

July 2006

Sierra

North Alabama Group



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<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/na.html>

General Meeting and Picnic **Thursday, July 20, 5:30 p.m.**

Bring your picnic supper to the Hays Nature Preserve.

Tuesday Night Hikes

Meet at 6:00pm at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot.

Picnic and Hike at the Hays Nature Preserve for July Meeting

This month the North Alabama Sierra group will meet at the Hays Nature Preserve for our picnic and hike. Bring something to eat and drink and maybe a lawn chair. Soos Weber, the Manager of the Preserve will lead a guided hike after supper for anyone who wants to join.

The Hays Nature Preserve and the Goldsmith Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary together form the City's largest and most undeveloped parklands. There are over 10 miles of trails that wind through bottomlands, swamps, and sloughs, suitable for hiking. Wildlife abounds with deer, rabbits, raccoons, and resident and migratory birds, in fact, this natural area is an important part of the [North Alabama Birding Trail](#).

Please come join us Thursday evening, July 20 for a picnic, camaraderie and a hike at a beautiful natural area. We will start around 5:30 and leave at dusk.

The Hays Nature Preserve is located on south US 431 east of Huntsville. Turn left past mile marker 324 if you are going south, or turn right 0.9 mile past mile marker 323 if you are going north on US 431.

- the Editor

State Receives Endangered Species Grants

Last week, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it is distributing \$1.4 million in grants to private landowners and organizations throughout the Southeast to benefit endangered species.

In Alabama, the Nature Conservancy has secured \$190,000 to work with landowners in the upper Paint Rock River watershed to enhance approximately 1000 feet of riparian habitat to benefit imperiled fish and mussel species. Along with the Paint Rock, groups in Mississippi and Alabama have also joined forces to secure a \$160,000 grant restore and enhance over 750 acres of native prairie habitat.

For more information about these projects and Fish and Wildlife's programs, contact Tom MacKenzie at 404-679-7291.

- BAMA Environmental News June 9, 2006 #264

Invasive Plant Group to Meet

On Tuesday, July 18, the North Alabama Invasive Plant Group will hold its second meeting. The Alabama Invasive Plant Council are in full support of the local group's efforts. The North Alabama group is continuing to work out the logistics of establishing an affiliation with the Alabama Council. In the mean time, the North Alabama group is going to continue organizing efforts at the next meeting on July 18th.

The group would like to see as many people as possible attend. The North Alabama group has a lot of work ahead of it and needs the collective expertise and ideas of many people to begin addressing the overwhelming problem of invasive plants in North Alabama.

The meeting will be from 6:30-8:00 at the Land Trust offices at 907 Franklin St. For more information about the meeting or about the North Alabama Invasive Plant Group, please call Andy Prewett, Land Manager of The Land Trust of Huntsville & North Alabama at 256-534-5263 or email him at andy@landtrust-hsv.org

- the Editor

The Best Hike In Tennessee

Hiking trails abound in the Savage Gulf of Grundy County. However, my all-time favorite is the Collins Gulf - Connector - Stagecoach Road loop. From trailhead to finish, the hike is about 13 miles, a good day's work. Most of the trail is not overly difficult, but three or four brief

sections can be strenuous, especially in the humidity of the summer.

At the trailhead, a left turn took me into the gulf and to Suter Falls, where Fall Creek tumbles into the gulf before joining the Collins River. Suter Falls is in actuality a series of drops about one-eighth of a mile long, and the lead waterfall drops 65 feet or so. The roar of the water falling over ancient rock, some of it 325 million years old, can be deafening at high water or a mere trickle, the water tapping the rock before collecting for a more energetic run.

After traversing a field of boulders, Otis, my black Labrador retriever, and I rock-hopped for half a mile or so across terrain made more difficult by a 3-inch layer of leaves on uneven ground. But eventually the rocky descent ended, and a steadier decline led us to the Collins River.

