

# HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

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Photo: Kevin FitzPatrick

## *Letter from the President*

**JULIA GRUMBLES, HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

It is truly an unprecedented time in our country and in Highlands. Our beautiful campus is exploding with the onset of spring, but it is quiet. Like you, we are waiting to see where this pandemic is headed, when it will abate, and how soon the Highlands Biological Foundation can re-open its office. We are adhering to Western Carolina University's policies and protocols while still serving our mission to educate our community about the natural world around us.

In the meantime, I thought I would share with you what is happening at HBF while we wait to return safely back to a full-time schedule. Fortunately, we have a very hard working, dynamic staff led ably by Charlotte Muir. She and her team have quickly rallied to continue HBF's long standing tradition and commitment to community education and outreach. Paige Engelbrektsson and Winter Gary have deftly employed technology through social media and our website to provide the Plateau community, and beyond, with environmental content and resources that can be enjoyed from home. From virtually guided Botanical Garden tours, daily online children's activities, and nature book and movie recommendations to corresponding with individuals through the mail, our team is working hard to engage all members of our community, even those who may not have internet access at this time.

Now that we are a few months into this new reality, we are working to be sure we are providing our community with as much up-to-date information as possible. WCU has recently restricted all face-to-face programming until further notice meaning we likely cannot hold our slate of educational programs. We are currently working to determine the best course of action to continue to engage our members and community, and we are planning to provide access to digital programs and Zahner Lecture alternatives in the months to come. We will advise you through emails and our website of all further updates due to the COVID-19 virus.

We hope you and your family are safe and well. It is our sincere hope and prayer that we will soon be able to return to "normal" to enjoy all that Highlands Biological Foundation is sponsoring at the Station. Please reach out to me or Charlotte if you have any questions. I hope to see you soon!

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# “Invaluable” Species Observation Cards Ready to Make Their Public Debut

JASON LOVE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL STATION

Tucked away in a corner of the archival closet in the E.E. Reinke Library at HBS is an atypical filing cabinet. The cabinet has twelve shallow trays, each only about six inches deep. What resides in these trays are invaluable treasures: 5”x8” species observation cards.

In his *Biology of the Blue Ridge: Fifty Years of the Highlands Biology Station (1927-1977)*, Dr. Ralph Sargent explains the origin of these treasures. In 1945, then acting Director Thelma Howell (“Doc”) began a file card list of the flora and fauna of the then Highlands Laboratory region. Dr. Sargent noted that the information would become increasingly valuable as subsequent investigators added to it. And add to it they did.

Some of the trays are hard to open, they are so packed full of cards. Each card represents a species, and there are usually several records on one card, noting the date, the person who made the observation, location, and any notes about the observation. Many different taxa are represented including slime molds, fungi, lichens, bryozoans, ferns, plants, insects, spiders, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

The cards read like a “Who’s Who” of renowned scientists and naturalists. Dr. Eugene Odum, considered the founder of modern ecology and who the University of Georgia’s Odum School of Ecology is named after, identified a Spotted Skunk in June 1947 in the “Lab Woods.” Arthur Stupka, the first naturalist of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, recorded three Red Crossbills “from (the) Sargent’s across (from) Station” on June 19, 1972.

Though the cards capture the breadth of famous biologists working at the Station at the time, it is the species that are the stars of the collection. Some, like the Bewick’s Wren (pronounced Buick, like the car), are now considered extirpated from the southern Appalachians, having not been sighted in several decades. Others, like the Spotted Skunk noted by Dr. Odum, are considered rare and any sightings are recorded by the NC Natural Heritage Program. Some records go as far back as the 1880s, but most range from the 1920s through the 1970s.

As valuable as these historic records are, they have limited usefulness to researchers in their current form. To remedy this, the Station reached out to the North Carolina Biodiversity Project to help us digitize the records and to make the data public.

Dr. Steve Hall, who considers the records “invaluable” and “worth their weight in gold,” is a former staff member of the NC Natural Heritage Program and current member of the NC Biodiversity Project. To aid in transcribing the data from the cards to a database, Dr. Hall custom-built a form in Microsoft Access to record the data.

