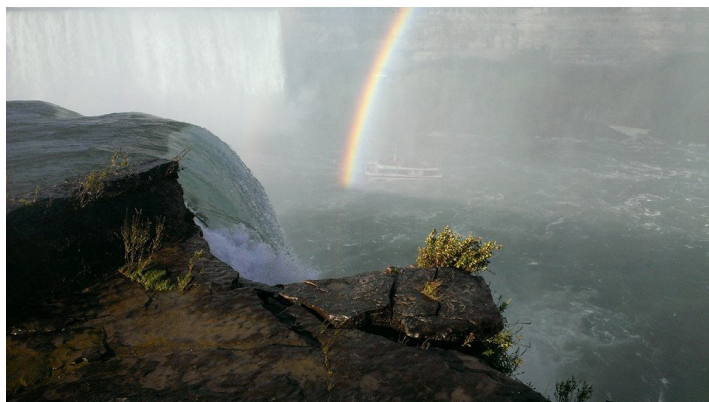


October 2014 - Joining In with National Heritage Areas

Joining In with National Heritage Areas

By Phyllis Baxter
AFHA Executive Director

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area has been operating as a regional heritage area for over ten years -- building partnerships, interpreting forest heritage stories, supporting natural and historic sites, encouraging heritage tourism, and getting things done with our AmeriCorps team. At the same time, we are seeking designation as a National Heritage Area - which would bring national recognition of the significance of our area, development assistance through the National Park Service, and, potentially, additional funding. Toward this end, we have completed a Feasibility Study which was approved by the National Park Service as meeting the criteria for National Heritage Area, and we have a designation bill which was introduced in the Senate a year ago by Senators Rockefeller, Manchin, Cardin and Mikulski.



Niagara Falls, NY. Photo: Logan Smith

Logan Smith and I just returned from Niagara National Heritage Area, where we participated in a meeting of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, of which we are an affiliate member. We were impressed with the potential of National Heritage Areas, and the exciting things going on all across the country.



SITES



~ OF THE ~ MONTH

Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.

FORESTRY SITE

The 9,400 acres that make up the [Calvin Price State Forest](#) in Pocahontas County was purchased by the state from the New River

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reauthorize some existing heritage areas, provide authorizations for new ones such as for AFHA, and to consider a National Heritage Area Program bill which will make this whole process more stable. We encourage you to let your legislators know that you support National Heritage Areas, and that it is important that Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area be designated!

Becoming a Bat Champion



The author manning the pollination station at the Mountain State Forest Festival. Photo: USFS

By Kristin Stockton

AFHA AmeriCorps Conservation Team Member

I was ridiculously excited to begin working with the Forest Service upon my arrival in Elkins. My main task is to work with the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI), and I must admit that I deeply and dearly love trees. I didn't enter this new position without some trepidation though. I have always been heavily involved with fieldwork, and it was made clear that my position would involve much more education and outreach than I am accustomed to. I accepted, knowing that this was an opportunity for

recent addition to the forest system. Its close proximity to [Watoga State Park](#), which has plenty of recreational opportunities, means that there was no need to develop the recreational aspect of the Forest, allowing visitors to concentrate instead on hiking, camping and hunting. Around two-thirds of the Forest are accessible only on foot, with oaks and yellow poplar present as well as white pine, the virgin timber that was logged here between 1880 and 1920.

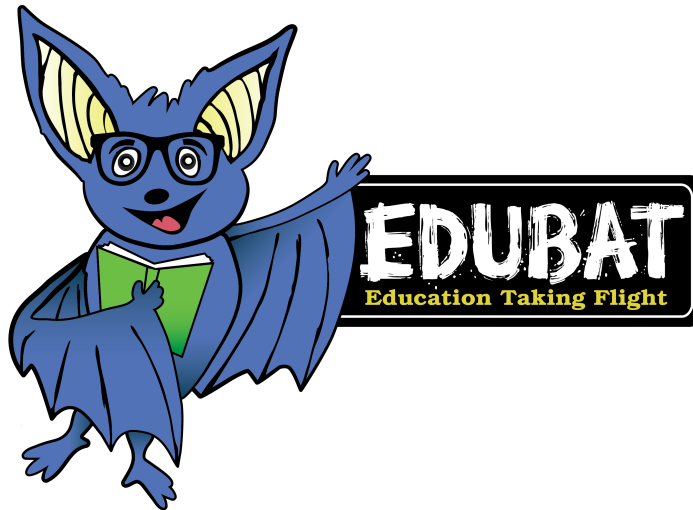


[Carnifex Ferry](#)

[Battlefield State Park](#) is the site of a September 1861 Civil War battle that took place near Summersville, WV in Nicholas County. The battle was important because it was a turning point in stopping Confederate incursions into western Virginia, making possible the

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ultimately, conservation.



