

A man and a woman are standing in a field of tall, dry grass. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored jacket, a cap, and tan pants. The man on the right is wearing a tan jacket, a cap, and blue jeans. They are both smiling. In the background, there are trees with yellow and green leaves, suggesting an autumn setting.

# Grassroots to GLOBAL CONSERVATION

WENDY AND HANK PAULSON  
TALK ABOUT THEIR  
CONSERVATION EFFORTS  
FROM BARRINGTON  
TO BEIJING

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Conservation visionary Henry Merritt “Hank” Paulson Jr., grew up at his family’s home off Cuba Road where as a boy, he rode horses and worked with farm animals and vegetable crops to help at his dad’s home-based farm. Tagging alongside his dad, he watched as the horse trails in the Barrington countryside were cobbled together across homeowners’ properties—horse trails that are actively used today in Barrington Hills.

**H**ANK WAS A STAR ATHLETE in wrestling and football while a student at Barrington High School. He is an Eagle Scout and a recipient of the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award. His love of nature, wildlife, and the outdoors began early in life, and continues today through conservation initiatives from Georgia, to the Americas, to China.

Hank is most widely-known as the 74th Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, having served during the financial crisis, after stepping down as chairman and CEO of the investment bank Goldman Sachs following his 32-year career there.

On the conservation side, Hank is the former chairman of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and of TNC’s Asia-Pacific and Latin America Conservation Councils; former chairman of The Peregrine Fund, and is now running the Paulson Institute, a non-partisan think tank and research institution located at the University of Chicago.

Wendy’s early work in conservation began in Barrington, where she was hired as a Nature Lady for Barrington 220 schools. She is the co-founder of

the Bobolink Foundation, and helped start bird classes in New York with For the Birds, and Birds in My Neighborhood in Chicago where she still teaches. Wendy is the former director of education for Citizens for Conservation. She is also the former chairman of the New York and Illinois chapters of TNC, and vice-chairman of national board and served on the boards of many other conservation groups. She currently chairs the Conservation & Policy Council for The Forest Preserves of Cook County.

While attending undergraduate school at Dartmouth, Hank’s blind date with a Wellesley College student named Wendy Judge evolved to marriage, family, and the couple’s long-term commitment to enjoy and protect the environment. The Paulsons have two adult children and maintain homes in Barrington Hills and Chicago. As of press time, Hank and Wendy are sharing their love and passion for nature and wildlife with their grandchildren in the Galapagos Islands.

*Quintessential Barrington* spoke Wendy and Hank Paulson in Barrington to discover where their current conservation work is heading.





# Hank PAULSON

**QB:** Hank, your first experience working with the earth was at your family's farm in Barrington. Was that a hobby farm, or your family's business?

**Hank:** My father supported our family with a day job in Chicago, but we lived on the farm on Cuba Road and it was his primary interest. It certainly was not a hobby to me! I had a regular big load of farm chores.

**QB:** What do you remember about the farm and the Barrington area as a boy?

**Hank:** I remember everything from putting up hay in the summer to mucking out horse stalls, wringing chickens' necks and plucking them to freeze, countless hours in a garden which fed the family with fresh vegetables in season, and frozen and canned for the rest of the year. I also remember the fun times—horseback riding, horse-drawn sleigh rides in the winter, skating on frozen ponds, roaming through the woods and fields with neighboring friends, catching bass on summer evenings on neighbor's ponds.

And I remember well my teachers and classes at Hough Street School, where Mr. Peterson shared a love of history, and later Countryside, where Mr. Wingate taught us about all facets of natural history—trees, birds, the night sky.

**QB:** Was growing up in the rural setting of Barrington instrumental in forming your commitment to preserving the environment?

**Hank:** Undoubtedly it had a big impact, but from my earliest days, I was attracted to wild, beautiful places. Every summer I looked forward to canoeing and camping with our family in Canada's Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario (just north of Ely, Minnesota).

**QB:** Did you ride horses as a boy? I had heard that your dad took you door to door to ask neighbors in Barrington Hills to allow for connecting bridle paths to go across people's property. Can you share more about that?

**Hank:** On the farm we always kept six or seven horses. My dad had me riding and helping him to break horses from the time I was 5. I have vivid memories of riding through the Barrington countryside as he identified open area birds like field sparrows, meadowlarks, and Bobolinks and quizzed me on various species of oaks. He was the president of the Riding Club and I do recall going with him while he persuaded countryside residents to grant access to ride across their properties.

