The Appalachian Voice

June/July 2016

Born to be Wild
Stories about the natural wonders of our world
Mushrooms & Mycology  Critters at Risk  Wildlife Rescuers

environmental & cultural events


Rhododendron Festival
June 16-18, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.: Savor the blooming of Rhododendrons at Rhododendron Gardens, this tradition includes musicians, crafters, food and music. $6. Visit Rhododendron.com or call 336-249-4582.

FloydFest
July 27-31: An incredible 5-day music and arts festival in the beautiful Appalachian mountains. From stellar artists to our parking lot, you'll find something for everyone. FloydFest.org.

MusicCast 'N Sugar Grove
July 10-15: Celebrate the heritage of the High Country at the annual MusicCast 'N Sugar Grove. From stellar artists to our parking lot, you'll find something for everyone. Sugar Grove, N.C. Visit musiccastnsugargrove.org for more information or call 704-203-7201.


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New River Cave Tour July 25, 2-4 p.m.: Explore the caves of New River State Park and learn about the geology of these underground spaces. Dress to get dirty. Max Meadows, Va. Visit nps.gov/tark for registration or call 276-603-7796.

Virginia Highlands Festival August 7: The annual festival celebrates Virginia's cultural roots, offering a range of events. Activities include wildlife, bike events, hiking and wine tours. Cost varies. Abingdon, Va. Visit virginiahighlandsfestival.org or call 276-623-5266.

Tennessee's Top 50 Things to Try
A note from the executive director
Three years ago, Appalachian Voices launched our “Energy Savings for Appalachia” program with high hopes of making energy efficiency improvements more affordable for many people. Saving energy saves families money, results in more comfortable and healthy homes, creates good paying jobs, and cuts the amount of fossil fuel we burn to meet our energy needs.

In thisCultural landscape. Hikes available most weekends. Visit bluegrassncalifornia.com or call 336-385-6312.

Tourism to the state’s eastern region experienced a number of factors. The Starlight Park, the Rocky Mountain fire burned over 6,000 acres in what is considered to be the park’s second-largest fire on record. The Rocky Mountain fire, along with the Silver Mine and Buck Knob fires in North Carolina, closed several sections of state parks and the Appalachian Trail.

When confronted with especially dry weather conditions during peak wildfire season, it is important for hu-

tennessee’s most unique fire of the season was the Silver Mine fire that burned near Hot Springs, N.C., in late April. Due to its size and proximity to the town, the fire posed a bigger threat to ecosystems and the public than typical forest fires. The Silver Mine fire took two weeks to extinguish and resulted in a total of 8,364 acres burned.

Throughout April, wildfires continued to grow in intensity. The Starlight Fire in Greene County, Tenn., burned 90 acres, the equivalent of nearly half the state’s forest, in 2016. The increase in intensity came as peafowl wildfire season overlapped with a period of particularly dry weather throughout the Appalachian region.

Listed under the “National Resources” chapter of the Nature Conservancy’s Stuff Mountain Preserve and learn about the botanical variety of this rugged landscape. Hikes available most weekends in this preserve. For more information, call 336-385-0220.

Hike Buffalo Mountain Preserve August 10: Learn about the history and natural resources of the Nature Conservancy’s Buffalo Mountain Preserve. Meet at the Buffalo Mountain Preserve office for a guided hike with a local expert. For more information, call 828-765-6500.
Tennessee Passes New Lead Notification Bill

By Savannah Crimmens

Scientists and researchers at Virginia Tech have begun to use computer-generated models that could help fight toxic PCB chemicals in the New River. PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are industrial compounds that were banned in 1977 after scientists found them to be possible causes of several illnesses, including gastrointestinal disease and cancer. Humans come in contact with PCBs through the consumption of fish. Since 2001 the Virginia Department of Health has maintained several advisories against consuming certain fish caught from the New River.

In order to understand aggressively cont-fed PCBs, researchers are using computer-generated models to pinpoint the sources of contaminants in the river and to gauge the extent of the pollution. This mapping technology will allow researchers to better understand how toxic chemicals move and interact with ecosystems over time.

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, mapping PCBs in the New River is an important step in understanding how to stop the spread of pollution and improve water quality in the river.

New Agreement Stops Trash Trains in Boyd County, Ky.

By Hannah Peterson

A new smartphone app called Muddy Water Watch empowers anyone to report sediment pollution across the United States. Users can take a photo of water pollution, provide a description and use location technology to submit the report to the nearest environmental watchdog organization, such as a local Riverkeeper group. The app is the environmental watchdog organization, such as a local Riverkeeper group. The app is available on iTunes and Google Play.

"There had been a region and statewide effort to have citizens to monitor sediment, but the largest hold-up was recording tons," says Carson. "This is simple and greatly improves our ability to record." The app is available on iTunes and Google Play.

Muddy Water Watch intends to fight sediment pollution, the number one reason for poor water quality in North Carolina. Carson said that they are adding new keepers into the system on the state level first, but any report across the nation can still be submitted to them.

In April, Tennessee’s governor passed Senate Bill 2450 requiring quicker notification of dangerous lead levels in public water. Under the law, public water systems must notify the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation within 24 hours and affected residents within 72 hours of detection.

Agreement Stops Trash Trains in Boyd County, Ky.

Towler, the residents of Boyd County saw the landfill and installation of air monitoring systems around the property.

"It was something I knew I had to take care of," says Towler. "This agreement wasn’t brought on trains from as far away as New Jersey, according to the Herald-Dispatch.

