



# THE FOREST FRIEND

FALL 2023 EDITION



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*There is something infinitely  
healing in the repeated refrains of  
nature -assurance that dawn comes  
after night, and spring after the  
winter.*

*Rachel Carson*

*We can never have enough nature.*  
*Henry David Thoreau*

*I firmly believe that nature brings  
solace in all trouble.*

*Anne Frank*

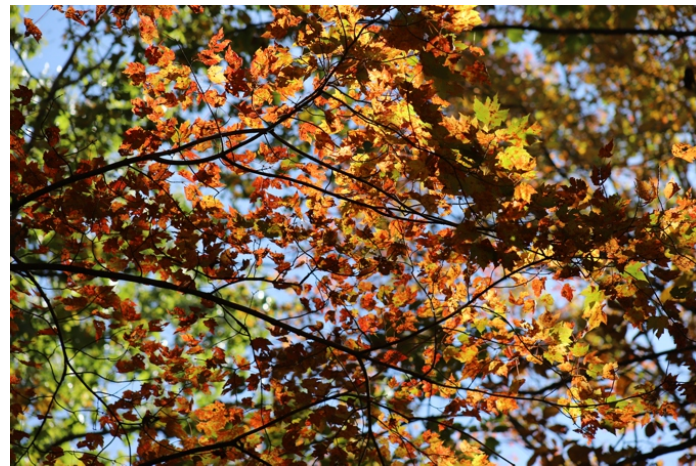
**KSF Foundation**

**7500 Kanawha State Forest Drive  
Charleston, WV 25314**

**Letter from the Chair  
by John Hughes**

**Calling all Leaf Peepers!**

As the Summer winds down and the sunlight gets shorter and shorter Mother Nature turns our green leaves to red, gold, and brown. Fall is in the air! Kanawha State Forest is the perfect place to enjoy this transformation hiking the numerous trails. Animals are also active this time of year since they sense the coming of winter and are actively foraging for food to bulk up their fat stores in order to survive the cold and absence of abundant foods. So please come out and enjoy the cooler temperatures and this wonderful transformation.



The Foundation is approaching our annual meeting in December and we are seeking person(s) who are interested in running for our board. If you are a Kanawha State Forest Foundation member and supporter and would like to actively participate in the endeavors of the board, please contact me of your interest (304-389-2693 or [jlhughesjr@suddenlink.net](mailto:jlhughesjr@suddenlink.net)).

Additionally, we are opening our bi-monthly meetings to the KSFF members. If you are planning on attending, please let me know so adequate space can be made available. Currently we are meeting in the Nature Center, which accommodates about 20 comfortably. My contact info is above. Meetings are every other month on the second Monday at 6 pm. The last meeting of the year is December.

So come out, enjoy, picnic, hike, bike, camp, horseback ride and enjoy the nice weather and

hopefully we will see a colorful display of trees! Upcoming event this fall and winter are as follows:

- October 28 - Bat Night Bonfire - 6:00 PM
- November 24 - Black Friday Hikes - 1:00 PM
- December 17 - Christmas at Kanawha State Forest - 1:00 to 4:00 PM
- January 1, 2024 - First Day Hikes - 1:00 PM



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**Appointment of Superintendent.**

The Kanawha State Forest Foundation welcomes the appointment of Clark L. Sanford as Superintendent of Kanawha State Forest. He has served as Acting Superintendent for the past year.

The Foundation looks forward to working closely with Superintendent Sanford to enhance the Forest users experience.



Clark L. Sanford  
Superintendent  
Photo by Rebecca Linger

**Endless Trails**  
by George Singleton

**New Section of Middle Ridge Trail Opens**

On Sep 23, a Grand Opening was held to officially christen the latest addition to the Middle Ridge Trail System at the south end of the park. The new section of trail is appropriately 1.2 miles long, with a grade that is easy enough for families and beginner hikers, mountain bikers, and trail runners to use.

The new portion of trail runs from the Black Bear trail entrance near the main road and winds gently uphill to the Four Mile parking lot at the end of the park. The upper portion of the trail traverses the area that burned in a fire last fall, but the forest shows good signs that recovery is underway.

