Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
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Giving at the Office Makes Supporting CWH Easy

Entering its 13th year, the Environmental Fund for Maryland (EFM) supports Maryland's leading environmental organizations through workplace giving and is dedicated to the preservation and protection of Maryland's natural heritage. Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage is proud to be a founding member of this alliance of twenty-one non-profit organizations based in Maryland. Member organizations specialize in environmental issues such as habitat restoration, land preservation, environmental education, advocacy or environmental justice.

Through EFM, CWH is able to participate in State, Federal and many local government payroll contribution campaigns. The goal of EFM is to provide an easy way for people to get involved in preserving our natural heritage. Supporting a charity through payroll deduction is one of the most efficient ways to support the organizations you care about—for you and for the charities.

Payroll contributions allow you to choose how much you want to give and then let you do so in small increments via your workplace's payroll system throughout the year, so you don't have to think about it! You can make a tax-deductible contribution to all of EFMs members with one general gift to the Environmental Fund for Maryland, or you may designate your gift to one or more member organizations of your choice, or better yet, Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage.

For more information on workplace giving visit www.efm.org, or call Shannon at 410-752-2644.

Make a donation to CWH at work

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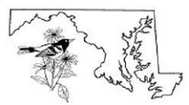


CHESAPEAKE WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Habitat works

The newsletter about building habitat for wildlife
Summer 2005

25 Years and Counting!

Andi Pupke & Chris Pupke

In 1980, a concerned group of waterfowl hunters gathered to discuss the decline in the population of waterfowl in the Chesapeake Bay. The group quickly decided that the loss of waterfowl habitat had to be addressed; however, there was no group restoring wildlife habitat in the region. What could be done? The answer was obvious: a new organization was needed to restore habitat for wildlife -and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage was born.

Our fledgling organization was aided by the Waterfowl Festival in the early years. CWH started out with a volunteer board but did not have any staff members for three years. Without the commitment of those board members and the support of the Waterfowl Festival at the beginning, CWH would have never gotten off the ground enough to make it 25 years.

In 1983, the organization hired its first employee and twenty-two years later, Ned Gerber remains at CWH, working every day with landowners to help them restore habitat for wildlife. One year later, CWH hired Mike Rajacich who, after twenty-one years, continues to manage CWH's nesting structure program.

By 1985 it became clear that focusing solely on waterfowl was not enough. Addressing the entire ecosystem was essential to improve the overall wildlife situation in the Bay region. CWH's charge was expanded to include professional wildlife management for game and non-game species. Robin Haggie was added to the staff to assist in wildlife programs and direct the sustainable agriculture program. Twenty years later, Robin is still imploring farmers to utilize farming

(continues on page 2)

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.

(continued from page 1)

techniques that reduce pollutants without reducing their bottom line.

When the first 5 years were a success, CWH was able to become independent from the Waterfowl Festival. Incorporating in 1986, CWH matured into its own private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Over the years, we have celebrated some remarkable achievements. Our work has benefited wildlife both in and out of the Chesapeake Bay. Through it all, a core staff that is dedicated to the wildlife resource has partnered with landowners throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

CWH's Chesapeake Care Program has restored habitat to benefit a wide variety of wildlife including Least Sandpipers, Northern Pintails, Grasshopper Sparrows, Scarlet Tanagers, Southern Leopard Frogs, Eastern Pondhawks, Monarch Butterflies and Delmarva fox squirrels. Over the last 25 years, we have restored over 1,450 acres of wetlands, planted over 800 acres of trees, and created over 2,700 acres of warm season grass meadows.

Our Nesting Structure Program has provided nesting locations for a wide diversity of wildlife. Our Wood Duck Nesting Box Program has installed 8,900 boxes which produce approximately 25,000 young Wood Ducks each year. Many people are also familiar with nesting structures for Osprey, Bluebirds and Purple Martins. Less well known are efforts for wildlife including flying squirrels, Prothonotary warblers, Great-crested flycatchers and even bats.

