

LANDKEEPERS REPORT



Thank You Volunteers!

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Berkshire Land Supports All of Us—Wildlife, Hunters, Explorers

First Leg of The High Road—OPEN!

LANDKEEPERS REPORT Fall 2021

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BERKSHIRE
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DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

Nearly 35 years ago, I spent a summer working for the Student Conservation Association (SCA). I had wandered back to Michigan after college and had no idea what I wanted to do. Inspired by several friends who'd had great adventures in the SCA, at Denali, Yosemite, and other great National Parks, I thought a summer outdoors might shake me out of my doldrums. I applied to Isle Royale National Park, in Lake Superior, for two reasons: I loved the landscape of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and I thought it might be easier to get a job in a lesser-known park, given my complete lack of experience.

I got the job. I bought my park ranger uniform at JC Penney, took a 12-hour bus ride to Houghton, on the Keewenaw Peninsula, and sailed on the Ranger III (still in service today!), a six-hour trip to the remote rocky island, famous for its mostly isolated population of wolves and moose.

After a week of training (in firefighting, piloting small boats, and other useful skills) I put my American Studies degree to work, developing interpretive programs about the fascinating human history of the island. With little to do in the evenings, I studied Peterson's bird guide and memorized every bird in North America. And by the end of the summer, I worked up the courage to do a 4-day solo hike from one end of the island to the other on the intimidating Minong Trail.

I share all this history because when BNRC had the chance to bring SCA crews to our trails this year, I said yes immediately. SCA set me on the path to a career I love, as it has done for many thousands of young people, who spend a summer, semester, or year learning to love and care for the land.

A crew of five spent 20 days at the Hoosac Range in North Adams, improving the popular and well-worn trail to Sunset Rock. They crushed rock, built gorgeous stone steps, and fixed erosion problems. They hailed from all over the country—Texas, Florida, and Long Island—and none had ever been to Western Mass before. I hope their experience with BNRC leaves them with a lasting love for the Berkshires and for land conservation. We are grateful for their great work.



Jenny at 23 in the SCA.

Jenny
Jenny Hansell, President
jhansell@bnrc.org



CAPTURING A CATALOG OF CREATURES

Berkshire couple watches wildlife on camera

Elizabeth and Matthew Watson live near a large corridor of conserved land under the dense tree canopy of the eastern Berkshires. The land on which they live, and the surrounding parcels that help create this greenway, are protected through a conservation restriction held by BNRC.

Liz and Matt take cameras on walks near their home and have set some trail cams out, too. The result? A striking collection of wildlife images—in both still photography and video—representing a breathtaking number of species.

BNRC donors made the conservation of this habitat possible, enabling these species and the outdoorsy character of the Berkshires to thrive in perpetuity. The area around Liz and Matt's home is also a fine example of how preserving the natural beauty of the Berkshires offers the added benefit of enhancing the region's climate resilience.

You can follow the inspiring photography of Liz and Matt on Instagram at @lizkulik and @mrwatson03. Their images are living examples of all we accomplish together through BNRC. 📷





AUTUMN'S FINAL ACT

Sublime weeks for adventures outside

As the brilliant reds and yellows of October soften into browns and beiges of winter, now may be the best time of year to enjoy the outdoors. Reliably crisp temperatures make for comfortable walking in the woods—the air seems lighter, there are no battles with horseflies and mosquitos, and the look of the outdoors is changing nearly every day.

Here are a few of your BNRC reserves that can feel extra special as fall begins to fade. Check them out and tag your photos #BNRC.

Bob's Way | Monterey & Sandisfield

Check out Bob's Way for a mix of northern hardwoods, hemlocks, and occasional white pines, with stretches of mountain laurel. The forest, ponds, and wetlands are home to porcupines and otters, among other mammals. You may get to glimpse one of the beavers that keep these marshy areas flooded to create prime habitat for a host of other wildlife. Three marked trails allow for hikes of 1.75 to 2.5 miles. It is rated moderate in difficulty due to uneven footing and elevation changes. *The trailhead is on Route 23 in Monterey, between Mount*

Hunger Road and the Monterey/Otis town line. Bob's Way is named for N. Robert Thieriot, a conservationist whose remarkable generosity forever improved our collective ability to preserve the special character of the Berkshires.