Prior to the addition of this section of trail, access to the rest of the nine-mile-long ridge-top Middle Ridge Trail was very difficult due to



Bradley Schmalzer, Superintendent Clark Sanford, George Singleton, Megan Simpson, Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, Ted Armbrecht

challenging terrain. If you weren't an accomplished hiker, mountain biker, or runner, you might have given up before you got to the top of the ridge! Now, with the new trail, it is much easier to get to the top of the ridge and the rest of the Middle Ridge Trail where you can enjoy even more of the beauty of the West Virginia hills.

Funding to build this trail came from a range of organizations and private donors, and the Kanawha State Forest Foundation is extremely grateful for their contributions. Through their donations, the Foundation was able to have this trail professionally constructed, allowing for a very rewarding user experience. Already, we have heard many comments, such as "this is the best trail in the forest" and "can you please build more trails like this one".

Key donors for this project included: The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, the Bob and Ann Orders Foundation, West Virginia American Water, Steptoe & Johnson, the Jonathan Cross Family, Ted and Calvert Armbrecht Living Trust, New Belgium Brewery, RGB Medical, among others.

We want to thank all of them again as the project could not have happened without their support.

After the ribbon cutting, some of the team went down the new trail to do a bit of touch up work as well. Trails, even new ones, always require a bit of tender loving care at times!



Bradley Schmalzer, George A. Singleton, Ted Armbrecht do trail refinements.

## Margaret Denison Fall Nature Walks: What a Beautiful Day for a Hike! By Rebecca Linger

On Saturday, September 16, 2023, the Foundation held its annual Fall nature walks honoring the memory of Margaret Denison. The naturalist and author, Margaret Denison, taught science and botany in the Kanawha County schools for a number of years and was well known in the Forest community. From the first Spring Wildflower Walk in 1991, she was one of the most knowledgeable and dependable leaders. Denison did not concentrate on botanical terminology, but rather on the flora including ferns, grasses, and sedges. She would identify them by their common names and origins and further elaborate with delightful folklore. In 1975, she received an award from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources for the listing of 710 flowering plants, 42 ferns and their allies, and 138 grasses and sedges in the Forest. She published "The Flora of Kanawha State Forest," which has been reprinted in spiral-bound form and is available in the Nature Center.

This year's walks included two exercise hikes, and hikes specializing on the ecology of Davis Creek, the geology of KSF, wildflowers and trees, mushrooms, medicinal and edible plants, forest management, and the gas wells in KSF. The turnout was modest, which was surprising since the day was perfect for a walk in the woods,



Chris Gatens informs participants about distinguishing characteristics of various plants. Photo by Dale Porter

temperatures in the 70s, clear skies. We want to encourage everyone to watch for the announcement of these walks; Our Fall walks occur on the third Saturday in September, and our Spring walks are held on the fourth Saturday in April.

## Outdoor Classrooms in Kanawha State Forest for Kanawha County Schools By Rebecca Linger

From April to August, the Kanawha State Forest Foundation, in collaboration with the Kanawha Valley Master Naturalists, Ltd. and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, held fifteen outdoor classroom events for the elementary school children of Kanawha County Schools.

Each day there were four different activities for the children, selected from the following list:

### Trees

Students will be guided on a walk through the Arboretum behind the Nature Center where they will be shown examples of trees, their bark, and leaves to help them learn to identify trees by name. In addition, "tree cookies" will be used to talk about how a tree grows, how the sap moves in the tree, and the uses of the wood in a tree.

### Aquatic Life

WVDEP representatives will discuss **stream ecology** (the study of aquatic species, the way they interrelate, and their interactions with all aspects of flowing water systems) with students, through various age-appropriate hands-on activities. The content will remain the same, but the activities will be tailored to meet the needs of specific grades. Each grade will have the opportunity to view live benthic



macroinvertebrates from Davis Creek, which flows through Kanawha State Forest and into the Kanawha River. These animals play a critical role in the food web and are necessary for healthy ecosystems.

