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OUR MISSION

New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all. Through acquisition and stewardship, we protect strategic lands from the Highlands to the Pine Barrens to the Delaware Bayshore. We promote strong land conservation policies at the local, state and federal levels, forge partnerships to achieve conservation goals, and provide support and technical assistance to partner groups. Since 1960, we have preserved more than 140,000 acres of open space, farmland, and parks. We also manage more than a dozen nature preserves, conduct public outreach and education programs, and advocate for sensible land use and climate policies that will protect the health of New Jersey communities for generations to come.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Dear members and friends,

We are in very challenging times when it comes to defending and advancing policies that safeguard the natural systems upon which all life depends. Climate change continues to accelerate, and with it comes increasing loss of natural habitat. New development on “greenfields” marches on. Here in New Jersey and across the continent, these forces are reshaping our landscapes and putting immense pressure on native plants and animals.

Of all the creatures that share our earth, perhaps none intrigue and delight us quite like our feathered friends. The recently released 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report paints a sobering picture: bird populations are declining significantly, with 229 species now in urgent need of conservation. And New Jersey, with its diverse landscapes and ecosystems, is no exception. The situation has been deteriorating for decades, with many species now at what the report calls the “tipping point” – at risk of vanishing entirely.

Despite this news, conservation efforts are yielding positive results for some New Jersey birds, and there are parallel efforts to save other species. In this Annual Report, we examine some of the ways New Jersey Conservation Foundation’s work impacts resident and migratory birds throughout the state. Read about the unique ways in which birds depend on our state’s habitats to survive. Learn more about the strategies, successes, and challenges facing conservation efforts that save birds and their vital habitats.

With your generous support, New Jersey Conservation Foundation is stepping up efforts to change the current course and to create a future where a rich diversity of species inhabits our world and the magnificent winged creatures of today continue to soar across our skies for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of this critically important work!

In partnership,

Alison Mitchell
Executive Director

Louise Wilson
Board President

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For membership information, please visit:
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Mailing address: 170 Longview Road,
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Follow us on Facebook! @njconservation

Stewardship Spotlight

Our incredible stewardship team has been hard at work increasing the accessibility of the Franklin Parker Preserve. Funding from the Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program and a partnership with the Pinelands Preservation Alliance is helping us to carry out these measures:

- Removing roots, rocks, branches, and debris from trails to ensure they are obstruction-free.
- Creating flatter, more compact surfaces for trails.
- Lowering kiosks to make signage more visible to people who use wheelchairs.
- Widening gate openings.
- Creating ADA-compliant parking spaces.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue working to make our largest preserve more welcoming to all nature lovers!

To plan your trip to the preserve visit:
njconservation.org/preserve/franklin-parker-preserve

ABOUT THE COVER

Friend and supporter Penelope Ayers captured this incredible image – not a composite! – of two young tricolored herons following their mother across the branches of Ocean City’s heron rookery. You can see more of Penelope’s photography on pages 4 and 5 in our story about the white ibis.



All photos by Jess Fasano



WHITE IBISES

A southern visitor that's here to stay

Until recently, you had to head south to spot a white ibis – way south. These elegant birds, with their bright white feathers and long, curved pink bills, were once found mostly in Florida and along the Gulf Coast. But recently, they started showing up in New Jersey, and they're not just passing through.

During the spring of 2020, the first white ibises were found nesting in New Jersey in Ocean City. In May of 2025, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection counted 906 – likely an underestimation – according to the Asbury Park Press. It's a striking reminder of how climate change is reshaping the natural world, right in our own backyards. As temperatures rise and weather patterns shift, many species are adapting to survive – heading to cooler areas or following food sources. For the white ibis, warmer summers and milder winters have opened the door to new breeding grounds along the Mid-Atlantic coast.

The good news is that decades of wetlands conservation is paying off. Restored and protected tidal marshes, estuaries, and coastal wetlands support native species like great egrets and glossy ibises, while also providing habitat for newcomers. Today, white ibises are most commonly spotted at the Ocean City rookery, alongside hundreds of egrets, herons, and other birds.

While it's exciting for birders and nature lovers to see these graceful newcomers gliding



Great egret nest by Penelope Ayers

over our marshes, their recent arrival raises important ecological questions. What happens to the species that were already here? What does this ultimately mean for these ecosystems?

As white ibises settle in, they may compete with resident species for limited nesting sites and food resources, potentially shifting the balance of the densely populated rookery. Researchers, like those at The Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, are watching closely to see how these dynamics unfold over time. The white ibis is just one example of how climate change is shifting the rules for wildlife. Species we're accustomed to seeing may start to disappear, while others we've never hosted before may soon become our neighbors. Conservation isn't just about preserving what we've had, it's about preparing for what's coming by using the best available science at any given moment, knowing it is still evolving.

One of the best strategies is to keep protecting diverse, resilient habitats because that helps all species, whether they've lived here for centuries or are just starting to call New Jersey home.

The vanishing red knot

Each spring for millennia, red knots have migrated from the southern tip of South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra – a 10,000-mile trip! To make it through this epic journey, red knots stop to refuel along Delaware Bayshore beaches in New Jersey, gorging on nutrient-rich horseshoe crab eggs and doubling their weight to gain enough strength to complete their journey to nest and raise young in the north.



RED KNOT

Photo by Chathura De Silva



Horseshoe crabs by Paul VanDerWerf

Historically, every spring, horseshoe crabs have laid millions of eggs. When females are abundant, they lay more eggs than can fit deep in the sand, resulting in floating eggs that will never hatch but instead feed shorebirds, fish, turtles, and other wildlife. But today, beaches that once brimmed with horseshoe crab eggs have far fewer to feed red knots and other shorebirds. Due to decades of horseshoe crab overharvesting and the pharmaceutical industry's dependence on horseshoe crab blood, populations have been decimated. Without the critical food supplied by crab eggs, the weak and hungry migrating birds are often not making it to the Arctic to reproduce – putting them on the path toward extinction.

Because of the sharply declining horseshoe crab numbers, red knots are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. There is currently a moratorium on the harvest of horseshoe crabs in the State of New Jersey.

Red knots have been affected by other threats as well, including direct effects from climate change, coastal development, and disturbance by vehicles, dogs, drones, planes, and boats. A staggering 94 percent have disappeared since the 1980s. Organizations like the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition and the American Littoral Society work



Shorebirds by Paul Williams

tirelessly to protect horseshoe crabs on our coasts, and in turn, help shorebirds like the red knot to rebuild their once-thriving populations.

The dire outlook for the red knot is a powerful reminder that no species exists in isolation. The horseshoe crabs of this region hold together a complex web of relationships in the ecosystem – a critical link in coastal biodiversity.

Just as these birds rely on the ancient horseshoe crab for survival, so too does all life in New Jersey depend on the health of its interconnected ecosystems – from tidal marshes and coastal dunes to forests and freshwater wetlands. When one link in the chain begins to fail, the entire web is at risk. By protecting land and natural resources and supporting sensible land use and climate policies, we are protecting both individual species and the rich biodiversity that sustains life across the Garden State.



