



Jocassee Journal

Information and News about the Jocassee Gorges



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Firefighters (from left) Henry Hutto and Trey Cox of the S.C. Forestry Commission pause for a moment at burned-over Bald Knob near the top of Pinnacle Mountain during the early stages of the Pinnacle Mountain Fire in November 2016. (SCDNR photo by Greg Lucas)

Effects of Pinnacle Fire mostly beneficial

Forest canopy opened in some areas, allowing diverse understory to develop

By Mark Hall

It has been half a year now since the Pinnacle Mountain Fire occurred, and things in general have already improved for many species of flora and fauna.


The relatively “stagnant” forest was opened up as a result of the fire, and the area is now more diverse. The wildfire did several things to alter vegetation diversity. Off-site species were damaged or killed by the intense heat, mountain laurel and rhododendron “ivy hells” were impacted, and many older trees fell to create “gaps” in the forest canopy.

Past logging practices permitted light-seeded species such as red maple and yellow-poplar to invade sites where they do not belong, from a strict ecological standpoint. Lack of fire over the past decades allowed those fire-intolerant species with thin bark to thrive. The Pinnacle Mountain Fire had the same desired effect as the controlled burns that are often implemented within the Jocassee Gorges, in that the heat blistered the thin bark of the undesirable species. Once bark is damaged, the physiological function of maple and yellow-poplar is disrupted and the fire scars promote further impacts by a host of tree pathogens and insects. The end result will be mortality in thousands of the off-site species, opening of the forest canopy and the subsequent development of more a diverse understory that will support fruit-bearing plants and herbaceous growth beneficial to wildlife.

The wildfire also impacted rhododendron and mountain laurel that have slowly encroached upon the higher

elevation and drier sites, again, due to lack of fire in general over the past few decades. Mountain laurel and rhododendron offer very little for wildlife, and the heavy shade they cast prohibits growth of any other vegetation. The reduction of those species will also promote the development of a diverse understory where plant species that have been absent or suppressed for many years will begin to appear.

One of the dangers of the Pinnacle Mountain Fire was that it took place in an area that supported many older trees that were prone to falling. Older trees often have cavities or deformities where fire is the “final straw” that will cause them to burn, crack and fall. Firefighters experienced an inordinate number of large, falling trees during the fire. Fallen trees on the ground will now offer “drumming” logs for ruffed grouse as well as refuge for the uncommon Allegheny woodrat. Fallen trees also create gaps in the forest canopy, where sunlight will now reach the forest floor and allow a multitude of herbaceous vegetation and woody shrub species to thrive.

Overall, the wildfire caused a serious “shake-up” to the environment. However, those abrupt impacts will have positive influence upon the interspersed, juxtaposition and composition of the vegetation in the area for many years to come. Botanical enthusiasts who visit the area will be pleased to find plant species that have been absent for years. The prosperity of many wildlife populations are intricately tied to vegetation diversity. Birds, bees, butterflies, bears and numerous small mammals will benefit from the changes and essential reallocation of resources caused by the fire. 

(Mark Hall is the land manager for SCDNR's Jocassee Gorges. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and Registered Forester.)



Ed Stovall (left) accepts a plaque honoring his many years of service as a wildlife technician in Jocassee Gorges. Presenting the award was Mark Hall, SCDNR Jocassee Gorges land manager. (SCDNR photo by Rob Harrison)

Long-time Jocassee wildlife technician retires

Stovall had worked in area since before Lake Jocassee was flooded

Ed Stovall recently retired from the Jocassee Gorges, where he helped maintain the road system by running heavy equipment for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) since 2002.

He also assisted with controlled burns, trail management and a myriad of the land-management activities on Jocassee. Ed was a logical “shoe-in” for the part-time position on Jocassee, as he had worked in the area for many years prior, building roads and assisting with forest operations.

Ed’s career began as a forest technician for Duke Energy under a department known as “Duke Forestry” in the late 1950s. He lived in Rosman, N.C., and helped plant trees and build roads in the Auger Hole section, now owned by the State of North Carolina. Ed was transferred to the Lake Norman project around 1965, where he worked under the forestry division. He was later employed by Crescent Land and Timber Co., a subsidiary of Duke Energy, which acquired land in upper Pickens County in the 1960s from the Poinsett Lumber Co. Those were lands where Lake Jocassee was built, and the Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges was eventually conveyed to the State of South Carolina beginning in 1997.

