



NaturePhile

Written/Published by: Your Trust-ed Staff

Volume #14/Issue #1 2016

The Balsam Mountain Trust inspires people to be responsible stewards of the natural and cultural resources of the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains through education and conservation leadership.



Yet another wonderment of the natural world—this early-emerging wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), is not only the earliest breeding amphibian on the Preserve, it is also an amazing frog popsicle at certain times of the year—namely, winter. This, and a few other frogs, turtles and insects, have an amazing physiological adaptation to cryo-preserve themselves, including vital organs, during their winter dormancy. There are other species that exhibit the same adaptation but lose the ability to do so as they age. Consider the implications of the same behavior in humans. First, the population of Florida would plummet and second, the tourist industry might be forced to go ‘underground’. So consider that if you could find some of these frog-cicles, you might be the talk of the party when you have your cocktail ‘on the rocks—or is it, ‘on the frogs’.

Photo by: Michael Skinner

In this issue: From the Trailhead—news from your executive director: Education Mewsings: from Jen Knight, interim naturalist; Americorps News: from Larissa Lopez, Americorps Service Member



From the Trailhead

By Michael Skinner, executive director

Small Victories = Large Amounts of Hope for Conservation

I'm not sure how many of you keep abreast of the news in the conservation world but I was able to pick up on some really great news recently about the fate of the over-wintering monarch population in Mexico. This biggest of the two migrating groups—the other winters in Baja California—realized an increase in wintering area density from an historical low of about 1.65 acres in 2014 to almost 10 acres over this winter. WOW! To add another perspective, this coverage equals about 140 million monarchs! This is such great news, and with the challenges with which conservationists are faced, this puts some wind back in our sails, so to speak. And as all of you know, we began our pollinator/monarch garden/monarch release program last year with our first Americorps member, Becka Walling—to much success and rave reviews. This means we can take a small amount of credit for, and be extremely proud of, our efforts. We're going to continue this program in 2016 with new Americorps member, Larissa Lopez, as well as with the rest of the Trust staff.

As a side note, it'll really be interesting to see if we get any tagged (returning) monarchs to show up on the Preserve this season.



This female monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) was photographed during its autumn migration in 2015, nectaring on the common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) on the Blue Ridge Parkway near the Virginia-North Carolina border.

Photo by: Michael Skinner

Trust Year at a Glance—2016

You may want to jot down some 'save the date' dates for this coming year as the Trust has a full plate of activities, of which, we're sure you'll want to take advantage. We continue to send out email blasts to all BMP members in as timely as a manner as is prudent and relevant.

You'll certainly want to be in attendance for all the Trust Talks this year as we have a compelling line-up. The first talk will be especially enlightening with the teenage brother/sister team of Carter and Olivia Ries as they wax philosophically about their non-profit One More Generation. Trust Talks will take place at the Boarding House this year so you can move directly from the talk to dinner. The Trust will, once again, be offering complimentary beer, wine and hors d'oeuvres prior to each program.

Many of you have seen Scottish/Celtic fiddle virtuoso Jamie Laval play at the Preserve as a 'Thank you for your Support' concert for all of our Trust supporters. Jamie is returning this year for a 4th of July concert and what's going to make this extra special is that he's going to be accompanied by world-acclaimed Celtic rhythm guitarist John Doyle. You will not/should not miss this concert as it will most certainly be a once-in-a-lifetime event.

The Trust's annual birthday party is being planned by a very talented and dedicated cadre of BMP

members and Trust supporters. The party will take place on Saturday 3 September and will surely be a hit.

Our super-successful Walk for Wildlife kicks off again this year on 4th of July weekend so get those new shoes ready to burn some rubber! Your 'feets' will work hard, but only until Labor Day weekend as Rose decided to shorten the season because we didn't want participants to have wear out too many trail shoes.

So, along with our regular schedule activities as well as our summer camps, 2016 is shaping up to be a great year for all BMP members and guests.

We're looking forward to many exciting, successful and fun interactions with all BMP members.

Come See Us!



Education Mewsings:

By Jen Knight, interim naturalist

In the Know with Project NOAH

Where can you: share wildlife photos; learn about local species; have organisms identified by experts; contribute to citizen-science initiatives and enjoy photography from around the world? You don't need to travel to a museum or university, you can accomplish all that and more on the ProjectNOAH app and website (www.ProjectNOAH.org). NOAH stands for Networked Organisms and Habitats and the website is an ambitious project to catalogue life on our planet.

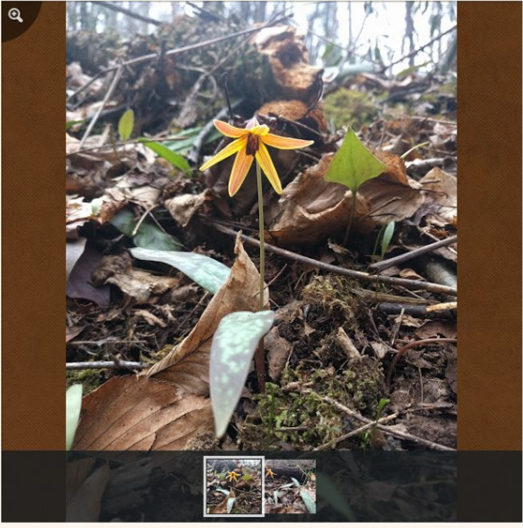
Anyone can sign up and upload photos, or 'spottings', to contribute to the growing database of plants, animals and fungi. If you have a great picture of the bird that visits your feeder every day, but have

no idea what it is, simply click "Help Me Identify" and wildlife geeks around the world will chime in with suggestions. It's a great chance to build your own identification skills as well as browse incredible amateur images from all over the world.