CWH's Sustainable Agriculture Program works with farmers and landowners to reduce the amount of pesticides and nutrients used in farming operations, while maintaining farm profitability. Our staff advises farmers and landowners to use agricultural methods such as no-till planting, band spraying and cover crops that use 2/3 less pesticides and nutrients than traditional intensive agriculture methods. These methods benefit wildlife and the waters of the Bay by preventing pollution without undermining the local agricultural based economy. We provide invaluable advice for farmers on over 2000 acres of land.

In 1995, CWH expanded its program offerings by developing the Education and Backyard Habitat Program. Under the direction of Andi Pupke for the last 10 years, this program helps small lot owners create havens for wildlife in their backyards and educates area residents about butterflies, bats, bluebirds and more.

Responding to the need to permanently protect wildlife habitat, CWH established our Landowner Services Program in 1997. This program works with landowners to protect existing and restored habitat on their property. Since 1997, we have protected 2,598 acres of wildlife habitat on thirteen different properties. In 2005, we are partnering with the Biophilia Foundation to restore and protect 659 acres of wildlife habitat on two farms in Queen Anne's and Dorchester counties.

LEE KARNEY

Pied-Billed Grebe

Through the years, CWH staff has demonstrated the positive impact our work has had on the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. For example in 1998, CWH in partnership with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, found that up to 75% of the pollutants that enter our restored wetlands are filtered by those wetlands. Research conducted in partnership with Conectiv Power Delivery showed that by controlling the invasive *Phragmites*, a wetland can be converted from a monoculture to a vibrant flora ecosystem of over 60 different species. Today, we are researching the benefits that warm season grass meadows have to grassland birds. Initial results indicate a fourteen fold increase of targeted species in warm season grass meadows over cool season grass meadows.

After starting small, CWH now owns 972 acres of land in Queen Anne's and Talbot counties. In 1997, CWH received a grant from the North American Wetland Conservation Act that enabled us to partner with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy to purchase the 284 acre Bennett Point Farm on the Wye River. In the 100 acres of wetlands we restored on this farm, were the first confirmed breeding pairs of Pied-billed Grebes and American Coot occurring in Queen Anne's County. The property hosts spectacular wintering and migratory populations of many species of puddle ducks as well as Bobwhite Quail and other birds.

Perhaps the greatest highlight of the first 25 years came in the year 2000 when the White and Bennett families donated their farm on Kent Island to CWH. Barnstable Hill Farm consists of 540 acres of woodlands and wetlands with over five miles of waterfront on Kirwan Creek and Prospect Bay. It is also the location of one our very first wetland restoration projects.

We are forever grateful to the White and Bennett families for this generous donation and for their incredible commitment to our wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay. The farm is now among the largest waterfront parcels managed specifically for wildlife in the mid-shore region. It serves as a demonstration site for perspective clients as to what our projects look like and the multitude of species they support.

As CWH neared its 25 year anniversary, the hard work of its dedicated staff and board was recognized by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources which named CWH as the Conservation Organization of the year.

As he looks back, CWH director and wildlife habitat ecologist, Ned Gerber, marvels at the success CWH has experienced, "When we started out, there were no financial incentives for landowners to manage for wildlife. Now, thanks to the federal government, we have CRP which allows us to build habitat on private lands for a diversity of wild species. We are working on multi-million dollar projects that are restoring and preserving hundreds of acres at a time!"

Imagine what we'll be up to over the next twenty-five years!

Wildlife profile: Yellow-breasted Chat

Andi Pupke

The Yellow-breasted Chat's scientific name *Icteria virens* describes this bird's appearance. The genus name *Icteria*, is derived from the Greek word for jaundice or yellowness, and the species name *virens*, is Latin for "becoming green." Adult chats have a bright yellow throat and breast, olive green back, white eye rings and white whisker stripes. The bill is stout, large curved and usually solid black. The lores (the area between the bill and the eye) are black in males and gray in females, otherwise, the sexes are similar. The chat is 7 inches long with a wingspan of 9.5 inches. It ranges from Southern Canada to Northern Florida. The species winters from southern Texas and central Mexico south to Western Panama.

