

## Second FNHA Gala for Kessler Mountain an Entertaining Cure-All

Members, friends and supporters of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association gathered the evening of Sunday, April 24th on Markham Hill at the Pratt Place Barn for an Elixir of Life Celebration and fund-raiser to help meet FNHA's commitment to raise \$300,000 over three years in support of Kessler Mountain. The weather was beautiful, the raffle and silent auction provided treasures galore, the buffet tables were loaded with scrumptious food, two bars offered wine and craft beers, the tables were festively adorned, and the sound system worked perfectly for the program, which featured an Old-Tyme Medicine Show.



Frank Sharp and Terri Lane at the Gala registration table

The evening ended with Mayor Jordan speaking on the importance of Earth Day and of Kessler Mountain; FNHA Treasurer Bob Caulk's call for donations to Kessler Mountain, to which many responded (if you missed his appeal, it's not too late to contribute); and with a drawing of raffle winners and results of the silent auction. Altogether a fun, festive evening benefiting an important cause.



Donna & Kelly Mulhollan (*Still on the Hill*), Terry Vaughn, and Mike Thomas rehearse for the Old Tyme Medicine Show

FNHA Vice-Chair Terri Lane welcomed guests and later gave a moving account of her childhood adventures on Kessler Mountain. Mayor Lioneld Jordan served as Master of Ceremonies, introducing Miss Lily Greenbow, the Earth Day Girl (Terry Vaughn), and Dr. M.T. Pawkitts, the Snake Oil Man, played convincingly by Mike Thomas. Original music written especially for the event by the Amazing Pawkitt Pickers (Donna and Kelly Mulhollan, *Still on the Hill*) was the perfect accompaniment for a lively skit. The Medicine Show cast included the Skeptic (Tim Gilster), Professor P. Dan Tic (Alex Mironoff), birders, hikers, and a biker who made the audience gasp as his bicycle twirled, jumped and danced on boxes that seemed far too small and high for his skillful acrobatics.



Join us in Welcoming  
**Jennifer Ogle**  
FNHA's New Board Chair!

See Page 7 for Up-Coming Events

## Removing Invasive Plants — Hard But Rewarding Work by Jennifer Ogle

If you have been on Scull Creek Trail in Fayetteville between Wilson Park and North Street lately, you probably noticed that the understory in the woods along the trail is much more open than it used to be. We can thank Kristina Jones and the group of AmeriCorps volunteers the City of Fayetteville hosted recently for this change, as they have worked tirelessly over the past few weeks to remove invasive plants from that area of the trail and from other places throughout town.

I had an opportunity to work with the AmeriCorps group recently, along with some local community volunteers, to remove invasive shrubs from a riparian forest at the city's new Kessler Mountain Regional Park. I was there as a representative of the Beaver Watershed Alliance to assist the folks at the Watershed Conservation Resource Center as they restored the eroded streambanks of a tributary to Cato Springs Branch, and it became evident quickly that our work would be challenging.

Removing invasive plants, especially large shrubs such as bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) and Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), without the help of heavy machinery is slow and hard work. At this particular site, shrubs (many of which would be more accurately described as small trees) had to be cut at ground level with loppers, dragged out of the forest, and placed into large piles, where they awaited removal by another crew. But the desired results of our efforts were almost immediately evident, as several native plant species were slowly uncovered as we worked our way through the forest.

We discovered a few Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphylum*) plants that had previously been hidden beneath a dense canopy of massive bush honeysuckle shrubs, no



Jack-in-the-pulpit plant in full flower at Lost Valley in Newton County  
Photo by Eric Hunt

doubt struggling through many spring seasons to capture the paltry amount of sunlight that been able to reach them. Jack-in-the-pulpit is just one of the many natives that birds and small mammals rely on for food in that type of habitat

in early to late spring, as long as plants are able to gather enough energy from the sun to produce flowers and fruits.

