

THE RIVER RUNS

News from the Cowpasture River Preservation Association

Eastern Small-footed Bats—An Enigma No More?

By Paul Moosman, PhD, Associate Professor, Virginia Military Institute



Eastern Small-footed Bats (*Myotis leibii*). Photo © Larry Master

America, weighing 4-5 grams. That's about the weight of 2 dimes and only 1/3 the size of a big-brown bat. Their wingspan is only a few inches across, and if you happened to see one flying during the day it could be easily mistaken for a large butterfly. Besides their small size, small-footed bats are identifiable by their chestnut colored fur that contrasts with a black face, ears, wings and legs (giving the appearance of a masked bandit). Their small size, short broad wings and distinct echolocation calls are thought to make them exceptionally maneuverable and allow them to forage amongst dense vegetation, or close to the ground.

Most Virginians seem surprised to learn that there are 17 species of bats in the Commonwealth. Some of these are more familiar to us than others. Big-brown bats, for example, are commonly found roosting in buildings or hunting insects in our backyards. Although other species of bats in our area are almost never seen, they are a fascinating part of our natural heritage and are worth getting to know. The eastern small-footed bat (*Myotis leibii*) is a wonderful example.

Small-footed bats are largely found in the mountains of eastern North America, and the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Highlands of Virginia are an important part of their geographic range. They are one of the smallest species of bats in North



Comparison of feet: Little Brown Bat (left) and Eastern Small-footed Bat (right). Photo © Larry Master

Until recently small-footed bats were an enigma. They are rarely encountered by biologists and so the species has been the subject of few studies. Most sightings occurred in caves or mines in winter. However, unlike other species of bats that hibernate in caves, small-footed bats are not encountered in large numbers. They also hibernate in odd locations, such as in crevices or under rocks on the floor of caves, and on the walls or ceiling near the entrances to caves (places other species avoid because they are so cold and dry). These hibernating tactics have led to speculation they might even hibernate outside of caves, though this has not been conclusively documented yet.

During the non-hibernation season small-footed bats roost in crevices on

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Visit our updated website at www.cowpastureriver.org where you will also find the ongoing Water Resources Stewardship Series as published in *The Recorder*. Look for this series under the publications tab.



WANTED: Photos taken within the watershed for our Facebook and website. Please submit photos and captions to: directorcrpa@gmail.com



Winter 2015

From the President

Greetings from wet, soggy Bath County where the smell of new hay, canoe rides, new deer and buggy days are only a distant memory. As the Holidays come to an abrupt end we hopefully return to a temperate winter. We hope that you will enjoy this publication and the direction of the organization's Board.



The threat of the Dominion pipeline to our watershed environment appears to be substantial as the evidence grows. We shall study the problems and reach our position on this significant issue as the facts develop.

May your 2015 be healthy, happy and full of river fun.

The Executive Director's Corner

Hello! I am excited about joining the Cowpasture River Preservation Association as its new Executive Director.

In the last newsletter, Keith provided an overview of my past work experience and academic background, so in this column I thought I might keep things on a lighter note. Growing up in western New York, I loved the outdoors and the rural countryside, so when my husband and I moved to Lexington in 2008 after 10+ years in more urban areas in North Carolina, it was in many ways a sort of homecoming for me.

My hobbies include physical fitness and wildlife/bird watching. I also love to travel and have visited some neat places, but have many more on my bucket list. So far, Costa Rica and Alaska are a couple of my favorites. I often try to incorporate all of my hobbies into my travels. Such as rock climbing in the Garden of the Gods and tackling the Manitou Incline (1 mile long, 2,000 vertical feet climb up 2,000 stairs) while in Colorado Springs this summer or hiking and biking in the Grand Tetons—just to list a couple of examples. Also, I have been fortunate to see many types of wildlife during my travels, such as: brown bear, humpback whales, orca whales, beluga whales, (all in Alaska) wolves, elk, moose (in the Grand Tetons), the elusive bird called the Resplendent Quetzal in the Monteverde Cloud Forest of Costa Rica and the Elegant Trogon in Ramsey Canyon, Arizona. The Elegant Trogon is related to the Resplendent Quetzal, but its call is often compared to the sound of a barking dog!



I want to thank everyone on the Board and in the general membership who have been so welcoming to me in my first several months. Again, I'm glad to be a part of this organization and look forward to our work together in 2015!

