

Habitat works

The newsletter about restoring, managing and protecting wildlife habitat.
Fall 2013



CWH's Barnstable Hill Farm is the largest property on Kent Island dedicated to wildlife. Its wetlands, woodlands and grasslands host a wide variety of wildlife, including Monarch butterflies. Several Monarchs tagged by CWH staff at the farm have been recovered 2,000 miles away at their overwintering sanctuaries in Central Mexico.



Habitat Works is published by Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to restoring, managing, and protecting wildlife habitat and establishing a more sustainable agriculture, through direct action, education and research, in partnership with public and private landowners. We welcome your comments and contributions.

CWH's Land Provides Great Benefits for Wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay

by Ned Gerber, Director/Wildlife Habitat Ecologist and Chris Pupke, Development Director

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has been fortunate to come into the ownership of 1,150 acres of land. Spread over six properties, this land is managed to maximize the benefits for wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay.

The farms offer some of the most valuable habitat for wildlife in the Mid-Shore region of the Delmarva Peninsula. Our staff works daily to manage the properties. This management includes controlling noxious weeds and invasive plants like Phragmites, repairing muskrat damage to wetland berms, planting wildflowers to benefit pollinators, implementing sustainable-farming techniques, and much more.

The properties are located in Queen Anne's and Talbot counties in Maryland. Together, they have more than six miles of water frontage serving as wildfowl sanctuaries. These managed lands provide habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife, including wild waterfowl, forest-interior-dwelling birds, turtles, butterflies, shorebirds, dragonflies, frogs, and more. Remember that 65-70% of the Chester River and Choptank River watersheds are farmed making land managed for wildlife rare as, while the region is rural, most of its wetlands and wildlands have been lost.

The properties themselves are quite diverse. They range from less than 15 acres to over 500 acres and can include large forests or 100 acres of restored wetlands. Two things they all share in common are wildlife and a connection to the Chesapeake Bay.

Piney Creek Wetland Preserve: Piney Creek is our first and smallest property. Donated to CWH in 1987, the property has more than half a mile of frontage on Piney Creek on Kent Island, near the Kent Narrows. The 13-acre property consists almost entirely of tidal marsh. The greatest attribute of the property is the wildlife that enjoys the sprawling shoreline of the sanctuary.

Bennett Point Farm: CWH purchased this 284-acre property in partnership with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy in 1997. The two groups were awarded a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant to cover the acquisition of the farm. Soon after the purchase, CWH restored more than 100 acres of wetlands, planted 30 acres of warm-season grass meadows and created a 30-acre forested buffer along the half mile of frontage on the Wye River. Located near Queenstown, the property was the site of the first documented nesting of Pied-billed Grebes and Coots in Queen Anne's County. The property contains the largest acreage of restored shallow-emergent wetlands in the county,

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which makes it very attractive to a diverse assemblage of wildfowl and other wetland creatures.

Barnstable Hill Farm: The 540-acre farm has 5.5 miles of water frontage on Kirwan Creek and Prospect Bay. Found on the eastern edge of Kent Island, the farm was the site of one of the first wetland restoration projects CWH ever completed. In 2000 the White/Bennett family donated the farm to CWH. It hosts a wide variety of wildlife in its woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. Each year CWH conducts tagging programs of the Monarch butterfly on the farm. Several Monarchs tagged at Barnstable Hill were recovered in their overwintering habitat in Central Mexico, nearly 2,000 miles away.

Barnstable Hill has become a fantastic wildfowl sanctuary (the largest in the county) due to the large amount of restored freshwater wetlands on the farm. The extensive marshy shoreline is in the lee of our region's predominant northwest winter winds, which adds to the attractiveness of the site for many species of waterfowl. Large flocks of geese and tundra swans loaf offshore with a wide variety of ducks. These birds trade back and forth into the wetlands and farm fields managed specifically for them.

