

Girls On the Run at Broad Run

by Christina Lambacher

This fall, you may have noticed a little extra commotion at our Mountain House a few evenings a week and that's because we were lucky enough to host a Girls on the Run team. Each week for the duration of the 8-week season, the group of 9 girls and 3 volunteer coaches met twice a week to go over a social-emotional curriculum that creatively integrates running activities and healthy behaviors into lessons teaching positive growth and self awareness. The environment of the Mountain House and surrounding nature provided an excellent opportunity for girls to be free of outside distractions to focus on learning valuable lessons (other than the occasional exciting train, of course!)



Girls on the Run is a physical activity based positive youth development program that focuses on the 5 Cs + 1: connection, competence, character, confidence, caring, and community. The dedicated coaches not only taught the GOTR curriculum which shows girls how to build self-esteem, recognize and manage their emotions, and make healthy choices, they taught the girls how to appreciate and respect the environment around them. The girls loved being at the mountain house, enjoying fresh air and nature, and their favorite activity: climbing on all the rocks. It was truly special to be able to provide this opportunity and open space for girls to get outside and connect with their peers.

As the season progressed and leaves began to turn colors and fall off the trees, the girls became more excited about all the changes happening around them. During one practice, while running laps, they decided to collect all of the big sycamore leaves that had fallen during the day. They gathered the leaves into a big pile at the front of the house for Michael to find the next morning. Who knows exactly what their inquisitive minds were thinking, but isn't it so wonderful that they had the space to just play, explore, and learn?

Throughout the 8 weeks, the BRMC GOTR girls worked hard towards a goal of completing a 5K. This taught the girls how to set a goal, work towards that goal, and how to follow-through. Seeing the excited faces of the girls as they came together as a team to accomplish this goal and celebrate their hard work was truly magical. We see that same excitement in the eyes of those who participate in our naturalist camps and realize for the first time the possibilities ahead of them.

Hosting a GOTR team was in line with our mission towards education and stewardship. Partnering with Girls on the Run of NOVA allowed us to provide a space for girls in the program to meet safely during a time where there are limited options for social connection. The BRMC GOTR team helped to create a foundation for young minds to begin thinking critically about the world around them and to instill a sense of confidence that they have the ability to be actively involved in shaping its future.



Aesthetic Necessity

by Michael Kieffer

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Building appreciation for the natural beauty that surrounds us is the deepest goal of a naturalist. Since the birth of ecology, many extremely talented scientists have spent their careers proving the importance of all life and how everything in the natural world is connected. Why save the earth's biological diversity? If one part of an ecosystem is altered, the effect reverberates through the whole web of life.



Sometimes the arguments and studies scientists have used to prove the necessity of preserving natural communities or the negative effects of pollution and habitat destruction have become difficult for the average non-scientist to understand. Could it



be that conservation advocates and enthusiasts have become so determined to scientifically demonstrate the importance of nature that an important argument for preserving the natural world has been forgotten? In the simplest terms, a conscious creature requires beauty for emotional and mental well-being. Is there anything more beautiful than nature, more inspirational, or more universally appreciated in all cultures, in all races, and in all human history?

We surround ourselves with plants in our homes. When we take a family photo, how many of us choose the mountain, or the sky, or one of many scenic natural backdrops? Cities can be extremely exciting with the bustle of human activity, but how many young lovers would be prompted by the sight of a street corner to ask a stranger to take their photo, compared to the park's duck-filled pond? We spend thousands of hours

and thousands of dollars landscaping our yards in an effort to dwell in the most beautiful garden human art can contrive, but our endeavors always seem inferior to what nature gives us for free.

Art was spawned from our early human ancestors' connection with their environment. Music had similar roots. Surrounding oneself with nature seems a simple recipe for happiness.

In light of our intrinsic aesthetic needs, is it right that maximizing shareholder profits at all costs should negatively affect the underpinnings of life and of living? The wheels of progress threaten to overwhelm nature's silence, beauty, diversity, and abundance. May it be asked that the few who profit from the destruction of natural communities prove their activities are not detrimental to greater humanity, rather than that greater humanity prove nature's importance? Change begins with appreciation, if we wait until we have time to receive nature's bounty, will it still exist?



BRMC Public Programs

Winter 2021



HIKE WITH A NATURALIST

Thursday, January 7th, 10 am (& every first Thursday of the month)

Join a professional naturalist to discover some of the flora and fauna of the local region. This program is free, meets at Leopold's Preserve (16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run, VA 20137) and all are welcome. Limited to 9 participants, at least in January. Please pre-register.

