

# DELAWARE, MARYLAND & WEST VIRGINIA

## 2019 CONSERVATION REPORT



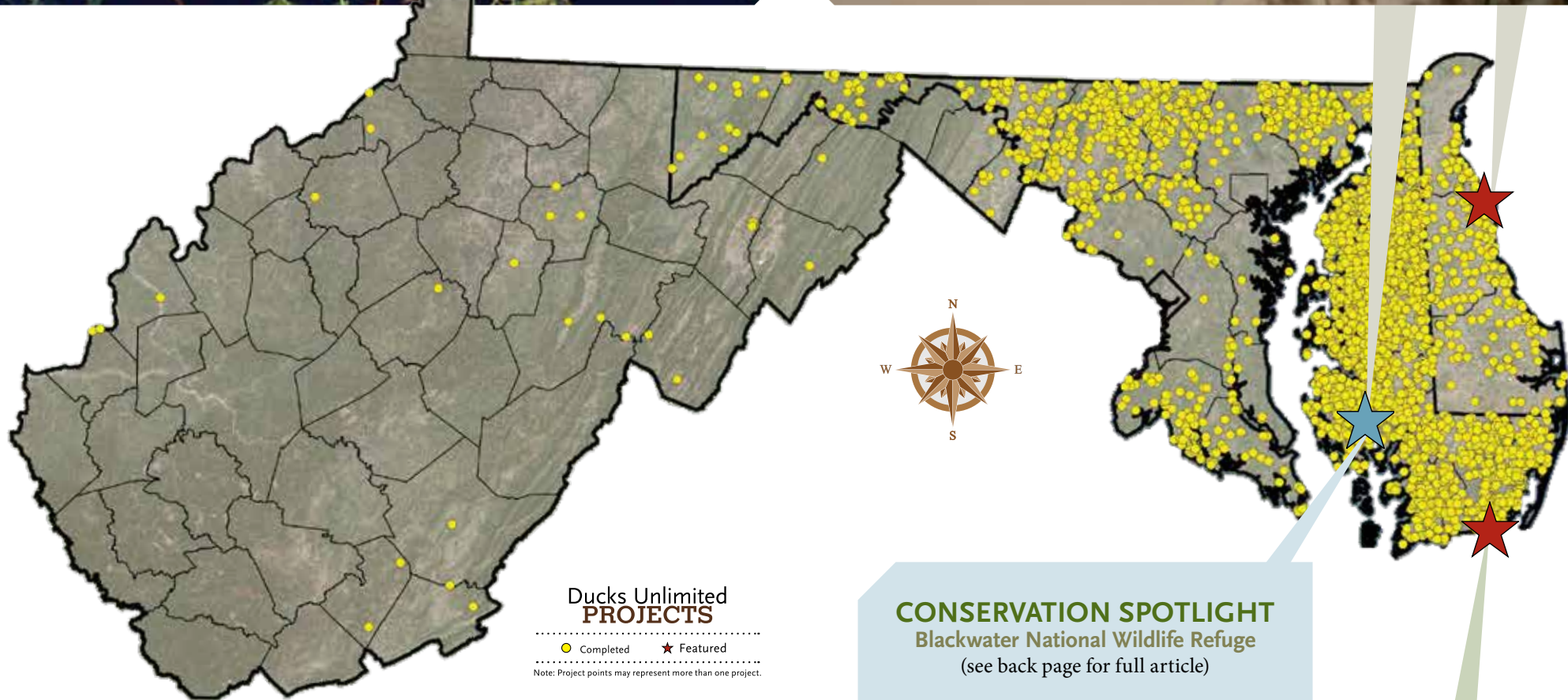
### NEW BIOLOGIST TO IMPROVE BLACK DUCK HABITAT

Ducks Unlimited received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in 2018 to hire a new biologist to help to implement the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Black Duck Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative. The initiative partners with landowners across the Delmarva Peninsula to restore waterfowl habitat on agricultural working lands. The new biologist, Chase Colmorgan, will work closely with NRCS staff to identify interested landowners and potential projects across the Peninsula. His position will compliment and expand Ducks Unlimited's ongoing private lands restoration work in the region.



### INVASIVE VEGETATION TARGETED ON DELMARVA PENINSULA

In 2018, Ducks Unlimited partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to control invasive phragmites vegetation at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland. The invasive form of phragmites aggressively invades native marshes and other wetlands, severely reducing habitat quality for waterfowl and other wildlife. DU's investment of \$33,000 was matched by \$42,000 in USFWS funding to treat over 1,000 acres of phragmites. Partners include Axalta, USFWS and funding from North American Wetlands Conservation Act.



