



# Newsletter

## May-June 2026



### Since Last Time...May 1, 2026

Greetings all...spring has rapidly transitioned to summer, with very little "April showers (to) bring May flowers". It's been a busy month for Wild Ones. We had a very successful tabling event at Garden Faire in Abingdon with several new members added and merchandise sold. Thanks to those who volunteered. You will be rewarded at the May plant swap.

We had a beautiful day at Hungry Mother Park for Earth Day. Although turnout was low for visitors, we all enjoyed the day and learned about the native plants Hungry Mother park rangers purchased from Draper Nursery. These plants were planted by us in the spillway area.

We are excited to be involved in some events in the Tennessee area for June and August. Please check out the upcoming events calendar for details. And there is a special showing of "The Extraordinary Caterpillar" movie at the Abingdon Cinema on May 7. See the events calendar for details. This is being offered by The Nature Conservancy, and Wild Ones will have a table in the hallway for visitors.

One of the Board members suggested it would be interesting and educational to see before and after pictures from our members. If you have an area or garden you have created with native plants, please send your photos to the [Wild Ones email address](#). We will feature those in upcoming newsletters.

We are recruiting a President for 2027 and a co-chair for the events committee to help Gail Olson. Please email us or contact a Board member with your interest. We will be happy to meet with you and answer questions about the duties for those positions. The Board encourages members, new and old, to get involved at the Board level. It's fun and interesting to work with a new group and learn from them.

Hoping you all have a safe and prosperous summer and especially hoping you will expand your native habitat at your home and communities this season.

Respectfully, Paula Reynolds, President

### Calendar at a Glance (Details on Pages 7-8)

**May 2: WOA H Plant and Seed Swap (members only)**

**May 7: TNC presents "The Extraordinary Caterpillar" at the Abingdon Cinemall**

**June 6: Jonesborough Garden Tour and Tea**

### WOAH Merch

Summer is coming! Get your hats, short-sleeve tees, mugs and more\_ - all available 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.



Key bills intended to suppress invasive plants were passed by the Virginia General Assembly and signed by the Virginia Governor this spring.

- HB 88 will help stop spread of invasives along roads and to manage plants already established.
- HB 109 amended the noxious weed law allowing harmful plants to be banned from being sold. Invasive plants can now be designated as a noxious weed even if it was already being sold commercially in Virginia.
- HB 388/SB 89 allows local governments to raise funds and take action on invasive plants at the local level.
- HB 710/SB 383 changes the penalty for failing to provide property owners written notice of invasive plants (like English ivy or Japanese honeysuckle) to a civil fine.

## **Spring Ephemerals Walk at the Erwin Fish Hatchery**

There were lots of wildflowers but an owl and large patch of bear corn surrounding a massive oak may have been the big surprises! As we gathered in the parking lot, most wandered over to look at trophy-sized rainbow trout that are part of the Erwin Fish Hatchery program. Then, we saw a different kind of trout – the trout lily! A spring ephemeral whose shiny, spotted, leaf resembles the speckled side of its namesake fish. In addition, we saw violets, trilliums, larkspur, bloodroot, black and blue cohosh, and others during our afternoon walk on April 4<sup>th</sup> in the incredibly rich wildflower community at the Hatchery. The threat of rain didn't stop us, but we did have raindrops on our windshields as we left.

The juvenile great horned owl sat on its low perch so we all could walk by and take photos! The yellowish brown of hundreds of bear corn plants (*Conopholis americana*) stood out in the green understory. It is a non-photosynthesizing parasitic plant getting its energy from the oak roots. It is always amazing to see the unusual and interesting surprises on a walk in the woods.

Dr. Ben Lee, ETSU ecology professor, described the species along the nature trail and discussed the unique adaptation of ephemeral species to take advantage of sun to photosynthesize before trees leaf out. Two of Dr. Lee's graduate students talked about their research. Erin Helbert talked about her study of stilt grass and Liz Howe demonstrated how she measures photosynthesis and carbon exchange of leaves.

We could see the mottled leaves of the trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) along much of the trail and learned that ants are a prime way the seeds are distributed. Nodding Trillium (*Trillium cernuum*) is a unique species to the area even though it is abundant in other parts of its range. We could see the seed heads hanging down below the trillium's three leaves. Another highlight was the old-growth character of the forest with the large oaks and tulip poplar trees. The nature trail, a pollinator garden, and the Unicoi County Heritage Museum are all open to the public along with facilities to raise millions of trout at the Hatchery, which was established in 1897.

