



# Canyon WATCHER

2019



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Cover Photo by Kevin Livingood





*Our mission is to preserve the Tennessee River Gorge as a healthy and productive resource through land protection, education, community engagement, and the promotion of good land stewardship.*



*Rick Huffines*

**Dear Friends and Supporters,**

It all counts, it all matters and it's all connected – especially the little things. When you venture outdoors, do you take time to notice the small, fameless, unbeknown shapes, colors, textures, and smells that fill your surroundings? Or... are you focused on the charismatic, iconic, and grand things that are so familiar to us all?

It's easy to notice the smell of a pine tree – it's incredible! It's also normal to be entranced by the sight of a bobcat – who wouldn't be? But consider for a moment that a water beetle smells like an apple... did you know that? You've probably seen them if you spend anytime near the beautiful clear flowing streams in our area. But have you stopped and given them your attention? Have you scooped one up in your hands and been bold enough to give it a smell?

Did you know that the tiny land snail is the reason our forest is filled with the beautiful sounds of singing birds? The snails are the primary source of calcium that nesting birds need to make strong eggshells. Look for the snail the next time you are outside, give it your attention, consider its incredible form, its graceful movement, its contribution to the whole, and then think about what the forest would sound like if we didn't have snails...

Have you ever noticed the lichens in the forest when you hike the trails in our area? They are on almost every tree, rock, and surface, yet few people ever "see" them. I cannot imagine how drab and uncolored the Winter would be without them. These green, red, blue, and yellow lichens are the wildflowers of Winter. Did you know that we wouldn't have Ruby-throated Hummingbirds if we didn't have lichens? Ruby-throats use lichens to line their nests, and if you've ever felt how soft a lichen is, you would know why. Touch a lichen, give it your attention.

I love the charismatic, large, and familiar things as much as the next person, and I hold them in the highest regard. I have also come to love the small, enigmatic, little things just as much and to value their contribution and to give them the attention they deserve. These "little things" are the glue that binds our natural world and they are also the indicators of when something is either right or wrong in the balance of nature. We should give our admiration to all things and never take for granted the power of small.

The staff and our board of directors work hard every year to make sure that we are protecting and properly caring for the things that matter to you. Please enjoy this edition of the Canyon Watcher to learn more about the work we do through your support to make sure we are making informed stewardship decisions by studying both the big and the small. We are truly grateful for your continued support.

Rick Huffines,  
Executive Director

**STAFF**  
 Richard D. Huffines  
*Executive Director*  
 Alishea Hixson  
*Associate Director*  
 Angie Langevin  
*Conservation Director*  
 Eliot Berz  
*Business & Community Access Director*  
 Audrey Nord  
*Accountant*

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**Welcome the Newest Addition to the TRGT Family**

Abigail Zella Hixson came into the world February 23, 2019. She is the daughter of our Associate Director, Alishea Hixson, and her husband, David Hixson.



# 2019 Land Acquisition Update by Angie Langevin

The latter part of 2018 and most of 2019 has been a busy time for land acquisition. This past year, the Tennessee River Gorge Trust (TRGT) worked with landowners to secure 296.6 new acres. These acquisitions bring the total of TRGT's fee simple ownership to 6,230.3 acres. TRGT is grateful for the community's support to continue to conserve land in the Gorge.

Early this Spring, an anonymous donor gifted TRGT with a beautiful home and 5 acres on Elder Mountain. The property offers stellar views of the Gorge, Williams Island, and Downtown Chattanooga. TRGT plans to sell the property and use the proceeds to pay off our recent land acquisition debt.

**How can I get involved and learn more?** We are currently working on a handful of projects aiming to preserve more land in the Gorge this year. Keep your eyes and ears tuned

for updates on these projects in the coming months. Make sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and sign up for our email updates to get the breaking news about our Gorgeous Adventures, volunteer projects, and new land protection in the Tennessee River Gorge.