Stovall assisted with logging operations when the forest in the area beneath Lake Jocassee was harvested, prior to flooding in the early 1970s. Ed worked on the lands owned by Crescent Resources, primarily in the Jocassee Gorges area since the early 1980s, so he moved his family to West Union,

where he is currently enjoying his well-deserved retirement.

Ed saw many changes in the landscape over six decades working as forest technician and equipment operator. He actually planted thousands of trees that have since been harvested during logging operations on Jocassee and many surrounding areas. Ed built forest management roads within Jocassee Gorges, so he knew the area quite well. He provided a lot of detail to Mark Hall, SCDNR’s Jocassee Project manager, Mark Hall, as the forest management plans were developed.

“Ed has a mind like a steel trap!” Hall said. “I could always rely on him to help us find old logging roads, identify where trees were planted and review the types of site preparation that were used in different areas. We will miss his unique, first-hand knowledge of the land.” Wildlife technicians Jimmy Kluge, the late Ronnie Gravely and Ken Forrester worked closely with Ed over the years and always picked his brain and sought his advice as they worked across the rugged landscape within Jocassee. On occasion, they would catch some trout and fry them up with ‘tater’s and onions down on the creek for lunch.

Stovall plans to enjoy his time nowadays with friends and family in West Union. He will visit family out of town from time to time, but mostly just wants to take it easy after all those years in some of the most rugged and challenging mountains in the Southeast. Indeed, he has earned his respite and the Jocassee staff hopes he will come by on occasion to fry some fish, talk about old times and share tidbits of his local knowledge....something no one else will ever have. ❁

Jocassee wildlife technician who worked two natural disasters wins statewide honor

Award named in memory of stellar technician Eric Mortensen

Ken Forrester, a wildlife technician with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) who worked on a hurricane and a massive mountain wildfire in 2016, was recently named the Eric Mortensen Memorial Technician of the Year.

SCDNR has for a number of years selected a wildlife technician who has gone above and beyond as the winner of the Natural Resources Technician of the Year award. In 2016, Eric Mortensen won the award and left his legacy behind to inspire all SCDNR wildlife technicians who followed. Mortensen passed away from cancer later that year, and the award was named after him.

Forrester, of Greer, who works in the Jocassee Gorges region, was a first responder during two natural disasters in 2016: Hurricane Matthew along the South Carolina coast and the Pinnacle Mountain Fire in northern Pickens County. Forrester first worked as a law enforcement officer on Interstate 26 during the lane reversal evacuation before Hurricane Matthew, and then afterwards he transported heavy equipment and supplies to the Lowcountry and

worked countless hours providing relief in Hampton County.

Forrester worked many long days, including weekends and holidays, during the Pinnacle Mountain Fire. During the fire, he provided heavy equipment assistance, generated intelligence reports from the field, managed fire lines and provided invaluable assistance to the S.C. Forestry Commission. Forrester quickly gained respect and admiration from the S.C. Forestry Commission staff.

Mark Hall, SCDNR land manager in Jocassee Gorges, said Forrester also works tirelessly during the black bear season in the South Carolina mountains. "Ken has developed respect and an excellent relationship with the bear-hunting community," Hall said. During controlled burn season, Forrester is always prepared, ready and willing to do what is required to manage a successful controlled

fire, according to Hall. Whether it involves repairing equipment, getting equipment ready or preparing the burn sites for a safe and successful event, he is always up for the challenge. In early 2016, Forrester worked a solid 36 hours straight when meteorological conditions went awry during a controlled burn.

"He is a key person responsible for the successful prescribed burning program in the difficult, mountainous terrain of the Jocassee Gorges," Hall said. 🍂



Ken Forrester pauses during work on a new trail to Beech Bottom Falls in Jocassee Gorges. Forrester was recently honored for his work on two natural disasters in South Carolina just weeks apart. (SCDNR photo by Mark Hall)

Forrester, who works in the Jocassee Gorges region, was a first responder during two natural disasters in 2016: Hurricane Matthew and the Pinnacle Mountain Fire in northern Pickens County.



The former Holly Springs Elementary in northern Pickens County is being reborn as the Holly Springs Center, featuring the School of Mountain Arts that will perpetuate traditional Appalachian arts and crafts. (SCDNR photo by Greg Lucas)

Holly Springs Center to offer classes, programs

Former Pickens County elementary school rises again as a guardian of Appalachian arts and culture

Closed by the School District of Pickens County in 2016, Holly Springs Elementary has been reborn as the Holly Springs Center, and organizers of the nonprofit have a full slate of activities lined up for this summer and beyond.

