

THE NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST



1995 ANNUAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

THE NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST was created in 1968 by the Legislature as an independent agency with the mission to preserve land in its natural state for enjoyment by the public and to protect natural diversity through the acquisition of open space. Land is preserved primarily by donations of open space through acquisition of title in fee simple, or of conservation easements, and is managed to conserve endangered species habitat, rare natural features, and significant ecosystems. Access to Trust lands is generally not restricted. Passive use by the public for recreational or educational purposes is invited wherever such use will not adversely affect natural communities and biological diversity.

The Trust also recognizes that ownership and management alone are not enough to achieve its mission. Public education is an integral function of protecting natural diversity. The Trust distributes printed information and sponsors interpretive programs and seminars designed to convey a conservation ethic for the protection of open space and its natural values.

THE NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Policy for the Trust is set by an eleven-member Board of Trustees. Six members are appointed by the Governor from the recommendations of a nominating caucus of conservation organizations and five members are State officials.

MICHAEL CATANIA, Executive Director of New Jersey Field Office of The Nature Conservancy. Resides in Mendham Borough, Morris County.

EMILE DeVITO, Director of Conservation Biology, New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Resides in South Plainfield Borough, Middlesex County.

SALLY DUDLEY, Executive Director, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. Resides in Harding Township, Morris County.

RUTH EHINGER, Land Use Regulation Program, Department of Environmental Protection. Resides in Hopewell Township, Mercer County.

BETSY FOSTER, member of the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs. Resides in Haworth Borough, Bergen County.

JAMES HALL (Vice Chairperson), Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources, Department of Environmental Protection; representing the Commissioner. Resides in North Hanover Township, Burlington County.

FRANK LEARY, (Chairperson), environmental consultant. Resides in Pohatcong Township, Warren County.

THERESA LETTMAN, Pinelands Preservation Alliance. Resides in Manchester Township, Ocean County.

HONORABLE JOHN A. LYNCH, Senator from District 17 and member of the State House Commission. Resides in the City of New Brunswick, Middlesex County.

THOMAS WELLS, Administrator, Green Acres Program, Department of Environmental Protection. Resides in Mendham Borough, Morris County.

LISA YOUNG, Treasurer's Executive Staff; Representing the State Treasurer. Resides in Princeton Township, Mercer County.

DAVID F. MOORE, Secretary/Treasurer

STAFF

Thomas F. Hampton, *Executive Director*

Beverly Mazzella, *Real Estate Coordinator*

Martin Rapp, *Ecologist*

Judeth Piccinini Yeany, *Counsel*

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Photos by Martin Rapp

IN 1995...

...the Natural Lands Trust experienced one of its most successful years since 1969, involving 21 individual closings, bringing approximately 1,353 acres under Trust stewardship. The size of the acquisitions range from the new 259 acre Catawba Preserve, to a 0.91 acre addition to our Pleasant Mills Preserve, both in Atlantic County. More than 650 acres of the total represents additions to existing Trust properties. Working closely with the Green Acres Program in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, we were able to secure ownership of several parcels, including the Milford Bluffs Preserve in Hunterdon County, significant for its rare species and natural community. After several years of effort, almost 120 acres were added to the Crossley Preserve in Ocean County, while expansion is anticipated in the coming year. As we enter 1996, the Trust has responsibility for more than 8,498 acres throughout the State, and expects to protect additional open space in the future.

...two members of the Board, Newton LeVine and Thomas Gilmore, were replaced with new Trustees appointed by Governor Whitman. Newton LeVine was first appointed in July 1979 and had been an active member of the Board for more than sixteen years, serving as the Chairperson for the last two years. Betsy Foster, Conservation Chairman for the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, will replace Mr. LeVine. Theresa Lettman, an active environmentalist from Ocean County, succeeds Mr. Gilmore, first appointed to the Trust in 1993. At the November meeting, both Mr. LeVine and Mr. Gilmore were thanked by Board members and staff for their dedication and the insights they brought to the Trust in protection of natural diversity.

