

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area News



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Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area promotes and supports a network of partnerships based around our unique Forest Heritage. We work in 16 West Virginia counties and 2 counties in Western Maryland.

To learn more about us and the work we do, including our AmeriCorps program, visit afnha.org.

Management Planning Update!

Many things happened this month! The Organization Structure & Management Task Group sent out an anonymous survey to key stakeholders to begin the analysis of AFNHA's internal management and the region's capacity to work with us on various aspects of the NHA. Once the survey closes the Organizational Task Group will meet to take the next steps with the constructive feedback and analysis we received.



The Interpretation & Visitor Experience group met this past month and are individually working to develop three primary theme statements that encapsulate three main topics of Forest Heritage interactions, Forest Ecology & Management, and History & Culture.



The Resource Stewardship & Enhancement Group will meet soon! This group will focus on strategies for conservation and support for environmental, cultural, and heritage assets. If you want to get involved in any of these groups or the Management Planning process, follow the link below or contact us at planning@afnha.org

[Click Here for Task Group Info](#)





AmeriCorps Story

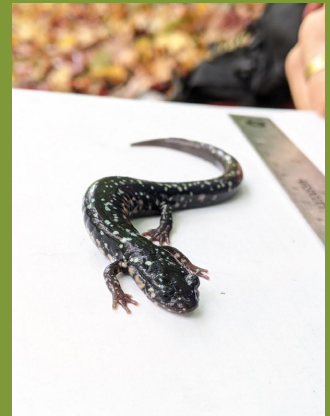
Surveys Searching for Elusive Species

By: Hannah Studdard

Serving with Canaan Valley NWR



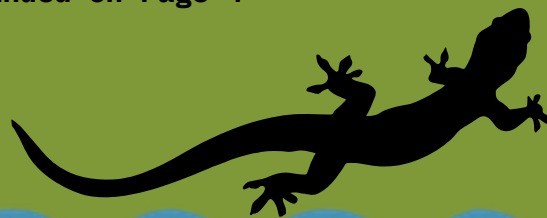
Starting service in Canaan Valley was a headfirst dive into hands on experience in the field, exactly what I was hoping and dreaming this position would provide. Most days have been spent hiking into the woods of the refuge, searching for brightly colored tape tied trees, and flipping rocks, logs, and brush looking for critters in the dirt. I've even taken part of legitimate night time snipe hunts. As fall here in West Virginia has exploded into reds, oranges, golds and yellows I can't help but count myself lucky that I have the opportunity to serve in a position that allows me to hike the valley floor and ridges daily, able to admire the changes and beauty that this state shows off so proudly.



Day one at the refuge was spent learning the ins and outs, or the standard operating procedures (SOP), of cheat mountain salamander surveys. Cheat mountain salamanders are an endangered species found in very few specific habitats within the refuge area. Their habitats look like moist forest floors, moss covered rocks, conifer trees and sediment, and higher altitudes. Most of the areas we survey are not prime habitat for cheat salamanders, but prove to be just fine for other species of salamander. Most of what we find are duskys, red backs, and the occasional Wehrle's and slimy salamander. When conducting these surveys, most of our time is spent looking for our points from which we start our search. We are led by maps from an iPad, that don't always take us to the exact point, but rather the general area in which the point is located. Once the gps point is located, we lay out two 32 meter transects dictated by a bearing from the gps point, and then we begin the search! We flip everything within arms reach of our transect, rocks, logs, bark, leaf litter.

If a salamander is discovered, we catch them and take some measurements, identify and photograph them, before putting them right back from where they came. The time at the points can be short if not much is found or if there isn't much to flip (we do have some points in grass fields), but if there is a lot to take stock of or flip we can spend quite a lot of time at one point. Our time hiking, bush wacking, looking for the points has greatly over shadowed our time at the points so far, and what a grand escapade it always seems to be whether many salamanders are gotten for the day or not!

Story continued on Page 4





Announcements and Events



ARC POWER Grant and MOV Job Position

On October 14th, 2020, the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area was awarded a \$50,000 grant by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to fund the Monongahela Outdoor Volunteer (MOV) program in creating a Sustainable Volunteer Trail Maintenance Program: A Key Requirement for Achieving Economic Development through Recreational Tourism. The project will develop a business plan for a volunteer trail maintenance center and program. Elements of the business plan will include community leadership initiatives, local partnerships, relationships with businesses that benefit from recreational tourism, growing a funding base, delivering trail maintenance training, a volunteer management system, and a communications/marketing plan for the program and center

**PRESS
RELEASE**

MOV is hiring a planner/fundraiser to assist in this project. Click link to the right for a complete job description and how to apply!

