

# LANDSCAPE



**THANK YOU**  
FOR MAKING GREAT  
STORIES POSSIBLE!

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**03 AN EPIC PANDEMIC PROJECT**

**04 ALL ABOARD FOR THE ECUSTA TRAIL!**

**07 MORE LAND PROTECTED**

**08 A NEW DAY FOR RIVERCANE**

## EXPLORE YOUNGS MOUNTAIN!

Ready to see some place new? We have a truly spectacular new trail for you. You are invited to explore the newly opened Youngs Mountain Trail, north of Lake Lure. The trail starts out in a lovely woodland, crossing several brooks. As you climb upward, you'll start to see the breathtaking views, each more stunning than the last. You can venture out onto dramatic rock outcrops to appreciate the gorgeous, wild landscape all around you.

Near the stone summit of the mountain, the view opens to a wide panorama. You'll see the Piedmont rolling off to the horizon and all of Lake Lure below you. You'll look out at the vast rock faces of Rumbling Bald and Eagle Rock, as well Mt. Shumont, Little Pisgah, and North Carolina's highest peak, Mt. Mitchell.



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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

### ON THE COVER:

*View from the newly opened Youngs Mountain.*

### ABOVE:

*Volunteers Bob Carson and Kim Chao on Youngs Mountain.*



## EXPLORE YOUNGS MOUNTAIN!

*continued from page 1*

As you take in this view, you can take pride in knowing that you made this trail possible, as a Conserving Carolina member. You protected 437 acres of mountain land full of rich wildlife habitat. You opened this trail, with its creative rock features and state-of-the-art sustainable design. You also helped protect the sweeping views from the top, which include thousands of acres of protected lands.

We are also very grateful to partners and funders including Rutherford County, RHI Legacy Fund, NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, NC Land and Water Fund, Open Space Institute, Recreational Trails Program, Tommy Hartzog, Fred and Alice Stanback, and Tim Sweeney.

It's not only the views but the biodiversity and wildlife habitat that made Youngs Mountain such a high priority for conservation. This mountain is part of a strategic migration corridor that is especially important as plants and animals shift their range in response to climate change. Along the trail, you can see many kinds of wildflowers. And near the stone summit, you cross through a rare community of mosses and lichens. You can hear many kinds of birds and you may see turkey, bear, deer, or coyote.

Youngs Mountain is the newest link in the 100+ mile Hickory Nut Gorge State Trail network that Conserving Carolina is spearheading. With this addition, 39 miles are currently open for you to explore. And more are on the way! Our vision is to connect Youngs Mountain Trail with the nearby Weed Patch Mountain Trail... and from there to Chimney Rock State Park, Bearwallow Mountain, Wildcat Rock Trail, and other hikes in the Hickory Nut Gorge. Thanks to you, this vision is already taking shape—a vast, connected landscape of protected lands that are open for all to explore.

## HOW TO HIKE YOUNGS MOUNTAIN TRAIL



**LENGTH:** 4.2 miles round-trip

**DIFFICULTY:** Strenuous

**GREAT FOR:** Views, Wildflowers, Wildlife

**PARKING:** Very limited and requires a pass. To reserve yours, go to [conservingcarolina.org/youngs-mountain](http://conservingcarolina.org/youngs-mountain)

# AN EPIC PANDEMIC PROJECT

Last spring, life jerked to a halt for Bob Carlson and Kim Chao, who are retired teachers living in Hendersonville. They volunteered for several causes—but suddenly all volunteering stopped. They couldn't play in their community band. A planned trip to Spain, Portugal, and Morocco was scrapped. They couldn't go see their four children. They couldn't hug their grandchildren.

For years, they had been part of Conserving Carolina's Rock Crushers volunteer trail crew. When the pandemic hit, Conserving Carolina had just started on a new trail near Lake Lure.

Workdays were called off, but Bob and Kim found ways to keep the Youngs Mountain Trail moving forward. They got creative to move heavy locust logs on their own. Other Rock Crushers also found ways to keep volunteering. Thanks to their ingenuity and hard work, this spectacular new trail opened this spring.

