

NATURE

VIRGINIA

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Bettina K. Ring © Daniel White/TNC

Our Once and Future Forest

This past spring, I had a long list of reasons to be excited about joining The Nature Conservancy. Near the top was having seen firsthand the remarkable progress toward restoring the iconic forests of our Virginia Pinelands and the incredible diversity they support, including the rare red-cockaded woodpecker. In my previous role as Virginia secretary of agriculture and forestry and, before that, as state forester, I saw the power of our state and federal agencies, scientists, and TNC all working together toward shared goals, and I was proud to support these efforts. I thank you for your critical support, as well, and I hope you will be as inspired as I am by our ambitious goals for restoring our majestic, resilient longleaf forests.

Bettina K. Ring

Bettina K. Ring, State Director



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To learn more and support our work in Virginia, use the QR code or go online to nature.org/virginia.



Climbing to a red-cockaded woodpecker nest at Piney Grove Preserve © Robert B. Clontz/TNC

Piney Grove Reaches Milestone

Celebrating 25 years of restoration success

In the months ahead, The Nature Conservancy will be celebrating our first 25 years of conservation at Piney Grove Preserve—and looking ahead to major advancements in our work to protect and restore the Virginia Pinelands. Since announcing in early 1999 TNC's first land acquisition in Sussex County, we have built powerful partnerships, returned fire to a natural role in the forest system, and helped Virginia's then-tiny population of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers bounce back and spread into other conservation areas. Piney Grove remains at the heart of a massive regional initiative urgently focused on restoring our diverse, climate-resilient longleaf pine forests. Learn more about our once and future forest at nature.org/vapinelands.

OktoberForest Fest Set to Highlight Longleaf Pine and Other Natural Flavors of Virginia

On September 30, TNC will co-host the second OktoberForest Fest with Black Narrows Brewing in Chincoteague. Among many brews on tap will be four that feature wild ingredients foraged from TNC conservation sites: longleaf needles (Pinelands), chanterelles (Allegheny Highlands), red spruce (Clinch Valley) and eelgrass (Eastern Shore). Learn more at nature.org/oktoberforestva.



Enjoying OktoberForest Fest © Daniel White/TNC



New acquisition expands protected habitat for Virginia elk herd. © Daniel White/TNC

More Room to Roam for Elk

New tracts expand Clinch Valley conservation footprint

The Nature Conservancy recently purchased two properties in the Clinch Valley region, expanding core habitat for Virginia elk and adding to The Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve along the Clinch River. A 576-acre property in Buchanan County will support the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources' continued success with elk restoration, along with related wildlife-watching ventures that bring much-needed ecotourism dollars into local communities. The second tract, 121 acres at Artrip in Russell County, protects forest and water quality along Weaver Creek, which feeds into one of the most ecologically significant sections of the Clinch. Transferring this tract to the Department of Conservation and Recreation will also help enhance the experience for paddlers and other visitors to Clinch River State Park. Along with TNC supporters, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, Capital One and Genan Foundation contributed funding to these projects. Learn more at nature.org/clinchlandexpansion.

A Center for Appalachians Conservation

Once home to thoroughbreds, Hobby Horse Farm is now helping us win the race to save our Appalachians. The recently acquired farm in the heart of the Allegheny Highlands is quickly becoming conservation central, hosting trainings for our Virginia fire team and other TNC staff and partners throughout the Appalachian region.



Land protection training © Bill Kittrell/TNC

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The Wind and the Willets



Willet with GPS transmitter © Bryan Watts

To better understand potential impacts of offshore wind development on migrating shorebirds, TNC and the Center for Conservation Biology this year tagged 22 willets with advanced GPS tracking devices. The research not only will help assess the potential risks to this species, but also is already establishing new benchmarks for willet ecology and conservation.

Recovering the Past



Vanessa Moses © Adaiah Baur

Eastern Shore native Vanessa Moses was 2022 Brownsville history intern for the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve. As Moses writes in an essay detailing her research, "the position lured me home because it was a unique endeavor to strengthen community ties by engaging ... the local African American community." Her work focused on the untold stories of the enslaved people who once lived and worked on the former plantation we know today as Brownsville Preserve. "Historical research projects offer understanding and connection to the past when an ever-so-shaky future lies ahead," she says. Explore her research at nature.org/brownvillehistory.