

Confluence

Fall 2023



A Legacy of Protecting Breathing Spaces

It's such a joy to get outside in the fall after the Triangle's sweltering summers. We are fortunate to live in an area with easy access to trails in gorgeous wild places.

While it's like picking a favorite child, I have to say there is a special place in my heart for Rocky Bluffs trail at White Pines in Chatham County. I don't get there often enough, but the view across the river from the top of the ridge makes me feel like I am far from civilization. Then, I love to take Schoolkids and River trails to the confluence and watch the river and the birds close up.

When TLC opened White Pines in 1986, Chatham County was still very rural. Today, every time I drive there from Durham, I am stunned by the massive amount of growth and development. While we need development to support our growing communities, we must continue to focus on the conservation of priority properties, like the two we purchased in Chatham in the past six months (pg. 7).

It takes planning and patience to strategically protect wild and working lands of the Triangle. I'm proud to share that we've protected nearly 500 acres in the past six months. It's through your continued support that we can conserve land across the region to safeguard clean water, protect natural habitats, support local farms and food, and connect people with nature.

I hope you enjoy celebrating and exploring trails as part of 2023's North Carolina Year of the Trail. TLC is proud to contribute 55 miles of trails to the state's vast network of trails, greenways, and blueways that showcase our diverse landscapes.

Thank you again for your investment in our home. We all benefit from your generosity.

Hope to see you on the trails,



Sandy Sweitzer, Executive Director

P.S. Before you get out to enjoy the trails, we have a bonus adventure for you: hidden amongst the pages of this newsletter are the keys to winning 1 of 4 Confluence Quest gift packs! Read this issue carefully, then find how to submit contest information on the back cover. 🌲



Confluence view from the River Trail at White Pines. Photo: TLC Staff

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- Luke Whiteside, Land Stewardship Associate (West)
- Christine Wilson, Director of Advancement

Welcome to the Team!

Since last Fall, we've welcomed several amazing staff members to TLC:

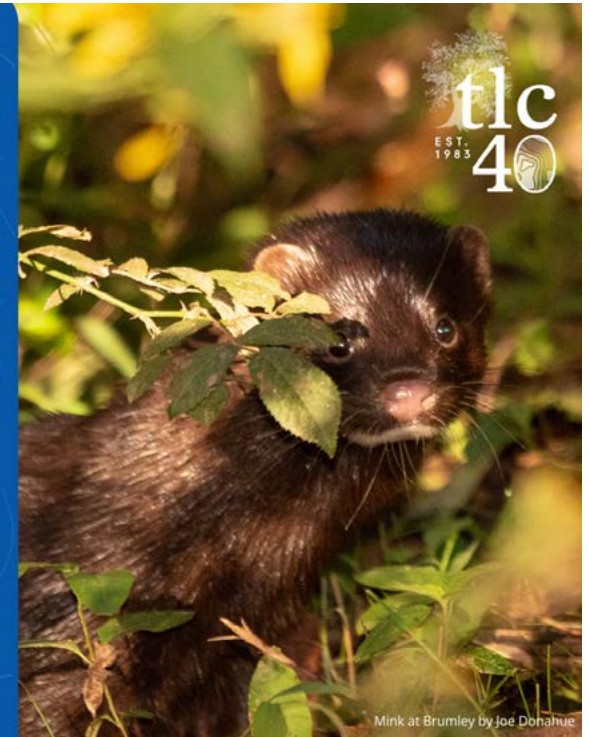
- Tanya Dianto, Staff Accountant
- Katia Griffin-Jakymec, Donor Engagement Associate
- Melissa Kennedy, Land Protection Associate
- Cara Lewis, Senior Communications Manager
- Chloe Ochocki, Conservation Planner
- Sonya Spruill, Administrative Associate

SAVE THE DATE!

GIVING TUESDAY

November 28, 2023

During this global day of giving, your donations will be **DOUBLED** to protect the lands you love!



- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship



Hit the Trails with TLC

Trailhead at Brumley North. Photo: Danielle Herman

Since the first 1.8 miles of trails opened at White Pines in 1986, TLC has served as a gateway to nature for thousands across the Triangle and beyond. The places we protect and the pathways we maintain are critical to providing the community with outlets for adventure, relaxation, fitness, and creativity.

Today, we are proud to offer over 55 miles of trails in a region defined by its wonderfully diverse landscapes and waterways. Whether you walk, bike, bird, or enjoy the view, there's plenty of sights and experiences awaiting across our eight public nature preserves.

