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Delaware's Largest Atlantic White Cedar Discovered at TNC's Ponders Tract

The tree species is considered an important indicator for local biodiversity.

Delaware's state botanist recently confirmed that an Atlantic white cedar at TNC's Ponders Tract at Pemberton Forest Preserve is currently the largest of its kind growing in a wild, natural setting in Delaware. The tree measures 38 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), the standard for measuring tree trunk diameter 4.5 feet above the ground. Other large Atlantic white cedars recently measured across the state have ranged from 25 to 36 inches DBH.

"We are delighted to learn that this special Atlantic white cedar tree resides at Ponders Tract, one of Delaware's natural treasures," says Lori Brennan, Executive Director of TNC in Pennsylvania and Delaware. "Habitats with thriving Atlantic white cedars have countless benefits for both people and nature, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change by removing carbon from the air, and providing food to a variety of insects, birds and mammals. TNC is committed to the continued protection of these critical ecosystems in Delaware and beyond."

Atlantic white cedar wetlands are considered a globally threatened ecosystem due to centuries of deforestation, land conversion and sea level rise accelerated by climate change. Additionally, these trees are the host plant for rare and threatened species.

"In addition to the importance of Atlantic white cedar trees for the Hessel's hairstreak butterfly, many state and globally rare plants occur in Atlantic white cedar swamps. It's important that we continue to protect and restore the Pemberton Forest ecosystem," says Natasha Whetzel, TNC's Delaware Stewardship Manager.

"Large-diameter Atlantic white cedar trees are rare in the state due to historical logging activities, and Atlantic white cedar swamps are now only known from Sussex County in areas such as Ponder's Tract," says Bill McAvoy, Delaware's state botanist.

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Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Expands



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TNC recently acquired and transferred 78 acres located in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for addition to the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2008 to preserve critical habitat for migratory birds and threatened and endangered species. The Refuge is located within the Kittatinny Ridge, a globally important flyway for migratory birds, one of the most climate-resilient landscapes within the Appalachians, and offers extensive hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities for the public.

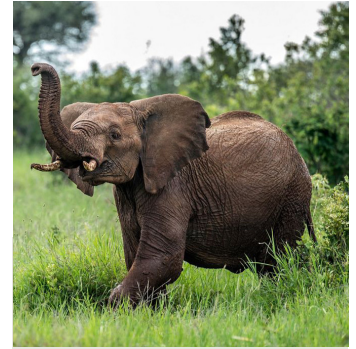
“The Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a vital mosaic of streams, wetlands, fields and forests that support vulnerable, threatened and endangered species,” says Lori Brennan, Executive Director for TNC in Pennsylvania and Delaware. “This acquisition continues to advance TNC’s distinguished legacy of conservation in the Upper Delaware headwaters, and we remain committed to preserving Cherry Valley’s lands, waters, and trails for generations to come.”

The transfer was facilitated with funding from DCNR and the Open Space Institute (OSI). The project was supported by OSI’s Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund, which seeks to protect water quality in the Delaware River Basin. Launched in 2014 with funding from the William Penn Foundation, the Fund has protected more than 21,000 acres of forested land to filter the Delaware River Watershed, a source of drinking water for approximately 15 million people.

Since the Refuge’s establishment in 2008, TNC has worked with partners, including local townships, Monroe and Northampton Counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Conservation Fund, the Pocono Heritage Land Trust, the USFWS, and the Wildlands Conservancy to add additional acreage.

“The story of Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a story of friends and partners working together toward a common goal of land protection and habitat restoration,” says Mike Horne, USFWS Refuge Manager. “TNC has been a leader in this pursuit here in the valley since long before the refuge existed. While this milestone is worthy of celebration, we look forward to many more successful collaborative conservation efforts in the future.”

PENNSYLVANIA DELAWARE



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Global Impact in Africa

Since 2014, TNC PA/DE board trustee Kathy Bishop and her brother Tom Bishop have dedicated their support to help TNC expand its wide-ranging conservation efforts in Africa, including protecting elephants and removing invasive species.

Kathy, who is CEO, President and Chairperson of Lebanon Seaboard Corporation, and Tom, who is the founder of the influential BI Research financial newsletter, have purchased an airplane for anti-poaching surveillance; secured heavy machinery to remove invasive cacti; and championed the Affinity Group for Women & Girls, which provides education and resources for girls living in impoverished Tanzanian communities.

Thank you, Kathy and Tom, for your continued support of global conservation! Read more about their impact at: nature.org/PADereport.