CRPA Hosts Students from Dabney S. Lancaster

By Monroe "Puggy" Farmer, CRPA Board Member

On September 22, 2014, four CPRA members hosted and conducted a class/lab for 16 ecology students from the Forestry Management Technology program at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC). The majority of the students were from Alleghany County and adjoining counties including some in West Virginia, but several students were from the eastern part of the Commonwealth. There are currently 30 students enrolled in the forestry program at DSLCC, one of only two colleges in Virginia with such a program (the other is Virginia Tech).

The forestry program emphasizes the importance of clean water on public health, wildlife, biodiversity and recreational use. Forestry students are taught the importance of large scale management at the watershed level down to riparian buffers on the local level. Many of the students entering the program are aware of water quality issues from their high school biology and environmental science classes as well as hearing about Save the Bay. However,



Dave Peters discusses monitoring techniques. Photo © Puggy Farmer

“exposing the ecology class students to the work the CRPA does in monitoring the water quality of the Cowpasture River compliments the instruction given to them in their forestry classes, as well as demonstrates the passion individuals have for the river,” said Brian Keiling, Program Head of Forestry Management Technology at DSLCC, who accompanied the students.



Mike Whiteside helps with macroinvertebrate identification. Photo © Puggy Farmer

CRPA members assisting with the program included Dave Peters, who presented an excellent class on how macroinvertebrates are used to assess the health of the river. He familiarized the students with preserved specimens and then sent them into the river to collect live organisms. The students returned with their catch nets, identified the organisms and tallied the numbers. Mike Whiteside hosted the class at his house, helped with organism identification and assisted the students while they were in the river. Kathy Farmer assisted in serving the lunch provided by the CPRA. Puggy Farmer coordinated a lab assignment with Mr. Keiling for the students to submit for grading. DSLCC provided three microscopes for student use and two vans to transport the students to the site. This was the second year the CPRA has hosted the lab for the college students.



For more information on the Forestry Management Technology program at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, visit www.dslcc.edu or contact Brian Keiling at (540) 863-2894.

LEAF Interns Return to the Cowpasture River

By Laurel Schablein, Allegheny Highlands Program Assistant, The Nature Conservancy

Four young women recruited from urban environmentally themed high schools spent one month interning with The Nature Conservancy this past July. The interns were among over 700 students participating in the organization's Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program, designed to provide a variety of hands-on, outdoor learning experiences, and generate interest in conservation careers. The Conservancy's Allegheny Highlands program has hosted interns for the past four summers and scheduled activities varying from invasive species control and trail construction to public outreach and interpretive sign installation. Partnering with the CRPA to assess water quality by sampling the benthic macroinvertebrate community is always among the intern's favorite experiences.



Dawn Kirk and Marek Smith demonstrate the use of a kick net to LEAF interns and mentors. Photo © Lisa Beckstrom/CRPA



The farm-to-table dinner at Berriedale Farms included grass-fed beef burgers with Nelson Hoy's special recipe that includes garlic and a touch of Highland County maple syrup. The young ladies helped Lizzie Biggs pick lettuce from the garden for dinner. Photo © Lisa Beckstrom/CRPA

This year, the young women arrived on site with apprehension about working in a stream with aquatic insects. Under the leadership of Marek Smith (The Nature Conservancy), Lisa Beckstrom (CRPA) and Dawn Kirk (US Forest Service), this apprehension quickly subsided, and excitement built, as they were introduced to the monitoring program and sampling methodologies. After doing the 'net dance' to disturb the rocks and invertebrates upstream from the nets, the group sorted and counted individuals while learning about their ecology and physiology.

The morning was followed by tours of

Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station and Berriedale Farms. The interns were introduced to Redpoll cattle, Suffolk Punch draft horses and Buckeye chickens before enjoying a farm-to-table dinner prepared by CRPA members, Nelson Hoy and Lizzie Biggs. They marveled at the views of rural Bath and Highland counties and the different ways of life they encountered throughout their stay. No doubt, they returned home enriched by their experiences, with stories to share with their families and fellow students.

Dawn Kirk helps LEAF intern Stefanie Torossian sort macroinvertebrates by Order. Photo © Lisa Beckstrom/CRPA



Member Fellowship



Summer Picnic at the Bracey's Hidden Meadows Farm

Approximately 75 members attended the 2014 summer picnic held at Pam and Lucius Bracey's Hidden Meadows Farm. Upon arrival, most participants were ferried down to the grassy riverfront picnic site in golf carts or all-terrain vehicles with an initial stop at a beautiful, cliffside overlook of the Cowpasture River. Other attendees arrived by canoe after a refreshing float down the river. Thanks to Lucius and Pam for being such gracious hosts and for opening up their farm to CRPA members!



