



## NEWS FROM THE RIDGE



### NFWF Grant Award Increases RRC's Capacity to Realize its Mission

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has awarded us a \$265,000 grant from their Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund for our project "Protecting and Restoring Forests and Grasslands at the Virginia-West Virginia Border." This project involves implementation of forest stewardship practices to increase forest resilience, improve biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and nurture overall watershed health. RRC will create a hub that provides outreach and support for land conservation and stewardship throughout this area. We are already partnering with Shenandoah University's River Campus at Cool Spring Battlefield as they implement a grassland restoration project on land adjacent to RRC, creating one continuous conservation corridor from ridge to forest to river to grasslands. We are all in this earth-keeping work together.

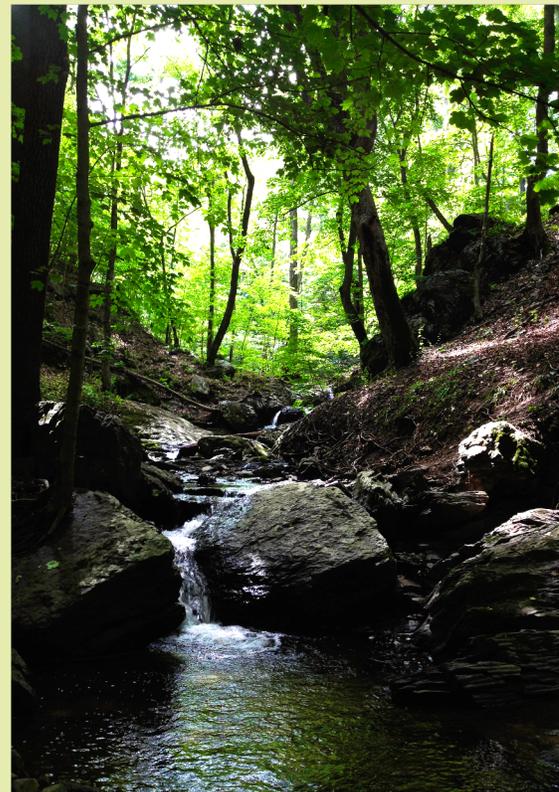


### RRC Searches for a New Conservation Steward

With the NFWF Grant, we are now able to hire a Conservation Steward who will serve an integral role in RRC's forest stewardship, land protection, and outreach work. The Conservation Steward will monitor the health of the forest, coordinate implementation of our Forest Stewardship Plan, and oversee trail maintenance, invasive species control, and forest care. Outreach will include developing a network of volunteers, collaborating with neighbors, and coordination communication with supporters. We are looking for someone with a passion for environmental stewardship, energy for connecting with people and organizations, knowledge of forestry and wildlife, and organizational management skills.

*To see the Job Posting, go to:*

<https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/GFMugHkMhPwtj1L69b1NMi53>





## Woodpeckers, Warblers, and Whippoorwills

Wood frogs converge on the pond this time of year, raising a raucous cacophony to woo mates into the water for breeding. The sudden absolute silence after hours of noise startle us into noticing a hawk circling overhead, its shadow falling on the surface of the pond. We've seen red-tailed hawks and cooper's hawks, owls, and bald eagles, soaring overhead or staring down from treetops searching for prey – whether frogs or mice, smaller birds, or even the chickens. They're the wonderful, winged part of this web of life.

The woods here at Rolling Ridge host more than 50 species of birds, some migratory but many who call this land home all year. From September 2020 through July of 2021, Nancy and Elliot Kirschbaum, PVAS members and veteran birders, did seasonal bird counts, confirming what birdwatchers here already know – this land is good for birds!

Chickadees, titmice, cardinals, wrens, sparrows, jays, indigo buntings, and bluebirds flourish year-round. We can mark the rhythms of the year by when the goldfinches turn from olive to brilliant yellow in late spring or the juncos arrive to stay the winter. When the grackles come in the fall, a great dark multitude swoops into the trees, filling the air with their cackles. Other migrants appear quietly, in smaller numbers but brighter colors - like scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks. The yellow-tinted belly of a great crested flycatcher or the striped head of a white-crowned sparrow are somewhat more elusive sights. Brown thrashers, catbirds, and wood thrushes permeate the air with melodious song in late spring and summer. We used to hear whippoorwills in May, relentlessly declaring their names into the dark, though they have gone silent now. One spring sunset, we heard a strange whistling sound in the field and had the rare pleasure of observing a woodcock performing his ritualized, spiraling sky dance.

Pileated woodpeckers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, northern flickers, nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers thrive on forests rife with insect life. For several years, a breeding pair of red-headed woodpeckers nested in the hollowed holes of a standing dead pine. Joette Borzick, wildlife biologist and bird expert, took videos of them because they were the first verified pair to breed in the eastern panhandle of WV in five to ten years. We haven't seen them again for as many years.

Several years ago we worked with the National Resources Conservation Service's Cerulean Warbler Habitat Improvement program to identify forest stands here at Rolling Ridge that are considered preferred habitat for the Cerulean warbler, one of many species of birds in worrying decline. Practices like selective thinning and understory regeneration improve wildlife habitat while building forest resilience and diversity. What is good for the trees is good for the birds. We have implemented these measures in some smaller stands and look forward to being able to do more of this crucial stewardship work throughout Rolling Ridge.

*Bill Telfair, who has a long connection with the Friends Wilderness Center, and Scot DeGraf, resident birder, lead bird walks the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30am. To join them, please sign up on the Potomac Valley Audubon Society website.*



Red-tailed Hawk



Great Crested Flycatcher



White-crowned Sparrow



Pileated Woodpecker