

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
KANAWHA STATE FOREST FOUNDATION

THE FOREST FRIEND

WINTER 2022 EDITION



After a hiatus of a couple of years, *The Forest Friend* quarterly newsletter makes its return with this Winter 2022 issue. If you have articles, information, or other items you would like included in future newsletters, please contact the newsletter editor at info@ksff.org.

The Kanawha State Forest Foundation board reserves the right to accept or reject any submissions. The deadline for submissions for the Spring issue is April 10, 2022.

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KSF Foundation
7500 Kanawha State Forest Drive
Charleston, WV 25314



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Did you miss the Foundation newsletter? I sure did.

John L. Hughes, Foundation Chair

It has been since the fall of 2018 that the Kanawha State Forest Foundation has not produced a newsletter. Well... we are back! The newsletter will be sent by email every quarter as well as posted to our website and Facebook page.

Many projects have been completed at the forest since we last reported to the Foundation membership: an ADA playground has been installed at the Spotted Salamander Trail (which has also been refurbished), a bat gate was installed at the bat cave off the firing range road (follow the new Kevin Dials Bat Trail), a kiosk that describes the area of old growth in the forest has been installed at the Four Mile parking area at the top of the forest, all 60+ miles of trails have been blazed, rotten sign posts have been replaced, and a water bottle filling station donated by WV American Water has been installed at the restrooms next to the new forest offices.

Current projects in development are to extend the two ends of Middle Ridge Trail, partnering with the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey to provide a kiosk on geological features of the forest and the history of coal mining in the forest, installation of commemorative bricks (purchased through the "That's My Brick" fundraising campaign) to a new ADA sidewalk at the forest office and to develop a museum honoring the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps who made the park what it is today. Through these improvements, along with several smaller projects, the Foundation has provided over \$126,000 to the forest. How was this accomplished? It was the hard work from board members volunteering their time to acquire grants as well as donations and membership dues.

In addition to the Foundation contribution, the WV Department of Environmental Protection, in collaboration with the WV Division of Natural Resources (DNR), is in the process of restoring the natural flow to Davis Creek. In the campground, the DNR will be upgrading the electrical supply and renovating the bathhouse. In addition to these projects, the new office at the old swimming pool building has been renovated and now includes a great gift shop.

As you can tell from the above improvements, the Foundation is very involved in ensuring that everyone who visits the park has an exceptional experience, but we still have work to do. I would like to extend an invitation to all Foundation members to please share any ideas and/or concerns with the board. You can contact me at jlhughesjr@suddenlink.net. Your input is important to us, and we will do our best to address all ideas and concerns. Due to Covid we have limited our board meetings to board members only.

However, once the board feels it is safe, we will be reopening our meetings to all Foundation members. An announcement will be forthcoming. We do meet every other month on the second Monday (Feb., Apr., etc).

I am requesting help with our website and grant writing. Currently we do not have a webmaster. If you can help, please contact me. The Foundation thanks each and every one of you for supporting Kanawha State Forest.



Foundation members and other volunteers begin the difficult task of moving angle iron from Middle Ridge Road to the site of the bat gate. D. Porter photo.



Installed bat gate. D. Porter photo



**Davis Creek Stream Restoration Project
Update. Mid December 2021
By Dale Porter**

The Fall and early Winter have seen a major and lasting impact on Kanawha State Forest (KSF) including the removal of the most prominent manmade structure in the park. Those who have visited Kanawha State Forest this Fall could not have missed the activity along Davis Creek from the North entrance of the forest. The Davis Creek stream restoration project has been in the planning for a while and the start (mid September) was later than initially anticipated, but is well underway as of mid-December and should be finished by Spring. Doing the project in the Fall and Winter means there will be a full growing season to begin regeneration from the unavoidable damage this type of restoration inflicts. The project was designed by Decota Consulting Company, Inc. of Cross Lanes, WV and the work is being performed by Appalachian Stream Restoration and Reclamation Specialists of Danville, WV.

