

FALL 2022

NEWS

Delaware Wild Lands



DEL AWARE WILD LANDS . O R G

NOTES FROM

Kate Hackett

Delaware Wild Lands'
Executive Director



In 1961, a small group of visionaries launched Delaware Wild Lands. Their forward-thinking ideas sparked Delaware's environmental movement and two watershed moments in the history of Delaware: the passage of Delaware's Coastal Zone Act (1971) and the Tidal Wetland

Act (1973). Sixty-one years later, DWL has passionately and permanently protected more than 31,800 acres of land. We now own and manage 21,800 acres of land for vibrant wetlands and wildlife habitat, clean air and pure water, and healthy farms and forests. Land protection and habitat protection continue to be a core focus of our work, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to safeguard biodiversity and expand land conservation. Indeed, with the help of our supporters and partners, we are significantly accelerating the pace of our work. In the past 10 years we have protected more land than the previous twenty...AND in the past two years we have doubled the amount of wildlife habitat we have repaired and restored!

We have repaired and restored hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat, diversified our funding streams, expanded our base of supporters, cultivated new partnerships, and secured highly competitive grant funding. Due to you and your investments, the determination of staff, and strong leadership, DWL is stronger than ever. It is in this light that I share, in the coming year, I will be leaving DWL to seek new opportunities to expand much needed land-based conservation work beyond the boundaries of Delaware and the Delmarva Peninsula.

I am tremendously proud of and inspired by what DWL has achieved since I became Executive Director in 2011. We take seriously our mission to protect strategically important lands and waters in Delaware. We work diligently to create certainty and predictability for the future of human and wildlife populations in Delaware and beyond and the next months and years of DWL's work look to be even more promising than the last. As we begin looking to the new year, we see exciting opportunities at DWL and robust, large-scale habitat protection and restoration work taking shape. We welcome you to lean in and learn more about DWL, our plans, goals, and successes! And, as always, thank you for your enduring commitment to conservation and your steadfast commitment to DWL and the work we have underway and yet to do!

Cover: Wood duck drake perched in DWL's Field 7 restoration site at the Great Cypress Swamp.

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DWL's 60th Anniversary Capital Campaign: A gem of a success!!



THANK YOU!

Together, we are safeguarding the lands and waters that will forever define our future and the iconic beauty of Delaware and beyond!

To learn more and sign up for news and updates, visit: DEWILDLANDS.ORG

DELAWARE WILD LANDS, INC.
PO Box 505
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Permanent protection of the
GITAITIS PROPERTY
concludes
Delaware Wild Lands
60th Anniversary Capital Campaign
and what great successes we've had!

DWL worked with the Gitaitis Family to secure 125-acres of habitat along the Delaware Bayshore, a project that also created a swath of **23,000 acres of contiguous protected land!**

Other campaign milestones include protecting 300 additional acres, planting 20,000+ trees, forging new partnerships for land acquisition and management, advancing new research about prescribed fire and wood duck nest usage...**and more!**

A special shoutout to our contributing partners: USFWS, WSFR, NCWCG Program, State of Delaware, New Castle County, Mt. Cuba Center, Ducks Unlimited, Welfare Foundation, Delaware Ornithological Society, Delmarva Power, Delaware Nature Society, and DWL's committed donors and supporters!

Where is GITAITIS?
DELAWARE

DWL celebrated our diamond anniversary last year by launching a 60th anniversary capital campaign – and concluded it with the permanent protection of the 125-acre Gitaitis Property earlier this year! This acquisition, combined with the purchase of the 225-acre Fortner Farm, were the **keys to creating a complex of 23,000 acres of contiguous protected habitat** that straddles New Castle and Kent Counties! In Sussex County, DWL **expanded protected forestland** by acquiring the 75-acre Breeding Property, which is dominated by thick stands of paw-paw and some of the oldest Baldcypress trees we've seen in Delaware.

These **upstate-downstate acquisitions** were a top priority and were complemented by a suite of **other campaign milestones** that included engaging and educating hundreds of volunteers, protecting important dune ecosystems, enhancing and expanding freshwater wetlands, planting 20,000+ trees (in 2021), forging new partnerships for land acquisition and management, advancing new research about prescribed fire and wood duck nest usages...and more!

Because of YOU, our supporters, staff, donors, and volunteers, DWL continues to **expand networks of priority protected lands** consistent

with DWL's mission and the priorities of many other organizations and conservation initiatives.

A special shoutout and thank you to USFWS, WSFR, NCWCG Program, State of Delaware, New Castle County, Mt. Cuba Center, Ducks Unlimited, Welfare Foundation, Delaware Ornithological Society, and DWL's many other committed donors and supporters!



Ongoing DWL-UD Partnership Advances Wood Duck Research

By Dr. Chris Williams, Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Blake Struthers M.S. student

Wood duck research has been a focal point for the University of Delaware Waterfowl and Upland Gamebird Center since 2017. Led by Dr. Chris Williams, the Center's studies have continued to rise in prominence throughout the Mid-Atlantic and beyond.

Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) initially installed more than 250 wood duck boxes in wetlands and marshes, and has been collecting baseline data on box use and nest success since 2004. Brenna Ness (DWL) and Chris Williams worked together to start bringing in University of Delaware students to more thoroughly research nest box use and success starting in 2017.

