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### Protecting Life on Earth

From the migratory birds winging their way high overhead to the fish swimming in our Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean, this issue highlights how The Nature Conservancy works every day to protect the diversity of life on Earth. As naturalist and author Diane Ackerman writes, “We need a cornucopia of different plants and animals, for the planet’s health and our own.” A food chain is one way in which plants, animals and people are connected, but there are many other links that we are only beginning to comprehend. As a TNC supporter, you are helping to advance scientific understanding of life *and* to foster a future for all of nature’s creatures and people to thrive. Thank you for your commitment to conservation!

*Bettina K. Ring*

Bettina K. Ring, State Director



#### SUPPORT NATURE

To learn more and support our work in Virginia, use the QR code or go online to [nature.org/virginia](https://nature.org/virginia).



The Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve bird team placed trackers on migratory willets. © Mario Balitbit/TNC

## Birds of a Feather

### Eastern Shore bird team tests new technologies

The Nature Conservancy’s bird team at the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve recently enjoyed one of its most productive field seasons ever, thanks to three seasonal technicians supporting team leader Alex Wilke and staffers Zak Poulton and Mario Balitbit. Projects ranged from annual monitoring of nesting birds on TNC’s barrier islands to tracking migratory willets to designing and testing nesting platforms for American oystercatchers in hopes of protecting nests from periodic flooding. “Willet Cams” are another creative new use of technology that the team expects will provide insights into the birds’ nesting behaviors and factors leading to breeding success. Learn more about our migratory bird program at [nature.org/migratorybirds](https://nature.org/migratorybirds).

**“The Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve serves as a model for how conservation can help coastal communities around the world.... The sweep of that work here is vast, from land protection and migratory bird conservation to oyster and seagrass restoration and coastal resilience. And the natural beauty and symbiotic relationship between people and nature gives us hope.”**

**Senator William Frist, M.D.**, TNC Global Board Director  
From “Happy Earth Day! A Message of Hope from the Longest Stretch of Coastal Wilderness on the Eastern Seaboard”



Courtesy of Bill and Tracy Frist



Researcher attaching electronic tag to an Atlantic bonito © Ryan Tharp

## Tagging Tuna

### New study aims to support Atlantic bonito conservation

Fishing pressures on the Atlantic bonito, a small tuna, are increasing and raising concerns among scientists about the health of this unregulated fishery. The bonito is believed to be an important food source for larger predators such as bluefin tuna and blue marlin. People, too, like to catch and eat bonito, which need to be consumed fresh, as these fish do not hold up well when frozen. Yet catches of 50–100 bonito at a time are commonly recorded. These factors have raised alarm bells, says Brendan Runde, The Nature Conservancy's marine scientist for the Mid-Atlantic Seascape. Runde is undertaking the first-ever electronic tagging of Atlantic bonito. In partnership with North Carolina State University and the American Saltwater Guides Association, TNC tagged 25 bonito this spring. "We hope that data from these tags and next year's will shed new light on bonito biology and movements, as well as encourage conservation-minded management and fishing practices," says Runde. Explore our ocean work at [nature.org/midatlanticseascape](https://nature.org/midatlanticseascape).

### Longleaf Pine Pavilion Opens

TNC and partners recently celebrated opening the new Longleaf Pine Pavilion at Raccoon Creek Preserve in southeast Virginia. Huge thanks go to TNC Virginia trustee Bill Owen, who established the pavilion on his property—an active restoration site—to host longleaf education and conservation events. TNC's Brian van Eerden also was recognized for his years of leadership in longleaf restoration.



Longleaf pavilion opening celebration © Kyle LaFerriere

## NATURE VIRGINIA



### Road Trip With TNC!

Looking for the perfect bookend to your summer? Hit the road this fall and experience our "Ultimate Appalachians Road Trip." From Maine to Georgia, Ohio to Virginia, this road trip offers something for everyone. Virginia and the 17 other Appalachian states showcase two nature destinations, along with a cultural stop. You're in the driver's seat, so use our guide to choose your own adventure! Then, download our playlist, grab your hiking shoes and favorite snacks, and set off for your first destination. Our Virginia adventures include Warm Springs Mountain and Bottom Creek Gorge preserves, with a side trip to enjoy traditional Appalachian bluegrass music. Visit [nature.org/approadtrip](https://nature.org/approadtrip).

### OktoberForest Fest 2025

On September 7 from 12 to 6 pm, our 4th annual OktoberForest Fest returns to Fine Creek Brewing in Powhatan. Join TNC and our collaborating and guest brewers to sample "Tastes of Virginia," including four craft beers brewed with wild ingredients foraged from TNC projects. Learn more at [nature.org/oktoberforestva](https://nature.org/oktoberforestva).



OktoberForest Fest 2024 © Ann Nallo/TNC