



# Compass

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Pocahontas County**

**From the Andes to West Virginia  
Orchard Hill Farm Alpacas, Page 8**

**At home in Nature's Mountain Playground  
The Carricos retire to a tourists' paradise, Page 14**

**“Pull!”  
Clay Shooting at Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Page 19**

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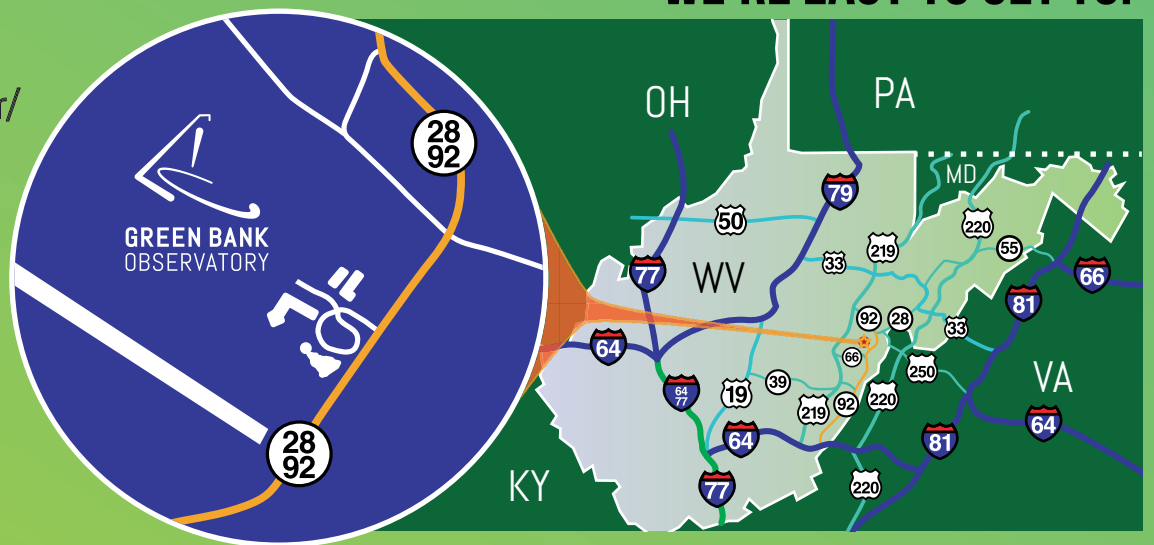
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### WE'RE EASY TO GET TO!



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# Sizzling shows this summer at the Opera House

**The Rustic Mechanicals**  
**Sunday, July 17**  
**7 p.m.**



The Rustic Mechanicals return to Discovery Junction Sunday, July 17, to perform Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. This will be the kick-off event of the 2022-2023 Opera House Season. The performance will begin at 7 p.m. and a suggested donation of \$10 is encouraged.

When the King of Navarre and his three courtiers forswear all pleasure – particularly of the female variety – in favour of a life of study, the arrival of the Princess of France and her ladies plays havoc with their intentions. Using every kind of verbal gymnastics to poke fun, *Love's Labour's Lost* proves to be Shakespeare's most intellectual comedy. The Rustic Mechanicals production is filled with music, romance, charm and a healthy dose of laugh-out-loud hilarity.

Founded by Celi Oliveto in the summer of 2014, The Rustic Mechanicals is the only troupe of actors in the state dedicated to touring the works of William Shakespeare and other classical playwrights.

## The Rustic Mechanicals

**Chatham Rabbits**  
**Saturday, July 23**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**\$10**

The Opera House welcomes North Carolina-based Americana folk duo, Chatham Rabbits to its stage Saturday, July 23. The show will begin at 7:30 p.m.

North Carolina is a place so identifiable by its separate regions – the mountains, the piedmont, the coast – that it has a tendency to feel indescribable, meaning one can conceptualize the state as a mash-up of places rather than a single locale. The art and artists born from the state often embody that same sense of blended regions, borrowing from broad cultural traditions and plumbing the histories of others' stories on the way to telling their own. Because of this,

many North Carolina artists can call a particular region home, but their work belongs to the state, because the entirety of the state has opened itself to them and they have opened themselves to it. Chatham Rabbits exemplify North Carolina's tradition of producing artists who embrace the state's many cultural resources and diverse musical traditions.

In their marriage and in their music, Chatham Rabbits' Austin and Sarah



## Chatham Rabbits

McCombie, also blend their own histories into a shared musical experience. Sarah first took the stage as part of a trio known as the South Carolina Broadcasters, a band that harkened back to the

old days of the Grand Ole Opry and AM radio country classics. Meanwhile, Austin played keyboards

and guitar for an electronic band called DASH. Given these histories, how would Chatham Rabbits describe their musical marriage?

"We're not purists," Austin said.

"And we're certainly not the hippest," Sarah adds. "But we've been able to belong nowhere and everywhere at the same time."

That's how their music feels: immediate, personal, available. With their first album, 2018's *All I Want from You*, Chatham Rabbits shared the many stories they'd heard over their years growing up in North Carolina. With *The Yoke Is Easy, the Burden Is Full*, they're sharing their own stories. They're

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*Cover: What can be said that hasn't already been said about the 173-mile long Greenbrier River? It rises in northern Pocahontas County and flows to the southern end into Greenbrier County. As it makes its way south. Much of the area along the river is protected by national forest, state parks and recreational systems. Fish, swim, kayak, float or just sit and enjoy the peace and beauty of this gift of nature. Photo by Carol Carrico*

## Pocahontas County Arts Council



### All Summer Long!

WEDNESDAY CLAY DAYS

at Third Ave. Studio. Kids' class 4:30 p.m. Adults 6:30 p.m.

Oil Painting, Durbin Art Center, Thursdays at 6 p.m.

Pioneer Days Art Show, June 24 - July 9

at McClintic Library, Marlinton

Durbin Days, July 15 and 16

Psankey with Cynthia Gurreri, Dot Painting with Peggy Owens and Clay Sculptures with Cris Bartlett

Paint your own Pottery: Durbin Art Center, Aug. 9, 2 p.m. and Little Yellow House, Aug. 16, 2 p.m.

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facebook.com/groups/PocahontasCountyArtsCouncil

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not purists. They're not hip. They're more than that: they're North Carolina musicians, meaning they belong nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

**Black Mountain  
Bluegrass Boys  
Saturday, July 30  
7:30 p.m.  
\$10**

The Black Mountain Bluegrass boys return to the Opera House after a few years' hiatus from its stage.

Mill Point local Richard Hefner has been the bandleader of West Virginia's longest-running bluegrass band for more than half a century. This year, he has curated one of the most diverse lineups to the group. Holding down the low-end on bass is Richard's Mill Point neighbor Joanna Burt-



**Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys**

Kinderman. On fiddle and guitar will be one of

West Virginia's most notable music ambassadors, Dave Bing. And on mandolin – master Dalton Smith.

To learn more about Richard Hefner and the Black Mountain Bluegrass

Boys, check out the Opera House Story Sessions. There are videos and a podcast that dives deep into Richard's early days, and also showcases some of his favorite songs. Dave Bing will also be featured on Season Two of *The Story Sessions*, starting July 3.

To learn more please visit [PocahontasOperaHouse.org](http://PocahontasOperaHouse.org)

**All Under Heaven:  
One Woman  
Pearl S. Buck Play  
Saturday, August 13  
7:30 p.m.  
\$10**

The Opera House wel-



**Cathey Sawyer will portray Pearl S. Buck**

comes to its stage the one-woman Pearl S. Buck play, *All Under Heaven*. Tickets are available at the door for \$10, or in advance at the 4th Avenue Gallery or at Pocahontas OperaHouse.org

*All Under Heaven*, by Valerie Harper and Dyke Garrison, is a one-woman play about Nobel and Pulitzer prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck which takes place a year prior to her death as she waits for a visa to arrive that will permit her to once again visit her beloved China. Her memories of her early life in Chingkiang, where her father was a mission-

ary, open the door to rec-

ollections of many people and events in her extraordinary life.

