

Volume 13

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Spring 2009

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

A Publication of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, Inc.

Timberdoodle Thoughts...

By Michael Kieffer

BRMC and Environmental Studies on the Piedmont enjoyed a wonderful Woodcock Walk or should I say watch. We saw American woodcocks, a.k.a. timberdoodles, and reveled at the display.

However, something was missing, Bill Sladen. Bill, who founded Environmental Studies, invited me out in 2001 to bring a group from BRMC to enjoy the woodcock flight display. Bill had never seen the event, but he soon became a big fan of the display. For years after, Bill and his wife Jocelyn would open up their house to countless programs including the yearly performance of these diminutive upland shore birds.

In years past, after the excitement of viewing a wonderful natural wonder was over the real portion of the program began. We would go back into Bill and Jocelyn's home and sit by the fireside and compare notes. Bill, in his way, would pit the leaders of the walks against each other and each participant's experiences. At first this felt sort of uncomfortable, but soon everyone involved learned a lot more about the birds and nature, which is what the program is all about.

What Bill was doing so well is challenging young and old to rethink what this event meant. More, he was rooting this natural experience deeper in all of our brains.

BRMC has thought often of our educational programs and what they mean. We feel we do a good job to teach our youth and expose them to the possibilities of their futures. We always try to provide a variety of programs to what I have termed "birth to death". Meaning, we try to provide opportunities for all ages. Now with everything we are facing as a global community, that approach to natural history is even more important.

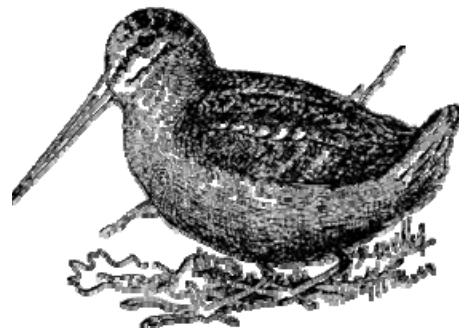
Over the past few years, we, like many other groups have used the phrase "no child left inside" or like we like to say "all children outdoors". This has been the route of all of our camps and nature programs. Forget

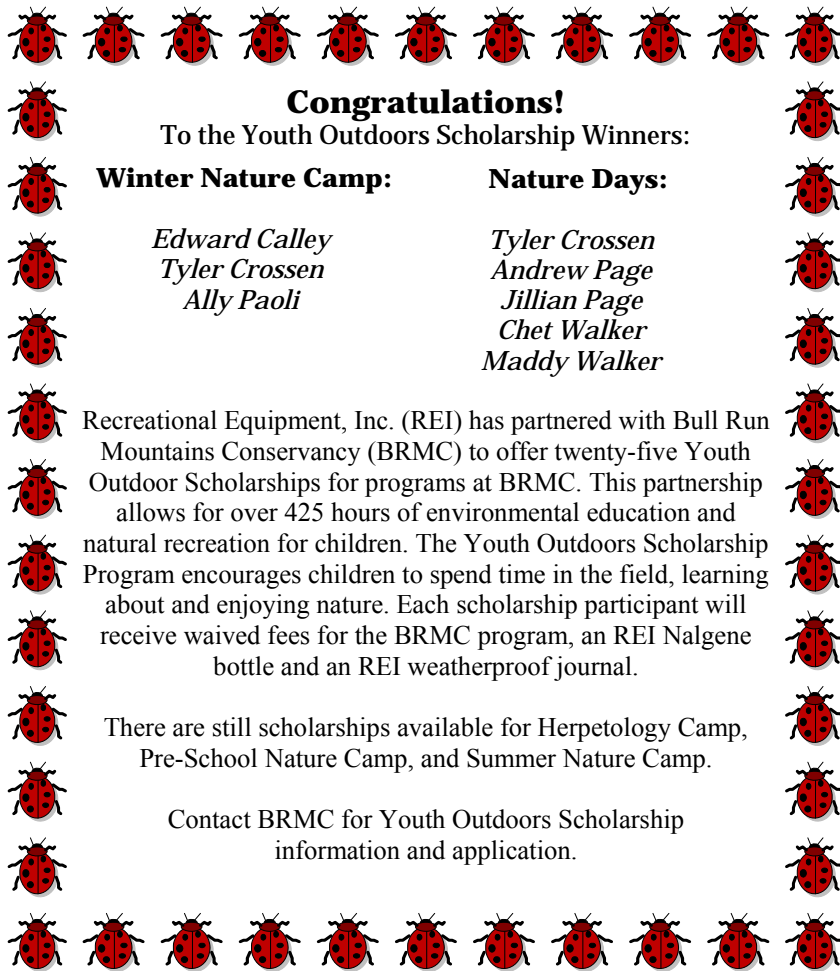
the indoor sidetracks, stick to what the mountains have to offer— trails, streams, and life.

