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Grab a Hot Cuppa
Coffee Houses and Hot Chocolate Hangouts, Page 8

Grooming and Grinning
The Art of Making Snow, Page 12

A Sweeter Future
Candy Darters Given Fighting Chance, Page 16

Save the dates:

Saturdays, February 18 and March 18!



Enjoy sugar camp tours, maple syrup tasting and purchase local products. Lodging and dining specials around the county. Stick around for Opry Night at the Pocahontas County Opera House, Saturday, February 18 - a night of traditional and Bluegrass music, starting at 7:30 p.m.

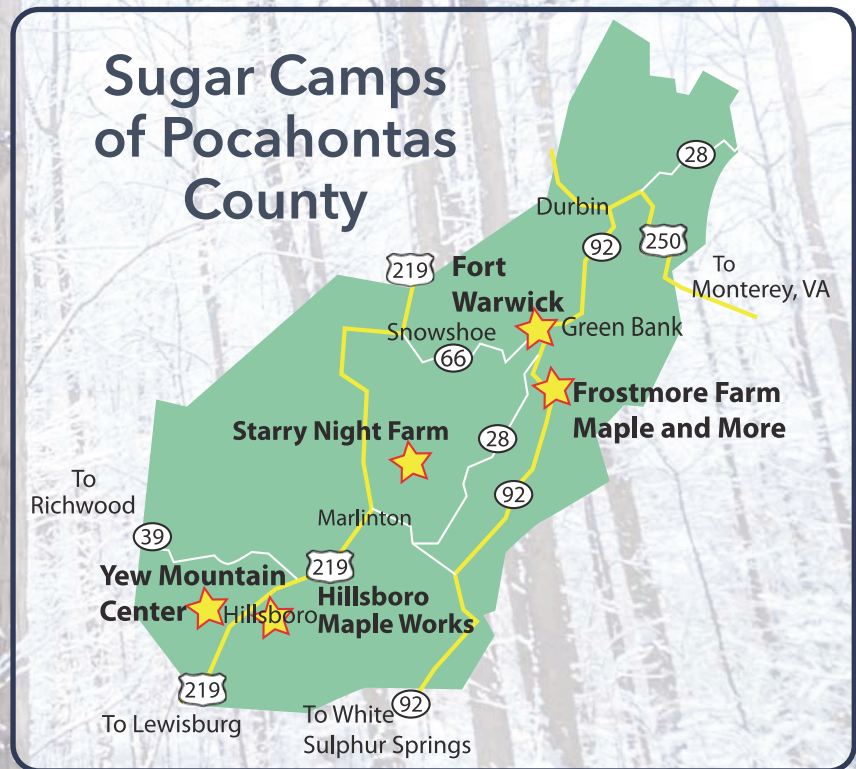
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**GREEN BANK
OBSERVATORY**

Local favorites and new faces at the Opera House

Opry Night
Saturday, February 18
7:30 p.m.

The Pocahontas County Opera House will welcome Mudhole Control and Lou Maiuri and the Appalachian Country Cloggers to its stage for Opry Night Saturday, February 18, at 7:30 p.m.

Every February, Opry Night at the Opera House presents the best local and regional talent in traditional music and dance. This year we welcome two extraordinary performances that span genres of Appalachian folk traditions.

The Appalachian Country Cloggers demonstrate Appalachian square dance figures while using Appalachian clogging and old-time flatfoot Steps. We also feature a traditional square dance caller and instructions in traditional square dancing.

Local favorites Mudhole Control will also perform at Opry Night. The multi-generational band is led by JR Loudermilk, whose father and father-in-law started the band many years ago.

The tradition continues with the addition of Steven Casto and Benjamin Davis. Casto is an award-winning banjo player and Davis is an award-winning fiddle



Mudhole Control

player.

The Foreign Landers
Saturday, February 25
7:30 p.m.

The Foreign Landers will appear on the Opera House stage for the first time Saturday, February 25, at 7:30 p.m.

This line of the tradi-

tional song from which The Foreign Landers takes its name captures something of what makes this Transatlantic folk duo's story so compelling. Mandolinist David Benedict grew up in South Carolina while Tabitha Agnew Benedict started playing 5-string banjo at a young age in her homeland of

Northern Ireland. They spent their early years playing the same music, and gazing at the same stars, yet still so far away from each other.

Today Tabitha and David are carving their own path in the acoustic



The Foreign Landers

music world together, drawing on their unique international heritage to create something new.

Their paths first crossed with a chance meeting at the 2017 IBMA Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina. The result of this first encounter led to thousands of skymiles

miles earned, and culminated with an international wedding in 2019 when Tabitha and David tied the knot near Tabitha's home in County Armagh, Northern Ireland.

See OPERA, page 5

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Cover: A groomer at Snowshoe Mountain Resort smooths the snow on a trail as the sun sets in the background. The trails are maintained by groomers at night and are covered in fresh snow by snow guns when the temperature is just right. Photo courtesy of Shawn Cassell

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The Foreign Landers debut full-length album *Travelers Rest* is an artistic rendering of this personal story – moving across the Atlantic in the face of many challenges to find a place of their own. Listening to this album will leave you convinced that The Foreign Landers were destined to be together and destined to leave their unique mark on the acoustic music scene. Their authenticity and originality in songwriting, tasteful multi-instrumental prowess, evocative vocals and unique transatlantic touch all combine together to create something inexpress-

**The Bing Brothers
Featuring Jake Krack
Saturday, March 11
7:30 p.m.**

The Opera House continues its annual tradition with The Bing Brothers Featuring Jake Krack Saturday, March 11, at 7:30 p.m. This high-powered old-time string band distills its Appalachian roots into a foot-stompin' good time that is not one to miss.