In addition to a Lifelong Learning Lab and a Community House, the Center will house a School of Mountain Arts. Modeled after the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, N.C., the School of Mountain Arts will include classes in Appalachian arts and culture, such as beginning dulcimer, beginning silversmithing, beginning pottery and raising small farm animals.

Holly Springs Center will hold a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) camp for rising kindergarten through eighth-graders. Summer tutoring will be held for rising first through sixth-graders on Tuesday and Thursday evenings through the summer. An arts camp for rising first through sixth-graders will be held every Wednesday morning throughout the summer, and an enrichment camp will be held on Friday mornings.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is scheduled to hold a Boater Education class at the Holly Springs Center this summer.

The Center will be the site of Exceptional Citizens Outreach (ECO). This will be a meeting, learning and socializing space for adults with special needs. Participants will take part in games and arts and crafts activities.

Holly Springs Center will also host makerspaces, where people can gather to share resources and knowledge to work on projects, network and build.

To learn more about these programs, including registration and pricing information, visit hollyspringscenter.com.

Center officials have been taking names for 3K and 4K morning classes, which are set to begin in August, pending licensing. The class's curriculum will combine Montessori concepts with best practices and will connect children with nature and the arts each day. An optional kindercare program will also be offered.

An artisan gallery, gift shop and information center will be opening in the near future. Rentals of the playground, gym, cafeteria, kitchen, studio space and meeting/conference/retreat spaces will be possible. ❁



Trout in the Classroom helps students raise, take care of trout

Program sponsored by SCDNR, Trout Unlimited and Fluor Corp.
By Sarah Chabaane

Imagine the wonder and joy of watching 100 rainbow trout eggs from Walhalla Trout Fish Hatchery develop into fingerlings right in your classroom with a culminating educational field trip to release the fish in authorized waters! I know, where was this program when I was in school?

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and Trout Unlimited Chapters teamed up eight years ago to provide Trout in the Classroom at four schools throughout the state. Trout in the Classroom has now grown exponentially into a force of 21 schools in five eligible counties as schools have to be within one hour of trout waters. This program is nationwide and with salmon in the Western states. Teachers are trained in the nuances of maintaining a 55-gallon tank with multiple components, basic chemistry and water quality analysis. Teachers attend workshops in Columbia and Clemson to learn about trout, watersheds and human influences on aquatic habitats.

As teachers gain more experience, SCDNR and Trout Unlimited expand into field workshops for teachers to learn fly-fishing techniques, macroinvertebrate sampling and visiting the hatchery to learn how the professionals raise trout. The program has provided more than 8,000 students the opportunity to raise and take care of trout. With help from Trout Unlimited and a permit from SCDNR, schools transport their fingerlings to Carrick Creek in Table Rock State Park and Saluda Shoals County Park on the Lower Saluda to ceremoniously release their fish with the knowledge that they are helping in restoration projects and their actions can positively influence their local environment.

Funding for the Trout in the Classroom program is greatly supported by Sport Fish



Rainbow trout swim in a classroom tank in anticipation of being let loose in a mountain stream. Below, Vic Blackwell, SCDNR fisheries technician, talks to students in Carrick Creek at Table Rock State Park before trout are released. (SCDNR photos by Sarah Chabaane)



grant money (excise tax collected from fishing tackle equipment), Trout Unlimited and the Fluor Corp. And we are grateful for the never-ending gracious hosts of our fish release sites. 🍂

(Sarah Chabaane is aquatic education coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. She has been with the agency for four years, beginning in the coastal office before swimming upstream to join Freshwater Fisheries. Growing up on dirt roads of North Florida, Sarah has a deep appreciation for the outdoors and natural resources with a soft spot for carnivorous plants and fish of all varieties.)

‘There was just some

Appalachian storyteller passes away, but her words will live forever

By Dennis Chastain

I was cruising down Hickory Hollow road near Table Rock the other day. With the window in my old pickup truck rolled down and the radio blaring out country music tunes in three-quarter time, I was feeling good. Lost in thought and tapping out the rhythm with my thumbs on the steering wheel, I passed the intersection with Birchwood Road, the old winding country road that leads to Dot Jackson’s house. I peered off down the lonely asphalt road and thought to myself, “When I get time I need to go talk to Dot about ...” Then it dawned on me that Dot is gone – not to the grocery store, or to Charlotte to stay with her daughter, or to a meeting in Pickens, she is gone, gone forever. A part of her will live on, of course, in the sense that she will long be remembered for who she was and the many ways in which she enhanced the lives of those who knew and loved her, and the stories we will long tell about her.

