

Adopt-a-Wetland contacts & communication



Delaware Beach Life Magazine

Delaware Beach Life, the premier lifestyle magazine of coastal Delaware, is proud to be a part of, and bring awareness to, important environmental issues such as what the Adopt-A-Wetland program highlights. The protection and preservation of our area wetlands, a vital natural resource, is extremely important in maintaining the livelihood of our communities.

Production Manager, Tessa Shoup, showcases the October 2012 issue in which the article "The Ripple Effect: Adopt a Wetland, Change the World" was published. To access this article on-line, go to: www.delawarebeachlife.com, select to view the October 2012 digital edition and click on page 10.

Submitted by: Tessa Shoup

Wetland Links worth checking!

<http://de.gov/aaw> new shortened link to the Delaware Adopt-a-Wetland program's home page

www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Admin/DelawareWetlands/Pages/default.aspx loaded with info about Delaware wetlands

www.delawareinvasives.net a good resource for identifying and managing invasive plants common to Delaware

www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/volunteers/Pages/Volunteer.aspx volunteer opportunities with Delaware Fish & Wildlife

www.epa.gov/wetlands/ good source for general wetlands info

www.facebook.com/AdoptAWetland visit us on Facebook!



Delaware Adopt-A-Wetland Program Aquatic Resources Education Center (AREC) Division of Fish & Wildlife

4876 Hay Point Landing Rd., Smyrna, DE 19977
(302) 735-8652 (302) 653-3431 (fax)



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Delaware Adopt-a-Wetland Coordination Team

Marlene Mervine, AREC AAW Coordinator, 302-735-8660, marlene.mervine@state.de.us

Gary Kreamer, AREC Education Coordinator, 302-735-8665, gary.kreamer@state.de.us

Vickie Henderson, AREC Environmental Educator, 735-8657, vickie.henderson@state.de.us

Tess Belcher, AREC Trainer/Educator, 735-8656, theresa.belcher@state.de.us

Mark Biddle, Wetland Scientist, DNREC, Division of Water Resources, 302-739-4590, mark.biddle@state.de.us

Mick McLaughlin, Naturalist, clemmys2003@yahoo.com

Terry Higgins, Kent County Coordinator (retired) higgente@dmv.com

Lia Leahy, Kent County Coordinator, lia.leahy@state.de.us

Kathy Tidball, Delaware Learn & Serve Program, Dept. of Education, NCC Coordinator, kathytidball@hotmail.com

Ginger Baum, Sussex County Coordinator, moobear@peoplepc.com

Amy Nazdrowicz, Landmark/JCM Environmental Consulting, amyn@landmark-se.com

WORKING FOR WETLANDS



NEWSLETTER FOR THE DELAWARE ADOPT-A-WETLAND (AAW) PROGRAM

Issue #18
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"PUTTING A PRICE ON DELAWARE WETLANDS?"

Consideration of wetland values is something most Delawareans rarely think about. As a long time Delaware resident, I for years took much of our natural resource treasures, including wetlands, for granted. Now, along with more and more people, I am continually surprised by the almost inestimable value of these treasures to our state. Undervalued and disregarded for so many generations, wetlands are now recognized as providing an amazing wealth and variety of benefits to humans and the environment. The growing list includes, but is not limited to: water supply, flood storage, erosion control, diminished storm damage, pollution prevention and control, recreational opportunities, fish/shellfish production, wildlife habitats, wetland resource harvesting, subsistence food use, education/research and eco-tourism.

A recent study by the University of Delaware's Water Resources Agency* provided some pretty impressive statistics on just how economically significant those benefits can be. It estimates the economic value of the ecosystem goods and services provided by Delaware wetlands at over 1.4 billion dollars annually! In addition to the economic benefits wetlands provide to fisheries, hunting, wildlife watching and other recreational activities, a key part of these valuations has to do with the costs we pay when wetland functions – like flood prevention and water quality improvement - are lost on the landscape, as happens when wetlands are filled in, converted to other uses, or impaired in their natural functioning. Thus, as is often the case with things important to our lives, we only come to appreciate their real value when they are gone. These are the hard lessons learned from events such as hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, reminding us that being proactive (in protecting wetlands so they can protect us) ends up being a lot cheaper in the long-run than being reactive (paying for the damage done when those protective capacities are lost).