GREAT BLUE HERON

The great blue heron's comeback story

The majestic great blue heron can be found at ponds, lakes, and rivers throughout New Jersey. As the largest heron in North America – standing nearly five feet tall with a wingspan up to six and a half feet – this elegant wading bird is hard to miss. But just over a century ago, seeing one was quite rare.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, great blue herons were hunted extensively for their plumes, which were highly valued in the fashion industry. Although plume hunting eventually declined, new threats emerged. Wetlands were drained, water quality deteriorated, and nesting efforts were disrupted by shoreline development and recreational activities. While great blue herons are remarkably adaptable, they are still vulnerable to changes in land use and habitat degradation.

Fortunately, conservation efforts have helped reverse their decline. A major turning point came with the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which made it illegal to harm, capture, or possess migratory birds, their nests, or their eggs. This landmark legislation provided a foundation for modern bird conservation and gave species like the great blue heron the legal protection they desperately needed.

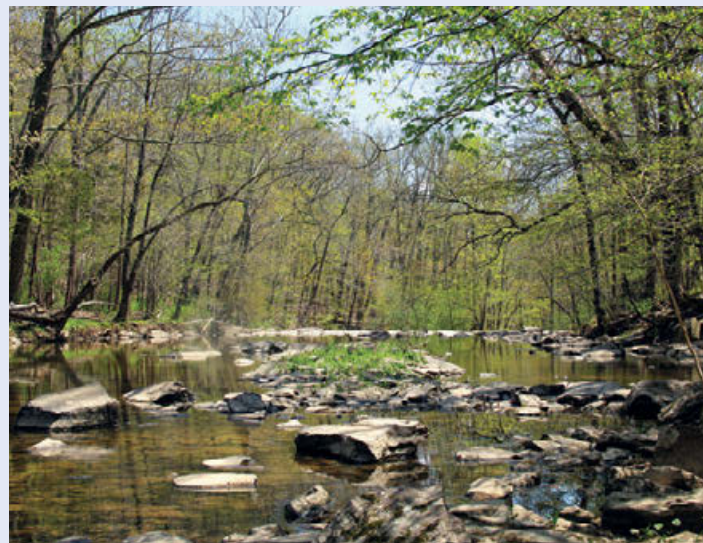
In the decades since, additional actions have contributed to the species' recovery. Regulations to reduce pollution have improved water quality in rivers, lakes, and wetlands – ensuring that herons have access to healthier fish and amphibian

populations. Public understanding of the ecological value of wetlands has also grown. These habitats are now recognized not only as critical for wildlife but also for flood control, water filtration, and carbon storage.

In the western part of the state, New Jersey Conservation Foundation's Wickecheoke Creek Preserve runs through dense forest and scenic meadows. Since the 1980s, we have been preserving lands along this pristine creek from

the forested wetlands of the Croton Plateau to where the creek meets the Delaware River in Stockton Borough. To date, New Jersey Conservation Foundation has preserved nearly 3,800 acres of open space and farmland in this corridor, creating and maintaining habitat for myriad bird species, including great blue heron!

Today, the larger presence of great blue herons across New Jersey reflects decades of dedicated conservation work. Their recovery reminds us that when we protect habitats and enforce strong environmental laws, even once-threatened species can return and thrive. The great blue heron's comeback is more than just a single success story – it's a testament to the broader power of conservation.



Wickecheoke Creek Preserve

Managing habitats for birds

Birds are declining worldwide, and there is an ongoing debate about how to best manage habitats for particular species. How should limited conservation resources be used to help them survive?



PINE WARBLER

Photo by Michael Marsh

Here in New Jersey, the wildfire-adapted Pine Barrens offer an important opportunity to manage habitat for a variety of declining birds by working with nature – and wildfires.

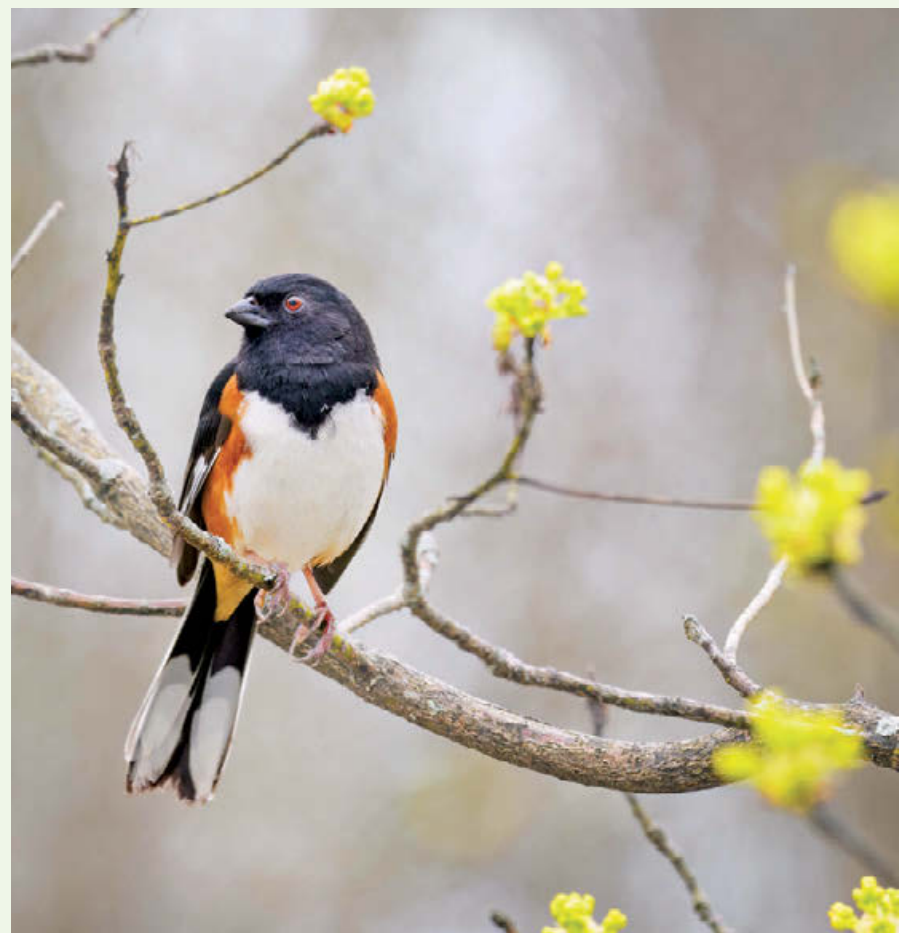
In recent years, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service has effectively used “containment” methods during wildfires, allowing fires to burn into areas protected by firebreaks – perimeters that have been safely burned, mostly along roads and lightly-thinned areas where scrub oaks, huckleberry shrubs, and young pitch pines have been mowed.

