

Eric Schradling—Man on the Go

When Eric Schradling is not working for the USFWS, he is usually busy training for, or competing in the “Iron Man Competition” in Hawaii. As you may know, the Iron Man competitions consist of some of the most grueling triathlon events found anywhere. So we are fortunate to have a friend of DU who has so much stamina and energy to bring to his job in helping to restore wetlands.

Eric attended University of Maine/Orono and received his B.S. in Wildlife Management graduating in 1988. While there he spent two summers during college at Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge as an SCA volunteer and as the YCC Coordinator. Eric also attended Virginia Tech and received his Master's degree in Wildlife Science graduating in 1991. Eric has been with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 11 years serving in federal activities and private lands restoration. He has

been the Private Lands Coordinator with the New Jersey Field Office, located in Pleasantville, for six years and it is in this capacity that Eric's expertise in delivering on-the-ground, low-cost habitat restoration projects and invasive species control that he has really helped DU tremendously. He even recently received the Eagle Award from the USFWS for exemplary leadership in promoting and implementing the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Since partnerships are so crucial to DU's ability to deliver projects, Eric's role with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has proven to be one of the most valuable relationships we have. While project locations have typically been downstate or along the Atlantic Coastal marshes, we are also frequently in Eric's company in planning or prospecting efforts in other parts of NJ as well. Eric is often the front line for project identification, keeping a sharp and creative

eye out for how DU can play an active role in project delivery. One type of project that Eric is a real hustler on is Phragmites control. This is of great waterfowl benefit and usually helps us accrue a good deal of acre accomplishments in a very cost efficient way.

Currently, Eric is helping us prepare the Environmental Assessment for our Cohansey River Program, and even helped with the contractual flow of funding from the Army Corps of Engineers to DU. Recently, Eric has also been instrumental in DU receiving a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant. Whenever we get a call from Eric we are usually in store for another great opportunity from a great friend of DU.



Black Duck Study

In November 2004, Ducks Unlimited, Southern Illinois University and partners began trapping American black ducks on Long Island for a ground-breaking research project.

Black ducks are an important species along the Atlantic coast, but have suffered serious declines in parts of their wintering range. However, around Long Island the wintering numbers have been relatively stable. This presents an ideal area to study the wintering and spring habitat as well as food resource needs of this species.

Since November 04, field crews have been traveling all over Long Island, tracking 30 radioed females. Over the course of the next two years, they will be sampling food resources and conducting behavior observations to determine what types of habitats are being used for different activities,

such as resting or feeding. Waterfowl biologists believe that wintering and spring staging habitats may be creating a bottleneck, especially in areas where development and population growth are increasing. This kind of information is critical in planning conservation habitat programs that meet the needs of wintering and spring staging waterfowl.

The study was well received by the media. A media blitz took place and at least six newspapers, including the New York Times and two television stations, came to the study site. Once the Associated Press picked up the press release, the black duck study was pasted across the U.S. from Anchorage to Los Angeles and up to Maine. Tina Yerkes, DU's Director of



Conservation Planning was interviewed by CNN radio and the clip was distributed to 2100 outlets worldwide. A web page has been designed to provide a bi-weekly update on the progress of the study and movement of selected black duck hens. See what happens as the radioed hens migrate and winter on the salt marshes of Long Island. To watch results of the study unfold, visit www.ducks.org, click on the conservation tab, then click on the Black Duck Study link. Anyone can follow some of the black ducks with transmitters on the web and review all of the details and updates on the Black Duck study.