One thing I have never emphasized though in this forum of our newsletter is the importance that BRMC feels of engaging adults. BRMC can work with children again and again and hope to make a difference in creating a more appreciative and connective future in their lives to nature. However, we realize that if our nature campers, and youth program participants go home and these lessons are not reinforced, we have not succeeded.

With this in mind, we are focused on creating a more adult interactive program. This program does not require you to have children, grandchildren, or nieces and nephews. It simply focuses on providing opportunities for all adults to work with and enhance first their own understanding of the natural world and secondly, assists them to help pass their passion for the outside onto the youth of tomorrow. Our new motto is "adults lead by example, nature has never been more important".

I thank Bill Sladen for everything he has meant to the community and for assisting BRMC in ways he could not imagine. I want to share a quote from Aldo Leopold about Woodcocks. "The drama of the sky dance is enacted nightly on hundreds of farms, the owners of which sigh for entertainment, but harbor the illusion that it is to be sought in theaters. They live on the land, but not by the land". How can we expect our children to be more responsible if we as adults do not emulate the behavior of respect and awe of the natural world?





Congratulations!

To the Youth Outdoors Scholarship Winners:

Winter Nature Camp:

*Edward Calley
Tyler Crossen
Ally Paoli*

Nature Days:

*Tyler Crossen
Andrew Page
Jillian Page
Chet Walker
Maddy Walker*

Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) has partnered with Bull Run Mountains Conservancy (BRMC) to offer twenty-five Youth Outdoor Scholarships for programs at BRMC. This partnership allows for over 425 hours of environmental education and natural recreation for children. The Youth Outdoors Scholarship Program encourages children to spend time in the field, learning about and enjoying nature. Each scholarship participant will receive waived fees for the BRMC program, an REI Nalgene bottle and an REI weatherproof journal.

There are still scholarships available for Herpetology Camp, Pre-School Nature Camp, and Summer Nature Camp.

Contact BRMC for Youth Outdoors Scholarship information and application.

Remembering our Outreach Specialist

On March 17, 2009, Bull Run Mountains Conservancy said good-bye to our beloved Ball Python snake. Many of you have met the Ball Python at our events and public programs. We think the snake was between 10-15 years of age. He will be greatly missed.



Volunteer Lucas Quinn with Ball Python

Meet Michele...

Hello and greetings! In December, I started working one day a week as the Research Director at BRMC. In this new role, I will help with program development and fundraising for research and education in the Bull Run Mountains.

I grew up in Northern Virginia and spent much of my childhood and young adult years exploring the woods and valleys of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge. It was my love of the outdoors and keen interest in the natural world that led me to become a conservation biologist. Over the last fifteen years I have worked on conservation issues for a variety of organizations, largely focused on protecting freshwater systems and the species that inhabit them. I look forward to using the skills I have developed in the service of the many excellent programs at BRMC.

At the beginning of April, Jennifer and I will be leading a workshop on setting up a worm composting bin. Compost is commonly called "black gold" by gardeners because it improves soil structure and contains nutrients essential for plant growth. Composting also reduces the amount of waste that goes to our landfills each year – about 15% of household waste in the US is food waste.

Composting with worms (vermicomposting) speeds up the process of composting, is easy to do, and can be done year-round. We will also discuss the proper use of vermicompost and the natural history of worms. Of note, Charles Darwin was fascinated with worms. The last book that he published was about these creatures and included a chapter titled, "The part which worms have played in the burial of ancient buildings"!

Cheers,
Michele Thieme

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy Public Programs 2009

HIKE WITH A NATURALIST **1st Wednesday of Every Month** **9a.m.—noon**

Our first Wednesday of the month hike for those members and nonmembers that don't like to hike alone. Come and discover some of the flora and fauna of the Bull Run Mountains.

This program is free; all are welcome.