**QB:** Much later in your life, in 2011, the Paulson Institute was founded at the University of Chicago with a mission "to strengthen U.S.-China relations and to advance sustainable economic growth and environmental protection in both countries" and as "a non-partisan, non-profit 'think and do' tank grounded in the principle that today's most pressing economic and environmental challenges can be solved only if the United States and

China—the world's largest economies, energy consumers, and emitters of carbon—work in complementary ways." To what degree does the Institute share concepts that already are working in the United States with China, versus finding entirely new concepts that are co-created within this partnership?

**Hank:** We have 45 people, 20 of whom are in China and most of our programs are in China where we are advising the national government on national parks, wetlands conservation, green financing mechanisms, economic reforms, and encouraging the Chinese government to open its economy to foreign competition.

**QB:** How receptive are you finding the Chinese to new ideas?

**Hank:** The Chinese welcome learning about best practices elsewhere and adapting them to China's unique circumstances. I have a team of people who, like me, have many years of experience in working with China.

**QB:** What are the greatest challenges in working in China on the environment?

**Hank:** The bad news is that the Chinese have severe environmental challenges which not only negatively impact China, but also the rest of the world. But the good news is that the Chinese have a major commitment to meeting these challenges and are working hard to do so. If the Paulson Institute can help move the needle even only slightly, we can be a significant force for good.

**QB:** Can you share what you are currently working on as you head to China?

**Hank:** We'll be adding a number of programs to our Green Finance Initiative which is a major focus in 2018. It's going to take trillions of dollars to help mitigate China's and the world's environmental challenges, and because governments don't have the necessary funds, they need to put in place the policies and market-based mechanisms for attracting private capital. Consequently, the Chinese see Green Finance as an imperative. We're helping them develop financing models that will work not only in China, but in the rest of the developing world. We also are advising the Chinese government on the roll-out of their cap and trade system to put a price on carbon emissions, which will be by far the biggest carbon market in the world.

**QB:** What do you believe is the most pressing issue for our local (Barrington) environment?

**Hank:** Planning intelligently for development in a way that preserves our unique ecological heritage.



Wendy  
PAULSON





**QB:** *How, and where, did you and Hank meet?*

**Wendy:** We met on a blind date when Hank was a senior at Dartmouth and I was a junior at Wellesley. We went to a performance of the Boston Pops.

**QB:** *Was a love of the outdoors an immediate connection for you both, or did that awareness of each other show up later in your lives?*

**Wendy:** We both loved doing things in the outdoors—hiking, canoeing, and mostly recreation. The interest in conservation came later.

**QB:** *Wendy, you grew up in a military family, as your dad was in the Marine Corps. You've mentioned your love of teaching and being outdoors came from your dad. What other experiences shaped your conservation-mindedness while growing up?*

**Wendy:** I think our years in Hawaii had a big influence. My brothers and I spent every waking hour outdoors, and I especially loved looking for the elusive mongoose reported in the fields near our house. I now know that is an invasive species, but at the time, it captured my imagination.

**QB:** *What are some other formative experiences you had growing up?*

**Wendy:** Those would include teaching sailing and canoeing on a base in North Carolina where I came to love the salt marshes, longleaf pines, and wild coastal beaches. Walks with my dad along New England Coastal paths where he'd point out mergansers and other ducks with cool names. [We had] a family practice of taking long walks on weekends.

**QB:** *You and Hank started your family in Barrington, having moved here from the East Coast where you both attended school. Your work as the "Nature Lady" for all the Barrington 220 school students provided connections to other conservation organizations. What groups did you serve here, and later, after you moved back East to New York?*

**Wendy:** In Barrington, I was active with the Natural History Society of Barrington and Citizens for Conservation. I served as a trustee and later as chairman of the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), then did the same in New York. I served as vice chairman of the National Board of TNC, and on the boards of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Rare, Forum on Children & Nature, and others. But what I loved most—and still do—was teaching and learning with children in nature.

**QB:** *Birding in both urban and suburban environments is one of your specialties. How did you learn so much about birds, and what is their importance as environmental indicators?*

**Wendy:** My dad was a casual birder, so I was exposed early to birding. But I didn't take it up seriously until meeting some researchers on Assateague Island in the early '70s who were documenting the decline of the Peregrine Falcon. Since there were few Peregrines around then, they taught me about shorebirds and seabirds and I was hooked. I started learning everything I could about birds and once I felt a reasonable level of competence, I wanted to return the favor by leading bird walks here, and later in New York and Washington, D.C.

