



The Catoctin Forest Alliance Bulletin

www.catoctinforestalliance.org



Newsletter of the CFA Vol. 16 No. 2 May 2026

Editor:

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Editor: Linda Sundergill

Our mission is to preserve and protect the Catoctin Mountain forest for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations

A Note from Our President

Now that we have had some “hot” weather, be mindful of friendly friends that like to surprise us at every turn and by downed logs on the trail. Do some reading and looking at pictures of snakes so that you can identify them. Let Rangers know when and where you see them and, if possible, a picture of the snake. Use care: it is not the time to be brave. Watch out for your pets and check them and yourself for ticks after a hike. Bring lots of water or other liquids to drink for yourself and that hiker who might have forgotten to bring enough. Always check with the visitor center for updates on trails or the web site for the park you are hiking in. Always report any issues with the trail you are hiking to the Rangers so that it can be taken care of.

Our parks are wonderful areas to visit. View the vistas, see the wonders of the forest and enjoy the splendor of the surroundings. The parks are there for our enjoyment today and hopefully into the future. The parks need our help. With budget cuts, the parks need volunteers more now than ever. Have your group leader, business organization or just a group of friends get in touch with a park and volunteer for a day or a weekend.

These parks are our state and national treasures and we need to protect and continue the work of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and the WPA (Work Progress Administration) from the 1930's. We can put our time into the trails that need work, the bridges that cross streams, invasive plants that need to be taken care of, buildings that might need some TLC and many other things. Ask the parks what you can do for them. Be respectful of the beauty and animals that you see as you visit their home. Hike the trails, take in the wonderful views and take the time to see with your eyes. Please stay safe as you do all these things.

“Happy trails to you”
Jim Robbins, President
Catoctin Forest Alliance

SUCCESS By Jim Robbins

SUCCESS Academy has been working hard on trails in the parks and the Never Forget Garden at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. They continue working with Julie on Monday's at ThorpeWood, tending to the the horses, goats, chickens and cows.

It is hard to realize that this year is almost over for the youth and that it is now time for some to graduate and venture out into the world. I wish them the best as they move forward. Always remember that I am a call away.

Amish By Jim Robbins

Our second group of 5 couples arrived on the 16th of March to work at Gambrill State Park on Pavilion #2 for a week. They started the project on Tuesday and finished it on Thursday. It is amazing how hard and fast they work.

The picture shows the finished project. They replaced the whole front of the pavilion in only 2 ½ days. Catoclin Forest Alliance and the parks are very fortunate to have such wonderful friends.



Meet Our Artists in Residence for 2026

Jerry Brown

We are pleased to welcome Jerry Brown to Catoctin Mountain Park as Artist-In-Residence during the month of September. Mr. Brown first started painting at the age of 76, when his entertainment business was quashed by the COVID epidemic. He then quickly became a notable regular, and featured artist at Red Raven Art Company, an iconic gallery along Gallery Row in Lancaster, PA, where he resides with his wife, Gina, and their 4yr old Border Collie, Gunny.

Over the past 7 years, Mr. Brown has won numerous prizes and awards for excellence in watercolor at regional exhibitions and plein air painting competitions. During his Residency, he is planning a studio session, open to the public, where you are encouraged to stop by to visit as he paints images from the park. He will also be conducting a watercolor workshop, sharing tips and techniques that he uses in his own work, and will also present an Artist Talk at the end of his Residency, where he will share and discuss paintings that he has completed during his time at the park. Be sure to look for Mr. Brown out on our trails and overlooks, and be sure to stop to have a look, and to visit (and be sure to bring the kids!) You can see some of Mr. Brown's recent paintings by visiting www.3BWatercolorStudio.com



Adrien Gehring

OPEN TO NATURE: WE ARE WOVEN TOGETHER

Making art is an experience of removing barriers to openness and communion with the world. I practice embracing vulnerability, curiosity, and connection to my senses and really experience the world around me. Then, the art I make emerges from my open mind, heart, and energy. I let go of pre-existing expectations or judgments.

Nature is a location where I feel open and feel at home. Maybe you feel this way, too? The opportunity to spend two weeks as an artist in residence, immersed in the Catoctin Mountains is a gift that I'm so excited to explore. I look forward to waking up with the birds, wandering the woods each day, and allowing the wisdom of the mountains to shape my creative energy over my residency at Cunningham Falls State Park.



