

# arkansas member report

## Shaping development to conserve Ozark karst terrain

Last summer, Nature Conservancy Karst Ecologist Mike Slay crawled through 2,000 feet of sharp chert rocks into Old Pendergrass Cave in northwest Arkansas to pour dye into a pool of water. Four days later and a quarter-mile away at a stream emerging from the ground, he retrieved charcoal packets designed to pick up traces of the dye.

“We placed differently colored dye in a stream farther up the same watershed,” Slay said. “Our goal was to determine how the water in the cave interacted with above-ground streams. A lab analysis of the packets confirmed that the streams above and below the cave were connected.”

Because karst, or cave, terrain is fractured and porous, pollutants can easily enter the fragile ecosystem, degrading groundwater and harming sensitive creatures like *Cambarus aculabrum*, a cave crayfish known to live only in Old Pendergrass Cave and three other sites in Benton County.

For years Conservancy researchers have rappelled into caves and squeezed through tight passages, mapping underground systems or conducting dye-trace tests to determine the connectivity between landscapes and waterways above and below ground. Their research has culminated in a recently unveiled map that shows underground Ozark areas most susceptible to surface pollution.

“The Karst Area Sensitivity Map, or KASM, gives city planners and developers a tool they need to avoid sensitive areas or plan developments in ways that won’t harm karst species or groundwater,” says Conservancy GIS Specialist Ethan Inlander.

Green highlights on the KASM represent areas that are less sensitive to surface pollution. Red highlights, which in many cases identify faults or streams that flow underground,



Stretching from northern Arkansas and southern Missouri and into eastern Oklahoma, Ozark karst terrain harbors at least 60 species found nowhere else on Earth. Photo by Ethan Inlander, TNC

represent karst areas most sensitive to above-ground activities. Most of the sensitive watersheds on the map were delineated by dye-trace studies.

(Continued on next page)



The portion of the KASM above shows sensitive underground areas and critical watersheds in Benton County.

## KASM, continued from page one

Before the KASM was released, its information prompted three developers working in cooperation with the Conservancy and state and federal agencies to donate \$1.8 million worth of land to protect a cave harboring gray bats and the largest known population of the extremely rare Ozark cavefish.

As Gary Brandon walks through Otter Creek Estates, a residential project his company recently developed at Cave Springs in Benton County, he points out the natural area.

“Homes were originally planned for that space,” he says. “After we learned that piece of property was directly above Cave Springs Cave and developing it could affect rare animals and the area’s groundwater, we donated 32 acres to the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.”

While the land was quite valuable from a development perspective, Brandon says the donation has more than paid off. In addition to receiving a tax break, the value of the surrounding lots he developed increased, particularly those adjacent to the green space.

“We designed Otter Creek around the donated land,” he says. “We included walking trails, parks and two small lakes in the areas we developed. Having that natural area next door is a really nice enhancement to Otter Creek, besides just being the right thing to do.”

Others who developed land near Cave Springs—Collins and Hunter Haynes of Haynes Limited and Brett Hash and Pat Demaree, who own Northwest Land Development and The Creeks Golf Course—provided similar donations. In all, 80 acres were donated to help protect Cave Springs Cave and its special residents. ■

## What’s next

To further focus their conservation efforts, Conservancy researchers are now combining the Karst Area Sensitivity Map with information they have gathered about the locations and populations of threatened and endangered species to develop a karst vulnerability map.



The extremely rare cave crayfish *Cambarus aculabrum* is known to live at just four sites, including Old Pendergrass Cave.

# Conservancy and partners create conservation agreement on the upper Little Red River

A colorful fish known to live only in the Little Red River is set to get a helping hand from The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The partners recently signed an agreement to protect the rare yellow-cheeked darter, as well as the speckled pocketbook mussel, an endangered species.

According to Conservancy GIS Specialist Ethan Inlander, one of the Conservancy's initial roles will be to help determine the habitats and threats most critical to the two species' survival. Inlander said the Conservancy, along with the partnering agencies, will also share information with landowners in the upper Little Red River watershed and encourage their involvement in the voluntary conservation program.

"We plan to develop a video that draws landowners to the program by discussing ways to improve the productivity of their land," Inlander said. "The ranching and stream bank improvements will have the added benefit of protecting water quality for people and aquatic animals alike."

Utilizing federal and state grants and in cooperation with several agencies, the Conservancy will be largely responsible for helping landowners who enroll in the program apply for money to restore and conserve their land.

