

FALL 2020

NEWS

# Delaware Wild Lands



DELAWAREWILDLANDS.ORG

NOTES FROM

## Kate Hackett

Delaware Wild Lands'  
Executive Director



*I am a paddler, of freshwater mostly, and find indescribable satisfaction from being in a canoe, always looking downriver. I never tire of scanning the currents and tumbling waters, always seeking and then surging toward the "V" in the water that enables one to circumnavigate obstacles with confidence and anticipation.*

*The resemblance between 2020 and these trips is undeniable. Fraught with unpredictability and upheaval, the challenges of this year have been compounded at DWL by the loss of Gina Bissell, DWL supporter since 1966, and two DWL keystones: longtime Board member and champion of conservation, William K. du Pont, and treasured friend and colleague, Kathy Harvey. However, despite these losses and all the events of 2020, DWL is not wayward in the current, hesitant, hedging, or uncertain. Instead, our tracking remains straight and true. Indeed, the past few months have focused us even more intently on our mission and the pressing need to accelerate our work. Just as we've done every year for nearly 60 years, we are eagerly identifying the "V", anticipating challenges, and skillfully navigating the waters ahead.*

*We are stronger than ever and have our paddles pressed into the water, capably and confidently moving forward. You helped craft us into a resilient organization, prepared for unexpected currents, and together we built a strong organization with unyielding purpose and commitment to the future of Delaware and the critical resources on which we all depend.*

*Recently, I saw a 3D map of population density that illuminates the critical importance of Delaware and the Delmarva Peninsula as a holdout – even an oasis – for natural resources and wildlife habitat amidst the already densely developed and rapidly growing Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Corridors (<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/3d-mapping-the-worlds-largest-population-densities>, published August 21, 2020). Recognizing these trends and witnessing dramatic changes in our climate, we see clearly the imperative for our work, now more than ever. Beginning this fall and for the next two years, we are breaking ground on three large restoration projects. The tree planting articles that follow are just an introduction for what's to come.*

*Join DWL as we anticipate our 60th anniversary next year and as we navigate the ever-changing waters around us. Grab your paddle, surge ahead, and help advance our work to change landscapes and livelihoods for the better. Let the enduring nature of our work; our enthusiasm for wildlife, waterfowl, and wetlands; and our commitment to conservation assure you that calmer waters lie ahead.*

Cover Photo: Located at the Great Cypress Swamp, this is the site of one of DWL's spring tree plantings. Note how the pattern of the tree planting resembles the rings of the tree in this aerial photograph.

With so many goings-on at DWL this year, we have to mail our fall newsletter and our annual appeal letter separately! Please watch your mail for our annual appeal letter, which will arrive in DWL's classic envelope (with our logo on the front). In the interim, enjoy the news about our projects and partnerships!

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# William K. du Pont (1938 – 2020)


## Longtime DWL Board Member, Respected Friend, and Conservation Pioneer

Always inquisitive and on the hunt, be it for 18th century antiques, historic narrative, great gunning locations, or high quality waterfowl habitat, Bill devoted many years of service to Delaware Wild Lands and we are honored he found our work worthy of his intellect and investment.

It is not possible to look across Delaware's vast tidal wetlands and coastal resources without also seeing William K. du Pont's commitment to protecting and enhancing waterfowl and wildlife habitat. A long-time and cherished member of Delaware Wild Lands' Board of Directors and past Board President, Bill left an indelible mark on the Delaware landscape and his passion for waterfowl and wildlife are interwoven into the fabric of DWL's history and the future of our natural resources.

