



Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

IMPACT REPORT FY 2021



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Design for Impact Report FY 2021 by Development staff.

**OUR MISSION IS TO INSPIRE AN
UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURAL WORLD
AND OURSELVES AS PART OF IT—
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.**

LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Claudia Bachman-Bouchard	Jess Brown	Dorrit Castle
Stanton Ching	Trad Dart	Steven Dodd
Eileen Duggan	Jason Guyot	Jennifer Herbst
Robert Martin	Fatima Matos	Rebecca Nolan
Scott Parry	Stacey Smith	Steve Solley
Rowland Stebbins	Richard Steele	Karen Stone
Fred Ziegler		

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Davnet Conway	Executive Director
Kevin Metevier	Director of Finance
Vera Harsh	Director of Development
Kim Hargrave	Director of Education
Al Brown	Publications & I.T.
Chelle Farrand	Development & Design Associate
Craig Floyd	Coogan Farm Manager
Pauline Gaucher	Preschool & Camp Director
Mayada Wadsworth	Database Manager

EDUCATION STAFF

Jerelyn Abicca-Smestad	Mary Audette	Marianne Goddard
Meadow Kohrs-Monroe	Lauren Michael	Katie McCann
Jess Morris	Nicole Neigel	Abby O'Brien
Betty Pacelle	Tessa Stuart	

STAFF

Sanny Chacanaca	Visitor Services
Sydney Donovan	Administrative Assistant— Finance
Lori Edwards	Animal Curator
Sandra Lewis	Visitor Services
Rob Reas	Afterschool Program Director
Joe Sanda	Maintenance Manager
Una Schaffer	Visitor Services

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE



In 2021 we set the ambitious goal to take the lessons learned from the pandemic and reimagine our future post-pandemic. 2021 didn't neatly wrap up the pandemic as we had hoped, but we continued our efforts as defined in the three pillars of our Strategic Framework, to strengthen Relationships, increase our Resiliency, and move the organization towards the third goal– Sustainability.

Support funding was wisely managed to maintain operations, allowing us to strategically use gifts, such as a recent bequest, to make the organization more sustainable in the future. We have significantly reduced the remaining debt carried over from the acquisition of the Coogan Farm, putting us on track to eliminate that debt completely in a few years. Endowment additions and investments have increased our funds from \$250,000 prior to the pandemic to over \$450,000 currently.

Our Board of Trustees helped launch a campaign to expand our *Wise Owls* ranks by encouraging loyal friends to plan legacy gifts, resulting in \$1 million in promised new *Wise Owls* bequest provisions. These exceptional planned gifts, and others of all sizes, will advance the values and vitality of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center for generations to come.

This new digital format for our Annual Report, designed and created by talented in-house staff, allows more room for us to increase our transparency about the state of our organization. It also allows us to share much more about the myriad things your support helps us do. You'll find information on the impact of our core programs, such as Outreach Programs, Summer Camp, Preschool, and Neighbors and Nature. 2021 also saw the addition of a new Mediation Walking Trail, and the return of many beloved in-person events including our Green-Tie Celebration, Spooky Nature Trail, Luminaria Walk and Woodland Egg Hunt. Stay tuned as we bring our Mushroom Festival back in 2022!

As part of our organizational efforts to increase Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA), we developed and launched several programs to improve access to nature for all, including Sensory Friendly Hikes and Wheelchair Birding, as well as Nature Discovery for children, and Art and Nature programs for adults with special needs.

Now in the third and final year of our Strategic Framework, we continue to seek to reimagine our future as one that is more sustainable and inclusive. To represent that vision, and with the benefit of a grant from the Connecticut Humanities, we will be launching a new website with a newly refreshed logo in bright and hopeful colors representing Earth and Sky. This report introduces our updated mascot, Mr. Bill, with his gaze directly forward– approachable, friendly and looking toward the future, just like DPNC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Conway'.

Davnet Conway

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen'.