John Fowler presented Polly Newlon with an award for her outstanding service as Executive Director and most recently as Water Quality Program Director.



Fall 2014 River Cleanup: Potomac Hunt Club Partners with Us!



The Fall Walton Tract Cleanup took place on a sunny Sunday afternoon, September 29. This year our dedicated crew of river stewards included members of the Potomac Hunt Club, who have been hunting and recreating at the Walton Tract and along the Cowpasture River for generations. Pictured (left to right) front row: Bucky Wells*, Gilbert Ramey*, James Bayless*, Lisa Beckstrom, Puggy Farmer, and John Fowler; back row: Chip Snead, Joe Woods, and Marek Smith. (* Hunt Club members)

Top Ten Litter Items from 2013 Virginia Waterways Cleanup ¹

Item	Number recorded	Percent of total
1. Cigarette Butts	24,594	15.69%
2. Beverage Bottles (Plastic)	15,929	10.16%
3. Food Wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	15,032	9.59%
4. Beverage Cans	12,419	7.92%
5. Grocery Bags (Plastic)	12,157	7.75%
6. Plastic Pieces	9,832	6.27%
7. Beverage Bottles (Glass)	7,157	4.57%
8. Foam Pieces	6,274	4.00%
9. Bottle Caps (Plastic)	5,996	3.82%
10. Other Plastic Bags	5,985	3.82%
Top Ten Total	115,375	73.60%

Part of the International Coastal Cleanup coordinated by the Ocean Conservancy and Clean Virginia Waterways each fall, our cleanup of the Walton Tract in the George Washington National Forest contributed to other statewide efforts to clean our waterways and collect valuable data about watershed trash and litter. More than 68,000 people have volunteered in Virginia since 1995 and the CRPA is proud to be a participant.



Ocean Conservancy

¹ Data from 2014 cleanups were not available by publication deadline

Upcoming Events

Look for the following events and activities as they are scheduled in 2015:

- Walton Tract Spring Cleanup, date to be determined. Information regarding the Walton Tract Cleanup will be provided in the Spring newsletter and on our website (www.cowpastureriver.org).
- CRPA Annual Meeting, Saturday, May 23, 2015 at Camp Mont Shenandoah. Look for details and registration information in the Spring newsletter coming out in a few months.
- Atlantic Coast Pipeline Open House Scheduled in Highland County will be held on Thursday, January 15 from 5-7 pm at the Highland Center (61 Highland Center Drive, Monterey, VA 24465).

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline

By C. Nelson Hoy, CRPA Board Member

The Cowpasture River of Virginia, nestled among the Allegheny Mountains, is arguably the cleanest and most pristine river basin in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 1972, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) proposed to dam the Cowpasture River near Padds Creek in what is now the Rough Mountain Wilderness area. The Cowpasture River Preservation Association (CRPA) was formed in response by concerned citizens for the dual purposes of protecting water quality and quantity of the Cowpasture watershed. The USACE gave up their quest to flood the Cowpasture River valley in 1987.



All photos obtained from Google and are representative of pipeline construction in other states.

A quarter of a century passed in quiet enjoyment of a bucolic, rural and mountain life for citizens of the Cowpasture River watershed until mid-2014 when Dominion Resources, Inc. announced plans to build a 550-mile long and 42-inch diameter, Marcellus gas transmission line from Harrison County, West Virginia to Robeson County, North Carolina, and across the Upper Cowpasture and Bullpasture River valleys. Dominion's Atlantic Coast Pipeline is a huge industrial construction project with no known precedent in rugged mountainous terrain but will nevertheless cross 20-odd Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia and Virginia. In the Cowpasture River watershed, Dominion's pipeline will cross Jack Mountain at 4,000 feet, Bullpasture Mountain at 2,815 feet and the great Shenandoah Mountain at 3,250 feet – up one side and down the other.