Yellow-breasted Chats are the largest warblers found in Maryland but they do not behave or sound very much like a warbler. Its behavior and large size including a stout bill and long tail make it seem more like a Mockingbird than a wood warbler. Another striking difference is the voice of the chat is the lowest pitched of any American wood warblers.

All agree that chats are out of place among warblers but no one has made much of an argument for a better placement. Despite constant speculation about the chat's taxonomic relationship, early DNA work points to it being simply a large, unusual wood warbler. Perhaps modern molecular testing may show a different outcome, but for the time it remains with the wood warblers.

The Yellow-breasted Chat is a flamboyant but rarely seen visitor to any farm. If you have ever been fortunate enough to see the male chat perform his display flight you will never forget it. During mating and nesting season the display flight begins with the hovering flight consisting of slow deep-flapping wings, dangling feet and a cocked head. The flight is accompanied by croaks, whistles and short repeated phrases. The flight song of the chat may also function as an alarm call or distraction display as well as territory advertisement.

The chat's medley of strange whistles, catcalls and musical notes has led to debates as to whether the bird is a true

DOUG BACKLUND

mimic like mockingbirds and catbirds. During courtship, the male sings from a conspicuous perch, then performs its hovering display flight, and then drops back to a perch.

There are very few studies on why chats sing at night like mockingbirds even though it is a well noted oddity for a song bird. One thought is that it is an unmated male or young male desperately trying to win over a female by singing all night. Most likely the answer lies in the mind of the female chat.

Since the chat is relatively shy and uses thick cover it is more often heard than seen. The chat's habitat consists of dense thickets and brush, often with thorns. This dense cover may in part explain the use of loud and varied notes that will carry for some distance. Early successional habitats are not favored by many landowners so the population of chats has declined. The chat is state listed as endangered in Connecticut due to loss of habitat.

The breeding season is from mid-April to mid-May. The cup-shaped nest is built in small bushes or tangles of vines or briers, 2 to 8 feet above the ground. It is made of coarse grasses, weeds, grapevine bark and dead leaves; it is then lined with fine grasses. The 3 to 5 eggs are white, smooth and slightly glossy, sometimes spotted with chestnut-red to red-purple. Incubation lasts for 11 to 15 days and the young leaves the nest 8-11 days after hatching. Both parents are responsible for feeding their young while they are still in the nest.

Chats are often parasitized by brown headed cowbirds and in some locations are even the chief victims of the cowbird's egg-switching activities. The cowbird will remove the eggs of the chat after she lays her own in the chat's nicely crafted nest. This causes the chats to desert their nest.

If you are interested in providing habitat for chats, create shrub hedgerows or thickets of raspberry, rose or greenbrier. Maintaining old field or scrub shrub habitats is one of the best ways to help this species.

Visit our website at:
www.cheswildlife.org

Ask Andi

Questions & Answers about wildlife by Andi Pupke

DAVE MENKE

I recently watched a raccoon washing its hands in the stream below our house. Is this normal behavior for raccoons?

The scientific name of the Common Raccoon is *Procyon lotor*. In Latin, '*lotor*' means 'one who washes.' Folklore has it that raccoons are very clean animals that wash their food before eating and it is true that when water is handy raccoons will often dip food in it. However, no one is really sure why they behave in this way. It's certainly not a sign of cleanliness as raccoons will eagerly consume large quantities of food far from water without any concern for cleanliness.

Raccoons are omnivorous, eating both plant and animal foods. They make their homes in hollow trees or logs, rock dens, brush piles, muskrat houses, barns, haystacks, dense clumps of cattails and occasionally ground burrows. Because raccoons are mostly active at night, they can be common in the area but rarely seen. In the spring and early summer their diet consists primarily of insects, crayfish, fish, fresh water mussels or clams and frogs. As the summer passes, their diet also includes all types of fruits, berries, nuts, acorns, vegetables and grains.

