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Conserving Bearwallow Mountain

After development threatened the iconic peak, the Lyda family of Edneyville conserved their mountaintop property and public access to it. The deep blue autumn sky sweeps down to meet the panoramic landscape as seen from atop 4,232-foot Bearwallow Mountain. *continued on page 2*

OUR MISSION Conserving Carolina is dedicated to protecting and stewarding land and water resources vital to our natural heritage and quality of life and to fostering appreciation and understanding of the natural world.



On the Cover: *Conserving Carolina families enjoying a sunset view atop Bearwallow Mountain.*

Article by Harrison Metzger

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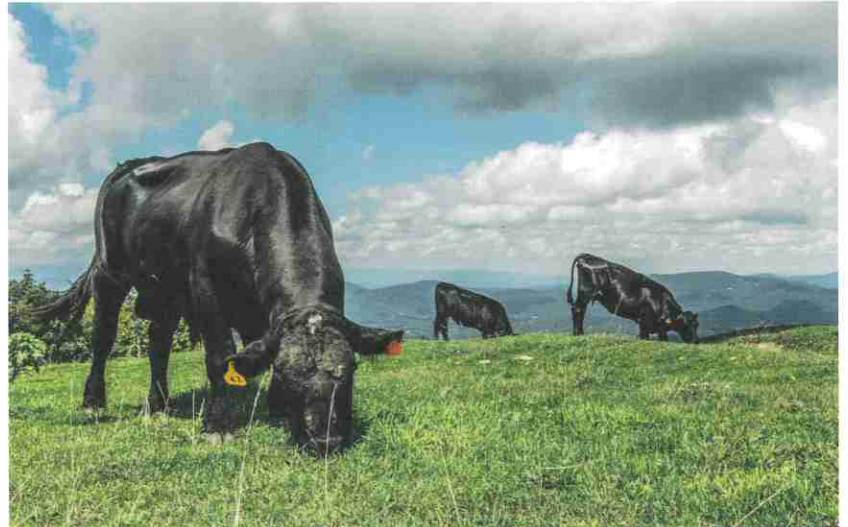
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The Barnwell and Lyda family's cattle have grazed the summit of Bearwallow for generations.

Conserving Bearwallow Mountain

continued from page 1

A soft breeze blows as evening shadows spread across the surrounding peaks – 4,412-foot Little Pisgah 2 miles across Upper Hickory Nut Gorge, and the dark wall of the Black and Craggy Mountains 21 miles to the north.

Standing here more than 2,200 feet above the valley and twice that distance above sea level, it feels like you could reach out and touch the toy-like houses scattered over the orchards miles below. In one of those homes, Nancy Lyda may be gazing up this way, enjoying the view of the mountaintop she and her family worked to protect for all time.

"My grandpa (Jerome Barnwell), his dad and two brothers bought the land," she says of the property, which her family has owned since the 1930s. "As far back as I can remember, we've always had cattle on the mountain."

For at least as long, visitors have been coming up here to enjoy one of Henderson County's most striking views. The grassy pastures below the old fire tower stay clear (and the grass nibbled short) thanks to the Lyda's cattle. Each May, the cows climb like mountain

goats through the rugged forests up the "backside" of Bearwallow to graze. And each fall when the temperatures start to dip, they make their way back down to the family's land in the valley below.

The cows may be oblivious to the fact that they enjoy one of the best views in Henderson County, but the family who own them are not. And the Lyda's love of this land goes far beyond giving cows a cool spot to graze in the summer.

"My dad loved the mountain," Nancy says. "He never wanted to sell."

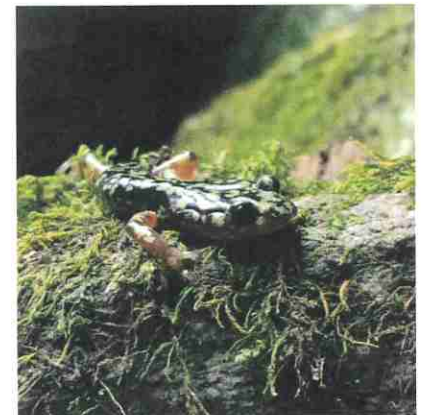


Photo by J.J. Apodaca

The green salamander is a rare species found on Bearwallow Mountain and other conserved properties in our region.