Dominion's Atlantic Coast Pipeline project is a direct threat to the Cowpasture River watershed and an indirect threat to the CRPA. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline project is a direct threat to the watershed because it will cross the Cowpasture River, Bullpasture River, Benson's Run, Davis Run, Crab Run and Shaws Fork and further, trench over 12 miles of fragile karst topography, mountain sides and valley lands. This industrial-scale gas pipeline project is an indirect threat to the CRPA because it challenges the fundamental purpose for our being – i.e., to protect and preserve the water quality of the Cowpasture (and Bullpasture) River.



The CRPA and its Board of Directors, however, understands that the Association's purpose for being is to protect water quality and quantity -- both surface water and groundwater. So with that charter-driven mission as a frame work for decision-making, the Association's purpose for being should not be to stop an industrial-scale pipeline's development, or to protect the aesthetics of view-sheds of the Cowpasture watershed, or to save rare salamanders, or to protect endangered bats, even though the CRPA membership may be sympathetic with those problems, issues and concerns. The CRPA instead should be prepared to become a player at a credible scientific or technical level. Our Association should deal with questions like what will be the CRPA's role in promoting the highest standards of excellence in pipeline crossings of rivers, drafts and runs, and over or around karst features

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The Atlantic Coast Pipeline *(Continued from page 7)*

like sinkholes, losing rivers and caves? How should we collaborate with landowners on either side of river or run crossings? How should the CRPA participate in public comments in the application and permitting processes through the George Washington National Forest, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the USACE and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality?

In the Cowpasture River watershed there are perhaps eight areas of environmental concern that fall within the CRPA charter-mandate to preserve water quality and quantity, including: steep terrain on the east, west or both sides of surface water crossings, intermediate-term destruction of riparian buffer areas, short and intermediate-term degradation of stream bed quality, permanent encroachment onto karst terrain features (sinkholes, losing streams and caves), and short-, intermediate- and long-term sedimentation.



Dominion's Atlantic Coast Pipeline will:

- Cross Crab Run, a native brook trout stream, about five miles west of McDowell.
- Cross Crab Run a second time about one mile west of McDowell.
- Cross the Bullpasture River about one mile south of McDowell and on the southwest corner of the McDowell Civil War Battlefield.
- Cross the upper Cowpasture River about one mile north of the River's junction with Shaws Fork (creek) and in a narrow 100-foot wide valley.
- Cross Shaws Fork about one and a half miles northeast of the hamlet of Liberty.
- Traverse karst terrain known and inventoried by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Natural Heritage and Karst Protection Programs.
- Create huge water source demands for pressure testing the pipeline itself and then contaminated water disposal issues.
- Threaten the Cowpasture River below Stillhouse Run where the river becomes a negative or losing river and karst cave passageways eventually supply the cool, clear and potable water necessary for the Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station.



With these challenges in mind, the CRPA in collaboration with the Valley Conservation Council sponsored a roundtable discussion on the challenges posed by the project and together these two non-profits formed the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance that now pulls together 30 conservation-minded groups for collaboration and sharing information. In addition, the standing CRPA Forest Liaison Committee and an Ad Hoc Pipeline Oversight Committee will keep members informed about critical development issues created by the project and work with our Board of Directors to develop comments, recommendations or otherwise engage with pipeline developers or regulators on behalf of the CRPA.

Association News

Keith Carson Retires as Executive Director

By Lou Robinson, CRPA Board Member

Keith served as our Executive Director for three years. During this time he kept the CRPA running as smooth as a well-oiled machine. He participated in many facets of the CRPA's activities, including coordinating agendas and minutes for the Board of Directors meetings, and producing and publishing the newsletter. He also coordinated other CRPA activities including the annual meeting, the summer picnic, river cleanups, and other special events. Keith did all of his work efficiently and with precision. He was a leader we all depended on and respected. Keith has been a major factor in the CRPA's continued improvement of its mission for the Cowpasture River watershed and the community.

Keith is not leaving the CRPA. He will continue as an active member and I am sure we will be seeing him at various events. **Job Well Done, Keith!**



Member Spotlight

Welcome Back, Scott Williams

As part of an ongoing series, we are asking new members or returning members to introduce themselves to our existing membership—thanks to Scott for his willingness to help pioneer this column.

Where are you from?

Originally from Waynesboro, VA, moved to Mechanicsville in 1995 for a job.

What is your connection with the Cowpasture River or area?

