



"Doughton Park with its show of Blazing Star *Liatris*" by David McKenzie

## Make Doughton Park your fall destination

At 6,300 acres, Doughton Park is the largest recreation area along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The park boasts nearly 30 miles of trails, historical cabins, mountain overlooks, picnic and camping sites, The Bluffs Restaurant, and a gift shop, making it an ideal destination for a fall adventure.

Even as the Parkway is closed to the north to undergo much-needed repaving and to the south for bridge repairs, visitors can still reach this natural wonderland via a detour along NC 18.

With less through traffic, Doughton feels even more like a serene retreat within the busy national park. Visitors can hike miles of trails, including a section of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The treks range from moderate to strenuous in difficulty, and many cross creeks and feature steep elevation changes, so be sure to plan your route accordingly. The extra effort is worth it to experience the beauty and solitude deep in the park.

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The Bluffs Restaurant reopened in 2021 thanks to support from donors. The circa-1949 restaurant remains true to its roots by serving delicious homestyle meals, including ham biscuits, sweet potato pancakes, fried chicken, and barbecue. Guests can grab a table in the delightfully retro dining room or at the picnic tables outside. (Dogs are welcome.)

The Visitor Information Center and Gift Shop, housed in a former service station, offers books, toys, maps, snacks, gear, T-shirts, and most importantly, knowledgeable staff. The shop even offers a special National Park Passport cancellation stamp and stickers, plus Junior Ranger and Bark Ranger programs.

Two 19th century historical cabins pass down chapters of the area's history. Brinegar Cabin is easily accessible from the Parkway and showcases early farm life in Appalachia. From Wildcat Rocks Overlook, visitors can spy Caudill Cabin, a one-room log home nestled in Basin Cove. Adventurers can hike the Basin Creek Trail to step inside the cabin, one of the few structures that survived a devastating flood in 1916.

There is an abundance of opportunities to sleep under the stars between the 100 sites at Doughton Park Campground, backcountry camping in Basin Cove, and at nearby Miller's Campground.

Don't miss an opportunity to enjoy the cooler temperatures, gorgeous autumn views, and all the amenities found in Doughton Park this fall. For more information, visit [DestinationDoughton.com](http://DestinationDoughton.com).



Volunteers show their love for The Bluffs by preparing the restaurant for its opening day on May 26. The group refreshed the building's exterior and the landscape by raking, painting, cleaning, and trimming. Thanks to their help, The Bluffs is shining this season. Photos by Cheryl Parker and Kevin Brandt.

## Grants support outdoor outings & trail repairs

In 2023, the Foundation awarded grants to an outdoor adventure group and a trail volunteer organization. Latinos Aventureros en las Carolinas received a \$5,000 grant to stock El Closet, a borrowing closet with outdoor gear for members of the Hispanic community. The Carolina Mountain Club received \$11,200 for trail maintenance tools and additional equipment.

“Creating enriching experiences along the Blue Ridge Parkway and in the outdoors overall is part of the Foundation’s mission,” said Carolyn Ward, CEO of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. “We are so proud to award these grants to a group introducing more people to the joys of nature and an organization that has spent countless hours bettering the trails along the Parkway.”

Latinos Aventureros en las Carolinas is a group that supports and advocates for community members to enjoy outdoor adventures, particularly with outreach to the Hispanic

community. The volunteers of the Carolina Mountain Club maintain and repair more than 420 miles of trails throughout Western North Carolina. Approximately 50 percent of the organization’s annual maintenance work is performed on trails along the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Latinos Aventureros en las Carolinas starting Alum Cave Trail, using hiking sticks from "El Closet."

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## Your IRA can help the Parkway and reduce your taxes

Rick Lotz loves to drive the Blue Ridge Parkway, and not just from behind the wheel. His support drives enhancements within the national park. He wants more Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation donors to know about the tax advantages of qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) from individual retirement accounts (IRAs).

“I don’t itemize deductions on my taxes, so I don’t get any tax benefit if I just write checks to nonprofits,” Lotz explains. “By gifting charities with QCD funds from my IRA, I can save on my taxes.” Distributions from a traditional IRA to the owner are normally subject to income tax and could push a person into a higher tax bracket. With QCDs, however, IRA funds go directly to nonprofits, so donors are helping their favorite charities with money that is never taxed.

To utilize the QCD option, individuals age 70½ and older simply instruct their IRA administrator to send funds to one or more qualifying charities.