Her father, George Barnwell, passed away in 1999. A few years after that, a developer got approval to build more than 300 homes on Bearwallow Mountain, despite lack of a water supply for that many homes.

“My brother and I and my mom had started the second and third parts (of the conservation easement). The last one wasn’t completed when my brother passed away so my children and I decided to go ahead and we finished it up this year.”

—Nancy Lyda

After a contentious debate, county leaders in 2009 approved plans for the City of Hendersonville to build a \$4 million water line and tank to serve the development. That same year, the Lyda family took the first steps to preserve their land atop the mountain.

Nancy’s mother, Pearl Barnwell, had been talking with what was then the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (now Conserving Carolina) about preserving the some of the 700 acres the family owns atop Bearwallow. Her brother, George “Sonny” Barnwell also worked on conserving the land prior to his death in 2014.

The organization in 2009 completed a conservation easement, in which the family voluntarily agreed to give up development rights, on 81 acres of the peak. In 2012, the family and the conservancy completed a second easement on 89 acres west to Bearwallow Gap. Then in May of this year, the family and conservancy finalized a third easement on 306 acres east of the peak to Little Bearwallow Mountain.

Now a total of 476 acres is protected atop Bearwallow, preserving in an undeveloped state the mountain’s familiar humpbacked profile that defines the northeast horizon in Henderson County.

Not all conservation easements allow for public access. But the one the Lyda family has completed on their land will allow Conserving Carolina to complete an important link in its Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trail and Network. The future 20-mile loop of trails will connect the top of Bearwallow with protected lands such as Conserving Carolina’s 600-acre Florence Nature Preserve east of Gerton, and hundreds more acres protected by the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy around Hickory Nut Gap.

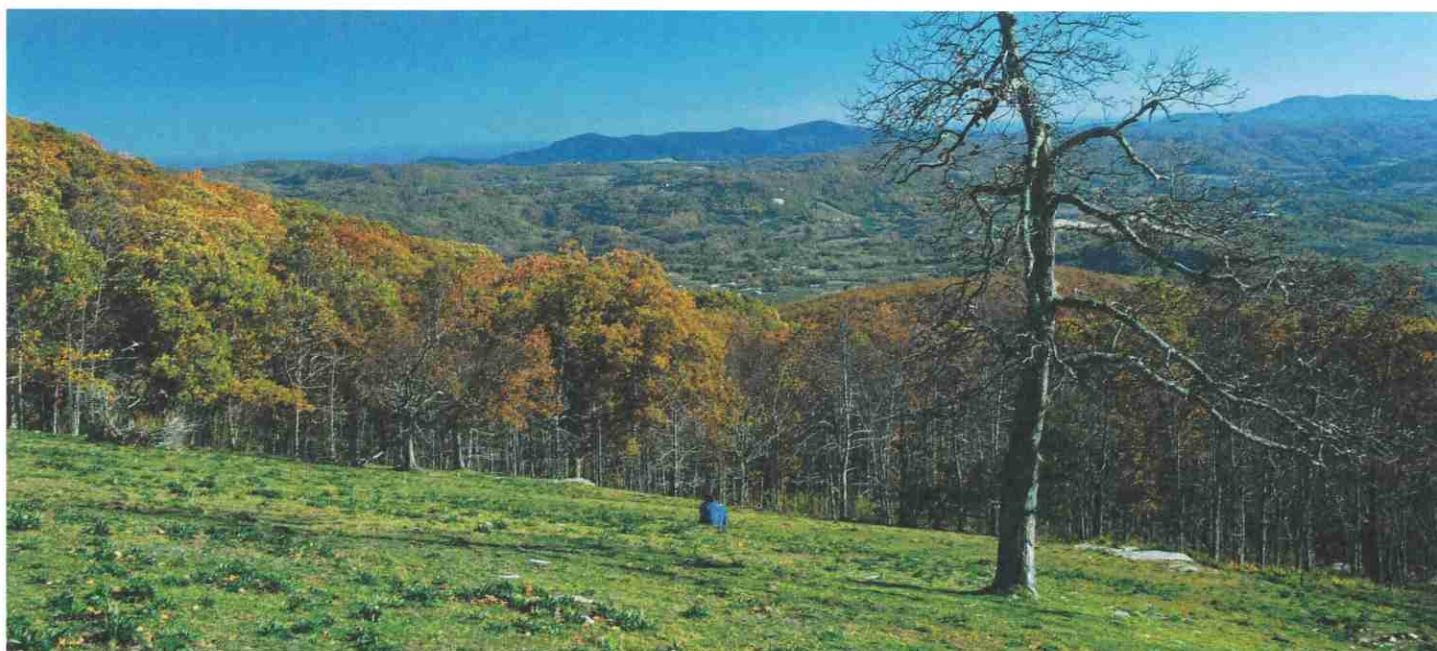
The ring of protected lands straddles the Eastern Continental Divide and the high elevation lands where northeast Henderson County abuts Buncombe County. Seven rare natural communities

