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Get out and explore your forest!



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area September 2013 E-Newsletter

Greetings,

At the beginning of September, we welcomed 17 new AmeriCorps members and 7 returning members to the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. We are looking forward to keeping you updated on changes, projects, volunteer opportunities, and events in the region as our members embark on their year of service!

Autumn is fast approaching, so remember to take an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful (and fleeting) fall colors. This month's e-news comes complete with suggestions for a great fall weekend getaway, right here in the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area. Happy exploring!

Get Out and Explore Your Forest!

By Kate Nietling
AFHA Conservation AmeriCorps Member



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.



Kate Nietling, (pictured far right) is an AmeriCorps member with the Marlinton District Ranger Station on the Monongahela National Forest. Here, she shares her insight into a great weekend trip in and around Marlinton, WV.

The changing seasons in West Virginia are so distinct and beautiful in different ways. Trees, flowers, and wildlife help each season stand out.

My personal favorite is fall. Yes, I love pumpkin flavored foods, but that is only one small element of my fall season. Here in West Virginia, fall is about getting outdoors and immersing oneself in the culture and heritage of the area. The contrast of hardwoods'™ changing leaves and the deep greens of spruce trees beckon to amateur photographers and nature lovers, while numerous local festivals proclaim the wonderful heritage and culture of Appalachia. On a spare weekend, I enjoy taking a little two day tour of the Marlinton/Pocahontas county area, especially with new visitors to the state.

From Marlinton, we head north on Rt. 219 up to the [Highland Scenic Highway](#), Rt. 150. There are four drive-up overlooks, and one short hike overlook on the highway. Each overlook has picnic area and gorgeous views. The Tea Creek-Williams River area is one my favorites to stop and have a picnic. The area is most known for the campground, however day users are welcome to visit and use the picnic area near the river or fish for the day. Big Spruce overlook on the highway features a short boardwalk hike (0.3mile) or a 2 mile hike connecting to the Williams Valley overlook.



[Green Ridge State Forest](#) is the largest contiguous block of public land in Maryland. The state forest is located within the Ridge and Valley Province of the Appalachian Mountains and runs from the Mason-Dixon Line to the Potomac River. Green Ridge is a working forest, balancing conservation and active timber management. The forest offers visitors with many recreation and adventure opportunities including a self-guided, interpretive driving tour, scenic overlooks, primitive camping, hiking trails, a mountain bike trail, public hunting and fishing, and geocaching.



[Traveler's Repose](#) is located along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike in Bartow, WV, and served as an Inn for travelers. It was also the first Post Office in Greenbrier County, and then the telephone exchange for the valley. The original house was in the midst of artillery fire during the Battle of Greenbrier River. After the battle,

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Driving along the Highland Scenic Highway in October.

Photo: Tommy Caggiano

Once finished exploring the Scenic byway, stop at the [Cranberry Mountain Nature Center](#) for a little break. The nature center is located on the south end of the scenic highway and features a nice picnic area and a short interpretive trail. Inside the center is an educational live snake display. Mr. Roy Moose generally does a couple snake shows on the weekends.

Just a mile west on Rt. 39/55 (also part of the Highland Scenic Highway) is the [Cranberry Glades Botanical Area](#). Though fall is not the time to see orchids in bloom, there are still some very unique plants and animals in this area. The boardwalk around the glades is about a half mile and boasts lovely views of the mountains from a different perspective. The plants will begin to put on berries in late September and attract an array of birds.



View from Cranberry Glades Boardwalk. Photo: Tommy Caggiano

The next stop on this fall excursion is the [Falls of Hills Creek](#) which is about 5 miles west of the glades. There are

today was built upon the old foundations in 1869. The residence is on private property with interpretive signs in the front, but is easily seen from the back where one may park off of Highway 250.



