

## CONSERVATION UPDATE

Since 1989, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 194,000 acres across the Palmetto State, investing more than \$43.2 million in South Carolina wetlands and other key habitats! Conservation activities in the past year include private land protection through conservation easements and habitat restoration projects on private, protected properties and public areas like Broad River Wildlife Management Area and Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge.

Ducks Unlimited's goal is to secure the future of waterfowl in the state and throughout North America. DU is actively working to protect, restore and enhance wetland habitats in South Carolina and on the breeding grounds most important to South Carolina's wintering waterfowl, including the Prairie Pothole Region and the southern Ontario region of Canada. By strategically focusing conservation efforts in the state and on the breeding grounds important to South Carolina's waterfowl, DU hopes to improve waterfowling opportunities for the citizens of South Carolina.



## MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

South Carolina's Campaign Committee made great progress in 2016, securing 22 new Life Sponsors, 17 upgrades and two new Feather Society members. That's nearly double their Life Sponsor goal of 12, and put South Carolina in the Top Ten State Campaign Committees! Clearly South Carolina sponsors understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Michael Bennett, owner of Bennett Hospitality, has been a longtime supporter of Ducks Unlimited and friend of past DU president George Dunklin, Jr. The Bennett's own Quinby and Richmond Plantations, both on the eastern branch of the Cooper River in Berkeley County. Both properties have conservation easements protecting their habitat values in perpetuity. Richmond Plantation is surrounded by SCDNR's 10,000 acre Bonneau Ferry unit where DU has coordinated some recent restoration work.

Mike Bennett shares his passion for the outdoors with his sons, Jack and Brennan. Among other travels, the three of them have been going to George's Five Oaks Duck Lodge near Stuttgart, Arkansas for many years. The Bennett's recently enjoyed the opportunity to support Ducks Unlimited and return George's hospitality by hosting an Evening of Conservation at their office, the Historic Rice Mill Building, in downtown Charleston, South Carolina this past February. In addition to their support of Ducks Unlimited, the Bennett's are big supporters of the Charleston Children's Hospital and the International African American Museum.



Michael Bennett and his son, Jack, enjoy a duck hunt together at the Cheeha Combahee Plantation in South Carolina.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - ACE BASIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have completed wetland enhancement work on ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge. Through the support of three different North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants and funding from the USFWS, we enhanced more than 400 acres of impoundments on the Grove Unit and 135 acres of a green-tree reservoir. The improvements benefit waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, raptors and migratory songbirds. This project compliments private lands conservation efforts across the South Edisto River on perpetually protected properties and planned work on Bear Island Wildlife Management Area just downriver. Having worked with the USFWS to secure two more NAWCA grants, DU is also set to begin enhancement work on the Bonny Hall Unit of ACE Basin NWR, which will provide enhanced wetland habitat of 784 acres of the refuge.



## VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

Volunteer fundraisers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and South Carolina has some of the best. The Palmetto State boasts more than 17,000 members, including 1,417 dedicated volunteers who hosted 84 events in 2016, raising nearly \$1.2 million to support DU's conservation mission.

The York County DU chapter is one example of SCDU's dedicated volunteers. Restarted in the 1990s by Joe Johnson, the chapter has outgrown multiple venues. Now they hold three events a year in Joe's "DU Barn." Though he has transitioned chapter chairmanship to USC Aiken chapter founder Adam Shumate, Joe is still heavily involved in DU. He serves on the state committee, mentors new DU volunteers and was heavily involved in the introduction of the SCDU license plate program. That program has raised \$500,000 for conservation efforts in South Carolina. Joe is also known for winning firearms on raffles and donating them back to DU to raise more money for the ducks. Joe credits Mike and Debbie Morrison for inspiring the York County chapter to establish a Greenwing event. Their event in Columbia served as the template for the annual York County event in cooperation with SCDNR and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

"York County Ducks Unlimited has done a fairly good job of educating the public as to the work of DU," Joe said. "From Adam speaking to school classes to our bluebird box program, we want everyone to know what Ducks Unlimited stands for. We are not just someone going out in the morning hunting ducks but are an organization that is centered on making our universe a better place to live."



Joe Johnson (right) oversees the first event in his "DU Barn."

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Having long been tremendous partners on a national scale, DU continues to strengthen our relationship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through project development locally on national wildlife refuges in South Carolina. Together, DU and the USFWS have partnered to restore and enhance over 8,800 acres on refuges throughout the state, providing critical wetland habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and other wetland dependent wildlife. DU staff continues to build on this important partnership and is currently working with refuge partners to leverage funds for the delivery of quality habitat for the advancement of both of our missions.



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



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