



# DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

## OFFICERS:

EUGENE H. BAYARD, ESQ.  
*President*

RICHARD S. FISCHER  
*Vice President*

BLAINE T. PHILLIPS, ESQ.  
*Secretary*

C. PORTER SCHUTT, III  
*Treasurer*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

EUGENE H. BAYARD, ESQ.

SCOTT C. CRAWFORD

WILLIAM F. D'ALONZO

THOMAS H. DRAPER, JR.

WILLIAM K. DU PONT

RICHARD S. FISCHER

CHARLES F. GUMMEY, JR.

CYNTHIA A. HEWITT

CARRIE LINGO

PETER T. MACGAFFIN

GREGORY PETTINARO

BLAINE T. PHILLIPS, ESQ.

C. PORTER SCHUTT, III

ELI R. SHARP

ROBERT W. TUNNELL, III

## STAFF:

KATHERINE F. HACKETT  
*Executive Director*

ANDREW S. MARTIN  
*Field Ecologist, Program Manager  
& Director of Social Media*

KATHLEEN H. HARVEY  
*Program Manager*

BRENNAN NESS  
*Conservation Programs Manager*

RONALD J. HAAS  
*Project Manager*

DEBORAH P. TURNER  
*Administrative Assistant*

PETER S. MARTIN  
*Field Ecologist*



*A population of bobwhite quail persists in a small section of Delaware's undeveloped coast.*

## Making It Count for Quail

### *DWL focuses on bobwhite conservation in Taylors Bridge*

You may call it a Northern Bobwhite, a Virginia Quail, or perhaps the more scientific *Colinus virginianus*...they all refer to the only species of quail native to the East Coast. Its sharp, whistle call – “bob-white!” – seems to be shrieked, as though it longs to be heard by anyone who’s willing to listen. The call was once a common sound throughout its native range, but has disappeared from most of its northern stretches and seen steep declines in all other parts of its range. Over the last 60 years, the population of bobwhites has declined 85% range-wide, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

Delaware’s densities of bobwhite quail were once the highest in the country, but now *you have to know where to look*. A remnant population exists within Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area and surrounding lands, including DWL’s Taylors Bridge Complex. In fact, during certain times of the year, visitors to this area have a hard time hearing anything but the calling quail. In 2016, this site was designated Delaware’s first Focal Area by the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). A designated Focal Area indicates that, through strategic habitat management, this area contains enough contiguous “quail habitat” to successfully sustain a breeding population of bobwhites. This year, DWL’s Taylors Bridge Complex was officially incorporated into Delaware’s bobwhite quail Focal Area.

So, what constitutes “quail habitat”? Much like Goldilocks (sans bears), bobwhites require a combination

of habitat features that are “just right” in order to survive. To meet their habitat needs, bobwhites require farmscapes with brushy fields, hedgerows, and woodland edges. These ground-dwelling birds have a diverse diet that includes seeds and grains, such as millet and corn, in the winter and insects, berries, and leafy greens in the summer. Thus, farm fields and pastures provide a variety of important food sources. Brushy fields provide critical nesting habitat, and hedgerows and woodland edges provide protective cover from predators and harsh winter weather.

To many, fallow fields and brushy hedgerows appear unkempt and unsightly. Unlike the manicured lawns

*Recently, DWL has seen and heard Bobwhite Quail north of Blackbird Creek, suggesting Delaware’s quail population is expanding its range.*

seen in every subdivision and golf course, these farms are overgrown and untamed...*and that’s just how the birds like it*. Even still, modern farming practices have done away with hedgerows and field buffers to increase efficiency and boost crop yields. This is just one reason why many suspect quail populations have steadily declined. Additionally, development, or conversion of fertile farmland into suburban sprawl, has contributed to habitat loss for this and many other wildlife species.

*Continued inside...*

# Notes from Kate Hackett

## *DWL's Executive Director*

How much GOOD can you handle?