To have records from the turn of the century, when the “Primeval Forest” and scattered farms dominated the Highlands Plateau, is unprecedented. Today, we have apps like iNaturalist and eBird to record sightings of different organisms, but aside from museum records and herbaria, there are relatively few records of flora and fauna in our region prior to the 1970s. To make the data even more valuable, we are estimating the geographical coordinates of each record based on the location information. This effort takes time, but we hope that over the next few years the estimated 15,000 records will be available online for researchers and the public to see how the biodiversity of our region has shifted over time.

| SCIENTIFIC NAME <i>THRYomanes bewickii bewickii</i> |       |     |                     |                   | COMMON NAME <i>Bewick's Wren</i> |  |
|---|-------|-----|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| YEAR  | MONTH | DAY | LOCALITY            | OBSERVER          | IDENTIFIED BY                    | REMARKS  |
| 1896  | May   |     | Highlands B. Spring | C. Sargent        |                                  | Probably too late in spring to be a migrant.                         |
| 1939  | July  | 26  | Franklin            | A. Stupka         | A. Stupka                        | Singing male observed.   |
| 1941  | June  | 12  | Highlands           | A. Stupka         |                                  | Family group of four seen on bottom of ridge (4000 ft.).             |
| 1941  | June  | 28  | Franklin            | Mr. & Mrs. Stupka |                                  | Family group of five near Little Tennessee at junction of highway.   |
| 1945  | June  | 7   | Highlands           | L. Sargent        | L. Sargent                       | 1 seen singing.  |
| 1955  | Oct   | 3   | Highlands           | T. Crumblin       | T. Crumblin                      |  |
| 1956  | June  | 23  | Scaly               | T. Crumblin       | T. Crumblin                      | One carrying food to 5 or 6 for nest.                                |
| 1960  | June  | 19  | Franklin Road       | John A. Clark     | John A. Clark                    | Heard singing armadilloes & woodpeckers before seeing a Ky. warbler. |

THE HIGHLANDS MUSEUM



# Supporting Science: Grants in Aid of Research

For over 50 years, the Highlands Biological Foundation has provided grants in support of scientific research, bringing graduate students and research scientists to the Highlands Biological Station from all over the country and abroad. Through applications vetted by the HBS Board of Scientific Advisors, members of which are drawn from member colleges and universities, these grants make it possible for researchers to conduct their studies in residence at HBS. These grants are available thanks to the generous donations of our HBF members and have supported thousands of research projects and hundreds of graduate theses and dissertations over the years.

Although it is currently unclear if these researchers will be able to conduct their research this summer at HBS due to COVID-19 restrictions, we want to recognize their potential contributions to research that may lead to a better understanding of the incredible diversity of this region.

Congratulations to the following 2020 GIA prospects:

**Meaghan R. Gade (PhD student, 4th year; Ohio State University)**

Linking spatio-temporal patterns of stress with demography in terrestrial salamanders.

**Philip Gould (PhD student, 4th year; Ohio State University)**

Evaluating the uptake of salamander-derived nutrients in headwater streams.

**Rachel Jordan (PhD student, 2nd year; University of Wisconsin)**

How will our native conifers respond to winter warming?

**Michael S. Osbourn (Faculty, Appalachian State University)**

Predicting cumulative impacts of climate, wildfire, and logging in the southern Appalachian salamander hotspot.



## New Event: *HBF's First Ever Carpenter Lecture!*

The Highlands Biological Foundation is thrilled to announce a new community event. Our inaugural "Carpenter Lecture" is scheduled to take place September 11 featuring renowned author, strategist, and teacher, Dr. Katharine Wilkinson (pictured). An anonymous donor made a significant contribution to HBF in honor of our former director, Sonya Carpenter. Sonya led our organization for nearly 10 years, and in her time, grew HBF's accomplishments immensely. Sonya always has a community perspective, so in alignment with her focus on educating our community on the living world around us, HBF will use these funds to bring in world-renowned scientists to hold free lectures for our members and community.