For more than 40 years, the Bing Brothers have been traveling the world, sharing the songs and traditions they picked up from the Mountain State.



The Bing Brothers featuring Jake Krack

Individually and collectively, they have won numerous awards, including one of West Virginia's highest folk-life honors,

the Vandalia Award. The Bing Brothers are working on a new album featuring many of their favorite musicians and

friends, and their latest album, *Just In Time*, was released in 2021 and is available now. Tickets for the Opera

House performances are \$10 for adults and admission is free for anyone 17 years old and younger. Tickets are available at the 4th Avenue Gallery in Marlinton, pocahontasoperahouse.org 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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The Monongahela National Forest

The Land of Many Uses happens to also be West Virginia's largest tourism asset

Cara Rose,
Executive Director
Convention and
Visitors Bureau

When you look at a map of West Virginia, you will notice that a light green shade dominates nearly the entire eastern border of our state. Nothing else in West Virginia can compare to the geographic size of the Monongahela National Forest. The Monongahela National Forest covers 921,150 acres of land in West Virginia. I like to call this tremendous resource "West Virginia's largest tourism asset." Because it is.

Pocahontas County, the third largest county in West Virginia, is also home to one third of the Monongahela National Forest with more than 300,000 acres within its border.

So many of West Virginia's iconic attractions are within the borders of the MNF – The Highland Scenic Highway – the highest elevation road east of the Mississippi, Cranberry Glades, Falls of Hills Creek, Seneca Rocks, Dolly Sods, Spruce Knob – highest point in West Virginia. The list goes on and on and here is a summary of what makes the MNF such an amazing tourism asset.

- Wilderness areas: 94,991 acres
- Roads: 570 miles
- Visitor centers: 2 (Cranberry Mountain Nature Center and Seneca Rocks Discovery Center)

- Designated Scenic Areas: 3
- Visitor observation towers: 2 (Bickle Knob Tower and Olson Tower)
- Picnic areas: 17
- Campgrounds: 23
- Snowmobile areas: 1 (Highland Scenic Highway)
- Wildlife management areas (managed with West Virginia Division of Natural Resources): 10
- Warm-water fishing steams: 129 miles
- Trout streams: 578 miles
- Reservoirs: 5 lakes
- Trails: 825 miles
- Wilderness areas: 8
- Old growth forest: 6
- Sensitive plants and wildlife: 50
- Threatened and endangered species: 9
- 13 historic places and natural landmarks

The multi-use forest lands not only contribute to a four season tourism and recreation economy, the timbering and wildlife resources are also a tremendous asset to our state and to Pocahontas County, supporting a robust timber industry and providing funds to the schools within the MNF boundary through annual timber sales.

West Virginia is lucky to have professional stewards looking out for our highly valued resources, as well – USFS staff who not only live in and love the forest but appreciate the value each of these assets brings to the communities inside the boundaries. The Mon Forest Towns Partnership was formed in the past few

years to not only cultivate a better relation between the towns and the forest but to also protect and promote the forest for recreational economic benefit. This initiative of 12 towns is working collaboratively to enhance the tourism economy for the communities.

What an amazing tourism and natural resources asset.

Pocahontas County is home to five state parks, two state forests and one national forest. All of which make up more than 60 percent of our county's land.

Pocahontas County has more public land than any other county east of the Mississippi River.

I think of all the wonderful tourism attractions our state has, and it is a wonderful feeling to know

that Pocahontas County is home to so much of the Monongahela National Forest and its iconic at-

tractions and natural resources. I challenge everyone to get out and enjoy the for-

est in each season and experience what makes this West Virginia's largest tourism asset.

CARNEGIE HALL

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11

BARBARA NISSMAN
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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

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FRIDAY, MARCH 10

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SATURDAY, MARCH 18

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Opry Night

Mudhole Control

Lou Maiuri & The Appalachian Country Cloggers

FEB.
18

THE FOREIGN LANDERS



FEB.
25

THE BING BROTHERS

FEATURING JAKE KRACK



March
11

These programs are presented with financial assistance from Pocahontas County Drama, Fairs and Festivals along with the following:



Mark Your Calendar

Full Moon Hike
 Saturday, February 4,
 6 to 8 p.m.

Head to Cass Scenic Railroad State Park Saturday, February 4, for a guided hike on the Greenbrier River Trail to view the Full Snow Moon. The Native Americans named the February full moon Snow Moon because February is usually the snowiest month of the year.

Cupp Run Challenge
 Monday, February 6

The first Monday in February is legendary at Snowshoe Resort aka 4,848'. The Cupp Run Challenge is Snowshoe's most storied tradition and participating in it is an unforgettable experi-

ence. This is one of the most exciting and long running races at the resort.

Uphill Thang and Randonnée Moonlight Shuffle Race

Saturday, February 11
 If you haven't heard – up-hilling is all the rage right now and Snowshoe Mountain Resort is excited to get in on the hype. Snowshoe Mountain will block off a few trails at Silver Creek for uphill equipment demos during the day and when the sun sets, get ready for the first-ever Randonnée Moonlight Shuffle – an endurance-testing race for Splitboard and Alpine Touring skiers up and down the Silver Creek slopes – Saturday,

February 11, 7 to 11 p.m.
Mountain State Maple Days
February 18 and March 18

West Virginia is home to one of the largest concentrations of maple trees in the country, and folks have been tapping trees for centuries, capturing the sweet water from the maple and creating the delectable maple syrup. Today, several family farms in Pocahontas County still harvest the sweet water and produce maple syrup and other maple products. Visitors can experience this tradition during the annual Mountain State Maple Days. Plan your winter weekend getaway around the events

Saturdays, February 18 and March 18, to enjoy not only winter outdoor adventure but also the sweet experience of sugar camp tours, special restaurant maple menus, lodging deals and more.