Raccoons are extremely adaptable and have learned to take advantage of human activities by digging in their garbage cans, eating from their bird feeders and finding

tasty morsels in their gardens. Raccoons seem very clever and even friendly but it is best to keep your distance from these predators as they can become aggressive when threatened and can carry diseases. Though nocturnal animals, raccoons often adjust their feeding schedules when rearing their young so when you occasionally see one being active during daylight hours, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is sick.

Of the seven species of the genus Procyon, only two, the common raccoon *(Procyon lotor)* and the crab-eating raccoon *(Procyon cancrivorus)*, have any amount of information known about them. The other species are either presumed extinct or not enough is known about them to determine their status in the wild.

CWH Thanks Dr. Krech for Countless Years of Service

Chris Pupke

Dr. Shepard Krech recently resigned from the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage Board of Directors. Shep served on the CWH Board for nearly twenty years and helped us become the leading voice for wildlife habitat restoration in the Chesapeake region. His devotion to wildlife, the Bay and CWH will be sorely missed.

Shep (also known as Doc) has been a leader on the Eastern Shore and in the Maryland environmental movement for over thirty years. After receiving a B.A. from Yale University, he graduated from Columbia University with a medical degree and began practicing in Talbot County. A sportsman and environmentalist, Shep served on the boards of the Maryland Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

CWH Board President Larry Albright said, "Shep was extremely important to our organization over the last twenty years. Consider how this organization has grown over those twenty years and the impact we have had on our wildlife! His contributions to this success cannot be overstated. He was always there for us with support for our fundraising efforts."

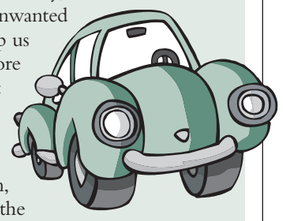
In addition to his work on the Board, Shep is also a CWH landowner partner. Over the years, we have worked on his farm on the Wye River to restore a variety of wildlife habitat, including wetlands, woodlands, quail habitat and Wood Duck boxes.

Thank you Shep for all of your hard work for and dedication to wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay!

Cars for Habitat

Tell your friends!

Do you have a vehicle that you no longer want or need? Would you like to dispose of that vehicle, gain a tax deduction, and benefit Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage at the same time? Donate it! It's easy, and your unwanted car can help us create, restore and protect wildlife habitat. For more information, please visit the "Donate a Car" link on CWH's website, www.cheswildlife.org or call Susanna at 410-822-5100. When you're ready to proceed, just fill out our online donation form, or email Susanna, and a representative of a firm acting on behalf of the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage will contact you.



Conquest Preserve Partnership

Andi Pupke

CWH is very pleased to be partnering with the Queen Anne's County Department of Parks and Recreation to increase wildlife habitat at their 750 acre Conquest Preserve located near the confluence of the Chester and Corsica Rivers. The property had been tilled for years with little land managed for wildlife habitat.

Working with Gregg Todd, Gus Gartner and Dan Levan of Queen Anne's county staff, CWH helped implement a plan to make improvements to the farm that will benefit wildlife and improve the quality of the farm runoff that pollutes the rivers. Grant funds for the habitat improvements were given by the EPA's Small Watershed Grants Program administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust and Rauch Foundation.

CWH staff and volunteers planted trees, native grasses and installed many nesting structures. Additionally, CWH helped plant cover crops and establish a Canada Goose Sanctuary on the property. Work on the trees and grasses began early this spring by killing areas of fescue grass since it is of little benefit to wildlife. By planting native warm season grasses, wildlife is provided with better cover and food. Furthermore, warm season grasses absorb excess nutrients from subsurface water flow because they have much deeper root systems than cool season grasses such as fescue. At Conquest Preserve, CWH planted over 50 acres of warm season grasses, including buffers adjacent to woodlands to offer a transitional edge for Quail and other wildlife.

In early May, local volunteers and members of Boy Scout Troop 165 from Denton planted 250 trees and installed 125 tree tubes. The tree tubes help protect the young trees from deer damage and act like a green house by holding in moisture. CWH planted a total of 15 acres of trees and shrubs to provide assorted wildlife with food and cover.