Our first Carpenter lecturer is Dr. Katharine Wilkinson, Vice President of Communication & Engagement at the nonprofit Project Drawdown and the Senior Writer of *Drawdown* — the New York Times bestseller on climate solutions. The Boston Globe dubbed Katharine's first book, *Between God & Green*, "a vitally important, even subversive, story" for its exploration of climate change and evangelical Christianity. Known for her work at the intersection of climate, gender equality, and women's leadership, Katharine's TED Talk on the topic has more than 1.7 million views. She currently advises on Mary Robinson's feminist climate podcast, Mothers of Invention, and is co-editing an anthology of women's climate wisdom with Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. In 2019, TIME featured Katharine as one of 15 "women who will save the world." She speaks, moderates, and facilitates across diverse forums, including National Geographic, Skoll World Forum, and the United Nations. Katharine holds a doctorate in Geography & Environment from Oxford, where she was a Rhodes Scholar, and she resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

# *We Are Here for You!*

## VISIT OUR NEW VIRTUAL LEARNING CENTER!

[highlandsbiological.org/nature-center/virtual/](http://highlandsbiological.org/nature-center/virtual/)

Educational Nature Activities, Virtual Botanical Garden Tours, and HBS Science Short Shows!

## NEARBY NATURE

Each week, we post daily activities and crafts that follow a nature theme such as birds, phenology, biodiversity, and more. Suitable for kids and adults of all ages, you can find the compiled Nearby Nature resources on our Virtual Learning Center page, and you can follow the Highlands Nature Center's Facebook Page for daily updates!

We are currently working to get hard copies of our materials out via mail to those without internet access. If you know someone who would be interested in our materials, please have them call the Foundation at (828) 526-2221 and leave their mailing address and we will happily send them the materials.

## SPRING SIGHTINGS

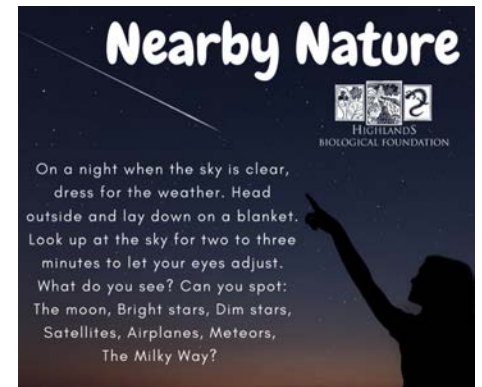
Several times a week, we share snapshots of species from the Botanical Garden to the HBS Facebook and Instagram pages as a way to brighten your screens with colors of spring, showcase the biodiversity of the garden, and share general natural history information.

## FILMED PROGRAMS

We have posted several virtual programs such as our 'A Garden in Every Season' Botanical Garden tours, 'Yoga in the Garden,' and short educational videos like 'Searching for Salamanders' to the HBS Facebook page. HBS Educational Outreach Coordinator, Patrick Brannon, has also been sharing educational 'HBS Science Short Shows' on his YouTube channel covering topics such as snakes, wildflowers, birds, and more.

## WEEKEND WANDERS

If you're looking for some quality quarantine, check out our Weekend Wanders! Each weekend, we post book, film, and podcast recommendations from our HBS trustees and staff to the HBS Facebook page to help you bring the outdoors inside.





# Stay at Home Scientists

CARRY OUT YOUR OWN  
RESEARCH THIS SUMMER!

PAIGE ENGELBREKTSSON  
EDUCATION SPECIALIST  
HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

*For decades the Highlands Biological Station has been an invaluable field site for research, large and small, on the Highlands Plateau. While this summer may see fewer scientists coming to the area under measures to contain COVID-19, research is not restricted to the Station or to visiting researchers. In fact, you can become a citizen scientist, collecting important data on your own!*

*Recent years have seen a rise in citizen science projects, projects that generate crowd-sourced data for researchers to use. The 2019 study documenting a decline in bird populations drew heavily on observations submitted by birders of all skill levels to an online database called eBird, for example. This summer, check out one or more of the following projects and help researchers, both here on the Plateau and at their homes, understand more about our natural world!*

## -Birds-

If you have an affinity for birds, here's a project you can contribute to by looking out your window.

### *eBird*

Every birdwatcher - at any skill level - has unique knowledge and experience.

Help the Cornell Lab of Ornithology gather this information and share it with scientists and communities around the world!