### **Insects**

Students will be given butterfly nets and insect viewers to capture insects in the forest and study them. Insect morphology will be discussed as well as the diversity of this family.

### **Owl Pellet Dissection**

Each student will receive a commercially obtained sterilized owl pellet (wrapped in aluminum foil and autoclaved) and implements to help tease the pellet apart. Owls swallow their prey whole and regurgitate pellets of the fur and bones. Students will find rodent and small bird skulls as well as the bones of these animals in the pellet. Description of owl digestion and bone identification sheets will be provided. Students may keep what they discover in the pellets.

### **Mushrooms**

Students will be guided on a walk to find mushrooms growing in the forest. Mushrooms will be identified as edible or nonedible but will not be picked. The role of mushrooms in the forest will be described.

### **Useful Plants**

Students will be guided on a walk to learn about the variety of plants that grow in the Forest and how they are used for food, shelter, and medicine. No plants will be picked. Stories of forest economy will be described, especially the role of ginseng, mayapple, and goldenseal.

### **Black Bears**

Students will be able to handle a black bear pelt and learn about the habits of the bears in our community. A skull replica as well as plaster casts of bear tracks that were observed in Kanawha State Forest will be available to the children to observe. Stories of how bears have interacted with humans will be told as well as what one should do when encountering a bear.

Funding from the JQ Dickinson Family Trust was used to purchase supplies, especially the owl pellets, which turned out to be rather costly. However, despite the cost, the children greatly enjoyed dissecting the pellets to discover what animals the owl had eaten. They were also educated on how an owl eats, why they form pellets that they regurgitate, and how stealthy they are when flying.

The Nature Center received a generous donation of animal pelts from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and part of the funds will be used to purchase replica skulls of the animals for which we have pelts. In addition, KSFF will also be purchasing insect viewing boxes for the children to use during the insects activity. We had only a couple of these, but they turned out to be very popular with the children since they allowed them to view the insects under magnification.

We are grateful to be able to host our school children and teach them about the flora and fauna of West Virginia. With the funds from the C.C. Dickinson Family Circle, we were able to highlight the Forest and encourage the children to return with their parents. In addition, because we were able to host the children with the funding, we received other donations of artifacts for the Nature Center. We are very appreciative of the partnership with the Dickinson Family and hope to continue to receive their support.



**The Behind the Scenes Work of the Kanawha State Forest Foundation's Ecology Committee**  
**By Doug Wood**

The members of the Ecology Committee are committed to enhancing the ecological functions of Kanawha State Forest (KSF). Since KSF includes several headwater tributaries of Davis Creek, watershed integrity is a key element of our efforts. When the WV Dept. of Environmental Protection proposed a stream wetland mitigation project that included removing the fish blockage of the CCC dam and improving stream habitat in a two-mile stretch, we commented frequently during the planning process and watched closely as the project advanced along. The original plans called for felling one hundred trees from one spot in the forest to supply large woody debris for habitat structures in the stream. That proposal included removing those trees from important nursery habitat for the endangered Indiana Bat. Our comments resulted in the contractor removing trees from a location outside of the boundaries of Kanawha State Forest, where early

some failing log plunge-pool structures), but our comments were taken seriously by the agency and the final outcome was overall, beneficial to the aquatic life of Davis Creek. The Watershed Assessment Section of the agency continues to



Doug Wood and Chris Gatens doing invasive asiatic bittersweet suppression. Photo by Dale Porter

monitor the project's influence on the stream's benthic macroinvertebrates and fishes.

Speaking of bat habitat, the Ecology Committee oversaw a bat research project a few years ago by a research professional who was also pursuing a Ph.D. in that field. Knowledge is power, so free professional research is a welcomed thing for the Forest staff and our committee.

