Institute's Hiking into History Class and the first-ever Middletown Youth Christmas Bird Count.

Access to DWL's lands is not limited to classes or large groups. At Milford Neck, we have a multi-year field research project about King Rails underway and this spring a researcher from the New York Botanical Gardens will conduct vegetation surveys of the Great Cypress Swamp and areas throughout Sussex County. **If you are interested in seeing first-hand the best of Delaware and learning more of Delaware's natural gems, please contact our office to schedule a visit!**



Members of the Garden Club of Wilmington (and their courageous bus driver) enthusiastically ventured deep into the Swamp!

Interested in receiving more news and updates from DWL?

Scroll to the bottom of our website (www.dewildlands.org) and sign up for our email announcements.



Photo by John Goodier

Flock of wild turkey from DWL's Sharp Farm visit an adjacent property.

DWL Brings Back the Wild to Delaware

Reintroduction of Wild Turkey in Delaware

Those of us who frequent the fields, forests, swamps, and marshes of Delaware regard wild turkey sightings as a common occurrence. Many of us, however, are not aware of how Delaware's wild turkey populations were established or the important role DWL played in the reintroduction of this native species.

Wild turkeys are a secretive woodland species wary of people and are only native to North America. Historically, wild turkey thrived throughout the East Coast until the early 20th century when the growing human population encroached on their habitat causing a substantial decline in the wild turkey population. **By the mid-1970s, no established populations of wild turkey remained in the State of Delaware.**

In 1981, Delaware Wild Lands and Delaware State Fish & Wildlife released more than 50 pen-reared

wild turkey at DWL's Great Cypress Swamp property. **For months we shared cautious optimism and the occasional poult (young turkey) sighting, but by the late fall it became clear the long-term propagation of the birds was unlikely.**

Taking stock of what worked (and what did not!), we expanded our efforts to include the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Northeast Wildlife Conference Group, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and released 40 wild turkeys at DWL's Milford Neck and Great Cypress Swamp properties. Telemetry monitoring and increased sightings at both release locations the following year confirmed that the release and breeding were successful. By 1987 healthy reproducing populations were present in both locations and sightings were increasingly common. In 1992, the wild turkey population in Delaware was estimated to be about 800 birds and had risen to 1,000 birds by 1993.



DWL and Delaware Fish & Wildlife staff banding wild turkey to monitor release success.

Today, outdoor enthusiasts enjoy sightings of a State-wide wild turkey population that exceeds 5,000 wild turkeys.

DWL now regularly sees wild turkeys foraging on our Betts, Armstrong, Taylor's Bridge, and Sharp Farms in New Castle County, Milford Neck in Kent County, and throughout the Great Cypress Swamp in Sussex County. Through the committed effort of DWL and our conservation partners, wild turkeys are once again present and thriving throughout Delaware.

Out and About on Delaware Wild Lands' Properties





An enthusiastic crowd braved February's chilling temperatures to gather at historic Odessa's Cantwell's Tavern for Delaware Wild Lands' Second Annual Wild Game Dinner and celebration of the beauty and bounty of Delaware's natural resources.

DWL'S SECOND GAME DINNER: SOLD OUT AND SCRUMPTIOUS

The popular raw oyster bar was the perfect kick-off to the five-course, palette-pleasing meal featuring Duck Confit Rillettes, Braised Rabbit Bucatini, and Roasted Venison, all creatively prepared and presented by Executive Chef Bryan Crowley and Chef De Cuisine Matthew Anderson. Wine pairings complemented each course, with a fine port to finish the evening.

Our thanks to Bob Ashby, Marc Ashby, and Cantwell's Tavern's exceptional chefs and staff for a very memorable evening!

A special thank you to Bill D'Alonzo, Peter MacGaffin, William K. du Pont, and Eli Sharp for sharing their bounty, to those who braved questionable weather to attend the event, and to our sponsors for **continuing the tradition, quality, and fund-raising success of the evening:**

All proceeds of this Wild Game Dinner benefit DWL's conservation and restoration projects and programs on the 20,000 acres of protected land we own throughout Delaware.

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DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

Delaware Wild Lands' Board of Directors: William F. D'Alonzo



Born and raised in Wilmington, Bill D'Alonzo is well-known in Delaware — and beyond — for a lifetime of achieving superior results in managing financial and land assets. Professionally, Bill served Friess Associates for more than three decades, beginning his career as a part-time researcher and ultimately succeeding the firms' founder as chief executive. Under Bill's leadership, Friess Associates grew from a staff of five to more than 40 through even the most tumultuous of financial times including the tech-stock bubble, September 11, war in the Middle East, and the Great Recession.

Bill is an accomplished investor and true leader, and nowhere is this more evident than in his deep commitment to and success with conserving land and restoring wildlife habitat. Whether gazing across the marsh at his Bombay Hook Farm or at the diversity of restored wildlife habitat at his Turner's Creek Farm, Bill's value for tradition and getting results is readily apparent. Bill skillfully interweaves the successes of the past with solutions that embrace new ideas and creativity, and he is keenly focused on supporting efforts and initiatives that have meaningful impacts.

Bill always looks towards the horizon without losing track of where he stands. He has a cool head, warm smile, and unwavering confidence that makes him a highly adept leader who navigates easily even in the toughest of times. His guidance of Delaware Wild Lands and assistance fostering strategic partnerships and entrepreneurial approaches to land conservation is helping transform DWL into a new era of leadership in private lands' management and restoration.

Delaware Wild Lands is grateful for Bill's involvement and we are honored to continue our partnership with him as a Board member, strategic visionary, and leader of DWL. In addition to serving on DWL's Board of Directors, Bill serves on the National Board of Ducks Unlimited and the Wetlands America Trust. Bill also recently joined the Tall Timbers Research Foundation Advancement Committee and the University of Delaware's Agricultural and Natural Resources Advisory Committee.

INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING DWL?

Think creatively! Two long-time DWL supporters are generously donating to DWL the proceeds from the sale of two specialty guns: an Italian Perazzi 12-gauge shotgun and a Prussian Sauer 12-gauge shotgun. More information is available at Artemis Outfitters (artemisoutfitters.com or **302-384-6861**). Online select the "Pre-Owned Firearms" tab and search for GI#**100512367** and GI#**100512371**.



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Delaware Wild Lands relies on the support of those who are committed to achieving great conservation in the First State.

Please support the work of Delaware Wild Lands with a tax-deductible contribution. Contributions can be submitted using the PayPal link on our website (www.delawarewildlands.org) or by sending a check to our office (Delaware Wild Lands, P.O. Box 505, Odessa, DE 19730).

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