At Swift Creek Bluffs, you can stand amongst centuries old beech trees while exploring new heights:

“Beech Bluffs Loop is my favorite trail for a few reasons. Aside from the awesome rare plants and beautiful spring ephemerals, the short

loop is very family friendly and my two and five-year old children love the preserve. The Stairway to Heaven is a good climb and gives you a feeling of accomplishment when you reach the top. It's also a sweet view looking down at the creek.”

- Umar Muhammad, Land Stewardship Associate (East)

On a trip to Brumley North, you'll find yourself immersed in song at a top birding spot in the state:

“After you cross the big bridge, you get to the birdiest part of Brumley North. The trail along the east side of the pond is a magnet for birds. As you continue, you encounter the nesting spot for the Kentucky warbler and the site where we most frequently encounter minks on the property.”

- Bo Howes, Director of Land Protection & Stewardship (West)

Be transported to cooler climates and discover incredible species along the riverside at White Pines:

“As a dedicated plant nerd, I find new plants to ooh and aah over every time I walk this trail. The topography makes for really cool variation as you descend to the river, and there is something about the section next to the Rocky River that soothes my soul – especially in the fall!”

- Laura Warman, Grants Manager

Each trail on our preserves offers sights and experiences unique to the Triangle. Thanks to the time, effort, and care from the TLC community, these special places are forever protected and open to all. 🌿

Need more trail inspiration?

Check out the rest of our staff picks:

