

The Current



News from the Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation

Spring 2026

BEGINNING THE NEW YEAR

BLUEBIRD BOX WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 21

John Wirts was the instructor for a hands-on workshop to teach participants how to build a bluebird nest box. Bluebirds have very specific needs for their nesting habitat, so it's important for them to have certain features in their "houses."

Bluebird populations were dwindling during the last century due to habitat loss, so we can support these lovely birds by installing well-designed nesting boxes for them to raise their families.



Ten participants spent the morning learning how to construct a bluebird nesting box.

YOUR DONATIONS HELP US GET THINGS DONE. PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.

Thank you!

10TH ANNUAL FIRST DAY HIKE

Despite snow and black ice, at least 72 hardy folks braved the cold to attend our tenth annual First Day hikes. Art Shomo and John Wirts led hikers on the Orange and Yellow Trails.

Discussions included winter tree identification, Coal River flooding and the flood plain, how wildlife copes with winter weather and other timely nature topics. Hikers observed evidence of past beaver activity near the river and learned more about the history of the river.

After the hikes, participants enjoyed refreshments of hot mulled cider, hot chocolate and cookies in the classroom.

COMING EVENTS

MARCH 21 – FLY FISHING WORKSHOP. Pre-registration required by March 14. Class size limited. Call the center at 304-915-8028.

APRIL 25TH – EARTH DAY EVENT 11:00 a.m. Three Rivers Avian Center will be here with their "Hoot and Holler" presentation featuring some very entertaining birds.

MAY 3 – WORLD SALAMANDER DAY
from 10:00 - 2:00



Mark Watson photo

**THE FORKS OF COAL
STATE NATURAL AREA
FOUNDATION**

OFFICERS

President - Kathy Hill
Vice President - John C. Wirts
Secretary - Art Shomo
Treasurer - Diana Green

DIRECTORS

Robert Miller
Tena Webb
Angie Bailey
Tommy Mullins
Kevin Hill
Ray Lovejoy
Penny Johnson
Kim Shomo
Frank Coulter

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Leanna M. Preston

FRIENDS OF THE FORKS

Tomi Bergstrom
Greg Stamm
John and Sarah Walls
Kanawha Valley Trail Alliance
WV Division of Natural Resources
WV Dept. of Environmental
Protection

BRICK SALES CONTINUE!

Buy a Brick - Build a Legacy

Support the Foundation and Workman wildlife center by purchasing a commemorative brick to honor someone special, or as a gift for an anniversary, birthday, wedding or any other special occasion. For more information or to purchase a brick, visit our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org or e-mail us at forksofcoalfoundation@gmail.com.

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

GROWING TOGETHER AT THE FORKS

Dear Friends and Partners,

As I look out over the nearly six miles of trails that now weave through the Forks of Coal State Natural Area, I am struck by how much we have accomplished together. What was once a vision is now a living, breathing sanctuary for our community. Since opening the Claudia L. Workman Wildlife Education Center in 2022, we have seen it become a true hub for conservation education. From the curious eyes of children to hikers exploring the trails to curious minds attending our classes and programs, the impact of your support is visible in every corner of this land.

However, our work isn't finished. I am proud to announce that we are expanding our trail system into 200 additional acres of stunning, untouched natural area. This expansion will significantly increase our footprint, offering even more space for hikers, birdwatchers, and families to connect with the unique beauty of West Virginia. Our goal is to ensure that as our community grows, our access to quiet, preserved wilderness grows with it.

While we grow outward, we must also build upward on a firm financial foundation. To that end, we are actively promoting our Endowment Fund. This fund is designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Claudia L. Workman Wildlife Education Center and the hundreds of acres of beautiful, protected greenspace. A gift to the endowment is a gift that keeps giving—it provides the reliable support needed to maintain our trails, protect our wildlife habitats, and keep our educational programs running for decades to come.

How You Can Help:

- **Contribute to the Endowment:** Help us reach our sustainability goals by making a donation specifically designated for the fund.
- **Explore the New Grounds:** Stay tuned for updates as we begin work on the 200-acre expansion.
- **Leave Your Mark:** Our "Buy a Brick" program continues to be a meaningful way to honor a loved one while supporting our daily operations.