In June the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to partially fund an unpaved roads survey that the Conservancy will conduct in the upper Little Red River watershed, as it has done in other watersheds. Research has shown that eroding unpaved roads are a significant source of sediment in Arkansas' mountain streams. Heavy sedimentation can harm aquatic insects, mussels and fish, but the problem can be alleviated with improved road construction and maintenance practices. Unpaved roads surveys reveal where the most problematic sites are so they can be addressed first. ■



Middle fork of the Little Red River

## Get smarter

To learn more about the Conservancy's work to conserve Arkansas streams, visit [nature.org/arkansas](http://nature.org/arkansas) and follow the homepage link to read "Muddy waters spell trouble for wildlife, paddlers, conservationists," a story featured in the spring 2007 issue of *Arkansas Wild* magazine.



The durable and waterproof monitoring stations collect up to 24 samples, which are noted by date, time and corresponding water level.

## Clearly understanding the Delta's muddy waters

Nature Conservancy researchers are watching the skies over the Arkansas Delta. Over the summer they placed in tributaries of the Cache River and Bayou DeView seven water monitoring stations that will help them better understand the rate and sources of sediment in these streams. Normally the devices automatically take in water samples once a week, but after heavy rains, they're set to collect samples every hour.

By analyzing the weekly and hourly samples, and thus the timing and duration of sediment fluxes, researchers can better determine the sources of sediment, which, in the Delta, are most often run-off from fields and stream bank failures.

The researchers are particularly eager to see results from the monitoring station at the lower end of Benson Slash, a tributary of Bayou DeView that the Conservancy has been restoring over the past year and a half. (See related story on page five.)

The study, a cooperative project with the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission that was funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will take two to three years to complete. The results of the study will be used to develop more targeted management plans and restoration strategies in the Delta. ■

## USDA, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the Conservancy partner to conserve 6,250 acres in Big Woods

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a \$9.4 million conservation partnership with the State of Arkansas that will restore and conserve up to 6,250 acres in the Big Woods. The deal centers around a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, or CREP, in which participating landowners receive USDA financial incentives to remove marginal cropland and pastureland from production and convert it to bottomland forest. In addition, participants receive \$160 per acre from the Conservancy to establish conservation easements on the land, ensuring it's conserved in perpetuity.

"This CREP is great for conservation, and it's great for the landowners," said Delta Field Representative Jerry Hogan. "What's different about it is the level of financial incentive the USDA is providing to participants. Because of their investment, the USDA wants to ensure the land is conserved forever, and that's where the conservation easement the Conservancy is purchasing comes into play. That's the 'enhancement' part of this Conservation Reserve Program."

Typically, land is enrolled in the USDA-administered Conservation Reserve Program for 10 to 15 years, after which

time it can be farmed again. The added feature of the conservation easement means the land can be reforested without fear that the effort will be undone later. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will be responsible for monitoring and managing CREP lands to ensure the stipulations of the program and conservation easements are met.

A major goal of the CREP is to link existing bottomland hardwood forest patches in the Cache River and Bayou DeView watersheds. Land eligible for this CREP is located within Monroe, Woodruff and Prairie counties.

"The restoration of these bottomland forests will create more habitat for the many kinds of animals—game and non-game, resident and migratory, rare and common—that need larger blocks of forest to survive," Hogan said. "This CREP will also help improve water quality in the Cache River and in Bayou DeView."

Hogan said approximately 300 hardwood seedlings will be planted on each acre enrolled in the CREP.

Landowners may apply for enrollment through Dec. 31, 2007, or until the 6,250-acre limit is reached. For more information visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## A day in the Delta with the Conservancy's Josh Duzan

It's 5:30 a.m. when I wake up. It's still dark outside, but I know an early start means an hour or two of refuge from the searing heat as I work near Brinkley, a little more than an hour's drive from my home in Little Rock.

Heading north from Brinkley, I drop down into the annually flooded bottoms of Bayou DeViv. Like much of the Delta, this floodplain was clear-cut around the turn of the 20th century when favorable timber prices and a seemingly endless supply of old-growth hardwoods brought prosperity to river towns. Luckily, the less merchantable trees here, including a number of colossal bald cypress, were left standing.

Delta Project Manager Matt Lindsey and I arrive at the Benson Slash restoration site just before 8 a.m. After studying the restoration design plans, I pull on my boots, still caked in dried mud from yesterday's field work. The temperature is already nearing 85 degrees.