**JOB
DESCRIPTION**

Upcoming Events

Goatoberfest 2020
Frostburg, MD
Toasted Goat Winery
240-558-9463

Join us at Toasted Goat on Saturday, October 24 for beer specials, giveaways, specialty cocktails, food specials, and just all-around a "goat" time! We will be transforming our outdoor seating area into our very own Biergarten!

Hanted Hollow Hills
Haywagon Ride
Lewisburg, WV
10/30-31, 10/23-25: 4-8pm
304-992-6178

Hollow Hills Farm (home of the WV Renaissance Festival) is offering haunted hayrides, games, food, drink and more on weekends throughout October. Beware as you travel down the forgotten section of Old Midland Trail where the fey folk haunt.. Tickets sold at the Castle Kitchen. \$5 per person

CW's Corn Maze
Cass, WV
Oct 3rd-Nov 1st
304-456-4652

CW's Corn Maze is a fun, family friendly activity for people of all ages. People will have the opportunity to journey through an 8 acre corn maze, play in the corn box, ride the barrel train, roll in the culvert, pet farm animals and slide down the culvert. Adults are \$5, Children \$10, & age 2 and younger are free



Full Moon Hike
Cass, WV
11/30
304-456-4300

Join in on the moonlit fun by partaking in the Full Moon Hike at Cass. The Beaver Moon Hike begins November 30th and will be led by Park Naturalist. The evening walk is about three miles round trip with a slight grade, but mostly flat walking surface. If you would like to participate in the Full Beaver Moon Hike, please call Cass Scenic Railroad State Park.

Maniac Mountain
Haunted House
Oct 1st-Oct 31st
Buckhannon WV 26201

A Haunted House, Hay Ride and Corn Field, all to scare you! Tickets can be bought for all three activities. Found at 1659 Teter Road in Buckhannon Visit maniacmountainhauntedhouse.com for more information.

AmeriCorps Story Continued

The most epic day of hiking resulted in finding only two salamanders. We were not to be disappointed, however, because outside of our slimey friends we experienced beautiful forest hiking and views from the northeastern most point of the refuge, as well as a couple of unexpected wildlife encounters. We hiked well over 5 miles for the day with an incredible amount of gradient change, taking us from beech brush covered hillsides to open, rock outcroppings that gave way to views of the entire valley floor. We took lunch at the top of our hike, hiding behind a large fir tree that helped shield us from the wind, before continuing to hike the rim to the remainder of our points. We finished out seven points that day, before turning back to the road that would take us to the truck. As we walked the road, a welcome relief from the steep hiking our feet had taken on that day, we saw a large black bear cross about 70 meters ahead of us! Our fourth bear sighting since starting in the valley... As we neared the truck we passed a small garter snake sun bathing on the road. Driving out, turkeys flew and deer bounded away from us as we headed back to the refuge shop. The wildlife here is abundant and in constant motion, reminding me of the reasons to take life slow and practice full awareness, otherwise you might miss out on the beauty hiding in the trees, under the rocks, or blending in with the surroundings.



Woodcock surveys have also been a part of the service here at Canaan Valley. Woodcocks are a small, cartoon-like, bird that spend most of their time on the ground. Our goal has been to capture, tag, and release three birds to be tracked. Over the course of a week and a half of surveying, we have caught only one female and she came to us on the first night. The process has been a fun and interesting one to learn. We start the surveys by setting up mist nets that run 12 meters in length and are 2.6 meters tall. After setting up 10 of the nets, we wait until dusk to check them for captured birds. If any are in the nets, we untangle, tag and band them, and then set them free. Aside from the stationary nets, we also take large spotlights and handheld nets, hoping to flush the small birds and catch them individually. Not much luck has bestowed us, but the excitement of catching that first female lingers. Real life snipe catching! My high school self would be amazed, as I never believed snipes to be real after all the searching I did. We have caught two wood thrush, a chickadee, and a sora that were banded as well.



Our surveys continue until the end of October, as the weather will change to be too cool to search for the salamanders that know to burrow into the warmer ground, and the woodcocks will migrate to those warmer temperatures. Until then we'll keep galavanting across the valley floor, scooping up salamanders and (hopefully) wrangling woodcocks for refuge preservation. Our findings ultimately help provide future plans and practices to preserve areas of the refuge known to house endangered, elusive, and important species. I'm honored and excited to be part of such a beautiful area and refuge that works for the betterment of the habitats it vows to protect.



Upcoming Podcast Release!

We are starting our podcast back up! Voices of the Forest will start back up in November and focus on a number of series. The first series will focus on Railways and Trains in the Appalachian Forest. Check our Facebook page for a release date coming soon! Click below for current Podcasts!

