

Friends of Blackwater

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Photo courtesy of ©Kent Mason

Working to protect West Virginia's Highlands, the Blackwater River watershed and the Blackwater Canyon.

THE DIRECTOR GETS A PHONE CALL FROM GINNY

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Dear Friends:

Just as I sat down to compose this letter, I got a call from the Blackwater Canyon's most famous inhabitant, "Ginny" the West Virginia Northern flying squirrel. Ginny had just read an article by Glenn Smith, who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in Massachusetts. In the article, Glenn says that we should "celebrate – not litigate" the fact that FWS is taking every shred of legal protection away from Ginny and her family. "Judy," said Ginny, "Glenn Smith's letter is so full of hogwash you can cut it with a knife!"

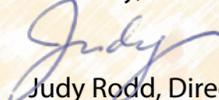
Ginny was right. Records show plans to de-list began Ginny more than seven years ago, and the entire review process was conducted in secret. Hundreds of FWS documents are still withheld from public scrutiny. FWS' decision was opposed by independent scientists who have studied Ginny for years. The FWS decision doesn't even mention the effects of climate change on Ginny's habitat -- just like the Bush Administration approach to the polar bear! Glenn claims that the de-listing was approved by the Government Accounting Office. That's false: the GAO report said that FWS failed to follow Ginny's Recovery Plan. Glenn even invites us to trust the good faith of FWS bureaucrats whose actions under the Bush Administration have been overturned in court time after time!

At Friends of Blackwater, we like to celebrate, but not the kind of machinations and distortions that Glenn Smith embraces. Instead, we celebrate the dedicated scientists and prestigious organizations at the Center for Biological Diversity and The Wilderness Society who have donated their time to help defend this tiny mammal. (If you want a lot more information on why Glenn Smith's article is all wet, you can read these experts' 47-page comment letter at www.saveblackwater.org.)

I picked up the phone and called Ginny. "What do you think, Judy?" she chirped. "Should I go to the de-listing "celebration" that Glenn is organizing? Of course, my babies still can't forage on their own, so I'll need to get a sitter." "Ginny," I said, "I wouldn't go if I were you. Without endangered species protection, Glenn could run you over with his SUV and laugh about it. I have a better idea. Our lawyers have a notice of intent to sue just about ready, and they can give it to Glenn at the party."

"Good idea," said Ginny. "Let's celebrate our determination to keep the endangered species laws strong – and litigate!" We hung up, and I finished writing this letter. We appreciate your support for this work, more than you can know. You all have a great Fall!

Sincerely,



Judy Rodd, Director



Governor Initiates, Legislature Passes Budget with \$5 million for Blackwater Canyon Purchase

On June 24th the legislature passed a supplementary budget which included five million dollars for the purchase of land in the Blackwater Canyon. This amount had been requested by Governor Joe Manchin after beginning negotiations on a Blackwater Canyon land purchase with

John Crites of Allegheny Wood Products. The legislation comes with the condition that a certified appraisal and letter of intent to purchase be completed by January 1st of 2009. While this is not enough money to purchase all the private land in Blackwater Canyon, it is a sizable commitment



West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin



Left: Members of the West Virginia Legislature take a vote during the 2008 Summer Session.

from the Manchin administration. Step two is to request that the West Virginia Congressional delegation appropriate additional funds to purchase the remaining 2,700 private acres in the Canyon. In 1997 Allegheny Wood Products bought this key piece of West Virginia's Scenic Crown Jewel for Five Million dollars. Its value has certainly increased since then! We applaud the Governor for embarking on one of the most important land purchases in the history of the state!!

Bush Administration Takes Aim at Endangered Species Act



For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has protected wildlife at risk of extinction. Because of this landmark law, bald eagles, grizzly bears and peregrine falcons and many others are all thriving. But the Bush administration has proposed an 11th-hour rule change that would make it harder for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to protect endangered and threatened species.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires federal agencies to consult with wildlife experts at FWS and NMFS to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize a listed plant or animal, or harm or destroy its habitat. These independent reviews, called Section 7 consultations, provide a critical safety net for imperiled wildlife. After years of failed attempts to roll back endangered species protections in Congress, industry lobbyists have convinced the Bush administration to propose weakening the ESA themselves through a regulatory change.

Removes Crucial Safeguard for Imperiled Wildlife and Habitat

The Bush proposal would allow federal agencies to decide on their own if they think their

actions would negatively impact a threatened or endangered species. Many of these agencies do not even have biologists or other qualified staff to make such a determination. If the agency decides the answer is "no," independent experts at FWS and NMFS would never have the opportunity to review the decision. While the action agency would theoretically still be responsible if harm occurs, it would take a citizen lawsuit against the agency to halt or alter the destructive activity. Citizens and courts would be forced to provide the independent checks and balances now provided by FWS and NMFS experts.

Additionally, even when an agency requests that FWS or NMFS consult on a project, the Bush proposal would place a 60-day limit (with a possible 60-day extension) on completion of informal consultations; otherwise, the project could move forward regardless of the impacts on listed species. This would increase the likelihood that projects that could harm imperiled wildlife could move forward. Currently, about 70,000 federal actions per year have triggered consultation. On average, more than 95 percent are resolved through informal consultation. Informal consultation allows the project, with agreement from the wildlife agencies, to proceed. Even in these situations it is common for recommendations for project modifications to be made, which can provide a crucial safeguard for listed species. By abolishing this process, few

Article reprinted from Defenders of Wildlife

of these projects improvements would be likely to occur.

