Imagine following a migrating mallard on her annual journey. Every year, she travels the same flyway, passing the same rivers, roads and streams, but every year something is different. There are fewer and fewer wetlands along the way. Fewer potholes to nest in up north, fewer bottomland marshes to rest in down south and fewer swamps to winter in along the coasts. Now imagine that you can change all that. Imagine that you can put those potholes back on the prairies, put those wetlands back on the wintering grounds. The good news is, by supporting DU, you can help do just that. We undertake our conservation work throughout the continent, ensuring that wherever waterfowl breed, migrate or winter, our mallard will have a place to live. It’s a daunting task that needs your help to accomplish.
For most waterfowl, life begins in the North where lush wetlands and flowing grasslands produce millions of birds each year. From the prairies of the Great Plains, to the western boreal forest, DU is focused on some of the best breeding habitat in North America where there are enormous challenges that are working against us.

After a long migration south, ducks and geese need to rest and refuel on healthy wetlands in warmer climes. From California to Florida, to Mexico and beyond, DU is working to ensure that wintering waterfowl find the best Southern hospitality in the thriving bottomland hardwoods, flooded fields and wetlands full of food.

Western waterfowl are as diverse as the challenges that face them. Ducks and geese must compete with non-native fish, and with people for water and wetlands. Throughout the Pacific Flyway, DU is conserving habitat, securing water and restoring wetlands to help waterfowl stay healthy throughout the year.

From Canada and New England, to the southern tip of Florida, waterfowl traveling the Atlantic Flyway find DU projects all along the way. In New York, DU is studying black ducks to reverse their decline, and throughout the flyway, we’re conserving wetlands for eastern traveling birds.
We’ve come a long way over the last 12 months for wetlands and waterfowl conservation, and we know we have a long way yet to go. With that in mind, at our 69th annual convention in Phoenix, Ducks Unlimited and the Wetlands America Trust officially launched the largest conservation campaign in history: the $1.7 billion Wetlands for Tomorrow campaign.

In February, more than 11,000 volunteers gathered for DU’s first National Volunteer Celebration Day, a nationwide effort to thank DU volunteers for their hard work and dedication to conservation. With 89 locations, it was the single largest volunteer event in DU’s 69-year history.

World Wetlands Day, February 2, marked the second anniversary of the educational partnership between DU and Project WET (Water Education for Teachers). More than 6,000 students in 250 classrooms at 56 schools across the United States are learning about the importance of wetlands and water resources as they participate in Project Webfoot.

Project Webfoot is a grassroots, volunteer-driven effort. Local volunteers raise funds to enroll classrooms. An enrollment fee of $300 per class covers the cost of the educational materials and provides a Greenwing membership to each student in the classroom.

Last year, Ducks Unlimited launched Hunt & Home, a unique way to help fund our habitat conservation work. Hunt & Home gatherings bring friends together to celebrate conservation and explore the “wild” world of game cooking with Ducks Unlimited spices, breads and sauces.

We’ve come a long way in the last year, but there are new horizons ahead—new challenges to face, more habitats to conserve, and many miles ahead of us before we achieve our conservation mission.

Last fall, DU hosted the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest in Memphis, marking the first time it has been held outside D.C. In events surrounding the contest, we raised more than $200,000 for DU. Each year, the stamps raise $25 million to fund waterfowl habitat acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Ducks Unlimited has joined forces with The Pew Charitable Trusts, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and many other partners to conserve wildlife habitats in the western boreal forest. A wide variety of wildlife benefits from our work throughout this continent.

WHERE YOUR DU DOLLAR GOES

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Fundraising and Development</td>
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<td>Administration</td>
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SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND REVENUE

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<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Major Gifts and Endowment</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>Royalties, Advertising and Other Revenues</td>
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Ducks Unlimited’s vision of the future is to conserve enough wetlands to fill the sky with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. Thanks to our 40,000 volunteers and nearly 700,000 members in the United States alone, this year we raised more than $162 million and conserved 169,224 acres to protect some of the nation’s best waterfowl habitat.

