



Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea*)

NATIVE PLANTS

Planting for Biodiversity

Flora and fauna evolved together—and they like it that way

by Pam Hay, PhD

One of my greatest pleasures is listening to our local birds singing in the mornings. Our birds, like other wildlife in our region, depend on native plants for their survival. Native plants have adapted to our local ecosystem and are the most sustainable plants for our area, requiring little upkeep once established. Local wildlife has evolved along with these plants over thousands of years and depends on native plants for food and shelter. Thus, the types of plants you choose to put in your yard have a big impact on wildlife in our area.

The ideal yard

The “ideal” yard has unfortunately become one consisting of large areas of a monoculture of grass. This trend has resulted in fragmentation of natural areas needed to support wildlife, with many species under stress for survival. The grasses in our yards offer little to no value to native wildlife. Additionally, grass

is exceptionally high in its need for water and chemical fertilizers to maintain the “perfect yard.” We tend to think of agriculture as the biggest contributor to water pollution, but the combined effect of acres of individual yards using fertilizers is greater. Runoff of these fertilizers goes directly from storm drains into our local streams, affecting the



A former biology professor at Davidson College, Pam chairs the Conservancy’s Education and Engagement Committee.

wildlife that depends on clean water for survival.

Many of the landscaping plants you find in nurseries are species from other countries not part of the local ecosystem. These plants are of little value to our wildlife and add to the fragmentation of the natural food chain. Some plant species even become invasive and spread to woods and meadows, outcompeting native plants, further diminishing food for our wildlife. See davidsonlands.org/invasive-plant-info/

How to start

What steps can you take in your yard to help local wildlife? First, include a variety of native plants. Look for plants that will provide fruits and seeds at different times of the year. This will not only provide year-round food, it will give your yard variety throughout the growing season and increase the biodiversity of wildlife it



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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dave@davidsonlands.org
- Katie Noble, Education Programs
katie@davidsonlands.org
- Zee Berl, Pro Bono Consultant
scwb46@gmail.com

CONTACT

P.O. Box 1952
Davidson, NC 28036
dlc@davidsonlands.org
704-892-1910
davidsonlands.org



Our Four Pillars of Success

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

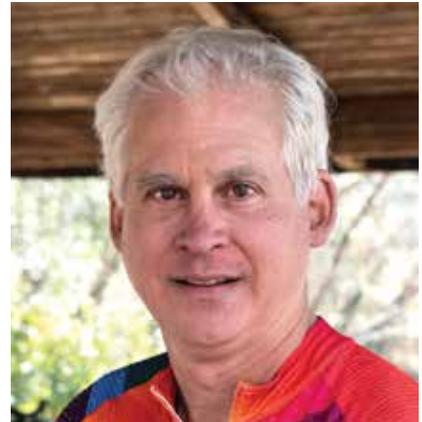
DLC LEADERSHIP

A Word from President Paul Freestone

Hello and thank you for your interest in Davidson Lands Conservancy’s mission and Four Pillars!

Our family has been lucky to call Davidson home for nearly five years, after a very purposeful transition to a third phase of adult life for me. Phase One was serving in the US Navy on board the fast-attack nuclear submarine USS Seahorse in Charleston. Phase Two (after I had thought we won the cold war...) was a fulfilling career working around the world for a global medical device company. As I travelled, I was always drawn to get out and explore places I visited, especially if a trail lured me into the local surroundings.

Some self-reflection led to Phase Three, which brought us to Davidson and has offered wonderful opportunities to learn and grow in the realm of community service and philanthropy. I had been so focused on family and career that I had failed to adequately support our local communities. I also realized that the tall trees, dense forests and waterways of my youth had imprinted on me, and I was looking for a place to call home that provided these elements for new explorations. I love getting



out into the woods and running or cycling next to local waterways and across the Piedmont, mountains, and Low Country. As a fan of lifelong learning, I see no shortage of opportunities to fill gaps in knowledge and experience related to natural surroundings, public finance (think greenway, park, and nature preserve funding), and philanthropy.

