



field notes

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A SPRING CLEANING FOR ANDREW JACKSON'S HOME

On the grounds of The Hermitage, President Andrew Jackson's historic home in Nashville, a massive sinkhole that had been used as a dumping ground for decades received a much-needed spring cleaning in April. The Conservancy and The Hermitage collaborated on a cleanup project to remove more than 60 tons of old home appliances, tires, furniture, and all sorts of household trash that had accumulated in the sinkhole.

Sinkholes — which form naturally in limestone through the etching of water over centuries — reach down into groundwater tables. Any garbage or chemicals in a sinkhole can contaminate groundwater for miles around, because groundwater flows just as surface water does. This sinkhole, with a mouth that is 20 feet by 40 feet wide and depth beyond 40 feet, is situated just one mile from the Cumberland River to the west and one mile from Old Hickory Lake to the northeast. Because of the high water table and the depth of the sinkhole, pollution of the nearby river and the lake is a very real possibility.

Although now a part of The Hermitage's 1,100-plus acres and historically owned by Andrew Jackson, the sinkhole was for many years not part of The Hermitage grounds. The parcel of land that includes the sinkhole was acquired in 2002.

Recently, The Nature Conservancy approached The Hermitage with a solution for the problem it had inherited: a grant program that covers 75 percent of the costs of cleanup and allows The Hermitage to match 25 percent with its own expenditures and in-kind labor costs.



Jeffrie Hunter, vice president for site operations at The Hermitage, surveys the trash-filled sinkhole on property acquired by The Hermitage in 2002. In April, The Nature Conservancy spearheaded the cleanup of this site. Photo © Paul Kingsbury/TNC

Funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Landowner Incentive Program is managed in Tennessee by The Nature Conservancy. It was the Conservancy's Cave Program Manager Cory Holliday who contacted The Hermitage with the grant offer and a plan to clean the sinkhole and restore it to a safe, natural state.

"Sinkholes are direct conduits to our groundwater in Tennessee. The Nature Conservancy is really pleased to offer landowners the opportunity to clean up sinkholes on their property," says

Holliday. "I think the Hermitage project illustrates that this is a widespread and universal problem in Tennessee, and we're very happy to be part of the solution."

The cleanup began in early April and concluded in early May. A local firm, Treeworks, was engaged to do the hazardous, hands-on work of removing the decades of trash as well as to take care of the plantings and landscape restoration. The cleanup included sorting the debris for proper disposal and recycling. Cost for the project was approximately \$22,000.

HELPING OUT TENNESSEE FARMERS AROUND THE DUCK RIVER

The Duck River is one of Tennessee's most scenic waterways. It's also one of the richest rivers in aquatic life on the entire continent. Just as significant, the Duck River is the sole water source for 250,000 people in Middle Tennessee.

The Duck is a healthy river, and The Nature Conservancy has been working to keep it that way. One key Conservancy project has been the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). Funded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and administered by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, LIP helps landowners make property improvements that protect and restore streambanks, reduce erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. The program pays for 75 percent of improvement costs.

Under LIP, managed by Conservancy staffer Corey Giles, the Conservancy has brought more than \$600,000 of improvements along the streambanks of key Duck River tributaries for 47 landowners since 2004. The improvements have included about 17 miles of fencing to keep cattle from muddying creeks, 45



Cattle farmer Wade Myers (left) talks with Conservancy staffer Corey Giles (center) and a Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency staffer beside the frost-free cattle watering station the Conservancy and TWRA helped Myers install. Photo © Gina Hancock/TNC

state-of-the-art frost-free watering stations for cattle, and hundreds of tree plantings. "We've concentrated mainly on three key Duck tributaries—Alexander Creek, North Fork, and Weakley Creek," says Giles. "We're focused on these because that's where the biodiversity is."

