

OWNED LAND ACTIVITIES REPORT
October 2012

Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve



This beautiful Great Horned Owl was found injured near I-66 and was rehabilitated by the Blue Ridge Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. The Center released the owl at BRMNAP on September 12th.



Brian Laposay, our preserve ranger, has spent nearly countless hours performing invasive species control on the Preserve this growing season. Below is a before and after of one small area of his work. The problem species shown is Japanese stiltgrass. In the image on the right, the stiltgrass is brown and dying after being sprayed a week earlier. Brian is mapping the location and extent of the stiltgrass to track his progress from year to year.



DCR Visit:

Tom Smith, Director of the Division of Natural Heritage has plans to visit to the preserve on Friday October 19th with David Johnson and Jeb Wilkinson, Director and Deputy Director of the Va. Department of Conservation and Recreation. Dave Johnson, as head of DCR, is working hard to visit all of the 61 natural area preserves in

the state system. VOF staff will provide a hiking tour to the cliffs and feel confident that we will be able to report that he was impressed with the management and quality of the VOF owned preserve.

House Mountain

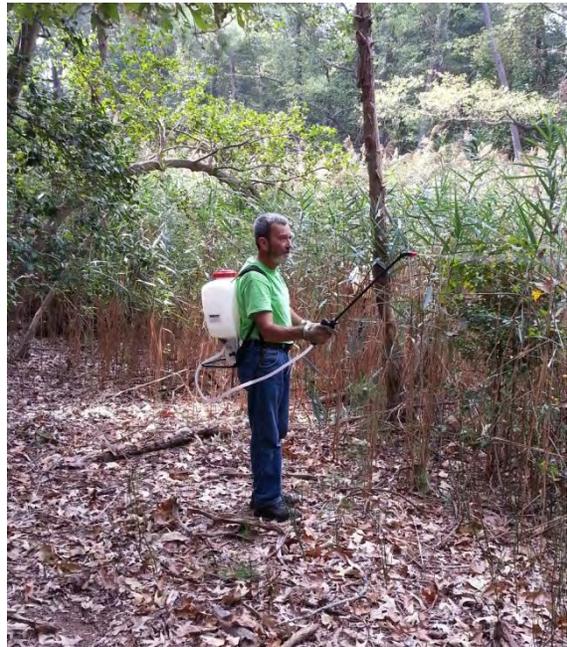
VOF has been attempting for weeks to schedule a second meeting to discuss the future management agreement with our partners, the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council. Both organizations have shared historical documents and are working to coordinate our first “working session” together.

Kohls Island

Last month, three VOF staff and two volunteers braved the ticks and chiggers to work on battling phragmites on the island. One of the volunteers has been working on controlling the phragmites for about ten years and has learned that annual spraying is required to address the continual appearance of new shoots. Apparently, phragmites’ roots are not killed by the standard herbicide. At the last volunteer workday a new patch of phragmites was discovered and this area received the most attention.



Lynton Land has been volunteering at Kohls Island for a decade.



Paul Billings is a soon-to-retire DCR employee from Westmoreland State Park

Another longstanding invasive species on the island is a stand of bamboo that is many decades old. It is difficult to capture the extent of the problem in photographs. It is estimated that the affected area is two-three acres.



Removal of the bamboo is complicated by the difficult access to the island. Potentially the bamboo would have to be removed by boat. We are working on creative options for tackling this particular invasive.

It has been known for years that Kohls Island is home to the threatened tiger beetle and the vulnerable seabeach knotweed. It turns out that the island might be home to another endangered species. The shell and skull below were found on the island and have been positively identified by the Division of Natural Heritage as the Northern Diamondback Terrapin. This terrapin is the only turtle in the U.S. that lives exclusively in brackish saltwater marshes, coastal bays and lagoons. During the summer the females look for sandy beach areas or coastal dunes to lay their eggs. The Northern Diamondback Terrapin is listed as a species of concern in Virginia due to loss of appropriate habitat and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries considers the Commonwealth's diamondback terrapin population as "Near Threatened." A number of other turtles/terrapins were seen on the island this day as well. Kohls Island is one of the few remaining intact beach and coastal dune systems on the northern neck.



Shell of a female Northern Diamondback Terrapin found at Kohls Island.



The Northern Diamondback Terrapin in life.

ACQUISITIONS:

Bull Run Project – Fauquier County

One of VOF's highest conservation priorities in the Bull Run Mountains Project is acquisition of inholdings and parcels adjacent to the 2,500 acre Bull Run Mountains State Natural Area Preserve. VOF staff is working with PEC's Bull Run Fund to try to acquire a small but critical parcel that, if acquired, will become part of the preserve. In addition VOF staff is working with counsel to investigate possible acquisition of several other parcels adjacent to the preserve that to date have remained undeveloped by virtue of title problems.

SALE PARCELS:

Bull Run Mountains Estate lots, White House Creek lot, and Colony property.

Staff has notified all neighbors of the Bull Run lots and White House Creek lot of our intent to sell the properties. The Bull Run lots are listed on MLS sites and a few inquiries have come in. The White House Creek lot was advertised at the annual homeowner's association meeting as a courtesy and we plan to advertise on MLS site soon. The current market for these lots continues to be weak.

The Colony property has been offered to all neighbors for the required 6 month time period.

An adjacent neighbor has offered the appraised value. The board approved the conveyance of the fee and retention of an open space easement at their July 2012 meeting. Staff is finalizing documents in preparation for closing this year.