



North Carolina
**WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

Journal

WILD LIVES □ WILD PLACES

Spring 2024



BRACE FOR IMPACT
NCWF's Year-Long Quest to
Chart the Future

LOCAL CHAPTERS GET IT DONE

SEASONAL GUIDE TO WILDLIFE



Vision Quest

BY TIM GESTWICKI, NCWF CEO

A vision quest is a rite of passage in many Native American cultures. For others, a vision quest refers to a journey or pathway towards something meaningful and significant. A traditional Native American vision quest consists of a person spending time alone in nature, and not a few hours here or there, but days and nights at a stretch. During this time of intense spiritual reflection or communication, the person is said to receive profound insight into themselves and the world and perhaps their place in the world. This insight can arrive in the form of a dreamlike “vision” and is said to provide a reason for being and a feeling of destiny, and it’s often described as a turning point in life.

The vision is the objective; the quest is the means of accomplishing the objective. Not being a Native American myself, I offer another perspective of a vision quest. This one is by no means comparable; it is only closer to home for me and helps me relate to the concept. If I were to utter “vision quest” to my wife, the guaranteed response would be, “Oh, I love that movie!” There was a movie called, in fact, *Vision Quest*, that she apparently adored as a youth. I cannot disparage the movie as I have not seen it, but the lead, as I understand it, is a high school wrestler who comes to the realization that in order for him to meet his calling—to assume his place in the world—he must do something out of the box.

What he was currently up to must not have been working well, or at least not well enough to meet his goal. So, he drops two or three (maybe four?) weight classes in order to wrestle at a place where he can meet his potential and make his mark. To lose the weight he turns to an older woman who guides and encourages him. I’m sure he does it, I’m sure he wins, I’m sure they fall in love and I am quite sure my wife fawned over the actor in her youthful exuberance. The point is the actor came to a turning point, a pivotal place in time, where he planned a significant change in order to realize his ultimate goal.

As an organization, NCWF went on its own vision quest over the last year, in the sense that we set out to find out who we were, how that related to who we thought we were, what we do, and how we do it. Those discussions informed deep and introspective thinking and planning into how we should work to have the greatest impact. What transpired was many conversations, interviews of staff, board, and partners, surveys of members, and professionally-facilitated sessions. We learned that we are a very effective, very credible, and much-needed organization dedicated to meeting the challenges facing wildlife and habitat. We realized that we are in a very good position, yet we need to expand, home in on priorities, evolve and focus on involving more people in this wonderful North Carolina Wildlife Federation family. We want to have an even more direct impact on our world.

We want to have an
even more direct
impact on our world.

Over months upon months of conference calls, meetings, and debates, we have our vision and we have our path forward—our quest—to meet our ultimate mission: **To protect, conserve, and restore wildlife and habitat in North Carolina.** This pathway forward, often referred to as a strategic plan, will not be just an exercise, such as a nice idea that turns into a dusty item on someone’s bookshelf. To that end we are calling our vision our *Conservation Impact Plan*. It is a living document, in fact, in order to be nimble enough to seize any and all opportunities, yet focused enough to keep us on track and not veer off course. It is the result of great introspection and a conscious effort to have impact for wildlife and wildlife habitat. In this *Journal* we cover why we will focus our actions in specific directions, and begin to spell out the priorities, strategies, and focal areas. We posted the plan on our website, but if you’d like a copy sent electronically, please request directly to me at tim@ncwf.org and I’ll send you one.

When my wife reads her spring NCWF *Journal*, I will inevitably gain a full clarification of any finer parts of the Vision Quest movie I misinterpreted or didn’t digest well enough. But I pledge to keep you apprised of our accomplishments as we strive to fulfill our very important blueprint for success, our “wildlife quest.” **NCWF**

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ABOUT THE COVER

Cover photograph The Eastern wild turkey has fallen on hard times across much of the South. In North Carolina, the Federation's new Conservation Impact Plan underscores the habitat initiatives that will help the state's wildlife thrive. Photo by Gary Jones / NCWF photo contest submission. Other photos, unless noted, courtesy of NCWF.

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NORTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

MISSION To protect, conserve, and restore North Carolina wildlife and habitat for all.

VISION A North Carolina with healthy and diverse habitats and wildlife valued by all people and sustained for future generations.

VALUES Science-based decision making
Non-partisan approach to policy
Inclusive of broad interests and perspectives
Collaborative with diverse organizations and individuals
Committed to solutions and impact





NCWF Unveils a New Initiative for the Future of Wildlife

North Carolina is a special state filled with a diversity of wildlife and vibrant natural places. From the highest mountain peaks on the East Coast to the one-of-a-kind Outer Banks and everywhere in between, there is no place quite like North Carolina, particularly when it comes to wildlife and ecosystems.

Consider this: North Carolina has the highest diversity of salamanders in the world. The Southern Appalachians alone are home to nearly four dozen different species. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park—the most visited national park in the country, due in part to its thriving elk population—is known worldwide as a fabulous destination for wildlife watching as well as its status as a center of biodiversity.

On the other side of the state, black bears roam the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula in numbers higher than anywhere else in the world. Wildlife from the smallest and rarest of all North American turtles, the bog turtle, to the largest amphibian in North America, the endangered Eastern hellbender, call North Carolina home.

