CHESAPEAKE WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Habitat works

The newsletter about restoring and creating habitat for wildlife
Summer 2009

Amphibians, such as this Pickerel Frog, will inhabit the reforested wooded wetland at Scott Road Farm in Emmitsburg, Maryland. (Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick)

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.

CWH Helping Western Maryland Town Restore 60 Acres of Habitat

At the foothills of College Mountain lies the Town of Emmitsburg, a rural community in Frederick County. Emmitsburg is setting an example for small municipalities to preserve land for their community to enjoy. Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage is working with Emmitsburg to restore approximately 20 acres of wetlands and plant 40 acres of warm-season grass meadows.

Many years ago, there were plans to develop a ski resort in Emmitsburg. The developers trumpeted the potential positive economic impacts on the town. However, the town recognized the devastating ecological impact the development would have.

With the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Environmental Trust, the town acquired the mountainside that was being cut into ski slopes. They placed a conservation easement on the mountain property as well as on the adjacent Scott Road Farm. The easement is co-held with the Maryland Environmental Trust and the Catoctin Land Trust.

Toms Creek runs along the eastern border of the Scott Road Farm. This farm consists of approximately 110 acres with two lakes for town residents to fish and 60 acres of tillable land. There are identified wetland areas on the farm and a large portion of the farm is in the floodplain.

The farm was previously rented to a farmer who attempted to plant timothy for hay, but was not very successful due to poor soils and wet conditions. The Town turned to CWH for help.

After visiting the Scott Road Farm, CWH's Geordie Newman suggested the Town look at conservation practices rather than the proposed mountain bike trail because of the hydric soils on site. Town Manager, Dave Haller, requested CWH advise Emmitsburg of any programs that would apply to the farm.

The CWH conservation plan calls for the 10-acre farm field adjacent to the creek to be reforested. Existing wet depressions in the field will serve as vernal pools for amphibians that inhabit wooded wetlands including Dusky Salamander, Two-lined Salamander, Pickerel Frog and American Toad. The upper 10-acre field will be restored into a shallow emergent wetland with a native grass and wildflower meadow buffer. It will be managed for migrating and over-wintering waterfowl and shorebirds.

(continues on page 2)

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage Board of Directors

Ralph Partlow, *President*
Larry Albright, *Chairman*
Cleo Braver, *Vice President*
Bob Reynolds, *Treasurer*
Victoria Zuckerman, *Secretary*
Judge Alfred Burka
Laura Hoffman
John Murray, Esq, *Advisor*
Dennis Whigham, PhD, *Advisor*

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage Staff

Ned Gerber, *Director*
Michael Robin Haggie
Mike Rajacich
Andi Pupke
Chris Pupke
Sandy Parker
Mary deArmond
Phillips Boyd
Austin Jamison
Geordie Newman
Daniel Sterling, Sr.
Donnie Crosland
Daniel Sterling, Jr.
Jenny Bartz

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage

The Old Railway Station
46 Pennsylvania Avenue
P.O. Box 1745
Easton, Maryland 21601

410.822.5100
410.822.4016 fax
info@cheswildlife.org
www.cheswildlife.org

Printed with FSC Certified Paper, 100% Post Consumer Recycled Paper Processed Chlorine Free, Green Seal Certified and made with 100% Green Energy. Using this paper saves per year:

- *32 trees*
- *23 million BTU's*
- *2,846 lbs greenhouse gases*
- *11,813 gallons of wastewater*
- *1,517 pounds of solid waste*

CREP Improvements

by Ned Gerber

A lot of money and time is being spent these days on talking about how to save the Chesapeake Bay. Fortunately one proven method of improving wildlife habitat and water quality has just gotten an upgrade.

Changes were recently announced in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that will make it even more profitable for landowners and farmers to restore farmland into grass buffers, forested buffers and wetlands.

Rental rates have been increased so that typical buffer strips pay $200-$250 per acre per year. Installation of most types of buffers is MORE than 100% cost-shared, if one includes the PIP (practice incentive payment) in the accounting.