As we enter our 70th year, we’ve identified the most important and most threatened wetlands on the continent and we know how to conserve them. What we need are people and partners to support our efforts. In May, at our annual convention, we announced a comprehensive campaign we call Wetlands for Tomorrow. We plan to raise at least $1.7 billion in the next five years to help conserve North America’s wetlands and waterfowl and ensure our vision becomes a reality.

The goals of Wetlands for Tomorrow are ambitious, because the stakes are so high. Ducks Unlimited is bringing the world’s foremost experts in wetlands conservation together with the world’s most passionate conservationists. We can make a difference for wetlands, wildlife and people before it’s too late. By supporting one or more of our nine conservation initiatives, you can help ensure that we all have wetlands for tomorrow.

Last year, we set some ambitious goals to strengthen our volunteer, chapter and member numbers. The message was simple. “Share the passion. Recruit new volunteers.” Our long-term success as the world’s most effective wetlands and waterfowl conservation organization depends on a strong volunteer force. It’s also essential to our Wetlands for Tomorrow fund-raising campaign.

Another goal last year was to find a way to recognize the efforts of our volunteers. In February, DU held its first National Volunteer Celebration Day. The event brought more than 11,000 DU volunteers together on the same day for the first time in our history. We’re looking forward to our next celebration on August 4, 2007.

We also committed to start 250 new chapters nationwide and thanks to our incredible volunteers, we finished the year with more than 365 new chapters—well ahead of our goal. With more people and chapters contributing, DU can do more for the ducks. You’ll see some of our top conservation achievements highlighted in this report.

This year’s conservation work required a concerted effort on the public policy front. We led 14 conservation and business organizations in developing and submitting a “friend-of-the-court” brief to the United States Supreme Court in an effort to make sure that wetlands across the nation continue to be protected under federal law. We worked hard to ensure the North American Wetlands Conservation Act continues to provide matching funding for waterfowl habitat conservation.

Looking back on the last year, we have a lot to celebrate, and a lot left to do. We know that with your continued support, we will see our vision fulfilled and see the skies filled with waterfowl forever.
At every turn in the life cycle of waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited has projects designed to meet their needs. From Canada and Alaska, to southern Louisiana and Mexico, Ducks Unlimited’s conservation work spans all four flyways and beyond.

The Breeding Grounds: Where it all Begins  
North America boasts some of the most productive waterfowl breeding habitats in the world—chief among them are the prairies of the Great Plains. Millions of ducklings and goslings are hatched each year on the prairies, where DU aims to protect 2 million acres by 2019. Last year, thanks to several major gifts from DU supporters, DU members, grants from NAWCA and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service partners, DU conserved more than 54,000 acres on some of the best duck-breeding habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region—the Missouri Coteau of North and South Dakota. To date, DU and partners have secured nearly 600,000 acres on the coteau through perpetual conservation easements.

Since 1937, DU has conserved or protected more than 6.4 million acres in Canada. But, our work is far from complete. Up to 70 percent of Canada’s original wetlands have disappeared in settled areas of the country, and more are being lost every day. This year, DU made great progress in the name of habitat conservation, conserving 114,704 acres in Canada.

Unlike the prairies, which are the continent’s most important waterfowl breeding habitat, the western boreal forest of northern Alaska and northwestern Canada ranks a close second. Known as “the other duck factory,” the boreal forest annually hosts 12 to 14 million breeding ducks and 75 percent of the continent’s migrating or molting ducks. Once a relatively untouched wilderness, oil and gas production, forestry, mining and climate change are becoming more of a threat. Through satellite mapping and on-the-ground research, DU and partners are identifying the most important habitats in the forest to help ensure that wildlife and industry coexist in one of the Earth’s last wilderness frontiers. DU has land management agreements on more than 7 million acres of the western boreal forest to minimize damage to waterfowl habitat. Millions of acres are still at risk.