Karen Stone

BOARD PRESIDENT

NATURE IS STILL OUR NICHE



Our educational programs are our bedrock. They are the heart of our mission and also happen to be the primary revenue generating initiative. Loss of this revenue had an impact in 2021, yet we were resilient. Experience delivering educational programs allowed us to adapt to the challenge. We were well prepared to meet the increased need for academic and social enrichment as schools transitioned back to hybrid schedules and children faced another isolating virtual school year. DPNC met this need with a variety of new and expanded programs that complimented hybrid school schedules, including Neighbors and Nature, Preschool, Homeschool, Environmental Mornings, and Afternoon Adventures.

Knowing that the air outside was safer, all of these programs came with newly modified procedures that kept children outside almost 100% of the time. Our staff secured tents, boots, rain gear, extra clothing, hand warmers, waterproof cushions, sail shelters and other creative ideas to help children be comfortable outside year-round. They lugged wood and typically had two campfires burning on cold days to keep children warm. Most importantly, they led by example, as teachers themselves stayed outside and stayed positive, through rain, sleet, snow, and wind.

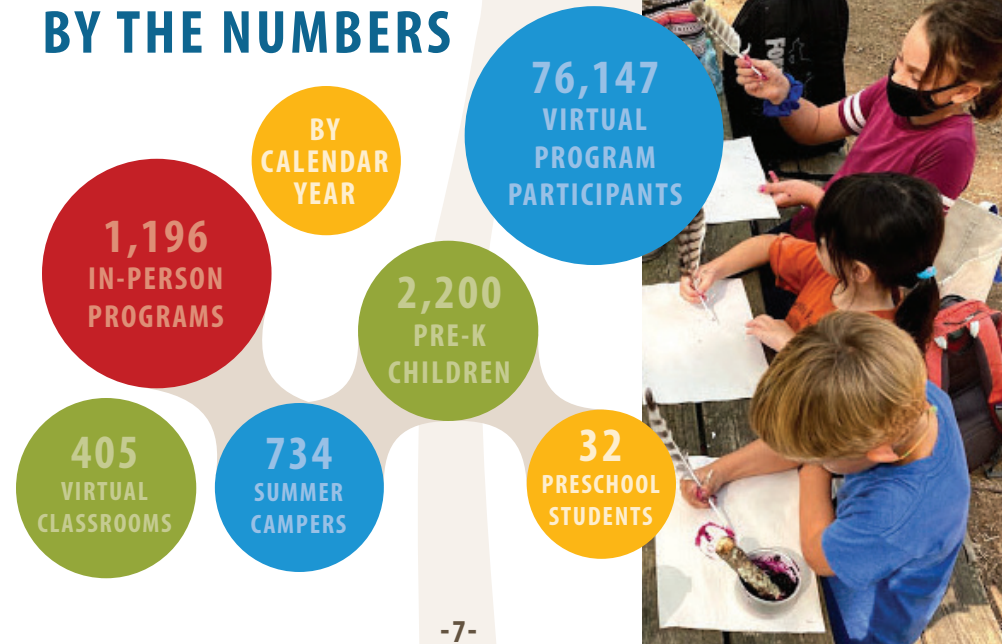
All of this happened while ensuring children remained as safe as possible from Covid by taking temperature checks, wearing masks, maintaining distances, washing hands, and providing single-use snacks and drinks. This work was nothing short of heroic, and each employee did it proudly and without

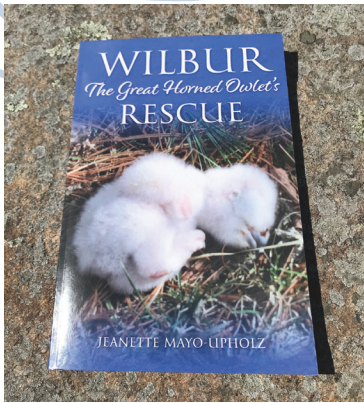


complaint, for the common good. In total, DPNC served 16,122 people in educational programs and an additional 74,381 through our popular Facebook Live programs.

With origins dating back 75 years, the Nature Center has weathered many storms. But perhaps our role in the community has never been more relevant than now, when nature, open space, and refuge play a critical role in the physical, mental and ecological health of our community.

