



**Killbuck Watershed Land Trust**  
133 S. Market St.  
Wooster, OH 44691

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# Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends  
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

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## Ducks Unlimited continued

ranching and the realities we face out here,' Haerter says. 'It all comes down to relationships and communicating needs. DU understands that these acres need to support livestock and ranching and farming communities, and they understand that conservation isn't free. Without economic vitality and well-being in these rural areas, there would be no conservation, either.'

"It's that kind of holistic approach that makes conservation easements work for such a variety of landowners. Whether

landowners seek to preserve the wild character of their lands, a legacy of family farming, or ensure the vitality of critical habitats

for migrating birds, the easement programs administered by DU and WAT are customizable tools that pay benefits both now and far into the future. Sometimes without seeming to change a thing."

Over our years, of operation, the KWLT has partnered with many public and private organizations to help landowners preserve natural habitat and promote family agricultural legacies. While DU has vast resources, compared to the limited worth of our Land Trust,

it is noteworthy that DU deploys its assets with the same convictions and concerns held by our Land Trust and our participating landowners.

Habitat protection, whether for wildlife or agriculture, is a matter of great public concern and we are fortunate to have worthy friends and partners across the country who share our mission.

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## Thank You for Your Membership

Your membership helps to maintain the rural atmosphere that has made our area a desirable and unique place to live. We hope you will consider sharing your philanthropic dollars with the land trust.

### Annual membership levels are:

Friend, \$50; Steward, \$100; Conservator, \$250; and Protector, \$500. To become a new member or to renew or change your membership level for 2021, please make check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, and mail to:

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust  
133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691

KWLT is a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations are tax deductible to extent permitted by the new federal tax laws.

*We thank you for your support!*

## New Board Members continued

Tate is currently an adult education instructor at the Wayne County Schools Career Center, as well as a renewable energy and sustainability consultant with his own company, First Move Energy. Krista is a freelance marketing consultant, specializing in marketing and communications strategy and content creation for small and medium-sized businesses.

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## Board of Trustees

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Robb Stutzman, *Vice President*  
Linda Bush, *Secretary*  
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### Board Members

Maryanna Biggio  
Tate & Krista Emerson  
Kevin Ely & Jael Malenke  
Karen Gotter  
David Kline  
Matt Mariola

## Contact Us

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust  
133 S. Market St.  
Wooster, OH 44691

Randy Carmel  
*President*  
carmel.randall@gmail.com

Robb Stutzman  
*Vice President*  
2171-B Eagle Pass  
Wooster, OH 44961  
Phone: 330-264-6115  
Fax: 330-262-5729

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## KWLT Welcomes Newest Board Members

### Tate & Krista Emerson

Tate is a Wayne County native, growing up on a dairy farm in Apple Creek that has been in the Emerson family for four generations. He and his siblings helped their parents manage the animals and the land until the 1995 when the cows were sold. The Emersons still own the farm and rent the land to their friends and local crop farmers. Between milking cows and cutting hay some of Tate's favorite memories were the summer road trips around the country visiting beautiful landscapes and historical sites, traveling west always being the most memorable. In addition to farming, the Emerson family has long been involved in the area. Both his grandfather, Clifford, and his father, John, each served as a Wayne County commissioner.

After graduating from Waynedale High school, Tate followed in his 3 older siblings' footsteps and attended Ohio University to use his natural propensity to figure out all things mechanical while earning a degree in Mechanical Engineering. It was during his last year there that he met his wife, Krista. For the next 20 years, Tate put his skills to work in aviation, illuminated signs, stainless steel fabrication and the automotive aftermarket industry, while also pursuing his passion for automotive racing.

Krista, on the other hand, grew up just outside of Cincinnati with her parents and older brother. Although Cincinnati is a major city (by Ohio standards, anyway), Krista's childhood home was considered by many there to be "in the country." Her parents have always been outdoor enthusiasts, and her mother was an equestrian who boarded her own horses on the family's property. She spent many days playing in the woods and creek that lined the back of their pasture.



*Krista & Tate Emerson*

After high school, Krista also found her way to Athens, OH, studying Journalism at Ohio University. With its proximity to the Hocking Valley and Appalachian setting, she found herself yearning to be

immersed in nature and explore the Western United States for the first time. So following graduation, she worked as a seasonal employee at a resort in Glacier National Park. Spending her two days off per week hiking, forest bathing and climbing summits, she realized that in the mountains was where she needed to be.

In 2002, after a year of being long-distance, Tate and Krista decided to move to Colorado together. They lived nestled in the foothills of Golden, CO, and spent their days off snowboarding, exploring in the mountains and adventuring to New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. While living in Colorado, they realized their passion for conservation and caring for the planet.

They have now lived in Wooster for 13 years and are raising 3 kids - Lyla (12), Griffin (9) and Decker (5) in town. They spend as much time as possible hiking and creek-walking around the area, and camping and playing at the family farm.