After three miles of brisk hiking, with an occasional pause to view the breathtaking wall of the gulf to the left, a spur trail to Horsepound Falls broke to the right. After dropping 30 feet, the water collects in a transparent pool before reorganizing for another run to the next precipice. Perhaps a half-mile farther along, Fall Creek Sink, a picturesque creek with mini-falls cascading from rock-lined walls, passed gently over broken rock before disappearing into a sink (the creek actually disappears into the ground).

The third distinct leg of the journey began with a climb. The trail skirts the now-dry Collins River, which had also disappeared underground, before crossing the dry bed of the river. This section of the trail leads the hiker to a junction at the Connector Trail, and junctions mean one thing - decisions. A sharp left turn takes the hiker to the famous Stone Door, but that trip was for another day. The brief walk on the Connector Trail was not fruitless. A 12-foot-high bamboo forest skirts the remote Sawmill campsite. This is the lowest point in the Savage Gulf, 1,000 feet above sea level. After four-tenths of a mile on the Connector, the trail again branches three ways. Sticking to the white blaze, I began the gradual 1.6-mile ascent out the gulf on the Stagecoach Road Trail. After a mile, there is advertised evidence of slave labor. The road is supported by stone blocks, chiseled and measured so perfectly that it looks as if it were set recently. How the road is bolstered in this steep terrain is an engineering marvel. It has stood the test of time since 1836. After reaching the top of the gulf, I was back on the Collins Gulf Trail, now 2,000 feet above the sea. Otis and I were briefly challenged by a poorly marked section of the trail. But panic never set in, and we resumed our walkabout. The stunning views of the work of time and water left me awestruck. Perhaps the best view of the gulf and the best view in Tennessee is three-quarters of a mile in on this trail. There a look to the northeast toward McMinnville offers a beautiful stretch of open expanse meant for one purpose, gazing.

Walking along the rim of the gulf, I encountered never-ending rhododendron, wild blueberry, in-season holly bushes, a variety of mosses and a variety of fir and pine trees. The trail alternates by skirting the gulf and then abruptly turning to creek crossings. The end of the hike is difficult. Tired from a full day, Otis and I came to a crossing of the Collins River and stared at a 120-foot suspension bridge lined with chicken wire. The roar of the whitewater gave the illusion the 35-foot drop over the river was actually higher. My canine buddy was none too happy to cross the bridge, but he summoned the courage to cross. Still shivering from our crossing, a larger boulder field awaited us. Our last abrupt climb out of the gulf took away our reserves but not my smile or my friend's tail-wagging.

- Jim Brown

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

July - August 2006

2006 ExCom Members

Chair	Liz Poleretzky	461-5819
Vice-Chair and Treasurer	Sam Denham	539-1033
Conservation chairs		
	Brenda Cummings	881-7447
	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Fund Raising	Judy Jones	852-6179
	and Freddie DiPlacido	533-0651
Membership	Dave Kostowny	325-2296
Newsletter	Jack Drost	880-2644
Outings	Lee Hollingsworth	461-3060
Publicity	Sandy Kiplinger	256/498-1023
Programs	Tom Burley	883-4267
Prgm Logistics Coordinator		
	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Secretary	Judy Burley	883-4267
Tuesday Hikes	Liz Poleretzky	461-5819
Web Page	Steven Baty	489-0990

General Meeting

Thursday July 20, 6:00pm. Hays

Nature Preserve. Bring your own food and drink and a chair. Optional hike of the Preserve afterwards.

Saturday, July 15 - Guntersville State Park hike. Strenuous. Hike 13.5 miles around the park's perimeter trails. Lots of canopy and scenery. Bring plenty of water, food and good hiking shoes. Meet 7:20am by the Wal-Mart gas station (11610 Memorial Pkwy SW, Huntsville). Sandy Kiplinger, sandykip@juno.com or 256/571-5870.

Tuesday, July 18, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. State Park fee. Leader: Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, July 22 - Elk River Float trip. Easy. RSVP by July 19. Bring your own canoe (\$10.00 shuttle fee) or call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 to arrange for a canoe rental. Meet at 8:00am at the Land Trust parking lot on Franklin St. and caravan from there. We will travel from the Shiloh Bridge to the Dickey Bridge - 7 miles. Bring sunscreen, insect repellent, and plenty of non-alcoholic beverages and lunch and be prepared for a good time. Call Doug Horacek 772-6788 for more information.

