

Log Hotel

by Michael Kieffer

With all the fires occurring year after year on the western side of the continental United States, it seemed a good time to revisit an article I wrote years ago. My daughter is now 14 and past crawling around the floor with me (even though I am not), but the concepts are as valid today as they were when this was written over a decade ago.

However, the intensity of fires occurring today due to some of the factors outlined below, as well as many others, has led to the complete loss of all vegetation above ground and thus there is no argument as to what should be done with the standing trees. How this will effect tree regeneration, especially in light of what could be the loss of the underground network of fungi, bacteria etc. is an experiment running without a lead scientist due to human-led forest management decisions of the past century.

"I was recently reading Log Hotel, by Anne Schreiber, with my daughter. The book teaches children that the life a tree supports once dead is even greater than when the tree was alive. As we looked at the pictures, we practiced pecking like a woodpecker as we "ate" beetles that thrived in the standing dead tree. We practiced crawling like an ant in and out of "holes" in the log on the ground. Finally, we practiced moving like a worm that works to turn the remnants of the log into soil, completing the cycle. She was enthralled with the book.



A red-bellied woodpecker drilling at a dead snag. By Mike Belknap

The next day I was reading an article in Science that studied the effects of post-wildfire logging on forest regeneration and fire risk. For years, the view that post-fire salvage logging reduced the future fire risk and increased forest regeneration through planting dominated literature and practice. There has been a small contingent that supported an alternative view—namely, that post-fire logging was detrimental to long-term forest health, wildlife habitat, and soil development, and actually increased the fire risk. Scientific data supporting either view has been lacking, thus the importance of this paper (Donato et al. 2006).

In 2002, the Bisquit Fire in Oregon burned approximately 200,000 hectares. The site quickly became a national focus of post-fire management issues due to its size, the region's historic reforestation difficulties, and an ambitious post-fire logging proposal. It was a long-awaited opportunity to study conifer regeneration and fuel in logged and unlogged replicated plots across the fire area.

The team's results reinforced the argument that post-fire logging removes naturally seeded conifers, increases surface fuel loads, and can be counterproductive to forest regeneration and fuel reduction. On average, plots nested in unlogged areas that experienced high-severity fire had a median stocking density of 767 seedlings per hectare, primarily Douglas fir. Postfire logging reduced this recruitment by 71 percent primarily due to soil disturbance and the physical burial of seedlings by woody material during logging operations. Replanting then resulted in no net gain in early conifer establishment.

In addition, post-fire logging significantly increased downed woody fuel loads, as many branches (unmerchantable) are left behind. In the short term, fire risk increases unless logging is coupled with costly mitigation efforts including prescribed burns of the unmerchantable material or physical removal. The authors then postulated that "the lowest fire risk strategy may be to leave dead trees standing as long as possible (where they are less available to surface flames), allowing aerial decay and slow, episodic input to surface fuel loads over decades."

As one can imagine this landmark study generated serious sparks especially since Congress had two bills pending to make it easier for companies to do salvage logging in national forests. After the paper was published online by Science, John Sessions, a forest modeler at Oregon State University (OSU), and eight co-authors from OSU and the U.S. Forest Service, wrote a letter to Science about what they called "serious shortcomings in (*continued on pg. 5*)

Winter Birds

by Anna Ritter

SHOOTING THE BREEZE
is a publication of
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Last week as I was slogging back through pasture after the evening horse chores, I spotted them hopping around an old brush pile: the juncos were back for the winter. Boots three inches deep in mud, I stopped to watch. As I stood there, a pileated woodpecker flew in across the pasture, alighted on a dead ash, and started hammering away busily. A few moments later a white-throated sparrow began to croon out its melody of “Oh sweet Canada, Canada, Canada” from somewhere in the brush. Winter had arrived.