A consummate storyteller, she recreates an array of some 14 male and female characters from her life. She details her personal and professional struggles including her experiences in China during the revolution and the criticisms from the literary world when she surpassed other big name (and mostly male) authors to win the Nobel. She also came under attack at the McCarthy hearings for her fervent anti-racist views and her friendships with noted civil rights leaders. She describes the causes she championed including her efforts to establish and fund an adoption agency to rescue Asian children fathered by US GIs. Throughout it all, Buck is candid about her personal struggles and finds humor where she can.

**History Alive! presents**



**Pearl S. Buck**

Born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, to missionary parents, Buck grew up in China, but she never forgot her West Virginia roots. She received the Pulitzer Prize for her 1931 novel, *The Good Earth* – the first American woman ever to be awarded the honor.

She was also a humanitarian and social activist who was deeply concerned about the welfare of children worldwide.

Portrayed by Missy McCollam of Beverly, West Virginia.

Book now for school performances and venues around West Virginia for the 2022 season. Email for details: [missy@theoldbrick.org](mailto:missy@theoldbrick.org)

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**John Ellison and The Carpenter Ants**

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**John Ellison and The Carpenter Ants**  
**Saturday, August 20**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**\$10**

Pocahontas County Opera House presents an evening of music with John “Some Kind of Wonderful” Ellison and The Carpenter Ants.

Singer/songwriter/guitarist John Ellison was born on the banks of the Kanawha River in a driftwood shack built by his father, a coal miner. When the house washed away in a flood, his family moved to McDowell County.

At 18, inspired by Chuck Berry and the desire to leave the coalfields, he quit his job at the Carter Hotel in Welch and boarded a bus for Rochester, New York. In 1966, he joined the Soul Brothers Six, signed with Atlantic Records and, on the way to their first recording session, wrote “Some Kind of Wonderful.”

To date, more than 60 artists have recorded the song. An astute businessman, Ellison retained the rights to his signature

song and started his successful Some Kind of Wonderful Foods.

Ellison continues to write and record and regularly performs in the U.S. and Europe with West Virginia’s premier rhythm and blues group, The Carpenter Ants – guitarist Michael Lipton,

drummer Jupiter Little, bassist Ted Harrison and vocalist/saxophonist Charlie Tee – have quietly amassed a résumé that rivals many national groups.

The group’s trademark country-soul sound – rich, soulful harmonies, stinging solos and a rock-solid

A Pocahontas County Bicentennial Event

# the Ballad of Cass

Written and directed by Missy McCollum, of the Old Brick Playhouse, Elkins, WV. Based on an original play by Nicolette Maleckar, from the writings of Tward Blackhurst about the people who lived in turn-of-the-century Cass.

**Saturday, July 16 and 23**  
**2 p.m. and 6 p.m.**

**Sunday, July 17 and 24 • 6 p.m.**

The play is presented as a “promenade” – The audience moves in small groups to different locations in Cass for each scene, beginning in front of the Cass Company Store and ending at the Cass Community Center; followed by a lemonade social.

**Tickets \$10 each.**

Limited advance tickets available online at [celebratepocahontas200.com](http://celebratepocahontas200.com)  
 Tickets also available at the door.

sponsored by

Burner-Blackhurst Reunion and Pocahontas County Drama, Fairs and Festivals.



**Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno**

rhythm section – captures that rare, loose-but-tight feel, and has won the band international as well as regional fans.

**Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno**  
**Saturday, September 17**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**\$10**

Indie folk duo, Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno will take the stage Saturday, September 17.

Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno’s self-titled record is old-soul roots music to its core. Though both are just out of college, the duo’s musical talents extend far beyond their years. Produced by

See **HOUSE**, page 7

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GRAMMY-winning Cajun roots heavyweight Joel Savoy at his Louisiana studio, Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno (released March 12, 2021 on Free Dirt Records) is not some soulless collection of songs imitating previous masters of American music. Rather, the pair has responded to one of the darkest eras in American history with an album of stunning breadth and originality.

With mass protests, fires raging near their current home in the Pacific Northwest, and no prospect of touring anytime soon, it's

an aptly biting, bittersweet group of songs for an uncertain time. Yet, Leva and Calcagno balance this with a sense of optimism—a notion that at our most vulnerable we might emerge better humans because of it all, perhaps beginning with our own intimate relationships... It's an artistic statement made from this moment but built to last.

Vivian Leva and Riley Calcagno follows Leva's critically acclaimed 2018 debut, *Time Is Everything*, which garnered rave reviews from publications like *Rolling Stone* who said the album shone "a light

up its place in the present."

Both Leva and Calcagno grew up in the Appalachian stringband tradition, have noted parents in the old-time scene, and spent formative years running wild around festival campgrounds. They are steeped in an instrumental culture of hard-picking and virtuosic musicianship... Great pickers don't necessarily make great songwriters; it's an entirely different art to be able to translate the world of rural Appalachia into a country song that can still make a personal point. As young artists stepping into the spotlight during one of the most brutal periods in our history it's clear they've built something that can last, something that speaks to our present time while reminding us of the best parts of where we came from.

**The Hammons Family Musical Heritage Celebration**  
Saturday, September 24  
7:30 p.m.  
\$10

The Hammons Family Musical Heritage Celebration returns to the Opera House in September.

This is an event dedicated to highlighting the Hammons' legacy within Pocahontas County and the American Traditional Music canon. Community members and old-time musicians who carry on this legacy are invited to sign up to perform or tell stories during the evening. The Hammons Family carried on longstanding traditions of fiddling, banjo playing, ballad singing, and storytelling at their remote mountain home in Pocahontas County. In recent years, musicians from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North



Carolina have taken to the Opera House stage to pay

tribute to the Hammons family, celebrating their own diverse range of musical styles and talents.

Master of Ceremonies Mike Burns was a long-time friend of the Hammons and carries on their music and history through anecdotal stories and songs.

Tickets for the Opera House performance are \$10 for adults and free for anyone 17 years old and younger. Tickets are available at [pocahontasoperahouse.org](http://pocahontasoperahouse.org), the 4th Avenue Gallery in Marlinton, and at the door the evening of the performance.

The Opera House Performance Series is presented with financial assistance through a grant from the West Virginia Division of Culture and History with approval from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. Support is also provided by Pocahontas County Dramas, Fairs and Festivals, and the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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# Alpacas live the good life at Orchard Hill Farm

Suzanne Stewart  
Staff Writer

Just a few miles off of the Elkins 5-Lane – where the hustle and bustle of a large shopping center gives way to pastoral and peaceful scenes – you will find Orchard Hill Farm and 45 alpacas.

Owned and operated by Becky Hammer and her husband, Dan, the farm has been home to the curious creatures since 2002 when Becky decided to branch out from her career of showing horses.

“I’ve had horses, and I still have two, but I wanted something else that I could raise on the farm that didn’t take a lot of room, and alpacas don’t take a lot of room,” she said. “Also, I wanted something I didn’t have to eat because I do not eat the things on my farm.”

After seeing an ad in *Country Living* magazine about raising alpacas, Hammer began doing re-



search and was soon on her way to California for an alpaca seminar.

“I ended up buying a girl that was pregnant, and then I bought one from Oregon that had just delivered,” she said. “So that’s where I started. They just multiplied from there. I’ve been all over the United States with alpacas, including West Vir-

ginia. One of the largest breeders of alpacas at the time was in Shinnston, outside of Clarksburg. He had four hundred alpacas.”

At one time, Hammer had 54 on her farm. Carrying on her love of showing animals, she started showing her alpacas all along the east coast.

“At the time, they were

basically fifty percent confirmation, fifty percent on the fleece,” she explained. “With alpacas, they are raised for their fleece and that’s primarily what the

Photo by Suzanne Stewart  
Becky Hammer holds a bowl of feed for the females in her herd of alpacas at Orchard Hill Farm in Elkins. Some of the girls fought for a turn at the bowl while others waited patiently for their turn.

shows were. Now, they’ve migrated to where the fleece is the main characteristic and not the confirmation.

“I was always a big proponent of confirmation,” she continued. “Confirmation is the bone structure and what they look like – their teeth and whether they’re straight and whether a breeding female can produce babies. Those are the things that you look for.”

