



WILDLIFE  
LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY

## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT


### THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

The mission of the Wildlife Leadership Academy is to engage and empower high school age youth to become Conservation Ambassadors to ensure a sustained wildlife, fisheries and natural resource legacy for future generations.

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"I can be doing my part even if I am only at the age of sixteen. I can be teaching and spreading information about the things that I adore. Being young doesn't give me a disadvantage, but rather gives me opportunities. "

~Kaitlyn, PA Bucktails Alum

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR & PRESIDENT

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Do you ever wonder about the legacy of our natural resources? Will the next generation step up?

**We hope that when you read our Wildlife Leadership Academy Annual Report this year, you will be reminded that YES - our conservation future is in good hands!** We hope that you will be inspired by these young conservation leaders who are making a difference in their backyards and beyond.

The backbone of our vision for the Wildlife Leadership Academy is to support our alumni from high school to college to career. **We want to ensure that our young conservation leaders feel engaged and supported as they grow from inquisitive teens to professional adults.** Whether it is offering college visit days, taking them to professional meetings, or giving them career advice via our Academy Alumni Network, we aim to connect them with their peers and other professionals so they can find success.

All of this begins with planting the seeds of confidence and inspiration in our students at their first Academy field school. A PA Bucktails Class of 2017 Alum, Kaitlyn, shares the spark that can be created...

"Wildlife Leadership Academy showed me that you don't have to have a degree to be a genuine conservationist. I can be doing my part even if I am only at the age of sixteen. I can be teaching and spreading information about the things that I adore. Being young doesn't give me a disadvantage, but rather gives me opportunities. Wildlife Leadership Academy was the opportunity that I needed."

Your support ensures that we can continue to plant the seeds of opportunity and serve these amazing young leaders as they grow. **We are so grateful to have you on this journey.**

Yours in Doing What Matters,



**Michele Kittell**  
Executive Director



**Joseph Reibman**  
President of the Board





"WLA has challenged me to be a Conservation Ambassador and that really changed how I think as well. I have to be creative and think about how I can impact conservation through outreach activities in my community." - Kaden, PA Bucktails

# MISSION

**The mission of the Wildlife Leadership Academy is to engage and empower high school age youth to become Conservation Ambassadors to ensure a sustained wildlife, fisheries and natural resource legacy for future generations.**

A year round program, the Academy begins with rigorous summer field schools that focus on wildlife/ fisheries biology and conservation as well as leadership skills development and continues with community outreach through education, service, media engagement, creative arts, and outdoor mentorship.



## INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

The Wildlife Leadership Academy is invested in creating a lifelong experience for our students – this commitment impacts not only the students we serve by providing personal and professional development but the communities they engage with as they take action on behalf of our natural resources.

Our vision for growth - the **Wildlife Leadership Academy Experience** - is focused on serving our students' needs as they grow from high school to college to career.

Our aim is to offer key opportunities beyond their first year of Conservation Ambassador Training that set them up for success in their professional lives.

# THE WILDLIFE

# LEADERSHIP ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

## CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR TRAINING

### SUMMER FIELD SCHOOLS



### OUTREACH SUPPORT



monthly e-newsletter

video workshops

social media engagement

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



college visit days

professional natural resource meeting attendance

### ADVANCED EDUCATIONAL TRAININGS

Weekend workshop intensives for Alumni focusing on specific conservation themes such as plants, GIS/GPS, nature photography, etc.

### ADVANCED LEADERSHIP TRAINING

A one year leadership and professional development program for Academy alumni that expands their leadership skill set, engages them with environmental policy makers, and enriches their transition into college and the workplace.

### ACADEMY ALUMNI NETWORK

- annual reunion/networking opportunity
- online networking platform
- career building workshops
- career focused podcast



HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE

CAREER



# WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CLASS OF 2017



"What made my WLA Drummers experience special to me was the fantastic team I was placed on. I formed true friendships with all of my team members and learned a great deal with them. Thanks to my teammates I learned how to work for the better of the group; whether it be through covering each other's weaknesses or by keeping each other motivated and sharp."