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Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



GREAT LAKES/ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

New Jersey Conservation Report 2005

New Jersey Habitat Happenings

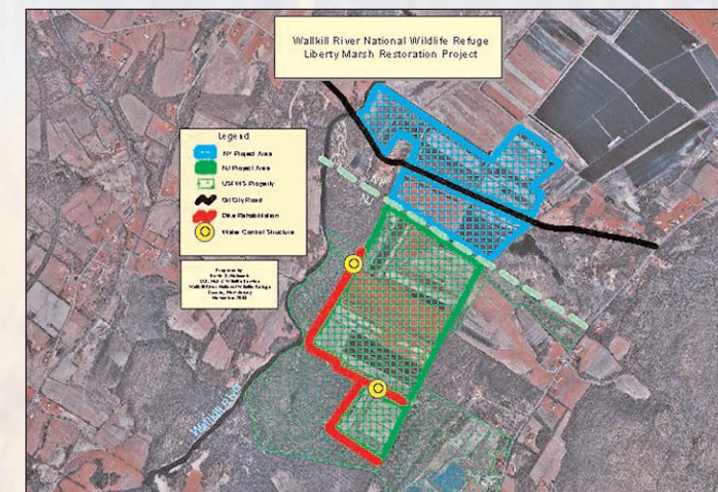
NOW ON TO THE JERSEY SIDE AT WALLKILL NWR!!

We all know that ducks do not recognize political boundaries, but things aren't always that easy when it comes to actually delivering habitat on the ground. Fortunately, things are now rolling south from New York into New Jersey at the Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge up in Sussex County.

The Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge encompasses some six miles of very fertile bottomland habitat along the Wallkill River in north Jersey. Interestingly, this river flows northward, starting in the New Jersey Highlands Region and eventually dumping into the Hudson River near Kingston, New York. Its flood plain is typically one half to one mile wide and contains some of the richest soils in all of the state. Agricultural practices have recently favored sod, vegetables such as onions, or corn. In 1990, Congress established the refuge with its first landholdings and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been actively adding acreage and restoring these agricultural acres into wildlife habitats ever since. Approximately 99% of these lands lie in New Jersey; so it seems curious that the first Ducks Unlimited (DU) project was in New York. But this does provide the prototype for a great partnership now to be expanded. Last year, DU completed dike work and water control structures on five moist soil impoundment cells on the New York side. Three are north of Oil City Road, two south, and all now provide excellent viewing opportunities to watch waterfowl during both spring and fall migration.

Continuing that successful track record, contractors broke ground on April 15 for two somewhat larger moist soil cells within NJ. Partnering with DU and the USFWS this time will be the New Jersey Duck Stamp Committee, which is providing partial funding for this project in the amount of \$22,000. DU was also successful in receiving a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant in the amount of \$32,000 for this project. Work is currently underway to restore a dike closest to the river, install a large water control structure, and sculpt the major ditch

that will transport water both into and out of this major cell. Work is expected to be complete in the next two months making this project ready to welcome an array of fall migrants later this year.



