



LANDSCAPE

For Nature and People. Forever.

SPRING/SUMMER 2019



THANK YOU

FOR MAKING GREAT STORIES POSSIBLE

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No More Missing Link!

For years, there was a missing link in a vast corridor of public conservation lands that almost—so close!—reached DuPont State Recreational Forest. We just bridged that gap, expanding DuPont and connecting it to a chain of public lands that stretches for over 100,000 acres along the North Carolina-South Carolina border.

In February, we conveyed 402 acres—called the Continental Divide Tract—to the North Carolina Forest Service, extending DuPont across the Eastern Continental Divide. That puts us within 0.2 miles, along a public road, of connecting the main body of DuPont to Jones Gap State Park in South Carolina.



847 Case Street
Hendersonville, NC 28792

2060 Lynn Road, Suite 1
Columbus, NC 28722

828.697.5777
conservingcarolina.org

f @conservingcarolina

ig @conservingcarolina

tw @ConsvrgCarolina



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

On the Cover:

Hikers and bikers enjoy spectacular views from Cedar Rock in DuPont State Recreational Forest, which Conserving Carolina helped create in the 1990s. Photo by Thomas Parlier.

No More Missing Link!

continued from page 1

From there, Jones Gap connects to Caesar's Head State Park, which connects to the Mountain Bridge Wilderness. That connects to the new Headwaters State Forest which we celebrated opening last September. The chain of public lands continues to the Greenville Watershed, Jocassee Gorges, Gorges State Park, and eventually to Sumter and Nantahala National Forests.

This addition to DuPont creates exciting potential for future public access. And it protects scenic views enjoyed from overlooks in the mountains. The Continental Divide Tract also offers important benefits for water quality, protecting headwater streams that flow into the Green River and Reasonover Creek.

This unbroken stretch of natural lands provides an important migration corridor for wildlife, too. Animals need to roam to seek out food, shelter, and mates. Many plants and animals also need to shift their range as the climate changes; some are migrating to higher elevations or further north. This corridor along the dramatic slopes of the Blue Ridge Escarpment gives plants and animals more opportunities to move and adapt.

All of these benefits were further enhanced this spring when Conserving Carolina purchased an additional 315 acres—the final phase of the Continental Divide Tract—for a total of 718 protected acres. We look forward to working with the North Carolina Forest Service to add this land to DuPont later this year.

Your support made it possible for us to expand on the legacy of our very first conservation project—helping create DuPont State Recreational Forest in the 1990s. The Continental Divide Tract also borders the 2,600-acre Green River Preserve, a summer camp we helped protect.

“In a region blessed with an abundance of public and conserved natural lands, DuPont State Recreational Forest is already one of our greatest conservation gems,” said Conserving Carolina executive director Kieran Roe. “The Continental Divide tract enhances it further by protecting water quality, preserving an important wildlife corridor and creating future opportunities for public access.”

45,000 ACRES PROTECTED!

We're celebrating a milestone. We've helped protect over 45,000 acres!
This includes some of this region's most treasured natural areas:

DuPont State Recreational Forest

Chimney Rock State Park

Headwaters State Forest

Bearwallow Mountain

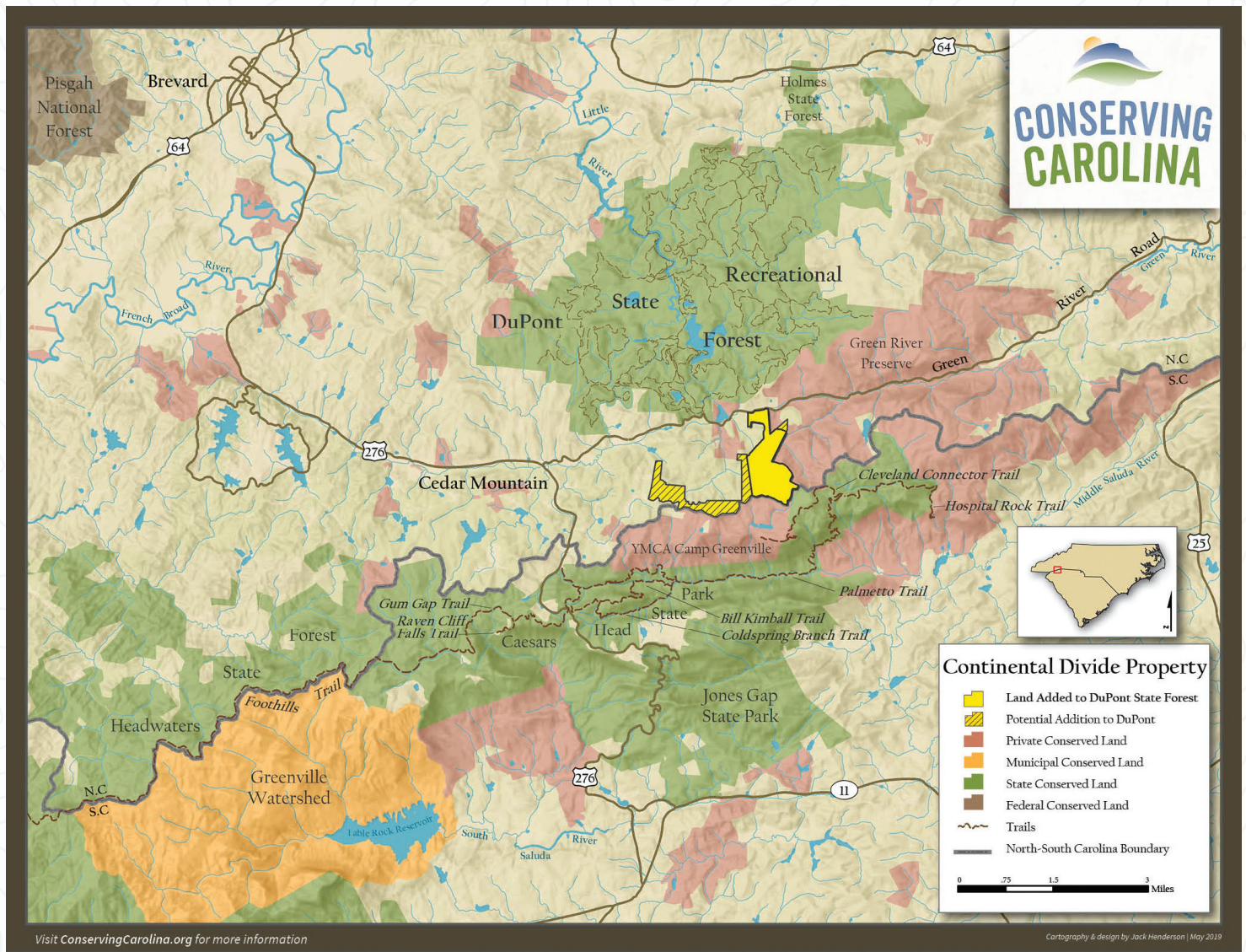
Hickory Nut Gorge trails

Little White Oak Mountain

Local parks and greenways

Tens of thousands of acres of private land—including working farms and forests, summer camps, and educational nature preserves.

▶ SEE WHAT'S PROTECTED NEAR YOU! OUR NEW MAP IS UP ONLINE: [CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/CONSERVATION](https://www.conservingcarolina.org/conservation)



Class Outside!

On two beautiful days in May, we helped lead field trips to Bearwallow Mountain. Both Edneyville Elementary and FernLeaf Community Charter School brought the whole school out to the protected mountaintop. Between the two schools, the kids sang songs, made observations, practiced mindfulness, and listened to the author of a book about Bearwallow. And they got to play on the open mountaintop. Here, a girl from FernLeaf takes in the big views. On the back cover, a boy from FernLeaf found a bug.





STORIES OF THE LAND

YOUNG FOR A TREE

John Humphrey was Conserving Carolina's first easement donor, protecting his family's farm in Mills River.

John Humphrey is coming up on his 103rd birthday. While that's a long lifespan for a person, it's still young for a tree. John, a conservation trailblazer, looks out at forests that are about his age and imagines the trees growing for centuries to come.

John donated the first ever conservation easement to Conserving Carolina, protecting his 181-acre farm in Mills River. This largely wooded land includes much of the headwaters of Foster Creek, an important source of local drinking water. John went on to serve on Conserving Carolina's board, including two terms as president.

John has also devoted countless hours to hands-on stewardship of his woods. You can still find him outdoors removing invasive plants like multiflora rose, bittersweet, privet, and barberry. "We finally got him last year to give up his chainsaw," says his son David, currently our board treasurer, who lives on the farm next door to John.