Since then, support and involvement with this project has grown to include participation in an 8-state, Flyway-wide study utilizing additional support from the Nemours Wildlife Foundation, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife. With the help of numerous graduate and undergraduate students, as well as field technicians, the project now includes annual monitoring of 161 nest boxes on DWL-owned lands, which is part of the 307 nest boxes monitored at seven locations throughout Delaware and Maryland. In addition to collecting data on how nest box and habitat characteristics affect



use and success, over the past three years researchers have banded 208 female wood ducks and tagged 2,459 ducklings from 615 monitored nests! This extensive dataset has enabled researchers to discover valuable information about nesting wood ducks, including preferences for smaller and newer boxes located far away from neighboring boxes.

The wood duck nest box program recently gained additional help from Delta Waterfowl, Nemours Wildlife Foundation, and Maryland DNR to support a new graduate student, Blake Struthers, who will compile all this past data and expand research objectives

for a Masters Thesis. Priority goals of the project will include assessing reproductive success and habitat use of wood duck broods throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. Results from this study will be used to help create a comprehensive management plan complete with guidance on how to maximize the effectiveness of wood duck nest box programs to ensure hunters and wildlife enthusiasts can enjoy this beautiful duck for generations to come.



Above: Wood duck hatchling and eggs.

Top Left: Web-tagged wood duck chick.

Top Right: Banded female wood duck.

Middle: University of DE students checking wood duck nest boxes on DWL-owned lands.

Bottom: Measuring and tagging wood duck chicks.



ACQUISITIONS

The Family Behind the Farm: The Gitaitis Property

This spring, DWL celebrated the purchase of its most recent acquisition: The Gitaitis Property. This beautiful 125-acre farm is located at the mouth of the Augustine Creek and features a mixture of hardwood forest, agricultural fields, and marsh habitat. The ecological value of this property, and the surrounding Augustine Creek Land complex, is high and provides critically important coastal habitat. It serves as an oasis for birds by providing stopover habitat for migratory waterfowl and foraging habitat for waterbirds that breed at nearby Pea Patch Island, one of the largest heronries on the East Coast. It is also a haven for coastal wetland-associated shorebirds, muskrats, fish, and the State's first population of resident Sandhill cranes. Importantly, it was the key to connecting 23,000 acres of contiguous habitat along Delaware's critical coastal areas! However, the ecological value of this property is only one interesting and important component of the Gitaitis Property. Every DWL property has an interesting story behind it, and the story of the Gitaitis property is overflowing with resilience, determination, and commitment to one's family and community.

In 1937, Anton Gitaitis and his son Michael purchased over 170 acres on the banks of the Delaware Estuary, south of Port Penn. The Great Depression overshadowed every walk of life in those days, and in Anton's words "If we have land, we will eat." And so they did. In 1949, Michael Gitaitis, his wife Nada, and their four-year-old son Mickey moved into a newly constructed farmhouse on this property, and a year later their son Ron was born. It was a working farm, with a dairy herd, chickens, turkeys, geese, tomatoes, and row crops of corn,

soybeans, and barley that were planted and harvested with draft horses.

Ron and Mickey worked on the farm as boys, helping with all the farm chores, growing strawberries, and trapping muskrats to supplement the family's income. Through necessity, they learned to operate and repair their farm machinery. As Mickey would later say: "If a man can build it, a man can fix it." The boys were active members of 4-H, and Ron once placed 4th in the Delmarva chicken competition. They enjoyed an idyllic mid-century life, fishing and hunting in their woods, swimming in the river, and ice skating on the farm's ponds.

After graduating with his Ph.D. in plant pathology, Ron and his family moved to Georgia, where he took a position as a professor with the University of Georgia. In his position, Ron managed farm fields for the University, researching crops and any plant diseases. Mickey and his children stayed on the family farm, with Mickey commuting to north Wilmington for work. The brothers remained very close. In time, Michael and Nada passed away. In 1990, Mickey married Joan, and she and her son also took up residence on the Gitaitis Farm.

Mickey and Joan loved the land, hosting family get-togethers and kids' birthday parties in the tiki hut they constructed. Family members, friends, and their children all benefitted from events and days spent with the Gitaitis Family enjoying themed events held on the family property. They would sometimes borrow a wagon from the



Brothers Ron (L) and Mickey (R) with a dairy cow on the Gitaitis Property in the 1950s.

Colemans to have hayrides once the crops were harvested. Despite living in different locations, Mickey and Joan, and Ron and his wife, Patrice, spent as much time together as they could, vacationing together as well. The same family land that bonded Mickey and Ron together also sparked a love of family and the land that the Gitaitis brothers enjoyed as boys and as adults.

It was always Mickey's wish to spend his last days on the farm. Following his passing, Joan inherited part ownership of the Gitaitis Family land. As she considered the future of the farm, Joan's goals were to honor Mickey's wishes to care for family (by selling the land) AND Mickey's deep devotion to the family property. With Ron's and Patrice's support and encouragement, Joan solicited offers to purchase the property and, ultimately, accepted the offer from DWL knowing they would preserve the farmland and woodlands and the Gitaitis family history and legacy.

Ice skating was a favorite winter pastime of Gitaitis family members, and the boys in particular.