In areas where invasive plants such as bush honeysuckle have become the dominant species, however, we see a decline in the ability of native plants to produce flowers and fruits. And in cases where infestations are particularly dense, natives cannot grow at all. As you probably already know, the problem with invasive plants is that they displace native plants by outcompeting them for resources such as water, nutrients, and sunlight. They even prevent the seedlings of certain native tree species from growing, which can cause an overall decline in forest health if left unchecked. But along the stream at Kessler Mountain, the invasion had



Bloodroot taking advantage of an open canopy in early spring along the Ozark Highlands Trail in Johnson County  
Photo by Eric Hunt

not yet reached that level because we could see that a few familiar native plants, including wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), rattlesnake fern (*Botrychium virginianum*) and spotted jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), were still holding their own beneath the honeysuckle and privet. And I'm hopeful that these native species will increase in numbers over the next few years, and that others will make a comeback as they respond to the increased amount of sunlight that reaches them near the forest floor.

As a botanist, I notice the plants before anything else, but I should mention that we noticed several animals as well — birds calling in the canopy, ticks of various sizes climbing up our pantlegs, and two very unforgettable creatures: a copperhead snake that hung around us throughout the afternoon and a territorial six-spotted fishing spider. Not only did these two animals keep us on our toes as we worked, but they helped me realize that this particular section of forest was still able to support wildlife and that our considerable effort to remove the invasive plants was very much worthwhile. Neither the snake nor the spider eats plants, but both of them consume insects as part of their diets, and insects need native plants as food, so the non-native plants are useless to them. As non-native (next page)



(continued from previous page)

invasive plant densities increase, insect populations decline due to loss of suitable habitat and food, and the animals that rely on them for sustenance also decline.

If you are able and feel inclined to help in the effort to stop the spread of invasive plants in our area and help support wildlife (and if the thought of working near venomous snakes and spiders large enough to catch frogs and small fish doesn't turn you off), please contact one of the FNHA board members to let them know. We host invasive plant removal events and would love to have you join us at one of our events. We can also connect you with organizations that do this type of work on a regular basis and that would welcome your help.



#### They Eat What???

A relatively small six-spotted fishing spider, with a gloved hand for scale. Larger individuals are capable of catching frogs and fish.

Photo by Jennifer Ogle

## Prairie Warbler on Callie's Prairie, Lake Fayetteville, June 13, 2016

Callie's Prairie is a prairie restoration-in-progress at Lake Fayetteville. Tallgrass Prairie is well-documented at today's Lake Fayetteville Park, at least as far back as 1859, when travelers on the Butterfield stages noted prairies as they passed through what is now a park. Yesterday, out in the middle of the restoration area, a singing Prairie Warbler. Welcome back, 1859.

Callie's Prairie is north of the lake. The hard surface Lake Fayetteville Trail forms a boundary on the east, north, and west sides. The prairie restoration process was begun by volunteers from Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association. The effort continues as part of Fayetteville Parks and Recreation management.

It takes me an hour or so to slow-walk this prairie section of the trail, stopping, standing, looking and listening. My goofy birder's behavior is at times a source of chagrin for hard-charging bicycle riders, but also sometimes appreciated by other walkers. I even met one of pioneer-woman Callie's relatives, charmed that her distant grandma was so honored.

In its expected habitat, a Prairie Warbler isn't a rarity in Northwest Arkansas, but it was a big surprise to me at Lake Fayetteville. In his book, *The Bird Life of Lake Fayetteville*, David Chapman includes a couple of other recent summer records, each involving the prairie restoration area.

Besides Prairie Warbler, I also picked up Painted Bunting (3), Common Yellowthroat (1), Blue Grosbeak (1-2), Field Sparrow (2), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1), Eastern Towhee (2, edge), Great Crested Flycatcher (snags), American Goldfinch (3), Indigo Bunting (2), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1), plus numerous other bird species mainly associated with the forest edge.

The ongoing restoration faces many challenges, including aggressive, non-native species like *Serecia lespedeza*, long ago introduced, probably as erosion control, back in those halcyon days when this was considered "good range management" on what was then private land. I couldn't see old Butterfield a la 1859, but I did see natives like Eastern Gama Grass raising its distinctive flowering heads above oncoming Indian Grass and Big Bluestem, all celebrating the return of a prairie ecosystem.



Painted Bunting at Lake Fayetteville



Indigo Bunting at Callie's Prairie

Article and photos by Joe Neal

## Douglas A. James, Pioneer Avian Ecologist, Retires

Best  
Wishes,  
Doug!



Enjoy  
Your  
Retirement!