My shoulders slumped and I sank back into the same gray gloomy mindset that had overwhelmed me when I first heard a little more than a month ago that Dot Jackson, our beloved “Dot,” had passed away. The effect was somehow more dark and gloomy than the feeling of sadness you get when a good friend passes away. The sense of loss was somehow even deeper and more profound than what we feel even after losing an aged parent or a close relative, it was as if all of us who knew her, as if the whole world at-large, had lost something bigger, something more profound. There was just something about Dot.



Dot’s 2006 novel, “Refuge,” won the Novello Prize, the Weatherford Award and the Appalachian Book of the Year Award.

I turned down the radio and recalled her big wide-opened smile and open arms the last time I saw her. Sitting there in her wheelchair, she was drawing me to her as if we had not seen each other in a month or a year, just as she had done a thousand times before. You could always count on her big warm, heart-felt, welcoming smile, and those aging arms spread wide open, “Oh darling, darling Dennis, come give me a hug. We need to talk.” It was always like that with Dot, ever since the first time I met her more than twenty five years ago. Dot Jackson was what we call here in the South, a Rare Bird, a One-of-a-Kind, a Kindred Spirit, or some would say, a lifelong Rabble Rouser.

She loved everything that was old, things that had survived the test of time, and abhorred those things that were new-fangled and tainted with the evil stain of big money, and all those things going on in this country that are a vexation to the spirit. She loved the mountains and mountain people. For thirty years she told their stories and the story of our Southern Appalachian heritage. She loved people without question and somehow found the goodness in even the hardest of hearts; although one time while telling me a story about the renegades, bullies and bad outlaws that used to prey on our God-fearing, hard-working ancestors after the War of 1861, she confided to me that, “Some people just need killing.” Lord, I used to love to sit down and talk to Dot. She knew everybody and was kin to more than she could count. She had a unique, richly expressive, way with words and she knew how to tell a story. Dot went through some hard times at various stages in her long and amazingly diverse time on earth, yet she always emerged from her trials and tribulations with a bright cheery spirit that could make the sun shine on a rainy day. There was just something about Dot.

‘Her descriptions of the mountains jumped from the pages...’

By Mike Hembree

Dot Jackson and I shared a love of the Carolina mountains.

It seemed only logical, then, that, over a breakfast of ham biscuits one day in 1994, we decided to write a book about them. We were writers, after all (the female half of us considerably more talented), and the mountains were there.



Dot Jackson, award-winning columnist, novelist and things Appalachian, co-founder She was the co-founder manager of the Birch the Arts and Folklife.

Something about Dot'



winning newspaper
and advocate for all
died Dec. 11, 2016.
ler and on-site
wood Center for

Reasons enough.

The book became “Keowee: The Story of the Keowee River valley in Upstate South Carolina.” The topic was close to each of us. Dot lived in the shadow of the mountains along the crown of South Carolina, and I loved the lakes and trails in the area.

Making the topic special, however, was the fact that the Keowee River, the focus of our writings, was no more. Once a sparkling wilderness river, the Keowee was flooded in the 1960s and 1970s by Duke Energy (then Duke Power) as part of a huge hydroelectric power project. The flooding created Lakes Keowee and Jocassee; lost was one of the Southeast’s most enchanting backwoods rivers, along with the farm fields and modest homes of hundreds of residents.

Bridges, houses and even graves were moved before the mountain valleys were flooded. The Keowee River lives only in memories. But grand memories they are. Dot took off in her tiny beaten-down

car, interviewing dozens of people who had lived in the area before the lakes were built. Many had moved only a few miles away, having watched the playgrounds of their childhoods disappear under lake water.

Meanwhile, I was busy documenting the timeline of the Duke project and building a big file on the history of the Cherokee Indians in the area. We wrote different chapters in the book – it is almost impossible for two writers to work on the same computer at the same time, a process that would result in flying consonants and vowels, not to mention coffee.

Dot is one of the finest writers I’ve ever known, but the quality of the work that she brought out of the mountains over that period of months still startled me. Her revealing interviews with old-timers and her vivid descriptions of the mountains before and after the flooding jumped from the pages.

This was hearth and home for Dot, and it showed.