*Since 1981*

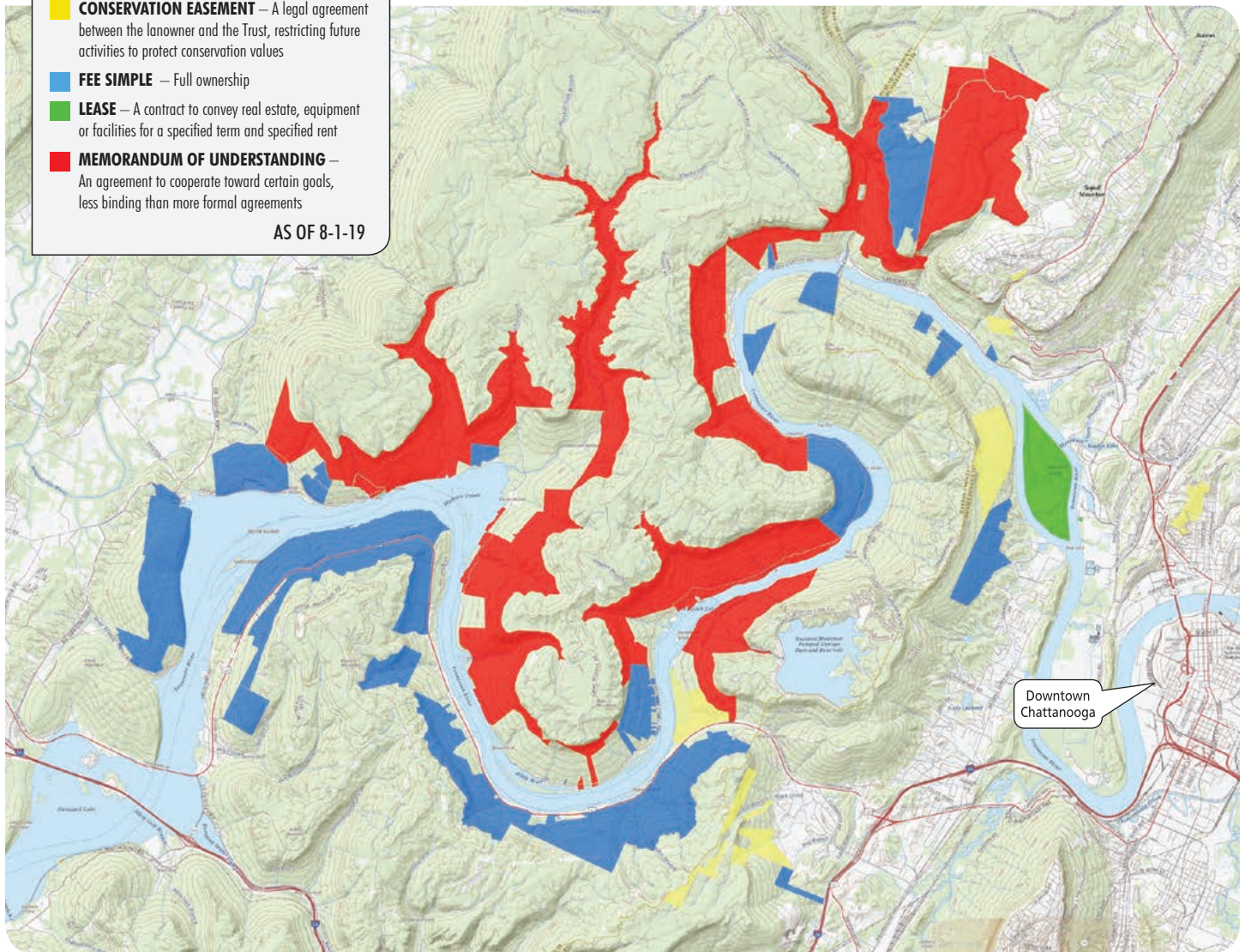
**17,329 Total Acres Protected**

• • • • •

**427.6 Acres Acquired in the Last 6.5 Years**

Three additional tracts totaling 100.5 acres under contract expected to close September 2019

- CONSERVATION EASEMENT** – A legal agreement between the lanowner and the Trust, restricting future activities to protect conservation values
  - FEE SIMPLE** – Full ownership
  - LEASE** – A contract to convey real estate, equipment or facilities for a specified term and specified rent
  - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING** – An agreement to cooperate toward certain goals, less binding than more formal agreements
- AS OF 8-1-19





# Guatemala Bird Partnership: Connecting Communities Through Bird Migration

by Eliot Berz

As our Earth changes its orientation and proximity to the sun, millions of critters begin to pack up and migrate to their second homes for the season, only to return months later. In particular, birds have a knack for migration. Nearly forty percent of bird species undertake some sort of seasonal migration whether it be a short distance or long transoceanic journey. Migration is just one of the several ways that wildlife demonstrates Earth's extensive interconnectivity. Due to their mobile lifestyle, these birds depend on healthy habitat in both their Winter and Summer homes plus their migration routes in between.