"It was our salvation during the pandemic," Kim says. "When the Conserving Carolina trails were closed because they were so crowded, we could be outside doing something useful and important. And so beautiful!"

Bob says, "In the middle of the pandemic, it was really nice to go out there by ourselves and be out in that glorious Nature. I always capitalize Nature. It deserves to be capitalized because Nature is spiritual."

It brings to his mind the forest bathing walks that Conserving Carolina has started to offer. It's true, he says, that a connection with nature offers benefits on a deep level. Your blood pressure goes down. Your outlook goes from pessimism to optimism. In April, he said, "With spring now, everything is new. It's a fresh start and I feel that too—that invigoration and life."

He says, "We have not yet done the guided forest bathing, but we did forest bathing every day, dripping with our own sweat!"



## THANK YOU, ROCK CRUSHERS!



We would not have such amazing trails without such amazing volunteers. The Rock Crushers work a full day every Wednesday to build and maintain our trails in the Hickory Nut Gorge.



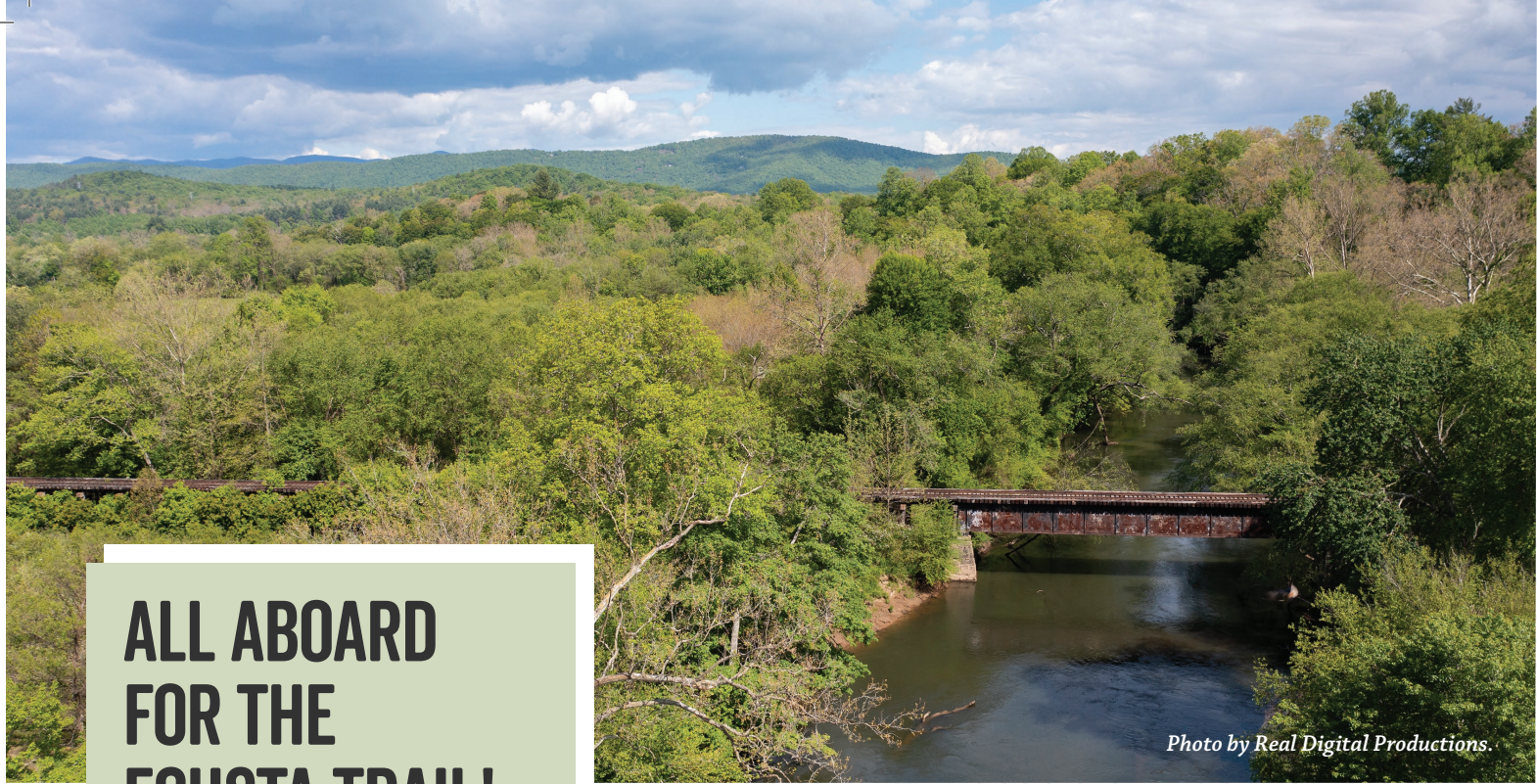
*This Rock Crushers trail crew on includes Austin Price, Bob Carlson, Kim Chao, Larissa Bowman, Wendell Pace, Wendy Pace, Bill Hamilton, Lyn Boeckx, Stefan Israel, Cathy Cooper, Max Howes (staff), Kelly Waldron (AmeriCorps) and Meredith Wingerson (AmeriCorps).*



