



The Highlands Voice

Since 1967, The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

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Timbering Project in Monongahela National Forest Cancelled Over Endangered Fish

By John McFerrin

The United States Forest Service has withdrawn a proposal to timber approximately 2400 acres in the Monongahela National Forest because of concerns about a fish, the endangered candy darter

The proposal was a part of the Big Rock project area. The Big Rock project area is within the Gauley Ranger District on the Monongahela National Forest. The project is located in western Nicholas and southern Webster Counties in the Cranberry River watershed north of Richwood.

The project would have involved a series of clear cuts totaling about 1200 acres as well as about 1200 acres of thinning. Of this, over 600 acres would be helicopter logged. According to the Forest Service, the goal was

to modify that part of the Forest so that it supports different types of wildlife.



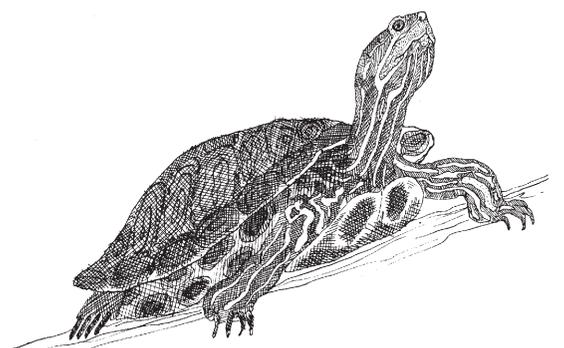
The candy darter is a small freshwater fish native to the Gauley, Greenbrier, and New River watersheds. Although darters in general make up 20 percent of freshwater fish species in North America, candy darters are found nowhere else.

The candy darter is small, measuring only 2-3 inches (55-86 millimeters) in length. This colorful fish prefers shallow, fast flowing stream reaches with rocky bottoms. Candy darters live up to 3 years and begin breeding around 2 years of age. Spawning in mid- to late spring, candy darters are brood-hiding, bottom

(More on p. 3)

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A Message from our President

By Larry Thomas

As 2019 was coming to a close, my first thoughts were that the year went by in such a whirlwind, but also how it was a very successful, productive and active year for the Conservancy. The Board continued to be very active in the governance of the Conservancy and the Board's committees were very busy doing their thing, bringing their findings and recommendations to the Board for approval and then reporting to the membership through *The Highlands Voice*.

The mission of the Conservancy is to promote, encourage and work for the conservation – including both preservation and wise management – and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation. We focus primarily on the Highlands Region of West Virginia, but our work is for the cultural, social, educational, physical health, spiritual and economic benefit of both present and future generations.

While the issues might be different from year to year, our methods remain fundamental. With members' help and support, we are able to expose problems, educate the public and policy makers, research better alternatives, and use our collective Voice, our historic record of successes, and our vision for the future, to continue our efforts on behalf of what we all have grown to love, respect and appreciate.

Our record of successes over the past 50+ years is a testament to our tenacity and willingness to tackle tough environmental issues. Thanks to our continued membership support, we can continue projects such as opposing mountaintop removal mining, opposing natural gas pipeline construction across our national forests, conservation of rivers and streams, providing protection for Wilderness Areas and activities on public lands, restoring the red spruce eco-system. We continue, as well, to engage State and Federal lawmakers, and inform the public about important issues such as climate change, Marcellus Shale drilling, proposed power lines, proposed mega gas lines, acid mine drainage, energy production in the highlands, threats to public lands, river clean-up plans and clean water issues. The list continues to grow and grow.

I hope that you have been following our activities in each month's issue of *The Highlands Voice* and have found the *Voice* to be informative and useful for you to understand the threats as well as the opportunities we are facing.

We have also enjoyed together the lands and waters we work so hard to protect. Whether it's the vast Monongahela National Forest, the spectacular Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge or other highlands locations. I hope that you can get out, or join us at one of our Reviews, outings, workshops or public meetings.

WVHC's mission is even more urgent than ever before. Threats to our highlands, clean air and clean water are increasing at an alarming rate. In our 50+ years, we have found that when it comes to protecting and preserving the highlands, fearlessness and persistence pay off and our pledge is to continue the fight.

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020!



When Larry is not being presidential, he likes to make wreaths. Here he is with Karen DeHaas at the annual wreath making workshop at Whitegrass.

Board Meeting Coming Up

The quarterly board meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy will be held on Sunday, January 19, 2020, from 10 to 3, at Café Appalachia in South Charleston, WV. Members are welcome to attend and take part in the discussion although they may not vote or make motions. We hope to focus on what's next for us in the upcoming decade.

Café Appalachia is a program of Pollen8, Inc., a nonprofit organization that creates social programs for families impacted by the drug epidemic in West Virginia. Additional information about the venue and its locally grown food sources can be found here <https://www.cafeappalachia.com/> and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CafeAppalachia/>. The address is 206 D street, South Charleston...near the mound.



