



# NEWS FROM THE RIDGE

## Have You Seen This Cute Critter at Rolling Ridge?



**The Allegheny Woodrat has emerged as an animal of interest in 2025** for Rolling Ridge Conservancy's residents, scientists, state wildlife agency folks, and others. Evidently, the Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), a medium-sized rodent prefers rocky outcroppings associated with our mountain ridges, especially in mixed pine-oak forests.

As a Species of Greatest Conservation Need, according to the West Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan, the woodrat co-occurs with other species of interest that depend on similar habitats. Most notably, ruffed grouse, Appalachian cottontail, spotted skunk, timber rattlesnake and bobcat thrive together. So, **scientists are interested in knowing where the Allegheny Woodrats reside, recognizing that they represent the potential for a host of other important species as well.**

The woodrat is a solitary, nocturnal critter, whose home range extends little more than a few hundred feet. Unlike the non-native Norway rat, the woodrat has a much cuter tail covered in fur. Also known as pack rats, woodrats will gather found objects and bring them home to their nests, including items that hikers may drop by accident. -

The decline of this species is not completely understood but is likely associated with the loss of food sources such as the American chestnut which was lost to blight and oak trees diminished by moth-caused defoliation. Contributing factors may also be the "raccoon roundworm" parasite, spread by raccoon feces, and the fragmentation and destruction of habitat by encroaching roads and building.

## Participatory Science & Monitoring on the Mountain

**Rolling Ridge Conservancy is planning an ambitious project to conduct a detailed survey of flora, fauna, fungi, and habitats, focusing on priority species across our 1600 acres.** This initiative is crucial for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring the sustainability of the diverse ecosystems in our woodland.

By engaging volunteers and experts in participatory science, we will not only gather essential data to focus and enhance conservation efforts but also foster a sense of community involvement and stewardship. **The Conservancy aims to build a network of engaged citizens who are knowledgeable about and invested in the health of our ecosystems.**

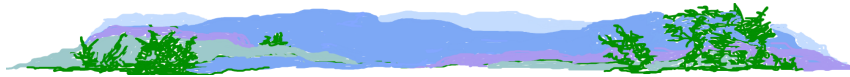
**Historical Context and Background:** From August 2001 to August 2002, Anna Hess spent a year inventorying the plants and animals found on Rolling Ridge Conservancy land. Anna documented 323 species of plants, 19 mammals, 115 birds, 10 reptiles, 13 amphibians, and 32 butterflies. About 50 of these species are currently identified as species of greatest conservation need in West Virginia. This historical data provides a valuable baseline for the current project, allowing for comparisons and assessments of changes over time.

*(Article continues on page 2)*



*Nodding Trillium*

A summary of Anna Hess's work can be found at  
<https://www.rollingridgeconservancy.org/natural-history>.



**Project Description and Activities:** The project will involve a series of key activities designed to build on each other, creating a comprehensive and dynamic picture of the Conservancy's ecosystems.

- Digitizing and updating historical data from the work of Anna Hess.
- Conducting a contemporary survey of flora, fauna, and stream quality and identifying priority species and habitats for conservation.
- Engaging volunteers through birding walks and bioblitz events.
- Offering educational programs to learn about resident species and how to monitor them.
- Establishing ongoing monitoring plans to track changes in ecosystems as they are affected by the accelerating changes in climate.

RRC is pursuing grants to help fund this ambitious and exciting work. Stay tuned for more updates on our conservation efforts and how you can get involved! **Together, we can make a difference in preserving our natural heritage.**



## Success Under the Stars: A Nighttime Critter Walk

Our recent nighttime exploration, the "Nighttime Critter Walk," was a resounding success! **On July 19th, a fantastic group of over two dozen people of all ages joined wildlife biologist Julie Zeyzus for a memorable evening at the Rolling Ridge Conservancy.**