Sometimes, Conserving Carolina volunteers pitch in to restore habitat on the farm. "They're my favorite workdays," says Olivia Dannemiller, an

AmeriCorps Project Conserve member who runs our volunteer program. "I feel like he cares so much about it and I just like volunteering with him. He does everything we do, if not more."

"It's awesome to work with a 102 year old," she says. "Who knows when I will have that chance again?"

John notes that the trees on his farm are about the same age as him. He says, "Something I've been trying to come to grips with is that in terms of the natural state of things, these forests apparently are really full of young trees... Some of them are approaching 100 years old. In terms of the natural state of things, that's still only approaching adulthood."

John is thinking about stewardship that goes beyond one human lifetime. "I can't imagine if this area was allowed to stay around and be taken care of to where the trees are 500 years old."

► FULL STORY AND VIDEO AT:
CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/JOHN-HUMPHREY

A Giving Garden



We met seven-year-old Delaney Cullen at a bat box workshop we offered last fall—and we learned that building a bat box was far from her first project to enhance the natural world around her.

When Delaney was just five years old, she had a vision to start a garden at her library, the Mountains Branch Library near Lake Lure. It would grow food for people. Birds, bees, and butterflies would come there. Lizards would live among the rocks. There would be hidden gnomes to find. And kids could play there.

With help from her family and community, Delaney made it happen. Seeing potential for more gardens like this, they called it “The Little Garden that Grew.”

Librarian Joy Sharp says that parents and grandparents will go out for a walk after storytime. “Inevitably I’ll see a child find something, whether it’s a cool insect or a butterfly or a flower that’s blooming,” she says. “And I notice immediately the sense of wonder and amazement on their face, which was exactly what we were hoping for.”

► [FULL STORY AND VIDEO AT: CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG//DELANEY-CULLEN](https://conservingcarolina.org/delaney-cullen)

LADY SLIPPER AWARD

- WINNERS -

This award goes to one of our outstanding volunteers every season. Here are the spring and summer stars.

Thank you, Duane and Ford!



DUANE BOWKER

VOLUNTEERING FOR:

3 years

PRIMARY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

Habitat restoration, removing non-native invasive plants

HOME:

Brevard

HOW HE GOT INVOLVED:

Saw one of our trail markers and wanted to get involved

MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

Noticing native plants take the place of invasives at sites where he’s been volunteering for years

HOPES & DREAMS FOR CONSERVING CAROLINA:

To continue to protect more beautiful places, especially ones where he can go for a hike

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

The importance of being in the woods and the people he meets along the way

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE:

Water quality, biodiversity, and the threat of climate change to ecosystems

HOBBIES:

Hiking and taking photos along the way



FORD SMITH

VOLUNTEERING FOR:

Over 20 years

PRIMARY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

Kudzu Warrior, Board member, Education Committee president

HOME:

Tryon

HOW HE GOT INVOLVED:

Stepped up his volunteering after attending Pam Torlina’s guided hikes

MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:

Meeting others with similar goals and seeing the slow positive change of projects like kudzu eradication or growing hybrid American chestnuts

HOPES & DREAMS FOR CONSERVING CAROLINA:

That the fiscal health of the organization will stay strong, enabling perpetual conservation of significant tracts

COOL FACT:

He traveled with his late wife for 10 years, tent camping on public lands across North America

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE:

Raising awareness of the complexity and interconnectedness of all life

HOBBIES:

Photography, camping, hiking, gardening, house fixup, reading, and tinkering with electronics

PLACES YOU HELPED PROTECT

BRINGING MUSKIE BACK

An ambitious floodplain restoration on the French Broad River will benefit many kinds of wildlife.

Scott Loftis, an angler and aquatic biologist, looks at plans for the floodplain restoration.

Gigantic muskellunge—or muskie—have long made their home in the French Broad River. They're a favorite of anglers who seek their chance to reel in the powerful fish, up to 50 inches long. But the river is a challenging habitat for muskie. Nearly all of the muskie in the French Broad River today are stocked fish. They start life in a hatchery, not the river.

“Why is that?” asks Scott Loftis, who grew up fishing in the waters around Asheville and now works as an aquatic biologist for the state Wildlife Resources Commission. “It’s a native species endemic to the French Broad—why?”

Observers report that the muskie are trying to spawn. “They’re just not successful,” Scott says. “The eggs’ survival is not successful. The fry survival is not successful. Because they need slackwater areas.”