Indeed, it is nearly impossible to overstate the impact Bill had on Delaware's landscape. He, along with a cohort of others, was instrumental in bringing Ducks Unlimited to Delaware leveraging the strength of this national organization to achieve on-the-ground conservation in Delaware (that continues today). He once chauffeured a member of the State Legislature to Legislative Hall in Dover in time for the vote on Delaware's groundbreaking Coastal Zone Act of 1971, which passed by only one vote. He also notably chaired the bipartisan committee that unanimously recommended passage of the Delaware Tidal Wetlands Act of 1973. In 1974, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior appointed him Chairman of the Advisory Board to the U.S. Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife. Suffice to say: when Bill took up a cause or issue, he got results. He harnessed his sharp intellect, inspired colleagues and friends, engaged his command of history, and ignited his keen sense of humor to accomplish even the most challenging of goals.

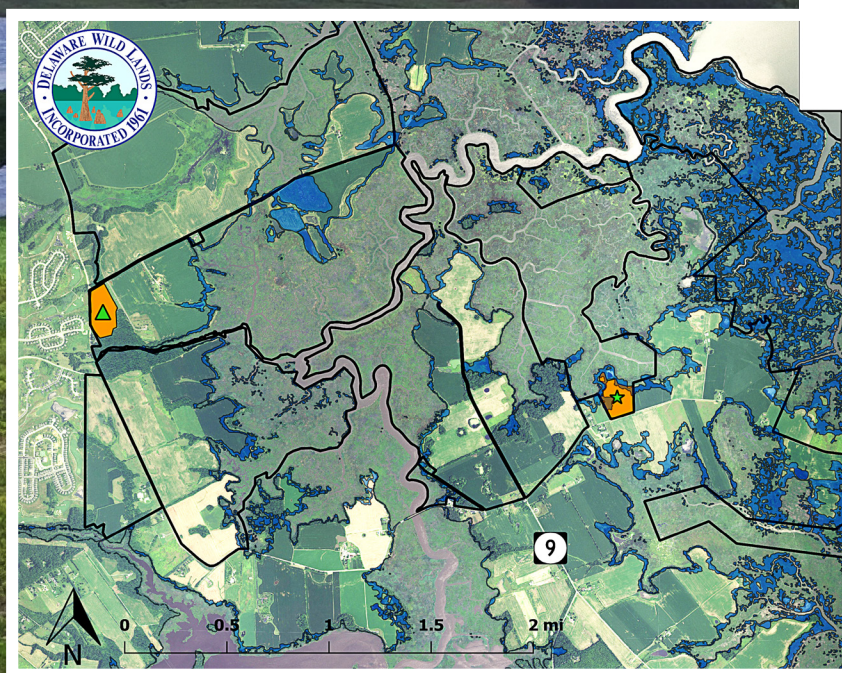
DWL, and the integrity of Delaware's coastal resources, are indebted to this charming and truly charismatic man. Our heritage, passion for conservation, and persistence in achieving meaningful impacts are only attributable to leaders like Bill. We carry Bill's legacy forward, and his relaxed demeanor, wry smile, colorful stories, and commitment to conservation will live on at DWL.



**“It is not possible to look across Delaware’s vast tidal wetlands and coastal resources without also seeing William K. du Pont’s commitment to protecting and enhancing waterfowl and wildlife habitat.”**

# Planting with a Purpose

How Grants Help Us Grow



*Note the agricultural field in the lower lefthand corner of this photo and how little buffer there is between it and the marsh. This grant will expand transitional areas like these to improve water quality, wildlife habitat, and marsh migration.*

Nearly 60 years ago, DWL's founders were motivated to protect important natural areas from increasing industrial development that was degrading and destroying Delaware's critical wetlands, marshes, and forests. Since then, DWL has never wavered from our mission of land conservation, and more recently our work is accelerating and expanding. Restoration of our protected lands has become just as important as land conservation to enhance the natural resources considered vital to the health of all Delaware's residents, human and wildlife alike.

DWL is thrilled to announce we were recently awarded a \$130,000 grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) 2020 Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund. This Federal grant is a competitive award for public and private landowners seeking to conserve and restore natural areas and waterways that support native flora and fauna in the Delaware River watershed.

