



# Landowner Letter

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE



Fall 2008

## Landowner Incentive Program

### Plant Propagation

The Delaware Landowner Incentive Program has partnered with the Mt. Cuba Center to begin a Plant Propagation Program that will increase populations of plants in the state that are rare/uncommon or are host plants for species-at-risk in Delaware. Native plant propagation also ensures that plant stock used in restoration projects is native and genetically adapted to our region.

To accomplish this, LIP biologists and staff survey current plant colonies and collect seeds. The seeds are delivered to Mt. Cuba to germinate. Once seedlings are successfully developed, LIP distributes them to landowners with appropriate habitat.



Alison Hunter  
Baltimore  
Checkerspot

### Spring/Summer 2008 Successful Propagations

Plant Host	Insect/Purpose
Cutleaf Coneflower <i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	<i>Papaipema nelita</i> (a coneflower borer moth)
White Turtlehead <i>Chelone glabra</i>	Baltimore Checkerspot
Poke Milkweed <i>Asclepias exaltata</i>	Rare species in DE - conservation concern



www.delawarewildflowers.org  
White Turtlehead

In order to continue propagating the Cutleaf Coneflower, DELIP is enlisting the aid of Delaware landowners to assist with seed germination. DELIP will provide seeds and materials for germination and will retrieve the seedlings in the spring to distribute to additional landowners.

*If you would like to participate in seed propagation, or if you are interested in planting some of our propagated seedlings on your property, please contact one of our LIP biologists.*

DE Landowner Incentive Program  
DE Division of Fish & Wildlife  
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Smyrna, DE 19977  
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2004 Hank Wallays

### Spotted Salamander

The spotted salamander is becoming more and more uncommon in Delaware because of habitat loss. It spends most of its life in small mammal burrows but will visit vernal pools for reproduction and egg-laying. The loss and/or degradation of vernal wetlands in Delmarva increases the necessity to preserve these important habitats.



McKenzie Hall

### Common Buckeye

The small, boldly colored buckeye prefers open areas with low vegetation and some bare ground. Caterpillars eat wildflowers and grassland plants, while adults feed on nectar and fluids from mud or damp sand. Early successional fields provide excellent habitat for the buckeye.

# Feature Article: Key Wildlife Habitat

## Early Successional Habitats

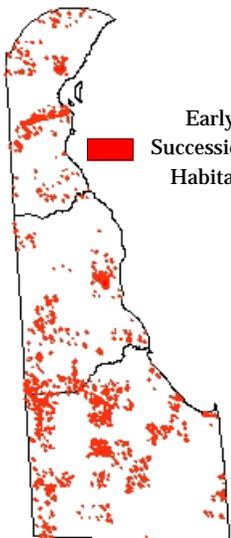
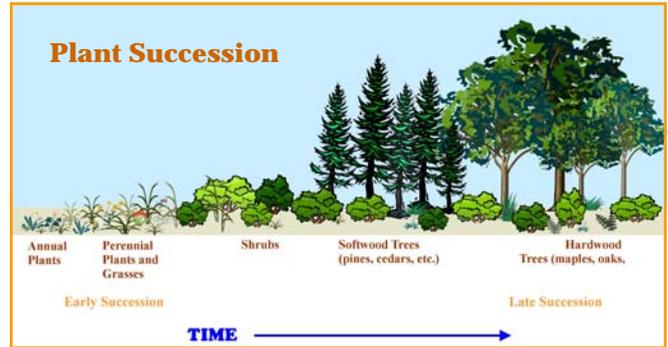
### What are they?

Plant succession is the process of vegetation change over time. Early successional habitats consist of a wide diversity of plant species from grasses and wildflowers to herbaceous and woody shrubs. Usually involving a large stretch of land, early successional habitats are especially key in providing food, nesting sites, and cover for grassland and ground nesting birds.

In natural, unmanaged habitats, plant succession would be maintained at an early stage via wildfires, which would limit the growth of tree seedlings and shrubs.

Currently, factors such as wildfire suppression, urban

development, agricultural practices, and invasive species have contributed to the limited number of early successional habitats found in Delaware, resulting in the decline of at least 48 species of greatest conservation need.



Early Successional Habitats



Chris Bennett  
Grasshopper Sparrow



Chris Bennett  
Little Bluestem



Lynne Staub  
Tiger Swallowtail on  
Common Milkweed



Lynne Staub  
Black-eyed Susan

### Where are early successional habitats found?

Throughout Delaware - most common in central New Castle Co., southwestern Kent Co., and mid to western Sussex Co.