North Carolina is the northernmost state for species such as the American alligator and the river frog, and the southernmost state for wildlife such as Wehrle’s salamander and the Southern ravine salamander.

Nowhere else in the world will you find wild Red Wolves other than in North Carolina. The last remaining wild population roams the Albemarle Peninsula. Also called the “Yellowstone of the East,” the Albemarle Peninsula is a migration stopover and wintering grounds for tens of thousands of snow geese and tundra swans that migrate from their breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska to over-winter in eastern North Carolina.

No other state on the East Coast has an estuarine ecosystem like that found in North Carolina. It is the second largest in the country and has some of the most diverse marine life on the entire Atlantic seaboard. Eastern North Carolina is also home to rare carnivorous plants such as Venus flytrap, found only within a 50-mile radius of Wilmington. Ancient baldcypress forests on the Black River in southeastern North Carolina nurture some of the world’s oldest living trees, documented at thousands of years old.

● ● ● LOOMING THREATS ● ● ●

As wild and natural as so much of North Carolina remains, there is no question that 21st-century threats to our environment are putting wildlife populations at great risk around the world and right here in North Carolina. Invasive species, diseases that impact both plant and animal communities, habitat loss, pollution, and a warming climate all imperil our natural resources.

One hundred thousand new residents arrive in North Carolina each year, and such growth, when not paired with smart conservation planning and investments, destroys, degrades, and fragments land required by wildlife. Vehicle-wildlife collisions alone kill

OSPREY IN NEST WITH CHICK
CHARLES RIEGEL / NCWF PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION

more than a million animals each day on roadways across America, and the approximate 80,000 miles of state-maintained highways in North Carolina are a part of the problem. At current development rates, 5.5 million acres of forested land will be lost in the state by 2040. North Carolina is also losing farmland to development, ranking second worst in the country in this critical category.

Habitat and wildlife declines are also occurring in North Carolina's estuarine waters. Large-scale shrimp trawling destroys sea grass beds and kills millions of juvenile fish before they have a chance to spawn. For every pound of shrimp caught, four pounds of bycatch—dead fish—are thrown overboard. Surprisingly, North Carolina is the only state on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts that still allows this large-scale shrimp trawling in its sounds and estuaries.

Many North Carolina freshwater streams run thick and dark as coffee with sedimentation and runoff from development and poor agricultural practices upstream, choking aquatic wildlife and plants. Wetland loss in North Carolina tops the list among other states, increasing the risk of flooding and freshwater contamination, particularly in urban areas. And climate change exacerbates the impacts of habitat loss, making North Carolina one of the most vulnerable states to flooding and hurricanes in the country.

The good news? There are ways to protect North Carolina's beloved quality of life—a standard which places as much importance on the natural environment as on human society.

USFWS / LESLIE PITT



THE SOUTHERN BOG TURTLE (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*), THE SMALLEST TURTLE IN NORTH AMERICA, HAS SUFFERED POPULATION DECLINES DUE TO THE LOSS OF MOUNTAIN BOGS AND THE ISOLATED WETLANDS IT REQUIRES TO THRIVE.



The North Carolina Wildlife Federation Conservation Impact Plan prioritizes the protection and restoration of the natural function and quality of the state's waters, wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas.

● ● ● A CALL FROM THE TOP ● ● ●

North Carolina's wetlands hold immense value, providing vital habitat for numerous wildlife species, recreational opportunities to North Carolinians statewide, and essential climate and resource services such as flood resiliency, water quality improvement, and carbon sequestration.

Despite their irreplaceable significance, these natural landscapes face threats from development and habitat degradation, largely due to the rolling back of legislation set in place to protect them from harm. However, a recent initiative ignites a shift in the fight for North Carolina's wildlife and habitat.

In February, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order No. 305, which aims to safeguard forests and wetlands and sets ambitious goals for the state's conservation efforts. Hailed as one of the most impactful executive actions in over two decades, and boasting the most ambitious environmental conservation targets in the state's history, Executive Order No. 305 enjoys broad support for its clearly defined conservation objectives.

"North Carolina's rich natural beauty is not only critical in our fight against flooding and climate change, but important to our economy," said Governor Cooper. "As our state continues to grow, we must be mindful to conserve and protect our natural resources and this historic Executive Order sets clear goals and puts a plan in place that will help us leave our state better than we found it for generations to come."

The action represents a significant step forward for wildlife habitat conservation efforts, particularly in light of recent legislative setbacks. Despite Governor Cooper's veto, last year's Farm Act of 2023, fueled by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, weakened long-standing state wetlands protections, leaving critical wildlife habitats vulnerable to development.

As noted in Governor Cooper's order: "On June 27, 2023, the General Assembly overrode Governor Roy Cooper's veto to enact the North Carolina Farm Act of 2023, which rolled back state protections for wetlands without first studying the environmental consequences of such an act for the people, environment, economy, and flood resiliency of the State of North Carolina."

The order goes on to outline key objectives, including the permanent conservation and restoration of two million acres of forests



EFFORTS TO CONSERVE WETLANDS BENEFIT NOT ONLY WILDLIFE, BUT THOSE WHO ENJOY SPENDING TIME IN THE PLACES WHERE WATERFOWL THRIVE.

