

Philly's Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



The Service's urban wildlife refuge partnerships raise awareness and capacity to engage a new and more diverse constituency in meaningful, collaborative ways to nurture an appreciation of wildlife conservation. Philly's Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship, or Philly's NEST, Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is a multifaceted community engagement program, which includes innovative hands-on programming at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, schools and neighborhoods, engaging Philadelphians in conservation action. Philly's NEST inspires environmental stewardship, increasing the number of citizens actively engaged in conservation of the Delaware Watershed.

Philly's NEST will enable us to more strategically create linkages between key locations within the Delaware Watershed. Those target areas will be: Strawberry Mansion Neighborhood in the East Park Reservoir area, Cobb's Creek, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, and Wissahickon and Tacony Creeks. The program will encourage increased support and participation in wildlife conservation at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. The program also aims to attract new participants in underserved communities, specifically youth, in conservation of the urban environment. Moreover, it will raise the Service's profile in the broader national wildlife conservation effort and address

one of the most critical issues for the future of conservation- relevancy to and communication with an increasingly urban America.

Through stronger partnerships and collaboration, we will collectively help more Philadelphians enjoy and care for natural environments within their own community. As a team, we will be able to increase participation in the conservation of natural resources throughout the city. The goal of the program is to implement an expansive community-based conservation program that engages new and diverse audiences, increases quality habitat in Philadelphia for migrating birds and other wildlife, and supports the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This goal will be achieved through the following specific objectives to be carried out in Philadelphia, in partnership with the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge:

1. Develop a native plant propagation program, in partnership with Fairmount Park.
2. Create a network of habitat restoration projects at schoolyards, in Fairmount Park and at the refuge in order to expand the availability of suitable habitat for migratory birds, while improving watershed health.
3. Engage target audiences in conservation action by providing them with the tools, resources, and opportunities to improve habitat in their yards, schools and communities and to participate in citizen science activities.
4. Integrate the refuge's education programs into Audubon's outreach initiatives at schools. This program strives to facilitate an understanding of natural processes and human activities that may positively or adversely affect both wildlife resources and the human environment so



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Students from local schools on a field trip at the refuge, learning about wildlife and habitat.



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that our young citizens, as future conservation leaders, can make sound environmental decisions.

5. Bring target audiences to the refuge to explore the natural world, participate in citizen science projects and assist with habitat improvements.
6. Offer unique interpretive walks in specific locations to help residents understand local environmental issues.
7. Provide training opportunities for teachers, refuge volunteers, Outward Bound instructors and SCA interns at the refuge to increase their understanding of the natural world and inspire them to action.
8. Provide collaborative programming for city schools. The refuge, the Student Conservation Association, Outward Bound and Audubon will provide joint outreach to better serve students in Philadelphia with environmental education.
9. Develop a citizen science program around a web cam installed at the refuge.

Each partner plays a critical role in implementing Philly's NEST program that includes youth leadership, habitat restoration, and innovative education through school programs, community events, and training opportunities.



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Students from Mastery Charter School creating wildlife habitat on their school grounds.



Through strong collaboration, the partnership strives to help more Philadelphians enjoy and care for natural environments within their own community.