I talked recently with Doug James on the eve of his retirement from the University of Arkansas about his life and career. Doug is a founding board member of the FNHA and a vital contributor to its mission to conserve native habitats in and around Fayetteville. While getting the “facts” about his life and career, I was treated to a conversation with a man who from a very young age has been fascinated with the natural world we live in and who has, through his career, passionately studied it to figure out how it works.

Doug grew up near Detroit, Michigan, and on July 25<sup>th</sup> of this year will be 91 years old. As early as the third grade it was obvious to his teachers that he knew a lot about plants and animals so they enlisted him to lead nature field trips. On one of those trips Doug said he took the class to a big tree to see a goldfinch. When they finally found it in the tree, they asked him, “How in the world did you see it?” and he replied, “I didn’t see it, I heard it.”

Doug went on in school, getting his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, where he studied with a renowned professor of ornithology. Doug’s next stop and first teaching position was here at the University of Arkansas where he arrived in 1953 to teach biology and environmental science. He now holds the title of “University Professor” (a distinction given to the best professors) and, having taught for 63 years, is the longest-serving faculty member in the history of the University of Arkansas.

Not only has Doug had a passion for studying the natural world of plants and animals, he also has had a passion for teaching others about it. Through his career, he has been major professor to 50 Masters-degree and 32 Ph.D.-degree candidates. Many of them have gone on to teaching positions and others work with environmental organizations as experts and advisors. His students are passionate about and loyal to the man who was passionate about teaching them, and many were in Fayetteville for his retirement festivities.

Being curious, I asked Doug what his favorite bird species was and, surprisingly, he replied, “The Starling.” He explained that because there are so many of them, he could not only study the population dynamics of a single species but their migratory patterns as well; that’s your ultimate investigator.

Doug also has helped locally to conserve our natural places. When FNHA was working to save Mt. Sequoyah Woods from development, Doug led hikes into the Woods to show people what was there and explain how important it was to save places like this right here where we live. He also was one of the experts interviewed in a video presentation produced by the FNHA explaining the value that natural areas have to communities and the need to preserve them as “Green Infrastructure.” You can view it on the FNHA website, [www.fayettevillenatural.org](http://www.fayettevillenatural.org), then click on “Green Infrastructure in our communities.”

Doug has an amazing family. He has three daughters: Sigrid, who is a lawyer in Louisiana; Helen, who is the chief curator of one of the largest bird collections in the world at the Smithsonian Institute (the feather doesn’t fall far from the nest); and Avis, who teaches biology at New Mexico State University. And, Doug has Liz, his wife, who is his always-steady-and-ready companion.

If Yoda from *Star Wars* were to sum up what Doug means to all of us, he might say, “Amazing you are. Inspire us you do.” Have a happy retirement, Doug.

-Article by Pete Heinzelmann



## Growing the Next Generation of Conservationists

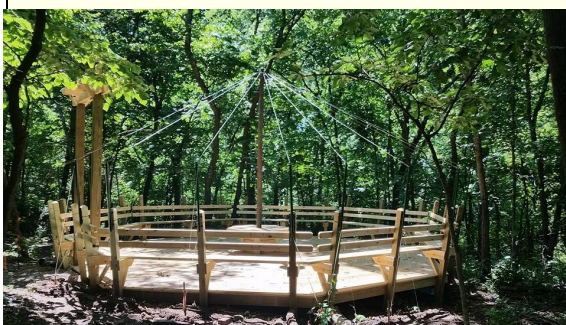
Snails, mushrooms, box turtles and numerous wildflowers were the stars of the trail this spring at the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and Nature Center for over 300 students attending field trips.

Five fourth-grade classes from Happy Hollow and Washington Elementary schools in Fayetteville attended half-day field trips that included a nature hike and hands-on activities. Students practiced their observation skills on the trail with a scavenger hunt and sketching/poetry activities and learned about plant and animal adaptations and erosion in the nature center.

Over 140 fifth-grade students from McNair Middle School also attended a full day field trip to the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and Nature Center this spring. Walt Manger facilitated the trip, which focused on Arkansas geology and forest ecology. Many thanks to the numerous teachers, parents, volunteers, and University of Arkansas Geoscience students who assisted and made the trip a success.

The spring field trips concluded an outstanding year of learning and growth at the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and Nature Center. Teachers and students provided valuable feedback about the trips and curriculum and the team learned many best practices for facilitating groups. The feedback and experience will be instrumental in creating positive learning experiences for future groups and students, including the more than 700 Fayetteville Public Schools third-grade students already planning to attend during the 2016/17 academic year.

