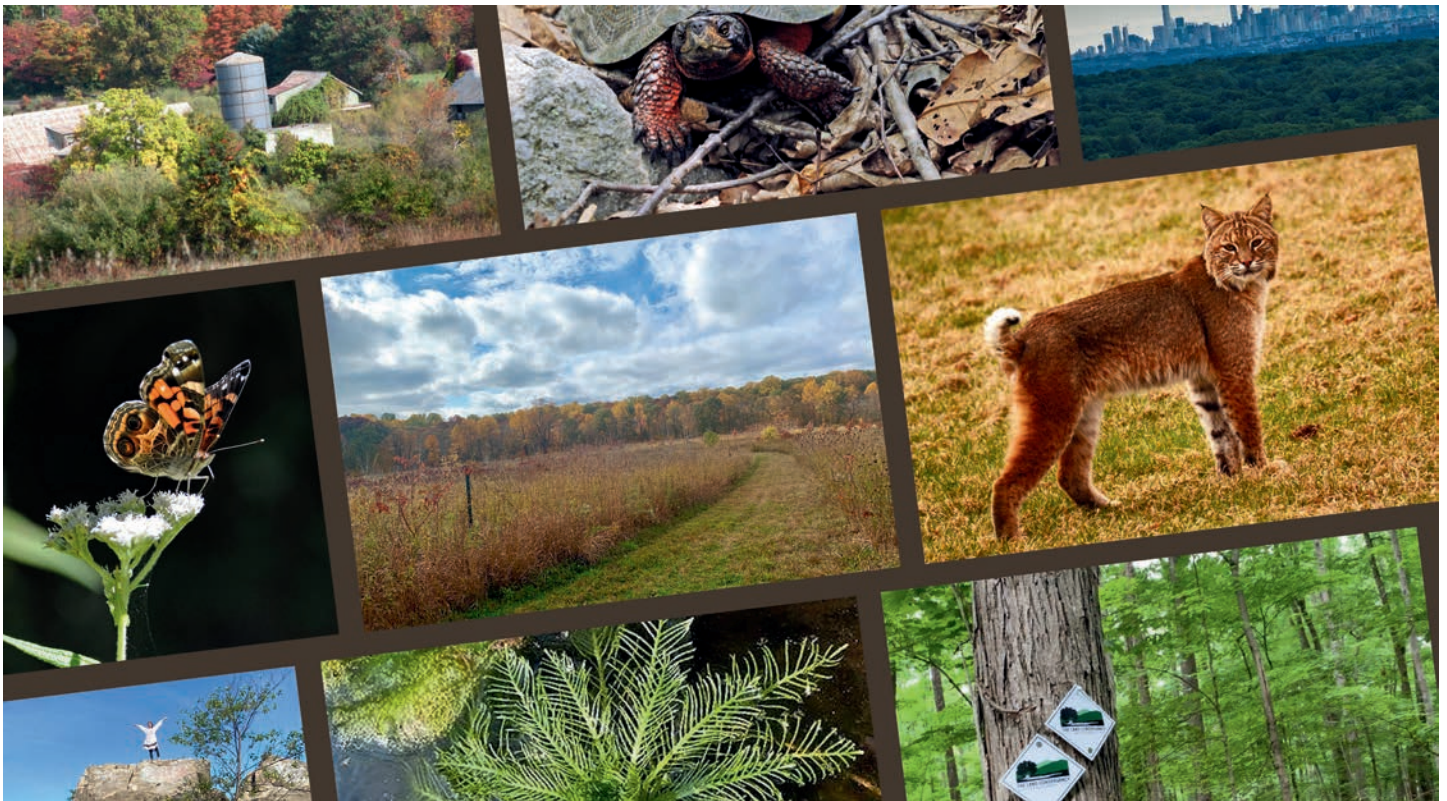


THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY **OUTDOOR**ISSUES

SUMMER 2024

Biggest Green Acres Award Ever



This year, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection distributed \$117 million in Green Acres funding for development and enhancement of parks and preservation of open space. Of the \$5.7 million that went to nonprofits, 29% went to a single organization: The Land Conservancy of New Jersey. This \$1,675,000 appears to be the largest award Green Acres has ever made to a nonprofit.

In addition, The Land Conservancy helped six New Jersey communities secure seven other grant awards, for a total of \$4.5 million: Madison, Oakland, Livingston, Hanover, Verona, and Knowlton. We also helped Bergen County update their open space plan, which made them eligible for Green Acres funding for the

first time in 14 years. Bergen County went on to secure \$2.75 million in grants of their own.

