

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

A Publication of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, Inc.

Fire & Ice

by Michael Kieffer



Autumn: it is a time when short hikes take hours. Once you enter any woodlot it feels as if you should never leave, for if you turn your back for just a minute fall color display may all disappear. It is time to exit our daily routine and to reflect on the past growing season. An artist has been at work since the first thaw, and no one can create and paint quite like life itself.

The whole process starts because of deciduous trees large leaves, which allow them to grow well in the shade, as well as in the sun. However, this trait becomes a liability when snow and ice can weigh them down and literally tear the tree apart “life and limb.” So, the tree cuts off the leaf that brings it life

in order to keep the leaf from causing its death.

The color explosion has begun. Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), dwarf sumacs (*Rhus copallina*), black gums (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and Virginia creepers (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) are leading the way with brilliant reds and purples. Poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), American elms (*Ulmus americana*), and birches (*Betula spp.*) are close on their heels; they will add a fantastic lemony yellow to the stage. Red maples (*Acer rubum*), silver maples (*Acer saccharinum*), and sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) will flash light gold with brilliant orange, pink, and red blush as hickories (*Carya spp.*) turn a golden tan.

No other tree genus can match the variety and brilliance that the maples—temporary kings of the forest—display. We stare at them for hours and hope with all our might that the wind will not blow and they can remain this way forever.

After the glitter of color has passed, oaks and beeches concede to the season with their deep crimsons, bronzes, and russet tans. These trees will not form a complete abscission layer between leaf and stem, as did their predecessors of the season, and thus their leaves will remain rattling and rustling through most of the upcoming winter, as if whispering silently about past glories and future conquests.

We find, throughout this season of thanks, a need to see it all. Subtle changes occur daily as the artist is constantly at work. We do not want to miss even the slightest stroke of the brush. In a few short weeks, we can watch leaves go from green to yellow, orange, red, and purple, seeming to summarize life’s full majesty, but ending abruptly as the leaves fall and sprinkle the ground like Fruity Pebbles—a final encore.

Join Bull Run Mountains Conservancy’s many programs this fall including our most popular event Halloween Safari, a guided night hike through the woods where you meet native “wildlife” that perform natural history skits. Go beyond the trails during our Old Home Site program, as we explore cemeteries, foundations, and clearings that mark past residences. Enjoy the autumn season and, whatever happens, make sure you do not let the splendor pass you by.



Speaker Series October & November 2023



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Coral Reef Restoration

Sunday, October 15, 2023, 2p.m.—4p.m.

John Crossen is an Environmental Attorney, Engineer, and a former Naval Facilities Engineering Commander and Army Corps of Engineers GS-15. Since leaving government service, John founded an Environmental Law and Engineering firm. This presentation will showcase an environmental remediation project that restored a subsurface coral reef mountain to its original state from the time of degradation and made it better than originally found!

Register today!



Where Does My Water Come From

Saturday, November 11th, 2023, 2p.m.—4p.m.

There is no mechanism on Earth for creating large quantities of freshwater. Over six million people depend on the Potomac River watershed for their water. The Bull Run Mountains (BRM) are a groundwater repository and their perennial streams a constant feeder into this system. This summer BRM perennial streams like Little Bull Run, pictured below, ran dry for the first time in memory. What does this mean about groundwater levels in the mountains region and the effects on the entire watershed?

Join BRMC and Elizabeth Ward as we dive into the increasingly concerning topic of where and how we obtain our water for everyday use and the impacts we have on it. **Register today!**



M. Kieffer

Friday Conservation Corps

by Matthew Frost

Every Friday morning at Leopold's Preserve, Friday Conservation Corps (FCC) members gather around Park Manager Nick Davis to listen to the tasks of the day including invasive plant removal (Honeysuckle, Japanese stiltgrass, Multiflora rose etc.), litter clean-up, brush clearing, mulch laying, and habitat restoration. Individuals of all ages and experiences come to lend a hand. You learn the ins and outs of invasive plant management including identification, you get exercise, and you spend time outside in the company of others. After 3 hours of labor, one can go home satisfied by how much of a difference their effort has improved the landscape. The FCC assists with the overall health of the preserve, while congregating a community of like-minded individuals to perform conservation at a local level. As for myself, knowing that my morning has been spent making a meaningful impact on the land, I am fulfilled. For as Aldo Leopold once said, "A conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke [of the axe] he is writing his signature on the face of the land."