BY THE NUMBERS





THE ART OF ANIMAL CARE

Animal rescue and rehabilitation is not always straightforward. *Wilbur: The Great Horned Owllet's Rescue*, a new book published this year, recounts the story of a very special rescue.

On the grass beneath a tall pine tree, Jeanette Mayo-Upholz came upon a ball of white fluff. Its moving legs and small chirps showed it had survived the long fall, so Jeanette and her husband, John, called our Animal Curator, Lori Edwards. They delivered the owllet to Davnet Conway, who was ready with a warm incubator that she took home to observe and feed Wilbur throughout the night.

Wilbur did so well that the decision was made to re-nest him as soon as possible. Nature Center staff and friends sprang into action to locate resources to reach into an 80-foot tree. With great luck, Tennett Tree Service was working nearby and Captain Hersh of Quiambaug Fire Department requested their assistance. Corey volunteered his services and found a suitable spot to park his truck requiring a long extension with

precious cargo (human and owllet). And soon Wilbur safely reached his nest, welcomed by a sibling and “meal” from his mother. Jeanette has written a book about the adventure. Copies are for sale at the Nature Center.

Besides the adventure with Wilbur, 2021 provided two additions to our resident animals– Albert, a Barred Owl, and Orion, a Peregrine Falcon. Albert was found in Rocky Neck State Park by a man who carried him in his sweatshirt for two miles. X-rays revealed radial and ulnar closed fractures. After weeks of wing wrapping and medications for pain and parasites, Albert has become an official ambassador. Orion was found in Bridgeport with a non-repairable elbow injury. Fellow wildlife rehabilitators, A Place Called Hope, transferred him to DPNC.

Among the successful and memorable rehabilitations in Animal Care was that of Sienna, a Red-tailed Hawk found with a serious head injury here in Mystic. She was able to make a full-recovery and is pictured on the opposite page giving one last inquisitive glance before being returned to the wild.

