

SPRING/SUMMER 2006

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firestarters: USING PRESCRIBED BURNS
TO RESTORE NATURAL HABITAT *(see full story on page 8)*

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director's message



few truly wild forests remain in Maryland. Before Europeans first made contact with North America, experts believe that 95 percent of Maryland was forested. Today, 41 percent of the state is covered by forests.

While forests in Maryland and around the world have suffered severe degradation because of disease, overharvesting and climate change, they continue to be recognized today not only for their economic value, but also for the ecological benefits they provide.

As you might have read in *The Washington Post* in February, the Conservancy played a significant part in helping to protect the Great Bear Rainforest in Canada—a 4.4 million-acre park surrounded by 10 million acres of sustainably managed forests. Born of compromise, in typical Conservancy fashion, the project balances the protection of the ecosystem with human uses.

In Maryland, the Conservancy is playing a significant role in protecting and restoring the state's forests. In this newsletter, you'll find some exciting details and photos of Maryland's first prescribed burn in 10 years, part of an effort to restore native hardwoods.

Maryland is hard at work on the policy side of protecting forests, too. Last year, Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. asked me to serve on his Commission for Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry. I saw this commission as an excellent opportunity to discuss the future of private forestland protection and the management of state forests with a range of important stakeholders.

The commission is charged with gathering "insight, knowledge and strategies for the development of a 21st-century public-private partnership-oriented land conservation vision for Maryland." The commission members include conservation

organizations, private landowners, timber companies, legislators and state forestry officials.

The Conservancy has invested much in conservation planning in the state, and we are sharing our local knowledge and global expertise with the commission. We hope that this commission and the work it ultimately produces will reflect recommendations to conserve the ecologically important areas that the Conservancy and its members are concerned about.

The forest industry in Maryland is facing a steady decline.

This decline, in part, is driven by a rapidly globalizing forest products industry and the pressures of development driving landowners to sell to developers rather than manage their forest resources.

Why should we be worried if the timber industry is facing economic difficulties and decline?

For one, The Nature Conservancy has always been a strong proponent of working forests as an important component of conservation landscapes when combined with core protected areas. We believe in balancing human needs for natural resources with maintaining the health of the environment.

The alternative use for these properties could be much more permanent—development. Ultimately, the changes in the timber industry could put thousands of acres of private forestland at greater risk.

Sincerely,

NAT WILLIAMS
Maryland/DC State Director

Before Europeans first made contact with North America, experts believe that 95 percent of Maryland was forested. Today, 41 percent of the state is covered by forests.

In January, we lost a dear friend and dedicated conservationist. Calvert R. "Cal" Posey Sr., who first brought the great blue heron rookery at Nanjemoy Creek to the Conservancy's attention, died at the age of 81. Cal served as the Conservancy's first Nanjemoy Creek preserve manager. He was a skilled naturalist, biologist, writer and southern Maryland historian. His extensive handwrit-

ten notes about his frequent trips to the Nanjemoy Creek preserve serve as a treasured historical record of the wildlife and natural communities in the forests that protect the Chesapeake Bay. We will miss him.

See page 7 for more on Cal's legacy.

beyond borders

SCALES OF CONSERVATION: Q&A WITH TERRY COOK

BY DANNY WHITE

Terry Cook is director of science for the 14-state Eastern U.S. Conservation Region. He spoke with us about working with partners in Africa, developing conservation priorities for the East and understanding the global context of the Conservancy's work in Maryland.

You went to Africa last year to work with the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI). How did that trip come about?

Jane Goodall started back in the '60s working at Gombe National Park in western Tanzania. While she and the institute have conducted valuable scientific studies on the social structure of chimpanzees, conservation of chimpanzee habitat was limited. Recently, JGI scientists took decades of data and mapped the territories of the various chimpanzee populations, and this mapping has demonstrated a severe reduction in territory size. Populations that once roamed extensively beyond the park are now bound by the park boundaries. Habitat outside the park has no legal protection, and it has increasingly been deforested and converted to agricultural use. Last year, I was asked to facilitate a workshop with JGI staff and partners in western Tanzania, using the conservation approaches the Conservancy has developed, to address how to protect or restore the remaining habitat outside the park, how much habitat the chimps actually need, and how to work successfully with local communities and the government.

What can the Conservancy learn from Jane Goodall?

You see the history there, and you realize how much Jane Goodall has contributed to people's attitudes toward conservation. She could connect people to a group of chimpanzees in Africa and get them to think about geographies and species they may never see. But they still cared, and they were willing to support her work. That type of global stewardship and caring is what we need to be better at. We need to apply what Jane Goodall was able to do in a little place like Gombe National Park to the Conservancy's work.