have been documented, including High Elevation Rocky Summit (two subtypes) Montane Cliff, Rich Montane Seep, pasture, and Southern Appalachian Bog. Specifically, the mountain is home to a small bog, between one quarter and one half acre, in the gap between Bearwallow and Little Bearwallow.

This “appears to be the bearwallow for which the mountain is named,” according to a report prepared on the area of the third conservation easement for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, a source of funding for the project. The public grant dollars were also matched by a generous private contribution to the project from Fred and Alice Stanback of Salisbury, NC.

“A minimum of 387 species have been observed on-site including 249 plant and 38 wildlife species (surveys not comprehensive),” the document states. “The steep, cool northern slopes contain high elevation features and microclimate, harboring high-elevation relic species typically found to the north – an unusual condition for the Blue Ridge Escarpment Area.”

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Conserving Bearwallow Mountain

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These windswept ridges contain suitable habitat for at least 14 species listed as rare by the state of North Carolina. These include three plants: climbing fumitory, prickly ground pine, and bleeding heart; and 11 wildlife species such as the green salamander, Blue Ridge gray-cheeked salamander, crevice salamander, coal skink, cerulean warbler, eastern small-footed bat and eastern spotted skunk.

The "Phase III" conservation easement area is also home to "an astonishingly large acreage, 73 acres, of unlogged old growth forests," according to the supporting documentation. These biologically rich areas contain a mix of old, young and decaying trees, complex "pit and mound" soil formations and gaps in the canopy that result in an uneven aged forest.

Down in the valley below, Nancy Lyda pauses from mowing her grass on a warm autumn day to trace the history of the family's efforts to preserve this rare piece of mountaintop land.

"My brother and I and my mom had started the second and third parts (of the conservation easement). The last one wasn't completed when my brother passed away so my children and I decided to go ahead and we finished it up this year."

Families who wish to preserve their land through conservation easements can continue to use the land as they always have. In the Lyda's case, they decided to set aside a 2.43-acre tract for a future cabin site for her three children, Tammy Lyda, Jeff Lyda and Jenni Frady, and two grandchildren, Andrew Lyda, 10, a 5th grader at Edneyville Elementary, and Jordan Frady, 17, a senior at North Henderson High.

They also decided to allow public access for the trail system



Photo by Harrison Metzger

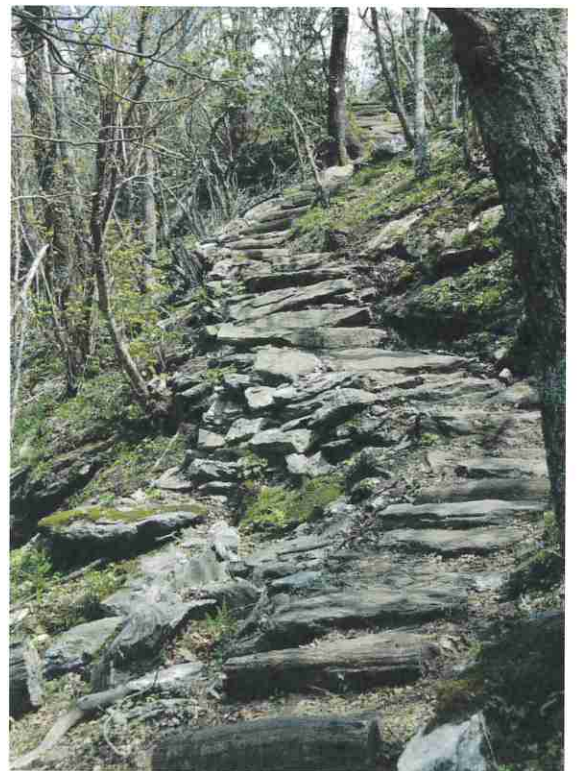
Members of the Lyda family enjoy a sunset from their land atop Bearwallow Mountain.