More about the Candy Darter (continued from p. 1)

spawners. Females select areas of finer pebble and gravel among riffles to deposit their eggs.

Candy darters were likely once relatively common throughout their range. Historical habitat degradation and fragmentation led certain populations to dwindle or even cease to exist. Nearly half of the 35 candy darter populations known when the species was first described in 1932 have now disappeared.

In 2010 the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the Center for Biological Diversity petitioned to have the candy darter listed as an endangered species. After some litigation by the Center for Biological Diversity, it was finally listed as an endangered species in 2018.

Projects such as the Big Rock project include several opportunities for public participation. The Forest Service does what is called a “scoping”, when it asks for public suggestions on what it should study in evaluating a proposed project. It also makes a Draft Environmental Assessment and accepts comments on that. After reviewing the comments, the Forest Service makes a response and then makes a final Environmental Assessment.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy made comments on the draft Environmental Assessment. Although the Forest Service did make some changes in its plans in response to those comments, the changes were insufficient to address our objections. When the final Environmental Assessment came out, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy made a formal objection, as did the Friends of Blackwater, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Dick Artley

After these comments, the next step would have been for the Forest Service to respond to the comments. Instead of responding,

the Forest Service announced on December 18, 2019, that it was abandoning the project. It is now listed on the Forest Service website as cancelled.

Although the commenters, including the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, raised issues other than the candy darter, Forest Service relied entirely upon the presence of the candy darter as the basis for abandoning the project. Once a species is listed as endangered, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service would routinely do a critical habitat designation. Although at the time the Forest Service abandoned the Big Rock project there had been no final designation, it was clear that the site of the Big Rock project would be part of the fish’s critical habitat.

With the Big Rock project part of the critical habitat, the United States Fish and Wildlife would have needed to consider the appropriateness of an incidental take permit for the project. An incidental take permit allows someone to “take” a limited number of individuals of an endangered species if the taking is incidental to another activity and not the goal of the activity. “Take” is defined as the “harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, collecting of a listed species”, or any “attempt to engage in such conduct. Since killing candy darters would not be the goal of the Big Rock project but only an incidental effect, it would be possible that the Fish and Wildlife Service could issue an incidental take permit.

The presence of the endangered candy darter triggers all of these obligations. Since the Forest Service had not even started on any of these obligations, it had no choice other than abandoning the project.

Library Project Finished!

Done! We handed off an 8th edition Hiking Guide to Kathy Cummings of Lincoln County’s Alum Creek Public Library. The project to give a Hiking Guide to every library is finished. Every county facility in the state should now have one. Enjoy checking out the tips for trekking in the Mon Forest at your local library...or buy your own copy of the 9th edition [online, at our website]. Whatever the weather, have fun planning your next trip the mountains! Many thanks to Cindy Ellis for ramrodding this project.



Congressional Relief for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline?**Trying to Forestall Congressional Action**

By John McFerrin

As we all learned in school, we have three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. With the Atlantic Coast Pipeline we are now seeing an example of one way that works in the real world. More specifically, the question is whether (and under what conditions) the Atlantic Coast Pipeline can cross the Monongahela National Forest and the Appalachian Trail.

In order to cross the Monongahela National Forest, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline has to get permission from the United States Forest Service. It also has to get permission from somebody (still not clear on who that somebody is; more on that later) to cross the Appalachian Trail.

When it was seeking permission from the Executive branch (the Forest Service), the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was doing well. After some initial questioning, making noises as if it might not grant permission, the Forest Service gave the go-ahead. It also gave the Pipeline permission to cross the Appalachian Trail.

Then came the judicial branch, in the form of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. It reviewed the work of the Forest Service and concluded that the Forest Service had not been sufficiently diligent in its review of the pipeline crossing of the National Forest. It did not necessarily conclude that the Forest Service had reached the wrong conclusion. It just concluded that the Forest Service had not tried very hard to evaluate the environmental impacts of the project. This sent the Forest Service back to the drawing board for another try.

The Court also ruled that the Forest Service did not have the authority to give the Atlantic Coast Pipeline permission to cross the Appalachian Trail.

With this ruling, there is no going back to the drawing board. Either the Forest Service has authority or it doesn't; the Court says it doesn't. No trip back to the drawing board will fix that. Dominion has to either live with the ruling or appeal to a higher court.

Dominion chose to appeal. The United States Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case; a hearing is set for February, 2020. There was a long story about that case in the November, 2019, issue of *The Highlands Voice*.

It is the public position of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, of course, the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit was wrong, that the Supreme Court will correct the problem, it will have permission to cross the Appalachian Trail and dirt will fly. Those who challenge the pipeline are equally confident that the Court was right, that the Supreme Court will agree, and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will have to figure out some way to avoid the Appalachian Trail.

In such a situation, Dominion (main developer of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline) might decide to hedge its bets. It would do so by approaching Congress, the legislative branch.

