



**AN INTERVIEW WITH ED HARRIS**

# A Legacy for the Future

## How does DLC go about conserving land?

We identify properties within our area that are important for a variety of features—their proximity to streams, lakes, and rivers—or that provide connections to other conserved land that would create larger buffers for wildlife. We also work to protect agricultural land threatened by development.

Once a property is identified as a potential candidate, we discuss with the owner the merits of a conservation easement. Conservation easements are negotiated legal instruments used to permanently conserve land. They specify conditions for use and protection of the land and reflect the owner's preferences as well as the natural features to be protected. Once the easement is granted, the land will be protected in perpetuity. The land owner still owns the land and can do all the things on or to the land that are within the framework of the easement.

## What about DLC's work to advance local trails and greenways?

Virtually everybody in Davidson loves greenways. They are usually at the top of the list of citizens' wishes for town amenities. They provide opportunities for exercise, transportation, and a connection with nature. Not only are they great amenities for our town, but they enhance the value of the land they cross.



*A longtime Davidson resident and experienced real estate developer, Ed serves on the DLC Board as Chair of the Land Conservation Committee.*

DLC advances greenway construction by coordinating efforts with the Town of Davidson (TOD) to establish relationships with property owners over whose land a planned greenway passes. The TOD has adopted a Mobility Plan—a map for greenways—showing the status and routing of all planned greenways. We focus on the missing links with the highest priority status.

The same tax benefits of other land conservation easements also apply to donating a greenway easement. The owner also benefits from enhanced land value from having the greenway connection. Ultimately, the Town holds the easement and provides the funding to construct the greenway.

## Tell us about a recent land conservation project completed by DLC and how the project came together.

About six years ago, a local farmer connected with Roy Alexander, DLC's founding Director, to inquire about possibly conserving his land.

*(continued on next page)*



Davidson Lands Conservancy is a local land trust dedicated to conserving and stewarding land and to promoting a conservation ethic. DLC advances its mission with education and through programs of land conservation, trails and greenways, urban forestry, and preservation of wildlife corridors.

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### Our Four Pillars of Success

- 1 Conserve & Steward Land**
- 2 Preserve & Enhance Tree Canopy**
- 3 Expand Greenways & Trails**
- 4 Preserve Wildlife Corridors**

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ED HARRIS *(continued from cover)*

He had inherited a large farm from his father and grandfather, and had witnessed surrounding farmland being converted to housing developments. It made him sad to see this, and, being advanced in age and having no children to take over the farm, he wanted it to be preserved—forever.

### The high value of local land combined with rapid development and limited capital available for conservation make the work really challenging.

Details of that conservation easement were printed in our last newsletter. Dave Cable and board members worked tirelessly for years to bring this project to fruition. In the end, it was worth the effort. The generous farmer who granted DLC that conservation easement can now rest easy knowing his land will remain undeveloped, and all of the incredible natural beauty and the biodiversity within it will be protected.

### Land conservation sounds difficult and time consuming.

It is both those things. The high value of local land combined with rapid development and limited capital available for conservation make the work really challenging.

Conservation projects require creativity and the right balance of persistence and patience. Projects can take years to complete. So, yes, this work is really difficult, but so important and incredibly rewarding.

### Is that what inspires you to give so much of your time to DLC?

Land conservation is important because it protects our planet. As humans, we are stewards of the Earth, and DLC takes that responsibility seriously. We're a small nonprofit with a limited budget focused on all we can do locally.

Mecklenburg County is almost built-out with housing, shopping centers, office buildings, and the roads required to get to them. Every day, more land in the county is lost to development. Finding the balance between producing sufficient housing and conserving land is difficult. With experience developing real estate, I feel that I can assist in the effort to find that balance.

A large area of undeveloped land lies at the edge of Davidson in the northeast corner of the county. It is a precious commodity, under threat. We have two parks located there that comprise over 500 acres. One park, Fisher Farm, is conserved. The other, Abersham, is not. DLC is actively engaged in trying to permanently preserve this land and other local properties that benefit the health of our community and our planet.

It's a fine legacy to leave for future generations.



# A Summer in Nature

Morning, noon, and night, Davidson Lands Conservancy finds work and play—outdoors!

The summer months are always beckoning us outdoors, but enjoying nature was almost an order this year, as we were—and are—still living through a pandemic. Since being outside comes naturally to DLC, we enjoyed hosting some safe, summer outings.