While IRA holders can donate up to \$100,000 per year, smaller gifts are common and beneficial to donors and nonprofit organizations.

“I would like to see QCDs catch on with more donors,” Lotz adds. “To me, it’s a question of would you prefer that the government decides how much of your tax money supports the Parkway, or would you rather make that decision yourself?”



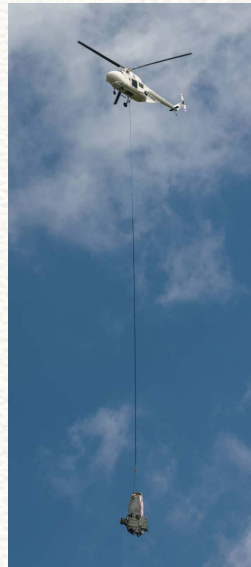
Rick Lotz with his personalized Parkway license plate.

## Plane wreckage removed

Two key elements of the Foundation's mission are to protect the natural resources within the national park and to help ensure the safety of visitors. Both goals were the impetus behind the removal of plane crash wreckage at Waterrock Knob in June.

With funding from the Foundation, National Park Service contractors airlifted the remaining wreckage of a Cessna 414A plane for disposal. The plane crashed near Waterrock Knob in November 1983, killing both occupants. The site of the crash is on land that was donated to the Blue Ridge Parkway in 2016. Since that time, an increasing number of visitors began trekking to the wreckage via unauthorized social trails, causing concerns for those who might get lost or injured.

In addition to the cultural significance of this area to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Waterrock Knob area is one of four high-elevation sites in the park where there is a concentration of rare and sensitive species, including Pinkshell azaleas. The use of the social trails caused severe damage to these species due to trampling, erosion, soil compaction, and vegetation removal. The National Park Service and volunteers can now work to rehabilitate the landscape.



Top: Cessna 414A at crash site on Browning Knob.

Bottom three: Helicopter airlift, salvage team, and recovered wreckage by Reggie Tidwell (Curve Theory).

## Bat survey underway

Thanks to donor support, a bat survey has taken flight as acoustic detectors were placed along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Ultrasonic microphones within the detectors pick up the frequency and rhythm of bat echolocation calls. This information helps to identify common and rare bat species, determine their locations in the park, and gather data that shows trends in their health and vigor.

Researchers at Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources & Environment will use this data to better understand the bat populations along the Parkway and how to protect them.



A Virginia Tech researcher attaches an acoustic detector to a tree at the Blue Ridge Parkway headquarters in Asheville.

# Growing pollination stations

In the future, pollinators along the Blue Ridge Parkway will find more wildflower habitats where they can thrive. Thanks to funding from Foundation donors, students from Appalachian State University and volunteers spent two summers surveying populations of bees in the park. The first survey was conducted before wildflower display areas were established on the Parkway, and the second after these areas were revived by National Park Service staff and volunteers who collected site-specific native seeds for planting.

The pollinator survey involved retrieving specimens from 60 collection sites, which yielded 9,000 specimens. Before the bees could be identified, the process involved washing, drying, sorting, pinning, and labeling all the specimens. In Virginia, 115 species of bees were found, while 128 species were collected in North Carolina.

In fact, two new species of bumblebees were found since a 2015 bumblebee inventory. The federally listed endangered species *Bombus affinis*, the rusty patched bumblebee, was found in Virginia. Both states yielded *B. pensylvanicus*, the American bumblebee, a vulnerable and threatened species.

To help foster this trove of pollinator biodiversity, the National Park Service is working to create additional pollinator sites within the park and train staff on educating visitors about the program. It all adds up to more bees, more beauty, and a more sustainable park.



## Monarch season

Each fall, large groups of North American monarch butterflies leave their summer breeding grounds and migrate south. These long-distance travelers are often seen in September and October at the high-elevation meadows of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Passive traps set at collection sites.



Curation of specimen samples.

# Training to save lives

Parkway volunteers received training and certification in first aid and CPR from the American Red Cross, thanks to Foundation donors. More than 20 participants attended training on cardiopulmonary resuscitation with and without the use of an AED at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville, N.C. Now these volunteers are prepared to assist visitors in the field when they might be miles away from a hospital or ranger station.



The Red Cross leads CPR training in Asheville.

## Blue Ridge on the rise

Over the last several months, hundreds of Blue Ridge Parkway neighbors shared their thoughts on the best ways to strengthen the economy along the national park's corridor. A series of Blue Ridge Rising listening sessions and meetings marked the first time in the Parkway's 87-year history that all 29 Parkway-adjacent counties in North Carolina and Virginia engaged together to determine strategies with wide-ranging benefits for the region.