Hammer has had a successful career in showing her alpacas and has come

home with several master awards through the years.

The alpaca farming business is a large network that spans the country and Hammer soon became a member of the West Virginia Alpaca Organization, of which she is treasurer. She has also amassed quite a bit of knowledge about the South American natives.

Alpacas are members of the camelid family, which includes llamas, guanacos, vicuñas, alpacas and camels.

“There are two breeds of alpacas,” Hammer said. “There are Suris, which have a long drapery lock, which is a little bit different characteristic than the Huacayas. The Huacaya has the teddy bear look. Probably ninety-three per-

See *FARM*, page 9

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FARM from pg 8

cent of all the alpacas in the world are Huacayas.”

Alpacas come from three countries in South America – Peru, Bolivia and Chile. They are a herd animal and have been around for centuries. Their numbers dwindled drastically when the Spanish Conquistadors invaded the Andes Mountains. The herders continued to breed alpacas and their numbers rose again until the 1950s, when they were once again taken out – this time, by drug lords.

Thanks to importation, alpacas were sent around the world and farmers in the United States, Australia and Europe began to raise their own herds.

“The United States got into the alpaca business around '84, and they started importing some to the United States,” Hammer said. “In fact, I had a full Chilean import. She was the gal I bought in Oregon.”

By 1998, the United States closed down the importation of alpacas, leading to the loss of their

Photo by Suzanne Stewart  
**A selection of fashionable ponchos, hats, socks, scarves and blankets made with Orchard Hill Farm alpaca fleece are available for purchase at the Tattered Rose Boutique in Marlinton.**

South American roots.

In addition to showing alpacas, Hammer got in the fiber business and has been sending her fleece away to be made into yarn and textiles which she sells online and at the Tattered Rose Boutique in Marlinton.

Alpaca fleece is very fine and soft, making it a coveted product for clothing and accessories. The fleece is graded one through six – with the very fine and softest of the fleece being used for finer materials while the coarser fleece is made into rug yarn.

“If you think anything about cashmere, a cashmere may have a micron count of twelve, which is very low,” Hammer explained. “A human hair is seventy. So if you touch your hair – it's pretty soft. Think about twelve. The



lowest one I ever had was a fifteen or fourteen. Now, as alpacas grow and get older, their fleece becomes

coarser. Then it can't be used for some of those very nice extravagant, luxurious sweaters or the silky type things that are so very nice.”

Although she is in the textile business with items made from fleece from her alpacas, Hammer is the first to admit, she is not crafty and does not use the yarn herself.

“I can't make one thing,” she said. “I told the West Virginia Alpaca Organization I couldn't weave; I couldn't crochet. I couldn't do any of those things. My thing was showing, breeding and now retail.”

The alpacas are sheared once a year at the farm, and the fleece “blankets” are sent away to be graded and made into products.

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See FARM, page 10



Photo by Suzanne Stewart

Alpacas are inquisitive members of the camelid family. When they are content, they “hum” and can – at times – have bad table manners, as shown above.

**FARM** from pg 9  
 white to tan to dark brown to black – and the lighter colors are dyed to add to the variety of products.

Being on the 13-acre farm with Hammer and her alpacas, it is clear to see she has a passion for what she does, and the animals have a fondness for her.

In one field, the females relax near a pond until Hammer yells out, “Hey girls,” and they come running to the barn to get a treat.

They gather around and inquisitively sniff their owner and nibble at the feed.

In another field, the boys hang out and have a tendency to be a little rough with one another, each yearning to be the alpha of the herd. A third herd of the youngest al-

pacas is kept separate and near their own barn. When Hammer and the occasional visitor walk among the alpacas, it’s hard to miss the contented “hum” they make which is a sign they are happy with their life on Orchard Hill.

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Pocahontas County Bicentennial Events  
 celebrating the life of

## Pearl S. Buck

### All Under Heaven: Life of Pearl

This one-woman live theater event performed by Cathey Sawyer, past Artistic Director at the Greenbrier Valley Theatre, Lewisburg, highlights the amazing life of Pearl. Written by Valerie Harper of “Rhoda” fame.

Free to the public.

**August 5 • 7:30 p.m. at the Lewis Theatre,**  
*as part of the Lewisburg Literary Festival*

**August 13 • 7:30 p.m. at the Pocahontas County  
 Opera House, Marlinton**

**August 28 • 2 p.m. at the Ames-Claire Hall in Union,**  
*hosted by Monroe County Historical Society*

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Funded by Pocahontas County Dramas, Fairs and Festivals and the Literacy Fund through the Greater Greenbrier Valley Foundation



### History Alive! presents Pearl S. Buck

Missy McCollam of the Old Brick Theatre in Elkins portrays Miss Buck in this living history presentation.

Performances are free to the public.

**Saturday June 25 • Little Levels Heritage  
 Fair at the Pearl Buck Birthplace, 2 p.m.**

**Saturday, September 10**

**Pearl S. Buck Birthplace, 2 p.m.**

Funded by the West Virginia Humanities Council with local support from the Levels Depot.

History Alive! Pearl Buck presentations are available to communities around West Virginia.

Email [Missy@theoldbrick.org](mailto:Missy@theoldbrick.org)



# The Summer With Tog

By Susan Higginbotham  
Contributing Writer

It started as a typical summer at Watoga State Park. But it ended as the summer with Tog.

There were seven of us hired for the summer jobs. Several of us had been there the earlier summer or two, and we knew each other. The others were new. We were all about the same age — some were college students and others were local — just a typical be-

ginning to the summer.

We usually had wild animal babies to raise. Well-intentioned tourists would “rescue” a baby animal, not realizing the mother was probably just gone for a short while. Fawns were the most common as we usually ended up with at least one every summer. One summer, we had Mamie, the groundhog, and Phoebe, the raccoon. But that’s another story.

This particular summer we had two fox pups — Ruff and Ready. One day

Photo courtesy of Patrick Park  
**Tog, a shining star at Watoga for one unforgettable summer, relaxes in park superintendent Jim Park’s office chair.**

they disappeared along with Mr. Park, the park superintendent. When he reappeared, he was accompanied by a small black bear cub. We named him Watoga — Tog for short. Mr. Park had taken the fox pups to the game farm and exchanged them for a bear cub.

A “Park” Loves a Bear and Tog Loves a “Park”

Tog quickly became the darling of the park. He had a very large dog kennel cage in a shaded corner of the staff parking lot. In the daytime, we



hooked his leash to the clothesline between the supply house and the ad-

ministration building, and he had a wheelbarrow filled with water that he could play in.

Mr. Park loved that bear. Not only would he take Tog in his truck as he made his rounds through the park but it was not unusual to see a bear sitting in the passenger seat as he drove around. The two of them usually ended up at the swimming pool where Tog would swim in the kiddie pool.

In the afternoon, Tog liked to nap in the lounge chair in Mr. Park’s office. Unsuspecting park guests would think he was a dog when they came in. Frequently, they would ask about wild animals in the park. Mr. Park would name the various animals they might see and then casually wave his hand at the chair and say “and we have a bear.” Many a park guest did a doubletake at their first meeting of Tog!

We hand-fed Tog warm milk from a 2-liter bottle. Sometimes, we would be feeding Tog from a bottle in one hand and Flag, the

“rescued” fawn that summer, from a bottle in the other hand. They didn’t know they were supposed to be enemies.

## Popsicles, Soda Pop and a Water Hose

Tog developed a fondness for popsicles and soda pop — both of which were sold in the commissary. We would warn guests not to get too close to Tog with either of those items because Tog would just reach out and take them. We tried to be outside when guests were around because they didn’t believe how quickly that paw could reach out or how long the claws were.

Tog also loved to play with the hose. In the afternoon, we would play “keep away” with him. We usually ended up soaked as Tog would grab the hose and chase us with it.

At night, whenever we returned from a movie or the rec center or wherever we had been, we would try to tiptoe past Tog’s kennel



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See **TOG**, page 12

without waking him. It never worked. He would wake up and cry like the baby he was. So we would have to go to the kitchen and heat a bottle for him, and then he would go back to sleep – so we could sleep.