ADDITIONS AND THE FUTURE

On the outskirts of Blairstown in Warren County, the Trust has managed the Limestone Ridge Marsh Preserve since 1974. When first acquired as a donation from Nancy Castleman, the 21-acre forest and marsh included a small portion of a pond used by waterfowl as a feeding and resting area. In 1990, the Board of Trustees identified additional acreage, as part of a project area, that would be desirable for protection of natural diversity. This past year, the Board approved an enlarged project area and acquired two important tracts.

The project area expansion contains the majority of the watershed for Cedar Lake. Beaver Pond wetland areas, and streams flowing into them, are important habitat for a variety of animals and plants. Several small dairy farms had evidently been operating here at the turn of the century where small level areas along the hilltop were cleared for pasture and crops. Large sugar maples, within a forest of young ash and maple, identify old field edges now nearly completely reforested. A mix of hardwoods including sugar maple, American beech, ash, dogwood, red and white oak and black birch, demonstrate the richness and diversity of the site. Stands of healthy hemlock tend to cluster in the rich soils of areas along the small streams.

The Wulster property, part of the original project area, is a 93-acre addition this year to the Preserve, expanding protection to a hidden limestone pond. The cool spring-fed waters of the pond, with its standing flooded timber, make ideal feeding and resting areas for flocks of waterfowl. Among the limestone outcrops, beneath the shade of the forest, grow two rare plants, the green violet and glade fern.

In the latter part of the year, a second acquisition of 145 acres increased the size of the Preserve to its

current 268 acres. The Summit Bank property represents the westernmost portion of the project area. Here one may find old foundations of the long-forgotten hamlet of Kalarama, still depicted on U.S. Geological Survey maps. In fact, the remnants of several dilapidated buildings were noted before acquisition and Summit Bank donated \$1,000 to the Trust at closing, to pay for removal of the structures. The woods road system through the property provides a hiking trail network and will eventually link the Limestone Ridge Marsh Preserve and the Paulinskill Valley Trail.



Wulster Property

M. Rapp

BUILDING ON PROTECTION

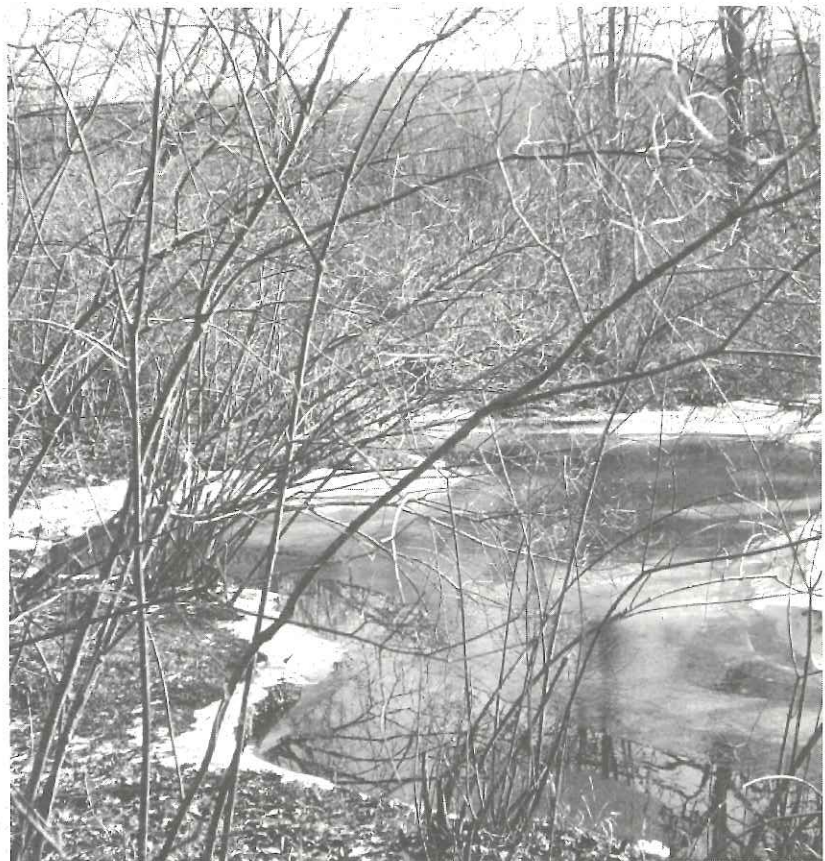
Located in rural Sussex County, in both Sparta Township and the Borough of Ogdensburg, the flood plain of the Wallkill River was a focus of attention for the Trust early this year as those lands were identified as a project area for future acquisition. Beginning in 1987, the Trust acquired 10 acres of wetlands along the river and added additional, but separate, parcels in succeeding years to bring the total to 55 acres by the end of 1994. Seeing a pattern of protection developing, and recognizing the significance of the region, the Trust approved a project area for acquisition totaling approximately 500 acres. Within months of the project area designation, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation donated more than 80 acres to the Trust along the Wallkill River.