What did you bring back from Tanzania?

I tend to think of Africa in a romantic way. I stayed in Jane Goodall's house that she built and where she raised her family. To travel up and down the hills of Gombe and follow those

chimps, it's like stepping into a storybook, things you've read about your entire life. But the sum of what I brought back was a renewed commitment to the Conservancy. The experience revitalized me in thinking about how to apply that type of enthusiasm and commitment here in the East where we have a lot more resources than Tanzania.

Why does the Conservancy need to think globally, or even regionally?

In a word, it's our mission. Our mission does not talk about protecting biodiversity in a state or in a country. Our mission statement is explicit about the global nature of our work. Yet only recently have we started to challenge ourselves and critically question whether our actions are aligned to meet the full potential of the organization and to effectively address threats to conservation at multiple scales—local, regional and global.

Terry Cook, lead scientist for The Nature Conservancy's Eastern U.S. Conservation Region.



beyond borders

What were some of the goals in creating a regional conservation plan?

The regional plan addressed a lot of high-level questions, such as what about the East is significant or unique? For the first time, we brought all 14 states together to look at their work in regional and global contexts. We looked at how our Atlantic coast channels migratory birds, and we said, how can we secure and protect this global phenomenon? We haven't answered all the questions yet, but we created a framework to continually advance our thinking about how we operate at these different scales.

What top priorities stand out for the East?

First was the recognition that the Central Appalachians—portions of West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania—are globally significant, representing one of the world's richest temperate broadleaf forests. More than 158 tree species are found in this ecoregion. The eastern states resolved that it is our collective responsibility to ensure appropriate conservation action is taken within the forests of the Central Appalachians.

Another top priority that stood out was marine conservation. While we have excellent projects all along the Atlantic coast, we haven't shown the same commitment to developing partnerships and capacities to protect our oceans. We have a special role to play in the conservation of marine biodiversity, and over the next several years, we will expand our ability to step beyond our shorelines and conserve the amazing diversity of species and habitats that characterize the temperate waters of the North Atlantic.

What does the regional plan mean for Maryland?

A couple of years ago, Maryland recognized the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to the Chesapeake Bay. They started a Chesapeake Bay initiative, and there's a high expectation that Maryland will continue to bring in the other states to think about water quality, native oyster populations, and a wide variety of things that have impacted the bay over the last 100 years. Maryland also has unique coastal systems and the Eastern Shore, which—if you look at migratory birds and the Atlantic Flyway—has globally important stopover habitats. Maryland has all the different pieces and will be a key player in terms of biodiversity and support of regional priorities.

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conservation highlights

NANTICOKE RURAL LEGACY AREA RECEIVES \$1 MILLION

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. announced in January that the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area will receive \$1 million for the purchase of conservation easements in the 21,250-acre area in Dorchester County. As the lead sponsor of the project, the Conservancy's Nanticoke River Project director, Liz Zucker, attended the governor's announcement in Baltimore County.

"Nearly 3,200 acres on six properties have been permanently protected with Rural Legacy funds since the area was first designated in 2001," Zucker said. "Protecting important natural resources within working landscapes—farms and forestlands—also helps support the local economy and manage growth responsibly."

The Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area is located in the heart of the Nanticoke River watershed where the river joins Marshyhope Creek in Dorchester County. It borders the waterfront village of Vienna to the north and south. The Nanticoke River watershed is home to more than 260 rare plants and animals.

Protecting the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area helps safeguard the Chesapeake Bay.

POTOMAC ALMANAC

STRAYING FROM THE BEATEN PATH Improvised trails off Billy Goat Trail threaten Bear Island ecology

BY ALEX SCOFIELD/THE POTOMAC ALMANAC
JANUARY 12, 2006

In November, members of the C&O Canal Volunteer Bike Patrol noticed a series of spray-paint orange blazes on Bear Island near Section A of the Billy Goat Trail. In addition to 20 such unauthorized markings along the trail, park officials and volunteers discovered 28 orange markings on trees and rocks in the interior of Bear Island.

Bear Island is federal land, part of Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. The Nature Conservancy has 50 percent undivided property interest in the island. While park officials don't know who marked the trees, the blazes are marked and double-marked as though made by somebody who understands trailblazing conventions. "It was done by someone who knows how trails are blazed," said Mary Travaglini, Potomac Gorge habitat restoration manager with The Nature Conservancy. "We're pretty sure it was probably someone that runs, bikes [or] does walks, we just don't know who or what it was for."

