



# Newsletter

## June 2025



### Since Last Time ...

I don't know about you, but I am still trying to do "spring clean-up" in May and get everything planted from the plant swap and winter sowing. The rainfall has been good for the plants but hinders outdoor chores.

Our next event is the walk at The Cedars Natural Area Preserve. If you did not hear Laura Young's presentation on Restoration Ecology for river cane in February, you can view the video on our website. Laura will be leading our walk to The Cedars. It does involve travel time, but we are planning to carpool. As of now, we still have two slots open. Please refer to the details in the Upcoming Events section on the website and in this newsletter.

Other WOAHP projects in progress include:

- Assisting kindergarten teachers at the Southside Elementary School in Johnson City to establish a monarch garden. It is going well, pictures to follow.
- Establishing a community native garden at the Coomes Rec Center in Abingdon. WOAHP is working with the Coomes Center staff, Abingdon Parks and Rec, VA Master Naturalist and Washington County Master Gardeners to develop and plant this garden. Planting is scheduled for June 7. I would like to thank Gail Olson, Karen Elmore, Anne Tucker, Monica Hoel, Beth Merz for their coordination of this project. Come by to see it.
- New things are happening in TN thanks to Jen Skarsaune, who joined our events committee. There is a Doe Mountain Recreation Area nature walk in September. And Jen will be at the Johnson County Farmers Market in Mountain City on September 20 for a tabling event to share information about WOAHP, give away seed packets and talk about native plants.

If anyone has a particular topic that could be considered for guest speakers in 2026, or nature walks, or Zoom talks please email [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com).

And last, Mendy Bechtold will be updating the WOAHP website to illustrate more current events. Please bear with us through the transition. The website was not updated in 2025, but our goal is to improve that communication.

The general membership may not be interested in the topic of bylaws, but we do have them. The bylaws were established in 2022. Wild Ones National organization has revised their bylaws and will require changes to be made to the WOAHP bylaws. This is under review now and will be completed in 1-2 months. Stay tuned.

Yours Truly, Paula Reynolds, WOAHP President

### Calendar at-a-Glance

[Details on pages 2-4](#)

**June 14: The Cedars Natural Area Preserve Walk with Laura Young**

**July 24: Mushroom Discovery Walk and Native Garden Tour**

**August 9: Tour of Member's Native Garden, Susan Brown & Christy Shivell**

**September 9: Wildflower Walk, Doe Mountain Reserve**

### WOAHP Merch

**Summer means we need to beat the heat. Short sleeve tees, bucket hats and ball caps in many colors! It is the only fundraiser for our chapter.**

Visit [Get wild. | Bonfire](#), or scan the QR code below with your smart phone's camera.



## Upcoming Event Details

### **June 14      The Cedars Natural Area Preserve (Preregistration required)**

We will join Laura Young, the Southwest Regional Steward of the VA Natural Heritage Program, to visit one of the most unique natural areas in Virginia. The Cedars Natural Area Preserve is home to over 30 rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species and communities in southwest Virginia. It also protects and manages for springs, karst features, caves, and riverbanks that are home to over 60 rare, threatened, and endangered aquatic and cave species.

Participation in this event was limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees. Only a couple spots remain open. Register by email to:

[wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com)

The Cedars is not a typical preserve in the sense of walking trails and parking areas; it exists for the resources first and the humans second. Plan to be walking through the forest, potentially on uneven ground, and through vegetation at times. It's recommended to wear long pants and sturdy hiking shoes or boots, and bring trekking poles if they would assist you. Bug spray and sunscreen are recommended as well as whatever food, water, and weather appropriate clothing items you need to have a good day in the woods.

The Cedars are about 1 ½ hour drive from Bristol. [Confirmation and directions to The Cedars will be provided to the registrants. by email.](#)

### **July 24:      Mushroom Discovery Walk and Native Garden Tour (Preregistration required)**

Join us at the [Blue Ridge Discovery Center](#) to enjoy and learn about native habitats in our region. We will follow trails in the morning to discover mushrooms and enjoy a guided tour of the native habitat areas established at the BRDC in the afternoon. You will need to bring lunch and beverage.

Lee Borg will lead the walk to identify and learn about various mushroom species growing there. Lee is a Virginia Master Naturalist with a passion for edible wild mushrooms. She retired from software engineering after 36 years, moved to the mountains, and began to notice mushrooms. Dazzled by the stunning variety of shapes and colors, curiosity drove her to have them identified. When told she had found a choice edible, something shifted in with her mind about the possibility of obtaining good food from the forest vs. the grocery store. Lee has now safely consumed over 100 species of wild mushrooms, learned about the trees and plants that support them, and most importantly, how interconnected our natural world is.

