

# NEWS RELEASE

**For more information, contact:**

Jodie Littleton  
Communications Consultant  
jlittleton@adkinsarboretum.org



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**(RIDGELY, MD—July 5, 2022)**

## ***Wake Up... We Need Everybody*, Botanical Drawings of Plants, Animals and Insects by Anna Harding, on View at Adkins Arboretum**

The piercing, orange-red eyes of a sharp-shinned hawk stare right into your own eyes in Anna Harding's exhibit, *Wake Up... We Need Everybody*. In her exquisite drawings on view through Sept. 3 at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center, this Easton artist uses her skills as a botanical artist to portray some of the many plants and animals indigenous to Maryland whose existence is at risk due to human activity. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., July 9 from 2 to 4 p.m.



**Anna Harding, "Backyard Birds 1"**

The only human in this captivating show is asleep. In a poignant image titled "Wake Up!" this human figure, drawn in pale gray graphite, sleeps on a bed of roots that tangle down into a colorful, animated assembly of species that includes ten different plants, four birds, two dragonflies, one salamander, two fish, two beetles and three butterflies, all of them at-risk species.

Using ultra-sharp graphite and colored pencils, Harding draws with such astonishing detail and precision that her artworks immediately invite you to step in close for an intimate look. There are dragonflies with gossamer wings, a spirited brown-headed nuthatch perched on a tree trunk, an extinct Maryland darter fish with tiny, intricately patterned scales and the elegant blossoms of a northern pitcher plant hovering above its eccentric jug-like leaves etched with complex webs of dark red veins.

Each of Harding's drawings is alive with a sense of wonder. You can practically hear the raucous call of a boat-tailed grackle, and you'll long to touch the luxuriant texture of a precious underwing

moth's gold and black wings. Again and again, the thought arises: what a loss it would be if these creatures no longer existed.

In her own gentle way, Harding is raising the alarm about the native plants and animals that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources has identified as threatened, endangered, extinct or extirpated (purposely destroyed).

As she planned for this show, Harding said, "I thought about how I can spark curiosity about the small things in our backyards and alert people to the conditions of our environment and the impact of human-induced climate and environmental conditions, and maybe inspire them to take some small action that could have a positive effect."

Botanical art began as a method of plant identification and classification requiring an in-depth knowledge of botany and keen observational skills. While following its tradition of painstaking attention to scientific detail. Harding takes her drawings a step further, focusing on the personality of each plant or animal and hinting at their habits and ways of living.

Although she has been involved in art since her college days, Harding's passion for botanical art began in 2013, when she started taking botanical art classes with Lee D'Zmura while simultaneously earning a certificate as a Maryland Master Naturalist. She went on to study botanical art with teachers in the U.S. and abroad and, as her skills matured, to teach at Adkins Arboretum.

"I was hooked on the connection between art and science," Harding said. "It has been a fortuitous melding of my botanical artwork and my interest in the natural environment.

Harding says that the crux of her work is described in a favorite quote from the late poet Mary Oliver: "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."

*Wake Up... We Need Everybody* is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Sept. 3 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. 0 or [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org) for gallery hours.

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*Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. For more information, visit [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.*

**Adkins Arboretum 12610 Eveland Road Ridgely, MD 21620**  
**410.634.2847 [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) [info@adkinsarboretum.org](mailto:info@adkinsarboretum.org)**