Delaware Wild Lands' Taylors Bridge Restoration



The project, identified in DWL's Taylors Bridge Management Plan (developed with Sarver Ecological LLC), includes restoration of 42 acres of agricultural land to early successional and forested habitats, and improved maintenance of 45 acres of recently restored wetland buffers and early successional habitat in DWL's Taylors Bridge Complex. One restoration site will be planted with more than 7,000 native trees and will connect two separate tracts of forest to create a 90-acre forested corridor. The other restoration sites are adjacent to tidal marsh systems and will be seeded with native grasses and wildflowers to accommodate natural marsh migration in the face of sea level rise (SLR).

DWL's projects have been identified as high priority actions, as the natural habitats in this critical coastal area continue to face a barrage of growing threats, including sea level rise, habitat fragmentation, and land conversion. Nearby Middletown is experiencing an exceptionally rapid rate of development. DWL's restoration activities, to be implemented over the course of 2021 and 2022, will allow DWL to increase the quality, connectivity, and resilience of our protected lands.

DWL's Taylors Bridge Complex supports 145 Species of Greatest Conservation Need documented in the Delaware Wildlife Action Plan. Notable species include rare skipper, spotted and marbled salamanders, eastern box turtle, saltmarsh sparrow, wood thrush, American kestrel, and bobwhite quail, all of which will benefit from DWL's restoration actions. But the community within and around Taylors Bridge will reap the benefits as well, in the cleaner air, purified water, and flood attenuation provided by the vegetation to be planted.

DWL prides itself in being efficient with our resources. We want our donors to know their money is spent wisely, and one way we do that is by leveraging funding and fostering productive partnerships. DWL's small staff would not be able to complete a project of this size without dedicated partners, and we are grateful to the folks who have helped us along the way. A special thanks to the United States Fish & Wildlife Service's Delaware Bay Estuary Project, Sarver Ecological LLC, and Ducks Unlimited for their support in successfully obtaining the award that will fund this important project. We look forward to growing our other partnerships further in the implementation phase of the project.

**This year's award recipients, combined with grantees from 2018 and 2019, will result in a total of 80 miles of restored streams, 894 acres of restored wetlands, 4,683 acres with new or improved public access, and much more.**



*Benefits of this project include forest expansion, meadow restoration, higher quality habitat for reptiles and amphibians (like this spotted salamander!), improved forage for pollinators, increased hideaways for turtles, and more!*



# Working Together for Wood Ducks

## Nest Box Knowledge

This summer marks the 4th year of DWL's wood duck research partnership with the University of Delaware (UD). This student-implemented research is building a long-term dataset that will more accurately measure the use and success of DWL's wood duck nest boxes. The studies also assess the environmental and nest box factors that are important to nesting wood ducks, which is advancing a more science-based approach to this program and facilitating more strategic placement of nest boxes on DWL properties. The research has grown in recent years to include Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) biologists who are now banding wood duck hens and ducklings in DWL's nest boxes. This contributes valuable information on survival and recruitment rates, movement patterns, and nest site fidelity of Delaware's wood duck population. But this year, we really spread our wings. DWL's wood duck boxes joined the ranks of a multi-university and multi-agency collaborative study about the impact of nest box characteristics on wood duck recruitment in the Southeast U.S.



*A biologist with the DE Division of Fish & Wildlife works with DWL interns to tag recently hatched ducklings at the Betts Farm. Tagged ducklings are then returned to the nest box.*

This regional study is being conducted across a much larger geographic area and is investigating the effects of multiple environmental and nest box factors to provide a more robust understanding of which factors are most important in recruiting breeding females into the wood duck population.



Based on research conducted to date, UD researchers determined some factors appeal to wood duck hens in selecting a nest box (i.e. box size, age, and number of other boxes nearby); however, other factors seem to influence whether that female successfully hatches a nest (i.e. predator guard type, box height, surrounding vegetation). It's exciting to learn how these factors differ for various habitats across other states in this region. In the first year of the regional study, research collaborators monitored more than 1,300 nest boxes in eight states from Delaware to Louisiana. On the Delmarva Peninsula, 92 wood duck hens were banded and more than 800 ducklings received web tags.

