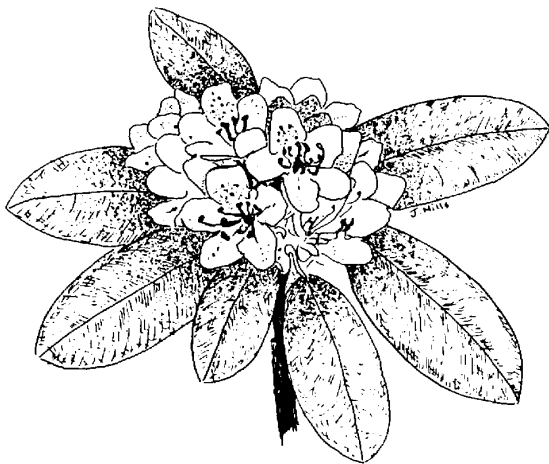


# FRIENDS OF ROAN MOUNTAIN

VOLUME 1, No. 1

FALL 1997

*Climb the mountains and get their  
good tidings.  
Natures's peace will flow into you as  
sunshine flows into trees.  
The winds will blow their own  
freshness into you,  
and the storms their energy, while  
cares will drop off like autumn leaves.*  
--John Muir



Drawing by J.C. Mills

For many years and for many people, Roan Mountain has been the source of good tidings. The Roan offers us the freshness, energy and peace of which John Muir speaks -- a tonic for the body, mind and soul. Scientists and naturalists have come to the mountain to study and appreciate the diversity of life found there. Artists and authors have recorded its beauty. And families have come to relax and play. The changing seasons bring a parade of colors and sounds. Wildflowers and warblers entice us with brilliant displays, while the more secretive salamanders and mushrooms surprise us with their beauty. Rocks millions of years old, grassy balds of mysterious origin, sudden summer thunderstorms, winter snows and hoar frost, trout streams, gardens of rhododendron, ferns and forests . . . The charm bracelet of Roan Mountain is full of fascinating ornaments.

For more than three decades, in both spring and fall, people have come to Roan Mountain to participate in a wide variety of hikes led by naturalists. These annual treks have become a tradition for many - a chance not only to visit flora and fauna but to reunite with friends as well. Now a group of these people have undertaken the task of forming an organization called Friends of Roan Mountain. The purpose of this organization is to foster a greater awareness and understanding of the natural, historical and cultural significance of Roan Mountain. The organization supports interpretive and educational programs and activities designed to accommodate a wide range of interests. Membership is open to amateur naturalists, scientists, agency personnel, teachers, students and anyone who has an interest in and love for the Roan.

# A BIT OF HISTORY

-Gary Barrigar

Almost 40 years ago, the vision of one German immigrant, Fred W. Behrend, led to a tradition on Roan Mountain which grows stronger every year. Hundreds of amateur and professional naturalists come to the mountain twice each year to enjoy, as one newspaper reporter recently stated, “the science, information, entertainment, and fellowship of a three-day celebration of living things in the natural laboratory of Roan Mountain.”

Fred Behrend came to the U. S. in 1926 to work as a stenographer for American Bemberg in Elizabethton. Having developed an interest in birding in Germany’s Black Forest, he quickly became familiar with the many species on Roan Mountain. Some residents of Carter County came to know him as “the Bird Man”. “No matter what else was going on in the world, Freddy could always tell you what day which warbler arrived on Roan Mountain”.

Freddy’s interest in wildflowers came later, when his 10 year-old daughter, Shirley, died of bone cancer. “I couldn’t hold my head up to look at the birds,” he told a friend. “That’s when I discovered flowers.” And there were many flowers to be seen on Roan Mountain. Asa Gray,

the great Harvard botanist, author of *Gray’s Manual* said it “has the richest flora of any mountain in the U.S.”

By 1959, Freddy had become news editor of the *Elizabethton Star* and a recognized nature photographer. He decided to embark on an ambitious project - *The First Annual Carter County Wildflower Tour and Bird Walks*. He asked two ETSU professors, Dr. Frank Barkley and Dr. Herman O’Dell to conduct botanical tours of the Mountain. Behrend’s color slides would be the subject of a Friday night program.