Brothers Mickey (L) and Ron (R) Gitaitis



Mickey and Joan hosted family events at the farm, tiki huts, popcorn machines, ziplines, fortune tellers, and pirate skeletons!



Young Mickey at work on the farm.

"I wanted to do the best for the property and for the family," Joan says. "What I didn't expect was that it would blossom into a friendship with Kate [Hackett, DWL executive director] and Delaware Wild Lands. They are people who truly care." She expected some sense of melancholy once the sale went through, but said "I've never cried over the sale of the land. I'm so happy Delaware Wild Lands has it, and I can look out my window and see it and know that it's protected forever."

The Gitaitis Property will continue as a working farm in DWL's hands, and will be protected forever from development. For certain, the deep love of and appreciation for the beauty of this landscape inspired a strong land ethic in the Gitaitis brothers and their families and DWL will protect that legacy and ensure the family property, history, and heritage is secured for generations to come.



Joan Gitaitis and Kate Hackett (DWL) share a moment of mutual appreciation that the Gitaitis family land and heritage will be protected forever.



A Phased Approach to Conservation in Taylors Bridge

Taylors Bridge perfectly characterizes Delaware's coastal flood plain: A mosaic of agricultural fields interspersed with patches of upland hardwood forest and the occasional residential development, surrounded by the waters of the Delaware Bay with fingers of marsh snaking throughout the adjacent low-lying areas. Aside from the natural beauty of the area, Taylors Bridge is also a highly biodiverse ecosystem, hosting 21% of the State's flora in just 0.36% of the State's land area. For these reasons, DWL recently embarked on a major multi-phased effort to restore and connect natural habitats across DWL's Taylors Bridge properties and protect the water quality of the Delaware River watershed. The first phase of this initiative, our now-completed "NFWF Phase I" project, was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and it had been the largest Federal grant DWL had ever received. Prior to this project, DWL typically focused on smaller grants because the organization was limited by its small staff size. With the substantial restoration work required for NFWF Phase I, DWL reached out to our partners, notably the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Sarver Ecological, and the State of Delaware, to help us plan and apply for this grant.

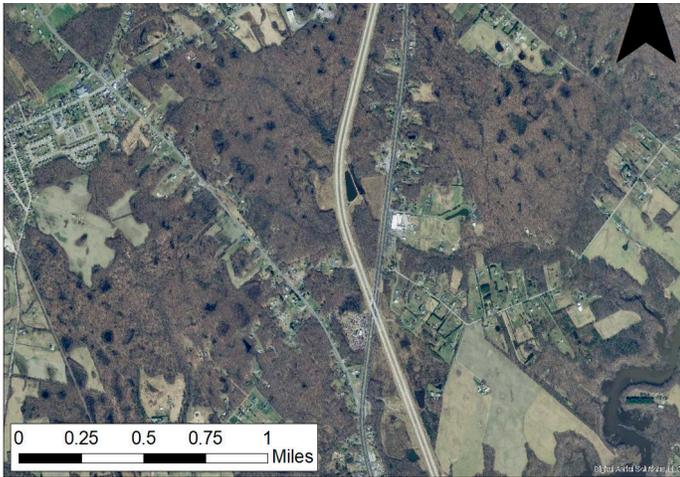
Last month, we received the great news that NFWF awarded DWL a second, larger, and even more ambitious grant. In fact, this will be the biggest Federal grant that DWL has ever received. This project, called NFWF Phase II, will rival the size and scale of DWL's recent restoration projects at the Great Cypress Swamp in Sussex County. NFWF Phase II will add 75 acres of forest, seven acres of early-successional habitat, and four acres of wetlands to the Taylors Bridge landscape. These restored areas will further connect and supplement the wildlife corridors that DWL installed in NFWF Phase I, thereby expanding the benefit of these corridors to new areas and additional wildlife populations.



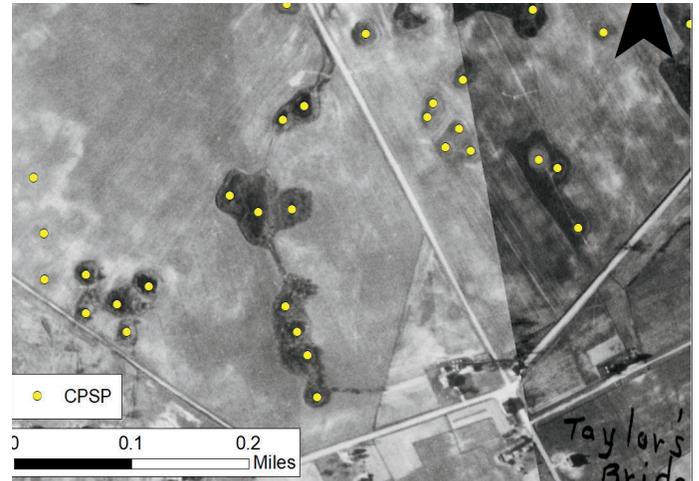
Restored CPSP habitat will benefit rare insects like this amber-winged spreadwing (*Lestes eurinus*), which is a Delaware Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. (Photograph by Dr. Michael Moore)



American featherfoil (*Hottonia inflata*) is a rare aquatic plant that can be found along the edges of CPSPs. This plant has been documented on DWL's Taylors Bridge properties, but its current habitat is threatened by sea level rise.