With technological innovations, researchers are now able to attach miniature tracking devices to small migratory birds in order to identify their migration routes and corresponding seasonal homes. Through the support of the Lyndehurst Foundation, the Tennessee River Gorge Trust has partnered with Toledo University, Harding University, and the University of Tennessee Chattanooga to track the annual migration of two migratory songbirds, the Louisiana Waterthrush and Worm-eating Warbler. The objectives of the research are to connect the Summer bird populations in the eastern United States with their corresponding wintering grounds, plus uncover their unique migratory strategies and the effectiveness of the tracking units. This critical information will help us better understand these two species and help inform future conservation efforts. To learn more about this exciting research visit [www.trgt.org/birdlab](http://www.trgt.org/birdlab).

Now that we are learning where these two bird species spend their Winters, TRGT decided to partner with La Paz Chattanooga to integrate a human element by connecting the people within these two areas. In 2018, we initiated a cultural and scientific exchange program between our community and the Petén region in Guatemala where many of these birds live. TRGT and La Paz staff traveled to the Petén region of Guatemala to engage in a community dialogue about bird migration, conservation, and the broader sharing of our cultures.



Students from Guatemala looking for birds with our team during an environmental education activity



Chattanooga community participants at Reflection Riding to meet and learn from our Guatemala Partners



During our trip, we developed a relationship with the Petén Birders Association, Caoba Birders Club, and the Wildlife Conservation Society of Flores. These nonprofit groups are working day in and day out to conserve the ecologically and historically rich Petén region; the very region where many migratory bird species from the Gorge spend their Winters. Alongside our Guatemalan partners, TRGT and La Paz staff visited local classrooms in the Petén region, engaging over 150 Guatemalan students. Guatemalan students received artwork, letters, and video messages from students here in

Chattanooga. The messages and artwork were collected in the prior school year by the La Paz and TRGT staff. The Guatemalan students in return sent artwork and letters back to share with our students.

The following year, our Guatemalan partners traveled here to Chattanooga to engage in a similar program. The group visited schools and led community events to share fascinating environmental education lessons, topics on Guatemalan conservation, and their own Mayan and Guatemalan cultures. From science and Spanish classes, to La Paz Family Day, our Guatemalan partners engaged over 480 people in 10 days!

The exchange highlighted our shared responsibility to protect migratory wildlife and served as a wonderful demonstration of how our two communities are much more connected than we often realize.

## Special THANKS

*This project was funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.*

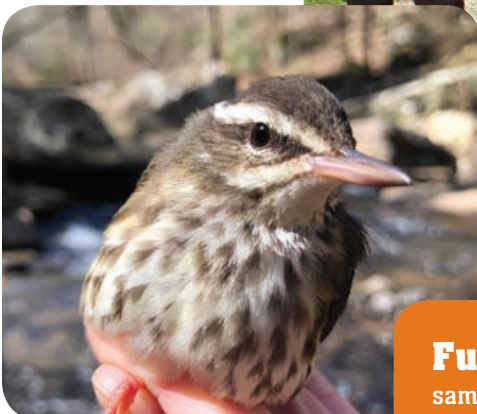


*Rick Huffines shows (L-R) Marcial Cordova, Benedicto Lucas, and Noel Vicente Hernandez the Gorge for their first time*



*Rick Huffines and a group of high schoolers in Guatemala participate in an education birding hike*

*A Louisiana Waterthrush in Middle Creek*



**Fun Facts:** Many of these birds returned to the same location in the forest to breed in 2018 and 2019. Two individual birds actually have returned to the same exact spot to breed in the Gorge for over 4 Summers in a row!

# THANK YOU to all who came to our VIP Preview Party and Another Gorgeous Evening!

The 9th Annual Another Gorgeous Evening (AGE) was a fun night thanks to those in attendance, our sponsors, board and volunteers. As always, AGE is Chattanooga's best outdoor cocktail party. The drinks were flowing. The music was great, thanks to the Ben Friberg Trio and Courtney Holder.