Some of the continent’s most productive duck breeding habitat lies in the heart of the southern Rockies in Colorado’s San Luis Valley, a broad expanse of high desert surrounded by 14,000-foot mountains. Managed wetlands in the valley support an average of 200 to 300 duck nests per square mile, with some areas boasting as many as 1,000 nests per square mile. In addition to their value to breeding ducks, the valley’s wetlands also provide migration and wintering habitat for multitudes of other migratory birds. As in many parts of the West, groundwater is the lifeblood of wetlands in the valley.

There is growing recognition of the importance of mallard populations that breed in the West. In Washington and Oregon, up to a third of the mallards harvested by local hunters are produced in these two states. In California, the number is even higher as mallards produced in the Central Valley provide more than half of the total mallards harvested in the state.

Tom Seeno
When he was a young hunter, Diamond Legacy Sponsor Tom Seeno would see the sky filled with thousands of pintails performing their graceful aerobatics. As an avid waterfowler in California’s Central Valley, he has witnessed the decline of pintail populations. Seeno believes in DU’s dedication to unlocking the mystery of this decline.

“I have seen firsthand DU scientists conduct their research and chart the course for the pintail’s return. I am proud to be one of the philanthropic investors in this important work because I know it is up to each of us to do what we can to restore the pintail’s numbers,” said Seeno.
DU is engaged in studies of breeding mallards in eastern Washington and in the Central Valley to provide new data about the number of hatched nests and the survival of ducklings during the breeding season. This information is critical to designing habitat programs that increase the size and success of mallards breeding in the West.

**Rest Stop Ahead: Migration Habitat** Soaring skeins of geese overhead or mallards on the horizon have long signaled a change of seasons to hunters and birdwatchers alike. Whether they’re heading south to warmer climes, or back to the breeding grounds for spring, Ducks Unlimited works to ensure that North America’s waterfowl find quality habitat in all four flyways.

One of the nation’s most popular places to witness the annual migration is Nebraska’s Rainwater Basin. Each spring, 5 to 15 million ducks and geese funnel into the shallow wetlands of the basin to rest and refuel. During 2006, DU conserved more than 1,900 acres in Nebraska’s famous basin. Most of those acres make up a complex of small to medium-sized wetlands that will complement the large wetlands in public ownership.

Another critical migration stopover is the 3,000-acre Rush Lake Basin, which was historically one of the most important wetlands for waterfowl and other wildlife in Wisconsin. Vast stands of aquatic vegetation attracted millions of wetland birds, but over the past several decades, the lake’s aquatic vegetation, water quality and wildlife have declined dramatically due to stable water levels, introduced carp, and nutrient and sediment runoff.

Ducks Unlimited and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources partnered to restore the lake. A $1 million NAWCA grant, combined with $2.5 million in matching partner funds, will help conserve more than 6,000 acres in the surrounding watershed, returning Rush Lake to the haven it once was for wetland-dependent wildlife.

In the Pacific Flyway, Oregon’s Malheur Lake and the adjoining Mud Lake complex once produced up to 100,000 ducks per year and hosted thousands of staging canvasbacks and pintails. However, since non-native carp arrived in 1954, they’ve consumed much of the aquatic vegetation that attracts waterfowl, and duck populations in the area have plummeted.

In Minnesota and Iowa, some shallow lakes have been reduced to murky water bodies because of introduced fish. Over a large region, degraded shallow lake habitat can reduce the food supply for migrating birds, especially during the spring. Lesser scaup are one of the birds seriously affected by poor shallow lake habitat quality.

**Bush Foundation**

Through its Ecological Health Program, the Bush Foundation of Minnesota seeks partners who restore, preserve and protect our natural resources to sustain the interdependence of humans, wildlife and ecosystems. Over the past five years, the Foundation has had a tremendous impact on DU’s conservation priorities by providing more than $750,000 in critical funding to enhance the physical capacity of our Great Plains office; accelerate our grassland protection work in the Dakotas; and, protect and restore shallow lakes in Minnesota.