Over the past several years, I’ve often written about birding during the wintertime. There is something about the cold crisp weather and open mountain slopes bare of leaves that urge you to lace on the winter boots and crunch your way through the woods listening to the sparrows and thrushes in the undergrowth. Below, I’ve picked out several birds that have become some of my favorites over the years, either for their cheery call notes or bright colors that contrast with the sometimes dreary winter days. These are all species reported on eBird in the last week around Fauquier County, and they’re common enough to be local to our greater Northern Virginia area. I had a hard time selecting just six species to include, and I eventually narrowed the focus down to “birds you’ll likely see in your backyard”: three songbirds (Order Passiformes) and three woodpeckers (Order Piciformes). To you birders out there, these will be old familiars. To novices, I hope you will get the chance to spot some of these and come to love them too.



White-throated Sparrow (male) by Keenan Yakola, Macaulay Library

1. White-throated Sparrow

As an “LBJ” (little brown job) the white-throated sparrow can be distinguished from its fellow sparrow counterparts by its bright yellow markings just above its eyes on the lores. A white crown and throat patch paired with a bold black eye stripe transition to rusty brown wings with dark striping patterns. You can often see these sparrows hopping around the base of our bird feeders and brush thickets nearby. Cornell Ornithology Lab reports that the White-throated sparrow will sometimes mate with the Dark-eyed Junco to produce grayish-looking sparrows with drab white tail markings. Like most hybrids, these white-throated/junco sparrows are sterile (Jung, Morton, & Fleischer, 1994).



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (male, left) by Paul Jacyk, Macaulay Library; Golden-crowned Kinglet (male, right) by David Turgeon, Macaulay Library

2. Ruby-crowned & Golden-crowned Kinglets

Two for one! The crowned kinglets are tiny birds that seem to always be in continuous motion, flitting from limb to limb from the brush below to the branches above. Both have muted gray bodies; the ruby-crowned kinglet has a white eye ring, while the golden-crowned has a black eye stripe with black crown stripes and pale yellow markings on the wings. When excited, the

adult males will display their bright red or golden crowns, respectively. Despite their small sizes, both kinglets have extensive ranges that reach far into Canada and even, in the case of the ruby-crowned, into Alaska.

3. Hermit Thrush

While I am still trying to build confidence distinguishing the hermit thrush from the wood thrush, luckily only the hermit thrush is around this time of year. The overall appearance of the hermit thrush begins with the brown feathers over the head and extends down to the long, reddish brown tail feathers. Its white breast is dotted with dark spots, which fade out below the chest. The wood thrush, for reference, has dark spots that continue down to its underbelly and retains the reddish brown color on its body (*continued on pg. 4*).



Hermit Thrush (male) by Yves Gauthier (Mtl), Macaulay Library

Public Programs Winter 2019

HIKE WITH A NATURALIST*

1st Thursday of Every Month at 9 a.m.

Join a professional naturalist and discover the flora and fauna of the local region. This program is free; all are welcome. Meet at the Mountain House.

MONTHLY SPEAKER SERIES

These programs are free and open to the community!

Saturday, January 26th, 2pm-4pm *Anna Ritter*

Saturday, February 23rd, 2pm-4pm *Chris Hobson*

Saturday, March 23rd, 2pm-4pm *Mike Johnson*

ORIENTEERING WORKSHOP*

Saturday, January 19th, 10am-12pm

Ever looked at a compass and wondered how its north-pointing needle would help you get home? We'll learn all about compasses & reading topo maps indoors before heading outside to try our skills in the field.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$10/non: \$15

WINTER VOLUNTEER PARTY

January 29th, 2019—Tuesday, 6p.m.-8p.m.

BRMC invites all our volunteers to a Mountain House Holiday party to celebrate and show our appreciation for all of your efforts. It doesn't matter if you came to one trail workday, or every night of Safari—we want to say thank you! We will provide beverages; please bring your favorite dish to share.