If you share my enthusiasm for making sure our natural surroundings continue to provide benefits to all, I invite you to join our exceptional DLC leadership in accelerating conservation of critical lands and habitat, and connecting our greenway networks. To discuss these topics, please reach out to me at *paulfreestone46@gmail.com* or Executive Director Dave Cable at *dave@davidsonlands.org*.

Thank YOU!

The work of the Davidson Lands Conservancy is only possible because of strong community support, for which we are exceptionally grateful. Through monetary gifts and volunteer time, we have advanced critical conservation work over the last year. We are grateful to the 250 generous and loyal donors who contributed more than \$65,000 in general program support in 2021.

Black-eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia*)



NATIVE PLANTS *(continued from cover)*

can support. Keep in mind that cultivars of native plants have often been bred for features that make the plant less beneficial to wildlife, so try to find sources of unaltered species.

If you want to support pollinators such as butterflies, include nectar plants as well as host plants for butterfly larvae. Additionally, consider placing similar flowers in clusters to allow easy access to food with little movement and thus minimal exposure to predators. Be sure to consider light and moisture needs of the native plants you choose. Also look at the final height and width of the plant, as most will increase from the size that you purchase. Keep in mind that you will have to water the first year to help plants get established, but these plants will need less water over time than non-native ones.

Starting fresh

If you are starting with a new landscape, it is easy to add native plants. In an established yard, plants might be added at the edges of existing flowerbeds, extending the bed into grassy areas. Maybe you add a butterfly garden or a tree in part of your yard. Also, check your beds for any invasive species and consider replacing them with a native one. Invasives are persistent and may need continuous monitoring.

For lists of plants native to our area, please consult the following sources:

- nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/plants
- audubon.org/native-plants
- ncwildflower.org

Would you rather walk outside and hear the roar of lawnmowers and leaf blowers or the soothing sounds of chirping birds? By working together to convert our yards to natural areas, we can create wildlife corridors that provide paths for nature to thrive. Collectively, we can make a difference in the biodiversity and well-being of the wildlife we see around us. Every time you choose to put a native plant in your yard, it makes a difference.

For more info on the importance of native plants, please read *Nature's Best Hope* by Doug Tallamy (see book review on page 7).

WELCOME TO THE BOARD

At DLC's annual meeting in December, members unanimously endorsed board officers for 2022. See *previous page for a complete list*.

Former DLC President Gordon Clark remains on the board and will serve on both the Urban Forestry and Community Engagement committees. Two new board members, Cindy McIntosh and Bonnie Newell, were elected with three-year terms, beginning January 2022.



Cindy McIntosh

After a career in marketing, Cindy retired to Davidson in 2007. Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, she developed a passion for the active outdoor life. Retiring in Davidson, she found a home for her other passion,

gardening. An active member of the Davidson Garden Club, she believes in improving and protecting the greenways and green spaces for all to enjoy.



Bonnie Newell

Bonnie, a 25-year Davidson resident, holds a degree from Clemson University in ornamental horticulture and landscape design. She works as managing partner with Berkley Group LLC and SVP of Real Estate Partnerships with Airwavz Solutions, both

in the wireless infrastructure industry. Bonnie's passion is connecting and protecting special people and places, with a belief that if we protect land here in Davidson, we can influence protecting land elsewhere.

URBAN FORESTRY

Connecting Trees, People, and Wildlife



Leslie Bragg (right) and her CSD students plant trees at Abersham Park.

TreesDavidson, a program of DLC's urban forestry conservation pillar, engages the community in caring for and expanding our tree canopy. This program is important for many reasons, including the critical role trees play in combating climate change. In 2021 the program

partnered with Catawba Lands Conservancy (CLC) and the Town of Davidson to host Community School of Davidson students to plant trees at Abersham Park. The students learned about the importance of native species and tree diversity in the resiliency of our urban forest. Additional tree planting is planned for this spring.

