DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

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PHOTO BY MILICENT WIGHTMAN
RUNNER-UP, WATER CATEGORY, 2026 PHOTO CONTEST

DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

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ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Scholarship Awarded to Local Student

Supporting the Next Generation of Community Leaders

The Conservancy awarded the annual Vanessa Joy Van Gorder Memorial Scholarship for $2,500 to Elizabeth Bailey, a 2026 graduate of Delaware Valley High School.

The Vanessa Joy Van Gorder Memorial Scholarship was established in 2015 in honor of Vanessa, who passed away on December 25, 2014. A recent graduate from West Chester University with a degree in education, Vanessa was passionate about the outdoors and loved exploring the region with her friends and family. The Conservancy established this scholarship in Vanessa's memory and to honor her dream of becoming an educator.

Recipient Elizabeth Bailey will attend the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she intends to study biology with a focus on conservation and environmental science. In high school, she was recognized as an AP Scholar with Distinction; served as captain of the Varsity Swimming and Diving Team; was a member of the National Honor Society and a Student Council officer; and was a three-time chapter officer and national award winner in Future Business Leaders of America. She also participated in numerous other academic and athletic clubs.



Elizabeth Bailey, Delaware Valley High School

Elizabeth gave back to her community through volunteer service, including fundraising for United Way, teaching children about birds through a bird-feeder-building project at the local library, and distributing meals to local families. In her career, Elizabeth hopes to help protect the environment to ensure that places like the one she grew up in will continue to exist.

To continue to inspire youth and encourage study and careers in natural science and education, contributions to the scholarship fund and other environmental education and conservation initiatives can be made online at DelawareHighlands.org or by mail to 571 Perkins Pond Rd, Beach Lake, PA 18405.

Planned Giving

A Tax-Smart Way to Protect the Upper Delaware River Region

Now is a great time to direct your traditional IRA distribution to the Conservancy.

If you're over 70 ½ , you can transfer a portion of your IRA, tax-free. It's a simple and cost-effective way to support land conservation.

Or, become a **Legacy Leader** and include the Conservancy in your will or trust through a bequest. Your gifts today will ensure that the lands and waters you love will be here for generations to come.

Visit delawarehighlands.org/plannedgiving for more information.



Trey Talley Named Executive Director

In August, the Conservancy's Board of Directors named Trey Talley as the organization's new Executive Director. Trey had served as Acting Executive Director since June, following the departure of former Executive Director Diane Rosencrance. He is the third Executive Director in the Conservancy's more than 30-year history.

Following a comprehensive national search that drew a strong pool of qualified candidates, the Board selected Trey based on his deep knowledge of the Conservancy and its work, his experience in land conservation and organizational planning, and his commitment to serving the communities of the Upper Delaware River region.

"We are thrilled to welcome Trey Talley as our new Executive Director," stated President Jacqueline Sailer. "Trey has shown that he is a natural leader who is committed to land conservation, the local community, and the Conservancy's mission. His vision for the future will broaden the Conservancy's important impact on our landscapes, clean air and clean water for generations to come."

Trey joined the Conservancy's land protection team in 2018 and has spent the past eight years leading and supporting land conservation projects throughout the region. Through this work, he has developed strong relationships with local and regional stakeholders, including landowners, grant funders, and public and private conservation organizations.

In addition, Trey worked closely with Diane on strategic and organizational planning, conservation policy advocacy, and the development and expansion of regional partnerships. He represents the Conservancy through multiple regional networks and coalitions and has served as a reviewer, contributor, and committee member for environmental planning efforts within the Conservancy's service area.

"I am deeply honored to take on this new role at Delaware Highlands Conservancy," Trey stated. "This is a critical time for conservation efforts in the Upper Delaware River region, and I look forward to working with other members of our community, including our partners in conservation and education, to build upon the Conservancy's three decades of positive impact. Toward that end, we will continue protecting land, expanding our education programming, and inviting members of the public to enjoy hiking and exploring at the Van Scott Nature Reserve."

The leadership transition comes at a time of continued momentum for the Conservancy. During Diane's ten years as Executive Director, the Conservancy protected nearly 5,000 additional acres in Pennsylvania and New York, expanded its staff, and established the 144-acre Van Scott Nature Reserve in Beach Lake, PA as a growing center for conservation and environmental education.

With the completion of the leadership transition, the Conservancy is entering a new chapter while remaining firmly rooted in our mission and the relationships that have supported our work for more than 30 years.

