



# THE 500-YEAR FOREST FOUNDATION *Newsletter*

Volume 15 ■ Number 1 ■ Winter/Spring 2012

With your donation you pay for the care of our forests that store one ton of carbon per acre annually.

## Our Sixth 500-Year Forest

We are greatly pleased to announce our sixth 500-Year Forest, whose owners are Frank and Eleanor Biasioli. In 1991 the Biasiollis purchased 118 acres of a mountain forest containing an old grist mill along the Lynch River near the Shenandoah National Park in western Greene County, Virginia. Since that purchase, they have restored the mill structure and small home on the property.

Most of the property is composed of north facing slopes broken up by small, intermittent streams or seeps, which are floristically diverse, with numerous ferns and herbs. Scattered large Sassafras, Yellow Poplar, and White Pine, perhaps 100 years old, can be found in the lower section of this area while the ridge tops and higher elevations of the property contain older Chestnut Oak and Black Gum some of which may be as old as 200 years.

Frank has been caring for this forest for a number of years in a manner consistent with a 500-Year Forest. He has worked to control non-native invasive plants and on the protection of wildlife habitats found on the property in order to promote the growth of a diverse, native forest. This is just a natural fit for the Biasiollis and our Foundation.

In December of 2011 the Biasiollis placed the entire property under conservation easement with the Piedmont Environmental Council with 107 acres of that donation additionally protected by the 500-Year Forest Foundation.

## Meet the Biasiollis

As newly weds, Frank and Eleanor Biasioli came to Charlottesville in 1973 for Frank to obtain his PhD at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. They had met in Cuerna Vaca, Mexico in 1970.

In Frank's childhood in San Antonio, his family loved being outdoors. Professionally, Frank has worked as a systems engineer in manufacturing and in the health care industry as well as in teaching and administration at the college level. As a volunteer, he has worked on restoration in protected forests in the Shenandoah National Park and adjacent conservation lands. He also served for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer working in part with the Panamanian Park Department during the last decade.

Eleanor, who received an M.S. in Mathematics and Secondary Education followed later by a Masters in Counseling, became a counselor at a middle school and high school. When their youngest child started school in 1986, she returned to full time work as a



middle school counselor for Albemarle County for the next twenty-two years. She was involved with two projects impacting the school system's response to sexual harassment and bullying, the latter working with the Virginia Youth Violence Project and resulting in a drop of bullying in the school from 15% to 3.6% over the course of these years.

Retirement now for both provides the luxury of "catching up" on neglected interests and projects and looking after a 500-Year Forest.



## Craig A. Bromby – legal counsel in North Carolina

Craig is a partner on the environmental team in the Raleigh office of Hunton & Williams. He has been practicing law since 1975, focusing primarily on environmental issues. He graduated with honors from N.C. State University and the Law School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to coming to Hunton & Williams, Craig worked for the predecessor agency to

the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources and for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He has extensive experience with issues involving forestry and natural resources.

Craig is a native of New Jersey, growing up less than 20 miles from downtown Manhattan. He now lives in Raleigh, N.C.

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*500-YEAR FOREST — One for Every County? Thus reads the title on the cover of the current Blue Ridge Country magazine. In the July/August Issue read the article “Figuring Out the Forever Forest” by Stephen Paul Nash, a member of the Board of Directors of the 500-Year Forest Foundation. We think you will find it interesting. The article is reprinted here.*

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# Figuring Out the Forever Forest

*by Stephen Paul Nash*

*What if every county in the Blue Ridge region were home to at least one 500-year forest? The foundation carrying that name has already helped several property owners toward taking part in that effort. The result could be a magnificent canopy of old forest, including stands of blight-resistant chestnuts and elms.*



**T**HE OLD GILLENWATER PLACE — a tin-roof, weatherboard saltbox with 90 years behind it — was kind of a wreck when Steve Brooks and Maxine Kenny first saw it. In the back bedroom, blackberry vines erupted through broken window panes. No one had lived there for decades.