Within a few weeks after the blazes were discovered, Travaglini went to Bear Island with a National Park Service official and covered the blazes with camouflage paint.

"Beyond the illegality of it, it has a real impact," said Stephanie Flack, project coordinator of The Nature Conservancy's Potomac Gorge habitat restoration project. "They degrade the habitat." The orange blazes are an extreme example of a common problem—"social trails," "recreational trails" or "informal trails" are but a few terms for what happens when visitors wander off marked paths. Hikers straying from marked paths have potential to wreak havoc on Bear Island, an ecologically sensitive area that was visited by 50,000 people each year.

Vandalism on federal parkland is a criminal offense. But staying on the marked path is a matter of complying with Leave No Trace ethics. It's up to the conscience of each Billy Goat Trail hiker to comply, and the stakes are higher than may seem apparent.

continued on next page



conservation highlights

Straying From the Beaten Path, continued from page 5

Georgeann Smale of Bethesda is accustomed to seeing informal trails meandering off the Billy Goat Trail, where Smale leads a group of volunteer trail stewards. "Occasionally we'll see flour. People will put their own temporary markings out there with flour. [Other times] hikers will put sticks or stones in arrows."

No matter what they mean, they're undesirable, Smale said. Informal trails often begin because they seem innocent and intuitive to a hiker. The blue-blazed trail may meander in an arc, as the hiker walks the straight-line shortcut.

"When you start to make [shortcuts] on all the trail networks, you're doing something you can't even see," Smale said. "When you lay out a formal trail, you have persons who know how to lay out the trail," Jeff Marion, a federal ecologist who studies the environmental impact of informal trails for the U.S. Geological Survey. "[Informal trails] are designed by visitors who know nothing. They may be inadvertently walking through an endangered plant community."

Along the Billy Goat Trail, there's a pretty good chance they are. "Bear Island is one of the most sensitive resources that exists in the D.C. area," Travaglini said. College graduates may recall informal trails on their campuses, where walkways may not have been the quickest way for students in a hurry to get to class or a dorm. Eventually, if there's an obvious shortcut from Point A to Point B, the shoes of hundreds of students taking a shortcut wear down a path across the college quad. Smale calls it the "edge effect."

When rare or endangered plant species are involved, as they are on Bear Island, some short-term affects of "bootleg" hiking are obvious. "In some cases, they directly trample the rare plants we're trying to protect," said Marion.

More indirectly, plant and even some animal species sometimes find it difficult

to cross a path. Marion said it's not uncommon for him to see a plant species flourishing on one side of a path, but nonexistent on the other side. "They can't seem to migrate past the trail," Marion said. The opposite problem can also wreak havoc with the local ecology—non-native plant species can be spread by hikers if seeds get stuck in their clothing or boot treads.

From their end, Park Service officials and volunteers along the canal and Billy Goat Trail try to minimize visitor impact on the area. "I'm fairly pragmatic about it," Marion said. With 50,000 annual Billy Goat Trail visitors, it's unrealistic to expect that every last one of them will stay on a blazed path. The key to minimizing impact is to design good trails that won't erode, and educate visitors about Leave No Trace. Marion will begin a study next year on the existing trail networks in the Potomac Gorge to determine the adequacy of existing trails, and whether inadequate ones should be regraded or reset.

Smale and Park Service officials are working on procedures for closing the Billy Goat Trail during wet seasons. When the Potomac River level hits 5.4 on the Little Falls gauge (still below flood level), parts of the Billy Goat Trail get submerged. During wet seasons, hikers may leave a marked trail to avoid swampy-looking stretches of a marked trail.

"That's why it's closed down during floods," Smale said. "If the blue-blazed trail is underwater, then we don't want you on the trail at all."

Hikers straying from marked paths have potential to wreak havoc on Bear Island, an ecologically sensitive area that is visited by 50,000 people each year.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Georgeann Smale, head of the Billy Goat Trail, attempts to educate many of the trail's 50,000 annual visitors about Leave No Trace principles. "It's an ethic, not a law," said Smale, who stresses the importance of adhering to Leave No Trace principles on the Billy Goat Trail, which passes through the fragile ecosystem of Bear Island, home to many rare and endangered plant and animal species.

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faces of conservation

FORMER CONSERVANCY MANAGER DISCOVERED HERON ROOKERY AT NANJEMOY PRESERVE

BY DAVID DADURKA

Calvert R. Posey Sr., The Nature Conservancy's first Nanjemoy Creek preserve site manager, died on January 9. He was 81.