Please RSVP to info@brmconservancy.org

WINTER WATERFOWL WORKSHOP

Saturday, February 9th, 8am-11am

Join BRMC and George Wallace, PhD biologist, Chief Conservation Officer at the Rainforest Trust, as we spend the morning birding. George has spent his entire career focusing on the conservation and study of birds, and will be spending the whole morning sharing this knowledge.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$15/non: \$20

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT—*Save The Date!*

February 26th, 2019—Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

Grace Episcopal Church, The Plains, VA

Join us for drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and lively conversation as we celebrate another year as educators, researchers, and stewards of the Bull Run Mountains. We are pleased to have Mr. Rodney Bartgis, formerly of the MD & West VA Department of Natural Resources and the Nature Conservancy, speaking on how habitat fragmentation affects population shifts.

WOODCOCK WALK

Saturday, March 2nd, 2019, 4:45pm-7:30pm

Join BRMC and the Clifton Institute for an evening stroll, and sit to enjoy the American woodcocks' spring territorial and courtship flights. We will meet at Clifton for a short discussion indoors before heading out to watch

American woodcocks perform flight displays that would amaze any world traveling birder.

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$10/non: \$15

AMPHIBIANS OF SPRING

Wednesday, March 6th, 2019, 7pm-9 pm

Last year we found hundreds of spring peepers, upland chorus frogs, wood frogs, and spotted salamanders along with lots of egg masses. Grab your red lights and boots. Let's see what we can find this year!

Pre-registration required.

Members: \$10/non: \$15

HOPEWELL OBSERVATORY

Saturday, March 16th, 2019, 6:30pm-9pm

Rain Date: March 30th

Meet at the Mountain House at 6:30 before visiting the Observatory for an evening of stargazing.

Space is limited, pre-registration required.

Members: \$15/non: \$20

Leopold's Preserve *Monthly Naturalist Walks*

BRMC & the White House Farm Foundation are partnering to provide monthly naturalist walks on Leopold's Preserve. Free & open to the community.

Winter/Spring Schedule

Saturday, January 19th, 1-3pm,.....Winter Birds

Saturday, February 9th, 1-3pm.....Winter Waterfowl

Thursday, March 7th, 6-7:30pm.....Woodcock Watch

HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS*

Cost: \$5 per participant including adults.

Orienteering—January 17th, 10am-12pm Join us to explore the mountains off trail as we navigate the old fashioned way—with a compass and topo map. *Best for ages 7+*

Winter Trees—February 21st, 10am-12pm The leaves are gone, so we'll be using bark patterns to ID trees in winter! *All ages.*

Spring Emergence—March 21st, 10am-12pm Warmer temperatures means the mountains are awakening from the winter months—we will focus on the emerging spring ephemeral wildflowers and amphibians' mating rituals. *All ages.*

Bird Migration & Spring Wildflowers—April 11th, 10am-12pm Join us as we learn about bird migration as we observe the first spring arrivals. We will also focus on spring wildflowers. *All ages.*

*Our host property for this event is the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve, which is owned & operated by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, a public organization dedicated to the preservation of our state's open-space lands.

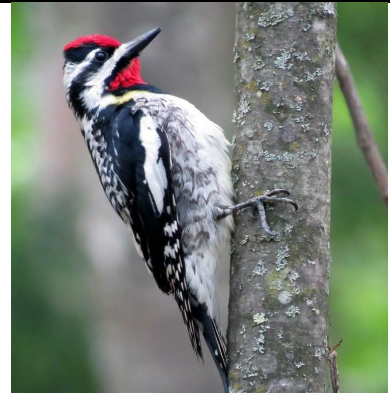
Winter Birds (cont.)

by Anna Ritter

(Continued from pg. 2)

4. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Both female and male yellow-bellied sapsuckers sport brilliant red crowns. The male also boasts a red throat patch, while both sexes often have the namesake pale dirty-yellow belly. Sapsuckers have a prominent black eye stripe and white wing patch, which along with their larger size, distinguishes them from both the downy and hairy woodpeckers. Like their name suggests, sapsuckers drill trees for sap: in the spring they bore into the xylem of the tree, which transports sap up to the young leaves; later in the season they drill into the phloem, where sap is carried back down to the roots.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (male) by Margaret Dunson, Macaulay Library

5. Hairy Woodpecker

Smaller than the yellow-bellied sapsucker but slightly larger than the downy, the hairy woodpecker is a medium-sized bird with white belly and bright red patch at the back of the head. Their wings are black with distinct white spots, and a thick black eye stripe marks their face. When distinguishing from the Downy woodpecker, note that the Hairy's bill is longer than the length of its head, while the Downy's is smaller. Over the last decade, European starlings preying on Hairy nesting cavities have led to Hairys moving to intact wooded areas, away from the edges and open spaces that starlings inhabit.