President Anita M. Pampusch said, “Preserving clean water in our environment is important to the Bush Foundation. It is gratifying to see the positive results from the work of conservation professionals doing targeted outreach to farmers and landowners of property around the shallow lakes and watersheds of Minnesota.”

(1)opposite page)

The Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area was created from a former salt pond complex, which now provides nearly 10,000 acres of wetlands for wildlife habitat and recreation.
In an effort to restore the 9,400 acres of lakes and bring back the birds, DU and partners constructed a large earthen berm barrier and a series of fish screens across the inlet that connects Mud and Malheur lakes. As the lake began to fill, biologists reported seeing carp literally bouncing off the screens in an attempt to enter Mud Lake. Without carp to devour the vegetation, waterfowl should once again find abundant aquatic foods to fuel their annual migration.

In the Atlantic Flyway, one of the most common rest stops for many waterfowl and shorebirds is the 10,000-acre Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Milton, Delaware. Last year, Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service partnered to restore 200 acres of critical habitat by replacing two failing water control structures. The replacement structures will help DU and partners manage water levels in the wetland, allowing native plants and natural wetland functions to return to this critical habitat.

A Home for the Winter  With hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles behind them, and a long, cold winter ahead, North America’s waterfowl need plenty of wetlands filled with food to sustain them through the winter.

One of the nation’s most important wintering grounds is the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (MAV), the historic floodplain of the Mississippi River. Here, bottomland hardwood forests flood each year, providing wooded wetlands filled with acorns, invertebrates and other essential foods for migrating and wintering waterfowl. Today, only about 20 percent of these original forested wetlands remain.

The Farm Bill’s Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a major driver in restoring forested wetlands in the MAV. WRP provides financial and technical assistance to landowners who want to restore marginal, flood-prone farmland on their property. Offered nationwide, WRP’s greatest impact has been in the MAV, where we worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to reforest approximately 125,000 acres during the last 10 years. Last year, DU restored more than 25,000 acres of habitat through WRP in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

For some waterfowl, the MAV is not a final destination, but a stopover on the way to a milder winter resort—Louisiana’s Gulf Coast. In a normal year, more than 10 million ducks and geese winter in these lush wetlands. Under its continental conservation plan, Ducks Unlimited recognizes the Gulf Coast wetlands as one of the five most important areas for restoration.

In keeping with that plan, last year DU pledged an additional $15 million to supplement our coastal wetlands restoration efforts. And we got right to work by restoring hydrology to 4,700 acres of degraded marsh on the Pointe-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area in Terrebonne Parish. This once vibrant marsh hosted thousands of wintering waterfowl each year, but erosion, intruding saltwater and increased turbidity degraded the wetlands. Ducks Unlimited and partners installed four water control structures and constructed a levee to control water levels, salinity and erosion. Over time, emergent vegetation will spread across the project area, and open water will be replaced by highly productive, shallow ponds.
In the Atlantic Flyway, DU is working to conserve 7,000 acres of Florida’s marshlands. Florida has lost 60 percent of its original wetlands, or 12.2 million acres—more than any other state in the nation. DU aims to stem that loss on some of the best waterfowl habitats through projects like the Hickory Mound Impoundment in Taylor County. This project conserved 700 acres of inter-tidal vegetated wetlands, 300 acres of forested wetlands and 834 acres of uplands on the Gulf Coast.

In the Pacific Flyway, Ducks Unlimited is working on one of the nation’s largest habitat restoration projects presently underway in the Napa-Sonoma Marshes. This massive conservation effort started in 1994, when California purchased nearly 10,000 acres along the Napa River. Last year, DU improved approximately 5,300 acres that will benefit a multitude of waterfowl, including canvasbacks, lesser scaup, northern pintail, mallards and cinnamon teal.

In some years, as much as 17 percent of all North American waterfowl spend the winter in Mexico, where, in many cases, wetlands remain unaltered by human influences. Through its programs in Mexico, DU works to ensure that these intact wetlands stay that way through sound public policies and educated conservationists.