## **WOAH 4th Anniversary, March 28, 2026**

The Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands (WOAH) Chapter celebrated its fourth anniversary on March 28th! WOAHA became a Seedling on November 15, 2021, and a Chapter on March 28, 2022. When the WOAHA seedling became a Chapter there were about 20 members (ten members was the required minimum). Of those, ten are still active in 2026.

The Chapter continues to grow in membership and diversity of activities. Newer members are volunteering for leadership and planning roles. In addition to education and encouraging native habitat, our members have been invited to speak at various events about native plants. We have partnered with the Washington County Master Gardeners, The Nature Conservancy, and the Virginia Master Naturalists.

Major Accomplishments:

- Adopted Bylaws (Drafted by WO National)
- Developed a Strategic Plan (3-yr, 2023-2026)
- Maintained: Website, Facebook, YouTube Channel
- Created a Species Plant List for Chapter's region
- Designed a Display Board and assembled Tabling Materials
- Offering Fundraising Merchandise
- Initiated a joint project to design, build, and maintain a public garden

## **Burning Our Meadow Improves Habitat**

**Gail and Dick Olson**

Bill Miller, from the Virginia Department of Forestry, called us on Tuesday afternoon, February 17, 2026, to ask if he and his crew could come in an hour to do a prescribed burn on our 2 1/2-acre meadow. We said "Yes!" This has been Gail's goal to help in her battle with woody invasives. Burns also remove built-up thatch, release nutrients, and improve germination of the native meadow species.

The afternoon was ideal for a controlled burn: the soil was still moist from recent rain, sunlight had dried the grass just enough, and a gentle breeze promised safe conditions. Bill and his three-person crew in their bright yellow fire-resistant shirts with their equipment, including an off-road utility vehicle loaded with a tank of water. Before any flames were lit, the team checked the mowed trails and cleared fire breaks surrounding each of three sections. The crew began by igniting the edges of each section, allowing the fire to move inward from all sides toward the center. While each section burned in less than 10 minutes, more time was spent checking fire breaks beforehand and monitoring hot spots afterward. The 2-hour operation was both efficient and impressive – and exciting to watch!

We established our meadow by burning and spraying the fescue pasture in 2010 followed by broadcast spreading of seed mix of native grasses and forbs. Over the years, there has been

an amazing display of Maximilian sunflowers and feeding finches in the fall; however, the grasses have gradually outcompeted the forbs. The field has been burned or mowed every few years, plus, there has been a constant battle with woody invasives such as tree of heaven, oriental bittersweet, and brambles. Meadows require maintenance, but their wildlife habitat is worth it.

We started the process with visits from several state and federal land management agencies to discuss available cost-share programs for landowners. Bill Miller visited to assess the area and discuss goals for our meadow and adjacent woods. He initiated the process to put us on their burn list. Laura Young lives nearby and encouraged us to burn when she stopped to see our meadows. She described the value of periodic prescribed in her WOAHP tour of The Cedars. Alaina Krakowiak, in her recent WOAHP Virginia Grasslands talk, described the need for periodic disturbance for all grasslands. We were ready whenever Bill called!

What's next? We could do nothing and watch our meadow return; however, we have started controlling the invasive and Gail has broadcast seeds and planted seedlings to add species diversity. We are taking weekly photos to document the regrowth of grasses and forbs from the fire-blackened soil. Our mid-April photo shows two months of regrowth.

We will have a native seed collecting event for WOAHP members on Saturday, September 26, from Gail's front meadow followed by a tour of our renewed upper meadow. The tour will demonstrate the results of the burn and showcase how it has improved biodiversity and habitat quality.



Meadow before the burn



Only about 20 minutes to complete the burn.



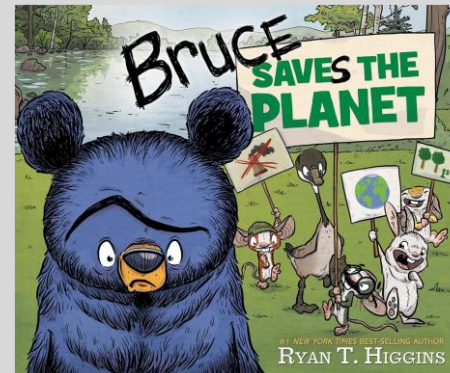
Meadow eight weeks after the burn. Both common and butterfly milkweed are coming in stronger than the past couple of years. Tree of heaven (Ailanthus) seems to be stunted and any sprouting seedlings are easy to spot foliar spray.