While the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is a very big deal around here, it is not such a big deal in the rest of the country. Relief for the developers would have to come as a tiny little afterthought hooked onto something bigger. Dominion's lobbyists would have to persuade some key legislators to do this: "Congress hereby passes a VERY BIG THING and, by the way, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is allowed to cross the Appalachian Trail."

In mid-December the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy took a step to avoid this result. By letter, we and several other groups asked Congressional leaders to refuse to allow asking any legislation to approve the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, including its crossing of the Appalachian Trail. We pointed out that we didn't think the Pipeline was such a good idea to begin with. Even if it were, there were questions about permits and permissions other than the one that would allow it to cross the Appalachian Trail. We thought that the best course of action was to let the courts sort all this out without Congress wading into the fray.

Let the Games Begin....

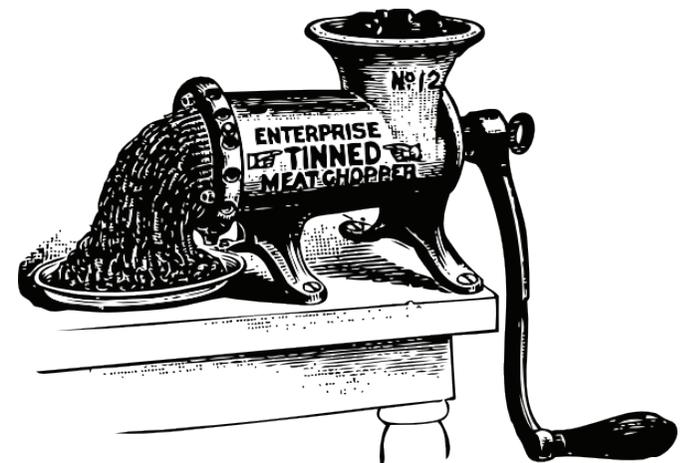
Time to dust off the baloney-grinding and monkeyshines clip art. The West Virginia Legislature will convene again on January 9, and their own website can help you keep track of officials and laws that interest you.

It is <http://wvlegislature.gov/>

Additionally, you can subscribe to legislative updates through the West Virginia Environmental Council at <https://wvecouncil.org/> and through the West Virginia Citizens Action Group <https://wvcag.org/>

We---you and all of us---were part of efforts in the recent past to stop bills to allow logging in state parks. Get in on the action again this year; help be the eyes and ears that watch for conservation issues and help be among those who "speak for the trees" and more.

Visit the Capitol too. E-Day is January 28th. Ally groups will have booths in the marble halls and that's a great time to try to make contact with your own representative. Maybe you will even have reason to thank them for some positive action or "green" votes. We encourage all our members to let the Legislature know that we care about preservation of the Highlands...and throughout the state.



Winter Outings Series - Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

All events are free and open to the public and begin at White Grass Ski Touring Center.

Jan 1 2020 Snowshoe Discovery Tour - 10 am A natural history snowshoe walk with Chip Chase as he endlessly gabs about the history of local skiing, quirky climate facts, railroad history, and the environmental battle for Canaan Valley vs. the Power Company.

Jan 5 Snowshoe Discovery Tour 10 am This land is your land. History and management of The Public's lands in and around Canaan Valley with local naturalist, Dave Saville.

Jan 12 Snowshoe Discovery Tour 10 am Red Spruce Ecosystem Restoration. Planting our future one tree at a time with naturalist, Dave Saville.

Jan 20 MLK Snowshoe Discovery Tour - 10 am A natural history snowshoe walk with Chip Chase as he endlessly gabs about the history of local skiing, quirky climate facts, railroad history, and the environmental battle for Canaan Valley vs. the Power Company.

Jan 26 Snowshoe Discovery Tour- 10 am Diseases and Pests on the Refuge with Americorps worker, Julia.

Feb 2 Snowshoe Discovery Tour - 10 am Natural History of the Northern Hardwood, Spruce and Hemlock Forest in Canaan with WV Land Trust representative, Rick Landenberger.

Feb 9 Snowshoe Discovery Tour- 10 am Love and babies within the mid-winter forest with forester, Amy Cimarolli.

Feb 17 President's Day Snowshoe Discovery Tour - 10 am A natural history snowshoe walk with Chip Chase, owner of White Grass, as he shares fun facts about the climate, forest type, and geology of the area. Enjoy a short streamside jaunt that lasts about an hour and covers around a mile of easy rolling terrain.

Feb 23 Snowshoe Discovery Tour- 10 am Geology and Hydrology of Canaan Valley with local naturalist, Frank Slider.

Pump Storage Project Redux

By Kent Karriker

Remember the pump storage project that was proposed for Backbone Mountain about a year ago, and then axed because of impacts to sensitive National Forest lands? Well, it's back, but in a different location.