When the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Protection came to the Foundation requesting support for the project, there was of course some initial concern about the major physical and historical impact the removal of the dam would have on the forest. The dam was a prominent artifact of the Civilian Conservation Corp's (CCC) work in the Forest and the pond a fixture since the 30's.

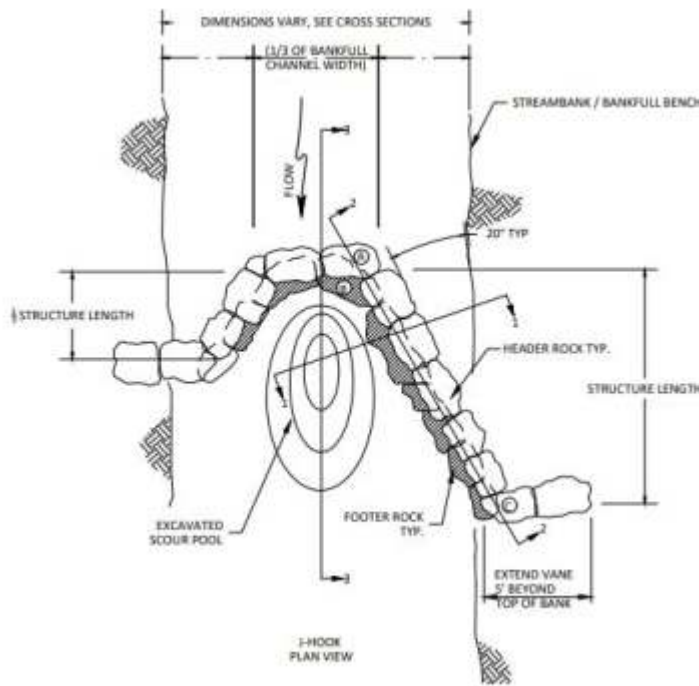
But further consideration made the decision for the Foundation to support the project an easy one. The dam and pond were initially built by the CCC as a swimming pool but only served this function for a short period. Since then, its primary purpose was as a fishing area. The pond had silted in since its last dredging to the point where it had become a marsh. The Division of Parks had no money to dredge the pond again and the expense of cleaning in the future would just increase. The Department of Environmental Protection had designated stream restoration funding that would finance the removal of the dam, restoration of the pond area to its natural flow, improve the fish passage between the upstream and downstream segments and also improve the fish habitat above the former pond area. The pond itself, was a deterrent to the fish habitat below the dam, as it raised the temperature of the water.

The restoration project begins a little downstream of the former dam and extends to the bridge at the Forest office parking lot. The majority of the work involves the removal of the dam, which was ground away with an excavator, and restoration of the stream in the former pool area. However, extensive work is also being done in the stream above and below the former pond area. The project involves installing rock and log structures in the stream to create pools and other fish habitat. These structures are designed to create scouring pools that will be self-maintaining.

The project should provide fishing possibilities along a mile or more of Davis Creek, whereas previously angling was concentrated in the pond area. As of this writing, the former handicapped fishing pier at the pond has been removed, but a new handicapped accessible structure will be built near the same area. An informational kiosk will be placed in the area of the former dam that will explain the CCC's work in the park. Other kiosks that address the stream restoration may also be placed near the stream.

Mid January Annotation To Above Article

A high water event occurred between December 31, 2021 and January 3, 2022 that resulted in significant erosion in the former pond area that was further exacerbated by snow and rain the following week. Tons of material was washed downstream from the former pond area. This has required material being excavated from along Rattlesnake Run to replace the lost



Construction Drawing of a J Hook Structure.

The Foundation had hoped that the project could include renovation of the Davis Creek trail in the area of the project, but restrictions on how the funds can be utilized meant that trail work could only be done where the restoration directly impacted the trail.

The flat areas in the former pond will be planted with a variety of native species to restore the ecology of the area and provide shade for the stream. It will be interesting to watch the transformation of this area as the native plants take hold and grow over the years. The next time you are in the forest, take a good look at the project and check back over succeeding months to see how well the structures have blended back to a natural state.