**The End of That Summer With Tog**

But the end of the summer had come. Flag was not a problem. The park took “rescued” fawns to their home on the other side of the mountain where they could keep them safe or at least try to keep them safe from hunters. But Tog was a different story. He had to go back to the game farm. This was in 1959 – a different time in the care of animals. Of course, it’s also a good lesson on why wild animals should be raised as wild animals, not as pets. Tog, who had been a pet with all kinds of freedom all summer long, suddenly was confined to a pen with all his freedoms gone.

Eventually, Tog became



Photo courtesy of Patrick Park  
**Watoga Superintendent Jim Park and his beloved Tog reunited once again at French Creek Game Farm, now the West Virginia State Wildlife Center. Circa 1975.**

a mean and dangerous bear. Mr. Park visited whenever he could and

Tog always remembered him. In spite of the rangers’ warnings that it

wasn’t safe, Mr. Park would go into the cage and he and Tog would

grate each other like the old friends that they were. I visited Tog several times. It was hard to believe that that big prowling bear was the adorable little cub we had hand-fed and played with for one memorable summer — the summer with Tog.

**About the Author**

Susan Higginbotham worked at Watoga the summers of 1957-1960. She lived upstairs over the kitchen and office with the other girls who all worked in the restaurant and also in the commissary.

Of her experiences with Tog and Watoga, Susan says “I loved Tog. I’ve always loved animals and Tog was just special to me. I had two pictures Mr. Park sent me. They were of me with Tog. I carried them in my billfold for years. When my billfold was stolen, I was devastated over the loss of those two pictures. All these years later, I can’t remember anything else that was lost. Just those pictures.

“I lived at home and

went to college. Those summers at Watoga were my growing-up time. They were a great experience. As I look back on it now, I realize that I should have been a forester or a naturalist in some way, but those weren’t considered “women’s work” at the time. I loved every minute of my time at Watoga. Mr. and Mrs. Park were like surrogate parents. Watoga was a great place, and Tog was part of it.”

Tog died in 1979. From time to time, Susan retells stories from those memorable summers at Watoga. After college, she became a schoolteacher and now lives about 30 minutes from Chicago.

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# The Ballad of Cass ~ A Bicentennial Event

*Written and directed by Missy McCollum, of the Old Brick Playhouse in Elkins*

This presentation is about the people who lived in turn-of-the-century Cass, and is based on an original play by Nicolette Maleckar from the writings of

Tward Blackhurst.

The play is presented as a "promenade."

The audience will move in small groups to different locations in Cass for each scene, beginning in front of the Cass Company Store and ending at the Cass Community Center.

Each performance will be followed by a lemonade social.

Please make plans to join us for this special Bicentennial Event.

Saturday, July 16 and 23  
• 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Sunday, July 17 and 24  
• 6 p.m.

Tickets \$10 each.

Limited advance tickets available online at [celebratethepocahontas200.com](http://celebratethepocahontas200.com)

Tickets will also be available at the door.



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- Historical Play: *The Life and Times of John Bradshaw, founder of Huntersville*
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# At home in Nature's Mountain Playground

Carol Carrico  
Contributing Writer

After decades of visiting Pocahontas County, staying at friends' cabins and enjoying the scenery, the husband and I made the dramatic decision to change our lives and move to nature's playground.

It was time for retirement, and we wanted something different. Our daughters were adults and on their own, meaning they visited us when it was convenient for them!

Chatting about what was in store for our future, we came upon the novel idea of packing up and leaving the Huntington area for good. And that was exactly what we did.

Building a house was not an easy task. Let's just say it was extremely difficult for this recovering perfectionist. With the help of friends and excellent builders, our dream home was completed and life in the county became real.

Not only were we experiencing a first time 24/7 together experience (you know what I mean by that!), we were able to enjoy all the wonderful facets of life in a tourist's paradise. How strange to be at peace with no sounds except for birds, wind and an occasional airplane (or fighter jet) overhead. Peace.

My husband was a military guy for 42 years. He loved being outdoors doing anything. I bought him a kayak for his birthday. Loving this new toy, he bought me one for his birthday, too, and we were off, paddling down the Greenbrier River.

It became my new favorite thing to do. The water is beautiful, the scenery magnificent and if you've never experienced this excursion,

you have missed out on so much.

Millions of beautiful West Virginia trees greet you throughout the trip. An occasional eagle is a treat and sometimes you'll see wildlife along the river or trail. It's easy to enjoy a day on the river with the sights to see. Take a picnic lunch, stop along the way and spend the whole day meandering down the water.

A few swimming holes provide a refreshing dip in the river, but from Marlinton to Buckeye to Seebert, they are few and far between. Much of the river is quite shallow and easily navigated by those who may be afraid of its depth. Just relax, paddle at ease and enjoy the time away from it all.

While the river is a great way to spend some time in nature, so many other amenities are available and we enjoy them all. Walking is fairly easy for us in our senior years and we take advantage of all the options – especially the ones on flatter ground!

The Greenbrier River Trail provides 77 miles of walking, biking, horseback riding enjoyment. Between the two of us, we have been able to experience all three.

Our ladies' group took several autumn adventures biking on the trail and after a few years, completed the whole trail in different segments. We were not in a hurry. We chatted, laughed, ate, rested, McGuyver-ed broken bikes and wore ourselves out. They were great times.

Never in a million years would the guys even think about a years-long excursion on just 77 miles. No sir! Even in their 70s, they completed the trail in only two days and said they could have done it in one! Ha.

We walk the trail several times a week savoring different sections. The scenery is lovely. You'll see farmland, pastures, every imaginable wildflower all through the spring, summer and fall. Cute cabins, nice homes, fishing or hunting camps dot the land along the trail, and the river is always right by your side or nearby.

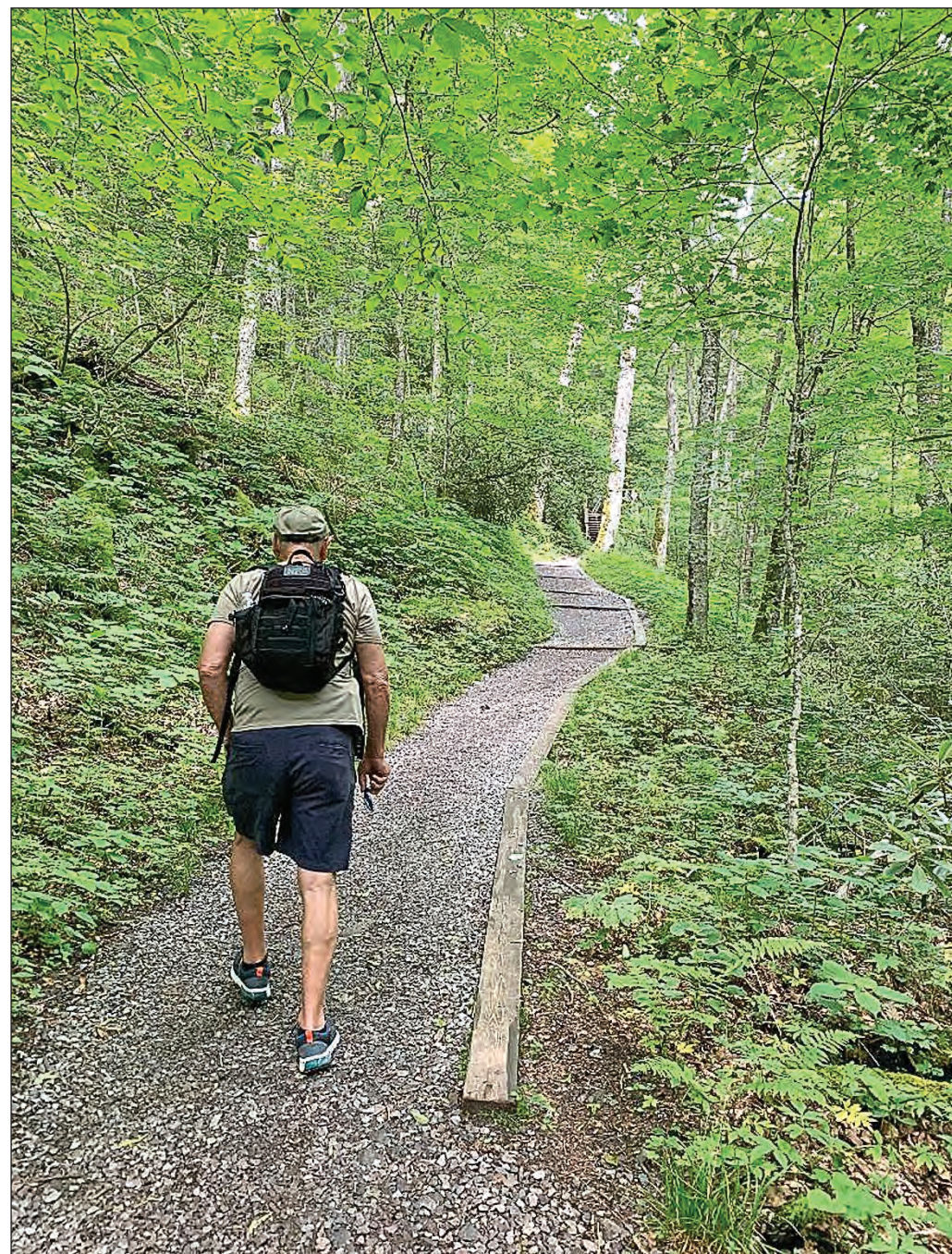
Miles and miles of nothingness or a little here and there. If you haven't been on the trail, please make it a number one event on your bucket list.

