



Newsletter

July 2025



Since Last Time ...

Summer is here in full force with high heat and humidity. Take precautions against heat exhaustion. We have a big job to keep everything watered.

Some of our projects have been completed:

The Community Native Garden at the Coomes Rec Center in Abingdon has been planted. Thank you to volunteers from WOA, Washington County Master Gardeners and Virginia Master Naturalists. Information is available on the WOA Facebook page.

The Southside Elementary School in Johnson City has planted their monarch garden for the kindergarten students. See details on page 4.

Many of us enjoyed the nature walk at The Cedars Nature Preserve in Jonesville, VA. It was well worth the trip. Some of the participants impressions are described on pages 5-6.

Mendy Bechtold has graciously accepted the position of webmaster, and is now on the WOA Board. After our June Board meeting, Mendy immediately updated the website. Things may look a little different, but the good thing is, the information is current. There are a few areas under review that we have plans to update. Please look at the wildonesappalachianhighlands.org website to **see what's new**.

Thanks to Anne Tucker and Gail Olson, WOA has an amazing new display board for tabling events. For those of you who are not familiar with these events, the display board offers information about our chapter for visitors to learn more about Wild Ones. Anne also made new business cards (see page 4).

The Board approved the revised bylaws as of June 12, 2025. The bylaws are posted on the website if anyone is interested in the organizational aspects of WOA. It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure WOA complies with the National Wild Ones organization.

Please check the upcoming events section on the website to see what is planned for the rest of 2025. There are still some great opportunities for adventure, education, and socializing.

Be safe this summer and let us know if you have any suggestions.

Paula Reynolds, WOA President

Calendar at-a-Glance

Details on pages 2-3

**July 24: Mushroom Discovery
Walk and Native Garden
Tour at Blue Ridge
Discovery Center**

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

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

WOAH Merch



Summer means we need to beat the heat. Protect your lid. 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

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 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

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 Konnarock Road. We will meet on the porch of the main schoolhouse building.

Event Details (continued)

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 WOAH 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. and the address will be provided by email closer to the date.

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

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/wvu1n19nk2mezbgmb2ymw/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. WOAH members can register via e-mail to: 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, -81.8461

More info: <https://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. There is a WOA Board that meets a little less than once per month, and our chapter also has various committees.

As noted in June's newsletter Paula's term as president expires in January and Paula would like to mentor a new volunteer as 2026 president for WOA. Please contact Paula at our email for this opportunity to serve our Chapter. Or perhaps you'd like to serve on one of the committees or at a tabling event. Let us know with an email to the following address: wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com if you can volunteer even an hour or two.

New from WOA We now have Business Cards for you. Feel free to hand one to anyone who may be interested in native plants and help promote Wild Ones. Get yours at any WOA meeting or event.

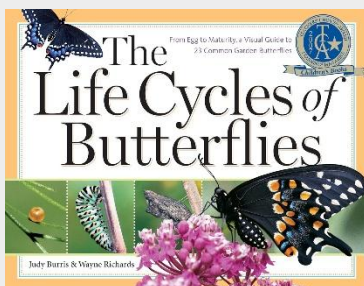


Johnson City Southside Elementary School Butterfly Garden

Three kindergarten teachers from Southside Elementary School in Johnson City contacted Wild Ones to consult on the development of a monarch garden outside the kindergarten classrooms. They want to have host plants available for the monarchs so the students could follow the life cycle of the butterflies.

Paula and Loyd Reynolds met with them and donated to them the book **The Life Cycles of Butterflies** by Judy Burris and Wayne Richards. They thought this book donation would be informative and helpful. They then assisted the teachers in selection of location; provided additional information on host and nectar plants; and provided some milkweed plants the Reynolds purchased from Virginia Highlands Community College. Other than that, the school was able to get donations and volunteers on their own and they have now established the butterfly garden. Susan Henry, Paula's primary contact has agreed to send us pictures as the garden develops since they planted seeds as well as the donated plants.

The Reynolds plan to work with them in the fall to demonstrate winter sowing for milkweed seeds. The teachers have raised monarchs in the past and are familiar with the process. Wish them luck.



Observations from the Walk at the Cedars Natural Area Preserve

Many thanks to DCR Southwest Regional Steward Laura Young for guiding us through the Cedars Natural Area Preserve where, as Kat Hayes noted, “it was an honor to be introduced to a few different species that only exist in just a couple areas of the world”. We barely crossed the road before Laura was able to show us their native rattlesnake master -*Agave virginica*, which is different than the species some of us have in our gardens (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) (thanks to Paula Reynolds for remembering these names). Passing through a thicket of chest-high redbud sprouts, we entered an open rocky area that was originally cleared with tree mulchers and a recent low-level burn to allow native herbaceous plants to emerge in the sunlight.