Bailey's Neck Farm: Donated to CWH in 2005 by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, this 135-acre property provides excellent habitat for both waterfowl and forest-interior-dwelling birds. The waterfowl enjoy the 25-acre wetland that CWH restored on the property shortly after it took ownership. The large 100-acre block of mature woodlands provides critical habitat for songbirds; some of which migrate from Central and South America

The wetlands host nesting American coots and Purple gallinules, which is unusual for Talbot County. They are also home to many wood duck broods that can be seen feeding in the extensive shallow-emergent wetland vegetation. Insectivorous birds, like purple martins and tree swallows, commonly feed over the restored marsh during the day and then are replaced by bats during the night hours. We

maintain an old barn on the site because the loft is used by nesting vultures every year.

Bozman Field: This 29-acre property provides a wild gateway to the Bozman-Neavitt area near St. Michaels in Talbot County. The property was donated to CWH in 2006 by an anonymous family. Habitat on this property is a mix of mature woodlands and naturally reverting woodlands. It provides an important greenbelt on the west side of St. Michaels Road.

Canterbury Farm: Located about one mile east of Bailey's Neck Farm, CWH's Canterbury Farm contains 150 acres of wildlife habitat. The property was donated to CWH in 2008 by the late Mrs. Martha Ann Dumke Healy. In 2001, CWH had restored 100 acres of wetlands on the farm. These wetlands quickly became one of the most valuable waterfowl areas in Talbot County. Shortly after the restoration, a survey of the wetlands identified nine species of dragonflies and damselflies that had not been previously documented in Talbot County.

CWH is proud of the properties we own. This pride comes from the success we have had in building partnerships with previous landowners and the habitat we provide for wildlife.



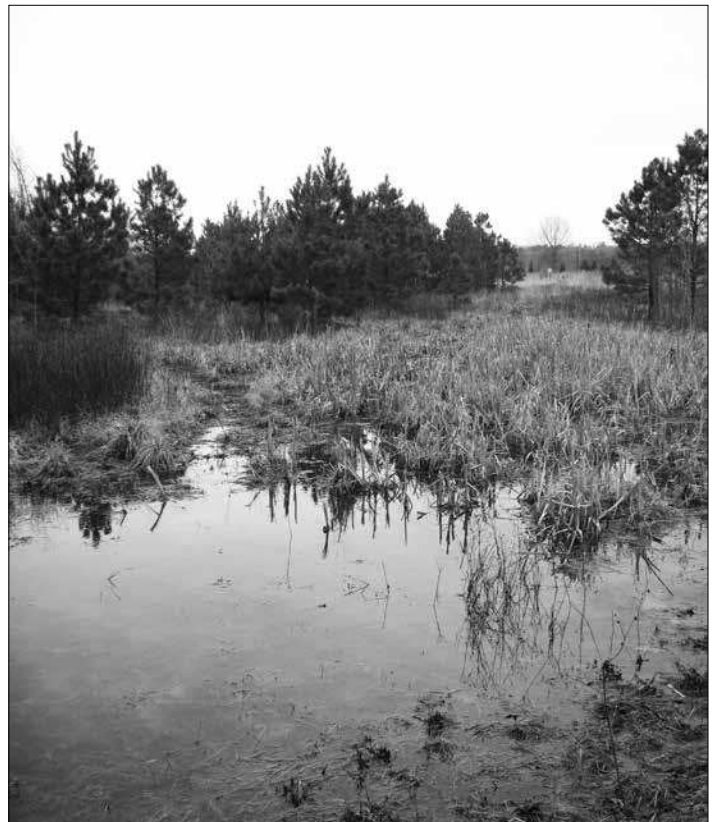
Canterbury Farm is located near Easton, MD, less than one mile from our Bailey's Neck Farm. In 2001, CWH restored 100 acres of non-tidal wetlands on the property. The farm was donated to CWH by Mrs. Martha Ann Healy in 2008. This summer, we restored an additional six acre wetland on the farm.



CWH's Piney Creek Wetland Preserve consists mostly of tidal wetlands near the Kent Narrows. In the winter, the shoreline provides habitat for a variety of waterfowl. In the summer, Ospreys nest on the platform installed by CWH.