Pond Area - December 2021



Pond Area - December 2021



Pond Area - January 2022



Pond Area - January 2022

Slackpacking the Mary Ingles Trail in Kanawha State Forest

(reprinted from the WVSTA Whoop-n-Holler newsletter August 2021, Vol. 49, no. 3)

By Jeannie Ammirato

Editor's note: Slackpacking hikes of various durations are becoming very popular. On May 21-22 this year, five women slackpacked the KSF portion of the MIT. I think their adventure might inspire other hikers to consider similar hikes, that is, daypacking between trailheads and previously established campsites.

Thanks Jeannie. You can watch a video of their MIT adventure at this link: [Relive your hike](#)

Our backpacking group chose a fun and memorable adventure for our first outing of 2021: We would explore every mile of the local Mary Draper Ingles Trail (MDIT) in our favorite playground, Kanawha State Forest, breaking our hiking into two days with tent camping at the Forest campground.

We began at the trailhead at Trace Fork; while there was barely space for only 2 vehicles, we had the advantage of one of the husbands shuttling us. This section was new to three out of five of us, and we found it happily shaded at 10:00 am, as well as mostly clear with easily crossable streams.

But we eventually realized that on the last stream crossing, we'd taken a right instead of a left. Thus, we cut off a small section of this usually 2.4-mile part of the MDIT. No worries—we connected after about half a mile.

We reached the top, Boundary Ridge Road, which piggybacks the MDIT, and were ready for more familiar trails. We ate lunch at mile 4.5 as soon as we'd turned onto

Hemlock Trail. Hemlock—to Beech Glen—to Wildcat Trails were very familiar to us, but still fun because we were walking in the opposite direction from our usual hikes. And we all five agreed that up or down, powdery snow or dappled summer sunlight, Beech Glen is about the prettiest trail in KSF!

Once we got to the bottom of Wildcat, we walked north on the paved forest road before catching the mostly flat Davis Creek Trail back to the Nature Center where we'd parked.

Day one ended with our tents, a campfire in the stone fire ring, and dinner around our picnic table at the peaceful Shrewsbury Group Campsite. This campsite was a great bargain at \$53 a night, including firewood and a restroom; showers are available down the road at the main campground. Flat ground with soft grass and no roots or rocks made for a comfortable place to spend the night. We were serenaded to sleep by the

call of the whippoorwill from the tall trees surrounding us.

Day 2 of our adventure along the MDIT began with a quick pace along the creek as we headed up CCC Snipe Trail—beautifully shaded with the flowing creek

sounds to our left. As we started up Mossy Rock Trail, we had to be a bit careful of roots and rocks heading up the hill, where we would cross Middle Ridge Road and start down Ballard Trail. The only unpleasant part of the day was the ear-splitting retort of the guns from the shooting range. We crossed the parking lot to get on the Wall Fork Trail, where almost immediately we



Dee, Linda, Mary, Jeannie & Cindy



met a mountain biking acquaintance and his two friends who warned us about ticks.

Wall Fork Trail was fun and beautiful, with a lot of tree coverage and green everywhere. We had some serious climbing to get through before we came to a fork in the trail and had to decide to veer right (shorter, but quite grassy) or stay on the true Mary Ingles Trail, which was about 7/10 of a mile longer. The trail was obviously popular with bikers, hikers, and the local fauna, we discovered, when we came to an enormous rat snake blocking our path. We courteously veered around him, snapping some photos as we went, while he twisted his slender black head to gaze at us with a gleaming round eye. Two or three times we came to downed trees that had been nicely cleared, so we crossed with minimal clambering. We noticed several old-growth Northern Red Oaks that seemed massive compared to all the other trees. We could only imagine the stories of time they could tell!

At the top of the trail, we were suddenly in the bright light on the East Boundary Trail, which we'd hike for a mile and a half. Not only rolling but also rocky and somewhat hard on our feet, this trail offered the counter benefit of beautifully blooming blackberry bushes. The KSF committee had also posted really nice interpretative signs of the nature to see along the way. The 1.5 miles went by fast.