About Trey Talley

Before joining the Conservancy, Trey served as an AmeriCorps Land Protection & Education Associate with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy in Asheville, North Carolina. During graduate school, he worked as a Research Assistant at the Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Earlier in his career, he was a financial analyst at a Community Development Bank in Chicago, Illinois.

Trey holds a Master of City & Regional Planning degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he specialized in land use and environmental planning, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of Chicago.

He lives in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Peggy, and their two children. Outside of work, he enjoys hiking, fly fishing, and spending time with friends and family.



A New Preview Garden at the Reserve

Before and After: An Accessible Space Converts Lawn to Meadow



After some excavation at the Van Scott Nature Reserve this year, we're pleased to share our new accessible Preview Garden, which surrounds the office and showcases some of the varied native plants and habitats you'll find on the trails around the Reserve.

Converted from lawn, the garden was designed to be ADA accessible and to provide an opportunity for people who may not be able to take a longer walk on our trails to enjoy native plants and observe wildlife. We often see birds, butterflies, and more!

In the future, we'll be adding signs to the Preview Garden to help you identify and learn more about the native plants and habitats you see.

Funding support for the Preview Garden has been provided by the Honesdale National Bank Foundation, Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Pocono Forests and Waters Conservation Landscape Mini Grant Program, and United Way. We would also like to thank Dustin Werner-Fazio of Forest, Fen, and Field for planting the garden and donating additional native plants, and to all the volunteers who assisted in the planting.







Official Conservancy Merchandise!

Proudly display your support for the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and local conservation with our new official merchandise, available for purchase on our Bonfire shop.

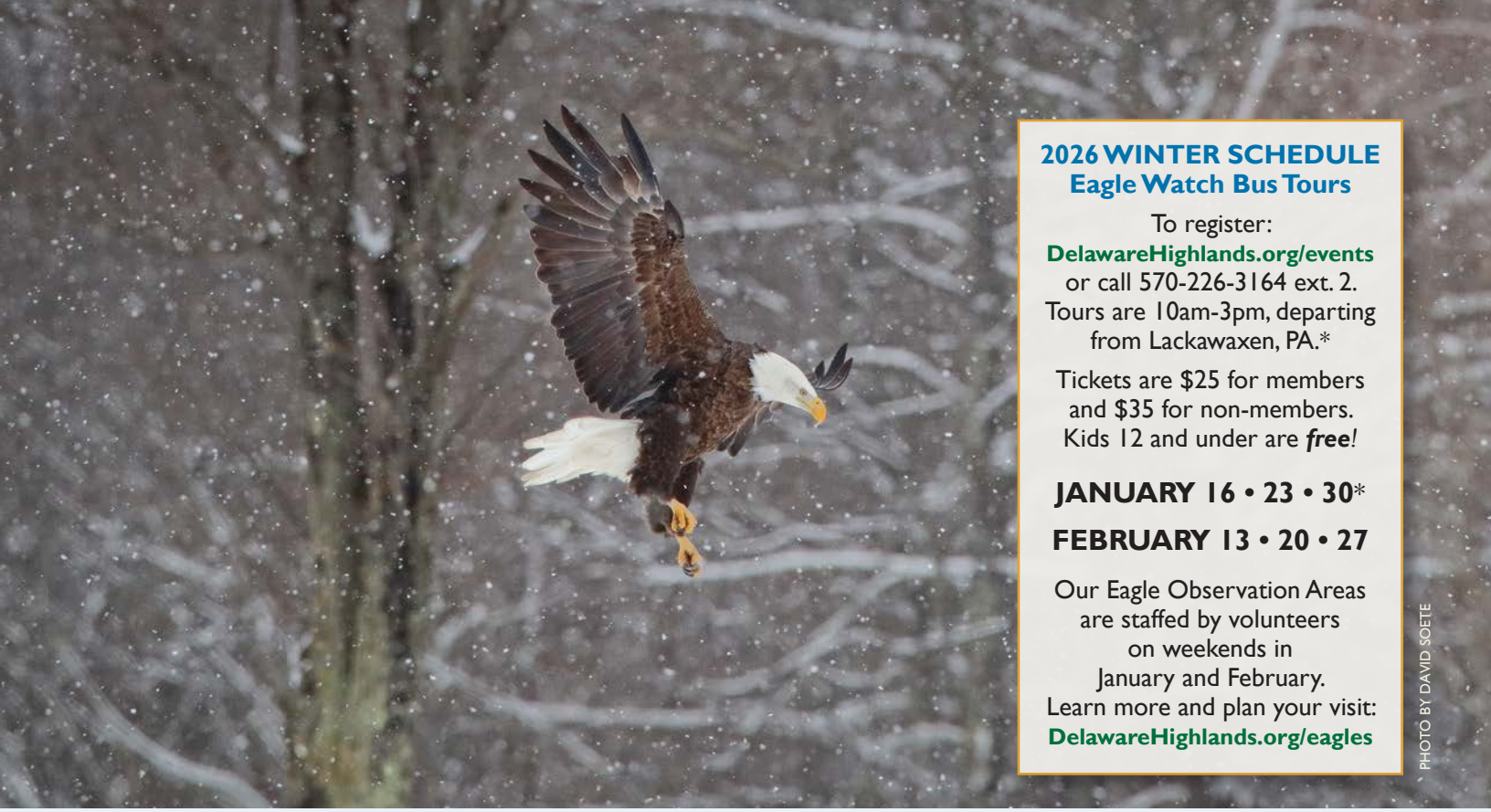
We have a wide variety of colors and styles of T-shirts, sweatshirts, and hoodies to choose from, plus tote bags, mugs, and baseball caps.

