



NaturePhile

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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.



The Trust continues to entice BMP members to help with the day-to-day operations at the Nature Center. Case in point is this shot of Mike Nervie who, along with Stephen Barnett, finished the construction of our box turtle condominium, as part of the Center's remodel. Mike, ever the engineer, constructed his way into a corner and had to be helped out by the Trust's two box turtles, Hermione and Merlin. BMP members have been so important to the ongoing success of helping to meet the Trust's mission. Stop by and say hello whenever you're in the neighborhood as we'd love to show you our progress.

Photo by: M. Skinner

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From the Trailhead:

By Michael Skinner, executive director

Putting Things in Perspective:

Do you keep abreast of the conservation news that is presented, for digestion and stimulation, on a daily basis, weekly, monthly, as seldom as possible? I do, and along with the information, I attempt to vet that news so as to come to the best factual conclusion that I can. Remember sergeant Joe Friday's now infamous quip: "All we want are the facts ma'am."? Sorting through the minutiae and the big, stinking piles of incorrect facts, can be problematic on many levels—especially if one is trying to establish and/or maintain, scientific integrity. And then, even peer-reviewed scientific articles can have 'fake news' in them.

As the Trust has facilitated numerous scientific projects on the Preserve, it is vitally important that we maintain our integrity—both as professional staff/naturalists and as a conservation nonprofit. And, that we present the facts. With that then, many of you know about the second half of the predator study (first half was the bobcat camera trap portion) where the researchers were looking for grey and red fox. Spoiler alert: they didn't discover a single one. They did catch coyotes, raccoons, bobcats, possums and a black bear. None of these animals were harmed and all were released back into their wild BMP homes after having had data collected for the project.

It is important to state here that we could've done a better job of communicating this part of the project to BMP owners. This, coupled with the fact that a BMP owner had their dog (Molly) inadvertently detained in one of the traps, reinforces the premise that we do more front-end loading with any research we do on the Preserve. (Note: I was informed by Molly's dad, Al T., that she has since logged about 60 (or is it 16) miles of trails and suffered no ill effects from her experience.)

We are so grateful that the CA and Ken B., allowed us access to the property where the research was conducted.

They're Heeeeere! New (Unwanted) Species Recently Discovered on the Preserve:

I discovered, recently, an insect species that I had not seen since I moved from Atlanta about seventeen years ago—the German cockroach. This is the species that people often comment that's on the top of the list of lcky! Fossil records suggest that cockroaches have been on this planet for over 300 million years. And they are the one species that we often joke about as the insect that will inherit the Earth.

These insects can be the vector for a whole host of things humans don't want, e.g., allergens, food-poisoning, diarrhea, asthma and many more. I'm not going to go into a great depth of detail here but suffice it to state that you need to be vigilant on the mountain. An obvious question is, "How did it (they, because if there's one, there've got to more) get here?" The answer, like so many other unwanted invasive species that end up on the mountain, is human transport, other animals, weather, etc. And they reproduce like little insect rabbits but even more so. In one year (assuming two generations per year) this critters can produce over 10,000 de



The German cockroach (*Blatella germanica*) is about 1/2 to 5/8 inches (12—15 mm) long and light brown in color.

scendants. Whew! Vigilance is the operative word here—especially in human dwellings and where there's human food and food waste. Stay tuned and, please if you see any of these insects please let us know.



Education Mewsings: Thinking Globally by Acting Locally or How Drinking Coffee Can Save the World

By: Rose Wall, Co-Senior Naturalist/Education Director

(Editor's note: we thought we'd share an article that had been produced previously in this publication because of the importance of two items near and dear to Rose's heart. The window-strike article is also timely because of a bird that hit a BMP owner's home and which, in this case, is one the more strikingly beautiful species who makes its home on the mountain.)

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 sungrown 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!

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 decline 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/

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!

References:

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http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/bird_friendly/ecological-benefits-of-shade-grown-coffee.cfm
http://eartheasy.com/eat_shadegrown_coffee.htm

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

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

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 and are no more than 4" wide or more than 2" high.

"Every creature was designed to serve a purpose. Learn from animals for they are there to teach you the way of life. There is a wealth of knowledge that is openly accessible in nature. Our ancestors knew this and embraced the natural cures found in the bosoms of the earth. Their classroom was nature. They studied the lessons to be learned from animals. Much of human behavior can be explained by watching the wild beasts around us. They are constantly teaching us things about ourselves and the way of the universe, but most people are too blind to watch and listen."

Suzy Kassem



This male scarlet tanager was the victim of a window strike at a home on the Preserve. By making an effort to minimize and/or mitigate these strikes, we can really reduce these types of incidents and enjoy more, the beauty and wonder of the natural resources we are all so fortunate to have on BMP.



AmeriCorps Update: Worm Your Way Over to the Nature Center

By Eliza Hurst, AmeriCorps Service Member

Spring has sprung (and gone)! The frogs are calling, flowers are blooming and birds are moving. One of my favorite parts of springtime has to be the plethora of migratory birds moving through our mountain home. I am thrilled that I was able to coordinate a festival to bring light to the wonders of these feathered friends. I am even more excited to share that our third annual World Migratory Bird Day Festival (WMBD) was a success! We reached over 200 members of the community, had eleven community groups join us and established new community partnerships.

I am happy to share that the Cherokee Museum and Dynamite Coffee Co. are two new partnerships made for this year's festival. I hoped to share the cultural significance of birds through Cherokee storytelling. Dawn Archer, a storyteller from the tribe, came out and shared her stories. It was a big hit! Additionally, Dynamite Coffee Co. generously donated coffee to serve at the festival. Their locally roasted, organic, fair trade coffee is also shade-grown (and delicious!). Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society was there to continue the conversation about shade-grown coffee.

As a recent Western Carolina University (WCU) graduate, I made it a goal to use my connectedness to the university to involve more WCU students in WMBD. The WCU Wildlife Club provided many helping hands at the festival. Eco C.A.T.S., a WCU student club that focuses on community sustainability, generously led a park clean-up the morning of the festival. They combed the park, filled six bags with trash, and inventoried the waste. The data was submitted to a citizen-science platform that is tracking the collected waste to other data collected worldwide. We believe that it is important to have an action item at the festivals. It is great to talk about the change that needs to happen, but it is also important to bring those experiences to the community.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Kathy Nervie and Sabrina Watkins for helping out as WMBD Committee members. They helped, for months, leading up to the event. I would also like to thank Carol Landers, Janie Stratigos, Louise Sparks, Jan Kohl and Bob Farquharson for volunteering at the festival. We couldn't have done it without these committed members! And finally, a huge thank you goes out to Bethany Sheffer who was available to consult with me throughout the planning process as well as lending a helping hand the day of the event. What an impact she has left on this community!

Editor's note: The Trust bids a fond farewell and best wishes to Eliza Hurst as she heads off to Syracuse University to start the next part of her journey in graduate school there.
Three Cheers!



Above: Bethany leading the bird walk at WMBD.

Below: Trust board chair Sabrina Watkins assists visitors at the event.

