



May 2011

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Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District • promoting locally led conservation
22545 Center Parkway • Accomac, VA 23301 • (757)787-0918

Is Your Yard for the Birds?

Did you know that habitat loss is the largest contributing factor towards animals becoming endangered? Many housing and business developments give little thought to the protection of wildlife. However, everyone reading this article can help stop this habitat loss. You can create a haven for native wildlife and migratory birds, beautify your yard and help improve water quality on the Shore. The VA Backyard Habitat program, sponsored by VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries encourages homeowners, schools and organizations to plant for wildlife in their landscaping. If you simply supply the 4 basic needs for wildlife (food, water, shelter and space), on your property, you can have your yard nationally and/or state certified as a wildlife habitat.

FOOD: Plants provide foliage, nectar, pollen, berries, seeds, fruits and nuts—all food for wildlife. Plants also harbor the insects on which birds feed. Even if you have a town condo with just a balcony or patio, you can still provide this food using supplemental feeders such as hummingbird, squirrel or suet bird feeders.

The program endorses use of natives due to the added benefits natives provide for both wildlife and the environment. Natives have evolved over a long period of time in the area they are naturally growing and are therefore adapted to the environmental conditions (rainfall, soil nutrients, temperature, wind, predators, etc). Once established they seldom need extra care as watering, fertilizer and pesticides.

Native plants and local wildlife



You can find Yucca plants flourishing in front of migrant Headstart in Parksley, VA or Tammy & Johnny's in Melfa.

have evolved together over thousands of years and depend on each other. One example of co-evolution between our native plants and animals is the yucca or Spanish bayonet. The yucca is a tropical looking plant with tall spikes of white bell shaped flowers. It grows wild along our sand dunes. The only thing that can pollinate the yucca plant is the yucca moth – this moth and the yucca plant are completely dependent on each other and cannot survive without the other. The moth actually mates within a yucca flower. The female gathers pollen from that and other yucca plants, rolls it in a ball and carries it under her chin to a yucca flower. She deposits her eggs in the ovary of the flower. To insure that her offspring have food she moves to the stigma of the flower (the sticky tip) to deposit the pollen. The stigma is in a recessed cuplike depression and hangs downward.

Therefore, this is the only way it can be pollinated. The moth takes a little bit of the pollen ball she has collected and packs it into the depression. This pollination allows the seeds to develop. The moth eggs hatch into larvae which live in the developing fruit and eat some of the yucca seeds. This is just one example of the interconnection between native plants and animals.

The Eastern Shore is a major rest stop for migratory birds.

Continued on page 2...

Conservation Poster Contest Winners for 2011

"Forests for People: More Than You Can Imagine" was the 2011 Conservation Poster Contest theme. First place winners in each grade category are shown below.



Ryan Romano of Broadwater, gr K-1, 1st place



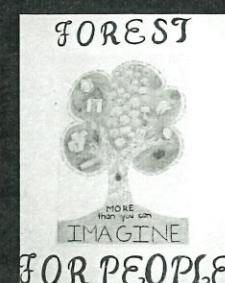
Krupa Patel of Shore Christian, gr 2-3, 1st place



Hayley Marshall, Kiptopeke Elem, gr 4-6, 1st place



Lauren Hunter, Nandua Middle, gr 7-9, 1st place



Chase Doughty, Northampton HS, gr 10-12, 1st place

Sign-up for State Cost-share \$\$\$!

Starting July 18, 2011 through August 31, 2011 accepting FY12 Cover Crop sign-up.

....for the Birds?

Continued from page 1...

They use the Shore to rest and feed, building up fat reserves to continue their flight. After leaving the Shore, some of these birds will fly non-stop over open water for 1,000+ miles, depending on the nutrition they obtained from our native plants to make this trip. Many decorative plants which have been developed for their beauty do not provide this nutrition. Therefore, it is extremely important to protect native plants and include them in our landscaping. They are essential for the survival of native wildlife and migratory birds. Many of these plants are breathtakingly beautiful such as the coastal sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) which becomes covered in butterflies when in bloom. Natives also help keep the Bay clean and save you money. To see these plants, their characteristics and benefits, go to www.deq.virginia.gov/coastal. Click on the *Plant ES Natives Social Marketing campaign*, then click on *Native Plants of Accomack and Northampton publication*.