Circumvents Careful Legislative Decision Making

With only a few months remaining in the Bush administration, this 11th-hour proposal is clearly an effort to secure dramatic changes to the ESA that the administration and its industry allies have been unable to achieve through legislation. The concepts of self-consultation and unattainable deadlines have been repeatedly rejected by Congress. This proposed rule attempts to eviscerate one of the most important provisions of the ESA with nearly no public debate and no Congressional consideration. If finalized, this parting shot at plant and animal conservation by the Bush administration could be a final nail in the coffin for polar bears, salmon, manatees and the thousands of other species listed under the ESA.

Go to the websites for Defenders of Wildlife www.defenders.org, the Center for Biological Diversity at www.biologicaldiversity.org or The Endangered Species Coalition at www.StopExtinction.org to send comments.

Friends of Blackwater has been speaking out against these proposed regulations on talk radio around the state. We will continue to remind the citizens how important these protections are to keep West Virginia's rare creatures from the brink of extinction.

Ginny is Heading for Court

NEW THREATS APPEARING EVERY DAY!

On September 25, 2008, Bush administration extremists at the U. S. Department of the Interior disregarded the opinion of top wildlife scientists and stripped “Ginny,” the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel, of all federal endangered species protection. Under federal law, it is now “open season” on this tiny nocturnal mammal, which lives in only eight high Appalachian mountain counties.

So, what difference does this make? The answer is – an incredible difference!

Days after the decision, a gas lease in prime flying squirrel habitat near Roaring Plains in the Monongahela National Forest was put up for sale. In Blackwater Canyon, a timber company asked the Fish and Wildlife Service to remove large areas of land from their proposed Habitat Conservation Plan -- because what happens to Ginny, and her nest trees, and her babies -- is no longer of legal concern!

Friends of Blackwater will soon be filing a lawsuit seeking to overturn the Fish and Wildlife decision. Lawyers from the Center for Biological

Diversity will lead the charge, making this the Center’s first endangered species litigation on the East Coast. This group has been successful in reversing the delisting of the wolf in Michigan and the Rocky Mountains, and very recently got the government to reverse their decision on polar bear protection! We know they can do the same for Ginny!

These new threats to Ginny and her family make it all the more important to move forward on the full public ownership of the Blackwater Canyon, where 3,000 wild and scenic acres remain in private ownership, and where Ginny’s very survival is at grave risk.

Here’s how you can help save Ginny’s home in the Blackwater Canyon -- today:

Phone, write, or fax the offices of United States Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-WV, and ask him to get federal funding to complete the Blackwater Canyon land purchase. Senator Byrd’s phone numbers are 202-224-3954, or 304-342-5855. His

CONTACT SENATOR BYRD!



Blackwater Champion US Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV)

fax number is 202-228-0002. His mailing address is: Senator Robert C Byrd, U.S. Court House, Virginia St. East, Charleston, WV 25301. You can also fill out the form on the back of this newsletter for FOB to deliver to the Senator, or you can send an e-mail directly to Senator Byrd’s office by going to www.saveblackwater.org.

Please act today to protect Ginny and her mountain home!

Saving Ginny’s Home Helps Save the Planet!

Ginny, the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel, likes to make her nest in large spruce and hardwood trees in the Blackwater Canyon. Now there’s new evidence that these big old trees are doing good for more than just Ginny and her babies!

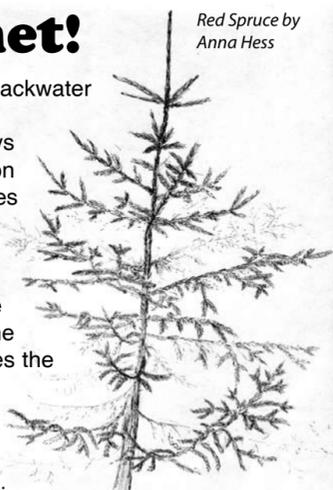
The *Canadian Press* of September 4, 2008, reports that a study by researchers at Simon Fraser University in B.C. says leaving old-growth forests standing may make more economic sense than cutting them down. The study says conservation wins out over logging when forests are valued for their role in capturing carbon from the atmosphere, and not just as sources of timber.

Add in more opportunities for recreation, the protection of endangered species, and the value of forest products such as mushrooms, and the report says it’s clear that standing trees are worth more than timber. Duncan Knowler, the associate professor behind the study, says the report is being conservative in its assessment of carbon prices, which are set to rise in coming years. As B.C. continues to participate in a cap-and-trade system with other western provinces and states, the province’s rich store of old-growth forests could be a significant revenue source. Knowler says the study also excludes the role forests play in purifying water and protecting fish habitat, which could make for a more robust argument in favor of conservation.

Reuters ran a similar story by Michael Perry from Sydney, Australia, on August 5, 2008, based on forestry studies done there. “Untouched natural forests store three times more carbon dioxide than previously estimated and 60 percent more

than plantation forests, said a new Australian study of “green carbon” and its role in climate change.” This study was done at Australian National University. The *Reuters* story continues, “Co-author of the report Brendan Mackey said protecting natural forests served two purposes: it maintained a large carbon sink and stopped the release of the forest’s stored carbon. Protecting the carbon in natural forests is preventing an additional emission of carbon from what we get from burning fossil fuel,” Mackey told *Reuters*.

So, when we work to protect the Blackwater Canyon and Ginny’s mountain home, we are helping to protect the entire planet. That is definitely worth doing!



Red Spruce by Anna Hess



Older growth forest tree bole formation by Paul C. Brown

Latest Threat to Monongahela National Forest: Drilling in Marcellus Shale!

