



# SPRING 2024



**GRASSLAND NESTS:**  
POPULATIONS HAVE GROWN SINCE  
DELAYED MOWING BEGAN.



SUPPORTING  
LAND AND WATER  
RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION

## DOE RUN IS A BRIGHT SPOT FOR BIRD CONSERVATION

**Doe Run** population numbers are getting a boost! Populations are growing among three species of grassland birds that breed in local hayfields—

**Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Grasshopper Sparrows.**

In the last half-century, grassland bird populations have declined dramatically due to changes in farming practices and increased land development.

Fortunately, the Doe Run area offers habitat for these birds, and several species have adopted the local hayfields for their summer residence.

**The Grassland Bird Collaboration** (GBC)—a conservation consortium headed by **Willistown Conservation Trust** (WCT) in partnership with the **Brandywine Conservancy** and **Natural Lands** and supported by the **Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative**—has been working with landowners and farmers to reverse declines among grassland bird populations. The GBC's goal is to create a working conservation landscape where partners can work together to address issues affecting grassland birds.

Last summer, the GBC enrolled ten private properties—totaling nearly 1,000 acres—in a delayed mow



program in which farmers waited to mow hayfields until mid-July to allow the birds to complete their nesting cycle.

Mowing before July removes available habitat and can reduce breeding success if birds have already

begun breeding. GBC field teams found almost all of the fields had breeding populations of at least one grassland species, and a number of fields had two or more!

Though 2023 was the first official year for the GBC, members of WCT's bird team have been working with several landowners and farmers for a number of years. In those fields, Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark populations have grown since delayed mowing began. These encouraging trends indicate breeding bird density may increase over time if delayed mow management continues. The GBC is now working with farmers and landowners to identify more late-mow areas to add to the program area for the coming breeding season.

The GBC project has also used the **Motus Wildlife Tracking** system to understand how Bobolinks use the landscape. Since 2021, 44 birds have been fitted with nanotags, small tags that communicate with an automated radio telemetry network. When a tagged bird passes a network sensor, its location is recorded. (*continued p3*)

## PRESIDENTS LETTER

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

It's with great pleasure that we witness the continued growth and progress of the area's conservation efforts. Conservation manifests in various forms, whether it's the expansion of conservation easements, the increase in farmed or eased acres, the rise in BDT membership, or the flourishing of bird populations. Each step forward contributes to the resilience and vitality of our community.

On a more personal note, I want to share a significant transition in our journey. After nearly four decades of nurturing over 20+ horses on our beloved King Ranch farm, we are now "horseless."

This shift presents a perfect opportunity to focus our attention on the grassland bird population that calls our farm home. We've collaborated closely with our dedicated local farmer to synchronize the cutting of our hay fields with the breeding and fledgling seasons of our feathered friends. *(Cover Article)*

Ten years ago, the BDT facilitated the purchase and planting of trees along the Laurels entrance, transforming it into a canopy for all to enjoy. *(P4)* As we all have collective achievements, let's not forget the individuals whose contributions have shaped our landscape over generations. We also extend our gratitude to those who planted and nurtured trees that have stood for over 300 years in our region—an inspiring testament to community commitment and stewardship.

Lastly, I want to remind you about the Clean N' Green program, also known as Act 319, which offers tax-saving opportunities for landowners with over 10 acres. Details about this program, along with information on all the topics mentioned here, can be found in our newsletter, if one isn't already familiar.

As we embrace the vibrant season of Spring, I encourage each of you to reflect on your role in our conservation community and the impact you've made. Let's come together to celebrate our achievements at this year's **Spring Fling Sunday, May 19th**—I look forward to hearing about your contributions firsthand!

**Amy McKenna** – President  
AmyMcKenna123@aol.com

*Amy*

## COMMUNITY NEWS:

### BIRTHS:

**Emily & Taylor Swarter**  
little boy - **Teague**

**Jessie Mooberry and Sorren Rubin**  
little boy - **Teague**

**Maisy (Grassie) & Kevin Fay**  
Baby Girl - **Meara**

### PASSINGS:

**Bob McNeil**  
Philanthropist and Land Conservationist

**Bruce Miller**  
Legendary horseman

**Ruth Thompson**  
Our local, Centenarian,  
Centurion Farmer

### NEW LANDOWNERS:

**Brooke and Nate Politi**  
Newlin Twp

**Nancy Jones & Fred Hammerle**  
Newlin Twp

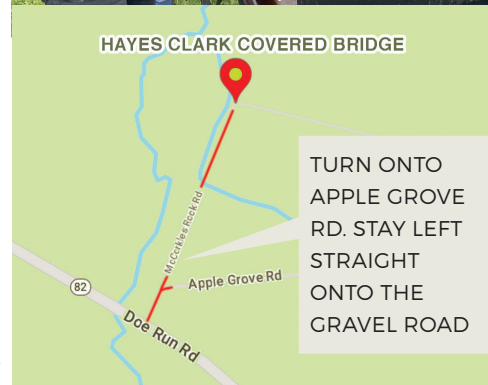
**Jessie Mooberry and Sorren Rubin**  
Newlin Twp