When the fire is over, the burned areas transform into spectacular Pine Barrens habitats filled with rare plants and animals that have evolved alongside wildfire over millennia, and the firebreaks and mowed forest areas also provide excellent habitat for many bird species. Among them are the Eastern towhee, pine warbler, and prairie warbler – some of the most vulnerable birds in the Pine Barrens.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation has had wildfires, prescribed fires, and firebreak projects on all of our major preserves in the Pine Barrens: the Franklin Parker, Candace McKee Ashmun, and Michael Huber Prairie Warbler preserves. We have received tremendous help from the Forest Fire Service in managing these fire events. As a result, our preserves are a stronghold for the Eastern towhee, prairie and pine warbler, common nighthawk, whip-poor-will, Eastern wood pewee, great crested flycatcher, Eastern bluebird, summer tanager, and many other birds that depend upon the natural disturbances that fires produce.

Additionally, an enormous 1,000-acre wetland restoration project started years ago by New Jersey Conservation, and funded by the Wetland Reserve Program of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, has converted the abandoned A.R. DeMarco

Enterprises cranberry fields at Franklin Parker Preserve back into natural wetlands. This has resulted in spectacular herbaceous and shrub wetland habitat for wetland-dependent species, including American woodcock, Eastern kingbird, blue grosbeak, tree swallow, and a variety of herons, terns, and ducks, as well as a dizzying array of amphibians and reptiles! The preserve boasts nearly 21 miles of trails and includes an observation platform overlooking the wetlands. For a trail map please visit: njconservation.org/preserve/franklin-parker-preserve.



Eastern towhee by Michael Marsh



Hooded warbler by Michael Marsh



Prescribed burn at Franklin Parker Preserve by NJ Forest Fire Service



Prothonotary warbler by Michael Marsh

In contrast, the Young Forest Initiative – a management approach often promoted in other areas of New Jersey outside of the Pine Barrens – relies on logging to clear-cut large swaths of mature deciduous oak-hickory forests in order to create habitat for particular bird species. While it aims to benefit wildlife, this expensive approach ignores one major obstacle: overabundant deer, which can often prevent the successful regrowth of trees and shrubs. Worse still, the Young Forest Initiative often results in the destruction of high-quality forest habitat in the hopes of creating something new – an unacceptable tradeoff in many cases, especially when our forests are dwindling and better options exist.

Mature forests in New Jersey that aren't prone to wildfires should never be logged or intentionally burned under the guise of natural resource protection. These include forests dominated by scarlet, white, Spanish, and post oaks, mature pitch and shortleaf pines, Atlantic white cedar, red maple, and black gum. They range from upland to wetland habitats and house interior forest birds that need dense shade and a closed tree canopy: prothonotary, hooded, and black-throated green warblers, hermit thrushes, ovenbirds, barred owls, red-shouldered hawks, yellow-billed cuckoos, and scarlet tanagers! Nearly all the warblers and songbirds are long-distance migrants that winter in the Caribbean, Central, or South America and seek specific habitats when they return to New Jersey to breed.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation follows a simple guiding principle: never purposely destroy one perfectly good, high value habitat in an attempt to create another. The risks are too great and the results are far too unpredictable. By working along pathways most akin to natural processes, managing for species of concern in the appropriate places, and using minimally invasive techniques, we welcome our feathered friends back each spring with healthy ecosystems that allow them to thrive.

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Ruby-crowned kinglet by Bill Lynch

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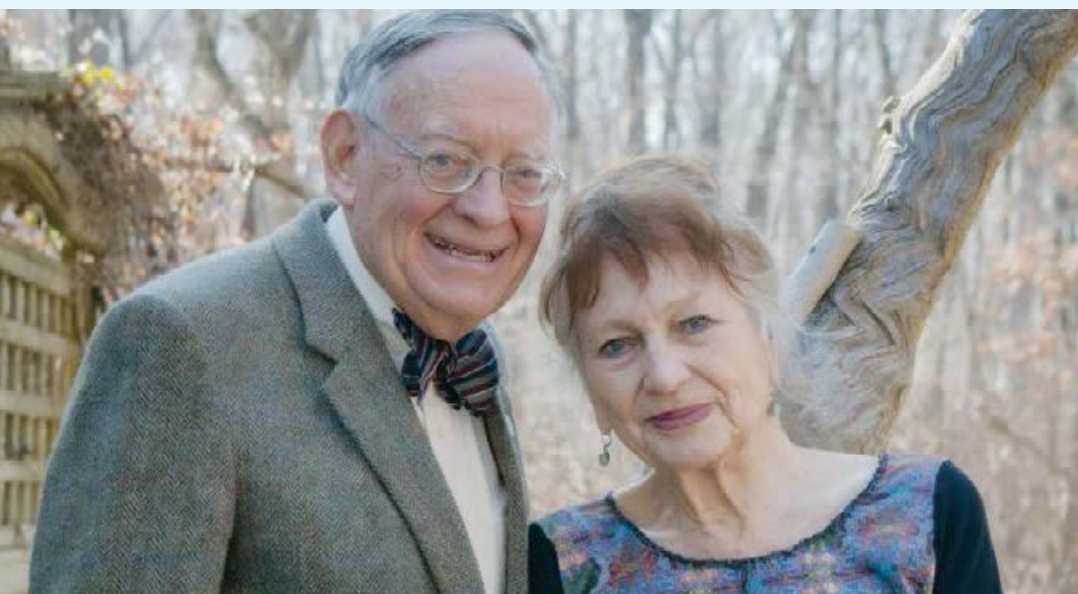
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“AS YOU LOOK AT THE NATURAL WORLD
IN ALL ITS VARIABILITY, CONNECTEDNESS,
AND DIVERSITY, IT’S JUST ONE MIRACLE
AFTER ANOTHER.”

— SCOTT & HELLA MCVAY

NJ Conservation honored Scott and Hella McVay at the annual gala on May 16th, 2024 at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton Township, Mercer County. The McVays, who reside in Princeton, were chosen for their inspiring leadership in conservation, environmental stewardship, and the connection between art and nature.

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 Estate of Harold H. Healy, Jr.
 Mary D. Herberich Family Trust
 Estate of Jane B. Knight

IN MEMORY OF

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 Art Spingarn, and Joyce & Harry Spingarn
 Roger Spingarn

2024 INTERN

Since spring 2024, superstar intern Sari Pehnke has spent hundreds of hours working with our stewardship team to maintain preserves across the state. She's assisted with countless projects – including searching for invasive pond mussels at Wickecheoke Creek Preserve, and removing litter during a stream cleanup at Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve (as seen in the photo!). Her great attitude and tireless efforts have had a positive impact on every one of these projects!

The internship was funded by The Garden Club of Morristown. Sari was recently honored with the President's Volunteer Service Award administered by the global nonprofit, Points of Light!

Thanks, Sari, for all you do!