**WEBSITE URL:** <https://ebird.org/>



## -General-

If you are able to access or observe a natural space of any size, small or large, and want to document the species you find there, the following projects are a snap to contribute to!

### *iNaturalist*

Created by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society, this nature app helps you to identify the plants and animals around you. By recording and sharing observations you can learn more about nature and create research quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature.

**APP URL:** <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

### *ecoEXPLORE*

Developed by the North Carolina Arboretum, this incentive-based citizen science program is for children in grades K-8. By following the three steps (See It, Snap It, Share It) participants can earn badges and prizes! We have partnered with ecoEXPLORE in the past and look forward to having our Nature Center Pollinator Garden become one of their Hotspots.

**WEBSITE URL:** <https://www.ecoexplore.net/>

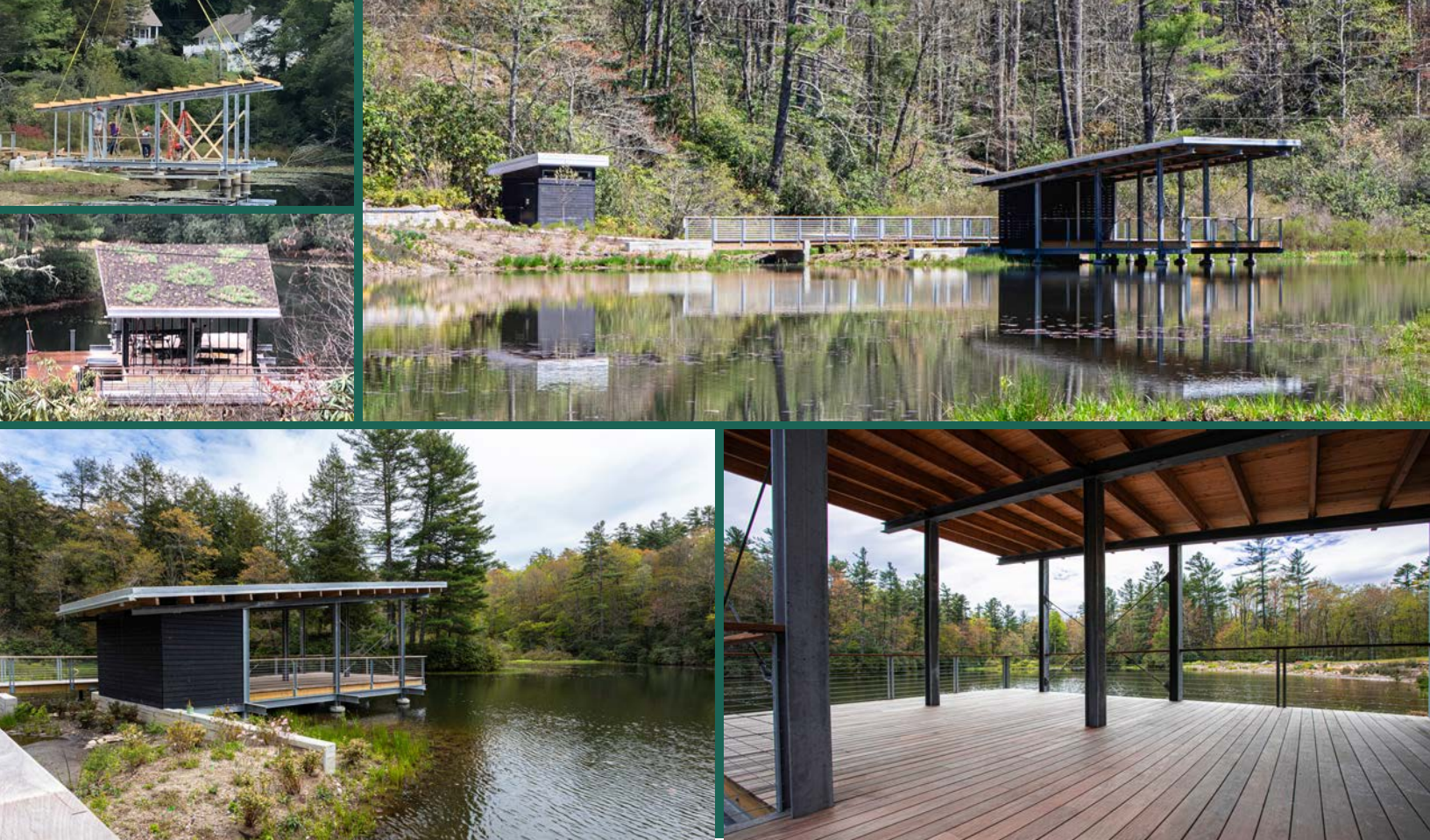
## -Invasives-

If you live in the Southeast, you can help scientists identify the spread of invasive species.