CADDIS CURL COMMUNICATIONS

and wetlands and the planting of one million trees in urban areas by 2040. Additionally, it mandates a Native Plant Policy for state-owned projects (following the preliminary policy set forth on Department of Natural and Cultural Resources property) and encourages support for conservation initiatives within tribal communities.

Underscoring the social, economic, and environmental value of North Carolina wetlands, the order directs the state to avoid or minimize new projects that would adversely impact vulnerable wetlands such as pocosins, Carolina Bays, and mountain bogs (particularly those that lost state and federal protections) and encourages state agencies to seek out funding for wetlands conservation and restoration projects.


“This is a pivotal point in redirecting the legislative narrative around North Carolina’s wetlands and natural spaces,” said Manley Fuller, vice president of conservation policy for NCWF. “Governor Cooper’s Executive Order provides a road map for the state in protecting and restoring these critical habitats for all that depend upon them—people and wildlife, alike.”



The North Carolina Wildlife Federation Conservation Impact Plan seeks to protect and restore the natural function and quality of the state’s waters, wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas.

For years, NCWF has been working to defend wetlands, streams, and other waters under the Clean Water Act as these ecosystems are among the most valuable for wildlife habitat. The U.S. Supreme Court’s 2023 decision in *Sackett v. EPA* severely restricted the federal government’s ability to protect critical wetlands, streams, and other waters that are important natural resources and shield communities across the nation from pollution, flooding, and other threats. As a result, more than half of our nation’s wetlands and millions of miles of streams are likely left without federal protection under the Clean Water Act. At the printing of this *Journal*, NCWF has intervened in a lawsuit in eastern North Carolina that seeks to advance an overly restrictive reading of the already narrow *Sackett* decision to include a requirement that wetlands be indistinguishable from neighboring waters as a prerequisite

to being protected under the Clean Water Act. An adverse ruling would likely remove protections from most, if not all, of the state's wetlands. The Federation's intervention aims to prevent an adverse ruling that could have devastating effects on waters in the Southeast. An update will be published in the next *Journal*.



The North Carolina Wildlife Federation Conservation Impact Plan advances public ownership of, and access to, public lands and waters.

- **Expand and connect protected areas to sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations and to allow for seasonal migrations and climate-driven range shifts.**
- **Support and work for new protected lands by expansion of the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge.**

NCWF continues to advocate for the protection and expansion of public lands to support species biodiversity, ensure connectivity for wildlife passage between natural areas, provide recreational space for outdoor enthusiasts, and provide resiliency to habitats that will be impacted by climate change. A recent win for wildlife and habitat is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's release of its final plan to expand and protect up to an additional 287,090 acres as part of the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge. According to the agency, "the Service's plan expands the approved acquisition boundary for the Roanoke River NWR along a 137-mile-long river corridor to protect the integrity of the floodplain forest and to benefit rare and at-risk species, including Atlantic sturgeon, cerulean and Swainson's warblers and bald eagles. Wild turkeys, wood ducks, mallards and white-tailed deer that make eastern North Carolina a recreational paradise will flourish with more land set aside for protection." NCWF submitted a formal public comment letter in support of the expansion and protection of this refuge for the benefit of wildlife, habitat, and all North Carolinians.

EASTERN PHOEBE



MARK GALLERANI / NCWF PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION



BRADFORD PEAR

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / MPBAUGH



FLOWERING DOGWOOD

ISTOCK.COM / JASMINEIMAGE



The North Carolina Wildlife Federation Conservation Impact Plan supports efforts to control and manage habitat-degrading invasive plant species.

Bradford pear trees are cultivars of the Callery pear, which was brought to the U.S. from China in the early 1900s to hybridize with and improve the disease resistance of pear trees. By 1950, the Bradford pear cultivar had been planted widely, and since then other cultivars have been produced. It was believed that these trees would not be able to spread. However, different cultivars can cross, allowing them to escape into our natural forests.

Much like other invasive species, these trees outcompete native species, thanks to their proliferating spread and because they leaf out earlier than other trees which subsequently shades out native plants. On top of that, they have not co-evolved with local wildlife, thereby creating monocultures that affect the food supply of the native wildlife species that depend on specific native plants to survive.

The Bradford Pear Bounty is a collaborative program between the N.C. State University Cooperative Extension Service, N.C. Urban Forest Council, N.C. Forest Service, and North Carolina Wildlife Federation. Since 2022, the program

has sought to educate and incentivize private property owners to remove the invasive Bradford pears from their properties by providing them with a replacement native tree that provides critical habitat for wildlife such as bobwhite quail, spring azure butterfly, and brown thrasher. Each of these respectively depend on native trees such as Eastern redbud, flowering dogwood, and common serviceberry. (For more program details, visit www.treebountync.com.)

The program has been available in nine North Carolina cities since its inception, and it has become incredibly popular, often “selling out” of the free native trees within the first few days. The bounty has also been integral to educating North Carolinians across the state about the biological hazards brought on by the spread of the ornamental yet malodorous Bradford pear, enlightening everyone from private property owners to conservationists.