Olivia Jackson, the BRDC program coordinator, will lead a guided tour of a rain garden, wetlands, pond, and nature trails that meander through the campus. Olivia grew up just

## Event Details (continued)

### July 24: Mushroom Discovery Walk and Native Garden Tour (continued)

outside Shenandoah National Park and spent most of her childhood exploring the great outdoors. She has a degree in biology and took field classes like herpetology, ornithology, and field botany that sparked her interest in naturalist education. She developed her skills in naturalist education at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center just outside Albany, New York. During her time there, her passion for teaching people about the wonders of the outdoors flourished. She believes that every day is an opportunity to learn something new!

We will also learn how volunteers can help maintain and expand the gardens while learning about them as part of the BRDC Weekly Garden Club.

Participation in this event will be limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees. WOA and WCMG members can register starting June 24th, and registration will be available to the public starting July 10th. You will receive confirmation and more detailed directions by email.

Register by email to: [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com)

**Time:** 10:30 am – 2:00 pm

**Location:** Blue Ridge Discovery Center, 6402 Whitetop Rd., Troutdale, VA 24378,

The Blue Ridge Discovery Center is located about 1 hour from Bristol. Take I-81N to Exit 35 and take Whitetop Rd (600) south 11.4 miles to the BRDC at the intersection of Konarock Road. We will meet on the porch of the main schoolhouse building.

### August 9: Tour of member's Native Garden, Susan Brown and Christy Shivell

WOAH Members Only Registration Required, Free Event,  
Home/Private Garden Tour

We are excited to offer a home garden tour by Susan Brown, a WOA member. She has spent 3 years transitioning some of her 12 wooded acres to native plants. Susan has consulted with Christy Shivell, owner of Shy Valley Nursery in Fall Branch, TN. Christy will be joining us to talk about her design and planting of various areas. We will divide into groups: native plantings, rain garden, hillside fruit and nut trees, trail through the woods, battle with invasive plants.

**Time:** Saturday, August 9th, 11:00 am – 1:00 [pm (Rain Date 8/16/25)]

**Location:** Abingdon, VA near Food Lion, Members please use email to register for the tour: [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) and the address will be provided by email closer to the date.

Maximum attendance: 25, carpooling required with details to follow.

## Event Details (continued)

### September 9: **Living on the Edge, Members Guided Nature Walk with Jen Skarsaune**

(Preregistration required)

Join Certified Tennessee Naturalist and fellow Wild Ones member Jen Skarsaune to explore the flora and fauna of edge habitat at Doe Mountain Recreation Area. Learn about native plants in bloom and some of the pollinators that they support.

We will gather at the Doe Mountain Adventure Center before leaving on a 1-mile naturalist guided walk along one of Doe Mountain's trails. Wear durable footwear and weather appropriate clothing. The walk will take approximately an hour. Bring your curiosity, a water bottle and hiking stick. This is a FREE event. You do not need to purchase a day pass but please complete a waiver if you do not already have a DMRA pass.

<https://waiver.smartwaiver.com/w/wvujn19nk2mezbgmb2ymw/web/>

This event is open exclusively to Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands members. Participation will be limited to maintain a high-quality experience for all attendees. WOA members can register via email to: [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com). DMRA is about 1 hour's drive from Bristol. Confirmation will be provided to the registrants by email.

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**Location:** Adventure Center, 1203 Harbin Hill Road, Mountain City, TN 37683

From Shady Valley, take US421 to J Shoun Rd and Harbin Hill Rd to the Center. From Damascus, take TN91 South to Mountain City and TN 67 2.7 miles west to Harbin Hill Road. The Center coordinates are: 36.45635, -81.84616

More info: <http://dmra.gov>

## There Are Many Ways to Get Involved

**Volunteer** Wild Ones does not require formal training classes, volunteer work hours, or continuing education hours for membership. However, the Chapter has events and organizational efforts that do require volunteer member help. Tabling events are opportunities for introducing the public to WOA. There is a WOA Board that meets a little less than once per month, and our chapter also has various committees. Perhaps you'd like to serve on one! Let us know with an email to the following address. Please send an email to [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com) if you can volunteer even an hour or two.

**Newsletter** Your fellow WOA members would love to hear from you! Send in your own member profile. Write about your garden, what are you hoping to accomplish, what resources did you use, what strategies did you employ? Do you have before and after pictures that show what you've done? Have you read a good nature book that you'd like to review?