### *SEEDN*

Developed by the University of Georgia, the Southeast Early Detection Network is an integrated invasive species reporting and outreach campaign. By reporting your sightings, you help scientists assess the extent of infestations and hopefully eradicate new ones.

**APP URL:** <https://apps.bugwood.org/apps/seedn/>



# *North Campus Update*

**SONYA CARPENTER, PROJECT COORDINATOR, HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

Years of planning, hundreds of donors, and over a year of construction have brought the north campus vision to a reality, and we are excited to share it with you very soon! Bring your family for a picnic, come see the new John 'Sto' Stowers Jr. Teaching Pavilion, or enjoy a quiet morning stroll through the pollinator garden on the dam. The new entrance, located on Lower Lake Road, has convenient parking, easy walking paths, and access to the beautiful Lindenwood Lake trail.

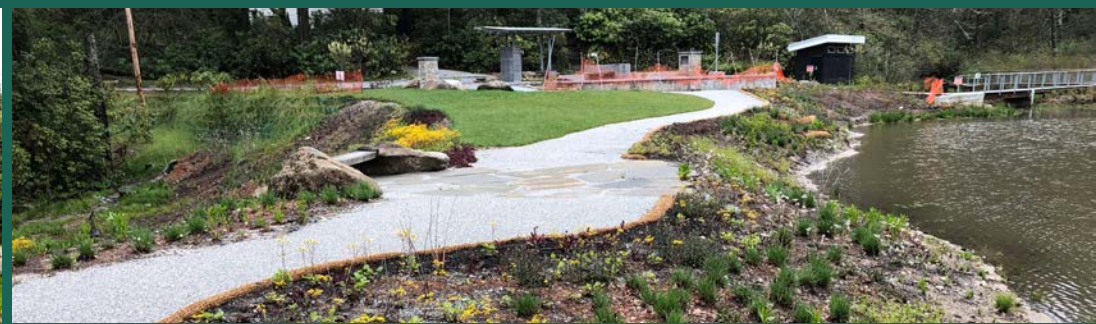
The innovative, cantilevered teaching pavilion offers great views of the lake and features a green roof planted with native wildflowers, grasses, and groundcovers. This new space will be enjoyed by our students and residents alike. It is a great place to observe the graceful swallows dipping to the surface of the lake for a tasty snack or to visit our resident pair of ducks.

The pollinator garden has been specially designed to provide excellent habitat with over 10,000 perennials, shrubs, and trees to feed, shelter, and attract local pollinators. This new addition will be alive with bees, birds, butterflies, moths, and more from spring through late fall, and it will provide our visitors with ideas for which plant species you can grow to support these vital creatures.

A beautiful new boardwalk will lead you around the lake and connect with the existing trails in the Botanical Garden. The Lindenwood Lake trail offers fantastic views of the wetlands, the pollinator garden, and the lake.

The construction team from Bryson's Enterprises and the design team from Kerns Landscape Architecture have been diligently working through rain, sleet, hail and ice to bring this project together for visitors to enjoy. We are so grateful for their hard work and attention to detail.

We would like to extend a tremendous, heartfelt **thank you** to all the donors who have given to the North Campus Improvement Campaign! With this project, we have created a space that honors all aspects of the Highlands Biological Station: the deep tradition of education, appreciation for the beauty and diversity of our native species, conservation of habitat for flora and fauna, and a welcoming space for our curious visitors.