What is Marcellus Shale? And Why is it Important?

The Marcellus Shale formation is a Devonian era formation that lies under much of the Appalachian Basin at depths of 6000-8000 feet with a thickness of 50-200 feet. It is speculated that the Marcellus Shale formation may contain as much 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Most of West Virginia is underlain by the Marcellus Shale. The production potential of the Marcellus Shale is so high that it has been said that gas speculators have taken to knocking on doors and offering unbelievable prices for mineral leases from private landowners and those who hold private mineral rights.

Now what does all this mean for the “Mon” and why is it important? Well recently there has been an increased interest in mineral rights held by the USA on the Monongahela. The most recent have been in areas that do not allow any surface occupancy. While at first glance this may seem to be a silly thing for a speculator to want or it may seem that there is a guarantee of protection, if you dig a little further you will find that in the case of Marcellus Shale and indeed other types of deep drilled wells you don’t need surface access to get to the natural gas. Newer technologies like horizontal drilling and hydrofracking (fracturing the shale to stimulate the release of the gas by pumping water with sand and chemicals) allow access to the gas with no surface access. However, no one yet knows for sure what hazards there might be to these procedures. Rest assured, we are watching and we will keep you informed.

FOB Protest Stops Lease of Public Minerals at Mt Porte Crayon/Roaring Plains

Friends of Blackwater Canyon and the Wilderness Society filed a letter of protest on September 10th with the Bureau of Land Management against the pending sale of a gas lease on six parcels located in the Roaring Plains section of the Monongahela National Forest. FOB also called the West Virginia delegation to complain about a lack of transparency when federal agencies prepare to lease gas in ecologically sensitive areas which are also the center of our outdoor recreation and tourism industries. The lease sale was withdrawn within a week!! However, gas leasing on the Mon continues and must be monitored.

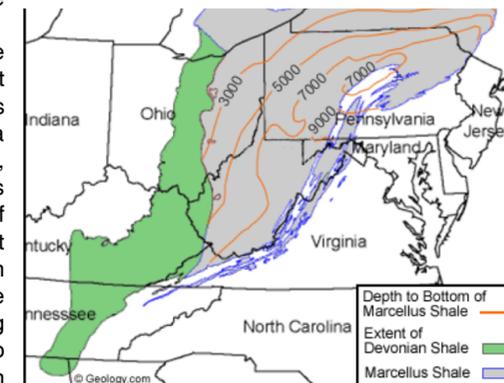
The tracts proposed for gas leasing are in the immediate area of Mount Porte Crayon and Thunderstruck Rock. The Nature Conservancy purchased 100 acres to form the Mount Porte Crayon Preserve at this site and also filed a protest. This area is considered to be one of the most unique and diverse ecological and biological areas in the East and was described by Rodney Bartgis of the Nature Conservancy as having, “a

remarkable diversity of habitats.” Habitat suitable for the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel, which is currently scheduled to be removed from the Endangered Species List with no regard for top scientific opinions, is found here. This area is also home to other threatened and endangered plant and animal species, including the snowshoe hare and cheat mountain salamander.

Roaring Plains has also been recognized by the US Forest Service as having unique properties that make it suitable for sustainable wilderness and has since been proposed for Wilderness designation in a bill before Congress. On all sides of Roaring Plains, there are many rocky outcrops and other areas affording spectacular and unparalleled views of the surrounding mountainous countryside. At least seven known high elevation wetlands (sphagnum bogs), the highest in the state, are present and are home to rare plants and animals such as the Bog Lemming, Bobcat and fisher. These bogs serve to regulate stream flow at the headwaters for both sides of the eastern continental divide.



A Marcellus Shale drilling project in Upshur Co. WV - Photo courtesy of WVSORO.org



Map showing depth of Marcellus shale formation.

Matching Campaign Against Illegal Logging a Success!

Our recent matching campaign to raise funds to stop illegal logging in Blackwater Canyon was a resounding success. Thanks to you, our supporters, we not only met but surpassed our goal of \$15,000.00. Put that together with our matching funds of \$15,000.00 and we raised over **THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS!!**

We could not have done it without the generosity of you our members or the donors that pledged the matching funds!! It is because of your support that we keep fighting to preserve and conserve Blackwater Canyon and the surrounding area!

And we are happy to report that to date logging in Blackwater Canyon has not resumed.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



This beautiful fellow was captured recently by Joyce’s daughter Jillian Friend as she hiked along the North Branch of the Potomac. (For more information about the North Branch see page 7).

Meet Joyce Dorsey



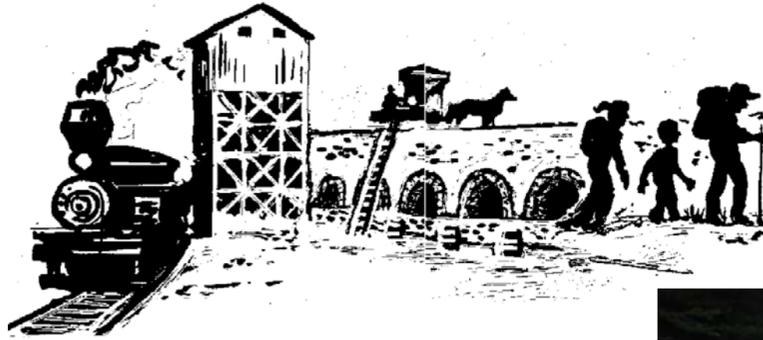
Joyce Dorsey

Joyce Dorsey joined the staff of Friends of Blackwater in February 2008 as a part-time administrative assistant managing the membership database. Joyce lives in Charleston with her husband, David, and sons, Lee and Chris. Her daughter Jillian Friend, resides in Oakland, MD with her husband.