Having finished excavating the new, meandering channel of Benson Slash, today we are building wetlands designed to mimic oxbow lakes that Delta streams naturally create over hundreds of years as they slowly snake across the landscape. We accomplish much of the day's work in an excavator (Thank you, J.A. Riggs Tractor Company!), stopping periodically to ensure the features we're creating match the plan's specs. While the day's work will be hard, it'll be a welcome relief from the recent days we spent driving 3,000 live stakes, one by one, into the ground with mallets. Live stakes are green sticks capable of establishing roots and holding the earth—and our work—in place. We are using black willow (*Salix nigra*) and button bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) for this project.

At 5:00 p.m., we pack up our gear. On the drive home, we cross the Cache and the White—two rivers altered over the years by dredging and dams. I smile as I think that my job at Benson is to give control back to nature, to balance the scale that was offset there years ago when a meandering stream was transformed into a turbid ditch. ■



J. A. Riggs Tractor Company of Little Rock assisted the Conservancy again this summer with the discounted rental of heavy equipment.



Josh Duzan is the Conservancy's Cache River project manager. He and the rest of the Delta program team have been working since May 2006 to restore a ditched section of Benson Slash Creek and surrounding bottomlands in the Big Woods of Arkansas.



Josh Duzan (left) discusses project specs with colleagues Matt Lindsey (middle) and Roger Mangham.

Support for the project is coming from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Private Stewardship Grant program and from the Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation as well as from Conservancy members, whose donations are being used to match funds from the Wetlands Reserve Program of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

See the Benson Slash project from its beginning and view dozens of photographs at [www.streamrestoration.typepad.com](http://www.streamrestoration.typepad.com), which also includes directions to the site.



Conservancy Stewardship Ecologist Seth Pearson is shown igniting a prescribed fire at Kingsland Prairie Preserve in Cleveland County.

# Natural State Fire

Arkansas' prairies and upland forests depend on fire to remain healthy and to provide ideal habitat for a diverse mixture of plants and animals. Without understory fires, forests become dense and trees compete for nutrients and water. This density makes trees more susceptible to drought, disease and pests like the red-oak borer, which in recent years has eaten its way through 1.6 million acres of Arkansas' oaks.

Many advancements in fire restoration were made during this past season, which began in the fall of 2006 and ran through the spring of 2007.

## Forest Service uses wildland fire as restoration tool

For 27 days, a fire likely caused by lightning smoldered and burned 3,481 acres at Potato Hill in the Ouachita Mountains before it was extinguished by heavy rains on May 7. This event marked the second time in Arkansas the U.S. Forest Service used a wildland fire to accomplish ecological restoration goals.

Tracy Farley, deputy public affairs officer for the Ozark-St. Francis and Ouachita national forests, said several factors affected the decision to let the fire burn. Land managers considered the amount of fuel (dead trees and underbrush) in the forest, weather conditions and the fire's proximity to developed areas.

"We would have put our firefighters at risk had we put them there to fight it," Farley said. "But we had a lot of folks out there monitoring it. At times, we used prescribed fire to ensure the wildland fire stayed within its predetermined boundaries."

Light rains slowed the fire's progression, Farley said, causing it to burn for nearly a month. Since the fire reduced the amount of fuel on the forest floor, the risk of an uncontrollable wildfire breaking out is also reduced.

"More and more land managers are beginning to understand the important role that fire plays in improving fire-dependent habitat as well as in preventing catastrophic wildfires, like those we saw this year in Georgia and Florida," Farley said.

Between October 2006 and April 2007, the U.S. Forest Service conducted prescribed burns covering 145,702 acres in the Ouachita National Forest and 68,857 in the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest.

## Fire restoration and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Martin Blaney, habitat coordinator for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, said that during the previous season, his agency conducted 31 prescribed burns throughout Arkansas, covering approximately 17,500 acres. The bulk of those burns took place on state-owned wildlife management areas. Blaney said the commission teamed with the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and the Conservancy on several of those prescribed burns.

"Our prescribed fire program and our ability to use prescribed fire have been greatly enhanced by the conservation partnerships we've formed within the state," Blaney said.

# Restoration

## Conservancy crews busy during 2006-2007 prescribed fire season

In its continued effort to restore fire-dependent communities, The Conservancy conducted 49 prescribed burns in Arkansas, covering 12,000 acres between September 2006 and May 2007. Conservancy burn crews also teamed with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the National Park Service on four burns covering nearly 6,000 acres.