One of the key threats facing Mexico’s coastal wetlands is the expansion of shrimp farms in, and adjacent to, mangrove marshes. Mangrove marshes are critical to fisheries, as well as waterfowl. But shrimp farms are devastating the mangrove swamps by changing the natural water movements that sustain them. These are priceless resources that must be protected. Last year, DU led the effort to inform government officials of this danger by using satellite maps that show the habitat destruction. With good public policies and concerned conservationists, we must save these valuable swamps before it’s too late.

DU also is examining wetlands issues that affect wintering North American waterfowl in Central America, the Caribbean and northern South America. Our survey work identified key wetlands that need attention. With minimal funding, we initiated several flagship projects, so these countries will have examples of what they can do to protect their valuable wetlands resources. The largest and most advanced project is in Trinidad and Tobago where many blue-winged teal once stopped on their way to Venezuela. This year, the newest project is in Laguna Cabral in the Dominican Republic, where large numbers of the beleaguered lesser scaup winter.

Research and Planning  Ducks Unlimited bases its conservation work on sound science and the latest, most substantial research in the waterfowl world. Thanks to modern technology, such as satellite telemetry and GIS mapping, DU’s cutting-edge studies will enable us to refine and perfect our conservation programs—ensuring that our efforts are spent where they’ll have the greatest benefit for the longest time. These are just a few of the many research projects presently underway.
Studies show that along the annual migration, food consumption is critical not only for a bird’s survival, but also for reproduction. If a migrating duck or goose can’t find adequate food and habitat along the way, that bird is less likely to arrive in prime condition to breed in the spring. Without proper nutrition, waterfowl reproduction suffers.

Ducks Unlimited is presently conducting two studies examining food resources and habitats in critical areas of the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways. In the Mississippi Flyway, DU is studying habitat and resource availability for spring migrants traveling through the upper Mississippi and Great Lakes watersheds. Through this study, DU is identifying what habitats we most need to put back on the ground, so migrating waterfowl will return to the breeding grounds healthy and in prime condition to reproduce.

In the Atlantic Flyway, DU is conducting a similar study on black ducks. Over the last four decades, American black duck populations have declined by as much as 60 percent. Several speculations have been made about the decline, but a distinct possibility is that black ducks are suffering from poor wintering habitat along the East Coast.

DU and partners are trapping and radio tagging black ducks across Long Island, New York, and examining their food resources, as well as habitat use and availability. So far, the findings suggest that a lack of available food due to degraded habitat is the primary factor limiting populations during winter and migration. If this study finds that the present energy supply is less than the demand, steps need to be taken, such as restoring lost habitat or improving existing habitat.

On the prairies, conversion of native grasslands, critical to waterfowl production, continues to occur across the Dakotas and Montana. Ducks Unlimited and partners recently developed statistical models that help identify which tracts of existing native prairie are at the greatest risk of being converted.

DU researchers monitored more than 60,000 individual tracts of native grasslands from 1984 to 2003 to develop these models. When combined with biological models of duck pair breeding densities and predicted nesting success rates, the grassland risk models allow us to prioritize the most important areas for the ducks so that we first protect those areas most likely to be converted. This is another example of ensuring the greatest efficiency and effectiveness of our investments in conservation programs through sound science.

On the way down the road, you may come across something new called Hunt & Home. Ducks Unlimited has launched a new program that starts with a home party and combines wild game cooking with the fun of getting together—all for a great cause.

Tom Zwicker
Tom Zwicker is the major donor chairman for Wisconsin and recently became a Diamond Life Sponsor with Ducks Unlimited. He is a 20-year member and has been a volunteer in all aspects of the organization for 10 years.

When asked why he makes Ducks Unlimited one of his top giving priorities each year, he said, “I believe in Ducks Unlimited. In life, there are those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities where you can make a positive impact on generations to come and leave the world a little better than when you came into it. Ducks Unlimited is one of these opportunities and I, for one, am very proud to be a member.”

