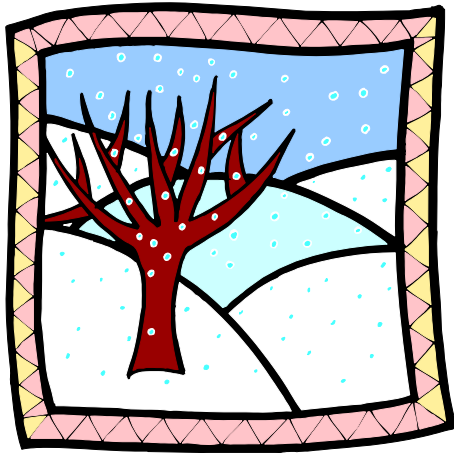


Volume 12, No. 1

Spring 2008



Winter Rally 2008

--David Hall

Our first Winter Rally made February 16th a happy time for the lovers of Roan Mountain. Indeed, the spirit of Valentines Day was seen in the smiles and good cheer of new members and old who filled the conference center for this event. Things kicked off with steaming fresh roast coffee and an endless array of buns and doughnuts with Anne Whittemore presiding with her smiles at the welcoming table. Kudos to our beautiful treasurer! As a celebration of winter birds and trees we could not have been luckier to have the expertise of ETSU's Tim McDowell, and the biologist and ranger, Joe McGuinness.

Tim brought in bundles of twigs and limbs of the Roan area's trees and shrubs for a hands-on look at their emerging buds—the real key to their identification. The PowerPoint viewer showed the beauty of these buds opening to leaves and flowers as well as the twig marks left from buds of a year ago, making it easy to see the fast growth of our local buckeyes versus the slower growth of the forest oaks. Joe took a slightly different tack as the screen filled with the beautiful plumage of winter birds. "Who do you think this hungry fellow is?" he asked, and his audience, often correctly, came up with the answer. Feeders as well as what to put in them—not to mention squirrels and cats—made for lively discussion and interaction. One shot showed a large open feeder filled not with Carolina chickadees, but with a large sleeping calico cat! Needless to say, we all had a lot of fun with these speakers and their beautiful presentations.



After a selection of really gigantic—that's the only word—sandwiches provided by Roan Mountain's Mad Martha's Café, along with chocolate cakes, cheese cakes and key lime pies, we headed down to the Tom Gray trail which meanders along the Doe River. The sun was with us, sparkling along the rapids and up the golden trunks of yellow birch. The ancient club mosses (200 million years), tall and branched, waved over the green stones of an old pioneer house foundation. The 40 to 50 members along for this hike, sure to be a record group for this little trail, were particularly fascinated with a long vertical box leaning on its wooden post six feet off the ground—which promptly became horizontal after a well meaning touch. Joe identified it as a bat box and gave us a summary of their habits as well as news of a fungal threat which is attacking them in northern caves.

Anne tells us that by Wednesday before the event, 61 people had paid for lunch. Eight people renewed their membership, two of whom had allowed their membership to lapse for a year or more, and one member renewed as a Life member. The big bonus was 9 brand new members! In addition to those who signed up for lunch, about 20-25 more folks, many of them Friends members, attended the morning program and afternoon hike. We are indebted to Jennifer Bauer who sent notices to all the area papers, and to Brian Stevens, who wrote a wonderful article on the event for the Elizabethton Star.

David Hall is a certified arborist and landscape designer. An avid hiker, he moved to the Roan Mountain area from Washington DC in the spring of 2005, and attended his first rally that fall when he joined Friends.

Socialization of Grey Wolves

—Rhonda Goins

Hear the Howling Tails of the Bays Mountain Wolf Pack, past and present, with Naturalist Rhonda Goins. The Bays Mountain Wolf Pack began in 1992 with three wolves. Since that time the pack has grown and evolved into the current pack of nine wolves. With two aging wolves among the pack, it became necessary to add new members to the pack. With a facility designed to keep and maintain up to ten wolves, it was decided that four new pups would be purchased.

Preparations for the new additions began long before their arrival. From having the proper paperwork to securing and training volunteers, everything had to be ready the day the pups arrived. All of the previous arrivals to the park were captive born and socialized by humans. The newest additions were no different. They were taken from their mother when they were 7 days old and reared by humans until they were ready to enter the enclosure and become a part of the Bays Mountain wolf pack.

Imagine the enticing smell of puppy breath with a



little wild aroma thrown in and you get an idea why the volunteers keep coming back time after time. One puppy to clean up after drives most people crazy but try four!! With one big pooper-scooper you have to clean up four piles of poop while four pups are trying to eat it as fast as it is being produced. At the same time you are maneuvering through the pups, you are also busy trying to

count and document the number of rocks or worms in each pile. It's a blast! This continues to be an opportunity of a lifetime; one that I would not trade for anything.