New App Allows Citizens to Report Sediment in Waterways

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Environmental News From Around the Region

Cross Appalachia

Since 1883, the Mast General Store has outfitted its neighbors with everything they needed for life. That tradition continues today with gear for a day in the kitchen, a trek on a trail, or travels around the world. You'll even find a trip down Memory Lane through a collection of 500 old-fashioned candies.

Valle Crucis • Boone • Waynesville • Hendersonville • Asheville
Winston-Salem, NC • Knoxville, TN • Greenville, SC

We provide our Community Supported Agriculture members with a weekly share of fresh-picked veggies from our organic gardens in Floyd, Va. Members choose from 18 different field and cellar vegetables and can select from a variety of share sizes. You can find us at the following locations on Saturdays: Roanoke, Radford, Blacksburg and Christiansburg, Va.

Mast Generalstore.com • Facebook • Twitter

Waterbar Mountain Organic Farm Fresh-Picked Organic Produce CSA

Virginia Waterway Receives Environmental Award

The Honeoye-Greenway in Lyndon, Vt., was honored with a gold medal as a part of the Governor’s Environmental Excellence Awards. The greenway consists of a two-mile walking and biking trail along the Honeoye Creek. A report from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality states that by providing citizens with fitness classes and protecting the creek from pollution using natural barriers, the greenway “encourages wellness and connectivity” throughout the community.

Savannah Clemmons

Environmental Education Center Opens in West Virginia

The National Park Service opened Camp Brookside Environmental Education Center in Brooks, W.Va., on May 21. Originally a summer camp, Camp Brookside was renovated to house a day camp and environmental education services. The center has seven cabins, a mess hall, study In order to more aggressively cont-fed PCBs, researchers are using computer-generated models to pinpoint the sources of contaminants in the river and to gauge the extent of the pollution. This mapping technology will allow researchers to better understand how toxic chemicals move and interact with ecosystems over time. Accord

New Virginia Main Street Towns Aim to Thrive

Lexington and Wytheville, Va., are two of four new towns to be considered Virginia Main Street Communities. The Virginia Main Street Program, managed by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, works to revitalize selected downtown economies, while preserving their historic value. Towns with a Main Street designation become eligible for certain grants, such as Downtown Improvement Grants that can provide up to $25,000 for one-time projects. Economic consulting services will also become available.

Main Street Lexington Executive Director Stephanie Wilkinson hopes to make use of the upper floors of downtown buildings for condos or small businesses. Wytheville plans on opening several new businesses over the summer in addition to the six that were established last year, and potentially more by the end of 2016.

— Dylan Turner

Online Water Mapping a Useful Study Tools and other amenities that can be found at nps.gov/let. — Hannah Peterson

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In the summer of 2009, Tim W. Jackson, former editor of Canoe and Kayak magazine, outlined for the Appalachian Voice eight choices paddling opportunities in central and southern Appalachia. From heart-pumping class IV/V rapids to tranquil lake excursions, the list he created was by no means complete, but well-represents the diversity of the region’s aquatic adventures. — J.G.

Greenbrier River (IV-V) — Class IV-V rapids, one of the premier expert whitewater rivers in the country. — S.C.

Chattahoochee River (III-IV) — From picturesque calm in N.C. and Va., to exciting class IV in the New River Gorge. — J.G.

Nolichucky River (II-III) — Flows through a deep mountain gorge, ranging from class II to III, dam releases or heavy rains can offer a few more thrills and spills. — J.G.

Youghiogheny River (I-II) — 60,000-acre reservoir that provides excellent canoe or kayak fishing. — J.G.

Caddo River (I-IV) — Action-packed class III and IV rapids gained the Ozark worldwide attention during the 1996 Olympics white water events. — J.G.

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
This is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved waterways in the United States, and the only one maintained by the National Park Service. This 1828-1850 canal system is a reminder of a time when waterways were the primary means of transporting goods, and the canal is a place where nature and history come together. — J.G.

Luray Caverns
Located in the Shenandoah Valley, Luray Caverns is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved waterways in the United States, and the only one maintained by the National Park Service. This 1828-1850 canal system is a reminder of a time when waterways were the primary means of transporting goods, and the canal is a place where nature and history come together. — J.G.
Bleeding the Union

Coal companies faced a passionate fight to establish the union. The hardships they endured and their determination to unionize Appalachian coal mines. The term “redneck” can be traced back to union miners who showed their allegiance by wearing red bandanas. Photo by Molly Moore

The town of Matewan in the southern West Virginia coalfields was outraged. Text on the museum wall explains that a week after the shootout, federal troops arrived to suppress the uprising. Federal air power arrived as well, and though the planes never attacked, the massacres continued. The commanding general declared a ceasefire on a field near the town, and both state forces and miners agreed to a truce.

At the museum, displays of weapons and spent ammunition underscore the violence of the battle. Between 10,000 to 20,000 miners are estimated to have been part of what became known as the Red Coat Uprising. Of those who died, the red bandanas worn by union miners distinguished them from coal bosses.

After the fighting, 528 people were tried for their role in the Battle of Blair Mountain. About 100,000 to 200,000 people were brought to court.

The museum displays a children’s memorabilia kit, including red bandana, and a photograph of West Virginia coalfield towns. More than 500 subsidiaries were killed in the violence of the time period. “This site is a visual history lesson,” said a visitor from the area during a trip to the museum. Photo: Beach Museum

Standing on a May Day platform at the local union hall, which brought more than 50 attendees to listen to reenactment, Mother Jones, who had a prominent role in the persona of national union activist and labor organizer, testifies in front of the crowd.

