

Landscapes

A VES Land Trust newsletter

Fall/Winter 2013

Youth Nature Walks

Boys & Girls Club, Kiptopeke and Occohannock Elementary Schools visit Brownsville Nature Preserve

Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (VES Land Trust) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) organized, sponsored, and hosted two field trips to Brownsville Nature Preserve for the Boys & Girls Club of the Eastern Shore this August, one for Kiptopeke Elementary second graders in early October, and one for Occohannock Elementary second graders in early November.

This fall, VES Land Trust and TNC hosted 240 children from age 4 through 13 at the Brownsville Nature Preserve in Nassawadox, Virginia.

Each group met VES Land Trust and TNC staff at the Brownsville office and walked the mile long nature trail to the learning stations. The trail starts on a boardwalk and winds through upland forest and marsh land. Along the trail, Bo Lusk, TNC, drew attention to flora and fauna as well as the various habitats, identifying fiddler crabs, hibiscus flowers, upland forest, mixed growth forest, cat tails, and much more. In the late fall, Lusk talked about seasonal change identifying evergreen and deciduous trees.

The kids rotated through 3 stations: Barrier Island life and history, Eastern Shore and Barrier Island wildlife, and Native American history and culture. Jerry Doughty, historian for the Barrier Island Center, taught the kids about early settlements on the Barrier Islands, the wild ponies at Assateague, and even showed them bones from a whale found on one of the islands. The Nature Conservancy staff played a matching game with the kids using found

bones and shells and laminated pictures to demonstrate the native Shore wildlife. Kids handled and matched turtle shells, egg casings, starfish, and even a dolphin skull to pictures of the animals. At the Native American history and culture station, Peter Henderson, Executive Director of VES Land Trust, showed the kids tools Native Americans used, such as arrowheads and a mortar and pestle, which the kids took turns grinding wheat and sunflower seeds with. Finally,



Boys & Girls Club, August 2013

Bo Lusk, TNC, showed the Boys and Girls Club oyster castles and talked about creating habitat for oysters. The older kids helped Lusk build a habitat using oyster castles, concrete blocks designed to look like castle battlements and stack like Legos. The field trips concluded with a picnic lunch.

Stream and Buffer Walks

The VES Land Trust sponsored two stream and buffer walks this fall led by Dot Field, Eastern Shore Region Steward for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Bill Portlock, Senior Educator with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Both walks lasted 2 hours and covered around a mile of stream. The walks took place on a VES Land Trust held conservation easement, Jacobus Point Farm. The stream passes through a low-lying wooded tract before draining into the marsh and Jacobus Creek, which feeds into Hungars Creek and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.



Dissolved oxygen test with Bill Portlock, CBF

Dot Field led the first walk on October 22nd. Field focused her talk on vegetation and wildlife. She pointed out invasive and native plants and trees along the stream. She identified crawfish homes, small mud towers close to the stream, and discussed insects that often indicate a healthy stream. Field also demonstrated how to measure the circumference of a tree when the group found a large pine tree. Taking the measurement at breast height, the pine tree measured 65 inches.

Bill Portlock led the second walk on November 6th. Portlock discussed wetland soil types and characteristics and indicators of good water quality. With participant assistance, he demonstrated three different tests: pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature. Each of these tests helps

identify the health of the stream. For pH and dissolved oxygen, water samples are compared and matched to colors on a chart. The walk ended with a stop at a marsh overlook, where Portlock connected the stream health to the health of the marsh and the Chesapeake Bay.

Participants learned how to measure water quality, what native plants and animals to look for, how buffers help protect streams from impairment, and how conservation easements protect water quality by requiring 100 foot buffers around water bodies.

Habitat Workshops with the Academy for Lifetime Learning

VES Land Trust and the Academy for Lifetime Learning offered two workshops this fall: History and Management of Quail and Creating Backyard Habitat.