Ecologically attuned developers are also taking part. Homes by Dickerson’s Pinehurst Division is planning to develop a 40-acre parcel into large 1/2- to 1/3-acre single-family lots. The parcel had historically been used as a peach orchard but, left on its own, had been overrun by Bradford pear trees. Known for a commitment to environmental stewardship through prior participation in the Butterfly Highway program, vice president Chris Steyne of the Pinehurst Division partnered with Kevin Hardt from The Southern Landscape Group to facilitate the removal of all Bradford pear trees from the parcel.

Homes by Dickerson has also taken care to avoid removing large trees on the property and removing other trees on an as-needed basis. The developer has expressed commitment to replacing the lost canopy with native trees and plants, particularly longleaf pine. That native, noble tree is essential to the Sandhills ecosystem that supports species listed on the Wildlife Resources Commission’s Species of Greatest Conservation Need list, such as the red-cockaded woodpecker.

Such a commitment to stewardship is neither easy nor straightforward. Sometimes developers who strive to plant native species are at odds with municipal and homeowner association landscaping requirements, as these requirements are not always favorable to native plants. There’s a positive benefit to the conversations that take place in such situations, however. “Builders are in a unique position where they can educate homeowners on what can be planted and the effects that it can have on their local ecosystem,” said Kate Shinkwin, a representative for the Pinehurst Division.

The Bradford Pear Bounty Partnership is working to continue to inspire change through education and the reintroduction of native plants into previously neglected environments. Through the efforts of non-profits, government groups, volunteers, and now responsible private developers, we may yet see North Carolina leading the charge in bringing awareness and inspiring change in how municipalities adorn their streets, all while restoring lost habitat for native wildlife species. **NCWF**

WHITE-TAILED DOE AND FAWN

DANNY GREENE / NCFW PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION



Throughout the year, NCWF chapters worked statewide to move forward on initiatives critical to the NCWF Conservation Impact Plan.



FROM THE NCWF CONSERVATION IMPACT PLAN

► Mobilize people and communities to achieve local and statewide wildlife and habitat goals

Key Concepts

• Focus on improving populations of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, creating sustainable fisheries, habitat connectivity and safe passage for wildlife, and addressing disease threats.

► Habitat Goal: Protect, conserve, restore, and connect habitat for fish and wildlife.

Key Concepts

• Actively restore and reconnect fragmented and degraded aquatic and terrestrial habitats across protected public lands, private working lands, and waterways (trust resources).



LESLIE WAUGH / MONARCH BUTTERFLY / NCWF PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION



DIGGS-LATHAM GARDEN WORKDAY, FEBRUARY 24. The North Carolina Wildlife Federation partnered with N.C. Cooperative Extension to install a teaching garden at Diggs-Latham Elementary School in Winston-Salem. The enthusiastic crew planted a wide variety of natives including pink muhly grass, lance leaf coreopsis, blazing star, and more.

PURPLE MARTIN HOUSE INSTALLATION, FEBRUARY 29.

The South Wake Conservationists installed a new purple martin house assembly at Simple Gifts Community Garden in Apex, just in time for nesting season. These amazing birds are arriving from Brazil for the spring and early summer, as part of their annual migration. They are the largest cavity-nesting swallow species, and they eat nothing but insects caught high in the air "on the wing."





LAKE NORMAN OSPREY HABITAT ENHANCEMENT, MARCH 5. Ospreys typically nest on tall structures that are somewhat isolated and over water. ATONS (Aids to Navigation) are appealing as nesting sites to the raptors, but such structures pose a hazard to both birds and boaters. LNWC and the Lake Norman Marine Commission took to the water to address the issue by installing deterrent devices to prevent ospreys from nesting on the markers.



ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR FOREST PLANTING, MARCH 14. NCWF, Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and community volunteers teamed up to plant 500 Atlantic white cedar tree seedlings at the site of the refuge's Millennium Forest in Columbia. Across from the Red Wolf Center, these cedar stands will create crucial wildlife habitat and opportunities for community recreation and education in the forest.

LONGLEAF PINE & NATIVE GRASS PLANTING, MARCH 16. Students from Fuquay-Varina High School 4-H Spatial Science Club joined the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, the North Carolina Forest Service and Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Division. The crew planted 300 longleaf pines and 300 native grasses at the future Beech Bluffs County Park.



CHARLOTTE CREEK WEEK CLEANUP, MARCH 17. The Charlotte Wildlife Stewards once again participated in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's annual Creek Week. Volunteers removed trash from a section of Briar Creek at Chantilly Ecological Sanctuary. Briar Creek is an important tributary of the Catawba River Basin providing habitat, recreation, and drinking for our neighbors downstream. This year around 30 volunteers removed over 400 pounds of trash from the creek.

Community Wildlife Habitat Benefits Wildlife and Neighborhoods



NORTH CAROLINA IS ONE OF THE MOST rapidly growing states in the country. Though there may be some benefits to such an increase, a surge in population numbers inevitably leads to heightened competition for resources, which brings increased development to accommodate the influx. As such development gains momentum, the toll on natural resources and landscapes becomes all the more evident, with wildlife paying the price. For those who recognize this impact, the race to combat development and the destruction of critical wildlife habitat is ongoing with no clear finish line in sight.

Thankfully, there are solutions available with lasting benefits for both wildlife and our communities, and NCWF chapters are a leading force to provide wildlife habitat in an ever more densely populated region. Among these is the implementation of habitat enhancements on private lands, ranging from municipal properties to individual backyards. Initiatives including NCWF's Butterfly Highway program and National Wildlife Federation's Gardening for Wildlife programs, such as the Certified Wildlife Habitat program, offer structured and supportive opportunities to implement these habitat enhancements.