The museum’s collection includes an extensive all-terrain vehicle trail network, more than 20 miles of hiking and backpacking trails, state-of-the-art interpretive exhibits, and more than 10 event where area speakers will share a story of the town's past and present. The May 4th 2015 event featured top notability from across the country.

Standing on a May Day platform at the local union hall, which brought more than 50 attendees to listen to reenactment, Mother Jones, who had a prominent role in the persona of national union activist and labor organizer, testifies in front of the crowd.

Tensions Unleashed

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The Changing Nature of Rural Electric Cooperatives in the 21st Century

By Remy McNutt, Appalachian Voices Energy Policy Director

When people think of their electric utility, they don’t usually think about how it operates, or whether it invests in clean energy or could help reduce energy costs. But that is changing as people struggle to pay their electric bills and experiencing more severe weather. Some of their local communities are getting more concerned about their health, the environment and their local economies.

A recent report by a company called Chmura Economics and Analytics shows that understanding the way that rural electric companies are changing can have important implications for consumers, communities, and policymakers.

Co-ops are looking at the best way to serve their consumers and provide them with a variety of services, says Telle Roberts, President of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

“Before, it was all about the power line the conversation does come up about electric bills,” he says. “Today, that’s the co-op — and therefore have a strong voice in how their utility is operated.”

The nation’s first rural electric co-op was established in Tuscaloosa, Washington, in the 1930s. Today, there are more than 900 electric co-ops serving 42 million people in America’s Energy Future.

In response, many rural electric co-ops are exploring new business models that reflect the changing needs of their members. They are offering services such as weatherization assistance, loans, and energy efficiency programs for their members.

One resident from Tazewell, Tenn., that has been incorporated since 1997. They built the first certified green home in North Carolina’s High Country.

During peak hours when electricity is most expensive, “There is a business opportunity for co-ops to rethink how they do business,” says Cherry.

Reducing waste through increasing energy efficiency and developing more renewable energy would have substantial environmental benefits, millions of tons of carbon emissions each year and cutting down on other air and water pollution. But it would also have a profound impact on families and local economies.

The average poverty rate in co-op service areas, particularly in Appalachia and the Southeast, is often higher than the national average. With costs for electricity higher in rural areas, co-op members ultimately spend a disproportionate amount of their income on their energy bills. This poses a significant burden on low-to moderate-income residents, exacerbating poverty and diverting money away from local economies.

All of this means that there is an opportunity for co-ops to rethink how they provide services to rural areas and manage energy demand. Yet not many co-ops have addressed these issues —

The Changing Electricity Market

“Would you believe that the people in the billion-dollar-a-year retail automotive industry, are a subculture of people?” asked Harold DePriest, CEO of the Electric Bluff Energy Center, in a conversation with Tennessean and former Chair of the Tennessee Valley Public Authority.

There’s no denying that, said DePriest. Embracing new opportunities is important.

Many rural electric co-ops in Appalachia and across the Southeast are continued on next page.

In other words, despite an added charge on their bills, nearly all customers start by feeling, “I don’t need to cut my electricity costs as a result of the efficiency improvements that have been installed, 100 percent of services and savings are kept by the customer.”

Under this model, eligible low-income families and are monitored by a customer’s bill payment history, not a credit score. This is attached to the property and not the individual, so no one will know the actual utility bill payment history, including residents of low-income and rental properties, if they choose, they couldn’t obtain it.

The expected results from Roanoke Electric’s efficiency improvements on as many as 10,000 homes are impressive. The first group of improvements, such as weatherization assistance, in June 2015. To maximize energy savings, Roanoke Electric’s service area is spent on energy costs. This is roughly the same amount of carbon emissions in the area where many families fall below the poverty line. The co-op has an electric bill of $8,000 for a single month, that is close to or above 40 percent of their income in many situations.” Cherry says.

This year, the co-op launched a new loan program, in June 2015, to provide power to rural areas and energy improvements on as many as 10,000 homes that are over 35 years old in Census Bureau identifies as more than 700,000 homes in poverty and 1.2 million homes that are over 35 years-old in the state.

Customers who receive federal Weatherization Assistance Program, provides just the job. They built the first certified green home in North Carolina’s High Country.

Funding opportunities is important.”

A New Model in Tennessee

Thousands of U.S. residents struggle to pay their electric bills year-round, particularly in the winter months when heating costs are most expensive. Many co-ops are exploring new business models that meet the needs of their members. Each member owns an equal voice in electing the Board of Directors, and their co-op — and a crucial voice in how their utility is operated.

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After more than a century of pri-
A number of factors are working together to limit the amount of solar that co-ops can install. As the amount of solar from co-op members grows and the price continues to fall, it becomes more difficult for members to meet that demand and keep up with the changing market. We need to adjust our business model to meet the challenge of expanding the program to meet new demands, as well as new members.

**The Utility of Today**

In 2013, Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corp. was one of the first co-ops across Appalachia to adopt this program. The impact of the pilot program was so positive that Blue Ridge Electric began talking about advocating for on-bill financing for energy efficiency programs across the state. Today, the utility has eliminated the pilot program and has adopted this program.

French Broad’s Director of Member Services Sam Hutchins got the idea for the program through his experience working with high energy bills. “Several years ago, I sat next to a member who was expecting to pay a double wide [manufactured] home that had all new electric, he said, “I knew I could not afford to continue heating that way. Through in- house research I found [high efficiency] heat pumps. If that was the answer for me, I knew it could help others.”

These two programs sharing an immediate economic impact, not only through saving co-op members, but by hiring local contractors to make the improvements and install the heat pumps.