ANIMAL CARE FAST FACTS: FY 2021

525
CALLS ANSWERED ABOUT INJURED WILDLIFE

319
TOTAL ANIMALS BROUGHT TO DPNC

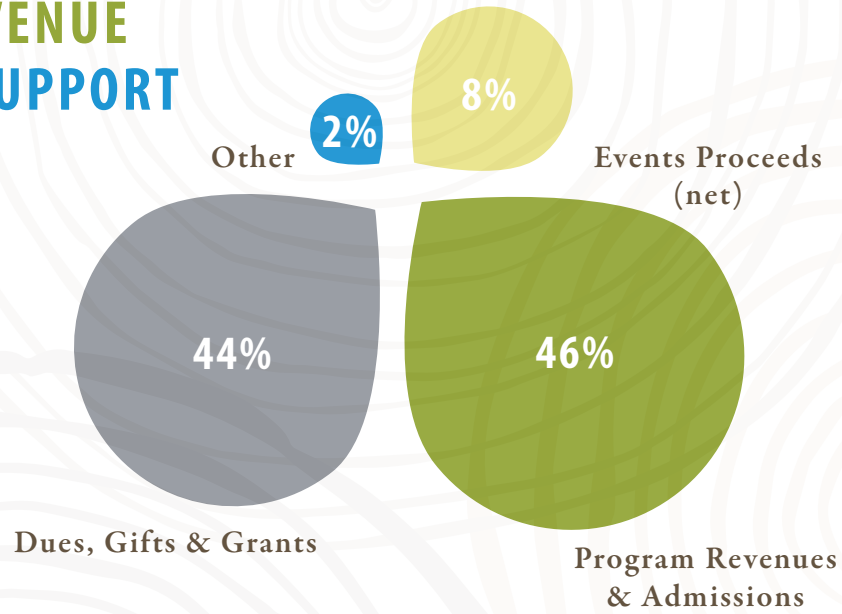
67
MAMMALS RECEIVED & TRANSFERRED

663
CASES OF FOOD PURCHASED FOR RAPTORS

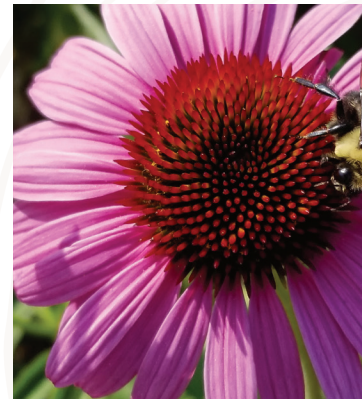
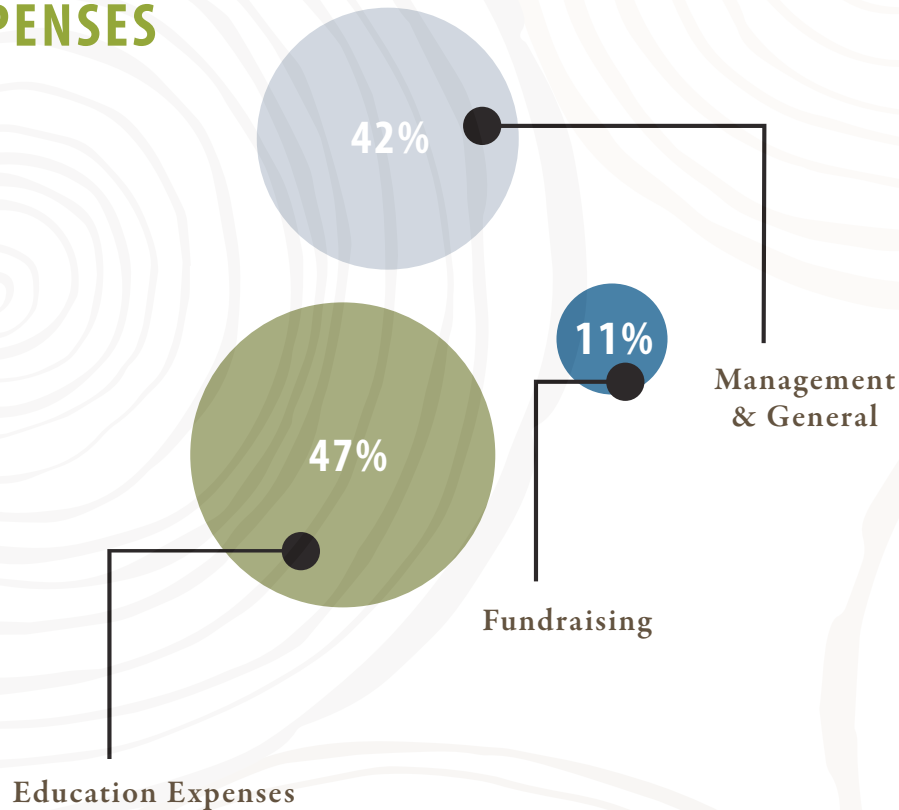
55
BIRDS & BIRDS OF PREY REHABBED & RELEASED

24
CASES OF CRICKETS FOR FOOD FOR AMPHIBIANS

REVENUE & SUPPORT



EXPENSES



INTENTION THROUGH FISCAL HEALTH & STRENGTH

The bulk of our earned revenue comes from our educational programs, and the pandemic severely impacted our ability to deliver outreach programs in schools and through field trips to the Nature Center. Last year we reported on the many creative ways our staff adapted our education programs to ensure we could continue to bring our environmental education to children throughout the greater Southeastern Connecticut area.

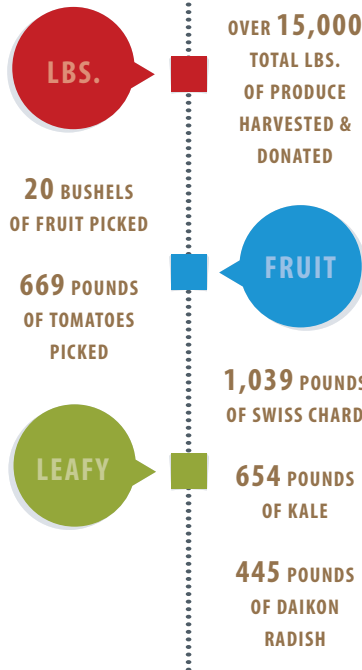
Smart fiscal management meant DPNC secured a second fully forgiven PPP loan. Careful cash management of a bequest allowed us to reduce the remaining debt from the Coogan Farm Campaign to under \$200,000 and increase our endowment to over \$450,000. While the threat of reduced program revenue remains, the Nature Center is proud to report how much progress we have made in maintaining a healthy financial position, while also strengthening our position for the future.