Full Moon Hike
 Saturday, March 4
 6 to 8 p.m.

Another month, another full moon. Cass Scenic Railroad State Park will host the Full Worm Moon hike Saturday, March 4. This is the last full moon of the winter equinox and heralds the beginning of spring. Some believe the name is for the return of birds and the warming soil that makes it easier for them to find worms.



Keep tuned in for weather updates, road conditions, travel alerts, COVID-19 updates and other important announcements!

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Wintertime Coffee Houses and Hot Chocolate Hangouts in Nature's Mountain Playground

**Mike Moore
Convention and
Visitors Bureau**

If you were to take a survey of what the number one, most consumed beverage world-wide is, it's a safe bet the results of that survey would point to coffee. Some reports place coffee as the second most sought commodity in the world; second only to crude oil. In an age when it seems ordering a cup of coffee requires a rudimentary understanding of at least two languages and a working knowledge of chemistry or at the very least the guiding hand of a well-trained barista, all I can say is mankind's desire for coffee shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. Now, at the risk of worldwide scorn, I must confess I'm not a coffee drinker. Mind you, I have nothing against coffee and certainly would not wish to be labeled "anti-coffee" in any way. I actually love the smell of coffee and have made a

few attempts to start a coffee habit of my own but, to mix my metaphors, it's just not my cup of tea. This time of year, I'm more of a Polar Express hot chocolate fan; favoring cocoa beans over coffee beans.

The one time of year, however, that I'm more inclined to give coffee another try is winter. There's something about having been out on a chilly winter's day and then coming in from the cold to sit down for a warm cup of coffee or hot chocolate. Either drink is a delicious way to warm up from the inside. So, whether you're looking for a hot chocolate bar or



great coffee shops in Pocahontas County, we thought why not share a quick rundown of a short list of our favorite places to grab some of the best coffee or best hot chocolate while spending time in Nature's Mountain Playground.

The Dirtbean Café, Marlinton

Located about a block from my office, the Dirtbean is usually my first suggestion when asked by visitors if there are any coffee shops nearby. About two years ago, the Dirtbean relocated from a large, open space to a smaller, more intimate setting. The new location gives the Dirtbean a relaxed, "dining with friends" kind of atmos-

phere. It's the perfect setting for a nice warm cup of coffee or hot chocolate while taking a break from your winter adventures in Pocahontas County. But a quick glance at the menu will reveal a few more delicious options. Lattes, cappuccinos, house drip coffee and flavored milk steamers are among your choices at the Dirtbean. And what warm drink isn't made a little better with the addition of a sweet treat? The Dirtbean also offers cinnamon buns, scones and cookies to sweeten the deal. The

Dirtbean is located at 818 2nd Avenue in Marlinton.

Simply Sweet Café, Durbin

Tucked away in the town of Durbin within easy walking distance of the train depot, is Simply Sweet Café. For those visiting Durbin and looking for cafés near the train, Simply Sweet Café will fit the bill nicely. Warm up with your choice of a latte, mocha, cappuccino, macchiato, hot chocolate or coffee. You can even go exotic with chai tea and steamed milk. And as the

name implies, the Simply Sweet Café has an assortment of sweet additions to

See **HANGOUTS**,
page 9

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go along with that hot drink. Cinnamon rolls, muffins and Danish round out their pastries list. The Simply Sweet Café is located at 4781 Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike in Durbin just up the road from the train depot.

**Depot Café,
Hillsboro**

If you find yourself on Route 219 in the Hillsboro area when that caffeine craving hits, you won't want to pass up the chance to visit the Depot Café. Located within The Levels Depot, the Depot Café has a warm, friendly atmosphere that is welcoming to locals and visitors alike. Café operator and cook Delsie Swearingen puts a high priority on healthy ingredients in all her menu items. Along with the favorites of coffee, latte and hot chocolate,

The Depot Café also serves mud water – a coffee alternative derived from mushrooms. It's reported that mud water has many of the benefits of coffee without all the caffeine. It's definitely made it on my bucket list of new things to try in 2023. In addition to hot beverages, The Depot Café serves breakfast and lunch.

**Starbucks,
Snowshoe Mountain
Resort**

If you find yourself a long way from home, enjoying a little skiing at Snowshoe this winter and looking for a familiar coffee house to warm you up, Starbucks in the Village at Snowshoe is just what you need. Whether it's one of their delicious coffees, lattes, macchiatos or hot chocolates, Starbucks is the perfect stop for a quick warm up before getting back out on the



slopes. And if a little longer break from the cold is more to your liking, grab a biscotti or cookie to go with that

warm drink and hang out a while – the mountain isn't going anywhere.

**Snowshoe Hare,
Slaty Fork**

Located at the base of Snowshoe Mountain in the former Why Not Shop, the Snowshoe Hare is the new kid on the block

in Slaty Fork. Just opened in December 2022, the Snowshoe Hare will offer an array of souvenirs and other items of interest for visitors. But there will be another offering from the Snowshoe Hare that must be mentioned here. Brace yourself. For those of you in the Slatyfork area, ei-

ther visitor or resident, posing the age-old question, "Are there any coffee shops near me?" Have we got good news for you. The Snowshoe Hare will feature (wait for it) a coffee bar (insert angelic music here)! As of this writing, details are still coming in. So, for now, this local coffee spot may require a little Internet digging on your part in the very near future. But there's no doubt the Snowshoe Hare coffee bar is going to make a big splash very soon.