Aerial view of the Liberty Marsh. Kevin Holcomb, USFWS

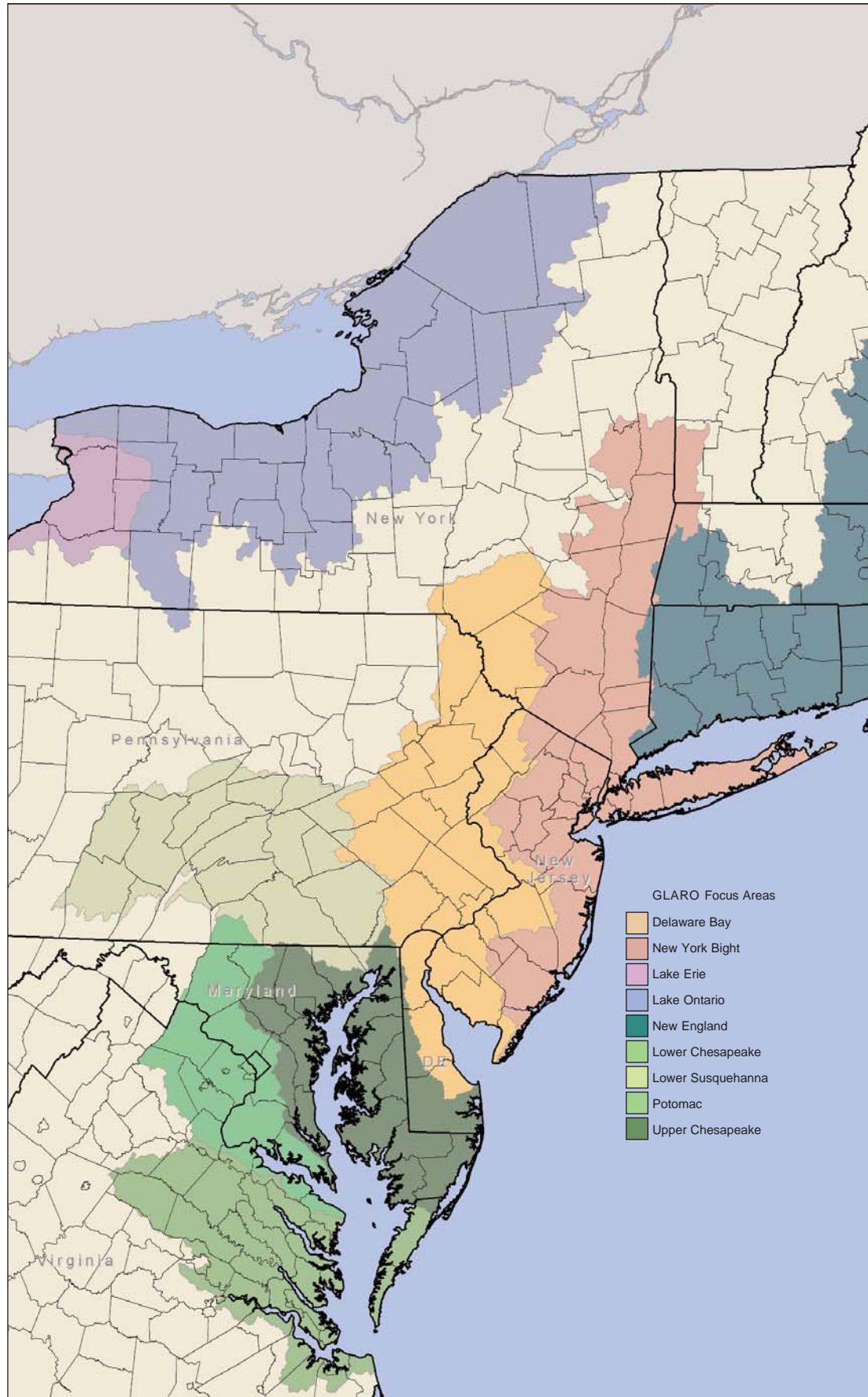
Ducks Unlimited

Conservation Planning in the GLARO

This past year, Ducks Unlimited (DU) staff collaborated in several sessions to accomplish a comprehensive approach to our conservation efforts in the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region. At the request of Dr. Tina Yerkes, Director of Conservation Planning, regional biological staff provided input regarding several landscape based factors including current waterfowl use, ecological connectivity, human influence, existing conservation partnerships, and challenges to success.

As anyone can easily grasp, when all factors such as this are considered, New Jersey is different than New Hampshire. This input helped shape an approach to DU's way of looking at and meeting the conservation needs and challenges that DU would experience in the future.

You will note on the accompanying map that all of New Jersey falls into one of two focus areas, within the Atlantic Coastal Ecosystem. Simply stated, this fact will allow Conservation staff to work cooperatively with Development staff and Field Operations staff to deliver conservation projects and raise supporting dollars and awareness throughout your great State.



isolators and other non-governmental partners to ensure wetland protection in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New York, New Jersey and Virginia. Ducks Unlimited's strategy is always to promote voluntary, incentive-based solutions and encourage actions that directly benefit our mission of waterfowl and wetlands conservation.