I grew up in Waynesboro and my Dad's (Guy Williams) best friend (Dan Jones) owned a camp called "Camp Jess Fer U" that was right on the river where SR 629 crosses it in Bath County. I started going there when I was 4 (I'm 53 now) and spent countless summer nights there up until about 20 years ago. We fished, we swam, we canoed, we hiked and just enjoyed being on the river. I even spent my honeymoon at the camp in 1984.

In more recent years, I have camped and fished off of SR 678 below Williamsville and below the swinging bridge in the Wallace Tract. My in-laws own a small camp off SR 609 near "The Gorge" on the Bullpasture River that we have started to spend a lot of time at. We have just started the process of putting a larger camp on the property and it's only a few miles north from where we fish on the Cowpasture at the Wallace Tract. We access that part of the river through Forestry Road 282.

Why did you join the CRPA?

I've had so many wonderful times and created so many great memories over the years on the Cowpasture that when I heard about your organization I knew I wanted to join to contribute to maintain the pristine beauty of the river. I also hope to eventually meet other members who share the passion for the Cowpasture!



Thank You To Our Loyal Watershed Members

This list includes dues and gifts received between May 31, 2014 and December 31, 2014. Thanks for your continued support and welcome to our new member.

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Chris and Tuck Carter
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In Memory of:

Richard F. "Dick" Sutton
Michael Jamison & Gary, Kathy Childs and Family

Drew Bennett Caldwell

Frederick and Peggy Paxton

Barbara Warley

John C. Warley, Jr.

Welcome to our New Member!

Gilbert Ramey

Did we get it wrong? We're sorry for any errors or omissions in this list. We are happy to correct errors.
Email: directorcrpa@gmail.com

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are vital to the CRPA's success. Much of our work and community impact relies on the generosity of individuals who donate their time and talent to assist on various projects. The CRPA has a variety of volunteer opportunities for individuals interested in protecting their water resources, learning new skills and having a great time! If you are ready to have fun, meet new people and actively work toward preserving our water resources for future generations, contact us today (directorcrpa@gmail.com or 704-930-8243) to join our fantastic volunteer team. Training may be required.

Some of the ways you can help us:

1) LITTER CLEAN-UP

- River clean-ups are fun and rewarding! We typically hold events in the spring and fall at the Walton Tract.

2) WATER QUALITY MONITORING

- Help us monitor streams within the Cowpasture River watershed. Training and all supplies are provided.

3) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Raise young community members' awareness of the importance of water quality and conservation
- Engage adult members of the community through environment-related programming
- Develop brochure and other media materials (fact sheets, etc.) to distribute throughout the watershed and for use at conferences, festivals, etc.
- Participate in public events, festivals, etc. to inform community members about the CRPA and our programs

4) EVENT PLANNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Plan social/recreation events for entire membership
- Assist with selling merchandise at our annual events



Eastern Small-footed Bats *(Continued from page 1)*

rock outcrops, especially on cliff faces or talus slopes that are exposed to the sun, but also on boulder covered dams, under bridges and in the rafters of overhanging porches. As with most species of bats, males and female roost separately. Males roost alone and play no role in raising pups. Females usually give birth to one pup per year and they may choose to roost with other females during the maternity season, forming "maternity colonies" in June and July. Mating probably happens in the autumn after pups have been reared and before hibernation. It's unclear how far they migrate to their over-wintering sites. Other species of bats can migrate hundreds of kilometers to their overwintering sites, but most evidence suggests small-footed bats don't fly far. It is possible some could hibernate in deep crevices on the same rock outcrops where they spend summer.

These unusual habits have made their populations difficult to monitor. Even now, as the fungal disease White Nose Syndrome (WNS) continues to decimate populations of several species of bats in North America, scientists aren't sure how much the disease has impacted small-footed bats. Although many likely died from WNS, their populations don't seem to have been decimated to the same extent as other species of *Myotis* in Virginia. If small-footed bats weather the storm, as everyone hopes, it will be yet another testament to their resiliency. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that if we want to learn the secrets of these little bats, they are not going to make it easy.

Not a member? Join today!

- \$20 Individual (minimum annual membership donation)
- \$50 River Guardian
- \$100 Headwaters Circle
- \$250 Watershed Steward Other _____
- \$500 Wallawhatoola Society
- >\$500 Bedrock Patron
- Junior Membership(s): 15 years and under; Cost = 4 hrs./year volunteer service

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CITY — STATE — ZIP

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- I prefer not to have my name published as a contributor.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer river monitor.
- I want to help save valuable resources, please send my newsletter by email.



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