Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
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Easy on the Fall Mowing

Ned Gerber

"I love Bobwhite Quail but can't stand looking at their habitat," was a comment I was surprised to hear several years back when chatting with a landowner about CREP buffers. While this gentleman understood that these declining birds needed grassy, weedy and brushy areas in the landscape to carry out their life cycle, the "neat and clean" mentality had a strong grip on him. No wonder as the chemical and equipment industries make a lot of money preaching "landscape neatness" to sell their wide array of products.

Many wildlife species other than quail also depend on early successional habitats that involve tall grass, "weeds" (often wildflowers), and "brush" (shrubs or tree seedlings). It is particularly unfortunate at this time of year when the monarch butterflies are migrating through to see the extensive overmowing of CREP buffers which wipes out all the tickseed sunflowers (bidens species), eupatorium, ironweed, milkweeds, and goldenrods that are so important to many species of insect pollinators. Mowing (or burning) a third to one half of the buffer per year would be sufficient to keep it in herbaceous cover and free from trees. However, shortly after the August 15th end of nesting date too many landowners participate in what we mockingly call the "conservation lawn program" in the wildlife community. Huge acreages of herbaceous buffers are made worthless for migrating and wintering wildlife as they are mown down to a lawn-like height.

The "overmowing" problem has been exacerbated by some government farm agencies (run by boards of farmers who don't like CREP anyway) who send letters out threatening landowners with immediate CREP contract termination and fines if they don't control ALL "weeds." Noxious weeds like thistle and johnsongrass should be controlled but scaring well-intentioned landowners into needless mowing of quality wildlife habitat is a ridiculous waste of landowner resources and wildlife. We have a wide array of tools available today to control vegetation when necessary so there is no need to fear that the landscape will somehow get "out of control" if it is not mown every year.

Some folks simply have trouble with minimizing management which can result in such fantastic habitat for a wide diversity of species. So before you mow it all down, call CWH and let us show you what is out there and how you can sustain it with a minimum of effort while you help wildlife through fall and winter. The bright yellow tickseed sunflower which tends to grow in moist spots typically blooms in September /October in showy stands which attract many insect including monarchs fueling up for the long trip south. What looks like a "weed" in July may turn out to be a beautiful wildflower in late August through October teeming with native bees and butterflies. By thinking carefully before mowing, we can save money and enjoy nature's wildflower show while providing habitat for native wildlife.

Attention! All Osprey Platform Owners

Since most of the ospreys have left our region for the winter so it's a good time to clear their nesting platforms. During his travels around the area this summer, Mike Rajacich, CWH's Senior Wildlife Technician, noticed many platforms with nests that had vegetation growing in them. For the well-being of the ospreys returning in the spring, it is best to have the whole nest removed from the platform every couple of years. If you are not able to do this yourself, CWH can clear the platform for you at a nominal charge. Please contact Sandy at 410-822-5100.

CHESAPEAKE WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Habitat works

The newsletter about building habitat for wildlife
Fall 2003

The 2003 nesting season was another successful one for Wood Ducks using a CWH Wood Duck Nesting Box. In the last fifteen years, CWH has installed over 8,100 nesting boxes. Based on our research, we estimate that over 25,000 baby Wood Ducks emerged from our boxes this Spring.

Habitat Works is published by Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to creating, restoring 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.

Why a Wetland?

Chris Pupke

Sometimes we can spend too much time worrying about how instead of why. For example, our staff biologists restore hundreds of acres of habitat for wildlife every year but spend all of their time worrying about the details of how to get the habitat on the ground.

Recently, CWH staff has been creating opportunities to focus on the wildlife usage of our habitat restoration sites (See Getting Results article, page 6). Combined with anecdotal information from landowners, we are learning how quickly wildlife respond to utilize restored habitat. For example, one of our landowner partners on the Miles River found flocks of Northern Pintail in the wetland CWH restored on his farm. He noted that in thirty years he had never seen Pintail on the farm before. Of course, the water quality of the Miles River has been in serious decline for over thirty years and human disturbance has increased as well. The lack of disturbance to our non-tidal wetlands, which are usually located in relatively remote spots, is one of the top reasons wildlife find them so appealing.