*Jason Austin and Bill Hamilton on Youngs Mountain.*



*Stefan Israel crushes rocks for gravel to fill in log steps. Photos by Pat Barcas.*



*Photo by Real Digital Productions.*

# ALL ABOARD FOR THE ECUSTA TRAIL!

A big dream is coming true for people who love to get outside—whether that’s taking a bike trip through beautiful countryside, going for a stroll or a jog in your neighborhood, or commuting to work without a car. A subsidiary of Conserving Carolina just purchased the 19.1-mile rail corridor for the Ecusta Trail! This planned new rail trail will connect Hendersonville and Brevard—and it may rival such famous rail trails as the Virginia Creeper Trail and the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

For well over a decade, the grassroots Friends of the Ecusta Trail has rallied support for this ambitious vision. They reached out to Conserving Carolina to help seize an opportunity to buy the land. We formed EcustaRails2Trail, LLC to purchase and manage the corridor. And this summer, it became official. The unused Ecusta rail line is now a rail-to-trail corridor!

The next big step is to raise funds to build the trail. Construction will cost an estimated \$31.1 million. Ecusta Trail partners hope to raise most of

the money through federal, state, and foundation grants—but we will need to raise about \$6.5 million locally to match these grants. Can you help?

Ultimately, the trail will more than pay for itself. Studies show that:

- Every \$1 invested in conservation, including parkland, results in \$4 of economic benefit
- Every \$1 invested in greenways results in \$3 of savings on health care costs, each year.
- Rail trails have brought economic vitality to small towns in North Carolina, Virginia, and other states.
- Rail trails draw tourists who support local businesses and provide tax revenue.
- Greenways lead to a healthier environment, with cleaner air and water.
- Rail trails enhance quality of life, with more opportunities for outdoor recreation and connection with nature.

We want to say a big thank you to the partners who have gotten this dream closer to reality, including Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Henderson County, the City of Brevard, the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority, the Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority, the NC Department of Transportation, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, and private contributors.

Together, these partners made it possible to buy the land. Now, can you help build the trail?

**YOUR GIFTS COUNT X5!**

When you donate to the Ecusta Trail, you are leveraging grants that multiply your donation by 5! To help bring the Ecusta Trail to WNC, go to **conservingcarolina.org/ecusta** or call our development director, Lynn Killian at 828-697-5777 x. 202



## WIN YOUR DREAM TRIP

Enter to win the trip of your choice: luxury glamping in Big Sur, CA, a stay at a coastal resort in SC, or a custom trip worth \$3,000! Tickets are \$100 each, only 200 available. Winner will be drawn Aug. 24 at the Conservation Celebration. You do not have to present to win. Get your ticket at [conservationcelebration.org/trip-raffle](https://conservationcelebration.org/trip-raffle).



## WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

**You can leave a legacy of beauty and wonder for coming generations, when you make a gift to Conserving Carolina in your will or estate plans. Your love for the land will live on.**

Please reach out to our development director, Lynn Killian, to discuss your charitable giving options or let us know of your planned gift. Lynn can be reached at 828-697-5777 x. 202. Or email her at [lynn@conservingcarolina.org](mailto:lynn@conservingcarolina.org).