The summer is also a busy time with work continuing on the trail, infrastructure, and nature center. In the past few months, a new native plant garden has been installed; a gazebo and stairs to the arboretum have been constructed; and new bridges, signs and an informational kiosk have been designed, built and are being installed. With help from many community partners, the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and Nature Center continues to support our mission "to grow the next generation of conservationists through research, outreach and education." If you would like to help support this mission or get involved in the project, please contact Sim Barrow with the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust at [sbarrow@nwalandtrust.org](mailto:sbarrow@nwalandtrust.org). Volunteer opportunities include assisting with field trips, developing educational materials, maintaining trails, and much more.



Above: The outdoor classroom gazebo



Middle: Fifth-grade students learning Arkansas geology  
Right: New trail entrance and sign with the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and Nature Center logo



-Article and photos by Dana Smith



## Northwest Arkansas Open Space Plan Is Complete and Implementation Is Starting

Did you know that 118,170 acres of open space in Benton and Washington Counties are protected today? That acreage is shown in detail on Map 3.13 and represents 10.1% of the two-county area. Major sections include parts of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, three State Parks (Hobbs, Devil's Den and Prairie Grove), Pea Ridge National Park, and several Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission sites. The largest tracts of protected open space in urban and suburban areas are in Fayetteville, where city leaders, with strong community support, have converted former drinking water sources to parks, required new developments to support park creation or expansion, and added significant natural-area acreage.

Did you know that Northwest Arkansas has one of the five highest projected growth rates in the United States? That growth rate translates to NWA population's reaching 800,000 by 2030. Our natural assets contribute to this rapid growth and are threatened by it, and it's important to act now to protect key natural, cultural and historic resources. Protection cost and difficulty will increase exponentially if development happens first.

The (two county) NWA Open Space Plan is complete and has been adopted by the NWA Regional Planning Commission. As recommended in the Plan, an Open Space Advisory Committee has been formed to continue public education and outreach, develop a program framework, and develop a ballot initiative in support of a local, dedicated and recurring source of funding for open space conservation. Full details are available at [www.nwaopenspace.com](http://www.nwaopenspace.com).

The methodology used was very similar to that used by FNHA in the Green Infrastructure Plan that focused on Fayetteville and the surrounding area; the results of the newer study were also similar. The highest priority land areas for conservation (95,000 acres; brown on Map 3.13) are in riparian areas and areas that support watershed health. The next highest priority areas for conservation (191,000 acres; green on Map 3.13) are more evenly distributed across the landscape, but include clearly defined areas that focus on protecting native plants and animals (glades and prairies).

Article by Bob Caulk

"To those devoid of imagination a blank place on the map is a useless waste, to others the most valuable part."