Think about that question, and I mean really think about it. I am. I am thinking about DWL's work this year and am trying to find the answer. It seems the many expected and unexpected positive results we are garnering – because of your support and help – make this question almost unanswerable. Hearing our Board, staff, and volunteers describe the impact of our conservation work makes me wonder what are our upper bounds? Though we certainly are reaching in that direction, stretching ourselves every day to do more and achieve higher quality work... in my nine years working for DWL, I have yet to see our limitations.

Interestingly, and despite urgings of friends and colleagues, I've been slow to see all the Marvel movies. Sitting down to prepare this newsletter, I now understand my reluctance! Marvel Comics are certainly a box office rage... but, at DWL,

we have banded together an exceptional team of our own superheroes. You may not see their capes but they appear around our Boardroom table, at outreach events, in waders in the marsh and forest, and even behind desktop computers. At DWL, our work is not typical and neither are our results. Read on about a few select projects and how DWL is pursuing land management strategies, outreach activities, and wildlife species that are changing Delaware and our world for the better... FOREVER.

Your contributions to DWL are an investment in the exceptional lands and waters in and around all of Delaware. DWL's work is creative and innovative and our results unparalleled. I challenge you to find a group that achieves more with the finances, staff, and equipment available to us.

Join us to find how much GOOD, and even great, we can achieve together.

*Big cordgrass at DWL's  
Taylors Bridge properties*

## DWL Joins Delaware's 32nd Annual Coastal Clean-Up

This September 14th our work at Milford Neck wasn't about planting trees, restoring wetlands, counting spawning horseshoe crabs, or assessing marsh health and beach erosion... instead, we hosted two project sites for Delaware's 32nd annual coastal cleanup. This state-wide effort is sponsored by DNREC and spans more than 45 sites in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties, including river, bay, and ocean shorelines and other wetland and watershed areas as well.

Since DWL joined the effort four years ago,

5,731 volunteers throughout the State have collected more than twenty tons of trash. Some of the more notable items recently collected in Delaware include a message in a bottle from 2007; in 2017 alone, 16,158 cigarette butts, 2,671 plastic bags, and 933 balloons; a Sony Walkman; 205 liquor bottles at one site; and a 400+ pound dead sea turtle (found at Milford Neck).

Delaware's coastal cleanup is part of a larger international effort organized by the Ocean Conservancy, and including the work

in Delaware, volunteers have collected more than 316 million pounds of trash since this effort began in 1986. While collecting trash, volunteers record what types and how many pieces of trash they collect, which helps marine conservation groups identify the source of the debris and how to reduce or eliminate it.

DWL is grateful to our volunteers and partners and we look forward to continuing this great stewardship activity in support of important waters throughout the State!

***Plastic is pervasive in our waters, in Delaware and throughout the world. According to the Ocean Conservancy, plastic has been found in 59% of sea birds, in 100% of sea turtle species, and more than 25% of fish sampled from seafood markets around the world.***

*Volunteers scour DWL's beach at Big Stone Beach Road for trash and other interesting finds (like seaglass and whelk shells).*



# Making It Count for Quail

## *DWL focuses on bobwhite conservation in Taylors Bridge*

Fortunately, it's not too late. Delaware's bobwhite population is nestled within a complex of contiguous protected land spanning more than 10,000 acres along Delaware's coast. These protected lands are owned and managed by Delaware Wild Lands and the State of Delaware, whose land stewards and biologists are working hard to make sure the quail stand a chance. This year alone, DWL has planted 45 acres of important quail food and cover in Taylors Bridge.

DWL is committed to protecting and restoring Delaware's important natural lands, while also supporting its agricultural heritage. Our Taylors Bridge Complex is comprised of forests, meadows, freshwater and tidal wetlands, and functioning farmland, which support a diversity of native wildlife. However, we also hope that recent restoration projects and ongoing habitat management activities will allow Delaware's quail population to expand and successfully sustain itself.