## SPRING FLING IN THE LAURELS SUNDAY MAY 19TH 10AM-NOON

Join us with family and friends at the **Hayes Clark Bridge** in the **Laurels Preserve**. This event was started 38 years ago to introduce the community to the 30 plus new landowners who had purchased parcels of the 5,400 acres of the King Ranch. It was called a **"Chuckwagon Breakfast"** as it was held in the field and attended by many of the **King Ranch Cowboys**.

The much-loved tradition continues – a pancake breakfast with locally sourced strawberries and sausages cooked by the **Buck and Doe** Board. Many come in farm clothes between chores, kids play in the stream. Time stops and everyone catches up!

From Rt 82, turn onto Apple Grove Rd, (19320). Then Stay left straight thru the gate onto McCorckle's gravel road.  
**Follow to the covered bridge!**



# SUPPORTING LAND & WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION



**289169013: MALE BOBOLINK**  
ORIGINALLY TAGGED IN 2021 AND  
RECAPTURED AND TAGGED AGAIN IN  
2023 AT BUCK & DOE FARM.

## DOE RUN IS A BRIGHT SPOT FOR BIRD CONSERVATION

*(continued from cover)* The tracking data have shown the birds regularly move between their breeding grounds and other fields. This means these birds rely on the patchwork of fields that are part of Doe Run's core preservation area, and when more hayfields are left standing until July, there is more habitat available to the birds.

This summer the bird team will deploy geolocators, which use daylight to estimate location and do not need wildlife tracking infrastructure for detection. Data from the geolocators will provide more information about Bobolink movement during the non-breeding season, filling data gaps regarding location and habitat use through the entire lifecycle. The movement data will be gathered as part of a regional study conducted by **New England University, Virginia Working Landscapes,** and the **GBC** to understand migratory patterns among Bobolink populations from Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

During the breeding season, the GBC will also provide an opportunity to get up close and personal with these amazing birds. Last year, the GBC held a **Beers, Bites and Bobolinks** event in June, which was hosted at **Buck & Doe Farm**, one of the area's most successful breeding fields. Locals gathered for a brief bird talk and a guided walk where everyone was treated to the ebullient songs and graceful acrobatics of Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, and more. The birds were on full display, providing a brilliant demonstration of how these fields are closely tied to their survival. There will be more events this summer for those curious about these birds, which are quickly becoming the pride of **Doe Run**.

Though the GBC has only been in existence for one year, there is growing excitement about what this community can do to help these declining species. Landowners and farmers have been generous with their knowledge of the land and have been enthusiastic about providing for grassland birds. As the GBC kicks off its second year, it is clear the Doe Run area is becoming a bright spot on the grassland bird conservation map, and there is great potential to build on these early successes.

**For more information, please visit**  
[wctrust.org/the-grassland-bird-collaboration/](https://wctrust.org/the-grassland-bird-collaboration/)  
or email Zoe Warner: [zmw@wctrust.org](mailto:zmw@wctrust.org).



**THE GBC SIGN CAN BE PLACED  
AT A FIELD TO INDICATES IT IS A  
PARTICIPATING FIELD. GBC SIGNAGE:**  
BUCK & DOE FARM HAS BEEN DELAYING  
MOWING FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

SPRING 2024 MARKS A BUCK & DOE TRUST 10th ANNIVERSARY



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the **Buck & Doe Trust** tree planting along the Laurels entrance. Although it's nice to see the growth of the trees form a canopy over the gravel drive, one realizes these trees have a long way to go to reach the age and notoriety of some of their neighborhood counterparts. We are very fortunate to have some very iconic trees in the area. We likely have been driving past many of these trees for years without truly realizing their historic contribution to the area. One of the most notable tree was the recently lost giant **Penn Oak** at the **London Grove Friends Meetinghouse**. It was one of the state's oldest and largest trees, and it was present on the grounds of the meeting in 1683, when **William Penn** founded the state.

BDT thought it would greatly interest to many to get more information about these older, historic trees. Many of our local trees are part of The **PA Champion Tree Program**, which is a program of the **Pennsylvania Forestry Association (PFA)**. It is an entirely volunteer-run program and records the largest trees of each species.