THE 2021 SEASON: GIVING GARDEN

After nourishing the soil in 2020, the Giving Garden produced 15,000+ pounds of produce for the Gemma E. Moran Food Center in 2021. Regenerative farming practices bolster the quantity and quality of the food being grown, and aid in the plant's ability to ward off pests and disease.

In addition to food production, the garden's other primary function is education. In-person and remote classes teach farming techniques to individuals, school groups, and other community gardens. As with all DPNC programs, the fees for gardening classes may be fully or partially underwritten, making them available to the broadest possible audience.

The Giving Garden benefits from the efforts of over 300 volunteers, including youth and older adults, corporate groups and local service organizations, who volunteer their time and talent from early spring preparations to the late fall harvests and many other tasks needed to keep the garden yielding delicious and nutritious results for those in need.



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? WITH MANY HERBS ALL IN ROWS

Sherrill Janeiro joined our flock of volunteers in February of 2016 after retiring, inspired by our mission and her long-time friend, Farmer Craig. Since that time, she has made an incredible impact in the Giving Garden, regularly playing an active role in helping to grow produce to help feed our community.

Not one to sit idle, after hearing that some people receiving our produce were not familiar with how to cook with some of the varieties, she took it upon herself to create recipe cards to accompany the food donations. The recipes were a mixture of her family favorites and others that highlight how to cook specific types of Giving Garden produce that are big on flavor with limited pantry ingredients. Taking the idea a step further, she created a recipe book and donated proceeds from its sale to the Nature Center.

She continues to be instrumental within the Giving Garden, enjoying the camaraderie and atmosphere found there. Her green thumb and knowledge are evident to any who visit, to the point that Farmer Craig refers to her as the "Herb Queen." And as evidence, she tripled the yield of production in our Herb Garden to over 600 pounds! We are grateful to have Sherrill Janeiro volunteering with the Nature Center.



AN INSPIRED WAY TO CELEBRATE

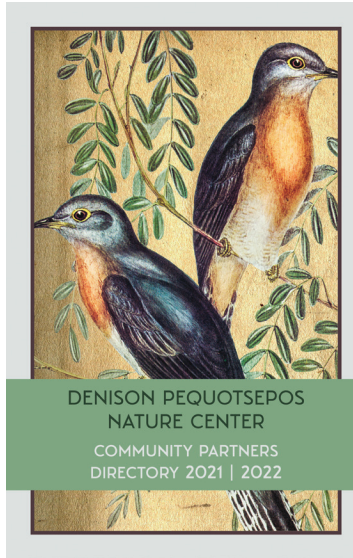
After a fully remote Green-tie Celebration in 2020, many Nature Center friends were ready to gather together in-person again. *Ready or Not!* was held in September 2021 at the newly opened Deans Mill Farm in Stonington, CT. Following a week of rain, the skies cleared to reveal a beautiful evening that showcased nature at her best.

Young program participants shared their knowledge of our animal ambassadors and their environments, demonstrating what the Nature Center does best—inspiring a love of the natural world. With contributions that were made before the event and paddles raised high by those present, *Ready or Not!* was one of our most successful Green-ties ever. We are grateful to all who answered the call to “fund the need” for nature education.

We look forward to celebrating with you again in the coming year ahead.



CHAMPIONS OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY



The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center's Community Partners provide major support for our programs and events. Large and small local businesses fund programs for the whole family, so the Nature Center can offer them at little or no cost. We are grateful to recognize this crucial support through our annual Community Partners Directory. Featured on our website and in a downloadable PDF, the Directory provides contact information, easily organized by business category, for the many dedicated companies that share our values.