Posey is credited with discovering the great blue heron rookery at the Nanjemoy Creek preserve in 1945 when he worked in the community going from farm to farm with the area's only grain combine machine to help local farmers harvest wheat. Nanjemoy Creek—with more than 2,500 acres now under protection—provides a nesting home to one of the largest great blue heron colonies on the East Coast.

Hand-written in cursive script, Posey writes in his memoir: "There was a stream of Great Blue Heron that were flying back and forth from the Nanjemoy Creek to the Swamp about a quarter of a mile from where I was combining. ... It was a few days before I had a chance to go and check out what I suspected to [be] a rookery site.

"However, I was quite surprised at what I found there. The Great Blue Herons had established a Rookery of several hundred nests in an area where no birds had ever been reported of ever being seen before. One huge Old Sycamore Tree had thirty-five nest[s] in that single tree."



Calvert R. Posey Sr., the Conservancy's first Nanjemoy Creek preserve manager.

Posey and past Conservancy trustee Belva Jensen helped organize a fund raising campaign to protect the rookery when Posey saw indications that the land might be threatened by development.

"Cal was an outstanding naturalist, biologist, local historian and lover of native American culture," said Nat Williams, state director of The Nature Conservancy in Maryland. "He was a dedicated conservationist and strongly committed to the protection of southern Maryland's natural areas. We will miss him greatly."

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innovative tools & tactics

SMOKE ALONG THE WATER: A PRESCRIBED BURN AT DORCHESTER POND

BY DAVID DADURKA



On February 2, The Nature Conservancy in Maryland/DC conducted its first prescribed burn in the state in 10 years. The burn took place at the Dorchester Pond preserve, the site of one of the largest Delmarva bays on the Eastern Shore.

A prescribed burn is an intentionally ignited and carefully managed fire used to return landscapes to their natural balance, benefiting plant and animal species that have evolved to rely on fire for survival. The Nature Conservancy conducts 300 to 400 prescribed burns every year ranging in size from several thousand acres in remote areas to small burns of several acres in urban areas.

The Conservancy's David Dadurka traveled with the Maryland/DC chapter's stewardship staff to observe. Below is an excerpt of his notes from the field.

9: 30 a.m.

After a two-hour drive from the Bethesda office, Deborah Barber, the Maryland/DC chapter's director of land manage-

ment and volunteer programs, Caroline Raisler, the chapter's conservation steward, and I arrive at Dorchester Pond and unload our gear.

Waiting for us are Maryland Department of Natural Resources' biologists Wesley Knapp and Wayne Tyndall and the department's volunteer coordinator, Paula Becker. Deborah Landau, the Maryland/DC chapter's conservation ecologist, is eagerly awaiting our arrival, and she introduces us to George Gress, the Conservancy's fire expert from Pennsylvania and our "burn boss" for the day.

The stewardship crew worked for months to prepare for the burn at Dorchester Pond. They've created fire lines to keep the fire from crossing outside of the burn unit—the area where the fire will be contained. Some loblollies were removed to make room for native tree regeneration. Volunteers helped to pull down greenbrier—a common Eastern Shore plant with big, sharp thorns that is fuel for fire.

Today's burn is intended to help restore native hardwoods. Loblolly was probably not a native species this far north on the

(Top) David Dadurka. (Below) View of smoke rising in distance over pond.





Starting the fire.

Eastern Shore, Deborah B. says. As typically happens with the removal of loblolly pine, non-native invasive species creep in. The fire will also help to slow the return of invasive plant Japanese honeysuckle.

We don fire-resistant Nomex suits. Wayne and Caroline begin to fill the drip torches—metal canisters filled with a mixture of diesel and gas that are used to ignite the flames. Deborah B. and Wesley begin to rake leaves outside the fire line. While they rake, Deborah L. revs up a chain saw to do some last-minute trimming of stumps.

10:30 a.m.

We all gather near George's truck, which is holding a tank with about 200 gallons of water. We walk the perimeter of the burn unit. Wayne and Deborah L. will work as "igniters," while Deborah B. and Caroline will be "holding"—wearing bladder bags filled with water and watching to make sure embers don't jump the fire line. Wesley will be driving the water truck and handling the water hoses. Paula agrees to be "weather girl" for the day—tracking temperature, relative humidity, dew point and other factors.

11:30 a.m.

George lights the test fire. If he doesn't like the way the test fire behaves, we could all be going home. Any big change in temperature, wind or relative humidity, and the whole burn could be

cancelled. But the fire looks good. George gives the go-ahead.