One short example:

“In the memories of those who lived there, children are still playing under those trees, and the sparkling ripples of those waters are full of their laughter. Gardens still spill their riches over fences; cows fatten in meadowland pastures. There are throngs of summer boarders to be fed. Little boys ride on homemade ‘truck wagons,’ and the woodland paths are full of sly young sylphs and gigglers from Camp Jocassee for Girls. Someone making likker, someone unloading sin at the baptizing hole.”

I had admired Dot’s work since reading her columns in *The Charlotte Observer*. It was special to be a colleague of hers when we worked together at *The Greenville News*.

To share a book title with her was a highlight of my career. The book surprised us by selling out several printings, but the real reward for me was working on a project with a special writer and special person, one who made every sentence shine and every friend better.

‘The world has lost a beautiful voice’

By Debbie Fletcher

Dot Jackson was a master with words, but I struggle to find the words to describe her. Accomplished? Without a doubt. Brilliant storyteller? The best. Emotional, giving, endearing, captivating, humorous, genuine, supportive, and unpretentious? Yes, times eight. But the one word I feel best describes her is “unexpected.”

I first met Dot in Anna Simon’s driveway. Anna had shared a picture of the Whitewater River that Dot used in her book *Keowee*, and I was anxious to meet Anna and talk about her Camp Jocassee experiences. Dot insisted on joining this adventure. The only thing I knew about Dot was that she had co-authored *Keowee*.

She drove up right behind me in a rambling little car that looked like it was held together by a coat of rust. The first thing she said as she opened the car door was, “Well, if it isn’t Will Brown’s great-granddaughter!” That was my first clue that this lady knew far more than I imagined, for I had no idea she would have even known who Granddaddy Brown was. As she got out of the car, I could barely see her over the car door. (She used to joke about being as tall as she was wide.) Unexpected.



Dot was an award-winning writer and columnist for *The Charlotte Observer* and *The Greenville News*.

The three of us spent about four hours at Anna’s kitchen table talking about Jocassee, looking at pictures, swapping stories, laughing, crying. That was my first glimpse into how deeply Dot “felt” things. One minute she was laughing, and then suddenly she’d close her eyes (I know she was conjuring a memory), and her eyes would moisten--not

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The wandering elk that visited rural neighborhoods in the Upstate of South Carolina during November 2016 (seen here at a Keowee Key golf course in Oconee County) has found a new home as part of an exhibit of Colonial-era wildlife at the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism's Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site.

Wandering Upstate elk finds new home at Charles Towne Landing

North Carolina transplant becomes part of popular Animal Forest exhibit

After efforts to encourage the now-infamous "Upstate S.C. elk" to return to its home herd in North Carolina proved unsuccessful, the animal was relocated to the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism's Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site, where it has become a part of the Animal Forest exhibit there.

The now-infamous wandering elk that visited rural neighborhoods in the Upstate of South Carolina in November 2016 has found a new home as part of an exhibit of Colonial-era wildlife at the popular Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site in Charleston.

A display about the Upstate elk, featuring its antlers, is also located in the lobby of the Clemson SCDNR office at 311 Natural Resources Drive.

People began spotting the young bull elk, estimated by SCDNR biologists to weigh about 500 pounds, in late October 2016 at various spots in Pickens County. Biologists believe the young bull elk was pushed away from his home territory in Haywood County, N.C., by larger bulls. Despite repeated warnings not to approach or feed the elk, word of the rare visitor quickly spread on social media, and photos and video of people doing just that began to circulate.

In order to protect the elk (and the public), biologists from the SCDNR and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission eventually relocated it to a remote part of the mountains in Oconee County. When the elk then moved on its own to a spot near Devils Fork State Park, biologists were hopeful that it might keep moving north and rejoin the herd, but unfortunately, that didn't happen.


The elk was tranquilized Dec. 16, 2016, in a neighborhood south of Devils Fork State Park in Oconee County. It had been in this neighborhood for the past two weeks, and did not show any sign of moving. It had become more aggressive and was showing no sign of going back to

North Carolina. SCDNR biological staff decided it was time to move it, and Charles Towne Landing was willing to accept the animal.

On March 11, 2017, Charles Towne Landing celebrated the addition of two new habitats to the Animal Forest: one is a large fenced-in area for the young bull elk, and the other a custom-built and spacious habitat for a mature bald eagle. Both new habitats were dedicated by Jim Fowler, renowned naturalist and former host of *Wild Kingdom*, *Mutual of Omaha's* long-running television program. Rob Powell, park manager, and Jillian Davis, Animal Forest curator, presided over the festivities, attended by a number of visitors and members of the Friends of Charles Towne Landing.