*Some visitors have  
already been spotted in the  
pollinator garden! 🌱*





# Zahner Conservation Lecture Series Reading List

KAREN PATTERSON, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH CHAIR, HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

*The Zahner lectures are known for wonderful speakers and engaging topics. This year, several of our planned speakers were discovered via books that intrigued Foundation members. We thought you might like to delve into some of these speakers' works before hopefully meeting them next summer. So, here is the Zahner Reading List.*

**Cynthia Barnett** was our planned keynote speaker at the HBF Summer 2020 kickoff event originally scheduled for May 16th. Unfortunately, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to postpone all May events, but we anticipate rescheduling this event for later this year or next spring. With the hope that Ms. Barnett, a Florida journalist, will still be able to join us, she will frame her lecture around her latest book, *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*. It was a finalist for the PEN/E.O. Wilson Award for Literary Science Writing. Her writing is lyrical, enthralling, and this history is eye-opening.

**Rose McLarney** is a poet from Macon County, who teaches at Auburn University. She has published several books of poetry and recently co-edited *A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia* which celebrates the diversity of 60 species from our mountains with essays, poetry, and art from a diverse group of essayists, poets, and artists.

**Susan Cerulean** is another lyrical Florida author who focuses on natural history and humans' relationships with that history. Her recent book, *Coming to Pass: Florida's Coastal Islands in a Gulf of Change* won a gold medal for nonfiction from Florida Book Awards. It describes her love of impermanent coastlines, and changes, both natural and human-caused, she has seen over her lifetime.

**Dr. Drew Lanham** grew up in Edgefield, SC and teaches at Clemson University. He is an author, ecologist, and ornithologist. His book, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*, has been described as a big-hearted, unforgettable memoir, and a meditation on nature and the contradictions of black identity in the rural South.

Finally, **Dr. Katharine Wilkinson**, introduced earlier in this newsletter, is our 2020 Carpenter Lecture speaker. She was a senior writer for the NYTimes bestselling book, *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*.

We hope you are inspired to obtain some of the works listed above and come meet these speakers next summer at our Zahner Conservation Lecture series, our postponed kickoff event, and our very first Carpenter Lecture this September. We are currently working on Zahner lecture alternatives for this summer amid COVID-19, so keep an eye on your email and the Station's Facebook page for more information and updates. We hope to see you soon, but until then, happy reading and enjoy these memories from our 2019 Zahner lectures!

Photos above: Greg Clarkson, Kevin FitzPatrick, & Paige Engelbrektsson



# Hillrie Quin: Championing the Plateau

PAIGE ENGELBREKTSSON, EDUCATION SPECIALIST,  
HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

With the passing of Hillrie Quin earlier this spring, the Highlands Biological Foundation lost a valued supporter and former board member.

Hillrie first joined the Foundation's board in 2016. His leadership and practical approach were invaluable. He served on the Botanical Garden committee as our first volunteer coordinator, helping our community members to better understand the needs of the Station. He also played a vital role in bringing together the Foundation, Station, and Greenway to improve our trails. All those who have walked through the Botanical Garden have benefited from his hard work on the Foundation's behalf.

In addition to advocating for organizations, Hillrie also lent his wisdom and wit to his friends. I was fortunate enough to meet Hillrie and his wife, Beverly, when I first arrived in Highlands in 2016, and drew on his insights often. He was one of the first to mention the vacant Nature Center position with HBF and encourage me to apply after I completed graduate school. Suffice to say, I was glad to return to Highlands and be able to strike up our conversations once more.

With Hillrie's passing we have lost a friend and a champion. But his legacy lives on all around us: in the properties that Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust has protected, in the trails that the Greenway has built across town, in the careful stewardship of the Botanical Garden and its volunteers. Most of all his legacy lives on in the people who knew and learned from him when we were fortunate enough to have him here. As Dan Berggren sings, "May your love be our memory, and your lessons keep us strong / May you live within our stories and live on in our songs." We'll keep singing, Hillrie.



