



Donnelle Keech (center) tabling at the Appalachian Festival
© Morgan Johnson/TNC

Profile of a conservationist

Donnelle Keech
Western Maryland Program Director

Donnelle Keech has been with TNC for 30 years, most of which time she has focused on conserving the forests of western Maryland. Today, she leads TNC's work to protect, restore and improve management of forests that are critical to conservation impact in the Appalachians. Keech has also long been a champion of another type of forest conservation strategy: community engagement.

As a longtime resident of Cumberland, Maryland, Keech is as immersed in the local community as you can get. She engages in conversations with community members through a variety of avenues, including annual community events, collaborative projects with local partners, and one-on-one meetings with families and organizations. Keech makes time and space to listen, learn, and build trust, ensuring that community voices shape conservation efforts.

"Our local communities and families have been stewarding these forests for generations," says Keech. "We need community partnership if we want our work to be tangible and lasting."

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Migration Marvels of the Allegheny Front



Saw-whet owl © Megan Lorenz/TNC Photo Contest 2019

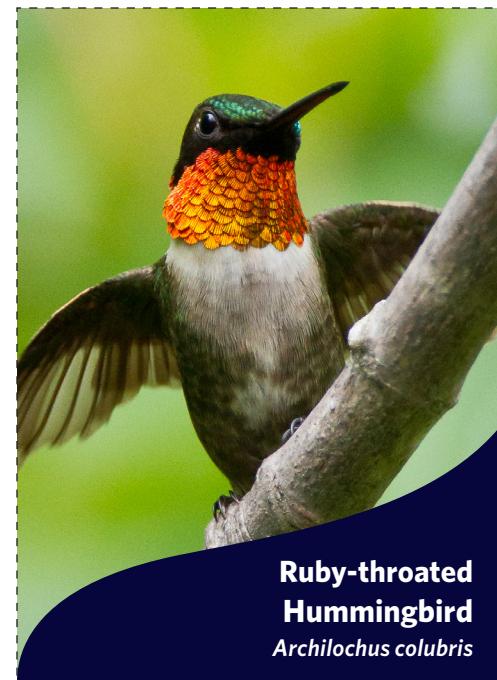
Each autumn and spring, the skies above the Allegheny Front come alive with movement. Stretching across the spine of the central Appalachians, this wild landscape serves as a vital migratory corridor for countless bird species. From the swirling thermals that lift raptors high above the ridgelines to the hidden wetlands that cradle weary waterfowl, the Allegheny Front is more than a scenic backdrop—it's a lifeline.

This dramatic landscape, where eastern forests meet highland plateaus, creates a natural funnel for birds navigating the Atlantic Flyway. Its unique topography and rich mosaic of habitats offer critical stopover points for rest, refueling and refuge. For conservationists, it's a place of both wonder and urgency—a living laboratory where the rhythms of migration provide insight into the health and connectivity of ecosystems and the impacts of climate change.