“On-bill financing for energy ef- ficiency improvements represents our best chance to provide good local jobs and reduce our energy consumption,” says Sam Zimmerman, president of Summer Dale Homes and one of Blue Ridge Electric’s program contractors. As well as an Appalachian Voices supporter. “By doing so, it would demonstrate that what helps the environment sometimes helps the economy even more.”

Due to rising demand from their members, Blue Ridge Electric is also in the process of developing a community solar program that will generate enough electricity on behalf of the co-op members so they can achieve net zero energy. This will mean that the community will be able to achieve a net energy positive goal, which will be a significant step forward in reducing carbon emissions.

This area of Pisgah is part of the Pink Beds Loop. The Forest Discovery Center is just down the road from Pink Beds. We made sure they heard from members, and utilized a wide variety of program stakeholders expressed their support for an on-bill loan program.

The co-op marks the Pink Beds Loop with a circle trail to the South Mills River gauge. This trail is an easy hike, and the river crossings are wide. The trail leads to the South Mills River gauging station, where you can see the water level change. The Pink Beds Loop is a great way to spend a day exploring Pisgah National Forest.

**Hiking the Highlands**

**Pink Beds Loop**

**Difficult: Easy to moderate**

**Details:** 5-mile loop; muddy in wet weather

**Directions:** From Breed, N.C., take US-276 and turn left onto US-276. The Pink Beds Discovery Center is on the left. For open parking enter the trailhead.

**More Info:** Contact Pisgah Ranger District at 828-252-8600 or visit www.fsapps.com/PinkBeds Loop/eddiespumpbuylocal.jpg

On Friday the 13th, I set out to Trans- sylvania County, N.C., to spend the day exploring Pisgah National Forest with my brother. The Pink Beds Loop was rumored to have mountain tops and plentiful wildflowers, and the hike did not disappoint.

The Pink Beds Loop was named for the many wildflowers in the area. The trail is well marked, and the views are spectacular.

**Pink Beds Loop**

As you begin the loop clockwise, the path passes through stands of mountain laurel and rhododendron. It is a beautiful, dogwood, doghobble, doghobble or shrub with the same Latin name. The trail is easy to follow, although roots and ruts require some attention for footing.

The Pink Beds Loop is a wide trail that leads to the South Mills River gauge. The trail is an easy hike, and the river crossings are wide. The trail leads to the South Mills River gauging station, where you can see the water level change. The Pink Beds Loop is a great way to spend a day exploring Pisgah National Forest.

Electric Co-ops

**Continued from previous page**

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Cheri Weatherly of the Mountain As- sociation for Community Economic De- velopment coordinates the How$mart Appalachian co-ops, the programs are still relatively new and yet to make a significant dent in reducing energy waste and driving local economic de- velopment. Less than one-third of the co-ops serving central Appalachian communities have developed or com- menced on-bill to on-bill financing programs. Even where the programs exist, achieving the level of investment and participation that is possible in the region is proving to be a challenge.

The project from his own experience. At the moment of the midpoint, a side trail leads to the South Mills River gaug- ing station, where you can see the water level change. The Pink Beds Loop is a great way to spend a day exploring Pisgah National Forest.

The day we visited was fairly dry, but the area was still heavy with fog and moun- tain dew. The path undulates through a fern-covered, steeply rising area. The trail is an easy hike, and the river crossings are wide. The path undulates through a carpet of ferns, before rising out of the valley to catch glimpses of the mountains in the distance. And everywhere, bird songs provide the soundtrack of the forest.

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This area of Pisgah is part of the Pink Beds Loop. The Forest Discovery Center is just down the road from Pink Beds. We made sure they heard from members, and utilized a wide variety of program stakeholders expressed their support for an on-bill loan program.

The co-op marks the Pink Beds Loop with a circle trail to the South Mills River gauge. This trail is an easy hike, and the river crossings are wide. The trail leads to the South Mills River gauging station, where you can see the water level change. The Pink Beds Loop is a great way to spend a day exploring Pisgah National Forest.

Electric Co-ops

**Continued from previous page**

would be a challenge.

Cheri Weatherly of the Mountain As- sociation for Community Economic De- velopment coordinates the How$mart Appalachian co-ops, the programs are still relatively new and yet to make a significant dent in reducing energy waste and driving local economic de- velopment. Less than one-third of the co-ops serving central Appalachian communities have developed or com- menced on-bill to on-bill financing programs. Even where the programs exist, achieving the level of investment and participation that is possible in the region is proving to be a challenge.

The project from his own experience. At the moment of the midpoint, a side trail leads to the South Mills River gaug- ing station, where you can see the water level change. The Pink Beds Loop is a great way to spend a day exploring Pisgah National Forest.
**Salamanders of Appalachia**

According to the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, D.C., many species of salamanders live in the varied climates and freshwater ecosystems of Appalachia that are found nowhere else on earth.

However, populations of amphibians — including many salamander species — are declining, and the specific causes of this decline are not known. Factors such as climate change may play a role in the loss of Virginia salamanders that breed through the spring and are particularly sensitive to water quality, changes in temperature and moisture levels.

In February, the U.S. Forest Service rejected a 10-mile segment of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline — which would cut through a “unique place where one of the world’s most diverse spruce-fir forest.”

According to the Service, this tiny archeological measure only 0.11 inches across and its habitat is “restricted to small areas of suitable mose mat on a few scattered rock outcrops and boulders beneath trees in the spruce-fir forests.”

Such vulnerable creatures are protected by the Endangered Species Act, which the U.S. Congress passed into law in 1973. Its main purpose was to provide protection for species at risk of becoming extinct and to protect the ecosystems in which they live. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is charged with implementing the act to save vulnerable and endangered species.

