

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
KANAWHA STATE FOREST FOUNDATION

THE FOREST FRIEND

SPRING 2022 EDITION



BELTED KINGFISHER

Page 3

BOOK REVIEW

Page 4

ANGLE WINGS APPEAR EARLY IN THE SPRING

Page 5

MIDDLE RIDGE TRAIL NEWS

Page 6

THE HIKER'S CORNER

Page 7

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND

Page 8

DIVERSIFIED ENERGY EARTH DAY

Page 9

OSBRA EYE SPRING NATURE WALKS

Page 10

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Page 2

UPCOMING EVENTS

Page 11

BOARD MEMBERS

Page 11

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

Chair's Report: April (snow) showers bring May flowers!

By John Hughes, Chair

With Spring in the air, Kanawha State Forest's wild flowers are springing out of the ground. Since our last newsletter exciting things are happening at the forest. The dam removal and stream restoration are winding down. The pools they are creating will make the stream a perfect location for fish and aquatic life to thrive. Gone is the silt buildup. The final grading, planting and fishing pier are some of the final tasks left.

Kanawha State Forest Foundation (KSFF) working with the Kanawha Trail Alliance, applied and was approved for a grant funded by the State of WV Mine Reclamation Fund in the amount of \$300,000 to complete the access to Middle Ridge Trail on both ends. This will give the forest a

premier trail approximately 13 miles long. The contracts for the work have been awarded and work should begin in late summer and continue to late fall.

"Marmet Crippled Children Foundation" dissolved and awarded KSFF a donation of \$30,000 for an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) project. This foundation gave KSFF a previous donation for the ADA playground next to Salamander Trail. KSFF agreed to use these funds to further enhance the playground by providing an ADA vault toilet next to Salamander trail. We are still short \$5,000 to complete this project.

Many questions have come up on the status of the That's My Brick project. Your purchased brick is now displayed in the Nature Center. We are still waiting on the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to give us a drawing of the new ADA sidewalks and entry into the gift shop. Once work begins, the bricks will be placed in the ground in conjunction with the project. Hopefully this will happen this year. I apologize for this delay. Your support is very important to us.

KSFF has an upcoming events. The event will be on June 19th at 2:00 pm to celebrate West Virginia's birthday. Music will be provided by the Kanawha Valley Community Band and a celebration cake will be provided.

As you can see, exciting things are happening at the forest. So come out, enjoy, picnic, hike, bike, camp and have a good time in a beautiful nature setting!



Former pond area. Photo by Dale Porter



BELTED KINGFISHER

BY Doug Wood



Photo by:
Dianne Anestis

The loud rattling call of the Belted Kingfisher can be heard along Davis Creek within and outside of Kanawha State Forest. Compared to most birds you encounter in the Forest, this one's head appears bigger than it should. When you see one dive after minnows in a stream pool, you will understand the physics behind such an oddly shaped bird, because the diver looks like a heavy

headed bomb dropping through the air, with one big difference; bombs don't typically have spearpoints at their tips! Woe to the small fish or crawdaddy who doesn't look up in time to dodge the spear-tipped, feathered bomb. Hence the name *King+fisher*. *Belted* refers to the bars across the bird's breast and/or belly, the female sporting two and the male, one. Belt colors can be slate blue or rusty red. Usually, the breast belt is blue and the female's belly belt, rufous.

Kingfishers are widespread in WV but are most concentrated in the Allegheny Plateau and Cumberland Mountains ecoregions, and Kanawha State Forest is in the latter, just a few

miles west of the border with the former. Good water quality that supports abundant prey, decent riparian (streamside) habitat



Photo by: Dale Porter

quality, and suitable nesting sites are very important for this species. Upper Davis Creek has all three, and in the Forest, the water quality is at its best. While Kingfishers are usually seen catching minnows, they will eat just about any aquatic creature small enough to go down their gullets: crayfish, salamanders, hellgrammites, small water snakes, stonefly nymphs, etc.

Between 1970 and 2014, the range-wide Kingfisher numbers declined by half and there was a 1.3% decline between 1986 and 2011 in the Appalachian Mountains populations. Because of this decline, the WV Dept. of Natural Resources designated the Kingfisher as a species in greatest conservation need. As state ornithologist Rich Bailey wrote in *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in West Virginia*, published last year, "this charismatic specialist of West Virginia's waterways deserves attention in



Jennifer Bauman Photos

Doug Wood demonstrates depth of a Kingfisher burrow on the 2021 Winter Walk



Inside a Kingfisher burrow.
Photo by: Steve Johnson, U. of Mass.

hopes that further population losses can be averted.”