Over the past five years, Queen Anne's County purchased Conquest Preserve with funds from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, Maryland State Program Open Space funds and county funds. A master plan is being developed for the property. CWH is helping design and manage wildlife habitat improvements by controlled burning, strip disking, spraying, and other habitat management techniques. Queen Anne's County is fortunate to have Conquest since there is no other county-owned property quite like it on the shore.

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CWH Helps Protect Habitat for Wildlife

Chris Pupke

To combat the continued loss of wildlife habitat, CWH's Landowner Services Program works with private landowners to permanently protect wetlands, woodlands and grasslands from development or conversion to agriculture. As a land trust CWH is unique in Maryland as most land trusts use easements that limit the number of homes but DO NOT protect specific wildlife habitats as we are doing.

By recording deeds of conservation easement, CWH can partner with private landowners to protect land that provides habitat for wildlife and filters ground water of pollutants before it fouls the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. These easements are voluntary but legally enforceable documents recorded in the land records at the county courthouse.

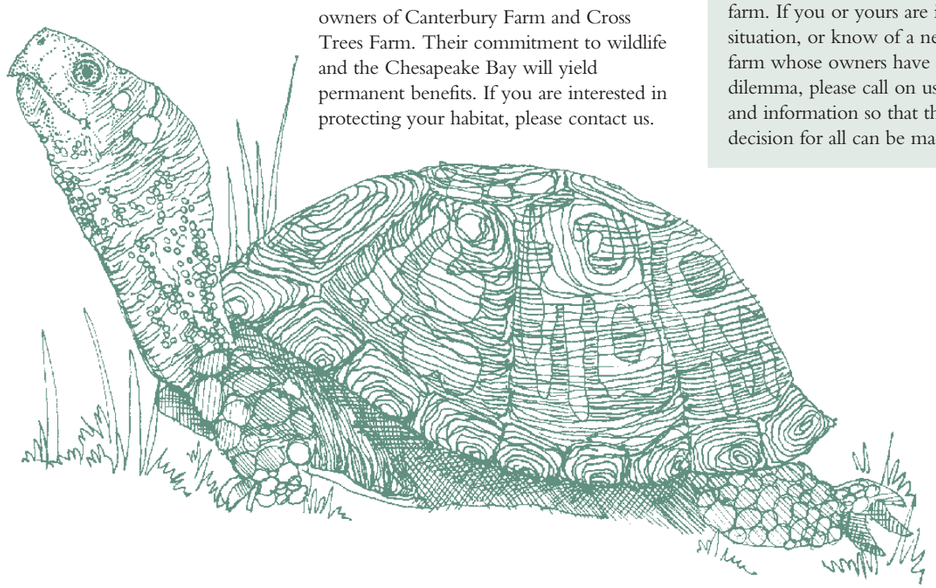
Recently, two deeds of conservation easement were recorded. The easements will legally protect 167 acres of wetlands, woodlands and grasslands for wildlife forever. In addition to the private landowners, CWH partnered with the Maryland Environmental Trust to complete these habitat protection projects.

The twenty-five acre Cross Trees Farm in Queen Anne's County near Centreville was protected. As part of a larger forested block, this woodland provides habitat for a variety of birds, including Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireos and Scarlet Tanagers. The woodland also helps filter rain water for a stream that runs through the property and leads to Island Creek and the Chester River.

The 142 acre Canterbury Farm, located on Bailey's Neck near Easton, was also placed in an easement. In 2001, CWH restored 100 acres of wetlands on this farm. These wetlands compliment the existing 35 acres of woodlands on the farm. A wide diversity of wildlife have used the property since the wetland restoration was completed, including shorebirds, frogs and dragonflies. Most notable are the extraordinary use of the wetlands by large flocks of waterfowl during the winter months and the dozens of young Wood Ducks that hatch each Spring. Once slated for over 40 homes, this farm will now be wild forever.