We partnered with Mecklenburg County to host a moth night at West Branch Nature Preserve, where more than 70 moth species were observed, a county record! And the Davidson East neighborhood graciously organized “Summer of Sunflowers,” a fundraiser for DLC.

Our volunteers tagged milkweed to protect pollinators at Abersham Park and Fisher Farm Park, inspiring old and young alike to save the bees. Girl Scout Troop 610 generously donated cookie-sale profits for pollinator-friendly wildflowers behind the Davidson K8 School.

Local naturalist, Rob Van Epps, led a group of eager birders through Abersham Park to identify summer birds on a steamy evening.

Partnering with World of Wonder, we had outings for children and families, including a nature exploration at West Branch Nature Preserve. We found critters ranging from salamanders to damselflies! And Eddie Beach taught families best gardening practices and more as part of a tour of the Davidson Community Garden.

As we move into the cooler days of Fall, outdoor activities continue, including an educational hike with Professor Brad Johnson on geomorphology, several tree plantings, a TreesDavidson/TreeStore giveaway, and a stream clean up.

All events are listed on the DLC Community Calendar, at [davidsonlands.org/dlc-events/](https://davidsonlands.org/dlc-events/)



A DLC volunteer holds a marbled salamander at West Branch Nature Preserve.



## ROY ALEXANDER FELLOWSHIP

### Intern Anna Sharp

The Conservancy benefits from an endowed internship program with Davidson College named in memory and in honor of Roy Alexander, DLC’s founding Executive Director. Roy died about 5 years ago, but his legacy lives on in many ways, including through this internship program.

Davidson College junior Anna Sharp, the 2021 Roy Alexander Intern, spent her summer advancing several key DLC initiatives.

Working with consultant Amy Clinton, she advanced efforts to match our local conservation needs with potential funders, moving grant proposals forward and suggesting wayfinding improvements for our greenway network.

The public health major and field hockey star said that her DLC experience highlighted the intricacies of non-profit management and helped her to feel more connected to nature and our community.

**“This summer internship has reinforced my interest in environmental issues and their intersection with public health.”** —Anna Sharp

## INVASIVE PLANTS

# Protecting Biodiversity

Learn the perils of nonnatives in your yard *by Pam Hay, PhD*

Native plant species are required to provide shelter, nuts, seeds and fruits for birds, insects, and mammals. Many of our native butterflies are dependent on specific native plant species.

Nonnative plant species, on the other hand, spread aggressively, displacing native plants and harming the local ecosystem. These plants lack local natural predators and disease threats giving them an advantage over our native flora. Not all nonnative plants are considered invasive and can be used as an accent in your garden, but they usually add little value for wildlife.

### Biodiversity loss

Habitat loss and invasive species are the leading causes of biodiversity loss. Invasives displace native species through rapid vegetative growth, reducing biodiversity and promoting monocultures—growing just one species in a given area. This means fewer host plants for bees and butterflies, and often less nutritious plants for our native wildlife, including insects needed by birds. Some invasive species release toxic chemicals into the soil

that actually inhibit the growth of other plants and can even be harmful to humans. Others reduce the amount of water, nutrients, and sunlight available to native species. Several of these introduced species, such as Chinese Privet, Nandina, Autumn Olive, and Mimosa trees are commonly seen around Davidson, and most people do not realize that they have become a threat to our woods and wildlife.



*A former biology professor at Davidson College, Pam chairs the Conservancy's Outreach and Education Committee.*



Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

### Don't plant them!

It is important to avoid planting invasive species. If invasives are already present in your yard, remove them. Avoiding herbicides is preferred, but you may need to use them.

Many plant species are easily removed by digging or pulling up. Some, such as the vines of periwinkle and English ivy, can easily reproduce from pieces of root or stem left behind. Other plants produce thousands of seeds that can lay dormant in the soil and continue to germinate over a period of years. In either case, be persistent in your removal efforts and will be rewarded with a more beautiful garden that promotes a healthy ecosystem!

Keep in mind that disturbed soils invite invasive plants, so be sure to replace removed plants with a native species. Also, try to bag and remove seeds and other plant parts to prevent spread.

For a booklet on the most common invasives in our area and how to manage them, go to [Davidsonlands.org](http://Davidsonlands.org), click Explore Nature, Invasive



**Tree-of-Heaven is now in Davidson, and we have a chance to slow its advancement if we act immediately.**



Plant Information, and then Invasive Plant Guide. You'll find a list of suggested native plants at the end of the booklet.