Purchase for yourself or give as a gift—just in time for the holiday season! A portion of the proceeds from each purchase will benefit the Conservancy.

Your items are made to order and will be shipped directly to you from Bonfire. Enter the **coupon code FALLNEWS26** for 5% off your purchase!



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2026 WINTER SCHEDULE
Eagle Watch Bus Tours

To register:
DelawareHighlands.org/events
or call 570-226-3164 ext. 2.
Tours are 10am-3pm, departing from Lackawaxen, PA.*

Tickets are $25 for members and $35 for non-members. Kids 12 and under are ***free***!

JANUARY 16 • 23 • 30*

FEBRUARY 13 • 20 • 27

Our Eagle Observation Areas are staffed by volunteers on weekends in January and February. Learn more and plan your visit:
DelawareHighlands.org/eagles

PHOTO BY DAVID SOETE

Winter Eagle Watching with the Conservancy

Join Us for a Guided Excursion or Self-Driving Tour!

In the winter months, our region becomes a temporary home to hundreds of bald eagles. Arriving in December from Canada and upstate New York, the eagles come in search of open water to fish, and large stands of trees in which to perch and roost. The clean waters and protected forests of the Upper Delaware River provide the perfect winter habitat for these magnificent birds, and eagle-viewing is a popular winter activity.

Eagle Watch

Join us for a guided Eagle Watch bus tour, scheduled in January and February 2027. Trips will depart from our Winter Field Office in Lackawaxen, PA at the Zane Grey Museum. For more information or to register, please visit **DelawareHighlands.org/events** or call 570-226-3168 ext. 2.

If you prefer to take your own driving tour, visit **DelawareHighlands.org/eagles** for information on viewing eagles safely on your own and to download a map with GPS coordinates for the Eagle Observation Areas located throughout the Upper Delaware River region. On weekends in January and February, the viewing areas are staffed by Conservancy volunteers ready to help you have a great eagle-watching experience!

Follow the Conservancy on Facebook **@DelawareHighlandsConservancy** and Instagram **@DHConservancy** for photos, videos, and updates from our volunteers through the winter season.

If you would like to join us as an Eagle Watch volunteer, find details about our annual **Eagle Watch Volunteer Training on December 12th** at **DelawareHighlands.org/events.**

Eagle Etiquette

During your visit, remember to practice 'eagle etiquette' to ensure you do not disturb the birds. Avoid loud noises such as yelling, car door slamming, horn honking, and unnecessary movement. Use binoculars instead of trying to get closer, and don't do anything to try to make the eagle fly. If the viewing blind is closed, remain inside your vehicle to avoid disturbing the birds, and park only in designated public parking areas.

Practicing eagle etiquette ensures that the eagles are able to conserve the precious energy they need to survive the cold winter months.

The Upper Delaware River region is one of the largest wintering habitats for eagles in the northeast United States. Being respectful when watching wildlife means we can continue to experience the joy and satisfaction we get from seeing eagles soar above our rivers and forests.

**Note - the January 30th Eagle Watch bus tour departs from the Van Scott Nature Reserve in Beach Lake, PA.*

Congratulations to the Photo Contest Winners!

Confluence: Land, Water, Wildlife

Through summer 2026 the Conservancy held its ninth annual juried photo contest, *Confluence: Land, Water, Wildlife*. The contest invites local photographers to capture striking nature photos from the Upper Delaware River region in five categories: landscape, wildlife, macro, water, and the Van Scott Nature Reserve, plus a youth category for photographers under age 18.