We hope to build community appreciation for these champions of support. You can view and download the complete PDF version of the directory at <https://dpnc.org/community-partners> and when you next visit them, please thank them for supporting the Nature Center.

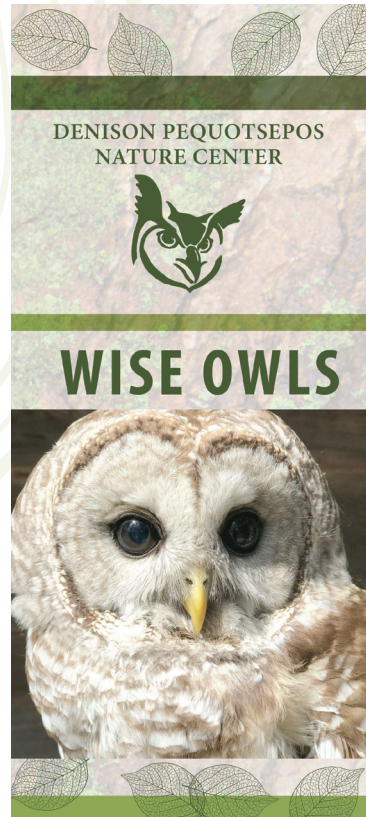
If you would like more information on how to participate in our Community Partners Directory, contact Vera Harsh at 860.536.1216, ext. 111.

AQUARION WATER COMPANY | ASA ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCTS
DRAGONFLY EQUESTRIAN CENTER | FOXWOODS RESORT & CASINO
GARVEY, STEELE & BANCROFT, LLP | KELLEY'S PACE
MYSTIC HARBOR GROUP | SPRIGS & TWIGS
STONERIDGE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY | VALENTI FAMILY OF DEALERSHIPS

THE WISE OWLS LEGACY PROGRAM

Over the years, planned gifts from dedicated friends of DPNC have been made with the same objective— building a thriving future. Large and small, they are all statements of belief in the Nature Center’s mission; taken together, their impact is transformational.

In 2021, dedicated supporters Dorrit Castle and Harry White teamed up to lead an effort to expand the ranks of our Wise Owls, or those who have planned a bequest for DPNC. Their efforts were rewarded with identified pledges of over one million dollars!



2021 GRANTORS TO DPNC

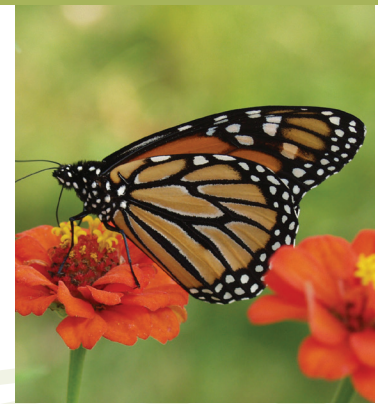
American Academy of Dermatology, Inc. | ASA Environmental Products, Inc
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut | Connecticut Humanities
Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation | Eastern Connecticut Community
Garden Association | Edward and Mary Lord Foundation | Kitchings Family
Foundation | Mystic Garden Club | Nordson Corporation Foundation
Pfizer Connecticut | Robert G. Youngs Family Foundation
Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition | State of Connecticut
Stonington Garden Club | Town of Stonington
Veolia Water N. A., Northeast, LLC

HOW GRANTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As the Nature Center navigated its way through the many challenges and changes posed by the pandemic, one document consistently guided our direction. Our Strategic Framework was under development in the months prior to the pandemic, and set clear guidance for a three-year path, encompassing the turbulent time of Covid.

In November of 2019, a team of trustees and staff participated in a workshop hosted by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut (CFECT) and the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut. “Strategic Frameworks for Nonprofits” made the case to establish a responsive plan in a timeframe condensed from the usual five years. Shortly thereafter, a generous capacity building grant by CFECT provided for a consultant to facilitate the process, which culminated in a timely document that helped DPNC to be “nimble, flexible, and relevant in a rapidly changing world,” as defined in its prologue.