Before the stream restoration project started in the Forest, I found a Kingfisher burrow within the project zone. Suitable nesting locations are usually eroded stream banks above what hydrologists call *bank-full depth*. In conversations between the Foundation Ecology Committee, the state ornithologist, and the WV Department of Environmental Protection



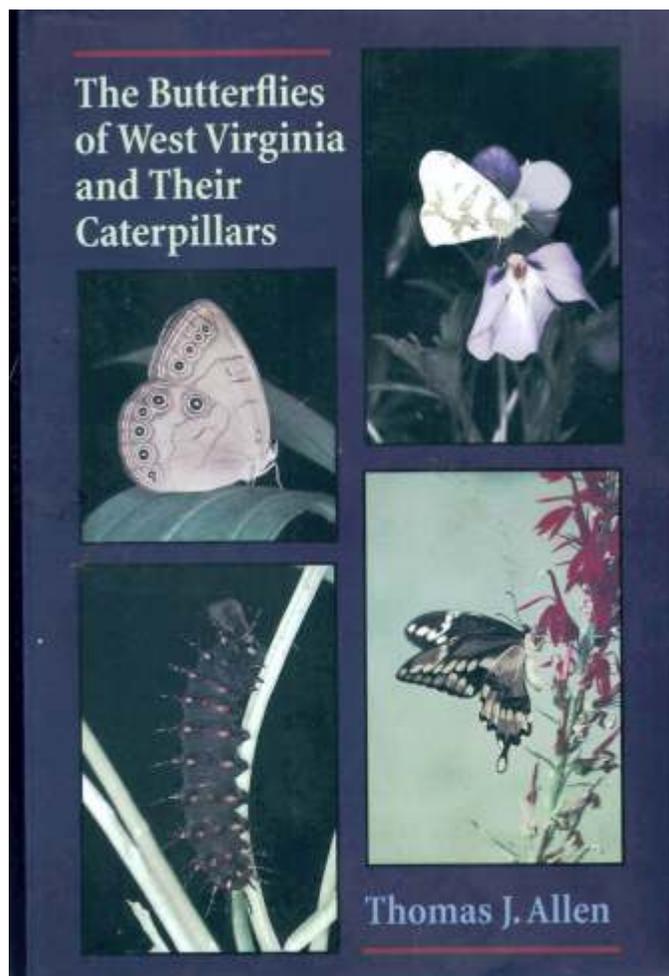
Bank of Davis Creek with Kingfisher burrows. Photo by Dale Porter

(WVDEP), the overseer of the project, it was determined that the WVDEP would inform the project engineers and contractors of the need to protect the burrow. Dale Porter went a step further and placed a sign atop the bank above the burrow. When we held the Shirley Schweizer Memorial Winter Walk this January, it appeared the contractor heeded the instructions and did not obliterate the burrow when placing log revetments along the eroded bank. Sometimes even a small gesture can have a big impact on the welfare of a species. We hope the Kingfisher couple will nest again this May or June.

BOOK REVIEW: THE BUTTERFLIES OF WEST VIRGINIA AND THEIR CATERPILLARS - By Tom J. Allen

By Dale Porter

This is perhaps the best nature guide for Eastern United States butterflies and we are fortunate that it is also West Virginia specific. Mr. Allen was a career wildlife biologist with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. Though the book was published in 1997, the material is still relevant, with the exception of the maps indicating the counties where the butterflies have been identified. The 2012 West Virginia Butterfly Atlas is probably the best source for this information. It is available at some local and on-line sources.



ANGLE WINGS APPEAR EARLY IN THE SPRING

By Dale Porter

Some of the first and most prominent butterflies that appear in Kanawha State Forest (KSF) are referred to as angle wings. Two of these that you will see in KSF are the Eastern Comma, and the Question Mark. These are two more butterflies that hibernate over winter in the adult stage. This means they are ready to emerge from hibernation as soon as some warm weather arrives.

Unlike the Mourning Cloak mentioned in the Spring issue, these butterflies are more tolerant of heat, but may seek cooler places like hollow logs, and not be as visible on hot days. You can see these butterflies from early Spring through late Fall, though less prominent in late May to

early June, the period when Winter broods die off and Summer broods emerge. The most common places to see these in KSF will be along the woods roads, especially along the ridges. Middle Ridge Road is well populated with them.