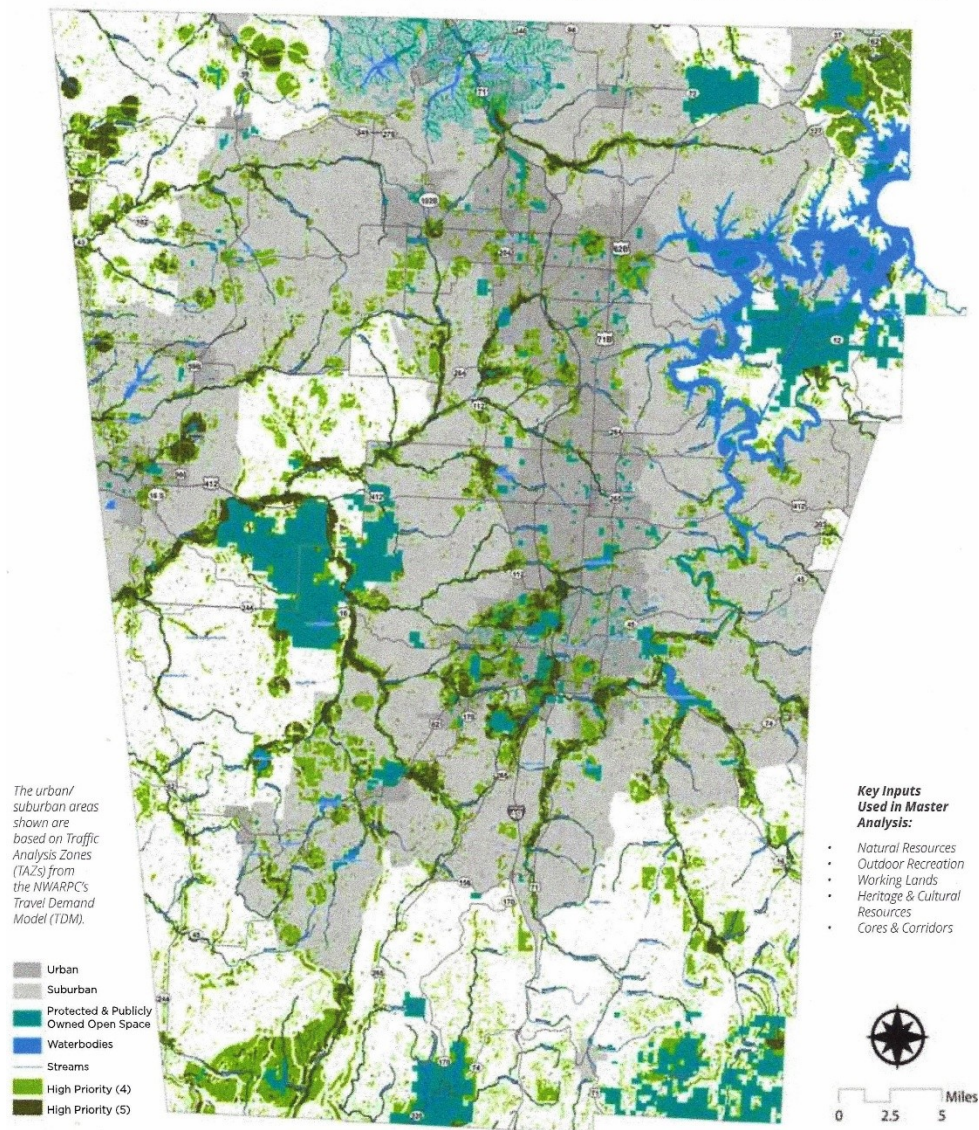
- Aldo Leopold

 Northwest Arkansas Open Space Plan

**MAP 3.13**

### HIGH PRIORITY AREAS & DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

This map shows the higher priority areas (levels 4 & 5 from the Overall Priority Map), and existing open spaces (blue-green). The urban areas (dark grey) and suburban areas (light grey) may indicate higher levels of development pressure. This is useful for those who wish to conserve higher-value open spaces near where people live and work (urban and suburban areas), and to those who wish to focus conservation efforts on areas that are most likely to become developed in the nearer term. To view this map in more detail, please visit: [www.nwaopenspace.com/resources](http://www.nwaopenspace.com/resources) and [www.nwarpc.org](http://www.nwarpc.org).



FNHA annual memberships are due in January of each year. Memberships at the Landmark level and above are Lifetime memberships. Since 2003, with support from so many levels, FNHA has been able to preserve natural areas, start an education endowment for children, influence land use and conservation policy, and in doing so we have gained national support and recognition. None of this would have been possible without you, our members, and we hope you will continue to support FNHA as we continue to preserve our natural heritage. Thank you!

*Have a question?  
Need more info?  
Want to comment?  
Like to volunteer?*

*Fill out the contact form at  
[www.fayettevillenatural.org](http://www.fayettevillenatural.org)  
or contact us directly*

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Help us to continue making exemplary natural areas accessible to everyone by supporting our conservation, stewardship, policy, and education efforts.

**Please join FNHA or RENEW your membership today**

Annual dues are:

- |                                           |                                        |                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$40   | <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$20      |

Membership is for the calendar year,  
and dues are payable January 1,

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FNHA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation comprised of a group of citizens dedicated to conserving the natural areas of Fayetteville and its environs for the benefit of present and future generations

OR Renew online with your [PayPal](#) or  
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**Save the Date!**  
**On Wednesday, October 26**

FNHA will be the beneficiary of  
Pack Rat Outdoor Center's ever-popular  
Pint Night and gear raffle

Join us for an evening of fun and festivity  
and help us pay down our Kessler Pledge!



**The 2016 Kessler Run Will Be Held November 5th**