6. Downy Woodpecker

"The Downy is down-sized," I remind myself frequently. Both in body and beak size, the downy is smaller than both the Sapsucker and the Hairy. Their small size is an advantage in competition for food, since they are able to reach insects on small branches and weeds that larger birds cannot. Cornell Lab of Ornithology even reports that they will hammer at the galls on goldenrods to reach fly larvae. With nesting cavities smaller than starling-size, Downys are usually seen along the forest edge and open spaces.



Downy Woodpecker (male, left) by Evan Lipton, Macaulay Library; Hairy Woodpecker (male, right) by Jean-Sebastien Guenette, Macaulay Library

References:

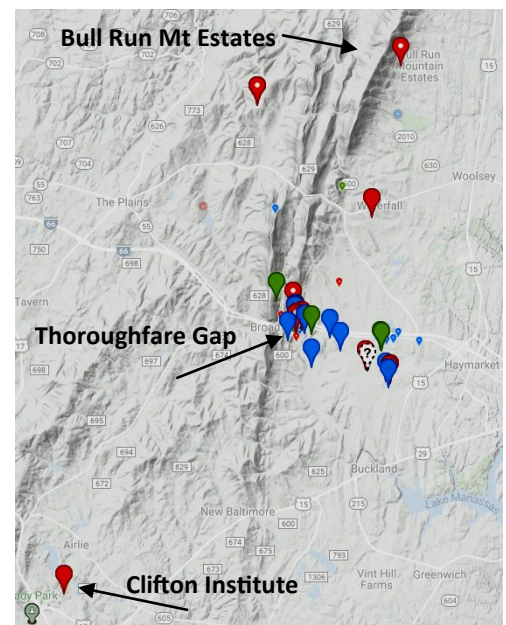
Jung, R.E., Morton, E.S., Fleischer, R.C. Behavior and Parentage of a White-Throated Sparrow x Dark-Eyed Junco Hybrid. The Wilson Bulletin, A Quarterly Magazine of Ornithology. Vol 106, no. 2. p.189-419. 1994.

Share Your Own Birding Photos on BRMC's iNaturalist Project!

Just 4 steps and your photos join thousands of others in cataloging the biodiversity of our region. You can also share your observations on eBird, where data from citizen scientists around the world is used to document population shifts and changes. At right, see BRMC observations through 2018.

To Share Your Photo on the BRMC iNaturalist Project:

1. Do some birding.
2. Take a photo! Smart phone pics count 👍
3. Join our project on the iNaturalist app by downloading the app and searching "Bull Run Mountains Conservancy."
4. Share your photos by uploading to the app and tagging our project.



(continued from pg. 1) the paper.” The group asked Science to delay printing the paper. (For the non-science geek, most journals publish online before the print version hits the newsstand to speed up a paper’s turn around and give us geeks a running start.) The paper appeared on schedule. Science Editor-in-Chief Don Kennedy said “we have confidence in our peer-review decision. I think it’s fairly clear [the letter] was an effort to suppress a paper” (Stokstad, 2006).



Dead logs bring new life. By Mike Belknap

This paper provides strong evidence that salvage logging may not be the best practice in the fire-prone west, and possibly opens the door to question salvage logging in other parts of the country, including hurricane prone areas. Not what some politicians and large logging companies want to read. If we look back to where we began this story, we all learned as a child the importance of dead wood for the forest, wildlife, and soil. It is a fundamental cycle of life and death. So, where do we lose this connection to the natural world? Is it simply the money? Maybe, but why then do so many property owners pay companies million of dollars a year to clean up their backyards after a storm or when a tree dies naturally? If a tree poses no danger of hitting your house, maybe we should let it stand and fall on its own and then leave it for the wildlife and soil.

