



Page 3 Stewardship activities never let up.

Page 5-7 Our very special donors and sponsors.



Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST

"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Spring 2020

Blue Ridge Forever
www.blueridgeforever.infc

Stability in a Storm

Dr. Gary Wein, Executive Director, HCLT

WHEN ONE SEES OUR AMAZING granitic domes, mountains like Whiteside, Satulah, Laurel Knob or Rock Mountain, you cannot help being awed by the view. Not just the first time, but time after time they continue to amaze. Within the relatively short lifetime of man, these stable giants have not changed much. This stability is important. It's predictable. These mountains seem like they have always been there.

When a land trust accepts a conserved property it makes a long term commitment, in some cases forever. Therefore stability is also important for a land trust. The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust can trace its roots back to 1883, with a group of local citizens committed to protecting the mountains they loved. Over the years

that group, now formalized as the Board of the Highlands-Cashier Land Trust, has continued the commitment. In the last fifteen years, your neighbors, folks like Bill Stiefel, Mercedes Heller, Thomas Bates, Lila Howland, Walter Wingfield, Bill Mauldin, and now Carlton King, have helped provide the leadership and stability necessary to conserve over 3400 acres in 104 places.

So, in this time of COVID-19, remember that the Land Trust continues to conserve and take care of the lands you have helped us protect with your generous donations and support. If we

are going to continue to conserve the air we breathe, the water we drink, and our amazing biological diversity it is going to take a stable hand at the tiller; the Land Trust is ready to do that.

However, we also need the stability of constant resources. Please continue to help us take care of what so many have worked so hard to protect since 1883.

Storm clouds gather over Fodderstack Mountain.



A New Normal

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I write to you, we and much of the rest of the world are on lockdown. I hope that by the time this reaches you, things will have improved and we will be moving toward some sense of normalcy. My fear is that this pandemic is going to create an entirely new and different "normal."

Your Land Trust has adapted to the situation in many ways. Our staff has been working from home. While we have canceled some events, we have been working hard to find alternative ways to stay engaged, primarily on our website and through social media. Our stewardship continues with monitoring our properties, working on our trails and fighting invasive plants, all of which take place by our stewardship staff working solo. Our trails and public spaces remain open to allow people a place to "isolate in nature." Posted signs remind visitors to maintain social distance.

So, you see, we are still on mission and we still need — now more than ever — your continued support, especially the financial support so generously provided in the past. 2019 was one of the best we have ever had from a fund-raising standpoint; please let us see a repeat or better.

Last year we took three conservation easements and two fee simple donations, preserving an additional 90.4 acres. We also participated with other

Carlton King
President HCLT



conservation groups in conserving an additional four properties totaling 90 acres. Currently, between the easements we hold and the land we own outright, we protect 104 parcels totaling 3,415 acres. And we are pledged to continue that protection in perpetuity. We can't do that without you.

Last year we presented 66 Kids in Nature programs, with a total of 987 participants. We also helped sponsor the Village Nature Series. Finding an alternative way to reach those we are trying to serve will be a challenge in the current environment, which we hope will be lessened by time. Another of the services we are able to offer with which some of you may not be familiar is consulting with developers and realtors, providing assistance in their planning so as to reduce negative impacts on this wonderful plateau which we are fortunate to enjoy. If you know a land owner who might be interested in having a discussion with us about the conservation value of their property, please encourage them to contact Gary at hitrust@earthlink.net.

Please renew your membership in the Land Trust today, and be as generous as possible, given the burdens that you may currently be carrying.

Your support is vital to our continued success.

**Nature stands by us.
Let's return
the favor.**

Our mountains need us now. More than ever, your support is vital. If you are able, please give today.

Donate Today: hicashlt.org
POB 1703, Highlands, NC 28741

Please fill out the enclosed remittance envelope or donate online at hicashlt.org.

If you'd like to learn how to make your gift go further, consider setting up a recurring monthly gift via our online donation button. It's simple to do and allows for you to give more over time.

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*The mission of the
Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust
is to protect valuable natural
resources for all generations.*

Stewardship Activities

News from the Trails

Stewardship by the Numbers

Over the past year, HCLT has continued to monitor and care for our conserved properties including:

- treatment of over **100 hemlocks** against hemlock wooly adelgid at four properties, with more in the works.
- maintenance of over **five miles of public trail**, and the creation of over **one mile of new trails**, including a

new section opening up at the Brushy Face Preserve.

- and as always, monitoring our **62 conservation easements, 42 owned properties**, and assisting many others in managing their properties in an ecologically sound way.

And while we're at it, we've mapped the invasive species threats on the Plateau and are undertaking control efforts where possible, including the eradication of garlic mustard at the known infestation points.



A waterfall at Padgett/Bilbee Memorial Preserve.

Tips for Social Distancing while Hiking

Going on a hike can relieve stress during these trying times, but you still need to keep your distance from others while out on the trail. Here are some tips to maintain social distancing even while out hiking.

- Stay local and avoid areas you know get heavy use, especially by people coming from outside the area.
- Hike trails that have adequate space along the sides where people can pass at a safe distance.

- Avoid touching surfaces other people are likely to touch.
- Stay aware of your surroundings, so you can see when people or dogs are approaching.
- Do not pet other dogs or let others pet your dog.
- Take out only what you take in, and bring your own food and water.
- Avoid hiking on windy days as the wind could carry droplets from a person coughing a farther distance.

HCLT has several trails that the public is welcome to visit. Trail maps can be found on our website.

Join us for virtual Village Nature Series!