Ashmere Island | Hinsdale

Up for an autumn paddle? Did you know BNRC owns an island? This 7-acre island reserve in the northern basin of Ashmere Lake has no maintained trails, yet you are free to explore, picnic, write, and make memories here. A public boat launch at the south end of the lake is located at Ashmere Lake State Forest, accessed from Hickingbotham Road in Hinsdale. *From the public launch, paddle slightly northeast, go underneath the road overpass, and*

then slightly northwest past the first large island to reach Ashmere Island straight ahead. The nearest end of Ashmere Island is about a 1.1-mile paddle one-way from launch, 2.2 miles roundtrip.

Stevens Glen | West Stockbridge

A hike of just 1.4 miles roundtrip brings you to one of Berkshire County's most dramatic sights: Lenox Mountain Brook cascading down a steep rocky ravine. A trail being refurbished at this writing and an observation deck will make it all safely accessible, and recall the Glen's history as a destination for carriage-goers more than a century ago. It is rated moderate in difficulty due to uneven footing and elevation changes. *From West Stockbridge village, the trailhead is approximately 1.5 miles up Lenox Road, on the left.*



Widow White | Lanesborough

Many visit Widow White to see Secum Brook, also known as Disappearing Brook. Over the course of a mile, the stream, one of the biggest sources of Pontoosuc Lake, disappears four times into underground channels. Wood roads offering out-and-back hikes wind through the property. Remnants of mill dams, small quarries, and an extensive stone wall provide evidence of the land's agricultural and industrial past. It is rated intermediate in difficulty due to unmarked trails and steep terrain. *Access is from an unimproved trailhead on Silver Street in Lanesborough, about 0.4 miles from a turn off Bailey Road.*

Thomas & Palmer Brook | Great Barrington

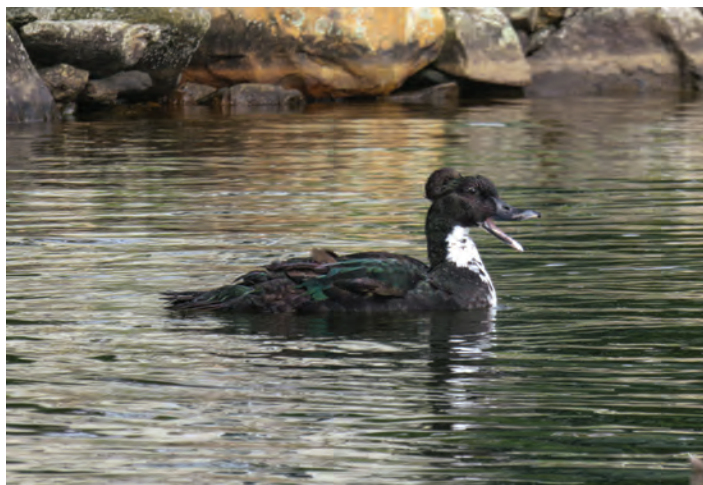
A 0.5-mile accessible trail, with multiple places to stop and rest, goes through a meadow, into a forest, and winds past boulders and large sugar maple trees. The bridge near the parking area is perfect for playing Billy Goats Gruff. Some visitors enjoy following the additional unmarked trail that leads further into the upland forest. The accessible trail is designed with all audiences in mind. *The parking area is located between 301 and 309 State Road (Route 23) in Great Barrington, across from Koi Restaurant.*

Hoosac Range | North Adams

A three-mile-long ridge trail (six miles round trip) atop the Berkshires' northeastern wall, Hoosac

Range includes several dramatic vistas, including the trail's Spruce Hill destination. A much shorter hike, 1.6 miles round trip, leads to Sunset Rock, which has spectacular views overlooking North Adams. Spruce Hill is a strenuous hike due to length and terrain; the Sunset Rock portion is moderate due to elevation change. *Take Route 2 east from North Adams. Find the parking area on your right, just past the cabins after the hairpin turn. Be prepared: winter comes early to Hoosac Range.*