In 2019, we added a VIP Preview Party for the art auction that was held a month prior to Another Gorgeous Evening. This new event was a blowout success and offered guests the option to buy artwork before the auction at AGE as well as meet the artists. We are grateful for all those who helped to make it a success in its first year and our hosts, Van Jernigan and Carolyn Kaufman, and Wade and Brenda Brickhouse.

These events are a great time to catch up with longtime friends and meet many new. We hope you and your friends will join us in 2020!



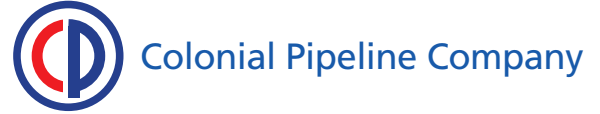
Original works from the art auction on display at the VIP Preview Party



TRGT's board members, staff, co-host and guests from Guatemala at the VIP Preview Party

## Special Thanks to our 2019 Gorge Partners

### PLATINUM PARTNER



### GOLD PARTNERS



### SILVER PARTNERS



### BRONZE PARTNERS



### SPECIAL THANKS



### VIP PREVIEW PARTY CO-HOSTS

Van Jernigan and Carolyn Kaufman  
Wade and Brenda Brickhouse



*Save the Dates*

for BOTH Events!



VIP PREVIEW PARTY

*The Power of Small*

**APRIL 16, 2020**

Chattanooga artists will showcase the intimate of life in the gorge.

ANOTHER *Gorgeous* EVENING

**MAY 7, 2020**

CHATTANOOGA'S BEST OUTDOOR COCKTAIL PARTY

*If you are interested in becoming a Gorge Partner, please email [alisheah@trgt.org](mailto:alisheah@trgt.org).*

## Leave No Trace? by Eliot Berz

It would be nearly impossible to find a spot on this Earth that we have not impacted in some way or another. A study published by the *Royal Society Open Science* even found alarming concentrations of microplastics in small shrimp crustaceans in six of the most deep and remote crevices in the ocean. Our existence can now be noticed, in some way or another, on almost every square inch of this big beautiful planet. There is no denying that we have left quite the impression on our environment and these humbling facts have the tendency to leave us distraught. A different and more productive response could be to use these facts to rouse a response. As any interacting organism within this vast ecosystem does, we alter and interact with our surrounding environment. However, we have the unique ability to act as a steward and deliberately leave less of a trace whenever possible. In essence, leaving no trace is an impossible task, but we can always leave less of one.

There are still numerous places that maintain a wild character; a character that is less altered by us than most. In the case of the Tennessee River Gorge, historic logging, industrial activities, and other factors have altered its character to the modern state we see today, but it undoubtedly still maintains a considerably wild character. Beyond these more foreboding environmental impacts, there is a widespread yet easily correctable impact that we probably all encounter on a daily basis- litter. Litter has a nasty way of quickly stripping an area of its seemingly wild character, yet its correction is simpler than most. There are many reasons to leave less of a trace but consider this one: with so much of our environment fundamentally and permanently altered by people, we have a responsibility as wilderness enthusiasts to work a little harder to keep the places that have not yet met this fate wild and free of our trash. For the sake of maintaining places that do not show such obvious signs of our presence, let's put forth a concerted effort to leave less of a trace. Let's take the extra

few steps to pick up that wrapper from the trail, be willing to carry a few extra pieces of trash out, and always pack it in and pack it out.



We have a jewel of a wilderness located just downstream of Downtown Chattanooga along the Tennessee River. The Tennessee River Gorge is a safe haven for an array of wildlife and people. Sights, sounds, and smells from the Gorge have the unique ability to leave us awestruck and mesmerized, evoking such an emotional response that we are drawn to its allure, returning time and time again. However, something as simple as a piece of trash has the vulgar ability to degrade its wild character in our eyes and cause more concealed harm to the broader ecosystem. For the sake of the other people that work, live, and play in the Gorge and for the sake of the organisms that may be adversely affected by the chemical compounds which make up that litter, let's work together to leave less of a trace. And hopefully, we can extend this sentiment beyond the trail. A willingness to leave less of a trace on the trail or on the water may just correspond to a willingness to leave less of a trace on our environment throughout our daily lives.