The Blackbird-Millington Corridor is a hotspot for Delmarva Bays. This location in Townsend, DE exhibits a particularly high density of CPSPs in forested areas, seen here as "dots" in the landscape.



Historic CPSPs are indicated in this 1926 aerial imagery by yellow dots. Many of these CPSPs were drained for agricultural projects and are no longer evident in today's satellite imagery here as "dots" in the landscape.

By utilizing a phased approach to restoration work, DWL can leverage the success of past grants to support current projects and produce results that might otherwise have seemed out of reach.

A major component of NFWF Phase II is the restoration of four acres of freshwater wetlands known as Coastal Plain Seasonal Ponds (CPSP), also called Delmarva Bays, Carolina Bays, or whale wallows. These ponds, which can be found across the eastern United States, are seasonal freshwater wetlands that are isolated from other water bodies. There are a number of theories about how these ponds were formed, including meteor strikes, fish shoaling activity, or wind erosion during the Pleistocene Era. What is certain, though, is that without predatory fish, CPSPs can provide unique habitat for rare and endangered species that can't exist in other water bodies. CPSPs were once a dominant feature on the landscape, and this particular area of the state was a hotspot for these ponds. With the conversion of land for agricultural and residential use, however, many ponds were drained or filled-in. The CPSPs that remain are now substantially threatened by development and sea level rise.

In preparation for the CPSP restoration, DWL staff referenced aerial imagery of DWL's Dickinson Farm from the 1920s and performed subsurface soil investigations to determine where these ponds once existed. Next year, staff will work with an excavator to restore the CPSP depressions to their

original depth and place locally-sourced tree stumps and logs to provide the structure necessary for a functional wetland ecosystem. DWL staff will then fill in the surrounding landscape with trees, grasses, and forbs.

Once NFWF Phases I and II are complete, the forested areas will serve as stop-over habitat for migratory songbirds and create a rare forestblock in the region that will support forest interior dwelling wildlife species like the wood thrush. The early-successional habitat will benefit native bee and butterfly populations; provide habitat for snakes, turtles, red fox, opossum, skunk, rabbit, and white-tailed deer; and support bird species such as the American woodcock, Baltimore oriole, Eastern towhee, common yellowthroat, indigo bunting, yellow-breasted chat, bobwhite quail, and turkey. The unique conditions in the CPSPs will benefit amphibians, reptiles, aquatic invertebrates, and rare insects and plants such as the state-endangered rare skipper, the amber-winged spreadwing, and the CPSP specialist plant American featherfoil. Farming activity will be streamlined as DWL makes a strategic effort to remove wet, marginal land from production in an effort to address sea level rise and manage the inland migration of marsh habitat on DWL properties. Furthermore, the trees and other vegetation that are planted will support conservation of the nearby marsh and protect the water quality of the Delaware River watershed. Landscape-scale conservation is a complex task, but DWL's phased approach to conservation is achieving big results in Taylors Bridge.

Phase I restoration projects mentioned in this article were funded with grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation, the Tree for Every Delawarean Initiative, and from the Environmental Protection Agency under a Nonpoint Source Program, Section 319 Grant. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government, or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or its funding sources..



Sustainable Forestry: Another Tool for DWL's Restoration and Management of the Great Cypress Swamp



An aerial view of one of our most recent sustainable forestry harvests, designed to avoid wooded wetlands and hardwood trees valuable to wildlife. This site was cut when conditions were at their driest, allowing us to cut an area where Baldcypress trees will be planted.

Inset: Logs from our most recent timber harvest being prepped for transport.

DWL is no stranger to traditional land uses. Since our earliest days, hunting and agriculture have been important components of how we manage the properties we own across the State. In more recent years, since about 2005, we added sustainable forestry into our portfolio of land management strategies at the Great Cypress Swamp. Our sustainable forestry activities have been instrumental in infrastructure development at the Great Cypress Swamp by providing funding that supports acquisition of new properties, purchases of raw materials for our barn and other structures, and a reliable stream of revenue for our restoration efforts in the Swamp. As part of our sustainable forestry program, and since 2009, DWL has planted more than 200,000 Atlantic white-cedar and Baldcypress trees on an area covering more than 175 acres, and nearly all of these plantings occurred on our timber sites. Initially, DWL relied

on contract foresters to design our harvests and restoration targets. Now, however, DWL staff manage nearly all of our harvest and restoration planning and implementation. In fact, in 2021 our own Ron Haas earned his Master Logger certification, from the Maryland-Delaware Master Logger Program, giving him an even better understanding of the timber industry and best management practices as they apply to our land in the Great Cypress Swamp.

When we develop timber sites in the Swamp today, the plans are complex, and often occur in multiple phases. One example of this is our Spruce Road timber harvest complex. The total complex is approximately 200 acres, but it is separated into nine primary units with a series of retention corridors and islands, condition-dependent harvest extensions, and sites identified for future Atlantic white-cedar and Baldcypress restoration.

