

# Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia

## 2021 CONSERVATION REPORT



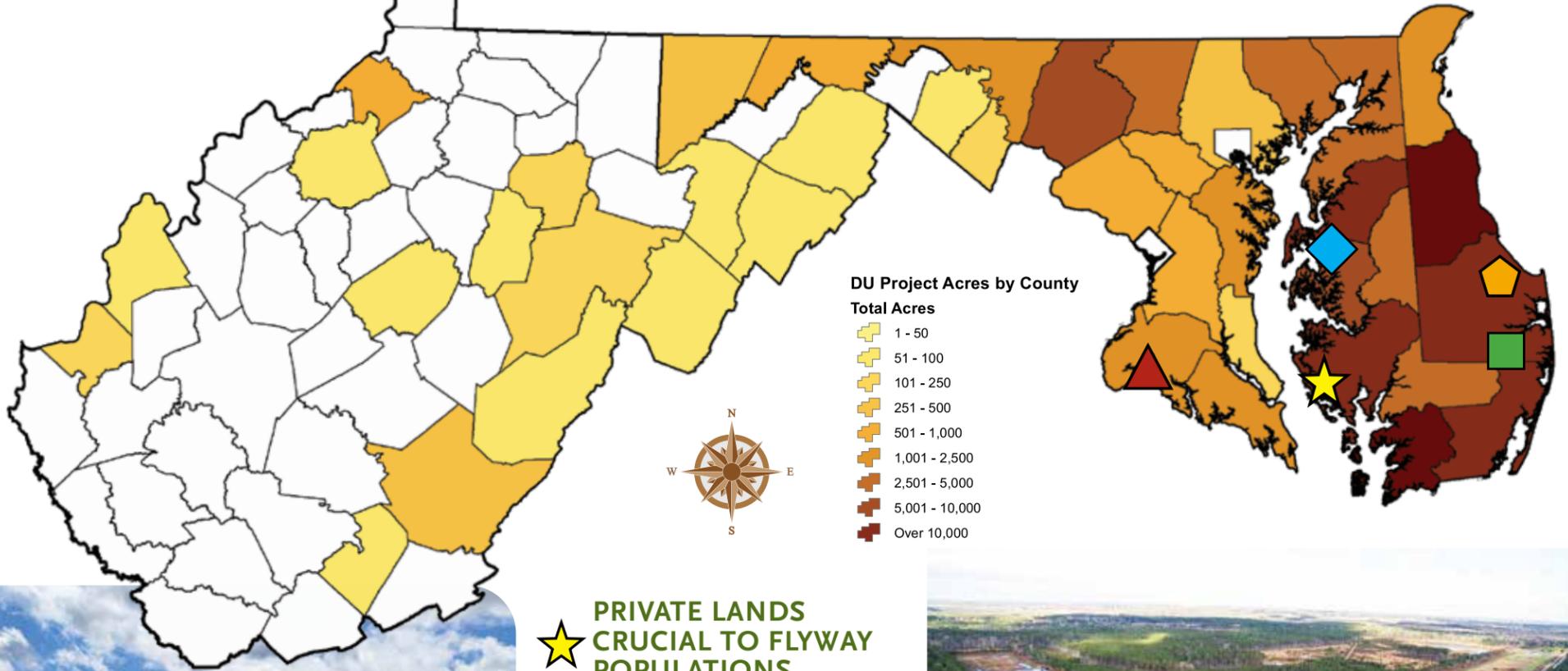
### ▲ NEW WETLANDS AT CEDAR POINT WMA Charles County, Maryland

In 2020 DU and several partners created a new 8-acre moist-soil impoundment within active agricultural fields at Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area. The property is owned by Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the impoundment will be managed specifically to benefit waterfowl and other migratory birds. The new wetland will be open to public waterfowl hunting in the future. Other partners include The Dr. Francis P. Chiamonte Private Foundation, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development and the Charles Co. Soil Conservation District.



### ◆ WYE ISLAND WMA TO GET NEW DUCK HABITAT Queen Anne's County, Maryland

A former agriculture field will return to wetlands in 2021. Ducks Unlimited, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Maryland State Parks will restore 20 acres of drained wetlands to a moist-soil impoundment. The property will be managed by the DNR to specifically benefit waterfowl and other migratory birds. New wetlands will be open for hiking and wildlife viewing, but no public hunting. Construction is expected to begin in late summer.