We are overwhelmingly proud of The Land Conservancy's remarkable land team, which works hard and achieves these kinds of impressive results. This funding will allow local governments and nonprofits to leverage millions of additional preservation dollars through matching federal, state, county, and local funds, as well as from private sources. When we win, everybody in New Jersey wins, from the towns we work with to the families enjoying the parks and green spaces that are built and improved with these tax dollars being put to good use.

(Continued on page 2)



THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

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THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
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Green Acres funding, cont'd

It's especially gratifying to see the Green Acres program thriving and finally able to distribute this many awards. The Land Conservancy has been working to increase funding for Green Acres since 2006, when we helped found the Keep It Green Coalition to lobby for expanded Green Acres, farmland, and historic preservation funding. Keep It Green eventually grew to 180 members and became the leading voice for land preservation in New Jersey. From there we played a leading role in getting a referendum approved for the state to fund Green Acres, and then helped that referendum get passed by educating the public about the importance of land preservation and park restoration.

In 2014, we led the campaign to dedicate a portion of the corporate business tax to permanently fund this work. Now our devotion to this cause is bearing fruit not just for us, but for nonprofits and municipalities across the state—and perhaps most importantly, for everyone who lives here.



FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



I started with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey through our internship program in 2010 and joined up full time as a Land Preservation Specialist in 2011. As an LPS, I work to permanently preserve land for conservation, farmland, and/or recreational purposes. I personally work on each parcel of land that I preserve, from initial landowner outreach all the way through to closing—and everything in between! It is a dream come true for me to be able to do this for a living, and I am honored to play a small part in the great work that The Land Conservancy does year after year, and in helping New Jersey live up to its nickname of the Garden State.

Ever since I first glimpsed the mighty redwoods in Muir Woods at age 16, I knew that I wanted to preserve and protect other special places. The land

needs an advocate, and I knew that this would be me someday. This desire eventually led me to earn a master's degree in environmental management, with a concentration in ecosystem sciences and conservation, from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. Armed with academic knowledge to go along with my love of nature and open places, I sought to make my dream a reality.

When I first drove up the long driveway to The Land Conservancy office at the beautiful Wildacres Preserve, a flock of wild turkeys crossed my path. From that moment onward, I knew I had found my professional home, a place where I could fight for nature and for the land.

Since then, I have preserved many properties and worked with many great landowners, as well as municipal, county, and state officials. Not to mention my amazing coworkers, colleagues, and other conservationists! The best part of my job is visiting the places that I have preserved and knowing that when my daughter grows up, these same special places will be there for her, and that they are preserved forever.

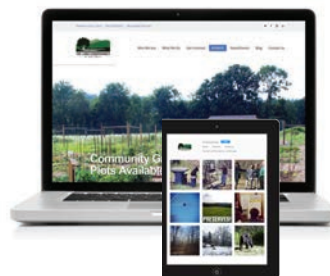
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Cela', written over a light green background.

Aaron Cela
Land Preservation Specialist

GET MORE FROM THE LAND CONSERVANCY

If you enjoy this newsletter, follow us on social media and sign up for our mailing list. You'll receive occasional dispatches from the field and learn about conservation issues, our preserves and programs, the people and organizations we partner with, and what we're working on in your area. You can also visit tlc-nj.org to read our blog.