Delaware Bay wetlands are a major staging area for 80 percent of the Atlantic Flyway population of snow geese. Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge near Dover, Del., is an important part of these marshes. Barrier beaches and dunes, submerged aquatic vegetation, salt marsh islands, fringing tidal marshes and maritime forest characterize these highly productive shallow water and adjacent upland habitats.
Every journey has a beginning, a middle and an end. Ours is no exception. So, imagine launching a major campaign that puts us on the road today to reach a new destination—a place called **Wetlands for Tomorrow**.
Woody Brehm

California's Forrest "Woody" Brehm is passing on to his two sons Ron and Kiley, both avid sportsmen like him, the importance of conserving and protecting wetlands by supporting Ducks Unlimited. The areas the Brehms chose to support are California’s densely populated Central Valley and the grasslands of Canada, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Recently, Brehm’s sons became Diamond Life Sponsors, and Brehm increased his membership to Benefactor Sponsor. These gifts qualified Brehm and his sons as charter members of the President’s Council—a new designation for those who make an annual gift of $10,000 or more.

“I am following my father’s beliefs that, as a waterfowler, I have an obligation to help protect valuable habitats for my sons and all future generations to enjoy, and I strongly support the conservation efforts of Ducks Unlimited,” said Brehm.

Thanks to the Brehms, these critical nesting and wintering habitats will benefit future waterfowl and sportsmen.

North American Grasslands Conservation Initiative

The mix of small, shallow ponds surrounded by lush, native grasses makes the grasslands of North America the world’s best waterfowl breeding habitat. Today, less than one quarter of our original prairie grasslands remains. Despite such dramatic habitat loss, the existing grasslands still produce 70 percent of the continent’s hunted waterfowl and hundreds of other wildlife species each year. DU has the scientific, policy and habitat management experience to restore this habitat.

With partners and landowners, DU plans to protect the native grasslands and restore many we’ve lost. Scientific studies show that if we can conserve 2 million acres over 20 years, we can make a real difference on the prairies. DU has already found at least 700 landowners willing to permanently conserve nearly 300,000 acres of grasslands through conservation easements.

Western Boreal Forest Conservation Initiative

Spanning 1.8 million square miles, the western boreal forest contains 35 percent of the world’s wetlands and a quarter of the remaining intact forests. When drought parches the prairies, millions of displaced ducks and geese flock to the forest where they are sustained until conditions improve on their preferred prairie habitats.

Until recently, the western boreal forest remained a pristine wilderness. Rising demand for natural resources threatens the region’s wetlands and waterfowl populations. Studies show the boreal forest is losing native habitat at a rate of around 1 percent a year—greater than the rate of loss in the tropical rain forests and three times greater than the global rate of habitat loss.

DU uses geographic information systems to create an inventory of waterfowl habitat, and will study the potential impact that resource development could have on the health of boreal wetlands.

Louisiana Coastal Conservation Initiative

Of all the wetlands in North America, Louisiana’s coastal marshes are among the most important and the most threatened.

In a normal year, more than 10 million ducks and geese winter on Louisiana’s coast. Louisiana’s marshes also supply 30 to 40 percent of U.S. commercial seafood harvest, support more than 25 percent of the nation’s oil and natural gas flows and provide a protective buffer during violent storms. Scientists estimate that one mile of marsh can reduce a storm surge by about one foot. These vanishing wetlands also provide extraordinary outdoor recreation.

During the last 50 years, Louisiana’s coastal wetlands disappeared at a rate of about 40 square miles per year. Every 30 minutes, another area of coastland the size of a football field disappears. The problems stem from human influences, particularly the levees along the Mississippi River, which prevent fresh water and sediment from reaching the marsh to make new wetlands and rebuild existing ones.

DU biologists and engineers help restore coastal wetlands throughout Louisiana’s marshes. Vast amounts of coastal Louisiana wetlands convert to open water each year. To combat the problem, Ducks Unlimited has restored more than 7,000 acres of open water by constructing and planting earthen terraces.

