



Rocky mountaintops along the Parkway provide the perfect environment for the endangered Heller's Blazing Star (below).

Learn how you can protect rare plants!

Plus, read about a lifetime on the Parkway, memories made supporting Flat Top Manor, and a new milestone for TRACK Trails.



A Place to Grow

New nursery to foster rare and native plant populations | By Clay Fleming

It's a sweltering summer day in the Pisgah District of the Blue Ridge Parkway, which stretches from milepost 339 to 469 in North Carolina. National Park Service Plant Ecologist Dr. Chris Ulrey and a team of volunteers and interns have hiked a steep trail to check on a delicate plant with a big name, the Heller's Blazing Star (*Liatrix helleri*).

A vibrant purple flowering stem that blooms from the top downward, Heller's Blazing Star was added to the list of endangered species in 1987. Today, it can only be found in a handful of counties in Western North Carolina. The shallow soil and full sun exposure along the rocky flats create the warm environment the plant needs to flourish.

Ulrey and his team are here to survey the Heller's Blazing Star, taking measurements ranging from number of rosettes to widest leaf to the number of flowering stems that help determine the health and vigor of the plants. One of the largest threats to this species, and many rare plants on the Parkway, is from hikers who leave designated trails and trample plants. The 80,000-plus acres that make up the Blue Ridge Parkway are home to more than 2,000 plant species. The National Park Service has taken steps such as



Botanical Technician Intern Marietta Shattelroe records data.

posting signs and building elevated boardwalks at select areas to protect fragile species.

The Foundation is working with Ulrey and the National Park Service on a new plan to give rare plant populations a fighting chance. The goal is to create a Parkway plant nursery. Here, collected seeds would be germinated and grown in a controlled and monitored environment. Once the plants are hardy enough to survive on their own, they would be reintroduced to the same location where the seeds were collected. This process is called augmentation, and is a strategy used to boost population health and survival.

You can help fund an internship to assist National Park Service biologists in laying the groundwork for the nursery. Your gift will kick off the project, including site selection, development of educational materials for visitors, and propagation. It's a project that will make an ongoing impact on the health of the Parkway's diverse ecosystem.



Dr. Chris Ulrey takes plant measurements.

How you can help

- When hiking, stay on designated trails to avoid damaging plants.
- Tell others why it is so essential to remain on designated paths.
- Donate to the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's plant nursery intern project to help increase the survival of endangered plants. To give, visit BRPFoundation.org.



Share your photos of Bluffs Coffee Shop

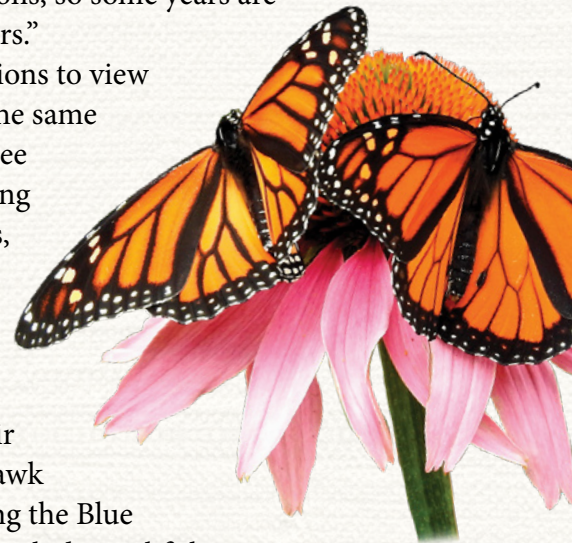
For 60 years, Bluffs Coffee Shop at milepost 241 welcomed travelers with home-style cooking and friendly service. Did you frequent the restaurant for the fried chicken, ham biscuits, and fluffy pancakes? If so, we'd love to see your photos from inside the shop and hear your stories. Please send photographs to Rita Larkin at rlarkin@brpfoundation.org or call (866) 308-2773, ext. 418.

Nature Note: Monarchs

The fall leaves aren't the only splash of color you can see on the Parkway in September and October. This is the time of year when monarch butterflies breeze through the mountains during their annual migration to Mexico.

"On really good days we can see between 50 and 100 individuals in a few hours," says Tom Davis, a Natural Resource Specialist with the National Park Service. "A lot of it depends on air currents and weather conditions, so some years are better than others."

The best locations to view the insects are the same places you can see hawks performing aerial acrobatics, because both the butterflies and birds catch wind currents for their flights south. Hawk watch areas along the Blue Ridge Parkway include Rockfish Gap at milepost 0, Harvey's Knob Overlook at milepost 95, Rocky Knob at milepost 167, Mahogany Rock Overlook at milepost 235, and Mount Pisgah Overlook at milepost 408.



