

Timber rattlesnakes on the mountains

by Michael Kieffer

Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus horridus*) are one of the mountains' most fascinating residents. They make up the eastern-most population in Virginia, and at this point in history are generally a rare species in the Piedmont.

In northern Virginia, avoiding the cold of winter becomes a limiting factor. Timber rattlesnakes (TRs) need to find winter quarters (hibernacula) that stay close to 55° F, such as the deep crevices of rock outcrops. As the Piedmont was settled, the rock outcrops that provided hibernacula became fragmented features in an agricultural landscape, which is now morphing into an urban landscape. This change in land use has left the Bull Run Mountains as the last Piedmont stronghold for TRs in northern Virginia. The mountains have the rock outcrop crevices surrounded by an intact natural landscape that TRs need to survive.

Timber Rattlesnakes, as well as copperheads, are rarely aggressive towards humans. If you encounter one of these snakes on the mountains, maintain a safe distance and move away from it (social distancing like we are all so used to now). In Virginia, harassing, harming, or killing snakes is prohibited unless it is threatening your safety (which it would only do if you step on it or try to kill it) or your livestock.

While snakes have natural predators, their greatest threat is humans. Most snakes are killed by automobiles, while some are killed deliberately by people who fear snakes. Most fear comes from a lack of understanding. We always hope people will be a little kinder to these truly astonishing animals, while they are still alive on these mountains.



M. Kieffer

BRMC Youth Outdoor Naturalist Camps

Summer 2020



Registration is open for all camps & workshops on our website, www.brmconservancy.org.

We're all trying to feel our way through returning to our lives safely, and BRMC is no exception. So we've established some protocols for our summer campers to make sure everyone stays safe. All participants must take their temperatures each morning of their program week, and stay home if they're not feeling 100%. Also, we are not able to take any participants who have come into contact with someone infected by Covid-19 unless they've gone through at least a 14-day post-contact quarantine.

Finally, we'll keep everyone 6 feet apart during the program, but campers must bring a mask. They won't have to wear it during the hikes unless we encounter another group. There have been some minor adjustments to scheduling to each offering. Please see the highlighted adjustments below with each program description.

BUDDING NATURALIST CAMP*

July 13th—17th, 10:00am-12:30 pm

To be conducted completely outside and one parent/guardian must accompany their child or children

At this week-long camp, young children will be exposed to the outdoors and wildlife, as they explore life on the Bull Run Mountains through a series of discovery hikes, frog and salamander searches, snake viewing, and stream exploration. Ages 4-6. *We are now limiting this offering to 6 participants.*

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$125/non: \$175

SUMMER NATURALIST CAMPS*

Session I: July 20th-24th, 10:00am-3:00pm

Session II: July 27th-31st, 10:00am-3:00pm

To be conducted completely outside.

BRMC invites your child to spend an adventurous week interacting with the natural world. Each day we will focus on different groups of plants and animals on the Bull Run Mountains. Campers will add to their understanding of natural systems through hikes, stream walks, frog and salamander catching, bird watching, butterfly and insect collecting, and games. Ages 7-12. *We are now limiting this offering to 10 participants.*

Pre-registration is required.

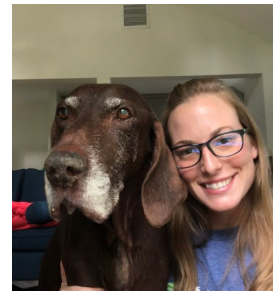
Members: \$250/non: \$300

**Our host properties will include Leopold's Preserve, Silver Lake Regional Park and the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve (BRMNAP), which is owned and operated by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), a public organization dedicated to the preservation of our state's open-space lands. All of these public lands are located within 5 miles of each other. Further information on each camp will be provided to participants. Also, each participant's parent and/or guardian will be directly contacted by phone by Michael Kieffer, Executive Director of BRMC and program leader.*

BRMC reserves the right to cancel a day of any camp due to severe weather. However, we do not anticipate issues with the new time window from adjusting the hours.

Welcome Christina Lambacher!

Hi there! My name is Christina Lambacher, and I'm excited to join BRMC as the new building caretaker/volunteer coordinator. You may have already seen me, and my dog Rusty, around the trails and mountain house. I recently graduated from George Mason University with a Master's degree in Social Work. Now, you may be asking yourself, what does social work have to do with a nature conservancy? To that I respond, "Great question!"



