

LANDSCAPE



THANK YOU
FOR MAKING GREAT
STORIES POSSIBLE!

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IN SALUDA**

TWO MOUNTAIN BOG PROPERTIES PROTECTED

To create an expansive wildlife refuge out of small and isolated mountain bogs, it takes some patchwork and some mending. Once, there would have been about 5,000 acres of Southern Appalachian mountain bogs. Today, there's only about 10% of that amount, a mere 500 acres. As a Conserving Carolina member, you just helped protect two of our remaining mountain bogs—and the rare communities of plants and animals that live there.

Mountain bogs never were never easy places to live. A bog is a specific kind of wetland, with acidic water and poor soils. Overall, it's a pretty tough place for life—so, life came up with some unique forms.

Consider one exotic-looking group of plants—pitcher plants. They can't get enough nutrition from the poor bog soils, so they supplement their diet by eating insects.

Conserving Carolina works in the homeland of the Cherokee, Yuchi, and Catawba people. We offer our gratitude to the land itself and our respect to the people who have long cared for this land.

ON THE COVER:

Endangered mountain purple pitcher plant.
Photo by Rose Lane.

TWO MOUNTAIN BOG PROPERTIES PROTECTED

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They lure bugs into the pitchers made by their leaves and then trap them. Yet, amazingly, some insects successfully make their homes *inside* these carnivorous plants. Pitcher plants also need to avoid eating their pollinators, which are often bumblebees. So, pitcher plants are designed to keep visitors to their flowers well away from the traps in their leaves.

Bogs are also home to many other endangered and unusual plants, including swamp pink, bunched arrowhead, Eastern cottongrass, and sphagnum moss. They provide habitat for tiny

conservation quilt. Recently, with your support, Conserving Carolina protected two more mountain bog properties. Totalling close to 100 acres, these properties are located in Transylvania County and Henderson County. Both are located on the edge of protected bogs, and they help provide a clean water supply for the bogs. They protect the bogs against runoff that could be polluted with sediment, pesticides, or fertilizers.

Tom Fanslow, our Land Protection Director, says, “Many people assume that it’s illegal to



David Lee and Emily Powell look at bog plants, including sphagnum moss.

bog turtles and many kinds of salamanders. They also support more common animals, such as ducks and grouse.

But mountain bogs need our help. Many have been drained, ditched, or dammed. Others have been polluted by stormwater runoff from development. Add to that the threat of poaching of endangered plants and animals (a felony offense). Then, throw in the threat of climate change that could overstress an already precarious balance. Today, many of the extraordinary plants and animals in our mountain bogs are on the brink of extinction.

That’s where the patchwork and the mending come in.

The patchwork involves stitching the last remnants of bogs together in a kind of

destroy wetlands. In most cases that is true, and yet we continue to see destruction of wetlands, not just from outright dumping of fill, but degradation due to nearby land disturbance.”

Eastern cottongrass





Endangered mountain sweet pitcher plant

Our goal is to add these properties to the Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge. While most wildlife refuges cover vast unbroken areas of habitat, this one is different. It's a collection of scattered, high-priority sites, including mountain bogs and the land surrounding them.

Conserving Carolina has now helped to protect five mountain bogs and we actively manage several bog preserves. When David Lee, our Natural Resources Manager, ventures into one of these preserves, he takes great care. A trip starts by sterilizing your rubber boots, to avoid introducing pathogens. The muck sucks at those boots at every step, threatening to topple you into the mud—and sometimes succeeding.

In the bogs, our team removes invasive plants like multiflora rose, privet, autumn olive, and Japanese knotweed. They also take out rhododendrons that shade the sun-loving bog plants. This kind of stewardship creates space for the bog community to expand. At the same time, we are restoring other types of wetlands, including multiple floodplain sites along the French Broad River.

This is the mending—taking ecosystems that have been worn to shreds and bringing them back toward wholeness.