Ellen Lucht Timko
FTI Consulting Team
Anne Kelleher and Dan Bodner
Navicore Solutions
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Jim "Rockets" Vellucci
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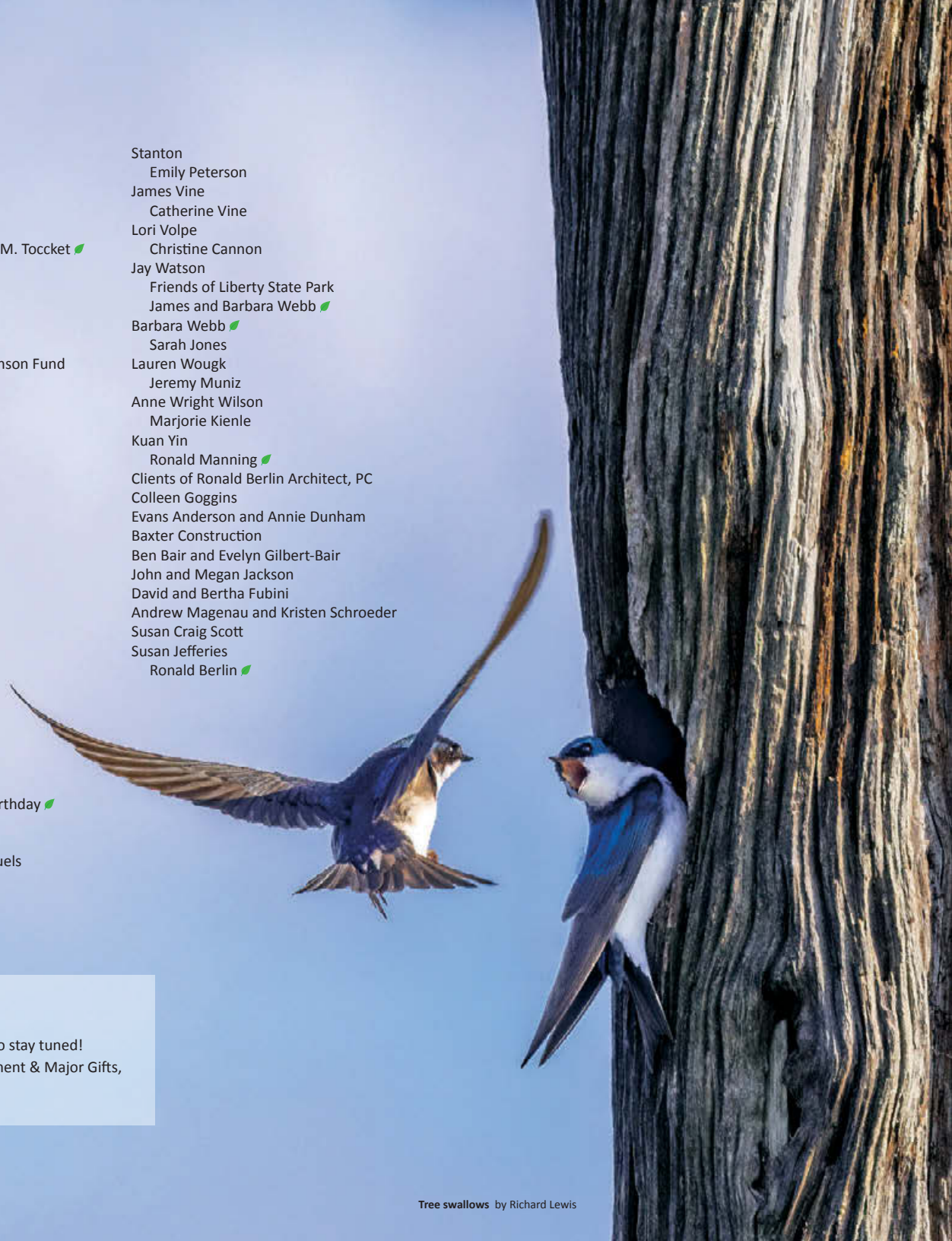
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DON'T SEE YOUR NAME? LET US KNOW!

Those who donated in 2025 will be included in next year's annual report, so stay tuned!
Share your thoughts and questions with Bo Humprey, Director of Development & Major Gifts,
at bo.humprey@njconservation.org.



LEAVE A LEGACY for Future Generations

The Red Oak Society was founded in 2011 to recognize those who donate to New Jersey Conservation Foundation through planned giving. We thank the conservation-minded members who are preserving New Jersey's natural resources and lands for future generations.



To become a member of the Red Oak Society, please let us know that you wish to support New Jersey Conservation Foundation's mission by:

- Giving through your will or charitable trust
- Giving through IRAs, qualified retirement plans, insurance or donor advised funds
- Gifts of cash, securities and real estate

To discuss how your planned gift will help ensure the permanence of preservation, please contact Bo Humphrey, Director of Development and Major Gifts, at 908-234-1225 or bo.humphrey@njconservation.org. While it is not necessary to advise us in advance that you have included New Jersey Conservation Foundation in your estate planning, we encourage you to let us know of your plans so that we may thank you and learn more about your interests.

If you wish to add us in your will or estate plan, please use the following listing:
New Jersey Conservation Foundation | 170 Longview Road, Far Hills, NJ 07931
Our tax ID number is 22-6065456.

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*denotes deceased members



Burlington County

PIERCE

10 Acres, Southhampton Township

This donated parcel buffers Burrs Mill Brook, a tributary of Rancocas Creek. Primarily wetlands and forest, it is contiguous to over 442 acres of NJ Conservation preserved land and close to our 1,272-acre Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Preserve. The land is located in an ecologically critical area in the heart of the Pine Barrens, and is habitat for a diversity of migrating birds.

Camden County

CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION

0.09 Acres, City of Camden

The Center for Environmental Transformation (CFET) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to environmental transformation in the neighborhoods of Camden. NJ Conservation partnered with CFET to fund the acquisition of the urban garden they manage in the City's Waterfront South neighborhood. We assisted CFET in protecting the garden's central lot, which was slated for development, ensuring this important space remains intact for generations to come. The garden provides food for the community, fosters community engagement, and serves as a place where local youth can gain work experience.