According to the USDA Forest Service "during a 50-year life span, one tree will recycle a value of \$37,500 worth of water, control \$31,250 worth of soil erosion and clean up \$62,000 worth of air pollution". In one year a single tree can absorb 48 lbs of carbon dioxide and produce enough oxygen to support two people. Anyone who steps under the shade of a tree on a hot summer day knows the cooling effect of trees. The Arbor Day Foundation states that the shade created by one healthy tree is equivalent to 10 room-size air conditioners running 20 hrs/day. The USFS estimates the annual effect of well-positioned trees around a conventional house results in a savings of 20-25% for energy use. Trees are more effective in flood damage protection, nutrient retention and stream bank stability than grasses or shrubs. They reduce phosphate entry into a stream by 50% and nitrogen, pesticide and sediment loads into a stream by 85%. Trees overhanging a body of water benefit fish by reducing water temperatures allowing oxygen levels to increase in the water. Tree roots provide habitat areas while fallen leaves and small branches create the organic matter that is the basic food source for aquatic life. A recent VA Tech study indicated that the roots from one mature tree increased the amount of water entering the groundwater supply by 153% over bare ground. In addition, trees make you feel good! Studies have shown that trees in a neighborhood can greatly improve the mental and physical health of residents. Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder have been proven to be calmer, more responsive and better able to concentrate in a space with lots of trees. (Taylor, A.F.; Kuo, F.; Sullivan, W. 2001. *Coping with ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Set-*

tings. *Environment and Behavior*).

WATER: Even a small backyard habitat needs more than trees and shrubs. Water is essential. Wildlife needs water to drink, bathe and sometimes to reproduce. Your wildlife habitat only needs one source of water. You could put in a small pond which would attract dragonflies or something as simple as a birdbath. The water should be available not just for birds but for other animals. For frogs or other flightless wildlife, you might want to consider having a bird bath basin on the ground in a shallow depression with plants around it for protection from predators. Sloped sides allow frogs, salamanders, turtles and small mammals access. Layering the edge with rocks and sticks or placing it near shrubbery or a small tree allows for perching.

In low areas where water stands for a few days after a heavy rain, consider a rain

garden. A rain garden can change a muddy mess into an attractive addition to the landscape. Rain gardens are usually fairly

small and serve to help water percolate back into the ground. Remember that the only source of drinking water on the Shore is our groundwater system. Rain gardens also trap nutrients, sediment, and pesticides preventing them from entering the waterways. Any runoff would be filtered. Take care to choose plants that can survive standing water and dry ground such as native ferns.

SHELTER: Shelter (or cover) is the third factor to consider. A well-manicured lawn provides no protection for wildlife—anything on this lawn is easy prey. Shrubs, trees, thickets, flowering plants and brush piles are natural shelters and are extremely beneficial for our wildlife and environment. The foliage provides nesting material along with food and cover. I observed a flock of over 15 yellow rump warblers fly into one of my wax myrtles. However, even when I got right next to this shrub, the foliage was so thick that I could not see a single bird. Cover also helps animals maintain body temperature and conserve energy reserves by providing protection against cold winter winds and inclement weather as well as providing cool shade during hot summer months.

Buffers along the shoreline help provide needed shelter for many animals such as frogs, turtles, etc. Wildlife uses this cover for nesting, dens and rearing young. Shelter can easily be provided with a combination of tall trees, understory shrubs and ground cover. Nesting boxes or gourds which provide a place for birds to raise their young could be included in your plan.

Continued on page 4...

AREC Farm Field

Day June 28th

The Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center Agricultural Research Field Day will be held on June 28, 2011 in Painter, Virginia. Featured are plot research demonstrations on methyl bromide alternatives for vegetable production along with weed, disease, and insect control techniques. General production techniques for tomatoes, potatoes, corn, cotton, soybeans and more will also be discussed. Registration will start at 8:00AM with field tours beginning at 9:00AM. A complimentary lunch will be provided at noon. For questions or assistance with special needs, please call 757-414-0724.