Pictured from the left are Jenni Frady, Jordan Frady, Nancy Lyda, Andrew Lyda, Tammy Lyda, and Jeff Lyda.

Conserving Carolina is building. "We decided to open it up and let people enjoy the views and the mountain as much as we do," she says. "And pretty soon there's going to be more trails up there so more people can enjoy the mountain, thanks to the conservancy."

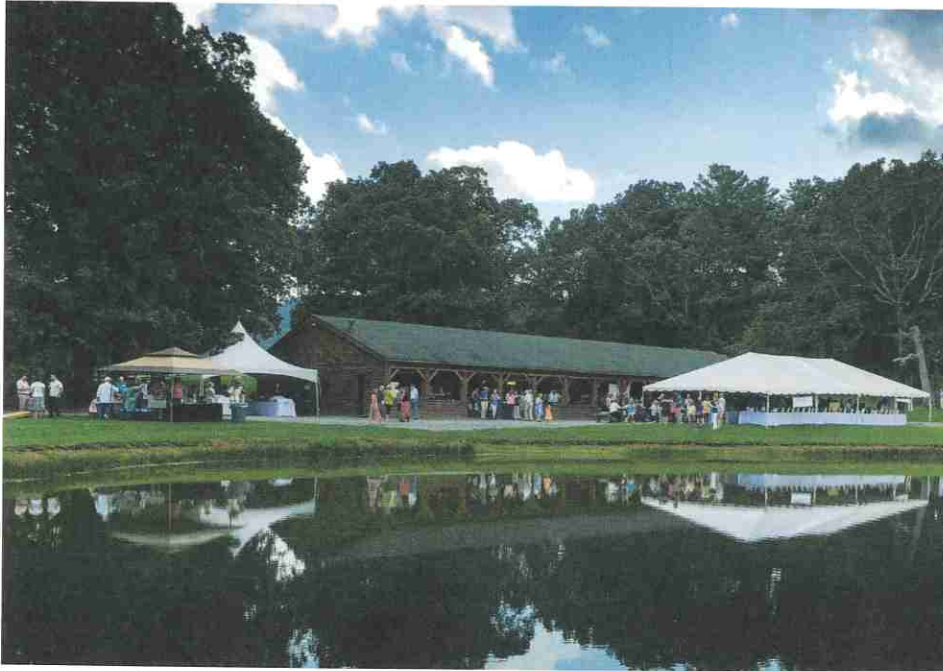
The large wooden deck of her home overlooks acres of apple orchards framed by the sweep of the Blue Ridge. Rising above it all into the clear blue sky is Bearwallow – an unchanging presence for generations residents and visitors to Henderson County, and a landmark of family heritage that the Lydas have decided to protect, and share.

"It's a beautiful place. I love it," Nancy says. "I try to get up there at least once a week to check on our cattle, and just to be up there. It's a very calming place."



A segment of the Bearwallow Mountain trail, now permanently conserved and made available for public access.

17th Annual Conservation Celebration was a Success!



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\$97,600
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28
Volunteers

132
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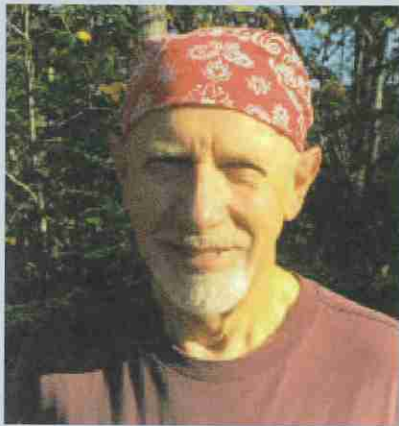
Turtle Island Pottery

Twigwork Designs

Kathleen Weir-West

The Village Potters

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR MAKING THIS EVENT A SUCCESS!