When you let us know of a planned estate gift, we will recognize you as part of our Land Legacy League. Gifts like yours put Conserving Carolina on solid ground for the future.

**Thank you!**

## TAKE THE FLYING SQUIRREL OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

Explore the outdoors your own way—like the flying squirrel! In this new challenge, we invite you to explore 8 places that Conserving Carolina has helped protect or open to the public. Unlike our White Squirrel Hiking Challenge, it's not all about hiking. You can choose if you want to ride a bike, go for a walk, have a picnic, paddle a river, take the kids to a playground, or do your own thing. You can discover natural areas near you or venture further out.



Pick any 8 outings from a list of trails, greenways, parks, waterfalls, rivers, and outdoor events. The list includes 8 outings that are accessible to all so the challenge is open to everyone. If you've completed your outings and you are a Conserving Carolina member, you'll earn your Flying Squirrel patch!

► **LEARN MORE AND GET STARTED AT**  
[CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/FLYING-SQUIRREL-CHALLENGE](https://CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/FLYING-SQUIRREL-CHALLENGE)

# LOVE BIRDING? HELP CREATE THE NC BIRD ATLAS.

Calling all bird watchers—expert or amateur—to help create the first ever NC Bird Atlas! Conserving Carolina is a partner on this project. We are looking for birders to make observations, not just about what birds you see but what those birds are doing. You would commit to make observations in your chosen area for 20 hours during the breeding season and 10 hours during the wintering season, with 2 nocturnal visits each season. **Your observations will help us better understand and protect birds!**

▶ [LEARN MORE: EBIRD.ORG/ATLASNC](http://LEARN MORE: EBIRD.ORG/ATLASNC)



Photo by Rich Stevenson.

## GUARDIANS OF THE GREEN BUSINESS MEMBERS

Thank you to all our Guardians of the Green business members! Please consider supporting these local businesses that give back to keep our region a wonderful place to live, work, or visit.

### \$10,000 AND UP



**WITHERSPOON**  
PLATT+ASSOCIATES

### \$5,000 - \$9,999



**ATHLETIC BREWING CO**  
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LEATHERWOOD WILDLAND MANAGEMENT • MAST GENERAL STORE  
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### \$500-\$999

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HENN'S PLANT FARM • LAZY RIVER OUTFITTERS  
SHERMAN'S SPORTS AND ARMY STORE • TRYON BUILDERS

# MORE LAND PROTECTED ON THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER



## POTENTIAL FOR FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

Just two miles from our Mouth of Mud Creek restoration, Conserving Carolina has protected another property that lends itself to natural floodplain restoration. We purchased an 87-acre former sod farm on the French Broad River in Mills River, known as Kings Bridge. Our goal is to transfer this property to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, which would decide how to manage it. There is strong potential to add a muskie slough, restore wetlands, or create public boat access on the land.

Natural Resources Manager David Lee says, “With restoration, the true goal is to have a regional effect. When you have similar restoration efforts taking place upstream, it provides a much better overall impact.”

We were able to purchase Kings Bridge thanks to conservation-minded investors who loaned us money, and were repaid at interest rates similar to a money market account. If you are interested in financing conservation projects, with a modest return on your investment, please let us know.

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION AND CLEAN WATER

A historic cattle farm in Mills River has been protected, preserving high-quality farmland and improving water quality. Conserving Carolina worked with the Brown family to place the 74-acre farm under a conservation easement. Katrina Brown, who owns the land with her brother Craig, says, “We’ve always known what a unique piece of property it is, and never wanted to see it developed. All the farms around here are disappearing. Let’s leave this one for future generations.”

This farm is home to cattle that are descendants of the famous Biltmore Dairy herd, prized for their high-butterfat milk. Most of the soils on the farm are classified by the USDA as “prime” or “of statewide importance.”

In addition, the Browns agreed to fence their cows out of the French Broad River and a tributary stream. Nearly a mile of waterfront is now protected with riparian buffers—a boon for water quality and wildlife habitat. The land across the river is also conserved, so people floating or paddling this stretch of the river can enjoy protected natural areas on both sides.