Joyce is a graduate of Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston) with a degree in Secretarial Science. Early in her career she worked for the Secretary of State’s Office under A. James Manchin, after which she took some time out of the work force to raise her family.

Joyce and her family like to visit Blackwater every trip they make to Maryland to visit their daughter, often meeting for lunch at Blackwater to enjoy the beautiful view and share quality time together. The family also enjoys hiking, biking, and fishing.

NORTH FORK WATERSHED PROJECT



Clean Up the Potomac! Our National River!

The FOB North Fork Watershed Project is researching water pollution in the North Branch of the Potomac River from the headwaters at the Fairfax Stone to Gormania. Under a grant from the Marpat Foundation we are looking at impacts from acid mine drainage (AMD) on the West Virginia and Maryland sides. The North Fork of the Blackwater and the North Branch of the Potomac are joined underground by old mining tunnels. The tunnels are filled with polluted water that moves across watersheds and state lines below the surface of the earth. This pollution ends up in the North Branch. We expect to publish a report on this work at the end of 2008.

Below are pictures of this beautiful headwater section of our National River. The pictures were taken by volunteer Jillian Friend in Potomac State Forest along Lostland Run and Laurel Run in Garrett County Maryland traveling with her dog, Sadie. They show one water treatment system, called a limestone "doser" which improves water quality in the Potomac.

Thank you, Jillian!!



Small waterfall along a tributary of the North Branch - Potomac.



Tyler and Logan Channell dig more holes.



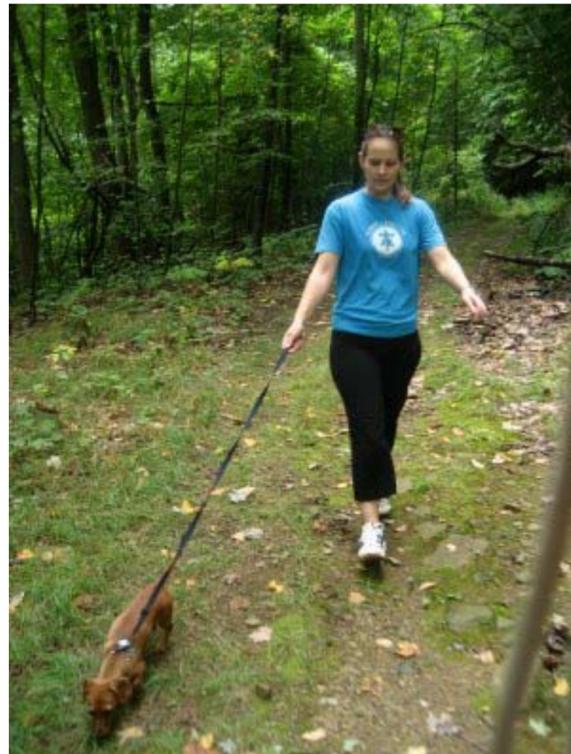
Above: Jana Pyle helps a child with planting a spruce tree.



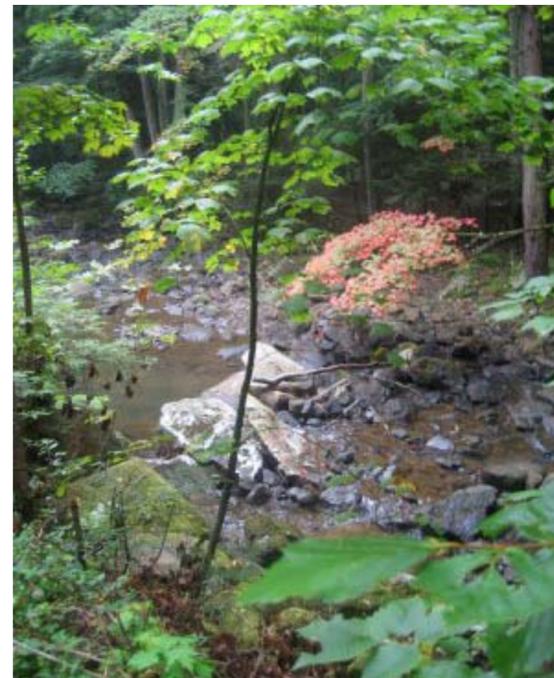
From Left: Andrew Meador, Destiny Meador, Vaia Meador, Tucker Welch and Sky Meador planted about 70 trees along the new trail.



Tucker Welch works hard at planting a tree.



Left: A doser to treat acid mine drainage along the North Branch. Above: Jillian and her pal, Sadie out for a hike.



Below: Fall color is beginning to emerge in the area of the North Branch of the Potomac.

Albert Highwall Work Nears Completion

Work on the Albert Highwall above the town of Douglas is nearly complete. All that remains is for the flushing mechanism to be installed. The re-engineered pond that treats acid mine drainage laced water from old underground mines has a new remediation method ... alkaline steel slag. This material reduces the acidity of this polluted water as it is piped from old mine tunnels, runs through the pond and downhill into Long Run. This treatment will continue downstream to improve the North Fork of the Blackwater and the main stem of the Blackwater River in the Canyon. This pond is flushed out once a day by a solar powered system. This project, the first of many, happened because Friends of Blackwater was able to bring together the Office of Surface mining, the DEP Abandoned Mine Lands project, and DEP staffers who oversee EPA funds which are administered by the state.