The standardized study methodology allows DWL to compare our nest boxes to those in other study areas. In doing so, we learned DWL's Augustine Creek wood duck boxes are being used at similar rates, but not producing nearly as many successful nests. DWL staff and volunteers are working to restore and improve our nesting boxes and nest sites and have installed 62 new nest boxes since 2018, but there are still many old and deteriorated boxes on the landscape that need to be replaced. Our work at Augustine Creek definitely isn't done.

Our restoration efforts to date would not have been possible without the generous support of Delaware Ducks Unlimited Greenwing Program, Waterfowl Chesapeake, University of Delaware, and a long list of individual donors, volunteers, and other partners. We're also grateful to UD, Delaware DFW, Nemours Wildlife Foundation, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources for including DWL in the collaborative study. DWL is still working to enhance our Wood Duck Box Program and welcomes any donations of wood duck boxes or wood for the project.



*A student researcher from the University of Delaware checks a wood duck nest box at DWL's Roberts Farm.*

# Expanding on Wetland Restoration Successes:

## The Long Field, A Second Crown Jewel at the Great Cypress Swamp

Over 10,600 acres in size, our Great Cypress Swamp might be the last truly wild place in Delaware. This, however, does not make it immune to the deleterious effects of human activity. Since the 1700s much of the 50,000-70,000 acres that once comprised the Swamp has been timbered and ultimately converted to agriculture. At the Swamp, like most coastal areas, conversion to agriculture means ditching and draining of the landscape. The areas of the Great Cypress Swamp north of Route 54 were ditched by the end of the 1930s to establish commercial agriculture and forestry operations. DWL's earliest efforts to curtail the resulting ecological damages and restore hydrology here began in the early 1980s with the installation of water control structures that would facilitate the flow of water back to the Swamp. These efforts expanded significantly in 2011, with the award of a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant secured in partnership with Ducks Unlimited. These grants funds were further leveraged to launch our 150-acre Field 7 restoration site (which you will recognize from our photos and videos). Here we spent (and spend!) a great deal of time restoring and nurturing over 1,000 acres of wooded and emergent wetlands. This site and project are likely the largest freshwater wetland restoration project on the Delmarva Peninsula.

This fall, we are building upon our successes at Field 7, with the help of our partners at The Nature Conservancy in Maryland/DC, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited. This new restoration site -- the Long Field -- is our newest undertaking at the Swamp and a centerpiece of our work for the next two years. The site consists of 80 acres of agricultural fields and surrounds our Field 7 restoration on two sides. Skilled earthwork will help form clusters of depressions in the naturally lower and wetter portions of the field. These clusters will then be "connected" by swales, or pathways,

to each other and the existing ditch system generating both a natural flow through the landscape during wetter periods of the year and the collection and purification of the water en route to the Delaware Inland Bays and Pocomoke River.

A second and companion part of this large restoration project includes a Spring 2021 planting of thousands of Atlantic White-cedar, Baldcypress, variety of hardwood trees, and buttonbush complemented by interspersed pollinator plantings and wildlife food plots. Reductions in spring meetings and outreach events enabled us to complete an early kick-off for this reforestation project. With the help of US Fish & Wildlife Service and an auger from Ocean View Builders, DWL staff and a small group of volunteers planted 650 Atlantic White-cedar inside a one-acre project subsite.



DWL's Ron Haas on site during construction of one of the Long Field swales.

**When complete, this small tree planting and the Long Field restoration site will stand alongside our previous efforts in Field 7 as a crown jewel in our efforts to restore the Great Cypress Swamp.**



Earthwork is underway for our 80-acre Long Field restoration. Note our Field 7 wetland restoration site visible in the upper left portion of the photo.