- Nathan, PA Drummers Class of 2017



5 FIELD SCHOOLS	12TH YEAR	2ND YEAR	5TH YEAR	6TH YEAR	1ST YEAR
<div>118</div> <div>Youth participants attended the 2017 field schools.</div> <div>In the summer of 2017, we offered high-achieving youth ranging in age from 14- to 17-years old a comprehensive study of Pennsylvania's wildlife and fish species at five field schools. In addition, 20 individuals participated as adult mentors, 17 of these adults were school teachers.</div>	<div>BUCKTAILS</div> <div>Focusing on the white-tailed deer and their habitat.</div> <div>20 new Students, 4 youth mentors, and 4 adult mentors. Youth hailed from 20 different PA counties and one county in Maryland.</div> <div>JUNE 13-17 Stone Valley Recreation Area, Huntingdon County</div>	<div>BASS</div> <div>Focusing on bass and the Susquehanna River watershed.</div> <div>20 new Students, 4 youth mentors and 4 adult mentors. Youth hailed from 19 different PA counties and one county in Maryland.</div> <div>JUNE 26-JULY 1 Camp Oak Hill Southern Lancaster County</div>	<div>BROOKIES</div> <div>Focusing on brook trout and cold water conservation.</div> <div>19 new Students, 4 youth mentors, and 4 adult mentors. Youth hailed from 15 different PA counties.</div> <div>JULY 18-22 Sieg Conference Center Clinton County</div>	<div>DRUMMERS</div> <div>Focusing on ruffed grouse and early successional habitat.</div> <div>19 new Students, 4 youth mentors, 4 adult mentors and two apprentices. Youth hailed from 14 different PA counties.</div> <div>JULY 18-22 Stone Valley Recreation Area, Huntingdon County</div>	<div>GOBBLERS</div> <div>Focusing on the wild turkey and management of their habitat.</div> <div>20 new Students, 4 youth mentors, and 4 adult mentors. Youth hailed from 19 different PA counties.</div> <div>JULY 25-29 Stone Valley Recreation Area, Huntingdon County</div>





Wildlife Leadership Academy has given me hands-on experience, connected me with environmental professionals, and therefore added direction to my dreams.

*- Vinisha, PA Bucktails Alum*



As an aspiring ecology major and future wildlife biologist WLA gave me an incredible taste of what to expect from my future career.

*- Zac, PA Bucktails Alum*



The Academy gave me a deeper understanding of how to advocate for conservation, as well as how to practice it in my own community.

*- Dinah, PA Brookies Alum*



My Wildlife Leadership Academy experience was extremely special because it pushed me outside my comfort zone.

*- Katie, PA Gobblers Alum*

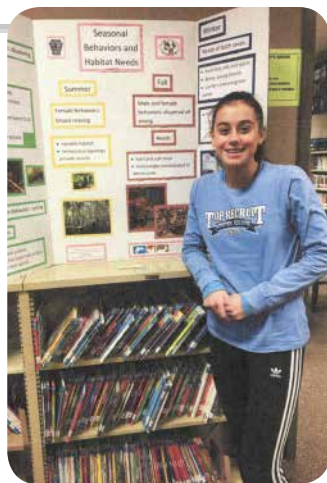


# GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITIES ACROSS PA

Equipped with knowledge and confidence, after field school, students extend their conservation knowledge to their communities in the form of EDUCATION, SERVICE, MEDIA ENGAGEMENT, CREATIVE ARTS, AND OUTDOOR MENTORSHIP.



**SERVICE** ..... Youth are encouraged to participate in activities with wildlife biologists and assist local conservation organizations with field projects like stream cleaning and habitat enhancement.



**EDUCATION** ..... Youth give educational presentations at their local sportsmen's clubs and school classrooms, share their tri-folds at local locations like libraries, businesses, and community organizations.

