

Flo Butler – Builder

Woman's Building Skills Help Protect Wildlife

By TODD McLEISH

Hheavy construction isn't typically considered to be "woman's work," especially not if the woman is 72 years old. But Flo Butler certainly isn't typical.

A retired research director for Technic Inc., Flo now devotes her volunteer time to helping The Nature Conservancy with much-needed construction projects.

"I was brought up on a backwoods farm in Wales, Maine," she explains. "In Maine you have to learn to do everything yourself. My husband, John, and I did a lot of building and remodeling at our own home, and those skills came in handy for The Nature Conservancy."

The Conservancy is the largest international environmental group and is dedicated to protecting land for endangered species. Flo got

involved with the Conservancy's work as a result of a business trip she took to California.

"I have always been very involved in the outdoors," says the Smithfield, Rhode Island resident. "While driving near Joshua Tree National Park in southern California, I visited a wildlife preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy to see vermilion flycatchers, a very beautiful bird. It was on this trip that I became very much aware of the work of the Conservancy."



in which sit professionally produced signs.

Visitors can see Flo's handiwork at the Conservancy's Ell Pond Preserve in Hopkinton, RI, the Queens River Preserve in Exeter, RI, and at Goosewing Beach Preserve in Little Compton, RI, among other places.

"Besides the signs, I also build bird nesting boxes and I'm available to help with any odd chores they have. I helped build a new gate at Fogland Marsh in Tiverton and replaced plywood siding on cottages at Goosewing."

According to Ginger Carpenter, director of science and stewardship for the Rhode Island field office of The Nature Conservancy, Flo has been an invaluable resource.

"She's a remarkable woman," said Carpenter. "Volunteers with excellent carpentry skills don't come along very often. We've been very lucky to have her on our team."

Back in Rhode Island, she immediately looked up the Conservancy's local office and got involved. Her most recent project entails building the framework for signs at various wildlife refuges across the state. She installs 4-by-4 posts, cross beams and plywood backboards

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