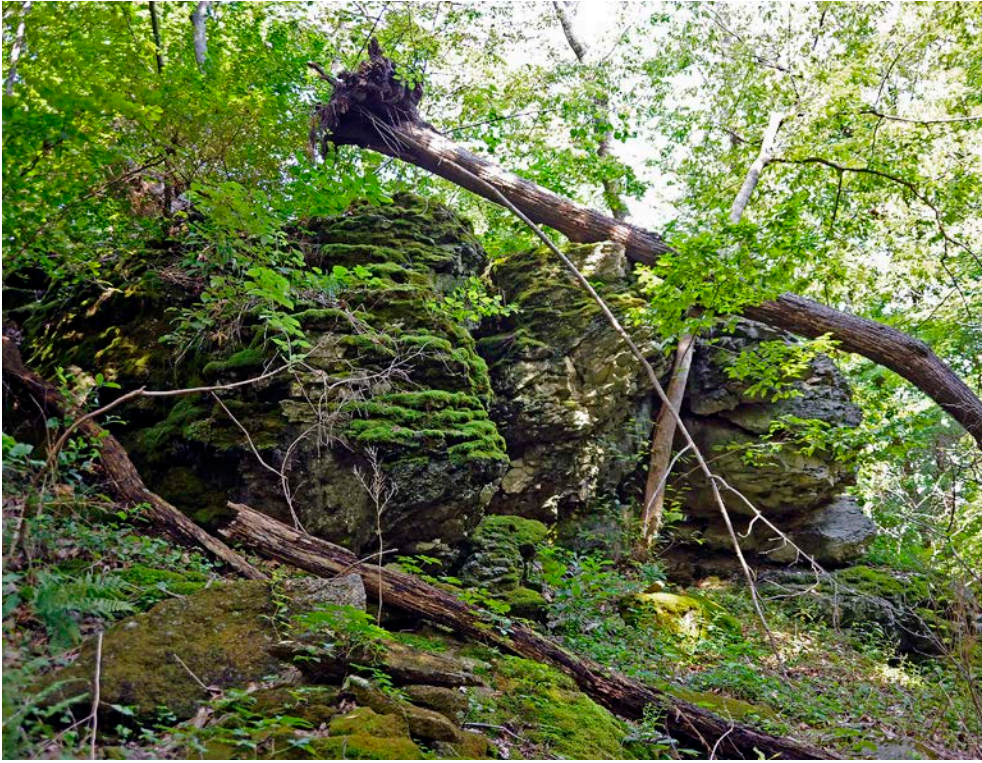


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Spotlight on NJ's Limestone Forests



Limestone escarpment at Hardwick Meadows Preserve.

Preserving New Jersey's limestone forests has long been a priority for The Land Conservancy of New Jersey. Limestone forests are tremendously valuable, containing some of the state's most spectacular and unique habitats and hosting many rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species.

Two significant land acquisitions in the past few months demonstrate our commitment to preserving limestone forests. The first is 37 acres in the Delaware River Watershed in northwestern New Jersey. This landmark acquisition brings together and builds on a number of important conservation initiatives that The Land Conservancy and its partners have been working on for years. The property is entirely limestone forest and very biodiverse, containing excellent habitat and rare plants that are only found in calcareous areas. It sits on the Paulins Kill, a major tributary to the Delaware River, and lies in the heart of Bobcat Alley. It broadens greenways on both sides of the Paulins Kill that have been prioritized for acquisition by Frelinghuysen and Hardwick townships and has been added to Warren County's White Lake Natural Resource Area. The forest provides canopy protection within a tremendous block of forest and will prevent future

forest fragmentation. In addition, the NJDEP Landscape Project identifies the newly acquired land as habitat for rare and endangered animal species like bobcat, blue-spotted salamander, and barred owl.

Stewardship VP Sandy Urgo says, "It's not often that we acquire a piece of land that fits into so many important conservation plans and efforts. Visiting this property calls to mind the feeling of being a kid in a penny candy store. We've found evidence of bobcat, river otter, and may other species. The expanse of land along the Kill in this area is nothing short of breathtaking. This conservation win is one for the record books!"

Earlier in the spring we also purchased 18 acres that were handed over to the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust for their ecologically important Hardwick Meadows Preserve, which is centered around a calcareous fen wetlands system that includes extensive braided stream channels fed by springs and seepage areas, limestone sinkhole ponds and wooded swamps. The new property boasts many of these unique features, including limestone escarpments that rise out of the forest like the one pictured here.

Much like White Lake, this ecosystem hosts many rare plants, a few of which are found nowhere else in New Jersey, such as spreading globe flower, sessile-leaved water-speedwell, hemlock-parsley, stiff gentian autumn willow, and green sedge.

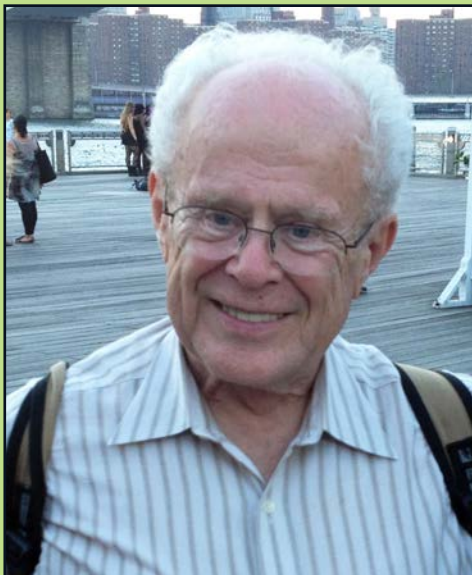
It's exciting to discover these unique places in our great state where nature is thriving undisturbed, and it's tremendously satisfying to work collaboratively with like-minded partners and share with our members who support these efforts and love New Jersey's green spaces as much as we do.

Outdoor Ambassadors Learn Why Water Quality Matters

Our friends from the Boys and Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic visited our South Branch Preserve recently to learn all about water quality and how it impacts our lives. These kids had a marvelous time performing science experiments and collecting macroinvertebrates to observe. Education Manager Van Trät's innovative and hands-on lessons guaranteed that everyone learned a lot and had fun. Here's a snapshot of our day!