*Each fall, bobwhites from different broods form social groups, or coveys, of up to 30 birds. At night, coveys roost on the ground in a tight circle with their tails pointed toward the center. This behavior helps conserve heat and stay prepared for predators.*



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
to DWL's New Castle  
County Land Steward and  
Programs Manager, Brenna  
Ness, who was awarded  
the National Bobwhite  
Conservation Initiative's  
Firebird Conservation  
Award from Dr. Justyn  
Foth, State of Delaware  
Waterfowl, Turkey and  
Upland Gamebird Biologist.

If you build it, they will come; but it's not enough just to provide healthy quail habitat. It's also important to determine the status of the population and assess how the birds are responding to management efforts using standard monitoring protocols. DWL staff is coordinating with Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife to conduct call count surveys of the quail on our Taylors Bridge properties. Bobwhites are more often seen than heard, so call counts conducted during spring breeding season and fall covey formation allow us to monitor population trends non-invasively.

In partnership with Delaware's Gamebird Biologist, DWL is expanding bobwhite quail conservation efforts in the State. As we look to the future, we will continue to work together to determine how we can successfully support the growth of this native bird's population. Ultimately, DWL's management goals are to create connected and protected landscapes and to enhance a diversity of habitats for quail and other native wildlife. And maybe, one day, in the not-so-far future, the wonderful, whistle of that "bob-white" call will be common once again.

*DWL's Taylors Bridge Complex boasts a blend of quality quail habitats, which includes farmscapes with brushy fields, hedgerows, and woodland edges.*



# In the Great Cypress Swamp, Forestry and Restoration Go Hand-in-Hand

At DWL, our work is anything but typical...and our restoration projects are no different. Since the inception of our sustainable forestry management program at the Great Cypress Swamp, the preservation and enhancement of the Swamp's unique ecological diversity has been our number one concern. Since our sustainable forestry operation



began, and in the past decade, fewer than 500 acres of our 10,600-acre forest have been timbered. Of those 500 acres, more than half were integrated into our wetlands and forest restoration projects.

Indeed, one area, our 150-acre Field 7 wetland restoration site, is now home to over one hundred thousand Atlantic white-cedar trees, over ten thousand Baldcypress, and over 50 acres of high quality emergent freshwater wetland...all of which

began their new life with a timber harvest. Other harvest sites throughout the Swamp are home to additional tens of thousands of planted Atlantic white-cedar, Baldcypress, and Oaks, as well as other wildlife-beneficial trees. And the increased diversity of tree species resulting from these timber harvests isn't the only positive outcome of our work: we've also created age structure diversity in our forests, providing early successional habitat and forest edge habitat, benefiting a large number of both migratory and resident bird species.

Our Field Ecologist, Andrew Martin, grew up on this property, trailing Peter Martin (another DWL staff member and Andrew's dad!) on his investigations of the Great Cypress Swamp. Prior to DWL's forest and wetlands restoration work, Andrew had never seen or heard a quail in the Swamp. In the ten years of our restoration efforts, DWL staff have seen and heard quail nearly every year, even making notes of several successful coveys on the property. Quail are not the only recovering species: We've seen a substantial resurgence of the uncommon Red-headed woodpecker, a deafening cacophony of Carpenter frogs, the first recent record of the Great Purple Hairstreak in Delaware, and increasing numbers of waterfowl and other bird species, all at the Great Cypress Swamp.

Our sustainable forestry program is highly specialized and by no means a large-scale clear-cutting operation. On the contrary, the remarkable recovery of the Great Cypress Swamp

is the product of countless hours of field observations and assessments of localized conditions; careful consideration of the species that thrive and will recover at the Swamp; timber-cutting equipment small and agile enough to avoid sensitive features, remove identified trees, and avoid damage to retained trees; and highly attentive supervision of timber harvests that ensure preservation of critical areas.