Wetland restoration rental rates have increased, as well. Perhaps more importantly, the State of Maryland now cost-shares on wetland restoration and this practice also receives the PIP (meaning over100% cost-sharing). Remember that these wetlands can be wooded, shallow emergent or scrub/shrub; benefiting a wide diversity of species.

According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, each acre of these buffers will prevent 120 pounds of nitrogen, 10 pounds of phosphorus and 4,000 pounds of sediment from fouling the waters of the Chesapeake Bay annually. CREP buffers are a significantly more cost-effective technique for improving water quality than upgrading septic tanks with biological nitrogen removal systems. Treating agricultural runoff is the most cost-effective method to clean up the Bay and restore our native wildlife.

(Western Maryland town continued from page 1)

CWH planted 40 acres of warm-season grasses and forbes on the farm this spring. Several of these fields are larger blocks and will allow for nesting of grassland birds as well as a resting place for migrating song birds. The warm-season grass species planted include big bluestem, little bluestem, broomsedge and switchgrass. The forbes planted for pollinators include partridge pea, lance-leaved coreopsis, purple coneflower, plains coreopsis, and black-eyed susan.

This is a fantastic project that will be visible to the public. Often landowners want to do warm- season grass meadows or wetland restoration, but they are not sure what it would look like in practice.

Haller commented "The Town of Emmitsburg has been working toward this project for over six years, but we could have never completed it without the assistance and expertise of George Newman and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage."

Restoring and protecting wildlife habitat in Western Maryland is gaining momentum as a result of projects such as Emmitsburg. CWH-West focuses its efforts on working with private landowners, but it is also important to capitalize on opportunities with municipalities and other interested partners.

Geordie Newman planting warm-season grass at Emmitsburg, Maryland

CWH Completes Habitat Restoration Project in Carroll County, Maryland

With the support of the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Biophilia Foundation, Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has completed a significant habitat restoration project at the Rogers Farm in Carroll County. CWH planted 31 1/2 acres of trees and a 25-acre, warm-season grass meadow adjacent to Deep Run, a major tributary to the Patapsco River.

The farm, located near the town of Westminster, is owned by Gail Rogers. Mrs. Rogers purchased the farm because she loves nature and wildlife. She wanted to create a wildlife sanctuary and wanted to do anything she could to enhance her farm for wildlife.

Deep Run, which flows the length of the property, is a tributary of Liberty Reservoir, a major source of drinking water for Baltimore City. It is home to a variety of fish species, such as largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, crappie, channel catfish, yellow perch, white perch, bluegill sunfish, carp, rainbow and brown trout. Additional wildlife observed using the Rogers Farm included Bluebirds, House Wrens, Red-shouldered Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks.

At the request of the Biophilia Foundation, CWH's Geordie Newman met with Mrs. Rogers at her farm. A mature riparian buffer on the property provided some protection for Deep Run. Beavers had settled in the creek creating several nice vernal pools and habitat for Wood Ducks. The remainder of the farm was in hay production.

Mr. Newman noted that the hay fields were on highly-erodible soils. With the help of the local USDA office, he made the determination that the entire farm could be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). A plan was drafted to convert the field to trees and warm-season grass meadows.

In April, CWH planted 13,700 seedlings on 31.5 acres. The species planted included American Beech, Flowering Dogwood, Northern Red Oak, White Oak, Black Walnut, Shagbark Hickory, Black Cherry, Persimmon, Red Maple, Yellow Poplar, and Eastern Redbud. The trees were planted at a density of 436 trees to the acre, as required by CREP.

CWH also established a block of 25 acres of warm-season grass meadows, a rare habitat block in Central Maryland. This block is a large enough area to support nesting grassland birds.

Typically, the total acreage of warm-season grass meadows is a result of narrow filter strips along streams. These ribbons of habitat are designed for water quality improvements but will not support nesting of certain species.

Federal funding, available through CREP, was utilized by CWH. To meet the full cost of the project, CWH was able to raise funds from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and Biophilia Foundation. The Chesapeake Bay Trust made a grant of $5,000 and the Biophilia Foundation provided a grant of $10,000 to complete the habitat restoration.