In the last few years the biologists at CWH have seen American Coots (see Wildlife Profile, page 5) in the larger restored wetlands that we have designed and constructed. It has been suspected that Coots are rare breeders on the lower Eastern Shore and unknown nesters on the mid-shore. Previous to our observations, only one confirmed nesting pair has been documented since 1977 in Maryland. Our biologists have seen adult Coots throughout the breeding season in wetlands we have restored and have even encountered a few broods of young Coots. We were thrilled to observe the Coots' behavior during our wetland surveys.

Observations of a recently restored wetland have found over a dozen species of shorebirds including Semipalmated Plovers, Western Sandpipers and White-rumped Sandpipers.

It's not just birds that we are pleased to encounter in our wetland restoration sites. A few years ago researchers found over a dozen species of dragonflies that had never been documented in Talbot or Queen Anne's counties. We have also partnered with the University of Kansas to determine the benefits our wetlands provide to migrating Monarch butterflies.

Since 1980, CWH has restored over 800 acres of wetlands. Our knowledge of the benefits these sites provide for wildlife increases every season. And every season our commitment to restoring habitat for wildlife strengthens. We know that these wetlands provide habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife and look forward to demonstrating just how diverse these wildlife benefits are.

And, it's not just wildlife! Many years ago, researchers at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center found that within five years of restoration a CWH wetland can provide favorable habitat for over 100 species of plants.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

A few weeks after restoration this Talbot County wetland is already filling with water. The following spring plant life will begin to sprout providing valuable food and cover for a variety of wetland wildlife.

Finally, in addition to the benefits for wildlife and plant diversity, our wetlands also improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. They filter pollutants from surface water before it enters the Bay. In partnership with CWH, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center has documented that our restored wetlands filter up to 70% of the water pollutants that would otherwise reach the Bay. So we know that all the wildlife in the Bay itself also benefits from our staff's hard labor on land—labor that this year will result in another 100 acres of restored wetlands!

CWH for the Future

CWH's Endowment Fund was established to ensure that we have the financial foundation to maintain our programs that restore and protect habitat for wildlife. The fund was established several years ago with generous donations from several of our members. Despite the weak economy and stock market declines of recent years, CWH's Endowment Fund continues to grow. This summer two donations, totaling $50,000, were made to support the fund. We would like to thank these generous donors for their commitment to CWH and the wildlife we serve. If you would like to support CWH's Endowment Fund, please contact Chris Pupke.

From Soybeans to Buttermilk

Part of the GMO Trail: Or in the Future Will Our Butterbeans Come with their Own Butter?

GMOs, or genetically modified organisms, have been around since the dawn of agriculture, some 10,000 years ago. The apple we see in the store today is, curiously, a close genetic relative of the small, often bitter, golf ball-sized "pome" found wild in central Asia. The confined animal feedlot operation porker is, again, a close relative, but a far-off look-alike, of the wild tusker found in Europe. Both of these organisms, the apple and the hog, have been bred to date by cross-breeding over many years. With the advent of GMO technology, or by a more precise term, transgenic organisms (TGOs), genetic material can be transferred from one animal or plant to another. In fact, genes can now be transferred from animals to plants, a process that would never happen in nature.

Fifteen or more years ago the list of agrochemicals approved for use in no-till full-season soybeans, a time when TGO plants and animals were just a dream in some lab technician's "crucible," was diverse. It included about a dozen herbicides, about half of which were of the residual type. This means that when applied to the soil at planting time, they provide season-long weed control; as opposed to a non-residual herbicide, which may kill the plant upon contact or be translocated throughout the plant, especially the roots. Residual herbicides are of greater concern because they stay active in the environment (and unfortunately the groundwater) for a significant period of time relative to most non-residuals. Today, with "Round-up Ready" technology a farmer can grow a crop of soybeans with just one non-residual herbicide, glyphosate. More than 90% of the soybeans grown on the Eastern Shore of Maryland are now Round-up Ready and this produces a quandary.