No matter. The real draw was the property’s 100-odd acres of chestnut oaks, poplars, buckeyes, cherries and maples, which swept up along the north side of Clinch Mountain in Southwestern Virginia. Some of it had been fenced and farmed long ago, but trees had reclaimed the hillside fields, and they were nearly mature.

A broad, rocky section nearest the top of the limestone ridge had never been logged at all. Those big trees were “old growth,” original forest, rare even here in rural Scott County. Rare anywhere east of the Mississippi, in fact. They bought the property in 1980.

The more deeply the couple fell in love with the new homeplace, though, the more they wondered about how to protect their forest. They had already seen too many vivid examples of scalped,

eroded mountainsides in the Appalachians, on both private and national forest land. A neighbor offered to sell them an additional 90 acres — or, he said, he could sell it to the loggers. So they bought it, too.

“We knew that no matter what, we were never going to have this logged,” Maxine says now, but their imagination strayed a good bit further. “We thought it would be nice if it were here forever, though we didn’t know anything about how to do that.”

**A**T ABOUT THAT TIME, Rick Helms and Carolyn Phillips were midway in a 20-year transit from Chicago to Houston, then Manhattan, though their heads were in the mountains. She was a *Wall Street Journal* editor from a cotton farm in Crockett County, Tenn. He was a professional waiter who grew up playing in the woods around Salem, Va., and going on family trips down the Blue Ridge Parkway. He grew trees on their apartment’s roof, five stories above the streets of New York.

“New York City closes in on me—the concrete gets to be too much,” Phillips says. “It was time to escape that, to some-

thing more life-affirming.” So they came to Albemarle County, Va., looking for oh, 25 acres.

“We ended up with 200 acres of old hardwoods,” Helms says, still sounding a bit surprised more than a decade later. “I started trying to educate myself to be a good steward of the forest.”

That may have seemed odd to some of the neighbors. A forest can fetch from \$400 to \$1,000 an acre from logging outfits. Even more important: this land south of fast-growing Charlottesville was ready for a real estate brochure: “Beautiful views of the Blue Ridge, 18 subdivided building sites, and an all-season stream.” The property extends up to Castle Rock and along the crest of Long Arm Mountain. Back in the rocky hollows, there were stands of old growth trees.

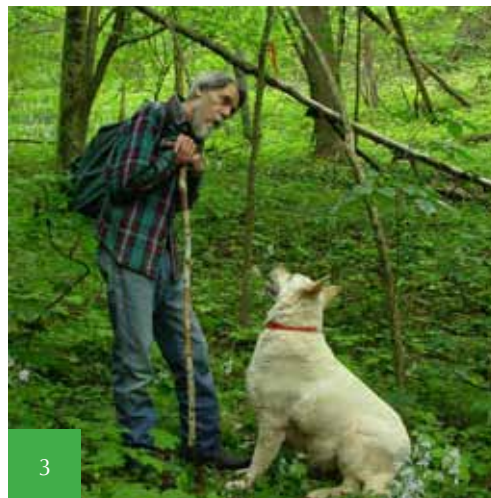
Rick attended seminars and workshops to figure out his new role. Most were taught by foresters trained by the logging industry. “So when they talked about the

health of the forest they were really talking about preparing trees to cut,” Carolyn recalls.

After six years they lucked onto a meeting of a group called the 500-Year Forest Foundation, however. “Someone there said, what if your goal is, never cut? A light bulb went off,” Carolyn says. “It’s a different attitude. It’s that the health of the forest has nothing to do with maximizing return.” Maxine and Steve had made the same discovery. Theirs was one of the first 500-Year Forests.

