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### Profile of a Conservationist Jennifer Case: Burn Boss

In the world of fire management, any given crew will have team members with a range of certifications and training, almost always led by a Burn Boss. Jennifer (Jenny) Case is the Burn Boss for the Pennsylvania/Delaware chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

Women comprise a mere 10 percent of the national wildland fire work force, and an even smaller percentage hold the title of Burn Boss. In addition to her formal role, Jenny has also become a mentor to the chapter's entire stewardship team, three-fourths of which are women. "The most rewarding thing about my work is the people I've met over the years. They give me hope in our humanity that there are dedicated people out there who keep trying against steep odds to make the world a better place," says Jenny about what keeps her ticking.

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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Natasha Whetzel, Jenny Case and Elizabeth Hanson enhanced their firefighting and leadership skills at the Belize Fire Suppression Workshop, February 2020. © Lydia Zowada

## Trailblazers: Women in Fire

March was Women's History Month, and this past March, the women of the Pennsylvania/Delaware Chapter's land stewardship team were immersed in a busy start to the burning season. For many land managers, controlled burning is one of the most important tools in the toolbox. Although every controlled burn has its own prescription and predetermined conservation objectives, the general idea is that returning the natural process of fire to the landscape in a safe and periodic manner makes our forests healthier and more resilient.

**"I want to be a role model for women who are looking at a career in conservation or fire and show them there is a place for them as well."**

*Natasha Whetzel, Conservation Practitioner*

The land stewardship team at the PA/DE chapter is comprised predominantly of women, all of whom are certified to work on controlled burns. However, fire

has traditionally been a male-dominated field, with only a small percentage of the national work force being women and even fewer in leadership positions. But that's changing thanks to people like Natasha Whetzel, conservation practitioner based in southern Delaware. "We should be promoting all forms diversity in our workforce because with diversity comes different perspectives in decision-making and problem-solving, and a wider range of skills," says Natasha.

Just before international travel was curtailed due to the pandemic, the PA/DE chapter sent three female staff to Belize to participate in a wildfire leadership training program. Thanks to ongoing investments in fire training like the program in Belize, TNC is supporting women like Natasha Whetzel, Elizabeth Hanson and Jenny Case who are demonstrating that careers in conservation are opportunities for men and women alike.



Stream Stewards program manager Kim Hachadoorian participates in a Brandywine Shad 2020 fish survey on the Brandywine Creek in Wilmington, Delaware, July 2020. © Charlye Stewart/TNC

# The World's Forgotten Fishes

## Working locally and globally to conserve freshwater fish

Rivers, lakes and wetlands are among the most biodiverse places on Earth. Combined, they cover less than 1% of Earth's surface, yet they're home to almost 25% of all vertebrate species—including 51% of the world's species of fish.

The World's Forgotten Fishes, a recent report published by World Wildlife Fund (WWF), The Nature Conservancy and 14 other conservation organizations, details how freshwater fish are critical to the health, food security and livelihoods of millions of people around the world. Alarming, the report reveals that freshwater fish are facing ever-increasing threats, with one in three species currently threatened with extinction and populations of migratory freshwater fish having fallen by 76% since 1970.

The combination of threats facing freshwater ecosystems—and to the fish that live in them—including habitat destruction, overfishing, dams, invasive species and pollution, must be addressed so that fish populations can be restored. TNC's Pennsylvania/Delaware chapter is working both locally and globally to support freshwater fishery conservation. Our own Tyler Smith is working with TNC's Africa Freshwater Conservation Program to develop a conservation plan for Lake Tanganyika, a project highlighted in the WWF report.

Closer to home, we are working to restore migratory fish populations in the Delaware River and its tributaries. "This year we're finishing a restoration road map for American shad and river herring in the Delaware River watershed that will inform priority restoration actions for these iconic fish," says Mari-Beth DeLucia, TNC's migratory fish program manager for Pennsylvania & Delaware.

To learn more about our work in the Delaware River watershed, including our efforts to help restore habitat for migratory fish, [visit nature.org/DelawareRiver](https://www.nature.org/DelawareRiver).

### Volunteer Profile



© Danielle Ellis

### Danielle Ellis— Stream Steward

As a Stream Steward, Danielle Ellis volunteers her time collecting water quality data along Lower Rocky Run in First State National Historical Park in Delaware. Danielle recalls what inspired her to join in this effort. "I remember sitting at work roughly five years ago thinking how desperately I needed a change. I can't remember how I stumbled upon Stream Stewards (probably Facebook) but I remember applying at my desk immediately. To this day, I am so glad I joined this program. Stream Stewards was the first field experience on my Curriculum Vitae before I later graduated with my BS in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation."

Volunteering for this program is important to Danielle because, "without the effort to monitor and protect the quality of our streams, there is a huge potential to degrade and lose a vital resource that sustains the life of people and wildlife alike." Monitoring the Brandywine Creek watershed is critical since it supplies clean drinking water for Wilmington residents. Stream Stewards benefit from the program too. Danielle enjoys the walk to her site, "I remember hearing a wood thrush when I was first learning bird calls and I often hear and see pileated woodpeckers—always exciting! I also look forward to seeing the frogs as I walk by, call and leap into the water."