The act and a previous protection provided to endangered species and allowed plants and invertebrates to be classified as “endangered” or “threatened.” The law also required federal agencies to conserve endangered species while prohibiting the agencies from damaging the habitats on which those species depend.

States also have an active role in conserving the wildlife within their borders, and the act outlines a framework for this collaboration and established sources of federal funding that continue to help offset the costs of state initiatives.

To list or not to list

The Endangered Species Act can be used to protect — or not protect — very specific classifications of plants and animals, such as subspecies of flying squirrels.

The Carolina northern flying squirrel is federally recognized as endangered and is a subspecies of flying squirrel found only at high elevations in western North Carolina, Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee. This nocturnal mammal reaches up to 12 inches in length and has a distinctive white stripe rather than flies, on flaps of skin that extend from its outstretched arms.

It is primarily threatened by loss of habitat, introduction of foreign pests and expansion of residential and recreational spaces.

But another subspecies — the West Virginia northern flying squirrel — lost its protected status in 2009.

**Endangered Species and Habitats of Appalachia**

**Virginia big-eared bats** are found in mountainous areas of Virginia and North Carolina — in places is taking a heavy toll.

“Ninety percent of the animals come in because of human involvement,” says Jessie Cole, a wildlife rehabilitation at Rockfish Wildlife Sanctuary in Nelson County, Va. “Humans are leaving an imprint on the earth, and unfortunately animals sometimes have to pay the consequences for that.”

Animal behaviorists say that feeding on human food or trash are often injured or sick and they can never be wild again.

“Threatened” is a very different form of volunteering at a humane society where you’re walking dogs and playing with cats, and it’s very fun,” Crabill warns. “Volunteering with a rehabilitation center is very hard work. You get dirty. They’re wild animals so they’re unpredictable and there’s a chance that you’re going to get scratched or bit.”

According to Crabill, relying on volunteers can create its own issues. “Sometimes they decide that they have something else that they would rather do and we end up being short staffed,” she says.

Carlton Burke, a home-based wildlife rehabilitator and freelance naturalist, says tough decisions and a heavy workload also take a toll. “Sometimes you have an animal so severely injured that the animal has to be euthanized,” he says. “Possibly 50 percent of what we take in must be euthanized.”

Wildlife rehabilitation in Appalachia

**CRITTERS AT RISK**

**BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

Humans can minimize the negative imprint of our next lives on our wild neighbors. Most food sources — dog food, birdseed and raisins — are accessible and keep raccoons, bears, squirrels, birds and crows from being injured or killed by traffic. Don’t place attractive treats where hungry bears can get caught in them, and hang something on vitamin and other food sources in the trees. Open containers of liquid are dangerous to dogs and cats, raccoons, bears and other small animals.

Researchers at the Appalachian Bear Rescue and Education Center in Lexington. “One 20-pound sack of raccoon milk replacer runs roughly $200. We go through that in about a week.”

Finding volunteers is another obstacle. “It’s very different from volunteering at a humane society where you’re walking dogs and playing with cats and it’s very fun,” Crabill warns. “Volunteering with a rehabilitation center is very hard work. You get dirty. They’re wild animals so they’re unpredictable and there’s a chance that you’re going to get scratched or bit.”

**Wildlife rehabilitation in Appalachia**

Many species of salamanders live in the varied climates and freshwater ecosystems of Appalachia that are found nowhere else on earth.

Along with amphibian species worldwide, Appalachia’s diverse salamander populations are declining. Article includes the Cow-Knot Salamander (right, photo by Steve David Johnson, stevedavidjohnson.com) and the Cheat Mountain Salamander (right, photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).
water is the common thread that ties everything together.

One creature that depends on these streams is the diamond darter. This translucent silver fish thrives in sand-bottom rivers to avoid predators and is recognized by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as one of the most endangered species in the Southeast. The member of the perch family roams no more than five inches in length and is most active at dawn and dusk.

Poor water quality and sedimentation, as well as the fragmentation of its habitat due to the construction of dams, has severely reduced this darter’s numbers. One found in Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia, the only surviving diamond darter population is now restricted to the Elk River of West Virginia. And the watershed of the Elk River is affected by such harmful practices as mountain removal, coal mining, natural gas drilling and timbering, all of which impact water quality and thus further threaten the diamond darter.

Mountain streams are also home to numerous species of endangered freshwater mussels, such as the Appalachian darter. Now found only in sections of the Powell and Clinch rivers of Virginia and Tennessee, this fish-seeking mollusk is losing its habitat from the construction of dams and is being poisoned by sediments and toxins in the water.

Preserving Appalachian Habitats and Humans

Groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity, a nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Ariz., are working hard to expand federal protection to as many endangered and threatened species as possible. While the group continues to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to have new species considered for protection, a 2011 settlement with the agency is also ensuring that new species are being adequately defined based on their status of species that have been on the agency’s candidate list, sometimes for many years. According to Crabill, trying to raise an orphaned bird or animal, which is illegal in most states without the proper permits for rehabilitation or education, is a bad idea. Each species must maintain a specific body temperature and requires specific foods to eat. If fed improperly or with the wrong kind of food, the animal could develop pneumonia or even die. Even if an orphan survives, making a pet out of such animals can be stressful for the animals and can create a range of problems, such as the animal being too difficult to handle or the baby being abandoned by the parent. The babies have no scent whatsoever. The mother only comes back to feed the babies and stays away the rest of the time, as not to attract a predator. “It’s pretty gratifying to know that you stopped in and did something, and what you thought would work, actually did work,” says Crabill.
A Magical Mycology Tapestry

Mushrooms Weave a Network of Ecology, Medicine, Food and Farming

By Eliza Laubach

... a fruiting body that emerges from the forest provides a glimpse to a web that is invisible to most people. This web is created by fungi, which have a special relationship to plants. Fungi help plants grow by providing nutrients and other benefits. In return, plants provide fungi with sugars that fungi use for energy. This symbiosis is called mycorrhiza. It is a mutually beneficial relationship that is essential for the growth of many plants. Without it, many plants would not be able to grow.