Throughout fiscal year 2021, CFECT continued its long support with essential grants directed to animal care, school education programs, Covid relief daycare scholarships, and operations. The Foundation is responsive to the needs of the organizations it supports, anticipating trends in funding requirements and exploring methods to ease application and reporting processes. The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center is grateful to recognize this important grantor.



Community Foundation
of Eastern Connecticut

VOLUNTEER IMPACT

We are all connected. Together we grow and thrive. Volunteers show us every day what can be accomplished through dedication and determination. Here are some of our volunteer highlights from 2021.*



ANIMAL CARE: 21 volunteers assisted with

feeding, cleaning and enrichment. This represented approximately 86 hours per month helping to care for more than 300 rescued animals or for handling animal ambassadors for events and programming.

EDUCATION: A small but mighty team of 7 volunteers returned for Summer Camp, donating 560 hours of their time. This group was restricted in size due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, several former campers were among the ranks.

EVENTS: 2021 brought the return of signature events such as Woodland Egg Hunt, Green-tie, Spooky Nature Trail, and Luminaria. 78 people donated a total of 344 hours, helping to ensure that DPNC guests had a positive experience.

GIVING GARDEN: 2,139 hours were given by volunteers in our Giving Garden, allowing us to donate over 15,000 lbs. of produce to the food insecure in New London County. Volunteers bolstered the herb garden, increasing production to over 600 pounds. Corporate teams returned, helping to further our efforts in growing produce and creating an outdoor space to provide pollinator habitat.

GROUNDS: Our Habitat Restoration team of 12 individuals gave 377 hours to help eradicate invasive plants and restore native plants at Coogan Farm. They experimented with different techniques including solarization, smothering, cutting and pulling. The team also continued planting grant-funded restoration projects at the farm, as well as caring for the native species in the farm parking lot islands making busy, buzzing pollinators happy. **By calendar year*

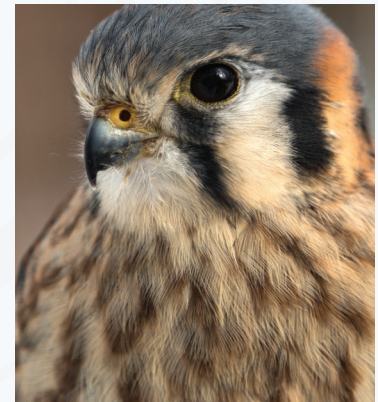
REMEMBRANCE AND TRIBUTE

IN HONOR OF

John Alfred and
Josephine Stea Hatch
Dorrit Castle
Susan Charette
Gwen Coughlin
DPNC Staff
Lori Edwards
Evans Mobil
Farmer Craig
Lili Fillion
Maggie Jones
Doris Mager and SOAR
Mark Mitsko
Constance Denison Pemberton
Heather Perinis
Sally Taylor

IN MEMORY OF

Drew Ayers	Pamela Crandall	Pat Flaherty
William G. Crane	Harriett Nye Elliott	Sally Halsey
Extra Terrific owl	Kali Finegan	S. Lederer
Henry B. Freye	Mary Ann Gregory	David B. Lyman
Louise Hoffman	Marion Ludington Hughes	Michael Neddo
Gretchen Schur Leming	Frederick E. Lord, Jr.	Padma
Ellen Coogan Marshall	Dion Williams Moore	Pasqualina Reale
Dennis O'Brien	Jean Odgers	Judi Wood
Beth Kennedy Pfeiffer	Louise Quarto	
Marcia Robinson	George H. Wallace	





TWO GREAT LOCATIONS, ONE GREAT PLACE:

**Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center
Main Campus**

109 Pequotsepos Road, Mystic, CT
*Exhibits, Live Animals, Trails,
Classrooms and Preschool*

Coogan Farm Nature & Heritage Center

162 Greenmanville Avenue, Mystic, CT
*Welcome Center, Classrooms,
Trails and Giving Garden*

**Denison Pequotsepos
Nature Center**

dpnc.org 860.536.1216