This complex, located in the interior of the Great Cypress Swamp, will create a diverse array of habitats upon completion. By breaking the site into multiple units, rather than one larger clear-cut, and having multiple years between cutting of adjacent blocks, we will add an element of age diversity to this portion of the Swamp. Species like Prairie warbler, Bobwhite quail and Wild turkey, which require early successional habitat, will thrive in the most recently cut blocks, as blocks cut several years prior will begin to support a different assemblage of wildlife. Creating new blocks of early successional habitat interspersed among a larger block of protected, contiguous forest, utilizing our sustainable forestry operations, is of enormous benefit to biodiversity, especially when so much of the forestry undertaken on Delmarva today consists of clearing lots for development, rather than as a long-term approach to forest management.



RESTORATION

Plant Diversity Resurrected In The Great Cypress Swamp

*Dr. Steven Brewer, Botanist,
Wild Earth Allies*

DWL's Great Cypress Swamp has garnered the attention of botanists and naturalists since at least the late 1700s. The flora of the "Swamp" (or GCS) and its environs is significant, in part, because it has a unique mix of species at the northernmost and southernmost reaches of their distributions. Approximately 27% of the Delaware flora has southern affinities, and 20% has northern affinities. Unfortunately, hundreds of years of logging, farming, and draining the Swamp degraded the ecological functions and biological diversity of the GCS. For example, the last botanical survey of the Swamp, in the late 1990s, recorded only 157 species among 67 families of vascular plants. Such low species richness is unusual for such a large area, even for swamps.

The good news is that restoring a few key species and ecological processes promotes the establishment of long-gone plants species. Consequently, plant diversity in the GCS has blossomed dramatically since the mid-2000s, when the hydrology of large areas of the swamp was actively restored and agricultural fields were removed from production. Botanical surveys of the GCS in 2021, conducted by Steven Brewer in collaboration with DWL's Ron Haas, show that the number of plant species has increased by 124% (more than doubled), mostly through expansion of grasses, sedges, and other herbaceous species.

The flora includes some very rare plant species, a reflection of the unique environments in the Swamp and the

protection that it receives. Two of the most exciting discoveries from the recent botanical surveys include species from the sunflower family. One is Marsh Fleabane or Camphor Weed, *Pluchea camphorata*, an annual to perennial herb, that was first discovered in the Swamp on 15 August 1877 by the botanist Albert Commons. This was the only known record for this species in Delaware and had not been seen in in state since that time, not even in the 1998 botanical survey which specifically targeted that species. We discovered a robust population of Marsh Fleabane in the Swamp in August of 2021, 144 years later! The second discovery is new to Delaware and Delmarva: the opposite-leaf Dwarf Dandelion, *Krigia cespitosa*.

Our work is not finished. The Swamp continues to benefit from ongoing restoration of key plant species and habitats. Stay tuned for more news about how we are expanding habitat restoration in the Great Cypress Swamp.



*Orange milkwort found at DWL's Great Cypress Swamp
(Photographs by Dr. Steven Brewer, Wild Earth Allies)*



PHOTOGRAPH BY DR. STEVEN BREWER, WILD EARTH ALLIES

Marsh fleabane found at DWL's Great Cypress Swamp



PHOTOGRAPH BY DR. STEVEN BREWER, WILD EARTH ALLIES

The Three birds orchid is an usual and exciting find for the Great Cypress Swamp because the bloom is apparent for only two to three days.



Delaware's Amphibians and Reptiles Have Something to Say, And DWL is Listening



Spotted salamanders breed in ephemeral wetlands that lack predatory fish. They lay their eggs in jelly-like masses that protect the embryos from predation and desiccation. On average, each egg mass can contain 50-150 individual embryos

Due to their cryptic and nocturnal nature, most amphibians and reptiles often go unnoticed and unheard. However, here at DWL, we are striving to find, listen, and learn from them. Amphibians and reptiles are some of the best bio-indicators of, or communicators about, habitat types and overall ecosystem health. They depend on healthy wetlands and forests to survive and are some of the first animals to respond to habitat changes (e.g., habitat loss, pollution, etc.) by showing signs of population decline. DWL is having conversations and listening to these indicators to help guide habitat restoration and land protection efforts.

But one may ask, “How do you listen to a salamander or turtle?” Unfortunately, having such a “conversation” is not as simple as sitting down for a lunch meeting. Meeting with amphibians and reptiles is actually a bit muddier! To assess animal and habitat health, we must conduct field surveys and collect data. For example, a presence/absence survey for salamanders in a wetland can tell us about what type of wetland it is, water quality, and the condition of the surrounding landscape.

DWL has recently initiated spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) and spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) surveys throughout our Taylors Bridge Complex in southern New Castle County. Both species are of conservation concern in Delaware and throughout much of the region. Herpetologist Nathan Nazdrowicz, with the State of Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, adds, “These species are an indication of high-quality forests with abundant ephemeral wetlands and much of this habitat was lost to agriculture and ditching during the early 1900s.”

In partnership with the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, DWL staff conduct annual surveys for each species. For spotted salamanders, this includes

nighttime surveys to record occurrence, habitat use, and successful breeding. To monitor for successful breeding, we record the presence and number of egg masses in a wetland. For spotted turtles, surveys record occurrence and habitat use, and involve mark-recapture methods to estimate population size and survival rates. The mark-recapture methods consist of notching each turtle’s shell with a unique sequence to help identify individuals. All surveys are conducted by trained staff with required permits.