Find a complete list of BNRC reserves at bnrc.org/reserves. Or use the **BNRC Berkshire Trails app**, available for Android and iOS. Donors like you make all these places, trails, and the app free for everybody. 🙏





THE HIGH ROAD



With gratitude for all the land donors, High Road Fund supporters, and land partners, we're pleased to share that the final pieces have been put in place when construction at the northern trailhead (Bousquet Mountain) is completed. For more information and to preview the route, visit [bnrc.org](#)

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

Let's be honest: we'd be sunk without volunteers. Over the years, BNRC supporters have conserved tens of thousands of acres. Fifty-six reserves are open to everyone—for free—for hiking, biking, fishing, birding, horseback riding, strolling with your dog, and so much more. There are over 60 miles of trails to keep clear. There are parking areas and pull-offs to keep open, clean, and safe. There are water bars to build, blowdowns to move, paths to blaze, kiosk maps to restock, invasives to pull. All this happens in large part thanks to the 200+ volunteers who help make BNRC everything it can be. Thank you! If you'd like to **learn more about volunteering with BNRC**, contact Mariah at mauman@bnrc.org.



HELPING EVERY SEASON

Dozens of BNRC donors find that monthly gifts are an easy way to make a significant contribution to Berkshire conservation over the course of a year. Some say the set-it-and-forget-it nature of being a monthly supporter makes for a fun moment at year-end or tax time to realize how much they were able to put into preserving open space, wildlife habitat, local agriculture, and free access to the outdoors for everyone. If this sounds like a great way for you to make the contribution you'd like to give to all who love the Berkshires, please visit bnrc.org/contribute and choose the "monthly donation" option. It takes just a few quick taps or clicks to make a lasting difference for so many.



Let's come together for the first leg of The High Road, along Yokun Ridge. We're looking forward to celebrating this milestone next spring. Visit [bnrc.org/thehighroadyokunridge](https://www.bnrc.org/thehighroadyokunridge).

FREE SPANISH-LANGUAGE MAPS AVAILABLE

BNRC and Berkshire Language Management collaborate to expand access to the outdoors

Mapas de senderos—Spanish-language trail maps—are now available for free in digital and/or print format for BNRC hiking trails.

As BNRC developed partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and nonprofits working with the Berkshire Latino community, it became clear that providing Spanish-language maps would be an important way to help Spanish-speaking visitors enjoy BNRC hiking trails. Silvana Kirby, a nationally-certified interpreter and founder of Berkshire Language Management, was instrumental in creating these new maps for Berkshire residents and visitors.

"Maps are so fundamental to understanding how to navigate on a trail, what to expect in terms of difficulty, and for the information they can provide about the natural world," said Jenny Hansell, BNRC President. "The maps cultivate a more inclusive environment for everyone who seeks to explore, enjoy, and stay well outdoors."

All the English BNRC trail map brochures—available at the most popular of BNRC's 56 conservation reserves—have been translated into Spanish. These mapas de senderos are available on the BNRC website, and by snapping the QR code

at BNRC trailhead kiosks. Additionally, paper mapas de senderos are provided free at five of BNRC's most popular trails: the Hoosac Range, The Boulders, Housatonic Flats, Thomas & Palmer Brook, and Olivia's Overlook at Yokun Ridge South. BNRC will continue to expand on these efforts, eventually printing all maps of its trails in Spanish as well as English, and translating other existing and future BNRC materials.

Mrs. Kirby said, "I embraced the opportunity to translate the maps and to work together with BNRC. Our team of translators provided a cultural awareness framework to reach the Spanish-speaking community and to educate our community with the benefits of safely hiking the trails in the Berkshires." 🌿



EXPANDING THE BNRC TEAM

New collaborators and staff forging new trails



Heather Bruegl, a new member of BNRC's Board of Directors, is a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin and a first line descendant of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. She serves as the Director of Education at

Forge Project. Forge Project supports Indigenous leaders in culture, education, food security, and land justice. The resources of Forge support Indigenous peoples who were displaced by settler colonialism.