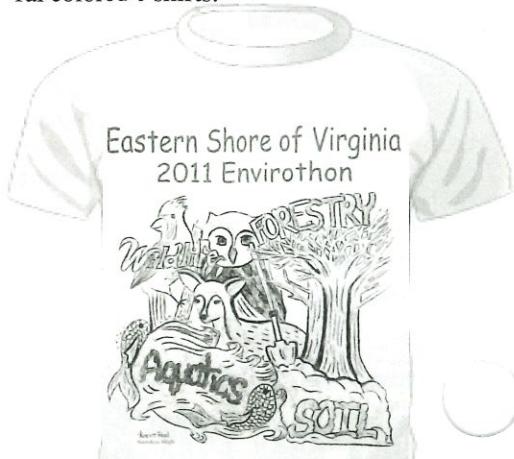


T-Shirt Design Contest

The T-shirt Design Contest began in 1993, the year Arcadia, Chincoteague, Nandua and Northampton started the first Envirothon competition in Virginia. The contest rotates each year to a different participating local high school. The winner of this contest receives a \$50 cash prize. This year the ES Soil and Water Conservation District presented this award to Katrina Fread of Na.

Next year the school having the opportunity to design the t-shirt will be Northampton; then Arcadia, Broadwater, Chincoteague and back to Nandua. Each year t-shirts with the winning design are presented to all the Envirothon team members, coaches and the resource experts for the Envirothon subjects: aquatics, wildlife, soils, forestry and that year's special issue.

The 2011 winning t-shirt design is shown below in black and white. The original design was featured in full-color on natural colored t-shirts.



T-shirt design shown above was created by Katrina Fread from Nandua High School. The design is featured on the 2011 Eastern Shore Envirothon shirt.

Continued from page 1...

2011 Conservation Poster Contest Winners

2nd Place



Above: Sarah A. McLaughlin of Broadwater Academy, gr K-1, 2nd place



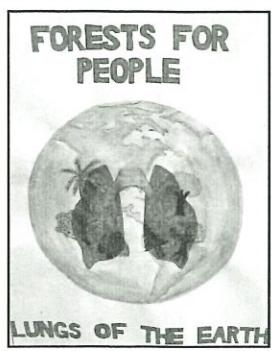
Above: Mahika Patel of Shore Christian Academy, gr 2-3, 2nd place



Above: Abigail McCaleb of Shore Christian Academy, gr 4-6, 2nd place



Above: Crystal Harmon of Northampton High School, gr 7-9, 2nd place



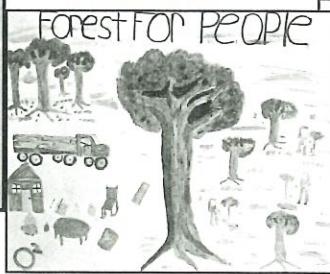
Above: Ashley Glennon of Northampton High School, gr 10-12, 2nd place

3rd Place

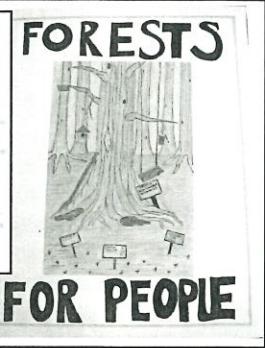
Below: Bethany Carpenter of Shore Christian Academy, gr K-1, 3rd place



Above: Victoria Grace of Shore Christian, gr 2-3, 3rd place



Above: Leah Fluhart of Shore Christian Academy, gr 4-6, 3rd place



Above: Mary Savage of Northampton High School, gr 7-9, 3rd place

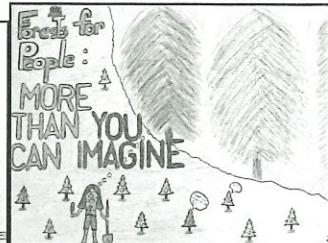


Above: Jiayu Zhou of Broadwater Academy, gr 10-12, 3rd place

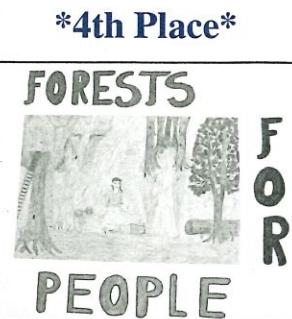
4th Place



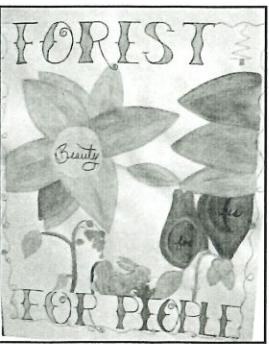
Above: Caleb Pruitt of Shore Christian Academy, gr 2-3, 4th place