**CREATIVE ARTS** ..... Youth are encouraged to connect with the outdoors through the arts. Students create portfolios of nature photos, write journal entries about their experiences in the natural world, sketch, paint and more!



**MEDIA ENGAGEMENT** ..... Youth write articles for the Academy's Next Gen Blog, their local papers, and conservation magazines. They also engage the media through interviews with their community newspapers and radio stations.

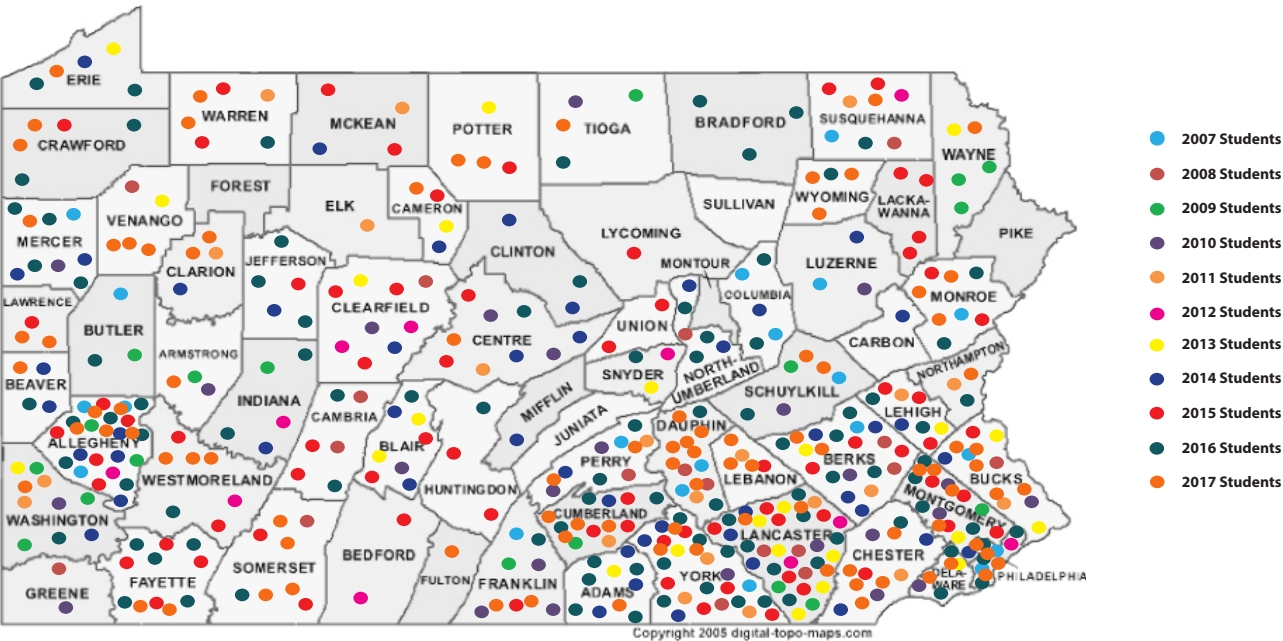


**OUTDOOR MENTORSHIP** ..... Youth get other youth and adults outside! From teaching other students about plants on a hike to mentoring a little brother or sister in fishing - students are passing on their passion for the out-of-doors!





# ACADEMY YOUTH DISTRIBUTION SINCE 2007



## ENGAGEMENT WITH CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

**Our students have engaged with conservation organizations and state agencies including:**

Audubon PA  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Clear Water Conservancy  
Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Trout Unlimited  
Quality Deer Management Association

The Wildlife Society, PA Chapter  
Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
local and state parks  
conservation districts

# OUTREACH ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2007

Our impact goes far beyond one week... it travels to citizens throughout the state of Pennsylvania through our trained Conservation Ambassadors.