Well, there you have it. A few of our favorite coffee places and hot chocolate hang outs in Pocahontas County.

Whether you favor the coffee bean or the cocoa bean, now that cold weather has settled in and we're all looking for a chance to get out and enjoy it, be sure to take some time to warm up with a hot cup of coffee or warm mug of hot chocolate. What better way to enjoy your wintertime visit to Nature's Mountain Playground?

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Hit the ice at Mountain Lodge

Suzanne Stewart
Staff Writer

Most people know the scene from *A Charlie Brown Christmas* – all the kids are ice-skating on a frozen pond, enjoying a chilly day during Christmas break.

While it may spark a yearning to go ice-skating, it's also a reminder that winter sports are fun, but it's sometimes too cold to enjoy them.

But, hold on...

It is now possible to ice skate indoors at the new skating rink at Mountain Lodge at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. The atrium between Ball-hooter and Allegheny Springs exit has been transformed into an ice skating rink with the use of Glice – an eco-friendly synthetic ice.

“The outdoor activities here are amazing, but when the weather is not cooperative and, of course, when people need a break from skiing and tubing, a nice indoor activity was something that we really wanted to be able to provide, different from what’s already here,” Mountain Lodge’s Lisa Cutlip said.

“Ice skating just seemed like a no brainer.”

The rink can be rented for private parties and is also open to the public. Individual skaters or private parties of up to 19 skaters can reserve a 50-minute or a 110-minute session on the rink.

Skaters can bring their own skates or rent a pair from the front desk at Mountain Lodge.

The rink opened in December and has already had a fair share of skaters of all ages.



Photo courtesy of Monica Krempasky
One of the atriums at Snowshoe Mountain Resort’s Mountain Lodge is now home to an ice rink made of Glice – a synthetic ice manufactured in Switzerland.

“It’s been very busy, and the comments that we’ve received from the guests have been phenomenal,” Cutlip said. “Everybody’s been excited, and they think it’s a great activity – an additional activity to do on the mountain.”

For more information on the ice rink, visit skatesnowshoe.com or call 304-572-2020.



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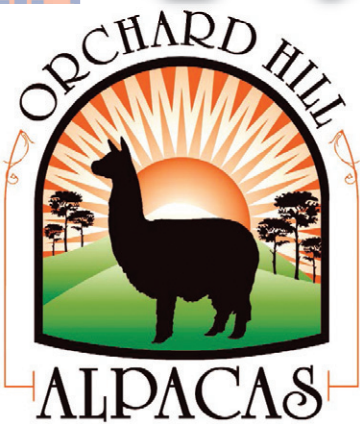
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The art of making snow

Suzanne Stewart
Staff Writer

Snow can naturally occur when the temperature is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below and ice crystals are formed in the atmosphere, creating unique snowflakes and a picturesque winter scene. When the weather fails to

provide, Snowshoe Mountain and Silver Creek resorts turn to the snowmakers who are quite knowledgeable as to how to make snow using the snow guns and an elaborate technological setup. "There's a lot to it," director of mountain operations Ty Tegtmeier said. "Snowshoe's been making snow since we opened in '74.

They had a snowmaking system. It's not anything like it is today."

So, how do you make snow? It takes three elements – cold temperature, high pressure water and high pressure air.

Temperature

Clearly, it has to be below freezing to make snow, but

there is more to the formula than that. The wet-bulb temperature – the lowest temperature that can be reached under current ambient conditions by the evaporation of water only – plays a part, too.

"Wet-bulb temperature plays a little bit into that because it can be thirty-eight degrees actual and you can



Snow piles up on a slope as the snow guns blast out fresh cover. A mixture of high pressure water and high pressure air join the cold temperature to make snow when the weather isn't cooperating.



Photos courtesy of Shawn Cassell

The trails at Snowshoe Mountain Resort and Silver Creek Resort are maintained by dedicated snowmakers and groomers who ensure that the slopes are covered with a nice fluffy blanket of snow. When there isn't enough – or any – natural snow, the snow guns are fired up and a blast of fresh snow rains down on the slopes. The groomers are then tasked with smoothing the piles of snow to make conditions perfect for skiers and snowboarders.

still make snow," Tegtmeier said. "It boggles people's minds. They think we're doing magic, but it's just because water freezes at low humidity."

Still, below freezing is better.

"Obviously, the colder the better," Tegtmeier said. "Our sweet spot with our system – and this is different for every resort and the system they have – I like eleven to thirteen degrees. If it gets much colder than that, we don't have any water left and we end up making really dry snow on the mountain which just kind of ends

up in the woods."

High pressure water

"A standard pressure washer that you wash your car with has high pressure water – but it doesn't have air mixed into it, so you can spray it in cold temperatures and it will freeze, but it will be like freezing rain," Tegtmeier said.

The snow guns have the same principle, but when the air is added, it goes from being freezing rain to snow.

High pressure air

"When you're making snow, you have high pres-

sure water and then you break it with the air," he said. "You hit it sideways – it's called nucleation. It atomizes the water into tiny little particles and then as soon as that freezing process starts back, you can put more water on it and it will increase your crystal."

