

Habitat Works

CHESAPEAKE WILDLIFE HERITAGE

The newsletter about restoring, managing and protecting wildlife habitat.
Summer 2017



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

CWH Dedicates Barnstable Waterfowl Habitat in Memory of Charlie Smith

By Andi Pupke, Education & Outreach Director

In May 2017, a large group of family and friends gathered with CWH staff to dedicate the newly completed waterfowl impoundment located at CWH's Barnstable Hill Farm in Chester, Maryland. The new habitat was dedicated in Charlie Smith's memory and funded by donations from his family and friends.

Charles Robinson Smith, III was a lifelong outdoorsman who enjoyed sailing, hunting and fishing. Constructing and dedicating a waterfowl habitat in his honor was a truly fitting way to celebrate his life.

Larry Albright, CWH Chairman and a great friend of Charlie's, remarked,

"Charlie loved the work that CWH does, particularly the shallow-water marshes. This will be a great way to honor his memory. Each time the ducks drop into this sanctuary habitat, I will think about how excited Charlie would get at that sight. I am very grateful to his widow, Elizabeth, his parents, Anne and Sunny, and the family for their support of this project."



Family and friends toast the memory of Charlie Smith.

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The Barnstable impoundment will be intensively managed to provide high-energy foods for migrating and wintering waterfowl. These grains will complement the natural moist-soil seeds found in abundance in the many wetlands we have restored on the farm. Very few landowners leave standing grain for wintering waterfowl on the shore, and even fewer leave food for the birds on sanctuaries like Barnstable Hill Farm.

Located on Kent Island, the 540-acre Barnstable Hill Farm was donated to CWH in 2000. The waterfowl impoundment was constructed on the north part of the farm. With more than 5.5 miles of waterfrontage on Kirwan Creek and Prospect Bay, Barnstable is one of the most important waterfowl sanctuaries in the Mid-Shore region. ●



Friends and family of Charlie Smith learn about the waterfowl habitat dedicated in his memory at CWH's Barnstable Hill Farm.



Photo courtesy of Richard Wilson

Hatch day!

Purple Martins began hatching near the end of June. Parents are now busily feeding their young.

CWH began monitoring and collecting data on Purple Martin nesting systems in 2008. Active management of martin housing provides better control of invasive, non-native birds and results in more robust martin populations. Learn more at cheswildlife.org.

WILDLIFE PROFILE:

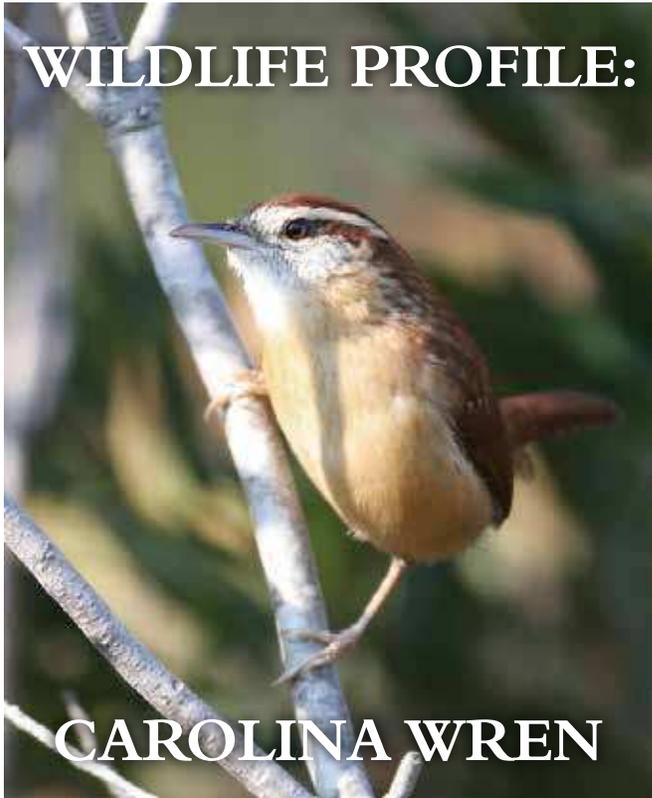


Photo by Bill Hubick

CAROLINA WREN

By Andi Pupke, Education & Outreach Director

The Carolina wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) is a common species of wren found in the eastern half of the United States. It is a very small bird of woodlands and thickets, measuring 4.9–5.5 inches in length with a wingspan of 11 inches. Despite its size, this shy bird can be heard over a great distance. It delivers an amazing number of decibels when singing and calling. It has a repeated “teakettle-teakettle” song and other piercing exclamations. The Carolina wren is a rich cinnamon color with white eyebrow stripes and a long, upward-cocked tail.

Every year, we at CWH receive a number of calls concerning the Carolina wren: not for its amazing vocal abilities, but for the places it chooses to nest. The wren often nests in hanging flower pots on porches and on decorative wreaths on doors. This year we even heard of a wren stuffing someone’s pants with nesting material while they were hanging on a clothes line. That wasn’t great long-term planning on the wren’s part. It’s safe to say that these wrens are nice birds to have around, just maybe not in your clean clothes.

If you find yourself with a Carolina wren nest on your porch or near your home, try to enjoy watching them raise their young. Just don’t be surprised by the odd places they choose to make their nests! ●



The Carolina wren can choose unusual nesting spots, even pants hanging on a clothes line.

Donate Stock and Receive a Charitable Deduction

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



For example, Mr. Roberts invested \$5,000 in stock several years ago. Today, the stock is worth \$20,000. If Mr. Roberts sells the stock, he would pay \$3,000 in capital gains tax (20% of the profit from the sale of the stock). If he donates the stock to CWH, though, he would receive a charitable deduction for the stock’s full fair-market value (\$20,000). This donation would provide a \$5,600 tax savings for someone in the 28% tax bracket. In the end, Mr. Roberts’s tax bill is \$8,600 less, and CWH receives a terrific gift that will benefit wildlife.

To learn more about stock donation, call our office at 410-822-5100.

THE BUZZ



ABOUT NATIVE BEES

Numbering more than 4,000 species nationwide, 400-plus species in Maryland and around 100 species at any given time in summer in any county on the Eastern Shore, native bees are quite prolific if given the chance to survive. These bees are critical to the ecosystem.

They pollinate food crops for us and many wildlife species and help to beautify the landscape by fertilizing wildflowers and flowering shrubs and trees.

Although disease, disappearing habitat and pesticide use have led to shrinking populations, learning about our native bees and taking even small steps to help them thrive can improve their numbers and yield big results for local ecosystems.

Bees are descendants of wasps, and while there are similarities between the two, there are notable differences. Bees are vegetarian creatures and are generally less aggressive than predatory wasps. Most are covered with fine, feathery hairs and pollen baskets on their legs or abdomens that allow them to gather pollen as they feed, distribute it among other flowers and bring it

back to the nest. Bees tend not to sting unless threatened or defending their colony, and most native bees either don't or can't sting.

Common native Maryland bees include bumblebees, sweat bees, miner bees, leaf-cutter bees, and mason bees. Although it is a remarkable pollinator, the non-native honeybee is unable to pollinate tomatoes or eggplant, and it falls far short of native bees in pollinating native food crops such as pumpkins, cherries, blueberries and cranberries. There are also concerns that it may spread diseases to native bees and sometimes out-compete them in limited habitat. You can benefit your own garden and the surrounding

ecosystem by attracting a variety of bees to your yard—particularly native species—and giving them a bit of help.