As Dick Olson remarked, “One of my favorite parts of the walk was to see the results of the restoration compared to the adjacent forest. Laura described the need for selective tree cutting and burning to get light to the forest floor. We saw a variety of new native wildflowers and tree seedlings coming up just a couple of months after the burning while the adjacent closed canopy area still had invasives. It was much more dramatic to see the project in person compared to hearing Laura describe it in her January talk”

Laura’s talk is available on the Wild Ones web site videos here:

<https://appalachianhighlands.wildones.org/videos/>

Our resident English horticulturalist, Snow Ferreniea said “I was amazed to see *Geranium maculatum*”, our native Cranesbill as an extensive ground cover from self-sown seeds. It is a clump forming plant so this is a treat especially as it was spotted with Black Cohosh, *Cimicifuga racemosa*.”

Everyone felt it was amazing to see the hydrogeology in this unique area where the limestone bedrock dissolved, forming caves and underground streams. This occasionally resulted in “karst windows” where the overlying rock caved in forming sink holes with the stream flowing through the rock wall at one end then back out the wall at the other end. These small moist rich areas hold their own pockets of interesting species from giant sycamores to fern covered walls as seen in the following photo.

Another feature in the Preserve that wowed the group was the historic Lee County Natural Bridge which was documented in 1770’s as a stopping point along the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail. At that time the stream banks were also heavily covered with river cane. Unfortunately, this area more recently had been used as a dump site for a sawmill, essentially turning it into an ecologically disastrous sludge pond. Now with the stream rehabilitated and recently replanted with sprouts of river cane it is a lovely site with a rock-face spring feeding into the stream and through the natural bridge and with Laura’s enthusiasm will have river cane restored as well.

Our fellow WOA member Ray Minor showed us the log cabin located on the Preserve where he lived at age 2 and now pictured below a few well-worn years later.

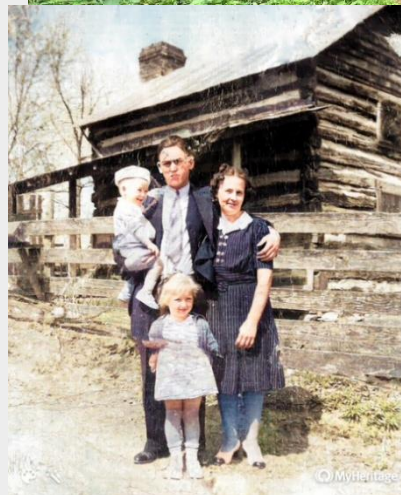
Whether it was the indigo bunting that called us into the woods, the unique karst geology, or Laura's conservation discussions of removing the overabundant cedars and other sun-blocking and invasive plants to allow this rare natural community of rocky limestone glades to thrive there was something for everyone to love.

As stated by Snow and agreed by all we "commend Laura for her commitment to the restoration and preservation of our native flora and land".



Down in a karst window at the giant sycamore

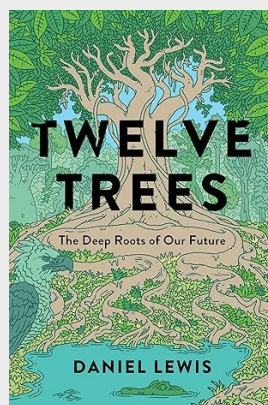
Natural Bridge



Ray Minor cabin

Book Review

WOAH Vice President Melanie Smith is a school librarian in Smyth County, in addition to everything else she does as a Virginia Master Naturalist, WOAH board member, and FrogWatch USA affiliate, and sends us a new book recommendation.



Twelve Trees: The Deep Roots of Our Future by Daniel Lewis. Avid Reader Press, 2024. Reviewed by Mellie Smith Twelve trees. Twelve stories.

Twelve highly informative and meticulously researched chapters about how climate change, humanity and history have shaped the future of these trees, and of us.

Twelve Trees is about some species of trees that need our help to survive. It explores their importance to their ecosystems, natural diversity and yes, cultural history. The book explains why they are important to OUR survival. A few of the trees will be familiar to those of us interested in native plantings. Some will be new to us. But each has had a deep impact on the earth and the people who live in the same habitat.

I especially like this quotation: “Trees are our custodians, forecasters, and predictors in an era of changing climates. They protect the ground beneath us through their stabilizing and bio diversifying effects. They lower our pulses and deepen our breath. (They) are powerful actors on our environment. In their total biomass they provide nearly bottomless carbon sinks, annually sequestering millions of tons of carbon dioxide . . . “

This book is full of interesting cultural information, scientific studies and statistics and hope. Hope. That’s what these trees need from us the most. I highly recommend Twelve Trees.