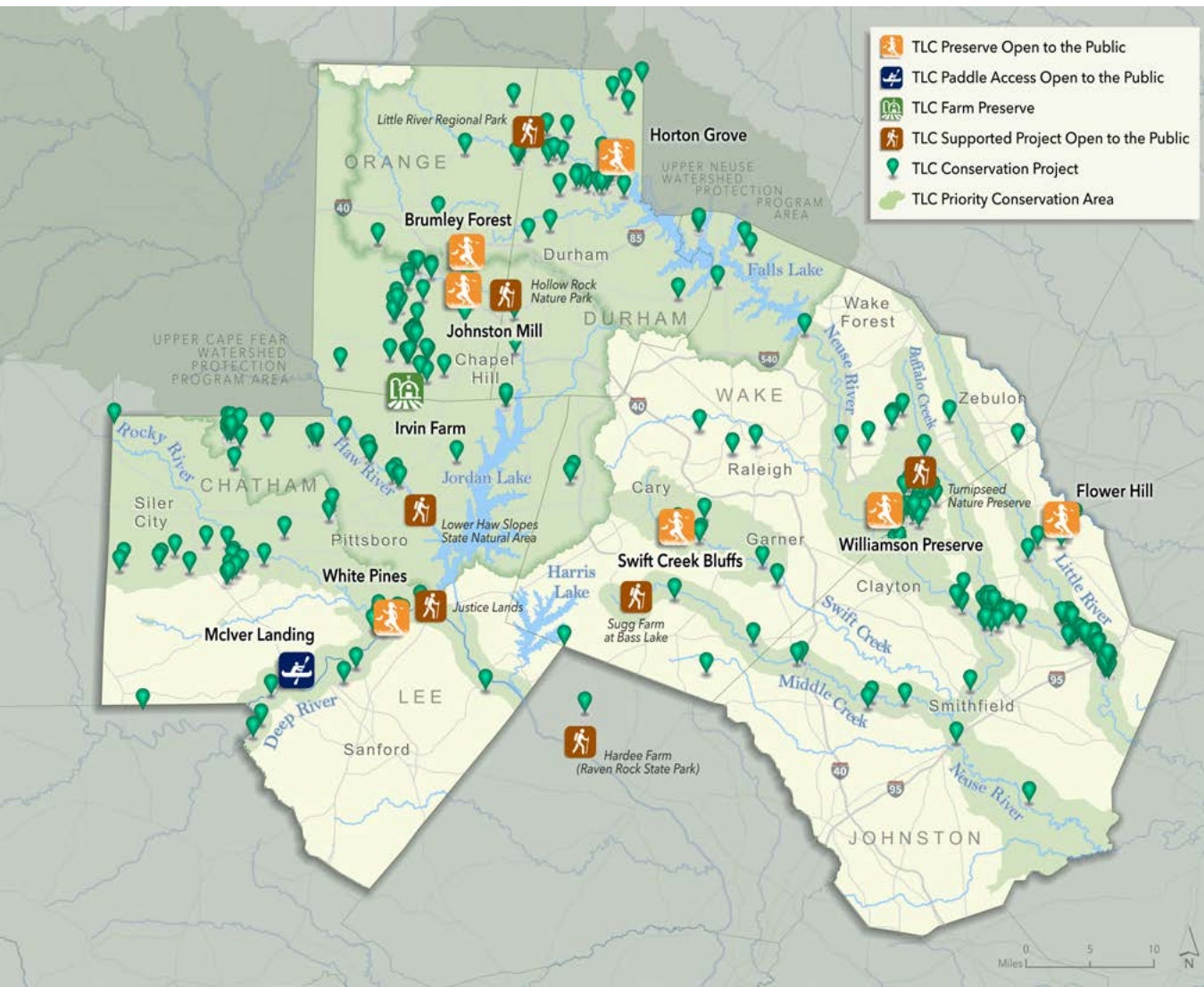


Photo: TLC Staff



Making Strides Towards 25,000 Acres

More than 1,000 acres
conserved per year

TLC pledged in 2018 that we'd protect 25,000 acres in the Triangle by 2025, doubling the pace of conservation. Thanks to your support we're on track to reach that goal and continue the pace into 2030! With the land protection deals this past year, we've surpassed 23,600 acres. Read on to see how your investment in TLC is protecting our land, water and wild spaces.

Big Woods Forest: Conserving Drinking Water Near Ferrington

In June, TLC permanently conserved 248 acres of undeveloped land within the Big Woods Forest Natural Heritage Area between Ferrington Village and Jordan Lake – our second-largest single purchase ever in Chatham County. This is TLC's first acquisition of land directly abutting Jordan Lake's protected lands in a decade, and contains beautiful wetlands, streams, and steep slopes that are unusual for the area and critical to the region. This area is also home to the largest population of bald eagles in North Carolina, making this property vital for both protecting water quality and wildlife habitat.

TLC purchased the land from Fitch Creations, Inc., the developer of Ferrington Village who donated 40% of the land value, which was matched with funding from the NC Land & Water Fund, the Town of Cary, and other generous organizations and private donors. With this land now protected forever, TLC will begin the long process of planning a public nature preserve, which includes a multi-year planning process to consider the resources necessary to design, install trails, open, and maintain a public space.

Protecting Land Along the Haw River

Earlier this year, TLC purchased 188 acres of land in Chatham County along the Haw River Corridor. Known as Chicken Bridge Forest, the property and surrounding areas have been of interest to TLC since 2007 due to the significant acreage and several Natural Heritage site designations. With 2,250 feet of perennial streams that lead directly to the Haw River and a well-established floodplain forest, the property is an excellent candidate for restoration as part of a river basin that supports drinking water for over 700,000 Triangle residents.



Thanks to the support of the nearby Protzman family, TLC was able to put in a competitive bid and close in record time. In protecting this property, TLC is participating in vital work to protect crucial green spaces and waterways in this rapidly growing county and along the newly designated Haw River State Trail.

Protecting Wake County's Cultural and Scenic Rural Landscape

TLC permanently protected a 46-acre property on a key connecting tract in the Marks Creek Watershed, a critical priority area for Wake County and TLC for more than 20 years. Home to pastures, old barns, historic homes, and rural churches, the Marks Creek watershed area offers a deep contrast to nearby bustling Raleigh.

Under the Marks Creek Rural Lands Initiative, TLC and partners have worked to catalyze land protection in this area to conserve significant cultural and natural resources

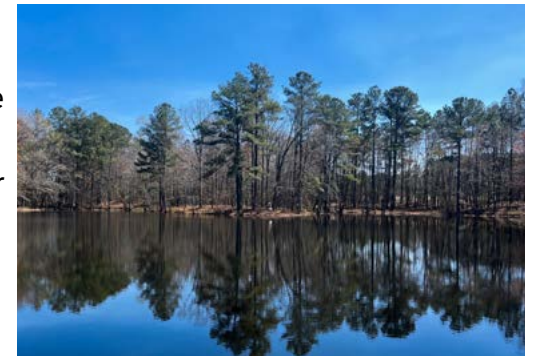


around Marks Creek and Lake Myra, connect the community through corridors and trails, and preserve scenic landscape views. Thanks to a bargain sale from the landowner and funding from the Wake County Open Space Bond and the NC Land & Water Fund, TLC was able to safeguard this land for generations to come.