**S**OME WOULD CALL IT a romantic idea, even grandiose, but for others it’s as practical as dirt: Allow a forest to age and renew on its own schedule, to provide habitat for the rarer plants and animals that are adapted to these scarce conditions. Give over the task of felling trees to high winds, ice storms and lightning strikes instead of chainsaws and bulldozers. Set a landscape out beyond

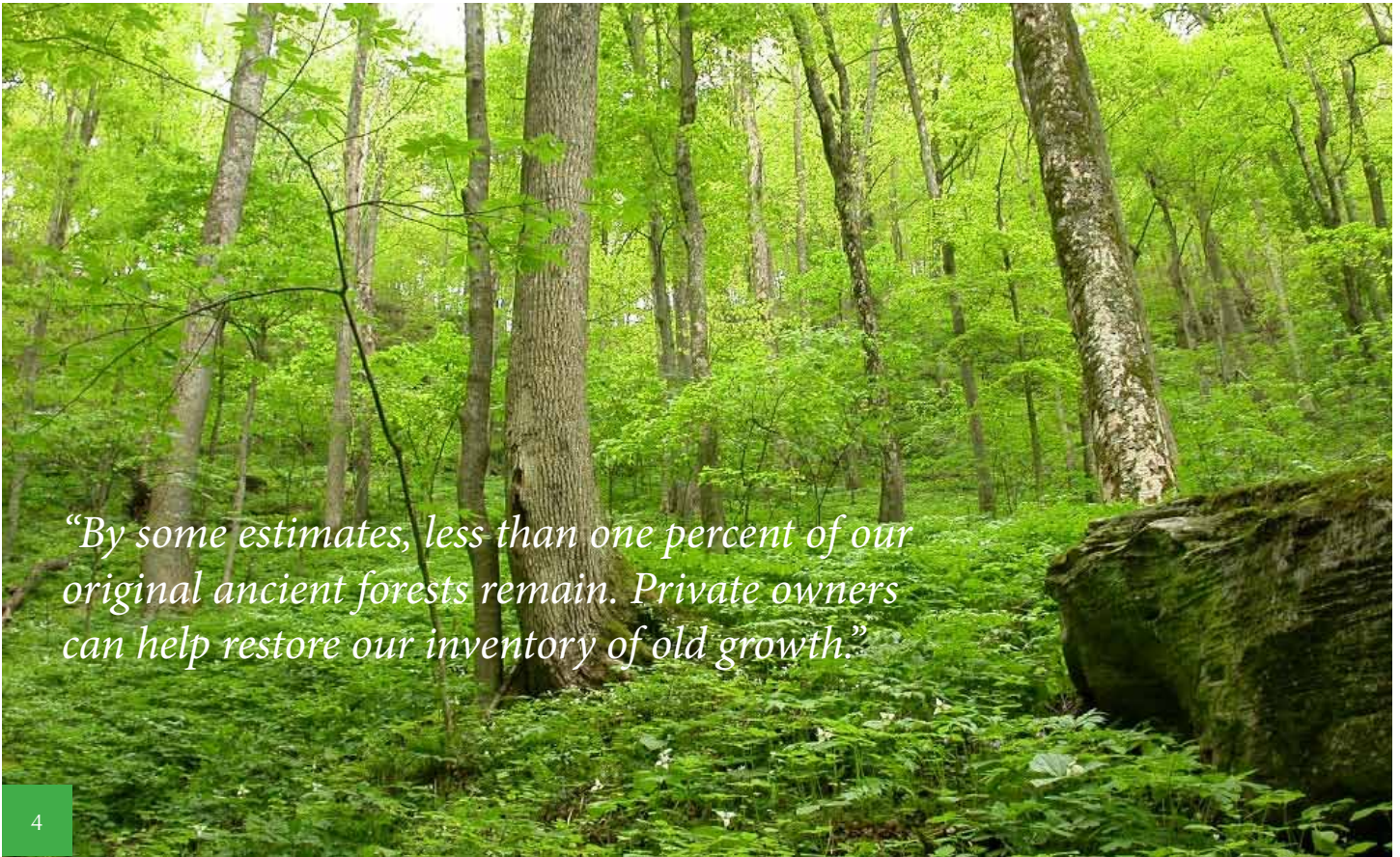
*Some would call it a romantic idea, even grandiose, but for others it’s as practical as dirt: allow a forest to age and renew on its own schedule, to provide habitat for rare plants and animals.*