The Conservancy is pleased to announce the winners of the juried contest. In the **landscape category**, winner - Jane Biron, runners-up - Roger Gottlieb and Milicent Wightman. **Wildlife category**, winner - Patrick Santucci, runner-up - Martha Tully, with two photos. **Water category**, winner - Santford Overton, runners-up - Karen Colaiaco and Milicent Wightman. **Macro category**, winner - Kathleen Colligan, runners-up - Nicole Bernardone and Sarah Hine. **Van Scott Nature Reserve category**, winner - Victoria Sanok, runners-up - Arielle Lane and Steven Mauren. **Youth category**, winner - Owen Doyle, age 15; runners-up - Kayla France, Daisy Olivo Heller, and Carson Wightman. The **People's Choice** is Eileen Chorba and the **Conservancy Staff Pick** is Aaron Smith.

The ARTery Gallery in Milford, PA will host the Conservancy from November 12th until December 7th in an exhibition featuring the winning photographs alongside artwork created by ARTery member artists, **opening with a reception on Saturday, November 14th from 2-4pm** at 210 Broad Street, Milford.

A selection of the winners is below; **all of the winning photos may be viewed on the Conservancy's Facebook page at facebook.com/delawarehighlandsconservancy**.


WATER - SANTFORD OVERTON


WILDLIFE -PATRICK SANTUCCI


MACRO - KATHLEEN COLLIGAN


LANDSCAPE - JANE BIRON


PEOPLE'S CHOICE - EILEEN CHORBA

Conservancy Now Accepting EITC Contributions from Local Businesses

In PA, the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program allows eligible businesses to contribute a portion of their state tax liability to an approved Educational Improvement Organization (EIO) like the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. The business receives a tax credit that can reduce PA state taxes owed by up to 90%.



As a local business, your EITC contributions to the Conservancy will bring local students to the Van Scott Nature Reserve in Beach Lake, PA for educational field trips and hands-on learning about the natural world.

To learn more, visit delawarehighlands.org/membership-support/eitc/.



Upcoming Events at the Reserve

Join us for community programs for all ages at the Van Scott Nature Reserve! Space is limited and events require advance registration. Visit **DelawareHighlands.org/events** for all the details, to register, and to view our complete Calendar of Events.

Using Nature as a Blueprint for Landscape Design

November 6 • 1pm-3pm

Join Maria Grimaldi, certified Permaculture instructor, for an introduction to the essentials of designing a landscape plan for your home or homestead. You'll learn the ethical principles of permaculture design and how to apply nature-inspired strategies to your own landscape. Explore tools such as zone and sector analysis to better understand your property and identify opportunities for thoughtful, sustainable design. You'll then put what you've learned into practice by creating a landscape plan of your own.

Stopover Ecology of Landbird Migrants: Why It's Good to be Fat and Other Migratory Tales

November 7 • 9am-11:30am

Join us at the Reserve for morning all about birds, featuring a presentation on avian migration and research conducted in northeast Pennsylvania with Dr. Robert Smith and Dr. Meg Hatch.

BearWise in Pennsylvania: Biology, Behavior and Coexistence

November 14 • 10am-11:30am

Join PA Game Commission Northeast Region's Environmental Education Specialist, Kelly Pollock to explore the fascinating biology, behavior, and seasonal habits of Pennsylvania's black bears. She will offer insights into how they survive and thrive in our forests and share tips on minimizing potential conflicts associated with black bears in your community.

Owl Prowl

November 21 • 5pm-7pm

Join us at the Reserve to learn about Pennsylvania's owls, their role in our ecosystems, and potentially spot one on the Reserve. This program will begin indoors with a brief overview on owls coupled with the opportunity to see and touch replica skulls of multiple owl species. At dusk, the group will head out on a quiet prowl to search and listen for owls in our beautiful meadows.

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PHOTO BY MARTHA TULLY
RUNNER-UP, WILDLIFE CATEGORY, 2026 PHOTO CONTEST

Your
Winter 2027
Eagle Watch
Calendar of Events
is inside!

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy is protecting
more than 19,380 acres of working farms and forests, clean waters,
and wildlife habitat in the Upper Delaware River region.

To learn more about...

the Delaware Highlands Conservancy or to make a donation in support of our work, visit DelawareHighlands.org.
Find us on @DelawareHighlandsConservancy @DHConservancy



PHOTO BY AARON SMITH
WINNER, STAFF PICK, 2026 PHOTO CONTEST

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DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home." – Gary Snyder