LEAVE YOUR MARK ON THE MOUNTAINS

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Do you want to create an enduring legacy that protects the Blue Ridge Parkway for generations to come? You can do it today by including the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in your estate plans.

Learn more at brpfoundation.org/giving.



A Fundraiser for Flat Top Manor



Jim and Linda Carlisle



Scott and Deanna Lampe

More than 200 guests joined us for the fourth annual Denim Ball on August 22 at Flat Top Manor on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The evening served as a celebration of the ongoing rehabilitation efforts taking place at the historic estate. Thanks to an outpouring of support, the event raised more than \$200,000 for repairs to the manor's crumbling exterior. The work is expected to begin in the summer of next year.

Thank you to all the guests, the Denim Ball Planning Committee, and sponsors: Blowing Rock Tourism and Development Authority, Cone Health, Mast General Store, Chetola Resort, Mountaineer Inn & Log Cabins, The Rosemyr Corporation, Blowing Rock Historical Society, Modern Automotive, The Blowing Rock, Sunset & Vine, Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show Foundation, and Booneshine Brewing.



Cobb and Cindy Milner greet George Harvin



Guests dance to the music of Soul Benefactor on the porch of Flat Top Manor.

Photos by Jan Todd / Deep Creek Carolina

Profile in Giving

Robert and Cama Merritt reflect on their lifelong love of the Parkway | By Clary Pickering

All of us have heartfelt memories of the Blue Ridge Parkway, but for husband and wife Robert and Cama Merritt, ages 92 and 91 respectively, their connection to the national park unit dates back to the very beginning, when construction of the road began in 1935. Their early experiences created a bond that has endured their entire lives.

From her parents' summer cottage, a young Cama had the perfect view of the construction at Little Switzerland Tunnel. Booms and bangs could be heard as this early Parkway landmark was formed. She fondly remembers walking down a little path from her home to explore when it was complete. "The stones that were revealed were beautiful. I remember large areas that were green, almost like jade," Cama says.

At the age of 12, Robert gathered with fellow Boy Scouts for a dedication event on the Parkway. "There was a ceremony on a hot summer afternoon with Bob Doughton and Governor Broughton to dedicate that part of the Parkway," Robert recalls. Construction of the road began at Cumberland Knob, with 12 miles completed by 1939.

The Parkway proved to be a perfect playground for their children, from the grassy meadows at



The Merritts with their youngest child in Little Switzerland, 1971

Groundhog Mountain to the hands-on exhibits at the Museum of North Carolina Minerals. Northwest Trading Post held coveted treats and gifts, while snow-bogged Parkway roads provided wonderful sledding slopes. "We took the kids up for sledding in the wintertime," remembers Robert. "Some of the long runs... [were] pretty fun, pretty exciting."

When Robert and Cama needed their own vacation, they traveled to Bluffs Lodge at Doughton Park. "We would stay in the hotel room, but I would take an iron frying pan and some other things, and we would cook our breakfast at the picnic area. Then we would have the whole day to hike the trails," Cama says.

Robert and Cama are celebrating 68 years of marriage this year. Their lifetime love of the Parkway is everlasting and their support is essential. The couple gives to the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation because it addresses the larger needs of the national park unit. But beyond that, they give because of the park itself. As Cama says, "the Parkway is the place where my heart feels nurtured and joyful."



Robert and Cama's children sled on the Parkway in 1960.



Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent J.D. Lee with Robert Merritt

Kids in Parks opens 200th TRACK Trail

Families can enjoy more opportunities to explore the outdoors with the opening of two new Kids in Parks TRACK Trails on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The latest additions to the network of family-friendly trails bring the nationwide total to 200, including seven on the Parkway and 42 in Parkway communities.

Young visitors can now use brochures as guides for learning adventures at Rocky Knob Picnic Area and the James River Visitor Center in Virginia. As the program continues to grow, it is encouraging more and more young people to unplug from electronic devices, engage with nature, and get healthier. In turn, nurturing their appreciation for the outdoors is creating a new generation of stewards who will protect public lands in the future.



Junior Rangers help park staff cut the ribbon at the opening of the 200th TRACK Trail, located at Rocky Knob Picnic Area.

The next time you are looking for a family trek, we hope you'll check out these new TRACK Trails. As a bonus, children can earn free prizes in the mail for registering their adventures at KidsinParks.com.

Catch a fall concert at the Blue Ridge Music Center!



Jeff Little

As the nights get cooler in the mountains, the shows move to the indoor theater at the Blue Ridge Music Center. Seating is limited, so get your tickets now.