# A Dis-Shoveled Earth Day Tree Planting

**1200 trees, 2 acres,  
10 "volunteers", 1 weekend.**

In honor of Earth Day's 50th anniversary this year, DWL ambitiously planned to plant 1,200 trees at our Armstrong Property. COVID-19, however, "dis-shoveled" these plans...and in accordance with the Governor's orders, we cancelled our Earth Day celebration and our volunteers for tree planting.

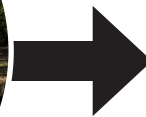
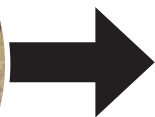
Unable to cancel our tree order, yet undeterred, a small group of DWL staff members, spouses and kids, and a few close friends donned our own shovels. Socially distanced, we braved ankle-high mud that dominated the site and worked tirelessly to plant 1200 trees.

Though relatively small in size, this restoration is strategic and impactful, reverting low-yield agricultural land to forest, ultimately connecting two patches of high value hardwood forest habitat at DWL's Armstrong Property. The project location, DWL's Armstrong Property, was selected because it hosts one of the largest remaining blocks of old growth forest in New Castle County, and was once home to the largest colony of nesting great blue herons on the east coast. Today, the marshes of the Armstrong Tract and Augustine Creek are home to a growing population of sandhill cranes (the first confirmed resident population) and continue

to serve as a critical foraging site for nesting herons and other waterfowl and wading birds. In addition to enriching and expanding wildlife and bird habitat, this emerging forest will provide a multitude of other benefits including clean air, pure water, carbon sequestration, and temperature modulation.

This project, along with a second smaller tree planting project at the Great Cypress Swamp, represent the initial phases of two much larger reforestation projects planned for DWL's New Castle County and Sussex County properties next year.

A big thank you to our volunteers and our Master Naturalists who came out to DWL's Armstrong reforestation site this summer to care for our seedlings and assess tree survival rate!



## DWL Welcomes Hannah Small, DWL New Castle County Land Steward

A Delaware native, Hannah spends her personal and professional time enjoying and protecting the First State's beautiful natural resources. Hannah has a background in forest health, wildlife biology, and wildland fire, and most recently she was a biologist with the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife studying amphibians and reptiles. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management from Delaware State University and a Master of Science degree in Applied Biology from Salisbury University. With DWL, Hannah will be responsible for managing habitat restoration projects, conservation, and community outreach on our New Castle County properties. In her spare time, Hannah enjoys hiking with her dog (Leo, a rowdy and loving Jack Russel!) and spending time with friends and family.

# Snapshots

**...from DWL's two springtime tree plantings: one at the Armstrong Property (in New Castle County) and one at the Great Cypress Swamp (in Sussex County). With the help of partners, families, and friends, we planted nearly 2,000 trees!**



Reforestation of this two-acre field will create forest connectivity and reduce edge habitat by creating a 70-acre tract of contiguous forest.



Determined volunteers helped plant 1,200 native trees at DWL's Armstrong Property.



This tree planting lies immediately adjacent to DWL's first large-scale wetlands restoration project, called "Field 7", seen in the top of this photo



This planting was made possible with field and financial assistance from USFWS!



These reforestation projects wouldn't have been possible without our dedicated volunteers!



DWL planted in a circular pattern at this site. Note how the planted circles resemble the rings of a tree.



This one-acre tree planting site helped launch what will be a much larger 80-acre wetland and forest restoration project planned for 2021.



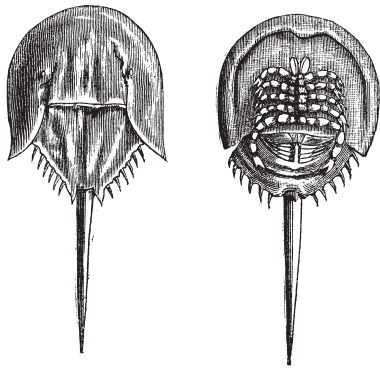
The daughter of a DWL staff member who "volunteered" (or was volunteered) to plant 650 Atlantic white cedar trees!!