In the coming years, we will be working more closely with scientists to formally monitor and document changes at the Swamp, including those of plant and animal communities resulting from both our wetland restoration efforts and forestry practices. We are also working with the Motus Wildlife Tracking System to install a tower in the Swamp that will track and identify tagged birds that use and pass through the property. To Delaware Wild Lands, forestry is just one of many tools we have available to preserve, protect, and enhance Delaware's natural beauty...and we look forward to sharing more about these great biological and ecological successes!

*The rare Red-headed woodpecker is benefiting from our forestry and restoration practices.*



*The Great Purple Hairstreak has not been identified in Delaware for a number of years... until now!*



**A speck in the landscape: The right equipment and careful planning minimizes the potential negative impacts of forestry in the Swamp.**

*The "clack-clack-clack" of the Carpenter frogs now echoes throughout the Swamp every spring.*







*Grey Fox*



*Foxglove Beardtongue*



*Luna Moth*



*Mud Turtle*



*Wood Duck Chick*



*Deer Tongue*

# OUT AND ABOUT ON DELAWARE WILD LANDS' PROPERTIES



*Great Egret*



*Indian Pipe*




*Killdeer*



*Blue Crab*





*DWL Field Ecologist  
Andrew Martin guides  
a virtual tour of the  
Swamp at this year's  
UD Coast Day.*

# Adding a New Dimension to Our Work with Virtual Reality



*Kids and adults alike delighted in the experience, some "swimming" through the water and others shrieking about "flying in a helicopter" and the "bird's eye view" of the Swamp!*

We often think of technology as being at odds with nature, whether it's industry's effect on the natural environment or smart phones and screen time building a wall between us and the experience of nature around us. However, technology is now also at the forefront of conservation: The advent of inexpensive personal GPS units, GIS and other mapping software, smartphones that aid in the identification of plants and animals, and much, much more. DWL has never been afraid of taking advantage of new technological opportunities.

In recent years we started using drones to capture imagery for social media and outreach activities, and for georeferenced maps for our restoration projects. Now, we have a new tool, Virtual Reality!

At this year's Coast Day, we unveiled the first of what we hope to be many Virtual Reality experiences of DWL properties. Using our drone as well as a hand-held rig, coupled with a Virtual Reality camera, we created a brief tour of select restoration efforts in the Great Cypress Swamp... from perspectives we never thought possible before. With our new Virtual Reality headsets, we can pass this experience on to anyone.

We are often asked why our properties aren't generally open and available to the public – the simple answer is that our properties aren't parks. The primary mission and purpose of DWL is to protect critical habitat and sensitive resources and our lands serve as a refuge for wildlife in a rapidly developing state and region. Due to the sensitive ecosystems on our land, open access could be detrimental to the wildlife and habitat we've worked so hard to preserve, protect, and enhance. We work tirelessly to schedule recreational and educational opportunities to see and experience DWL lands by providing tours for academic institutions, birding clubs, school groups, paddlers, and other organizations. Now we're bringing these special places to our supporters and the general public. Virtual Reality truly adds another dimension to the sights and sounds of nature, and allows a kind of access to some of the most sensitive and inaccessible parts of the land we manage.

Be on the lookout for announcements about DWL's presence at coming events; we may not be able to bring everyone to the Swamp, but now we can bring the experience of the Swamp to you!



# Native Plant Species Profile:

## *Black gum (Nyssa Sylvatica)*

Black gum grows on a variety of soils and can be found growing throughout the Great Cypress Swamp in both Blackleaf hardwood bottomlands and moist uplands. The natural range of Black gum extends from central Florida to Southern Maine, and as far west as the Eastern reaches of Texas. Black gum trees typically grow to approximately 60-80 feet tall and 2 feet in diameter, though some exceptional specimens exceed these dimensions. In the Swamp, we typically find Black gum in stands of predominantly Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and Red maple (*Acer rubrum*).