Find out what it takes to both socialize and maintain a healthy and balanced pack in captivity. Ever wonder what it would be like to be part of a group of volunteers responsible

for the care of young wolf pups, 24 hours a day, beginning when they are one month old and continuing until they are 4 months old?

Please plan to join me on Friday, May 2, 2008, at the Roan Mountain Spring Naturalist's Rally, for an enjoyable and informative family presentation.

Rhonda Goins, Naturalist from Bays Mountain Park in Kingsport, Tennessee, has designed and implemented the socialization procedure used to introduce wolf puppies into Bays Mountain Park's pack, both in 2003 and in 2007.



Frozen Head: A Highly Diverse Tennessee Natural Area

David Engebretson,

The Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee is one of the richest ecosystems in our country. A mountain complex that might be overlooked for size, stature and scenery when compared to the larger more predominant Smoky Mountains to the east. A closer look would reveal a subtle, often hidden beauty found in unique geologic rock formations, rare plant communities containing enormous cinnamon ferns, delicate orchids and tropical looking magnolia trees. The Cumberland Mountains are home to significant populations of neo-tropical migrants whose annual pilgrimage brings them to the Cumberlands to nest and breed. Located within this rich forest community is Frozen Head State Natural Area, an oasis of undisturbed natural habitat, bio-diversity and solitude.

Tennessee's recent "North Cumberland's" land acquisition will provide new hope for conservation in the Cumberlands. Frozen Head and the surrounding Brimstone and Sundquist Wildlife Management Areas will benefit directly from the 124,000 acre acquisition. The partnership created by the "North Cumberlands" land initiative will provide a vital corridor for wildlife, maintain and improve watershed quality and protect important nesting habitat for Neo-tropical migrants.

David Engebretson, Park Manager at Frozen Head State Natural Area, will present the Saturday evening program on May 3rd at 7:30 p.m. David has worked with Tennessee State Parks for 27 years as a naturalist, interpretive ranger and park manager.

Loves to Play in the Woods

— Julie Poehlman

Naturalists are curious people! I mean that in both senses of the word. We are curious about the world around us and to some people that makes us a bit strange. How many of us have become excited over discovering an unusual moth or bird, only to have the others around us seem indifferent? Taking the time to observe and learn about the natural world is a delight for those of us fortunate enough to attend the Naturalists Rally held at Roan Mountain State Park. Finding the rally and attending is a gift I give myself as often as I can!



When I found the announcement of the rally on the Internet, I was thrilled because of its location. I'd already become enchanted by Roan Mountain, so discovering the event there was an added enticement to come.

The rally is so welcoming to folks at all stages. From the "newbie" to the seasoned sage who seems able to identify every critter, we learn so much from each other. No question is insignificant. I appreciate the willingness of the leaders to share their knowledge. Every participant is eager to see, share, learn, and treasure nature. Sharing the beauty and experiencing it together is part of the uniqueness of the weekend. Being surrounded by kindred spirits, you feel you are among friends. Thank you to all those who have made me feel so much at home there!

I presently live on the coastal plain on Maryland's eastern shore. Whenever I am able to view the blue velvet ridges at the top o' the Roan, it still thrills me. Some experiences are soul stirring, like watching a large doe bound over the rolling grasses on the balds. Those images stay forever imprinted in my mind's eye. It's like a painting coming alive.

Growing up... I was the kid who looked for salamanders under rocks, brought home the stray box turtle, and was fascinated by bird's nests. Maryland Public TV had a children's program called "Hodge Podge Lodge". The woman who was our guide, Miss Jean, would share cool things like bird skeletons and seed pods, and she would take us on nature trails. I was in my "zone"! I still have rocks I collected as a kid.

The first rally I attended was overwhelming! So many choices at the exact same time! How could I possibly choose just one per time slot? I am an agonizer when it comes to decision making, so even the selection process was daunting! There was a smorgasbord of hikes, all sounding delicious! Somehow I picked one lane to drive my car into.

The exceptional photographic presentations alone have been worth my 500 plus mile drive down. Sitting in the darkened room I have wept at the beauty they have captured with their lenses. For me, the images have been the richer, more satisfying feast (no disrespect to the wonderful caterers at City Market from "Lizabethton!")

I would like to especially thank the gentleman who brought the live Hickory Horned Devil caterpillar. I will never forget seeing that unusual animal. It almost didn't seem real. Everyone at home to whom I showed the picture was amazed at the creature.