### **Watch out for Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)**

The Tree-of-Heaven or Stink Tree is a highly aggressive invasive that spreads by root sprouts to create dense thickets. Each tree produces up to 300,000 seeds per year and grows quickly up to 80 feet tall. It releases chemicals in the soil that kill other plants and produces copious amounts of pollen-causing allergies. It is tolerant of poor soils and can even grow in cement cracks. All of these characteristics lead to habitat destruction and loss of native plants.

The Stink Tree is the preferred host of the Spotted Lanternfly, a highly destructive insect found as far south as Virginia. It feeds on 70 different native

tree species, especially fruit trees, and likes to lay its eggs on the Tree-of-Heaven. Both are from China and have no natural predators in the US.

### **It's here!**

Tree-of-Heaven is now in Davidson, and we have a chance to slow its advancement if we act immediately. It resembles native sumac and walnut trees and has a pinnately compound leaf that can be up to four feet in length. The leaflets have smooth edges, not serrated, and a notched lobe near the base containing one or two bumps, known as glandular teeth. When crushed, the leaves have a strong odor resembling burnt peanut butter. The bark is usually light gray and rough. Wing-shaped fruits appear from July to February on female trees.

Timing and method are both important in removing Tree-of-Heaven. Young seedlings can be pulled from moist soil. Small trees can be cut close to the ground and a 22 percent solution of Triclopyr applied with a paint brush to the cut surface. This must be done within five minutes of cutting to ensure absorption before the plant seals the wound.

Cutting alone actually causes vigorous root sprouting and will do more harm than good. Larger trees can best be removed late July through October using the hack and squirt method. This requires a sharp hand ax to make a series of non-overlapping cuts around the tree at the same level. Apply about a milliliter of concentrated herbicide into each cut. If the tree has fruits, try to remove as many as possible and bag them. Be careful using the herbicide and wear gloves to avoid contact with plant sap.



**DLC's 16th Annual Run For Green** was held Saturday October 2, returning this year to in-person fun and competition. To see results (congratulations!) and all our generous sponsors (thank you!) visit [runsignup.com/Race/NC/Davidson/RunForGreen](https://runsignup.com/Race/NC/Davidson/RunForGreen).

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## UPDATE Land Conservation and Greenways

### Beaty Park

DLC has permanently conserved the land for the proposed Beaty Park, soon to be improved with amenities and trails. Located in the heart of Davidson, the 20-acre park includes a pond and mature woods. Plans for improvement are nearly complete, and include play areas, restrooms, a pavilion, and trails. Construction on these improvements will begin this winter. DLC is partnering with the Town and the Davidson Garden Club on the project.

### East Davidson Conservation Area

Connectivity of conserved land is important, because contiguous natural lands add the most to water quality, wildlife, and people. The Conservancy's strategic land conservation efforts are focused on the northeast corner of Davidson, expanding on the

natural lands of Fisher Farm and Abersham Parks and the recently conserved 100+ acre farm. This also protects the water quality and habitat of the Rocky River and West Branch corridors. Several land conservation projects are in process in this area.

### Greenways

The Conservancy's greenway and trails initiative is focused on completing the connector trail between Narrow Passage and Fisher Farm Park. The community values our greenways highly, and this trail is a key leg. Bridging this 2,500 linear-foot gap will provide non-vehicular access to Fisher Farm from River Run, Narrow Passage, the West Branch development, and the village area. DLC is working with landowners in the corridor and Dewberry engineers to advance the trail. The town has funds available to build the greenway.

## DK8 NATURE OBSERVATORY

# Learning in Fresh Air

DLC led the most recent improvement at the Nature Observatory behind the Davidson K-8 School, fashioning an outdoor classroom. Studies show that outdoor learning results in positive outcomes for students, including better concentration and active nature learning.

Claire Alexander—Girl Scout, high school junior, and conservationist—collaborated with DLC by coordinating the effort to fundraise, gather supplies, clear the site, and build this special learning space.

Congratulations to Claire, who earned her Scouting Gold Award with this project, and thank you to DLC volunteers and the businesses who helped create a beautiful space for learning.