At the top of the last climb, we came to the Middle Ridge Road where we'd turn right. We stopped a couple minutes to look back at the hill we'd just come down and wondered how mountain bikers navigated that steep climb on loose gravel. As we continued, we were suddenly surprised by the appearance of our buddy Dale Porter, who had hiked up Mossy to meet us. Together we hiked back down the trails we had climbed only a few short hours ago—and back to the parking lot, where we quickly grabbed icy water from our coolers and scrambled to get those heavy boots off!

A fabulous adventure with over nine miles the first day and 12 miles the second day. We are amazingly blessed to have such cool trails to explore. To have such a wealth of nature fun so close to home, and to have many volunteers and the KSF staff to maintain every section of it so well. To have friends with whom to share such an adventure and to have the good health to be

able to experience it. We will be back on the Mary Draper Ingles Trail soon and, meanwhile, tell all our friends!

Watch Out For The Mourning Cloak in the Early Spring

By Dale Porter

The Mourning Cloak (*nymphalis antiopa*) is one of my favorite butterflies found in Kanawha State Forest (KSF). There are features of this butterfly that distinguish it from most other Forest butterflies.

The Mourning Cloak is medium sized with a wingspan of 2 to 2 3/8 inches. The primary dark coloration can make it easy to overlook. It is not

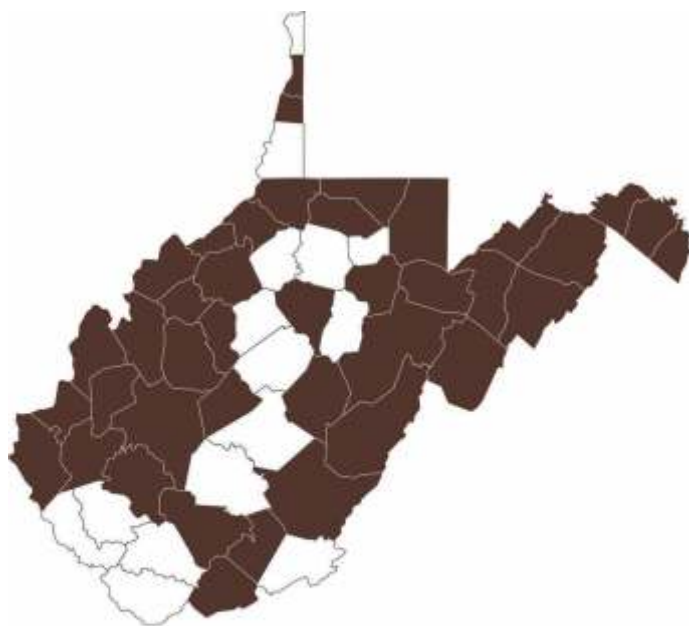


Photo by: Dale Porter

distinctive from a distance in its forest environment. However, an opportunity for a close observation reveals a creature whose upper wings are a beautiful deep chocolate brown with an 1/8th-tan to yellowish border and a series of blue to purple dots. You may wonder why a butterfly article in a winter newsletter? Well the Mourning Cloak is the rare butterfly that you might see in the forest in January or February, but definitely in March. If there is a warm spell in

always in the early Spring. The ones I have seen in KSF, have all been in the woods, rather than open areas. Mourning Cloaks are not as common in the forest as many other butterfly species, but their range is widespread covering northern North America and Eurasia. The WV Butterfly Atlas shows records in 37 of the 55 counties, but likely the species occurs in all counties

Doug Wood, and Susan Olcott assisted with this article.



**Documented in
dark counties**

January or February, you might see one flying around the forest. This is because it is one of the very few butterflies that overwinter in the adult stage while most butterflies overwinter in the egg, larva, or chrysalis stage. The Mourning Cloak hibernates in leaves and crevices in trees during the winter, but a warm spell may bring it out. This is why it is often the first butterfly seen in the Spring.

While most butterflies live a few days to a few weeks in the adult stage, the Mourning Cloak's adult stage lasts 9 to 10 months. For a couple of months in the Summertime, they enter a stage called aestivation, a dormant state like hibernation, except during the hot months.