BRMC Public Programs ~ *Fall 2023*



HIKE WITH A NATURALIST

Wednesday, September 6, 10 am (& every 1st Wednesday 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. *Pre-registration is preferred.*

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.

Birds & Blooms

Tuesday, September 12th —age 13 and up—10a.m.-noon.

Join us to enjoy and learn about the fall bird migration and late summer blooms!

Wednesday September 20th—all ages—10a.m.-noon. Join us to enjoy and learn about the fall bird migration and late summer blooms!

Fall Ecology

Tuesday, October 17th—age 13 and up—10a.m.-noon. Join us to marvel at the beauty of autumn! We will be focusing on the life cycles of trees and fall color.

Wednesday, October 25th—all ages—10a.m.-noon. Join us to marvel at the beauty of autumn! We will be focusing on the life cycles of trees and fall color.

Old Homes & Succession

Tuesday, November 7th —age 13 and up—10a.m.-noon.

Explore the cemeteries, foundations, and vegetation that tells the story of the Thoroughfare community!

Wednesday, November 15th—all ages—10a.m.-noon.

Explore the cemeteries, foundations, and vegetation that tells the story of the Thoroughfare community!

Winter Survival

Tuesday, December 5th—age 13 and up—10am-noon. Learn what mammals do to survive winter!

Wednesday, , December 13th—all ages—10am-12pm. Learn what mammals do to survive winter!

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 through monthly naturalist walks on Leopold's Preserve: 16290 Thoroughfare Road, Broad Run, VA 20137.

Fall Schedule

Sunday, Sept. 17th, 10 a.m.-noon—Birds & Blooms

Join us to enjoy and learn about the fall bird migration and early fall blooms!

Sunday, October 29th, 10 a.m.-noon—Fall Ecology

Join us to marvel at the fall colors as we focus on the life cycles of trees!

Saturday, November 11th, 10 a.m.-noon—Old Home Sites

Explore the cemeteries, foundations, and vegetation that tells the story of the Thoroughfare community!

Saturday, December 9th, 10 a.m.-noon—Winter Survival

Learn what mammals do to survive winter!



WHITE HOUSE
FARM FOUNDATION

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE PLEIN FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST

WINTER NATURALIST CAMP

December 21st & 22nd, 10a.m.—3p.m.

Join BRMC for a winter adventure and learn more about the winter woods. Birds are more easily seen in leafless trees and sounds are magnified in the winter stillness. Dress for the weather—snow makes the day all the more fun.

Ages 7-14. Pre-registration required.

Members: \$100/non: \$150





BRMC's 24th HALLOWEEN SAFARI



Bull Run Mountains Conservancy



Friday, October 20th

Or Friday, October 27th



7:00—8:00pm

\$10 in advance only

Pre-register online or by mail.

All ages!

User friendly trail @ Leopold's Preserve!

Join BRMC for a non-scary night hike on Leopold's Preserve (16290 Thoroughfare Rd., Broad Run, VA 20137).

A guide will lead you along the trail where you meet native "wildlife" that perform natural history skits. There is a new cast of animals each year, so don't miss it!

Join us for a night-time adventure, and live music by a bonfire!

Contact us at:

(703) 753-2631

info@brmconservancy.org

www.brmconservancy.org

P.O. Box 210, Broad Run, VA 20137

Youth Outdoors Summer Programs 2023!





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