### Species dependant on this habitat:

Animals: Grasshopper sparrow, Vesper sparrow, Buckeye Butterfly, Eastern milksnake, Least shrew, Northern bobwhite quail

Plants: Common milkweed, Black-eyed Susan, Broom-sedge, Beardgrass, Little bluestem, Indian Grass, Partridge Pea

## DE Landowner Incentive Program Updates:

A total of 151 landowners have received financial assistance from LIP and over 1200 acres of wildlife habitat have been restored!

- 460 acres of Early Successional Habitat

- 694 acres reforested

- 48 acres of Wetland Habitat

- 3 acres of invasive species control

*We would like to welcome Brian Jennings to our team of LIP biologists. Brian joins us with an extensive background in wildlife conservation and ecology and we are excited to have him on our team!*

### Delaware's LIP Biologists

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# Stories of Conservation

## James Richardson, Kent County

A bricklayer by trade and a “farm boy” at heart, Mr. Richardson enjoys taking care of his 51 acres of land himself. The Landowner Incentive Program allows him to do just that, with the added benefit of providing quality habitat for a variety of Delaware’s grassland wildlife species.

The Richardson property was seeded in native warm season grasses and wildflowers to maintain an early successional habitat. After only two years in the program, Mr. Richardson has noted new wildlife in his grassland fields. He has seen rabbits, white-tail deer fawns and even spotted a covey of bobwhite quail. The quail were an exciting discovery as those are the first that he has seen there in almost 25 years!

Bird surveys done by LIP biologists have revealed a total of 5 Species of Greatest Conservation Need using the Richardson fields: Grasshopper sparrow, Eastern kingbird, Northern bobwhite quail, Black vulture and Dicksissel.

When asked if he would have done this on his own, Mr. Richardson responded, “Probably not. We need to have a cash return off the land.” LIP gives him that opportunity

to provide wildlife habitat, while still receiving financial benefit from his property.

The Richardson property has been enrolled in the Landowner Incentive Program for two years now, and after his five-year contract is complete, Mr. Richardson says he is considering signing on for another five years. The Landowner Incentive Program “Gives your [farm] land a rest. It takes away the stresses of farming, with a good return!”



The Richardsons' early successional habitat is planted in warm season grasses and wildflowers, which include: Little bluestem, Indian grass, Black-eyed susan, Broom sedge, Partridge pea, Purplestem aster, Butterfly milkweed and several other native grassland plants.



The 2nd Delaware Breeding Bird Atlas is a five-year study of the distribution of all breeding birds occurring in Delaware. Volunteers conducted surveys for the first atlas project from 1983-1987 and provided baseline data regarding breeding bird species and their locations.

### The current atlas project is designed to:

- Build and improve the original baseline data
- Collect important information on rare species
- Provide detailed distribution maps for all bird species breeding in Delaware

*Delaware is broken up into approximately 265 survey blocks—each block containing about 10 sq. miles. Volunteer atlasers may be block “owners” or submit breeding reports from casual observations.*

Would you like to be an atlaser?

### CONTACT:

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BBA Coordinator

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*Photo by Chris Bennett*

# Program Information

## Invasive Plant Control:

### What is an invasive plant?

A plant (usually non-native) that is often very aggressive and out-competes and displaces native flora and fauna.

In most cases, these plants are without their native predators and are therefore able to grow abundantly—altering or damaging native plant communities and habitats. A lack of native vegetation directly affects local wildlife

**Common Reed** *Phragmites Australis* aggressively invades wet areas, clogging waterways and potentially decreasing the extent of wetlands. Dense growth also shades out native aquatic and marsh plants.



dependent on indigenous foliage, pollen, nectar, fruit and seeds. This decrease in essential food sources and habitats creates a need for invasive plant removal.

Invasive plant control can be done manually (hand pulling, cutting, mowing), by use of an approved herbicide, and/or by controlled burning.

*The Div. of Fish and Wildlife provides assistance to landowners in controlling invasive plants in areas where a species-at-risk will directly benefit.*

### Financial Assistance:

The Division of Fish and Wildlife will provide a flat rate of \$118.40/acre for ground application of an approved aquatic herbicide within a wetland and \$59.20/acre if aerial application is required. Invasive plant control on upland habitat provides a flat rate of \$55.50/acre. If mechanized equipment is used, a flat rate of \$333.00 may be provided.



**Mile-a-Minute Weed** *Polygonum perfoliatum* climbs over other plants and can shade out native species. It can also prevent tree seedlings from developing and has been detrimental to reforestation.

***If you have questions regarding invasive plants, or are interested in assistance with control, contact one of our LIP biologists.***



Large patches of **Japanese Stiltgrass** *Microstegium vimineum* out-compete native plants and change nutrient cycling in the soil, eventually creating a monoculture.



**Garlic Mustard** *Alliaria petiolata* colonizes forest understories and competes with wildflowers and tree seedlings for light and space.