In 2023, DWL will begin its 75-acre forest and wetland habitat restoration project in Taylors Bridge, integrating results of these surveys and the answers we are deriving from these “communications”. This includes restoration of 50 acres of forested wetlands that will directly benefit the fragmented spotted salamander and spotted turtle populations living there currently. Future monitoring will include expanding our current survey efforts to these restored areas to better assess the impact of our habitat restoration efforts. For more information, read about this project in our “Phased Approach to Conservation” article.



Note the small triangular notch on the outer edge of this spotted turtle’s shell. This notch is part of the mark-recapture survey.



Spotted salamanders are members of the mole salamander family, *Ambystomatidae*. Mole salamanders are named as such because they spend most of their life underground and only surface during breeding season. In Delaware, spotted salamanders can typically be seen migrating to breeding ponds on warm rainy nights from February – April.



PARTNERSHIPS

Work Underway to Honor Eugene Bayard

Just over a year ago, DWL lost one of our longest-serving and most influential Board of Directors members, past Board president, and dear friend, Eugene "Gene" H. Bayard. Gene's contributions to DWL, and many other organizations, are innumerable and consequential; in no way is it an exaggeration to say he helped shape DWL into the success it is today.

Shortly after his passing, DWL was approached by the Board of Directors of Chesapeake Utilities, where Gene also served as a Board member, about creating a meaningful memorial to him. Chesapeake Utilities and DWL both wanted to ensure what Gene strived to create could be memorialized and shared well beyond the lifetime of our shared Board member. Together, we developed the concept of the Eugene H. Bayard Memorial trail, which is currently under construction at the Roman Fisher Farm at the Great Cypress Swamp.

When complete, this trail will feature a memorial to Mr. Bayard, and will meander through a series of native plantings



Members of the Chesapeake Utilities' Board of Directors joined Delaware Wild Lands' Directors and Staff, and Bayard Family members, at the ribbon cutting for the Eugene H. Bayard Memorial Trail at the Roman Fisher Farm.

exemplifying some of the unique biodiversity of the Great Cypress Swamp and of Sussex County. The trail will pass through small groves of Baldcypress and Atlantic white-cedar trees, a variety of native hardwood trees, native flowering plants and vines, maintained early successional and pollinator habitat, and a small wetland swale. With the support of Chesapeake Utilities, we will also install interpretative signage labeling many of the species along the trail and linking to more information about them.

As Gene would have wished, this trail will expand DWL's outreach efforts, showcase the unique character and natural resources of Delaware, highlight a shared passion for and commitment to preserving, protecting, and enhancing Delaware's natural beauty, and serve as a fitting memorial to Eugene H. Bayard, whose wise counsel and disarming wit did so much for our organization and for Delaware at large. A special shoutout to Chesapeake Utilities for making this possible!



RESEARCH/EDUCATION

DWL by the Numbers



51

Species of moths identified at DWL's Moth Night



285

People volunteered 749 hours for DWL



12

Horseshoe crab spawning surveys conducted at Milford Neck

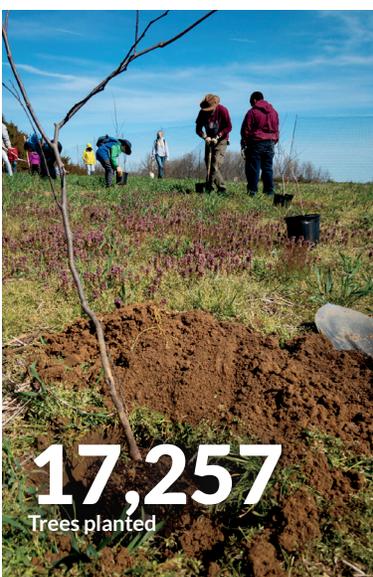
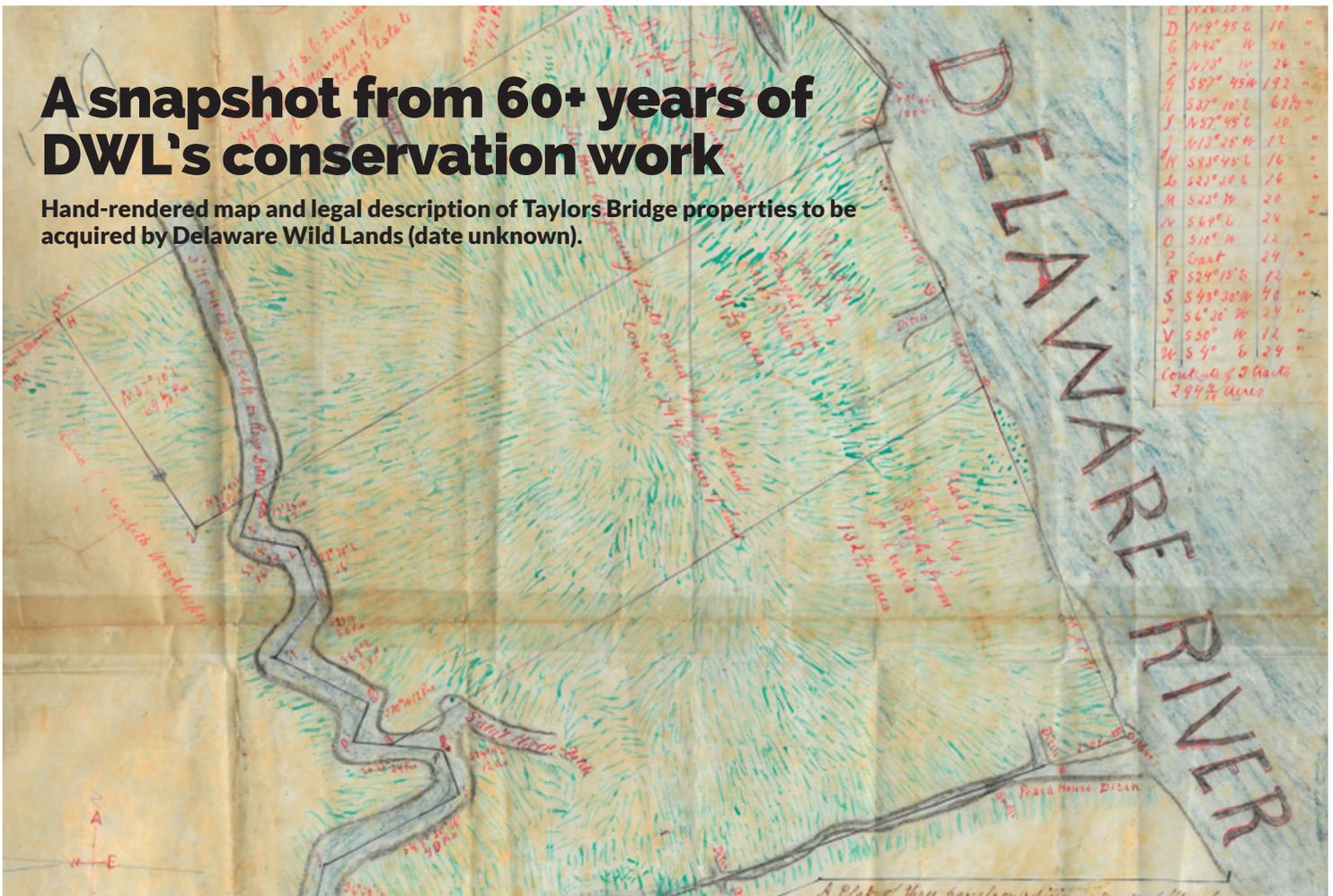