Wendell Pace is a passionate and dedicated volunteer. Since joining the Trails Crew in 2016, Wendell has been one of the most consistent members of the “Rock Crushers” and is always

eager to go work—no matter the weather. “The wonderful people and being able to work in the woods” is what continues to motivate Wendell to donate so much of his time to Conserving Carolina.

On his own time, Wendell also participates in the Adopt-a-Trail program and maintains the Trombatore Trail. He maintains this trail and has donated almost two hours every week to its upkeep! Wendell’s hope for the future is that Conserving Carolina will start connecting more of the trails in the area to create a larger system—a plan that is in the works!

Wendell and his wife vacationed to Western North Carolina and decided to never leave. He discovered Conserving Carolina when after searching on how to get involved in trail work in the area. In addition to volunteering with us, Wendell and his wife volunteer with many more organizations in the area and are very active at their church.

For Wendell, “Always be kind and always be honest” has always been a motto to live by and he represents that with his positive and fun attitude while working with the Rock Crushers every Wednesday.

LADY SLIPPER AWARD - WINNERS -

Selected by the volunteer program four times per year—one for each season—the Lady Slipper Award Winner is a volunteer who shows outstanding support to Conserving Carolina’s mission.

We are always welcoming and recruiting new volunteers to join our team! We have many ways you can volunteer with us—join our Habitat Restoration Crew to help restore our land to its native habitat, our Trails Crew to maintain existing and build new trails, our Education

and Outreach crew to help educate our community of conservation, or help our staff in various ways in the office. If you’re interested email volunteer@conservingcarolina.org, call Olivia at 828-697-5777 ext. 211, or sign up on our website.



Carol Newton began volunteering with Conserving Carolina in February 2016, when it was Pacolet Area Conservancy, and has been a dedicated volunteer ever since. Carol

serves on the Development Committee and works closely on events and fundraising in Polk County.

After working in many fields from performing arts to electrical contracting, Carol realized they all have common ground—organizing and promoting. Carol helps with organizing and promoting at Conserving Carolina and has spearheaded the Little White Oak Mountain challenge to help repay the loan secured to purchase the 1,068-acre tract in Polk County. She planned the campaign, worked in preparing materials, and organized other committee members. She is a tireless and committed advocate

for the project and for Conserving Carolina. The Little White Oak Mountain challenge motivates Carol to continue volunteering because she appreciates how it “brings different groups in the community together and benefits each other.”

When not volunteering with us, you can find Carol gardening, reading mystery and historical fiction, traveling, hiking, and being involved at church. Her hope for the future of the organization is that “Conserving Carolina raises awareness that translates into action for using natural resources well.”

A Story of Coming Together



After many months of hard work, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (CMLC) and Pacolet Area Conservancy (PAC) are now Conserving Carolina. We have joined together to enable us to build a larger community of advocates to further our common mission to permanently conserve, care for, and connect people to our most treasured places in our burgeoning region for generations to come.

Founded in 1994 as Natural Heritage Trust of Henderson County, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy protected more than 32,000 acres of land in Henderson, Transylvania, Rutherford, Buncombe, Jackson and Polk counties. Pacolet Area Conservancy, founded in 1989, protected more than 10,000 acres of valuable natural resources in Polk, Rutherford, and Transylvania counties, as well as Spartanburg and Greenville counties in South Carolina.

The neighboring land conservancies had been partnering on projects over the last several years, including the 1,068-acre tract on Little White Oak Mountain that protects several federally-endangered species, more than 13 miles of streams and nearly 400 acres



of the Little White Oak Mountain/Tryon Peak Natural Heritage Area. The project also provides expanded outdoor recreation opportunities for the Polk County Recreation Center and the Green River Game Lands, and an exciting opportunity to provide much-needed workforce housing at its lower elevation through a partnership with Housing Assistance Corporation.