The air was filled with anticipation as Julie kicked off the event with an engaging talk, sharing her deep knowledge of the forest's hidden life. During her talk, we were treated to a special appearance as several bats gracefully flew around, giving us a live preview of the nocturnal world we were about to explore. **Participants learned about the unique behaviors of owls, the fascinating ecology of bats, and the surprising world of nocturnal insects.**



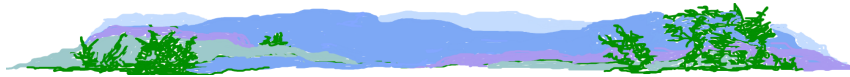
We saw little brown and big brown bats, hoary bats, and an evening bat. A highlight of the evening was the use of ultrasonic detecting equipment. Many participants downloaded the free "Echo Meter Touch Bat Detector" app that allowed them to "listen" to bats in real-time using Julie's microphones. This technology transformed a quiet evening walk into a dynamic experience, making the unseen world of bats deeply fascinating for everyone involved.

We extend a huge thank you to everyone who joined us, and a special thanks to Julie for sharing her expertise and passion. Your curiosity and support are what make our events so successful. We look forward to more opportunities to connect with you and the natural world in the future. Keep an eye on our calendar for upcoming events!



## RRC Walk in the Woods Workshop: November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Mark your calendar for RRC's third annual Walk in the Woods Event. Join us for a day of forest discovery and community! We invite you to explore the growth, regeneration, and possibilities unfolding in our woods after selective timber harvesting. This is a unique opportunity to witness firsthand how careful stewardship shapes the future of our eastern forests. Guided by biologists and forestry professionals, we'll walk through the area together, discussing the benefits, challenges, and new life emerging from our management practices.



## COMING EVENTS + HAPPENINGS

*We invite you to enjoy the trails and events on Rolling Ridge Conservancy lands whenever possible.  
Here are a sample of offerings from RRC and our partner organizations on the land.*



*August/September – Jack-O-Lantern, Hen of the Woods, and Chicken of the Woods mushrooms appear; scarlet tanagers, warblers, and other migrants begin leaving WV*

- **RRC Volunteer Workdays:** Oct. 18, Nov. 22, Dec. 13 - 9am-1pm  
Come prepared to spend time in the woods conducting conservation and forest health-based activities, e.g. invasives removal, woodland terracing, erosion control, and trail maintenance. Activities led by Land Steward Luke Bauer. ([Register here.](#))
- **RRC/PVAS Bird Walks:** Oct. 14, Nov. 11 - 7:30-10:30am. Led by Bill Telfair + Scot DeGraf.  
(Registration required at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/rolling-ridge-conservancy-bird-walk-11/> )

*Early October – trees in peak color; black bears begin entering winter dens; acorns ripen; butterflies and moths use leaf litter to overwinter; bucks become more nocturnal and elusive preparing for breeding season (the rut)*

- **FWC Nighttime Critter Walk:** October 4 - 7pm – Explore the forest under an (almost) full moon.  
(To register, [click here.](#))
- **RRC Walk in the Woods Workshop:** November 15 10am-2pm  
Coffee and tea at the BYM lodge, followed by group hike to recent timbering sites and discussion about topics relevant to forest care and conservation.
- **FWC/RRC Goat Experience-Running of the Weed Eaters:** Oct. 4, 11, 25 at 9am  
Interact with goats, run with the grazers through the woods as they munch away on invasive plants, and learn about the benefits of GPS collars and invisible fences. (To register, [click here.](#))

*Late October/Early November – box turtles bury themselves in leaves and dirt and become inactive during winter*

- **Hunting Season:** RRC works with local hunters to manage the deer population. During deer hunting season, wear bright colors and stay on trails. **Trails are closed to bikers from Oct.18 to Dec. 31 and to hikers from Oct.18 to 26 and Nov. 24 to Dec. 31.** ([Hunting Season Dates](#))

To find out more about **RRC** events, write us at [info@rollingridgeconservancy.org](mailto:info@rollingridgeconservancy.org) or visit [www.rollingridgeconservancy.org](http://www.rollingridgeconservancy.org).