Though I see them in the forest, they are not plentiful like many other butterflies are. I have never seen more than one at a time and almost

Annotation About The Name: Mourning Cloak By Doug Wood

This butterfly's name follows from an old funerary practice when a husband passed away and his wife would don a dark cloak, during a designated period of mourning whenever she went out in public, to symbolically represent her grief. Even though the widow's cloak was dark, it was often decorated around the edges with dark lace. The namer of this butterfly obviously saw the similarity between the mostly dark wings of the insect, with just a touch of decoration, and the dark, but subtly decorated mourning cloak of the widow.



Doug Wood explains the theory and practice of stream restoration during the annual Shirley Schweizer Memorial Winter Walk, January 15, 2022.

My Experience with the Master Naturalist Program

By Laura Bobbera

Editor's Note: The Kanawha Valley Master Naturalists will be starting their 2022 classes in Kanawha State Forest on Friday March 11, 2022 with their Orientation class. To register, please contact info@mnofwv.org and include KVMN in the subject of your email.

I don't remember how I heard about the Master Naturalist program, but I knew it existed. When Covid helped me decide to retire, I began looking into the program. First, I looked online. I learned the Master Naturalist Program was a national program and that there were several chapters in WV. The schedule of classes for the Kanawha chapter listed on the site really impressed me due to the variety of subjects- insects, birds, reptiles, geology, habitat, mammals, etc. I learned that there were 62 hours of classes, some elective and some required, as well as required volunteer hours that could be completed over four years to become a certified Master Naturalist. Having paid college tuition for two children, the \$100 fee for all the hours was a real bargain. So, I signed up.

Due to Covid, the first classes I attended were online via ZOOM. I remember asking at the time if there were any tests. There aren't. Classes later changed to in-person, usually at Kanawha State Forest, Shelter 4. Classes are generally held on Friday night with fieldwork, when required, on Saturday morning. Fieldwork may include finding mussels in a river, searching for snakes or salamanders in the park, locating fossils and discussing rock formations, finding and identifying mushrooms, etc. Since I live a bit away from Kanawha State Forest, I take advantage of the park campground when we have a Friday/Saturday class.

With regards to the volunteer work, I was a little concerned about how to find

it. There was no need to worry. Multiple opportunities are emailed to participants such as helping remove invasive species at various locations, clearing paths at a park, helping with nature walks, or looking for a certain butterfly. Plus, I can create or find volunteer work in my area which has turned out to be a lot easier than I thought.

The participants in my group are an eclectic group of individuals ranging from college students to retired folks like me, all united by an interest in our natural world. I have been highly impressed with the quality of the instructors- many college professors, others working in the field they teach. In all, it's a great group of down-to-earth people.

What has amazed me the most, though, is how my eyes have been opened to my surroundings. I see things now I would have walked by without even noting. My appreciation of nature and all its complexities has so vastly expanded. The wonder I feel when I see something as common as a box turtle that we studied is overwhelming. I'd researching online more and spending additional time outside all because of the Master Naturalist Program. It's such a wonderful program, so worthwhile. For me, it's been a life changer.



Barred Owl near campground. Photo by Dale Porter

The Hiker's Corner: Observations From The Trail

By Rick Ferris

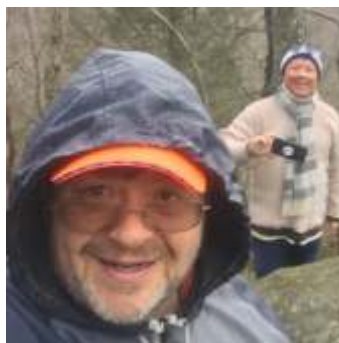
Author's Note: Welcome to the Hiker's Corner. I have met hikers that have been hiking Kanawha State Forest (KSF) for nearly 80 years and I have hiked with lifelong Mountaineers who have hiked in KSF less than 10 times. Many who love KSF will fall somewhere in between. Though I have not kept exact count I can conservatively state that I have more than 1200 hikes in Kanawha State Forest. We have lived near the forest for almost nine years now and I hike at least three times a week. Factoring in vacations and professional travel with an average of 3.5 times hiking per week over the last 8.5 years comes to 1428 hikes. All of those hikes gave me the idea for the Hiker's Corner where we will be documenting and suggesting hikes, how too information, parking and trail heads, and other stuff that hikers and other users of the forest, and readers of the Forest Friend, might be interested in. Thank you for reading and we welcome your feedback and suggestions at rickferriswv@gmail.com.