Snowmaking began simply enough with snow guns that were manually moved by snowmobile to all the trails to evenly distribute snow. Now, the mountain has between 700 and 1,000 stationary snow guns that are managed by a computer system in the compressor

house.

"We started adding permanently mounted guns because every second you are dragging a gun from one trail to the next, you're not making snow," Tegtmeier said. "It's for efficiency. We started mounting guns on trails, so pretty much every trail, unless there's a lift or something in the way – has guns on it."

The snow guns are hooked to 43 miles of pipeline under the trails that is operated through the compressor house where water and air are pumped through to the machines.

"The air is always the same," Tegtmeier explained. "It's two inches of air wide open. We have six compressors down in this compressor house. Each one will make 53- to-5,500 cubic feet per minute of air. There are six of them, so that's 35,000 CFM which is huge. That's a lot of air to compress."

Each snow gun uses roughly 1,000 CFM, so the compressor house can only handle 35 snow guns at a time. Luckily, the newest

See **SNOW**, page 14

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Photo courtesy of Shawn Cassell

models have their own compressors and are able to work on their own.

“The newer models have a compressor on them, and they have a fan,” Tegtmeier said. “Plus, they’re totally automated so they have a weather station on them and a computer in them. The weather station says ‘this is what the temperature is, this is what the humidity is, this is what the water temperature is, this is how much water I can put out with the quality that you want,’ so the operator chooses the quality of snow between one and nine, wet to dry, and then the gun will do this rest, unless something goes wrong.”

Those operators are well-versed on how to program the computers that operate the snow guns and are keen watchers of NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – weather re-

Groomers smooth the trails near The Village at Snowshoe Mountain Resort.

ports.

They know that although there is a seven-day forecast, they focus on three to four days out and that determines how many of the snow guns are operated and what trails are focused on at that particular time.

It’s also helpful to have a layer of natural snow to build onto, but a bare trail won’t deter the snowmakers.

“If we can make snow on top of snow, it helps to give the snow something to stick to; something to build upon,” snowmaking manager Nathan Price said. “If we’re starting with bare grass, the ground’s generally warmer than the snow, so then we’re fighting that melting effect from the ground until we get enough snow to actually cap the ground and



See **SNOW**, page 15

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start to cool it off.”

There is an interesting phenomenon that happens when the ground is bare and the snowmakers have nothing to build on. The heat from the ground sometimes melts the artificial snow as the layers are being built and causes a gap between the ground

and the snow.

“What happens with manmade snow is it turns into layer glacier, so it’s one big chunk of snow and it all moves together,” Tegtmeier said. “It ends up almost floating up off the ground. So if you could cut down to the ground, you’d see there’s two inches of air under-

neath our snow on top of the ground because it melted up and there are certain places where it will be touching the ground.”

Once the snow is made and has created a good base, it’s time for the groomers to enter the picture. The groomers usually operate at night, after the slopes are closed.

They work to smooth out the trails and make a nice surface for the next morning’s skiers and snowboarders.

“Think of it like a plow and a tiller in a garden,” slope maintenance manager Brandon Cline said. “It does the same thing except it puts corduroy on top of it and makes it real pretty for in the morning.”

“If they make dry snow and groom through it, it’s

soft, nice snow,” Tegtmeier added. “It does aerate a little bit. With the tiller, you’re turning over the snow with a plow. It puts air in it and then the tiller grinds it into tiny little pieces and then it compacts it back down and sets it in place.”

The corduroy is a pattern similar to the pants of the same name. A nice lined pattern that gives the snow a nice aesthetic.

“When people are ski-

ing on it, they’re not going in deep, they’re on top of it,” Tegtmeier said. “It holds that corduroy until midday, usually, depending on the temperature. If it’s cold, it’ll hold that shape all day long. If it’s warm and rainy, it gets moved around a little bit.”

While it only takes three elements – cold temperature, water and air – to make snow, there’s no denying the importance of the crew of dedicated snowmakers and groomers to keep that snow ready for the thousands of skiers and snowboarders who carve their way down the trails at Snowshoe Mountain Resort and Silver Creek Resort.



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A sweeter future for rare candy darter

By Leah Riley
US Fish and
Wildlife Services

For a small, colorful fish with vibrant orange and blue stripes, the future of its survival in West Virginia and Virginia streams is drastically becoming gray and bleak. The candy darter and its beautiful colors are disappearing from their habitat as pressure increases from a rival fish species introduced into its waters. The variegate darter outcompetes the candy darter for food, habitat, and even mates, as hybridization of the two species can cause the candy darter's colors and its genes to fade from its streams.

With a team of dedicated partners including West Virginia Department of National Resources and West Virginia University, biologists at White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery in West Vir-

ginia are developing techniques to propagate and translocate candy darters to boost their populations and return them to streams they were once found.

Candy darters are small, about two to three inches long, but play a large role in river ecosystems and food chains. In addition to hybridization, the candy darter's decline can also be attributed to habitat degradation, pollution, and geographic isolation. Nearly half of the 35 known candy darter populations have been extirpated since the species was first described in 1932. In November 2018, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the candy darter as endangered under the Endangered

Species Act.

Signs of breeding success

A major breakthrough in candy darter conservation came last year when staff at White Sulphur Springs developed a new, innovative way to replicate the specific candy darter habitat that is crucial to their survival and reproduction. The darters need shallow, rocky stream beds with fine pebbles and gravel to reproduce. Additionally, the tiny fish are easily stressed and require extra care in transport.