TEA OF THE MONTH CLUB **2nd Wednesday of Every Month** **2p.m.—4 p.m.**

Each second Wednesday we enjoy a woodland tea party with freshly brewed herbal tea and light fare. We take a short hike in which we learn about a new variety of local flora and its medicinal values. We will then brew and drink tea made from the plants we collect.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$10/non: \$15

OLD HOME SITES **April 18th—Saturday 8:30—11 a.m.**

BRMC is thrilled to continue our exploration of old home sites with an extra treat. Go beyond the trails as we explore cemeteries, foundations, and clearings that mark past residences. Then sit back and enjoy a hot breakfast in the woods as Marcia Markey, a local historian, performs a historical re-enactment based on diaries, letters, and other primary sources. Space is limited and spots fill early.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$25/non: \$30



M. Cianciosi

ADULT EDUCATION: **Chesapeake Watershed Workshop** **May 1, May 15, June 5— Friday** **9a.m.—2p.m.**

Participate in the conservation of rivers and streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Expand your understanding of the magnitude of the issues. On day one we will enjoy the beauty of pristine headwater streams in the mountains, on day two, just 3 miles downstream, we will analyze the impacts of golf courses and development on Little Bull Run, and on day three we will end at Turkey Run National Park contemplating the journey the water has had to make.

Limited to 10 participants.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$150/series

Non: \$225/series

ADULT EDUCATION: **HERPETOLOGY DAY** **June 13th, Saturday** **9:00a.m.—4:00p.m.**

Amphibians are the most underappreciated terrestrial vertebrates and the “villainous” reptiles are the most misunderstood. Not anymore, join BRMC staff and expert Marty Martin (51 years of experience studying the reptiles in the Bull Run Mountains) to debunk the myths. The natural history and behavior of these classes of animals are truly astounding. Ask anyone who has been on our Amphibian Night hike (a.k.a. sex in the dark).

Limited to 10 participants.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$50/Non: \$75

Chesapeake Watershed Workshop **June 22nd—24th and August 10th—12th** **9:00a.m.—4p.m.**

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy (BRMC) will offer 16 scholarships for youth ages 13-18 to attend an educational workshop focused on the conservation of the rivers and streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Funding for this Scholarship Program has been provided by the *Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund*. The three-day workshop will begin with an

exploration of headwater streams in the Bull Run Mountains. Day two will be spent downstream along Little Bull Run, and day three will be spent in Turkey Run National Park along the banks of the Potomac River. At each location students will perform stream monitoring, vegetation analyses, and stream habitat and riparian buffer evaluations. **Scholarship application deadline has been extended to April 18, 2009.**

HERPETOLOGY CAMP

Session 1: June 25th—26th
Session 2: June 29th—30th
9:00a.m.—4:00p.m.

Herpetology is the study of reptiles and amphibians. BRMC invites your child to spend two days hiking and handling, searching, and observing salamanders, frogs, lizards, snakes, and turtles on our preserve. As we discover more about these unique creatures, your child will add to his or her understanding of natural systems.

Ages 7-12.

Limited to 15 participants.
Pre-registration required.
Members: \$100/Non: \$125



PRE-SCHOOL NATURE CAMP
July 13th—17th, Monday thru Friday
10:00a.m.—12:00p.m.

At this week-long camp, young children will be exposed to the outdoors and wildlife. They will explore the life on the Bull Run Mountains through a series of discovery hikes, nature crafts, and games. Ages 4—6.

Limited to 10 participants.
Pre-registration required.
Members: \$125/Non:\$150

SUMMER NATURE CAMP

Session 1: July 27th—July 31st
Session 2: August 3rd—August 7th
Monday—Friday, 9a.m.—4p.m.

BRMC invites your child to spend a nature-filled week interacting with the natural world. Each day we will focus on different plants and animals in the Bull Run Mountains. Campers will add to their understanding of natural systems through hikes, stream walks, games, and eco-dramas. Ages 7-12.

Limited to 15 participants per session.
Pre-registration required.
Members: \$250/Non: \$300

To register for a program, fill out the form below and mail with your payment to:
 Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, P.O. Box 210, Broad Run, VA 20137
 For more information, call us at (703) 753-2631 or visit our web site at
www.brmconservancy.org.

Name _____

Address _____

City/ZIP _____

Home phone _____

Work phone _____

E-mail _____

Are you a BRMC member? _____

No. of people registering _____

Fee _____

Amount enclosed _____

Name of child if registering for youth camp _____

Tea of the Month Club
 Specify Month _____
 Members: \$10/Non: \$15

Old Home Sites
 Members: \$25/Non: \$30

Adult Education:

Chesapeake Watershed
 Workshop
 Members: \$150/series
 Non: \$225/series

Herpetology Day
 Members: \$50/Non: \$75

Herpetology Camp
 Session One, June 25-26
 Session Two, June 29-30
 Members: \$100/Non: \$125

Pre-School Nature Camp
 Members: \$125/Non: \$75

Summer Nature Camp
 Session One, July 27-31
 Session Two, August 3-7
 Members: \$250/Non: \$300