Charles Towne Landing's Animal Forest is unlike most zoos. While the animals are still the attraction, their ties to the history of Colonial South Carolina is the lesson. The exhibit is home to a variety of species that inhabited the Carolinas at the time when Charles Towne was a newly settled English colony.

The Animal Forest is one of Charles Towne Landing's most popular attractions. Those who are interested in animals such as the Upstate elk may take part in the Adopt an Animal program. By adopting the care of an animal, you help with necessary items in wildlife maintenance such as feed, medical care and supplies, habitat maintenance, and repair. For more information on the Adopt an Animal program at Charles Towne Landing, visit <http://friendsofcharlestownelanding.org/programs/adopt-an-animal>.

Elk were present in the mountains of the Carolinas and other Southeastern states at the time of European colonization, but by the 1800s, overhunting and loss of habitat led to their disappearance. Elk were reintroduced to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 2001, and that herd has grown to at least 150 animals. Legislation passed in 2009 by the S.C. General Assembly protects elk in the Palmetto State, in anticipation that they might eventually begin to show up here. 

Become an 'Ultimate Outsider' by visiting all 47 state parks

Intrepid explorers expand their horizons beyond mountain parks

By Odell Suttle

In the summer of 2016, Sadie, my wife, and I decided we would launch a quest to become Ultimate Outsiders. It seemed fitting that we would have the official distinction. We have been visiting state parks since 1986.


The Ultimate Outsider is a program sponsored by State Parks in which you visit all 47 state parks. For us, a weekend or vacation in the park means we will rent one of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) cabins and get on the hiking trails during the day. We had always gone to Table Rock, Oconee and Myrtle Beach for our park trips.

We have learned in these past few months all the parks have their own personality and enjoyment to share with visitors. We have now visited Lake Hartwell State Park, Oconee State Park, Oconee Station, Table Rock, Paris Mountain, Jones Gap, Caesars Head, Devils Fork and Keowee-Toxaway.

That leaves us with 38 and our new goal is to complete this Ultimate Outsider journey this year. Our plan is to go to a park with the CCC cabins, rent a cabin for a week and every day travel to as many parks as possible, then return to our home base at night.

There is so much beauty in every park and we had been missing all this by going to the same places every time. Then there are the park employees that I now call my friends. In every park, the rangers and those in the office have been so cooperative. They have even helped us locate other parks that we had no idea where they were or how to get to them.

In a nutshell, we are both loving our Ultimate Outsider adventure.

(Odell Suttle "is a lifelong resident of Fountain Inn. Wife Sadie got me into hiking and she always drives me to the beginning of a hike and picks me up at the end. I could not do all the hiking if not for her help. I graduated from Hillcrest High School, the 2014 5-A state football champions. I was in Viet Nam 1966-1967. I like animals and have lots of birds living in my yard. Rabbits make beds in the yard and raise their babies, deer pass through when they want to nibble Sadie's flowers, coyotes live down on the creek about two hundred feet behind the house, but they never bother anything so I leave them alone.") 



BECOME AN
ULTIMATE OUTSIDER

EXPLORE ALL OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S STATE PARKS
TO BECOME AN ULTIMATE OUTSIDER!

Start your journey by ordering a guide online or at any state park. Collect a stamp at each of the 47 South Carolina State Parks you travel to and have a park ranger verify your stamp book at the final park you visit. Complete the verification form while you're there, and the park ranger will submit your name to receive a free Ultimate Outsider T-shirt in the mail to commemorate your achievement!

Share your adventure, using #SCStateParks and #UltimateOutsider

EXPLORE 47
COME OUT TO PLAY
STATE PARKS

Table Rock State Park (in background of top photo) serves as part of the S.C. State Parks Service's challenge to visit all 47 state parks and become the Ultimate Outsider!

New Palmetto Trail passage opens in Jocassee Gorges

Mountains-to-sea trail adds section
near Sassafras Mountain
that will allow loop hikes in area

Palmetto Conservation Foundation (PCF) recently opened the new Roundtop Mountain Passage to the public. The passage adds a 6.1-mile forested footpath to the cross-state Palmetto Trail and creates opportunities for circular hikes in the Jocassee Gorges.