Saving Aquatic Habitat in Johnston County

This spring, TLC has been very active in Johnston County, thanks to the generous support of the county's Board of Commissioners. With their funding, TLC was able to permanently protect 17 acres of land on the floodplains of Middle Creek, an important aquatic habitat recognized by the NC Natural Heritage Program. This property will provide a refuge for some of the state's most threatened aquatic species, including the Neuse River waterdog and dwarf wedgemussel. Additionally, the property will preserve the health of streams that flow into the Neuse River, and through water storage and flood reduction along Middle Creek, will help ensure clean drinking water for residents of Johnston County.

This property is an exciting indication of the impact of TLC's partnership with Johnston County, which recently approved next year's budget that includes \$825,000 for TLC to acquire easements and conservation properties. We look forward to putting these funds into action to protect over 500 acres of family farms and critical natural habitats.



Photos: TLC Staff



Beloved Trail is Celebrated as a New State Trail

Haw River. Photo: Jennifer Peterson

Great news for explorers in the Triangle! The Haw River Trail is now an authorized state trail thanks to the perseverance of local advocates, nonprofit organizations, and our state legislature.

TLC has long been a champion for the Haw River, and we demonstrated our commitment to conservation of the corridor and implementation of the trail with the protection of Chicken Bridge Forest this year. TLC’s conservation of land around the Haw River dates back to 1990 when we acquired an easement of 180 acres to protect sensitive ecosystems. In 2001, TLC helped establish the Lower Haw River State Natural Area by assisting in the transfer of 1,022 acres to the NC State Parks system, and five years later, we expanded the State’s Haw River holdings with two upstream tracts totaling an additional 122 acres.

TLC’s work on the Jordan Lake Watershed Conservation Strategy emphasized the importance of the health of the Haw River for water quality as an important source of drinking water for over 700,000 residents. Now, we are excited to serve on the Haw River Trail Steering committee in hopes of enhancing recreational opportunities and appreciation for this critical waterway.

The Haw River Trail will join 12 other state trails and become part of the North Carolina State Parks system. While a state park is operated and managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation, a state trail comprises multiple connected sections that rely on local partnerships. Each section of the trail is sponsored by a federal, state or local government agency, nonprofit organization, or private landowner.

The Haw River Trail already boasts:

- 20 miles of completed land trail in Alamance County
- 40 miles of completed paddle trail in Alamance County
- 15 recreational parks and trailheads open along the trail in Alamance County
- 6 public access sites in Chatham County

The planned Haw River Trail corridor extends approximately 80 miles along the Haw River, from Haw River State Park on the Rockingham-Guilford County line through Alamance County to Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in Chatham County.



Two Wheels, Will Travel

Mountain biking at Brumley South. Photo: Chris Fowler

Exploring TLC trails on two wheels is a special kind of rush. We offer more than 20 miles of multi-use trails on two of our preserves. Fun fact: TLC is the only land trust in the state to offer biking trails.

Before you hit the trails, bikers should remember to:

- Give an audible warning before passing others.
- Slow down to pass people on the trail.
- Announce yourself and slow down to pass.
- Obey all instructions on signs.
- Wear your helmet.
- Ride single-file.
- Stop only on the shoulder of a trail.
- Ride at a responsible, controlled speed (15 mph or less).

Trail Highlights for Two Wheelers:

Williamson Preserve has nine miles of trails for bikers with 7.5 miles of cool multi-use singletrack with obstacles. The newest trail - Lily Loop - has great elevation changes (200+ ft of climbing) and plenty of switchbacks, rock sections, and multiple fantastic dips and turns.

Follow the directional arrows:

Trails at Williamson Preserve go in one direction.

Make sure you are going the right way on the right day!

LEFT: Sunday through Wednesday: Bikers turn left at trail intersections

RIGHT: Thursday through Saturday: Bikers turn right at trail intersections

Electric bikes are currently not allowed on trails.

Williamson and Brumley preserves are funded by The North Carolina Land and Water Fund, a state conservation trust fund that plays a vital role in protecting water quality, open spaces, and treasured cultural resources. Currently, the Fund does not allow any motorized vehicles on conserved land.



Wild IDEAS for a More Vibrant Triangle Goes Outside

Brumley S Pond. Photo: Cole Stanley

During February’s Wild I.D.E.A.s for a More Vibrant Tomorrow, we explored how a diverse coalition of people are helping shape a more healthy and vibrant Triangle region. We left February’s event with a challenge: help introduce more people to the outdoors.