Bailey's Neck Farm has a 25-acre wetland that CWH restored after the property was donated to us by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The property also includes a 100-acre woodland that provides habitat for a variety of songbirds, including neo-tropical migrants.



Bozman Field provides a greenbelt on the west side of St. Michaels. The 29-acre property is reverting to wooded wetlands which will help improve water quality in the Choptank River.

CWH Restoring More Wetlands at Pickering Creek Audubon Center



This Virginia's Warbler was spotted at Pickering Creek Audubon Center in March 2012. (Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick; billhubick.com)

CWH and Pickering Creek Audubon Center have one of the most successful conservation partnerships in the Chesapeake region and it is getting even better!

Over the last decade, the two organizations have worked to restore 75 acres of shallow-emergent freshwater wetlands, create 30 acres of warm-season grass meadows and plant a 3-acre forested travel corridor for the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel.

CWH has worked with PCAC staff and volunteers to manage these restored habitats so that they function as intended. For example, while trees are highly desirable in a fox squirrel habitat they are not useful in the shallow wetlands designed for shorebirds and waterfowl. As a result, a lot of effort goes into controlling them as trees like sweet gums are constantly invading the wetlands.

This habitat restoration work has great benefits for wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay. Pickering Creek has become one of the most valuable waterfowl sanctuaries in the Mid-Shore region. Birders from around the state frequent the Center to see ducks like Widgeon, Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintails. The constructed marshy habitats at PCAC are now large enough that when wildfowl or shorebirds are accidentally disturbed they do not leave the property but simply make a short flight to land elsewhere in the wetland sanctuary. Furthermore, water quality in Pickering Creek, the Wye River and the Chesapeake Bay have benefitted from the filtering qualities of the wetlands, grasses and trees.

Last year the Center played host to birders from throughout the Eastern United States when a Virginia's Warbler was spotted darting about the restored habitat. This little

bird enjoyed Pickering for almost three months. It was the first time the bird had ever been spotted in Maryland!

During the Summer of 2013, CWH began designing a new wetland at Pickering

Creek. This freshwater marsh will be the third restored by CWH at the Center. It will be about 15 acres in size nestled alongside the previously restored wetlands. This is a beneficial location as research shows that bigger is better (higher numbers and diversity) when it comes to wetland wildlife habitat and the three wetlands will serve as one large 90-acre marshy sanctuary.

Pickering Creek Audubon Center is a non profit sanctuary privately owned by the Maryland/DC Audubon chapter of National Audubon Society. Since 1982, PCAC has been dedicated to community based conservation of natural resources and is preserved for the purpose of environmental education and outreach on the Eastern Shore. Through on-site and in-school educational programs for over 15,000 children and adults annually, PCAC helps share the outdoor world with future generations, creating in each a sense of stewardship for our natural resources.

Support for the wetland restoration comes from the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a grant from the MD Department of Natural Resources, a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and members of CWH.

Purple Martin Update

by Andi Pupke, Education & Outreach Director

During the summer of 2012 one of the Purple Martin colonies that CWH manages was blown down in a powerful storm—the Derecho on June 29. After losing 55 chicks and probably most of the adults, we were surprised to have any martins at all nesting at this location this spring. Three pairs of adult martins nested this season; fledging 12 chicks from a colony that had been wiped out just the year before. Normally after a colony has suffered a trauma like an owl attack or a house being blown down, the surviving members of the colony will seek another home.

CWH conducts weekly checks on the martin colonies that we manage, ensuring the health and well-being of the birds during the nesting season. It is important to conduct the weekly checks to keep European house sparrows out and to check for parasites and predators.

We do not know if any of this season's nesting martins were returns from last year or new birds altogether... We were just happy to have them!



Wetland Restoration Underway at Canterbury Farm



This wetland restoration at CWH's Canterbury Farm was started in the late Summer. The new six acre wetland will complement the 100 acres of wetlands CWH restored on the property in 2001. These types of wetlands provide wildlife with critical habitat and help improve water quality.