In the southern Appalachian Mountains, according to the Appalachian State University Extension office, is cultivating mushrooms. This project is designed to help break down pollutants from municipal and agricultural runoff. This project attempted to use the natural power of fungi and their mycelium network to break down and reduce pollutants from the environment.

One of the most sought-after offerings is Ganoderma tsugae, a medicinal mushroom that is native to Appalachia and provides a variety of health benefits. It is used in traditional Chinese medicine and has many healing properties. It is also used in modern medicine to treat various conditions, including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Another type of mushroom that is popular in Appalachia is Ganoderma lucidum. This mushroom is also native to the region and is used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat various conditions, including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

In addition to medicinal mushrooms, there are many edible mushrooms that are popular in Appalachia. One of the most popular is the Morel, which is an edible mushroom that is known for its unique flavor and texture. It is often used as a topping for various dishes, including salads, soups, and sandwiches.

In conclusion, mushrooms play an important role in Appalachian culture. They provide food, medicine, and a connection to nature. As the population becomes more interested in sustainable and local food systems, mushrooms are likely to become an even more important part of Appalachian cuisine.

Morel: an edible mushroom with a brown cap, white flesh, and a distinctive, warty exterior. Found on roots of dying/dead oaks in late summer to late fall.

Maitake: an edible mushroom with a tan-colored cap, white flesh, and a unique, umbrella-like shape. Found on roots of dying/diseased oaks in late summer to late fall.

Oyster: an edible mushroom with a white cap, white flesh, and a unique, umbrella-like shape. Found on roots of dying/diseased oaks in late summer to late fall.

Fungus Among Us

Filtering Water with Fungi

In the town of Mars Hill, N.C., hydrologist Tom Dorgan is using fungi to filter pollutants from municipal and agricultural runoff. This project attempted to use the natural power of fungi and their mycelium network to break down and reduce pollutants from the environment.

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The Miracle of Harvest
Meadowview Restaurant and Farm
Focuses on Local Foods and Community

By Eric J. Wallace

After co-authoring 2007’s wildly successful New York Times best-seller Animal, Vegetable, Miracle with his wife, Barbara Kingsolver, Steven Hopp got an idea. What if he used his portion of the profits to open a farm-to-table restaurant? For years, even Hopp’s 2008 decision to found Harvest Table Restaurant in the tiny southwest Virginia town of Meadowview seemed ludicrous. The area’s population totaled 967 and had a per-capita income of around $15,700. “Why would anyone open a gourmet restaurant here?” scoffed Hopp’s detractors. “It’s just too small a market.” But Hopp thought differently. By considering the virtues in terms of traditional, profit-motivated business models, detractors all but missed the point. Indeed, Hopp believed the true mileage was how to maximize a business’s positive impact on its community.

Turning a ‘Miracle’ into Reality

For Hopp, a professor of environmental science at Emory and Henry College, the Benn.defaultValue.NEC.1x1.png

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“Thousands of folks responded, telling us of their efforts to reclaim a healthier food culture — they found their local farmers’ market, raised chickens and planted gardens [miracle]helping supporting individuals, families and communities to be involved in local food movements.”

Considered from such a vantage, opening a restaurant based on principles validated in Miracle made perfect since it was simply the next phase of the project.

“The experiment started when we realized we could do something for [our little] town of Meadowview,” says Hopp. “Clearly we needed jobs. Determined to test the hypothesis, Hopp brought and renovated a big building in the center of Meadowview’s displaced, 1-mile stretch of a downtown that had once been a booming railway and textile hub. He conceived his long-time, protégé and farm-to-table template and instruction and the Community’s overall well-being. The idea was to show kids that money can be made growing more than hay and soybeans. “They got to sell produce to stores, restaurants, [and] people,” he explains. “It’s a way to grow your share of what’s needed now and anticipating what’ll be needed in the future.”

Within seven years of opening, the number of jobs Hopp has worked. The number of local food institutions that blossomed to nearly 100. Taste-wise, by 2011 the buzz was so wide it attracted a New York Times food writer, who subsequently described the restaurant as a place that would be “an instant hit in a popular city.” It was a learning experience for everyone.”

Hopp didn’t take long for relationships to form. Growers began phoning Newton before planting the season’s vegetables. Expert foragers would stop in and peddle what they’d find. Farms were upgrading their infrastructure and purchasing additional heritage breed livestock to stock the restaurant’s demand for organic, sustainably raised meats. In short, the project was working. However, Hopp and Newton weren’t done.

With sky-high culinary ambitions — “We wanted our food to taste as good as anywhere in the U.S.,” says Hopp — “that was one of our major goals” — there remained specialized ingredients that weren’t getting produced. For farmers with the know-how to pull it off, the labor demands of raising small batches of specialty vegetables, herbs and spices didn’t make economic sense. So, Hopp set up an agar-4.5 acre plot of property adjacent to his Kingsolver’s homestead and hired Appalachian State University agro-ecology students, including hand-carved chess boards, home-made, wooden, painted, photo-plastic, handmade snowflakes, soups, jams, jars, furniture, earthstone and myriad other items. All the products were locally produced and definitely for sale.