On November 1st, Todd Englemeyer from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries presented on the history and habitat needs of the Bobwhite Quail. The Bobwhite flourished on the Shore in pre-colonial times because they require early successional habitat, which frequent storms provided. Even colonial agricultural practices benefited the Bobwhite Quail. Colonists hacked and burned forests to plant fields. When the soil was depleted, they abandoned those fields for new ones. Brush grew in these abandoned fields, creating excellent habitat for quail.

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www.facebook.com/VESLandTrust.

However, as the Shore was reforested in pines and farming practices changed, reduced ground cover meant quail habitat suffered. Quail need three types of habitat in close proximity to survive. They need nesting cover, which is thick and at least 1 foot tall and close to water; brood cover, which offers some bare ground for ease of movement; and covey headquarters, which provides a shelter of low growing trees and shrubs especially for winter

months. To maintain all three of these close together, quail habitat requires a lot of active management.



Todd Englemeyer, DGIF, identifying good brood cover

After Englemeyer's presentation, VES Land Trust board member and easement donor, Meriwether Payne, led participants, Englemeyer, and VES Land Trust staff on a walk of her and her siblings' properties under easement with VES Land Trust near Locustville. The walk highlighted areas ideal for quail habitat as well as ways to improve existing habitat to attract quail. Englemeyer asked participants to identify nesting, brood, and covey headquarter habitats. Participants were able to see first-hand what it might take to create quail habitat on their own property.

On November 15th, VES Land Trust held our third Creating Backyard Habitat workshop. The workshop began in the early morning with a bird walk led by Joanne Laskowski and Karen Terwilliger, VES Land Trust board member and owner of Terwilliger Consulting. Terwilliger hosted the bird walk on her property near Locustville. Participants walked along Custis Creek, through early successional fields, forest, and by a fresh water pond looking for birds. The group saw Yellow-rumped Warblers, Song Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, Hooded Mergansers, Belted Kingfishers, and a Purple Finch.

The walk was followed by presentations from Karen Terwilliger on the challenges facing wildlife and Tony Picardi on creating and maintaining habitat. Terwilliger outlined the top five stressors to wildlife: development, pollution, ecosystem modifications, invasive species, and unsustainable natural resource use. She also offered ways to reduce these stressors drawing on her experience creating Wildlife Action Plans. Picardi focused his talk on creating butterfly and bird habitats in your yard through square foot gardening and managing and maintaining your own wildflower meadow. He stressed the importance of native species and active management.

VES Land Trust outreach efforts have been made possible in part by grants from the Volgenau Foundation.

Land Preservation Tax Credit Still Strong in Virginia

Virginia allows an income tax credit for 40 percent of the value of donated land or conservation easements. Taxpayers may use up to \$100,000 per year for the year of sale and the ten subsequent tax years. Unused credits may be transferred and sold, allowing individuals with little or no Virginia income tax burden to take advantage of this benefit.

North Carolina's conservation easement tax credit is set to expire on December 31, 2013. It was marked for elimination as part of tax reform legislation passed by the Republican-led legislature and signed by Gov. Pat McCrory earlier this year. While there is no current legislative plan to eliminate the land preservation tax credit in Virginia, potential easement donors should recognize that other states are.

Save the Date: Annual Oyster Roast

March 29, 4:00 PM
At Grapeland
Home of Philip B. Tankard
Bridgetown, VA

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Youth Nature Walks

Stream and Buffer Walks

Habitat Workshops

Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit

Save the Date: Annual Oyster Roast

Help keep our records up to date.

Please notify us at veslt@verizon.net or 757-442-5885 if you have a new mailing address, e-mail or phone number.

To support our work, please send donations to: VES Land Trust, P.O. Box 1114, Exmore, VA 23350, or online at www.veslt.org. Call us 757- 442-5885 for instructions on making gifts of stock.



VES Land Trust seeks to conserve rural lands which will best preserve the farms, forests, fisheries and heritage of Virginia's Eastern Shore for the benefit of future generations.

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