Meaningful populations of waterfowl and woodcock make use of the open water and forested wetlands along the river for feeding and resting during both nesting time and migration. Rare wildlife in the area include bog turtles and wood turtles, likely to be found in the flood plain habitat. Limestone fens, spring seeps from the limestone bedrock, provide open, low pH conditions in wet soils. These rare natural communities support state listed endangered plant species such as flowering gentian and bog birch.

In the southern portion of the state, four parcels totaling over 75 acres were added to the growing Pleasant Mills Preserve in Mullica Township, Atlantic County. Through donations from James and Barbara Kelley, Morris and Ruth Dolinko, Lynn Joan Dell and Joy Sue and Leon Kurland, these properties provide protection to the Brockaways Branch, just west of Pleasant Mills Road. The waterway supports a dense stand of Atlantic white cedar, with pitcher plants growing out of the peat mat edging the

tea-colored water. The properties are a mixture of typical pine barrens wetlands with the uplands sporting a healthy variety of oaks interspersed with pitch pine.

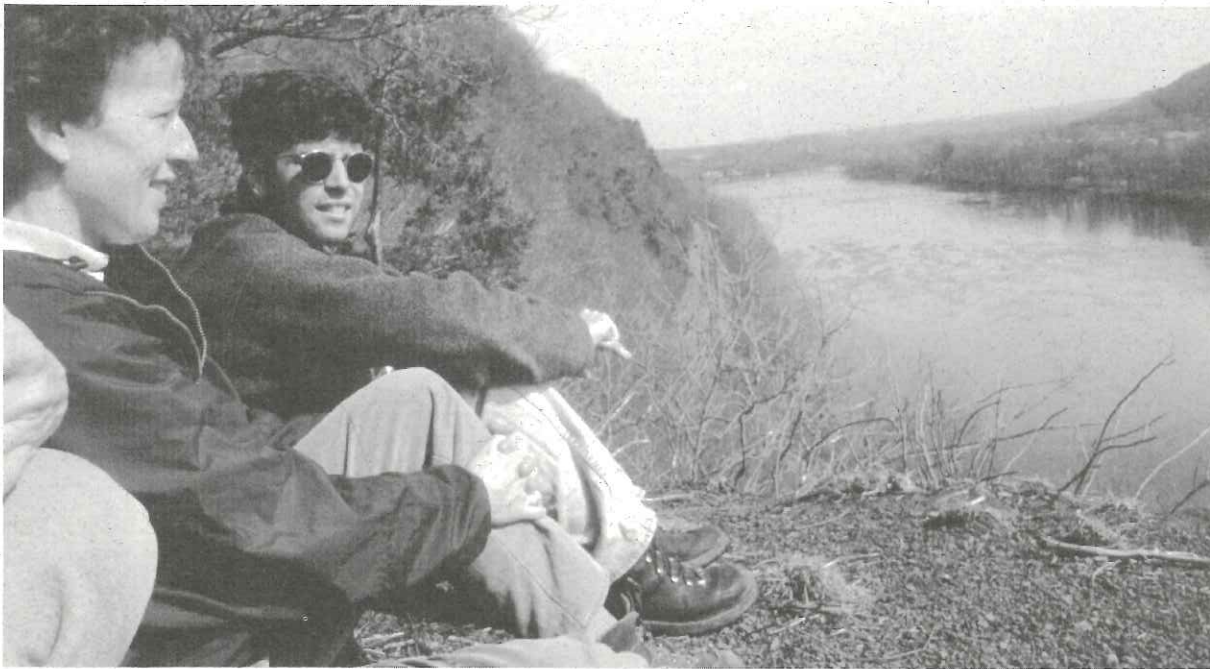
In suburban Franklin Township, Somerset County, the Mildred Roberts Family, Seymour and Sandi Tushak, Morris and Raye Landis, and Connie and Sam Landis provided a legacy to open space protection by donating a 10-acre wooded lot near the Trust's Flemer Preserve. The donation also aided family members by disposing a final asset of the family corporation, which could then be dissolved. With a small stream flowing along the narrow rear portion of the lot, dominant species include red maple, ash, and red cedar together with minor stands of dogwood, apple and oaks in the reforested field area. Within a mile of the property, the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park and Cook Natural Area also provide public access to undeveloped lands surrounded by older homes and established tree nurseries.