18

Sandhill cranes counted

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

Hand-rendered map and legal description of Taylors Bridge properties to be acquired by Delaware Wild Lands (date unknown).





What's Old is New Again: Repurposing Barn "Treasures"



A Greg Shelnutt work-in-progress tentatively titled, "For the Graduate(s)," which uses metals and artifacts from DWL's Fortner barn..



"Treasures" to be cleaned out from one of the Fortner Farm barns.



One of several barns at DWL's Fortner Farm.

Purchasing and protecting land often means also acquiring structures. With structures come "treasures" that range from buckets of nuts and bolts to functional and rusted tools to wooden chicken coops to old decoys to frayed ropes and more. At DWL, we pride ourselves in being resourceful and we seek ways to repurpose and reuse materials. For our recent Fortner barn clean-out, we called on University of Delaware's Professor Greg Shelnutt, Chair and Professor of Art, Department of Art and Design, to create something wonderful by rescuing pieces of the past.

"I am deeply grateful to Delaware Wild Lands for their work, and—in particular for thinking about artists as possible 'aesthetic recyclers'.

I have long been interested in abandoned objects—especially those with history—a sense of place, purpose, and abandoned or forgotten history."

"I think of my sculpture as a kind of storytelling, be it forceful and overt or subtle and mysterious in its approach. I endeavor to create works that provoke the viewer into questioning accepted

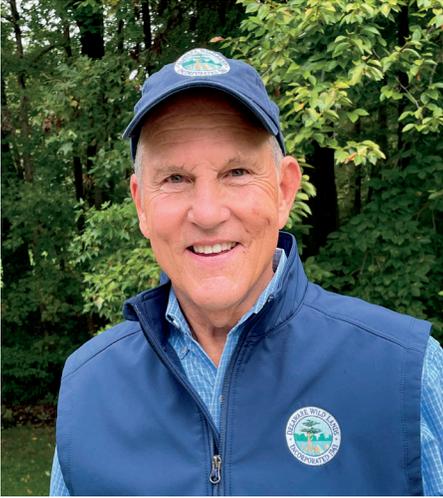
notions about our physical world and cultural context. Sculpture, in particular, asks one to investigate the assumptions one makes to negotiate the physical, emotional and spiritual world in which one lives."

DWL's treasures inspired Professor Shelnutt to create a sculpture for his graduates and, together, we hope to contribute to the cultural dialogue around art, history, repurposing, and conservation of our environs and broader environment.



PARTNERSHIPS

Delaware Wild Lands' Board of Directors: Peter MacGaffin



If one were to posit about Delaware Wild Lands' accomplishments over the years, a number of factors might arise in conversation: dedication, reputation, integrity, partnership, commitment, quality, impact, results, perseverance, and permanence. Peter MacGaffin certainly recognizes these as hallmark characteristics of Delaware Wild Lands' (DWL) work and he believes, more readily, that DWL's accomplishments can be described much more simply: "It's about the work. And it's about the people." Most conservation professionals are not drawn to this field because of the people...but, as Peter touts, "the people are what make the work possible and successful". He is right. And once you talk with Peter you, too, will agree that people are and will continue to be a focal point and primary driver of DWL's successes.