The Conservancy usually employs up to 10 seasonal staff members—fire technicians, crew leaders and fire management specialists—to work on the two burn crews that operate in Arkansas. Additionally, three full-time staff have responsibilities that include fire restoration, and program managers trained in prescribed fire regularly participate in burns at the sites they manage.

Eleven of the Conservancy's 49 prescribed burns during the past season were conducted on private lands enrolled in the Landowner Incentive Program. Jason Milks, private lands fire restoration project manager for the Conservancy, also conducted two workshops for landowners on safe and effective use of prescribed fire to improve wildlife habitat. Currently 39 landowners and 8,020 acres are enrolled in the Landowner Incentive Program, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-funded program the Conservancy, in partnership with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, became actively involved with in 2004. ■



Forty-six percent of the state's rare plants and animals depend on fire for some part of their life cycle or habitat needs.

Learn more about the Conservancy's work with partners to restore fire-dependent landscapes in Arkansas. Visit [nature.org/arkansas](http://nature.org/arkansas) and follow the homepage link to read "Can't See the Forest for the Trees," a story in *Arkansas Wild* magazine.



In April, Conservancy crews restored fire to Devil's Knob Natural Area in Izard County.



In December 2006, the Conservancy's Allan Mueller (above), Arkansas Game and Fish Commission ornithologist Catherine Rideout and Arkansas-based U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Steve Osborne spent one week searching for the ivory-billed woodpecker on the Choctawhatchie River in Florida's Panhandle. © Steve Osborne, USFWS

## Latest ivory-billed woodpecker search concludes

Between November 2006 and April 2007, searchers looking for the ivory-billed woodpecker covered more than 32,000 acres in the Big Woods of Arkansas. While the search team reported additional good sightings as well as the collection of additional, suggestive sound recordings, they were not able to locate a roost or nest hole or produce a perfect photograph or video. Since the ivory-billed woodpecker—a bird believed to be extinct for some 60 years—was rediscovered on Bayou DeView in February 2004, teams have searched almost 25 percent of the Big Woods' 550,000 acres.

This season's team included five full-time searchers: one with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, two with Audubon Arkansas and one with The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas—Avian Conservation Project Manager Allan Mueller. Fifty-seven volunteers working on two-week tours and 13 local biologists volunteering their time supplemented the efforts. Earlier this summer, Cornell published a report detailing the season's search tactics and evidence. Highlights from the report are available online at [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu).

The search is expected to resume in Arkansas this December. Similar searches for the ivory-bill took place in South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and Texas; most are expected to resume this winter. ■

## Conservation through education

Twentieth century British ornithologist and conservationist Sir Peter Scott once said, "The conservationist's most important task, if we are to save the earth, is to educate." Heeding this advice, Conservancy staff regularly lead or participate in workshops and seminars, including more than 30 so far in 2007.

This year the Conservancy has hosted three grazing workshops, which demonstrate alternative grazing techniques that landowners can use to yield greater returns per acre and improve the health of their land and nearby streams. The Conservancy has also hosted three workshops for county road crews and land managers to work on construction and maintenance practices that will help keep sediment from unpaved roads out of streams.

LANDFIRE, also known as the Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools Project, is a five-year, multi-partner project to produce consistent and comprehensive maps and data that describe vegetation, wildland fuel (such as dead trees and brush), and fire regimes across the United States. As a major component of the project, Conservancy staff from Arkansas have coordinated a dozen LANDFIRE workshops, meeting with



In May, Ouachita Rivers Project Manager Joy DeClerk (above right) led a workshop on bank erosion collection methods.

experts throughout the South to gather detailed information on local plant communities and fire habits that will help inform policy and fund decisions related to fire management and ecosystem restoration.

Topics of other workshops and trainings the Conservancy has led or attended include conservation forestry, conservation easements, grants and acquisitions, and sediment monitoring.

# Corporate support for conservation

On May 24 the Conservancy hosted its 14th annual Corporate Council for Conservation recognition luncheon in Little Rock. Since its establishment in 1993, more than 100 of Arkansas' leading corporations have joined this coalition to support the Conservancy's work throughout the state.

Claiborne Deming, who is the president and CEO of El Dorado-based Murphy Oil Corporation and the immediate past president of the 25 Year Club of the Oil and Gas Industry, was the keynote speaker for this year's luncheon. Deming focused his speech on the company's reaction to Hurricane Katrina and the clean up of an oil spill the storm caused at the company's New Orleans-based refinery. Deming's wife, Elaine, currently serves as a trustee for the Conservancy in Arkansas.