Communications and Graphic Design Expertise

In an effort to promote the positive outcomes of DU's conservation work and general awareness, the Communications



and Graphics staff head up the coordination of all media outreach and printed materials. These efforts take place in the form of press releases, website updates, building rapport with the media as well as the designing and printing of all marketing and communication collateral. Internal communication is also a focus and is achieved through newsletters and quarterly conservation updates.

Project Accountability

With the amount of conservation projects carried out across GLARO, it's imperative that project accountability be consistent and precise. Ducks Unlimited has a team of professional employees dedicated to making sure that fiscal tracking, project reporting, contract compliance and approved audits are accomplished.

Ducks Unlimited utilizes a tool called CONSERV for tracking project progress and accounting practices ensuring maximum quality control.



Turning Science Into Habitat

Understanding Habitat & Nutrient Requirements of Spring Staging Waterfowl

During spring migration, waterfowl depend upon stopover habitats for protection and nutrient acquisition both for extended travel and to meet their energetic needs on the breeding grounds for subsequent nesting efforts. In areas where landscapes are highly altered and threats to remaining habitats are high, such as in the Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes watersheds, migrants may suffer considerable nutrient limitation. This is especially true during the spring migration period, when waterfowl likely suffer sub-lethal effects associated with poor quality habitat resulting in reduced breeding efforts. An understanding

of the habitat and nutrient requirements of spring staging waterfowl is necessary to effectively target habitat conservation efforts in the region.

The objectives of this research are to determine the amount and types of wetland habitat required to support the nutritional needs of spring migrant waterfowl in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. This research will require an understanding of the current landscape condition, availability of food resources from existing wetlands, and spatial and temporal habitat use patterns of waterfowl during spring migration.

Wintering and Staging Needs of Black Ducks

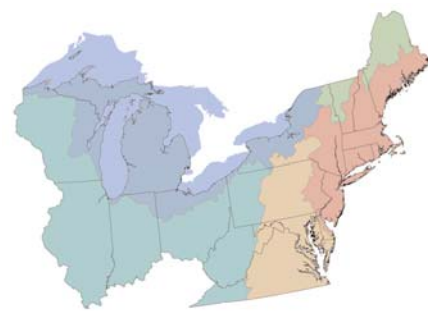
This study is centered on Long Island, NY, which represents a traditional wintering and staging area for black ducks, and an

area where numbers have been relatively stable. American black duck populations have declined in recent years by as much as 60% on the wintering grounds. There are several possible explanations for this decline, one of which is loss of wintering habitat. Coastal salt marshes are the most important wintering habitat for black ducks throughout the Atlantic Flyway. By 1940, 90% of the Atlantic Coast salt marshes between Maine and Virginia were ditched and severely degraded resulting in fewer available wintering sites and likely reduced food resources. Spring is likely a time of critical food shortage, but without research we do not know when or where it occurs along the Atlantic Coast. The data produced from this study will help DU focus and refine its on the ground conservation efforts.



Established in 1998, the Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office (GLARO) in Ann Arbor, Michigan was opened to focus on and address the demands of breeding, wintering and staging birds in the Great Lakes and Atlantic states.

To meet the challenges of this region, GLARO has assembled a comprehensive team of conservation and administrative staff. Staff expertise ranges from on-the-ground biological and engineering services, to public policy and administrative services, to planning and research.



Meet the Experts:



Biological Expertise

Ducks Unlimited biologists combine administrative and biological expertise in the planning and delivery of on-the-ground habitat restoration projects. Providing technical assistance to private landowners, incorporating wildlife ecology into habitat-based project design, and providing wetland restoration management services are just some of the skills and services offered by DU biologists.



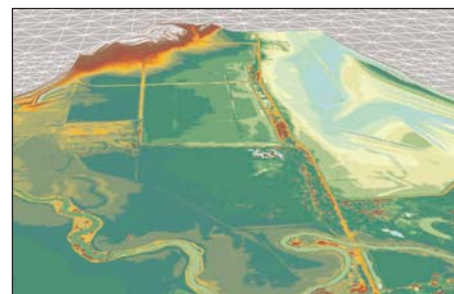
Engineering Expertise

Ducks Unlimited engineers provide innovative and state-of-the-art engineering services to assist with habitat-based project designs. The restoration projects designed by our engineers enhance and refine the function and maintenance of wetlands and their associated habitat. Working together, our team of engineers, surveyors and construction managers offer survey and design services from concept to construction, permit assistance and construction management, as well as overall project implementation.