When you first meet or talk with Peter MacGaffin, reliably he will crack a joke and garner a mischievous smile. And, you will almost never leave a conversation with Peter MacGaffin until he makes you chuckle. While Peter quickly and easily forges connections with people, what you might not encounter in your first moments interacting with him are his abounding commitment to conservation and to the State of Delaware.

Peter's love of Delaware's natural beauty and bounty emerged from years spent as a young boy exploring Delaware's forests, farms, and fields. He first hunted ducks near Port Penn, DE and, since then, has cultivated a lifelong commitment to water fowling and conservation. He began supporting Ducks Unlimited in the 1970s as a volunteer and now serves on Ducks Unlimited's National Board of Directors. He has served on DWL's Board of Directors in various capacities and leadership positions since 2004 and proudly has included DWL in his planned giving.

Peter is a native Delawarean, and in his own words, he was "born, raised, educated, and worked in Delaware and will see [his] last sunset in Delaware". He is a strong proponent of Delaware's "small but mighty" mentality and he draws satisfaction from assembling a team to accomplish tangible results. He is dedicated to protecting Delaware's critical natural resources, the wonders of the First State in which he lives and thrives, and expanding DWL's achievements. Without doubt, Peter's ability to engage staff, supporters, and partners; his can-do attitude; and willingness to roll up his sleeves has elevated the reputation of DWL and the reach of our conservation work.

At DWL, we have learned from Peter the interminable value of people and worth of personal relationships. We know we can always count on Peter MacGaffin and that if we can identify a need, Peter is willing to mobilize his friends, family, and colleagues to advance conservation and help DWL achieve even greater results. We are forever grateful to Peter for his patience, passion for conservation, reminders that "no is a stepping stone to yes", and that YOU, our supporters, drive DWL's continued success.

Peter lives in Bear with his wife, Linda.

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.



Out and About on DWL's Properties



Great-horned owl



Wood duck hatchlings



Goldenrod soldier beetle



Seaside Sparrow



Fowler's toad



Bobwhite quail in tree



Cloudless sulfur butterfly



Featherfoil



Needhams skimmer



Prickly pear cactus blossom



Fledgling screech owl



RESEARCH/EDUCATION

NATIVE PLANT
PROFILE**Baldcypress**
Taxodium distichum

If you're familiar with Delaware Wild Lands, you're familiar with Baldcypress... just look at our logo! Our founder Ted Harvey's interest in Baldcypress trees played a roll in his desire to preserve some of Delaware's most sensitive natural areas. Trussum Pond (DWL's first acquisition, since conveyed to the State of Delaware) is known for its charismatic Baldcypress trees rising from the water, and the Great Cypress Swamp is home to some of the largest aggregations of Baldcypress in Delaware.

In the fall, one begins to understand the "bald" in Baldcypress. As one of a few species of deciduous conifers, the feathery leaves of Baldcypress trees begin to turn yellow, and then a striking rust color, before dropping from its branches in late autumn. Baldcypress seeds form inside of green geometric cones that range in size from a small grape to a golf ball. Also in late autumn, the cones begin to turn brown and fall, often breaking when they land. Although Baldcypress trees can grow in a variety

of conditions, including dry soils, they require fluctuating water levels to soften the cone and release the seeds for dispersion and germination. Although Baldcypress trees actually grow faster in dry conditions, it is the tree's ability to withstand frequent and long periods of inundation which has allowed it to find its niche as a wetland obligate species. Baldcypress trees are also known for their "knees", a part of the root system which can often be found above the surface of the water surrounding mature Baldcypress trees. Baldcypress is a very long-lived species, with the oldest known specimen occurring along the Black River in North Carolina, estimated to be more than 2,600 years old!

DWL has actively worked to restore and enhance Baldcypress in the wooded wetlands of the Great Cypress Swamp for decades, and last year alone we planted more than 20,000 Baldcypress seedlings with help from our friends at Wild Earth Allies and Delaware Center for the Inland Bays!

DWL
Wish List

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:

- **Plastic storage totes** (*Outreach, Maintenance*)
- **Adult life vests** (*Outreach*)
- **64GB and 16MB SD cards** (*Wildlife Monitoring, Outreach*)
- **Galvanized or stainless wood screws, various lengths** (*Maintenance*)
- **Drill bits** (*Maintenance*)
- **Flagging tape, various colors** (*Restoration*)
- **4ft wooden stakes** (*Tree Plantings, Maintenance*)
- **Batteries - AAA, AA and D** (*Wildlife Surveys*)
- **Headlamps** (*Wildlife Surveys*)
- **Wood duck nest boxes and materials** (*Conservation*)
- **Heavy duty trash bags** (*Trash Cleanup, Maintenance*)
- **4 pool noodles** (*Outreach*)
- **Wheelbarrow, with 2 wheels** (*New office!*)
- **Corrugated sheet metal (3'x4')** (*Conservation*)
- **Plywood sheets (3' x 4')** (*Conservation*)
- **Garden hose spray nozzle** (*Maintenance*)
- **Rope** (*Maintenance*)
- **Large Cooler** (*Outreach*)

DELAWARE WILD LANDS

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