BUCK & DOE TRUST TREE PLANTING ALONG THE LAURELS ENTRANCE - 10 YEARS OF GROWTH (ORIGINAL PLANTING 2014: RIGHT)

SUPPORTING LAND & WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION



**GIANT PENN OAK AT LONDON GROVE FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE** RECENTLY LOST (ABOVE),



**PENN OAK** - ON STREET RD. NEAR NEW BOLTON



**AMERICAN SYCAMORE** - ALMOST 300 YEARS OLD, 100' HIGH LONDON GROVE RD

## CLEAN AND GREEN – PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT

### WHAT IS CLEAN & GREEN (ACT 319)?

Clean and Green is a preferential tax assessment program, that bases property taxes on use values rather than fair market values. This ordinarily results in a tax savings for landowners. Deadline to enroll is June 1. The Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted the program in 1974 as a tool to encourage protection of the Commonwealth's valuable farmland, forestland and open spaces. Currently, more than 9.3 million acres are enrolled statewide.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACT 515 AND ACT 319?

Act 515 was an earlier program. Most properties enrolled in Act 515 have updated into Act 319 status for additional tax savings. Contact your county assessment for all details.

### WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

A property must be ten acres in size, and in Agricultural Use, Agricultural Reserve, or Forest Reserve. Agricultural Use applications may be less than 10 acres in size if the property is capable of generating at least \$2,000 annually in farm income.

### HOW ARE USE VALUES DETERMINED?

The Department of Agriculture supplies county assessment offices with use values annually. The county has the option to implement these values or use lower values. Agricultural Use and Agricultural Reserve values are based upon the income approach for land appraisal. This standard appraisal technique defines the agricultural use value of a tract of land as the present value of the income stream it can generate when put to its best agricultural use. Forest Reserve values are based on the average value of timber in a particular county, or the average value of six timber types by county.

New this year are the updated Clean & Use Value, which will be no longer be divided into

subcategories. The new use values will be based on individual soils. A complete list of the soils in the Commonwealth was provided by the USDA, NRCS State Soil Scientist. This list is divided by county and being provided to you as a link. Act 319 requires that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture provide assessors with use values annually.

### WHAT IS THE PENALTY FOR A CHANGE IN USE OF LAND?

A landowner who breaches the covenant is subject to seven years of rollback taxes at 6% interest per year. The rollback tax is the difference between what was paid under Clean and Green versus what would have been paid, if the property had not been enrolled, plus 6% simple interest per year.

### CAN I REMOVE MY PROPERTY FROM THE CLEAN AND GREEN AFTER IT HAS BEEN ENROLLED?

A landowner may voluntarily remove their land from Clean and Green by notifying the county assessor by June 1 of the year immediately preceding the tax year for which removal is requested. Rollback taxes are due upon submission of the request.

### MAY I SELL OR DIVIDE MY PROPERTY WITHOUT HAVING TO PAY ROLLBACK TAXES?

The Act allows for two types of divisions or conveyances: "Split-offs" and "Separations." A split-off is a division, by conveyance or other action of the owner, of land, into two or more tracts, for use of constructing a residence. No more than two acres may be split-off per year except if the municipality requires a minimum three-acre subdivision to construct the residence. Cumulative split-offs may never exceed 10 acres, or 10% of the total land originally enrolled, the lesser of the two. Rollback taxes would be due only with respect to the land split-off. Separation is a division, by conveyance or other action of the owner, of land into two or more tracts of land that continue to be in Agricultural

# SUPPORTING LAND & WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION OF AGRICULTURE

Use, Agricultural Reserve, or Forest Reserve. The tracts must usually be at least 10 acres in size and continue to meet the qualifications. No rollback taxes would be due.

## **MAY I BUILD AN ADDITIONAL HOME ON MY CLEAN AND GREEN PROPERTY?**

The split-off provision provides for the construction of a residence on enrolled property. Please check with the county assessment office.

## **MAY I CONDUCT NON**

## **AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES ON MY CLEAN AND GREEN PROPERTY?**

The act allows for a "rural enterprise incidental to the operational unit." This is defined as a commercial enterprise or venture that is conducted on two acres or less of enrolled land, and when conducted does not permanently impede or otherwise interfere with the production of an agricultural commodity on that portion of enrolled land not subject to rollback taxes. The two acres on which this enterprise is conducted would be removed from preferential assessment. Rollback taxes would be due with respect to those two acres.