Currently, there are over 3,200 registered Butterfly Highway Pollinator Pitstops and over 15,200 Certified Wildlife Habitats registered across the state. Some entire communities have even committed to expanding their impact by pooling local Certified Wildlife Habitats — designated as Certified Community Habitats.

One such instance culminated just this year, involving the arrival of a newcomer to a coastal town and his acknowledgment of the potential impact of the community for the wildlife species that also call it home.

"I saw that there were no Certified Wildlife Communities east of Raleigh, which I found a little alarming," said Ernie McLaney, longtime conservationist and NCWF chapter member. "And I thought 'How could that be true? Would Saint James really be the first one?'"

Saint James is a town on the coast of North Carolina, just south of Wilmington. Its proximity to the coast and its some 250 ponds positions Saint James as an indispensable habitat for coastal wildlife species. McLaney quickly realized this upon his move to Saint James in 2023. "There's so much lush vegetative landscape here. Folks were already providing food for the birds, and forty-two percent of the landmass here was already protected under conservation stewardship," said McLaney. "So, they already had all the elements in place. I just needed to find people to help get it certified."

Luckily, this was not McLaney's first experience in certifying Community Wildlife Habitats. A former member of the Habitat and Wildlife Keepers (HAWK) NCWF chapter in Matthews, McLaney has long been interested in and passionate about wildlife conservation. Through HAWK, he assisted the chapter in certifying Matthews as a Community Wildlife Habitat, with support from NCWF and the National Wildlife Federation.

After Matthews was successfully certified, McLaney was given another daunting challenge: certifying the city of Charlotte.

"After we certified Matthews, NCWF reached out and charged me to start something in Charlotte, too." McLaney said, "So we started a chapter there and got started on the certification process. But I found out that Charlotte already had a huge number of Certified Wildlife Habitats, even before we got started."



"Would Saint James really be the first Certified Wildlife Community east of Raleigh?"

Charlotte was not far behind Matthews in becoming certified, ushered along by landowners and groups who had already stepped up to the plate and registered their own properties as Certified Wildlife Habitats before the Community Wildlife Habitat process had even begun. Luckily, Saint James, too, already had a community of partners poised for the task ahead.

Not long after his move to St. James, McLaney met with the St. James Conservancy, vocalizing his interest in making the town a Community Wildlife Habitat. Not only were they receptive to his idea, but they invited him to become a member of the Executive Board, jumpstarting McLaney's outreach to the broader community. He picked up partners in the Garden Club at St. James, St. James Ponds Committee, and other local birding and gardening groups. McLaney says it takes a village, and at this point in the journey, the proverbial village showed up, giving presentations to the Saint James Town Council, informing them of the many benefits of certifying Saint James as the first coastal Community Wildlife Habitat.

The next step was to mobilize the community by encouraging individuals to convert their own properties into Certified Wildlife Habitats by providing wildlife with food, water, cover, and places to raise young. They quickly caught on.

"I noticed that when somebody certified their property, it wasn't long before their neighbor did, too. They saw this thing working and they talked about it with each other, which ultimately made people think 'Well, if you can do that, so can I.' It was nice to see that spread, it was inspiring," said McLaney.

Saint James is situated on a migratory flight path along the East Coast, where many migratory birds pass through on their migration routes each year. People in Saint James quickly realized that the food sources they were incorporating into their yard, particularly native flowering plants with fall-ripening berries, drew these birds. In McLaney's words, the community gained the understanding that if you have the right habitat, the amount of wildlife you can see is incredible.

But this collective change had implications beyond the community of Saint James. McLaney was approached by the Oak Island Beautification Committee to come speak about the process of establishing a Community Wildlife Habitat, and how this little town just across the Intra-coastal Waterway might join Saint James in become a wildlife-friendly haven.

Saint James' larger neighbors are gaining interest, with Wilmington actively in the process of accruing points for certification and being registered as a Community Wildlife Habitat. The Cape Fear Garden Club is leading the process with the help of McLaney, NCWF's Lower Cape Fear Wildlife Chapter, and NCWF vice president of conservation partnership Natalie Bohorquez.

"The goal is for this somewhat scattered network of certified communities to become a patchwork of interconnected wildlife habitats, on the coast and across the state," explained Bohorquez. "As that happens, it opens up an opportunity for more people to become involved. People vacation to and travel along the coast, and hopefully seeing what's being done here might influence their actions moving forward. That could mean planting native plants in their yard, picking up trash in their neighborhood, or certifying their entire community. It all has a cumulative impact on wildlife, particularly within this statewide community of people doing the same thing."

Establishing these Community Wildlife Habitats is no small task, but the benefits for coastal wildlife, and wildlife statewide, are immeasurable. It will require the collective effort of passionate individuals, groups, and communities who are committed to safeguarding North Carolina's wildlife.

"You can't be selfish while you're doing this," McLaney said. "You can't say 'Look at what my group did'. You have to look at the bigger picture and the long-term outcome, which is getting your community certified for wildlife and raising the conservation education bar within your community. If you can have that mindset and bring in other people who can help you out along the way, good things can really happen quickly."