Freddy continued on as director of the spring event until 1976. In 1977, when Freddy became too ill to continue this task, Dr. Lee Herndon and Dr. Gary Wallace filled in. Ardent supporter Tom Gray was director in 1978 and 1979, followed by Jim Potter in 1980, John Martin in 1981, Jim Potter again in 1982 - 84, Richard Gray (Tom’s son) in 1985 and 1986, and Jennifer Laughlin from 1987 until the present.

After seeing the spring event become so successful, in 1963, a fall event was organized, *The Roan Mountain Naturalists’ Rally*. This annual event, which is conducted the first weekend after Labor Day,

quickly became as popular as the spring event, taking advantage of the many fall wildflowers that Roan Mountain has to offer. Freddy Behrend was director from its’ inception in 1963 until 1976, followed by Ed Schell from 1977 until 1987, Jim Potter (ably assisted by his wife Edna Potter) from 1988 until 1992 and Gary Barrigar from 1993 until the present.

Both the *Spring Roan Mountain Naturalists’ Rally* and the *Fall Roan Mountain Naturalists’ Rally* have grown in scope and number of participants since their early days. Geology, stream ecology, caving, astronomy, butterflies, salamanders, medicinal and edible plants, ferns and history hikes are now offered as well as renown speakers in the evenings. With the organization of *Friends of Roan Mountain*, we expect the Naturalists’ Rallies to get even better, but the spirit of the first event envisioned by Freddy Behrend lives on!

Gary Barrigar teaches Ecology, Chemistry, and Physics at Elizabethton High School. He is the current director of the Fall Naturalists’ Rally.

## ROAN MOUNTAIN STATE PARK UPDATES

-Jennifer Laughlin

Tuesday, August 12, 1997 marked the official dedication of ten new cabins at Roan Mountain State Park. Sitting on the hill behind Cabin 16 through 20, the new facilities are situated in a cool, forest environment. Three full beds and one and one half baths enable the new, fully equipped cabins to sleep six comfortably. Reservations can be made by calling the park office at 423-772-3303.

Other future park improvements include: the conversion of the present Visitor's Center/Park Headquarters to an Interpretive Center, housing quality exhibits designed to provide intriguing information on the Roan Mountain area; a new building for the administrative offices; and a recreation building. Information on opening dates is not yet available at this time.

While visiting the Roan Mountain area, be sure to check out the newly renovated gift shop located in the Visitor's Center. A variety of Roan Mountain and State Park items can be found there, in addition to a nice selection of t-shirts and sweatshirts. The Park Visitor's Center is a good spot to stop and find information, including maps and brochures highlighting Roan Mountain and the surrounding area.

Throughout the year, the State Park offers a variety of programs, special events, and activities. Keep your eye out for our Summer in the Park and our Special Events brochures for each calendar year. Upcoming activities to watch for include:

### 17th Annual Fall Festival - Saturday & Sunday, September 13 & 14, 1997

featuring crafts exhibits and demonstrations, music, and clogging each from 10:00 am - 6:00 pm.

### Halloween Activities - Saturday, October 25, 1997

Call the park at 423-772-3303 for information.

### Valentine Tree - February 1-15, 1998

Hang a valentine of your own creation on our tree and you will become eligible to win one of our exciting Valentine prizes by random drawing.

### 40th Annual Spring Naturalist's Rally - May 2 & 3, 1998

(Formally known as the Wildflower Tours and Birdwalks)

For additional information about Roan Mountain State Park, please write or call:  
527 Highway 143, Roan Mountain, TN 37687. (423) 772-3303 or 1-800-250-8620.

Jennifer Laughlin is a Ranger Naturalist at Roan Mountain State Park, and she is the current director of the Spring Naturalists' Rally.

# LOGO CONTEST

We need a logo! Here's your chance to contribute a lasting symbol to posterity. The winning logo will be used on our membership cards, future newsletters, perhaps a Friends of Roan Mountain T-shirt, . . . The designer of the winning logo will receive a year's free membership in Friends of Roan Mountain, a copy of Roan Mountain: A Passage of Time by Jennifer Laughlin, and a Roan Mountain State Park T-shirt. Submit the design(s) of your fancy by September 30. Mail the design to:

Gary Barrigar  
708 Allen Avenue  
Elizabethton, TN 37643

The winning logo design will be chosen by the organizing committee and will premier in our next newsletter.