I have been experimenting with natural plant fibers over the past year, weaving and printing with the textures and shapes of leaves. I am excited to immerse myself in the ecosystem of the mountains and let the late summer season inspire me with her patterns, colors, and textures. I want to

explore how we are all connected, woven together and interdependent with each other. I believe that nature is our greatest teacher of this truth.

As part of my residency, I will be observing a daily schedule of yoga, meditation, and walks to support my creative practice. Rituals help me still my mind, open my heart, and commune with nature. I invite anyone to join me on Wednesday evenings for a creative meditation walk, September 16 and 23, 6pm-7pm (sundown). On Saturday, Sept. 19th at the William Houck Area Concessions Building and Sept. 26th at the Apples Church Pavillion, I will offer a demonstration and invitation to make your own eco-print.

I look forward to seeing you in the woods!
Adrien Gehring

Cunningham Falls & Gambrill State Parks Volunteer Opportunity

submitted by Claudia Padilla

We are seeking volunteers to staff the Cunningham Falls Visitor Center and Nature Center, as well as the Gambrill State Park Nature Center, starting Memorial Day weekend. No special skills are required, but volunteers should be willing to engage with the public, answer basic park questions, and handle opening/closing the buildings.

- Schedule: Saturdays and Sundays, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Requirements: Must pass a background check and fingerprinting.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. If any CFA members are interested in volunteering for this position, please let me know. It'd be easier with someone already familiar with the parks.

Best regards,

Claudia Padilla, Lead Park Ranger, Cunningham Falls & Gambrill State Parks

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

14039 Catoctin Hollow Rd. Thurmont, MD 21788

(301) 271-7574 (office) (240) 818-2976 (cell)

claudia.padilla@maryland.gov



[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)





WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

@CUNNINGHAM FALLS STATE PARK

Solar Viewing

Explore Earth's closest star, the Sun @ South Beach Parking Lot
14274 William Houck Dr. Thurmont MD

First Saturday of every month

April 4, May 2, June 6, July 4, August 1, September 5, October 3

Time: 2-5 PM

Night Sky

View constellations and planets @ the Dam Overlook Parking Lot
14372 Catoctin Hollow Rd. Thurmont MD

First Saturday of every month

April 4, May 2, June 6, July 4, August 1 from 9-11 PM

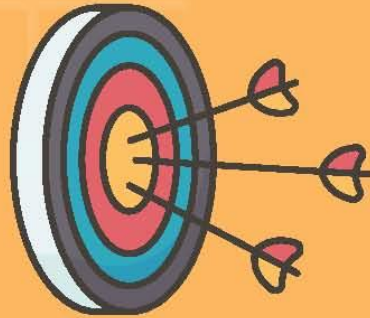
September 5, October 3 from 8-10 PM

EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND WEATHER DEPENDANT.
RAIN AND CLOUDS CANCEL THE EVENT.
VISIT WESTMINSTERASTRO.ORG FOR UPDATES AND DETAILS.



BEGINNER ARCHERY

Cunningham Falls State Park
Manor Area
6709 Cunningham Falls Park Rd,
Thurmont, MD 21788



Sundays: May 17
Saturdays: May 30, June 6, June 27
All sessions are 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Ages 7 and up only
\$5 per person, cash only
Rain cancels the event
To register, call 301-514-5866

Registration closes at 1:00 p.m. on the day of
the program. Time slots are every half hour
from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

New Trail Completed in Catoctin Mountain Park

Submitted by Rick Slade, Superintendent Catoctin Mountain Park

I'd like to highlight the construction of a new 3/4-mile trail connecting the east and west sides of the park between Cunningham Falls and the Catoctin National Recreation Trail. It was completed as part of the park's 2022 Parkwide Trail Plan. It follows the construction of another trail in 2024 connecting Camp Misty Mount to the Charcoal Loop Trail and Thurmont Vista. Both trails were constructed by youth trail crews hired through the Conservation Legacy Appalachian Conservation Corps. The park will continue to implement elements of the 2022 Trail Plan in future years.



Youth trail crews hired through the Conservation Legacy Appalachian Conservation Corps complete the new trail and participate in ribbon cutting.



A Note from Shelley

Submitted by Shelley Miller, Membership and Fundraising Chairman

Hello CFA Family. If you have already renewed your membership with CFA, thank you! If you have not, please do so now. Our website makes it easy! Simply go to <http://www.catoctinforestalliance.org> and click on JOIN.