Just a few steps down the Scenic Highway from the Cranberry Glades Nature Center is a small road which takes you down into the woods leading to a very unique spot.

Someone told us about the jail situated in the area near the Glades and we had to see it for ourselves. No building, not really much of a foundation is even visible, but informative signs lead you to the area and explain the amazing history of the place where fellows were incarcerated with no fences, no walls, no real means of keeping the "criminals" under lock and key.

Take your time and check out why only a couple of guys managed to escape, but the rest stayed. Clearly, it was too cold and snowy in the winter to be able to leave and too beautiful in the summer to want to.

Several interesting trails are available even for some of the older generation along the Scenic Highway. Of course, High Rocks Trail is a favorite and fairly easy two-mile hike to an amazing view overlooking the Hillsboro area. Take a camera, binoculars and a little lunch and experience impressive views that surely won't be enjoyed by those living in



Larry Carrico loves to hike a good trail, or the graveled path at the Falls of Hills Creek. The U. S. Forest Service refers to the falls as the glittering jewel in the crown of the Monongahela National Forest. The 114-acre area sits just south of Rt. 39, five miles west of the Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. The handicapped accessible boardwalk is 1,700 feet long and allows everyone to view the first waterfall which drops 25 feet, crashing to the rocks below. Access to the small parking lot is via a graveled road, where restrooms are also available.

town.

One of the trails we were able to enjoy (and by that I mean were able to complete!), was a five-mile trek from the Williams River

Overlook to Big Spruce Overlook and back just off both sides of the Scenic Highway.

The scenery is spectacular on these trails, and we were

especially mesmerized by the remains of the logging railroad. We couldn't imagine how a railroad could be built and used on the side of that mountain. Several log-



Photos courtesy of Carol Carrico

The Carricos accepted Watoga State Park's invitation to check out the Arrowhead Trail by the Riverside Campground, and hike to the Ann Bailey Lookout Tower. The place offers a spectacular view of the Greenbrier River, and the quiet that surrounds you is a balm for the soul. Pictured: Carol Carrico at the lookout tower.

ging camp accessories, rusted and very old were right on the trail. Many photos were taken as we hiked and many unanswered questions still linger.

Spectacular scenery abounds in Pocahontas County. Maybe it's because of my age, or maybe it's just that good, but I feel so very blessed to have chosen this part of the state to make my home. So many opportuni-

ties to enjoy. I certainly haven't named them all, but just the few that have made our time here easy to appreciate and easy for our aging souls!

What's best? All for free. Borrow the kayak, use the neighbor's bicycle, any kind of tennis shoe will work on the trails I've mentioned. Take your time. Breathe in this unpolluted air.

A very kind man wel-

comed me to the county after just a few weeks of living here. He said it's a great place to live if you can stand the inconvenience. Well, it's a little inconvenient, but planning well has avoided the dilemma. Loving the environment and the people has made it much better than tolerable.

Are we happy we took this unprecedented move?

Certainly.



## Be a part of the Bicentennial! Upcoming events:

**July 2 - Ann Bailey Trail - Workman Cabin guided day hike - 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.** Learn about this historic restoration and pioneer families of the area. Pack a lunch.

**July 7 - 10 - Pioneer Days in Marlinton.** Free, nightly musical entertainment, parades, carnival, contests, arts, crafts and more.

**July 10, August 7 and Sept. 25 - Marlinton Historical Town Tour, 2 p.m.** Meet at McClintic Library, across from Episcopal Church at Ninth Street and Fifth Avenue.

**July 13 - 16 - Durbin Days Heritage Festival.** Parades, carnival, games and competitions for all ages; live music nightly and fireworks finalé!

**July 15 - Durbin Jail Tour, 5 - 7 p.m.**

**July 16 - History of Durbin - 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.** at the library.

**July 16, 17, 23, 24 - Ballad of Cass.** Promenade-style historical play about the town of Cass. Saturdays at 2 and 6 p.m.; Sundays at 6 p.m.

**July 29 - 31 - Burner-Blackhurst Reunion.** Cass.

**Sept. 10 - History Alive! presents Pearl S. Buck - 2 p.m.,** at the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace, Hillsboro.

**Sept. 24 - Autumn Harvest Festival and Roadkill Cook-off, Marlinton.** A one-day festival with arts and crafts, county fair exhibits and contests, live music and a world-renowned wild game cook-off.

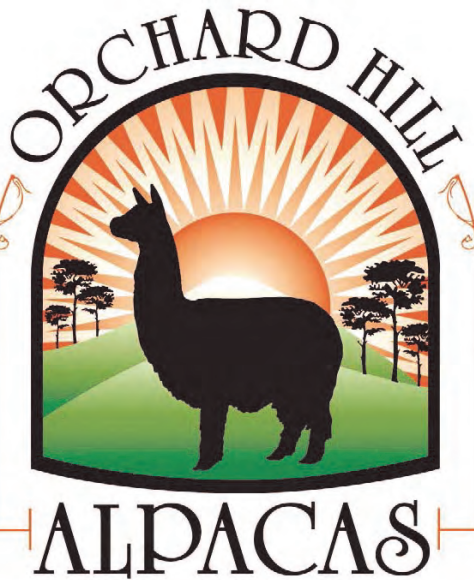
**Sept. 24 - Hammons Music Festival, Pocahontas County Opera House, Marlinton.** Today's musicians pay tribute to this Old-Time musical family's legacy.

**Sept. 25 - Cranberry Shindig - Cranberry Mountain Nature Center.** Rt. 39 on Kennison Mountain. A one-day celebration of Appalachian culture. Live traditional music, artisans, demonstrations and more.

**Sept. 30 - Oct. 1 - Huntersville Tradition Days Bicentennial Birthday Celebration.** Live music, pioneer skills, crafts and demonstrations. Living history and tours, baking contest and hunter's feast.

**Through October 31 - Cass Historical Town Walking Tours.** Daily at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Led by park staff.