By combining the scenic beauty of the natural landscape with the culture of the restaurant, Hopp is able to provide talented local artisans a sales platform.

In their first year, Harvest Table dining hosted nearly 6,000 unique diners streaming in from near and far presentations in the region, local food recommendations, or articles like this one, the benefits that the restaurant has been named by both Virginia Living and Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine as the state’s region’s “greenest” restaurant has certainly helped. “When someone visits we want them to have a good time and be amazed by the food,” says Hopp. “We want them to want to access the community experience. I think, in reality, why we’re here is to repeat business. You can’t do that without people seeing that, that’s what keeps them coming back.”

In the end, while Hopp is quick to point out that the project is not making many one rich fast, he says the farm, restaurant and Guild are putting money in the pockets of 300 individuals and farms. The overall result, he asserts, is a net positive for the community.

“We’re teaching tons of people,” he says. “Hands and hands-on here — farmers have altered their perceptions. Children and diners are learning about environmentally responsible agriculture. We’re having a lot of fun, and we’re healing the earth in the process.”

And all of this has been made possible simply by believing in local foods. Isn’t it amazing what a meal can do? To find more information, visit harveshtablerestaurant.com

Miracle of Harvest
Continued on next page

Harvest Table’s menu features locally crafted handmade stone pizza pies, pan-seared rainbow trout, and vegetables and vegetable offerings. Nothing is fresher than a dish picked from the Farming Garden, cattle to be killed on the farm, and produce from the community’s own root crop ambassadors. The farm is known for providing quality, sustainable, healthy, and seasonal food to feed America.

Harvest Table is located at 400 University Drive in the heart of downtown Abingdon. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week, and serves adults only. The menu is seasonal and changes daily. The restaurant is closed during the winter months.

Harvest Table is open for brunch Saturdays and Sundays. Reservations are encouraged. For more information, call 276-626-1767 or email info@harvesttablerestaurant.com.
states. Across the country, electric utilities are heating up in dozens of the next five years, battling for the future of clean energy are heating up in dozens of our own solar installations to offset the cost of power they draw from the grid during periods of high energy demand.

Several state commissions are way ahead of West Virginia’s and have already concluded that the benefits of net metering are both vast and shared. But groups including The Alliance for Solar Choice, which has built a constituency. Where the solar industry is well-established, it supports development in the state. Last year, North Carolina added 1,134 megawatts of solar capacity, second only to California.

The renewable standard survived in the final product of the 2015 special session under the House and Senate, and a standard requiring utilities to meet a portion of electricity demand with renewables have made the state a model of solar success. But some North Carolina policymakers want to take a different path. Lawmakers let the state’s solar rules expire at the end of 2015. After an attempt in the state legislature to weaken the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard, solar advocates are doubling down to push for legislation to keep solar in place.

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That’s hard but not far off, according to Ivy Main, an environmental lawyer who writes about Virginia energy policy on her blog Power for the People VA.

“We’ve made an economic tipping point where some residents and businesses find it worth doing,” says Main. “This is not focused on the future.”

The commercial community has about the same
potential for solar as its southern neighbor but lacks a mandatory renewable portfolio standard and never enacted state tax credits to bolster clean energy.

A recent study for the Center for BioLogistics and Virginia—on “F” policies to help residents access solar.

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total access to solar, they’re making the case to utility regulators—and new residents—that building the $5 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline to transport natural gas is a must to maintain reliability and meet growing electricity demand. The two utilities will own a majority stake in the project, which is designed to bring cheap natural gas to the southeast. But due to a groundswell of public attention to solar, they’re making the case to utility regulators—and new residents—that building the $5 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline to transport natural gas is a must to maintain reliability and meet growing electricity demand. The two utilities will own a majority stake in the project, which is designed to bring cheap natural gas to the southeast.

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Virginia Utility Submits Plan for the Future

In May, Dominion Virginia Power submitted its multi-year forecast for meeting energy and financial demands in the state while complying with the federal Clean Power Plan.

The proposal presents alternate scenarios for the future that employers would use to determine the cost of each. In announcing its plan, Dominion claims that it “will invest billions of dollars and significantly increase use of renewable energy.”

Environmental groups are unconvinced and are challenging the proposal in court.

Following months of tumultuous hearings, Dominion announced its plan, building a third nuclear reactor at its North Anna facility in Louisa County.

Energy Burdens fell on Low-Income and Minority Communities

Several inner-city and minority communities are disproportionately affected by pollution, as mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Recent Studies Question the Economic Benefits of Pipelines

Concern: Ginger as Coal Companies emerge from Bankruptcy

Hannah Petersen

Fracking Wastewater Linked to Contamination

The U.S. Geological Survey released a study in May that for the first time linked surface water contamination to natural gas fracking wastewater injection sites.

The researchers wrote that “multiple lines of evidence demonstrate that activity of the Marcellus Shale is associated with detections of contaminants in surface and groundwater.”

The study’s authors concluded that “improving landfill engineering and quality of water treatment is necessary to protect our drinking water supplies.”

Clean Power Plan Court Case Delays Until September

But regulators and environmental groups concluded that pipelines from the Appalachian region would generate power from new sources and should be “out of fixing the problem,” says Doris Petersen, a labor activist in Fayette Co., W.Va., are fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline would cost low. A low-priority ranking would be “out of fixing the problem,” says Doris Petersen, a labor activist in Fayette Co., W.Va., are fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline would cost low. A low-priority ranking would

Virginia Utilities asked for $2.6 per month increase, which if approved, consumers will see by July 2017.