If you have not perused the CFA website lately, please take some time to see all of the accessible components. Joining or renewing from the website directly is easy. If you prefer, you may still print and complete the membership page and send to CFA PO Box 411 Thurmont MD 21788 with a check made out to CFA. Building a strong membership base is critical to maintaining and growing the positive impacts of CFA. CFA strives to preserve the Catoctin Mountain forest for present and future generations. Many exciting things continue to happen in CFA and many new undertakings are on the horizon. Please join us as we reflect on the highlights of the past several months and embark on navigating the exciting events of the year ahead. Thank you to all who make these things happen! And if you simply wish to donate that is wonderful too!!

Recent happenings:

The 2026 Cunningham Falls State Park Maple Syrup Festival

A big shout out of thanks to all who helped in any way with the Maple Syrup Festival at Cunningham Falls State Park (CFSP) this past March. CFSP had all hands-on deck as another successful Maple Syrup Festival took place on March 14/15 and 21/22. Shelley represented CFA by volunteering both Sundays.



People waiting for fresh, hot pancakes with maple syrup at the Maple Syrup Festival 2026



Making maple syrup
Photos by Shelley Miller

The Impact Difference

Jim and Shelley are still members of the Impact Club of Frederick. This is the organization that granted CFA some funds last year to assist with some of our efforts. If any CFA member would like to attend an Impact meeting with us to find out how you can help become an entrepreneur in tandem with others to help Frederick County Non-Profits, please let Jim or Shelley know. We'll happily take you as our guest.

Present Happenings:

Artist In Residence Exhibit at the Cunningham Falls State Park Manor Area Visitor's Center

Artwork from the CFA's Artist in Residence (AIR) program remains on display in the CFSP Manor Area Visitor's Center (6709 Cunningham Falls Park Rd., Thurmont, Maryland 21788). Thank you Claudia Padilla and Sarah Rodriguez for allowing CFA to exhibit in CFSP's visitor's center and thank you, Jim and Linda Sundergill, for setting up the display. If you have not yet had the opportunity to see it, please try to do so. It is a beautiful representation of CFA AIR artists' works and the relationship the program has with the park.

While there, please check out the CFSP Manor Aviary just adjacent to the Visitor's Center! It is wonderful! <https://www.friendsofcunninghamgambrell.org/aviary>

Future Happenings:

We realize many are asking about the CFA *Annual (Crab, etc...) Raffle* which is taking shape into a little different event this year. Stay tuned!!

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

CFA remains a vital group of caring individuals who are making a positive impact in our community. Please consider being an active part of this incredible service organization by joining or renewing your membership today! Remember, you may go to the CFA website: www.catocinforestalliance.org, to join or renew. You may print out, complete, and mail the filled-out form to CFA PO Box 411 Thurmont, MD 21788 with a check made out to CFA.



Falls Trail at Cunningham Falls State Park

Consider Donation to CFA

To help CFA continue its programs to preserve and protect the Catoctin Mountain forest, please consider, making a donation. CFA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so your donations will be tax deductible. Any donation over \$20 will include a one-year CFA membership. Here is what your donation could do.

- \$50 will buy notebooks or clipboards for 40 children at the week-long day camp.
- \$120 will cover the cost for one child to attend the week-long day camp
- \$125 will provide food for 40 children for one day of day camp.
- \$200 helps sponsor the Artist in Residence program
- \$364 will buy protective equipment for a SUCCESS program youth.
- \$400 will buy bus transportation for 40 children to day camp for one day.
- \$1300 will fund the SUCCESS program for one year.

Giving Levels

- **Acorn** up to \$99
- **Seedling** \$100- 499.99
- **Sapling** \$500-999.99
- **Mighty Oak** \$1000 and over

Donation checks can be made out to CFA and sent to Catoctin Forest Alliance, PO Box 411, Thurmont, MD 21788

Join or Renew your Membership to CFA

We'd love to have you join us in our mission to protect the Catoctin Mountain forest. Your support would be a great benefit to us and the forest. To join CFA or renew your membership, please send the membership application form and a check made out to **Catoctin Forest Alliance** with notation "**Membership**" to the address below. **The yearly membership dues are \$20 per person or \$30 per couple.**



You can also join online at <http://www.catoctinforestalliance.org/index.php/join>.

Kathy Byrne *New members will receive a CFA patch*
CFA Treasurer
123 Ironmaster Dr.
Thurmont, MD 21788

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Committee Interest

Strategic Planning _____ Membership _____ Conservation/Education _____
 Fundraising _____ Artist in Residence _____ Marketing/Publicity _____
 Information Technology _____ Finance _____

Visit our website at www.catoctinforestalliance.org