



## NEWS FROM THE RIDGE



### RRC HAPPENINGS

June 18: Volunteer Workday  
– see article on pg. 2

July 4-7, 19-22, August 2-5:  
Opequon (BYM) Camping  
Intensives

July 30: Miner's Lady  
Endurance Race

Learn more about  
Rolling Ridge Conservancy at:  
[www.rollingridgeconservancy.org](http://www.rollingridgeconservancy.org)



### Bluebells Have Arrived!

Last week we took a walk down the Ridge-to-River Trail to see the profusion of bluebells carpeting the land on either side all the way to the Shenandoah River. Before new leaves emerge on deciduous trees, beautiful spring ephemerals like bluebells, mayapples, and spring beauties faithfully return each year, blanketing the landscape and heralding nature's revival. These native wildflowers arrive just in time to nourish native bees and butterflies, their timing and flower design syncing seamlessly with the insects with whom they have co-evolved over millions of years. Buzzing bumblebees fly in and out, sampling goodness from dangling goblets and spreading pollen from one to the next, enacting a relationship designed for mutual success.

As we headed toward the waterfall past a tall poplar, a yellow fluttering at its base caught my eye. A kaleidoscope of tiger swallowtails was puddling in the mud – a common behavior for butterflies seeking nutrients in the damp earth. Whether sated or startled, they lifted all at once into the air and swirled over our heads in a magical aerial dance of delight.

Three groups of visitors had come down the trail from the other direction by Cool Spring in Virginia. Children wasted no time wading into the stream at the base of the waterfall while parents sat on boulders listening to the soothing sound of cascading waters. We spoke to three

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*(cont'd on pg. 2)*



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women, two from Canada who were visiting their friend in the States and all, by their accents, originally from Germany. We enjoyed a few moments of shared pleasure in these earthly gifts of bluebells and butterflies, birdsong, and stream song.

When bluebells burst forth on the mountain, I feel as though spring has truly arrived – which seems a bit ironic as I stare incredulously out my window today at the wet snow falling and the young willow trees drooping heavy-laden as the landscape turns from fresh green to white.



We live in unpredictable times when change can happen capriciously, unexpectedly, and often overwhelmingly. This wilderness feeds our souls and nourishes us with delight so that we can handle the stresses of our times.

Yet she too needs us to nurture her own resilience so that nature can survive whatever change may come - so that the bluebells will continue to bloom each spring for the bumblebees and the butterflies and the next generation of children who come wading in the stream.



## Volunteers Mulch Natives and Remove Ailanthus

About a dozen volunteers tended to the care of native understory plants by clearing out invasive weeds and dense leaf piles before adding mulch rings to conserve moisture and protect soil. One hundred native shrubs were planted two years ago with a grant from NRCS as part of wildlife habitat improvement for the Cerulean Warbler and other declining species. Enclosed in fences to protect young plants from deer browse, shrubs like arrowwood, chokeberry, and northern bayberry will help improve diversity in the understory and create better edge habitat.

Efforts to implement best management practices for forest stewardship are not one day projects. Securing funding, procuring plants, preparing the site, and planting were just phase one of this project. Following up each year thereafter with care and maintenance makes all the difference in how well these understory plantings become established for the long term.

Volunteers also worked with Jeff Feaga to remove ailanthus trees along the road leading back to the lodge as part of our ongoing work to keep them from getting out of hand. Ailanthus, or Tree of Heaven, is an exceedingly fast-growing, aggressive invasive that can rapidly outcompete other tree species. The WV Department of Natural Resources lists it among the “Dirty Dozen” most damaging invasive plants in West Virginia.



“Instructions for living a life.

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.”

-MARY OLIVER