**For additional events, visit [celebratepocahontas200.com](http://celebratepocahontas200.com)**



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**Black Mountain  
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JULY  
**30**



**All Under Heaven:  
One Woman  
Pearl S. Buck Play**

AUG  
**13**



**John Ellison  
& The Carpenter Ants**

AUG  
**20**



**Vivian Leva  
& Riley Calcagno**

SEPT  
**17**



**The Hammons Family  
Musical Heritage Celebration**

SEPT  
**24**

## Earth Observatory

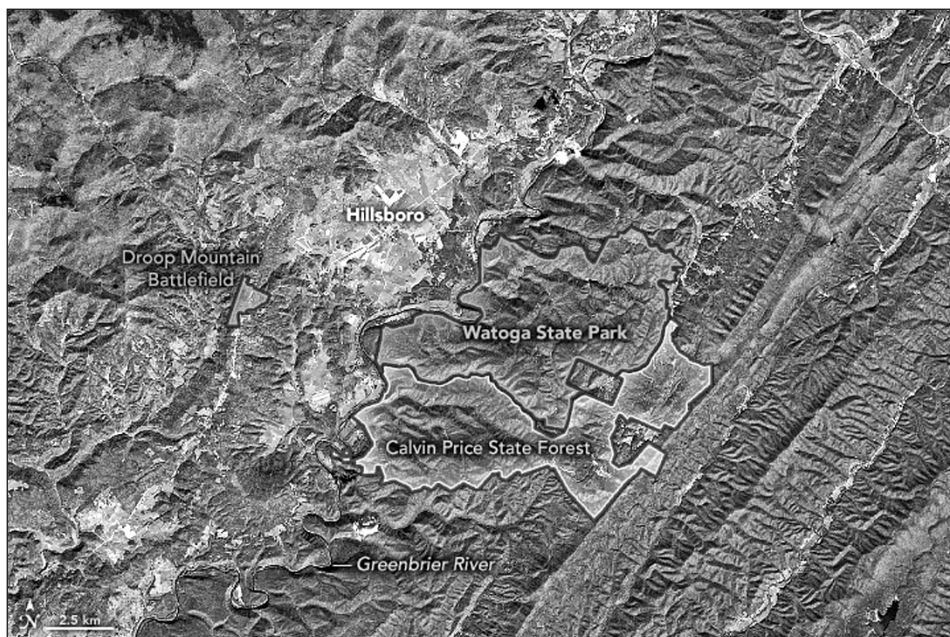
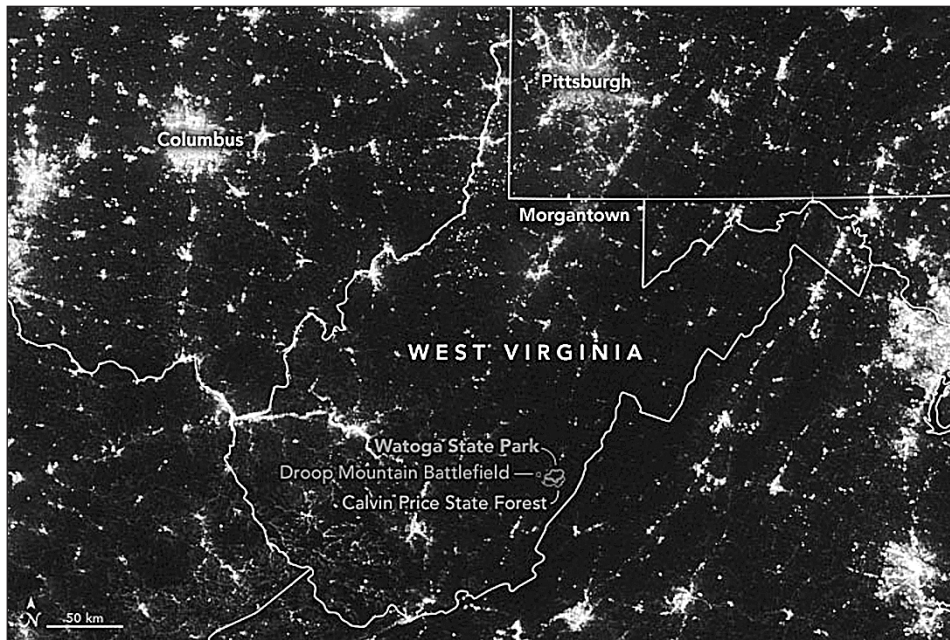
Amid the network of artificial lights, lights that span our planet like a game of connect-the-dots, darkness is a precious commodity. (Top photo) There are places, however, where the terrain and distance from cities help keep light pollution to a minimum.

Watoga State Park in eastern West Virginia is one such place.

Watoga and the nearby Calvin Price State Forest and Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park combine to span a total of 31 square miles (80 square kilometers) of Pocahontas County.

The second image (bottom photo), acquired on October 18, 2021, with the Operational Land Imager (OLI) on Landsat 8, shows a natural-color view of the parks during the daytime.

Located in the highlands of the Allegheny



Mountains, the parks are relatively remote – far from the glow of major

cities that light up much of the eastern United States. Only a handful of small towns and farms dot the otherwise heavily forested landscape.

The remoteness of the area is evident in the nighttime image, which shows the pattern of human settlement across West Virginia. The image was acquired on April 24, 2022, with the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) on the Suomi NPP satellite. The

image comes from the VIIRS “day-night band,” which detects light in a range of wavelengths from green to near-infrared and uses filtering techniques to observe signals such as auroras, city lights, and reflected moonlight.

Recent changes have made the parks even darker than just a few years ago. Mary Dawson and Louanne Fatora, board members of the

See **STARRY**, page 18

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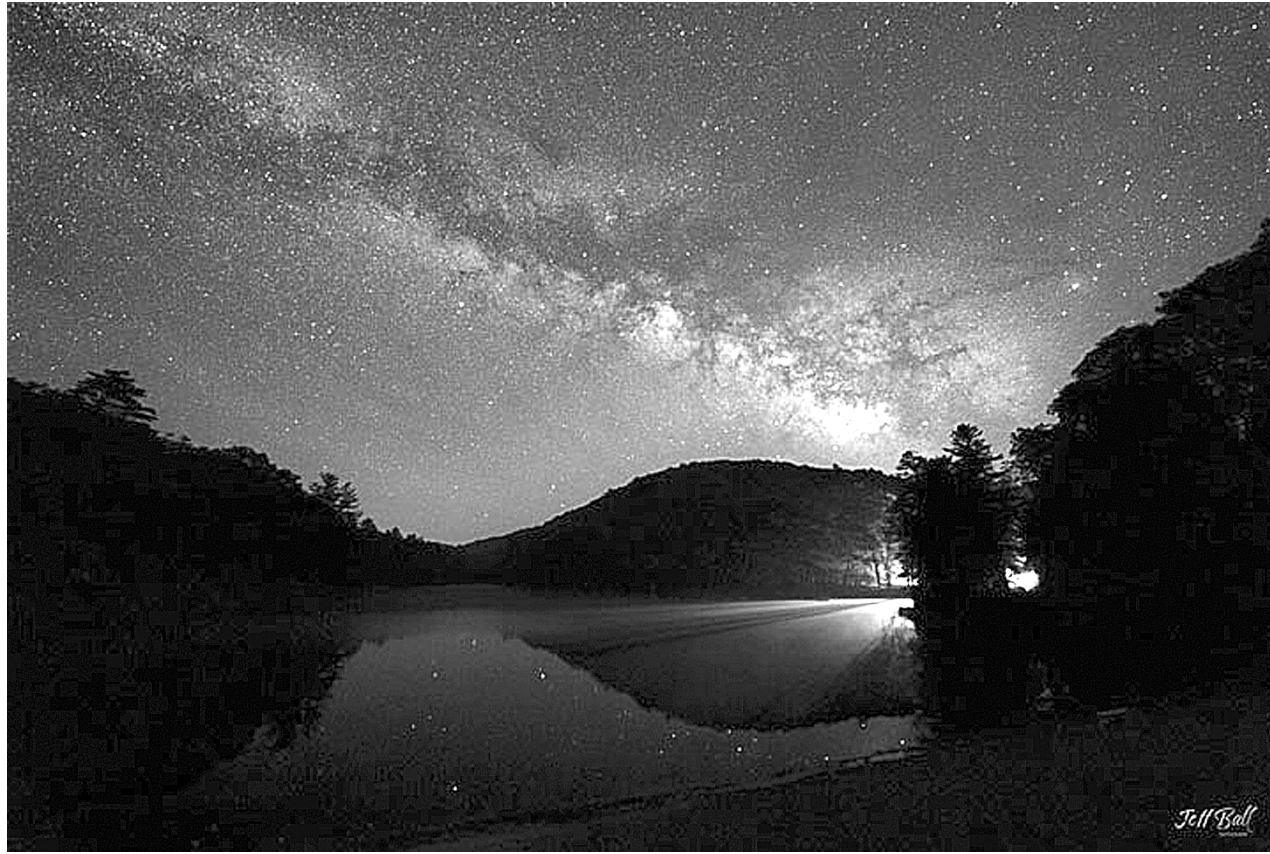
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ated in all three parks re- ceiving official status as "dark sky parks" in Octo- ber 2021. They were the state's first parks to re- ceive the designation from the International Dark- Sky Association. Even designated dark sky parks are not com- pletely dark. Instead, they are lit by natural sources such as starlight and moonlight. The celestial light show draws amateur astronomers, stargazers, and photographers. The photograph, left, shot by Jeff Ball, shows the Milky sky parks are not com-