Once slated to be the site of the 687-unit Foster Creek Preserve residential development, this collaborative conservation venture will be a major asset to the community economically as well as from a conservation standpoint. "As the cooperative effort on the Little White Oak Mountain project demonstrates, having our neighboring conservancies join forces strengthens local conservation in our region even more," says Conserving Carolina executive director, Kieran Roe. The organization

will maintain its offices in Columbus, NC and Hendersonville, NC, with current staff remaining in place under the direction of a new consolidated board of directors and Roe.

A united organization helps build a larger community of advocates to save more of our iconic lands and precious waters. We are excited to present a new look while performing the same great work along the Blue Ridge Mountains, Foothills and Escarpment, Jocassee and Hickory Nut Gorges, and French Broad, Broad and Green River Watersheds. A new, active name clearly communicates who we are and what we do, continuing the legacy of permanently conserving our natural heritage today, for our grandchildren, and beyond. In addition, a redesigned website provides a visual, user-friendly and engaging experience that showcases the work you make possible.

"You have been by our side, creating real change in our communities. With your support, we embark on a new journey as a stronger and larger organization that is able to meet conservation opportunities in our region head on."

—Kieran Roe, Executive Director

This expanded geographic region, served by our combined expertise, resources and membership bases strengthen our ability to raise awareness of the crucial importance of protecting our shared land and water resources, and to foster appreciation of our unique natural heritage. We can save more of our mountains, foothills, rivers and farms.

For Nature and People. Forever.
We are Conserving Carolina... Are you?

Your Legacy Matters



Owen Carson of Equinox Environmental, Guardian of the Green business sponsor of Conserving Carolina, with family enjoying conserved land at Conservation Celebration 2017.

“If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it.”

- Lyndon B. Johnson

Joining Conserving Carolina’s Land Legacy League with a planned gift will help sustain conservation efforts for many years to come. Conserving

Carolina offers a variety of convenient giving options such as a simple bequest through a will or a beneficiary designation in a retirement account or life insurance

policy. Please let us know if you have included Conserving Carolina in your charitable giving estate plans so that we may thank you during your lifetime.

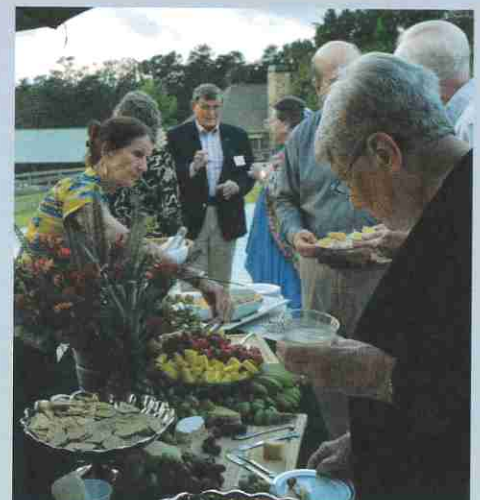
For more info on joining Conserving Carolina’s Land Legacy League contact Lynn Killian, Development Director 828-697-5777, ext. 202 | lynn@conservingcarolina.org

Thanks for a Successful For Land’s Sake

Thank you to all who attended For Land’s Sake held Sept. 22, 2017 at Thanksgiving Farm, the home of Alan and Jenny Taylor. 90 guests enjoyed a gourmet dinner by Impeccable Taste Catering, a fantastic silent auction, beautiful mountain views and good company. This special event brought in over \$12,800, which will help us continue our mission to protect the special places in our beautiful mountain and foothills region.

Special thanks to our Platinum sponsor, Parsec Financial, and Silver

sponsors - Claussen Walters Real Estate, Dusenbury Insurance, Horse Country Productions, Morgan Stanley, Tryon Builders and Williamson’s Paint Center. Thanks as well to the generous auction donors - Avery Creek Nursery, Carole Bartol, Mark Byington, Conserving Carolina, Covington Jewelry, Harvest House, Heartwood Gallery, Vard Henry, Melinda Holland, Dibbit Lamb, Becky McCall, Betsy Miner, Torry Nergart, Orchard Inn, Pro Physical Therapy, Purrfect Bark, Saluda Outfitters, and Ford Smith.



