



- CATAWBA -
LANDS CONSERVANCY
LAND | WATER | FARMS | NATURE



CAROLINA
THREAD TRAIL

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

CITIZEN SCIENCE

ADVANCING RESEARCH BY ENGAGING WITH NATURE

AT FOUR OF CATAWBA LANDS CONSERVANCY'S publicly accessible preserves, trail users can now engage more closely with nature and help our team collect data about the plants and animals living there and the effects of our restoration efforts. With the launch of the Edward Jenner Wood V Citizen Science Program this spring, we are working to inspire the community—both young and old—to dive into the outdoors, connect with nature, and make meaningful scientific contributions.

Citizen science empowers individuals to contribute to scientific research, regardless of their background, age or expertise, and promotes universal access to scientific data. It provides an opportunity for community members to engage through small, simple actions, fostering a deeper connection with the natural world. Spotting and identifying a native bird can be delightful on its own, sparking curiosity and passion for nature. But the simple step of logging that sighting with an app can also provide critical data for scientific research projects.

These types of crowd-sourced citizen science projects can lead to significant scientific discoveries and advancements. The collective efforts of many individuals can generate large datasets that would be impossible for scientists to gather alone. This data is used in studies on biodiversity, pollution, climate change and more, making it an essential tool for scientists and policymakers. By participating in citizen science, you can help collect valuable data that enhances our understanding of local ecosystems and informs conservation efforts.

EMPOWERING ALL AGES TO EXPLORE

Our program uses a variety of citizen science tools to engage both kids and adults. This multi-generational approach not only fosters a love for nature but also builds a sense of community as participants work together towards a common goal. By involving people of all ages, we aim to build connections through a shared experience in the outdoors and encourage stewardship of our natural resources.

"Whether you are a seasoned naturalist or a curious beginner, there is a place for you in our citizen science program," says Grace Rooker, Conservation Technician and Davidson Impact Fellow for the Conservancy. "It's a chance to be a part of scientific research while at the same time learning and building connections with other people who care about the outdoors."

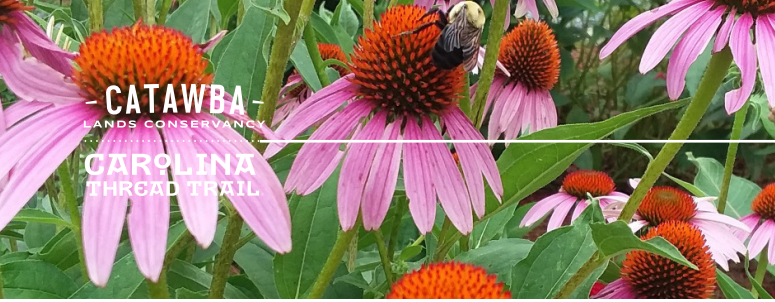
A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO NATURE



Edward Jenner Wood V. Photo courtesy of Emily Wood.

We are deeply honored to name our citizen science program in memory of Edward Jenner Wood V, a young boy who had an incredible love for nature and curiosity about the world around him. His curiosity and excitement about songbirds and the stars, as well as the

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE](#)



Photos by Allison Hester and staff

CITIZEN SCIENCE CONTINUED



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BART LANDESS

Our population will double in the next 25 years.

So what will our legacy be? When we double in size, how much space will we reserve for recreation, to preserve our natural beauty, to create gathering spaces for all, to leave behind a place where people still want to migrate and stay? Will people say, "The Charlotte region had great foresight and did all the right things to make the area beautiful, livable and prosperous," or will they say, "They really missed an opportunity"?

Lucky us to inherit the good work and success of the many people who previously called this area home, with plentiful water and green space, able to support the needs of so many for such a long time. But our current growth threatens the great quality of life here.

It's up to us to set the stage for a future of which we can all be proud and continue the growth and prosperity that we've enjoyed.