# TENNESSEE RIVER RESCUE

**Saturday, October 5 ~ 9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**The Tennessee River Gorge Trust is proud to lead the Suck Creek Zone. We need your help!  
Sign up to volunteer – [trgt.org/gorgeousadventures](http://trgt.org/gorgeousadventures)**



# What does Stewardship mean to TRGT?

by Angie Langevin

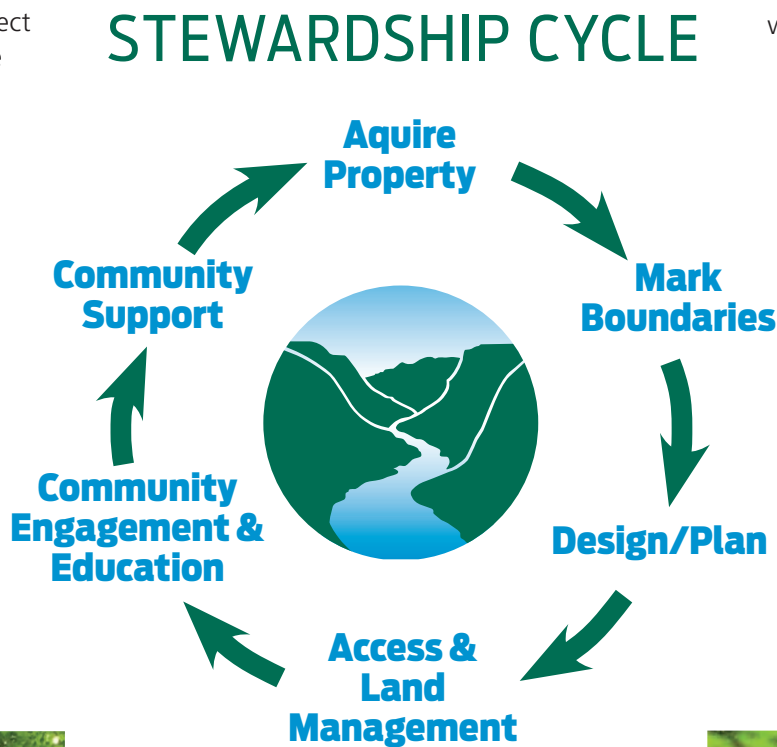
Protecting land in the Tennessee River Gorge is at the heart of TRGT's mission. When TRGT preserves land, we are making a commitment to look after its rich ecosystems in perpetuity. For us, the cycle of stewardship is the core of our land conservation promise.

When land is acquired, the first step in the stewardship cycle is to mark property boundaries. You may have seen our signs posted around the Tennessee River Gorge. Boundary signs help to safeguard the land by making sure everyone is aware of where our property ends and begins. After we define our boundaries, we use research to understand exactly how we should protect the land inside the lines. We ask questions like: *Are there populations of threatened plants and animals that need to be preserved? How can we help strengthen the forest by promoting biodiversity? Should we open an area to hiking, camping, or rock climbing?*

TRGT uses science to get a pulse on the health of our wild areas. Data from our research informs decisions

on how we can better look after, or steward, these special places. We can effectively design a plan for the land that blends the elements of human access and land management. This might mean mowing our butterfly meadow to promote regeneration of pollinator-boosting flower species. We may discover that some parts of the land need more protection; and we should limit human access. Still other areas may be perfect for building a new trail so more people in our community can experience the Gorge.

Engaging our community around the remarkable land in the Tennessee River Gorge is important. This is where we close the loop of the stewardship cycle by providing educational opportunities, community events, volunteer days, and access to the land. As humans, we champion the places we know and love. Stewardship connects people to the land by giving them opportunities to enjoy, understand, and ultimately, to step in and protect.



Left to right: TRGT Boundary Sign, Red Salamander, Common Milkweed, Barred Owl

# Honorary & Memorial Gifts

September 2018 through August 2019

A gift to the Trust is the perfect way to honor a friend, the birth of a child, a marriage or to memorialize a special person's legacy. All gifts support future land protection, education, and stewardship efforts of the Tennessee River Gorge Trust.