1. Carolyn Phillips and Rick Helms prepare for a hike on Long Arm Mountain, part of their 500-Year Forest.

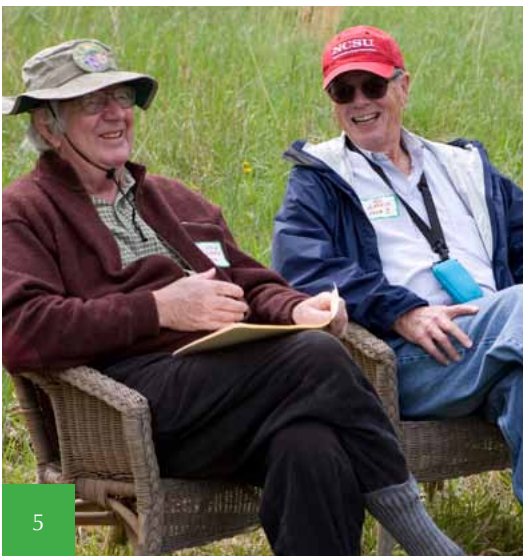
2. Pipevine swallowtail caterpillar is one of many species to thrive only in mature forests.

3. Forest owner Steve Brooks consults with Sophie on forest management practices.



*“By some estimates, less than one percent of our original ancient forests remain. Private owners can help restore our inventory of old growth.”*

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4. This deciduous forest is in the Brooks-Kenny Clinch Mountain Preserve.

5. Sweet Briar College biologist and butterfly specialist Lincoln Brower (left) sits with 500-Year Forest Foundation President Ted Harris, during a botanical survey.

the reach of the next generation of humans — and of the ones after that — as the forest ecosystem reassembles itself over the centuries.

The foundation has helped several owners like Maxine, Steve, Carolyn and Rick arrange and manage a conservation easement for their forests that eliminates the possibility of development and logging, no matter who acquires it in the future.

In legalese, these arrangements are called an “encumbrance,” which sounds like an obstacle or a burden. For the property owners who make the commitment it’s the opposite: an enhancement and a liberation.

“As the centuries pass, these forests will become what we think of as ‘new old growth,’” says Ted Harris, a canny Durham retiree with a Cheshire-cat grin and the persistence of an old oak. He is the originator and CEO of the foundation. The creation of some 500-Year Forests can absorb a year or more of patient negotiation.

“By some estimates, less than one percent of our original ancient forests remain, in national parks and wilderness areas,” he says. “Private owners can help restore our inventory of old

growth. This protects biological diversity and habitat, and provides science research opportunities. Those aging trees pull in carbon, too, and that helps as we fight global warming.”

“I think it’s just understanding the land, and where we’ve come from,” Steve says. “People at first would ask me if I worried that it would affect the value of the land. But if anything, I told them, it will increase the value of the land.

“I just think it’s a good feeling,” he adds, “knowing that this land is never going to be developed or timbered, and it’s all going to become old-growth forest. I’d like to see a lot more of that.”

Harris and the Foundation are always on the hunt for more candidates with at least a hundred acres of maturing trees and a conservation mindset.

“What we really need is at least one 500-Year Forest in every county in the Appalachians,” he says.

State and federal tax laws may offer handsome incentives for conservation easements. The foundation helps orchestrate that, collaborates with landowners to develop management plans for their property, and documents the ecology with formal botanical surveys. Finally, the foundation provides crucial



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support and planning in the battle against invasive species such as Ailanthus, Pawlonia, Japanese Stilt Grass, Garlic Mustard, Mile-A-Minute weed and dozens of other uninvited aliens that disrupt forest ecosystems.