It used to be that the river would spill over the land, into wetlands or slackwater pools called sloughs. Muskie and other fish would swim into the calmer water to rest and spawn. They’d lay eggs on plants or

woody debris and their fry would hatch in slow-moving water full of food.

Over the last 150 years, water-soaked floodplains have been converted into productive farm fields. People use



Tim Boyer, president of the Western North Carolina Muskies Club, caught this muskie near the mouth of Mud Creek.

ditches and berms to separate the water from the land. But, that contributes to swifter flows that intensify bank erosion. And if you’re a fish, the confined channel means fewer places to slip out of the current,

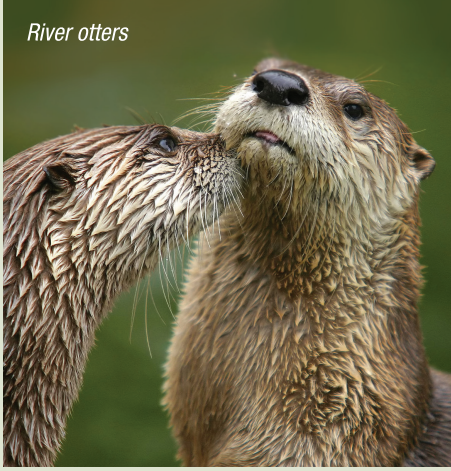
which runs fast and brown after heavy rains. Muskie eggs get damaged by swirling soil particles or they get washed away. The fry that do hatch face an upstream battle their first year of life.

An ambitious project to restore a natural floodplain on 103 acres at the mouth of Mud Creek near Fletcher could provide habitat that muskie need while benefiting a wide range of living things, from turtles to birds to people.

Conserving Carolina purchased this flood-prone farmland in 2015 and is now working with numerous partners to restore it to a more natural state, where the river can once again flow over the land. Plans include muskie sloughs, wetlands, pollinator meadows, forest plantings, a campsite, trails, and a potential greenway connection.

Conserving Carolina executive director Kieran Roe says, “Maybe this kind of comprehensive restoration is what we start to do more of. And maybe all that helps the French Broad River get healthier over time.”

River otters



Full of Life

Plans for the floodplain restoration at the mouth of Mud Creek include:

SLOUGHS

Slackwater areas, or sloughs, support all kinds of river species including fish, salamanders, crayfish, snails, and mussels. They also benefit insects, which feed fish, birds, and bats.

WETLANDS

Wetlands provide much-needed habitat for species from turtles to ducks. One wetland is designed to filter runoff from nearby neighborhoods, improving water quality in the French Broad.

FOREST PLANTINGS

Forests along rivers absorb and filter rainfall, reducing both flooding and pollution. Reforestation at Mud Creek will support many kinds of animals—for example, owls, songbirds, otters, coyote, fox, and deer.

POLLINATOR MEADOWS

Hilltop meadows will attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. More insects means more birds and bats. Pollinators are also key to food production in farms and gardens.

CAMPSITE, TRAILS, AND GREENWAY

There's already river access and a paddle trail campsite at Mud Creek. Future plans include walking trails and a potential connection to the Oklawaha Greenway.

STORIES OF THE LAND

A STORYTELLER RECREATES LOCAL HISTORY

Ronnie Pepper grew up in Hendersonville, in a small two-bedroom house without running water, where he lived with his grandparents, his mother, his brother, his sister, his aunt, his cousins, and his uncles. “We had a lively house!” he recalls.

They practically lived outside, he says—working in the garden with his grandmother, romping on juice-can stilts, playing basketball with a homemade hoop. He would also go on visits with his mother. “My mama used to love to visit some of the elderly. She’d be helping them and I would be listening to the stories that they told... I loved to listen.”

Over the years, Ronnie became a storyteller. “It’s just a love that I have,” he says. It was a valuable skill in his 25 years as a Head Start

teacher, and as a father and grandfather. “Being African-American, growing up in slavery, you know, you wasn’t supposed to write,” he says. “So there was not a lot of the written history. What was told was just passed on.”

He grew up hearing stories about the Kingdom of the Happy Land—a community of freed slaves that settled near Tuxedo on the North Carolina-South Carolina border just after the Civil War. Knowing now that he grew up among descendants of those freedmen, Ronnie is dismayed to think of the stories that he didn’t pay attention to, the questions he didn’t ask. Still, using oral traditions, written sources, historical context, and imagination, he has a unique perspective on on this local history.