The use of Round-up Ready soybeans has, on one hand, reduced or eliminated the use of more toxic residual herbicides. However, its prevalence has produced agronomic problems in the field and a further controversial dependence of farmers upon corporate agribusiness.

Several of the older residual herbicides, such as alachlor, chlorimuron and metholachlor, have an oral LD50 (the Lethal Dose that kills 50% of the test animals at the stated dose) of half that of glyphosate. (Remember that the lower the value the more toxic the product). These residual materials do not degrade rapidly in the soil, like glyphosate, and instead often end up in streams and ponds, infiltrating the groundwater and eventually into our drinking water. Also, some of these herbicides (oryzalin and linuron) are very toxic to fish. Glyphosate is a non-residual herbicide that is effective on annual and perennial weeds because it is translocated to the roots. It has an oral and dermal LD50 of >5,000 mg/kg and no measurable effects on fish, thus its use over the residual materials is deemed by us at CWH to be vastly preferable.

TGO technology involves gene-splicing, the actual removal of a gene from one organism and into another. Round-up Ready technology involves the insertion of the glyphosate resistant gene into the genetic makeup of several agricultural crops. One serious problem though, as with antibiotics in humans, has been its overuse. In a short period of time, like antibiotic resistant bacteria, glyphosate resistant weeds (often termed "superweeds") have emerged. Due to its ease of use and its relative safety, glyphosate (Round-up Ready) technology has been eagerly embraced by farmers. Not just whole fields have been planted to Round-up Ready soybeans but whole farms in whole regions of the country.

Bt-resistant corn (another TGO product which controls corn earworm and corn borer) is grown on farms but safety buffer zones are recommended. A buffer zone for Bt corn was implemented whereby no more than 3/4 of a field can be planted to a Bt variety without a conventional variety being planted nearby. This measure is intended to reduce the possibility of insect resistance. Unfortunately, the use of safety buffers is self-regulated and there is no enforcement. The buffers are not commonly installed and the emergence of Bt-resistant insects is a clear possibility. This prospect has the organic community in a furor, since certain strains of Bt are their only means of controlling certain lepidopterous pests.

Consider the following:

1) growth promoting genes have been implanted into pen-raised salmon with the concerns that if they escape then this gene will adversely impact wild salmon stocks;
2) the gene for cold temperature tolerance from a flounder has been inserted into strawberries;
3) rice has been implanted with a gene for beta-carotene, which is converted to vitamin A to prevent blindness in children in less developed countries; and
4) genetically engineered bacteria are grown to produce a "natural" insecticide used by organic farmers.

Ninety-five percent of modern dairy farms use some type of artificial hormone. These include milk let-down hormones, growth-promoting hormones, vaccine or shock reaction hormones, and steroidal anti-inflammatory hormones. One of these is a genetically engineered hormone called rBST (recombinant bovine somatotropin), used to increase milk production. However, many are concerned about the human health and market effects of this hormone.

We should probably realize that some of this technology is "good," some is questionable and some needs further study. For instance, with our global population at over 6 billion, should TGO grains be banned from import to countries suffering from famine for political reasons? Should not all food products be appropriately labeled as to their TGO content? It is certainly easier, is it not, to judge, criticize and argue on such issues if one is not wondering where the next meal is coming from?

In the future there may not be enough land to grow our food with conventional crops. We may not have the luxury, as in some parts of the world, of having organic crops to feed ourselves. In this respect, I have to agree with Dennis Avery, Director of the Center for Global Food Issues, that without these and other agricultural technologies there would be a lot less wildlife habitat to go around. However, wildlife conservation also depends on stable political situations, low unemployment and zero or negative population growth. If there are to be new agricultural products they need to be brought into the marketplace and implemented with respect to an evermore educated public. Greater energy should be brought to bear to prepare us, as consumers, about the issues beforehand.