In a 2011 Outdoor Delaware magazine article celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the DE Division of Fish & Wildlife, Tony Florio lauded the vision of Norman Wilder (the first Director of what would become the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife) in realizing the importance of wetland resources to Delaware and its growing population. Quoting Florio: "his greatest legacy to the First State was his vigorous pursuit of land, especially wetland acquisition". Because of the foresight and dedication of those early leaders, and the commitment to wetland protection of other hard-working conservationists across our state, we still retain a legacy of these beautiful and valuable wet places to enjoy (and even "adopt") for the benefit of future generations! Yes, we are beginning to put a price on the worth of Delaware's wetlands, but no, that price cannot be underestimated! We would be privileged to welcome **your** participation in Delaware's Adopt-A-Wetland Program - helping to ensure protection of all the benefits that healthy wetlands in Delaware can provide!

By Marlene Mervine, Program Coordinator

* Kauffman, G. et. al. 2011. Economic Value of the Delaware Watershed. University of Delaware Water Resources Agency, Newark, DE. www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/DelEstuaryValueReport.pdf



Records Pond site in Laurel, DE.

Look inside for details on 2013 Adopt-A-Wetland Workshop

Spotlight on Adoption Activities

Kent County Conservancy

Checking out the Wildcat

Several years ago the Kent County Conservancy (KCC), in partnership with Delaware's Adopt-A-Wetland Program, adopted the historic Hunn Site located just off Sorghum Mill Road near the eastern terminus of Route 10 on the western shore of the St. Jones River. This site, rich in the early colonial history of central Delaware, was used for decades in the earliest portions of the 20th century as an unregulated, industrial dump with the local moniker of 'Wildcat Landfill'. Carl Solberg, a founding board member of the KCC, was instrumental in initiating the process which culminated in the formal adoption of the site by the Conservancy. One of the first orders of business for the adoption process was the participation of KCC Board Members along with families and friends to plant a large number of shrub and tree seedling species that are native to the upland, freshwater swamp, and estuarine marsh area that comprise the 'Wildcat's' topography. In January of 2012, despite limitations of site access, several KCC Board Members were able to accomplish a limited visual evaluation of the success of the plantings and the natural regeneration that this very important, protected, local Kent County area now enjoys. Current plans call for annual, visual monitoring of the 'Wildcat' by members of the KCC.



By Terry Higgins

Leahy Family and Friends

We adopted our wetland site, nine acres behind our home, in March of 2012 and are having so much fun making discoveries there—it really is a beautiful place! Some of the highlights for me have been photographing a Pileated Woodpecker feeding its young and discovering the identity of two turtles, a Stinkpot and a Cooter. My husband caught the latter and—when I measured the carapace—discovered it was not a Painted Turtle as we had thought, but a Red Bellied Cooter. I had never heard of a Red Bellied Cooter before—how exciting! Our family is really having an amazing time in our wetland observing wildlife and discovering information about the wet landscape, water and the many species that are our "neighbors". We also found a beautiful plant and verified that it was indeed native to Delaware—a Water Starwort. Caring for our wetland through the Delaware Adopt-A-Wetland Program has been a wonderful learning experience for both my husband and I and our girls.

By Lia Leahy

White Creek at Bethany

For many of us who live at White Creek at Bethany, a Sussex County community near Bethany Beach, that early October morning was a nerve racking experience. Our community is located on wetlands, adjacent to White Creek, a tributary off the Indian River Bay. We suffered severe flooding caused by super storm Sandy. When high tide arrived that morning, water began to build and the flooding resulted. Fortunately by evening high tide, the water had receded. We are a community who has an "adopt a wetland program" and residents were anxious to start cleaning up. Fifteen community volunteers swept the wetlands, picking up trash and debris. Our youngest volunteer, Christian Clark, age 12, has a real concern for the environment and was a big help. Flood waters of Superstorm Sandy threatened a number of homes in the community of White Creek at Bethany, but fortunately the water did not penetrate any of the residences.