Smoke begins to waft back towards the crew, the woods begin to crackle and the ground begins to blacken. I'm standing 20 feet from the one-foot-high flames but can already feel the heat. As Deborah L. lights the fire line, George squirts a water line on the road using the hose attached to his truck to keep the fire from spreading into the woods.

Noon

The team burns a fire line of a couple hundred feet. Wayne lights a thicket of greenbrier and the flames spread high and fast. The air smells oaky and the ground turns to white ash. George calls over the radio to remind us to drink lots of water. We're walking around in the heat of the fire, wearing heavy suits and faced with a lot of smoke. With those kinds of conditions you can quickly become dehydrated.

Along the edge of the pond is sedge, which Wayne later tells me is habitat for the rare carpenter frog. The area is full of tree stumps, which we cut to keep the trees from encroaching on the pond.

2:13 p.m.

I walk to the far end of the Delmarva Bay and watch the smoke waft over the water. As I walk along the shoreline, I notice deer tracks. Off the water, a small flock of waterfowl takes flight. As I walk along the edge of the pond, the sedge—now blackened—crunches at each step. I catch sight of something jumping in front of me. It's a tiny frog, covered in soot, hopping toward the water.

The acrid smell of smoke from earlier in the day has receded and now the scent is of one closer to incense. The team now douses water on the embers and smoldering wood piles to cool any remaining hot spots.

4 p.m.

We've finished up the major work for the day. George congratulates the crew on a job well done. We begin wrapping up the hoses and packing up the equipment. The Deborahs will come back periodically during the evening to make sure the flames stay extinguished. Over the next few months, we'll come back periodically to check the plant growth on the site and keep an eye out for a resurgence of Japanese honeysuckle.

Go online: See more photos and learn about fire and conservation at <http://nature.org/maryland>.

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CONSERVATION GOES HIGH-TECH

BY DANIELLE RING

Surrounded by a patch of the invasive plant garlic mustard, Caroline Raisler, the Maryland/DC chapter's conservation steward, pulls out her personal digital assistant (PDA), a small hand-held computer and slides out the stylus. She taps in information with the stylus about the location of the garlic mustard on the small touch screen and maps her progress in eradicating the weeds.

Stored on her PDA is software developed by the Conservancy's Oregon and Idaho chapters called the Weed Information Management System (WIMS). The software serves as a way to record the location and spread of invasive plants and animals. It is integrated with Global Positioning System (GPS) software, which helps the user map locations of these invasive species.

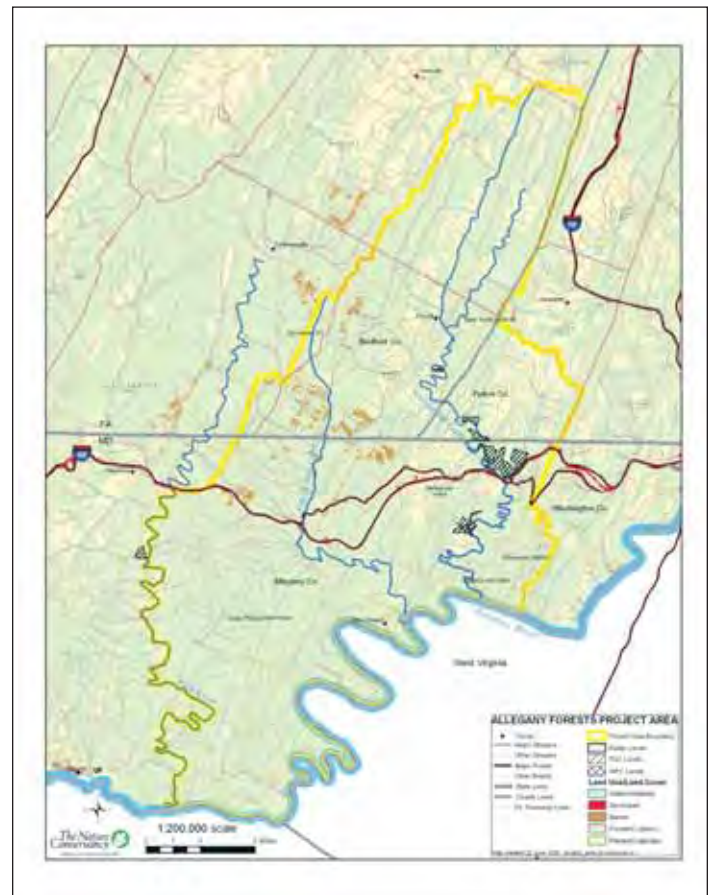
Far from the image of the old-school naturalist, jotting and drawing sketches in her tattered and worn field journal, the Conservancy's land stewards today rely heavily on technology to support and inform the organization's conservation work. The Conservancy has been a pioneer of using technology to guide our conservation work. In the United States, the Conservancy built the Natural Heritage database, which has since become NatureServe, a leading source for information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems.