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

17



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

2,102



VOLUNTEER HOURS

9



NEW OR IMPROVED TRAILS OPENED



5 NEW PROPERTIES PROTECTED



ACRES CONSERVED



ACRES OF HABITAT MANAGED

PROPERTIES CONSERVED IN 2024:

Spencer Mountain Trail Easement
3 miles
Gaston

Caldwell Creek Copse CE
42 acres
Mecklenburg & Cabarrus

Four Mile Forest CE
9 acres
Mecklenburg

TRAIL FORUM

HONORS OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

In a first for the Thread Trail, three volunteers were recognized at the 17th annual Trail Forum conference in December. Leanne Mason and Paul Gocha were both awarded the Saxby Chaplin Volunteer of the Year Award, honoring the work they do as a team to steward the Duke Kimbrell Trail (formerly Seven Oaks Preserve Trail) in Belmont, NC. Between Leanne's daily hikes along the trail and Paul's swift cleanup response and chainsaw work, these two are a force to be reckoned with. In addition, Dr. Mike Reimann was named our

very first Trail Champion of the Year, in recognition of his tireless work to advance trails in Stanly County, NC. Dr. Reimann's advocacy for the Carolina Thread Trail helped make the Falcon Trail a reality, connecting the communities of Richfield and Misenheimer, NC.

In addition to honoring these incredible individuals, Trail Forum attendees enjoyed a robust slate of educational sessions during the event, as well as a lunch keynote address from author and cyclist Lisa Watts.



Leanne Mason, Paul Gocha and Dr. Mike Reimann were honored at Trail Forum. Photos by staff and Jennifer Podis

TRAIL FORUM IS PRESENTED BY

LandDesign.
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JOIN US FOR A PROGRAM OR EVENT!

MAY 10

Citizen Science Program Hike
Buffalo Creek Preserve Trail

JUNE 7

National Trails Day
Join us for public programs across the region!

SEPTEMBER 13

Torrence Creek Hike & Ice Cream
Torrence Creek Greenway/Huntersville Ice Cream Shop

OCTOBER 4

Schweinitz's Sunflower Prairie Hike
Buffalo Creek Preserve Trail

NOVEMBER 8

Overmountain Victory Trail Hike & Bike
Overmountain Victory Trail



Forney Creek Trail, Denver, NC

Windy Grove Woods CE
6 acres
Mecklenburg

Popple Springs CE
24 acres
Lincoln

Charles A. Cannon, III Memorial Land Preserve
44 acres
Cabarrus

FIELD NOTES

Bird box installation at The River District

NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED ART CAN BE SEEN ALONG THREAD TRAIL

The Helix/R, a 20+ foot tall sculpture by John Rietta that is listed on the Smithsonian American Art Museum Inventory, has been installed near downtown Cramerton, NC on the Riverside Greenway, as part of an effort to increase public art along the Matthews-Belk South Fork River Corridor. Thanks go out to the Town of Cramerton and all the donors who helped bring this installation to the town.

FARMERS SHARE EXPERIENCES CONSERVING THEIR LAND

Conservancy staff brought together local farmers for a panel discussion about state and federal funding opportunities to conserve agricultural land. Held at Riverbend Creamery in Lincolnton, NC, the event included presentations by farmers who previously received funding, who shared their experiences and how they were positively impacted.

A RECORD YEAR FOR ACRES MANAGED

Last year set a record for acres of land that the Conservancy restored and improved! The Natural Resource Management and Stewardship team conducted management and restoration efforts on over 470 acres throughout the year, improving habitat and helping ecosystems thrive. Read "Wildlife of the Piedmont Grasslands", on page 5 for an example of such work.



Installation of the Helix/R sculpture by John Rietta, located in Cramerton, NC

PARTNERSHIP ENHANCES HABITAT FOR PREDATORY BIRDS

The Conservancy's Natural Resource Management and Stewardship team is working with Crescent Communities, Carolina Raptor Center and NC Wildlife Management to enhance habitat for raptors at The River District, a property owned by Crescent Communities. Our team constructed and installed several owl boxes on the property, and in October a raptor release was held, returning a rehabilitated owl to the wild.

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TRAILS
OPENED
IN 2024:

Lake Whelchel - 2.5 mi
Riverwalk Hickory - 0.25 mi
Abby Creek Greenway - 0.5 mi

Great Falls Rail Trail - 1 mi
Falcon Trail - 2.5 mi
Downtown Connector Huntersville - 0.25 mi

WILDLIFE

OF THE PIEDMONT GRASSLANDS

According to the Southeastern Grasslands Institute, grassland loss is “the single greatest conservation issue currently facing North American biodiversity.” For many grassland creatures like birds and butterflies, connected expanses of natural lands are critical to survival. Even for those that don’t travel far during their lifespans, like the oak toad, a healthy ecosystem with clean water, shelter, and ample food is essential.