Recently, at a protected bog, our Conservation Easement Manager, Torry Nergart got to admire the fall color of an endangered pitcher plant, which had turned burgundy and yellow. This bog is a playground for a botanist like him, abounding in unusual plants. But, they don't need to be so extremely rare.

Torry reflected on the work of a partner, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, which propagates endangered plants from seed. "What they're doing is an absolute last-ditch effort to stop extinction," he says. "What *we* need to be doing is making more wetlands. We need to make more habitat and then we can have more of those rare plants and animals."

FALL GLORY AT MUD CREEK

When you see the meadows and wetlands at the Mouth of Mud Creek, it's hard to believe that a few years ago, none of this was here! Your support made it possible to take some flood-prone fields on the French Broad River and recreate a natural floodplain where fish, birds, salamanders, pollinators, and all kinds of wildlife can thrive. This fall, it was in full bloom. **Thank you for restoring this wetland!**



Photo by Gordon Tutor

KINGS BRIDGE BECOMES N.C. WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA

Two miles upstream from our natural floodplain restoration at the Mouth of Mud Creek is another promising site for wildlife, on the banks of the French Broad River. Last year, Conserving Carolina purchased an 87-acre former sod farm in Mills River. Called Kings Bridge, it takes its name from the bridge on Rt. 191.

This property is now public land! We transferred it to the N.C Wildlife Resources Commission, which made it a Wildlife Conservation Area. This means the land will be managed primarily for the conservation of non-game wildlife resources. Although there are no trails or other infrastructure, public access is permitted for wildlife observation and fishing. However, the property is a designated safety zone where hunting is not allowed.

The property has strong potential for a natural floodplain restoration, expanding vibrant habitat along this stretch of the French Broad River. Nick Shaver of the Wildlife Resources Commission says, "This parcel is a new and unique opportunity for our agency to take what is virtually a blank slate and create some high quality wildlife habitat that will benefit both terrestrial and aquatic species."



HIKING CHALLENGE

EXPLORE 8 GREAT HIKES ON PROTECTED LANDS

Hiking Challenge 5 completer Liene Kukainis hikes Youngs Mountain with her son, nicknamed Z.



The long awaited White Squirrel Hiking Challenge 6 is here!

You are invited to explore eight amazing places that Conserving Carolina helped to protect, enhance, or open to the public. As a Conserving Carolina member, you can be proud as you hike these trails. For every one of these hikes, there is a tie to a recent conservation success that you made possible.

The Hiking Challenge is sponsored by the conservation-focused real estate firm, Witherspoon, Platt, and Associates.

If you complete all eight hikes and you are a Conserving Carolina member, you will earn your White Squirrel patch and a prize package with exclusive perks from local businesses.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Go to [conservingcarolina.org/hiking-challenge-6](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/hiking-challenge-6) to learn more and log your hikes.

If long hikes aren't your thing (or you can't get enough challenges) check out our Flying Squirrel Outdoor Challenge. This challenge offers more flexibility to do your favorite outdoor activities and it can be tailored to any level of ability.

Which one will you do first?

1. BEARWALLOW MOUNTAIN

This is our classic Hiking Challenge hike, offering panoramic views from the grassy mountaintop. And now a new Conserving Carolina trail connects it to Wildcat Rock.

2. WILDCAT ROCK TRAIL – EXTENDED

This new link connects two Conserving Carolina trails. You can choose how you want to get there—from Bearwallow or from Wildcat Rock.

3. BRACKEN PRESERVE

Conserving Carolina volunteers helped expand this trail system, which connects the City of Brevard to Pisgah National Forest. You can hike or bike these trails.

4. DUPONT: FAWN LAKE AND LAKE JULIA

Experience the quieter side of DuPont as you hike or bike around these beautiful lakes. We're proud that Conserving Carolina helped to create this state forest and that we recently added 700+ acres, linking it to a major conservation corridor.

5. DUPONT: HOLLY ROAD TO HOOKER FALLS

Reach this popular destination in a new way, including a sustainable trail that was designed with advice from Conserving Carolina's trails expert.