See **STARRY**, page 23

**STARRY** from pg 17

Watoga State Park Founda- tion, obtained funding that allowed them to re- place existing lights throughout the park with new fixtures that aim downward and use bulbs

that cause less light pollu- tion. In addition, volunteer astronomers tracked the quality of nighttime dark-

ness over the span of a year, and the park held several events to educate the public about dark skies. The efforts culmi-

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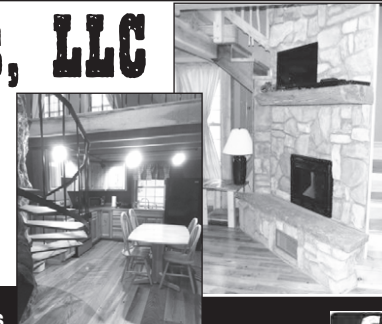
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# ‘Pull!’ A lesson in clay-shooting

Suzanne Stewart  
Staff Writer

Hidden among the trees near Silver Creek Resort and Shavers Lake is a small log cabin with a sign outside that reads “Clay Shooting.” It may not seem like much, but behind that cabin is a clay-shooting course where visitors can take aim and get an adrenaline rush “hunting” those elusive orange and black disks.

The course is part of the Outdoor Adventures offered at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. As someone

who is always willing to try new things – even those that scare me – I scheduled a visit and headed out to try my hand at the popular gun sport.

It must be noted that prior to this I had never shot a gun in my life. Needless to say, I was nervous. But, I was paired with two skillful and knowledgeable guides who put my mind at ease. Billy McKinney, a Pocahontas County native, and Jack Moore, a Roanoke, Virginia, import gave me the rundown before we headed for the course.

See **PULL**, page 20

Photo courtesy of Kurtis Schachner

No, that’s not the author taking aim at the Snowshoe Mountain Resort Clay Shooting course. To be honest, Suzanne didn’t want to have pictures taken just in case she had terrible aim and missed all the clays.

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The clay shooting facility opened in the summer of 1999 and welcomes shooters of all skill levels and most ages.

“There is an age range,” Moore said. “It’s twelve years old and older. We’ve had little kids show up before – maybe ten years old – that bring their own shotgun. We’ll definitely take them out to the course.”

The facility has a collection of Beretta shotguns in 28 gauge, 20 gauge and 12 gauge. The smaller the number, the bigger the shell and the heavier the shotgun.

“I actually prefer a twenty gauge over a twelve gauge,” Moore said. “Whenever you’re dealing with the twelve gauge, the barrel is going to be bigger. The two different shotguns – the semi-automatics are typically lighter than the over-unders. That’s just the way they’re built.”

The over-under – which I later decided was my preferred shotgun – is the style of gun which you “crack open” to load. A lever is pushed and the barrel comes away from the stock to allow for two shells to be loaded. The barrel is then lifted back into place and ready to shoot.

After showing me the types of shotguns, McKinney brought over a shell that was dissected down the middle to show me the inside and the process a shell goes through.

“Here’s your primer, right here, this is full of gunpowder,” he said, pointing to parts of the shell. “The fire pin hits it and ignites the powder, then there’s the wad and these are your BBs. They’ll go flying out of there. The BBs will outrun the wad. So you’ll see the

I thought to myself, ‘I doubt I’ll see anything because my eyes will be closed,’ but I didn’t want to let my fear show. I was determined to give this a try.

As we sat in the cabin, I asked about the six clays mounted on the wall behind Moore’s head.

He explained that there are different shapes and sizes for the different levels of the course.

Like a golf course, the clay shooting course starts off rather easy with stationary clays and progressively gets harder, with the clays getting faster, or two being thrown in the air at the same time, or they get smaller and faster.

“The white one on the left is the rabbit,” Moore said. “It runs on the ground and is a little bit thicker. The black one is a battue. Typically a battue is thrown straight up in the air. The stander is the most regular clay that we

See **PULL**, page 21



With the over-under shotgun – 28 gauge and 20 gauge – the barrel is pulled away from the stock in order to load the shells. After the shooter is done, he or she “cracks open” the shotgun to eject the spent shells. As they eject, the shells take flight and smoke rises from the barrels, adding a little drama to the sport.

Photo courtesy of Kurtis Schachner

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throw. Then it just gets smaller from there. So we have a midi which is going to come out a little bit faster and then the mini – hard to see, comes out super, super quick.

“We’ll only usually throw the midi and the mini for somebody who’s a little more advanced,” he added.

The clays are literally made out of clay and are

biodegradable which is a good thing because there is a lot of rubble in the woods after a run through the course.

Visitors to the course are allowed 25 shots at the course and are also allowed to bring their own shotguns and ammo if they so desire.

The facility has seen a lot of repeat customers, and newbies – like me – who were curious about this sports shooting thing.

Finally, before outfitting me with a shell bag that clipped around my waist, the guys gave me a final safety lesson.

First and foremost, the shotguns are not loaded until the shooter is in the window at the range on the course. When carrying an over-under, it is required to have the gun “cracked open,” and with the other shotguns, the barrel must point to the sky, perpendicular to the ground.

“If it’s an over-under, we like to see the gun broken down,” Moore said. “Reason being, whenever I’m looking at that gun and it’s broken open, that’s how I know it’s safe. We don’t ask people to load their guns until we’re inside the box, and that’s when they’re also allowed to take the safety off to shoot. The barrel always stays down range. We don’t want them swaying



Photos by Suzanne Stewart  
The prey (above) – a variety of clays, from left, rabbit, battue, standard, midi and two minis. The ammo (at right) – 28, 20 and 12 gauge shells.

outside the box.”

It was time to head for the course. I carried the broken down over-under, and we headed for the first box. The boxes are wood frames with a “window” where the shooter stands and aims for the clays. I put in my earplugs and was ready to go.

McKinney helped me with my first shell, adjusted my stance and told me how to sight up the clay before I shot. I aimed,



took a deep breath and shot. I hit a clay! Granted, it wasn’t the clay I was aiming at, but I got it nonetheless. It was a rush.

That was the first time I shot a gun and it wasn’t a

disaster. I wasn’t nervous to have two pros watching me. In fact, it was comforting to have them there, knowing they weren’t going to let me get hurt.

McKinney held on to the ejected shell for me to keep as a souvenir, and we continued down the course.

See PULL, page 22

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It was exhilarating to go from box to box, and see how the course was set up. There are launching machines where Moore would load the clays, He said when I was ready to yell "Pull!" He would shoot a clay out to give me an idea of where to aim and then I would get to give it a try.

The clays are stored in boxes along the course.

There were boxes where he shot two clays at once – impossible for me to hit either one. And others where the clays came out fast and high in the air – again impossible for me to shoot. Overall though, I managed to hit six or seven clays that day.

Yes, my shoulder ached halfway through, but I didn't want to stop. I was honestly surprised that I enjoyed shooting a gun. I've been around them in the past, but never had the inclination to shoot before, due to a fear of accidents.

After my experience at the clay shooting range, I realized that it's natural to



fear accidents, but it is also possible to have a fun and a safe day of shooting. All it takes is respect for the weapon and it's capabilities.

There were even a few times where I uttered a few, rather loud "woohoos" as I saw the clays shatter from my not so ex-

pertly aimed shot. As the three of us returned to the cabin, I knew I would return to shoot more clays. Maybe next time, I'll bring a few friends.

