

NATURE

GEORGIA

Winter 2019 • nature.org/georgia



Deron Davis © Eliot VanOtteren

Thank You!

Thank you for all you have done for nature over the past year. With your help, The Nature Conservancy worked with diverse partners—from Rome to Brunswick—conserving our state's natural assets. The mounting pressure we all feel as more and more people call Georgia home and as extreme weather events challenge our communities forces TNC to remain flexible yet focused on high-impact solutions that deliver tangible, lasting results. Because of your support, we are well-positioned to make the Georgia we love an even better place for people and nature.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deron Davis".

Deron Davis, Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy in Georgia

DONATIONS:

Go to nature.org/georgia to donate. Or you can email donate@tnc.org for more information.



Protecting the gopher tortoise and its ecosystem is a conservation priority. © Marc Del Santro

We Dig Georgia's Gopher Tortoises!

Weighing 8 to 15 pounds, measuring over two feet long and traveling at a top speed of less than five miles per hour, the gopher tortoise is a small species with a supersized ecosystem role in Georgia and across the southeast. The distinctive burrows they dig provide habitat and protection to more than 350 animal species, including some that are endangered or threatened.

As Nature Conservancy supporters, you likely know that gopher tortoises thrive in dry, sandy upland habitat found in southern Georgia from the Chattahoochee Fall Line to the coast. You're also aware of our commitment to restoring the longleaf pine forests that once flourished in the region but now cover less than 5 percent of their original 90 million acres. Restoration will provide prime gopher tortoise habitats and benefit humans by supporting our freshwater systems, providing natural resilience to catastrophic storms and helping sustain the regional economy.

For these reasons and more, TNC supports the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (GTCI), a collaboration of state agencies, conservation groups, for-profit companies, foundations, and landowners dedicated to preventing the gopher tortoise from becoming endangered in Georgia. We're on a mission to build public affinity for gopher tortoises and the diverse conservation work that supports them.

GTCI's goal is to permanently protect and manage 65 viable gopher tortoise populations* in Georgia through a combination of purchasing gopher tortoise-friendly lands and helping landowners successfully manage their properties where gopher tortoises live.

Dig into the gopher tortoise story and learn about the longleaf pine ecosystem at GopherTortoiseConservationInitiative.com.

*A viable population has 250 adult gopher tortoises.





Georgia Director of Conservation Dan Ryan at a TNC service project in Atlanta. © John Amis

Q&A: Dan Ryan

Dan Ryan is The Nature Conservancy in Georgia's Director of Conservation, a role he assumed in August after serving as the chapter's Director of Land Stewardship & Planning for two years.

What are you most excited about in your new role? I am excited about guiding our science-driven land and water conservation work across the state and continuing to strengthen the partnerships that are vital to reaching the outcomes we set out to achieve. I'm also looking forward to making more people aware of all the benefits that conservation delivers: flood resilience, water quality, wildlife protection, the outdoor economy and more. I look forward to working with the team to elevate conservation as one of the key tactics in building a thriving future for Georgia and the region.

What do you think are some of Georgia's most pressing conservation challenges?

Climate change is the overarching challenge we face because it impacts every facet of our work. Confronting this issue in meaningful ways is the work in front of us all as Georgians, business owners, lawmakers, NGOs and educators. How do we ensure that our forest and freshwater systems are adaptable to the changes yet to come? It will require a lot of effort and investment to buffer us and other species from the worst impacts of climate change.

What do you believe TNC uniquely brings to bear on this complex issue?

TNC is leading in the area of climate adaptation science and its application. It is asking the right questions about how to protect the stage—the forests and the wetlands—to withstand environmental changes and allow for species movement. TNC has the resources to combine protection with science and policy, to bring a solutions-oriented approach to these vexing problems, and to do it for the long haul.

What's your favorite aspect of Georgia's natural world? The sheer diversity of Georgia's physiographic regions—coastal plain, piedmont, blue ridge, ridge/valley—that provides so much diversity in landscapes, plant and animal species, and cultural heritage. There is never a lack of places to explore and things to learn.

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Together we can protect the world we love.

Plan today to pass on your values. Many of our members choose to make a gift to The Nature Conservancy through their will, trust, retirement accounts or insurance policy. Taking a few minutes to plan can have a positive impact for you and our world. Learn more at nature.org/legacy.

Protecting nature is easier than you think through a gift of stock, bonds or mutual funds. These gifts allow you to give more with less because you may be able to both take an income tax deduction and avoid capital gains taxes. Talk to one of our Gift Planning specialists by calling (833) 336-7526 or emailing stock@tnc.org.



TNC volunteers and staff at Wild for Georgia 2019
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Wild for Georgia 2020: save the date!

We look forward to seeing you
Friday, April 24 at Piedmont Park.