My first task with the Forest Service has definitely placed me in new territory. October is not about the trees; it's all about the bats! Katie Stoltzfus, Paige Lansky, and I are tasked with development and implementation of Project EduBat, an initiative to promote bat conservation through education. Bats are amazing creatures yet are frequently misunderstood and portrayed in a negative light. By introducing kids and their parents to bat conservation through fun activities, facts, and media, we encourage people to become "bat champions," citizen scientists with a focus on environmentalism and bat-friendly practices. The materials that we are working on with the Forest Service staff include crafts, games, and social media. National Bat Week is October 26-November 1. In celebration, we will be initiating 365 Days of Bats on the Facebook page and visiting an elementary school in Petersburg, WV so that the kids can participate in bat-themed activities.

Although Project EduBat primarily targets families, the social media sites cater to all ages and are posting cool new information daily. To like us on Facebook go to [facebook.com/ProjectEduBat](https://www.facebook.com/ProjectEduBat) or follow us on twitter at [@EduBat_BatChamp](https://twitter.com/EduBat_BatChamp).

The park includes hiking trails, the Patterson House Museum, and overlooks on the Gauley River. A reenactment of the battle is held every other year with the next one scheduled for 2016.



The [Burgoo International Cook-Off](#) has been held annually on the Saturday of Columbus Day weekend since 1995. Taking place at Baker's Island Recreation Area in the Elk River in downtown Webster Springs, the event celebrates burgoo, a thick traditional hunters' stew that can be made up of vegetables and game such as squirrel, bear, pheasant, raccoon, and rabbit. The event includes live music, events for children, an apple pie contest, apple butter making and a scarecrow contest.

Working on The Aurora Project

By Kellyn Biela

AFHA AmeriCorps Heritage Team Member

As a new comer not only to the state of West Virginia, but also to rural communities, I am enchanted with the personable small town life that Aurora and Preston County have to offer. Living here, a completely different mindset of neighborliness emerges. Though I don't claim to have met everyone here, I have certainly met someone related. Still finding my way around, I stumbled into a street that became narrower and narrower and bumpier and bumpier the further I went along. Stopping to confirm my suspicions that it was not a through street, I met Anita. We discovered that not only had I met her mother the previous Sunday, but made such an impression that I was entreated to think about adopting one of her children's dogs. Another day, a neighbor offered me a dozen fresh eggs from her chickens, and then called apologetically to say she had forgotten to wash them. These are just a few examples of the hospitality I have been shown. It certainly imbues a sense of security that you don't have to lock your doors, and if you do forget to do so, it will be ok.

Coming from a constantly changing city with a growing number of immigrants and transplants, where it is easier to construct a new building than use what we have, it's exciting to see the strong sense of history instilled here. The Aurora Project, where I am serving my AmeriCorps term, is a complex of historic buildings from a 19th century resort. Although we are still renovating these historic structures that are home to West Virginia's only artists' residency, the Aurora Project is buzzing with ideas for programs and events we hope to host in the coming year. This quaint

The [Tuscarora Trail](#) is a 250 mile side trail of the Appalachian Trail which crosses the AFHA region for 33 miles mostly along the border of Morgan and Berkeley Counties. Originally part of the Big Blue Trail, it was conceived of as an alternative to the AT, which was threatened by development in the late 1960s. This section of the trail contains some rough terrain, steep climbs, and crosses private property in some sections. It is maintained by the [Potomac Appalachian Trail Club](#) and has recently been included in the [Great Eastern Trail](#), a series of trails running from Alabama to New York.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

Email us at:

info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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creative process. In addition, we aim to deepen the appreciation for the arts, humanities, and the environment through programs linked to local culture, history, and traditions.

[AFHA Facebook](#)

Aurora Celtic performs at the Aurora Barn Dance, October 5th, 2014. Photo: Scott Prouty

Although I have only been here a month, I have already participated in producing our Annual Barn Dance. We transformed a working barn into the perfect venue to hear Appalachian tunes and to square dance. I look forward to the rest of the year and developing an exciting event series for our community to learn from and enjoy together.

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