# Vital Role of Horseshoe Crabs in Human Health and Habitat

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## Fast Facts for HSCs:

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- **HSCs have 9 pairs of eyes and much of what we know about vision is based on HSC eyes.**
- **More closely related to spiders than crabs, HSCs predate dinosaurs by 200 million years.**
- **Female HSCs lay their eggs in clusters of 5,000 eggs, and will lay as many as 20,000 eggs in one night and 100,000 eggs in a spawning season.**



In the 450 million years since their evolution, we have never needed horseshoe crabs like we need them now....

If you have ever received a flu shot, needed a hip or knee replacement, used contact lenses, or taken an FDA-certified drug, you have relied on the Atlantic horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*). Their fundamental role in protecting human health is little known but vitally important. And this may be unsettling news when you see the appearance of these ancient creatures....

The blue blood of the Atlantic horseshoe crab (HSC) is uniquely "pure" and contains lysate, which clots when it detects toxic bacteria. This clotting mechanism is particularly advantageous for testing new pharmaceuticals. Blood cells extracted from HSC are used in lab settings to test the integrity and efficacy of new drugs...including the widespread efforts underway to develop a vaccine for COVID-19.

And while you slumbered in the wee hours of the new moon and full moon early this summer, staff members from DWL, the Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife (DE Fish & Wildlife), and the Delaware Sea Grant Program donned our headlamps and mosquito nets to carry out

the decades-long survey of spawning horseshoe crabs conducted on DWL's Milford Neck beaches. Every year, for nearly three decades, DWL staff, our partner organizations, and citizen scientists have counted the density, prevalence, and gender ratio of HSCs to help monitor these important creatures and protect their critical roles in sustaining human health and bird migrations. Data collected during these surveys are entered into a model to estimate the HSC populations. Based on these surveys, and additional analyses conducted by DE Fish & Wildlife, trends in HSC populations, as measured in Delaware, are on the rise.

The value of DWL's lands at Milford Neck cannot be discounted or underestimated for wildlife or human populations. For generations, the people of Milford Neck made a living by farming, trapping, fishing, propping and foraging. Pirates plundered ships along the coast in early colonial days. During Prohibition, smugglers used Milford Neck's isolated beaches to bring rum ashore from the Caribbean. Today, we need the lands, marshes, and beaches of Milford Neck for something different: protecting the vital role of HSCs in sustaining human health and the migration of shorebirds, ensuring the ecological integrity and diversity of natural dune and marshes systems, and serving as a buffer to protect inland agriculture and our built infrastructure.



Spawning horseshoe crabs along the shores of DWL's Milford Neck properties.

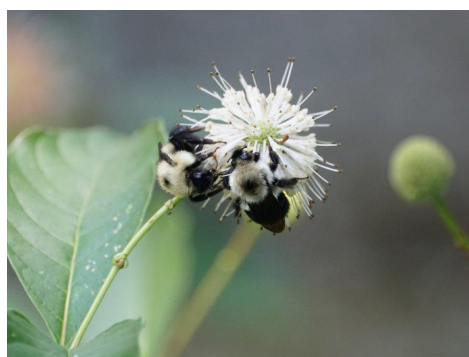


Two citizen scientists gather data about horseshoe crab gender ratio, prevalence, and density.