Treasure Trees

Last summer DLC launched the Treasure Tree program with the help of Davidson College interns. Treasure Trees are those with size specifications, species, or historically significant features—they're the oldest and grandest trees

in Davidson. Signs that designate Treasure Trees include QR codes that link to fun and helpful tree details. Look for them as you walk through town.

DLC's corporate partner Trane Technologies has generously provided funding to help underwrite the Treasure Tree program. Scott Tew, DLC board member and Trane Technologies VP and sustainability managing director, made the grant possible.

Davidson Tree Council

A group of arbor leaders have formed the Davidson Tree Council, which includes Gary Thacker, Town arborist, Davidson College arborist Jamie Moore, and Davidson Lands Conservancy. The council will manage all aspects of our urban forest, including educational programs, tree stewardship and planting events, the Treasure Tree platform, a memorial tree program, aerial tree-canopy analysis, street trees, and consistent tree identification signage. The Council will help support the Town's Tree City USA designation.

"The formation of this council is a great step forward to ensuring our urban forest is managed effectively and efficiently", said Gordon Clark, past President of DLC.

Salamanders and Turtles and Wetlands, Oh My!

World of Wonder Continues to WOW

World of Wonder began in 2010 in response to the growing concern that too few children spend time outdoors experiencing the natural world first-hand. Now in its 12th year of connecting families to nature through exciting outings and programs, WOW is a collaboration between Davidson Lands Conservancy and Woodland Discovery.

The West Branch Nature Preserve is an ideal spot for observing an array of wildlife including birds and beavers! In early February, local naturalist and herpetology lover **Allan Lloyd** (pictured above right with a mud turtle) once again led families in a quest to find the spotted salamanders that breed in wetlands in late winter. In addition to a beautiful spotted salamander, the group found a marbled salamander and a mud turtle!



Healthy wetlands support a broad diversity of wildlife, including these charismatic amphibians. Each month, WOW hosts a family-focused outing, and 2022 will be full of wonderful offerings. Look for nature printing, making musical instruments from natural objects, hikes and more.

WOW will also participate again this year at Woodlawn School's STEAMfest, April 3 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. This is a free event for families to explore science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

To keep up with DLC volunteer and education opportunities, sign up for our electronic newsletter at davidsonlands.org.

Walk with a Geologist



Brad Johnson (far left) led an informative outing in November to review the geology and stream ecology of our area. Participants learned why streams in the Piedmont exhibit similar shape with steep walls and entrenched channels. On this walk we discovered the story of how our Piedmont streams formed, a subject of active research at Davidson College, and discussed the geology of “whale rock” and other aspects of the site.

BOOK REVIEW

Nature’s Best Hope

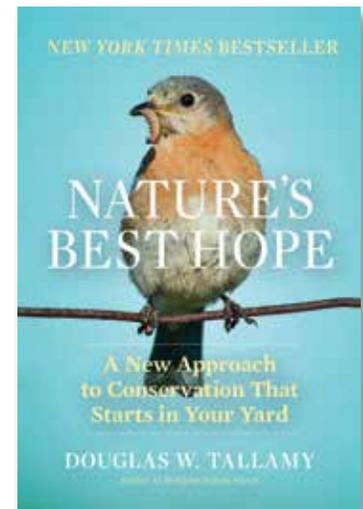
A NEW APPROACH TO CONSERVATION THAT STARTS IN YOUR YARD, BY DOUGLAS W. TALLAMY, 2020

Review by Cindy McIntosh

Doug Tallamay awakened readers to the catastrophic decline of wildlife populations in his first book, *Bringing Nature Home*. Because this decline is due to the rapid disappearance of native plants, his advice was simple: plant more natives. But nothing has stopped the momentum of ecological and habitat decline. Headlines continue to dismay, sighting such ecological disasters as the 90% decline in the monarch butterfly population, the 45% yearly loss of honeybees, or the 36 million trees lost each year in the US. His new book, *Nature’s Best Hope*, is a handbook for the individual homeowner to create “conservation corridors to provide wildlife habitats.”