Cumberland County

FRANCESCHINI

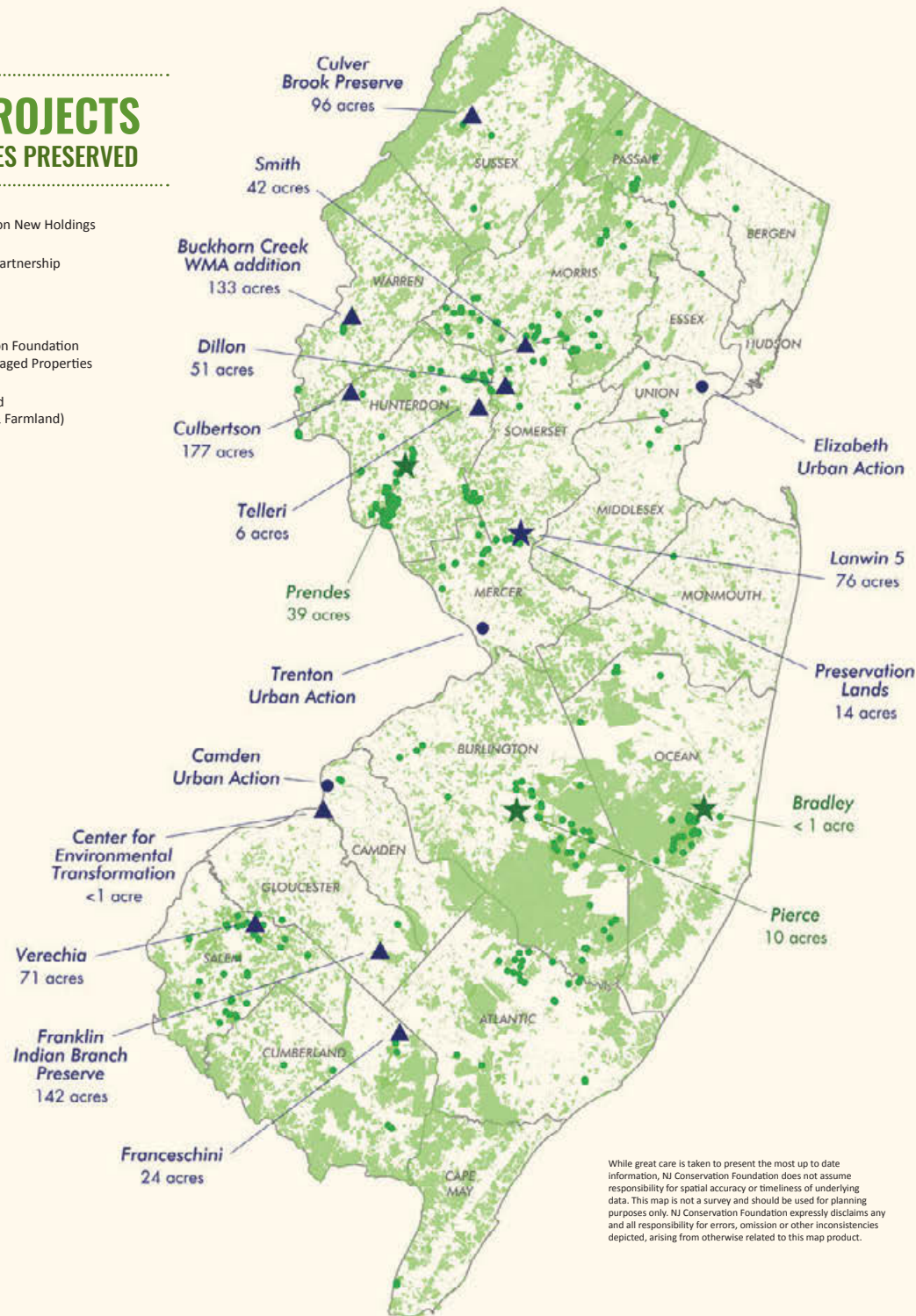
24 Acres, City of Vineland

The preservation of this property is significant given that it is among a small number of preserved active farms in the area. It is located close to NJ Conservation's Menantico Creek Preserve, also in Vineland. We assisted the State in acquiring an agricultural easement on the farm, which authorizes the State, in partnership with the landowner, to ensure the long-term protection of the property.

15 PROJECTS

881 ACRES PRESERVED

- ★ NJ Conservation New Holdings
- ▲ Preserved in Partnership
- Urban Action
- NJ Conservation Foundation Owned & Managed Properties
- Preserved Land (Open Space & Farmland)



While great care is taken to present the most up to date information, NJ Conservation Foundation does not assume responsibility for spatial accuracy or timeliness of underlying data. This map is not a survey and should be used for planning purposes only. NJ Conservation Foundation expressly disclaims any and all responsibility for errors, omission or other inconsistencies depicted, arising from otherwise related to this map product.



Gloucester County

FRANKLIN INDIAN BRANCH PRESERVE 142 Acres, Franklin Township

This forested property was permanently protected from development thanks to a joint effort led by South Jersey Land and Water Trust (SJLWT). The preservation project not only prevents the deforestation of this ecologically important land, but also preserves quality wildlife habitat and clean drinking water. SJLWT and NJ Conservation purchased the property using grant funding from the New Jersey Green Acres Program. Other partners included Franklin Township, the State's Office of Natural Resource Restoration, Natural Lands, and the landowners — the families of Louis Schipani and William Hallissey, who donated a significant portion of the land value. SJLWT owns and manages the property, which is open to the public for passive recreation and activities related to environmental education.

Hunterdon County

CULBERTSON

177 Acres, Bethlehem Township

NJ Conservation partnered with Hunterdon Land Trust in preserving this forested property located in the William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative focus area. Acquisition of this parcel is a part of a larger preservation effort in the Musconetcong River watershed aimed at improving water quality. The property is adjacent to a portion of NJ Audubon's Deerpath Sanctuary, and is located close to other preserved land. Other partners included the New Jersey Green Acres Program, Hunterdon County, Bethlehem Township, and the William Penn Foundation.

PRENDES

39 Acres, Raritan Township

The preservation of this forested property protects critical wildlife habitat and expands NJ Conservation's network of preserved lands along the Wickecheoke Creek and its tributaries. The property provides important breeding habitat for nesting birds including veery, Northern parula, and wood thrush. NJ Water Supply Authority has supported preservation of lands in this watershed as part of its Water Supply Protection Plan with the goal of protecting the D&R Canal water supply, and provided funding towards ancillary costs for this project. Additional funding partners included the New Jersey Green Acres Program and the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund.



PrenDES by Elise Cavicchi

TELLERI

6 Acres, Readington Township

Through our partnership with Raritan Headwaters Association, NJ Conservation assisted Readington Township in preserving this land along the Rockaway Creek, a tributary of the Lamington River, as public open space. The property links existing preserved lands to the east and west owned by Readington Township.

Mercer County

LANWIN 5 & PRESERVATION LANDS

90 Acres, Municipality of Princeton

NJ Conservation joined a public-private partnership to preserve the largest remaining undeveloped tract in the Princeton community. This historic acquisition ensures the preservation of vital ecological resources, including old-growth forests, wetlands, and habitats for endangered species. Partners included the Municipality of Princeton, Friends of Princeton Open Space, Ridgeview Conservancy, The Watershed Institute, Mercer County and the New Jersey Green Acres Program.

Ocean County

BRADLEY

0.3 acres, Lacey Township

The donation of these small, undeveloped parcels expands NJ Conservation's nearly 4,000-acre Candace McKee Ashmun Preserve at Forked River Mountain. The area includes a mix of pine and oak upland forests, pitch pine lowlands, and cedar swamps.

Salem County

VERECHIA

71 Acres, Pilesgrove Township

NJ Conservation assisted the State in acquiring an agricultural easement on this 71-acre farm, ensuring its preservation. The entire property is located within the headwaters area of Oldman's Creek and the Salem River Watershed, and includes habitat for rare species.

Somerset County

DILLON

51 Acres, Bedminster Township

NJ Conservation's longtime partnership with the Township facilitated the donation of an agricultural easement on this property, called Hoopstick Farm, which will make sure the property is protected from development. The farm, which has prime soil, was identified as critical for preservation in the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan. As the original host of the Essex Horse Trials, the farm welcomed American and international horse and rider teams. The preservation of this property protects critical agricultural and natural resources, as well as Bedminster's equestrian history.