Trail Talk

By Jennifer Helwig

Winter is a wonderful time in the Bull Run Mountains. Even though we didn't see much snow until the first of March, the air was crisp and cold during the winter months. With no leaves on the trees and little under-story growth, hikers are able to see ridges, valleys, and rocky outcrops that normally go unnoticed. You really get the feeling that you are in the mountains. One of the nice surprises in the winter woods is stumbling upon flowering Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*. Found in swampy woods and wet meadows, the flowers are small, ball-like clusters almost entirely enclosed by a hood-like spathe that exhibits various color patterns of lime green and purple. On the preserve, we observed the first blooming Skunk Cabbage at our Winter Nature Camp in late December. Peak bloom appeared to be in mid-February. Look for Skunk Cabbage along Catlett's Branch below the Dawson's Cemetery and also along the Quarry Trail north of Catlett's Branch.

See you on the trails!



Flowering Skunk Cabbage

NEW! Adopt-a-Trail at BRMC!

Attention Scouts and Volunteer Groups:

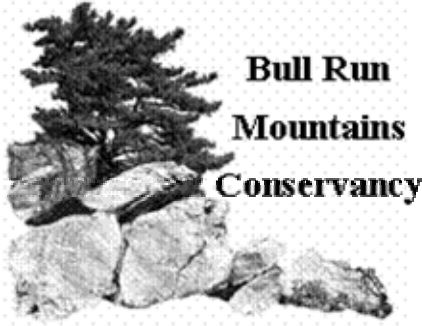
Looking for an on-going project where you can take ownership and get your hands dirty? Become part of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy's Adopt-a-Trail program. Your group will be assigned the responsibility of maintaining one trail at BRMC throughout the year. Your responsibilities will include keeping the trail clear of fallen trees and branches, picking up litter and trash, and notifying BRMC of major trail disturbances or issues. This is a one-year commitment and we encourage your group to monitor the trail as needed during that time.

Contact BRMC as soon as possible, as there are a limited number of trails to adopt.

- Mountain Road, 1.2 miles
- Quarry Trail, 1.75 miles
- Ridge Trail, 1.3 miles
- Ridge Loop Trail, .75 miles
- Catlett's Branch Trail, .25 miles
- East End Trail, 1.25 miles
- Dawson's Trail, 1 mile
- Fern Hollow Trail, 1.1 miles
- Chapman Trail, .2 miles

SHOOTING THE BREEZE is going electronic!

Help us to save money, time and trees by opting to receive the BRMC newsletter via e-mail instead of a paper mailing. To start receiving your newsletter electronically, send us an email at info@brmconservancy.org.



**Bull Run
Mountains
Conservancy**

Education · Research · Stewardship

P.O. Box 210 Broad Run, Virginia 20137
(703) 753-2631 - www.brmconservancy.org

Yes, I would like to become a member of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy.

Name _____
 Organization _____
 Address _____
 Phone _____ E-mail _____
 Referred by _____

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Senior | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Group | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$300+ Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000+ Conservation Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Please make your tax-deductible contribution to:
Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, Inc., P.O. Box 210, Broad Run, VA 20137

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy is a membership driven organization.

Become a member today and support our programs and support the public preserve. Your membership provides BRMC necessary funds to operate and shows our foundation and corporate supporters that the public values and appreciates the resource.

Membership Benefits:

- Support environmental and historical programs for all ages
- Support research and management of the natural area
- Discounts on all public programs and trips
- Quarterly newsletter including our program calendar

Join today at www.brmconservancy.org

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy		2009 Calendar of Events
April 4	Build Your Own Worm Bin Composter	Old Home Sites
May 1, May 15, June 5	Adult Education: Chesapeake Watershed Workshop	Adult Education: Chesapeake Watershed Workshop
June 13	Adult Education: Herpetology Camp	Herpetology Camp
June 22-24 & August 10-12	Chesapeake Watershed Workshop	Chesapeake Watershed Workshop
June 25-26 & June 29-30	Herpetology Camp	Herpetology Camp
July 13-17	Pre-School Nature Camp	Pre-School Nature Camp
July 27-31 & August 3-7	Summer Nature Camp	Summer Nature Camp
<p>Directions: Take I-66 to Haymarket exit. Go south on Rt. 15. Go west on Rt. 55 for 2.7 miles. Turn right on Turner Rd., then left on Beverley Mill Dr. to the Mountain House 3/4 mi. on left. Call (703) 753-2631 for more information or visit our Web site at www.brmconservancy.org</p> <p>Unless otherwise noted, all programs and events will meet at the BRMC Mountain House at 17405 Beverley Mill Drive in Broad Run, Virginia, across from the Bull Run Mountain State Natural Area Preserve trailhead.</p>		