Wade Myers of Unionville speaks highly of LIP and the help the Conservancy has provided on his 200-acre cattle ranch on Weakley Creek. "The watering stations we put in for the cattle are the single best improvement I've ever done on this farm in my 36 years here," he says, adding, "Corey has been great to work with."

CONSERVANCY'S CHIEF SCIENTIST SPEAKS AT BELMONT UNIV.

In March, Peter Kareiva, chief scientist for The Nature Conservancy, addressed a full house of college students, professors, and Nature Conservancy supporters at the Jack C. Massey Business Center of Belmont University. The topic of the public lecture was "Conservation in a Human-Dominated World Experiencing Economic Crisis," and it was part of a year-long series organized around the university's hosting of last fall's Town Hall Presidential Debate.

A university scientist by training, Kareiva has published and lectured widely on the need for 21st century conservation that goes beyond setting aside protected areas just for rare plants and animals. In a world challenged by explod-



Photo © Darlene Panvini

Peter Kareiva: "We need to stop thinking of man as a blight and start thinking of a future in which people and nature both prosper!"

ing population and finite resources, Kareiva argued forcefully for focusing on protecting ecosystems that are most vital to people's health and their needs for survival. Unless conservation is better connected to people and their needs, he said, it will fail. He noted that in order to succeed, conservation must reconnect people with nature, show that nature is a good economic investment for people, and make clear that "conservation is about choosing a future, not bemoaning a lost past."

The lecture was videotaped by Nashville's Channel 10 for later broadcast. We plan to share details about that broadcast in the next issue of *Field Notes*.

ARBOR DAY COMES TO THE NORTH CUMBERLAND WMA

In March, a team of about 30 enthusiastic volunteers pitched in to reclaim former strip mines by planting hundreds of trees. The event took place at the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area, whose hardwood forests were protected in 2007 as part of Tennessee's largest conservation deal since the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

On a cold, foggy morning that warmed up into a lovely spring day, the team planted approximately 1,000 native hardwood seedlings on the site in the Cumberland Mountains, near Frozen Head State Park. The seedlings included 200 chestnut trees donated by the American Chestnut Foundation, which is working on restoring the chestnut tree to American forests.

The event was organized by the Conservancy in cooperation with the Office of Surface Mining, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Division of Forestry, Lexington Coal Company, Triple H Coal, the American Chestnut Foundation, the Coal Creek Foundation, Tennessee State Parks, and the Friends of Cumberland Trail State Park.



A group of Young Marines works with Vic Davis from the federal Office of Surface Mining to plant a seedling at the North Cumberland WMA. Photo © Vic Davis/OSM

Among the volunteers were Nature Conservancy supporters, members of the Coal Creek Watershed Association, Young Marines, and several high school students. "I was really pleased with the number of young people that came out," says Nature Conservancy staffer Kathe-

rine Medlock. "They got to interact closely with conservation professionals from The Nature Conservancy, the Tennessee Division of Forestry, TWRA, and others. It was a wonderful way to encourage the next generation of conservationists." Thanks to all who volunteered!

DUDLEY PORTER JR. — IN MEMORIAM

Longtime Nature Conservancy leader and supporter Dudley Porter Jr. died March 10 at a Chattanooga hospital. He was 93. In the 1970s, he was one of the core group who established the Tennessee Chapter of the Conservancy.

A board member of the chapter from its earliest years up until 1990, Porter was also a key figure in spearheading early Nature Conservancy successes in protecting Savage Gulf, Taylor Hollow, and the Tennessee River Gorge.

To oversee the 26-mile gorge's continued protection, Mr. Porter cofounded the Tennessee River Gorge Trust, while continuing to maintain his engagement

with The Nature Conservancy. In 1991, he received the Jane Whitson Award for his service to the Tennessee Chapter.

An attorney for the Provident Life and Accident Insurance Company in Chattanooga, Mr. Porter headed the company's law department and served as its general counsel during his 27 years with Provident. Following his retirement from Provident in 1976, he served as counsel to the law firm of Chambliss & Bahner.

