

georgia update

FALL/WINTER 2018

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Leaving a Legacy on GEORGIA'S COAST

A MOTHER'S LOVE IS THE EARLIEST AND AMONG THE MOST POWERFUL influences in a child's life. It can direct the course of that life and often guides major decisions. Eloise Bailey Thompson's (1928-2017) love of family, history, nature and her community was passed along to her children Alan, Bettina, Jim and John,

and it is in her name that they made a generous donation that helped The Nature Conservancy buy and protect Cabin Bluff, in a critically important location on the Georgia coast. It was a landscape that was close to Eloise's heart and the family's home.

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Eloise was a school teacher in St. Marys, Georgia but also a local historian who researched and documented Camden County history. Her subject matter included Grover Island, a small but important piece of the Cabin Bluff tract located near the mouth of the Crooked River.

Eloise found that in 1799 Grover Island became what was likely the first federally-protected conservation land in the United States. President John Adams ordered the purchase of the land to preserve its live oak timber resources, which were used in shipbuilding. In 1926, amid the steel age, Grover Island was sold to a private buyer.

Growing up about two miles away, the Bailey children were intrigued by Grover Island's forested beauty. As adults, the siblings could think of no better place to protect for future generations.

Cabin Bluff is one of the last large, undeveloped portions of the Georgia coast. This lush landscape of islands, marsh, tidal creeks, maritime forests, flatwoods and sandhills sits just across the Intracoastal Waterway from Cumberland Island National Seashore. A renowned hunting, fishing and sporting destination since the 1800s, Cabin Bluff is a significant natural area,



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the protection of which will benefit both the globally important longleaf pine species and people who participate in the outdoor recreation economy. The protection of Cabin Bluff is a priority also because its condition, elevation and location make it an important site for ecosystem resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change.

The Conservancy plans to sell a portion of the property to a private, conservation-minded entity and the remainder to The Georgia Department of Natural Resources for the creation of a new wildlife management area that will be open to the public.

“As an educator, historian and nature lover, our mother would be ecstatic to know that our family is helping The Nature Conservancy protect land that is so historically and environmentally significant,” says Alan Bailey.

Conservancy staff and partners are using the property as a remote office, meeting location and research site while planning for its long-term management and protection.

THANK YOU!

CONSERVANCY DONORS HELPED US RECEIVE A MATCH OF \$1.5M FROM THE BOBOLINK FOUNDATION THAT WILL FURTHER PROTECT THE GOPHER TORTOISE AND THE FORESTS THAT KEEP GEORGIA HEALTHY FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE. THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING YOUR SUPPORT TO GO TWICE AS FAR!

COVER: The view from one of Cabin Bluff's coastal habitats. ©Sheila Del Santro/TNC; ABOVE: Jim Bailey, Bettina Bailey George, Alan Bailey and Johnny Bailey with their mother, the late Eloise Bailey Thompson. ©Alan Bailey

Together we CAN save the GOPHER TORTOISE

Strong relationships are a key component of success in conservation. Many of the results we achieve are the culmination of years—sometimes decades—of collaboration, communication and commitment among partners. But are there distinct characteristics that cause a seemingly disparate group of organizations and individuals to reach their shared goals? The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative may hold some answers.

The Nature Conservancy, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other vital partners are working together with the goal of protecting a minimum of 65 viable gopher tortoise populations to preclude the need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act. By 2020, the group also aims to raise \$150 million from state, federal and private sources to protect longleaf pine forests and sandhill communities, the gopher tortoise's habitat. The Bobolink Foundation, founded in 1986 by Hank and Wendy Paulson, is one of the initiative's funders. Justin Pepper, the Foundation's chief conservation officer, believes the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative will be recognized as a stand-out collaboration.

"The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative works well because the partners harness site-specific knowledge, role clarity and an elevated level of trust in a way that maximizes the impact of each partner," says Pepper. "For example, the nongame section of

Georgia DNR is a tremendous public partner. They not only support much of the on-the-ground science, but also facilitate collaboration across the nonprofit organizations."

The Bobolink Foundation made an initial pledge of \$5 million and an additional \$1.5 million in matching funds for gifts to the Initiative from Conservancy donors. The foundation's decades-long support of conservation in the Altamaha Basin and existing relationships with several members of the initiative contributed to Bobolink's early and ardent support.

"We appreciated the leadership shown by Eleanor Ratchford and the Knobloch Family Foundation which was already committed to the effort. The opportunity to co-invest with another foundation was an added value," Pepper says.

The Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative is acutely focused on areas in southern Georgia that scientists have identified as protection and restoration priorities. As it works toward its goals, the collaboration may also become a model for turning good partnerships into successful conservation outcomes.



Justin Pepper and Nature Conservancy trustee Cody Laird on Cody's farm where he has restored longleaf pine for several years. © David Weitnauer

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LOOK INSIDE For the inspiring story behind one family's support of coastal conservation.



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The Legacy Club
Celebrating 25 years
and 25,000 members
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Thank you

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