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Join our annual business membership program today! Your once-a-year membership contribution not only benefits conservation, it provides YEAR-ROUND recognition of your business at all of our major events, in our print and online outreach materials, and much more. **For more details contact Jenn Tutor, Donor Relations Manager, jenn@conservingcarolina.org or 828.697.5777 ext. 209**

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Meet our AmeriCorps Members!

Four new and two returning AmeriCorps members joined Conserving Carolina this fall!



Left to right: Mike, Olivia, Jennifer, Jen, Max, Jonathan

Michael Yuhas is the Trails Associate and comes from Virginia. He enjoys hiking, snowboarding, and playing music.

Olivia Dannemiller is the Volunteer & Community Engagement Associate, hails from Asheville and spends her

time hiking, adventuring to swimming holes, seeing live music, or borrowing a dog for the day.

Jennifer Barnett is the Community Outreach & Education Associate. She grew up on a farm in the Great Plains of

Oklahoma. In her free time, Jennifer likes to hike, garden, create art projects and practice the ukulele.

Jen Adams is returning as the Habitat Restoration Associate. Jen grew up in a small town in New Hampshire and in her free time, she enjoys hiking, climbing, and skiing.

Max Howes is serving as the Habitat Restoration & Volunteer Coordinator position based out of the Polk County office. He was born and raised in Chapel Hill and enjoys swimming, disc golf, biking, and watching basketball.

Jonathan Feldman is returning in a new role—as AC Stewardship Associate. Jonathan works at Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. and hikes with his Pitador, upgrades his Volvo, creates music, and writes “terrible poetry” in his free time.

A Summer of Service

Five young adults gave and grew through Conserving Carolina’s new community development initiative.

This summer, Jordan Kirkland, 18, Jason Brandyburg, 19, Bailey Allen, 17, Fernando Baruch, 18, and Abdul Derios, 18, maintained trails, restored wildlife habitat, formed partnerships, and participated in professional development trainings. Through all of this, a willingness to try new things for the sake of personal growth guided every activity.

The summer was packed with opportunities aimed to nurture new relationships with one another and the greater community, including a beautification project with the staff and volunteers of El Centro. El Centro works to create a more inclusive community



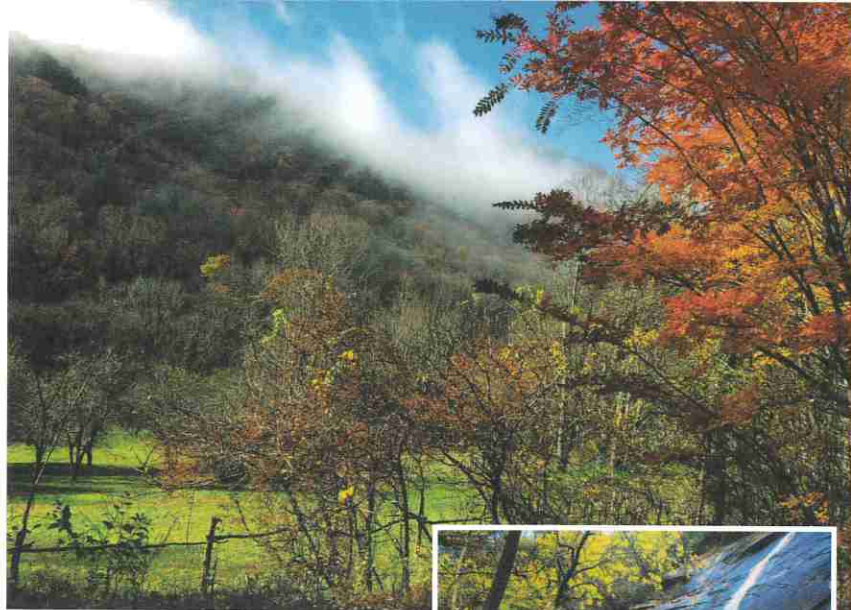
Left to right: Jason, Bailey, Fernando, Abdul, Jordan

for Latinos by providing services, developing grassroots leaders and working together to access community resources. The team also built a garden structure with Hood Huggers International, which offers strategies for building support for historically African American neighborhoods by serving at their Burton Street Community Peace Gardens.

In addition to partnerships and physical work, the team developed personal and professional skills, attending a course

on resume building, interviewing and networking, completing a money management workshop, and participating in classes to build their communication.