Project proponent FreedomWorks, LLC has filed a new application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to study the feasibility of constructing the project on the Allegheny Front, near Bismark, in Grant County. This proposed location would involve constructing two reservoirs, one on Mill Run, a tributary of Stony River, and another on the North Fork of Patterson Creek. (See the December 2018 Voice for a basic description of how a pump storage facility works.) Unlike the previous incarnation of this project, the current proposed location is entirely on private land and would not affect any public land. The new proposal is being called the Ulysses Pumped Storage Hydropower Project.

FERC has accepted FreedomWorks' application for processing. If they decide to issue the preliminary permit, it would allow FreedomWorks to proceed with feasibility studies (a permit to actually construct the facility would be considered later in the process). Right now, FERC is accepting comments on the preliminary permit application. But hurry if you want to submit a comment; the deadline is January 13, 2020. Information on the project and the procedure for commenting can be found in the FERC elibrary (<https://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/elibrary.asp>). Choose "general search," set the date range from 10/01/2019 to the present date, and search for docket number P-15012. If the preliminary permit is issued, the public will have an additional opportunity to comment during the construction permitting phase.

The Conservancy is currently evaluating the revised proposal and has not yet taken a position on it. However, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources raised many concerns in a comment letter that they filed on November 18. According to the Department of Natural Resources comment letter, the project likely would eliminate the trout fishery in the two affected streams, could impact numerous rare species, and would be constructed in an area that contains known caves.

The Highlands Voice is published monthly by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Articles, letters to the editor, graphics, photos, poetry, or other information for publication should be sent to the editor via the internet or by the U.S. Mail by the last Friday of each month. You may submit material for publication either to the address listed above or to the address listed for Highlands Voice Editor elsewhere in this issue. Electronic submissions are preferred.

The Highlands Voice is always printed on recycled paper. Our printer uses 100% post consumer recycled paper when available.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is www.wvhighlands.org.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:

The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation—including both preservation and wise use—and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual, and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.

The Iron Wheeled Winch**Forest Forensics: Finding Clues in the Woods to History**

By Chris Bolgiano

It stands on our ridge like some kind of modern art sculpture, with its jutting iron beam and iron wheels sinking into the earth. It pulled logs up from the slopes and hollows to the ridge, where a cart or truck carried them to a mill or a rail depot. The trees around it are 80 to 120 years old, so this winch took part in the biggest logging frenzy in world history.

Historians date this final deforestation of the eastern U.S. from 1880 to 1930, as southern cities rebuilt after the Civil War, northern cities expanded as freed slaves fled Jim Crow, and narrow-gauge railroads crawled up almost every stream. Accessible forests had been repeatedly cut over, but there were still plenty of huge virgin trees on high mountain slopes and ridges. Timber companies, mostly owned by distant businessmen, operated with a “cut out and get out” attitude. In just 50 years, West Virginia went from being 95% forested to 85% denuded.

Steam equipment powered by wood or coal threw sparks that ignited entire mountainsides. If an old blackened skeleton leaves char on your fingers, it may have been a living tree killed by a hot fire, which renders some trees rot resistant. Only about one percent of the pre-European forest survived, mostly in areas too rocky or wet to log.

Rain gushed down bare slopes, eroding deep trenches and carrying away innumerable tons of soil. Floods drowned thousands of people, ruined millions of dollars of property, and smothered streams with sediment. So terrible was the immediate damage that Congress passed the Weeks Act in 1911, authorizing the purchase of millions of burning, eroding mountain acres for repair by the U.S. Forest Service. With help from the Civilian Conservation Core during the 1930s, the U.S.F.S. extinguished fires, planted trees, built erosion fences, and developed recreational amenities still in use. Ironically, the destruction of the magnificent original forest led to national forests, like the George Washington National Forest in our area, that produce clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, hunting and fishing opportunities and other recreation, wood products, and carbon sequestration that benefits all of society.

But millennia of soil-building were lost. Decades of regrowth now obscure the reduced fertility from soil loss, but in 1943, a Forest Service report on the Virginia mountains noted that even some of the better growing sites “because of fire or other past abuses are of

low productivity.” No trees today come close to matching the sizes of the virgin trees cut back then, and scientists estimate it will take centuries of leaf fall and root growth to restore that productivity.

Where did all that soil go?

It’s still moving downstream. Called “legacy sediment,” it is “a source of nutrients and trace elements [that] may add significantly to the degradation of downstream ecosystems such as the Chesapeake Bay,” according to research published in the journal *Geology*. In 2017, the Chesapeake Bay Program held a Legacy Sediment Workshop to discuss remediation of “the enormous volumes of legacy sediment stored in valleys of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.” Here in the Valley, JMU archaeologist Dr. Carole Nash said that “excavations on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River consistently demonstrate the impacts of logging on mountain soils. It’s common to document three feet of alluvial deposits over the earliest levels of historic occupation in the 1740s. Below that, only an inch of soil takes you back in time a thousand years.”