Rachel Hailey, a member of BNRC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, is owner and transformationalist at Rachel Hailey & Associates Consulting. Rachel and their team support organizations in

the outdoor recreation, education, and conservation sectors to expand access for groups who have been too often excluded from outdoor spaces.



Lorena Dus is Senior Caseworker at Berkshire Immigrant Center, and is a member of BNRC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Lorena also serves on the board of the Literacy

Network of South Berkshire, is a member of the Berkshire District Attorney's Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force, and is a 2020 "40 Under 40" Berkshire Community College awardee.



Dusty Clitheroe and **Polly Williams** are co-founders of Strength Perspective,

a company that helps organizations navigate

implicit biases. They are consultants to BNRC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, guiding BNRC's staff and board toward actions and organizational change to shift the narrative and reality of whom BNRC serves.



Silvana Kirby, founder of Berkshire Language Management, is helping BNRC create materials that make it easier for Spanish-speakers to enjoy the Berkshire outdoors. This includes Spanish-language

versions of BNRC's trail map brochures. Berkshire Language Management is a full-service language consulting, culture awareness, and educational company.



John Gillespie, BNRC's new CFO via Charles River CFO, manages Interim CFO and Outsourced Accounting services for client engagements in the nonprofit and social enterprise sectors. He leverages

his in-the-trenches CFO expertise to guide CEOs and boards on how to grow their enterprises in a strategic manner, implementing specific courses of action to improve the bottom line.



Doug Brown joined the BNRC team in 2021 as Director of Stewardship. Doug leads the team that manages all BNRC reserves and works with landowners to carefully fulfill all annual

BNRC conservation obligations at over 150 properties across the Berkshires. Doug grew up in Andover, Massachusetts, where he spent most of his time exploring the protected woodlands in town, or on trails in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. 🐾



Rich Montone learned archery to take advantage of the longer deer season for those hunting with a bow.

"Hunters and non-hunting conservationists have so many interests in common: healthy wildlife populations, balanced ecosystems, protected open space, public access, and love for the outdoor experience."

—ANDREW MADDEN

Western District Supervisor,
Massachusetts Division
of Fisheries & Wildlife

HUNTING, LAND PROTECTION, AND THE BERKSHIRES

For nearly a century, hunters have had an enormous role in North American conservation—and the formation and support of BNRC

You may have met Rich Montone on one of our outings or events—he's BNRC's Development Director, and has a huge role in ensuring BNRC can meet our ambitious conservation goals. He has a deep connection to another aspect of BNRC's history and roots: he's a hunter.

"There's no healthier meat than venison," says Rich. "High in protein, low in fat, obviously free of preservatives or growth hormones. Two deer will feed my family for half the year or more. And it's a good way to help conserve what's special about this region."

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, commonly called MassWildlife, relies on conservation funding created by the sale of hunting, freshwater fishing, and trapping licenses—and the sale of related permits—to conserve land in the Berkshires and throughout the Commonwealth.

Such funding has enabled BNRC and MassWildlife to collaborate on many Berkshire conservation projects, such as Alford Springs in Alford and Steadman Pond in Monterey/Tyringham.

In Massachusetts, one must undergo a training and licensing process to legally hunt anywhere in the state. All first-time hunters are required by state law to

take a Basic Hunter Education Course, which covers ethics, firearm safety, regulations, and responsibilities. Many hunters supplement this with specific technique courses, or more advanced firearms safety courses to qualify for state firearms permits.

"Some hikers worry about being in the woods during hunting season," said Andrew Madden, Western District Supervisor of MassWildlife. "Hunting is a very safe activity and accidents are extremely rare. Even so, it is a good idea to wear blaze orange during hunting seasons, and to have your dogs in blaze orange too."

The conservation ethic of hunters, and the funds created through legal hunting, have made an enormous difference for BNRC's ability to protect the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Berkshires. We wish all hunters an enjoyable, safe, fruitful hunt this fall, and thank them for their part in making the Berkshire outdoors free for everybody to enjoy.

If you would like to learn how to hunt, check out Massachusetts virtual and in-person Learn to Hunt Programs at mass.gov/service-details/learn-to-hunt-programs. 🐾



MERCER FAMILY PRESERVES ROUND POND

360 acres of forest and waterfront protected forever

Land conservation is ultimately about people and choices. We are honored to help landowners preserve the landscapes that have meaning to them personally, and to the broader Berkshire community.