Roundtop Mountain Passage is located between the Foothills Trail and the Palmetto Trail's Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage in northern Pickens County within Jocassee Gorges. From the Sassafras Mountain overlook, hikers will travel about a mile down the Foothills Trail toward Table Rock State Park. Signs will identify the Palmetto Trail split, and a trailhead kiosk about 150 feet down the Roundtop Mountain Passage will display a map and other important information. The address for Sassafras Mountain overlook is 1399 F. Van Clayton Memorial Highway, Sunset, SC 29685. At 3,553 feet, Sassafras Mountain is the highest point in South Carolina.

"PCF is delighted to open this new passage through the Jocassee Gorges," Executive Director Natalie Britt said. She added that PCF "appreciates the financial support from the Graham Foundation of Greenville for the new passage." Britt is leading PCF's efforts to "Finish the Trail." The 500-mile Palmetto Trail is South Carolina's longest hiking-bicycling trail and largest trail construction project. About 370 miles have now been completed. PCF's Palmetto Conservation Corps, the state's only trail-based AmeriCorps service project for young adults, helped build the new passage.

Jocassee Gorges is state-owned public property managed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). PCF partnered with SCDNR to create the Roundtop Mountain Passage, and collaborated with the Foothills Trail Conference to connect the passage to Sassafras Mountain and the Palmetto Trail's Middle Saluda Passage. Roundtop Mountain Passage intersects the Palmetto Trail's Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage between Table Rock and Keowee-Toxaway state parks. Roundtop Mountain Passage will offer some interesting circular hikes through Jocassee Gorges in combination with the Middle Saluda Passage, Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage, and the Foothills Trail.

"The new section of the Palmetto Trail will offer hunters, hikers, birdwatchers and other nature enthusiasts access to remote, impressive portions of Jocassee Gorges,



The formidable granite face of Rock Mountain is seen in early spring from the Roundtop Mountain Passage overlook on the Palmetto Trail in Jocassee Gorges, northern Pickens County.

which harbors huge Carolina hemlocks, old-growth woodlands, and stunning scenic vistas," said Mark H. Hall, SCDNR Jocassee Gorges land manager. Equally important, he added, "The trail will provide strategic access for search and rescue operations as well as wildfire management." Last November's Pinnacle Mountain wildfire burned about 10,000 acres in Jocassee Gorges, Table Rock State Park and the Greenville Watershed.

From the Roundtop Mountain Passage trailhead off the Foothills Trail, hikers will travel along a woodland ridge that slowly rises to a stand of rhododendron. The rhododendron marks the passage high point. From here, the winter forest offers a fine view of the mountains in North Carolina. Through a canopy of oak, poplar, maple, hickory, and sourwood, which set the forest ablaze with autumn color, the trail descends along the ridge and onto an abandoned woods road. Through summer's heat, the canopy protects smaller spring-flowering trees and shrubs—dogwood, wild cherry, azalea, redbud, serviceberry, and blueberry, as well as a plethora of perennials including trilliums, orchids and lilies. The forest, a sanctuary for birds and wildlife, also features a protected stand of old-growth Carolina hemlock at the summit of Roundtop Mountain.

The well-marked passage continues descending on Roundtop Mountain Road, an SCDNR access road, to an overlook that offers a spectacular view of Rock Mountain's formidable granite face. This overlook of the viewshed across Poplar Hollow Creek is the only place where the mountain's rock face is visible from the ground. Continuing to descend, the trail intersects with SCDNR's Poplar Hollow Road. Hikers take a left and follow the road for about two miles to the intersection with SCDNR's Horse Mountain Road.

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Meadow dedicated to former SCDNR bear biologist

Eastern tallgrass prairie demonstrates importance of grasslands

By Dr. Bill Stringer and Cathy Reas Foster

Skip Still has been an inspiration to lot of people. He is a man with many interests. The things that strike a chord with us are his advocacy for black bears, and his abiding interest in native meadows and prairies.

The South Carolina Native Plant Society has been working for several years on a meadow/prairie in front of the Clemson South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) office. The area is called the Skip Still Meadow, and it's named for a man who worked for many years as a wildlife biologist with SCDNR and headed up its Black Bear Project.

The creation of the Skip Still Meadow has been a long effort for several reasons, not the least of which is that the soil on the site is too fertile. After several years of plugging in native grass and wildflower species, and having crabgrass take off, we finally have arrived to the point where the site begins to approximate an Eastern tallgrass prairie. A dedication



Skip Still, retired SCDNR black bear biologist, speaks during a dedication service for his Skip Still Meadow in October 2016. The meadow is adjacent to the SCDNR Clemson office. (Clemson Extension Service photo by James Blake)

ceremony for the meadow honoring the retired bear biologist was held at the Clemson SCDNR office in Fall 2016.