6. GREEN RIVER GAME LANDS: GREEN RIVER COVE TRAIL

Follow a beautiful mountain river for the entire length of this hike. And know that, as a Conserving Carolina member, you're helping to expand the Game Lands.

7. WHITEWATER FALLS

See the highest waterfall in the Eastern U.S., plunging more than 800 feet! Upstream, land that you conserved helps to keep the Whitewater River pristine.

8. YOUNGS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Discover the newest Conserving Carolina Trail with spectacular views over Lake Lure and the Hickory Nut Gorge.



Photo by Kevin Adams.

GIVE THE GIFT OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Do your family and friends love the outdoors? Do they care about beautiful mountain views, new trails to explore, and clear, clean rivers? **Give them a gift membership to Conserving Carolina!** Your holiday gift protects places they love while connecting them to the joyful work of conservation. Plus, they get some great perks:

- A reusable Conserving Carolina tote bag
- Conserving Carolina stickers
- Invitations to special events
- Members-only hikes on protected lands
- Eligibility to earn their White Squirrel or Flying Squirrel patches
- Newsletters like this, with uplifting conservation stories

▶ FOR GIFT MEMBERSHIPS, GIVE US A CALL AT 828-697-5777. OR GO TO [CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/DONATE](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/donate) AND CHOOSE GIFT MEMBERSHIP.

DID YOU SEE THE CONSERVATION CELEBRATION?

Big thanks to everyone who took part in our virtual Conservation Celebration! Between the virtual event and the online auction, you raised over \$90,000 for conservation. Your gifts go far to protect our precious mountains, rivers, foothills, and farms.

You can still watch the Conservation Celebration online, with updates on the great work you're supporting, a musical performance by Woody Platt of the Steep Canyon Rangers and his wife Shannon Whitworth, and a powerful keynote address by conservation leader Jay Leutze. **Just go to [conservingcarolina.org/celebration21](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/celebration21).**



CELEBRATING THE ECUSTA TRAIL

After the long-awaited purchase of the 19-mile Ecusta Trail corridor, supporters celebrated at both endpoints of the future rail trail. Ribbon cutting ceremonies were held in Hendersonville (above) and Brevard (below). When built, the rail trail will connect these two communities, passing through Laurel Park, Etowah, Horsehoe, Penrose, and Pisgah Forest along the way.

A subsidiary of Conserving Carolina called EcustaRails2Trails, LLC, purchased the corridor in August and we're now working with Friends of the Ecusta Trail to raise funding to build the trail. Grant funding will multiply your donations x5!

▶ [LEARN MORE AT CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/ECUSTA](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/ecusta)



A PLACE TO FEEL AT HOME



Photo by Alexla Perez-Sanchez

Sometimes, as an immigrant, you're so focused on survival you don't let yourself relax, ever, says Delia Jovel Dubón. You don't prioritize your own health. You need to be so driven to succeed in this new land. You can improve your life here—but you can also lose everything so quickly.

Still, to Delia, the land itself is welcoming. The lush green mountains bring back her

childhood in El Salvador. The land teaches her how to raise vegetables.

That food is a source of nourishment—body and soul—and that nourishment can be shared.

A single mother with a special needs child, Delia provides for her family. She's also a grower in a farmers' co-op. She helped start a food bank offering fresh food. And she recently launched a project to transform a tract of land covered in kudzu into a Hispanic community center called Las Flores—"The Flowers."

"I see a space where people can feel at home," Delia says. At this space between Hendersonville and Mills River, there could be community gardens, a pavilion, and a nature play area. Delia says of her vision for it, "I see people having a good time together. It's a place where people can feel safe—because I think the hard part for any immigrant is how you can feel comfortable in a country that is not yours. And I think for many of us, we are never comfortable. It's like you are always finding the way to feel at home. And it's not easy because of all the context showing you, you are not from here."