This work is made possible by two grants awarded to the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The grants are funded through the American Rescue Plan Act and U.S. EDA's programs to advance economic recovery and resilience in travel, tourism, and other sectors.

The feedback and ideas will form an action plan identifying key projects that will advance



Rebecca Adcock speaks during a Blue Ridge Rising community meeting in Patrick County, Va., in March.

economic development in multiple communities. The next steps in the process will be discussed at a Blue Ridge Rising Summit on Dec. 5-6, 2023 at the Meadowbrook Inn in Blowing Rock. Visit our website for more details in the coming weeks.



A TRACK Trail opening in Lancaster, S.C.

## Kids in Parks expands in S.C.

Families in South Carolina are in for a healthy dose of outdoor adventures as the Kids in Parks program expands its network of family friendly trails across the state. Through a \$1.2 million grant from the BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation to support the goals of Diabetes Free SC, Kids in Parks will establish three TRACK Trails in each of the state's 46 counties over the next four years for a total of 138 new locations.

"Providing children with a way to engage with nature that makes them healthier and increases the access and use of our local resources is an amazing investment in the state," said South Carolina KIP Program Manager Teddi Thomas Garrick.

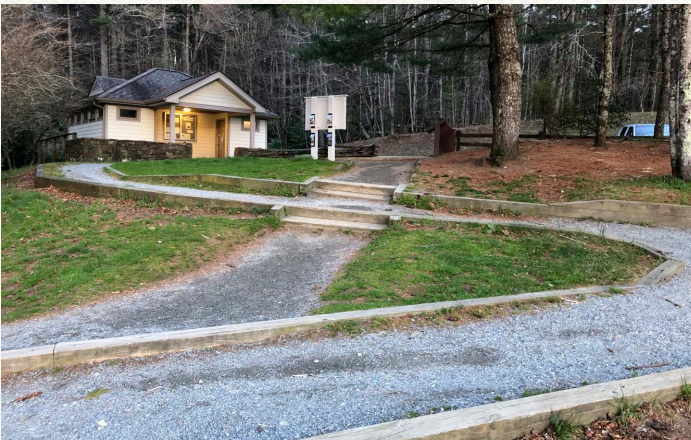
The new trails are part of the program's national network of TRACK Trails, which started with its first trail on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Activity brochures available at each trail are designed to engage families with the natural world and introduce the health benefits of outdoor play. Recent studies show that, on average, kids spend over seven hours a day "plugged-in" to electronics and only seven minutes a day participating in unstructured outdoor play. TRACK Trails are working to decrease the difference in those numbers and get children outside and moving for their physical and mental wellbeing.

# Creating a better path

The trail around picturesque Bass Lake is a popular route for outdoor lovers. At just under a mile, the level loop is ideal for a wide array of mobility levels. Unfortunately, the ramp that leads to the trail from the parking area is rutted and difficult to walk, making it an obstacle for many who seek to enjoy this beautiful corner of Moses H. Cone Memorial Park.

To help upgrade the ramp to meet accessibility standards, the National Environmental Education Foundation awarded a grant for \$17,000 toward the cost of the project. The funds are a huge step forward to converting the eroding slope to a stable concrete pathway that follows the principles of Inclusive Universal Design.

To complete this important enhancement, we need your help to reach the total fundraising goal of \$40,000. With a donation for the project, you can give more people safer access to this cherished natural place. Please give today by using the form here or at [BRPFoundation.org/donate](http://BRPFoundation.org/donate).



Visitors navigate the degraded ramp at Bass Lake at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park.

# YES!

I want to support projects along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

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Need to update your information? Contact  
Rebecca Askew at [raskew@brpfoundation.org](mailto:raskew@brpfoundation.org).



## Music on the Parkway

This summer was full of mountain music at beautiful Parkway locations. Local and regional artists shared their talents at Milepost Music concerts hosted at Doughton Park, Humpback Rocks, Peaks of Otter, Mabry Mill, and the Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville. The concerts are made possible thanks to donor support for the Blue Ridge Music Center and a collaboration with the National Park Service. Don't miss the final performances on Sundays in September. Details at [BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org](http://BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org).



Milepost Music at The Bluffs in Doughton Park.

Blue Ridge Parkway winding its way through the woods in Virginia.