I must confess that writing this brief piece is intimidating. I know there are many very knowledgeable participants who have graduate degrees and years of field experience. I am just an admitted lover of nature who is quite happy to just be able to attend and benefit from the wisdom of the experts. I still have so much to learn, but I relish the joy of fresh facts and serendipitous sightings! Plus the attendees always seem to be friendly and ready for fun. Hey! We are all kids at heart, who love to play in the woods!

Hope to see y'all there...if the creek don't rise and the dawgs don't run off. (And the gasoline prices don't get much worse!)

Julie works at the Queen Anne's County Free Library as assistant to the children's librarian. She is the staff artist that creates the displays, crafts, and color sheets for the children's programs. This gives her ample opportunity to read children's books without embarrassment! She just attended the Eagle Fest held at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge outside of Cambridge, MD.)



Memorial Gift

The Friends of Roan Mountain received a donation toward its efforts in conservation and research of the Roan Mountain area. Ron Vance, a resident of Roan Mountain (village), former biology teacher at Cloudland High School, past seasonal worker for the Southern Appalachians Highlands Conservancy, and friend of the Roan Mountain area, passed away last year at his home. His family requested that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Friends of Roan Mountain in his memory. The monetary gifts have been added to our "Raffle" fund which is solely used for research and conservation efforts in the area through application to and vote by the Friends' Board of Directors. We are honored to be the recipient of this memorial gift, and we express our gratitude to the Vance family.

BATS NEED FRIENDS

— Anne Whittemore

A mysterious fungus was discovered in 2007 growing on the muzzles of several bats hibernating in a cave near Albany, New York, from which the term "White Nose Syndrome" was given to describe the phenomenon. Between 8,000 and 11,000 bats in one cave died from this condition. Several bat species were killed at this time including the federally-endangered Indiana bat. In 2008, the condition was observed in additional caves and mines in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts. So far, the White Nose Syndrome has not been observed in West Virginia, Virginia, or Tennessee caves, although precautions in the greater Virginia Region are being taken by closing caves where bats are known to hibernate.

Bat experts met several weeks ago (February 2008) in Blacksburg, Virginia to discuss what is known about the syndrome, and to tabulate the studies being done.

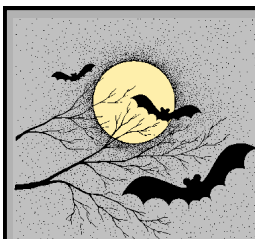


What is known: Several species of bats are affected and thousands of dead bats have been found in New York to date. Most of these are little brown bats and Indiana bats, but northern long-eared bats and eastern pipistrelles are also affected. Many, but not all, of the impacted bats have the white fungus on the muzzle with associated skin irritations. Dead or dying bats recovered from affected caves have very little fat reserves. At several sites, bats were noted hibernating closer to the entrance than normal, often within the twilight zone. Large numbers of bats were reported leaving the caves and flying in the daylight, often when temperatures were below freezing. Two New York caves visited in 2007 were revisited this winter (2008); in these caves the bat populations were shown to have declined by the 90% and 97%. Remaining live bats were in poor condition, and were not expected to live through the winter. Many of the dead bats collected in 2008 were examined and showed signs of pneumonia and hemorrhaging in the lungs.

What is not known: The cause of the problem is not known. A fungus is apparent on the bats, but no one knows if the fungus is the cause of the problem or if it is just a secondary infection of bats weakened by some other condition. The actual cause may be fungal, viral, bacterial, or some other agent.

Techniques at several labs around the country are being used to study this problem including pathological examinations, bacterial, viral, and mycological investigations, testing of immune response in affected bats, and the use of thermal imaging to examine the bats' response (or lack thereof) to stimuli.

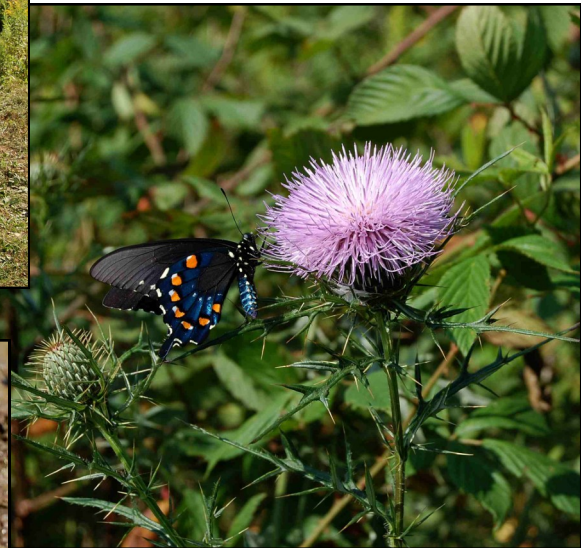
It is also not known how the white-nose syndrome is spread. It is possible that it may be spread from cave to cave by cavers, bat biologists, and others who enter caves. Until more is known, this cause is assumed. Caves are being closed and cavers are asked to abide by these closures. If it is carried from cave to cave by the bats, then there is little which can be done to stop the spread of the white nose syndrome. It is not known whether there are risks to humans; this also is being assessed. Potential impacts to other wildlife species are not known. For further information check these websites: www.white-nose.info and/or http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html.