Despite the challenges, biologists were able successfully care for the candy darter brood stock for three months and spawn juvenile candy darters for the first time at the hatchery. Biologists



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The rare candy darter by Joel Sartore.

were also able to observe and record spawning behavior for the first time, as 800 eggs were laid in cap-

tivity, producing 17, healthy, fertilized eggs.

Another year of achievements

A new year brought new successes to the hatchery

See **CANDY**, page 17

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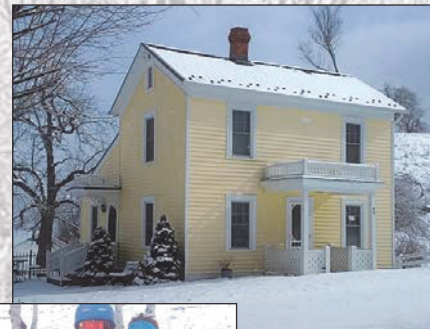
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and a brighter future for candy darter. Caring for candy darter brood stock is a monumental challenge and there is always room for improvement. This year, staff aimed to reduce any possible stressors facing the fragile candy darters at the hatchery. Reducing stress of the brood stock improves their overall health, increases their chances of successful reproduction, and allows them to quickly acclimate to their surroundings in captivity.

Biologists put careful consideration into how they collected the brood stock candy darters to reduce stress. Kick-seining nets were used for collection to gently capture adult candy darters, making the transition to the facility easier on the fish.

Advancements were made to improve the water quality with reverse osmosis technology. This process ensures the water is clean and pure, mimicking the cool, fast-flowing streams where darters are found in the wild. With improved techniques and controlled habitat, the candy darter brood stock thrived at the hatchery.

Even with all their hard work paying off, it was still a challenging year for the hatchery staff and their candy darter spawning efforts.

The biologists began their spawning efforts with only four mature, breeding males, limiting the number of spawning pairs and greatly reducing the number of eggs produced. Remarkably, this year the hatchery produced 30 healthy eggs, with 27 of the eggs successfully hatching and 21 of those



A juvenile candy darter gets measured at White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery.

growing into healthy juvenile darters.

More firsts for candy darter conservation

Despite working with a limited number of healthy eggs, one of the greatest

achievements of the year can be seen in the survival rate of the healthy eggs spawned at the hatchery. Thanks to improved conditions and a nearly stress-free environment, the

proportion of hatchery eggs soared to 78% - a staggering increase from last year.

At the hatchery, the small, vulnerable fry can grow while safe from the myriad of threats they would face in the wild, including predation, starvation, and being displaced down river to unsuitable habitat. The growth rate of the darters was considerably higher than juveniles in the wild. In just six months, the juvenile candy darters were the size of the one-and-a-half-year-old fish in the wild, giving them a greater advantage to find food and avoid predation once released into the wild.

"We are quite pleased with the survival and growth of our juveniles, 78% survival from hatch is nearly unheard of and the growth rates far exceeded our expectations," explained Andrew Phipps, hatchery biologist. "We are satisfied our changes from last year have put us on the right track."

Once the fry were a safe size for tagging, about 2.5 inches, they were marked with a Visible Implant Elastomer, or VIE tag. The VIE tag consists of a gel that fluoresces under ultraviolet light and is placed near the darter's pectoral fin. To ensure the safety of the small candy darters, hatchery biologists worked hard throughout the year with variegated darters to develop a safe tagging

method that could be used on the growing candy darters.

With the great strides made in the last several years, the White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery can now care for adult brood stock, spawn fish, and raise and tag the endangered candy darters for release into the wild.

This fall, all juvenile candy darters were released into the wild. This is the first ever release of hatchery raised candy darters, a conservation milestone that marks years of dedication to the survival of this colorful species. With the help of West Virginia Department of National Resources, a suitable, high quality habitat was selected in a stream where candy darters can thrive while isolated from variegated darter invasion by a dam.

"It was a long time and a lot of hard work by so many people. We played just one role in what was a big play," said Phipps. "We are honored to get to work with this animal and all the folks who care so much about it. To finally get to release these animals after watching them hatch and grow for the past six months is so rewarding."

This release marks the start of restoring this vibrant species back across Virginia and West Virginia streams and landscapes.

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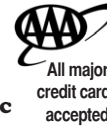
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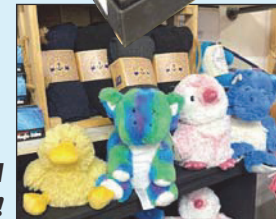
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Saffron ~ The wonder spice

Melody Reynolds Phillips
Staff Writer

I have roots in West Virginia, but I did not grow up here. In 2021, I was excited to be able to finally make the move "back home."

Before moving, however, there was a lot of work to do. Because of my love for plants and herbs, one of the first things I

did before listing our old home for sale, was to dig up certain plants. One of those was my saffron. I dug up the corms in the spring; they are supposed to be transplanted in the fall. With me working out of town at the time and my husband back and forth between our new home and the one we were preparing to sell, the corms just sat in an open

tray drying out. It wasn't until late fall 2021, after the time they would have come up, that I was able to plant them. To my surprise, they produced green leaves and a few flowers within only a couple of weeks. In the fall of 2022, there were several flowers to harvest from. As poorly as I had treated them and moving them from Zone 7 to Zone 5,



Although saffron is known for being used in culinary delicacies, it also has a long history of use in traditional medicine and as a fabric dye.

they are doing very well and are a colorful late fall addition to the yard.