On October 21, TLC invites you to join us for Wild I.D.E.A.s Gets Outside - a chance to explore the outdoors through fun activities at one of our most popular nature preserves. This reimagined Wild I.D.E.A.s will provide opportunities to experience nature hands on – and to share the joy of the outdoors with others.

We’ll bring together various community groups to lead hikes, demonstrations, and outdoor activities throughout the day at Brumley Nature Preserve. We will also encourage partners to lead follow-up hikes or programs at various TLC locations after the event to give attendees more chances to experience nature. The event also features a community expo – we will invite our community partners to set up tables and exhibit booths around the preserve, showcasing their

organizations. Food and drink will also be available for purchase from local vendors.

We hope that this event will serve as a medium to introduce attendees to new activities that they can try outdoors in a fun, safe, and welcoming environment. Additionally, we want to introduce attendees to the grassroots organizations around the Triangle that are striving to make the outdoors a more diverse and inclusive place!

BE SURE TO SAVE THE DATE

Wild I.D.E.A.s

Saturday, October 21, 2023



Learn more at: <https://triangleland.org/explore/wild-ideas>



National Nonprofit Partner Spotlights Unique Conservation Opportunities at Williamson

Williamson barn. Photo: Cole Stanley

Join us this fall for a weekend of learning, games, and stewarding the land! TLC is proud to partner with the national nonprofit Leave No Trace, which is focused on using the power of science, education, and stewardship to ensure a sustainable future for the outdoors and the planet.

Leave No Trace has launched its newest program, “Spotlights,” to engage communities across the country through multiday programming with their traveling team. This program was designed to highlight the important on-the-ground work of local conservation organizations like TLC, with an emphasis on engaging the public through stewardship and education.

We are excited to host the crew at our Bailey and Sarah Williamson Nature Preserve on **September 22 and 23**. The event kicks off with a Friday Meet and Greet Trivia Night. Here, you can grow your Leave No Trace knowledge and ask any questions you may have while also learning how you can incorporate the principles into your everyday

life. On Saturday morning, return to the preserve and apply what you learned at our stewardship workday to help remove invasive plant species, maintain the trail system, and protect our natural habitats. Finally, we will finish the spotlight with a foraging walk that is in partnership with Steel String Brewery to contribute to a new beer to be released in the fall with part of the proceeds benefiting TLC.

All events are free, but some have group limits, so please make sure to save your spot on our events page online. RSVP to join us - <https://lnt.org/event/leave-no-trace-spotlight-raleigh/>.

LEAVE NO TRACE SPOTLIGHTS

September 22 and 23, 2023



Learn more at: <https://lnt.org/event/leave-no-trace-spotlight-raleigh/>



Community Action Against Invasive Species



One way to identify autumn olive is by its leaves' silvery undersides.
Photo: TLC Staff

Across our region, invasive species are plentiful amongst the natural habitats and trails we love due to a lack of predators and competition. In the southern section of Brumley Nature Preserve, major strides are being made in the fight against invasive species, particularly autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). This invasive shrub overtakes habitats by out-shading native plants, producing up to 200,000 seeds per plant, and even altering the soil composition around it.

Removing autumn olive and other invasives at Brumley has long been a goal of TLC staff since the preserve opened to the public in 2017. Following a pause due to the pandemic, volunteer activities have returned in full force and several groups have made tackling Brumley's autumn olive problem a dedicated project.

In addition to the high school and corporate groups that have spent many workdays with our staff, two volunteer groups have made particularly critical impacts. Each Thursday, the Conservation Corps (West) assists TLC in caring for our preserves and trails in the western part of the Triangle, doing everything from trail maintenance to clearing