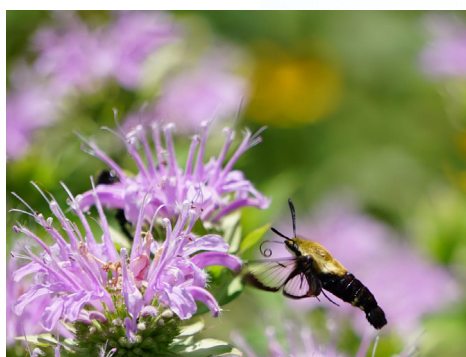
# Out and About on DWL's Properties



Osprey in Flight



Bumblebees Feeding on Buttonbush



Clearwing Moth on Bergamot



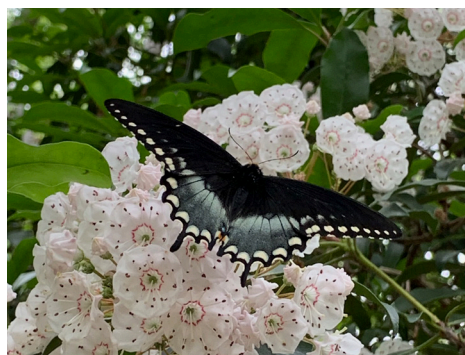
Red-Headed Woodpeckers



Semipalmated Plovers



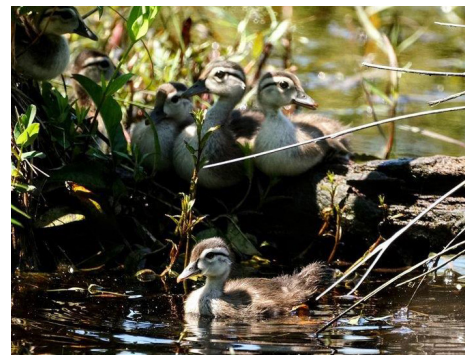
White Ibises



Butterfly on Laurel



Cedar Waxwings



Wood Duck Kids

## A snapshot from 60 years of DWL's conservation work



DWL supporters celebrate acquisition of DWL's Dickinson Tract (in 1966). This property is now part of DWL's 4,600-acre Taylors Bridge Land Complex.

## 3 easy ways to contribute

**1/ Monetary Donation:** In addition to accepting cash donations and Donor Advised Funds, DWL accepts the transfer of marketable securities [Mutual Funds, Stocks, Bonds, and Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs)]. These types of donations may qualify for a tax deduction.

**2/ Planned Giving:** Did you know you can name DWL as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or include us in your will? It can be as easy as a phone call to your insurance carrier or attorney.

**3/ Real Estate:** DWL loves landscapes...so we are always pleased to accept donations of land! With permission from donors, we also accept donations of boats, buildings, and other assets, that can be sold and then use the proceeds to further DWL's conservation mission.

We encourage you to contact your financial advisor, estate attorney, or tax consultant to discuss how these transactions can benefit you. DWL also has staff and advisors available to help you and answer questions. For more information, contact Kate Hackett, DWL Executive Director, at 302-378-2736 or [khackett@dewildlands.org](mailto:khackett@dewildlands.org).

# Creating a New Cadre of Conservationists

Moving into our 60th anniversary next year, DWL is ramping up our conservation and restoration work across the State! And we recognize that 8 hands (of our four field staff members) are not enough to complete the multi-phased restoration projects planned for 2021 and 2022.

Anticipating our need for volunteers and skilled support, DWL joined Delaware's Master Naturalist Program as a Local Organizing Partner, or sponsor for people interested in completing the Master Naturalist program. Trained in Ecology, Geology, Soil Science, Botany, and Plant Identification, Invasive Species Control, Habitat Management, and more,

Master Naturalist candidates must complete 60 hours of instruction and 40 hours of volunteer service for their sponsoring organization.

DWL is pleased to support two Master Naturalist classes and 13 Master Naturalist candidates. Already our Master Naturalist candidates are lending their training to DWL, helping care for and assess survivability of our newly-planted trees at the Armstrong Farm and creating improved terrapin nesting habitat at our Liston Property. We are pleased to cultivate the next generation of conservationists and provide impactful and meaningful opportunities to advance their learning and our restoration and conservation projects!



Master Naturalist candidates assess the health of tree seedlings at DWL's Armstrong Farm tree planting site.



Beach trash and litter can impede terrapins seeking their nest sites at DWL's Taylors Bridge beaches.