Approximately 70% of antibiotics used in the U.S. are fed to livestock for non-therapeutic purposes (i.e., to promote growth rather than to treat an infection), and it is now commonly accepted that this practice is a major contributor to evolving drug resistance of bacteria that cause disease in humans, perhaps second only to overuse of antibiotics to treat human diseases.

One interesting theory on the sudden prevalence of Lyme Disease holds that the spirochete was initially not able to infect humans. However, when the spirochete encountered livestock antibiotics, it changed in order to survive and became able to cause disease in humans. This theory would account for the fact that the disease was unknown in people and their pets until the 1980's—after the heavy use of antibiotics in livestock was underway.

Supporting CWH While You Shop

The holidays are just around the corner! Don't forget, if you are shopping online, there is a great way to support CWH and it doesn't cost you any extra time or money.

All you have to do is start your online shopping at GreaterGood.com (www.greatergood.com or www.igive.com) and buy the gifts and things you need from brand name retailers—including L.L. Bean, Lands' End, 1-800-FLOWERS.com, Dell, OfficeMax.com and hundreds of others. At no extra cost to you, up to 15% of every purchase you make can automatically go to Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage.

If you are not already shopping on-line, why not? Just think…if everyone shopping online remembered to shop only through one of these sites, all kinds of non-profit organizations could benefit!

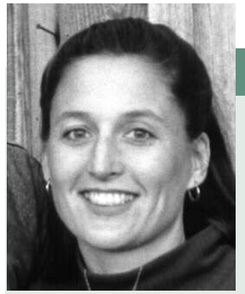
It's in the Mail!

Keep your eyes open for the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage Annual Appeal coming soon to a mailbox near you! Our Annual Appeal is one of the two times a year we seek your support.

Donations from our valued members help to support a wide range of projects designed to protect our Bay's natural heritage. The bulk of our revenues, derived from private foundations, government grants and project income fees are usually restricted to a specific project for which they were requested. Unrestricted contributions from our members for the Annual Appeal and Membership Drives are crucial to CWH so we can continue to pay rent, utilities and staff salaries.

Your support is critical to helping us continue with our mission to create and restore wildlife habitat.

Mark your calendars for Waterfowl Festival weekend, November 14-16, 2003. Feel free to stop by our booth. Volunteers are still needed to sit at the CWH booth. Please call Andi at 410-822-5100 if you are interested in helping us out!



Ask Andi

Questions & Answers about wildlife

By Andi Pupke

Q: I live in a small town and would like to attract bluebirds, what can I do?

A: The problem with trying to attract bluebirds to your home in any size town or development is House Sparrows. House Sparrows (aka English Sparrows) are non-native birds which are very aggressive. They will relentlessly work to destroy other birds' nests, eggs, and young and even other adult birds for no apparent reason other than to take over the bird world. I have found many bluebird boxes with adult bluebirds in them that have been killed by House Sparrows.

House Sparrows are attracted to towns and other urban areas because of the "easy living" that people and our buildings afford them. So, if you live in town, putting bluebird boxes up will most likely only invite House Sparrows to live in them. Bluebirds rarely live in towns or other urban places as they experience fierce competition from House Sparrows. Unless you can monitor your bird boxes daily, keep any and all House Sparrows from nesting in it, and keep bluebirds safe from the House Sparrows, it is best not to install them. Many well-intentioned people hoping to attract native cavity-nesting birds may actually be doing greater harm by not monitoring their boxes regularly, allowing House Sparrows to proliferate at tremendous rates.

There are other things you can do to benefit native birds in your yard when you live in town. For example, planting native fruit producing shrubs and trees will provide food and planting native evergreens will provide cover for nesting and protection from thermal stress.