In many forgotten ways, the past continues to shape the present – and the future.



Send Us a Post Card, Drop Us a Line, Stating Point Of View

Please email any poems, letters, commentaries, etc. to the VOICE editor at johnmcferrin@aol.com or by real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Leave a Legacy of Hope for the Future

Remember the Highlands Conservancy in your will. Plan now to provide a wild and wonderful future for your children and future generations. Bequests keep our organization strong and will allow your voice to continue to be heard. Your thoughtful planning now will allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness, wildlife, clean air and water and our way of life.

Join Now !!!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

| | | | | |
|---|--|------------|--------|--------|
| Membership categories (circle one) | | Individual | Family | Org. |
| Senior | | \$15 | | |
| Student | | \$15 | | |
| Introductory | | \$15 | | |
| Other | | \$15 | | |
| Regular | | \$25 | \$35 | \$50 |
| Associate | | \$50 | \$75 | \$100 |
| Sustaining | | \$100 | \$150 | \$200 |
| Patron | | \$250 | \$500 | \$500 |
| Mountaineer | | \$500 | \$750 | \$1000 |

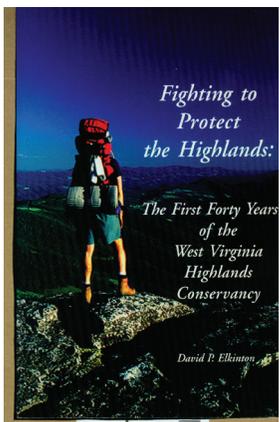
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West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful

You may also join on-line at www.wvhighlands.org

GET A GREAT HISTORY BOOK

For the first time, a comprehensive history of West Virginia's most influential activist environmental organization. Author Dave Elkinton, the Conservancy's third president, and a twenty-year board member, not only traces the major issues that have occupied the Conservancy's energy, but profiles more than twenty of its volunteer leaders.



From the cover by photographer Jonathan Jessup to the 48-page index, this book will appeal both to Conservancy members and friends and to anyone interested in the story of how West Virginia's mountains have been protected against the forces of over-development, mismanagement by government, and even greed.

518 pages, 6x9, color cover, published by Pocahontas Press

To order your copy for \$15.95, plus \$3.00 shipping, visit the Conservancy's website, wvhighlands.org, where payment is accepted by credit card and PayPal. Or write: WVHC, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Proceeds support the Conservancy's ongoing environmental projects.

Tell a Friend!

If you have a friend you would like to invite to join the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy just fill out this form and send it to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Person you wish to refer: _____

Address: _____

Email _____

Your name: _____

Filling out the form, etc. is, of course, the old school way of doing things. If you prefer, just email the information to Dave Saville at WVHC50@gmail.com.

The way it works: Anyone you refer gets *The Highlands Voice* for six months. At the end of the six months, they get a letter asking if they want to join. If they join, we're happy. If not, then maybe next time.

SUCH A DEAL!

Book Premium With Membership

Although *Fighting to Protect the Highlands, the First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* normally sells for \$15.95 plus \$3.00 postage. We are offering it as a premium to new members. New members receive it free with membership.

Existing members may have one for \$10.00. Anyone who adds \$10 to the membership dues listed on the How to Join membership or on the renewal form will receive the history book. Just note on the membership form that you wish to take advantage of this offer.

Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge Woodcock Project

By LeJay Graffious

"There goes one!" Zach calls out. The nightly crepuscular flight of the American Woodcock had begun. The team had high expectations of trapping seven timberdoodles to band and install GPS transmitters. The core team was Zachary McCracken, Jackie Burns and LeJay Graffious. The team was assembled by Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge (CVWR) Biologist, Dawn Washington. Zach, an AmeriCorps member assigned to the refuge via American Conservation Experience (ACE) program, was point-man for the project. Jackie is a retired education specialist for the refuge and experienced in extracting birds from nets. LeJay Graffious is a director of the Old Hemlock Foundation and the licensed bird bander for the project.

The team and two volunteers met on Freeland Road around 3 o'clock to set up twelve 12 meter mist nets. Anticipation was high as we waited for the hour after sunset to pass to check the nets, but the net check only produced one Hermit Thrush.

Thus began the CVWR involvement in The Eastern Woodcock Migration Research Cooperative. This international collaborative is interested in understanding migratory ecology for the American Woodcock. The project's coordination is provided by the University of Maine, and involves partners from eleven eastern states and three eastern provinces of Canada. The cooperative's objectives are determining:

- when woodcock initiate migration
- how long it takes individuals to complete migration
- survival during migration
- stopover sites where woodcock rest and refuel during migration.