Your contributions to Project-NOAH may also benefit scientific research. When you upload a spotting, you can include geographic (gps) information. Researchers are using data from ProjectNOAH to generate range maps and migration routes, as well as helping to gain a better understanding of behavioral patterns.

Groups focused on documenting a certain aspect of wildlife are called 'missions' and many of them have a research goal. The "Lost Ladybug Project" is one such mission that

Trout Lily
Erythronium umbilicatum

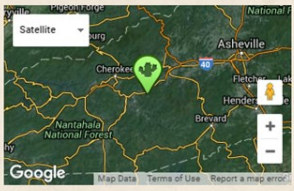


Favorite Flag

Description:
Distinctive mottled leaves give the flower its name.

Edit this spotting

Spotted by
JenKnight



North Carolina, USA
Lat: 35.38, Long: -83.12

Spotted on Mar 19, 2016
Submitted on Mar 19, 2016

Spotted for missions

- Balsam Backyards
- Plants of the South East USA
- Flowers of North America

Reference
[Erythronium umbilicatum](#)

is plotting the change in ladybug species distribution on a global scale.



Balsam Mountain Trust is getting in on the action too. We have set up our own mission: Balsam Backyards, to document the biodiversity on the mountain. By adding spottings we can improve our knowledge of species distribution and prevalence on the Preserve. Your pictures will help build a localized field guide for your (and our) own backyard.

Even when you're off the mountain, you could browse recent Balsam Backyards spottings to see what's blooming, if the leaves have peaked yet, etc. Remember that interesting bird from your feeder? Maybe someone else got a photo of its nest site. For all of you competitive collectors out there, the app charts all your spottings, suggestions and comments and then awards you 'patches' when you hit special milestones – they may only be digital, but they're pretty cute.

If this sounds interesting but beyond your technological ken, no worries! Just stop by the Nature Center and we can show you the ropes. This will only work if we can get people involved, so get out, get snapping, and let us see all the beauty we know Balsam has to offer!

We'll hope to have you share your findings and, we would more than happy to help you find things on your special BMP homestead.





Larissa will have many opportunities to indulge her interest in wildlife species during her Americorps tour of duty with the Trust. Her enthusiasm is contagious and we encourage folks to stop by and visit with her and all the new species she is getting to know.

Americorps News

By Larissa Lopez, Americorps Service member

I am thrilled to be serving as the Trust's 2016 AmeriCorps member and Educational Outreach Coordinator. I am looking forward to exploring and working in western North Carolina during my tour, as well as creating strong ties in the BMP community. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and I hope to hear from all of you throughout the year, so please stop by the Nature Center and say hello. I am not a North Carolina native but in my time spent living here, I've felt a strong sense of belonging. I received my B.S. in Natural Resources: Ecosystem Assessment and a minor in Forest Management from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina in 2014. I was born in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. I left my native homeland at the age of three and grew up in Maryland, but have been visiting my home country every year since.

Although my family has always shared my great respect and gratitude for the environment and a curiosity for the natural world, I did not have the traditional "outdoorsy" childhood of many environmentalists. My passion for conservation did not begin as a result of the familiar 'American' camping trips with my family to marvelous national parks or, a connection to a specific species of wildlife. My love for the natural world originally stems from my empathy for

those who are not able to benefit from well-managed natural resources. Growing up, I was always well aware of the global issues associated with access to potable water - whether they be geographic, political, economic or as a result of environmental degradation. I felt compelled to raise awareness of the global water crisis and make myself useful in developing solutions. I became very passionate about creative and sustainable land management as a tool for achieving water quality and water access.

After studying and working to support wildlife habitats, I felt there was something missing in my educational background, having not had the personal experience with the animals themselves. I was drawn to BMP for several reasons, but primarily to gain a connection to the wildlife I am committed to protecting through habitat conservation efforts. Furthermore, I am extremely passionate about connecting youth and underrepresented communities to nature in hopes that they may realize a passion for living sustainably and continue a path in the environmental movement.

During my service term, I will be working to expand and deliver environmental education to school children and the public in Jackson and Haywood counties. I am working with our Adopt-a-School program for 4th and 5th graders bringing them live animal, inquiry-based programming to supplement their biological sciences curriculum. I am also elaborating on the pollinator programs, with an emphasis on monarchs, for 1st and 2nd graders. During these lessons, students will engage in citizen science by rearing monarch cat-

erpillars in the classroom and starting their own pollinator gardens.

I will also be developing pollinator and wildlife lessons in Spanish to deliver to Latino children and families in western North Carolina who may otherwise not have access to this type of material. Studies have shown that Hispanics place a high value on environmental conservation and are most likely to act politically on environmental issues. However, their participation in environmental activism in this country is low because they are not engaged in conservation efforts as a result of several barriers—mainly language. I hope to reach this population and better connect them with their communities and with nature.

I will also be maintaining the BMP pollinator garden that our previous AmeriCorps member, Becka Walling, started last year so stay tuned for updates and volunteer workday opportunities. I am enthusiastic about the tasks ahead of me and look forward to a year of learning, giving back, and new friendships.



It's Time to Get
out in the **Woods** Every-
one, so Join us on a
Journey of Discovery!