CWH Top 10 Native Planting Ideas for Wildlife and Fall Color

TREES & SHRUBS

Scarlet Oak, *Quercus coccinea*
A large tree named for its autumnal leaf coloration.

Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*
Known as a nuisance tree for its spiny seed heads and invasive nature, it has very attractive fall colors of deep reds, yellows and purple.

Blackgum, *Nyssa sylvatica*
Normally the first tree to show bright red color in the fall.

Sassafras, *Sassafras albidum*
A small tree with blue fruit that has bright yellow and red fall foliage.

Staghorn Sumac, *Rhus typhina*
A tall shrub with brilliant red foliage and clusters of hairy red fruit that persist through out the winter.

Poison Ivy, *Rhus radicans*
A slender shrub or trailing vine that may be best known for causing a painful skin rash. Despite it's itchy flaws, the fruit is eaten by many types of birds and mammals and the leaves turn brilliant colors in the fall.

Maple-leaved Viburnum, *Viburnum acerifolium*
A shrub with leaves shaped like a Red Maple, the fruit is eaten by many song and game birds as well as small mammals. In the fall the leaves normally turn subtle colors of peach, pink & yellow.

FLOWERS

Goldenrod, *Solidago spp.*
A normally bright yellow composite flower that blooms early to late fall depending on species.

Tickseed Sunflower, *Bidens spp.*
Often found in the wet soils of ditches and fields this bright yellow flower is very attractive to migrating monarchs.

Joe-pye Weed, *Eupatorium dubium*
A very tall bold purple to pink flower that blooms in early fall and attracts many butterflies.

CWH Receives Grants from Waterfowl Festival

The Waterfowl Festival made generous grants to support CWH's wetland restoration projects ($15,000) and our Wood Duck Nesting Box Program ($5,000). In addition, the Waterfowl Festival and CWH renewed their partnership on the Goose Sanctuary Program with a grant of $18,000. The grants come from funds from the annual Waterfowl Festival weekend event held in Easton. This year's Waterfowl Festival will be held on November 14, 15 and 16.

CWH President Larry Albright receives a check from Waterfowl Festival Board Member, Vance Strausburg.

Wildlife Profile - American Coot

(That ol' Coot!)

Andi Pupke

Although the American Coot *(Fulica americana)* is often mistaken for a duck, it is actually a member of the rail family. They have lobed feet (not webbed like true waterfowl) that allow them to walk across soft mud and thick mats of floating vegetation. Coots are highly animated birds, being very conspicuous, noisy and aggressively territorial. To signal their social intentions they vary body posture, adjust positioning of their white undertail coverts (feathers), and perform many other displays to communicate among themselves. While fighting, a coot usually sits back on the water and grabs its opponent with one long-clawed foot attempting to slap the contender with the free one and jab it with its bill. Coots will react with similar displays for other intruders and even predatory mammals. They do not, however, perform distraction displays like other rails.

American Coots are among the least graceful of the marsh birds. Commonly called "splatterers," they scramble across the surface of the water with wings flapping not only to confront intruders but also to become airborne.

Even though American Coots can be conspicuous some of the time, they can be among one of the more secretive marsh dwellers, and are often overlooked in their dense nesting habitat. They will dive to avoid being spotted, even with a young chick hanging on to their back. American Coots are listed as an uncommon breeder on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. This may be due to their secretiveness during nesting season. Coots select nesting habitat that includes ponds in brackish marshes that contain plentiful growth of aquatic plants such as Wildcelery, Red-head pondweed, and Sago pondweed. In upland situations, American Coots prefer wetlands with cattail, bulrush, burreed, and *Phragmites*, but they will use a variety of vegetation for nesting. They will build up to nine bulky, floating nesting structures but only lay eggs in one of the nests and use the others for brooding, displaying or copulating. They can lay 4-17 eggs, but the average clutch is 9-11. One egg is laid per day and incubation, which lasts 21 or 22 days, begins with the laying of the first egg. Both sexes participate in incubation, but it is primarily performed by the female.