Above: Anna Sexauer of Broadwater Academy, gr 4-6, 4th place



Above: Shania Dickson of Northampton High School, gr 7-9, 4th place



Above: Stephanie Dunton of Northampton High School, gr 10-12, 4th place

Envirothon 2011

The State Envirothon will be held May 22-23rd this year at Camp Hanover, Mechanicsville, VA. This will be the 19th year the ESSWCD along with other partnering agencies has sponsored an Envirothon training/testing event for the local Envirothon teams. The team with the highest testing scores can compete at the State level. This year Northampton High School's Envirothon team had the highest test scores. However, hampton will not be able to attend the State competition; therefore, Arcadia High School, with close second highest scores, will be participating in the State Competition! Congratulations, Arcadia!

One of the District's very own Directors, Robin Rich-Coates will be one of the judges for the oral presentations at Camp Hanover.



Participants of the 2011 Annual Local Envirothon Competition

..... for the Birds? Continued from page 2...

If you have a small lot, you can just hang up a few birdhouses to provide shelter.

SPACE: Space is the final factor to consider. Wildlife, like humans, needs different areas for different activities—areas for feeding, resting, and raising their young. The arrangement of these areas is very important for their survival. One item often overlooked are the pathways (or corridors) animals use to travel from one area to another. Corridors are vegetative connections (usually trees and/or shrubs) between the different areas wildlife use for feeding and/or nesting. Small animals and birds can use these protective pathways for their movements and still remain hidden from hawks and other predators. Forest fragmentation is the biggest factor in the declining populations of deciduous forest birds. Fragmentation occurs when part of a forest is cut and no vegetative cover is left. This results in a patchwork of smaller forest with unprotected ground between them. Corridors provide the needed cover.

You can expand protective corridors for animals to use by joining these corridors with the protective cover of your neighbors' properties. If you have woods, consider not mowing up to the edge of the woods but leave "soft edges". Nature provides soft edges normally. The shrubs, vines, partridge pea, etc. growing along

the edge of the woods edge provide an entirely different habitat which allows animals to hide in safety while scoping out the open areas. Soft edges provide a quick escape area, if a predator does approach. This type of habitat is especially appreciated by quail. Many of our local farmers are now using this practice which is resulting in an increase of the quail population. The last space consideration is to provide different horizontal layers, especially in the woods. Different animals use different layers. There are some birds that prefer the canopy (the top of the trees). The scarlet tanager likes to nest in the canopy. The middle layer or under-story is preferred by the black-throated warbler. This bird requires a large unbroken (non-fragmented) area for nesting. The wood thrush nests in the under-story but forages on the forest floor tossing leaves about with its beak. It is estimated 5% of the wood thrush population is disappearing yearly due to forest fragmentation and this bird breeds on the Shore in summer.

CERTIFICATION: Once food, water, shelter and space have been provided, you are ready for certification. For Virginia certification there is no charge; just go to www.dgif.virginia.gov/habitat to receive your beautiful free plaque stating that your yard is a Certified Wildlife Habitat. For the National Wildlife Certification, go to www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/certify.cfm. ■

The Shore Conserver is published quarterly by the Eastern Shore SWCD to provide information to land users. The District customarily meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month at 5:00pm at the USDA Service Center in Accomac, VA. The public is welcome to attend. To be added to the mailing list, please contact the District office at 757-787-0918 x119.

All programs and services of the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

Election of Directors *Public Notice*

Date of Election of Soil and Water Conservation District Directors Notice of Filing Nominating Petitions, Declaration of Candidacy and a Certificate of Candidate Qualification

An **Election of Directors** for the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District will be held at the general election on November 8, 2011. The District encompasses the Counties of Accomack and Northampton, which includes any incorporated towns therein.

Candidates for elected directors must reside within the boundary of the city (if applicable) or counties (includes incorporated towns within the county) which such candidates shall represent upon election. A total of two directors shall be elected to represent all the citizens within each city (if applicable) and county, which includes incorporated towns within the county.

Persons who wish to file as candidates for the office of District director must fully complete and file the requisite nominating petition, statement of qualification, and declaration of candidacy with the general registrar of the city (if applicable) or county where the candidate resides by 7:00pm, on August 23, 2011.

For further information contact your local registrar's office, visit the Virginia State Board of Elections website at www.sbe.virginia.gov or ESSWCD, 22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301.

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