SMITH

42 Acres, Borough of Peapack & Gladstone

This family farm along the North Branch, a tributary of the Raritan River, was a priority for preservation in the Borough's Farmland Preservation Plan. The North Branch is home to a variety of wildlife including birds and diverse fish populations. Partners included NJ Conservation Foundation, the State Agriculture Development Committee, the Borough of Peapack & Gladstone, and Somerset County.

Sussex County

CULVER BROOK PRESERVE

96 Acres, Frankford Township

NJ Conservation partnered with Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation and Conservation Advising Services to acquire the former Culver Lake Golf Course, expanding on our decades-long preservation work in the Highlands region. The new Preserve will not only safeguard the natural resources and beauty of the region, but also offer valuable green space for the public to enjoy. Funding for the purchase of the property was provided by NJ Conservation, the Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation, the Open Space Institute's Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund, the New Jersey Green Acres Program, the Sussex County Open Space Fund, and Frankford Township.

Warren County

BUCKHORN CREEK WMA ADDITION

133 Acres, White Township

NJ Conservation, with help from The Nature Conservancy, assisted the New Jersey Green Acres Program in preserving this large and important linkage to the State's Buckhorn Creek Wildlife Management Area. The site, which includes forests and farm fields, will permanently protect habitat for many wildlife species, including some of New Jersey's state-listed endangered species such as bobcat, veery, and wood thrush. In fact, the site is part of The Nature Conservancy's "Bobcat Alley," a vision for preserving and connecting thousands of acres of critical bobcat habitat in Warren and Sussex counties.



Culver Brook Preserve

2024 PUBLIC PARTNERS

LAND PRESERVATION/ URBAN

Bedminster Township
Bethlehem Township
Burlington County
City of Camden
Camden County
Camden County Municipal
Utilities Authority
Cumberland County
City of Elizabeth
Frankford Township
Franklin Township
Gloucester County
Hunterdon County
Lacey Township
Mercer County
NJ Water Supply Authority
NJDEP Green Acres
Program
NJDEP Office of Natural
Resource Restoration
NJDEP Regional Greenhouse
Gas Initiative
Ocean County
Peapack-Gladstone
Pilesgrove Township
Princeton

Raritan Township
Readington Township
Salem County
Somerset County
Southampton Township
State Agriculture
Development Committee
Sussex County
City of Trenton
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Vineland City
Warren County
White Township

STEWARDSHIP

NJDEP Green Acres
Program
NJ Department of Human
Services Division of
Disability Services
USFWS Partners for Fish
and Wildlife
NJ Corporate Wetlands
Restoration Partnership
Lower Delaware Wild and
Scenic
National Fish and Wildlife
Foundation

Urban Action

NJ Conservation continues to pursue a number of exciting initiatives in New Jersey's cities. From planting trees to bird walks and free fishing days, we led multiple programs that foster community and enhance urban neighborhoods in 2024!

Trees for Trenton is a unique partnership, convened to cool down Trenton's streets and parks with tree plantings. Our partners – including Outdoor Equity Alliance, New Jersey Tree Foundation, Isles, The Watershed Institute, Cadwalader Park Alliance, and the City of Trenton – planted 220 shade trees in 2024. Considerable community engagement work was conducted by our “Tree Ambassadors” to gain public support for the planting projects. This work includes watering, monitoring and stewardship of this newly planted green infrastructure that will benefit many future generations of residents and visitors to the City.

NJ Conservation has partnered with city, county, and state government officials, under the umbrella of the Trenton Green Team and the Circuit Trail's Mercer County Action Team, to advocate for the completion of Trenton area's multi-use trail network and develop the “Trenton Walks!” initiative. Since June of 2024, there have been 48 group hikes with 497 participants of all backgrounds covering 1,152 person-miles. Our work has been a catalyst in building community, developing health and fitness themes, and advancing critical projects like the East Coast Greenway,

Delaware River Heritage Trail, and Johnson Trolley Trail.

We had another successful year in cut flower production and programs at Capital City Farm in Trenton. In 2024, furthered engagement in urban agriculture by hiring a local resident and Outdoor Equity Alliance staff person to manage growing, harvesting, and distribution of fresh cut flowers into the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and to kitchen tables around the City.

Alongside our partners, NJ Conservation successfully secured a State appropriation of \$5 million for the construction of Capital Park located behind the New Jersey State House. We continued advocating for the Park's development to link the City's historic and cultural assets, and reconnect it to the river.

In Camden, we worked with the New Jersey Green Acres Program and Camden County to plan for the future of the former Sadler's Marine Services site at the confluence of the Delaware and Cooper Rivers. We committed NJ Conservation staff and private funding to help with clearing, remediating and developing this exceptional parcel for public use and enjoyment.

Additionally, in partnership with TD Bank and the Arbor Day Foundation, NJ Conservation coordinated and facilitated the planting of 45 shade trees in Camden's Gateway Park. We also led multiple programs to engage the community around free fishing days and other local events.