When asked about CWH-West, Mrs. Rogers commented, "My experience with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage is that they have delivered all they said they would, and more. I know how fortunate I am to have Geordie Newman working to develop habitat on my land. This group is careful, non-intrusive, and with complete follow-through. I will be happy to give anyone who asks me a detailed accounting of each step of the process and how Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has carried it out."

In addition to actually planting the trees and grasses, one of the most valuable services CWH offers is walking landowners through the CREP process. Often landowners grant CWH agricultural power of attorney on the project, such as the case with Mrs. Rogers.

Mrs. Rogers is seeking to permanently protect the farm. The farm is currently in an agricultural district, meaning the farm cannot be developed for the next 10 years. Mrs. Rogers is waiting to be selected for a Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund Easement. This Maryland Department of Agriculture program purchases easements from volunteer landowners.

The Rogers Farm provides an example for farm owners in Central Maryland who are interested in establishing wildlife habitat and improving water quality. CWH is grateful for the support of the Chesapeake Bay Trust and Biophilia Foundation.

Most of all, we would like to thank Mrs. Rogers for her commitment to wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay.

REMINDER: CWH Monarch Tagging Workshop in September.

Join the CWH staff to learn about the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly and help scientists from around the continent track their astounding generational migration by helping us tag Monarchs. Dates for the workshops are September 23 at 4 p.m. and September 26 at 10:30 a.m. To register for this free workshop or for more details, call CWH at 410.822.5100.

Space is limited for each workshop, so be sure to register early.

Partnership Helps Native Plants at National Wildlife Refuge

by Michael Robin Haggie

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has partnered with Integrated Vegetation Management Partners and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service to control invasive weeds and improve wildlife habitat at Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Kent County, Maryland.

This partnership formulated an integrated vegetation management plan to promote native plants. The plan included GIS mapping of the management areas, coordination and supervision of professional contractors to apply appropriate herbicides according to the plan, surveying and documentation of plant community changes at permanent transects, and photographic documentation of before and after results.

More than 140 acres have been restored to native plants from non-native infestations of Phragmites, autumn olive, multi-flora rose, wineberry, Japanese stiltgrass, Japanese honeysuckle, mile-a-minute weed, Paulownia, and tree of heaven *(Ailanthus)*. The refuge sites were used on demonstration field tours for other agencies in 2007 and 2008.

By controlling invasive and non-native plants, the partnership is promoting the establishment of native plants. This type of habitat management also yields benefits for the wildlife that rely on those native plants for food. The beneficial results have been shared at conferences across the country.

IVM Partners founder and Director, Richard Johnstone, presented a lecture on the Eastern Neck program at the Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex's Sixth Annual Science Meeting in March 2009 at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, Maryland.

Planned Giving

Planning your estate is a great time to think about wildlife. A planned gift to CWH from your estate can lower estate taxes for your family, support wildlife and the Bay and, depending on the type of gift, provide some income for a beneficiary.

What is a planned gift? It is a gift of cash, securities or real estate made with careful forethought. Planned gifts can be simple and straight forward or more complicated. These gifts should always be reviewed by your financial advisor or estate planning lawyer.

A bequest is the most basic type of a planned gift. The donor designates in his or her will an asset to be given to CWH upon their death. Bequests can lower estate tax burdens and allow *you* to determine where your money will go rather than the federal government. Including CWH in your will is as simple as adding a codicil that names "Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, Inc." as a beneficiary.

Life insurance policies can also serve as a charitable gift. New policies can be purchased or old policies transferred to make CWH the recipient of the death benefits. Certain tax deductions are permitted for this type of gift.

Charitable Remainder Trusts are probably the most complicated common form of a planned gift. However, Charitable Remainder Trusts are a popular device for individuals to give a significant gift to a charity, receive some tax breaks and provide income for a family member.

Planned gifts are a wonderful opportunity for you to support CWH's work for wildlife and the Chesapeake Bay while preparing your estate to ease the burden on your family. Please call our Director of Development, Chris Pupke, if you have or would like to make a planned gift to CWH.