- **Jeff Little Trio - 5 p.m., Saturday, October 5**

\$20 for adults, \$15 for children 12 and younger

Influenced by the mountain flat-picking guitar tradition, Jeff Little uses his talents to put the piano at the center of Americana music. In 2014, Little was inducted into the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame. Rounding out the trio are award-winning guitar and banjo player Steve Lewis and Luke Little on mandolin and bass.

- **Rob Ickes & Trey Hensley - 5 p.m., Saturday, October 19**

\$25 for adults, \$15 for children 12 and younger

Based on a mutual love of bluegrass, country, blues, western swing, and all types of string band music, the partnership of dobro player Rob Ickes and guitarist Trey Hensley delights audiences of traditional American music.



Trey Hensley and Rob Ickes

The Visitor Center and Roots of American Music Museum will remain open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through November 3. Free Midday Mountain Music sessions on the breezeway continue from noon to 4 p.m. daily. The Blue Ridge Music Center is at milepost 213 on the Parkway near Galax, Virginia. For tickets, visit BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org.

Foundation welcomes new project manager

As the extensive rehabilitation efforts at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park and Bluffs Coffee Shop enter construction phases, the Foundation is welcoming project manager Kevin Brandt to our team to ensure the projects move forward efficiently and effectively.

Brandt, who is retiring as Superintendent of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, has spent four decades with the National Park Service, during which he managed the restoration of historic structures in Yellowstone, Hot Springs, and Bryce Canyon national parks, as well as in a number of additional parks and recreation areas. Brandt also oversaw the extensive repair of the C&O towpath, where visitors can walk or bike alongside the entire 184.5 miles of the canal.

This new position is an innovative approach and complements the National Park Services capacity and expertise to execute partner-funded projects on the Parkway.

“We are appreciative of the Foundation’s Community of Stewards and its willingness to support the important work occurring across the Parkway,” says Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent J.D. Lee. “We are very excited to bring Kevin on to our



Photo by William Spinrad Jr.

Kevin Brandt at the Conococheague Aqueduct ribbon cutting

collective team and look forward to many successful projects together.”

In his new role, Brandt will serve as a liaison between the Foundation and Parkway leadership to shepherd projects to completion, beginning with the substantial exterior repairs to Flat Top Manor. For the project, he will collaborate with the Denver Service Center, the central planning, design, and construction management office for the National Park Service.

“It’s hard not to be excited about the restoration of, and future for, Flat Top Manor and the entire Moses Cone Estate,” Brandt says. “What an incredible opportunity to create a richer visitor experience along the Parkway by bringing this storied jewel back to life.”



Celebrate the new flume at Mabry Mill on Oct. 3

Ed and Lizzie Mabry must have gotten a thrill the first time water reached the gristmill they built more than a century ago. You can relive that excitement and marvel at the new flume your donations helped build during a ribbon cutting ceremony at 2 p.m., Thursday, October 3, at Mabry Mill, milepost 176 in Meadows of Dan, Virginia. The event also marks the completion of new shake roofs on historic structures at the site. The project is a collaboration between the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, National Park Service, and National Park Foundation with donations matched by a Centennial Challenge grant. You can still be a part of a job well done by donating at BRPFoundation.org.

Protect the Parkway. Get the Plate.



The word BOOK was an easy pick for Debra Dees when she personalized her Blue Ridge Parkway license plate. A longtime librarian and now a teacher for students with reading challenges, she is happy her plate fee supports the Parkway. “There are so many places worthy of money, but the Blue Ridge Parkway has my heart,” she says.

Want your own plate? Visit GetThePlate.org.



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Presents

Of Valley & Ridge Art Show & Gala Fundraiser

We want you to be there when more than 20 fine artists unveil a selection of works inspired by the Blue Ridge Parkway. Join us for the opening gala of the benefit art show, *Of Valley & Ridge: A Scenic Journey Through the Blue Ridge Parkway*, at 5 p.m., Friday, October 11, at Zealandia in Asheville, North Carolina. The gala and two-day art show and sale that follow are presented by First Citizens Bank and benefit the Foundation.

The evening is an exclusive preview and opportunity to purchase en plein air works created outdoors on the Parkway by members of the group The Saints of



She Flows with Memories by Mark Henry

Paint. The festivities at the circa-1880s mansion atop Beaucatcher Mountain will include hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and live jazz. Tickets are \$100, and there are only 100 available.

Proceeds from the gala tickets and a portion of art sales will support the Foundation's work to protect, preserve, and enhance the Blue Ridge Parkway. The art will remain on exhibit and available for purchase on Saturday and Sunday, October 12 & 13.