Number of Students Served

469

PA Counties They Hail from

62

Number of Outreach Projects completed

4,194

Number of Hours of Work Given to their Communities

16,000+

Number of Citizens Engaged

72,000+



# REPORTS FROM THE FIELD



## Kaden Robinson

"Since completing Bucktails Field School in June, I have been busy completing many outreach projects. **During my projects it has been fun meeting new people and working with different organizations.** One of my very first projects was organizing a kayak stream cleanup. I met with a watershed educator to discuss outreach ideas. She knew that unfortunately there is a lot of trash that ends up being dumped into our local Shermans Creek. So I organized an event with fellow high school students and home school students. We floated down Shermans Creek in our kayaks to look for trash along the banks and we collected a tire, half of a TV, a window screen, and many glass and plastic bottles. We properly disposed of the trash we found."



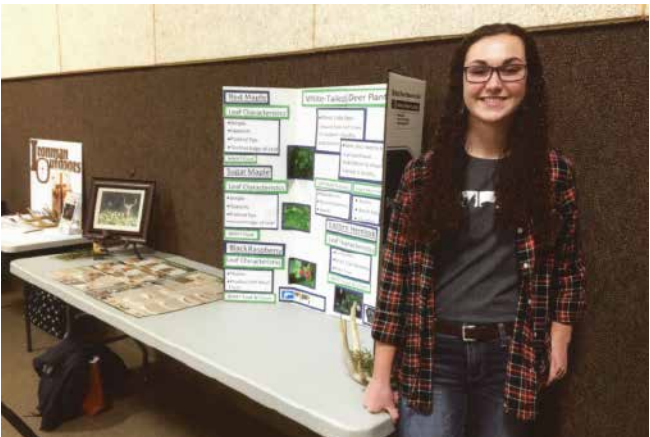
## Noelle LaFaver

"For my outreach projects, I have immersed myself into things that have interested me. Since attending the Wildlife Leadership Academy, my photography skills have been growing every day. I have made a photography website, where I can keep and show off the pictures I have taken. I have also researched wildlife parasites that have been known to infect pets for a pet expo this fall. **The outreach that I have been doing has really helped me develop character and figure out my areas of strengths and weaknesses.**"



## Nick Silvis

"Since Drummers in mid July, I have done various activities related to conservation and the environment. I made a trifold and set up a book display in my local library talking about our waste footprint and how to reduce our consumption, recycling, and reusing supplies. I teamed up with Manada Conservancy to give a presentation on bugs and the keen powers of observation to children between kindergarten and fifth grade at the public library. I have written various blog posts, drew some nature and scientific drawings, and have completed a nature photography collage. **I have taken lots of people on hikes and plant identification walks through various state and national parks.** I am also working with Manada to organize a stream side cleanup or other service projects. "



## Kaitlyn Royal

"Since attending WLA, I have been doing macro-invertebrate collecting. My Envirothon team has been doing water quality testing on local streams. We identify the macros and then write the report for our findings. **We can then use those results to talk to underclassmen about the importance of water quality.** We look at how water quality corresponds with biodiversity in a stream or river."



# ACADEMY ALUMNI NETWORK

Below you'll see Academy Alumni from high school age, to soon-to-be college graduates all together at the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Wildlife Society meeting. This meeting is just one of the ways we work to connect our Alumni with each other! **Through the Academy Alumni Network we offer...**

## CONNECTION

Through a new website students can connect with instructors and each other as well as keep up to date on the Academy.

## SUPPORT

In a new online platform, students can connect in a private group where they can seek career advice, job opportunities, and general support in their journey from college to career.

## SERVICE

Students can take advantage of the opportunity to give back to the Academy by volunteering, working or teaching at the Academy summer field schools.



# Growing with us and gaining skills

After attending as participants, students have the opportunity to continue to gain experience- giving them workforce experience as they are trained in program logistics, conservation education, leadership skill development, risk management and staff management.

## STUDENT | age 14-17

20 new students attend each field school every year. Students are accepted into the program through an application process.