The Eastern Comma and the Question Mark are very beautiful. They have a VERY similar appearance and are



Eastern Comma
Photo by: Dale Porter

difficult to tell apart. There are two features that distinguish between these similar butterflies: the size and the underwing marking that give them

their names. The Question Mark is the larger at 2-3/8 to 2-5/8 inch wingspans while the Eastern Comma is smaller at 1-3/4 to 2 inches. On the underside of the wings, you find the small silver markings that give them their names. One marking is in a form similar to a question mark and the other a comma. From my personal observation, the Eastern Commas seem to be the more numerous species in KSF. The Question Mark also has more prominent tails on its hind wings, but that distinction is not so plain without doing a side by side comparison.

For the Question Mark, the first flyers you see in the Spring will live into May. The Summer brood emerges in June and flies into the Fall. The Winter brood emerges in August and flies into October before hibernating, and these will be the ones you see the next Spring. There are minor color variations between the seasonal broods.

The Eastern Comma's life cycle is similar to the Question Mark, with the Winter brood living into May. The Summer brood arrives in June and flies thru July. The Winter brood arrives in August, flies through September before hibernating and reappearing the next Spring.

If you spend any time in KSF this Spring and Summer, you are sure to encounter one or both of these butterflies.



Question Mark
Photo by: Dale Porter

Reference Source: The Butterflies of West Virginia and Their Caterpillars, by Tom Allen.

HOW DO YOU MAKE THE BEST BETTER?

By George Singleton

How do you make one of the best trails in Kanawha State Forest, and one of the premier trails in Southern West Virginia, even better?

By finishing it!

The Middle Ridge Trail (MRT) system is the most popular multi-use system of trails in the forest, with the existing nine miles of ridge-top trail constructed by volunteer labor over the past two decades.

But the front and back ends of the trail have never been completed, and due to challenging terrain, existing routes to reach the trail are difficult for intended users: families, hikers, mountain bikers and trail runners. Lack of easy access to the trail has restricted healthy recreational opportunities for our community, as well as limited the attractiveness of what could be one of the most spectacular trails in West Virginia.

Completing the final two sections will result in broader access by extending the trail through sections of natural beauty with terrain that is easy for even the beginner to walk, run, hike, or bike.

Beginning in early 2021, the Kanawha State Forest Trail Committee identified it as a priority to finally complete the MRT. Working in conjunction with the Kanawha Valley Trail Alliance as well as the Kanawha State Forest management team, the Committee started the process by first identifying what would be needed to make completion a reality.

This involved several trips to scout and GPS map the proposed route, then aligning with

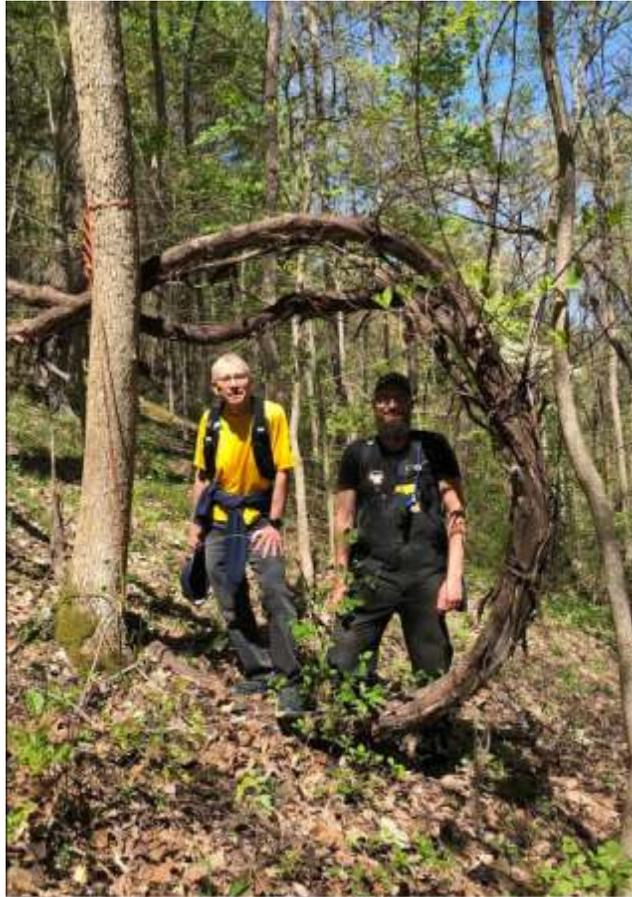
Kanawha State Forest management on trail routing and the process moving forward. To ensure a high-quality product, professional trail building companies were then contacted to bid on the project, which involved a walk-through by bidders and the Trail Committee. After a detailed review of the bids, two companies were awarded the project - one best suited for the front end, another for the back end.