Woody Brehm

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North America’s Threatened Wetlands Conservation Initiative

Wetlands are indispensable to waterfowl and other wildlife. Like great sponges, wetlands soak up excess water, reducing the severity of floods, storm surges and droughts. A study estimated that one acre of wetlands can store more than 1.5 million gallons of floodwater.

Wetlands also help purify our water. Plants and soils in wetlands remove high levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and toxic chemicals from the surrounding water. They also purify water that flows into our lakes, rivers and streams.

The United States alone has lost more than half of its original wetlands. Unfortunately, every year we lose at least 80,000 more acres. Our only course of action to stop the decline is to protect remaining wetlands and to restore lost ones.

Pintail Conservation Initiative

At one time, more than 10 million nesting pintails dotted the breeding grounds in Western Canada and the United States. Today, pintails number less than 4 million.

Recent DU research indicates that habitat loss and unsuccessful nesting are the greatest limiting factors for pintails. The most devastating trend is the conversion of native prairie to croplands. During the past century, more than three-fourths of the Prairie Pothole Region’s original grasslands have been lost.

Research shows that in the absence of native prairie, pintails will nest in crop stubble. They are early nesters, often settling down on a clutch of eggs before planting begins, so many pintail nests are destroyed by farm equipment. Compounding the problem is the loss of key migration and wintering habitats in the Klamath Basin, California’s Central Valley and along the Gulf Coast.

DU protects and restores natural habitats, and develops agricultural programs to improve conditions in areas most important to pintails.

Mallard Conservation Initiative

DU aims to conserve the vast landscapes that mallards call home. Research shows that nest success is important on the prairies, while brood survival is the key in the Great Lakes and water availability is critical in California. DU targets its work to fit the conservation needs in each of these crucial areas.

As mallards leave their breeding grounds, DU is securing healthy habitat throughout all four flyways. Each year, millions of mallards gather in the bottomland forests of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley.

In the Columbia Basin of the Pacific Northwest and the Central Valley of California, water quality and availability are the greatest challenges. DU works with partners to find affordable clean water for migrating waterfowl. In the Atlantic Flyway, flocks of mallards visit the Chesapeake Bay each year to rest in mid-migration. DU restores water quality and conserves habitats to ensure they survive their long migration.

John and Shirley Berry

“Each time, Shirley and I enjoy the outdoors or hear about experiences enjoyed by others, we know that we are truly blessed to have wonderful natural resources available. When we ask ourselves how best to preserve these resources for future generations, our answer is Ducks Unlimited. We know our gifts to DU will provide benefits for many generations of enjoyment,” said John Berry of Naples, Florida.

John and wife Shirley are DU’s newest Gold Legacy Major Sponsors and Platinum Feather Society members. An avid waterfowler, Berry’s leadership on the Wetlands America Trust board has allowed him the opportunity to participate at a national level in the restoration and protection of some of North America’s most threatened wetlands. This generous gift was a more personal way of fulfilling Ducks Unlimited’s mission and ensuring the health of our wetlands for future generations.
Strategic Conservation Initiative Fund  In the race to reverse the crippling loss of wetland acres each year, Ducks Unlimited has a proud history of applying nearly all of our income to immediate conservation work. However, spending the majority of our funds today means we may not be prepared for tomorrow’s greatest conservation opportunities. Through the Strategic Conservation Initiative Fund, Ducks Unlimited will build a savings account of assets to save critical habitat from the auction block and to act quickly on unanticipated land sales.

Once established, this fund will enable Ducks Unlimited to meet urgent conservation priorities by having resources available for immediate use where and when they are needed.

Endowment Initiative  A robust endowment is the foundation of Ducks Unlimited’s long-term fiscal strength. DU’s Endowment Initiative provides financial certainty and an ability to respond to urgent ecological concerns. Ducks Unlimited invests the principal of the endowment to grow over time, and the income it produces ensures a stable source of funding for ongoing conservation needs, providing a hedge against economic challenges.