Four nights in mid-summer, over 100 scientists and volunteers, mist nets — all focused on a shy, gentle, oft-maligned creature. From July 29 - August 2, 2007, the **Southeastern Bat Diversity Network** mounted the **6th Annual SBDN Bat Blitz**. With their headquarters at Roan Mountain State Park, the volunteers spread to fifty different sites, most of them near or over water, netting 462 bats in the park and the adjoining Cherokee and Pisgah national forests. Seven species were documented including big brown bat, eastern red bat, eastern small-footed bat, little brown bat, gray bat and eastern pipistrelle. Link to http://www.sbdn.org/past_blitzes.html for more details.

Watch a free streaming video which shows the volunteers in action at the Miller Farmstead by linking to [episode 1409 of Tennessee's Wild Side](http://www.tnwildside.org/) (<http://www.tnwildside.org/>).

A FEW PHOTOS FROM THE FALL RALLY



Courtesy of Friends member,
Carolyn Martin

FRIENDLY NOTES — THE OLD AND THE NEW

Important
DATE!

The Spring Rally is celebrating 50 YEARS! Join us May 2-4 on the mountain as we carry on a great tradition. Don't forget to mail your dinner reservations and check to Anne Whittemore by the deadline - **Wednesday, April 30th.**



NEW

We've added a new Winter Rally. The first annual Winter Naturalists' Rally was held in February. David Hall has agreed to be the rally director. Talk with David about any ideas you have as we begin this new tradition.

UPDATE

We have a new website address. <http://www.friendsofroanmtn.org/> Many thanks to Jerry Nagel for all the work he put into setting up our original website through ETSU and maintaining the site through the past years. We now have our own independent site with a more simple, self-identifying address. Jerry Greer is our new webmaster.

F.Y.I.

Life Membership dues for Friends of Roan Mountain will change this year. Currently, we have 16 Life members (5 of these are family life members), and 2 Honorary Life members. You may still join as a Life member at the rate of \$250 at the spring rally. Beginning on May 5, 2008 the cost of a Life Membership will be \$350 for an individual or couple. The cost of a Family Life Membership will be \$450. A family, for the membership purposes, will be defined as a unit containing a parent or parents with children under the age of 18. At age 19 the children will no longer be included in the Family membership. The current annual membership dues are not changing (Individual = \$15, Family = \$20, Student = \$10, Corporate = \$45).

PLEASE!!

HELP IS NEEDED FROM THE MEMBERSHIP ATTENDING THE SPRING RALLY TO ASSIST THE TREASURER AT THE BALL FIELD DURING LINING UP FOR HIKES ON SATURDAY MORNING, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, AND SUNDAY MORNING. IF YOU ARE AVAILABLE, PLEASE CONTACT ANNE AT 423-477-2235.

Reminder!

The 7th Annual Elizabethton Butterfly Count will be held on August 3, 2008. Sunday Meeting times: 9:00 am & 1:00 pm. Join Don Holt for this day long winged adventure. Come for all or part of the day. Sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association & Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park. (Rain Date: Sat, August 9.)

Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher.

— William Wordsworth

Hey folks,

Mark your calendars! The 2008 Roan Mountain Butterfly Count will be held on the usual third Saturday of July, that is July 19, 2008. Anyone may participate, no experience is necessary. We will meet at 10 am at the Visitors' Center in Roan Mountain State Park, then make our way to Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area. Lunch can be had at Mad Martha's Restaurant in the village, followed by an ascent to the Rhododendron Gardens with the hope to see lots of high elevation butterflies. If time allows, more areas in the State Park and village may be visited later in the afternoon.

One should always be prepared for inclement weather at the top of the mountain just in case. Be aware, there is a small fee per car to enter the Gardens area. There is also a small fee per adult that goes to the hosting organization, the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). A report is published of all counts in the country and may be ordered from NABA as well. Who knows, perhaps this will be the year we report some rarity or new record. Come be a part of the fun!



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