Saffron (*Crocus sativus*) grows from a bulb-like corm. Its thin bright green leaves resemble chives in appearance. Growth is dormant during the summer months and the leaves begin emerging in the fall. Lavender flowers, each containing three reddish orange threadlike stigmas, start to appear shortly after the leaves emerge. It may take one to three years after planting

the corms before flowers produce.

Saffron threads need to be hand-harvested each morning during the short, two to three weeks of blooming. Each flower opens for only one or two days before dying. Because of this time consuming and labor intensive harvesting process, saffron is considered the world's most expensive spice. The green leaves will remain green, even under snow, until spring, when its dormancy period begins.

Saffron contains volatile oil composed of terpenes, caretenoids, crocin and vitamins B1 and B2. According to MedicalNews Today.com/articles/327017, *What are the health benefits of saffron?* by Jon Johnson, November 15, 2019, benefits of saffron may include: protecting damage to the nervous system and oxidative damage to the brain. Other benefits may include mood improvement, a positive effect on libido, easing symptoms of PMS, and may curb appetite to help promote weight loss.


The National Library of
See **SAFFRON**, page 20

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SAFFRON from pg 19

Medicine published a research study in spring 2016 on saffron's effect on patients with age-related macular degeneration (AMD). In this study, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5342880/, by Farabi Eye Research Center and Psychiatric Research Center, the findings reported "results are in agreement with other studies... that showed a significant improvement in retinal function in association with antioxidants supplementation" and "patients in the saffron group frequently gave subjective reports of better vision as well as reports of increased general well being." The study also stated, "In conclusion, daily supplementation with 30 mg of saffron for six months was associated with statistically significant changes in macular OCT (optical coherence tomography) and ERG (electroretinography) parameters in patients with both dry and wet AMD."

Traditionally saffron has been used for cough, insomnia, atherosclerosis, depression, anti-tumor, anti-inflammatory, memory improvement and much more.

Because of the high cost of saffron, many reputable sellers combine other ingredients with it or completely replace saffron with an inferior product to increase profits. SUR in English website



Saffron is harvested from the flower of *Crocus sativus*, commonly known as the saffron crocus. The vibrant red stigma and styles – called threads – are collected and dried to be used for seasoning and as a coloring agent for food.

posted an article on Monday, 4 April 2022, www.surinenglish.com/spain/gang-arrested-selling-20220404173855-nt.html, about how 11 members of a criminal gang were arrested for selling fake saffron powder made from gardenia. More than 400 pounds worth over \$750,000 was seized. This is not an isolated instance. Other herbs, such as safflower and marigolds, may look like saffron, but they do not contain the important nutrients that make saffron so sought after.

Ways to ensure you are getting the real stuff is to

either buy locally from a grower you know and trust or to grow this easily cared for herb yourself.

Saffron likes full sun to partial shade. The corms are planted in the fall. After planting, keep the beds well mulched and free of weeds, even during the dormant period. Young crocus will produce leaves the first year but the flowers may take up to three years to start blooming. Once established, they are self-multiplying and should be divided every several years to allow room for the mature corms to produce healthy flowers. Mulching, keeping the weeds out, and daily harvesting of the threads for the short blooming period in the fall are the only care this wonderful herb really needs.

Saffron has many uses. The threads can be easily incorporated into meals, in rice, pasta and soups. Placing a few threads into a mug and covering them with hot water makes a delightful tea. For those who do not like the flavor of saffron but want the nutrients from it, a few threads can be placed into an empty capsule and taken like a pill. Empty capsules are easily assembled and many can be made at one time and stored for later use.

Saffron is considered generally safe for daily use; however, caution should be taken if allergic to other plants in the same family of Iridaceae. Also, if pregnant, always seek professional advice before trying any kind of supplements.

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A colonial homemade chemical

Melondy Reynolds Phillips
Staff Writer

Lye was an important homemade chemical on the colonial frontier.

People who lived on the frontier didn't have the luxury of running to a store when needing basic essentials. They used what they had on hand to make do.

Fires were almost always kept burning in homes. The fires were used for cooking and warmth, but also for cooling in the summer. Doors kept open while a fire burned created a cool draft through the log cabin as the hot air lifted up and out through the chimney. With constant fires, there was always a good supply of ashes.

A lye hopper was an essential appliance on a frontier homestead. A basic hopper could be made from an old barrel or a simple upside down wooden pyramid. It needed a lid to keep out the rain, and several small holes in the bottom for drainage. In the bottom of the hopper were placed small stones and some straw with the rest being filled with ashes. The hopper sat on a stone or wooded slab, which had a groove or V-shape cut into it to direct the lye into a nearby pail. Water would



When making soap, colonials would collect hardwood ashes and place them in a hopper, shown above. The hopper was used to separate the lye from the wood ash.

be poured on top of the ashes at a rate of about one-half to one cup every hour or so. If the water was added too quickly, it would not have time to pull the components out of the ash, and it would create a very weak lye. The lye that dripped from the bottom could be run through the ashes multiple times to create a stronger solution.

After a day or so of slowly adding water to the hopper, the lye would start to drip from the bottom.

This could be a continual process with more ashes and water being added daily.

The main components of hardwood ashes are calcium carbonate and potassium carbonate.

They also contain around 10% potash, 1% phosphate, many micronutrients, and some trace amounts of heavy metals.

When wood ash is combined with water it creates a very alkaline solution called caustic potash or lye. Hardwood ashes are better than soft woods since soft wood is too resinous and affects the quality of the lye produced. Ashes from pear, apple and ash wood have a strong bleaching action. For more delicate linen, ashes from ferns are preferred.