May 26 Buzz-Worthy Insects-Discovering Native Pollinator Power
June 30 Rock Talk- Uncovering the Geology of the Plateau
July 28 Survival By Degrees- The Impact of Climate Change on Birds
Aug 25 Witness for Nature- A Living History with Rachel Carson
Sept 29 Edible Fungi- How Mushrooms Will Change the World
Participate from home, no cost, 5-6 pm. Reserve: director@cashiersgreen.com

Stay connected and keep up with all our happenings:

- Follow us on Facebook
- Check our website: hicashlt.org
- Join our mailing list: info.hitrust@earthlink.net

HCLT's Latest Conservation Projects

Padgett/Bilbee Memorial Preserve:

This 34-acre easement is located in west-central Jackson County. It is surrounded on all sides by USFS Nantahala National Forest and another HCLT-conserved property.

Zahner Preserve: This is the homestead of Bob & Glenda Zahner, renowned local conservationists. The 10-acre easement is located on the northern end of Highlands.

Wee House: Along the lower slopes of Scaly Mountain a new 10-acre easement buffers USFS Nantahala National Forest lands. It is within the direct viewshed of the Appalachian Trail.

Natural Bridge Preserve: HCLT conserves this 6.6-acre property with the largest natural bridge in North Carolina.

Quin Farm Preserve: This 30-acre property is now under ownership of HCLT. The property helps HCLT expand plant conservation efforts by giving us a place to grow plants, and improves our ability to manage our conserved lands.

TNC Conservation Easements: The Nature Conservancy has transferred four easements to HCLT for management and monitoring. These include two pieces of the Ravenel remnants in the Highlands area that conserve old growth forests; the Sanson Wildlife Preserve outside Cashiers that protects old growth forest and borders other HCLT-conserved lands; and the cliffs and summit of Big Sheepcliff Mountain in Cashiers, which also borders other HCLT-conserved lands.



The Zaher homestead.



Kids in Nature

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. Rachel Carson

Explore Your Backyard

HCLT has been nurturing the innate sense of wonder that children have about nature through our Kids in Nature programs. We worked with eleven different community groups including Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau, Gordon Center After School, Literacy Council, and The Mountain to name a few. We talked about spiders, flowers, trees, salamanders, insects and more!

One of the best parts about teaching kids about nature is getting to see their eyes widen with amazement as their curiosity is piqued, or hear them laugh with excitement. Due to COVID-19, we had to cancel all programs and events, including our Kids in Nature programs. We have missed seeing those smiles and witnessing those moments of discovery. But even though we are not working directly with our community kids, we have been reaching out via social media and through our partner organizations to continue to encourage children and families to explore in their own yards. We continue to evolve with the current situation, and we will not give up on cultivating our future stewards. We continue to plan for programs yet to come, as we anticipate getting back to our in-person environmental education hikes and

Right: Campers from the "Kelsey Kids" Highlands Historical Society 2019 summer camp point to a picture of a salamander they had just found on the Kelsey Trail while hiking with HCLT's executive director, Dr. Gary Wein.

Below right: Sarah Lown, HCLT's 2019 summer intern, shows a camper at The Mountain Learning and Retreat Center an insect they found while searching the meadow for pollinators during a 2019 Kids in Nature summer program.

activities when it is safe to do so. We look forward to a time when we can again explore together.

In the meantime, we encourage everyone to create opportunities to spark interest and nourish the "wonder and excitement" of your children or even the inner child within yourself! Follow us on social media and check out our website for tips and ideas to help you learn about the nature that surrounds you in daily life.

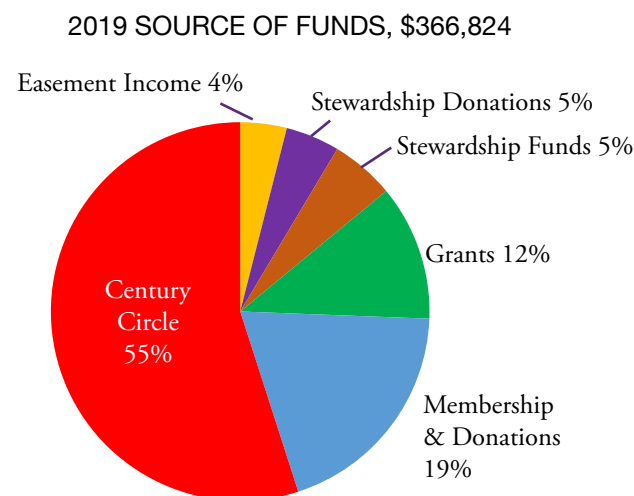
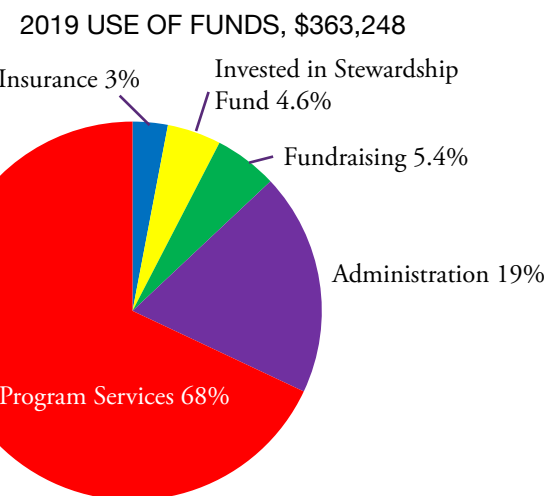
Thank you to our grantors for helping us to build a connection between youth in our community and nature through our Kids in Nature Programs.



Photos: Kevin FitzPatrick

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January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019



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**Sheep laurel blooming on the newly conserved
Zahner Conservation Easement.**



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