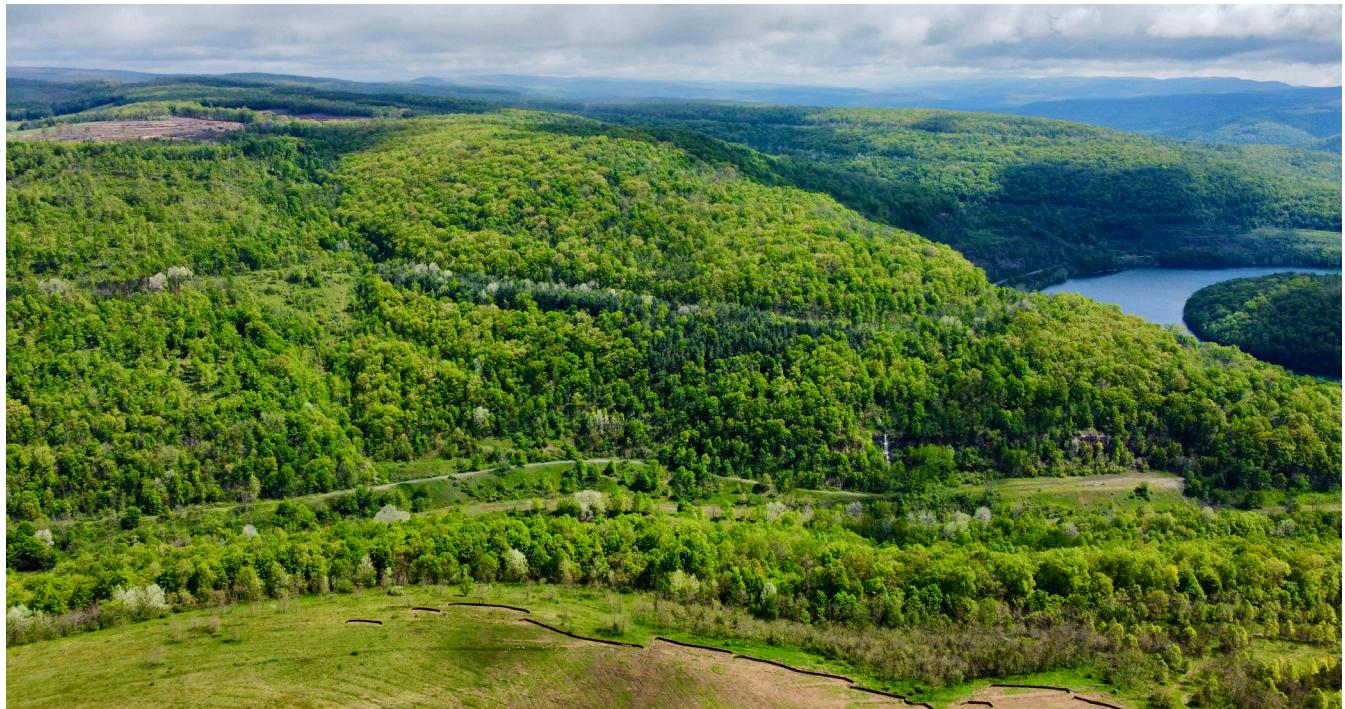
We have created a list of 10 fascinating bird migration stories that connect the Allegheny Front to other critical ecosystems around the world. In these stories, we'll explore remarkable migrations by raptors, waterfowl, seabirds and perching birds. From unexpected detours to astonishing endurance feats, these journeys illuminate the resilience and vulnerability of avian travelers. You'll meet species whose paths intersect with the Allegheny Front in surprising ways—and discover why protecting this landscape is essential not just for birds, but for the biodiversity and communities that depend on it.

Read the full story at
nature.org/migrationmarvels

Ruby-throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) depend on healthy Appalachian landscapes for their annual migration. Look for new species trading cards in future magazine editions.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Archilochus colubris



The recently protected Potomac Highlands Preserve includes more than 1,300 acres of new conservation land in a critical conservation corridor. © Andrea Campbell

Protected Forever

Announcing the Potomac Highlands Preserve

In June 2025, The Nature Conservancy purchased more than 1,300 acres of land in Garrett County, Maryland—now known as the Potomac Highlands Preserve. Just steps from the North Branch of the Potomac River and nestled within the Allegheny Front, this property bears the marks of a long

history of resource extraction. Former surface mines and overharvested forests appear as scars on the property—but TNC is working to change that. Using science-based restoration strategies, we are committed to transform this land into a healthy, resilient and connected ecosystem.

Bordering the nearly 4,500 Army Corps of Engineers Jennings Randolph Lake Recreation Area, the Potomac Highlands property helps connect and expand conservation lands in the Allegheny Front—a high-priority conservation corridor located within the globally important Appalachian Mountains. Serving as a habitat bridge between vast conservation lands in the southern and northern Appalachians,

the Allegheny Front plays a critical role in keeping this continental ecosystem connected. Conservation of the Potomac Highlands Property connects an important piece of the Appalachian puzzle that TNC is working to solve.

To stay updated on restoration work that is planned for the Potomac Highlands Preserve, visit: nature.org/potomachighlands

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

The ruby-throated hummingbird is known for its iridescent green feathers and the brilliant ruby-red throat of adult males. These hummingbirds are often seen darting among flowers in gardens, woodlands and meadows, hovering as they sip nectar with their long, slender bills.

Their diet consists mainly of nectar, supplemented by small insects and spiders for protein. Each fall, ruby-throated hummingbirds embark on an astonishing journey, flying up to 1,500 miles to wintering grounds in Central America.

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The Nature Conservancy

Disclaimer:

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