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# The South River Current



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*Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship*

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*Photo by Dave Socky from [VDCR Facebook](#)*

## Watershed Protection: Be Mindful of the Millipede

Humans depend on healthy ecosystems to purify the environment. Each ecosystem that surrounds us is home to a unique variety of flora and fauna, all with a specific function. When a particular species, no matter how small, becomes extinct, the loss affects the function of the whole ecosystem. This change creates a domino effect that can impact the larger ecosystems that humans interact in every day. That's why in 2020 the Cave Conservancy of the

Virginias, trustees of the DuPont Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Fund, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR), and other local landowners came together to preserve a local cave habitat. This deep underground cave along the South River in Grottoes, Virginia, is home to some of Virginia's rarest creatures. The cave and surrounding area are now named Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve. Its rare residents include two species of cave pseudoscorpions, a cave spider, the Madison Cave amphipod, the threatened Madison Cave isopod, and the Grand Caverns blind cave millipede. These recently discovered creatures have existed for countless years and are now being protected in the preserve for years to come. There is no public access to the Preserve, but public awareness of its existence and the importance of preservation are essential to the future health of environments we do access every day. Want to read more? Click [here](#)!

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**October 28 (Sat) ▶ 4:00 pm**



**Family Friendly Event**

### Trick or Treat

Local volunteer groups providing "trunk or treat" for kids of all ages

### Costume Contest

Enter our Costume Contest for adults and kids to show off your talent for a chance to win prizes!

### Ha

## Did You Know?

- Grand Caverns is looking for volunteers to help with its Fall Festival and Haunted Cave on October 28th and 29th. Email [Lily Whitman](#) for info.
- Do you want to take part in the 2024 Rapto

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*View from Afton Mountain ([photo source](#))*

## Connections: Can't Wait to Migrate!

Like isopods living deep underground, raptors flying above the mountain tops also impact the health of our environment. That is one reason why every fall from August 15th to November 30th, volunteers take turns snuggling up with lawn chairs, blankets, and binoculars on the grounds of the Inn at Afton (elevation 2,000 feet) to count hawks and eagles as they migrate south. The Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch observation area just off Interstate 64, exit 99, east of Waynesboro, offers 180-degree panoramic views north over Rockfish Gap, west over the Shenandoah Valley, and east over the Piedmont Region. Volunteers have documented about 15 different raptor species over the years (some common and some rare). Each year, they record the total number observed and submit their findings to the Hawk Migration Association of North America ([HMANA](#)). HMANA is an organization committed to the scientific study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration. Why? Changes in the health of raptor populations can indicate changes in the environment. By monitoring these changes, scientists hope to proactively protect the birds, other nearby wildlife, and the natural habitat they share. Don't forget, raptors help control populations of pest species such as mice, rats, and insects and they remove carrion (think roadkill) from the environment, reducing the spread of disease. We need them to keep on doing their thing! Do you want to join the team for a spell on the mountain? New volunteers are welcome. Click [here](#) to review this year's visitor information. The Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch is supported by three nearby bird clubs: Augusta Bird Club, Piedmont Virginia Bird Club, and Rockingham Bird Club.

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## Take a Walk Back: Name That Tune Town!

Nestled in the Southwest section of the South River Watershed is a small town called Stuarts Draft. It is home to a little over 12,000 people, a handful of manufacturing facilities, and lots of grazing cattle. Stuarts Draft looks like many other mountain towns, but its unusual name tempts the curious mind. The word "Stuart" implies a historical figure much like those who inspired the names of Waynesboro, Lyndhurst, and Crimora, but what of "Draft"? Was it a sort of "practice" town, like a first draft; an enlisting destination for a military draft; or maybe the birthplace of a new malt beverage? The origin of "Stuart" began with Archibald Stuart, a Scotch Presbyterian, who purchased the land and started a farm in 1738. A relative, Robert Stuart, also settled there, operating a chopping mill. In 1749, Archibald Stuart's son Thomas also purchased land near the South River where he lived with his wife and their nine children. Although the extended family moved away in subsequent years, they had left enough of a mark to inspire part of the town name. The origin of "Draft" is surprisingly unknown. One theory submits that "Draft" refers to the document drafting the land sale, but those records were called patents by the time the sale went through. A second theory suggests that "Draft" refers to a shallow river crossing on Stuart's land or the South River itself, but, according to the Beverly Patent map, Stuart's land did not extend to or across the river. A third theory claims a frequent air current blew over a low-lying area of a nearby stream, causing a strange wind (draft) to waft through the village from time to time. The most likely reference is to a small valley or cove on the property that

was regionally referred to as a draft. Whatever the true inspiration was, the name became official in 1837 when the first post office was established in town, and Stuarts Draft remains the name nearly two hundred years later.

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For upcoming events go to the [South River Watershed Coalition Events Page](#).

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## The South River Current



*October 2023 Volume 4 Issue 10*

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