

KITE FLYING, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES HIGHLIGHT DAY



Peter Aaslestad of Staunton wrestles with a kite as he helps daughter Claire Aaslestad, 10, get it into air Sunday at "Kites and Critters" along Bells Lane in Staunton. MIKE TRIPP/THE NEWS LEADER

Spirits soar on Bells Lane

Moore Farm hosts 'Kites and Critters Day'

By Laura Peters
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Kites decorate the sky as the laughter of children fills the air.

On the outskirts of Staunton, on Bells Lane, hundreds of visitors came out for "Kites and Critters Day" on Moore Farm. Organized by the Valley Conservation Council, the farm was opened up to the public to show its conservation efforts and give residents a peak inside the life of the farm.

Divided up into eight stations around the farm, visitors were able to observe quail habitat, tree plantings, trout releases and more.

Children were invited to release fingerling Eastern Brook trout into Poague Run through the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

"We try to encourage people to try and understand their local environment," conservation council member

STAUNTON

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Kites fly high over a field along Bells Lane during "Kites and Critters" in Staunton on Sunday. MIKE TRIPP/THE NEWS LEADER



Jeff May of Staunton works to get an oversized fish kite back into the air after the wind calmed during "Kites and Critters" on Sunday. MIKE TRIPP/THE NEWS LEADER

Kites

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Sarah Hollberg said. "Whether you live in the urban area, you can come and enjoy your local watershed and see a local farm."

Riparian buffers also surrounded the streams along the farm. The buffers make forested stream banks in order to improve water quality. The forested stream banks keep cattle out from polluting the water, which in turn has made the water and the surrounding environment a better habitat.

"We also thought they'd be interested," said Hollberg, who added this is the first time the council has done an event like Sunday's. "People really react to the agriculture and lot of people

recreate on Bells Lane. So now they can come inside the gate and see the stream."

Hollberg said adding the buffers has positively affected the rest of the farm, allowing other species, such as the Northern Bobwhite quail, to thrive. On the farm, native warm-season grasses have been reestablished in order for birds, like the quail, to nest in and have cover.

"It's a great place for conservation," Hollberg said.

Placing buffers along the stream banks has allowed for improved habitat for creatures, such as water insects, fish and butterflies.

Host Carolyn Moore Ford is a third generation farmer and her brother operates the cow/calf operation full time. Visitors kept coming up to thank



June Holm, 11, of Harrisonburg tries to get a butterfly kite airborne during "Kites and Critters" along Bells Lane in Staunton on Sunday. MIKE TRIPP/THE NEWS LEADER

her for opening the farm to the public for the day.

"I think it's important," she said. "It's an opportunity to see a farm in the city and appreciated all the positive things that come from our farmland."

Flying High Kite Club's Jeff May and his wife, Shelby, provided a scenic view of kites on the

ridge overlooking the Woodrow Wilson Parkway. Sky high, the wind was blowing at a perfect speed to keep the kites aloft.

"There's a lot of information, in a fun way," visitor Lee Godfrey said. "I've never been to Poague Run and the Lewis Creek Watershed, and now I have."