Planting trees in Trenton



Trenton Walks program by Tim Brill

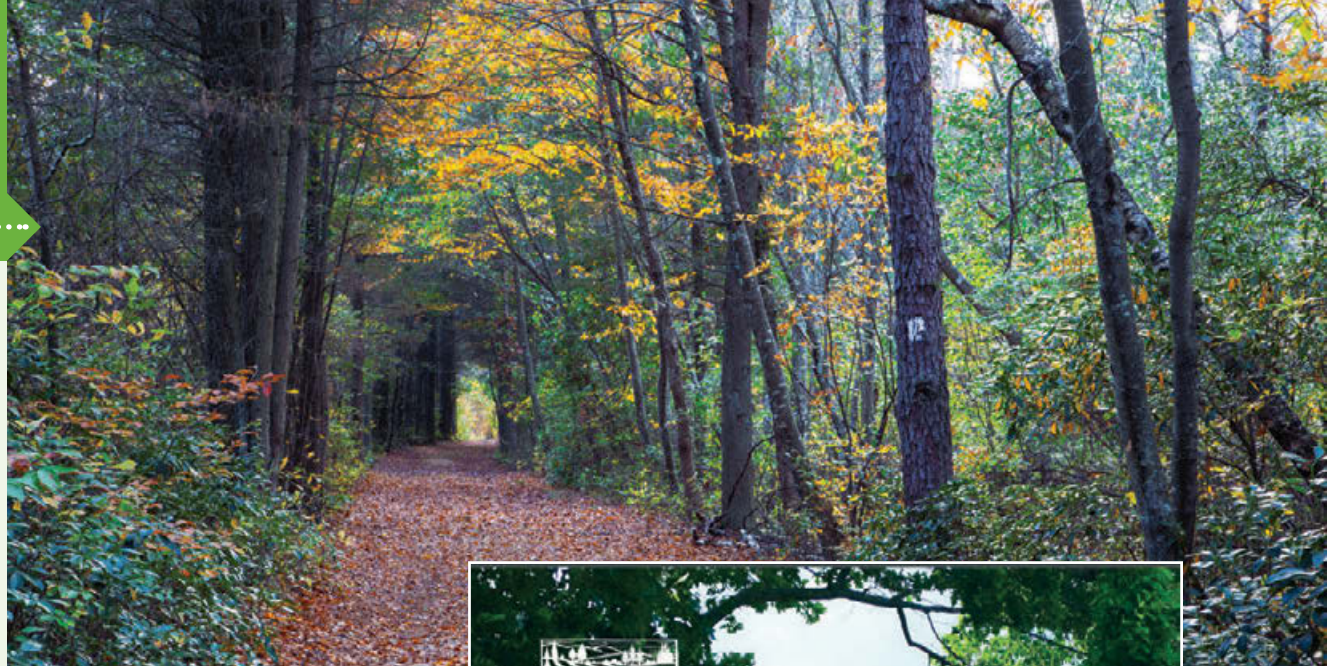
2024 POLICY UPDATES

NATURE FOR ALL: A 2050 VISION FOR NEW JERSEY

New Jersey Conservation Foundation has taken stock of the past 60 years of investments in preserving open space, farmland, and urban parks in the Garden State and assessed the results. The Nature for All report, launched by NJ Conservation in 2024, sets forth a fresh vision for land conservation over the next few decades with two important recommendations that will be a primary focus of our policy agenda going forward.

First, New Jersey must preserve 50% of the most critical remaining lands by 2050, or roughly 500,000 acres, focusing on ecological, water, and agricultural values. These available lands currently provide valuable ecosystem services. They filter and store drinking water, control and mitigate flooding, supply local foods, sequester carbon, provide wildlife habitat, and protect air quality. If developed, their essential ecological functions and services will cease, leading to an overall erosion of environmental quality.

Second, the state must establish a comprehensive Green and Healthy Cities Initiative aimed at greening the state's under-resourced communities and rectifying decades of environmental injustice. The state has a long, distressing history of locating undesirable and polluting industries and facilities in low-income communities and communities of color. Antiquated, outdated water and sewer infrastructure facilities, built 200 years ago for smaller populations, are failing today's residents.



Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Preserve by Richard Lewis

Historically, many of New Jersey's urban communities were located along key rivers and waterways and today are increasingly vulnerable to flooding due to climate change. They also suffer from the "heat island effect," and temperatures continue to rise, further threatening public health. Our future must ensure clean water, a healthy environment, and access to nature, parks, trails, and gardens for every community. New Jersey must continue to lead the nation in land preservation, environmental protection and sustainability, and environmental justice to ensure a better future for all residents. The time for action is now!



WHARTON FOREST MAPPED TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY

In November 2024, after a lengthy public process, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection created an official map, which establishes where visitors are allowed to drive motorized vehicles within this enormous preserve, and where the forest is too sensitive to allow for motorized access.

New Jersey State Parks and Forests personnel have been doing an excellent job erecting signs, guardrails, and barriers to clearly direct motorists to use appropriate roadways while also avoiding critical wildlife habitat, wetlands, and other unique features of the Pine Barrens.

Unfortunately, too many individuals are ignoring the rules, driving unauthorized vehicles around barriers and past signs, destroying critical fragile habitats with no regard for the natural environment. The success of the “Wharton Map” in protecting natural resources will ultimately depend on the level of active enforcement by State Park Police and other members of the law enforcement community, including the courts. We are calling on the governor and the attorney general to recognize the importance of curtailing off-road vehicle destruction as essential in protecting the Pine Barrens ecosystem by directing all necessary law enforcement authorities to invest significant time, energy, and resources in protecting our natural world.

In Wharton State Forest, endangered female pine snakes are experiencing the dangers of unregulated, illegal trespassing and riding. Recently, an individual riding a motorbike accessed an area unlawfully and disturbed a female pine snake digging her nest only 20 feet away. Nearby, another female was in her freshly-dug nest hole located a few feet away from an old, abandoned sand road being illegally used by four-wheeled quad drivers.

Every day, rare plant sites and fragile wetlands are destroyed by those engaged in the illegal recreational activity of “mudding,” and almost nothing is done to stop the perpetrators.

Without a serious enforcement program being implemented, including writing citations or issuing fines, the problem will continue.

A COURT WIN FOR NEW JERSEY AND BEYOND!

In *New Jersey Conservation Foundation, et al. versus the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission* (FERC), a federal appeals court overturned FERC’s approval of the Regional Energy Access Expansion (REAE) gas pipeline project. This expansion of fossil fuel capacity into New Jersey was found to be unnecessary and failed to meet legal standards and environmental protections. New Jersey Conservation Foundation brought this case with our partners because of the continued threat posed to important lands – including preserved lands – by the proliferation of gas pipeline infrastructure. Projects like this stand in the way of moving to a clean energy future, and as with the now defeated PennEast pipeline, are built to supply unneeded, excess gas financed on the backs of ratepayers. We have seen fossil fuel infrastructure that harms important natural lands and waterways with no resulting public benefit approved by FERC time and time again. Although this project was built while we litigated, the decision sets critical precedent for future projects and comes after years of fighting to get the courts to recognize FERC’s failure to fully comply with the Natural Gas Act.

PRESERVING A FOREST BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE

The battle to preserve the largest remaining privately owned forested parcel of land in the Watchung Mountain region is a stark reminder that New Jerseyans need to continue to speak



Off-road vehicle damage

up for open space throughout the state. Both Essex County and the township of West Orange recommended the preservation of this 120-acre forest located on the Watchung Mountain’s Second Ridge in master plans and open space plans. Their vision was to preserve the land to help create a system of interconnected greenways throughout the region. Although the magnificent forest was targeted for preservation, the site is currently the proposed location for a nearly 500-unit housing development. While a previous proposal to construct housing on this site had been rejected as unsuitable, now West Orange and the developer are using the state’s affordable housing requirements to justify the construction of the massive housing development. After a local organization, We Care NJ, identified a series of errors in both the developer’s permit applications and the approval of wetland and flood hazard permits for the project, NJ Conservation joined a lawsuit seeking to require the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to require a new, correct permit application.