By Brian Scott

In another study, the Institute for Energy and Financial Analysis concluded that pipelines from the Marcellus and Utica shale-beds beneath Ohio, West Virginia, and North Carolina — the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines.

The study concludes that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has authority to issue a “no go” order to a pipeline if it “would not be in the public interest.”

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Virginia Utilities asked for $2.6 per month increase, which if approved, consumers will see by July 2017.
Connecting the Economic Dots in Southwest Virginia

At a recent economic summit in Wise, Va., Democratic congresswoman Tammy Owens paused at the Appalachian Voices information booth to talk about the potential for reclaiming abandoned coal mines in ways that benefit the local economy. Owens runs an organic commercial farm on former strip mine land. She also wants to start an outfitting business to take out visitors on another abandoned strip mine.

Owens was one of more than 300 people who attended such a summit – as organizers and leaders at Appalachian Voices – working on economic development initiatives to help move Southwest Virginia forward.

Although the region is struggling, there are opportunities, too. Under the Obama administration’s POWER initiative to boost areas around the country hit hardest by coal’s decline, the 2016 federal budget includes a total of $65 million for matching grants. And the Appalachian Regional Commission Act would release an additional $1 billion over five years for remediation of abandoned mines and land that has a poor cleanup economic benefit.

During afternoon breakout sessions, attendees discussed topics such as education, workforce development, health, supporting existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and developing the region’s agricultural and natural assets, and tapping into emerging initiatives like solar energy.

Developing solar energy in Southwest Virginia was one of the featured breakout sessions at the summit. For the past several months, we have been partnering with the nonprofit organization Appalachian Voices to research opportunities for community-scale solar energy in the region. Our goal is to help build the local economy by generating local jobs and relying on local energy.

Our booth also focused on the opportunity to reclaim abandoned mine land (generally strip mines closed prior to 1977) in a way that also develops economic opportunities such as solar energy. Appalachian Voices is currently working with environmental consulting firm Donohue-Nickerson to consider ways to build on our own proposal with the Appalachian VoicesDOE Appalachia Southwest Virginia program, which launched in 2013 to provide funding for renewable energy projects. The goal is to provide a community-scale renewable energy model, allowing communities to build a clean energy business through community-scale renewable energy projects.

This spring, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative had a booth at FloydFest, and it’s not too late to get involved. To learn more about how to get involved in the opportunity to build new energy systems, visit appvoices.org/energystory. 

HELLOS AND GOODBYES Changing Faces on the Appalachian Voices Team

This spring was a time of transition at Appalachian Voices as the team and several key staff members moved on to new opportunities. Nick Wood, a resident of Durham, N.C., now staffs our N.C. Field Coordinator, replacing Sarah Kellogg. Nick is a licensed attorney and labor union organizer before joining Appalachian Voices as our N.C. Outreach Coordinator. After working in labor law and with the Neuse River Coalition, he worked with us and allies across Virginia to fight new coal-fired power plants as the Wise Energy For Virginia coalition coordinator. His passion for the region helped her communicate the reasons why rural electric cooperatives in western North Carolina to circum-

2016 Webinar Series

If you’re reading about environmental and energy issues in The Appalachian Voices, chances are you’re watching through Appalachian Voices’ ongoing webinar series. During these live webinars, attendees can ask staff and other experts questions. But don’t worry — you miss the live session, you can watch the video recording online at your convenience.

In the first webinar of 2016, we held a panel discussion on the future of solar energy in Virginia. The panelists included Virginia Commonwealth University professor Brian Cramer, Dominion Resources Chairwoman Margaret-skinner, and Dominion Energy President Tom Glavich. The panelists discussed new opportunities to better leverage solar energy in the Commonwealth.

This spring, Appalachian Voices, our partners attended the Duke Energy and Dominion Resources Sponsorship meeting to remind them to protect nonprofits and our planet. It’s no secret that these big utilities have a strong track record on clean energy. Duke is working with the state of North Carolina to curb climate change; Dominion is pushing forward with clean energy projects.

In Tennessee, we’re collaborating with environmental consulting firm Donohue-Nickerson to identify optimal sites for potential solar energy projects. Our focus is on building opportunities and training the workforce to raise the bar, connect with new supporters and greatly expand our impact.

Dominion Energy has committed to help bring communities together to develop solar energy projects. In this role, we’re connecting with new supporters and greatly expand our impact.

Our two solar projects are being developed along with our partners with the Utility Solar and Appalachian Voices teams. The project is located in Chilhowie, Va., and will be built in partnership with the Virginia Solar Cooperative and the Virginia Solar Cooperative.

In the coming weeks, we will continue to work with our partners at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative to launch the program, and we’re continuing to work with our partners on a new energy efficiency program that will bring communities together to develop solar energy projects.

In Tennessee, our work with state organizations and electric cooperatives has led to major energy efficiency financing programs. Our focus is on building opportunities and training the workforce to raise the bar, connect with new supporters and greatly expand our impact.

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Although the sharp-shinned hawk is the smallest hawk in North America, its feats of aerial acrobatics are often deadly for songbirds. This particular bird collided with a car and required rehabilitation. Fortunately, there were no broken bones, and the hawk healed quickly. The raptor was released on Nov. 25, 2012. Turn to the centerspread to read more about regional efforts to save wild critters. Photo by Marty Silver, Tennessee State Parks

Renew your commitment to protecting Appalachia for future generations

This summer, consider how you can help protect the land, air, water and communities of this unique and beautiful region of the world.

Appalachian Voices is a nonprofit, grassroots organization working to save the central and southern Appalachian mountains from serious environmental threats and to advance a vision for a cleaner energy future. Join us today.

AppVoices.org/join