The importance of DU’s endowment lies in its permanence. Endowment gifts keep on giving, year after year, generation after generation. Planned gifts and bequests are excellent vehicles for building this endowment and the future of Ducks Unlimited.

Educating Youth About Wetlands  Today’s youth are tomorrow’s conservation leaders. It’s up to us to instill an appreciation of wetlands and waterfowl in our children, so they will grow up to share our conservation ethics and continue our conservation legacy. One of the best investments we can make is to educate future generations about the importance of wetlands and waterfowl habitat.

To that end, Ducks Unlimited recently launched Project Webfoot, a nationwide effort to raise awareness and appreciation of wetlands among students, teachers, parents and communities. Project Webfoot gives teachers learning materials that can be integrated into the existing school curriculum to teach reading, science, art and other subjects with a wetlands focus. These materials bring the world of wetlands to life for 4th-6th grade students by encouraging active participation and problem solving.

DU’s Webfoot and Greenwing programs for kids promote conservation education today for the conservationists of tomorrow. Through these innovative programs, children learn why wetlands conservation is so important to waterfowl, wildlife and people.

ConocoPhillips  For 16 years, Ducks Unlimited and ConocoPhillips have partnered to protect, enhance and restore wetlands in the playa lakes region of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska through the Playa Lakes Joint Venture. Gifts from ConocoPhillips to Ducks Unlimited have surpassed $1.55 million, putting ConocoPhillips in an elite group of Diamond Legacy Sponsors.

“We are proud to be a partner in habitat conservation work that ensures a special place where waterfowl and other wildlife can rest, feed and flourish,” said Robert A. Ridge, VP for ConocoPhillips.

“We are especially proud that our contributions have been matched many times over by other partners to get the most value out of our conservation dollar.”

Ducks Unlimited is able to increase the ultimate effect of gifts like those from ConocoPhillips by obtaining public matching dollars. DU can turn $1 in private funding into $5 or more.
What began as a shared childhood passion for hunting and time with their fathers and grandfathers resulted in a partnership that benefits ducks and Ducks Unlimited. Since 2002, Bobby Wade and Jeff Barry have developed five recreational properties in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, and donated their perpetual easements to DU, ensuring the properties will be preserved forever.

“We work with DU, because its mission is parallel to our interests in conserving habitat and providing a place for future generations of our families to enjoy,” said Barry.

Wade echoes Barry’s sentiments and adds, “As a CPA, I appreciate the attractive tax implications that make donated conservation easements an integral part of our land management plan. We partner with DU, because they are the leaders in wetland conservation, and their land protection team is great to work with.”
This past year was an extraordinary one for the Wetlands America Trust (WAT) and for Ducks Unlimited as we celebrated the beginning of our Wetlands for Tomorrow campaign. The Trust is an integral part of the campaign and is happy to report DU raised more than $500 million during the leadership phase of the campaign. But, we still have a long way to go to reach our $1.7 billion goal.

Wetlands America Trust is a non-profit organization created in 1984 to support the DU mission by managing its endowment, revolving funds and purchased lands. We now have 221,591 acres, valued at more than $291 million, under conservation easement or deed restriction with WAT. In the last year, we received 12,714 acres, valued at more than $19.3 million.

The board takes its fiduciary responsibilities seriously and has a very strict review and approval process for any land purchases, donations and conservation easements. During fiscal year 2006, we reviewed and updated the responsibility levels for contracts and signing authorities for various levels of financial transactions.

Our board of directors plays a substantial role in Ducks Unlimited’s efforts to conserve, restore and manage wetlands for North America’s waterfowl. As advocates, hunters, landowners, volunteers and philanthropists, members of Wetlands America Trust made personal gifts and asked others to financially support our conservation efforts.

This is an exciting time for Ducks Unlimited, Wetlands America Trust and the entire world of conservation. With the launch of Wetlands for Tomorrow, the world’s largest conservation campaign in history, we look forward to many more years of success in the name of habitat conservation. Together, we can make a difference, and we will.