### ★ PRIVATE LANDS CRUCIAL TO FLYWAY POPULATIONS Dorchester County, Maryland

Landowners pursuing conservation efforts on their private property are crucial to meeting the needs of waterfowl. For more than a decade Ducks Unlimited has engaged in a private lands wetland restoration program in Maryland. DU and partners provide financial and technical assistance to landowners on Maryland's Eastern Shore to restore and enhance habitats that benefit migratory waterfowl. DU completed one such effort in 2020 in Dorchester County. The project restored 12 acres of drained agriculture to emergent wetland. In the last decade, DU has completed 25 private lands projects totaling nearly 200 acres on the Eastern Shore.



### ■ DELAWARE'S LONG FIELDS PROJECT RESTORED Sussex County

Ducks Unlimited and partners completed restoration of 70 acres of former agriculture land back to wetlands within Delaware Wild Lands' Great Cypress Swamp. This project complements hundreds of acres of restored forested wetlands adjacent to the project site which DU restored previously with Delaware Wild Lands. Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and private donors.



**PERFECTLY BALANCED: A PLACE FOR FARMING, RECREATION AND HABITAT FOR WATERFOWL AND WILDLIFE**

The ultimate vision of the Graves family’s farm in Milton, Delaware included a place that attracted ducks, geese, deer and other wildlife species. The area would balance the needs of their actively farmed land with that of the wildlife. After much patience and an effective private-public partnership, the vision for Graves Farm LLC is coming to fruition.

One of the family farm managers, Kenny Hopkins, has been working to help carry out the family’s vision for years. However, working to enhance wildlife habitat on active farmland came with its own set of challenges. “Years ago, we had a guy come out who did some work to dig ponds (freshwater waterfowl impoundments) deeper, which backed

water up and the fields just never drained like they were supposed to,” said Hopkins.

Those challenges didn’t deter Hopkins from the vision of increasing wildlife habitat while having an active farm. His plan included expanding the shallow areas from two to three acres to a 15-acre area. Because of its proximity to Prime Hook Refuge, a saltwater marsh, Graves Farm is ideal habitat for the American Black Duck.

Having worked with Ducks Unlimited before, Hopkins reached out to DU and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for additional technical and financial assistance for this wildlife restoration project and agricultural drainage concerns. Hopkins consulted with then Delaware soil conservationist Bobby Gorski and DU Farm Bill Biologist, Chase Colmorgen, who shared available options for NRCS technical and financial assistance.

Delaware NRCS was able to offer financial assistance to implement the NRCS-approved design through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program’s (EQIP) Working Lands for Wildlife effort.

“Shortly after the project was completed, we had a nor’easter in early July that brought about six inches of rain in one day,” said Hopkins. “So, the next morning I rode up there, and there wasn’t any water laying in the swales or ditches. And all water had drained to the impoundment like it was supposed to.” Hopkins has previously seen where a storm like that would have flooded his farmer’s crops and the hot weather would have just scalded and killed them.

*This is a condensed version of an article that appears on the NRCS Delaware website.*



**DU JOINS EASTERN MALLARD TRACKING STUDY**

Ducks Unlimited is joining several partners to further study the decline in recent years of the eastern mallard population. During the mid-1990s, eastern mallard breeding populations peaked at approximately 1.4 million breeding birds followed by a steady decline of approximately 1% annually to 1.05 million in 2019.

Although the overall trend is worrisome to managers, the greater concern is that the sub-population of breeding mallards in the northeastern US has declined by an estimated 36% over the past 20 years, while the sub-population in eastern Canada has remained relatively stable.

Scientists and managers have posed a variety of explanations as to why eastern mallards have been declining. But to manage the population more effectively, scientists need more reliable estimates of productivity and seasonal survival.

The collaborative project will tag 150 female mallards in eastern Canada and 450 adult females in the U.S. portion of the eastern mallard range with Global Positioning System transmitters to better understand demographic rates, migration chronology, and habitat usage differences between the two sub-populations throughout the annual cycle.

In addition to the benefits of this project for mallard management, the project may also have implications for American black duck management. The timing of this project will coincide with a similar large-scale marking effort of American black ducks in eastern North America.

The \$1 million project is in planning phases in 2021, with plans to track birds in early 2022.



**Mid-Atlantic by the Numbers**

HISTORICAL	2020 NUMBERS
• 316 projects	• 6 projects
• 79,065 acres conserved	• 1,193 acres conserved
• \$21,126,074 invested	• \$1,059,358 invested

For more information in your state visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)



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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.

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