**QB:** *Founding the Bobolink Foundation in 1986 offered a means to address a variety of conservation projects here, in the Altamaha River Basin in Georgia, and other areas. What are some of your most successful projects so far, and how do you measure success?*

**Wendy:** We support projects and programs locally and in other parts of the country and hemisphere where we feel we can make a difference. Georgia has been a focal point where we feel really good about the ongoing work along the coast and in the Gopher Tortoise Initiative, owing largely to the genuine collaboration of excellent partners, the engagement of volunteers, and strategic vision. Those are features we look for as we make philanthropic investments. Certainly, the work done by Citizens for Conservation here in Barrington is something we care a lot about and applaud. We feel similarly about initiatives in Colombia and Peru, where The Field Museum's Science Action Team is much involved, and in Brazil.

**QB:** *Why did you choose the Bobolink as your foundation's icon and name?*

**Wendy:** It happened in an instant. It occurred to me one morning that I didn't particularly like our names attached to the Foundation, as they had been early on, and that I'd prefer to have a name connected to nature. The next instant, "Bobolink" popped into my thought. It's a grassland bird that migrates between the Americas which is appropriate for a Foundation that focuses largely on grasslands and the Americas. And besides that, it's one of Hank's and my favorite birds.

**QB:** *You often mention the volunteer work ethic found in Barrington. How do you see that, and how does that relate compared to other areas in the United States you've worked in?*

**Wendy:** An ethos of volunteerism permeates Barrington, from school PTOs to Scouts to civic groups. The epitome group for me has been Citizens for Conservation which, since 1970, has relied almost entirely on volunteers for its work in land protection, education, and restoration. It's the best model I know for community-based conservation. That became especially clear to me when I lived for periods in New York and Washington, D.C. I became active with conservation groups in both places, but saw nothing that approached the volunteer base, enthusiasm, and effectiveness that characterizes CFC.

**QB:** *What do you believe is the most pressing issue for our local (Barrington) environment?*

**Wendy:** To combat ignorance and indifference—to cultivate citizens who are ecologically literate, who care about local nature, and who want to help keep healthy nature a primary feature of the Barrington area.

**QB:** *Everyone can make a difference. What can people do to help protect our environment here at home?*

**Wendy:** Learn about local nature: What is my watershed? What is a prairie? Savanna? A native woodland? Grow native species that can feed wildlife, provide habitat, minimize need for watering. Spend time outdoors in nature and, even better, spend that time with a child. Nurture curiosity about the natural world and let the definition of home expand to include native plants and animals. Think habitually about our impact on the natural world, e.g., am I using more water than I really need? Can I consolidate errands to minimize use of gas? Am I contributing as little as possible to solid waste stream?

**QB:** *What is the importance of protecting our open spaces here?*

**Wendy:** There are many reasons. One group includes what often is called ecosystem services—storm water retention, water purification, carbon sequestration, defense against flooding. For me, the reasons are more about the quality of life. Natural areas give us beauty, refuge and respite, peace, places to explore, discover, wonder, reflect. Life without those places would be barren.

**QB:** *Do you feel that the equestrian community plays a role in preserving our open spaces?*

**Wendy:** I have not been much involved with the equestrian community, but I have many friends who are, and they have taken an active interest and role in restoring wetlands, prairies, and savannas, and have been active proponents of conservation work, including serving as volunteer teachers and field trip leaders.

**QB:** *A group of local conservation organizations have recently partnered with CFC for the Barrington Greenway Initiative. Why is that important?*

**Wendy:** It builds on the remarkable legacy of protection and conservation already underway in the Barrington area and neighboring regions. To pursue a vision that connects existing protected areas across counties and municipalities, and provides continuous habitat for native plants and wildlife, is inspiring and ambitious and will make the Barrington area a model for visionary, long-term conservation. It builds on the volunteer model developed by Citizens for Conservation and portends a community that knows and honors nature. The Greenway Initiative bears all the hallmarks that we feel are so important: excellent partners, real collaboration, engaged volunteers, and inspiring vision.

# Looking AHEAD



**QB:** *You are off to the Galapagos Islands soon. Any special sightseeing hopes for this trip?*


**Wendy:** We mostly look forward to sharing the experience and thrill of discovery with our grandchildren.

**QB:** *What books are you reading right now?*

**Wendy:** I'm reading John Muir's, "The Story of My Boyhood and Youth" (for upcoming discussion by the Conservation Book Group). The book I most often recommend is Aldo Leopold's "Sand County Almanac", followed by Andrea

Wulf's, "The Invention of Nature", about Alexander von Humboldt. Another fun one, more about local nature, is Jerry Sullivan's "Hunting for Frogs on Elston."

**QB:** *Any new goals for 2018 that you can share?*

**Wendy:** To do our best to contribute to ongoing efforts by lots of individuals and groups toward safeguarding our natural world. One of the specific areas we're exploring is ecotourism as a conservation strategy—establishing excellent ecotourism models to support local conservation work, mostly in Central and South America, but in the United States, as well. 





#### The Barrington Greenway Initiative

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