What are we teaching our children when they learn the importance of a natural process and then witness their elders eliminate not only the standing dead tree but all evidence that it even existed? The dumps get larger, while our woodlots begin to starve. I guess we are really teaching to do as I say, not as I do. It is time to leave our anal retentiveness indoors and leave some of the outdoors alone.”

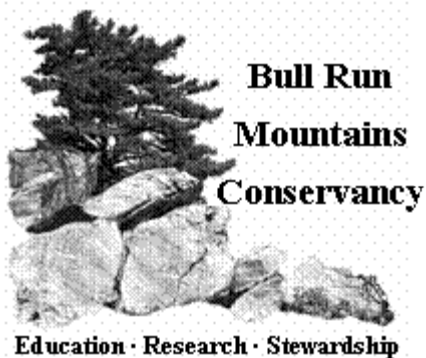
References:

Donato, D.C. et al. Post-Wildfire Logging Hinders Regeneration and Increases Fire Risk. Science. 311, 352 (2006).

Stokstad, Erik. Salvage Logging Research Continues To Generate Sparks. Science. 311, 761 (2006).

To register for a program, fill out the form below and mail with your payment to:
Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, P.O. Box 210, Broad Run, VA 20137
Program registration is also now available online at www.brmconservancy.org/calendar.html.
For more information, call us at (703) 753-2631 or visit our web site at www.brmconservancy.org.

Name _____	<u>Homeschool Programs</u> \$5 per participant	Orienteering Workshop Jan. 19, 10am-12pm \$10/\$15
Address _____	Orienteering Jan. 17, 10am-12pm	Winter Volunteer Party Jan. 29, 6-8pm
City/ZIP _____	Winter Trees Feb. 21, 10am-12pm	Winter Waterfowl Workshop Feb 9, 8am-11am \$15/\$20
Home phone _____	Spring Emergence March 21, 10am-12pm	Annual Fundraiser Feb. 26, 6:30pm
Work phone _____	Bird Migration & Wildflowers April 11, 10am-12pm	Woodcock Walk March 2, 6:30-9pm \$10/\$15
E-mail _____	<u>Leopold's Programs</u>	Amphibians of Spring March 6, 7-9pm \$10/\$15
Are you a BRMC member? _____	Winter Birds Jan. 19, 1-3pm	Hopewell Observatory March 16, 6:30-9pm Rain date: March 30, \$15/\$20
No. of people registering _____	Winter Waterfowl Feb. 9, 1-3pm	
Fee _____	Woodcock Watch March 7, 6-7:30pm	
Amount enclosed _____		
Name of children if registering for youth camp _____		



P.O. Box 210 · Broad Run · Virginia 20137
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Yes, I would like to become a member of Bull Run Mountains Conservancy.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Referred by _____

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Senior | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Group | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$300+ Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000+ Conservation Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

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 support the public preserve. Your membership provides BRMC necessary funds to operate and shows our foundation and corporate supporters that the public values and appreciates the resource.

Membership Benefits:

- Support environmental and historical programs for all ages
- Support research and management of the natural area
- Discounts on all public programs and camps
- Quarterly newsletter including our program calendar

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy	2018 Calendar of Events
Orienteering	January 17 (Homeschool)
Orienteering	January 19
Winter Volunteer Party	January 29
Winter Waterfowl Workshop	February 9
Winter Trees	February 21 (Homeschool)
Annual Fundraiser	February 26
Woodcock Walk	March 2
Amphibians of Spring	March 6
Spring Emergence	March 21 (Homeschool)
Hopewell Observatory	March 16 (Rain date the 30th)
Bird Migration & Wildflowers	April 11 (Homeschool)
<p>Unless otherwise noted, all programs and events will meet at the BRMC Mountain House at 17405 Beverley Mill Drive in Broad Run, VA, across from the Bull Run Mountains State Natural Area Preserve trailhead.</p> <p>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.</p>	