The section to be completed at the front end is about 2.5 miles long, running from near the bottom of Middle Ridge Road (by the shooting road) to the ridge-top close to the Teaberry intersection. The section at the back end is about 1.4 miles long and will run from the entrance of Black Bear up towards the Four Mile parking lot. There is an additional ridge-top section 0.9 miles long to be completed by volunteer labor.

That's what our project is all about: completing the Middle Ridge Trail to provide easier access to some of the most beautiful scenery in West Virginia. If all goes well with fund-raising, construction on the

back end will begin in early fall, with the front end to follow later.

Fund-raising has been successful to date, but we still need your help! Through grants and private donations, we are working to ensure the project will soon be fully funded. Your help can take us over the top by donating any amount, big or small. Simply write a check to: The Kanawha State Forest Foundation, Attention: Trail Committee, 7500 Kanawha State Forest Drive, Charleston, WV, 25314. Your donation will help us complete the longest and most beautiful trail in the forest!



George Singleton and Bradley Schmalzer scout potential trail routing.

The Hikers' Corner MY FAVORITE OVERLOOKS

By Wayne Stevens

After hours of hiking, it is my opinion the following overlooks are some of the best in KSF: Teaberry Rock is located on the Teaberry Rock Trail near Middle Ridge Road. There is a short trail on the right if you approach from the bottom, left from the top. The view is somewhat obstructed by trees but is still a nice view to the South.

Overlook Rock Trail is located about a half mile past headquarters or can be accessed near the archery range. The climb is fairly steep in either direction you choose. The view is also somewhat obstructed by trees, but still provides a nice Eastern view.



The staff from the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey utilize Overlook Rock to view the forest.

Photo by Dale Porter

To reach Castle Rock, walk CCC Snipe Trail from headquarters to the end of the trail. Cross Shrewsbury Road to Mossy Rock Trail. Follow Mossy Rock to Middle Ridge Road. A sign across the road indicates Saulter's Loop. Follow Saulter's Loop a short distance and the sign for Castle Rock is on the left. After a short walk, an interesting rock formation will come into view. Castle Rock view is nice to the Southeast. The noise from the shooting range below can be heard.

Shrewsbury Hollow Overlook is one of my favorites. To reach the overlook, hike up White

Hollow Trail. After reaching the road at the top, follow the road in an Easterly direction. Pass the first road on the left and continue to the next utility road on the left. Follow the second road to the electric tower at the end. Walk past the tower to a small point .You will have a view over Shrewsbury Hollow and many more miles North.



Overlook on Teaberry Rock Trail being used for a photo opportunity.

Photo by Dale Porter

My favorite view is from East Boundary Road. To reach this area, park at the lot at the end of the Forest. (Four Mile Mountain) Walk East on Middle Ridge Road to the first intersection. An Old Growth Forest sign is located just before East Boundary Road. Follow East Boundary Road for just over a mile until the power lines are overhead. There is a great view North and South for many miles.. Power lines somewhat obstruct this view. However, this may be the highest point in KSF.



Wheelchair-Accessible Playground at the Spotted Salamander Trail

Photos and text by Jennifer Bauman

The first wheelchair-accessible playground in the West Virginia State Parks System has been installed next to the paved Spotted Salamander Trail at Kanawha State Forest, thanks to a combination of grant funds, corporate and private donations.

The new playground includes a solid rubber foundation which allows handicapped visitors to propel themselves on the smooth surface to access a platform swing while remaining in their wheelchairs. The playground also includes an all access-swing with a safety harness and a patented "Jenn-Swing" to provide full-body



Jennifer Bauman Photos



opportunity for inter-active play on ADA compatible equipment.

This is the second of a three-phase accessibility project, launched by the Kanawha State Forest Foundation. The first was the renovation of the Spotted Salamander Trail and addition of a paved parking lot. Phase-3 will be the installation of an ADA vault toilet when sufficient funding is available.





**DIVERSIFIED ENERGY'S
EARTH DAY AT THE FOREST**

Photos and text by Dale Porter

Diversified Energy (DE) celebrated Earth Day 2022 on April 21st by helping prepare Kanawha State Forest for the Summer recreation season. DE employees from around the region, even some from Wyoming County, gathered at the forest to tackle various tasks the forest staff determined would benefit the forest. The tasks included spreading mulch in playground areas, trail maintenance, planting trees supplied by DE in areas where well



sealing necessitated disturbing the soil, and painting structures. Not only were personnel supplied, but a backhoe was brought in to remove the first temporary wooden bridge going up Polly Hollow. This bridge was built when the power line was replaced a few years ago. The bridge had deteriorated to the point of being a hazard even for



Placing stepping stones after bridge removal.