A recent study in the journal *Science* reports North America has lost one in four birds during the past 50 years and 14% in the last decade alone. Woodcock are not immune to this disappointing downward trend. Studies show they are decreasing by 1.1% per year. Woodcock are iconic to Canaan Valley and the logo for Friends of the 500th. We are fortunate for the CVWR to protect land from development and to have a refuge staff interested in protecting the young succession forests which are the habitat of these upland shorebirds. Hunters in the valley seek this gamebird in the open areas under hawthorns and aspen coppice. According to Cornell's <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>,

Woodcocks nest in young, shrubby, deciduous forests, old fields, and mixed forest-agricultural-urban areas across the eastern United States and southern Canada. They display in forest openings and old fields in the springtime, and they often use clearings for roosting in the summer. On the western edge of their range, they may depend on moist, wooded riverside areas and wet meadows in young woodlands. Woodcocks spend the winter in similar habitats in the southern part of breeding range, also moving into additional

wintering habitat in Texas and on the southern edges of the Gulf States.

Because of their economic value as a game bird, they become an umbrella species for many other forest birds that depend on young forests. Every time an acre of mature forest is removed the resulting succession is critical habitat for many species such as whip-poor-wills, chestnut-sided warblers and wood thrushes. The value of these shrubby forests deserves more attention than can be given in this newsletter article.

Dawn Washington recognized the need to research the woodcock in Canaan Valley and initiated this project. Working with Casey Ruckers they began fund raising to purchase the \$1800 GPS transmitter for each captured bird. Funds came from gifts of the WV Highlands Conservancy, the Old Hemlock Foundation, Walt Lesser and others. With the funds for five transmitters, she joined the cooperative. Dawn had arranged for a licensed bander to come to WV, trap, band and install the transmitters. When the bander could not come, she contacted Jackie Burns who has contacts with the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory on Dolly Sods and the Old Hemlock Bird Observatory in Bruceton Mills, WV.

As a director of the Old Hemlock Foundation (OHF), little did I know that I would become so fully involved in the project! When I saw Casey's plea for funds, I worked with the other directors to donate. When a need for a bander

became apparent, Jackie asked me if I were interested. I jumped at the opportunity. The OHF's mission is to promote and preserve the legacy of George Bird Evans and his wife, Kay. George wrote a well-known hunting book entitled *Grouse & Woodcock of the Blackwater/Canaan*. So this project ties directly to our mission. As a hunter over Old Hemlock setters and a licensed bird bander, the project was of high interest to me.

In order to move the project forward several activities needed to be completed first and the timeline was short since this was early September and the project requires native birds, not migrants. The first step was for the core team to travel to the Niagara Falls area to meet Alex Fish, representative to the University of Maine, to be taught the capturing techniques and proper installation of the GPS transmitters. After one night there working with the New York State biologists and Alex, we moved to Hemlock, NY to meet other biologists from New York and Pennsylvania.

There we had experience setting the nets, extracting birds, using dip nets to trap roosting birds and all the banding collection techniques including putting on the electronic backpack. Nets were set in the open fields where strips were mowed in the goldenrod fields. These were in place prior to sunset and then checked an

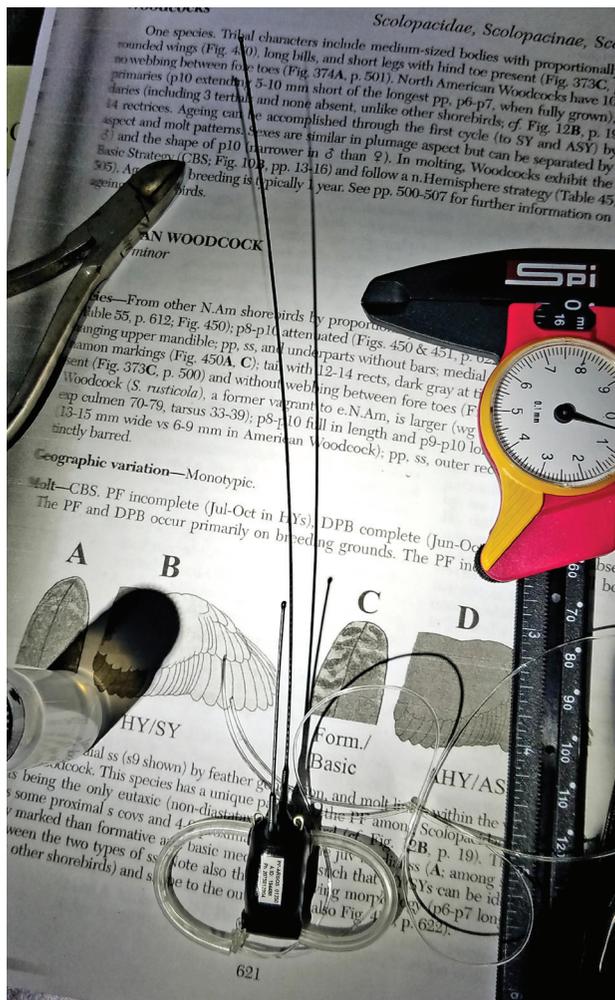
(More on the next page)



Catching Woodcock to Learn About Them (continued from previous page)

hour after sunset. Woodcock roost in the open areas of these fields. The flight from the young forest is crepuscular flight, sometimes called “dusking.”