During the luncheon, the Conservancy presented awards to Potlatch Forest Holdings, Inc., and the company's regional resource manager, Jim Newberry, for support in creating a 16,000-acre conservation easement on property the company owns in south Arkansas. The project site, which is composed of loblolly and shortleaf pine and which harbors endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers, opened to the public as the Moro Big Pine Wildlife Management area in July.



Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism Director Richard Davies and Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Director Karen Smith were among those who attended the 14th annual Corporate Council for Conservation luncheon.



Murphy Oil Corporation President and CEO Claiborne Deming provided the keynote speech.

The Conservancy also presented David Long, an Arkansas Game and Fish Commission agricultural liaison, an award for his help in securing private, state and federal support to conserve 6,250 acres in the Big Woods of Arkansas through an innovative Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. (See related story on page four.)

Mel Harness of Mel Harness Roofing also received recognition during the luncheon for his discounted work on a much-needed roof replacement at the Conservancy's Little Rock office. Architect and Conservancy friend Tom Fennell was noted for his work to design the roof. ■



Conservancy State Director Scott Simon (left) with Mel Harness.

## Green Growth adds young professionals to Conservancy's membership



The Conservancy's state director, Scott Simon (upper left), and Board of Trustees Chair Stacy Hurst (upper right) presented an award to Betsy Lavender and Ross Cranford for their outstanding support in hosting Green Growth.

On April 26, The Nature Conservancy hosted "Green Growth," an event geared toward recruiting the next generation of Natural State conservationists. Approximately 150 young professionals attended the evening event, which took place on the grounds of the Clinton Presidential Center and featured live music, cocktails and food by Lilly's Dim Sum Then Some. Door prizes, including gift certificates donated by Ozark Outdoor Supply, Chainwheel and area restaurants as well as a duck hunt at General Menifee Hunt Club sponsored by Robin Borné and Dr. Walt Stallings, were given away during the evening.

"Green Growth was a huge success, and a lot of fun," said Joy DeClerk, the Conservancy's Ouachita rivers project manager. "We now have as part of our membership some of the brightest and most influential young professionals in Arkansas. We're looking forward to the impact they'll make."

DeClerk's husband, Chris, was a member of the band "Weakness for Blondes" that performed during Green Growth.

"The host committee did a great job of attracting new members to the Conservancy and setting the perfect tone for the evening," said Harryette Shue, director of philanthropy. Host committee members were Ross Cranford and Betsy Lavender (co-chairmen), Kristy and Hardin Bale, Chris Cranford, Jay Cranford, Clarke and Chad Delp, Tobi and Carter Fairley, Annie Feltus, Robert Feltus, Ashley and Andy Hight, Mallory and John Jewell, Angie and Jordan Johnson, Philip Mobley, Sarah and Jeff Priebe, LeighAnne and Rob Robinson, Laura and Jay Shue, and Jibbie and Shawn Tyler. ■

## Conservancy celebrates silver anniversary in Rogers

On May 3, Cynthia and Collins Haynes hosted a dinner in Rogers to celebrate The Nature Conservancy's 25 years of accomplishments in Arkansas. More than 130 guests attended the event, which took place under tents on the grounds of Haynes Limited.

Guests were welcomed by Conservancy trustee Ann Henry of Fayetteville. (The Henrys have a long history of leadership in the Conservancy—Ann's husband, Dr. Morriss Henry, was a charter member of the Board of Trustees when the Arkansas chapter was created in 1982.) After dinner, State Director Scott Simon highlighted two and a half decades of conservation work in the Natural State, and Tim Snell, associate state director for water resources, discussed the organization's plans for the future.

Dick Trammel, a member of the Conservancy's Northwest Arkansas Advisory Council and a lively auctioneer, got guests bidding on items including trips to the Big Woods of Arkansas and Oklahoma's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. The event was a great success for Arkansas' conservation programs. ■



(From left) Wade and Kelly Jones, Borum Cooper, John Cooper III and the Conservancy's Harryette Shue visit before dinner. © Cyd King, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*

# The legacy of Marie L. Lavallard

Marie L. Lavallard of Fayetteville, a longtime friend of The Nature Conservancy, died April 3, 2006, at the age of 94, leaving a legacy among the lives she touched as well as a legacy of conservation.