## YOUTH MENTOR

If students excel in their outreach, they are eligible to return as an Assistant Team Leader and serve as a youth mentor to a new class of Conservation Ambassadors.

## APPRENTICE

Students who continue to follow through with their community outreach efforts are invited to attend in their third year as apprentices helping “behind the scenes” at field schools.



## ACADEMY SUPPORT TEAM

Alumni who are interested can work for the Academy Support Team (AST) at one or more field schools each summer. ASTs provide logistical support as well as take a leadership role in team building activities and more!

## ACADEMY ELITE AKA LEAD COORDINATOR

Academy Elites are trained to become Lead Coordinators for a field school, taking on the more advanced roles. These include leading the week of field school, being responsible for staff and program logistics, as well as risk management and safety. Academy Elite are selected based on maturity, responsibility, and leadership potential.



# ESTABLISHING A LEGACY CAMPAIGN

In 2017, we continued towards our 1 MILLION dollar campaign goal to support the Academy's three year vision.

## EXPAND OUR EXCLUSIVE CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

**Through partnership and additional staffing,** three additional field schools will be developed focusing on bass, turkey, and plants. By meeting this goal, 432 more youth will be engaged and in turn will contribute to conservation education and service work in their communities.

## CONNECT OUR AMBASSADORS THROUGH AN ACADEMY ALUMNI NETWORK

**The Academy Alumni Network will offer** connection as our students continue to grow in their careers by offering support in the form of career advice and networking opportunities. Meeting this goal will ensure success for our Academy Alumni, 700 strong by the end of 2018, through a network of support as they move from high school to college to career.

## LAUNCH THE ADVANCE LEADERSHIP TRAINING (ALT) PROGRAM

**The ALT program will be an advanced leadership and professional development program** for Academy alumni that expands their leadership skill set, engages them with environmental policy makers, and enriches their transition into college and the work place.



## LETS TALK TURKEY!

### 2017 WILD GAME & WINE

Led by our board of directors and hosted by the Schuylkill Country Club our 3rd Annual Wild Game and Wine Dinner was held in the spring of 2017.

The evening highlighted the WILD TURKEY - our newest addition to our field school curriculum. Keynote speaker, wildlife biologist, and turkey expert, Bob Eriksen (below), shared highlights of this wonderful PA species! **In total, \$1,550 was raised!**



### A NEW PARTNERSHIP - PA GOBBLERS

With the financial and in-kind support of the National Wild Turkey Federation PA State Chapter - a new field school was launched - PA GOBBLERS!

Director of NWTF Development, Ray Smith shared: **"After 12 years of employment with the NWTF I can say that this very well may be the best money we have spent working to recruit younger people to help tell our story."**



## Laurie Enders

### PA GOBBLERS LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER

*"What was special about my Wildlife Leadership Academy experience was the great atmosphere. As soon as I arrived at WLA I immediately felt welcomed. Everyone was nice and caring. When we were in sessions everyone was attentive to what was going on, and inquisitive. In trivia everyone was competitive but there was never anyone putting anyone else down and I really enjoyed that. Another element that made my WLA experience special was that my team and everyone at the camp gave me a chance to be a leader. I was granted the opportunities to speak at our town hall meeting, lead my team cadences on the last day, and I even got the chance to lead the entire group cadence, something that made me so unbelievably happy I talked about it the entire way home. My fellow campers and the counselors at camp nominated me to receive the leadership award. Winning this was so special and incredible to me that I cried when they announced my name. **I couldn't believe that my peers and people I looked up to saw me as a leader and that just put my experience over the top. I will never forget that moment and it will live with me forever.**"*



# PAYING IT FORWARD

The Pay It Forward challenge encourages students to raise \$500 each to “Pay It Forward” to next year’s incoming class of Conservation Ambassadors.

The Class of 2017 raised \$5,813 from 55 donors!