WINTER Bird Walk

Saturday, February 6th, 10am-1pm

George Wallace, Ph.D., biologist and world-class birder, joins BRMC as we spend the morning birding. George has spent his entire career focusing on the conservation and study of birds. Participants must bring their own binoculars and spotting scopes, as we cannot share due to Covid-19. Meets at the Mountain House. **Pre-registration is required.**

Members: \$15/non: \$20

HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS

All programs are 10am-12pm. \$5 pp, including adults.

BRMC invites you and your child to spend an adventurous outing interacting with and learning about nature! We meet at Leopold's Preserve, 16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run, VA 20137.

Winter Survival

Thursday, January 14th—10a.m-noon. We will focus on mammals and how they survive and thrive in the winter.

Geology

Thursday, January 21st—10am-noon. Join us to explore and discuss the geology of the Triassic basin.

Orienteering

Thursday, February 18th—10am-noon. Join us as we learn to use a compass and the lay of the land when orienting our location in the woods.

Amphibians of Spring

Thursday, March 18th—10am-noon. We will explore the habitats and life cycles of amphibians.

Migratory Birds and Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers

Thursday, April 15th—10am-noon. We will focus on bird migration and spring wildflowers.

LEOPOLD'S PRESERVE

Monthly Naturalist Walks

BRMC is proud to partner with **The White House Farm Foundation** and its mission to enrich individuals with knowledge of and involvement with our natural ecological systems for monthly naturalist walks on Leopold's Preserve: 16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run, VA 20137.

Winter Schedule

Saturday, January 23rd, 10am-noon...Geology

Saturday, February 20th, 10 am-noon...Winter Birds

Wednesday, March 3rd, 6:30-8 p.m...Amphibians of Spring

Wednesday, March 10, 5:00-7 p.m...Woodcock Watch



WHITE HOUSE
FARM FOUNDATION

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE PLEIN FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST

Let's Get Social!



BRMC is now on Instagram and LinkedIn too! Like, follow us, and share with your friends the latest information on our education programs as well as partner updates and donor opportunities.

We are BRMC

by Rita Fenwick

For the Fenwick family, Bull Run Mountain Conservancy (BRMC) is part of our scrapbook of happy family memories. It has been a steady presence in our lives for decades.

Aside from providing great family hikes, for our children BRMC provided ways to connect to nature and a stage on which to do good. Sarah, in particular, spent her teenage years volunteering with BRMC. She learned orienteering and how to treat bee stings as a volunteer camp intern. She helped count timber rattlesnakes as part of an annual scientific research study. She measured pollutants in the Bull Run Mountain streams as her National Science project in high school, winning a regional award. To Sarah's surprise, she was nominated for and won a "Hometown Hero" award and appeared for a month in a minute long TV spot between programs on WETA, which highlighted her volunteer work.

During the same time, BRMC nominated Sarah for REI's Stewards of the Environment Award. REI is a national retail cooperative providing quality outdoor gear and apparel. Sarah was one of 6 winners for this national award. She received a \$500 gift card to use at any REI store and BRMC received a \$20,000 grant in her honor.



Sarah (center) receiving her award from REI at our Annual Fundraiser!



Rachel (second from the right) as a "flying squirrel"!

For our daughter Rachel, BRMC inspired a life-long love of hiking in the woods and playing in streams. For our son Cyrus, Bull Run Mountain Conservancy provided a childhood filled with Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn type adventures with friends. Looking for crawdads under rocks at camp. Playing king of the hill on mountains where Civil War battles were fought. Looking for "gold" in the rock rubble. Standing wide-eyed outside the old graveyard while his sisters told scary stories.

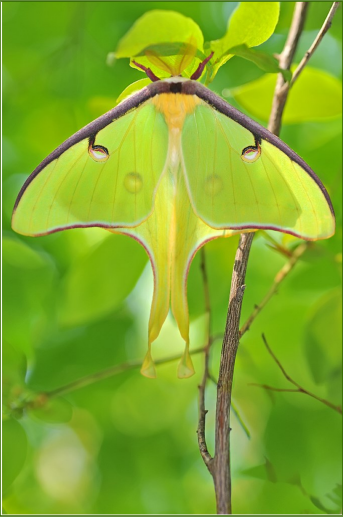
Helping with the wonderful Halloween Safari became an annual family tradition. One year, Sarah was a "turkey vulture", while Rachel face

with Cy taking up the sweep position. When Sarah left for college, Rachel took her place as an animal for the next two years with memorable "flying squirrel" and "luna moth" performances. I continue to be a trail leader to this day.