Whether you've been shooting since you were a teen or have never touched a shotgun before,

the clay shooting crew will be there to help you have the best time possible. All you need to do is listen to

Photo courtesy of Shawn Cassell  
To find the Clay Shooting cabin, turn off at the Silver Creek Resort entrance and follow Shavers Lake Road. The cabin will be on the left before reaching the lake.

ready. The clay shooting facility is open Thursday through Sunday and requires reservations.

To make a reservation, call 877-441-4386 or visit <http://www.snowshoemtn.com/todo/sum-activities/sporting-clays/index.htm>

the safety tips, take a deep breath and don't forget to yell "Pull!" when you're

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STARRY over pg 18

Way over Watoga Lake. The name Watoga is the Cherokee word for "starry waters," according to the park's website.

While dark skies are favored by stargazers, they are also important for the local ecology.

"Watoga's dark sky des-

gnation is just as much about the preservation of habitat for many unique species of animals, plants, and insects, as it is about the clarity of the night sky," Fatora said.

For example, the park is home to the rare "synchronous" firefly. It's the timing of their flashes -

synchronized intervals - that sets their mating display apart from other fireflies. Watoga State Park is one of a handful of public locations in the United States where people can view the display. The park's protection from light pollution should also benefit the fireflies, which are sensitive to light.

Visitors should be aware that firefly displays last just a few weeks of the summer, and celestial views are occasionally obscured by clouds. But as West Virginia's largest state park, Watoga offers plenty of activities, such as hiking, paddling, and swimming, to keep visitors busy until the natural light shows return.

NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens, using VIIRS day-night band data from the Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership and Landsat data from the U.S. Geological Survey. Photograph by Jeff Ball. Story by Kathryn Hansen.



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# Missoula Theater Company to present 'Hansel and Gretel' at Opera House

The Pocahontas Opera House is excited to announce that the Missoula Theater Company will return to Pocahontas County August 1 through August 6. At the end of the one-week theater camp, children will mount a full performance of *Hansel and Gretel*, complete with music, dance, costumes, scenery and makeup. Children entering first through eighth grades are

encouraged to apply. The cost is \$25 for the first child and \$15 for each sibling. Applications are available at the Wellness Center and on the Opera House website [www.pocahontasopera-house.org](http://www.pocahontasopera-house.org). Scholarships are available. "We are thrilled to welcome the Missoula Theater Company back to Pocahontas County this summer," camp director Charlie MaGhee Hughes

said. "We had two great years of summer theater camps before COVID hit, and I know there are a lot of kids out there who can't wait to take to the stage again." *Hansel and Gretel* offers a wide range of parts for children of all ages. In addition to Hansel and Gretel, Granny and the Wildwood Witch, there is an assortment of crafty cooks, lost campers, rascals, denizens of the



deep and a flock of cuddly "wallybirds." For those who prefer not to perform, assistant directors will help with rehearsals and work backstage. The camp will be full of activities for everyone. When not rehearsing for

the big show, there will be workshops in props, costumes, set design and movement. The camp will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, August 1, through Friday, August 5. Lunch and snacks will

be provided each day. Performances will be Friday, August 5, at 4 p.m. and Saturday August 6, at 2 p.m. Campers are expected to attend the full six hours each day and participate in both performances.



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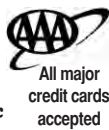
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Maureen Conley

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The 13.1-mile half-marathon includes two hills, one with 640 feet in elevation gain, the other 420 feet. The 3.1-mile 5k has about 325 feet of elevation gain. Both races start and finish at the Beaver Creek Campground.

See *TRAIL*, page 26



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TRAIL from pg 25  
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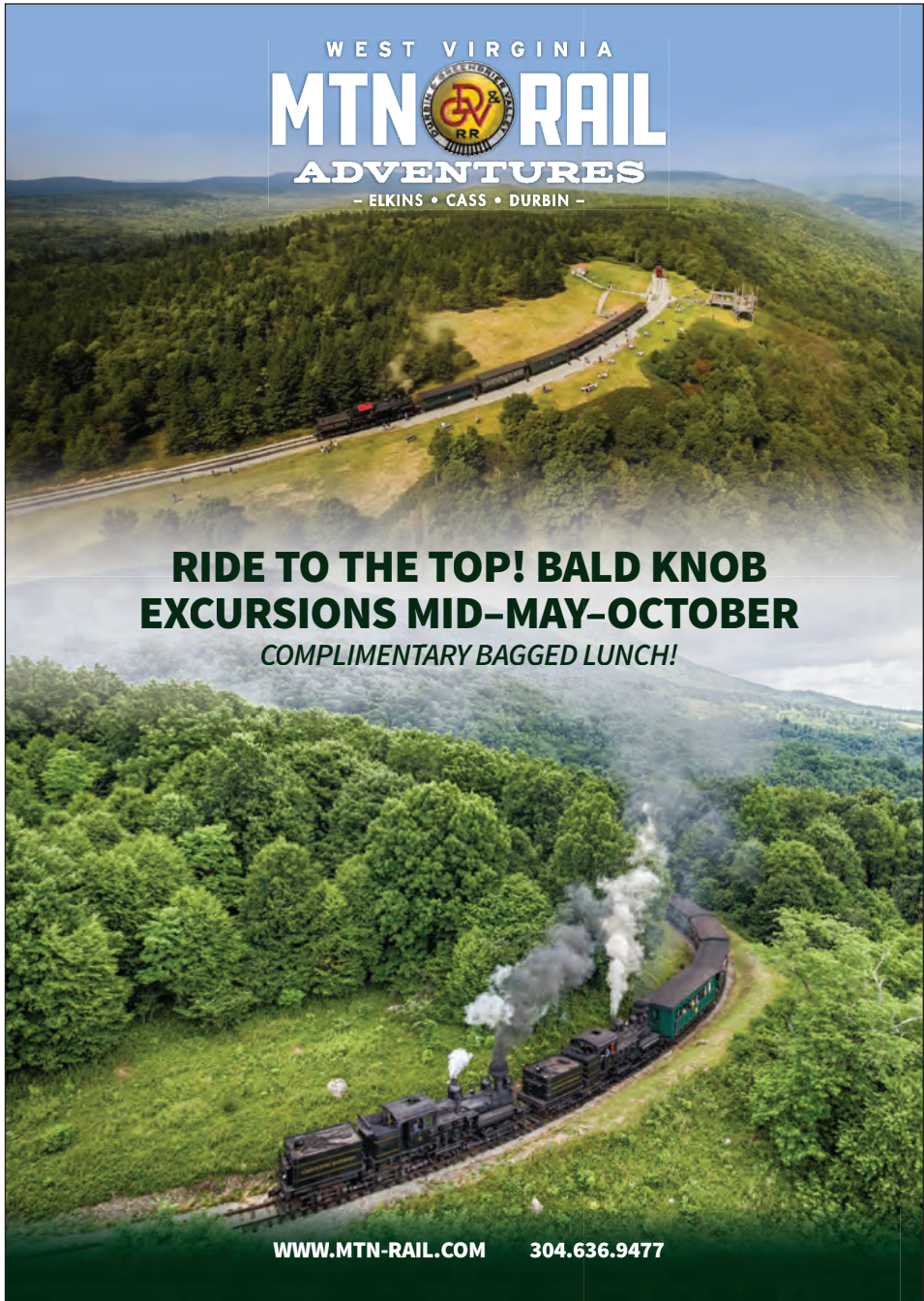


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June 12	Community Appreciation Day		Aug 21	Footing In The Hills
July 1-4	Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks Display		Sept 2-4	Labor Day Celebration & Fireworks Display
July 7-10	4848 Festival		Sept 9-11	Women's Mountain Bike Camp
July 15-17	Yoga Power Retreat at Snowshoe		Sept 25	Community Appreciation Day
July 29-31	Mercedes-Benz UCI Mountain Bike World Cup		Oct 1-2	WV Enduro Series Finals
Aug 6	Treasure On The Mountain	The Snowshoe	Oct 16	Closing Days



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