After the nets were checked, any caught birds were processed. The bird was assigned a nine digit band number from the US Geological Survey Banding Lab. Now this bird had an identity to which we recorded the data of the GPS Tag ID number, the bander, the bird's sex, age, weight, bill length, tarsus length, leg



Woodcock GPS transmitter

length and the wing chord. In addition one secondary wing feather was collected for DNA studies.

After the initial flight, the biologists would scan the fields with spot lights and landing nets looking for roosting ‘cock. During our training both Zach and Jackie were successful in trapping a spotlighted bird.

Even though I am a licensed bird bander for birds larger than a hummingbird to an eagle, gamebirds were excluded. I had to apply to both federal and state agencies to receive my permits. With such a short time line, I was worried, but the director of the banding lab, Bruce Peterjohn, and Barb Sargent of the WV DNR were very

helpful in moving through the bureaucratic paperwork. Everything moving along I needed a different size mesh for the misting net with these larger birds than my usual passerines. The other directors of the OHF helped fund the \$1500 needed. The CVWR purchased the landing nets. The national Ruffed Grouse Society added to our GPS purchase to bring us to a total of seven GPS tags to install. All we needed now were seven healthy American Woodcock.

Dawn arranged for some strips to be mowed in areas where woodcock were seen or heard on spring surveys. Zach and some other volunteers did some reconnaissance looking for dusking birds.

We decided our first attempt would be off Freeland Road on October 14. We saw five of our target birds but had no success in capturing. The next day we set up off A-Frame. We saw a few birds but had no captures. October 16 we had hopes of our first bird off Cortland Road but rain damped our efforts. So what I had anticipated was a few days to capture seven woodcock was being questioned.

Our next attempt was on October 21 and we decided to return to Cortland. That evening we caught our first and second bird. The first was during the crepuscular flight. The second was spot-lighted and netted by Daryl Johnson. Both birds brought smiles to the crew.

Our next effort was October 21 – 24 when we were able to install a third transmitter. A fourth bird was netted on the 23rd but was in so poor a condition that I decided not to put it through the rigors of data collection and it was released with only a band. The last banding effort was on October 29 again on Cortland. We mist netted our fifth bird and installed our fourth transmitter.

The conventional method of capturing in the fall is mist nets and landing nets. In the spring, bird dogs are used to locate and net birds. I was interested if this could be done in the fall. Andy Ammann, PhD of Michigan DNR published a book, *A Guide to Capturing and Banding American Woodcock Using Pointing Dogs*. After studying his methods, I thought after we exhausted the conventional ways and using Dawn's permission we would try landing net over my English setter, Mountain Laurel. She could find the birds, but our inexperience with landing nets were

ineffective both at night and during the day the attempts.

Our project seeks to better understand American Woodcock in Canaan and where our woodcock migrate. The aggregation of our data with others in eastern US will help with pieces of the puzzle of woodcock migration and areas that need to be protected and managed. We were able to mark five of Canaan's birds with satellite transmitters. The markers weigh between 4 and 7 grams and will transmit data at pre-set intervals with status and location. You can follow the annual progress from the Eastern Woodcock migration research cooperative on their website, <https://www.woodcockmigration.org/>.

As with any worthy project it takes a community of individuals. The support of Ron Holis, CVWR superintendent, was critical. Dawn Washington's leadership and organizational skills got the project moving and a reality. The following volunteers provided various levels of support: Brandon Iddings, Julia Portmann, Zachary McCracken, Mike Anderson, Scott Wilson, Walt Lesser, Herb Myers, Jackie Burns, Dawn Washington, Daryl Johnson, Matthew Boarman, Cindy Joseph, Jeanne Odom and Thomas Woods. Kudos to Zachary McCracken who was the project's point-man and coordinated the equipment and volunteers. Of course, with the support of the members of the Friends of the 500th much valuable citizen science data is added to the natural history of the valley and how it is part of the total fabric of the western hemisphere's natural world. Our plan is to continue this project in the spring when the timber doodles return to the Land of Canaan.



Black Kettle

“Nothing lives long...only the earth and the mountains.” Black Kettle

If only that were true, Black Kettle
If only

If only it weren't permitted
promoted and profited from

the annihilation of boulders
covered by creation
with lichens and green moss
of every color and depth,
flora and fauna,
and all manner of critters
seen and unseen —

If only it weren't permitted
promoted and profited from

the desecration of mountain laurel
that once proliferated here
and bloomed in lush pink and purple profusion
every year
but will again no more...forever

and with them the giant leaf makers:
the wild cherries and oaks and maples
who spanned the sky
and send by wind tiny silent prayers-
their abundant seeds
to flourish if they themselves
should perish
but shall make such hopes for the future, no more...forever

If only
the topsoil it took
human eternities to make
wasn't squandered in barren rock
and shale
that holds no moisture
nutrients or hope whatsoever,
but bequeaths mud and heavy metals
come hard rains

If only people cared Black Kettle
if only words once true held strong
and firm as mountains
once did

If only

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Mon National Forest Hiking Guide

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the new edition of the treasured guide to every trail in the Monongahela National Forest features brand-new topographic maps and Kent Mason's gorgeous photos, all in color.