The heads of American Coot chicks have brilliant orange tufts of down and a patch of bright scarlet. When they beg for food they flaunt this brilliant head gear, nodding frantically in front of their parents. Those with the brightest heads are fed first and are likely to be the strongest, most vigorous of the brood and therefore the ones most likely to survive. Almost a third of the chicks that hatch each year die from starvation. However, in many bird species 50-60% of chicks do not make it to fledging and the species continue to thrive.

CWH is pleased that our larger wetlands are able to support nesting by species usually not found on the mid-shore. We believe in biological indicators and feel that nesting coots are simply one more sign that our constructed wetlands are serving the wildlife resource as intended.

Visit our website at: www.cheswildlife.org

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Getting Results

Surveying CWH Meadows for Bird Usage

In the last few years CWH has planted over two thousand acres of warm season grass (WSG) meadows on farms in Maryland under the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Our empirical observations have indicated that where there are very dense stands of warm season grasses, wildlife usage is restricted to the margins. (Residual fertilizers from agricultural operations have a significant impact on warm season grass helping it to grow dense and too thick.) However, these "too thick" stands, without maintenance, do eventually die-out. (In the fall these grasses can grow so tall, thick and rank that after heavy rains or winds they matte down and literally kill themselves underneath.) Additionally, our observations indicate that where there are reduced stands and greater diversity from natural plant colonization (i.e. weeds) there is greater wildlife use. Initially the required programatic seeding rates for these meadows were far too high due to lack of familiarity with the grasses as well as concerns about erosion control and water quality. We feel that stand density can be reduced and diversity increased to meet both the wildlife and water quality aspects of the program. Furthermore, the literature is scant on research information on wildlife usage in these newly established meadows.

Since January of this year CWH has been conducting bird surveys in different warm and cool season grass meadows in the mid-shore region. These meadows are of different sizes and composition. Some are distinct meadows and others are buffers adjacent to riparian woodland or forest. We are endeavoring to determine bird use of these sites throughout the year and the data collected will help us manage the meadows to optimize wildlife use.

We are attempting to estimate the population size and trends for various species of birds. Their abundance, diversity and frequency (demographics) will be used to hopefully determine their specific habitat requirements. Over the winter we began walking transects in the study sites. Transects are spaced 50-100 feet apart depending on the size of the site and are surveyed once a week. All birds heard or seen are entered accordingly on specific data sheets along with their behavior at the time of observation. At the beginning of May, we modified data collection in some locations and substituted point counts that are surveyed every other week. Point counts involve an observer standing in one spot and recording all the birds seen or heard at a fixed distance. This survey method causes less of a disturbance to wildlife in the meadows during nesting season as well as minimizes tick infestations to data collectors! The details of each point count or transect are recorded onto special data sheets, including information about the date, time and weather. The bird species are recorded in the order that they are observed, the quarter in which they are observed, the number of individuals and their behavior. Census time starts at sunrise and continues for 3-4 hours which is the time of day when most species are actively calling or moving about.

Bobolink

CWH is also surveying similar habitats nearby which do not include warm season grass meadows or cool season grass meadows. These are know as control sites and will give some good comparative information and validity to the study. We will be comparing our data from the warm and cool season grass meadow areas to traditionally farmed fields where there is no grass buffer.

Some highlights that have been observed using the WSG meadows include seeing Field Sparrows feeding their young and Grasshopper Sparrows defending their territory. Grasshopper Sparrows are almost ubiquitous wherever there is an undisturbed meadow. They make their presence known by their characteristic insect-like rasping song. As soon as you enter a field during breeding season, if they are there, they will start calling, as if to say "this is my home, what are you doing here?" The abundance of Bobwhite Quail has been most gratifying, confirming that we can still have these wonderful birds in our landscape if we are willing to manage for them. Bobwhite Quail have undergone a severe decline in Maryland and most other areas in their range due to loss of habitat.

