



NaturePhile

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The mission of the Balsam Mountain Trust is the stewardship of the natural and cultural resources on Balsam Mountain Preserve and the Blue Ridge Mountain region achieved through effective land management practices, scientific research and environmental education.



Chance Favors the Prepared Mind: We just had to print this picture that Ken Bowdon took (I believe with his smart phone) near his house on the Preserve. This is of course, a redtail hawk. The photo is dripping with habitat and flight related nuances that make for a really great photograph. Send us your best nature shots, we'd love to see them and share them with the community.

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From the Trailhead

By Michael Skinner, executive director

The Approaching Spring

It would seem, once again, that another season is creeping up on us. And while each season seems to foist itself unerringly in the direction in which we're waiting, there is, this year, a bit of restlessness within the human psyche, i. e., it would seem that Old Man Winter has worn us out. I believe it's referred to as winter fatigue. It would seem as though we've been a bit spoiled of late because this winter, at least in the mountains, while sometimes chilly and with little snow, has not been that unbearable—i.m.h.o. And while we've been exposed to the latest fad in monikers, read: polar vortex, there are, in their inexorable march to survival, little verdant heads of our earliest spring wildflowers, pushing their way up and into the lengthening daylight which they will drink of heavily.

Moving on Up...to the East Side (Montreat College that is)

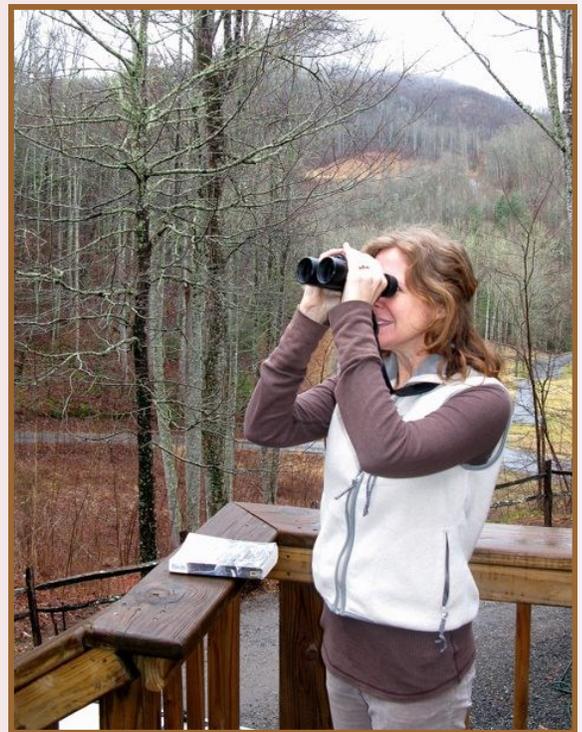
As we all know change happens and change is happening with the Trust. Blair Ogburn, who has been with the Trust for almost nine years has decided to go back to school (at Montreat College) and chart a new, yet somewhat familiar path for herself and her family. The foundation she laid for the education programs will be a good place for the new naturalist to take and run with and, build on. The success of the programs the Trust offers to both the membership and the surrounding communities has, in no small part, been due to her commitment, creativity and energy.

So we wish her well in her new journey. I'm sure she'll stop by to visit from time to time. We're going to have a going away party for her on the mountain once the season gets underway and the bulk of the BMP membership is on the mountain. We'll send an announcement about the get-together at a later date.

New Trust Board Members

I wanted to let everyone know that the Trust welcomed three new Trustees in January to its Board. Your new Trustees are Mary Arbaugh, Ken Bowdon and Ed James. The Board also thanked three other Trustees for their service as they rolled off at the end of 2013. They are Sam Belfore, Ron Leatherwood and Linda Purdy. When you see any of these folks on the mountain or in town, please extend a gracious thank-you. Trustee positions are voluntary and so I would like to offer my personal gratitude to each person who chooses to serve on our Board.

The current Trustee complement is as follows: Michael Fulbright, chair; Rob Howard, vice-chair; Bill Mamrack, treasurer; Nancy Ison, secretary; Trustees, Mary Arbaugh, Peter Bates, Ph. D., Ken Bowdon, Jack Burnett, Ed James, Jeff Murphy, Linda Outlaw, Peter Smith and Janie Stratigos. Their efforts and interest are what continue to steer the Trust on a navigable tack.



A pose often captured was Blair glassing the woods and sky to get a magnified view of her avian interests. The Trust will continue the work she started, which are, among other projects, migrant and breeding bird surveys along with the Audubon Christmas bird count.

Some News for Yews:

- The Trust engineer (Rob Howard) and building contractor (Bill Miller) have completed the plans for the new Raptor Hilton going up at the Nature Center. Construction should begin the third week of March. We'll then be able to rotate birds on display as this, along with a little wing-stretching room, was the goal for these condos, sorry, single-bird residences.
- We are going to offer the 2014 spring Turkey Harvest once again. As per our tradition, we will offer a youth hunt, in conjunction with the North Carolina Wildlife. We'll shoot an e-mail (pun intended) to everyone in the very near future. The 2014 season is: youth, 5-11 April; regular season, 12 April—10 May. Any BMP owners interested in this hunt should contact Michael Skinner or Johnny Nicholson.
- As we see more homes under construction on the Preserve we're thinking of offering a Habitat Review Workshop. These workshops have historically been a chance for new homeowners and their build/design teams to have a conversation with the Habitat Review committee members in person and in a relaxed atmosphere at the Nature Center. If you're interested in attending a meeting please contact Michael. We'll send out an announcement for the official date/time if we get enough interest.
- Nature Center Open House—Since we're approaching a new season on the mountain and, the Trust has two new employees and, hopefully, a new critter or two, we thought it would be fun to invite everyone to an open house. Date and time will be announced later this spring. We'll look forward to having everyone here.



All the 'birds' are posing. Avery Herr, 2nd from left and niece of BMP owners Linda & Hugh Lockman, brought a group of her coed friends (l-r: Kelsey, Avery, Clara, Kelsey and Maddie) to have a collegial bird of prey demonstration. Zeus was the chosen performer and the ladies loved meeting him. Engaging members in this type of activity helps provide a closer walk with the wild side of the Preserve.

Muchos Abrazos y Muchos Gracias



This is just a quick note to say "many hugs and many thanks" to all BMP members who gave so generously in 2013 and who have given over the life of the Trust. Your generosity is what allows the Trust to continue to meet its mission, serve the BMP membership and make a difference in providing our program participants with the best information we can so we can all make responsible decisions as relates to the health of our planet.

We look forward to many more adventures with you and hope to see the name of every BMP member on the Trust Donor Recognition plaques located on the Preserve.