Grasslands play a crucial role in supporting pollinators, ground-nesting birds, and other native wildlife. In fact, many of our rarest and fastest declining species depend on grassland ecosystems. The deep root systems of many grasses also make grasslands especially effective as carbon sinks that are less vulnerable to wildfires—a tree that burns ends up putting more carbon into the atmosphere than it removes; native grasses are mostly underground, and evolved to thrive and even require periodic fire.

The Catawba Lands Conservancy’s grasslands program works to protect and restore habitat for creatures like the bobwhite quail, meadowlark, monarch butterfly and even many species of frog and toad. In 2024 the Conservancy managed 150 acres of permanently protected grassland habitat.



The Conservancy’s impact on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is what attracted Ally Financial to invest in the Catawba Grasslands Project. Last year, Ally was the presenting sponsor of Pop Up Picnic, which raised over \$93,000 to help with restoring native grasslands that once thrived across much of our region.

“Communities that balance investments in nature alongside development are more resilient, vibrant, and economically stable, which is particularly important in a changing climate,” said Kathleen Price, Sustainability Risk Executive with Ally. “We are thrilled to support the work of the Catawba Lands Conservancy to build stronger ecosystems in the Carolinas for the benefit of all.”

ally do it right.

JOIN THE GREENWAY GALS

Are you a woman who loves trails and wants to see more of them? Do you want to build community with other like-minded women and spend time connecting outdoors? If so, you should join our Greenway Gals affiliate group!

The Greenway Gals are a community of women dedicated to supporting and expanding the Carolina Thread Trail.

Learn more at carolinathreadtrail.org/greenwaygals

Right: Greenway Gals at Landsford Canal State Park in Lancaster, SC. Photo by Nelson Stegall



Torrence Creek Connector - 1 mi
Ballantyne Greenway - 1.5 mi
Stewart Creek Greenway - 1 mi

Long Creek Greenway (Treyburn to 485) - 2.1 mi
Rock Springs Nature Preserve Trail - 0.5 mi

2024 DONORS

Our donors' generous support each year enables us to pursue our mission of saving land and connecting lives to nature. This list reflects combined gifts of \$500 or more that were made during the 2024 calendar year. View the full donor list in the online digital edition.

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\$100,000

C.D. Spangler Foundation
Dowd Foundation
Gaston Community
Foundation
Redlair Foundation

\$50,000

Comporium
Dickson Foundation, Inc.
Mecklenburg County
W. Duke Kimbrell Family
Foundation

\$25,000

American Farmland Trust
Bank of America Foundation
Catawba-Wateree Water
Management Group
Charlotte Steeplechase
Foundation, Inc.
Duke Energy Foundation
Microsoft
Nucor Corporation
Pharr McAdenville
Corporation
The Langdon Charitable
Fund

\$10,000

Akers Foundation
Ally Financial
Blumenthal Foundation
Blythe Development
Company
Bragg Financial Advisors,
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\$5,000

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Abernethy Charitable
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Crescent Communities
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LLC
Friendship Fund Foundation
Howe Foundation, Inc.
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Lanier Material Sales
McAdams
Moore & Van Allen, PLLC
The Andover Group at UBS

The Keith Corporation
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\$2,500

Arboguard Tree Specialists
BGE, Inc.
Blue Ridge Trail Works, Inc.
CBRE
Collett and Associates, LLC
Colonial Materials, Inc.
Cramerton Historical
Society
ECS Southeast, LLP
Eden Multifamily
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2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

(in thousands)

		2023	2024
ASSETS	CASH - OPERATING	\$2,852	\$3,160
	CASH - RESTRICTED*	\$12,265	\$13,699
	PLEDGES RECEIVABLE	\$918	\$803
	OTHER RECEIVABLES	\$110	\$50
	FIXED ASSETS (NET)	\$699	\$582
	PRESERVES	\$33,537	\$33,940
	OTHER ASSETS	\$725	\$671
	TOTAL ASSETS	\$51,106	\$52,905
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$24	\$121
	GRANTS AWARDED	\$805	\$593
	LEASES PAYABLE	\$727	\$662
	NET ASSETS	\$49,550	\$51,529
	TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$51,106	\$52,905