Mr. Porter made his first gift to the Conservancy in 1973 and continued to make generous gifts annually. Upon his

death, he made a substantial gift to the chapter's activities in Southeast Tennessee through a deferred compensation plan, for which we are very grateful. When doing estate planning, please consider a designated gift to the Tennessee Chapter. Like the generous contributions of Dudley Porter, your Legacy Club gift can make ongoing difference for nature and for future generations right here in our state.

Please let us know if you have already included the Conservancy in your estate plan. If you would like more information about making a bequest and creating your legacy, please call Wendy Buntin, Director of Philanthropy, (615) 383-9909.

NEWS NOTES

ROCK ART FOUND ON CONSERVANCY PRESERVE

This winter The Nature Conservancy announced that a startling discovery had been made at a Conservancy preserve on the Cumberland Plateau. The protected land contained a rare example of Native American rock art. The black painting, which depicts a human figure, has been authenticated by University of Tennessee archaeologist Jan Simek.

Simek estimates the painting to date from around 1000 to 1600 A.D. "It is a remarkable figure," Simek told the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*. "In my mind, there is no chance it is a recent fake." Although this painting and the acres surrounding it are permanently protected, the Tennessee Chapter is still raising funds to pay off debt taken on to purchase this property. Donations are much appreciated!



The ancient painting. © Cory Holliday/TNC



SHOP EARTH FARE, HELP THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

To encourage customers to switch to re-usable shopping bags, Earth Fare supermarket in Knoxville has begun a new campaign involving The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Chapter. In the Choose or Reuse™ campaign, every time a customer chooses to take a new plastic or paper bag for groceries,



CONSERVANCY TEAMS UP WITH BONNAROO

The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Chapter has joined the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival as a Greening Partner. Bonnaroo is a four-day, multi-stage music festival held each June on a 700-acre farm in Manchester, Tennessee. This year's festival dates are June 11-14. Bonnaroo brings together some of the most popular performers in rock & roll, along with top artists from bluegrass, Americana, hip hop and jazz.

To kick off this new partnership, Bonnaroo offered two pairs of backstage passes to meet musical artists David Byrne and Robert Earl Keen. Rock artist David Byrne, the former lead singer

of Talking Heads, will be performing "The Songs of David Byrne and Brian Eno" at Bonnaroo. Texas singer songwriter Robert Earl Keen is a leading star of the Americana scene. The tickets were offered in an online auction at the Web site charityfolks.com. The funds raised from these tickets will support the Conservancy's work in protecting lands and waters for people and nature.

In Tennessee, funds from the auction will help ensure the long-term protection of the Duck River, which passes through Manchester and is one of the richest rivers in aquatic life in North America. The Duck is a key Conservancy project site.

SECURING THE BAT CAVE

To protect endangered gray bats, The Nature Conservancy and partners recently installed a massive gate at a cave protected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Old Hickory Lake, just outside Nashville. The state-of-the-art, 5,400-pound steel structure allows bats to fly through, while excluding potential vandals. Thanks to gates like this—and The Nature Conservancy's acquisition of four key gray bat roosting sites in Ten-



Building the gate. © Cory Holliday/TNC

nessee—gray bat numbers are on the rebound.

ies, they are asked to donate 5¢ to one of two organizations: The Nature Conservancy or TVA GreenPower Switch. When a customer brings in a reusable bag or box, Earth Fare donates 5¢. The participating Earth Fare supermarket is located at 10903 Parkside Drive in Knoxville. This environmentally friendly program runs through June. Please support TNC through Earth Fare.

LET'S RECYCLE OUR GOOD NEWS!

When you're finished with this newsletter, think about it dropping at off at the reception area of your doctor, dentist, or hairdresser. The same goes for our *Nature Conservancy* magazine. It's good for the environment and a great way to spread the word about The Nature Conservancy!