When Delia was a child, her country was torn apart by civil war. Her family had to flee their rural home and seek safety in the city. She says, "I think for my generation who lived the civil war, talking about it is like a bad dream."



El Salvador was not only ravaged by civil war; it also lost most of its tropical rainforest to logging—a loss that Delia says keeps the people in poverty. "How can you have wealth when you do not have natural resources? You cannot."

For her, arriving in North Carolina was in some ways like a return home. "I always said I wanted to come back to live in the countryside and finally I arrived to a place that it's like the small town where I was born. It's mountains. It's green everywhere. I feel really blessed and privileged to live in a space that it's like this."

Delia formed the Tierra Fértil growers' cooperative with other immigrants to grow their own food—increasing community and security as they do so. But to grow food, they need land. Through Farm Link, they connected with



Delia farming with Tierra Fértil.
Photo by Alexla Perez-Sanchez.

"It's a place where people can feel safe—because I think the hard part for any immigrant is how you can feel comfortable in a country that is not yours."

- DELIA JOVEL DUBÓN



Volunteers at Las Flores, with huge kudzu vines.

Conserving Carolina’s land protection director, Tom Fanslow. Tom suggested that they use a property Conserving Carolina owns between Hendersonville and Mills River.

Tierra Fértil had already found some land to farm. But Delia saw potential for a community center in this new property—despite the state it was in.

Just as people need land to cultivate, this land needs people to bring it back to health. There are trees engulfed in kudzu and bittersweet vines that will kill them if left unchecked. Invasive plants like English ivy, Chinese silver grass, and multiflora rose dominate much of the understory. Before they can begin to create Las Flores, Delia and her partners need to make a space for it.

So, volunteers from Conserving Carolina, Tierra Fértil, and True Ridge have been coming out one weekend morning each month to clear out invasive plants. Four months in, they are making strong progress and making friends.

While her life is already full, as a parent, provider, and farmer, Delia says, “I think the only way that I can survive is by doing this work,” she says. “I try to build a sense of home and community. Being able to support other community members with so much potential makes me feel happy. I learned that when you change others’ realities, you change your own.”

Everyone is invited. To volunteer, go to our website calendar and look for Las Flores workdays. See you there!



ENGAGING MORE PEOPLE WITH THE OUTDOORS

Alexla on Bearwallow Mountain

When Alexla Perez-Sanchez was a girl, her mom took her for a walk at the Carl Sandburg Home. But neither could read the signage in English and they weren’t sure where to go—so they just sat in the car. This summer, Alexla helped us make sure that all kinds of people can feel at home in the outdoors. She created Spanish signage for our trailheads, supported community engagement, and created videos on conservation topics.

If we’re going to protect our amazing natural world, we need people to care... *a lot!* Often, the first step is creating opportunities for people to connect with nature. Alexla is an amazing example. She discovered her deep connection with nature through Summer of Service, an AmeriCorps program with Conserving Carolina. Ever since, she’s been passionate about land conservation. And she’s passing that passion on to others.



WELCOME, NEW AMERICORPS MEMBERS!

Conserving Carolina is proud to lead AmeriCorps Project Conserve, with members at 18 conservation organizations throughout WNC! And we’re excited to be working with six AmeriCorps members at Conserving Carolina. Seen here are (left to right) Karsten Griffo, Elizabeth Joslin, Josh Huffstetler, and Allie Houtz. Not pictured are Matty Alpert and Gabe Isaac.

Wildflower Preserve Created Near Pearson's Falls



Land near Pearson's Falls in Saluda with beautiful spring wildflowers is now the Pearson Wildflower Preserve, named in honor of the late Mildred Pearson. Mildred protected the land during her lifetime with conservation easements, including one held by Conserving Carolina. In October, Conserving Carolina purchased the approximately 25-acre property from Mildred's nieces, Sarah and Priscilla Pearson.