Since 1997 CWH has permanently protected 2,463 acres of wildlife habitat on twelve different properties. CWH's work on easements differs from most open space easements in that our easements specifically protect wildlife habitat.

CWH wants to thank the dedicated owners of Canterbury Farm and Cross Trees Farm. Their commitment to wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay will yield permanent benefits. If you are interested in protecting your habitat, please contact us.



Leaving a Legacy

Not infrequently we hear about landowners who have inherited the family farm, but have lives and jobs elsewhere. Some of these family members may want to retain use of the farm as a weekend retreat, while others may want to simply "cash out".

All of these "second generation" landowners have been contacted by developers just dying to carve-up the family farm into a subdivision. This may be an attractive solution to those members who simply want as much cash as possible. Other family members may want to try to preserve the farm, but don't know how to afford to buy out their relatives. Everyone wants to avoid a divisive family disagreement.

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage can help. We are able to design creative land disposition plans that achieve a fair price for family members that want to sell (including tax savings on the gains), and affordable ways for the others that wish to retain their rights to enjoy the farm. Most importantly for all of us, we can do this while restoring and preserving the wildlife habitat and open space values of the farm. If you or yours are in this situation, or know of a neighboring farm whose owners have this dilemma, please call on us for advice and information so that the best decision for all can be made.

Monocacy National Battlefield

Geordie Newman

July 9, 1864, on a checkerboard of gold wheat fields and green cornfields just outside Frederick, Maryland, Confederate forces under General Jubal Early defeated Union forces under General Lew Wallace. The battle cost Early a day's march and his chance to capture Washington, DC. Thwarted in the attempt to take the capital, the Confederates turned back to Virginia, ending their last campaign to carry the war into the North.

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has partnered with the Monocacy National Battlefield to restore native warm season grasses and wildflowers to the landscape of the battlefield. CWH converted 15 acres of hay fields bordering the Monocacy River into Little Bluestem, Broom Sedge, Side Oats Grama and 14 species of wildflowers. Normally, CWH would recommend buffering creeks or rivers in western Maryland with trees to lower water temperatures to sustain populations of native trout. However in this particular situation we needed to preserve the historic viewshed of the battlefield to represent the fields on July 9, 1864 described above.

The Monocacy Battlefield is located just south of the growing city of Frederick, Maryland. Andrew Banasik, Natural Resource Manager of the Monocacy Battlefield is very interested in creating wildlife habitat in addition to their historical mission. Over the next several years, CWH and the Monocacy Battlefield plan to convert an additional 40 acres of park hay fields into warm season grass meadows. CWH has planted thousands of acres of warm season grasses over the years providing a diverse habitat benefiting many species from the Grasshopper Sparrow to Red-spotted Purple butterflies.

Often landowners are interested in providing habitat for Bobwhite Quail and therefore plant warm season grasses consisting of several grass species. CWH plants a taller mix, which consists of Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, Side Oats Grama. These meadows can grow up to six feet high. In well drained soils, we can also plant a short mix if the landowner prefers a meadow that is between 2 to 4 feet high. The short mix consists of Broom Sedge, Side Oats Grama, and Little Bluestem. In addition to the mix for the individual landowners, CWH plants a mix of forbes to attract butterflies and other pollinators within the WSG meadow. Whichever type of meadow a landowner chooses, native warm season grasses provide far superior habitat for wildlife than do typical lawns. Their root systems also provide greater absorption of subsurface runoff which can contain pollutants that would otherwise reach the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Maintenance for warm season grass is minimal since they are meant to grow tall. We recommend that only one third of the meadow be burned or mowed per year, so a patchwork of meadow is left for wildlife to enjoy. CWH encourages that meadows are burned when possible since it is biologically the most beneficial technique for management. For more information on Warm Season Grass meadows, call the CWH office at 410-822-5100.

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

CORPORATE MATCHING: Don't forget corporate matching contributions. The company you work for or are retired from may be able to match your donation to CWH. Check with your personnel office to obtain a matching gift form. Mail the form to us along with your tax-deductible donation. We do the rest.