

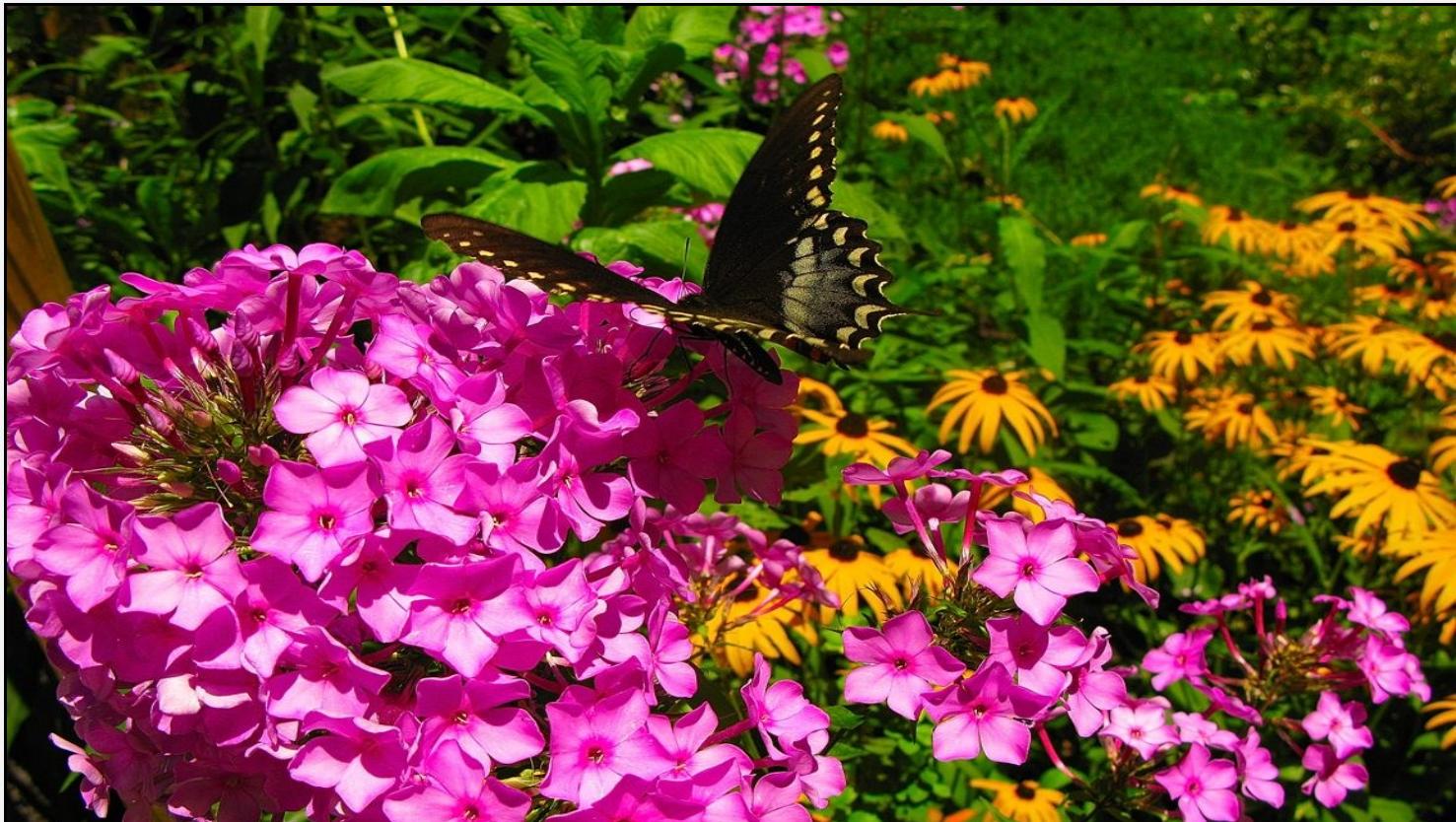


# NaturePhile

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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.