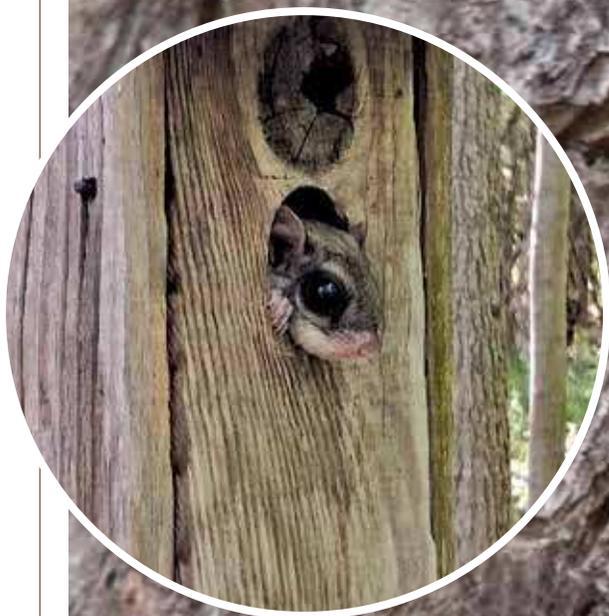
So, what can you do to help native bee populations? Above all else, respect bees and give them space to do their work. Avoid widespread use of insecticides and fungicides. Plant a pollinator garden. Let flowering weeds like dogbane and milkweed grow unmown/unsprayed in ditches and other odd spots in your neighborhood. Talk to your county roads people about not mowing ditches and roadsides until after October 1, when the monarchs have gone through. If you own a farm, plant pollinator patches and buffer strips, and save your mowing for March. Even a small patch of native plants will attract and provide food for bees and other beneficial pollinators.

Finally, learn about different types of bees and how they live. Bumblebees build nests, often in old mouse nests in sheds and other buildings, while other species nest in the ground or in abandoned animal or insect burrows. A section of PVC pipe filled with paper straws and mounted under an overhang or in an open barn or shed can provide a brooding place for cavity-nesting bees. This type of structure is available for the asking to CWH members. Visit our office at 46 Pennsylvania Avenue in Easton, call 410.822.5100, or email info@cheswildlife.org. ●



Ask Andi:

Q: What type of critter is in my bluebird box?



By Andi Pupke, Education & Outreach Director

Photo by Donna Tolbert-Anderson

A: This little squirrel is a southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*). Its overly large eyes are a clue that it is nocturnal. Flying squirrels are easily distinguished from other tree squirrels by their smaller size—nine to ten inches long—and gliding membrane, or patagium, a fold of skin that extends from the wrist of the front leg to the ankle of the hind leg. When the front and hind legs are extended, the membrane forms a winglike gliding surface. Their fur is soft, silky and moderately long. The upper body is grayish to brownish in color, and the underparts are creamy white.

Flying squirrels do not actually fly. They glide from tree to tree, covering more than 100 feet if starting from a very high perch and using their tails to steer around branches and other obstacles. They are found throughout the deciduous forests of eastern North America from southern Ontario to the Gulf Coast, with isolated populations in Mexico and as far south as Honduras. The North American distribution of this species is more southerly than that of its close relative, the northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*).

The flying squirrel requires deciduous and coniferous forest for its

habitats. It makes its home in snags, woodpecker holes, manmade nest boxes and the abandoned nests of birds and other squirrels. If you have a wooded property and would like to help the flying squirrel, you can refrain from cutting down snag trees and erect nesting boxes (available from CWH) in the woods.

Many people are unaware of how common they are due to their nocturnal behavior. If you are ever in a wooded area at dawn or dusk, you may be able to catch sight of these shy squirrels. ●

From Farm Field to Flourishing Wetland

By Ned Gerber, Director/Wildlife Habitat Ecologist



Plants are sprouting from the topsoil CWH used to cover a wetland site at Waltham Farm near Centreville, Maryland.

When I first saw the field about 18 years ago, I knew right away that we should create a large emergent wetland there. Maybe it was the numerous drainage leads that gridded the field or the way the main ditches led down to the creek. At that time, we planted extensive native grass buffers on the farm using the newly created CREP and restored about 20 acres of shallow emergent wetlands—just not on that spot. We planted native grasses and wildflowers in what was then a very wet meadow, and they thrived over the years in between. However, I always worry about very wet meadows being an ecological trap, especially if we have a dry winter/spring. My concern is that ground nesters that use the site during

a spring drought will lose their nest if heavy precipitation comes as it did this year.