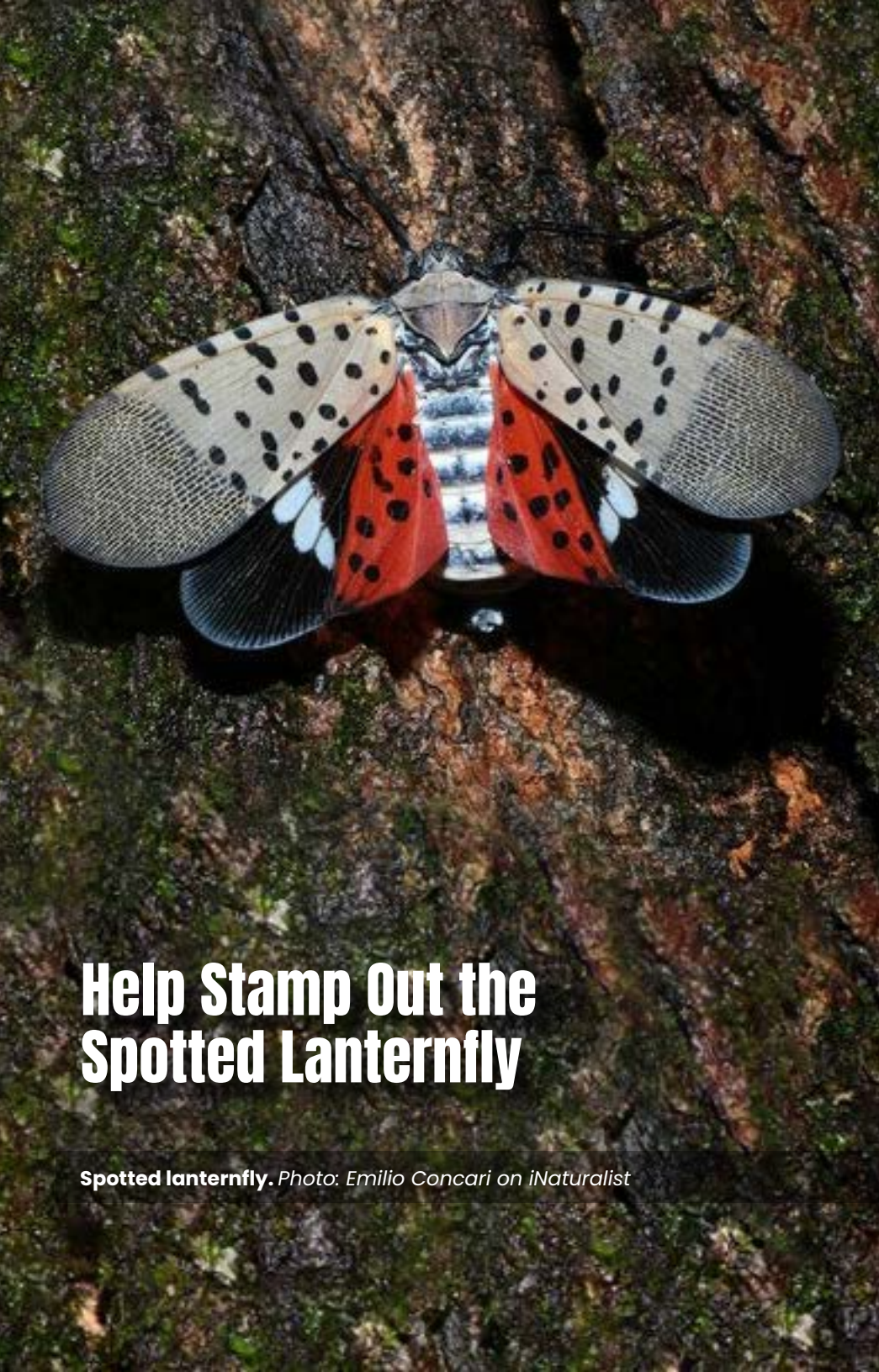
invasive species. This dedicated group has cleared several sections of autumn olive, with a particularly impressive amount of decaying shrub mountains left behind near Springhouse Loop.

Led and created by TLC volunteer Steven Feuerstein, TriWild is another incredible group that has tackled not only autumn olive, but also privet and multiflora rose near where Brumley hosts Schoolhouse of Wonder. Since 2021, Feuerstein has worked with TLC staff to establish a monthly workday to bring the community together around invasive species removal.

Today, thanks to the dedication and effort of these volunteers, several acres of Brumley's forest understory are free from dense walls of autumn olive – creating opportunities for greater biodiversity in the forests, woodlands, and fields of Brumley.

Are you looking for ways to protect local habitats?
Check out our volunteer opportunities across the Triangle.





Help Stamp Out the Spotted Lanternfly

Spotted lanternfly. Photo: Emilio Concari on iNaturalist

We need your help! Be on the hunt for the invasive spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*)! This Asian insect is not a fly but a planthopper (a cousin of cicadas) that uses a long beak to pierce plant tissues and suck up sap and fruit juices. These pretty but unwanted interlopers gorge themselves on over a hundred plant species, including natives like grapes, Virginia creeper, maple, birch, and walnut. They are so destructive they are considered an essential threat to native habitats, crops, and ornamental species. These little buggers are on the move. Since being found in Pennsylvania in 2014, they have moved south, and we have a confirmed population in North Carolina as of June 2022.