To start, one of social work's grand challenges is to create social responses to a changing environment. To achieve that, transformative social responses like new partnerships, deep engagement with local communities, and innovations to strengthen individual and collective assets are needed. The work that BRMC does to provide research, education, and stewardship to the Bull Run Mountains and surrounding area is contributing to that goal, and I feel so lucky to be a part of that contribution.

I am also a firm believer in the positive benefits that nature has on a person's mental health and well-being. Not only is this a personal belief, it's supported by science and research. With that, I am eager to contribute to an organization that is taking strides to provide access to outdoor spaces for all to enjoy.

One of my goals while working with BRMC is to help rebuild its volunteer base. Edward Abbey said, "The idea of wilderness needs no defense, it only needs defenders." An amazing organization like BRMC relies on the support of volunteers to defend its mission. Creating a strong volunteer base not only helps to sustain an organization, it creates a community.

To strengthen our community, we are creating opportunities that are more accessible to more people by encouraging those with a variety of skills, knowledge, and passion to join us. With that, we're working on understanding the types of volunteer opportunities our current community members are interested in. To do that, we created a volunteer interest survey (<https://forms.gle/cLvVZAiufg3o8kbS9>), which I would encourage everyone to fill out!

Another important component of reinvigorating the volunteer program here at BRMC is letting those around us know who we are. With that, we are working on spreading the word - this includes posting on volunteer websites, posting on our social media, and sharing information with our personal networks.

If you have ideas or questions or just want to share a story with me, I encourage you to reach out via email at christina@brmconservancy.org. I look forward to being able to work with and get to know everyone in the BRMC community.

Backyard Conservation

by Frannie Barnes

This spring, most of us spent the majority of our time in our homes. And how fortunate are we that we had the changing of seasons from winter to spring which brought new growth, new animals, and extra time to enjoy them?

You might have noticed that we have been highlighting and sharing many of our backyard finds on social media. We've been adapting with the changing time and while we haven't had our classroom open, it hasn't changed our commitment to educating others about the Bull Run Mountains. This includes our own backyards!

Backyard conservation goes beyond admiring the flora and fauna in your yard. Practicing backyard conservation helps the environment and has the added benefit of making your yard more enjoyable and potentially more attractive! These practices can help increase food and shelter for birds and other wildlife. It can control soil erosion and conserve water. And of course, it is an easy way to be a steward of the environment.

Please look for our upcoming posts on Composting, Water Conservation, Backyard Birds and Feeders, and Planting Native Plants. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram (FB@BRMconservancy and/or IG@BRMconservancy.)

SHOOTING THE BREEZE
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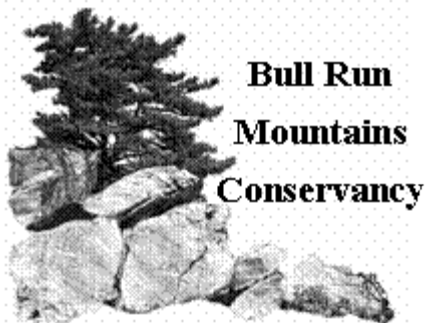
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Yes, I would like to become a member of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy.

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Please make your tax-deductible contribution to:

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, Inc., P.O. Box 210, Broad Run, VA 20137

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy is a membership driven organization.

Become a member today and support our programs and protect the mountains and region. Your membership provides BRMC necessary funds to operate and shows our foundation and corporate supporters that the public values and appreciates BRMC.

Membership Benefits:

- Support environmental and historical programs for all ages
- Support research on and around the Mountains
- Discounts on all public programs and camps
- Quarterly newsletter including our program calendar

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy	2020 Calendar of Events		
Budding Naturalist Camp	July 13th-17th		
Summer Naturalist Camp	Session I- July 20th-24th Session II- July 27th-31st		
Unless otherwise noted, all programs and events will meet at the BRMC Mountain House at 17405 Beverley Mill Drive in Broad Run, VA.	Directions: Take I-66 to Haymarket exit. Go south on Rt. 15. Go west on Rt. 55 for 2.7 miles. Turn right on Turner Rd., then left on Beverley Mill Dr. to the Mountain House 3/4 mi. on left.		