

## Restoring Woodland, Restocking Wildlife Garner Recognition For Forest Stewards

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HALIFAX (Dauphin Co.) —

Ten years ago, Pat and Lloyd Kauffman left behind the encroaching development, the expensive land prices, and the worries of urbanization in Lancaster County to literally live in the woods.

They purchased 71 acres of woodland in the Wieser Forest District, surrounded by lush forest, abundant pastureland, and amazing trails home to a diverse amount of wildlife.

Only problem was, how to help pay for the costs of restocking a fledgling pond, plant enough native plants for the denizens of the forest, and achieve the diversification they so intensely desired?

A few years back, through the suggestion of the local conservation district, Pat called up the Bureau of Forestry in the state Department of Environmental Resources. She was looking at the possibility of signing up under a federal program to help rebuild the forestlands.

However, Pat was reluctant. If she signed up, what were the restrictions? Would the "government" tell her which plants she could stock or make her open the land for hunters?

Pat quickly found out that the funding was available. Indeed, there was even money to hire a forestry consultant, which they did — Rob Northrop, from North East, Md. It wasn't long before a Forest Stewardship Plan was developed to cull old trees, get rid of invasive species of plants, and restock the pond to attract more wildlife.

In 1990, after starting with the plan, Lloyd, who operates his own independent owner-sampler milk testing business, helped plant about eight acres of buckwheat. While little of the soil was Class I (mostly Class III and IV) when the Kauffmans purchased the farm, the planting proved beneficial. The soil improved. Flocks of turkey hens moved in to brood. The fields attracted wild turkey. Deer grazed the land. And rabbits loved it.

For their efforts in forest stewardship, the Kauffmans — who

manage about 71 acres, including 40 acres of forestland and the remainder in pasture — were honored as forest stewards by the Bureau of Forestry.

"I've been really impressed with these programs," said Pat. While it was difficult to pay for many of the improvements began at the Kauffman farm years before they signed up, the Kauffmans did all they could to improve the forestland and natural wildlife. "The programs have allowed us to do things we wouldn't know how to do. It's given us resources as far as the loaning of the (tree) planting bars and a source for purchasing the trees.

"I was really surprised at the programs available for the landowners," she said.

Under the program, for the past three years, about 500-650 new tree seedlings per year have gone into the acreage. In many similar plantings, few survive. But the Kauffmans have been surprised just how well their plantings have done.

"We've found that we've had a very good success rate so far," said Pat. "The trees planted two years ago are doing great. Trees we planted last year are doing wonderfully. We've just been fortunate with the weather."

Where old and fallen trees have been removed by loggers, new seedlings, including evergreens, make their appearance. With the return

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of trees, the wildlife have returned to nest in a great deal of their woodland in the Armstrong Valley.

One day last week, Pat and Lloyd were busy putting in about 75 new seedlings along the creek which runs through their property. Trout still swim in the local Armstrong Creek. With the renewal of the forests, new species have made their way onto the Kauffman woodland.

Quail have returned in numbers.



Pat Kauffman, right, said that they couldn't afford the price of farms in Lancaster. And "we found that this area was the way Lancaster County was maybe 20 years ago. In the interim, (the Halifax area) is getting more urbanized." She stands with husband Lloyd next to materials from an 1860s post and beam corn barn, obtained in Lebanon County, that will go into their new home overlooking the Susquehanna River.

So have the wild turkeys, and of course deer.

Also, woodcocks favor the refurbished land.

"I had never seen a woodcock until we moved up here," said Pat. "They are the strangest looking things. You don't see them often."

Also, grouse have thrived. Possum, chipmunks, and other small animals are in abundance.

in the winter. The Kauffman pond measures about two acres and ranges anywhere from five to 25 feet deep. It's bank-full in the winter and, in a drought, can lower to six feet or less and measure only a few yards across.

The water level in the pond last week was shallow, almost summerlike. The area was short about four inches of rainfall for the season.

"It's not a pretty pond," said Pat. But she said the naturally occurring drainage area makes it a great place for real diversification of wildlife. In the spring come the wood ducks, according to Lloyd, followed by the Little Blue and the Great Blue Herons and King Fishers. In the winter come the deer and of course the racoons and groundhogs make their presence known. Wild geese also make up a great deal of the wildlife that continues to return to the natural pond.

At one time, the Kauffmans tried to stock the pond with bass. It worked — until the drought of 1988. Then, the water level fell and the Great Blue Herons came and fished out the bass.

"We never would have a chance to experience that kind of thing down in Lancaster County," said Pat. "It's gotten so populated down there."

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Pat and Lloyd grew up in the Pequea Township area in southern Lancaster County. Pat worked on her father's dairy. For a time, Pat was working as leader of the 4-H dairy and 4-H horse programs, in addition to time spent as a staff writer with *Lancaster Farming*.

But the urge to have access to woodland, ponds, pastureland, and wildlife drove them up to the mountain areas of Dauphin County.

"Here, we get a real diversification of wildlife," she said. She said the Forest Stewardship Plan helps them organize and direct a plan to not only attract wildlife, but manage it effectively.

"Unlike many who put 10 or 12 acres in, we put all 70 acres in, because we're managing it both for the wildlife and the forest," said Pat. As part of the plan, less desirable trees and invasive species such as the sumac, a rapidly growing, weedy, poisonous tree, were removed.

This allows more desirable species, such as red oak or white oak — and the ash, hickories, and poplar — to grow abundantly.

"We're ordinary people given a chance to do something interesting with these programs that we would not normally have the resources to do," said Pat.



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