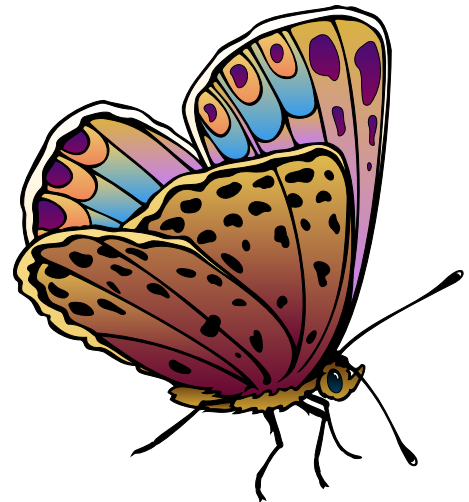
## BUTTERFLIES ON THE ROAN

- Dr. Jerry Nagel

Butterfly watching with binoculars has become a popular natural history activity in recent years, and Roan Mountain provides plenty of opportunity to pursue this interest. So far, 53 species of butterflies have been recorded on the Roan and there are certainly more to be discovered. Both the fall and spring naturalists' rallies usually offer a "Butterflies Through Binoculars" field trip, and for the past five years the Roan Mountain 4th of July Butterfly Count has been held around the third weekend in July. This is a national event sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association/Xerces Society that is now in its 22nd year.

If you wish to butterfly watch on your own, one especially good location is the Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area. This is a working mountain farm that is being used to develop farming techniques which are compatible with the preservation of the native biodiversity. Staff members at the State Park Visitor's Center should be able to give you directions to the area. This area alone has yielded 44 of the 53 species recorded on the Roan. Please check in with the caretaker, and be sure to close the gates behind you as you walk. If you are lucky you may see several American Coppers during your walk.

The spruce/fir and grassy balds habitats at the top of the Roan have relatively few species of butterflies compared to the lower elevations, but the roadsides in the spruce/fir habitats can offer a spectacular flight of Aphrodite Fritillaries around the third week in July. In two of the past four 4th of July Butterfly Counts this area yielded the national high count for this particular species.



Dr. Jerry Nagel is professor emeritus of biological sciences at East Tennessee University in Johnson City.

# THE ROADSIDE DITCHES OF ROAN MOUNTAIN

-Arthur Smith

One can find the most wonderful plants in the ditches and along road embankments and road cuts on Roan Mountain. These areas have access to sunlight and, on the Roan, are usually somewhere between moist and downright wet. This is just what many plants are designed to exploit.

Perhaps the loveliest of these is the purple fringed orchid, which blooms in June. These have a one to two foot tall stalk with a dozen or so one-half inch orchids at the top. The orchids are a bright magenta, and each is a graceful delight.

Near the gardens on the Roan, in early June, we may find Gray's Lily growing by the roadside in profusion. This is the plant, besides the Rhododendron, which visitors recognize and admire most often.

Two of the most striking roadside plants bloom in August. Bee balm is a brilliant red and is easy to spot with its round clusters of flowers in wet ditches. The green headed coneflower also grows in moist areas to six feet tall and has a number of three inch diameter yellow flowers on each stalk. The centers of each flower are green and the wide spacing of the yellow rays gives each bloom an airy appearance which is charming.

The most precious roadside resident in September is likely to be the deep, dark, royal purple gentian -- each bloom shaped like a stubby little cigar. This is the southern mountain gentian, one of our rare plants. Look for it!

Beautiful fillers along the roadsides in fall are the white snakeroot and the pale lavender Joe-Pye weed. Given a chance, these will crowd out most of the others.

This brings us to a management issue. The more precious plants require open areas and cannot stand much competition -- similar to conditions on the open balds. If the roadsides were allowed to grow up completely these plants would disappear. Yet, the bush-hogging, mowing, and weed-eating being employed on the Roan are destroying these plants. The desire to keep everything neat and tidy and the abundant supply of prison labor may be destroying roadside treasures. Mowing must be done to keep habitat open for these plants, but there is a need to coordinate the timing of mowing schedules to be most beneficial to the plants. We must be willing to tolerate a little shagginess when the plants need to be left alone to develop their bloom stalks.

Arthur Smith, a retired chemical engineer, lives near Kingsport, Tennessee, and is a member of a number of conservation organizations.