

Happy New Year from AFHA!

## AFHA Exhibit & Concert Series

By Scott Prouty

AFHA AmeriCorps Heritage Team Member

To welcome in 2015, the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area (AFHA) is pleased to announce a concert series for 2015 in conjunction with a new exhibit which will open later in the spring, "Homespun & Handmade: Culture in the AFHA Region." The concert series will feature traditional music artists from both within and without the region. We will host at least one concert per month at the Darden Mill starting on January 25th with [Born Old](#). There may also be additional events once a larger space on the second floor of the Mill becomes available. Stayed tuned to our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for further details.



Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.



A center for forestry research and timber management, [Cooper's Rock State Forest](#) is also home to rustic Civilian Conservation Corps

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*Born Old. L-R: Paul Gartner; Doug Van Gundy.*

### **Born Old at the Darden Mill**

Saturday January 24, 2015

7:30pm

Suggested Donation \$10

#### [Born Old](#)

Born Old is Paul Gartner (banjo, guitar & vocals) and Doug Van Gundy (fiddle, guitar, mandolin & vocals). The duo plays traditional old-time music from West Virginia, as well as early country classics from the great artists of the 78 rpm era, including The Carter Family, Charlie Poole, Uncle Dave Macon, and others. Gartner and Van Gundy have been making music together for 15 years, giving performances that are traditional and informative without sacrificing a very high energy, raucous, fun factor.

Recently guests on National Public Radio's Mountain Stage program, they perform regularly

Historic Places. There are also extensive recreation opportunities in the southern portion which includes hiking and biking access to rock cliffs lining the Cheat River Gorge and a maze of large boulders. The main overlook was the home to the legendary fugitive cooper who hid there for many years, giving the forest its namesake.



[Pringle Tree Park](#) is located just north of Buckhannon in Upshur County where Turkey Run meets with Buckhannon River. The park is the location of the Pringle Tree, a large sycamore in which the Pringle brothers, John & Samuel, lived for three years after deserting their post with the British-American army at Fort Pitt in the 1760s. After returning to civilization, they brought others back and established the first

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Band Festival (Clifftop) and Vandalia Gathering annually for over a decade. They have also taught at many festivals and music camps, including the Augusta Heritage and Allegheny Echoes workshops.

The Darden Mill is located at the corner of Railroad Ave and First St.

2 Railroad Ave  
Elkins, WV 26241  
Map <http://tinyurl.com/lo5p23a>

Evening parking is available at the Mill, on-street, and in the H&R Block lot across the street.

Call (304) 637-6182 for more info.

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## Practicing Environmental Education

By Emily Peters  
AFHA AmeriCorps Conservation Team Member

Within a single year, I have lived in three different states. Each state comes with new places, new people, and new experiences that have helped me to learn and grow. I now make my home in state #4, as an AFHA AmeriCorps member serving at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Field office in Elkins. While Iâ€™m in the Mountain State, I hope to make a difference in the community by developing strong education and outreach programs concerning local environmental issues. Itâ€™s another state, and another experience; so far, itâ€™s been a great one!

The current sycamore is the third generation of the tree, and the park includes a picnic area, a playground, and a boat launch ramp.



The [Landmark Studio for the Arts](#) in Sutton has provided a venue for cultural events in Braxton County since 1978 when the West Virginia Hillbilly Players first staged theatrical events there. Members of the group purchased the building in 1988, just over 100 years after it was originally built as an Episcopal church. The Studio provides a venue for regional artists and also presents programs to schoolchildren. While the emphasis has been on theater, the venue also hosted an annual birthday tribute concert to local fiddler Melvin Wine for many years, an event which has recently been revived.

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*Yurt at The Mountain Institute. Photo: Emily Peters*

One of my experiences involves connecting with fellow environmental educators at The Mountain Institute's (TMI) Spruce Knob Mountain Center. This humble environmental education center is nestled deep in the mountains, surrounded by beautiful landscapes. So when I received an invitation to live in a yurt and co-teach about watersheds and water quality (which happen to be some of my all-time favorite subjects) I, of course, accepted.

I assisted with TMI's™s Appalachian Watershed Stream Monitors program, which is aimed to inspire youth and teachers to become active citizen-scientists in their local watersheds. My days at TMI were spent geeking out with middle-schoolers about macroinvertebrates and the water quality of a stream, then hiking to Spruce Knob to have a short geology lesson and discuss human impacts on watersheds. Everything about this experience was amazing - particularly the students and educators. It was great to see an established, intensive program in West Virginia that completely connects kids to the value of science in nature and works to inspire future conservation leaders.



For 20 miles the South Branch of the Potomac River runs along [Smoke Hole Canyon](#) between North Mountain and Cave Mountain, with nearly vertical walls on either side. Located in Grant and Pendleton Counties, the Canyon is now part of the Monongahela National Forest's [Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area](#). Prior to this time, it had a reputation for inaccessibility and as a center of moonshine production. Available activities include hiking, hunting, fishing, canoeing, rock climbing and camping. Smoke Hole Cavern is considered one of the most beautiful and remote areas in West Virginia, with the Nature Conservancy (which owns an easement there) calling it, "one of the richest concentrations of biological diversity in the East."

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*Students from Mineral County visit Spruce Knob with The Mountain Institute. Photo: Emily Peters*

Sometimes I feel like I should come with a warning label. TMI educators really had no idea what they were in for when they invited me. I mean, it's difficult to stay calm when you're holding tiny living creatures that tell you how healthy a stream is by simply existing (macroinvertebrates). Thankfully, my enthusiasm was enjoyed by the students and understood by the educators. My appreciation of watersheds runs deep, and I was happy I could share my passions with others. That's the reason I became an educator, harnessing those passions to promote environmental stewardship and inspire youth in conservation.

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Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

Email us at:

[info@appalachianforest.us](mailto:info@appalachianforest.us)

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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