Wallkill River Wetlands

M. Rapp

GREEN ACRES AND THE TRUST



Overlooking Milford Bluff

M. Rapp

Pooling resources was the key to protection of several parcels of open space brought under the management of the Trust in 1995. Several years ago, the Trust identified project areas for protection of natural diversity because of their significance as endangered species habitat and, in several instances, their location adjacent to existing Trust preserves. Working with the Green Acres Program in the Department of Environmental Protection, the Trust targeted a number of these sites for purchase. This past year, after much negotiation with property owners, two major acquisitions by the Green Acres Program were assigned to the Natural Lands Trust for management.

The Crossley Preserve, literally on the edge of the Pine Barrens, also lies adjacent to densely populated senior citizen developments in Berkeley Township, Ocean County. Since 1984, the Preserve has provided passive trail recreation for local residents and habitat protection for a number of endangered species. Also since 1984, the size of the tract has grown continually, and did so again this year through acquisition of 120 acres known as the Union Valley property. The newest addition parallels the old Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way from the not-so-forgotten Town of Crossley,

west to Township Line Road. This new addition of a classic open pitch pine community, with pockets of wetlands associated with the Oxford Branch, expands the Crossley Preserve to almost 500 acres. Land protection efforts are still underway in this region and other significant additions to the Crossley Preserve are expected in 1996.

Just north of the Town of Milford in Hunterdon County, a very striking feature of the landscape along the Delaware River is the ridge line, high above County Route 627. This 237-acre property, once known as "Hidden Acres", also has access and frontage along Milford-Warren Glen Road. The property, now known as the Milford Bluffs Preserve, sits atop a plateau, with most of the land level or sloping gently towards the east. Facing west, the red shale cliffs enjoy a hot, dry microclimate, itself a rare community type and suitable for unusual plant life. Rich hemlock ravines and the toe of the slope provide mesic conditions favorable for other rare plants documented over the last century. Acquisition provides assurance that hydrology around the bluff will not be altered by development and that management can be initiated to banish exotic species.

ENDANGERED SPECIES STEWARDSHIP

Management responsibility for endangered species habitat brings with it a sense of pride in protecting a part of the state's natural heritage as well as a great deal of planning and labor to implement appropriate actions to accomplish the goal. Knowing how to successfully manage habitat to benefit a particular species is often more complicated than completing the plan of action. The habitat requirements of many endangered species are not totally understood. The Trust owns a number of properties where this enigma presents itself each day. That challenge was compounded this past year when Florence Walker offered to donate, and the Trust accepted, 82 acres of land adjacent to our Hamilton Preserve in Atlantic County.

The property has been known for many years as habitat for a large population of *Rhynchospora knieskernii* (Knieskerns beaked rush), a federal and state listed endangered plant species. This 4 to 6-inch high rush is difficult to identify in the field, and very little is known about its habitat requirements. Research and management techniques, funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, are currently being conducted by the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Natural Lands Management. One of the sites being studied is the Trust's Crossley Preserve in Ocean County, where a smaller population of the plant is located along the existing interpretive trail.