We have Indiangrass, big bluestem, bushy bluestem, little bluestem and Eastern gamagrass, as well as butterfly milkweed, native sunflowers, several species of false indigo, leadplant, asters, and blazing stars all prospering on the site. There were a few occasions when we considered giving up, but then we asked ourselves, “Would Skip give up?” and the answer was no, so we soldiered on. These native species are all perennials, and so with a winter mow or burn each year, it will fill in, and remain for a long time to come. It can serve as an outdoor classroom on Eastern native grasslands. Plus, a sturdy Leopold bench in the middle makes it a wonderful place to sit and reflect. We hope Skip will use it for that, and we hope that we will run into Skip sometimes when we go there to reflect. ❁

(Dr. Bill Stringer is a retired professor at Clemson University and one of the founders of the S.C. Native Plant Society. Cathy Reas Foster is a former Clemson Extension Service agent who serves on many conservation boards and committees.)

New trail goes by Carolina hemlock on Roundtop Mountain

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The trail continues to the right for about a quarter mile, and intersects with the Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage of the Palmetto Trail. Trail signs point to Table Rock State Park to the left, and to the right US Highway 178 at Beasley Gap. For backpackers, a campsite with a water source is located about a half mile up the Blue Ridge passage toward Table Rock.

“PCF did a nice job in constructing the trail. We are pleased to have better access to a generally underutilized area,” Hall said.

Palmetto Conservation’s mission is to conserve South Carolina's natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote outdoor recreation through trails and greenways. Founded in 1989, the

statewide nonprofit organization is best known for building and maintaining the mountains-to-sea Palmetto Trail, which is a free, public resource for active, nonmotorized recreation.

From Walhalla in the Blue Ridge Mountains to Awendaw on the Intracoastal Waterway, the Palmetto Trail winds from mountains to sea through 14 counties—Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Union, Laurens, Newberry, Fairfield, Richland, Sumter, Clarendon, Orangeburg, Berkeley and Charleston. The Trail inspires active, healthy living and showcases the state’s diverse natural beauty, fascinating history, and rich cultural heritage. Visit www.palmettoconservation.org for information and downloadable maps of the Trail’s 28 passages. ❁



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Dot Jackson was a voice for people of Appalachia

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with sobbing tears--more like feelings that just showed up as tears. Her next words would be spoken with her eyes closed as if opening them meant losing that elusive memory. I could have sat and listened to her for hours--and I did. Unexpected.

One evening on my way to Jocassee, I spent the night with her in her old mobile home on the Birchwood property. Books and precious papers were stacked everywhere. "Let me fix you something to drink!" She had to use a cane to get around, and I expected a glass of ice water, maybe some iced tea. Her tiny kitchen was barely big enough to turn around in, and she had to keep everything on the counter so she could reach them. I heard the blender whirring, and she soon emerged with the most delightful concoction of white wine and frozen peaches served in a wine glass. Unexpected.

We were invited to speak together at Pickens High School. I would have preferred to just sit and listen to her stories about Issaqueena and how Six Mile got its name, but she refused in her humble manner by saying something about me knowing far more about Jocassee than she could ever know. So not true. Greg Lucas and I had a lingering lunch with her that day at a little grocery/convenience store/café down the road from the school.

Oh, the stories she told that day in between the many people who recognized her and came over to get a hug. Precious. That's what Dot called everyone. Precious. The thing is, you could tell she really meant it. We ended our delightful lunch with peach cobbler, which Dot refused. Greg asked, "You don't want any peach cobbler, Dot?" "Oh, I want it," she said. "I want the whole damn pan!" Unexpected.

Dot spent a morning with me on Lake Jocassee in 2004 as the divers once again visited Attakula Lodge 300 feet below. I know it was as hard for her as it was for me to be sitting on the water that drowned Jocassee, but we were dedicating my first book that day, and she wanted to be there for me. During our first encounter at Anna's house that day, Dot read the start of my book--which was really just going to be an unpublished memoir--and she told me I had to publish it. Period. So, I did. Dedicating the book that she insisted I publish--well, she just had to be there.

So, that was precious Dot Jackson, or Robinson. Funny, I never got a clear explanation about her last name. Doesn't matter, though, because anyone who knew her, just knew her as Dot. The world has lost a beautiful voice. Thank you for your words, Dot. They comfort us. 