Doug Hall, president and CEO of MDA Federal (previously Earth Satellite Corp.) and a Maryland/DC chapter board member says that "current technology is a powerful tool for understanding priorities and for helping us take action in the most effective way possible."

In the Maryland/DC chapter, our scientists and land stewards use several different tools to further our conservation efforts.

Conservation Information Manager Michelle Canick primarily works with ArcGIS, a product of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). In 2003, ESRI donated \$15 million in GIS software and gave discounts on training for three years to the Conservancy—the largest technology gift to the Conservancy in its history. The software allows Canick to create maps and analyze data to help inform conservation project managers of possible opportunities for land acquisition or protection.

For example, Canick creates a map of the Nanticoke River project area, based on aerial photographs. Then she overlays



(Top) The Conservancy created this map of the Allegheny Forests project area using specialized computer software.

(Left) Tools of the trade: The Conservancy uses personal data assistants (PDAs) equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) software to track invasive plants.

information such as protected lands and habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species. Liz Zucker, who directs the Nanticoke River Project for the Maryland/DC chapter, receives the detailed map and uses it to decide how best to proceed in land deals and conservation strategies.

The greatest benefit of the software, according to Canick, is to "bring together different pieces of the puzzle—important areas for biodiversity, land ownership patterns and the threats to

biodiversity—so you can look at the patterns as a whole to more effectively conserve important places.”

According to Raisler, WIMS has helped most with independent weed crews who treat affected areas hundreds of miles away from the chapter’s headquarters. The crews record details on where and how they treated, and the information is immediately uploaded into WIMS as a permanent record.

The Web also has been a key factor in furthering conservation work, according to Doug Hall. The information can be easily and constantly updated and shared at a low cost. “All you need is a Web browser to be able to retrieve data that five years ago would have been difficult to access and understand.”

The rapid pace of environmental change compels the Conservancy to become a leader in the application of technology for conservation purposes. However, high costs remain a factor. Donations from companies, such as ESRI, assist us in acquiring software and training that we might not otherwise be able to afford. But, in general, the Conservancy must continue to invest its own resources in acquiring and developing new technologies to ensure that we protect the lands and waters that plants, animals and natural communities need to survive.

To learn more about how you can help support the Conservancy’s conservation technology efforts, contact Cheryl Barto of the Maryland/DC chapter at (301) 897-8570.



STATE CONSERVATION FUNDS REACH UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS

BY DAVID DADURKA

After four years of significant cuts to land conservation and park development funding, the Governor has finally restored full funding for Program Open Space (POS) at the unprecedented level of \$361 million. At press time, the General Assembly seemed poised to approve the Governor's FY07 budget, which would provide funding for the creation of local parks and playgrounds, the protection of agricultural land and natural areas, and the acquisition of state parks, forests and wildlife management areas.

Program Open Space, created in 1969 and funded through the real estate transfer tax, is recognized as one of the first and most successful dedicated funding sources for land conservation in the country. With the recent diversion of this funding to other programs, the Conservancy has been working as a member of the Partners for Open Space Coalition to restore funding to these programs. Partners for Open Space is a group of more than 130 environmental, conservation, agricultural preservation, and park and recreation organizations. In addition to efforts to ensure passage of the budget as submitted, efforts also were under way to seek repayment of \$90 million that was diverted from last year's POS budget for unrelated purposes.

A survey of 803 registered Maryland voters was conducted in February to assess their attitudes on a variety of conservation issues, including POS. This information will help with the development of a public education campaign to inform voters about the benefits of POS.

In addition to its work on land conservation funding, the Conservancy is supporting legislation that would require Maryland to become a member of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a northeast region program that requires participating states to limit and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants through a cap and trade system.

Seven states announced an agreement in December to implement RGGI, which was signed by the governors of the participating states. The Nature Conservancy strongly advocated the signing of the multistate RGGI agreement. The states that agreed to sign the agreement are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Vermont.

Go Online: To learn more about RGGI, visit <http://nature.org/success/art16967.html>.



The state of Maryland's Program Open Space provides funding for protecting agricultural land and natural areas.