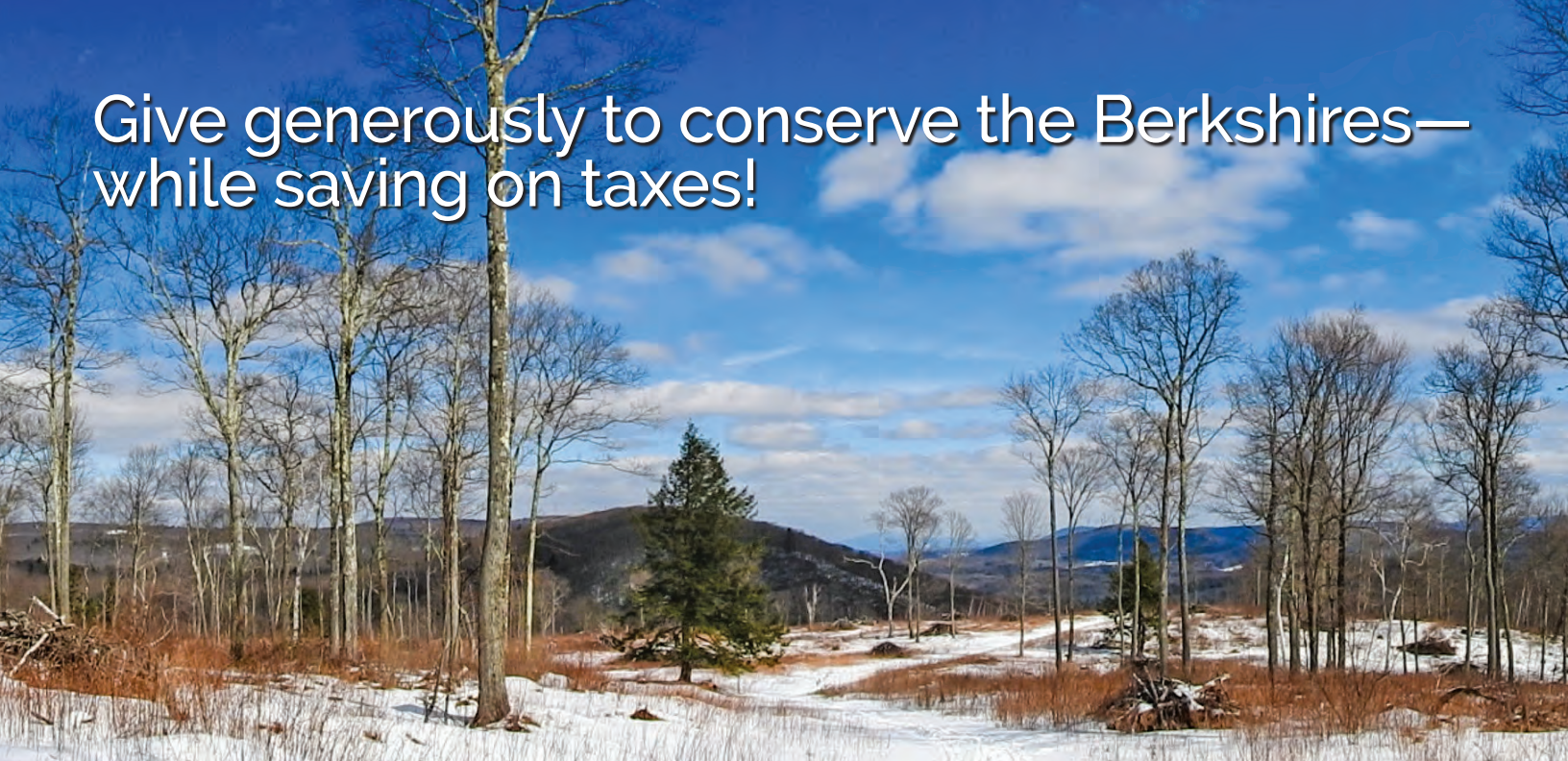
BNRC recently acquired approximately 360 acres from the Long Pond Road Nominee Trust, including all of Round Pond and its dam. Prior to this, the Mercer family has owned Round Pond for generations. At one time, Fred Mercer offered donkey rides on the trails behind the pond. Now the braying donkeys are gone and it is a quiet place to walk. In winter, anglers with tip-ups and sleds ply ice along the stump-studded western shore.