The Walker property includes a long abandoned sand-and-gravel pit, with a portion of the mined area harboring seasonal ponds that support the population of the beaked rush. This tiny rush appears to thrive in areas of wet, disturbed habitat such as the land surrounding the ponds. How much disturbance the plant will tolerate is the question that must be answered in order to manage the site successfully. Deeper ponds and surrounding lands are open, unvegetated sand barrens, gullies, and washes supplied by groundwater. Those areas not directly affected by past mining are forested wetlands of red maple and pitch pine.

Compounding the difficulty of planning for the stewardship of the site is a long history of public abuse to the property that includes illegal dumping of refuse and off-road vehicle use by motorcycles and 4-wheel drive trucks. Dealing with the trash on-site was partially resolved through efforts by Mrs. Walker and her husband David, before the Trust accepted title to the land. Heavy equipment supplied by the donors, and under the direction of the Trust ecologist, removed several years worth of debris, in the hope that a clean site would not be a target for continued public dumping. Mrs. Walker has also generously offered a monetary donation that will contribute to future protection of the property and aid in successful stewardship of the endangered species habitat.



Walker Property

M. Rapp

LOCAL STEWARDSHIP



5

Bear Swamp Stewardship

M. Rapp

Local groups and individuals often make the best stewards of open space because of their presence and the pride they take in protecting resources in their community. When the Trust acquired the Bear Swamp at Red Lion Preserve in Southampton Township, Burlington County, a local group was ready to meet the challenge even before the deed was signed. The Rancocas Conservancy, a local conservation organization involved in protection of land in the Rancocas Creek Watershed, urged the Natural Lands Trust to acquire the property and offered its assistance in management. Conservancy members coordinated trash removal soon after the Trust received title to the land, organizing more than sixty-five individual volunteers, and acquiring assistance from Southampton Township and Public Service Electric and Gas Company.

This past year the Trust also approved an agreement with the Conservancy that spells out the their responsibilities and those of the Trust

to care for the land and interact with the local residents who will visit the sanctuary. The Conservancy will provide day-to-day management of the Preserve, conducting inspections and reporting any activities that are inconsistent with Trust land management policies. The local stewards, under the supervision of the Trust Ecologist, will prepare a management plan for approval by the Board of Trustees that will include baseline documentation, habitat management, public relations and a volunteer program. Obviously, the labor involved with such an undertaking will be considerable, yet the Rancocas Conservancy has accepted the challenge and will coordinate the necessary volunteer efforts. It will also develop a public education program that will include tours for school and community groups and research projects for public educational institutions. The Rancocas Conservancy will become the local stewards because of their interest and expertise in protecting natural diversity in their community.

STREAM CORRIDOR PROTECTION



Raccoon Creek

M. Rapp

6

Water bodies and stream corridors are important habitat, not only for wildlife, but as flood-retention areas and open space for adjacent and downstream human residents. Preservation of open space adjacent to streams protects not only the property but prevents potential adverse impacts downstream, thereby multiplying the benefits of land protection. Run-off, sediments and pollutants are rarely limited to a single location when occurring next to a moving body of water. Several acquisitions by the Trust this year reinforce the concept of stream corridor protection for the benefit of many, especially in an area of rapid development.

The Raccoon Creek in Gloucester County passes through not only developed land areas but rural agricultural fields as well. In the Borough of Swedesboro and Woolwich Township, the Trust accepted donations of two parcels of stream corridor from Josephine Finocchiaro, totaling approximately 49 acres of freshwater marsh along the upper tidal reaches of the Raccoon Creek. The marsh community is represented by spatterdock in the mudflat portions most influenced by the tide, while the higher marsh elevations are known to support healthy stands of wild rice. Cover, resting areas and food sources for wildlife are plentiful, that support high numbers of waterfowl and wading birds. The river margins are sharp alluvial bluffs with a buffer of hardwood forested wetlands rising in elevation to relatively flat uplands. The rich soils of the uplands and slopes support a healthy forest community of oak, tulip, beech, and maple.