## Book Reviews by Mellie Smith, WOAHA Vice President and children's librarian

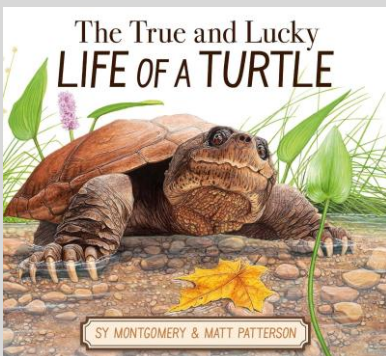
I have always believed that books make the best presents for kids. And by kids, I mean people of all ages! However, there are some really good books out there written for youngsters that touch on the importance of native habitat. Giving these as gifts, finding them in a library, or reading them to young people can plant a seed (pun intended) for native gardening and rewilding the landscape. Here are a few of the newer ones I've read recently:

**Bruce Saves The Planet** by Ryan T. Higgins. 2025. Planet Possible Books.

Bruce the Bear would just like to be left alone to fish, but he inadvertently gets pulled into a crowd protesting to save their local forest from development and pollution. He is accidentally successful and enjoys his next fishing trip on a protected wildland full of important insects. This book includes facts about habitats and the importance of plants in these habitats.



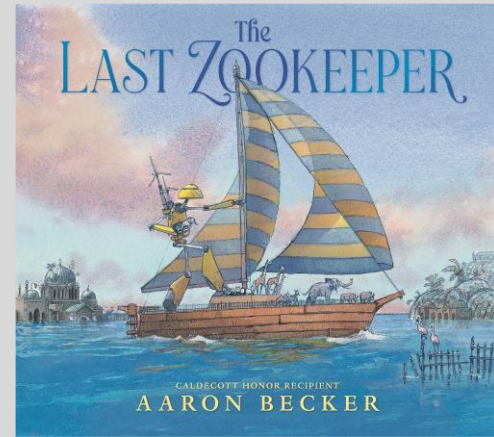
**The True and Lucky Life of a Turtle** by Sy Montgomery and Matt Patterson. 2025, Clarion Books.



I have become more and more enamored of author Sy Montgomery (The Book of Turtles, Of Time and Turtles, The Soul of An Octopus, How to Be a Good Creature—all of which I highly recommend and are tailored to adults), and this book is no exception! She has partnered with wildlife artist Matt Patterson for a children's book that tells the true story of "Fire Chief," a snapping turtle hit by a car and nursed back to health and freedom. The book teaches that habitat, and habitat free from human dangers, is very important and can be created by humans! Patience and love for our natural world is highlighted in this wonderful story of hope and caring. And, the illustrations are scientifically accurate and gorgeous!

**The Last Zookeeper** by Aaron Becker. 2024, Candlewick Press.

A highly original book with no words, but quite a story, *The Last Zookeeper* imagines a flooded world (global climate change, anyone?) where robot NOA is all alone, the last of seawall construction machines. It begins to care for animals abandoned in a zoo and during a storm, it must find a way to save himself and all the animals. This modern-day Noah's Ark story is a quiet statement about the current trajectory of our climate and a shoutout to the ones who care enough to risk all to make it better.



Find WOAH hats for your summer protection!

Get wild. | Bonfire,

## Upcoming Events

### **May 2: WOAH Members Only Native Plant and Seed Swap with Potluck**

Saturday is the Chapter's Spring Native Plant and Seed Swap! Our swap is unique in that it is **exclusively for native plants and seeds**. If you have extra native plants or seeds to share, feel free to bring them, but participation is welcome even if you come empty-handed. Please label each plant or seed packet with its common and scientific name, as well as its preferred growing conditions (such as sun/shade and moisture needs). Join us for a fun and educational event—expand your native garden, connect with fellow enthusiasts, and help support local biodiversity!

Following the Swap will be the **potluck dinner and social hour**. Bring a dish to share, your own beverage, and reusable plate and utensils to support sustainability. Nametags will be available for new members, please wear yours. Parking is \$2.