"Mildred was one of the earliest conservation landowners. She protected her land because she loved her forest and wanted to see it protected forever," says Conserving Carolina's Southeast Stewardship Manager, Pam Torlina. "I'm really glad that we'll be stewarding that land as a tribute to her and the legacy she wanted to leave behind."

This purchase eliminates the remaining development potential on this special property. The land adjoins the popular Pearson's Falls hiking area, which is owned by the Tryon Garden Club. The garden club acquired it from Mildred's grandfather, Charles William Pearson, in 1931. The recently acquired property provides an important riparian buffer along the North Pacolet River and Fork Creek. It includes rare natural communities, and most of the property is part of a state designated Natural Heritage Area. In the spring, beautiful displays of wildflowers include an abundance of Solomon's seal, May apples, and trilliums.

Photo by David Campbell



Make a Legacy Gift —FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

Will you leave a legacy that goes beyond your lifetime? Consider making a gift to Conserving Carolina in your will or estate plans. This is one of the most profound ways that you can make a difference for conservation. Your gift will protect wonderful places forever, so your love of nature lives on.

You have many options for how to make your legacy gift. Your advisors can help you find the best way to make a gift that supports your retirement and estate planning goals. We're also happy to talk with you about how you wish to give. Options for legacy giving can include a bequest in your will, a gift of land, a life estate, or making Conserving Carolina the beneficiary of your life insurance policy or retirement account.

To discuss your gift, call Lynn Killian at 828-697-5777 x. 202.

If you decide to make a legacy gift, please let us know so that we can thank you and recognize you as a member of our Land Legacy League.

New Trails and Parkland at Little White Oak Mountain

The vision for new hiking and mountain biking trails at Little White Oak Mountain is becoming reality. We are thrilled for our partners at Polk County Parks and Recreation, who received a grant that will allow them to start building trails—and expand the park!

The grant from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund makes it possible for Polk County to improve the park with trails, an outdoor classroom, a picnic area, and more. It also funds the planned purchase of an additional 140 acres of parkland from Conserving Carolina. When complete, this purchase will bring the park to 440 acres. We are offering this land as a bargain sale so that, with this grant, the acquisition comes at no cost to the county.

This land is part of more than 1,000 acres at Little White Oak Mountain that had been threatened with development until Conserving Carolina protected it—with your help! Part of this land was added to the Green River Game Lands and part went to the local park. Approximately 30 acres will become the site of an affordable housing community. The expanded park will connect to the affordable housing development. It also connects to Polk County Middle School and creates places for outdoor education and sports training.

Photo by Ford Smith



LADY SLIPPER AWARD - WINNERS -

Our fall and winter volunteer awards go to Susan McHugh and Ted Altman! Thank you for all of your dedicated volunteer work!



SUSAN MCHUGH

VOLUNTEERING FOR:

3 years

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

Board of Directors

HOME:

Saluda, NC

HOW SHE GOT INVOLVED:

When land near her home was slated to become a tactical gun range, she worked with neighbors and Conserving Carolina to protect it

MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

Interacting with the community of dedicated members, volunteers, and staff.

HOPES & DREAMS FOR CONSERVING CAROLINA:

“Keep on keeping on.” Expand land protection. Build a strong, diverse support base.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

A deep appreciation for and connection with the extraordinary and unique natural world of WNC.

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

Climate change, biodiversity, natural resource protection, and education.

HOBBIES:

Gardening, hiking, reading, and quality time with friends and family (especially her two great nephews).



TED ALTMAN

VOLUNTEERING FOR:

3 years

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

Kudzu Warriors

HOME:

Tryon, NC

HOW HE GOT INVOLVED:

After flooding damaged the Norman Wilder trails, he stepped up to help

MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

Seeing a carpet of wildflowers this spring where the Kudzu Warriors had dug out kudzu

HOPES & DREAMS FOR CONSERVING CAROLINA:

Inspire more people to protect our natural resources by creating more places to enjoy the outdoors

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

To leave a legacy for his children and grandchildren.

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

Preservation of natural resources.

HOBBIES:

Hiking, woodworking, and travel.