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

- Wood Duck Boxes
- Red Cedar Pet Bedding (Wood Duck Boxes)
- 4x4 posts and predator guards (Wood Duck Boxes)
- AA and D Batteries (Wildlife Surveys)
- Headlamps (Wildlife Surveys)
- 6-ft Center Folding Tables (Outreach)
- Loppers (Stewardship)
- Work Gloves (Stewardship)
- Plastic Storage Totes (Outreach)
- Binoculars (Outreach)
- Heavy duty trash bags (Beach and Crash Cleanups)
- 64GB and 16MB SD cards (Wildlife Monitoring, Outreach)
- 5/8" rebar, 10' lengths (Tree Planting, Deer Fencing)
- Galvanized or stainless wood screws, various lengths (Maintenance)
- Case of WD-40 (Equipment Maintenance)
- Flagging tape, various colors (Restoration)

DWL  
Wish  
List

# Finding Peace in the Predictable:

## Connecting our Community with Nature through Responsible Recreation

For so many of us, and all of us at DWL, spring is a time of renewal, excitement, and hope. With each bursting tree bud and early bloom, the anticipation of spring arrivals builds: flowering dogwoods, a chorus of spring peepers, the return of ospreys...and the return of baseball. But, this year, COVID threw a curveball, and life completely changed. Mother Nature, on the other hand, proceeded with business as usual. For once, we humans were the ones forced to adapt.

Getting outside during this time, and re-connecting with nature, never felt more important, and Delaware's public parks were evidence that many others agreed. Who can blame them? Simply being in green spaces has been scientifically proven to improve human health – physically, mentally, and emotionally.

During those incredibly confining and confusing times of early spring, DWL sought to offer an escape into nature, where the predictability of seasonal cycles could provide a retreat from the uncertainties of such a strange spring. We recognized the critical need to be safe and need to remain separate from each other, as well as the need to marvel at spring's awakening, to experience awe, to be consumed by nature, and to walk beneath an open and uninhibited sky.



*Intrepid berry pickers braved the heat and humidity of this year's (socially-distanced) Trek & Treat day at the Sharp Farm.*

In April, DWL invited visitors on a (socially-distanced) Outdoor Adventure at the Roberts Farm to savor the sights and sounds of spring migrants and soak in the spectacle of buds and blooms. In July, we adapted our annual Pick and Pull event into a Trek and Treat at DWL's Sharp Farm. Rather than gathering to pull weeds, visitors hiked along established trails and picked wild berries to take home.



*Visitors enjoyed DWL's one-way hiking trails and the interpretive information along the way...all while maintaining the necessary COVID precautions.*

Connecting with our community during COVID presented us with new, uncharted territory, but, like everyone, we adapted. We were determined to meet the needs of our neighbors and communities and offer opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors while ensuring safe conditions for outdoor recreation. To do this, we required participants to wear masks and pre-register for the hikes to space out arrival times for each family. These ensured visitors could safely stroll the looped trails and take in the beauty and bounty of nature without encountering others along the way.

For DWL, COVID has been a lesson in perseverance, and there's still so much uncertainty in the future. But it's possible and important to find peace in the predictability of nature. After all, the world continued to spin, the trees turned green, wildflowers bloomed, birds and butterflies returned...and even baseball came back!



*As DWL staff rhythmically move a brush saw in back and forth motions, removing competitive vegetation from this spring's Atlantic White-cedar planting in the Great Cypress Swamp, one plant that predictably garners, even demands, attention is Boneset (*Eupatorium serotinum*). Its snow-white flowers erupt in large clusters at the end of its multiple stems. Recognizing its value to a multitude of species, we are always careful to work the brush saw around these perennial warm season forbs.*

*This species of *Eupatorium* flowers bloom from August through October, so they are a telltale sign of the waning summer and onset of fall. When mature, the height of Boneset ranges from three to six feet, and the stout, branched stems provide an umbrella of cover for turkey and other species of ground-nesting birds. Because they are late bloomers, this and other species of *Eupatorium* are of particular value to pollinators, attracting numerous species of bees, wasps, and butterflies.*

**DELAWARE WILD LANDS**

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