Tiger Swallowtail on Tickseed Sunflower
(see Mow Later article on pg. 6)

CWH Hosts Herbicide Application Training

by Andi Pupke

CWH hosted an herbicide application training program at Barnstable Hill Farm on February 18, 2009. Among the eighteen attendees were CWH staff members, employees of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, County Weed Control Specialists, and private land managers. Attendees received training credits from the Maryland and/or Virginia Department of Agriculture.

The program provided an adjunct training session for licensed herbicide applicators that is oriented towards practical wildlife habitat management. A similar program offered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture focuses on farming operations.

Topics included control of invasive plants, regulatory updates, aquatic weed management, application technology, and pasture weed management. A review of equipment and an equipment demonstration were held in the field.

The presenters were Lloyd Hipkins and Patricia Hipkins, both of Virginia Tech. Dr. Hipkins is an Extension Specialist concentrating on non-crop, industrial and aquatic weed management in the Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology and Weed Science. He also conducts herbicide research with new and developing products, as well as new application techniques. Patricia Hipkins is the Assistant Coordinator of the Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs. Her work supports the Pesticide Safety Education Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension's agent educators.

CWH judiciously utilizes herbicides to effectively manage wildlife habitat. Herbicides, when used properly, can help improve habitat for wildlife without jeopardizing environmental health.

Visit our website
www.cheswildlife.org

Ask Andi

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

Q: During the summer evenings my children enjoy chasing fireflies around our yard. Recently, they asked me: "Why do fireflies light-up?" Can you help me answer this question?

A: Fireflies use bioluminescence to attract mates and prey. Bioluminescence is a chemically produced light emitted from the lower abdomen, which may be yellow, green or pale red.

Fireflies communicate through flashing patterns. Different species flash unique sequences to attract a mate. Females carefully choose mates and are remarkable picky; often starting a dialog with up to ten males. They will keep several conversations going throughout the night. A female will mate with only one male; typically it is the one she has responded to the most.

Some species of fireflies, such as *Photuris*, use deceptive flashes to attract prey. This behavior has earned *Photuris* the nick name "femme fatale fireflies."

Fireflies, or lighting bugs, are winged beetles. They are in the *Lampyridae* family of insects in the beetle order *Coleoptera*. There are more than 2,000 species of fireflies found in temperate and tropical environments around the world. Many species can be found in marshes or wet wooded areas where the larvae have abundant food sources.

In many fireflies, pairs stay coupled for hours while the male gives the female a protein package injected with sperm, called a nuptial gift. This bundle of proteins allows the female to produce more eggs.

A few days after mating, the female lays eggs on or just below the surface of the ground. The eggs hatch three to four weeks later and the larvae then feed on other insects. They are specialized predators, and can take up to four years to reach maturity. The larvae and females in many species of fireflies do not fly and are also referred to as glow worms.

The final two weeks of their life are spent as an adult. This time is spent flashing, mating and laying eggs. They do not eat as adults but will attract prey. The firefly extracts bad tasting chemicals from the bodies of their prey, which the firefly uses to protect itself from predators.

Like all wildlife, loss of habitat can affect firefly populations. The habitat restoration work that CWH does provides habitat for fireflies and many other critters.

Wildlife Profile: Savannah Sparrow

by Andi Pupke

Savannah Sparrows *(Passerculus sandwichensis)* inhabit a wide range of open country, including meadow, pasture, marsh and tundra grassy habitats. They are brown or dark brown and are streaked on both their back and breast. They have pink legs, a yellow supercilium ("eyebrow" stripe), a whitish median crown stripe and a notched tail.

The Savannah Sparrow's appearance can be highly variable and there are 17 recognized subspecies. One of the subspecies, the Large-billed Sparrow *(Passerculus sandwichensis rostratus)* has been proposed as a separate species.

Savannah Sparrows form flocks that feed in areas distant from cover. They forage for insects, larvae and other small arthropods from the ground or tree branches. Seeds are also consumed, especially outside the breeding season.

During nesting season Savannah Sparrows are territorial. The male sings to warn other males that he has a claim on the area. If a territorial male hears an unfamiliar song, he will fly to an exposed perch and match the intruder's song phrase by phrase to discourage the intruder from trying to set up territory. This behavior is known as counter-singing. They nest on the ground, normally hidden under a clump of tall grass.