CHECK OUT OUR CHAPTERS!

For more information on how you can participate, email natalie@ncwf.org.



ALBEMARLE CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE CHAPTER (Elizabeth City)



CHARLOTTE WILDLIFE STEWARDS



CONCORD WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



HAWK (HABITAT AND WILDLIFE KEEPERS) (Matthews)



INNER BANKS WILDLIFE (Washington)



LAKE JAMES AREA WILDLIFE AND NATURE SOCIETY (Nebo)



LAKE NORMAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONISTS



LOWER CAPE FEAR WILDLIFE



MARSH (MARVIN AREA FOR THE RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF WILDLIFE HABITAT)



MOUNTAIN WILD! (Asheville)



NEUSE RIVER HAWKS CONSERVATIONISTS (Wake Forest)



NEW BERN WILDLIFE CHAPTER



PAWS (GASTON COUNTY PIEDMONT AREA WILDLIFE STEWARDS)



SOUTHEASTERN SWAMP STEWARDS (Whiteville)



SOUTH WAKE CONSERVATIONISTS (Fuquay-Varina, Raleigh)



TRIAD WILD (Greensboro)



TRI-COUNTY CONSERVATIONISTS (Chapel Hill)



UNION COUNTY WILDLIFE CHAPTER



WILDLIFE HABITAT STEWARDS (Northeastern NC)



The North Carolina Wildlife Federation Conservation Impact Plan states the need to inspire and grow the next generation of conservationists.

- Increase award amounts through the Scholarship program to support tuition expenses for selected biologists and young conservationists attending a North Carolina accredited college or university.
- Celebrate youth conservationists through photo contest ensuring a youth category.

NCWF Scholarship Nominations Open



Recent NCWF scholarship recipient Brendan J. Runde PhD. completed his dissertation at NCSU researching management of reef fish species such as snappers and groupers. He is now employed as a marine scientist with The Nature Conservancy in Virginia.

SINCE THE 1970s, NCWF has awarded scholarships to more than 300 college students from across the state, helping them follow their dreams of studying and working for wildlife and conservation. Many award recipients achieve significant success in their fields, making a difference for wildlife and habitat.

Qualifying students who are committed to environmental and natural resource conservation or management are encouraged to apply. The Federation's scholarships are highly sought after and always competitive, and we appreciate the opportunity to identify and recognize deserving students and provide scholarship aid.

To qualify, students must be enrolled full-time at an accredited North Carolina college or university with a major related to wildlife, fisheries, forestry, conservation, or environmental studies. Academic merit, socio-economic elements, and extra-curricular involvement all impact final decisions.

NCWF will provide up to seven grants, which may include two \$2,500 Conservation Leadership grants for a graduate and/or undergraduate student of outstanding merit. Students must submit scholarship applications and supporting documents online by June 13. Visit www.ncwf.org/scholarships to learn more or apply. For questions or requests to apply by mail, contact Lacy Kegley at awards@ncwf.org.

Dale Mosteller, NCWF Supporter and Conservation Champion

NCWF IS SADDENED TO REPORT that Dale Mosteller, of Lincolnton, North Carolina, passed away earlier this year.

Mosteller was a stalwart Federation board member and board officer, and a longtime member of and leader for the Lincolnton Sportsman Club. He served on the NCWF board of directors for nearly 20 years and served as president of the Federation board from 1998 to 2000. He was named 1993 Sportsman of the Year in the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards program.

"I worked with Dale going all the way back to 1991," recalls Tim Gestwicki, NCWF CEO. "He was always asking what he and the board could be doing for the Federation and for Federation staff—never what we should be doing. He was a huge champion for this organization, and was beloved by staff and other board members across his nearly two decades of service."

NCWF conservation editor T. Edward Nickens remembers Mosteller as kind and cheerful and committed to deepening personal relationships with those in the NCWF family. "When my son, Jack, was little, Dale gave him a tanned beaver hide, which Jack thought was a small bear hide, and he kept it by his bed for a very long time," says Nickens. "He called Dale 'Bear Man' after that. That's a very small example of the very large number of times, and the very meaningful ways, Dale Mosteller made sure to personalize his conservation work, building a network of deep relationships with people he worked with for decades."

Photo Contest

PHOTOGRAPHS ARE POWERFUL. They capture beauty, safeguard memories, and tell truly amazing stories. This summer, alongside hundreds of other photographers, you have the opportunity to share the story of North Carolina wildlife through NCWF's Sixth Annual Wildlife Photo Contest.

NCWF invites submissions from professional, amateur, and youth photographers. From images of green anoles in backyard pollinator gardens to elk wading through mountain streams to brown pelicans fishing off the coast of the Outer Banks, potential subjects are endless.

The submission window is open from July 1 to September 1. Categories include Carolina Critters, People in Nature, Scenes of North Carolina, and Pollinators and Insects. The goal is to showcase the wildlife and the natural beauty of North Carolina in your backyard and across the state.

For a donation of \$15 or more, you can submit up to 12 photos (with a maximum of 3 images per category). All proceeds go towards wildlife habitat conservation and restoration efforts in North Carolina. Winners will be selected in each category and experience level (professional and amateur), as well as an overall youth winner (16 and younger). Previous contest submissions have been featured on NCWF's website, social media platforms, quarterly journals, postcards, and bookmarks.