Why worry about wildlife habitat when we have wonderful parks, nature preserves, and national parks already doing a good job of protecting wildlife habitat? Wildlife doesn’t necessarily respect park boundaries. When conservation is confined to parks, it will not preserve species in the long run, because those areas are too small and separated from one another.

Tallamy’s answer is to plant biological corridors that connect preserved habitats to the places where we live and work. With nearly 86% of the land east of the Mississippi River privately owned, the opportunity for impact is exciting and promising. He calls his plan “Homegrown National Parks.”



Tallamy’s Homegrown National Parks can be created through simple steps we can apply to our own communities and yards. Even untrained people can reclaim millions of acres covered

in lawn with minimal expense. To provide food, water, and shelter for insects and other wildlife that need native plant communities to survive, start by enlarging existing flower beds well into the lawn and adding native plants and shrubs. Remove invasive species and replace them with keystone natives and pollinators. Pam Hays’ article in this newsletter has three links to creating a list of natives for you.

Tallamy recommends networking with neighbors to create multiple habitats on your own street. Underplant trees in your yard with native plants and ground covers to aid in the pupation of caterpillars. Add a water feature or bird bath to create a clean water source for wildlife. Tallamy promises that these beautiful plants transform your garden into a dynamic habitat, buzzing with bees, butterflies, and birds. Before you know it, you will begin to see a garden bursting with abundance and a connection to the natural world.

UPDATE Land Conservation and Greenways

Land Conservation

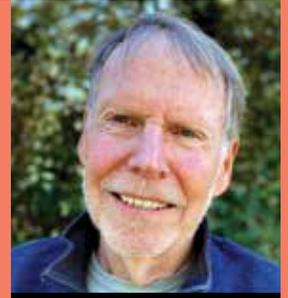
The staff and board members of the DLC are always happy to talk to property owners about the benefits of conserving their land. We are actively working with five land owners whose properties meet the conservation criteria established by the DLC and comprise a total of approximately 470 acres. Much of this acreage is contiguous or close by, providing permanent areas where wildlife can thrive and future generations can enjoy.

Many landowners are unaware of the benefits of conserving their land. One of our jobs is to be an informational resource. Conservation is voluntary. The details of each conservation agreement are negotiated based on the preferences of the land owner and the criteria established by the DLC. While the conservation agreement or easement is permanent and runs with the land, the land ownership is unaffected. The only significant change is that the property cannot be developed. Most all other land uses are possible and available to the current owners and, upon a sale or transfer of title, to future owners.

A New Greenway

Our work to create a greenway connecting Fisher Farm and the Narrow Passage development is making good progress. Both properties are accessed off Shearer Road. This greenway connection is important to residents of Davidson and the rural community outside the town, as it will complete the link for a walking and biking path all the way from downtown Davidson to both Fisher Farm and Abersham Park.

The preliminary engineering work has been completed, giving us an optimal path between the two existing greenway destinations and also establishing the exact acreage required to complete the construction of the connection. In the next several months we hope to finalize the contractual agreements with the affected landowners, and move to complete the final construction drawings to prepare for construction. Our goal is to be well into construction before the end of 2022.



By Ed Harris,
DLC Vice President

DK8 NATURE OBSERVATORY

Sprucing Up

DLC and Catawba Lands Conservancy partnered with Community School of Davidson sophomore and senior students for an in-service work morning in mid-November. More than 20 students and staff gathered at the Nature Observatory behind Davidson K8 School to improve that nature area behind the school.



Community School of Davidson sophomores and seniors.

Students mulched trails, repaired bridges, and cleared an area of brush and debris for a second outdoor classroom space.

In another community effort, Davidson College Presbyterian Church congregants and Scouts helped coat most of the trails leading to the school's outdoor classroom with mulch, making it much easier to access after a rain.

"It felt good to help protect a local waterway to keep it healthy and provide a place for people to learn about stream ecology."

—Anna Teckenbrock, CSD sophomore



Rewilding Fisher Farm

Native grasses benefit wildlife
from bees to foxes *by Andy Kane*

DLC is leading a long-term collaborative effort to rewild Fisher Farm to benefit nature by enhancing wildlife, and to inspire and inform visitors. Rewilding activities are conservation efforts to restore and protect natural processes and wilderness areas.