## **MAY I ENGAGE IN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ON MY CLEAN AND GREEN PROPERTY?**

The program was recently amended to provide for oil and gas development with a limited rollback tax penalty. Rollback taxes are only due with respect to those areas of the property devoted to the activity - as determined by the county assessor upon submission of a well production report to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Similarly, commercial wind production is now permitted with rollback taxes limited to those areas devoted to the activity. Tier one alternative energy systems - such as solar and biomass - are permitted without any rollback tax penalty if the majority of energy is utilized on the enrolled tract.

## **HOW DO I APPLY FOR CLEAN AND GREEN?**

Please contact your county tax assessment office to request an application.

## **WHAT IS THE DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR CLEAN AND GREEN?**

The application deadline is June 1 of each year, in order to be considered for the following tax year.

## **MUST I RE-APPLY ANNUALLY FOR CLEAN AND GREEN?**

Once enrolled, a landowner does not need to reapply. Landowners must, however, notify their county tax assessment office if the status of their enrolled land changes.

## **CONTACT FOR CHESTER COUNTY ASSESSMENT OFFICE FOR ADDITIONAL INFO:**

➔ **Enrollment period runs from March 1st to June 1st of each year.** The property owner must make separate application for each non-contiguous tract of land on which they desire use-value assessment.

## **APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE CHESTER COUNTY ASSESSMENT OFFICE BY JUNE FIRST. THE APPLICATION MAY BE FILED IN PERSON OR BY MAIL TO:**

Chester County Assessment Office, 313 W. Market St. Suite 4202, West Chester, PA 19380-0991

Any questions regarding the proper completion of the application, call 610-344-6105. The application is available for download, but cannot be submitted electronically. All signatures on the applications must be notarized. al is requested. Rollback taxes are due upon submission of the request

**VISIT:** [https://prdagriculture.pwpca.pa.gov/Plants\\_Land\\_Water/farmland/clean/Pages/default.aspx](https://prdagriculture.pwpca.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/farmland/clean/Pages/default.aspx).



BUCK & DOE TRUST  
P.O. Box 804  
Unionville, PA 19375

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## HISTORY

THE BUCK & DOE TRUST WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE TIME OF THE KING RANCH PROJECT TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY COOPERATION AND SUPPORT OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM. THE TRUST SEEKS TO WELCOME NEWCOMERS AND OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS, NEW AND OLD, TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER BETTER. THE BOARD MEMBERS HOST THE **SPRING FLING IN THE LAURELS** (A CHUCKWAGON BREAKFAST), AND OTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH FOCUS ON "COMMUNITY CONSERVATION".

2024 ANNUAL DUES  
\$40 PER FAMILY

} Payable to: BUCK & DOE TRUST  
MAIL TO OUR ADDRESS  
OR USE OUR WEBSITE

[www.buckanddoetrust.org](http://www.buckanddoetrust.org)

## MISSION:

### THE BUCK AND DOE TRUST IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHOSE STATED MISSION IS SUPPORT OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION WITHIN THE BUCK AND DOE RUN WATERSHEDS. THESE WATERSHEDS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, THE TOWNSHIPS OF EAST FALLOWFIELD, WEST MARLBOROUGH, EAST MARLBOROUGH, HIGHLAND, LONDONDERRY, AND NEWLIN.

### THE TRUST INITIATIVES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS MISSION ARE:

**PROMOTE**, THROUGH MEMBER INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION, THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL HIGH QUALITY CONSERVATION EASEMENTS WITHIN THE BUCK AND DOE WATERSHEDS.

**MONITOR** AND SUPPORT ACTIVE ENFORCEMENT BY EASEMENT GRANTEES OF ALL EXISTING CONSERVATION EASEMENT REQUIREMENTS.

**PARTICIPATE**, INFLUENCE, AND MONITOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAURELS RESERVE BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CENTER OF THE BRANDYWINE CONSERVANCY.

**INITIATE** AND ENCOURAGE ACTIVE AND TIMELY COMMUNICATION ON LAND AND WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION ISSUES WITHIN THE BUCK AND DOE WATERSHEDS.

## BOARD MEMBERS

- Amy McKenna – President
- Richard Buchanan – V. President
- Nina Seder-Burnaford – Secretary
- John Goodall – Treasurer

- Pat Branum
- Terry Corkran
- Phoebe Driscoll
- Mamie Duff
- Keith Kanara
- Jamie O'Rourke
- Maria Pfeffer
- Rob Robillard
- Janet Sidewater
- Susannah Small
- Barbara Stewart
- Lizzie Vannote
- Maggie Buchanan II-Intern