Tuesday, July 25, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. State Park fee. Leader: Liz Poleretzky, 461-5819.

Saturday, July 29 - Greeter Gulf Creekwalk and Swim. Strenuous. Walk through Tennessee's Garden of Eden. Rated strenuous because of slick rocks

and walking through water up to waist deep. Boots or shoes required in the water - river sandals are NOT okay. Bring water, lunch, hat and sunscreen. Meet 8:30am at Garden Cove, Pratt Ave/Meridian St. For more information, Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Tuesday, August 1, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. State Park fee. Leader: Helga Sowa, 534-5656.

Sunday, August 6 - Monte Sano hike. Moderate. Two to three hour hike in Monte Sano State Park. Cool off after the hike by taking a dip in the beautiful Monte Sano swimming pool (bring your swim suit and a towel). Meet 2:00pm at Sam Denham's house 4333 Chickasaw Dr SE. 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Tuesday, August 8, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking Lot. State Park fee. Leader: Bruce Martin, 256-725-2168.

Newsletter Labeling

Wednesday, August 9, 5:30pm. Down South Condominiums clubhouse. South Mem Parkway. Entrance on right between Big Ten Tires and Schlotzsky's. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, August 12 - Landtrust Hike. Moderate. Meet at the Landtrust parking lot on Bankhead Parkway at 9:00am. Approximately 5 miles, bring water and hiking boots. Liz Poleretzky, 461-5819.

Sunday, August 13 - Spider lily walk. Easy. Meet at 1:00pm at Hikers Parking lot, Monte Sano. Cost \$3.00. Long outing for a Sunday afternoon but well worth it. We will look for spider lilies everywhere they have been reported. Bring water and sturdy hiking boots. Call Doug Horacek 772-6788 for more information.

Tuesday, Aug 15, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. State Park fee. Leader: Virgil DeStefano, 539-0348.

Tuesday, Aug 22, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. State Park fee. Leader: Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Other Outings / Events

The following activities not sponsored or administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service.

Save the Date – Saturday Sept 30

National Public Lands Day – Cleanup on the Flint River Please set aside this day to come out and help make a difference in the environment. We all talk about it, how about spending just one day out of the year doing something about it? More details next month.

Nature Wanderers

Saturday, July 15. Bear Creek Canoe Run Easy canoe trip along the Bear Creek in Marion County, Alabama. TVA release so water is cool with a few ripples along the way. We will stop and swim at the Chief's hole and picnic on sandy beaches. Cost is approximately \$25 per person for two-person canoe and includes canoe rental and transport. Meet at McDonald's on Highway 157 in Moulton at 12:30 p.m. or the Bear Creek Canoe Run at 1:30 p.m. Bring snacks, water, and a canoe partner! Call Teresa Young at 256-773-1945 for reservations in advance of date.

Saturday, July 22. Mississippi Bike Ride Bike and swim at two of the nicest beaches anywhere around. Paved roads, light traffic. 21 miles total down and back at Bay Springs Lake in northwest Mississippi. Meet at Captain D's in Madison at 8:30 am or the Chevron in Courtland at 9:15 am. Bring lunch, snacks, and water as you feel needed. More mileage and dinner following the ride are optional. This is an "all day trip". Please call Doug Felton at 256 830 2271 in advance of date to check for any changes.

Saturday, July 29. Sipsey Wilderness/ Bankhead Forest Hike Join Ted and other friends from Wild South as Ted leads an easy-to-moderate hike in the Sipsey Wilderness and/ or Bankhead Forest. Destination to be announced at the time of the hike. Remember to bring lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. Meet at Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 am. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.

Monday, July 31. Natures Wanderers Meeting We will meet in the Community Room of the Wheeler Basin Library on Sixth Avenue in Decatur at 7:00 p.m. for the quarterly meeting of Natures Wanderers. Call Teresa Young 256-773-1945.