The 360 acres acquired in June 2021 compliment recent transactions on Tom Ball Mountain and weave together over 1,000 acres of conservation land. The extended reserve protects over 482 acres of Core Habitat, defined by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program as habitat that is critical for the long-term persistence of rare species. This seems particularly important at a time when so many species are struggling to survive.

To complete this project, BNRC partnered with the Department of Fish and Game, who purchased a conservation restriction over the acreage. This steadfast partnership allows us to leverage your donations and secure tracts of lands that might otherwise be out of reach, and it guarantees public access. Public access is coming here too, but please be patient. We currently do not have any parking, and there are no good alternatives along the narrow road. By this time next year, we plan to have off-street parking and marked trails. For now, we ask that you be patient and wait until BNRC can open the reserve.

Land conservation transactions take faith, goodwill and perseverance: faith that BNRC can raise the purchase price, goodwill from donors who make it possible, and perseverance on the part of landowners who wait while we negotiate grant programs and partnerships. Together we can make our communities more livable for humans and wildlife alike. 🌱

Give generously to conserve the Berkshires— while saving on taxes!



Increasingly, BNRC donors are using these tax-savvy donation methods. **Is one of these right for you?**

- **Transfer appreciated stock.** Donating your appreciated stock is a high-impact, tax-savvy way to protect the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Berkshires. Visit bnrc.org/givestocks.
- **Give directly from your IRA.** If you are 72 or older, you can make a tax-free donation directly from your IRA, and even meet your newly reinstated required minimum distribution (RMD). **Inquire with your plan administrator or financial advisor.**
- **Protect the future of the Berkshires in your will.** You can help conserve the Berkshires forever at zero cost today through a legacy gift. This online service helps you create your legal will for free (or draft a will for review with an attorney)—and you'll have the option to protect the Berkshires for generations to come! Learn more at freewill.com/bnrc.

Of course, most donors do donate cash, which is always welcome, and contributes enormously to everything we accomplish together through BNRC for the region. **You can quickly donate cash anytime, or schedule an easy monthly contribution, at bnrc.org/contribute.**

Thank you for everything you do to care for the Berkshire outdoors!



Questions? Contact Rich Montone at rmontone@bnrc.org, or 413-499-0596 x5.





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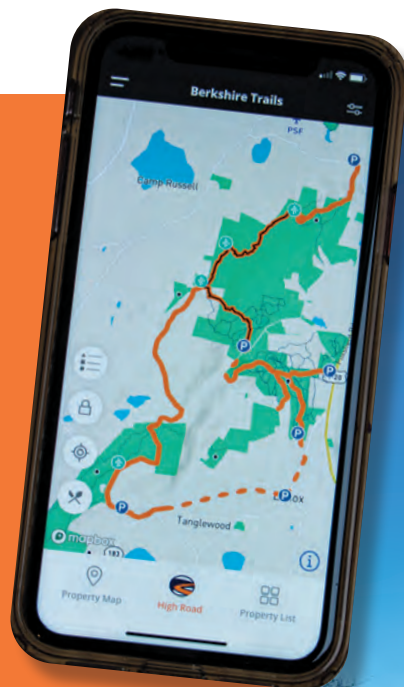
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TRY THE BNRC Berkshire Trails App

The BNRC Berkshire Trails app for Android and iOS is a great way to plan outdoor adventures in the Berkshires—in advance or on the go.

- Trails and info on BNRC reserves, and other locations too
- Save and share your favorite hikes and outings
- 100% Berkshire, and 100% free, thanks to donors!

bnrc.org/app



“You could spend a wonderful week wandering Berkshire County’s back roads, using this app to guide you from one secluded wonder to the next.”

—*New York Times*

