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Delaware Nature Society's Derek Stoner Receives Conservation Award

Derek Stoner received the Conservation Award from the Delmarva Ornithological Society (DOS) at a presentation Feb. 15. Stoner is a family program and conservation project coordinator at the Delaware Nature Society (DNS).

Stoner was recognized for his diverse achievements in land management; reforestation; birding and birding education for youth, families and adults; and as a DOS officer.

"We are proud of Derek's award and accomplishments and know that he has influenced many adults and children with his commitment and enthusiasm for nature conservation," says Brian Winslow, executive director of the Delaware Nature Society.

"Derek's talents are many and far reaching," notes Bill Stewart, conservation chair of DOS.

"In the past ten years, the name 'Derek Stoner' has become synonymous with birds, bird conservation and bird education in the tri-state area."

At DNS, Stoner leads a wide variety of bird programs. He leads walks and trips for adults, families, and children year-round. He assists with the Ashland Hawk Watch on a weekly basis in the fall and volunteers his time at the site on weekends.

Since 2002, Stoner has coordinated the conservation program at Middle Run Natural Area, which is owned by New Castle County and managed for conservation by Delaware Nature Society. Thousands of volunteers have helped to plant more than 33,000 trees at this 860-acre park, which is located near Paper Mill and Possum Park roads in Newark.

Stoner and his cadre of volunteers are working to increase the park's forest habitat as well as to increase stream buffers next to Middle Run, which is a tributary of White Clay Creek. Stoner also conducts five bird surveys at Middle Run each month. As the trees have matured, they have begun to attract nesting blue-winged, prairie warblers and yellow-breasted chats as well as other bird, mammal, and insect species that depend on this habitat.

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"I first met Derek when he came to interview for a job," recalls Joe Sebastiani, seasonal programs team leader at the Delaware Nature Society. "All of a sudden, during the question and answer process, an American bittern flew to a pool of water outside the window," says Sebastiani. "Any birder knows that an American bittern sighting is a rare treat and Derek had never seen one in his life. We all went to look at the bird and I thought...this is a sign...hire this guy!"

"Derek has deeply and positively influenced many people, young and old in his conservation and environmental education work," adds Sebastiani. "I congratulate him on receiving this award."

For more information about the Delmarva Ornithological Society, visit <http://www.dosbirds.org/>. For more information on the Delaware Nature Society, visit www.delawarenaturesociety.org or call 239-2334.

