



Summer 2022 Newsletter

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Thoughts from Laura Hassell,
WHFF Executive Director

Summer is a busy time for us at the White House Farm Foundation (WHFF). As our staff has grown, so have our programs, community outreach, and restoration work. In this issue you will read about our exciting programs taking place at Leopold's Preserve in Haymarket.

But the WHFF's outreach doesn't stop there. We highlighted the Plein Environmental Scholarship in our last newsletter, and we are excited to be reviewing those applications this month. As evidenced through the scholarship, we strongly believe in the mission of Virginia's community colleges. This spring, we donated plants and landscaping services to Jenkins Hall, the newest building at Laurel Ridge Community College's Luray Campus (formerly Lord Fairfax Community College).

We were also pleased to be the Title Sponsor for the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust's (NVCT) annual gala held at George Washington's historic River Farm. The NVCT is an important partner of ours, not only because they hold our conservation easement at Leopold's Preserve, but also because of the important work they do conserving land – including spearheading the Save River Farm campaign. The WHFF is also helping out at River Farm by donating plant material and labor to restore the historic grounds.

Be sure to sign up for our mailing list on our website, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to find out how you can get involved.



SMSC Students examine a turtle during a field experience at Leopold's Preserve.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION

One of the most important parts of our mission is to enrich individuals with knowledge of ecology, history, and wise land use. The interpretive signs and free educational programs at Leopold's Preserve represent one part of our commitment to sharing knowledge, but our support of education extends across Northern Virginia. We love hosting students of all ages on field trips and research experiences, both at the Preserve in Haymarket and at the Farm in Luray. If you're interested in an educational visit to one of our properties, please contact us!

Growing Partnership with SMSC

We're thrilled to be growing our partnership with the [Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation](#)! A few weeks ago, SMSC students visited the Preserve to investigate plant diversity in our upland depression swamp and water quality in beaver-modified wetlands. They found that harmful nutrients were being filtered and retained by our beaver dam, preventing pollution in downstream ecosystems. We hope to host more SMSC students this fall as part of an upper-level independent research course!



A monarch butterfly clings to a native milkweed flower.

GOING NATIVE

Native plants are foundational to our work in ecosystem conservation and restoration, particularly when converting disturbed farmland into native meadow habitat. Native plants are the centerpiece of our restored meadows at the White House Farm and Leopold's Preserve.

Besides large-scale restorations, native plants can also play an important role in landscaping. In a practice typically dominated by ornamentals that offer little benefit to wildlife, native plants are a great way to increase pollinator and bird activity in any location. You can find resources to help you embrace native plants in your garden through the Virginia Native Plant Society website, including [this guide to native plants of Northern Virginia!](#)

Friday Conservation Corps

Since its inception this March, a dozen volunteers have given nearly 70 hours of their time through the Conservation Corps! With their help, we've been able to accomplish much more than we could on our own. From maintaining the western wetland to cleaning up trails, volunteers have taken on stewardship tasks at the Preserve week after week. We're also grateful for the [Bull Run Mountains Conservancy](#) and the [Virginia Master Naturalist Merrimac Farm Chapter](#), who have supported this and other volunteer efforts with us. If you're interested in volunteering with the FCC, [click here!](#) Join us for just an hour or come back every week. We'd love to have your help!

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

Updates from the Preserve

Summer has arrived with a burst of green - our southern trails are now nicely shaded by oak and hickory leaves, while our meadows are blooming with color. Birds, pollinators, and dragonflies abound, and our calendar is packed with exciting events. We're honored that so many individuals and organizations have continued to support our mission at Leopold's Preserve!



Volunteers pose with their completed duck boxes on our wetland observation deck.

Wood Duck Nest Box Building

We're so thankful for the volunteers who joined us in early June to build new nest boxes for our wood ducks! Park Manager Nick gave a quick talk about wood duck life history, then everyone got a good workout screwing together the pre-cut cedar boards. We assembled 8 boxes which we'll install in our western wetland this fall - keep an eye out for them!

#TrailCamTuesday

We're lucky to have the support of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, who recently loaned us 20 trail cameras to use around the Preserve. With their cameras, we've been able to capture incredible photos and videos of many animal species - deer, fox, coyote, beaver, raccoon, rabbit, and more! To see some of the highlights, check out our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages - we post trail camera footage every Tuesday.



This Red Fox was caught on one of our trail cameras in late March.

"MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY"

Dominion Woman's Club at the Preserve

The Dominion Woman's Club is dedicated to improving their community through volunteer service. In the past several years, they have consistently tackled important service projects with us. In the fall of 2020, club members began volunteering at the Preserve, and they quickly became some of our most dedicated partners. That winter, they helped us to decide how to logically organize our trails. Before this point, none of our trails were named or labeled, which sometimes confused visitors. Now, specific loops and through trails designated with the help of the DWC are labeled with color-coded signs that help everyone stay oriented.



DWC members at their bench dedication ceremony.

Over the years, these women have cultivated a love of the Preserve - one member describes it as "a special place for me to paint, enjoy nature, wildlife and open space." In the past two years, they have installed an attractive garden at the parking lot entrance, planted daffodils around the Old House, donated



Just a few examples of projects supported by the Dominion Woman's Club!

a bench overlooking our pond, and planted 16 saplings along Meadow Loop. As if this impressive list of accomplishments wasn't enough, members of the DWC have helped us with countless smaller projects. We can't thank them enough for their support of the Preserve. To learn more about the Dominion Woman's Club and the work they do in our community, visit dominionwomansclub.org.

JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

Freshwater Ecology Walk

Saturday, June 18, 10 AM - 12 PM
Leopold's Preserve

Participate in a stream exploration and learn about all the fascinating critters that inhabit our freshwater systems. Led by our partners at the [Bull Run Mountains Conservancy](#).

Wildlife Releases

Wednesday, June 22 9 AM - 11 AM
Saturday, July 23 9 AM - 11 AM
Leopold's Preserve

Our partners at [AERO Animal Rescue](#) will be releasing rehabbed opossums into the Preserve! Stop by for an educational talk prior to each release.

Friday Conservation Corps

Every Friday, 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM
Leopold's Preserve

This drop-in/drop-out volunteer activity is perfect for students, scouts, and anyone looking to earn community service hours. All participants must [register through our website](#).



Nature's Best Hope, Douglas W. Tallamy

Tallamy draws on the work of Aldo Leopold and other conservationists to push back against the idea that "humans are here and nature is somewhere else." We love his passionate endorsements of wise land use and native landscaping!

What We've Been Reading



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www.whfarmfoundation.org



@LeopoldsPreserve
www.leopoldspreserve.com

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