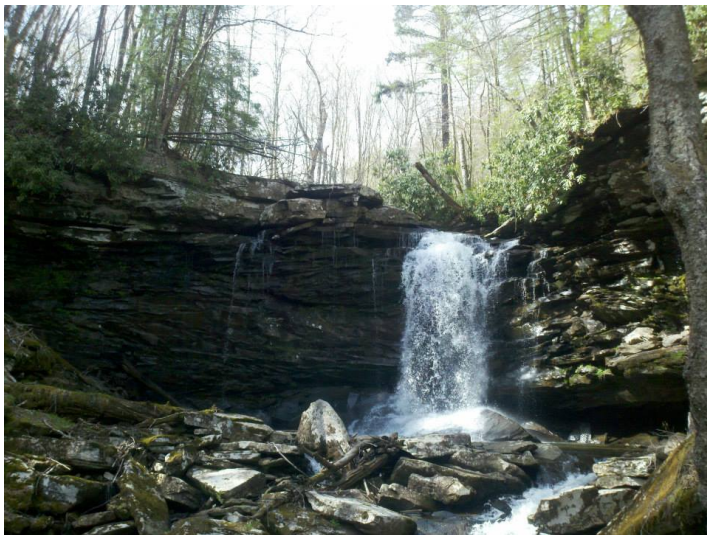
[Helvetia, West Virginia](#) is a small Swiss village tucked in a high mountain valley of Randolph County. The original Swiss and German settlers arrived in 1869 and many of their descendants remain in the community today. Due to isolation, the strong traditions of dance, music, food, and holiday celebrations have survived through generations. Fasnacht is one of the community's most popular events, celebrating the Swiss tradition of burning "old man winter." Celebrants design and wear their own masks, and partake in music, square dancing, and a large bonfire.



[Audra State Park](#) is a West Virginia State Park located in southwestern Barbour

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the falls and surrounding area. This is usually a good place to end the first day.



Middle Fall at Falls of Hills Creek. Photo: Tommy Caggiano

There are several campgrounds off of Rt.39/55 and off of Rt. 150 most of which are open until the end of October, early November. If you are staying in Marlinton, the evening is a great time to visit the [Pocahontas County Opera House](#) if there is an event happening. Or, try one of the dining options in Marlinton, Slaty Fork, or Hillsboro. Some places offer locally sourced ingredients and music.

If you are still feeling adventurous the following day, a trip up Droop Mountain is still fairly close to the Marlinton area. Traveling south on Rt. 219, [Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park](#) is the first stop. The park has a couple trails leading to a lookout tower. The tower will give you a view of the mountains and valleys rarely found elsewhere. Museums and exhibits explain the historical significance of the Battle of Droop Mountain.

Just south of Droop is [Beartown State Park](#). A boardwalk winds through natural rock formations seemingly large enough for bears to live. The walk can be as quick or as casual as one may choose.

early 19th century gristmill and the tiny community of Audra. A gristmill spillway is still visible in the river today. The park is hilly and forested, bisected by the Middle Fork River. The deep pools, large rocks, and riverside beach have provided generations of visitors with a place to swim or sunbathe. or work on their tans. Audra State Park is the site of a cave that is accessible by a boardwalk.

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

Email us at:

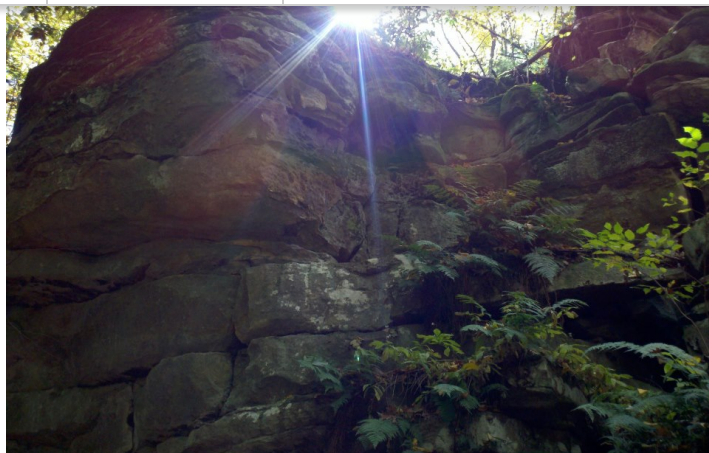
info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

Check us out on Facebook!



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Beartown State Park. Photo: Kate Nietling

From here, the day can continue on down to [Lewisburg](#) which features quite a few antique stores, for some indoor time, and also a few different caverns, for some underground time. Antiques in the area generally feature a section of Fiesta dishware, which is made in West Virginia!

Don't forget to check local papers for festivals happening in the area—the end of September and all of October feature several heritage festivals and harvest festivals. Fall is a perfect time to discover the nature, culture, and heritage this state has to offer!

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