Rick and Carolyn have helped a couple of neighbors decide to place conservation easements on their forests. Another recent visitor was inspired to contemplate taking the next step, to a 500-Year Forest designation.

What will these valleys and ridges be like, in five centuries? They're optimistic: a magnificent canopy of big old protected forest, of course, with stands of blight-resistant American chestnuts and elms. With some willing owners, it could stretch from here over the next several ridges to another current 500-Year Forest six miles away, now owned by Hal and Jean Kolb.

Oversized dreams?

"Well, I always call this my water and air factory," Rick says. "Clean air and water don't just come from nowhere. They actually have to be manufactured by the planet. So: Make no small plans!"



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6. Downed trees in old growth areas function as "nurse logs" for insects and fungi.

7. Maxine Kenny and Steve Brooks with Ginger and Sophie.

8. Carolyn Phillips and Kim Gilbert measure a senior tree in the Helms/Phillips 500-Year Forest.

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*Stephen Paul Nash is the author of "Blue Ridge 2020: An Owner's Manual," University of North Carolina Press, and "Millipedes and Moon Tigers: Science and Policy in the Age of Extinction," University of Virginia Press. He is a member of the 500-Year Forest Foundation's board of directors.*

# Invasive Control Programs for 2012

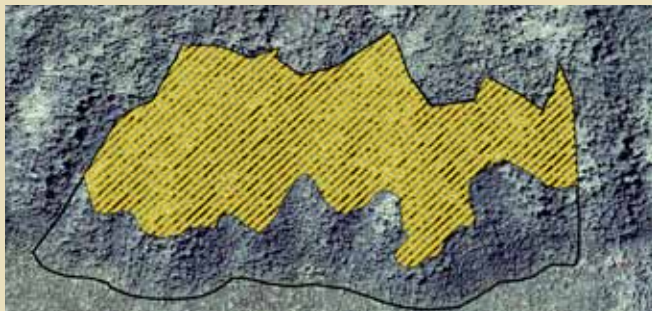
We hired Rodney Nice of Conservation Services, Inc. to identify invasive plants locations and specify plans for their eradication in two of our forests, Brooks/Kenny and Helms/Phillips. See below for more detail. We feel that Rodney is right on when he states that “controlling invasive species ... may seem like a daunting task,” that it takes “a long-term mindset and approach,” and that “complete eradication is not a plausible goal.” According to Hal Kolb’s thinking, “One of the chief tasks of the Foundation is to inspire the forest owners to take on this task and to assist them with it. The Foundation, however, can provide only a small measure of the total effort and assistance needed, and thus we need to get the owners fully engaged.”

## Biasioli

There are no definitive plans for this year. Frank will continue his efforts to control invasives. A biotic study this coming year will give us the information to design a long-term management plan.

## Brooks/Kenny

The recent study conducted this spring by Rodney Nice identified Garlic Mustard as a serious threat to the under growth of the forest through much of this forest (see the accompanying chart below). Hopefully a program can be designed to stall the Garlic Mustard’s advance upwards in the forest without affecting the pristine streams that flow on the property. To a much lesser degree, three other invasive plants of concern are Japanese Stilt Grass, Ailanthus, and Multiflora Rose.



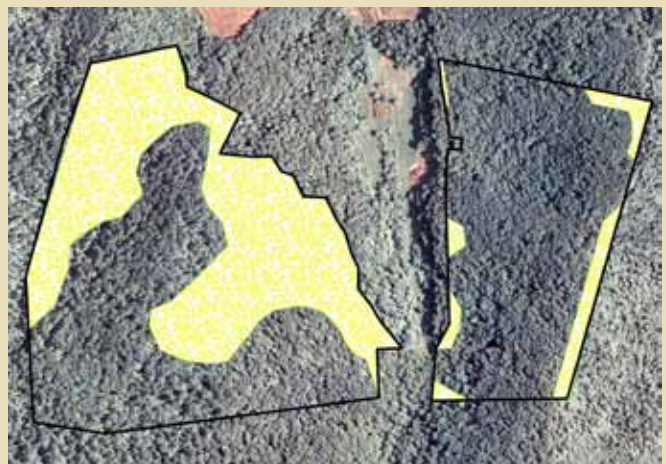
Brooks/Kenny (probable extent of infestation in yellow)