MOTTO:

When volunteering time, you often receive more that you give—in his case, great friends and knowledge about the natural world.



HABITAT AT HOME

LEAVE YOUR SEEDHEADS

Some gardeners cut back their flowers after the blooms have faded... but if you leave your seedheads standing, you'll see far more birds! You're also providing homes for native bees. Seedheads can also add winter interest to your garden.

Some of the best seed producing plants for birds are:

- Coneflower
- Black-eyed Susan
- Swamp Sunflower
- Ironweed
- Joe-Pye Weed
- Bee Balm

Native bees also nest in the hollow stems of your dead plants. Those stems are like free bee hotels that you never need to clean. This infographic from botanist Heather Holm shows how to support native bees by leaving your stems all winter and then cutting them fairly high in the spring.

If you don't like the look of dry seedheads, consider leaving them up in just part of your garden, maybe in the backyard. Another option is to cut them but leave the seedheads on the ground nearby for birds.



HOW TO CREATE HABITAT FOR STEM-NESTING BEES

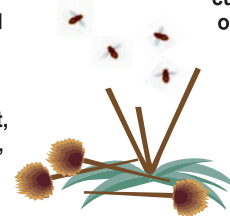


WINTER

Leave dead flower stalks in-tact over the winter.

SPRING

Cut back dead flower stalks leaving stem stubble of varying height, 8 to 24 inches, to provide nest cavities.



Female bees find cut or naturally-occurring open stems, start a nest, then lay an egg on the pollen balls. Larvae eat the pollen.



SUMMER

New growth of the perennial hides the stem stubble.



Bee larvae develop in cut dead stems during the growing season.



FALL



WINTER



Bees hibernate in stems during the winter.



SPRING

Cut back dead flower stalks. Old stem stubble will naturally decompose.



Adult bees emerge and start nests in newly cut dead stems or in naturally-occurring open stems.



Graphics and content: Colleen Satyshur, Elaine Evans, Heather Holm, Sarah Foltz-Jordan

Source: pollinatorsnativeplants.com

FIELD NOTES



Every fall, there's an abundance of goldfinches in the garden of photographer and Conserving Carolina member Rich Stevenson, in Hendersonville. They feast on coneflower seedheads, one of their favorite foods. Did you know that goldfinches are strict vegans? They eat buds, seeds, and fruits, but no insects or worms.



Member Debbi Ware found this pinesap blooming near her home in Tryon. Notice how these plants have no green parts! Unlike most plants, they don't have chlorophyll and they don't make energy from sunlight. Instead they tap into fungal networks underground that are connected to tree roots. The trees do the photosynthesizing and the pinesap gets the energy by way of the fungi.

What wild things are you seeing? Share your pics in the Conserving Carolina Community group on Facebook.

GET OUTSIDE WITH US!

We'd love to connect with you at one of these upcoming events.

VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS

Be a hands-on part of land conservation! Help us restore habitat, build trails, clean up greenways, and more. Make friends and make a difference.

FOREST BATHING WALKS

Awaken your senses and experience your deep connection with nature at our beautiful Transfiguration Preserve in Bat Cave.

WALNUT CREEK PRESERVE WALKS

Take a guided nature walk at Walnut Creek Preserve in Mill Spring. Learn about topics like mushrooms, geology, tree i.d. and more.

MORE EVENTS

Get our emails to stay up-to-date about events like our winter solstice hike, members-only hikes, virtual events, and more.

▶ **ONLINE CALENDAR:** [CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/CALENDAR](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/calendar)

▶ **EMAIL SIGN UP:** [CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/SUBSCRIBE](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/subscribe)





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SHARE THE JOY OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS!

From field trips on Bearwallow Mountain to more parks, trails, greenways, and protected land, your gifts create wonderful places for nature and people, forever. Please make a generous gift today and share the joy you feel in nature.

Thank you!

Students with Fernleaf Community Charter School on a field trip to Bearwallow Mountain.