Jordan sums up his Summer of Service experience, “We worked hard all summer. We learned a lot of new stuff about the environment and about what we are capable of doing in our own community. I knew I liked nature and now I know I can do this for a living.”

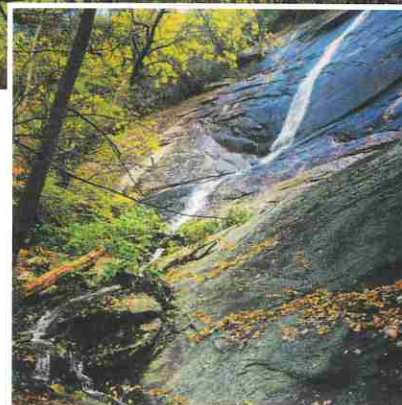


Wildcat Rock Trail Completed

Begun in 2014 and built progressively in four segments, construction of Conserving Carolina's Wildcat Rock Trail achieved final completion earlier this year. The trail is the newest segment of Conserving Carolina's Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trail, a loop that will one day extend more than 20 miles to connect a myriad of regional conserved lands in northeast Henderson County.

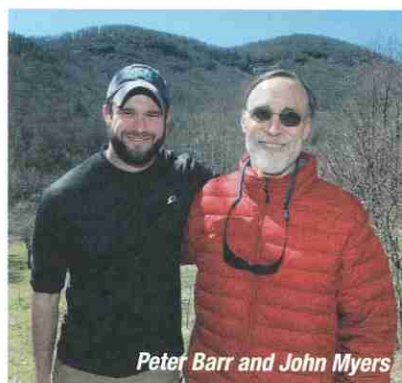
Initially known as the Little Bearwallow Trail because it ascends the northern slopes of Little Bearwallow Mountain, the new Wildcat Rock Trail enables hikers to reach three distinct scenic destinations: 100-foot Little Bearwallow Falls, the dramatic outcrop of Wildcat Rock, and the picturesque ridgeline meadow near the Little Bearwallow summit.

The three mile trail was constructed in combination with the Vermont and North Carolina Youth Conservation Corps, Trail Dynamics, American Conservation Experience, Carolina Mountain Club, and Conserving Carolina's Rock Crushers Trail Crew. To complete the project, Benchmark



Trails installed more than 200 masoned stone stairs. The trail features widely acclaimed sustainable design and construction to ensure safeguarding of the natural resources through which it traverses—all on properties forever protected by Conserving Carolina in partnership with landowners John Myers and Jane Lawson.

The Wildcat Rock Trail begins at the Upper HNG Trailhead on Highway 74A near the community of Gerton, opposite the entrance to Conserving Carolina's Florence Nature Preserve. Future trail development will connect this new trail to the summit of Bearwallow Mountain in 2019.



Peter Barr and John Myers

Event Calendar

DECEMBER

Thursday, December 14

4:30-6:30 pm

Holiday Drop-In

At the Home of Lynn Killian, Development Director; Hendersonville, NC

Members stop by for appetizers and holiday cheer as we celebrate and THANK YOU for saving our beautiful lands and waters.

RSVP to jenn@conservingcarolina.org.

Sunday, December 31

Last Chance to Make a Difference in 2017!

Your tax-deductible, year-end contribution to Conserving Carolina protects the special places you love.

FEBRUARY

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

Symposium on The Changing Equestrian Landscape

FENCE in Tryon

APRIL

4/28

~~Sunday, April 29, 2018~~

Land Lover's Picnic

Chimney Rock State Park

Honoring 2017 conservation landowners, members and dedicated volunteers.

AUGUST

18

Saturday, August 25, 2018

18th Annual Conservation Celebration

Camp Gwynn Valley

Celebrate the conservation of mountains, foothills, rivers and farms with friends and fellow supporters at Conserving Carolina's signature benefit.

SEPTEMBER

Date TBD

For Land's Sake

Join us for a benefit celebrating another year of successful conservation. This signature event will be hosted in the Southeastern part of our service area.



847 Case Street
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Please Give To Our Year-End Appeal!

**Your Contribution Helps Protect and
Preserve Land and Water Resources...**

For Nature and People. Forever.



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