The excavator is digging out a deeper pool area (2-3' in depth) that will retain water longer in the typical dry summer season than the shallow areas. The dump truck is taking the soil over to the edge of the restoration area where the soil will help create the berm (you can see some piles of dirt in the distance).

Canterbury Farm was donated to CWH by Mrs. Martha Ann Healy in 2008.



Wetlands Provide Habitat for Odonates

Wetlands provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Waterfowl are amongst the most widely recognized species that inhabit wetlands. Odonates (Damselflies and Dragonflies) are perhaps the most beautiful and diverse species that thrive when we restore and protect wetland habitat.

Odonates come in a host of colors and sizes. They rely on wetlands and help keep the insect world in balance. The larvae are born and live in the water before they undergo metamorphosis to turn into winged adults. They hawk on the wing; searching for other insects for food. Some species, like Black Saddlebags and Common Green Darners even undertake seasonal migrations.

A survey was conducted at five wetlands restored by CWH in Talbot and Queen Anne's counties. Bob and Joanne Solem, naturalists from Howard County, Maryland conducted the survey in 2000 and found more than 20 different species of Odonates. This included 13 different species and 3 new county records in Queen Anne's County and 20 different species and 9 new county records in Talbot County.

There are many benefits to restoring wetlands. Helping preserve local populations of beautiful dragonflies is just one.



Black Saddlebags (Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick)



CWH at Work on the Banks of the Shenandoah

by Austin Jamison, Blue Ridge Division Coordinator

Ever since Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage started working in Virginia through its Blue Ridge Division, the Shenandoah River watershed has been a main focus of activity.

The Shenandoah River runs south to north through the scenic Shenandoah Valley in the western part of Virginia. It is the principal tributary of the Potomac River, and therefore a major part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Its main stem, along with its North and South forks, is over 300 miles long and drains almost 3000 square miles. The river is a major recreational destination for boaters and fisherman who target its smallmouth bass.

The surrounding valley is underlain with limestone and has long been a significant area for agriculture. Once known as the breadbasket of the confederacy, the area is still home to four of the top five agricultural producing counties in Virginia. Poultry and cattle make up the largest share of agricultural production in the valley.

Unfortunately, a high concentration of agriculture, along with some heavily polluting industrial sites, has also had a negative impact on the river. American Rivers listed the Shenandoah River in its

top-ten list of most endangered rivers in America in 2006. Less than 30% of the river has forested riparian buffers. Fecal coliform is a major pollutant of the river along with mercury and PCBs from industry.

Additionally, the river suffered major fish kills in 2004 and 2005 with 65% of the fish population dying. A strain of bacteria, *Aeromonas salmonicida*, has been identified as playing a role in the die offs, but the exact cause is still unknown. Fish stressed from pollutants and endocrine disruptors may be less capable of fighting off infections from the bacteria. Pesticides such as atrazine have also been correlated with intersex characteristics in fish.

Over the last 5 years, CWH has planted more than 350 acres of native warm-season grass (NWSG) buffers and meadows in the Shenandoah River watershed.

The majority of these acres have been in riparian areas and included livestock exclusion. These riparian buffers reduce nutrient and sediment pollution in water bodies. They also provide excellent wildlife habitat compared to the thick, sod-like fescue that was formerly in place. Many of these buffers also involved a tree planting in

order to create a forested buffer in the future. Fescue has been shown to both compete with tree seedlings for nutrients and water and also exude allelopathic chemicals that inhibit tree growth. Eradicating the fescue and replacing it with NWSG like big bluestem and indiangrass and wildflowers such as partridge pea and black-eyed Susan provides both quality wildlife habitat and good growing conditions for tree seedlings.

CWH has also had the opportunity to plant demonstration wildflower and pollinator meadows at two institutions of higher learning in the watershed—James Madison University in Harrisonburg and Mary Baldwin College in Staunton. These

meadows are designed to attract beneficial pollinators and songbirds like goldfinches. They also provide educational opportunities for students and an example for local residents looking for ways to replace their lawns with more environmentally-friendly landscaping.