**Time:** 3:30 – 6:00 PM

**Location:** Steele Creek Park, Civitan Shelter, 4 Little Ln, Bristol, TN, 37620

# Upcoming Events

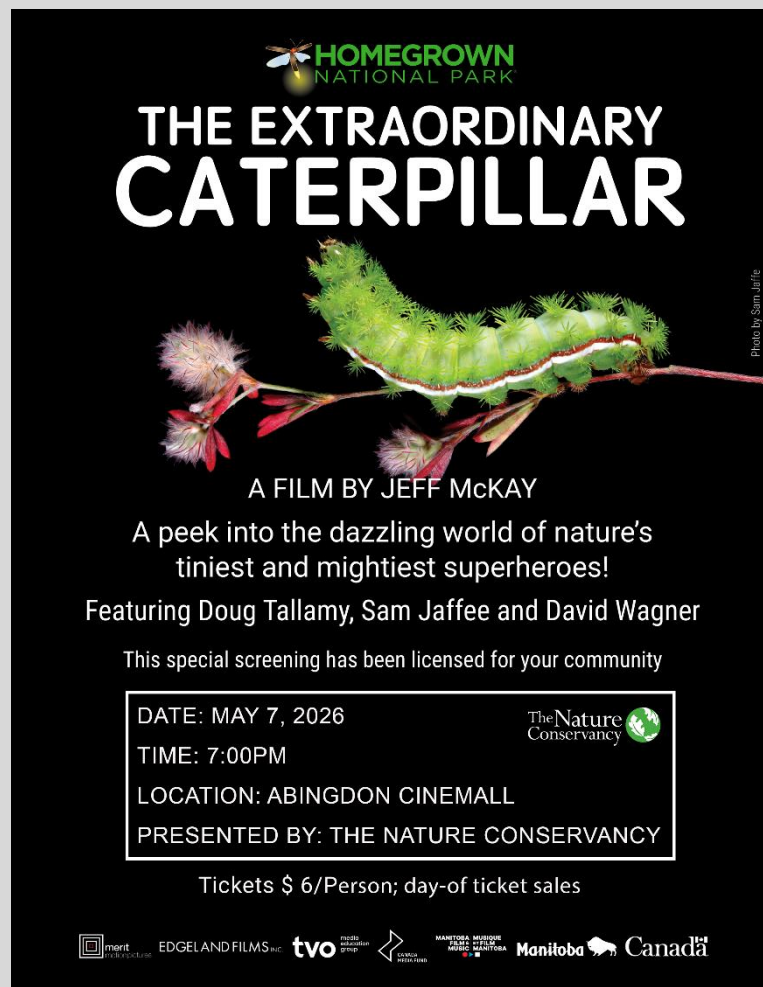
## **May 7: TNC presents "The Extraordinary Caterpillar"**

The Nature Conservancy is hosting a local screening of the short nature film "The Extraordinary Caterpillar". It has incredible footage and commentary about these small and fascinating insects and their pivotal role in our ecosystem.

[Here is a short trailer of the film](#)

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Location:** Abingdon Cinemall, 721 E Main St. Abingdon, VA



**HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK**

# THE EXTRAORDINARY CATERPILLAR

A FILM BY JEFF MCKAY

A peek into the dazzling world of nature's tiniest and mightiest superheroes!

Featuring Doug Tallamy, Sam Jaffee and David Wagner

This special screening has been licensed for your community

DATE: MAY 7, 2026	The Nature Conservancy
TIME: 7:00PM	
LOCATION: ABINGDON CINEMALL	
PRESENTED BY: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	

Tickets \$ 6/Person; day-of ticket sales

Photo by Sam Jaffe

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## Upcoming Events

### **June 6: Jonesborough Annual Garden Tour & Tea**

Garden lovers from across the region will gather in Jonesborough for the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Garden Tour & Tea. This self-guided walking tour through Tennessee's oldest town offers a rare glimpse into some of the area's most stunning gardens.

Marketplace vendors will be set up at the International Storytelling Center Plaza and the Jonesborough Visitors Center 9:00 – 4:00 PM, featuring a variety of garden - inspired items, including yard art, plants, tools, handcrafted goods, and garden-style jewelry. Tickets can be purchased online at [Jonesborough.com/tickets](http://Jonesborough.com/tickets) or by calling 423-753-1010.

**Wild Ones Appalachian Highlands Chapter will host an Information table at the Marketplace from 9:00 – 4:00 PM. We need volunteers to provide information to visitors about the value of native plants and to promote the Chapter.**

**Time:** Garden Tour 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Tea Party 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**Location:** Jonesborough, TN

**May 8-10: Mount Rogers Spring Naturalist Rally**

**At Blue Ridge Discovery Center**

**Information and preregister at: [Blueridgediscoverycenter.org](http://Blueridgediscoverycenter.org)**

### **Nature Conservancy Volunteer Opportunities**

**For the most current and most local information, register at this link:**

**<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/946902e77d3743a7a2e70f29cdf31a8f>**

**May 9: Nature Acrylic Painting Workshop with Renee Wienecke**

**May 21: Native Rivercane Planting: Natural Tunnel State Park, Clinchport, VA**

**May 22: Native Rivercane Planting: Cedars Natural Area Preserve, Jonesville, VA**