One may not think of urban Lakewood Township, Ocean County as a location for stream-corridor protection, but it was here that the Trust recently acquired more than 12 acres along the banks of the Cedar Bridge Branch adjacent to the Garden State Parkway. This parcel, and a smaller section on the west side of the Parkway, are the only areas of this stream that, historically, had not been converted to cranberry bogs. Without the dikes and ditches of the cranberry bog, this swamp retained much of its original wetland characteristics. Cedar Bridge Branch winds through the length of the property, with cedar stumps and logs strewn along the stream channel and floating bog mats of open, emergent vegetation along the bank. This open creek edge supports a wide variety of flora and is suitable habitat for the curly grass fern and Blake's aster, endangered plant species documented upstream. White cedars form a tree line beginning some 25 feet from either bank of the creek, while pitch pine, red maple and oaks grow on the drier portions further upland. The habitat is testimony to the unique characteristics of this small remnant swamp and its importance in a highly urbanized area.

In the watershed for the upper portion of a tributary to the Mulhockaway Creek, in Union Township, Hunterdon County, lies a 16-acre parcel donated by Eileen Schuyler. The area is presently rural; however, several new housing developments have recently been completed and additional development is planned. The property sits at the foot of Musconectcong Mountain, though the topography is generally level. The entire property is forested, having a canopy of ash, a mid-story of dogwood and spice bush, and a ground cover of stilt grass, jack-in-the-pulpit, garlic mustard and a variety of ferns and grasses on the creek banks. The creek flows along the southern edge of the property and much of the site has wetland characteristics. The property, having apparently been pasture or field many years ago, has grown into a thicket type habitat in several locations. Because of its proximity to Spruce Run Reservoir, this land will provide watershed protection necessary for the future needs of this area of the State.

PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR WETLANDS

Over 400 acres of wetlands were donated to the Trust during 1995, ensuring perpetual protection of a resource that is known to benefit the public in its natural state. Despite the known benefits from their preservation, wetlands continue to be under pressure for development, and regulations limiting their use are constantly being criticized. Recognizing the constant assault on wetlands, the Trust continually endeavors to acquire this valuable natural resource so that preservation can be assured.

In the City of Estell Manor and Weymouth Township, Atlantic County, the Trust recently received a donation of 259 wetland acres from Bart Hackley. Initially, Mr. Hackley offered to sell the property to The Nature Conservancy who referred the offer to the Trust. After consulting with the Trust Real Estate Coordinator, Beverly Mazzella, and his tax advisor, Mr. Hackley reevaluated his options and decided to donate the parcel to the Trust. With access only by boat, the property consists of tidal marsh located between the Great Egg Harbor River and the South River. The vegetation of the preserve known as Catawba is primarily salt marsh cord grass with isolated patches of phragmites. The presence of sensitive joint vetch, a federal and state listed endangered species, has been documented one mile south of this marsh.

Evelyn and Nathan Nathanson were the proud donors of the newly acquired 146-acre Thompsonstown Preserve, located in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County. Lying east of the Great Egg Harbor River, the property is mostly forested wetlands, with small intermittent ponds that tend to dry during the summer months. Nevertheless, wetlands such as these often tend to store flood waters, evidence of which could be seen on tree trunks and hummocks nearly one foot above ground level. While waters from this site eventually flow into the Great Egg Harbor River, no discernible channel exists.

Surrounded by rural agriculture and undeveloped forested lands in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County, a 16.5-acre property, now known as Bears Head, was donated by Helen E. Thomas as part of a settlement of a Tidelands Resource Council action. Located in the Pinelands Protection Area, the land is mostly pine barren wetlands with portions in upland oak forest and old field succession, a small stream passing through the property is the headwater of a tributary to the South River.

These parcels are protected by various regulations limiting the development of wetlands in New Jersey—today. With acquisition by the Trust, these lands will forever be held in the public domain.

7



Catawba

M. Rapp

TREE PLANTINGS ENHANCE PRESERVES

Forest meets field in Carney's Point and Oldmans Township, Salem County, to provide variety at the Trust's 391-acre Game Branch Preserve. A mixture of old agricultural fields and wetland forest provides habitat diversity that tends to increase wildlife utilization. In addition to wildlife use, the Game Branch Preserve is part of a rural agriculture community and, the Trust wished to retain portions of the old field area in a working agricultural landscape. However, too much 'edge' where forest meets the field, can reduce the value of the woods for interior forest nesting birds.

