



## Summer 2023 Newsletter

*"To plant a pine, for example, one need be neither god nor poet; one need only own a shovel." - Aldo Leopold*

### CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

It's great to see so many people out enjoying the summer weather at Leopold's Preserve. Whether you'd like to take a quick stroll around Berry Meadow, watch for birds in the wetland, learn about the deep history of this landscape, or take a four-mile hike around Leopold's Loop, now is the perfect time to get out and experience all that the Preserve has to offer. Come visit on your own or join one of our free guided walks. Check out [our calendar](#) to see our full offering of educational programs and volunteer events.

Outside of Leopold's Preserve, I am extremely proud of the work we are doing to influence meadow management in the Shenandoah Valley. Read more about the work we have done with White House Natives and the working White House Farm to improve nesting success for threatened meadow birds in our headline article.

Finally, I'd like to highlight our continuing partnership with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. We were proud to sponsor their annual fundraising gala last week, and are looking forward to an exciting joint event at Leopold's Preserve between WHFF and NVCT to be announced later this summer. Keep an eye out for that announcement in the weeks to come! Until then, I hope you enjoy the sights and sounds of summer at Leopold's Preserve.

- Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



An unmowed pasture overlooks the White House Natives nursery.

### GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

#### A conversation with Eric Sours

Eric Sours is the nursery manager at White House Natives, a wholesale tree nursery in Luray, Virginia. The nursery is adjacent to the working White House Farm, which Eric also manages. He works closely with WHFF staff to oversee restoration and outreach in our riparian buffer.

"You've heard of No-Mow May?" Eric asked as he showed our staff through pastures full of billowing grass. "This is the conservation equivalent." Native pollinators and birds rely on grassland habitat for food and reproduction, especially through May and June. However, many farmers take their first cut of hay from pastures like this one in mid-May. Facilitated by WHFF, Eric has continued to learn about best management practices from the Clifton Institute and Virginia Working Landscapes. Now, he's incorporating those practices into his management of the White House Farm and White House Natives.

About 60 acres of pasture and open space will be maintained as grassland through early summer, with BMPs dictating a first hay cutting after July 1. "It's amazing how many birds have nested in that tall grass," Eric said proudly. "Allowing birds to hatch those eggs lets their populations grow."

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

## Updates from the Preserve

### Savanna Habitat

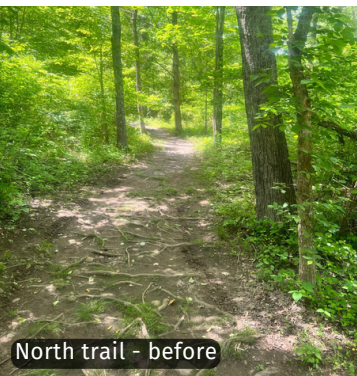
We have been working diligently to create a savanna habitat from a 2.5-acre former farm field along Warbler Way. Piedmont savannas are a rare type of fire-controlled landscape. They blend meadow and forest aspects to create a unique habitat that allows many different plant and animal species to thrive.

This spring, we continued our work to transform this landscape by planting 30 native trees across the savanna. 19 trees were planted by volunteers as part of our Earth Day celebration - we received help from a middle school environmental club, scout groups, and community members. Andrew Weitzel and Troop 58 planted the remaining 11 trees as part of his Eagle Scout project.

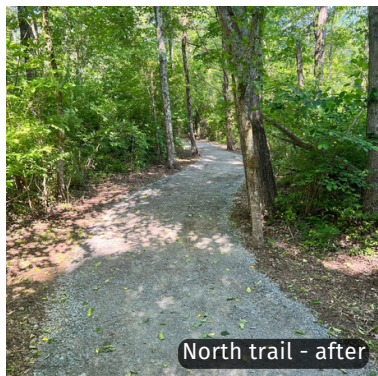
Moving forward, we will seed the savanna with a mix of native grasses and wildflowers as we continue to control non-native fescue in this area. Stop by and explore the new savanna trail off of Warbler Way and keep an eye out for a new savanna interpretive sign coming soon!



The Creation Care Club from All Saints Catholic School helped plant trees in the savanna to celebrate Earth Day.