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

(in thousands)

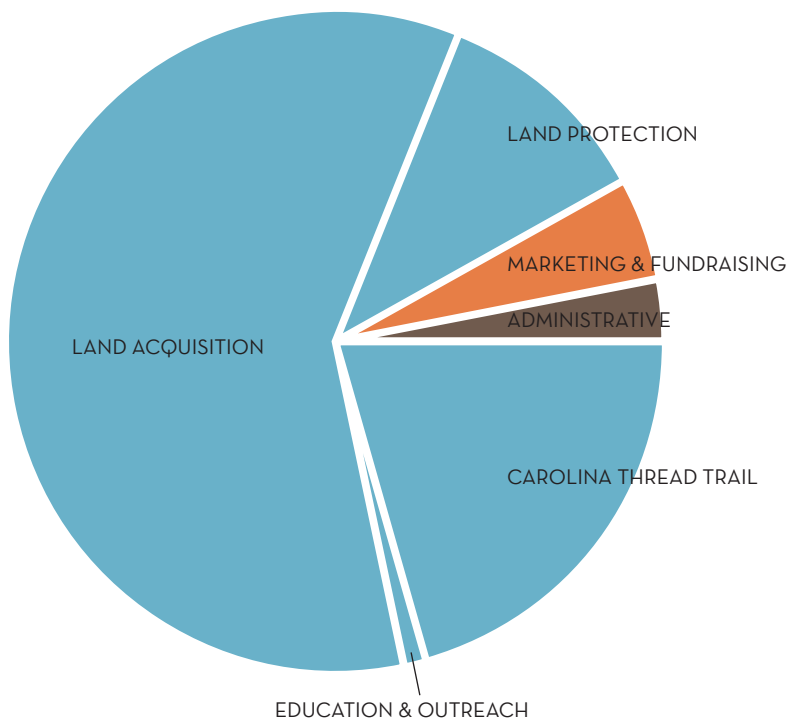
		2023	2024
FUNDING	LAND & EASEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS	\$2,225	\$3,892
	PUBLIC SUPPORT	\$2,488	\$2,864
	INVESTMENTS - MARKET CHANGES	\$893	\$659
	INVESTMENTS - EARNINGS	\$377	\$523
	OTHER FUNDING	\$223	\$190
	GRANTS	\$563	\$148
	TOTAL FUNDING	\$6,769	\$8,276
USES	PROGRAMS - LAND ACQUISITION	\$2,867	\$3,705
	PROGRAMS - CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL	\$2,280	\$1,389
	PROGRAMS - LAND PROTECTION	\$660	\$726
	MARKETING & FUNDRAISING	\$297	\$303
	ADMINISTRATIVE	\$180	\$174
	TOTAL USES	\$6,284	\$6,297

Note: The two-year comparisons reflect a consolidation of Catawba Lands Conservancy and Carolina Thread Trail financial reporting due to the merger of the two organizations as of December 31, 2022.

*RESTRICTED CASH



USES



- CATAWBA -
LANDS CONSERVANCY

CAROLINA
THREAD TRAIL

2400 Park Road, Suite 1
Charlotte, NC 28203

MAILING AREA

ANNUAL REPORT



- CATAWBA -
LANDS CONSERVANCY
LAND | WATER | FARMS | NATURE



CAROLINA
THREAD TRAIL

HIT THE TRAILS WITH US FOR NATIONAL TRAILS DAY!

Photos from
previous National
Trails Day
programs.

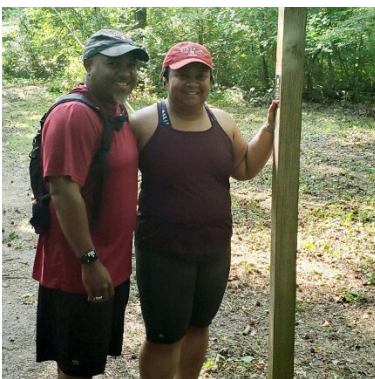


What: FREE public programs
hosted by Carolina Thread
Trail and partners

When: Saturday, June 7

Where: Various locations
across the region

More info:
carolinathreadtrail.org/ntd



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