Early last year, the Board of Trustees approved a plan to reforest a two-acre field that protruded into an otherwise forested habitat. Neotropical migrants use this woodland as a safe refuge for resting and feeding during their spring and fall migrations. Interior forest nesters, such as ovenbird and scarlet tanager, require large unbroken tracts of forest for successful nesting. Excessive edge habitats, such as were created by this isolated field, concentrate natural predators such as raccoon and skunk. Replanting this small field with trees

enhanced use of the adjacent forest. Using a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Partners for Wildlife Program*, and with the help of over 35 volunteers, including sportsmen, Boy Scouts, and students, the Trust planted 1100 tree seedlings. Purchased from the Bureau of Forestry's Jackson Nursery, native oaks, ash, tulip and pine seedlings were used as stock to once again make field into forest.

Tree planting can be beneficial not only to wildlife, but to young people, as an educational lesson. Last March, the sixth and seventh grade students at Ocean Intermediate School in Ocean Township, Monmouth County, participated in a reforestation project at the Trust's Whale Pond Preserve, adjacent to the school. Coordinated with Al Johnson, the Science Director, and under the direction of the Trust Ecologist, the students planted trees to buffer the Preserve from the nearby highway. Mr. Johnson intends to use the outdoor classroom for the students to monitor the tree growth, and conduct other environmental science lessons such as water quality monitoring, and aquatic studies.



Tree Planting at Whale Pond

M. Rapp

COOPERATIVE ACQUISITION

The Natural Lands Trust and Wetlands Mitigation Council have been working cooperatively over the last several years to acquire land identified as mitigation for minor development of wetlands. Donation of wetlands can satisfy mitigation requirements of the Council and serve to protect natural diversity through anagement for the public benefit. The Council does not have the staff to manage properties, however, and has looked to the Trust to provide this service. This past year, the Trust agreed to accept the donation of a 38-acre tract of wetlands along the Wading River in Washington Township, Burlington County as part of this cooperative undertaking.

This brackish tidal marsh, where salt water meets fresh, had been mostly Atlantic white cedar with portions having been cut over twenty years ago as evidenced by stumps and corduroy roads. Young cedars are dense in

wet areas away from the marsh which supports some fine stands of wild rice and cattails. In addition to active muskrat lodges, wildlife at the marsh include bald eagle, tundra swan, black ducks, mallards and Canada geese. Sensitive joint vetch, an endangered plant, has been documented in this marsh ecosystem nearby and may yet be found here in future searches.

Fate can play a part in land preservation. Despite the proximity of nearby state-owned lands, several agencies had been unsuccessful in negotiating purchase of the land from the former owner. The eventual donor of the land was acquainted with the former owner and was able to negotiate the purchase of the property for eventual transfer to the Trust as mitigation. Without cooperation between the Wetlands Mitigation Council and the Trust this valuable wetland would have had an uncertain future.

DONORS

Diane Bricker
Maureen & Ronald B. Cranston
Theodore Daniecki
Lynn Joan Dell
Ruth & Morris Dolinko
Josephine Finocchiaro
Bart Hackley
Irvin & Helen Johnson
Nancy Kaye
Barbara & James Kelley
Joy Sue & Leon Kurland
Morris & Raye Landis
Sam & Connie Landis
Gardina A. & Edward V. Lipman Sr.
Rodman H. Martin
Joseph & Annamarie McCann
Janice O. Monihan
Evelyn & Nathan Nathanson

Eric & Deborah Roberts
Mildred Roberts
Richard & Phyllis Roberts
Eileen Schuyler
Estate of William V. Smith
Helen Thomas
Seymour & Sandi Tuschak
Florence Walker

Downstown Airport Inc.
The Fanwood Foundation
Hanover Pond Development Corporation
Manalapan Realty Associates
New Jersey Conservation Foundation
Stavola Co., Inc
Summit Bank
Sun Pipeline Company
Township of Old Bridge



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