MEET NEW BOARD MEMBERS JEFF EDISON AND NED SYMES

BY DANIELLE RING

While growing up, Jeff Edison enjoyed exploring wilderness areas in his home state of Michigan and national parks on the West Coast. He moved to Baltimore in 1991 and now runs Phillips Edison, a company that buys and renews old shopping centers. The company's work reflects Smart Growth principles—redeveloping existing buildings instead of creating more sprawl. Jeff's conservation values expanded even more when he began helping the Conservancy as a volunteer for the Baltimore Campaign Committee, a fund-raising advisory group. The Conservancy's philosophy of science-based habitat protection is consistent with his own, Jeff says. He also appreciates the Conservancy's expanding role of working with governments and communities, and that the Conservancy goes “beyond just buying land.”

Ned Symes describes his childhood as a “Tom Sawyer” existence. As a boy, he roamed the forests and marshes of South Carolina and Delaware—only returning home for the promise of dinner. Today, he is the founder and executive vice president of Quadell Consulting Corporation. Since 1978, the company



has assisted the government in running affordable housing programs. Ned enjoys giving back to the community and says, “We believe in being publicly spirited, in looking beyond our own cabbage patch.” That attitude—and the Conservancy’s mission—is what persuaded Ned to join the Maryland/DC Board. He appreciates the Conservancy’s action, leading-edge conservation strategies and the way resources are leveraged.

Welcome to Jeff and Ned!

NATIONWIDE SURVEY FINDS NATURE CONSERVANCY MOST TRUSTED ORGANIZATION

In a recent survey, Harris Interactive®, a worldwide market research company, found The Nature Conservancy to be the most trusted organization among 13 leading nonprofit organizations, think tanks and associations. According to Harris, 79 percent of those familiar with the Conservancy said they trusted the organization—the highest trust score of any organization tested.

Go Online: For more information, visit <http://nature.org/press-room/press/press2233.html>.

SCIENCE: SEARCH FOR UNDERSTUDIED SPECIES IN POTOMAC GORGE

Though invertebrates compose the majority of the world’s animal species, they are among the least examined. The Conservancy, with help from dozens of biologists, skilled naturalists, other partners and volunteers, plans to conduct a non-stop, 30-hour effort in June to survey for the historically understudied species, such as insects, in the Potomac Gorge—the 15-mile river corridor from Great Falls to Georgetown. The Potomac Gorge is one of the most biologically significant natural areas in the eastern United States and national park system, with more than 200 rare species and natural communities.

The Nature Conservancy’s “Bioblitz” of the Potomac Gorge will take place June 23-25. The National Park Service, the Washington Biologists Field Club and the MD-DE-DC Soft Drink Association are among the sponsors of this event. Dr. Arthur Evans, a beetle expert and research associate with the Smithsonian Institution and the Virginia Museum of Natural History, will serve as coordinator and principal investigator for the Bioblitz.

The Bioblitz will cover the greatest number of undersurveyed taxonomic groups for which we can recruit qualified team leaders and participants. Between 75 and 200 volunteer researchers will conduct the Bioblitz on national parkland during the survey period. The Bioblitz also will include public education activities, based at Glen Echo Park, the “base camp” of the Bioblitz.

Go Online: For the latest information on the Bioblitz, visit <http://nature.org/maryland>.

The Potomac Gorge is one of Washington’s most popular destinations among recreationists and nature lovers alike.



preserve spotlight



NASSAWANGO CREEK

BY KRISTIN BRAMELL

What to Do There

Step into a canoe and enter Nassawango Creek, a sheltered and intimate place. The geometric farms that pepper the landscape of the Eastern Shore along Route 50 have vanished from sight. The massive trees of this primeval forest envelop visitors with ample shade and serenity. From the uppermost canoe launch, Nassawango Creek begins with a gentle current through a narrow and winding channel.

This part of the creek is quite peaceful and lush—the “knees” of towering bald cypress are visible along the banks and the songs of prothonotary warblers and wood thrushes can be heard. In spring, magnolia and azaleas are in bloom, in June the elderberry flowers and shows berries in August, and the swamp rose and cardinal flowers peak in June and July.

About a mile into the trip, look for “Nature Sanctuary” signs leading to the Francis M. Uhler Nature Trail, where visitors can rest and have lunch on the right side of the creek. Signs along the trail identify a range of native plants.

From this spot, the creek continues downstream to the Pocomoke River, where the paddling is more difficult and the waterway much wider. This is a good place to head back to the canoe launch.