Savannah Sparrows are one of the most abundant native sparrows and have benefited from the clearing of forests in the Northeast. While it may increase the population of Savannah Sparrows, forest clearing harms a great number of wildlife species.

Although they are currently an abundant species, local populations can be harmed by bad land management. Poorly-timed mowing of meadows can wipe out nesting birds and their young. Heavy use of insecticides and other chemicals can devastate their food sources. And development wipes out not only the nesting areas but also the foraging sites.

Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick

CWH works to restore and manage grassland habitat valuable to ground nesting birds, such as the Savannah Sparrow, and many other wildlife species by working with landowners to increase and protect habitat on their property.

Donate Stock and Receive a Charitable Deduction

Donating appreciated stock is an excellent way to support CWH, the Bay and our wildlife. This type of donation is very simple and allows you to take advantage of tax laws to increase 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 $1,000 (20% 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!

Mow Later–Save a Pollinator

by Ned Gerber

In what has become an unfortunate late summer tradition, many landowners and farmers mow, with mistaken enthusiasm, ALL their grass buffers enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ground down to a lawn-like height immediately after the USDA's August 15 end-of-nesting-season date.

This is a negative development for wildlife since it deprives many animals and insects of food and cover. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and CWH all suggest only mowing one-third to one-half of buffer strips and other meadows per year.

Most wildlife interests prefer mowing in March as it gives the creatures a lot of winter cover and yet prevents the trees and other woody growth from encroaching on the grassy meadows.

Nature's way is to have meadow wildflowers go to seed, which then dry in the autumn air. Some fall to the ground at various times over the autumn and winter to create new flowers, which provide food and cover for birds and other wildlife. Mowing the grasses and wildflowers to the ground in August or early September puts all the seed at risk by "sowing" it all at once before it has dried. Furthermore, the seeds are laid on soon to be wet soil that is covered by chopped plant material before it has had a chance to mature.

Some spectacular aesthetic value is also lost by late summer mowing. Tickseed Sunflowers *(Bidens polylepis)*, Joe-Pye Weed *(Eupatorium maculatum)*, New York Ironweed *(Vernonia noveboracensis)*, and others have yet to bloom and are unable to do so under an August 15 mowing regime. The pollinators that would use these blooming plants suffer from this lost habitat as well. Where will the butterflies go for nectar? Where will the bees get their nectar and pollen? Other wildlife, such as box turtles, may be killed by this early mowing.

The USDA has brochures, seminars, websites and a lot of other information about the importance of pollinators in light of colony collapse disorder (CCD) in honey bees. Everyone now understands more fully the importance of both honey bees and native bees to crops and wild plants. Yet, we continue to manage our landscape as if none of this matters. The USDA needs to change the mowing rules on CREP/CRP buffers and meadows so that society gets maximum biodiversity benefits from these taxpayer funded habitats.

Project Highlight:
Meadow at Old Wye Church

This spring CWH planted a 1.5-acre warm-season grass and wildflower meadow at Old Wye Church in Wye Mills, Maryland. The meadow will provide habitat for wildlife and help filter pollutants from surface and ground water before they reach the waters of the Wye East River.

Restored in 1949, Old Wye was originally built in 1721 for 60,000 pounds of tobacco. The church recently built a footbridge to provide access to the meadow area from the churchyard.

In the center of the meadow, the church has placed a Celtic cross that was constructed from the remains of the Wye Oak tree. The Wye Oak was the largest white oak tree in the world until it fell in a storm in June of 2002.

Property Profile: Bennett Point Farm

In 1997, Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, along with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC), purchased the 284-acre Bennett Point Farm on the Wye River. The property has one-half mile of water frontage on the Wye near Queenstown, Maryland.

Bennett Point Farm was purchased with funds from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. NAWCA provides federal cost-share funding to help protect, restore and manage wetland habitats for a diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife.

Since acquisition of the property, CWH has restored 107 acres of wetlands, planted 25 acres of forested buffer along the Wye River and created 13 acres of warm-season grass meadows.

