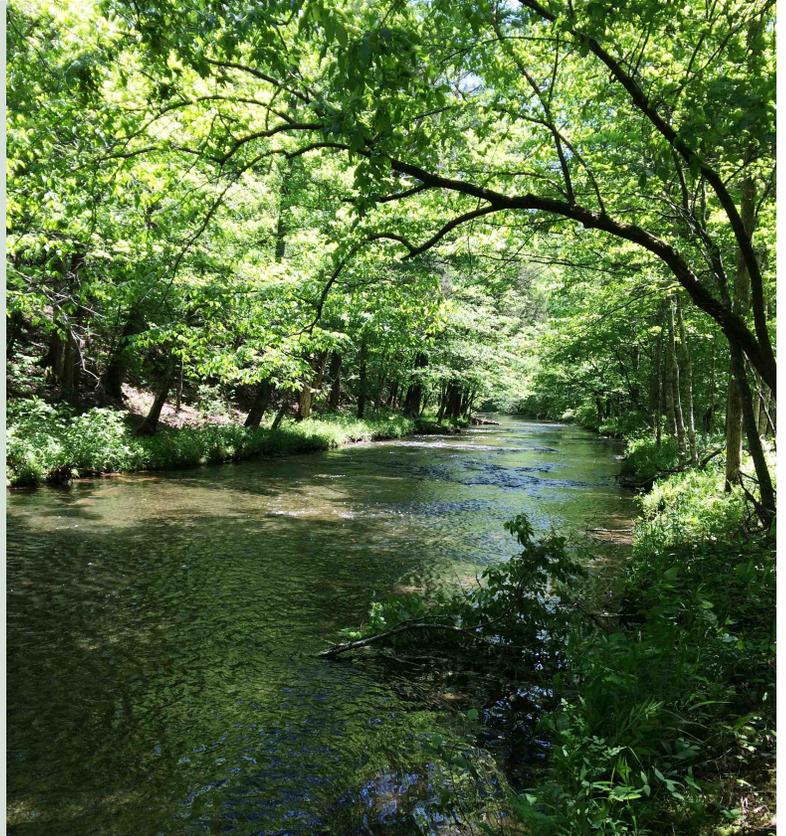


TENNESSEE BIODIVERSITY PROJECT: Big Swan Headwaters Conserved for Future Generations

by Alice Hudson and Christie Henderson, Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation

In May 2017, the Swan Conservation Trust (SCT) and the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation (TennGreen) announced the placement of a Conservation Easement on more than 1,300 acres of forested land adjacent to “The Farm Community” in southeastern Lewis County. The conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between the SCT and TennGreen that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values.

The SCT was founded in 1992, and beginning in 1997, began acquiring parcels of land in a heavily-forested area on the north and west sides of The Farm Community. The intention was to protect the natural heritage, water quality, and biodiversity of the land due to its unique topography and significant wetland and riparian habitat.



Merging six land acquisitions and one land donation from 1997 through 2008, and paying down all loans by December 2015, was a significant accomplishment for SCT. The 1,358 acres of forest, known as the Big Swan Headwaters Preserve, contains over eight miles of streams, seven rare species, over 50 calcareous seeps (a rare wetland type), and contains several small, scenic waterfalls. This acquisition is located in the [Western Highland Rim Conservation Opportunity Area](#) (COA) identified in the 2015 State Wildlife Action plan.

Forests provide significant habitat for disappearing species of animals and plants, whose homes are lost to development and changes in the natural landscape. Forests are also important for the contribution they make in regulating the composition of earth’s atmosphere. Scientists now believe that rapid deforestation in many parts of the world is at least partially responsible for the apparent climate changes we are experiencing. Forests contribute to pristine water quality of both streams and groundwater, which are important drinking water supply sources in Tennessee.

“The Board of Swan Trust and its loyal members are proud to be in partnership with TennGreen to protect the natural

Photo credits

Page 1: Swan Creek within the Big Swan Headwaters Conservation Easement.

Page 2: The Swan Conservation Trust and Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation (TennGreen) teams hike through the newly protected Big Swan Headwaters Preserve. A group shot of the protection team. - All photos courtesy of TennGreen

treasures of Big Swan Headwaters Preserve, to ensure the security of its wildlife habitat in perpetuity, and to provide enjoyment for future generations,” said SCT’s new President, James Eagle Moore.

“TennGreen is honored to be entrusted with the permanent care of this magnificent property. We applaud SCT’s long-range vision and sustained commitment to protect this rich natural area,” remarked Steve Law, TennGreen’s Executive Director.



Over fifty Highland Rim Calcareous Seeps, a threatened wetland type, flow with cool, clear groundwater year-round, despite occasional summer drought conditions. This easement benefits the City of Centerville in Hickman County, which receives the Preserve’s clean waters as a partial source of its municipal water supply.



Big Swan Headwaters Preserve is characterized by a wide variety of mature hardwoods on dry ridges and slopes, as well as streamside riparian areas. Geologically, the upper and lower Fort Payne formation underlies majestic limestone bluffs and provides a resistant chert layer, creating scenic waterfalls and cascades that flow into the main streams. One of the most outstanding ecological revelations was the presence of over fifty Highland Rim Calcareous Seeps, a threatened wetland land type.

The Preserve will be open to the public, but there is much work to be done. SCT has the following goals for the property:

1. Raise ~\$12,000 annually to cover the organization’s operating expenses
2. Development of hiking trails with kiosks and signage for easier access to the Preserve.
3. Establish a fund to purchase critical parcels adjoining the Preserve as they come up for sale.
4. Create an endowment to pay the following in perpetuity: land taxes, insurance, land stewardship, and the ongoing costs of managing an organization.

In addition to its ecological and recreational benefits, the Preserve’s seeps flow with cool, clear groundwater year-round, despite occasional summer drought conditions, continuously replenishing the creeks with fresh water. The City of Centerville in Hickman County, many miles downstream, benefits from preservation efforts in the headwaters of Big Swan Creek, by receiving clean waters for its municipal water supply.

Visit www.tenngreen.org or www.swantrust.org for details on this project.