North trail - before



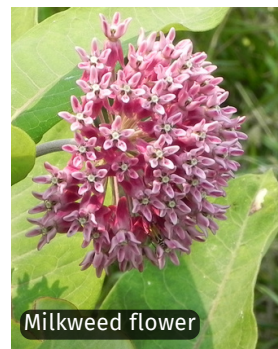
North trail - after

### Trail Improvement Projects

With the warm weather comes an increase in visitation, and Park Manager Nick Davis is working hard to ensure that our trails are in pristine condition. With the help of dozens of volunteers, Nick has successfully rehabilitated a washed-out section of the "north trail", added mulch to enhance Pinkard's Loop, and trimmed back overhanging vegetation along the entire trail system. Want to give back to Leopold's Preserve? We welcome all volunteers. [Register for a workday!](#)

### Accessibility Grant

We are thrilled to have been awarded a grant through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Get Outdoors (GO) Fund. We plan to use their generous gift to make accessibility improvements to bird watching areas in the wetland. Do you have ideas for ways we can make bird watching more accessible at Leopold's Preserve? Don't hesitate to reach out to [info@whfarmfoundation.org](mailto:info@whfarmfoundation.org).



Milkweed flower

### Seasonal Observations

- Milkweed
- Red columbine
- Green heron
- Scarlet tanager
- Box turtle



Team Avatar staff were on site last fall to conduct interviews and record footage of the Preserve.

## DISCOVER LEOPOLD'S PRESERVE - SHORT FILM

We've been working with Team Avatar Films over the past six months to produce an informative video about Leopold's Preserve. We recently completed the final five-minute film, which is now available on our YouTube page! It features interviews with several of our volunteers, partners, and staff, along with beautiful footage of the fall colors at Leopold's. We hope that this film will help more people learn about our mission and all of the great things that Leopold's Preserve has to offer. Want to see for yourself? [Click here to watch!](#)

## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: AMY SCALA



Amy is a great friend of Leopold's Preserve and has helped make tremendous improvements to the property over the past three years. Her first visit to Leopold's was in 2019 for an Artists in Middleburg plein air event. From there, she has facilitated countless projects as a member of the Dominion Woman's Club Environment Committee, including the installation of a bench at Berry Pond, maintaining the native plant garden by the parking area, planting daffodils around the Old Homestead site, selecting wayfinding sign locations on our trails, and more.

In addition to her work with the Dominion Woman's Club, Amy frequently volunteers with the Friday Conservation Corps. In fact, she was one of three volunteers to attend our first-ever Conservation Corps workday back in early 2022! She particularly enjoys helping to remove invasive vines.



Above: Amy, painting on Meadow Loop. Below: paintings by Amy.



Amy also enjoys creating art. She has participated in and led several plein air painting events at Leopold's, most recently our "Art in the Park" event in April. She is also an active member of the Artists in Middleburg and Loudoun Sketch Club. She has won awards at the local and state level for her acrylic paintings of Leopold's Preserve.

You can join Amy and the rest of our Conservation Corps volunteers on any Friday morning to help improve the Preserve. Register at [www.leopoldspreserve.com/calendar](http://www.leopoldspreserve.com/calendar).

## JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

### Volunteer Workday

Saturday, June 17, 8:30 AM  
Leopold's Preserve

Help Park Manager Nick Davis maintain and improve our 7-mile trail system. Volunteers of all ages and abilities are welcome!

### Hike with a Naturalist

Wednesday, July 5, 10:00 AM  
Leopold's Preserve

Join our monthly naturalist program on the first Wednesday of each month. Learn about the natural world as you stroll along the trails.

### Butterfly Survey

Saturday, July 8, 9:00 AM  
White House Farm, Luray

Count butterflies in our riparian meadow along the Shenandoah River as part of the annual NABA survey. No experience necessary!

# HALF-EARTH



*Our Planet's Fight for Life*

EDWARD O. WILSON  
WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

### Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life, by Edward O. Wilson

Wilson outlines one of the most influential conservation ideas of the modern era in this compelling book. He argues that by preserving half of the earth's surface for nature, we can sustain the biodiversity needed to support humanity.

### What We've Been Reading



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