The "place where the rivers meet" is growing, and it is thanks to your generosity that we can dream this big. Thank you for standing with us in protecting this treasure.

With gratitude,

Kathy J. Hill,
President, Forks of Coal Foundation

NATURE NOTES...

WOOD FROGS AT THE FORKS

The Wood Frogs at the Forks of Coal are one of the early harbingers of spring. They can be heard making their distinctive sounds in the tiny wetland along the Spring Peeper Trail during mild, wet weather in mid-winter. They come in varying shades of tan and brown and have a black “mask” across their eyes and upper lip.

Like all amphibians, they reproduce in water, but the rest of the year Wood Frogs spend their lives in moist woods near logs and leaf litter. They eat mainly mites, spiders, snails and insects.

You may ask, “how do they survive in winter?” According to the new version of Amphibians and Reptiles of West Virginia by Dr. Thomas K. Pauley, et al., they have special “physiological adaptations



Mark Watson photo

that render them freeze tolerant in the winter [and they are] the only amphibian species that occurs north of the Arctic Circle in the Western Hemisphere.”

2026 WV HUNTING AND FISHING SHOW

The foundation was invited back to the annual West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show in January, an annual event sponsored by the **West Virginia Trophy Hunters Association**.

It was a great opportunity to network with old friends and get to know new ones at our location across the aisle from the WVDNR section.

Thanks to all our volunteers and the **Adventure Tourism** students and their teacher Bobby Miller from the **Boone Career and Technical Center** for their help again this year. They have been helping us staff our booth at the show for several years, and they do a great job.

And THANK YOU to our friends in the WVTHA! We appreciate your support!!

THANKS TO ALL WHO SHARE AND SUPPORT OUR MISSION

With sincere gratitude we thank the generous friends and neighbors who have recently made donations and purchased bricks.

Dr. Elizabeth D. Swiger
Nelle Ratrie Chilton Charitable Trust
Edwards Family Fund
West Virginia Trophy Hunters Association
Nina R. Peyton
R. Terrance and Karen Speidel Rodgers
Elizabeth McClintock
Robert Fala
Leanna and Bret Preston
Robert A. Johnston
Karen M. Scherr
Jim and Beverly Triplett
David Long
Frances Miller
Deborah Eads
John, Jr. and Marian Jordan
Chris Cobb
Phyllis Starcher
Louis and Teresa Watts
Ronald King
Carol Adams
William E. Thayer II
Diana Kile Green
Art and Kim Shomo
Kroger Community Rewards shoppers
John Fischer
Rebecca Gillespie
Angie and Mike Bailey
Barry and Lucinda Curry
Visitors at the center
Paul and Anne Wheeler

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER....

We welcome volunteers. If you would like to volunteer at events or on trails or serve on our board of directors, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us through our website or: forksofcoalfoundation@gmail.com. or contact one of our board members.

PLEASE JOIN US AND SUPPORT THE FORKS OF COAL FOUNDATION TODAY!

The Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation was formed in 2016 to work with the West Virginia DNR to create a wildlife education center, educational programs and conservation area on the 102 acres at the Forks of Coal. The Foundation, the DNR and the WV State University Extension Office are working together in the development of the center and nature oriented activities and programs which will benefit our local Coal River and Kanawha Valley communities.

We invite you to join us! To learn more, go to Facebook or our website at www.forksofcoalfoundation.org.

Name _____ Phone Number/E-Mail _____

Address _____
Street Number City State Zip Code

Amount of Gift _____ \$25 _____ \$35 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ Other

Please make check payable to: Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation

P.O. Box 5556, Charleston, WV 25361.

or visit our website and click the "Donate" button.

The Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Forks of Coal State Natural Area Foundation

Post Office Box 5556

Charleston, West Virginia 25361

www.forksofcoalfoundation.org



Jim Triplett photo

Happy Spring - Take a hike!

