

# The South River Current



Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship

## Watershed Restoration: The Wellbeing of Wildflowers

Summertime is peak blooming season for dozens of native wildflowers in the Shenandoah Valley. Common buttercups, black-eyed Susans, and asters take turns dotting open fields and gardens, while some wildflowers are hidden in the mountains and area preserves. Have you ever seen a Virginia sneezeweed (*Helenium virginicum*), swamp pink (*Helonias bullata*), or prairie loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadriflora*)? (See photos above.)

These rare native flowers can be spotted in natural sinkhole ponds at Mount Joy Pond Natu-

ral Area Preserve. The DuPont-Waynesboro Settlement Grant provided funds for the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) to acquire 85 acres adjacent to the Mount Joy Pond Natural Area Preserve in 2018. The new acreage serves as a land buffer that will help protect these rare flowers and maintain the water quality of over 8,000 feet of headwaters streams. The preserve does not offer public access. Please call the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Division of Natural Heritage for permission to visit. Click [here](#) for contact information.



Top left: *Virginia Sneezeweed (Helenium virginicum)* by Sally Anderson;  
Bottom left: *Swamp Pink* by Jim Fowler; Right: *Prairie Loosestrife*

## Did You Know?



- The VNPS purchase of the land next to Mount Joy Pond Natural Area Preserve will help protect the habitat of one of the world's largest populations of the globally rare, as well as the state endangered, Eastern Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) pictured to the left ([picture credit](#)).
- During World War I, three mysterious men were arrested at Crimora mines accused of being spies.
- Fly fishing can be the most effective method of fishing, especially if you're fishing on rivers instead of lakes. Compared to spin fishing, it offers an all-around more lightweight experience, with a light rod and light fly that's designed to imitate the fish's food.



Tommy Lawhorne, cofounder of the South River Fly Shop, holding a smallmouth bass.

## Connections: Is Fly Fishing for You?

With temperatures in the 90s this summer, the water in the South River is sure to develop lots of warm spots. With smallmouth bass enjoying water temperatures in the upper 60s and 70s, now is the time to grab your fly rod and reel and head to the South River. Want to brush up on your fly-fishing skills or start fresh with lessons? [The South River Fly Shop](#) in Downtown Waynesboro offers guides and instruction right on the South River! The shop carries all the supplies you'll need to wrangle a scaly bunch for yourself. The South River Fly Shop was founded in 2011 by Kevin Little and Tommy Lawhorne, seeking to build an independent, locally owned, and managed fly-fishing and guide service that would serve the needs of fly anglers throughout the region and beyond. If you'd like to peruse their selection of products, shop [online](#) or head to the storefront at 323 W. Main Street. If you have any questions, call the shop at 540-942-5566. Happy fishing!

## Take a Walk Back: The Mines of Crimora

In the 1870s railroad construction was booming in the United States. Steel was in high demand for railroad tie construction due to its sturdy, reliable nature. A key component in producing high-quality steel was, and still is, manganese. During the steel-making process, molten iron is converted to liquid steel that contains dissolved oxygen. As the steel hardens, the dissolved oxygen reacts with carbon monoxide and causes blowholes. The addition of manganese deoxidizes steel and prevents the formation of blowholes. Heavy concentrations of naturally occurring manganese were found north of Waynesboro in the 1860s. By 1866, a mine was up and running. In 1879, the area was named Crimora after Miss Crimora Frances Withrow; in 1880, large-scale mining began. During the first two decades of business, the mines were mismanaged and dangerous. In 1896, C. P. Harmon bought the mines, renovated the facility, and implemented better safety practices. During World War I, steel was used to make everything from tanks and ships to helmets and rifle barrels, and the Crimora Mines were the world's top producer of manganese. After the war, the facility closed and reopened a few times and then finally closed for good in 1958. The only remains of the Crimora Mines today are three man-made lakes. Underwater mine shafts connect these lakes to area water sources. Tales of great misfortune, conspiracy, and gruesome tragedy have become part of the history of the Crimora Mines. To read a tale or two, click on [this article](#) by Dale Brumfield from Newsleader.com.



The Crimora Manganese Mine (photo courtesy of the Augusta County Historical Society)