“The Conservancy is grateful to have been named as the beneficiary of a portion of Mrs. Lavallard’s estate,” said Susan Borné, associate director of philanthropy. “Thanks to her commitment and planning, the Arkansas program will receive one of the largest bequests in our history.”

Lavallard was a Conservancy member since 1975 and made many gifts in support of special projects. She enjoyed attending Conservancy programs and trips, and over the years she developed friendships with the Conservancy staff.

A graduate of Cornell University with a master’s degree in plant science, Lavallard began her career at the University of Vermont in 1936. In 1946, she and her husband, John Albert Lavallard, both took positions at the University of Arkansas College of Agriculture. Mrs. Lavallard remained at the U of A until her retirement in 1981.

During her years at the U of A, Lavallard founded the *Arkansas Farm Research* journal, and she served as professor, department chair and head of the Department of Agriculture Communications. She was also an adjunct professor at the Pan-American Agricultural School in Honduras.

“Marie was most interested in nurturing students of all levels and from all countries,” said Dayle McCune, the Conservancy’s former associate director of philanthropy who knew Lavallard for many years. “Although Marie didn’t have children of her own, dozens, if not hundreds, of international students adopted her. She traveled extensively to visit them after they left the U of A, and her home was brimming with mementos they sent her.”

For her work with the Foundation for International Exchange of Students, a non-profit organization that works with international students at the U of A, Lavallard received the Millennium 2000 International Volunteer Award sponsored by the U.S. Department of State in partnership with *USA Today*.

In keeping with Lavallard’s deep interest in conservation in the Natural State and abroad, the Conservancy will use half of the bequest funds for in-state land acquisitions and half for land acquisitions in other countries. ■



The late Marie L. Lavallard.  
Photo provided by Cornell University

## Give the Gift of a Lifetime

There is no legacy more lasting than nature itself. That’s why The Nature Conservancy works with people like you to preserve the lands and waters you love—both close to your home and around the world.



If you would like to learn about options for creating your own conservation legacy, contact Susan Borné by phone at (501) 614-5071 or by e-mail at [sborne@tnc.org](mailto:sborne@tnc.org). Or visit the Conservancy’s gift and estate planning Web site at [nature.planyourlegacy.org](http://nature.planyourlegacy.org).

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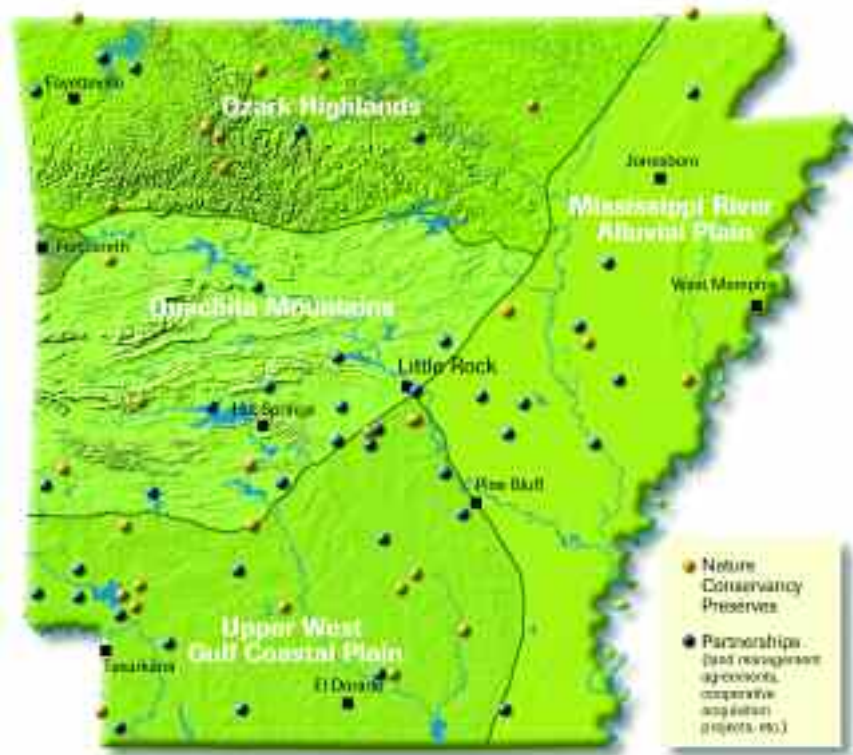
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The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

**The Nature Conservancy**   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

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