Left: Sign at the entrance to the Albert Highwall tells about the project.

Right: The new pond at the Albert Highwall waiting for the flushing mechanism to be installed.



The new rip rap channel that will direct water from the pond.





Fish and Wildlife says Wind Turbines Damaging, Wants NedPower Studies

On August 7, 2008, the West Virginia Field Office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service released a letter that raises questions about whether the NedPower industrial wind turbine project has complied with a Public Service Commission Order licensing the project, which is located next to Dolly Sods.

The letter points out that important bird and bat studies on the Allegheny Front have never been done. The letter contradicts statements made by the company in their PSC compliance filings claiming that the Fish and Wildlife Service had agreed with NedPower's conclusions of "no risk," and had agreed that the company had complied with all required studies.

In the letter, Fish and Wildlife Service says that the Allegheny Front, where the project is located, is a major migratory corridor for birds and bats; and that the agency is concerned about cumulative impacts on bird and bat populations. The Service states that better studies are needed because of limitations of past baseline studies, and that additional post construction studies must be aimed at reducing mortality. The agency wants studies to analyze under what weather conditions and at what time of year, and at which turbines, the most bird and bat kills occur. The agency also wants raptor studies redone, and additional mist netting for bats along the newly created turbine corridors.

Fish and Wildlife wants the studies to lead to changes in the project aimed at reducing mortalities. The Service suggests that feathering blades or shutting down turbines have proved to be effective in reducing bird and bat deaths. The letter states: "WVFO (West Virginia Field Office) continues to believe that the (NedPower) Mt Storm wind project poses a greater risk to wildlife than was recognized by pre-construction studies and risk assessments."

The Service predicts that the NedPower project will kill 215,259 to 308,250 bats during its operation. Citizens will soon go before the PSC to point out the possible fraud perpetrated by NedPower on the PSC in their compliance documents. They will request that the PSC enforce the recommendations of the Fish and Wildlife Service to avoid an environmental catastrophe at this site.



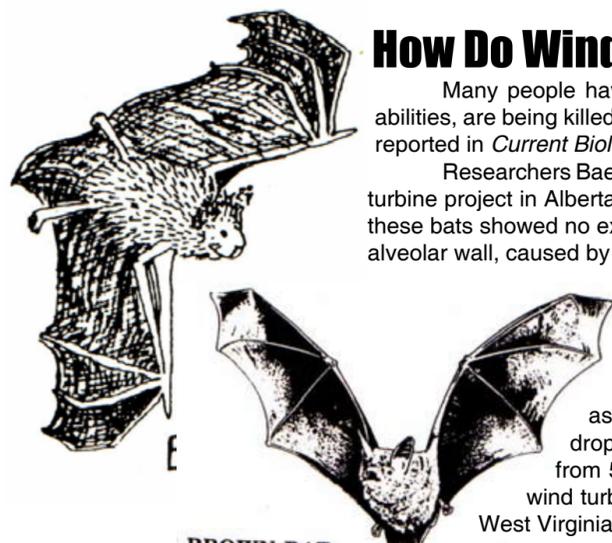
How Do Wind Turbines Kill Bats? Barotrauma!

Many people have been wondering how and why thousands of bats, with their amazing sonar-navigation abilities, are being killed by industrial wind turbine blades. A possible answer is provided in new Canadian research, reported in *Current Biology* magazine.

Researchers Baerwald, D'Amours, Klug, and Barclay at the University of Calgary examined dead bats at a wind turbine project in Alberta. Of the 75 bat corpses autopsied in the field, 92% had internal hemorrhaging, and 46% of these bats showed no external injuries. Further study in the lab showed lesions on the lungs and air bubbles on the alveolar wall, caused by the rupture of the lungs.

Researchers suggest that bats entering areas of low pressure around moving wind turbine blade tips may be suffering from barotraumas, where their lungs explode due to a pressure differential. Bats are susceptible to the sudden drop in pressure because their "large pliable lungs expand when exposed to a sudden drop in pressure causing tissue damage."

"The greatest pressure differential at wind turbines occurs in the blade tip vortices which, as with airplane wings, are shed downward from the tips of the moving blades. The pressure drop in the vortex increases with tip speed which in modern turbines turning at top speed varies from 55 to 80 m/s", said the researchers. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has suggested that wind turbines be shut down during peak migration periods for bats to avoid these deaths, but so far West Virginia regulators have not addressed this issue.



YELLOWTOP BLOOMING by J. Lawrence Smith

Weeks before various shades of yellow appear on trees in the fall, roadsides and fields will be bright with blooming goldenrod. Many persons consider the plant a weed causing those allergic to pollen much discomfort which isn't really quite true. Goldenrod, often called yellowtop, actually has benefits not the least of which is medicinal value.

Most persons assume there is only one species of goldenrod, but in West Virginia nearly thirty distinct varieties have been recorded. One of the most familiar is early goldenrod named for blooming as early as late May, but continuing to bloom well into November.

A number are specialized in their requirements and, while ranging over a large area, are found in certain habitat. The shale barren goldenrod grows only on certain Devonian shale that, in West Virginia, is found only a few places in eastern counties.

Even though not having special needs, Rand's goldenrod has been found in the state only in Lewis and Nicholas Counties. While found more widely to the north, the West Virginia locations seem to mark the southern limit of the range of the species.

Bog goldenrod is found in Canaan Valley and many damp places in the mountains where in blooms in August. At least three others, the hispid, downy and mountain species are found mostly in the mountains or eastern areas beyond the higher Alleghenies.