## CLASS OF 2017 BLUE POLO SOCIETY MEMBERS - \$500+ RAISED



DONOVAN FAITH



MATT FORD



LAURIE ENDERS



PIERCE LANDIS



ZACH CLINE



RACHEL OLVER



GARRISON RUSS



CAVAN MCINTYRE-BREWER



DERRICK VIA

"I still remember the first day of WLA vividly, being showed to my cabin and pinning on my name tag. I met my team of four other like-minded high schoolers and I fit right in. After the parents left we met in the main room, at that moment the most educational experience of my life began. Experts from a multitude of fields came in and taught me about an animal I had never even heard of. Now I am educated enough to teach other people about not only the Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock, but about the importance of having a varied ecosystem and managing of animals. Most importantly though is what I learned about leadership. I learned that just by my impact on my local community I can make a change for not only the betterment of our natural resources, but for the betterment of our future generations. I want to Pay It Forward so I can share my incredible experience. To give another person the knowledge that they can make a difference."

## RALPH ABELE EXCELLENCE IN OUTREACH AWARD

Newly named in 2017 in honor of conservation leader Ralph Abele, each year, this award is given to students who excel as Conservation Ambassadors. For each field school a \$500 scholarship is awarded to the student who is top in their class for outreach.

### CLASS OF 2017 AWARDEES WERE:

**PA BUCKTAILS: John Sandala**  
Gave 206 hours to his community.  
Reached 37 people with his outreach.

**PA BASS: Jonathan Simak**  
Gave 80 hours to his community.  
Reached 269 people with his outreach.

**PA BROOKIES: Lenka Platt**  
Gave 37 hours to her community.  
Reached 596 people with her outreach.

**PA DRUMMERS: Pierce Landis**  
Gave 371 hours to his community.  
Reached 1,531 people with his outreach.

**PA GOBBLERS: Lori Enders**  
Gave 104 hours to her community.  
Reached 1,135 people with her outreach.

## 2017 WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FINANCIALS

Individual Contributions	82,092
Scholarship Fund Contributions	20,251
Foundations	141,150
State/Federal Grants	112,493
Earned Revenue - Tuition	29,301
Earned Revenue - Other	2,501
Academy Reunion	1,461
Wild Game Dinner - Fundraiser	5,243
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$394,492</b>
College Scholarships	2,000
Salaries & Wages	120,878
Intern Wages	3,850
Payroll Expenses	11,252
Workers Comp Insurance	3,676
Accounting Fees	4,913
Instructor Fees (Curriculum Coord.; other instructors)	33,722
Office Supplies	2,880
Program Supplies	29,864
Computer & Software	3,205
Fundraising Supplies	1,056
Academy Reunion	4,027
Wild Game Dinner	3,639
Telephone	2,071
Postage, shipping, delivery	5,082
Website & Internet	1,044
Equipment/Vehicle Rental	3,445
Program Transportation Rentals	5,344
Printing & Copying	15,574
Promotions & Publications	3,452
Program Facility	14,761
Program Meals	31,317
Office Rental	7,633
Utilities	508
Travel & meetings expenses	12,422
Insurance - auto,liability,etc.	5,071
Membership dues - organization	699
Background checks	232
Miscellaneous	1,127
Bank Charges	99
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$334,845</b>
Net Operating Income	59,647



# OUR TEAM

The Wildlife Leadership Academy is led by the efforts and vision of our board of directors.

## ACADEMY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Joseph Reibman, Esq.**  
President

**James Brett**  
Honorary Director

**Peter Duncan**  
Vice President

**Gary Wessner**

**Randy Hensinger**  
Treasurer

**Tim Romig**

## YEAR ROUND ACADEMY STAFF



**Michele Kittell**  
Executive Director

Leads administration and program growth and development for the Wildlife Leadership Academy.



**Katie Cassidy**  
Program & Outreach Coordinator

Leads marketing and post-field school mentorship for our Conservation Ambassadors.