This photograph of a male spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) was taken in Michael's front yard as it was feeding on volunteer (and nectar rich) purple phlox (*Phlox paniculata*). In the next issue we'll have a story by Becka (our Americorps member) about her monarch project and the pollinator garden now gracing the area in front of the tennis courts. In the next NaturePhile look for more pollinator news.

Photo by: Michael Skinner

Every third bite of food you take, thank a bee or other pollinator.

E.O. Wilson, *Forgotten Pollinators*, 1996

In this issue: From the Trailhead—news from your executive director (Challenge Grant, Save-the-Date); A Note From Trust Board Chair Rob Howard; Clip and Save—information on preventing bird strikes on windows; Education Mewsings; Americorps; Bear Aware



## From the Trailhead

By Michael Skinner, executive director

The ingredients for living a life of joy are usually some, if not all, of the following: a steady-state of being, i.e., not too cold, not too hot, maybe analogous to that of a well-tuned transmission—purring like a kitten and getting you where you need to go without a whole lot of drama (or melodrama); the ability to laugh at yourself—even when people may be laughing at you (although I believe it's much more fun to have folks laugh with you); finding silence, stillness and provocative calm—this is not really difficult to do, especially where we find ourselves here in the mountains of western North Carolina and with that thought—use your senses in ways you've never considered, e.g., walk in the woods and pinpoint/concentrate on a fragrance and see if you can locate it. Once located, try another sense, maybe your sense of sight and your large human brain and see if you can determine just what it is by its description and, oh yes, it always helps to have field guides at the ready. Oh...and when you've used your senses, think about two other senses which are equally important—your sense of place in this amazing world and your sense of wonder. I try to, frequently and consistently, remain challenged by what the natural world presents to my mind's eyes. And, after these observations, I try and interpret what I've seen in a variety of ways. With that then, I offer the following for the oft-maligned member of the aster family—the dandelion.

### Generosity...Continued

The Trust is again indeed very fortunate to have been offered the \$25,000 challenge grant by our anonymous donor. This grant challenge has been offered since 2011 and we're fortunate that this donor continues to believe in what the Trust does. What is also encouraging is that this year we're off to the fastest donor matches since the challenge began in 2011. So as a reminder, the challenge works this way: if you donated to the Trust in the



### Ode to the Dandelion

by Michael Skinner

A con-si-dered dandy, this lion is not,  
Shepherds of green grass deny it a spot  
It's a low-level sunrise on the firmest of earth  
But there's never a party celebrating its birth  
  
Instead, a toxic elixir is broadcast its way  
Punished for none other than, it just got in the way  
Of monotone palettes, mundane as a lawn  
But its bright shining light helps hasten the dawn  
  
An abetment with wind when offspring it bares  
Ensuring existence by climbing the stairs  
With lightness of being, a Poppins - type ride  
You'd win with a wager, as it spreads far and wide

past, any amount above what you donated previously will be matched; if you're a new donor, each dollar you donate will be matched dollar for dollar. We came very close to the complete total last year so we're hoping this year, with your help, we'll reach the total match of the \$25,000.

## *SAVE the DATE!*

# 5 September 2015

Can you believe it? The Trust is celebrating its 15th Anniversary this year and we're looking forward to having everyone there. We're very grateful to Chris Manning and Mike Bucceroni for donating the use of the Boarding House space to have the party and, they have donated the food too! This will be a great time to gather for fellowship and to celebrate the ongoing success of the Trust as it continues to fulfill its mission.

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### A Note from Rob Howard, Trust Board Chair, about the Nature Center

By now you have probably heard that the Trust was recently served a foreclosure notice on our Nature Center (NC) property and we'd like to explain the background of this situation and how we are dealing with it. In summary, we expect no disruption to our Trust program offerings this summer while we pursue a longer-term resolution of this matter.

For a little background, in 2009, as part of Vestlyn's foreclosure on Chaffin-Light/BMP, a lien was placed on the property where the NC is located. The Trust was not a party to this action, but nonetheless it is bound by it. On 17 June Vestlyn filed a notice of hearing to 'permit the foreclosure on the deed of trust and to sell real estate' on the property (lot #192 – Nature Center location).