Planning and Research Expertise



Working closely with the GIS department, the Director of Conservation Planning identifies, develops, analyzes and applies data to determine where conservation work is needed most. DU biologists rely on these focus areas when planning on-the-ground conservation projects in their states. Cutting edge research projects, such as the Great Lakes Mallard Study and the Spring Staging Study are two examples of research required for planning activities.



GIS (Geographic Information System) Expertise

The GIS staff is a major component of wetland conservation. Using a unique system of hardware and software, GIS experts can provide conservation staff with the primary data and tools necessary to evaluate, implement and monitor conservation on many levels. Their skills are used extensively to produce maps, graphics and statistics for communicating our conservation activities and supporting fundraising activities. DU professionals use GIS analysis to help monitor the location of habitats when tailoring conservation programs in priority areas.

Public Policy Expertise



GLARO's habitat conservation efforts are also advanced through the Public Policy arena. In the GLARO, Ducks Unlimited (DU) has a Director of Public Policy who works with DU's Washington Office, members of Congress and their staff, and State Legislatures to advance wetlands and waterfowl conservation.

Ducks Unlimited's Public Policy efforts also occur at the state level. In the past few years, DU has worked with state leg-

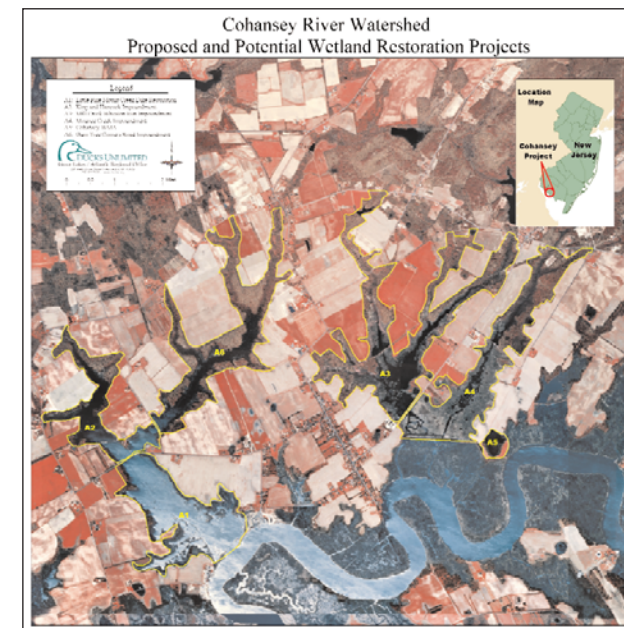
Cohansey River Watershed Update

We recently took an important step forward in the overall progress of our Cohansey River Watershed program with the completion of the conceptual engineering designs for the water control devices at two of the major impoundments in this area.

Pine Mount Creek, or "the big dike" will be the most significant of these undertakings. Spanning the mouth of Pine Mount Creek at its intersection with the Cohansey River, this effort requires some very state-of-the-art thinking and design in meeting this project's objectives. Not only will it hold back a watershed of almost 200 acres, but it must also be designed in a way to prevent flooding of nearby homes in Greenwich at times of extreme high tides. To satisfy the objectives of other environmental interests, it must also include fish passage to reintroduce anadromous fish to this creek. DU's principal Engineer, Dennis McDonough, completed this design, which has now been submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Army

Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to produce an Environmental Assessment. Once that is completed and accepted, we intend to work with the New Jersey Department of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) to submit the required permit applications later this year. When the permits are eventually received the construction will be a two-year process to properly build this substantial dike and specialized water control structure. Thus far, DU has received contractual funding for this design work from the ACOE in the amount of \$57,000.