Approximately 24 acres of land are used as food plots and planted in corn or soybeans. CWH and ESLC donated a conservation easement on the property to the Maryland Environmental Trust in 1998 that includes protecting the existing 115 acres of mature woodland.

Bennett Point Farm provides valuable habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Many different species of waterfowl utilize the wetlands, including Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails and Canada Geese. Research conducted on the farm by the Wood Holes Institute found the first nesting pair of Pied-billed Grebes in Queen Anne's County. One-quarter of the restored wetlands were designed as vernal pools, an increasingly rare type of wooded wetland that provides excellent habitat for frogs, salamanders and other reptiles and amphibians.

Research conducted on Bennett Point Farm by the Woods Hole Institute found the first nesting pair of Pied-bill Grebes in Queen Anne's County. (Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick)

Furthermore, the habitats on the farm help improve water quality in the Wye. The Wye River watershed is listed under the Clean Water Action Plan as a Category 1 and Category 3 watershed. It is one of only 12 watersheds in Maryland to receive the designation of both a Category 1 and Category 3 watershed. This designation means the Wye "deserve(s) special attention to reverse or slow degradation before (its) pristine resources are lost."

Including Bennett Point Farm, CWH owns 1,150 acres of land that are managed to restore, enhance and protect habitat that will increase wildlife populations and improve water quality.

☐ ***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 # _____

☐ $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 _____

Signature _____ Amount $ _____ Expiration Date _____ Security Code _____

Please mail to: Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, P.O. Box 1745, Easton, MD 21601
CWH is a private nonprofit organization designated 501(c)(3) by the IRS. A financial statement is available upon request.

SU09

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.

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
The Old Railway Station
46 Pennsylvania Avenue
P.O. Box 1745
Easton, MD 21601

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Easton, MD
Permit #62

CWH Helps Talbot County Soil Conservation District Create a Bluebird Trail

Adapted from an article written by Teresa Kampmeyer, District Conservationist

Bluebirds are one of the most beloved species in North America. They are secondary nest builders, usually nesting in the abandoned tree cavities of woodpeckers. Their beautiful colors, delightful songs, habit of consuming insects, and strong family devotion provide happiness and inspiration to people.

Bluebirds were once greatly imperiled by contamination of their insect food with DDT, the lack of nesting cavities and the competition with exotic species. This caused the population to drop severely. However, Eastern Bluebirds *(Sialia sialis)* are making a comeback. This is in large part due to the thousands of people who have erected and monitored nest boxes for these magnificent birds.

The Talbot Soil Conservation District (SCD) recently established a Bluebird Trail around their office near Easton. The SCD Board of Supervisors and staff thanked the following partners for their role in making this project possible: Dave Wilson, USDA Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator; Tom Hutson, 4-H Coordinator with Cooperative Extension Service; Ned Gerber, Director, and Andi Pupke, Education & Outreach Director of Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage; and Tom Cohee of Barkers Landing.

In short, Dave Wilson secured a grant to pay for the materials needed for the posts and construction of the boxes. Tom Hutson rounded up the teenagers and built the boxes. Ned Gerber donated the predator guards to mount on the posts. Andi Pupke gave training and guidance to the staff to install the predator guards and monitor the nest boxes. Tom Cohee dug the holes for the posts and granted permission for SCD to extend the trail onto his property. A total of eight boxes were installed and within two weeks two of those boxes had eggs.

Bluebird nesting boxes must be placed 300 feet apart because Bluebirds are very territorial. It is also necessary to control the English House Sparrows or they will eliminate the Bluebirds; making monitoring so important.

Andi Pupke of CWH and Teresa Kampmeyer of Talbot Co. SCD monitoring a box on the Bluebird Trail at the Easton office of the SCD.

English House Sparrows are a non-native species introduced from Europe. Along with the loss of habitat, their aggressive seizure of boxes is the main reason for the rarity of Bluebirds today. House Sparrows will enter Bluebird boxes and frequently kill Bluebirds, destroy their eggs or drive them from their nests.

CWH has a simple devise that can be added to the box to trap the House Sparrow. At no time should House Sparrows be allowed to successfully nest in the Bluebird box. Doing so will only increase the House Sparrow population and further reduce the number of Bluebirds.