Just northwest of the canoe launch is The Nature

Conservancy & Furnace Town’s visitor center. Here is not only a historic representation of life in the 19th century, but also the one-mile Paul Leifer Nature Trail. The tree canopy provides a welcome break from the sometimes-searing summer sun as the trail meanders through upland woods, a bald cypress swamp and a 19th-century canal. Throughout the trail are interpretive signs that identify plants such as the pink lady slipper, other orchids and ferns. There are benches from which visitors might catch glimpses of playful otters. Show your Conservancy membership card to receive free access to Furnace Town Visitor Center. Visit www.furnace.com for more information on events and activities.

Watch for ticks, chiggers, greenbrier and poison ivy, which all happily exist at our Nassawango Creek preserve, although they can be avoided by taking certain precautions. In the summer especially, be aware that the Eastern Shore of Maryland has a plethora of bugs and mosquitoes. Be prepared with bug spray.

If you would like more information about visiting Nassawango Creek, or the surrounding areas, please contact the Maryland/DC chapter office at (301) 897-8570.

Making a Weekend

Snow Hill

Very close to Nassawango Creek is Snow Hill, a unique old town

filled with bed and breakfasts, antique shops, and the charm of small-town living. Within a half-hour of Nassawango Creek, the slightly larger town of Berlin offers history, dining and relaxing opportunities. The town will captivate you with its 47 registered historic buildings, tree-lined streets and museum. To experience the surf of the Atlantic Ocean, Ocean City, the Delaware beaches and Assateague Island National Seashore are within 30 miles.

Pocomoke State Forest, with nearly 15,000 acres of loblolly pines and cypress swamps, offers excellent hiking opportunities. With the Pocomoke River running through a large swath of the forest, there are wonderful spots for fishing and boating.

Directions/Maps/Contact Information

Getting to Furnace Town

From Baltimore/Washington area, take U.S. Route 50 East across the Bay Bridge to Salisbury. Just as you approach Salisbury, 50 East and 50 Business will split; you want to get in the left lane to take the bypass around Salisbury, which will say 50/13 Ocean City. Stay on the bypass until the exit for Route 12 (it will also say Snow Hill Road, Salisbury, and Snow Hill). Veer left on the exit ramp and turn left at the stop sign. Follow about 10 miles to a right on Old Furnace Road.

Getting to Nassawango Creek canoe put-in

From Baltimore/Washington area, take U.S. Route 50 East across the Bay Bridge to Salisbury. After taking the bypass around Salisbury (see above), go south on Route 12 towards Snow Hill for 14 miles; turn right onto Red House Road. After about one mile, park along the road shoulder near the designated parking sign. Launch next to the sign on the east side of the creek.

Work We're Doing

At about 9,200 acres, our Nassawango Creek preserve is the

largest private nature reserve in the state of Maryland. But we do much more to preserve the area than simply buy land. We have just completed an extensive bird and vegetation survey to guide our future restoration work and to aid our conservation partners in their habitat classification efforts. With more than 60 record-

ed species of migratory birds, such as the scarlet tanager, yellow-throated and white-eyed vireos, and more than 20 species of warblers, there's no doubt that Nassawango Creek is a critical stopover point for migratory birds.

At several bogs deep within the preserve, our stewardship staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to thin encroaching hardwoods to make room for native vegetation. We have already seen a resurgence of pitcher plants, rare grasses and rare sedges growing in the bog.

Our Nassawango Stewardship Committee is an extremely effective group of local volunteers who maintain our trails and monitor the preserve. Our organization is very lucky to have such a dedicated group of people to act as an on-the-ground presence for our important conservation work on the Eastern Shore.

Trips With Amy:

So you think all of this information is great, but you're still looking for a bit more? Please contact Amy Hastie at (301) 897-8570 or

ahastie@tnc.org to get details and sign up for the following guided trips:

June 10 and 11: A leisurely morning of paddling on Nassawango Creek. Bring your own canoe or kayak, or we can arrange a rental for you.

September 15 and 16: A guided hike at the Paul Leifer Trail. Call quickly—space is limited!

Go Online:

For more information on Nassawango Creek, visit <http://nature.org/maryland>.



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coming in july...

AMERICA'S WILDEST URBAN RIVER: FLOODS, FLORA AND FAUNA IN THE POTOMAC RIVER GORGE

This new exhibit on the Conservancy's Potomac Gorge Project will be on display at the United States Botanic Garden, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., from July through November. For more details, [visit nature.org/usbg](http://nature.org/usbg).



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