Goldenrod blooms at the same time as ragweed, a key cause of "hay fever," and is often blamed for allergic reactions. In reality, the pollen of goldenrod is too heavy to be blown any distance and flying insects are necessary for pollen transfer between plants.

The larva of the goldenrod gall fly feed on the plant and cause the formation of a knot-like structure or gall. Parasitic wasps seek out the galls and inject their eggs through a tube on their abdomen called an ovipositor. Upon hatching, the wasp larva devours the gall fly larva.

Goldenrod has long been known to have curative properties and, interestingly, the generic name *Solidago* means "to make whole." It has been used to treat inflammation of the mouth and throat. The plant continues to have a place in herbal medicine especially in the treatment of afflictions of the kidneys. An infusion stimulates kidney function as well as reducing inflammation.

Inventive Thomas Edison undertook a series of experiments with goldenrod and produced rubber. The tires on his Model T Ford were made from goldenrod rubber. Even though of good quality and durable, no interest was taken in the imitation rubber either by manufacturers or the government.

Late summer seems a time when the land is napping and there are few sounds other than the whine of insects in the fields. The gold yellowtop by the roadside is a sign that fall will soon splash the trees with rainbow hues.



NATURE'S WATER CONSERVATIONIST by J. Lawrence Smith

An unsung hero, a least figuratively, in the westward expansion of America was the beaver with the mammal eagerly sought for its lustrous fur. The beaver trade is most often associated with John Jacob Astor, Jedediah Smith and mountain men of the Rockies. Even before the exploration of the West, the trade in beaver hides played a vital role in the economy of colonial America.

During the Seventeenth Century, King Charles I deemed the use of beaver fur in the making of hats compulsory in England. Traders in the colonies could readily supply the demand due to the abundance of beavers almost everywhere. Letart, Mason County, was named for James LeTort who carried on trade at this site on the Ohio River with both Indian and white trappers in the 1740s.

Daniel Boone operated a trading post and store at Point Pleasant shortly before 1790. He later moved up the Kanawha to settle above Charleston where he lived for a few years. Here he met and taught Paddy Huddleston the skill of trapping beavers at Long Shoal near Kanawha Falls, Fayette County.

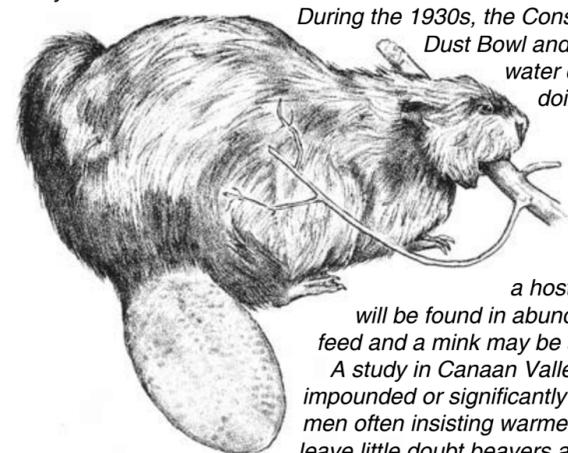
The beaver disappeared as America moved westward and it was thought extinct in West Virginia before 1900. They began appearing at a few places in the state early in the last century. About 1920 a colony was established on North River in Hampshire County, but unfortunately vanished in a few years.

During the 1930s, the Conservation Commission began a program of restocking beavers in the state. As a result of the Dust Bowl and widespread drought during this time, much effort on the federal and state level was given to water conservation. The beaver is skilled at water management and would be of great assistance by doing what came naturally.

Animals brought from Michigan and Wisconsin were released in Randolph, Pocahontas and Webster Counties in 1933 as a first step in bringing the beaver back to West Virginia. In a little more than a decade the number had increased to more than 2000 in a dozen mountain counties. They began to thrive in Canaan Valley where their dams and associated ponds now dot the landscape.

Beavers are key players in the ecology of wetlands with their ponds providing living space for a host of amphibians, fishes, birds and mammals. Here the aquatic stage of the red-spotted newt will be found in abundance drifting in still water. Mallards and black ducks nest while beautiful wood ducks rest and feed and a mink may be seen slinking along in search of a meal.

A study in Canaan Valley in 1995 by wildlife personnel revealed nearly 20 percent of free-flowing streams had been impounded or significantly altered by beaver activity. Feelings are mixed about the benefit of their presence with fishermen often insisting warmer water is detrimental to trout production. Regardless of opinion, many lodges in the ponds leave little doubt beavers are right at home and are here to stay.



The Civilian Conservation Corps In the Blackwater Region 1933-1942

In our last newsletter, we did a center feature about The Civilian Conservation Corps in Blackwater. We never dreamed of the overwhelming response we would get from our members with stories and pictures to share. Since the response was so outstanding we wanted to share some of those with you.

I read with interest your article on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the June issue of Friends of Blackwater. My father, Lee Markley, was a civilian employee of the CCC from July 1933 until Sept 1935. He was also a veteran of WWI and served with the AEF in France.

During his tenure with the CCC he was stationed at Camp Nicholas in Cowan, WV, Camp P-60 in Oak Hill, WV, and Camp SES-1 in Reedy, WV. I have included a copy of a photograph of the members of Camp P-60.

I have no firsthand knowledge of his duties but family lore and available photographs would indicate that he was involved in building lime kilns. I think the lime was used to treat the soil on the farm land in the local area. Also, included are copies of photographs showing the CCC in the process of constructing a typical lime kiln. My father is shown in fedora and high top boots in both photos.