**Sara Banker**  
Admin Specialist

Manages bookkeeping, alumni and donor records, participant admissions, and hiring summer staff.



**Gary Alt**  
Curriculum Coordinator

Leads curriculum development, implementation, and assessment for all field schools.

Summer staff and volunteers make the Wildlife Leadership Academy program a safe, fun, and supportive environment!



**KEY SUMMER STAFF INCLUDES** full summer interns and at each field school:

- **Health Care Coordinator** -provides a healthy and safe week for our students by overseeing medical history and on-site needs.
- **Academy Elite** - aka Lead Coordinator (Alumni) - Leads the field school.
- **Academy Support Team** (2 Alumni) - provide support to the Lead Coordinator.

**VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN ESSENTIAL TO THE ACADEMY'S SUCCESS FROM THE START.**

IN 2017, VOLUNTEER SERVICES INCLUDED 1,776 HOURS OF SUPPORT WITH AN ESTIMATED COST OF **\$40,848.**





# THANK YOU!

THE WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IS ONLY POSSIBLE because of support from every level - from sponsorships to our partners at state agencies and conservation organizations - these folks are the reason that we can educate and empower the next generation of conservation leaders!

## HABITAT LEVEL SPONSOR \$10,000+



## HEMLOCK \$5,000+



## MOUNTAIN LAUREL \$1,000+

The Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation  
PPL Corporation



## GRASSROOTS \$250+

Organizations/foundations who gave specifically to Academy tuition scholarships as well as college scholarships to youth who excel in their outreach activities.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Allegheny Highlands Bird Club                                     | PA Chapter of The Wildlife Society                       |
| Allegheny Toyota  | PA Outdoor Writers Association                           |
| Appalachian Audubon   | Peter A. Yeager Memorial Foundation                      |
| Black Forest Conservation Assn                                    | Potter County Conservation District                      |
| Eastern Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation                      | Quality Deer Management Assn. (QDMA), Mason Dixon Branch |
| Falcon Foundation   | QDMA, SE PA Branch, In memory of Mike Gerth              |
| Fryburg Sportsmens Club   | Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation                            |
| Lebanon County Conservation District                              | Safari Club International, Pittsburgh Chapter            |
| Mark Martin Motors  | South Mountain Audubon                                   |
| McKean County Conservation District                               | Trout Unlimited, Oil Creek Chapter                       |
| National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), Cameron County Longbeards | Trout Unlimited, PA Council                              |
| NWTF, Susquehanna Long Beards                                     | Trout Unlimited, SE Montgomery County                    |

## FOUNDATION & AGENCY SUPPORT

Foundations and agencies that have invested in the Academy's mission.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Amaranth Foundation                                 | Reidler Foundation                   |
| Colcom Foundation                                   | Richard King Mellon Foundation       |
| Laurel Foundation                                   | Schuylkill Area Community Foundation |
| PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program | Sordoni Family Foundation            |
| PA DEP Environmental Education Grant                | The Degenstein Foundation            |
| Pittsburgh Foundation                               | The Foundation for PA Watersheds     |
| PNC Charitable Trust                                | The NRA Foundation                   |

## PARTNERING AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

Provide support in the form of staff time as instructors/mentors and/or Advisory Team members, facility use, equipment or materials.

Advanced Telemetry Systems, Inc. | Cedar Crest College | Chester Water Authority | Clearwater Conservancy | Clinton County Conservation District | Hunters Sharing the Harvest | PA Department of Environmental Protection | Kutztown University | Lancaster County Conservation District | NWTF, Pennsylvania Chapter | Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art | PA Fish and Boat Commission | PA Game Commission | PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources | Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association | Pennsylvania State University | Penn State Dubois | Penn State Extension | QDMA, PA Council and Chapters | Ruffed Grouse Society | Susquehanna University | The Wildlife Society, PA Chapter | Texas Brigades | Trout Unlimited, Pennsylvania Council | TU, Lloyd Wilson Chapter | TU, Spring Creek Chapter