## Gilvary

This 500-Year Forest is also one the Virginia’s Natural Area Preserves. Two years ago the 500-Year Forest Foundation hired the Curtis Environmental to perform the Biotic Inventory for this forest. The Natural Heritage Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, represented by Ryan Klopff, Mountain Region Steward, is in the process of creating a management plan, which should be ready by the year’s end for this forest.

## Helms/Phillips

We also hired Rodney Nice to give us a picture of the invasive plants in this forest. His report and management plan is focused on identifying and controlling unwanted invasive plant species. Native and non-native invasive species are a common site across the Helms/Phillips property. These include such species as: Japanese Stilt Grass, Garlic Mustard, Royal Paulownia, Tree-of-Heaven, Japanese Barberry, Multiflora Rose, Oriental Bittersweet, and Devil’s Walking Stick. The report detailed control measures for these invasive plant species (see the accompanying chart for the range of Garlic Mustard). Rick Helms has begun implementing the recommendations.



Helms/Phillips (probable extent of infestation in yellow)

## Kolb

As owners of a 500-Year Forest for almost eight years now, Hal and Jean can see real progress in their invasive efforts. This year they added 4th year student Michael Jordan to their crew of occasional workers with Peter Mehring, Lee & Kathryn Kolb, Shirley Halliday (reimbursed with firewood), and Ryan Mehring (compensated by University of Virginia’s charity day program). In addition to the routine invasive work done by all, Michael helped with clearing under the electric line and building the new Taylor Creek loop trail.

## Sunshine

The invasive control effort this year will continue the work begun last year by Neil Ames Horticultural Service to eradicate the species Ailanthus, also known as Paradise Tree or Tree of Heaven. Still remaining from last years operations is the northwest quadrant of the forest. This area is known to harbor a high concentration of these trees. The results of last year’s treatments will be assessed in order to see if further treatment is needed. Lastly, as time allows, further efforts will focus on eradicating Multiflora Rose, Barberry and Wineberry. This work began in May and will be finished in September.

# Donors ~ Thank You

What we do is only possible with the support of our donors.  
The following gifts were received from November 1, 2011 to May 30, 2011.

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Jess Crumbly

George Darden

Skit and Gena Davidson

Billie Lee and Stan Dunford-Jackson

Paul and Lisa Edmunds

*in memory of my grandmother,*

*Celeste Edmunds*

Harry and Margaret Eschenroeder

Bob French

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Marie and Stuart Harris

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*in honor of Eleanor Heath, Frank Heath*

*and Charlie Heath and family*

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*in memory of my husband, Dick*

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**500-YEAR FOREST**  
FOUNDATION

## *President's Letter*



Ted Harris

Finding a new 500-Year Forest is always great fun. In the case of Frank and Eleanor Biasioli they found us and that says to us that our work is becoming known.

Steve Nash has contributed with his pen twice this year. Earlier in February he wrote about us in Virginia Living and now in the Blue Ridge Country magazine. He is one of our gems.

In preparing to attract some forests in North Carolina, our pro bono counsel, Miranda Yost in Richmond, was a great help in locating Craig Bromby.

I often think how many aged trees might be living if they could but speak. It seems to me that a magnificent living giant that must live in the same place all its life should be spoken for, when necessary. If that happened more often, there would be a lot more big trees around.

We have realized that we do not have the capacity today to retain a full time leader, so we are in the process of devising a plan that will divide the load work load up among the directors, in the event I become incapacitated. More about how we will do this in our next newsletter.

We continue to be so appreciative of those of you who support us with your contributions.

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