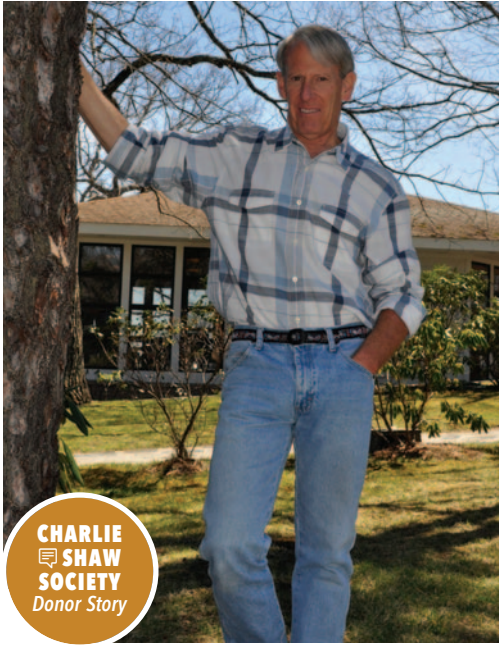
Submit your photos electronically starting July 1 at ncwf.org/photo-contest/

Good luck, and happy snapping!



ERIN PRICE ERWIN / POLLINATOR / NCWF PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION

Eyes on the Cliff Edge: *Conservation in Collaboration*



In a fast-paced and rapidly developing world, it seems that the pressing need for conservation becomes more urgent each day. Fortunately, there are individuals whose dedication and passion for wildlife and the outdoors serve as guiding lights. Philip Blumenthal, president and director of Wildacres Retreat and director of the Blumenthal Foundation, stands as a testament to the profound impact one person can make in conservation and environmentalism.

Blumenthal's journey is deeply rooted in his family's history and his love for the natural world. "Our family has been in Charlotte for about 100 years," he says, "and we've been involved in arts organizations, educational institutions, civic organizations, and many environmental and conservation organizations." On top of his community engagement and directorial roles at Wildacres and the

Blumenthal Foundation, he has also been involved with organizations like the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and the Nature Conservancy.

Blumenthal's approach to conservation is characterized by collaboration and inclusivity. He emphasizes the critical importance of groups working together toward common goals. He suggests that the collective reaction to wildlife and environmental concerns resembles knowingly driving towards a cliff edge where, instead of hitting the brakes, the driver pushes harder on the gas. To Blumenthal, the silo-ing of these groups and issues only increases our acceleration towards the cliff edge.

"When you look at the scale of issues confronting us right now, it's clear we've all got to find ways to work together," he says. "With urban population growth and development and competition for resources, the pace of change is increasing incredibly quickly. It's important to figure out how we can address this together."

Wildacres Retreat, dating back to the 1920s, serves as a physical manifestation of Blumenthal's convictions. It has evolved into a space for reflection, learning, and collective action. It has hosted a diversity of people and groups, from lapidary workshops to national board meetings for several environmental organizations, reflecting Blumenthal's belief in the transformative power of nature and community.

Blumenthal's passion and advocacy extends to specific conservation efforts. In particular, he appreciates and supports NCWF's Save Our Sounds initiative working to protect North Carolina's coastal sounds and estuaries against large-scale inshore shrimp trawling and unsustainable fishing practices, as well as NCWF's work towards the recovery of the wild red wolf population in the state.

"A lot of these species were here before we were, but we've made it all but unlivable for them," says Blumenthal. "I think that those plant and wildlife species have a right to exist." His holistic approach to conservation underscores the interconnectedness of species within an ecosystem, a model that Blumenthal believes conservation organizations should emulate. He says that NCWF's nonpartisan approach to protecting, conserving, and restoring North Carolina wildlife and habitat is a huge reason for his support as a Shaw Society donor, alongside the commitment to educate others on wildlife-related issues and mobilizing them to take action in their own communities.

"I think working together towards a solution is a good and important thing," he insists. "It can work for wildlife and it can work for the people that live here, too."

You can join Philip and other NCWF donors in the Shaw Society by donating \$1,000 or more in a calendar year. Some people prefer to give a single gift in a year, others like to give monthly, and some give through stock, their IRA, donor-advised fund, or estate plan. To learn about all the ways you can join the Shaw Society and support wildlife and habitat in North Carolina today and for future generations, contact NCWF VP of Philanthropy Kate Greiner at kate@ncwf.org.



ROBERT CASSANOVA / GREEN TREEFROG / NCWF PHOTO CONTEST SUBMISSION

CREATE A BETTER
FUTURE FOR WILDLIFE.
It's easier than you think.

Make a gift that lasts longer. Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will because they care about causes that are important to their lives. A gift to NCWF in your will, retirement funds or life insurance ensures future generations can enjoy the wildlife and habitat that you care about in North Carolina.

www.ncwf.org/legacy



Interested?

Kate Greiner, CFRE
VP of Philanthropy
P: 704/332-5696
E: Kate@ncwf.org

THE Season

Jeff Beane's GUIDE TO
NATURAL NORTH CAROLINA

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JUNE

June 13: Bluehead chubs are spawning. The large stone nests constructed by these abundant, stream-dwelling minnows provide essential spawning habitat for several other minnow species.