Lye water was used for

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laundering clothes. Bucking – soaking in the lye water – broke down the dirt and grease in clothing and the lanolin in wool. It also helped with setting dyes. White linen that had yellowed would be washed and then soaked in lye water for about a day and placed in the sun, generating a bleaching effect.

For a tough stain and spot remover, fullers' earth or ashes would be added to the lye water and rubbed into the spot. After the mixture dried, it would be brushed off or lightly dampened and rubbed off.

Mixing lye with a fatty substance spawns a chemical reaction called saponification. By using these two simple ingredients, people could make soap. Due to their limited resources and lack of modern day testing kits, after finishing the soap, a "zap" test was done. Someone would quickly take a small lick of the bar of soap. If the person felt a "zap" on their tongue, the lye was too strong and the resulting soap wouldn't be used on human skin.

Corn was an easy to grow and store crop on the frontier, and it had many uses. Breads, hominy, mush, porridge, grits and animal feed all came from corn. Harvesting "green corn," before it dried, was roasted or made into "green corn soup."

Most corn was left on the stalk until it had fully dried. This dried dent corn, still in the husk, was stored in corncribs until needed, while some corn was ground into flour. Roasting corn (parched corn) changed the taste and structure and made it a stable snack for long journeys.

Hominy, made from corn, also had many different uses. To make hominy, simmer dried whole corn, dent corn, in lye water until the skins and dark tips fall off. Rinse the corn with clean water several times to remove the lye. An alternate method is to add clean ashes, only wood burned,

then add the corn. Simmer and rinse the same way.

Using lye to turn corn into hominy had many benefits. The process changes the corn's chemistry. The niacin in the corn becomes more bioavailable which helped prevent pellagra (a mineral deficiency disease). The lye adds calcium to the corn, makes the protein within the corn more complete, and reduces the risk of mycotoxins.

Hominy can be eaten on its own, added to soups, chilies and other dishes, or used to make masa for corn tortillas.

Another common use

for lye was bucking and graining deer hides. The bucking and graining process included soaking the hide in lye water to help remove the grain and hair. All the hides were called buckskins, or bucks, because of this bucking and graining process. Once the grain was removed and the lye neutralize, the hides were dried. At this point they were called half dressed hides, and they felt thin and stiff.

The half dressed hides could be taken to the store

to barter. In the 1700s, bartering was based on tobacco currency and had set rules. One shilling was the same as 10 pounds of tobacco or one pound of half dressed deer hides. Hides in this form could be easily stacked, stored and exported on ships without rotting, so this form was preferable.

The store weighed the dried hides, and you could purchase the supplies you needed. Half dressed hides were used so much as a form of currency that when someone

said, "I need five bucks," they are literally asking for five pounds of half-dressed deer hides.

So many of the sayings you hear today are from something specific in the past.

The times and behaviors in our history that were troublesome should be taught to the next generation so they do not repeat them – but there are also many fascinating and exciting things to learn from the past.

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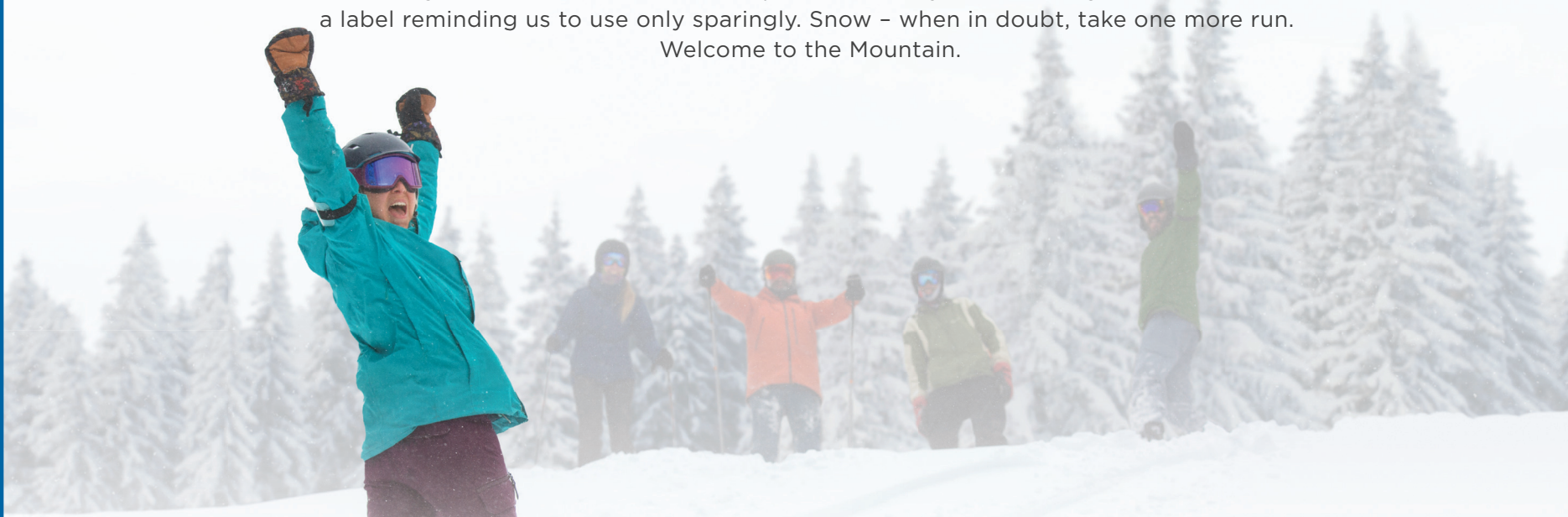
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