These days, it is just my husband and I still living in the area. Our children are grown, married, and no longer living locally. George and I remain grateful for the opportunities BRMC provides to visit favorite haunts, go birding, or enjoy the night sky.

David Roos Legacy

Core Education Programs



Halloween Safari

BRMC creates three magical nights of hikes, stories, and music around a bonfire with popcorn roasted over the fire, along with marshmallows and sinfully delicious hot chocolate.

Conservation Patron, \$5,000

2 Benefactors, \$1,000



Youth Outdoors Program

BRMC's Youth Outdoors Program engages children to show them the outdoors is fun and exciting and teach them that we all have a responsibility to protect and enhance our landscape. Equal opportunity scholarships provided.

Conservation Patron, \$5,000

2 Benefactors, \$1,000



School Ground Programs

BRMC offers school site programs integrated into their curriculum & after school programs that increase schools' opportunities to provide students outdoor activities.

Conservation Patron, \$5,000

2 Benefactors, \$1,000



Speaker Series

BRMC's Speaker Series provides opportunities for scientific researchers, local conservation organizations, historians, and archeologists to share their work with the community.

Conservation Patron, \$5,000

2 Benefactors, \$1,000



Homeschool Programs

BRMC's Homeschool Program focuses on larger concepts, such as evolution, plate tectonics, and how the Bull Run Mountains came to be the home of the plant & animal life that the students explore.

Conservation Patron, \$5,000

2 Benefactors, \$1,000

BRMC's Bluebird Trail

by BRMC staff

As you may know, one of the many projects we are involved in is a volunteer bluebird trail with team leader Joe Gardner and assisted by Michael and Kelp Armstrong who are all longtime supporters. This is an ongoing project that monitors bluebird boxes utilizing The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program. Right now, we monitor two houses at our Mountain House property, and 4 houses on the Wakefield School campus.

With that, we are so excited to expand our bluebird endeavor to Leopold's Preserve! This expansion starts with removing all of the old bluebird boxes throughout the preserve, which will be a great volunteer undertaking considering we are not sure just how many are there and where they are all located. Thankfully, we have dedicated and amazing volunteers to scour the preserve and help us remove the dilapidated bluebird shelters.

One reason to remove the old boxes is that they are not being properly maintained or monitored. This is a critical step in collecting data about the bluebirds in our area be-



cause the boxes must be cleaned out regularly and monitored to ensure that they're being used by their intended occupants. The current boxes are attracting house sparrows and European starlings, which are both invasive bird species, that end up doing more harm than good.



With the installation of four new bluebird boxes at Leopold's Preserve, comes a unique opportunity for our BRMC community to be involved. Those who are interested will be able to have a bluebird box dedicated or

sponsored! Dedicating or sponsoring a bluebird box comes with some great benefits. You'll not only get a personalized plaque with your name on the box, but we'll refer to your bluebird box by name in all of our data reports (i.e. The Smith Family box). By sponsoring a box, you'll be able to follow along as we collect data and monitor the bluebirds who inhabit your box, and you'll have the rare opportunity to be involved firsthand in the type of research that is the foundation of our organization. Most importantly, your contribution helps to sustain projects like this one.

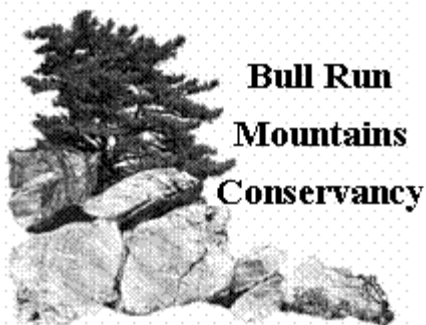
A dedicated or sponsored bluebird box is a wonderful way to show your support for our environmental efforts; memorialize or honor a loved one; or share as a meaningful gift for a birthday, anniversary, etc. In recognition of contributions to the fund, we will install a personalized plaque on one of our four bluebird boxes for just \$500. Your plaque will remain for the lifetime of the project.

If you are interested in sponsoring a box, you can email us at info@brmconservancy.org. We will only be installing four boxes to begin with, so it will be on a first come first serve basis with the potential to be waitlisted for when we expand the project.

Winter World

photos by Michael Kieffer





**Bull Run
Mountains
Conservancy**

Education · Research · Stewardship

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

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Organization _____

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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
donor driven organization.**

Become a donor today and support our programs and protect the mountains and region. Your contribution provides BRMC necessary funds to operate and shows our foundation and corporate supporters that the public values and appreciates this resource.

Membership Benefits:

- Support environmental and historical programs for all ages
- Support research on and around the Mountains
- Discounts on all public programs and camps
- Quarterly newsletter including our program calendar