Send your text and photos to [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com)

## Seeking Volunteer for WOA President 2026

It may seem early, but I am reaching out to members who may be willing to serve as President for 1 year. My term is up at the end of 2025. If you were to express an interest now, I could mentor you for several months. The current Board is very supportive, and many have been in their positions for years. I am hoping to meet with anyone who might be considering getting more involved in the chapter. I could explain duties and answer questions.

When I agreed to be President my main concern was not having the native plant knowledge that other members demonstrate. But I was assured it was not a requirement for the position. I would say the duties are more about organization and moving the chapter forward. The team at Wild Ones National is very helpful and quick to offer support, and there are training video resources for many areas of the national and chapter functions.

So, I would suggest we meet for lunch or dinner, my treat, and just explore the idea. We don't need an immediate answer. I'm still President for the next 7 months. Feel free to email me at [wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com](mailto:wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com), or meet me at a event, or call me. I am looking forward to talking with you.

Hopefully and sincerely,  
Paula Reynolds, President

## Fireflies – Lightningbugs !

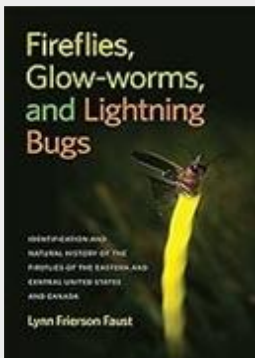
Do you ever feel like you are in the dark? Well, good! That's a great place to be according to WOA Vice President, Melanie Smith who recommends these books that will light your path to learn more about fireflies just in time for the season.

Scientists and naturalists are just beginning to learn how important darkness is not only to our wellbeing, but to all living things—plants, animals, bacteria and all. In fact, the night is considered its own separate habitat. There are myriad creatures and really cool plants out there! Not to mention glowing fungi and sparkling stars.

Where to start? How about with lightning bugs? There's a reason why you are seeing less and less of them, and that reason has to do with lack of native plants and too many chemicals. Try these books out to educate yourself. These books were recommended by Dr. Will Kuhn, an entomologist who was the keynote speaker at this year's Blue Ridge Discovery Center Spring Naturalist Rally.

Dr. Kuhn also recommends the Xerces Society's website, specifically the page titled [“Conserving the Jewels of the Night.”](#)

And may I recommend, if you are interested in nighttime/darkness habitat conservation, visiting the [Dark Sky International](#) website:



*Fireflies, Glow-worms and Lightning Bugs: Identification and Natural History of the Fireflies of the Eastern and Central United States and Canada.*

By Lynn Frierson Faust. Wormsloe Foundation Nature Books, 2017.

*Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens and Other Marvels of the Dark.*

By Leigh Ann Henlon. Algonquin Books, 2024.

(I highly recommend this one! Very readable and set in western North Carolina.)

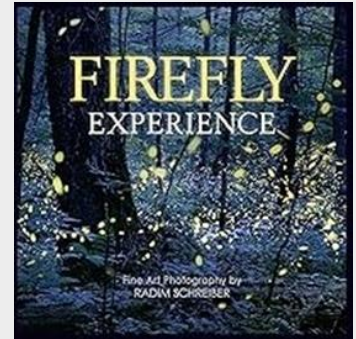






*Silent Sparks: The Wondrous World of Fireflies.*

By Sara Lewis. Princeton University Press, 2016.



*Firefly Experience (A Fine Art Photography Book).*

By Radim Schrieber. Artbook Publishing, 2017.

[xerces.org/publications/guidelines/conserving-jewels-of-night](http://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/conserving-jewels-of-night)

### New Educational Resources from Wild Ones National

WOAH Vice President Melanie Smith was also able to secure the following resources from Wild Ones National.

The Appalachian Highlands Chapter of Wild Ones received a \$75 gift certificate to Bookshop.org to purchase books especially aimed at children to educate and enlighten them on the importance of pollinators and native plants. This opportunity was made possible through Wild One's partnership with Monarch Joint Venture and a generous donation from Ingram Publishing.

The books are: ***Finding Home: A Story of a Mason Bee; Monarch Butterfly (New and Updated Version); Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt; Before the Seed; Lela and the Butterflies; and Meet the Pollinators: A Night and Day Adventure.***

These books are available for any member to use. Some ideas for their use are as a cozy read-aloud corner at a farmer's market or other event. Another use could be at a pollinator craft table set up near a WOA table with someone to read and do pollinator crafts with kids while the parents visit with WOA members. And, of course, to read to your own kids and grandkids! If you would like to borrow these books, please contact WOA Vice President Mellie Smith at [mellie5263@gmail.com](mailto:mellie5263@gmail.com)