

NATURE

VIRGINIA

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Virginia's Mountain Majesty

Hobby Horse Farm and Warm Springs Mountain Preserve both owe their existence to the Ingalls family, who more than a century ago acquired property overlooking the historic Homestead Resort. Truman and Nellie Semans also felt the pull of the mountain, purchasing the farm, stewarding it for decades and championing TNC's ongoing conservation of Warm Springs Mountain, which surrounds the farm on three sides. The family's recent gift of their beautiful property will profoundly impact our work in the Allegheny Highlands and help us achieve our bold conservation vision for the entire Appalachian range. This summer, I invite you to visit Warm Springs Mountain and see firsthand how your support helps protect Virginia's mountain majesty.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Locke W. O." followed by a stylized flourish.

Locke Ogens, Virginia Director



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Hobby Horse Farm in Bath County, Virginia © TNC

Unbridled Generosity

Hobby Horse Farm Advances Appalachian Conservation

A generous gift by Truman Semans of his family's historic Hobby Horse Farm in western Virginia's Bath County elevates our adjoining Warm Springs Mountain Preserve as a flagship preserve for the Appalachian Mountains. "This farm is, for us, heaven on Earth," says Semans. "We are proud to give it to The Nature Conservancy." TNC envisions this 600-acre slice of heaven on Earth eventually becoming a landscape-wide hub for implementing climate-resilience solutions; hosting visiting scientists, students, legislators, and environmental leaders; serving as a training center for fire teams; and modeling effective conservation for the entire Appalachian range. Learn more at nature.org/hobbyhorsefarm.

Visit Warm Springs Mountain

Summer truly becomes nature's "peak" season with a visit to TNC's Warm Springs Mountain Preserve in Bath County. From mountain vistas to lush green forests to a globally rare montane pine barren, each of the preserve's three public hiking trails offers you a distinctive outdoors experience. Learn more at nature.org/warmspringsmountain.



Warm Springs Mountain © Daniel White/TNC



Frosty red spruce forest and seedling © Patrick Cavan Brown; Tal Jacobs at Clinch Mountain planting site © Kathryn Barlow/TNC

Sprucing Up

New science boosts restoration of red spruce forests

As cool, moist air kisses your skin, the very ground beneath your feet feels less than solid. A *squelch* sound accompanies every step on spongy soil. The vibration you felt first in your chest soon fills the air, and you realize your heart is fine, but there's a ruffed grouse nearby drumming its wings on the forest floor.

"It's really a magical feeling," says Kathryn Barlow, restoration manager for The Nature Conservancy's Central Appalachian Program. Barlow is describing the experience of walking into a high-elevation red spruce forest, especially on a summer day.

"There's a lot of promise here for future public-private collaboration on forest management and restoration."

Tal Jacobs, Forest Management Specialist, Clinch Valley Program

Unfortunately, the timber industry targeted spruce trees during a time when forestry was far from sustainable. By the 1930s, a mere 10% remained—but innovative science and urgent needs for climate-resilient habitat are offering new hope for widespread restoration.

In 2021, our partners grew a half-million red spruce seedlings from seeds selected to increase genetic diversity. Plantings are then designed to link existing stands across private and public lands. This past year in southwest Virginia, Clinch Valley forester Tal Jacobs coordinated a planting of 25,000 seedlings across TNC and state lands. "There's a lot of promise here for future public-private collaboration on forest management and restoration," Jacobs says. Learn more at [nature.org/redspruce20](https://www.nature.org/redspruce20).

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25K

Number of red spruce seedlings planted last year across TNC and state lands on Virginia's Clinch Mountain

Exhibit Celebrates Golden Anniversary



© Gordon Campbell/At Altitude Gallery

In February, the Barrier Islands Center in Machipongo hosted a public opening for a new exhibit celebrating TNC's golden anniversary on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. "We wanted to celebrate all that came before us—the people, the conservation, the community work, everything that The Nature Conservancy has been doing here for over 50 years," says Jill Bieri, director of TNC's Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve. VVCR collaborated with the center and local artists to create a multi-media installation featuring photography, a timeline of conservation milestones, and three-dimensional depictions of ecological treasures such as migratory birds and restored seagrass meadows. The 50th-anniversary exhibit remained open and free to the public through May. Learn more about our Eastern Shore work at [nature.org/vvcr](https://www.nature.org/vvcr).