



Partnership Creates Opportunity to Save Threatened Species



Photo credit Mike Pinder

The New River Land Trust has joined forces with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and The Conservation Fund to protect an important property in the New River region. The property has been home to a family farm for generations, but it's also home to three endangered or threatened species: the Bog Turtle, federally listed as threatened; a butterfly, Mitchell's Satyr, federally and state listed as endangered; and the Appalachian snaketail dragonfly, which is listed as significantly rare in Virginia. These species are threatened due to the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat from wetland alteration, development, pollution and invasive species. The bog turtle is also threatened by the illegal wildlife trade.

When the property went up for sale, NRLT moved quickly to work with the owners, secure financing from The Conservation Fund and is preparing to purchase the property. In the short term, the Land Trust's ownership will ensure the land and the special species that live there are protected. The long term plan is that DCR will acquire the property and it will become a Natural Area Preserve managed for the benefit of its rare species. Conservation is very much a collaborative effort in Virginia and this project is a great example of how the New River Land Trust works with private owners and its many conservation partners to protect the New River region's natural resources.

Allison Tillett Joins New River Land Trust

We're very pleased to welcome Allison Tillett to our team as our new Conservation Outreach Coordinator. She will be taking over from Kirby Walke, who is moving out of the area with his family.

Allison's interest in conservation evolved from an affection for the natural world, appreciation for our delicate ecosystems, and enthusiasm for bird watching. At Virginia Commonwealth University she studied wetland science, restoration ecology and environmental policy, and graduated with her Master's degree in Environmental Studies in December 2016. Allison earned her Bachelor's of Arts in Religious Studies at Radford in 2009. She recently returned to settle down in the New River Valley to enjoy the mountains, the New River, trails, and the welcoming people in the area.

Allison is excited to facilitate the protection of some of Virginia's most beautiful and treasured landscapes, and further inspire appreciation of our natural resources.



NRLT Partners with Big Brothers Big Sisters VTCRC

Opportunities for new partnerships can spring up in surprising places. Conservation Outreach Coordinator Kirby Walke was working at RunAbout Sports when Tina Cannon came by to thank RunAbout for allowing her organization to volunteer for an aid station at the Hokie Half Marathon. As the conversation progressed, Tina shared about her work as director of a new Big Brothers Big Sisters program at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC), a mentoring program which pairs local youth (“Littles”) with professionals from the VTCRC and surrounding community (“Bigs”). Kirby immediately wondered if the New River Land Trust could provide some outdoor field experiences for Tina’s group through our Youth Outreach Program. The result has been an exciting new partnership between the NRLT and Big Brothers Big Sisters VTCRC.

The partnership with the NRLT has helped meet the need to develop an organized program for outdoor experiences. So far, the NRLT has arranged three field experiences for Bigs and Littles: the first involved learning mapping skills and completing a mapping scavenger hunt and hike on the VTCRC trails. The second was a Master Naturalist-led hike and quest for “special things” in nature at Heritage Park. The third was a trip to Glade Road Growing in Blacksburg to learn how to make tortillas by hand (photo



above), go on a detailed tour of the farm, and enjoy a locally-sourced lunch that included their handmade tortillas. In the fall, the group will hike Mill Creek Park in Narrows. We look forward to partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters again next year.

Outdoor Family Class Discovers Opossums & Birds

Master Naturalist Bill Opengari led an engaging exploration of opossums and birds at the Nature Play Space in Heritage Park in June. The kids and their families looked at bird’s nests and eggs, explored bluebird boxes, learned how to “talk” to opossums and about their acute sense of smell. We are grateful for the Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers who provide a wealth of information about the natural world and help with our nature education programs.

