

NEWS RELEASE

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(RIDGELY, MD—April 30, 2024)

***The Secret Life of Adkins*, Photographs
by Kellen McCluskey , on View through
June 29 at Adkins Arboretum**

You can lose yourself in Kellen McCluskey’s large-scale photographs of bees, blossoms, birds and trees. In her show *The Secret Life of Adkins*, on view in the Visitor’s Center at Adkins Arboretum through June 29, this Centreville artist captures stunningly intimate views of the Arboretum through all the seasons of the year. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Saturday, May 11 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The reception also marks the launch of *My Covert Home*, a new book featuring McCluskey’s photographs and a collection of 14 poems by environmental artist and writer Mary McCoy. A gentle and meditative study, this collaborative project explores the forest’s beauty and ecology.

McCluskey has been shooting photographs at the Arboretum ever since she joined its staff in 2015. Although she has held several positions over the years, she currently serves in Development and is the Arboretum’s first Staff Photographer, a role she relishes because it gives her the unique opportunity to take photographs in nature at all times of day and in every season.

“My interest in nature photography has been a long, slow burn,” she said. “I had access to a ‘Brownie’ camera when I was young and loved taking pictures of my surroundings.”



*“Morning Dew on Spider Web,” Kellen McCluskey,
42” x 28”*

McCluskey has developed a knack for zeroing in on the beauty of the moment, however fleeting. The large scale, rich color and drama of her photographs swiftly draw you into the enticing realization that there are worlds within worlds to be discovered. Thousands of tiny redbud blossoms dance across a blue April sky, a bee feasts on the golden yellow nectar of a brilliant pink aster in September and frosty winter light shines through the orange of the crinkled beech leaves surrounding a perky white-breasted nuthatch.

“Color! I love color,” McCluskey explained, “and I’m always on the hunt for anything that deviates from leaf green or bark brown.”

For more than 25 years, she has been taking photos of the natural world with a digital camera using available light without artificial enhancements or specialized equipment. While her photographs are featured in the Arboretum’s brochures, calendars and weekly newsletter emails, this first solo exhibition of her work offers a chance to see how her skills, sensitivity and knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Adkins landscape have coalesced to create a breathtaking portrait of the richness and bounty of the natural world.

Fascinated with the vibrant seasonal changes she finds in that landscape, McCluskey titled each image with both the subject and the date it was photographed. A shy owl stares from just beyond some branches where tiny green buds are sprouting in “April 20: Barred owl (*Strix varia*),” while “October 14: Morning dew on spiderweb” reveals the stunning intricacy of a spiderweb where dewdrops are strung like pearls, and in “November 1: Sunny Little bluestem grasses (*Schizachyrium scoparium*),” airborne seeds catch the light so that they resemble a flurry of snow or perhaps bright sunshine sparkling on water.

There’s magic in McCluskey’s photos, as there is in all of nature, and *The Secret Life of Adkins* is a show that stirs a sense of wonder and curiosity about what’s to be discovered when you slow down and really look. No one who hasn’t been spending most of her days at the Arboretum could have such an intimate knowledge of its varied landscapes and the cycles of its seasons, but this show is an invitation to take the time to search them out for yourself.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through June 29 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 100 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

A 400-acre native garden and preserve, Adkins Arboretum provides exceptional experiences in nature to promote environmental stewardship.

CUTLINE: “October 14: Morning Dew on Spiderweb” by Kellen McCluskey is among the works on display in *The Secret Life of Adkins*, her exhibition of photos on view at Adkins Arboretum.

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