If you find a lanternfly, please take a picture, squish it and then report it to the N.C. Department of Agriculture at ncagr.gov/slf.

Besides squashing lanternflies when you see them, it's essential to also remove tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), one of their favorite host plants. This invasive weed was brought from temperate parts of China. Tree of heaven crowds out native species from their natural habitats, damages buildings, and other structures (it does love growing out of small cracks in cement!) and poses a nuisance and threat to agriculture.

TLC stewardship staff and volunteers work hard to keep tree of heaven and other invasive species out of our preserves. We also get support from partners – like last year's grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to help keep invasive species out of Brumley Nature Preserve and improve bird habitat. You can also help! Sign up for one of our volunteer crews, join an event, and ensure your land is free of invasive species.

LEARN MORE





Second Year of Success with PINES!

PINES Program Graduation at Williamson. Photo: TLC Staff

In May, our Pathways Into Natural and Environmental Science (PINES) program wrapped up their semester with our largest cohort of students yet! This year, TLC was able to expand the program from five to 10 Knightdale High School students to join us in exploring the outdoors, learning about careers in conservation, and creating community around learning and nature.

Throughout the semester, the students embarked on several exciting field trips and participated in hands-on experiences to get a feel for the world of conservation and outdoor recreation. From birdwatching hikes to an overnight camping trip, the fellows gained skills in outdoor navigation, plant ID, environmental stewardship, and confidence in being outside.

Beyond engaging trips, the PINES students also began work this spring on a long-term project that will eventually become a new trail at Williamson Preserve. This trail, which will pass by the agriculture pavilion off Walnut Hill Way, will be designed as a family-friendly path complete with interpretative signage and a nature play space for children.

The end of this school year saw four of the students graduate high school, and each have exciting post-graduation plans pursuing STEM-related careers at NC State, Duke, and NC Central. The remaining six fellows are set to return to the program next year – in addition to the new students that will be added from Knightdale High School.

“The PINES program helped me find a way to direct my passion for nature and ability to problem solve into a career path and has helped me in countless ways,” shared Hanna, who plans to return in a role supporting the Education & Outreach team alongside her college studies.

We’re excited to continue supporting this awesome group of young conservationists and continue welcoming more students to nature.

LEARN MORE





Thank You to All Our Volunteers!

At the TLC's Annual Volunteer Appreciation Celebration in June, 60 volunteers and staff members gathered to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of the past year. The event recognized these outstanding volunteers.

- Mark Jolly
- Bill Dubas
- James Lee
- Brooks Lutterloh
- Joan Curry
- Marion Haywood
- Ann Sparrow
- Stewart Johnson
- Brian Reazor
- Ross McKinney
- Steve Gartrell
- Steven Feuerstein
- John Dorsey

Volunteers are crucial to what we do at TLC! They contributed close to 3,000 hours of volunteer time to our organization in fiscal year 2023. Whether participating in land restoration projects, conducting educational programs, leading nature hikes, monitoring properties, or assisting with administrative tasks, their dedication contributed significantly to our goals.

LEARN MORE



Plan your legacy with Triangle Land Conservancy!

Make your will in as little as 20 minutes with this free online estate planning tool, thanks to our partnership with FreeWill.

[Freewill.com/triangleland](https://freewill.com/triangleland)

TriWild Volunteers at Brumley South. *Photo: Steven Feuerstein*



**P.O. Box 1848
Durham, NC 27702**

Can You Complete the Confluence Quest?

Search for fun facts in this issue of Confluence and you could win a Confluence Quest gift pack! To help us understand how our supporters are using Confluence, the TLC Communications Team has created this short online quiz and survey. For your efforts, you will be entered to win 1 of 4 fantastic prize packs full of items donated by our outstanding corporate partner, Great Outdoor Provision Company.

- 28 L Mountain Hardware backpack
- Metal camp mug
- Mountain Hardware trucker hat
- \$25 GOPC Gift Card
- Surprise assortment of TLC swag



**Four explorers will be selected to win prize packs.
Please complete the Confluence Quest by October 1, 2023
to be eligible for the contest.**