▶ [YOU CAN READ OR LISTEN TO RONNIE’S TELLING OF THE STORY AT CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/RONNIE-PEPPER](https://CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/RONNIE-PEPPER)

Ronnie Pepper tells stories about local history, as well as stories from Africa and stories about his family.



HENDERSON COUNTY PASSES GREENWAY PLAN



Rendering of the future Mills River Valley Trail.

NEW GREENWAYS ARE COMING TO HENDERSON COUNTY!

Conserving Carolina helped rally public support for the County's greenway master plan—a 30-year vision for a 70-mile network of paths where people can walk, run, bike, play, push strollers, roll wheelchairs, and enjoy the outdoors. In April, the Board of Commissioners passed the plan unanimously and got a standing ovation from the packed room.

We look forward to partnering with Henderson County to expand our local greenway network. Over the past 15 years, we've been helping develop greenways in communities such as Fletcher, Tryon, and Brevard. We're currently leading efforts to create the new Mills River Valley Trail.

Meet Our Guardians of the Green Business Members

Please consider supporting the businesses that support Conserving Carolina!

\$10,000 AND UP



\$5,000-\$9999



\$3,000-\$4,999



CAROLINA
MEMORIAL
SANCTUARY

\$1,000-\$1,999

DUKE ENERGY

LEATHERWOOD WILDLAND MANAGEMENT

EQUINOX ENVIRONMENTAL

STANTEC ENGINEERING

JENNINGS ENVIRONMENTAL

SUPER-SOD

\$500-\$599

ADVENTURE TREKS • CHIMNEY ROCK MANAGEMENT, LLC
DIAMOND BRAND OUTDOORS • HENN'S PLANT FARM, LLC
SHERMAN'S SPORTS AND ARMY STORE • TRYON ESTATES
TRYON BUILDERS, LLC • TRYON THEATRE

Land Targeted for Shooting Range May Add to Game Lands

When land on the edge of the Green River Game Lands in Saluda was targeted for an outdoor shooting range, the local community strongly opposed it. After hundreds of local citizens voiced their opposition, the plan was dropped. But what happens next?

We're working toward a conservation solution that would add this land to the Green River Game Lands, opening it for the community to enjoy. Conserving Carolina is purchasing the property and raising funds from local donors that will help us leverage 3.5 times that amount in potential grant funding. Please consider making a gift!

Protecting this 81.5 acres of forests will preserve scenic views of the Green River Gorge. It will also protect wetlands and streams that flow into the Green River, with its famous whitewater rapids.

Susan McHugh, a local activist who has led efforts to protect the land, says, "The journey has come full circle from something very bad for our community to something very, very good. The end result is that this beautiful forest will be protected forever."

View of the Green River Gorge in Saluda



MEET POLLY AND NATE

You can see them in front of Mast General Store in Hendersonville as part of the Bearfootin' Bears Public Art Walk. This beautiful mama and baby bear were painted by artist Deborah Fleming. They will be auctioned on Oct. 19 to benefit Conserving Carolina.

POPULAR TRAILHEADS GET SOME LOVE



Our Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trailhead now has twice as many parking spots.

It's great to see so many people enjoying our trails—and it's meant that we need better trailheads. Last fall, we added 12 new parking spots at our Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trailhead, which serves the Wildcat Rock Trail and Florence Nature Preserve. Many thanks to the late John Myers, Jane Lawson, and REI for their support! We're also completing improvements at the trailhead for our popular Bearwallow Mountain and Trombatore Trails. This summer, you'll find safer parking, new signage, and more inviting entryways.



HABITAT AT HOME: Shade Your Stream

If you have a stream in your yard or neighborhood, how's it holding up? This year we've seen record-setting rainfall with intense flooding. Even in less dramatic years, heavy rains can cause erosion, especially in streams without plants and trees along the banks. As a result, streams become muddy and have bare, steep banks. Streams that have shade and woody vegetation along their banks not only stand up better to flood events, but they also make much better habitat for native insects, birds, fish, and amphibians!

You can help keep streams healthy and enjoy a more beautiful and lively backyard. Here's how:

AVOID MOWING UP TO STREAMS. Instead of mowing or cutting the vegetation directly next to the stream bank, allow plants to grow in a riparian buffer of about 15 feet. A riparian buffer is an area of vegetation between bare land (hard surfaces or mowed grass) and water. Riparian buffers filter runoff and prevent stream bank erosion.