The other design is for the water control structure at Gum Tree Corners Road. This design is far less complicated and will be retrofitted into the existing road dike where Pine Mount Creek flows under Gum Tree Corners Road. Its primary purpose will be to prevent any salt-water encroachment and at the same time allow



for water level management of the bottomland upstream. When complete, this area should be particularly attractive to wood ducks, teal, and mallards. It is also adjacent to an active bald eagle nest site. If permits can be secured by the end of this summer, we hope to construct this project before December 2005.

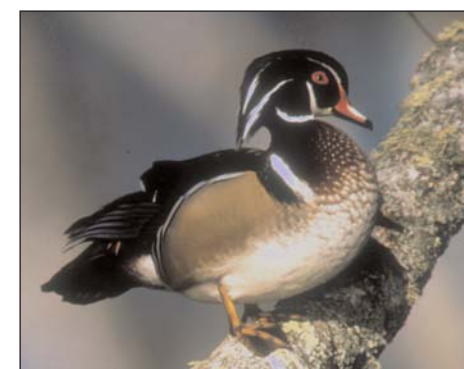
Petrecca Property to Offer Unique Hunting Opportunities

Located on the Wading River in Burlington County, the Petrecca property represents a parcel that was managed and used for waterfowl hunting in the past. As the previous owners passed away, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Green Acres Program was able to purchase this attractive parcel, and in fact are currently adding adjoining acreage to this new state waterfowl management area. The area consists of two impoundments that have fallen into disrepair adjacent to the riverine marshes. Ducks Unlimited has recently provided engineering for the installation of water control structures to bring these two units back to a manageable condition. NJDFW is providing in-kind services to restore the dikes and install these structures when purchased. Once completed, these impoundments will be particularly attractive to wood ducks and teal.

The personal plan of NJDFW Director Marty, McHugh is to develop this area into a limited special use area for Youth Waterfowl Hunts and handicapped accessible experiences for waterfowl, deer, and turkey hunting. This will be a great opportunity for DU to continue to partner on this project and DU looks forward to how we might be more involved as the programs themselves develop prior to this fall.



Green Winged Teal Drake



Wood Duck Drake

Meadowlands Study Underway

Continuing our longstanding relationship with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, this past year DU was awarded a \$100,000 contract to undertake an important research project which recently got off the ground. There were several important actions that led us to this point building upon existing partnerships and looking to foster others.