June 14: Ten-lined June beetles are flying. Rosinweed is in bloom.

June 15: Spotted salamander larvae are transforming; juveniles disperse into terrestrial habitats on rainy nights.

June 16: Gray's lilies are in bloom in the Mountains. Gopher frog tadpoles and tiger salamander larvae are transforming in the Sandhills and Coastal Plain and will disperse into upland habitats on rainy nights.

June 17: Common five-lined, southeastern five-lined, and broad-headed skinks are nesting. Unlike most reptiles, these lizards remain with their eggs, guarding them until they hatch.

June 18: Lo moths are flying.

June 19: Peak bloom for rhododendron and mountain laurel in the Mountains.

June 21: Sourwood is in bloom.

June 23: Nesting peaks for our state reptile, the eastern box turtle. Sandhills thistle, Appalachian mountain-mint, and Nash's meadow-beauty are in bloom.

June 24: Spurred butterfly pea, sticky false-foxtail, and sandhill dayflower are blooming. Lark sparrows are nesting. These ground-nesting sparrows are rare and occasional breeders in our state; most breeding records are from military drop zones and other large, grassy areas in the Sandhills.

June 25: National Catfish Day—North Carolina has nearly 20 species to celebrate.

June 27: Green June beetles begin emerging. Large emergences usually follow a rain that softens the soil so that the adults can dig their way to the surface.

June 28: Northern pinesnakes are nesting. These uncommon snakes, found mostly in our Sandhills region, are unique in that females typically spend several days digging a long tunnel ending in a nest chamber, where they deposit their small clutch of large eggs (the largest eggs of any of our snakes). Their nest chambers sometimes provide refugia for other animals.

June 29: Green salamanders are nesting in our southern Mountains. These fully terrestrial salamanders attach their eggs to the ceilings of narrow rock crevices, attending them until they hatch.

June 30: Loggerhead sea turtle nesting peaks. American kestrels are fledging.

JULY

July 1: Black skimmers are nesting on some of our more remote beaches and barrier islands. Fringed meadow-beauty is blooming. Grapeleaf beetles are flying.

July 3: Northern bobwhite eggs are hatching. Sandhills wild-petunia is blooming.

July 6: Eastern cicada killers are mating. These large, impressive wasps are often needlessly feared, especially during their mating aggregations, but they are harmless to humans (although not to cicadas) unless handled.

July 7: Summer runs of white perch provide good fishing on the Chowan River. Fourangle rose gentian is in bloom.

July 8: Bog turtles are nesting in mountain and foothill wetlands. Unlike most turtles, this rare species does not excavate a nest in soil but conceals its small egg clutch in a moss clump or a grass or sedge tussock.

July 10: Squirrel treefrogs, eastern narrow-mouthed toads, and oak toads breed in temporary wetlands after heavy summer thunderstorms.

July 11: Blue grosbeaks are fledging.

July 12: American goldfinches are nesting. These familiar, colorful finches depend on mature thistles for food and nesting material, and are thus among our latest nesters, raising just one brood per year.

July 15: Peak flight period for our largest butterfly, the giant swallowtail, in the outer Coastal Plain.

July 16: World Snake Day—a great day for celebrating North Carolina's 38 species!

July 17: Black bear mating peaks. Ditch daisy is blooming.

July 18: On hot, humid afternoons, watch and listen for the impressive dives and "boom displays" of the common nighthawk.

July 21: Jewelweed, black-eyed Susan, savannah meadow-beauty, and Joe-pye weed are in bloom.

July 22: Our largest beetle and heaviest insect—the eastern Hercules beetle—is flying. Look for adults of this impressive beetle around lights at night.

July 24: Indian pipe is in bloom.

July 25: Imperial moths are flying.

July 27: Gartersnakes and ribbonsnakes are giving birth.

July 28: Eastern gray squirrels are bearing their summer litters.

July 29-30: Southern Delta Aquarid meteor shower peaks.

July 30-31: Alpha Capricornid meteor shower peaks.

July 30: Royal walnut moths are flying. Water spider orchid, sandhill golden-aster, and sandbog death camas are blooming.

July 31: Fence lizard eggs are hatching. Rough earthsnakes are giving birth. Turk's-cap, Michaux's, and Sandhills lilies are in bloom.

AUGUST

August 1: Milkweeds are in bloom.

August 3: Even on the hottest days, the heat-loving six-lined racerunner, our fastest terrestrial reptile, is out and about. Look for it streaking between patches of cover in open, sandy areas.

August 5: Cardinal flower, pink turtlehead, sweet-pepperbush, and tickseed are in bloom.

August 8: Dog Day heat and the late season may have silenced many songbirds, but a few die-hards, like the indigo bunting and red-eyed vireo, may still be heard singing, even at mid-day.

August 11-12: Perseid meteor shower peaks. This is one of the best meteor showers to observe, producing up to 60 meteors per hour at peak.

August 13: The eggs of many snake and lizard species are hatching.

August 14: Yellow fringed orchid, spurred butterfly-pea, yellow-eyed grasses, and several meadow-beauty species are in bloom.

August 15: Timber rattlesnakes sometimes mate this time of year. Although many of our snakes breed mostly in spring and fall, these and other pit vipers may also do so in late summer.