By Ginny Moushegian



Adopt-a-Wetland News & Views

Night Surprise – the Common Water Snake by Jim White



Over the years I have spent a fair amount of time alone in wetlands at night and I actually feel very comfortable searching the dark water for nocturnal creatures. However, I will admit that even I can get startled when the narrow beam of my flashlight happens upon a large snake swimming slowly nearby. Of course my nerves quickly quiet down when I realize that the snake is a harmless female Common Watersnake, *Nerodia sipedon sipedon*. As its name suggests, this snake is common throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. It is found in or near virtually all freshwater habitats, including rivers, streams, ponds, ditches, vernal pools, freshwater marshes, and swamps. Even habitats not usually hospitable to herps such as brackish tidal streams and the edges of salt marshes, are utilized.

The not so secretive Common Watersnake is one of the most frequently encountered snakes on the peninsula. It is often observed basking near water or swimming on the surface. Unlike most snakes, the Common Watersnake can be very bold, allowing an observer to get very close before slithering away into the brush or water. When cornered or threatened it often flattens its body and strikes aggressively. Although not dangerous to humans, it will readily bite if handled. Like many snakes, it discharges a malodorous musk from its anal glands when handled. The Common Water snake is a moderately large, thick-bodied snake and can be highly variable in coloration. Adults usually have reddish brown to black markings on the back and sides on a pale gray to dark brown background. The markings usually form crossbands on the anterior part of the body and blotches that alternate between the back and sides on the posterior part of the body. Juveniles have more pronounced markings on a pale gray or light brown background. The markings gradually fade with age and are sometimes obscured in older, larger snakes, giving them an almost uniform black appearance. Mating takes place in the spring, usually out of the water on logs, snags, vegetation, or the ground. Common watersnakes bear live young, from mid-August to mid-October. Litter sizes ranging from 8 to 46 young have been reported.

This snake feeds primarily on fish and amphibians. All prey are swallowed whole and alive, even catfish with their mildly venomous fin spines. This snake often preys upon American and Fowler's Toads and apparently is immune to their toxic skin secretions. Contrary to what would seem logical, they swallow the toads with the hind legs first. So, the next time you are enjoying your favorite wetland I hope you are lucky enough to observe the Common Watersnake and I hope you enjoy the adrenaline rush.



Announcing the latest AAW Adoption Achievement Awardees!

As has been its tradition, at its spring 2012 workshop, the Delaware Adopt-a-Wetland program recognized past year accomplishments of several individuals and groups. Groups receiving the well-deserved honors for 2011 included:

- [WISH/Wildlife Improvement at Stine Haskell](#) (for wildlife habitat stewardship at DuPont's Research Center in Newark)
- [The Delaware Native Plant Society](#) (for care of their native plant focused wetland at Big Oak Park near Smyrna)
- [The Bridgeville Lions and Lioness Club](#) (for long term conservation and care of their Upper Nanticoke River wetland)

A special *Friends of Delaware Wetlands* award was also given to the [DNREC/Watershed Stewardship Wetlands Team](#) of Mark Biddle, Amy Jacobs, Steve Williams, Alison Rogerson, Andy Howard & Rebecca Rothweiler for their outstanding efforts in integrating and advancing wetland restoration, monitoring, conservation and education in Delaware.

Farewell Terry Higgins!

It is with great pride and gratitude that Delaware Adopt-A-Wetland recognizes the many years of invaluable service of Terry Higgins, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences at Wesley College, and long-term Kent County Adopt-a-Wetland Coordinator, who is retiring this summer.

In addition to his years of service on the AAW coordination team and to Kent County adopters, Terry has spearheaded adoption of the Marydel Lions Club & Kent County Conservancy sites, and along with his wife Martha, stewards a beautiful 9-acre AAW site on his own property. Terry's contributions to AAW and wetland conservation in Delaware have been substantial and exemplary, and we will very much miss his positive, wise and caring influence.