PLANT NATIVE PLANTS. Native plants provide the best food and habitat for the animals and insects that live here. You'll see more pollinators, butterflies, and birds!

LIVE STAKE IN THE SPRING. Live staking involves placing the cuttings of certain trees or shrubs into the ground along a stream. When live staking is done correctly, species like silky dogwood, black willow, and elderberry will regrow from the cutting to make an entirely new tree! You can even harvest your own live stakes if you already have these plants. Eventually, live staking will provide excellent erosion control and habitat along your stream. (See a video on live staking: conservingcarolina.org/shade-your-stream)

PLANT A TREE OR SHRUB. The more trees, the better. But, planting even one tree or shrub can make a difference in the health and stability of a stream. Plan to plant in the fall or early-to-mid spring. The heat of summer is hard on newly planted trees. A helpful tip is to plant trees in any month with an "R" in its name.



At our Hendersonville office, Tom Fanslow, our land protection director, recycled a Christmas tree by securing it to an eroding stream bank with rebar. The Christmas tree's branches help stabilize the bank, allowing live stakes positioned among the branches to grow into trees.

DON'T HAVE A STREAM AT HOME?

See if your neighborhood, church, or workplace has a stream. Do some investigating. Are the stream banks devoid of vegetation, or mowed all the way to the water's edge? Do the banks look heavily eroded? Is the water very muddy? If you the answer to any of these is yes, see if you can get permission to do some planting along the banks.

Habitat at Home is a monthly column by AmeriCorps Project Conserve member Kelly Holland.

► **FIND SEASONAL TIPS AT
CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/HABITAT-AT-HOME**

FIELD NOTES



Sweet white trillium, a rare wildflower, is abundant at our Melrose Falls Preserve. Trillium spread from their roots, but they have another strategy too. They attach their seeds to packets of fatty food. Ants carry these packages to their underground tunnels, eat the food, and discard the seeds. Ant "compost" heaps make perfect places for new trilliums to sprout.



Our conservation easement manager, Torry Nergart, found this state-endangered green salamander on a protected property. Green salamanders need a very specific habitat: just the right size cracks in rocks in forests with high humidity.

See You There!

Saturday, June 22, 10:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Upper French Broad River Festival

Champion Park and Town Hall, Rosman, NC

Come out to a free family-friendly festival to celebrate the headwaters of the French Broad! There will be free tubing, hands-on activities, kids' archery, food trucks, and music. Not to mention Rocky the Hellbender and a 20-mile canoe relay!

Saturday, July 20, check-in from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Mills River Valley Trail Ride

Starts at Bold Rock Hard Cider in Mills River, NC

Join either a 6-mile or 25-mile ride through the beautiful Mills River and Etowah countryside. Cost is \$25 in advance, \$30 on the day of the event. Free for kids under 15. Proceeds support the Mills River Valley Trail. Followed by a free festival at Bold Rock from 11:00 to 4:00.



Saturday, Sept. 21, 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Conservation Celebration

Caitlyn Farms, Mill Spring, NC

Stroll Caitlyn Farm with its beautiful lakes, flower fields, and breathtaking views of Little White Oak Mountain. Savor a gourmet dinner, local wine, and craft beer. Enjoy live music, an exciting auction, and the trip raffle draw. \$125 per person. Sponsorships available. Look for your invitation later this summer!

Learn more at conservationcelebration.org

▶ **GET THE DETAILS AND FIND MANY MORE EVENTS:**
CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/CALENDAR

For your convenience, your membership renewal date appears on the address label.

For Nature and People. Forever.

COME CELEBRATE CONSERVATION!

Conservation Celebration
Saturday, Sept. 21, 2019
Caitlyn Farm, Mill Spring, NC

You're passing on the gift of nature to new generations—like this boy on a field trip to Bearwallow Mountain (see p. 3). Lets celebrate! Join us in September for dinner, dancing, auctions, a raffle draw, and breathtaking views of protected Little White Oak Mountain.

Get tickets (starting mid-July) or become a sponsor: conservationcelebration.org

PROTECT THE PLACES THAT FILL US WITH WONDER.

Please make a gift to keep conservation going strong—by check, by phone, or online.
Thank you!