Welcoming New Trustee Bob Ross



Robert C. Ross, longtime supporter and cheerleader for The Land Conservancy, has finally joined our board as a trustee. Bob practiced law as a generalist attorney with Debevoise, Plimpton, as a sole practitioner, and with Pfizer for over 45 years. He also was the sole caregiver for his late wife for 34 years, the last 10 years 24/7. After her death, and in accordance with her wishes, he has made fundraising grants to over 120 different charities with a wide variety of missions, including the Janet Ross Fund that supported TLCNJ's Legacy Giving Circle.

Since 2014, he has also acted as an intermediary between the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and the The Land Conservancy, assisting with the completion of 20 different trail preservation projects. Bob has also served on the The Land Conservancy's Development Committee for five years. We're so happy to have you, Bob!

The Winners Are In!

We are very excited to showcase the New Jersey students who have been awarded The Land Conservancy's six \$10,000 scholarships this year. For 40 years our organization has been proudly supporting future environmental leaders who are training for careers protecting our natural resources. The Land Conservancy's scholarship program started in 1983 with the Russell W. Myers Scholarship, followed by the Rogers Family Scholarship in 2005, and has grown exponentially since then.

First up is Nikki Morley, whose love of birds "took flight" while volunteering at the Raptor Trust in 2016. After getting an animal science degree from Lafayette College, Nikki was a planning intern with TLCNJ, then went back to the Raptor Trust to work on avian rehabilitation, helping injured wildlife and raising native baby birds for release into the wild. Now Nikki is working on a master's in ecology and ecosystems at the University of Vienna, studying how urbanization affects the territory structure and social foraging behavior of crows. Nikki's ultimate career goal is to work with AZA-accredited zoos doing conservation breeding, handrearing, and reintroduction. Fascinating!

Joseph Brau is a resident of Elizabeth and rising third-year law student at NYU School of Law. This summer, Joseph is working with the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, DC to learn more about climate litigation and collaborating with environmental justice community organizations that will serve him well in an environmental law career.

Danielle Dyson is a second-year master's student at Rutgers as well as a second-time winner of a TLCNJ scholarship. We truly admire Danielle's career as a fisheries biologist with the NJDEP that's been shaped by her childhood at the Jersey Shore. Danielle says, "I have spent many summers tagging protected shark species in New Jersey backbays and then tracking them with our acoustic receivers (almost like an EZ Pass system for sharks!) so that we can better protect them and their essential habitat. I hope to start a tagging program at the NJDEP so we can better manage vital marine species and protect them from extinction and exploitation. I aim to work towards a PhD so I can become an adjunct professor, continuing my research

with the NJDEP while teaching and inspiring future generations of scientists."

Samantha Pasciullo Boychuck is a master's student at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, where she studies environmental management, focusing on economics and policy as well as terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. Samantha's research ranges from studying the impact of forest density on tick populations to comparing the gut microbiomes of Channel Island foxes and spotted skunks. She's working on a GIS certificate, assists with Clean Air Act permitting for the EPA, and ultimately wants to help governments and private companies achieve environmental goals while also balancing profit and growth.

Jennalie Lutes from Middlesex is studying for a master's at Florida Atlantic University in environmental science. She is the lead technician for the Lake Okeechobee annual wading bird monitoring project, which involves monthly aerial surveys, corresponding ground surveys, and nest monitoring. Her thesis is evaluating the diets of wading birds. Jennalie is working towards becoming a biologist/ecologist who incorporates research and community-based approaches into the conservation and management of natural resources and wildlife.

And finally, Zoe Byham is a recent graduate of Rutgers University with a degree in environmental policy, institutions, and behaviors and minor in political science. Zoe is continuing her education at the University of Cambridge this fall, completing her master's in philosophy and environmental policy. At Rutgers, Zoe was a climate leader on campus, serving as president and co-founder of Climate Reality RU and a research intern and student representative for the Rutgers Office of Climate Action. Zoe is passionate about climate action and is determined to pursue meaningful change within the public sector. And she's on the right track, having interned for the White House Climate Policy Office, Senator Cory Booker, and the sustainability team at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

We can't get enough of these stories about ambitious young people making their home state of New Jersey a better place!



MEET OUR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



NIKKI



ZOE



JENNALIE



DANIELLE



JOSEPH



SAMANTHA

THE FUTURE OF NJ CONSERVATION



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End of Fiscal Year Success!



This blue-eyed Bobcat Alley bear thanks you! We are proud to announce that our community donated \$201,484 during the 2024 End of Fiscal Year Campaign to support The Land Conservancy's most urgent projects to help the Pequannock Watershed, Bobcat Alley, and farmland preservation. You're saying loud and clear that you feel strongly about protecting and restoring New Jersey's natural resources! Special gratitude to the anonymous donors who generously doubled every gift we received up to \$20,000.

Thanks to your response, we can continue to be at the forefront of conservation in New Jersey.

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