I have also heard through family members that he may have been involved in the CCC's attempt to eradicate the invasive Japanese Barberry, but am unable to confirm this.

If any of your readers have information relating to the activities of the CCC at any of the aforementioned camps, I would appreciate hearing from them. Unfortunately my father died when I was 15 and I had little opportunity to talk with him about his time in the CCC or his service in WWI.

Robert Markley



This letter is written in regard to your request for information on relatives in the CCC. My father, Bert Farmer, who was born in Eggleston, VA in 1921 and still resides there was a member of the CCC from Sept 1938 to 1940.

He enthusiastically recalls many of his work experiences and training during this struggling time for our nation and for the families. His efforts, like so many of the CCC boys, not only aided our country but also offered much needed support for their families.

Upon receiving his paycheck, my father would keep \$5 for himself and send \$25 home to his mother for her to use for family support. Of the amount his mother received, she used half of it and saved half. My father said he did not save any of his \$5. When my father returned from CCC to go to work and to be married before being drafted into WWII, his mother had saved enough for him to purchase a vehicle. He said he drove the vehicle back from the dealership without ever having driven a vehicle before that day.

When in CCC, my father worked mainly on building roads and bridges in Bluefield, Baston, and Hollybrook, VA. He also traveled to Tennessee to assist in the fighting of fires. In the flood of 1940, he was able to travel closer to home as he had to assist in cleanup for the flood in Narrows. He remembers being so close to home, but unable to go home and visit with his family.

My father also remembers working hard during the day and taking classes at night. He said he was able to take typing and telephone repair and worked on his high school GED. He also remembers having to follow a regiment of rising with the bugle, saluting the flag, and following orders which helped prepare him the WWII upon being drafted.

The CCC provided the military with semi-trained recruits. My father said that what had been picks and shovels a few years earlier became guns and grenades. The boys that had come to the aid of their country through the planting of trees, fighting of fires, and building of bridges and roads, were now coming to the aid of their country through military combat.

During WWII, my father fought on the front lines and was later captured by the Germans. He was granted release when the Russians liberated the POW's in 1945 near the end of the war. He then returned home. His young adult life was behind him with memories of a struggling family and a struggling nation trying to regain what had been lost. These memories have influenced him and guided him through his long life.

When pondering the life of these young men, it does seem that the trite old saying, "What doesn't kill you will make you stronger" applies to the generation of the CCC and WWII veterans.

Barbara Mitchell

In Memory and Honor.....

BILLIE ALTEMUS

Rosella Majerczak recently donated in memory of Billie Altemus. Rosella tells us that Billie directed the Oglebay Nature Camp and Terra Alta Camp for over 50 years. While in Terra Alta campers would take a day to visit Blackwater which was a highlight of the trip. They would also hike on the Canyon Trail and visit Dolly Sods.

We contacted Billie's son and asked him to write something about his mom. This is what he shared with us.

My Mom (Billie Altemus) had been involved with Oglebay Park all of her life. She grew up in Wheeling, WV and benefited from Oglebay Park and all it had to offer. She became involved with Oglebay Institute's Nature Program when A.B. Brooks was the Nature Center Director. This was the beginning of many years of involvement with the nature education program at Oglebay Institute. There was a hiatus from Oglebay Institute as a result of her having six kids in six years! But once she raised us to "adulthood" and moved from Battle Creek to Berea, Ohio she got involved with Oglebay Institute again. In 1976 Bob Gingerich (Oglebay Institute's Nature Center Director) asked her to direct both Junior Nature Camp (<http://juniornaturecamp.org/>) and Terra Alta Mountain Nature Camp (<http://www.mountainnaturecamp.org/>). She directed Mountain Nature Camp for 28 years and was 87 when she stopped!

In addition to directing the Mountain Nature Camp at Terra Alta, Billie Altemus also ran many of the 'mini camps' and weekend nature workshops that were based at the camp in Terra Alta; a week long

High School Ecology Camp, a week long Backpacking Camp, and weekend workshops on mushrooms, geology, botany, herpetology, and ornithology. She would spend much of the summer in Terra Alta overseeing these programs.

As director Billie was fully involved with all aspects of the programs at the Terra Alta Camp, staffing the camps and workshops, running the kitchen (cooking at times), serving as program director, recruiting campers, and taking care of the accounts. Both Junior Nature Camp and Terra Alta's Camps and workshops were yearlong labors of love for her. And she was good at doing her job. However, she was never one to take the credit for the success of the nature programs she directed, but rather liked to work in the background and heap praise on those that helped her, whether it was the program staff, kitchen staff or camp counselors. She knew that these were the folks that made the camp work and she was perfectly



Billie Altemus at rear left with son Jon to her immediate right.

happy working to provide the stable platform for them to do their jobs.

There is no doubt that of Billie's many achievements in life, and there were so many, it was the work she did for Oglebay Institute that gave her the most joy and satisfaction. Her contributions over the years to both the Terra Alta camps and Junior Nature Camp cannot be overstated and her presence at them will be felt for many years to come.



Elsie George

the past few years in Springfield, Virginia. Elsie George succumbed to the ravages of Alzheimer's Disease.

Elsie was memorialized by her son Kevin George. Kevin provided the above obituary to us for print and told us additionally that Elsie purchased her home at Timberline in the 1970s. She moved there upon her retirement in 1997 and was able to enjoy the home for about two and a half years before Alzheimers necessitated her move back to Virginia.

ELSIE GEORGE

Elsie Schuyler Lyon Moore George, a scholar who helped shape the American History Advanced Placement exams for high school seniors, died on January 30, 2008 in Springfield, Virginia.