# A NEW DAY FOR RIVERCANE

Cherokee rivercane baskets have been getting smaller. These days, an intricately woven basket might be only the diameter of an apple. Artisans have been making some baskets smaller to make the most of the rivercane, because there's so little left to harvest.

Even Dylan Morgan, a 26-year-old who has been making baskets for less than five years, has seen the decline in rivercane. He says, "I'd hate to get so in love with this craft, to spend so much time learning, just for it to—*pfft*—be gone, just like that."

Dylan comes from a family of wood carvers, and he took up that craft, but he felt that he couldn't match the carving skills of his father and older brother. He says, "I felt like it was just shoes I had to fill with wood carving." He started

learning basket making from Lucille Lossiah, a master basket maker, and it sparked a passion for him.

But rivercane—considered by many to be the most traditional material for Cherokee baskets—has been reduced to small, sometimes overharvested patches. Rivercane—called *ih-ya* in Cherokee—is a species of native bamboo that used to grow in vast canebrakes along rivers and creeks. It's been reduced to just 2-3% of the amount that used to grow here.

Dylan says, "There's a bigger thing of wanting to help preserve it and work with it—saving it not only for Native Americans, but for future generations in general, for the Earth itself to have the cane here that was once growing."

The good news is that rivercane will spread vigorously when given the chance. At our natural floodplain restoration at the Mouth of Mud Creek, we are working with the Cherokee Preservation Foundation to expand a stand of rivercane. At Mud Creek, we are removing saplings that compete with the cane, avoiding mowing near the canebrake, and creating educational signage in both Cherokee and English.

It could be a new day for rivercane, like the new day that Dylan thinks of when he sees the traditional Noon Day Star pattern, which he has tattooed on his forearm.

"A lot in our culture had to do with facing east," he says. Doors would face east. If you were getting married, you would face east. "That was where your



"There's a bigger thing of wanting to help preserve it and work with it—saving it not only for Native Americans, but for future generations in general, for the Earth itself to have the cane here that was once growing."

- DYLAN MORGAN





# LADY SLIPPER AWARD

- WINNERS -

Our spring and summer volunteer awards go to Dibbit Lamb and Don Dicey! Thank you for all of your dedicated volunteer work!



**ELIZABETH "DIBBIT" LAMB**

**VOLUNTEERING FOR:**

17 years

**VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:**

Board of Directors, committees, and events.

**HOME:**

Landrum, SC

**HOW SHE GOT INVOLVED:**

A friend convinced her to join the land committee of the Pacolet Area Conservancy (PAC), one of the groups that formed Conserving Carolina.

**MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:**

Creating a butterfly garden next to PAC's old office.

**HOPES & DREAMS FOR CONSERVING CAROLINA:**

To expand its educational programs.

**WHAT MOTIVATES HER:**

After seeing so much development from Vermont to Florida, she wants to preserve land in WNC for future generations.

**TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:**

Climate change, species preservation, water quality, scenic beauty.

**HOBBIES:**

Reading, hiking, gardening, music, crossword puzzles.



**DON DICEY**

**VOLUNTEERING FOR:**

7 years

**VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:**

Kudzu Warriors, trail maintenance, stream monitoring.

**HOME:**

Tryon, NC

**HOW HE GOT INVOLVED:**

He got started through PAC's hiking program.

**MOST REWARDING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:**

Working with fellow volunteers and AmeriCorps members, which reminds him of a field trip from his school days.

**COOL FACT:**

Don grew up in the NH countryside before moving to NC in 1978. His dad taught him to fly fish and how to sneak up on wild trout.

**WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:**

To leave a legacy for his children and grandchildren.

**TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:**

Invasive species, environmental education.

**HOBBIES:**

Mushroom foraging and cultivation, woodworking, fishing, hiking, reading, and exploring the outdoors.

new day started. What that pattern means to me is just like that: you're always looking for your new day. You're not looking at yesterday. You can't go in the past, can't be dwelling over something small."

He says, "That's how we used that story of the noon day star. At noon, that's when it's at its highest peak. That's when it's shining the brightest over everybody. You're looking at it and you're watching it fall to the west to sunset. That's when we're all focusing east to tomorrow, to the new day."