### MARYLAND PRIVATE LANDS RESTORATION CONTINUES

For decades Ducks Unlimited has partnered with private landowners to restore prior drained wetlands back to a more natural state. With 92% of Maryland's lands under private ownership, successful landscape scale habitat conservation must include private landowners. Ducks Unlimited has completed 25 private lands projects in Maryland since 2010, restoring nearly 180 acres of wetlands. These efforts continued in 2018, as Ducks Unlimited received a three-year grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bay Trust Fund. Year one featured three private lands projects on Maryland's Eastern Shore, and five projects are planned for the future.

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## Conservation Spotlight:

## MARYLAND COASTAL WETLANDS PREPARE FOR MORE WATER

Maryland’s Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is the battle front of migratory bird habitat, human activity and rising sea levels.

Nestled on the eastern side of the heavily developed Chesapeake Bay, wetlands in this 28,000-acre refuge are in danger of being drowned out by the bay. But a Ducks Unlimited restoration project in 2018 expanded the resting and feeding opportunities for migrating ducks.

Blackwater is one of the most biodiverse and ecologically valuable areas in the state. The refuge’s importance to migratory birds is immense. It’s a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance, North American Waterfowl Management Plan Priority Wetland and Audubon Internationally Important Bird Area.

The refuge has 400 acres of freshwater impoundments managed to benefit waterfowl and other migratory birds. Despite their importance, many of these freshwater impoundments are located where land and sea meet and are at risk of being lost to rising sea levels.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their partners are exploring opportunities to construct and restore these impoundments to offset future losses and ensure these important habitats exist in the face global climate change. As part of that effort, DU and the USFWS restored a 60-acre former agriculture field that will give refuge managers the infrastructure to keep this rejuvenated land healthy for birds each spring and fall.

“Adding 60 acres of freshwater impoundments to the 400 already at the refuge is huge,” said Jake McPherson, Ducks Unlimited regional biologist in Maryland. “This land was a forested wetland before people ditched and drained it for agriculture. We are restoring it to an impoundment which is a high-functioning habitat for birds.”

Funding was contributed through a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant. This was the latest in several projects Ducks Unlimited has completed at Blackwater. Three similar restorations are also planned in 2019 and beyond.



### LOOKING AHEAD

- Ducks Unlimited is preparing restoration projects at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge and Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Fundraising is underway, and at least one project will be completed in 2019. Axalta is supporting these projects.
- A 40-acre wetland restoration at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge will begin in summer 2019. Partners include the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Waterfowl Chesapeake, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), private funders and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).
- Ducks Unlimited is partnering with Maryland DNR to restore wetlands at Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area (Charles County), LeCompte Wildlife Management Area (Dorchester County) and Old Bohemia Wildlife Management Area (Cecil County). Additional partners include private foundations, NFWF, NAWCA and USFWS.
- Ducks Unlimited is engaging in “Delmarva Oasis,” a broad partnership of land trusts and other conservation organizations focused on large-scale strategic protection of vital habitat across the entire Delmarva Peninsula.

### ATLANTIC FLYWAY BAG LIMITS APPROVED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved changes to bag limits for Atlantic Flyway mallards and Canada geese for the 2019–2020 waterfowl season. The changes were made at the recommendation of the Atlantic Flyway Council. Ducks Unlimited plays no role in setting bag limits or hunting seasons for waterfowl.

**Mallards:** Bag limit will be reduced from four birds to two. Further, the USFWS approved limiting hen mallards to one daily within the two-bird mallard bag limit.

**Canada geese:** For Atlantic Flyway states north of Chesapeake Bay (Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey), the limit will decrease from three birds to two. In the Chesapeake Bay region (Maryland, Delaware and Virginia), the limit will decrease from two birds to one. The USFWS has approved reducing the season length for all states from 45 days to 30 days. These changes apply only to Atlantic Population zones and not to North Atlantic or Resident Population Canada Goose zones. Check with your local state wildlife agency for details.



The changes reflect declines in populations of mallards and Canada geese in the north Atlantic region. The cause of the eastern mallard population decline has not yet been determined. Atlantic population Canada geese have decreased during the past two years. In 2018, a late spring thaw and cold weather on the population’s northern breeding grounds prevented the geese from nesting successfully.

### DE/MD/WV BY THE NUMBERS

2018

- 5 projects
- 1,028 acres conserved
- \$554,304 invested

HISTORICAL

- 300 projects
- 77,114 acres conserved
- \$16.6 million invested

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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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