Fisher Farm Park, a natural gem for our community and region, provides a beautiful place to walk, bike, and enjoy nature with friends and family. This unique 200-acre park is appropriately named—not long ago it was a working farm. While former hay fields and pastures were good for livestock, they offer little or no benefit to native wildlife.

Prior to European settlement, the Carolinas had vast areas of open prairies and savannas that were extremely rich in plant diversity and wildlife, including pollinating insects vital to the food web. Farming and modern land-management practices changed all that.

Old farm fields, dominated by nonnative fescue and Bermuda grasses, present both a challenge and an opportunity.

Old farm fields, dominated by nonnative fescue and Bermuda grasses, present both a challenge and an opportunity. Such fields are notoriously lacking in plant and animal diversity due to a sterile monoculture of nonnative grasses that offer a paltry amount of food and cover for insects, birds, rabbits, etc. These vast field areas offer potential for rewilding by replacing the nonnative grasses and flowers with native ones.

Wildlife biologists and conservationists work to recreate these critically important early successional habitats. Fortunately, many of Fisher Farm's existing fields can be converted to rich meadows of native grasses and forbs (herbaceous flowering plants) that offer a much richer ecosystem for wildlife, including diminishing pollinating insects. That is the goal of this project.

The fields below the parking area at Fisher Farm are being maintained as low maintenance meadows. The infrequent mowing regime allows for limited native



NCWRC wildlife biologist John Isenhour (far right) offers DLC volunteers rewilding suggestions at Fisher Farm.

grasses to grow, flower, and fruit. Areas like these provide some food and cover for wildlife. However, fields like these, dominated by fescue, fall way short of their potential for beauty and diversity of plants and animals without the elimination of nonnative grasses.

The NC Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC) has taken a leadership role in establishing early successional habitats. Recently, NCWRC wildlife biologist John Isenhour visited Fisher Farm to offer practical rewilding suggestions. John proposed several approaches for establishing and maintaining early successional habitat and native grasses and flowers such as: indian grass, little bluestem, tridens purpletop, spotted bee balm, swamp milkweed, and butterfly weed. But first, nonnative grasses must be eliminated.

The best way to move forward with rewilding Fisher Farm may be to work on small plots and experiment with what works best. Restorative areas of interest can be created along the greenway to educate visitors and generate interest in the rewilding project. With an abundance of volunteers, Fields at Fisher Farm is poised to become a shining example for ecosystem restoration and regeneration for the benefit of wildlife and future generations.

Additional sources:

- xerces.org/publications/guidelines/organic-site-preparation-for-wildflower-establishment
- ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Conserving/documents/UplandGazette/Upland-Gazette-Spring-2020.pdf

DAVIDSON LANDS CONSERVANCY



P.O. Box 1952
Davidson, NC 28036

FROM DLC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVE CABLE

Why I'm NOT Worried

Our community has at its heart—literally and figuratively—the beautiful Davidson College campus, an academic park with art, fields, historic buildings—and smart, curious, concerned students.

DLC's internship program brings the intelligence and environmental passion of Davidson students into our mission. We have highlighted them in previous newsletters (see davidsonlands.org), and here I simply want to shine a light on their contributions over the last few years.

Collier Ballard has been working with us on greenway mapping and grant writing. David Hagler, history major and classical studies minor, is building our Wildlife Corridor program and assisting with the Treasure Tree program. Michael Yen is a junior

sociology major and environmental studies minor from Los Angeles. An intern for DLC for the past three years, he is most interested in local policymaking and implementation.

We thank all our Davidson student interns—past and present and future. They are environmental warriors. We look forward to welcoming more of these into our work, before sending them into the world to protect and heal the fields and creeks and trees they love.

And that's why I'm not worried.



DLC's Interns Collier Ballard, Anna Sharp, and David Hagler with DLC board member Ty Cryan second from left. (Michael Yen not pictured)