The Guide has been updated with the cooperation of National Forest District Rangers and Recreation Specialists to reflect changes in the past ten years:

- * newly designated wilderness areas
- * new trails near campgrounds and sites of special significance
- * a new complex of interconnected trails on Cheat Mountain
- * rerouted and discontinued trails
- * ratings for difficulty, scenery, access to water, and much else

The definitive guide to the Mon adds a wealth of information about history, wildlife, and botany; safety, preparation, and weather; horseback and mountain bike riding and cross-country skiing; as well as sources of further information on the Forest and its environs.

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Profits from the sale of these guides support a wide variety of worthy environmental projects for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

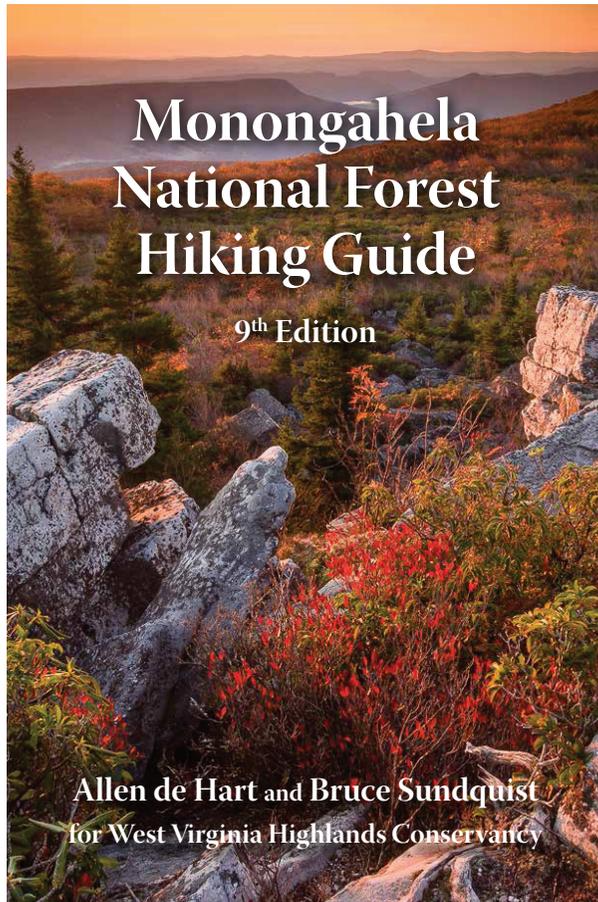
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The Highlands Voice: It's Not Just for Reading Any More

The Highlands Voice is the main way that the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy communicates with its members. But we would like to communicate with more than our members. We have a valuable perspective and information; we would like to communicate with everybody. We still offer electronic delivery. If you would prefer to receive it electronically instead of the paper copy please contact Dave Saville at WVHC50@gmail.com. With electronic delivery, you will receive a link to a pdf of the Voice several days before the paper copy would have arrived.

No matter how you receive it, please pass it along. If electronically, share the link. If paper, hand it off to a friend, leave it around the house, leave it around the workplace. It's not just for reading. It's for reading and passing along.

BUMPER STICKERS

To get free *I ♥ Mountains* bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Slip a dollar donation (or more) in with the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to provide bumper stickers to their customers/members may have them free. (Of course if they can afford a donation that will be gratefully accepted.)



Also available are the new green-on-white oval *Friends of the Mountains* stickers. Let us know which (or both) you want.

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- ▶ The baby shirts are certified organic cotton and are offered in one infant and several toddler sizes and an infant onesie. Slogan is "I ♥ Mountains Save One for Me!" Onesie [18 mo.]---\$25, Infant tee [18 mo.]---\$20, Toddler tee, 2T,3T,4T, 5/6---\$20
- ▶ Soft pima cotton adult polo shirts are a handsome earthtone light brown and feature the spruce tree logo. Sizes S-XL [Shirts run large for stated size.] \$ 25.00, 2XL \$26.50

To order by mail [WV residents add 6 % sales tax] make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Online Store, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

The same items are also available at our on-line store: www.wvhighlands.org

T- SHIRTS

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HATS FOR SALE

We have West Virginia Highlands Conservancy baseball style caps for sale as well as I ♥ Mountains caps.

The WVHC cap is beige with green woven into the twill and the pre-curved visor is light green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy logo and the words West Virginia Highlands Conservancy on the front and I (heart) Mountains on the back. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure.

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