## In Memory Of:

### Ed Chapin IV

Garnet Chapin

### Jean Dolan

Cheryl Herr

### Dorothy Hise Hamill

Randy Hamill

### Adele Hampton

Bill Hampton

Janet Moon

### Ryan Keller

Elizabeth Davis

### Bob Lyons

Betty Ewing

### Bill Roberts

John Sherborn & Annette Allen

### Sam Powell

Anonymous

Elizabeth Akins

Jim & Glenda Brown

Charles Dunlap

Ann Foltz

Bill Hampton

David & Alishea Hixson

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Jack & Gloria Robertson

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Pete Serodino

### Mary Smith

Alicia Collins

### Arch Trimble, III

Gloria & Randy Smith

### Annie Waddell

Carole Lee

## In Honor Of:

### Jim & Annie Hall

Barbara Keeling

### Richard Park

Vicki McCoy

### Mariah Prescott

Karna & Lloyd Levitt

### Alison Styring and Mike Lamont

Ellen Robinson

### Mike & Stormy McGauley

Judy & Mike St. Charles

### Larry & Marty Roberts

Weill & Barry Parker

### TRGT Staff

Pat & Brenna Kelly

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CIRCLE OF CONSERVATORS

One way you can help ensure that our work continues is to name TRGT as a beneficiary in your will. To learn more or to notify us that you have named TRGT in your estate, call 423.266.0314.



*Our thanks to these individuals for supporting the lasting legacy of TRGT.*

MS. JEAN BIDDLE\*

MR. ROBERT D. BROWN\*

MS. ELISABETH BRYAN\*

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM McMASTERS CLARKE\*

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MRS. SAM (EMILIE) POWELL\*

MR. RALPH SHUMACKER\*

JAMES AND MARILEE STITES\*

— and three anonymous donors

\*deceased

## Special thanks to our Research Partners!

Georgia Adopt-A-Stream

Harding University

The Orianna Society

Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center

Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute

Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

University of Toledo

Learn More: [trgt.org/research-partnerships](http://trgt.org/research-partnerships)



*The staff at TRGT cannot do any of this work without our donors, volunteers, and board members.*



# Volunteers

**T**RGT has an amazing group of volunteers who help us with stewarding the lands, special events, and serving on our board and committees.

This year, we want to give a shout out to our corporate volunteer groups who helped us with projects on and around our trails. These groups coordinate work days with us to assist with a variety of projects on our lands.

If your group or company would be interested in volunteering, please email [alisheah@trgt.org](mailto:alisheah@trgt.org).

## Corporate Volunteer Groups:

- Buzzi Unicem
- Chattanooga Gas
- Colonial Pipeline
- Rock/Creek
- TVA



*Chattanooga Gas volunteers helping spread gravel at the Pot Point Nature Trailhead*



*TVA Cares Crew in November 2018*

*Thank You!*

# New Staff

## Angie Langevin, Conservation Director

Angie is originally from Connecticut but was drawn to the Cumberland Plateau by her undergraduate work in environmental studies at Sewanee: The University of the South. Before beginning her graduate work, Angie led trail crews in the Rocky Mountains, and studied birds as a field technician in Northeast Tennessee and Big Bend National Park, Texas. Angie graduated from Appalachian State University with a master's degree in biology and a focus in cliff ecology. Before joining the Tennessee River Gorge Trust, Angie taught environmental science at Girls Preparatory School and served as the Stewardship Director at the Southeastern Climbers Coalition. When not at work, you can find Angie rock climbing, trail running, gardening, or playing with her dog, Woody Guthrie.



## Eliot Berz, (formerly our Avian Technician) Business & Community Access Director

Eliot, a Chattanooga native, received his bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Sewanee: The University of the South. He is currently completing his master's degree at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. Before returning to Chattanooga after Sewanee, Eliot worked with the Piedmont Environmental Council in Northern Virginia as a research fellow. He has worked in various roles in the Chattanooga conservation and outdoor recreation field with Thrive 2055 and Outdoor Chattanooga. He has enjoyed pursuing a variety of conservation, wildlife research, and outdoor recreation projects. Eliot has worked on public access endeavors on various blueways and greenways, such as the Rapidan River in Virginia and Hiwassee River in Tennessee. When not working, you will likely find Eliot in the river kayaking or fishing.





Tennessee River Gorge Trust, Inc.  
 1214 Dartmouth Street  
 Chattanooga, TN 37405  
 423.266.0314

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 Naked River Brewing  
 Velo Coffee

**RETAIL OUTLETS:**  
[trgt.org/partner-products](http://trgt.org/partner-products)



Friday, September 13, 2019

*Bird Banding – \$10*

Thursday, September 19, 2019

*Paddle – \$10*

**SOLD OUT**

Saturday, November 16, 2019

*Hike – \$10*

Stay tuned to [trgt.org](http://trgt.org),  
 social media, and emails  
 for additional dates.