



The Habitat Corner

Tennessee is blessed with a rich natural diversity that supports a wide assortment of wildlife including 315 species of fish, over 120 kinds of mussels, 56 reptiles, 70 amphibians, 77 mammals, and over 350 bird species. What makes TWRA's job so difficult is it is responsible for all wildlife, not just those that are hunted, fished, or trapped. The agency is charged with the preservation, conservation, management, and protection of all of the state's wildlife and its habitats for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of all the citizens of Tennessee and its visitors.

Very few landowners think about the unseen, rare, and sensitive species like the black-sided dace, the pink mucket, or the cave salamander which require clean water to survive. Many streams in Tennessee are in bad condition due to poor land management from agriculture, forestry, mining, and urban development which results in sedimentation, nutrient, and chemical runoff. Addressing some of these problems require a regulatory approach by state and federal agencies.

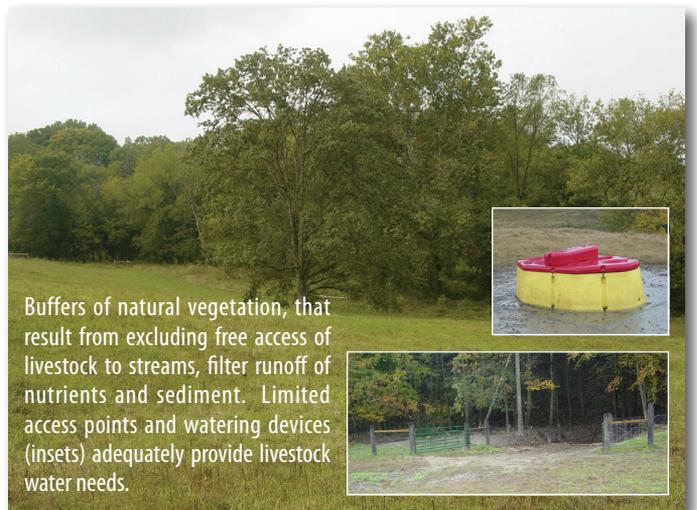
Fortunately, there are many conservation programs available to Tennessee landowners who want to voluntarily protect critical habitat for species of conservation need as well as improve their agricultural operations.

The Asher family farm in Claiborne County was one farm that took full advantage of these programs. Ronald Lambert, of The Nature Conservancy, who works in the Clinch and Powell river watersheds as part of the Clinch-Powell Watershed Alliance, designed and helped implement a farm conservation plan for the entire Asher farm. The conservation plan improved the Asher's grazing program as well as protected critical habitats needed by a variety of wildlife.

The Ashers utilized the Tennessee Landowner Incentives Program (TNLIP) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to provide cost-share to implement work that would help protect habitat in and along Old Town Creek, a tributary of the Powell River. Sedimentation was a major contributor to the degradation of habitat in and along the stream. More than 40,000 feet of fencing was installed to keep cattle traffic from eroding the stream banks. The restored vegetative stream buffers resulting from the exclusion of livestock will help reduce erosion and nutrient runoff. The buffer will also serve as a travel corridor and as habitat for a variety of wildlife.

With the removal of unlimited access for livestock through fencing, several access areas to the streams were constructed for cattle to obtain water. In addition, an alternate water source was constructed by developing a large spring-fed holding tank. The water was then piped to watering facilities placed in various locations around the farm for the cattle to get clean water.

By keeping the cattle out of the stream, water quality and herd health is improved. Grazing distribution of the cattle is also enhanced around the farm because the cattle no longer have to travel to the stream for water. By implementing the plan, the Asher farm project will help protect seven federally listed wildlife species and four species of greatest conservation need.



Buffers of natural vegetation, that result from excluding free access of livestock to streams, filter runoff of nutrients and sediment. Limited access points and watering devices (insets) adequately provide livestock water needs.

HABITAT TIPS

To learn more about the many nongame wildlife species in Tennessee and their habitats, visit TWRA's new "Watchable Wildlife" website at <http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/>.

ASK THE BIOLOGIST

- Q: How can I find out if there are rare species on my property so that I can manage for them?
- A: One option is to check with the Tennessee Department of Conservation-Resource Management Division's website under the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (<http://tn.gov/environment/na/nhp.shtml>). The information on this site can help you figure out if any rare species may occur in the area.

Another option is to meet with a TWRA or NRCS wildlife biologist who has access to more specific data that can help them determine if any known species occur close to your property. They will also be able to determine if you may have habitats on your property that may support rare species or species of greatest conservation need.

"Helping Landowners and Wildlife Through Habitat Enhancement"

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has Private Lands Biologists that will assist you in developing a management plan for your property and a strategy to implement it. See www.TWRAPrivateLands.org for who to contact for technical assistance and other useful information on habitat management and programs.