

# NATURE

**VIRGINIA**

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Virginia Director Locke Ogens © Kyle LaFerriere

## Conservation on the Ground in Western Virginia

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) became part of the Bath County community in 2002, when we protected nearly 10,000 acres to establish Warm Springs Mountain Preserve on the ridge overlooking the historic Homestead Resort. From our base near Hot Springs, TNC's Allegheny Highlands team works to make our preserve a place where you can connect with the wonders of nature. The mountain also connects to a vast expanse of public land, and we collaborate with diverse partners to protect and restore our forest heritage, wildlife habitat and clean water throughout the Allegheny Highlands. I invite you to join us on the ground at Warm Springs Mountain, whether you enjoy our scenic trails, volunteer your time or donate to support our mission of creating a world where nature and people thrive together.

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

Locke Ogens, Virginia State Director



View from Warm Springs Mountain Preserve © Byron Jorjorian

## Virginia's Allegheny Highlands Protecting our forest legacy for future generations

Named after an Algonquian word meaning endless, the Allegheny Highlands connect hundreds of thousands of acres of forest. Water filters down from forested ridges, flows into the Jackson and Cowpasture rivers, and eventually reaches the James River, from which a third of all Virginians get their drinking water. The Nature Conservancy protects one of the largest, most biologically important Allegheny ridgetops at our Warm Springs Mountain Preserve, established with support from the Collis-Warner Foundation, Truman and Nellie Semans, and many other generous individuals. Our nearly 10,000-acre preserve adjoins the George Washington National Forest, stitching together vital wildlife corridors and serving as a proving ground for forest restoration throughout the Central Appalachians. Learn more at [nature.org/alleghenyhighlands](http://nature.org/alleghenyhighlands).

### Why We Protect Warm Springs Mountain

A globally rare mountaintop pine barren and almost a dozen rare animals and plants led The Nature Conservancy to purchase nearly 10,000 acres to establish Warm Springs Mountain Preserve in the heart of the Central Appalachians. Research now identifies this area as a natural stronghold for resilient forests in the face of climate change, as well as vital habitat for wide-ranging wildlife and migratory birds, including the imperiled golden-winged warbler. Explore online at [nature.org/warmspringsmountain](http://nature.org/warmspringsmountain).



Golden-winged warbler © Bettina Arrigoni



Restoration, science and stewardship © Daniel White/TNC; © Nikole Simmons/TNC; © LaurelSchablein/TNC (clockwise from top left)

# Fire on the Mountain

## Restoring a diverse, healthy forest mosaic

Scientists have pointed to the Allegheny Highlands and surrounding Central Appalachian landscape as natural strongholds that can withstand the impacts of climate change—but there are warning signs. From The Nature Conservancy’s Warm Springs Mountain Preserve to the thousands upon thousands of acres of adjoining national forest, a rarely broken forest canopy suggests a thriving habitat. However, an unnaturally high percentage of that canopy is closed—likely because of decades of fire suppression—thus blocking sunlight from the forest floor and stifling growth. Hardest hit are the oaks. Mighty oak trees may sprout from tiny acorns—but not without

**“Sunlight on the ground stimulates new growth, and one of the best ways to accomplish that is with controlled burns.”**

*Blair Smyth, Allegheny Highlands Program Director*

that our preserve shares with the George Washington National Forest has enabled unusual levels of collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service—by far the region’s largest landowner—to implement large-scale fire management. We also scientifically monitor the effects that fire produces on plant growth and bird populations. By tracking and documenting progress, we inform and influence federal forest management, which can accelerate restoration of diverse tree species, sizes and ages that will form a healthier forest mosaic. Explore how our Appalachian forests benefit nature and people and how we’re protecting and restoring them at [nature.org/alleghenyhighlands](https://www.nature.org/alleghenyhighlands).

ample space and light. “Sunlight on the ground stimulates new growth, and one of the best ways to accomplish that is with controlled burns,” says Allegheny Highlands program director Blair Smyth. The 13-mile border

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### Plan Your Visit to Warm Springs Mountain Preserve



Bear Loop Overlook © Daniel White/TNC;

Warm Springs Mountain Preserve is open daily to the public via trailheads at Ingalls Overlook, Sandy Gap and Bear Loop. Each of these three foot trails offers a distinctly different experience. Find trail descriptions, maps and other information online at [nature.org/warmspringsmountain](https://www.nature.org/warmspringsmountain).

### Conservation Heroes



Courtesy of Truman Semans

Every action The Nature Conservancy undertakes depends on people like you supporting our mission. Among the many donors, partners and members who helped make our Warm Springs Mountain Preserve a reality, Truman and Nellie Semans stand out for their exceptional generosity and commitment to conservation. Truman, vice chairman and senior advisor of Brown Advisory, formerly served TNC as a Virginia trustee, and in addition to supporting Warm Springs Mountain from the start, he and Nellie also permanently protected their Hobby Horse Farm in the Allegheny Highlands through a conservation easement with TNC.