The Committee has also done a great deal of work on enhancing the native plant life of Kanawha State Forest, including re-establishing giant cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), commenting on other projects that might damage rare plant communities (such as gas well road maintenance and new trail construction), overseeing the re-vegetation of reclaimed, abandoned oil and gas well sites, developing and maintaining the arboretum, developing the Kevin Dials Bat Conservation Trail, cooperating with the Forest staff and the

Old-Growth Forest Network to designate the KSF Eastern Watersheds Old-Growth Forest tract,



Chris Gatens and Doug Wood place signposts in the arboretum. Photo by Dale Porter

succession forest habitat was a primary goal of the contractor's project at that location. There were glitches along the way (and still a few today, like

Developing the Old-Growth Forest Trail interpretive signage, researching vegetation communities on old coal refuse piles, renovating an old-field habitat for pollinators and other species that need small canopy gaps for certain life stages, and removing invasive plant species from key locations in the Forest.

Herptiles (Reptiles and Amphibians) are a group of animals that suffer from illegal handling and collecting in KSF. The Ecology Committee offers advice on how to avoid causing declines in the herptile populations in KSF via hands-on nature walks, herpetological society meetings, and habitat-altering projects (such as draining roadside wetlands). With the rapid spread of Chitrid fungus, Ranavirus, and other diseases that damage reptiles and amphibians, nature education events that promote handling of salamanders, frogs, turtles, lizards, and snakes should be changed to teaching how to appreciate such critters without handling them.

These are the types of projects the Ecology Committee has been involved in to aid in restoring native habitats that benefit native animal species, as well as educating the public about appropriate interactions between humans and nature's elements within the bounds of Kanawha State Forest. Enhancement of the overall ecosystem health of KSF, along with education of the public regarding the same, are the two main goals of the Committee. Every reader should help KSF become a better natural gem near our state's capital city.

### Asiatic Bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*

Asiatic bittersweet is a non-native invasive vine. It strangles the trees it grows on and can topple them by their weight.



Leaf & unripe fruit



Vine

## We-CAN-Climb

Text and photos by Dale Porter



On Saturday, September 30th, the CAMC Foundation held their ninth annual *We CAN Climb* event at Kanawha State Forest. Proceeds from the event go to support the CAMC Children's Advocacy Center. Participants had the option of a 2.5 mile hike, or a 5K timed trail run. The event was well attended with a total of 165 participants registered for the event which was held in beautiful Fall weather.

The Children's Advocacy Center provides specialized, compassionate care to children and families in situations involving child neglect and abuse. The staff is trained in child forensic interviewing to identify his or her needs and facilitate the provision of services needed. The pediatricians are specialty-certified in child abuse detection in a thorough yet sensitive manner.

The Center provides a variety of victim advocacy and case management services to help a child as they move forward, as well as trauma-focussed therapy.

All this is provided as no charge to the family for the services provided.

Children are referred to the Center for services by doctors, mental health providers, law enforcement, Child Protective Services and parents.

Further information about the Child Advocacy Center can be found on their website.

<https://www.camc.org/services/pediatrics/childrens-advocacy-services>

**Geology Hike**  
**Photos and Text By Pete Sullivan**

If you have ever hiked on Beech Glen Trail you will remember seeing this impressive sandstone outcrop near the top of the ridge.



This fluvial sandstone is part of the Pennsylvanian Conemaugh Formation that is present in varying thicknesses on all the ridgetops in Kanawha State Forest. Fluvial sandstone means that this sandstone was deposited as part of an ancient river system that flowed east to west 300 million years ago.

Close inspection of the rocks shows the presence of large rounded grains of quartz.



**The Foundation thanks outgoing Secretary Joe Carney for his years of service to the Foundation.**

**Board of Directors**

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Black Friday Hikes**, Friday November 24, 2022, 1:00 PM

**Christmas at Kanawha State Forest**, Sunday, December 17, 2023, 1:00 to 4 PM.

**First Day Hikes**, Monday January 1, 2024, 1:00 PM

**Shirley Schweizer Winter Walk**, To be announced.

**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.
- Please identify the photographer.
- Identify persons featured in photo when possible.
- Submit articles and photos by deadline.

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

**Deadline for Winter Edition of the *Forest Friend* is January 10, 2024** formerly February publication.

**The Forest Friend**

Edited by Rebecca S. Linger  
 Layout by Dale A. Porter

We are looking for a volunteer to take over the layout of the quarterly newsletter. If you are interested, please contact Rebecca Linger.