

Volume 8, No. 3

Fall 2004

The grand show is eternal.
It is always sunrise somewhere;
the dew is never dried all at once;
a shower is forever falling; vapor is
ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal
dawn and gloaming, on sea and
continents and islands, each in its
turn, as the round earth rolls.

— John Muir



42nd Annual

Fall Naturalists' Rally

Sept. 10, 11, 12

September 10

The Friday night program at the Fall Naturalist's Rally will feature regional naturalist Scott Dean of Western North Carolina, Naturally. The program, "Three Seasons in the Southern Appalachians" will combine Dean's photography with discussion of the geology, weather, flora and fauna of the region.

Scott Dean has the following to say about his program.

We all enjoy the diversity and beauty of each season here in the mountains. But how many of us understand why certain flowers bloom at specific times? For that matter, why should a plant invest its energy and resources into the production of a flower, or nectar, or an aroma? How do the bloom times of plants relate to the activity of different animals?

The southern Appalachians are the most botanically diverse region in North America, with estimates as high as 4000 species of vascular plants alone, and Dean will discuss some of the underlying reasons for this diversity. Using Asheville as a central point you can find a typical Loblolly Pine Forest Community within fifty miles. Traveling fifty miles in another direction will find you in a Spruce-Fir Community similar to those found in the Northern United States and Canada. We will look at how elevation equates to traveling northwards and how this affects both plants and animals.

Another topic of discussion will be the mountain balds, basically treeless tracts occurring below the tree line. This is particularly appropriate as our gathering takes place on Roan Mtn., which is home to one of the most famous Heath Balds in the world. We are still not sure of what is responsible for these areas but will consider various explanations, some scientific and some based

in the rich folklore of the region.

Weather patterns in the mountains are unpredictable at best. The topography of the region creates mini

rain shadows and leads to a huge difference in precipitation amounts in relatively close lying areas. The dry ridge area around Weaverville receives the lowest annual rainfall



amount in the eastern United States while Brevard, which is located approximately 50 miles away, often receives one hundred inches of precipitation in a year! Dean will address how our mountains affect rainfall and how rainfall affects plant and animal communities.

The entire evening will be a celebration of the southern mountains. Dean's love and appreciation of the region along with his knowledge of the area's natural history combine to ensure an informative and enjoyable program. 🍷🍷🍷🍷

September 11

Featured at the Saturday evening program will be Paul Bradley, District Ranger for the Appalachian Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest since 1990. Bradley's program, "Roan Mountain, Ecological Jewel of the Appalachians" will highlight the unique characteristics of the Roan, look at the origin of the Roan Highlands, and describe management actions that are currently underway and planned to protect the Roan.

The following article comes from Paul Bradley.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE HIGHLANDS OF ROAN

Along the Tennessee-North Carolina border, the Appalachian Trail winds back and forth between the states as it passes through a 15-mile stretch unlike any other from Georgia to Maine. It is the Highlands of Roan.

The crest of the highlands, above 5,000 feet, is anchored at Roan Mountain by a spruce-fir forest and extends north with a series of balds from Round Bald to Hump Mountain. These treeless openings of grasses, sedges, and shrubs make up a very unique landscape. The openings have outstanding recreational, scenic, natural, scientific and historic values. The grassy balds provide unobstructed 360-degree views of the southern Appalachian Mountains along with spectacular seasonal displays of flowering shrubs and plants.

The number and diversity of rare plants and animals living on the Highland of Roan further adds to the uniqueness of the area. Forty plant and animal species are recognized as being threatened, endangered, or sensitive. Scientists from across the United States and other countries visit this area to study these unique plant and animal communities. Many species are relics from the prehistoric period of glaciers and warming of the climate. Plant communities are found here that usually exist only in climates much farther north.

There are many theories as to how the unique Roan Highlands came to be. Some suggest it is the result of early climatic changes. Others suggest the origin of the balds is due to natural causes such as ice and snow, insufficient soil moisture, soil acidity, natural fire, or exposure to harsh winds. Some suggest that prehistoric grazers, such as mastodons and mammoths, may have grazed and maintained the balds, followed by bison and elk. While others speculate that Native Americans used these areas as

hunting camps and lookouts, or for religious ceremonies.

The USDA Forest Service began purchasing the property in the Roan Highlands in the 1930s. In the 1950s the Appalachian Trail was rerouted to the Roan Mountain area, but much of the area the trail crossed was still in private hands. To place the existing trail in public ownership, the land was purchased through the National Trails Act starting in the 1960s. Through the efforts of the Forest Service and non-profit organizations such as the Appalachian Trail Conference, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy, the core of the magnificent Highlands of the Roan is in protected ownership.

While some acquisition issues still exist, the partnership of agencies and organizations interested in preserving the Roan are now focused on managing the Roan to protect its unique characteristics. Mowing and grazing are the primary tools that are currently being used to maintain the openings and balds important to many of the rare species.