She was born on April 28, 1921 in Chicago. A journalism and history major at Northwestern University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, she met and married Harley Huey Moore, while in North Carolina. She flew with her two young children to join her husband, a pilot with CATC Airline in Shanghai, China. Elsie & Harley toured the farthest reaches of China and in some outposts, Elsie was the "first white woman" the natives had ever seen. After her husband's plane crashed and he died, she taught history at Kamenhameha School on Oahu, Hawaii. After her marriage to navy Lieutenant Otto Lindeman George, the family moved to suburban Washington, DC and lived in Falls Church, Fairfax, McLean, and Leesburg.

Elsie taught at many area schools, among them Langley High School, Edison High School, and South Lakes High School and was the academic coach at Edison and South Lakes for

the "It's Academic" TV program. She taught at the American School near Tokyo Japan in 1964-1966. She forged a relationship with the Educational Testing Service, the SAT provider, which resulted in her being appointed to be a reader and eventually a table leader for the American History Advanced Placement exams. This exam allows high school students to receive college credit for advanced courses taken in high school. Ms. George helped to establish new guidelines for these tests, and trained teachers on the procedures for their students to master these advanced exams.

After completing her PhD from American University in 1972 with a dissertation on the women appointees of the Truman and FDR administrations, Ms. George continued her teaching career in Las Vegas, NV. She instituted a new curriculum at the college preparatory Meadows School and was appointed to teach history and women's studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, pioneering such new courses as Women in Literature and Women in Politics.

Elsie was one of the first property owners in Timberline, Canaan Valley in WV. She lived for

Your Blackwater Memories.....

Here are the two pictures that have been enjoyed by us over the years. They were taken July 4, 1960 at Pendleton Point. Our daughter, Vivian, was a little more than two years of age. I was pastor of the Franklin Methodist Church at the time.

The Blackwater area has been my favorite place since I first saw it on July 4, 1952. I was a student at WV Wesleyan College. The college rented a bus and took picnic lunches for us. We spent the day there. I would have no idea how many trips we made over the years to Blackwater.

While at Franklin, on a hot summer day, we would take a picnic lunch and go up there and spend the day. Vivian loved it. She loved having her picture taken, but she would have to be just right and then tell me when to take it.

She has been in Florida since 1982, but when she comes home for a visit we always find time for a trip to Blackwater regardless where we are living.

She is a WVU graduate and is currently Director of Admissions of a Rehabilitation & Convalescent Home in Fort Lauderdale. Next month she will be a grandmother. She is quick to tell me what that will make me!

Sincerely,
Alvin L. Guyon - Near Keyser, WV

Left & Below:
Vivian Guyan on a
visit to Pendleton
Point on July 4, 1960

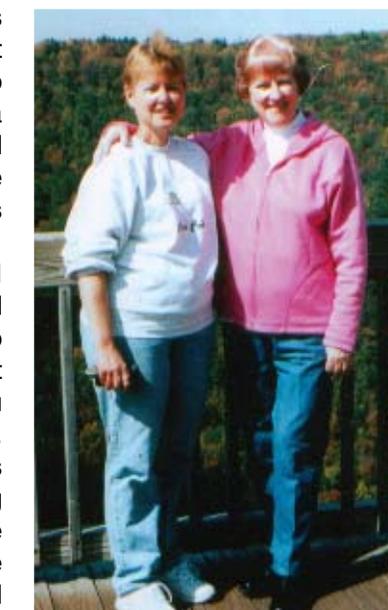


When I grew up in the 1940's and early 1950's there wasn't much money so a trip to Blackwater Falls was always a special treat. When friends and relatives came to visit through the years and from many states this was our favorite destination.

It was years later before I discovered Lindy Point and it is still our favorite place to hike. What a fantastic view that actually takes your breath as you come off the trail that first time. One of my older photographs has four generations enjoying a picnic in the park. Now we are privileged to take two more generations to enjoy the beautiful scenery.

When our eleven year old grandson lost his twin brother in 2006 due to an accident we all tried to find things that would interest him to keep him busy. I wasn't sure what he'd think at his first sight of Lindy Point but when he said "cool" and "awesome" that sounded "cool" to me. Now we are taking our six year old great-grandson and he is quite a trooper on the many steps to the falls.

No matter where we have been fortunate enough to travel to and enjoy this beautiful country it was always so good to come home to my mountains. This is truly "Almost Heaven WV". I can't imagine living anywhere else.



Above: Mary Kyle and a friend visit Lindy Point

Mary Kyle - Bayard, WV

Taking the Canyon Campaign to Congress!!!!

Taking the Canyon Campaign to Congress is part of our ongoing quest to protect the Blackwater Canyon. Please take a minute to fill out the form below and add your personal comments. Then just mail it back to us at: Friends of Blackwater, 501 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, WV 25311 and we will deliver them to WV's Senator Robert C. Byrd.

Dear Senator Byrd,

Because of your principled stands and your demonstrated wisdom and effectiveness in working for the good of West Virginia and the Nation, we ask for your help today to protect the Blackwater Canyon, West Virginia's "natural treasure" and Scenic Crown Jewel!

We ask you to please:

- Help secure funding for the public purchase of the 2,700 acres in the heart of the Canyon; and
- Demand that our Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation give the Blackwater Canyon special protection -- for its role as an ark of rare species (including Ginny the WV northern flying squirrel) and historic resources, for its Wild and Scenic River, and for its public hiking/biking Canyon Trail.



Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____