*Continued on page 4*

*Promoting, protecting, and preserving our natural heritage*

## Spring is a time for Gratitude *President's Message*

Spring is a time for gratitude. Gratitude that winter's peace has given way to the beauty and abundance of spring. Spring in Ohio is loud and green. Spring peepers, bird migration, and bursting tree buds signal another season of nature's pleasures and gifts. Along with these delights is the need for us to respond accordingly. It might mean plowing and planting the farm, getting the garden weeded, then planted, and weeded again (and again).

Vegetation management becomes a part of the spring season. Most of us are looking at the long list of spring chores: weeding the perennial flowerbed, trimming trees and bushes, harvesting hay, or mowing the lawn. Increasingly, this land management includes alien species that become weedy, sometimes overwhelming farm fields, gardens, and natural areas, reducing native flora and fauna as well as garden and crop yields.



ONAPA Volunteers at Brinkhaven Barrens

KWLT has been fortunate to partner with Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association (ONAPA) which provides expertise in land management strategies, and enthusiastic volunteer groups. These volunteers help reduce the effects of invasive plants at Brinkhaven Barrens State Nature Preserve. Brinkhaven Barrens was recently dedicated into the Ohio State Nature Preserve system, due in large part by the help of ONAPA recognizing the unique biological heritage the site represents.

Last autumn KWLT entered into negotiations to purchase 135-acres of wetlands around the village of Killbuck utilizing a Clean Ohio grant. Anyone visiting this area can't help but notice the swamp and marsh bordering State Route 520 and bisected by State Route 62, west and south of Killbuck Village. In addition to the property's noteworthy scenery, these wetlands contain a rich diversity of aquatic and terrestrial

wildlife. The value of the property for preserving water quality, mitigating flooding and reducing sedimentation in Killbuck Creek, and acting as an important aquifer recharge zone is another reason KWLT became involved in its preservation.



Killbuck Swamp Preserve

In December, after reaching an agreement with the property owners, KWLT began the grant writing process and seeking local approval. Around this time, the property real estate listing got the attention of another land trust, Arc of Appalachia, which also recognized the tremendous conservation value of these wetlands. KWLT met with Arc of Appalachia, and after touring the site and further discussion, decided that working together to purchase and preserve the wetlands was a stronger base for success than either of us working alone. The strength that resulted from our collaboration is allowing us to expand the initial acquisition site to include an adjoining 22-acre mature woodland and old sandstone quarry site, as well as a half-acre homesite that we plan to transform into a trailhead. Our master plan calls for significant development of public recreation and outdoor education at the site, contributing not only to wildlands preservation but local tourism. The exciting news is that KWLT and Arc of Appalachia have been awarded Clean Ohio funding to conserve the Killbuck Swamp Preserve!

The site is at the edge of Killbuck Village in Holmes County, and offers the opportunity to attract wildlife enthusiasts and tourists to the preserve, potentially increasing visitation and the associated benefits to the village. The site is within walking distance of Killbuck Elementary School offering a potential for student outdoor education experiences.

In addition to providing sanctuary to animals like salamanders, frogs, toads, turtles and snakes, the preserve contains over 4100 feet of Killbuck Creek frontage. The associated riparian woodland, vernal pools, wet meadow, swamp and marsh are home to wading birds and waterfowl, as well as beaver, otter, and mink. This is an exciting acquisition for KWLT and Arc of Appalachia and we look forward to the possibilities this acquisition means for our organizations, the Village of Killbuck, and the surrounding area.



Drone view of Killbuck Swamp Preserve

Partnerships, like those with ONAPA and Arc of Appalachia, allow KWLT to utilize the expertise of two long established non-profit conservation organizations to preserve a valuable resource for community benefit. KWLT will co-own and manage the Killbuck Swamp Preserve, providing local expertise and oversight. By partnering with Arc of Appalachia, KWLT benefits from their grant-writing experience, financial resources, and expertise managing an extensive network of nature preserves in Ohio. It is a win-win for both organizations. Our strength lies in our collaboration with the private and public sectors for land preservation in the region and emphasis on local preservation of both farmland and natural areas.

As this wonderful project unfolds over the next two years, and as we conclude the elements of the grant proposal, KWLT will be sharing more in our newsletters, and our revised website. The KWLT website will be active in the next few weeks and will offer more information about the work we do and how you might help us in conserving our local natural heritage! 📧

~ Randy Carmel, KWLT President

## Another Conservation Group doing Land Preservation

### How Ducks Unlimited, Inc. Helps Preserve Agricultural Land

Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU), in a variety of ways, has protected more than 14 million acres of wildlife habitat across the continental United States. Conservation easements are widely used. Most of its easements are held by Wetlands America Trust (WAT), the organization's foundation and landholding arm. WAT is one of the largest accredited land trusts in the nation, protecting nearly 450,000 acres of crucial habitat through conservation easements.

