

CONSERVATION UPDATE



Georgia is part of the Atlantic Flyway and provides important winter habitat for waterfowl that are produced in the prairies, Great Lakes and eastern Canada. Georgia's coastal wetlands provide important habitat for several species of diving ducks like lesser scaup, and puddle ducks such as green-winged teal and wigeon. Interior wetlands and beaver ponds associated with major rivers winter thousands of mallards and wood ducks, while deeper reservoirs provide important habitat for ring-necked ducks, canvasbacks and wood ducks. Our goal is to conserve habitat to secure the future of waterfowl in Georgia and throughout North America. Your support of DU will help us achieve that goal. Since 1988, Ducks Unlimited has completed 54 projects in Georgia, conserving nearly 27,000 acres across the Peach State. To date, DU has invested more than \$2.2 million in Georgia conservation projects.



MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

Georgia's Campaign Committee worked hard in 2016 to exceed their sponsor and upgrade goals by securing 14 new Life Sponsors and 13 upgrades. They met their goal of adding 2 new Feather Society members. In fact, the GADU state campaign committee ranked seventh in the nation. Georgia sponsors clearly understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

In 2007, Atlanta based Coca-Cola Company and its bottling partners set an aspirational goal to safely return to communities and nature an amount of water equivalent to what is used in their beverages and production by 2020. Ducks Unlimited and Coca-Cola have partnered on wetland conservation activities in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) of Canada. The company continued its investment in conservation this year with another \$200,000-grant.

By protecting existing wetlands and restoring degraded ones, we increase annual floodwater storage and contribute to watershed ecosystem health. Each acre of wetland replenishes 1 million liters of water to nature that would be lost if the land is converted by development.

The Coca-Cola Company

Working with willing landowners, we conserve wetlands in the PPR through conservation easements, ensuring valuable ecosystem services provided by wetlands such as floodwater storage, nutrient reduction and carbon storage to mitigate climate change impacts are maintained.

The Coca-Cola Foundation grants are also used to restore wetlands on permanently secured land in the PPR. The benefits resulting from the restoration of these previously degraded wetland basins will continue in perpetuity as part of DU's Revolving Land Conservation Program. Under this program DU purchases habitat, restores wetlands and adjacent upland areas, puts a perpetual conservation easement on the land and sells the property back into the community for use under sustainable agricultural practices that protect its hydrology for waterfowl habitat.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - FLINT RIVER WMA

The 2,300-acre Flint River Wildlife Management Area is located along the Flint River in Dooly County, Georgia. Ducks Unlimited partnered with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) to plan and implement the restoration of 150 acres of wetlands and approximately 65 acres of adjacent hardwood forest. The project site was historically an emergent wetland and bottomland hardwood forest, but previous owners ditched, drained and cleared the site for agriculture. The site was converted to a loblolly pine forest in 1986. Since state acquisition in 1993, beaver dams have impounded water across the project site and on adjacent property during non-drought years. This inundation has caused the pine trees to become stressed, with many dead or dying below the high-water mark at the site. GADNR approached DU to assist with restoration of this historic wetland. DU received a \$75,000-Small NAWCA grant for the project, including pine tree removal, wetland vegetation restoration, water control infrastructure installation and habitat management. GADNR is currently wrapping up the construction phase of the project, which will be completed in this year, and a project dedication will follow.

VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Georgia has some of the best. Membership grew to more than 19,200 members in 2016. The Peach State had 69 committees that hosted 112 events and generated \$2.2 million in event based income.



GADU's volunteers share the same vision to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. They also understand that the beneficiaries and stewards of tomorrow's full skies are the youth of today. The national hunting base is aging, and there are fewer young hunters. For this reason, DU has made Youth and Education a priority initiative at the national level. GADU shares this concern and is making tremendous strides to support the conservation education of Georgia's youth.

GADU launched a Greenwing membership drive in August 2016, with a goal to reach 1,000 members by 2018. Thanks to the efforts of our local chapters, GADU not only met this goal but did it in a mere 4 months! The 2016 Greenwing membership count was 1,018, up 26 percent from the previous year.

GADU hosted four Greenwing-specific events in 2016. These events provided outdoor opportunities to 280 children across our state. There were BB gun shooting contests, retriever demonstrations, exotic animal exhibits and a duck banding and release with GADNR. All four events placed nationally in the top 55, with three in the top 30 and one in the top ten.

In addition to the already solid university chapters at UGA and Georgia Southern, there are now active chapters at the University of North Georgia and Kennesaw State University. UGA (No. 7) and Georgia Southern (No. 15) continue to place among the Sweet 16 top university chapters in the nation. We can look forward to these young volunteers one day becoming the conservation leaders of the state.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - GEORGIA DNR

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) is a strong partner of Ducks Unlimited. In addition to supporting habitat conservation on the breeding grounds in Canada, GADNR and DU have worked together to improve habitat and hunting opportunities on public lands in Georgia. Recently, we partnered to restore and enhance wetland habitat on Flint River and Altamaha WMAs. The project on Flint River WMA will restore hydrology and management capabilities to 150 acres of wetlands and 65 acres of adjacent hardwood forest. This project was funded through a Small NAWCA grant and will be completed during FY 17.

In coastal Georgia, DU is working with GADNR to develop a five-year plan for restoration at Altamaha WMA. The Altamaha WMA comprises 27,078 acres, of which 3,235 are managed, tidal freshwater and brackish impoundments. DU recently submitted a NAWCA grant to fund the enhancement of 447 acres of managed wetland impoundments on Altamaha WMA and will be working with GADNR to leverage funds through various grant opportunities to enhance more.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



**SOUTHERN
REGION**

193 BUSINESS PARK DRIVE, SUITE E
RIDGELAND, MS 39157