Eastern Kingbirds have been observed feeding their fledglings in one location and during mid-August flocks of Purple Martins were congregating near some meadows long after they had left their nesting locations. Yellow-breasted Chats, though seldom seen, are often heard singing their throaty, mirthful song. Song Sparrows have been found nesting and Savannah Sparrows were common on passage earlier in the spring. Small flocks of Bobolinks were observed earlier, our attention drawn to their distinctive bubbling song, but sadly, none stayed to breed.

An abundance of dragonflies and damselflies have also been seen using the meadows. From the large pondhawks to the graceful skimmers, many different dragonflies were found hunting insects near the seed heads of the WSG during the day and roosting in the thick grass clumps at night or during inclement weather.

Once the first year of our surveys are complete we can start thinking about which bird species utilize various meadows. If several years worth of data confirms, for example, that we NEVER find Grasshopper Sparrows in buffer strips unless they are at least 200 feet wide, then we can plan and manage accordingly. This might mean that we intensify efforts to encourage bobwhite nesting and brood rearing in the narrower strips because we know we will not harm Grasshopper Sparrow use of these areas. Once we feel more confident about various bird species' use of varying size and type of meadow, we can manage for the birds likely to occur there.

Protecting Wildlife Habitat

Residents throughout the Chesapeake region have seen the persistent loss of wildlife habitat to development. This loss includes the draining of wetlands and clearcutting of woodlands containing endangered species like the Delmarva Fox Squirrel. It affects our wildlife populations and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Consider a recent study by the U.S. Forest Service that showed that over 100 acres of forests are lost everyday in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Given current land management philosophy and government budgetary restraints, it is difficult just to keep pace with these losses. At CWH, we are not satisfied to simply tread water—we want to make significant progress. With this in mind, we have, over the last five years, made a determined effort to preserve existing wildlife habitat in addition to restoring it.

The most effective method of protecting wildlife habitat is for a conservation organization, like CWH, to own it. Unfortunately, purchasing property is very costly. Occasionally, a generous landowner is willing to donate their property to a conservation organization. However, these opportunities are very rare.

Fortunately, there is another, less costly, method to protect wildlife habitat—the Conservation Easement. A conservation easement is a legal document that prohibits certain activities on a property, while permitting a landowner to retain all other rights and privileges of owning the property.

When drafted properly, conservation easements should legally protect the property in perpetuity. And when donated to a qualified land trust, easements can provide significant tax breaks for federal and state income taxes, estate taxes and local property taxes.

Most conservation easements focus solely on limiting development of the property. These types of easements help preserve open space, viewsheds, and farmland. These easements help ensure that sprawl development does not overwhelm family farms. However, sometimes these easements do not expressly protect existing wildlife habitat.

CWH staff works with landowners to ensure their property will always remain a haven for wildlife. By working closely with our biologists and the landowner, CWH's Landowner Services Program crafts a conservation easement that ensures a forest remains a forest, a grassland remains a grassland and a wetland will never be drained or filled.

We are very grateful for the wonderful commitment our landowner partners have made to ensure wildlife will always find homes around the Chesapeake region.

Have a used car?

Donate it to CWH. For more information visit www.cheswildlife.org.

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

I am enclosing $ _____ as my tax deductible contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

☐ Please send me information on the Planned Giving Program.

Please make your check payable to Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, or charge to:

☐ Visa ☐ M/C Account # _____

Signature _____ Amount $ _____ Expiration Date _____

☐ $30 Individual Habitat Guardian
☐ $50 Family Habitat Guardian
☐ $100 Habitat Protector
☐ $250 Habitat Sponsor
☐ $500 Habitat Benefactor
☐ $1,000 Habitat Conservator
☐ $2,500 Habitat Steward
☐ Other _____

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CWH is a private nonprofit organization designated 501(c)(3) by the IRS. A financial statement is available upon request.

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