Spreading Mulch

foot travel. The bridge was removed and a vehicle ford established as well as some large stepping stones to facilitate foot travel across the stream. DE plans on returning at a later date to remove the other bridge as there was not enough time to do so on April 21st.

Diversified Energy employees and other volunteers all received a blue Earth Day tee shirt and lunch was provided for the employees and other non-DE volunteers. Diversified Energy has employees spread across the region, often working in remote places. This event not only assisted Kanawha State Forest, but provided an opportunity for DE employees to work together for a day with fellow employees they might only interact with by phone. Well tenders were shoveling mulch side by side with office staff.

Several Kanawha State Forest Foundation members also assisted in guiding the work parties with volunteer coordinator Jennifer Bauman coordinating with the Kanawha State Forest staff and DE management.



Planting donated sassafras tree in arboretum.

2022 OSBRA EYE SPRING NATURE WALKS: What a beautiful day!

By Rebecca Linger

On Saturday, April 23, 2022, the Kanawha State Forest Foundation hosted the Osbra Eye Spring Nature Walks in Kanawha State Forest. The public began gathering at 8:30 am to register and greet other nature lovers. Volunteers, Barb Koster, Kathy Hastings, Karen Sherr, Yvonne Kourie, Peggy Kourey, and Chuck Wirts worked well together to register everyone and orient them to the offerings of the day. A table of door prizes included books on nature topics and beautiful pottery made by Dale Porter.



Photo by Rebecca Linger

There were two major door prizes as well, a two-night stay at Cacapon State Park and a camping cook station that would help to organize your outdoor kitchen at your campsite. Chris Hedges won the Cacapon lodging and Sandy Noe the cook station.

There were eight walks that the public could choose from: two birding walks, one easy stroll along the Firing Range Road, led by Dave Dendler and Laura Ceperley, assisted by Master Naturalist John David Thacker and a more moderate birding hike through Rattlesnake Hollow, led by Jim Waggy with help from Master Naturalist Devon Fox. The medicinal, edible, and useful plants walk highlighted the plants of Johnson Hollow, led by Rebecca Linger and assisted by Master Naturalists Jane Shepherd and Victoria Sewell. We also had three different wildflower walks: hiking Polly Hollow, Chris Gatens and Sara Miller described the flowers and trees of that beautiful part of the Forest, assisted by Master Naturalists Peggy White, Danielle Ballard, and Linda Miller. Mark Watson led a

group along the CCC Snipe Trail to point out the spring wildflowers, assisted by Master Naturalists Ted Jones, Michelle Platt, and Dollie Fox. The third wildflower excursion allowed an opportunity for folks with limited mobility to get out and see the flowers. This walk was led by our currently mobility-limited Foundation member, Doug Wood, assisted by Terry Watkins. The group drove to a variety of stopping points to take short strolls to view the flowers. Dale Porter described the mining operations that took place in the Shrewsbury Road area, which is now the Arboretum behind the Nature Center. He was assisted by Master Naturalist Leslie Bonham. Finally, Barry Curry took a group along the Davis



Registration - Photo by Rebecca Linger

Creek trail to describe the work that was accomplished in the Fall and Winter of 2021 to restore Davis Creek to its original meandering streambed. He was assisted by Master Naturalists Jamie Chambers and Chuck Keefer.

While the turnout wasn't quite what we expected, we were gratified to see over 50 nature lovers eager to share our love of the Forest. The day was beautiful and warm; really, one of the first warm Spring days we've had yet this year. Every year we offer these Spring walks as a welcome to the time of renewal and restoration for all of us. Be sure to join us next year in Spring and come to the Margaret Denison Fall Nature Walks, to be held on Saturday, September 17, 2022, with registration starting at 8:30 am.

Board of Directors

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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.

WV Birthday Celebration, Music and Cake,
June 19, 2022

Margaret Dennison Fall Nature Walks,
September 17, 2022

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.

Submission deadline for the Summer issue is July 10th.

The Foundation welcomes Joe Emmerth as Acting Superintendent of Kanawha State Forest. He is serving in that capacity until a permanent superintendent is recruited.



Former pond area. Photo by Dale Porter



Upper Pond Area - Photo by Dale Porter