In response to this situation, we are proceeding on two parallel paths:

1) Negotiating with Vestlyn to see if we can retire the lien at a reasonable cost and

2) Planning to relocate the NC to a temporary location on the property. Toward this end we have identified a promising location and are assessing this location in more detail to see how we can make best use of it.

We will give you additional updates as planning progresses. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me (828-508-5656), Michael or any Trust Board member. We appreciate your understanding and patience as we work through these issues.



## **Clip and Save - An Occasional Service Article to BMP Members**

### **Prevent Birds from Hitting Your Windows: Prevention and Products**

#### **Prevention**

Vertical blinds: Keep these halfway (or more) closed.

Shades and curtains: If you aren't looking out the window or don't need to let in daylight, keep these closed.

Lights: At night, turn off lights or else close curtains or blinds.

#### **Products**

CollidEscape

<http://www.collidescape.org/>

Product Info: CollidEscape makes your windows visible to birds without obstructing your view of the great outdoors. CollidEscape can even be tinted to match your home, or printed to convey your personal style! Our product effectively acts as a one-way film during the day, while providing an unobstructed view of the outside.

CollidEscape is a film designed for the average homeowner to apply themselves to the outside of the glass to stop the reflections birds often attempt to fly through. over 90% of residential applications are applied by the homeowner themselves - designed for the novice applicator.

Windowalert Decals

[http://windowalert.com/?gclid=CJjhZWzg8cCFYGRHwod\\_qQOuw](http://windowalert.com/?gclid=CJjhZWzg8cCFYGRHwod_qQOuw)

Product Info: WindowAlert is a window decal that may be applied to home and office windows. The decals contain a component which brilliantly reflects ultraviolet sunlight. This ultraviolet light is invisible to humans, but glows like a stoplight for birds. Birds have vision that is up to 12 times better than that of humans. WindowAlert decals, and our new UV Liquid, help birds see windows and avoid striking the glass.

UV Liquid Paint (Also sold by Windowalert )

Product Info: An easy-to-apply liquid that can be daubed on a window's exterior and dries clear, leaving marks that birds can see. Use alongside decals for the best coverage and protection against bird strikes. Often available at your favorite birding-supply store.

Bird Crash Preventer

A preassembled curtain of taut monofilament lines strung three inches apart and five inches from the exterior of a window or sliding-door side panel. Birds see the lines and avoid them, while the space between the lines and glass gives birds that touch them a chance to spread their wings and brace themselves. Available in dark brown and white.

[santarosanational.com](http://santarosanational.com)

#### **Window glass products – for remodels or rebuilds**

**Fritted glass windows:** The closely spaced dots of opaque glass fused on the outer surface makes them highly visible to birds, but you can still see through them.

**Angled glass:** If you position windows downward (20 degrees), the glass won't reflect sky and trees.

**UV-reflective glass:** UV-reflective glass, such as [Ornilux](#) is visible to birds and transparent to humans

**Etched or sandblasted windows:** You can have any pattern etched or sandblasted onto the glass. (This is most effective if the areas that don't have a pattern are no more than 4" wide or more than 2" high.



## Education Mewsings:

By Rose Wall, senior naturalist/education coordinator

### Thinking Globally by Acting Locally or How Drinking Coffee Can Save the World

The world runs on coffee. Americans alone, drink more than 330 million cups a day. Trailing only oil, coffee is the second-most traded commodity in the world, worth over \$100,000 billion. Bottom line: coffee is a big deal.

And, I don't know about you, but it's a big deal in my day to day life as well. I love coffee. On a late night drive, when I'm desperate to stay awake, I've been known to doctor up some pretty grimy stuff - but, other than that, you will find I am quite particular about my choices. Why? Because I care about flavor; I care about what goes into my body and, likewise what goes into the ground; and, I care about the people across the globe that are growing what I consume on a daily basis. For this, some might call me a coffee snob. I prefer to think of myself as a conscious consumer. So, what exactly is there to be particular about? Talk to a coffee expert, and they might give you a dissertation. I will keep it much simpler: buy "shade grown". Shade grown means exactly what it sounds like - that the coffee plants were grown under the shade of trees. The majority of the coffee in the world is grown in the tropics. And, it was

not until around 25 years ago that many growers ditched this method for the sun-grown coffee they can get to the market more quickly. How does this affect you?