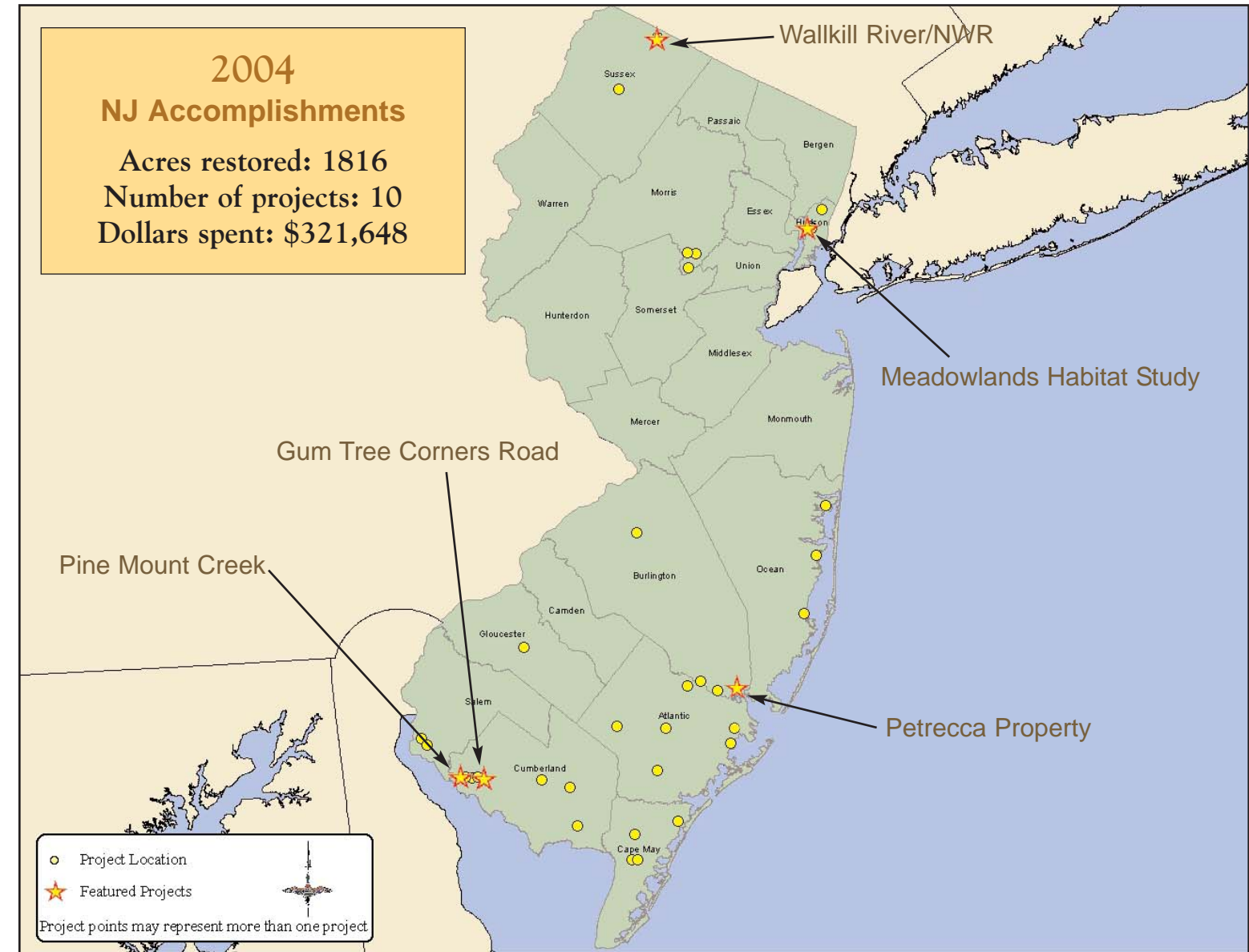
Last summer, motivated by a Federal mandate to develop the New Jersey Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, our good friend and partner Marty McHugh, Director of New Jersey's Division of Fish and Wildlife, suggested a meeting of significant partners who might help in developing that strategy. Marty recognized that the 8,000-acre Hackensack Meadowlands loomed as a challenge of its own and purported that a conservation plan for the Meadowlands unit, as already directed by the Meadowlands Commission itself, would require a more intensive effort. His proposal was to create a partnership that would call upon the expertise of Ducks Unlimited as well as New Jersey Audubon to help develop component parts of the overall plan. The result was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) bringing together DU, NJ Audubon, NJDFW, and the NJ Meadowland's Commission to collaborate on the best possible product

DU's portion of the effort was designed by Dr. Tina Yerkes, our Director of Conservation Planning, and is entitled "NJ Meadowlands-The Significance of Urban Wetlands to Migratory and Wintering Waterfowl along the Atlantic Flyway." The study, which began this winter, will survey and evaluate food resource availability and waterfowl use in the various wetland habitat types found in the Meadowlands complex. Matt DiBona, a former DU intern and now graduate student at the University of Delaware, will be conducting the research effort throughout this year and into early 2006. The findings will then be analyzed and reports prepared about this time next year.



Mill Creek wetland complex, a former Atlantic White Cedar swamp.

**2004
NJ Accomplishments**
Acres restored: 1816
Number of projects: 10
Dollars spent: \$321,648



MEET YOUR NEW JERSEY BIOLOGIST

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