More than a few years passed, and when the landowner expressed an interest in a large wetland, I went back out to survey the site and do a few initial borings.

I happily discovered lots of swamp milkweed and many other wetland plants thriving with the big bluestem we had planted so many years before—good omens.

The landowners, Henry and Jean Hilleary, agreed that we could further explore building a shallow emergent wetland on the site.

The process began in earnest, with extensive soil borings in spring to determine whether the soils would hold water sufficiently to support diverse emergent wetland vegetation. Looking more closely at soils enables us to know where we are able to dig deeper pool areas that will hold water all summer and obtain clay berm material that keeps water on the entire site during wet periods. This early dirt scoping work is followed by a topographic survey of the proposed area to ensure that the berm can hold enough water on the site seasonally to support the plant and wildlife species we want to see there—swamp milkweed, wild millet, shorebirds, waterfowl and waders, to name a few.

During the late summer of 2016, we began restoring 18 acres of

shallow emergent wetlands on that site at Waltham Farm near Centreville, Maryland. It was a protracted process, as the site was very wet from the onset of construction and constant rains brought work to a standstill. The off-road truck we use to move earth got stuck frequently, which made earth moving very slow. We tried to rent a low-pressure truck on tracks to speed up the work, but not one was available on the East Coast. Winter was fast approaching, and once the daily temperatures get low enough, sites no longer dry sufficiently to move dirt well. The prospect of mothballing the unfinished wetland project for the winter seemed more likely each day.

Then the geese showed up, as they do each fall. Fortunately, they brought some dry weather with them. We were able to complete the dirt work in November and seed the site heavily to stabilize the soil for winter. Of course, the geese loved those tender young grasses and kept much of the wetland looking like a huge mud puddle all winter. They also love mud puddles, as do the shorebirds that follow them once they leave in spring. Summer arrived, and the wetland greened up well. Now we have more plants to install and invasives to control.

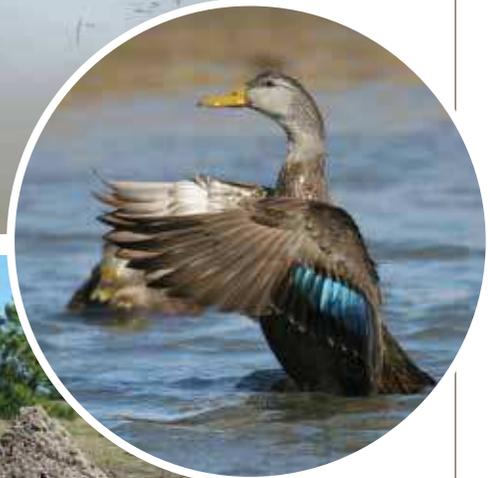
Located on Reeds Creek, a major tidal tributary of the Chester River, Waltham Farm is tended as an oasis for flora and fauna.

In addition to providing food and habitat for innumerable birds, mammals and insects, along with a critical stopping point for migratory waterfowl, we estimate that this wetland restoration alone will prevent 3,360 pounds of nitrogen, 170 pounds of phosphorus and 42,000 pounds of sediment from entering the Chesapeake Bay watershed annually.

Thanks to support from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Biophilia Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust and other sources, what was once a wet farm field is now a thriving ecosystem and a step toward a cleaner, healthier Bay. ●



A deeper pool on Waltham Farm provided clay for berms used to impound water on the site.



When constructing a wetland, ditches are employed to manage water onsite so that earth can be moved.



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Farewell, Chris Pupke



CWH bids a fond farewell to Chris Pupke, who accepted a position with the Biophilia Foundation after nearly 19 years with CWH. Chris served as our director of development and handled many easement-related matters as well. With a strong devotion to wildlife resources, he greatly enjoyed our partnership with the Biophilia Foundation, which enabled CWH to restore habitat on farms purchased for that purpose. These farms were then resold to wildlife enthusiasts in “enhanced wildlife habitat-ready” condition. Chris shared the sense of wonder all our staff feel at how quickly many wildlife species colonize newly created habitats.

We wish Chris great success in his work for the Biophilia Foundation.

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