Anywhere from April to June, inconspicuous greenish five-toothed flowers appear among the

unfolding leaves, and by September or October small plum-colored fruits develop. These fruits are an attractive and valuable food source to many species of wildlife. Although these fruits are technically edible for humans, their taste is unpalatably bitter and sour. The simple, alternate leaves of the Black gum are shiny-green, and turn a brilliant red in the Fall. As a matter of fact, Black gums are among the first harbingers of Fall, turning color and dropping leaves before most other tree species. They are also among the last trees to green out in the Spring. On your travels into the woods, keep an eye out for the underappreciated Black gum!

*The typical color and shape of this Black gum tree make it a certain standout among other trees.*





# DWL Board of Directors

## Cynthia A. Hewitt

Well-known for her natural curiosity and gentle disposition, Cynthia Hewitt holds a distinguished position among the top financial advisors nationwide. Numerous publications and associations in the financial sector have recognized Cynthia – again and again and year after year – for her exceptional talent in the field of investment services. She was one of only a very few women included in Barron's List of Top 100 Women Financial Advisors...for TEN consecutive years. Cynthia is a trailblazer, a true pioneer, starting a career in finance long before the sector welcomed women. In decades of her professional practice, she has garnered countless awards while maintaining the highest levels of professionalism without sacrificing the superlative relationship skills that characterize her success.

Cynthia easily navigates new situations and welcomes new challenges. Her keen determination is well-matched by her

gracious charm and quiet confidence. She is even-keeled and undaunted by new challenges or difficult conversations. For decades she has worked with clients to envision, create, and care for their legacies, rolling up her sleeves and working tirelessly to develop the needed roadmap for success.

An experienced advisor with breadth and depth in non-profit Board service, DWL is honored to have Cynthia bring her many talents to our Board of Directors. Her wealth of knowledge in management and investment, inquisitive nature, and eye for important trends that shape the future will be great assets to DWL. Cynthia understands both how to craft long-lasting strategies and the behind-the-scenes work needed for success. She knows short-term gains are easy to achieve but sustaining decades of high quality results requires careful stewardship, dogged persistence, and unbridled commitment.



Cynthia is serving or has served in leadership roles at the Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County, Winterthur, Fund For Women, Delaware Community Foundation, Tatnall School, Christiana Care Health System, and Library of American Landscape History, among other organizations.

A lifetime student and teacher, Cynthia is pursuing a Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies at the University in Delaware. She is an alumna of Vanderbilt University and now lives in Yorklyn with her husband. They have an adult son and enjoy travelling, sailing, and outdoor sports.

**Looking for a unique way to support DWL's conservation and restoration efforts, or our stewardship and community outreach work? Check out our holiday wish list!**

- Wood Duck Boxes
- Red Cedar Pet Bedding (Wood Duck Boxes)
- AA Batteries (Wildlife Surveys)
- 16 GB SD Cards (Wildlife Surveys)
- Headlamps (Wildlife Surveys)
- Chest Waders (Wildlife Surveys)
- DeWalt 20V MAX Battery Pack, 3.0-Ah (Stewardship)
- Loppers (Stewardship)
- Work Gloves (Stewardship)
- Life Vests (Outreach)
- 6-ft Center Folding Tables (Outreach)
- Binoculars (Outreach)
- Plastic Storage Totes
- Hand Tool Set (DIY Projects)

**All donations are tax-deductible. Don't forget to support DWL through Amazon Smile, too!**



### DELAWARE WILD LANDS

315 Main Street, PO Box 505, Odessa, DE 19730-0505

Telephone: 302-378-2736

Facsimile: 302-378-3629

Website: [delawarewildlands.org](http://delawarewildlands.org)

Email: [info@dewildlands.org](mailto:info@dewildlands.org)



Delaware Wild Lands



@DEWildlands



[delaware\\_wild\\_land](https://www.instagram.com/delaware_wild_land)

*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.