Anne Whittemore will be presenting Friends of Roan Mountain with a booth at the Wilderness Wildlife Week, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee January 8-16, 2005. Anne plans to have the booth open the entire time.

If you are interested in coming to this outstanding event either as a participant or visitor and would like to help man the booth, please let Anne know. This will be an opportunity to sell our remaining shirts and hats, and to hopefully gain members.

Anyone who has pictures of past rallies particularly with people in them, and who would be glad to donate them (5-1/2 x 7 or 8-1/2 x 11) for the display board. Any help will be appreciated.

Call Anne at 423-477-2235 or e-mail:
LAWhittemore@aol.com

Note:

Wilderness Wildlife Week activities are offered free of charge. Music Road Hotel Convention Center is the headquarters for the event.

For a brochure, call 1-800-WINTERFEST or the Pigeon Forge Office of Special Events at (865) 429-7350.

Dear Friends of Roan Mountain,

Thank you for your continued support of our reintroduction of the Southern Appalachian race of Black-capped Chickadees to Roan Mountain. We believe this research is vital and crucial to restoring the natural avifauna to the unique Southern Appalachian community. We wanted to update you on the progress of our research.

Last fall we began locating and attempting to capture birds in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. By the spring we increased our mist netting and have since captured three individuals and transported them to Carver's Gap on Roan Mountain. The birds are supplemented on Roan with feeders and nest boxes, which you may have seen recently near the Carver's Gap area. Currently, we are on a short hiatus while the birds are in their nesting season and rearing young. We soon will be mist netting again and attempting to capture family groups. Although our goal is to capture more individuals, we now can officially say that there are Black-capped Chickadees on Roan Mountain. Thank you again for all your support, and next time you are on Roan Mountain, keep ear and eye open for Black-capped Chickadees!

Best regards,
Mary Schmidt
Graduate Student, ETSU
Dept. of Biological Sciences



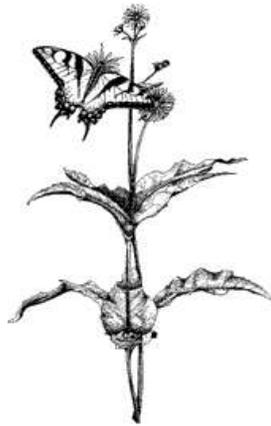
12th Annual Roan Mtn. Butterfly Count

The 12th annual Roan Mtn. Butterfly Count was held Saturday, July 24, 2004. (On the previous Saturday, which was the regularly scheduled time for the count, rain brought the count to a premature end.) The weather this time was often cloudy, but without rain.

Five people in one party counted for seven hours between 10 am and 6 pm. Participants were Bob Baldwin, Nancy Baldwin, John Hay, Don Holt, and Tom McNeil. Areas visited included Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area, Roan Mtn. State Park, the Rhododendron Gardens fee area in Pisgah National Forest, and the Ripshin Lake area. The day's count ended with 373 individual butterflies of 21 species.

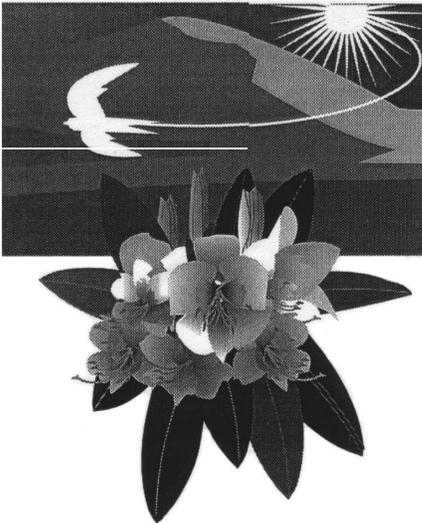
Although we had many good looks at Aphrodite Fritillaries, the numbers were rather low this year. Having a high count of this species is a hit or miss affair, which makes it that much more special when you do find yourself in the right place at the right time. I hope you will join us next year as we look to experience this wonder once again.

Pipevine Swallowtail - 57
Black Swallowtail - 17
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - 8
Cabbage White - 40
Clouded Sulphur - 27
Orange Sulphur - 16
Clouded/Orange (?) Sulphur - 3
Eastern Tailed-Blue - 18
Summer Azure - 5
Great Spangled Fritillary - 2
Aphrodite Fritillary - 28
Great Spangled/Aphrodite (?) Fritillary - 4



Meadow Fritillary - 29
Pearl Crescent - 38
Eastern Comma - 2
Viceroy - 2
Common Wood-Nymph - 6
Monarch - 1
Silver-spotted Skipper - 33
Common Checkered-Skipper - 1
Clouded Skipper - 1
Least Skipper - 19
Sachem - 16

Submitted by Don Holt, Johnson City, TN



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