## Thank YOU!

- Landscape architect **Gary Fankhauser**, who completed a master plan for the Observatory, helped Claire design the area.
- **Bartlett Tree Service**, DLC's corporate partner, removed large dead ash trees.
- **Ace Hardware** in Cornelius, **Northlake Lowe's**, **Soil Supply of Huntersville**, and **Hoke Lumber** in Mooresville donated supplies.





## BOOK REVIEW

# The Bird Way: HOW BIRDS TALK, WORK, PLAY, PARENT, AND THINK, BY JENNIFER ACKERMAN, 2020

Review by Libby Cable

Thud! That was the sound this morning of a bird flying head first into our kitchen window. Thankfully, as is usually the case, the bird shook it off and flew away.

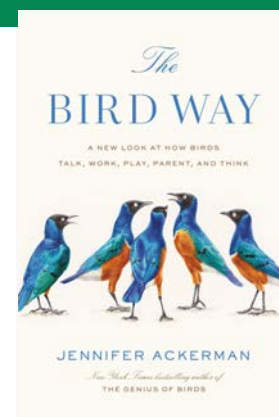
Having just finished Jennifer Ackerman's remarkable book about birds around the world, I'm less apt to attribute flying into glass as a mark of intellectual inferiority and more apt to wonder if the bird had too much on its mind while in flight. I now know that birds have higher neuron counts in their small brains than do primates. Bird behavior is a product of both instinct and experiential learning. While bird species differ greatly from each other, as a group, they are much more strategic than I ever knew.

Ackerman presents amazing research that provides examples of birds that use tools, master dialects, manipulate and deceive other birds, clown around, and form cooperative allegiances with other bird species when it suits their interests. For some bird species, mating is a gentle courtship; for others, it's rather violent. Some species kidnap fledglings and raise them as their own; other species graciously foster fledglings that have been abandoned by their parents. In short, birds, a vital

element in our interconnected and complex ecological system, exhibit a wide array of behaviors that, in evolutionary terms, serve them well.

I can only imagine what a rich population of birds existed a century ago. One quarter of the birds in the U.S. and Canada have disappeared since 1970 – in the blink of an eye in geologic time. The habitat loss from the recent Australian bush fires killed more than one billion birds, mammals and reptiles. While bald eagles and waterfowl are resurging, humans' use of insecticides continues to take a toll on our bird population. Birds that rely on insects for sustenance are rapidly declining due to starvation. Shifts in climate patterns upset bird migrations and reproduction.

Ackerman's engaging account of researchers' findings on the wide range of bird behavior from around the world is worth a read, even for those who don't think of themselves as bird lovers. She shows us how the intelligence of birds exceeds prior assumptions and underscores the intricate interdependence of living beings in our ecosphere.

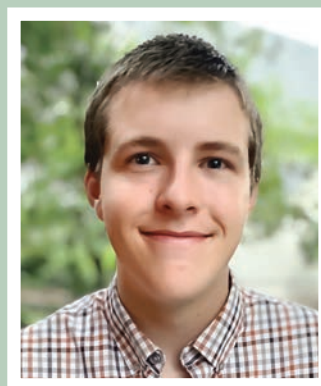


During her three-year term on the DLC Board, recent Davidson graduate **Azella Markgraf** brought energy and leadership, with a sharp focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will miss her service and commitment to conservation.

## Davidson Students on Board

This fall we welcome sophomore **Ty Cryan** to the Board. A native of Burlington, NC, Ty spent his childhood boating with his father on the conserved corridor of the Haw River.

Ty brings skills in geographic information mapping (GIS) to our DLC work and to his planned Environmental Studies major.



**"I'm excited to have the opportunity to give back and support Davidson Lands Conservancy."** —Ty Cryan

# DAVIDSON LANDS CONSERVANCY



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## THE BEE'S KNEES

# Inspiration From a Young Conservationist

Milkweed is a favorite spot for monarch butterflies to lay their eggs, but this valuable plant is often unrecognized and mowed down in a field. Enter DLC with events to flag this weedy treasure in places like Abersham Park.

One such tagging event inspired Davidson Day School third-grader Halen Holden to do more to save the milkweed—and thus the bees. Passionate about conservation, Halen combined her love of art and nature to create greeting cards to spread the message of pollinator protection.

In Gigi's, her grandmother's Statesville frame-gallery shop, this young artist, conservationist, entrepreneur, and future large-animal veterinarian sells her cards to raise funds for DLC.

**"It's easy to use art to help others."**

— Halen Holden, hoping to inspire her friends