Wildflower meadow planted by CWH's Blue Ridge Division

CWH Receives Anonymous Challenge Grant



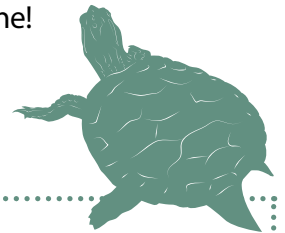
This Fall CWH is working hard to meet a generous \$30,000 challenge grant. The grant is an excellent way for CWH to get new donors and for existing donors to increase their support. Ultimately, it will provide critical funds to help CWH restore, manage and protect wildlife habitat.

For each dollar CWH receives from a new donor (someone who has not donated to CWH in 2012 or 2013) from now until the end of the year, CWH will receive an additional dollar from the challenge grant.

Additionally, our existing donors can help us reach this challenge by donating an amount above their 2012 donation. If you are not certain of your level of gift giving last year, just call the office and we will be happy to provide that information to you.

This is a great way to double your impact ...twice! CWH's work is great for wildlife and is vital to the Chesapeake Bay. And your qualifying gift will be doubled by our generous donor. Please fill out the membership form below and return it with your tax deductible donation today. Or, visit our website to donate on-line!

We are extremely grateful for the generous donor who has made this challenge grant possible. **With your help, it will help CWH close out 2013 strong!**



Donate Stock and Receive a Charitable Deduction

Donating appreciated stock is an excellent way to support CWH, the Chesapeake Bay and our wildlife. This type of donation is very simple and allows you to take advantage of tax laws to maximize your gift to CWH and reduce your taxes.

For example, Mrs. Jones purchased stock for \$5,000 several years ago. Today, this stock is worth \$10,000. She decides to donate the stock to Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage and receives a charitable deduction for the full, fair-market value of the stock (\$10,000). In the 30% tax bracket, the deduction saves her \$3,000 in income tax. Additionally, by donating the appreciated stock, she avoids paying capital gains tax of \$750 (15% of the \$5,000 gain). The actual cost of her gift is reduced to \$6,000 (\$10,000 less the \$3,000 tax deduction and less the \$1,000 capital gains avoidance).

Please call our office and talk with Chris Pupke to learn more about this easy method to support CWH!

Yes! I would like to join with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage to help build and preserve wildlife habitat.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Individual Habitat Guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Habitat Benefactor |
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Ask Andi:

Questions and answers about wildlife by Andi Pupke, Education and Outreach Director

Q: *We have a number of bats around our home and they are becoming a nuisance with guano collecting on the deck. They are hanging by the door. We do not want to harm the bats, but is there a way to discourage them?*

A: If the bats are not roosting in your home during the day, you should try to welcome them. Putting up a bat house nearby without excluding them from a building will most likely not work. If they are already roosting in the woods near your home, then they will not leave a good home in a tree for a bat house. Remember that local populations can be greatly affected by disturbing one colony.

Also, try to remember that the “nuisance” you have is a vital part of the ecosystem. Many people try to attract bats every year so that they will consume insects that are pests. In agricultural settings like the Eastern Shore, farmers try to attract bats

because they consume night flying insects, like the cutworm moth, that can do a great deal of damage to corn crops each year. Bats are safer and cheaper than insecticides.

Generally bats are not a threat to people. Very few diseases can be passed on to people from bats. In the case of rabies, bats can only pass the virus on when they become sick. The most common way people are bitten by bats is when they pick them up off the ground with bare hands. Like any wild animal, any bat whether sick or healthy will bite in self defense, if handled. Reports of rabies in bats are uncommon. Use common sense and do not pick up a bat.

Histoplasmosis is often associated with bats; however, the common lung infection is caused by a fungus (*Histoplasma capsulatum*) that naturally occurs in soil. Bird droppings and bat guano enhance the development of this fungus in the soil. When a person breathes in the spores of the fungus they may contract histoplasmosis.

Many folks who like to garden embrace bats for insect control and their guano is highly prized as a great soil amendment. So it may be worth sweeping the guano into the flowerbeds and enjoying the bats company and fewer biting insects while on your deck.