DU's work with agricultural easements was recently featured in the article "Legacy for Landowners," written by T. Edward Nickens for the November/December 2020 issue of Ducks Unlimited Magazine. With DU's permission, we're reprinting portions of the article. The complete article can be read at the link included above.

Like the conservation easements held by the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust (KWLT), the DU easements "limit the uses of a parcel of land as a means of protecting and improving its conservation value. Typically, landowners sell or donate development rights while retaining rights to inhabit, recreate, farm, timber, and otherwise utilize valuable property. In return, they receive either a one-time cash payment or substantial tax savings derived from the donated value of the easement."

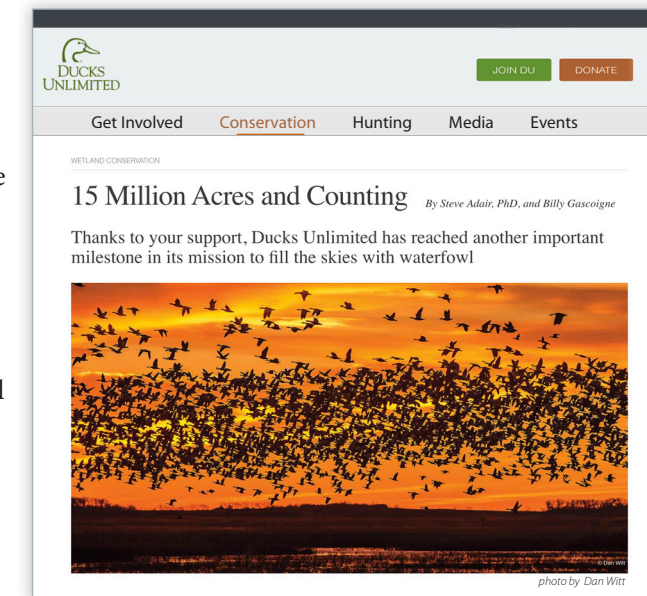
DU has done extensive work in Ohio, recognizing that our state contains part of the vast tracts of land and water that form the Mississippi Flyway, which supports the migration, breeding and wintering of much of America's waterfowl.

### DU's creative work with farmers is notable

For example, DU holds easements on nearly 2,000 acres of rice fields in Sacramento Valley, California which is part of the Pacific Flyway. Nicole Van Vleck, the CEO of the landowner Montna Farms, notes that "landscapes that are crucial for wildlife are also landscapes that are vital for agriculture

and other enterprises... Balancing a strong conservation ethic with a solid business plan that allows for future growth is hardly straightforward. 'Easements are in perpetuity,' she says, 'so you have to think about every item that could become an issue 100 or 200 years from now.' "

"What makes a conservation easement work, she says, is the relationship between the landowner and the easement holder. 'You are, in some ways, taking on a partner, and that



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requires working out the details of what the relationship will be. But our trust in DU brought us a lot of comfort. We've worked long and hard to get the language right."

"And the result is a long tenure of getting the conservation right. That very first easement restricted development rights but allowed continued agricultural use of the land, Van Vleck says. It also included an agreement to provide water each winter for wintering waterfowl, which was a new concept for the area."

"But also important was the message to the community that conservation easements can help ensure the long-term viability of family farms. 'We're in the rice business,' Van Vleck says,

'and it was important for us to make a statement that we will be in the rice business for the long term. This conservation easement was as much a commitment to our family farming heritage as it was about ducks. Done right, an easement can protect legacy. And it's a win for agriculture and a win for the environment.' "

Another example arises from South Dakota ranchland. A landowner there, Bruce Haerter, "works a ranch in north-central South Dakota, where high-quality prairie pothole habitat can support an incredible 100 pairs of nesting ducks per square mile. But it is also a region with a strong agricultural heritage where working landscapes are treasured."

"Haerter recently signed grassland and wetland easements on nearly 1,500 acres, including large swaths of native prairie that have never seen a plow and land on which he'll implement a rotational grazing system for his cattle. The wetland easements on the Haerter ranch will protect more than 180 acres of temporary, seasonal, and semi-permanent wetlands—just the kind of habitat that pulls in both nesting and migrating ducks and geese."

"What makes the easements work, Haerter says, is the ability to continue ranching within certain guidelines. In his area, for example, landowners with easements on their grasslands are still allowed to harvest hay but agree not to cut it until after July 15, when most bird nesting is complete. 'And natural grazing can occur in a way that ensures there is enough grass on the landscape to provide cover for ducks, pheasants, partridges, and grouse,' Haerter explains. 'It's expensive to buy all your feed for a cattle operation, so the conservation aspects of the easements actually help ensure ranch continuity.' "

"It's a good example of how versatile conservation easements can be. 'The people I've worked with are very knowledgeable about grasslands and wetlands but also about farming and