Sometimes the Worst Days Are the Best Days

It was a mid-January day with a winter storm threatening central and southern WV. Winter storms are typical weather for the season. Venturing out in the storm to climb about the hills and hollows of the forest is not. Doing so let us have the park almost to ourselves and that is one of the great advantages of hiking on bad weather days. Often, I will hike by myself but today my buddy, Jim, wanted to join in the fun. I went out to start the car and it was spitting ice. I figured he would cancel but when I confirmed, he was upbeat and determined so I went along with the plan and met him at Polly Hollow.

Polly Hollow to Beech Glen to Wildcat Ridge, first showed to me by former Park Ranger Kevin Dials, is one of the best hikes in the park if you ask me. Polly Hollow follows a wide forest service road that is easy to maneuver up to the Beech Glen trail which climbs the side of the hill

using the hollow and incorporating some



switchbacks. You will pass some very interesting rock formations along the way to Wildcat Ridge, which you can take back down to Dunlop Hollow and back out to the head of Polly Hollow where you began.

Walking up Polly Hollow has many stream crossings and today the streams were running high, so we took the higher route following Polly Trail. Our intention was to pass over the stream crossings higher up and make our way around to Beech Glen trail. As it turned out, the route we chose was shorter by following Polly Trail all the way up to Wildcat Ridge. Was it the sleet that shortened our trip? Who knows; we had a blast, proving that sometimes the worst days turn out to be the best days.

Jim swears we have done this hike before and there were times he had me believing him. We walked in front of a magnificent rock face that seemed to go on and on that I absolutely do not remember seeing before. I am aware that there are some nice rock formations on Beech Glen, and I thought that is where we had hiked in the past. I guess we will just have to spend some more time over in that area until we know it enough to recognize where we are at.

If you are interested in doing either of these hikes, Polly Hollow is on your right after the Archery Range but there is a nice parking area across the road



on your left as you are headed into the forest. If you get to Dunlop Hollow you have gone just a little too far. I hike two to three miles per hour and Beech Glen takes me a couple of hours, while the Polly Trail took us about 90 minutes. Make sure to wear sturdy shoes and bring some water. Be prepared for a strenuous climb up to the ridge top and then another back

down. This hike is not the easiest but if you are up for it, you should really enjoy it. Let us know what you think. Thank you for reading the Hiker's Corner.

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Due to COVID, we have restricted board meeting to board members only. We will review this restriction on a meeting by meeting basis. If you have something you wish to bring to the board's attention, please contact the chair, John Hughes at: jlhughesjr@suddenlink.net.

The meetings are conducted by agenda. If you desire to have something included in the agenda, please contact the Foundation at info@ksff.org at least seven days prior to the meeting. Please include your contact information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Osbra Eye Spring Nature Walks

Saturday, April 23, 2022

The Kanawha State Forest Foundation will offer a variety of interpretative hikes to learn about wildflowers, birds, amphibians, edible plants and mushrooms, to name a few.

Registration at 8:30 AM
Walks will begin at 9:00 AM

The Forest Friend
Edited by Rebecca S. Linger
Layout by Dale A. Porter

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSION

When submitting articles for the newsletter, please submit photos as separate files. Do not embed them in the article. It makes it very difficult or impossible to place in the newsletter format.

The Foundation reserves the right to accept or reject any article submissions.



Jeannie, Vince and Bill enjoy outings in the forest.



The former pond in September just prior to it being drained. Dale Porter photo.