



© Sally Palmer/The Nature Conservancy

Back From the Brink

The Nature Conservancy plays key role in mussel species recovery.

Freshwater mussels are amazing creatures, and Tennessee's rivers boast 137 species—more than any state except for Alabama. This is good news because mussels serve as nature's water filters. A single mussel can clean up to 10 gallons of water per day in the process of simply eating and breathing. Imagine a whole colony populating a riverbed.

This occupied the minds of The Nature Conservancy and partners more than a decade ago while assisting a local dairy farm with upgrading their waste treatment facility to prevent cow manure from reaching a 5.5-mile stretch of the Duck River known to harbor exceptional mussel habitat. In return, the Allen family, who opened the dairy in 1948, secured an easement that protects their property's ecological values forever.

Ten years later, amazing things are happening. "We reintroduced

rare Pale Lilliput mussels in this key stretch of river over several years, and annual monitoring reveals that these populations are thriving and even starting to naturally reproduce," says Don Hubbs, mollusk recovery program



© Sally Palmer/The Nature Conservancy

coordinator at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

Listed as federally endangered since 1976, Pale Lilliputs had disappeared from the local ecosystem. According to

the federal Pale Lilliput Recovery Plan, multiple reproducing populations must exist for the species to be down-listed. Other reintroduction efforts are under way at Bear Creek and Lower Paint Rock River in Alabama and at Elk River in Tennessee.

"These findings represent a huge marker of success in recovering endangered species," says Sally Palmer, TNC's director of science and policy in Tennessee. "It illustrates how our work to secure easements, manage lands and support research to inform future actions benefits all of us."

What You Can Do: According to Don Hubbs, helping Tennessee mussels starts in our own backyard. "Anything you can do to limit chemicals and sediments from reaching local waterways helps. Mussels can't move quickly away from pollution and are much more sensitive than fish."



© The Nature Conservancy; © Courtesy Carol Kirshner

Faces of Conservation

Carol Adams Kirshner joins The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Board of Trustees.

When did you first connect with nature? During childhood, I went to overnight camp in Maine for many summers. I loved hiking the Presidential Range, canoeing in Maine on Kezar Lake and on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, and spent most of my waking hours outdoors. I adored every minute of it.

Do you still enjoy the outdoors today? I still love to hike. Close to home, in Nashville, we live near Radnor Lake State Park. I go there almost daily. My husband and I have also visited the Smokies each fall for the past 40 years, including with our children when they were little. Lately we have been traveling more and recently enjoyed hiking in locations as far as Denali National Park in Alaska, the Lake District in England and in Portugal's Douro Valley.

How did you learn about The Nature Conservancy? A relative knew that the environment and conservation are absolutely of utmost importance to me and my family. I wanted to learn more and eventually became a member and donor, and kept apprised of TNC's activities. Since then I have grown to know the staff and organization in Tennessee. I am so impressed with all they do.

What do you look forward to as the newest member of TNC's Tennessee Board of Trustees? Over time, I have become impressed with TNC's scope. They not only work locally, but around the world. My son, who works as a college professor in the environmental field, has witnessed TNC's work in Africa. I look forward to learning more about the international work. I also enjoy learning about how TNC is making a connection between conserving nature in urban areas with our physical and emotional well-being.

NATURE TENNESSEE



Since 1978, The Nature Conservancy has acquired and protected many important landscapes in Tennessee—more than 340,000 acres (and growing). We also helped to create or expand 30 state natural areas, 13 wildlife management areas and three national wildlife refuges around the state. More important than the quantity of acres is quality. We've protected landscapes that are special for people and provide crucial wildlife habitat.

Conserving nature in Tennessee over four decades has required cultivating skills critical to pursuing larger scale projects. Now it is time to determine how to tackle environmental issues that are more significant and complex than ever before. Time is of the essence. But we are up for the challenge.

Terry Cook
State Director

P.S. Visit nature.org/tnproclamation to view Governor Haslam's proclamation marking this occasion.