**WE APPRECIATE THE  
CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL OUR  
MEMBERS. THOSE WHO HAVE  
DONATED THIS FISCAL YEAR  
(BETWEEN JUNE 2019 AND  
MARCH 2020) INCLUDE:**

Bryding Adams  
Tina Adams  
Alex Smith Garden Design LTD  
Tricia & Inman Allen  
Judith & Richard Allison  
Lynda Anderson & Kenneth Conover  
Sherri Annino  
Lisa & Brad Armstrong  
Susan Ash  
Kim Bailes  
Melissa Ballantyne  
Linda Barlow  
Grace Battle  
Margie Bauer  
Linda & Keith Beaty  
Katy Betz  
Cathy Dolan & Richard O. Bierregaard Jr.  
Judy & Paul Boehm  
Susan Boehm  
Teri & Moses Bond  
Marty Boone  
Jack Bornemann  
Lauren & Wes Borre  
Katherine & Glenn Bosio  
Carroll Ann Bowers  
Shannon & Joe Bowman  
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Alister Brady & Michael Lanzilotta  
Myles Brandt  
Vivian Brewer  
Ellen & Creed Brierre  
Judith & Jack Brinson  
Britton Foundation  
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Rachel Friday & Jeff Schenck  
Monte & Palmer Gaillard  
Joanna Gardner  
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Victoria & Rufus Harris  
Kathryn Harwood  
Cris Hayes  
R.B. Haynes  
Betsy & Marc Hehn  
Kathy Hendricks  
Cathy Henson & Chris Carpenter  
Lori & Ed Heys  
Highlands Country Club  
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Terry Hill  
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Gary Kaplan  
Rosie & Ben Kay  
Lynne Keener  
Bonnie Keller  
Carol & Stiles Kellett  
Alfred Kennedy & William Kenny  
Diana & Richard Kennedy  
Eliza & Thomas Kidder  
JoAnn & James Kiley  
Natasha & Brooks Kittrell  
James Landon  
Barbara & Douglas Landwehr  
Frank M Langford Jr.  
George Lanier  
Jacquelyn Leebrick  
Kristine & Rivers Lelong  
Diane & Michael Levine  
Diana & John Lewis  
Lynn Lewis  
Carole Light  
Brightman Logan  
Ursula & Anthony Long  
Lydia Sargent Macauley  
Judy & William Maner  
Leslie & Bentley Manning  
Paul Manos  
Michele Many  
Elizabeth & David Martin  
Melanie & Tom Mauldin  
Virginia & Bob May  
Forrest & Jennifer McConnell III  
Karen McDougal  
Ada McIver  
Becky & Will McKee  
Audrey & Lawrence Mellichamp  
Mary Merchant & John Green  
Anna & John Mershon  
Kathleen & Jim Milby  
Lynn & Phil Miller  
Johnette & Stephen Mintz  
Beth Moore & Wallace Patzke Jr.  
Patricia & John Moorehouse  
Cheryl & Neil Moulton  
Mountain Findings  
Charlotte & John Muir  
J.T. Fields & Glenn Murer  
Lane & Mark Murrah  
National Automobile Dealers Charitable  
Foundation

Butchie & Alan Neely  
 Robin Neil  
 Elizabeth Nellis  
 Nancy & Lyle Nichols  
 Frances & Obie Oakley  
 Old Edwards Inn & Spa  
 Ruthie & Franko Oliver  
 Roberta & Joe Owens  
 Jennifer Panders  
 Amy Patterson  
 Cookie Patterson  
 Karen Patterson  
 Malissa Peacock  
 Ginny Pearce  
 Allen Perry  
 Sallie & Brien Peterkin  
 William Peterman  
 Ronald Petersen  
 Hensley & James Peterson  
 Jody & Eric Pierson  
 Penny Pollock  
 Karen & George Powell  
 Abel Putnam  
 Kim & Sue Ratliff  
 Peter Ray  
 Dianna & Tim Ray  
 Stephanie & William Reeves  
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 Carol & Rusty Stewart  
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 Martha & Hal Stibbs  
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 Esther & Jim Stokes  
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Gail Taber  
 Michael Tarrasch  
 Susan & Charley Tarver  
 Irina Taylor  
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 UNC Pembroke  
 University of Louisville  
 University of the South  
 USC Aiken  
 Wake Forest University  
 Western Carolina University



## What's blooming in the Botanical Garden this spring?

Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

Yellow-root (*Xanthorhiza simplicissima*)

Catawba Rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*)

Green & Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)

Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*)

Crested Dwarf Iris (*Iriscristata*)

Yellow Mandarin (*Disporum lanuginosum*)

Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)

Sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus*)

*Thank you for your continued support!*