2024 FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

	Dec. 31, 2024 (1)	Dec. 31, 2023 (1)
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4,259,898	4,308,148
Investments	19,705,043	17,907,566
Unconditional Promises to Give, net	817,327	
Beneficial Interest in Split Interest Agreements	98,852	125,852
Grant receivable		61,500
Other receivable	521,143	520,188
Land, Buildings and Easements	41,793,951	42,253,100
Right of Use Assets	101,151	159,520
Other Assets	237,349	203,907
Total Assets	\$67,534,714	\$65,539,781

Liabilities and Net Assets

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$390,046	\$346,449
Grant Payable	\$342,711	
Lease liabilities	102,542	161,458
Total Liabilities	835,299	507,907

NET ASSETS

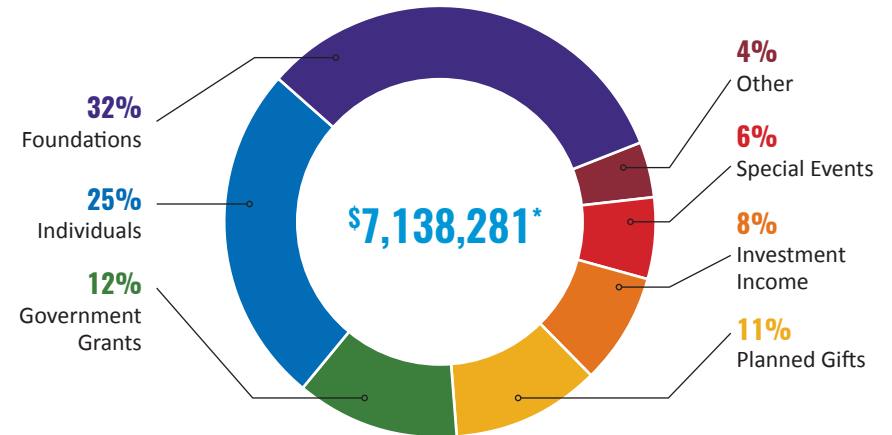
Without Donor Restrictions	57,999,907	55,543,488
With Donor Restrictions	8,699,508	9,488,386
Total Net Assets	66,699,415	65,031,874
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$67,534,714	\$65,539,781

*Unaudited financial information

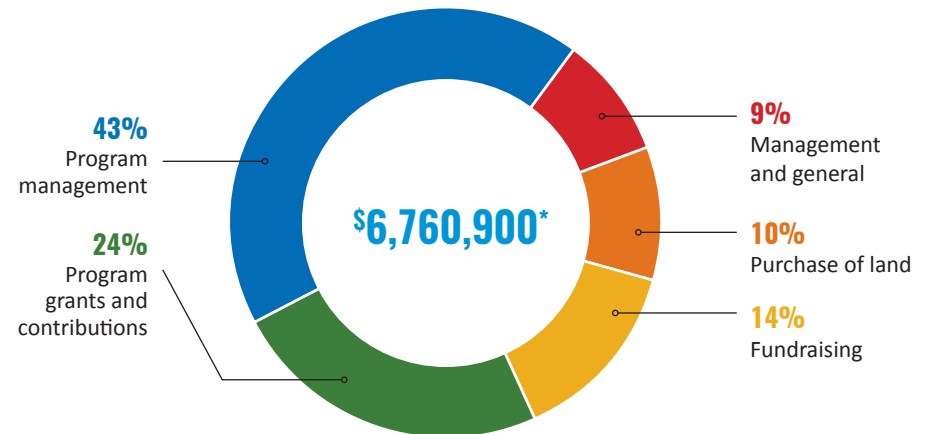
(1) Extracted from the December 31, 2024 audited financial statements.

To receive a copy of the complete audited financial statements, please send a request to info@njconservation.org

Support and Revenue



Expenses and Land Purchase





New Jersey Conservation
FOUNDATION



NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
Bamboo Brook | 170 Longview Road | Far Hills, NJ 07931

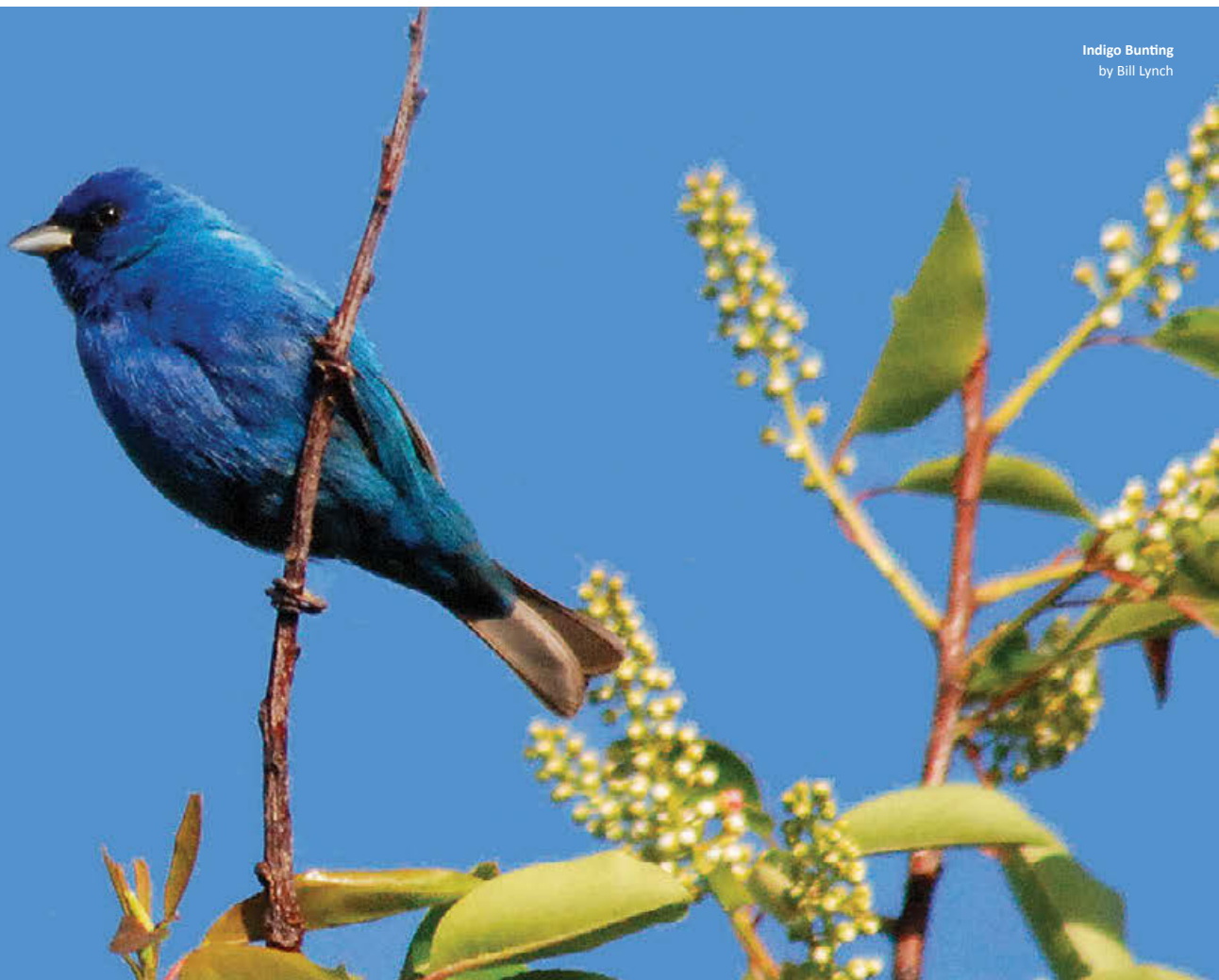
www.njconservation.org

“

EVERYONE LIKES BIRDS.

WHAT WILD CREATURE IS MORE
ACCESSIBLE TO OUR EYES AND EARS,
AS CLOSE TO US AND EVERYONE IN THE
WORLD, AS UNIVERSAL AS A BIRD?”

.....
- DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



Indigo Bunting
by Bill Lynch