#### Shade grown coffee...

**Enhances Flavor:** As coffee beans mature more slowly in the shade, natural sugars increase and help to enhance flavor. Coffee lovers rejoice!



Sun-grown coffee on left; shade-grown on the right.

Photo credit: Shalene

**Means less toxins in your product:** Sun grown coffee produces high yields, but requires extensive use of pesticides, fertilizers and irrigation. Next to tobacco, coffee is sprayed with more chemicals than any other product consumed by humans. And, these chemicals don't just make it into our coffee beans, they also run off into local water resources harming the environment and people. Alternatively, shade-grown coffee is most often organically grown.

**Helps sustain rainforests:** Since 1972 more than 6 million acres of forest have been stripped for coffee production. Unlike our temperate-deciduous forests with relatively deep, rich soil, tropical rain forests are often referred to as "wet deserts" because of their relatively poor soil quality, with soil depths measuring only one to two feet. Once the trees have been cleared, coffee producers get only a few years of production before the soil has been depleted of nutrients and/or eroded away. After the soil is gone, the forest doesn't stand much of a chance to bounce back.

**Provides bird habitat and greater biodiversity:** Migrating bird populations have been in rapid de-

cline since the introduction of "sun" coffee. Sun-grown coffee has greater than 90% fewer bird species than shade-grown. This is why many bird conservation organizations have made this at the forefront of their efforts world-wide. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center has even created a certification; look for their "Bird Friendly" coffee. And, it's not just the birds that benefit; think of all the creatures that call the rainforest home.

When we talk about conservation, sometimes the problems seem too big to tackle. You may ask: How can I save the rainforest? Well, when we are talking on the scale of billions of people changing a day-to-day habit, huge results can be accomplished. Just think: you can help save the world while drinking your morning cup of joe (side effect: warm fuzzy feelings with your coffee buzz).

### **Where can I buy this delightful coffee?**

**Local coffee roasters that have shade-grown options include:**

**SRO: This Balsam Mountain Trust staff favorite can be purchased at Greenlife or <http://vitalendurance.com/product/organic-whole-bean-costa-rican-coffee/>**

**Counter Culture Coffee: Look for their "sanctuary line"**

[http://www.coffeehabitat.com/2006/07/counter\\_culture/](http://www.coffeehabitat.com/2006/07/counter_culture/)

**Dynamite Roasting Company: <http://www.dynamiteroasting.com/>**

**Wild Birds Unlimited: Asheville branch stocks a variety**

**A non-local company with super high standards and yummy coffee:**

**Caffe Ibis: all coffee is shade grown**

<http://caffeibis.com/certifications/smithsonian-certified-shade-grown-and-bird-friendly-coffee>

And, it's not just coffee. Also look for a wonderful partner to a good cup of coffee: shade grown chocolate!

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." ~John Muir

You and your cup of coffee are a part of this universe. Enjoy!

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Photo credit: Allegro Coffee Company



## Adopt-A-School

By Becka Walling, education outreach coordinator and Ameri-Corps member

*By way of an introduction, I am the new (and first) Ameri-Corps member lucky enough to be serving with the Trust. Please stop by the Nature Center and say hello. I would love to talk to any of you about my projects.*

While here I am working on expanding our Adopt-A-School program and other projects. So many children growing up today are disconnected from nature, and we are doing our part to connect (or reconnect) kids with the natural world. This past school year we began a pilot Adopt-A-School program. The program works this way: the Trust solicits businesses to become partners with us by providing funding (ideally \$1,000 for a school but we have had businesses become ‘half—partners’ with \$500) whereby they ‘adopt’ a school (either of their or our choosing). So, the business provides the funding and the Trust provides the environmental education programming. These programs are targeted at 4th and 5th graders and the school receives the benefit of the programs provided to them at no cost. To date, six schools in Jackson and Haywood Counties have participated.