## HABITAT AT HOME

# CELEBRATING NATURE AT HOME

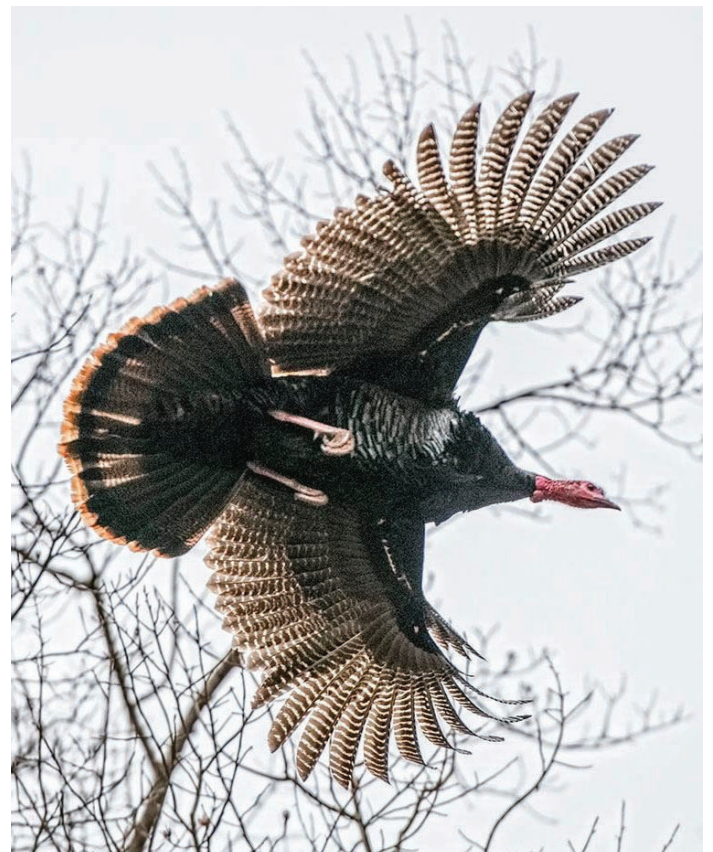
We asked you to share photos of native plants, wildlife, and habitat restoration projects at your home or in your neighborhood—and we love seeing the more than 300 photos entered in this year's Habitat at Home photo contest! Here are the five photos that our judges selected as finalists, as well as the grand prize winner based on online voting. We'll do this again next spring, so keep getting wild at your place!

### GRAND PRIZE WINNER:

*Denise Booher captured this moment at her home in Hendersonville.*



*Ward Seguin photographed this fern unfurling in Etowah.*



*Neil Jacobs captured this turkey in flight in Asheville.*



Steve Goodman took this picture of tadpoles in the reflection of trees in South Asheville.



Julianna Warren photographed these Carolina anoles in Tryon.

## EVENTS ARE BACK!

We finally get to see you again!  
Here are some of the ways you can  
connect with Conserving Carolina.

### **CONSERVATION CELEBRATION**

Join us August 24 for the virtual event—and don't miss the online auction! Surprises to be announced. Learn more and sign up at [conservationcelebration.org](https://conservationcelebration.org).

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### **VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS**

Connect with special places. Meet some great people. Make a difference!

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### **WALNUT CREEK PRESERVE WALKS**

Take a guided nature walk at Walnut Creek Preserve in Mill Spring.

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### **FOREST BATHING WALKS**

Immerse in the wonder of the forest at Transfiguration Preserve in Bat Cave.

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### **FIND EVENT DETAILS:**

Visit [conservingcarolina.org/calendar](https://conservingcarolina.org/calendar). You can also get event updates in your inbox, when you subscribe to our email newsletter.



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## LAND FOR EVERYONE

**Great news!** Thanks to you, more places are protected for everyone to enjoy. You helped us purchase the Ecusta Trail corridor and open the Youngs Mountain Trail. You are changing lives for the better—*now and for generations to come.*

How can you make your gifts even more meaningful? Consider becoming a monthly donor, making a gift of stock, or including us in in your will. Or donate today, by check, phone, or online. **Thank you for making big dreams possible!**