We use live animal encounters and interactive programming to help kids make connections between what they are learning in school and what critters can be found in their backyards. There is no substitute for the wonder that kids experience sitting inches away from an owl’s face, touching a snake or watching an opossum use its opposable thumbs and prehensile tail to climb. Our programs encourage students to think critically about complex topics such as: How does one little animal survive in the big, wide world? Why is variety important within a species? How can you tell what an animal’s life is like just by looking at its skull? How do humans impact the environment? How does the environment impact us?

Using live animals gets the students excited about SCIENCE and CONSERVATION at an early age. Encounters with wildlife, especially during the formative years of childhood, has a lasting impact on lives. I would not be the animal lover, conservationist and naturalist that I am today without those early experiences. I think Baba Dioum, the Senegalese conservationist, said it best, “In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”

During the 2014-2015 school year Trust programs have impacted the lives of over 700 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders through our Adopt-A-School program and, we’ve secured donors for seven elementary schools for 2015-2016, but are looking for additional sponsors for a few more schools. If you know of a business that might be interested in sponsoring an elementary school for \$1000, please e-mail me ([naturalist@bmtrust.org](mailto:naturalist@bmtrust.org)), call me (828-631-1063) or stop by the Nature Center Monday-Friday to talk.



## **Catchin' Up With our Charismatic Megafauna (black bears):**

**We've heard a number of different interpretations, stories—embellished and otherwise, of how/what/when/where and why of the black bears who make the Preserve part of their territory. We've included a reminder of how to be "Bear Aware" here. Please feel free to call the Trust for more information.**

## **BECOME BLACK BEAR AWARE!!!**

**What to do if you encounter a black bear:**

**Some simple rules for safety**

1. Do not intentionally feed bears as this rewards them for approaching humans and/or human settlements. Bears do have a keen sense of smell. *Leave food at home on short day hikes.*
2. If you see a bear, remain watchful. Do not approach it. If your presence causes the bear to alter its behavior (it stops feeding, changes travel direction, or watches you without leaving) then you are too close.
3. Getting too close to a bear may provoke aggressive behavior, such as running toward you, making loud noises or swatting the ground.
4. Slowly back away from the bear, but do not run. A black bear can easily outrun a human. They can run up to 30 miles per hour.
5. Do not climb a tree if threatened by a black bear as they are excellent tree climbers.
6. If a black bear persistently follows or approaches you without vocalizing or paw swatting, change your direction. If the bear continues to follow, stand your ground and attempt to intimidate the bear by stomping your feet or throwing rocks or sticks directly at the animal—hitting it if possible and *shouting very loudly.*
7. Do not turn away from the bear – this may invoke the bear's predator—prey response to chase you.
8. In the rare case that a black bear does attack, fight back: bite, kick and punch or poke it in the eyes. Keep protection handy such as long-range pepper spray, a whistle or even a paint-ball gun.

**As a homeowner at Balsam Mountain Preserve, what can I do to protect my homestead and to keep black bears in the wild?**

- **Thoroughly clean outside grills after use.** The smell of fat drippings is too much to bear!
- **Buy and install a bear proof garbage can.** This action is a requirement for each homeowner at Balsam Mountain Preserve (unless your garbage is secured inside your home/garage).
- **Take down your bird feeders at night.** Lock feeders inside a shed or airtight container.
- **Feed birds in winter only.** Stop seed feeding by April 1st.
- **Hummingbird feeders attract bears.** Take them in at night and wipe down with a warm cloth. Store in the refrigerator.
- **Feed your pets inside if at all possible.** Supervise their feeding if you do feed outside. Never leave food out for your pet to eat when the pet is not present.
- **Clean pet food bowls often.**
- **Compost with leaves, and do not put food scraps that create pungent odors in your compost pile.** In other words, stick to composting coffee grounds, vegetable peels, and yard scraps like grass clippings.