

November 2006

Sierra

North Alabama Group



Visit our website
<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/na.html>

General Meeting Thursday,
November 16, 6:30 p.m.

Club members talk about backpacking through Rocky Mountain National Park.

Tuesday Night Hikes Downtown

Meet at 6:00pm at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St.

Backpacking in Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado is the seventh most visited park in the National Park System. With 265,000 acres, 150 lakes, peaks over 14,000 feet, and 350 miles of trails, the park has some of the greatest variations in environment of any park in the system. For the November meeting, Dixon Tidmore and Steven Baty will introduce you to this park with facts and photos from a seven day backpacking trip taken in September.

- Tom Burley

A Scientist's Plea for Christian Environmentalism

Eminent Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson, who made "biodiversity" a household word in the 1980's when he won multiple Pulitzer prizes for his books "Biodiversity," "The Ants" and "On Human Nature," suggests that scientists need to "offer the hand of friendship" to religious leaders and build an alliance with them to "come together to save the creation." We environmentalists don't have the political clout by ourselves.

Our North Alabama Sierra Club website has a link to Wilson's eloquent letter to the evangelical community (<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/northalabama/EOWilsonLetter.pdf>), reproduced from where it appeared Sept. 4th, 2006 in "The New Republic" with permission from both the journal and from Dr. Wilson himself, an Alabama native and a graduate of Decatur High School. If you do not have access to the internet, S. Denham will be glad to mail you a hard copy of the letter. For more information, call Sam Denham at 539-1033(h).

- Sam Denham

The Great Eastern Trail

In the 1960s, concerns about pressures from population, road projects, and military installations spawned two major trails to the west of the Appalachian Trail, the Benton MacKaye Trail linking Georgia with the Great Smoky Mountains, plus the Tuscarora Trail crossing parts of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Originally conceived as potential replacements for the AT, these trails have now prospered in their own right.

The Benton MacKaye and Tuscarora trails joined a growing number of existing and planned trails through eastern mountains. Last year the trails community, including representatives from American Hiking Society and the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program, gathered to propose a "Great Eastern Trail" (GET) that would connect the Florida National Scenic Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail. Some have said that the GET will help ease crowding on the AT. Many miles of the proposed route already exist.

In Alabama, nearly 140 miles of the Alabama Pinhoti Trail traverse a very remote section of the Appalachians to the Georgia border, with sections much more rugged than you would expect. In the Conecuh National Forest in southern Alabama, the Conecuh Trail follows a gentle, rolling route through a bottomland forest of beech and oak interspersed with the stands of cane that give the forest its name. Between these two segments, a gap of some 220 miles exists, posing a major challenge to trail planners.

As laid out, the Great Eastern Trail stretches approximately 1,600 miles. However, it directly connects to some 10,000 miles of other trails, creating possibilities for endless exploration. Imagine being able to walk from Pennsylvania's dense forests of hemlock to primeval cypress swamps, or the vastness of the Great Plains. The connections are coming to make these dreams a reality. The first step for trail planners is to link existing trail segments together. This will be a slow but very exciting

process. A coalition of trail groups is coming together to work on the issues involved. In Alabama, the Alabama Hiking Trail Society and the Alabama Trails Association are working on trails in the state that will become part of this corridor. <http://www.alabamatrail.com/home.html> The North Alabama Sierra Club has been participating in some of the work on the Pinhoti Trail and the next work day is November 18 (see Outings page for more details).

For more information about the Great Eastern Trail, contact Jeffrey Hunter at jhunter@AmericanHiking.org or (423) 266-2507.

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- the Editor

Executive Committee Members Needed

If you are interested in serving on the 2006 Executive Committee (Excom) for the North Alabama group, please contact Liz Poleretzky, the current Chair, or one of the other current Excom members – see phone list on the Outings page. This is a good opportunity for those that have been in the club and enjoyed its benefits/outings through the years to give back to the group and for new members who would like to get more involved. - Liz, 461-5819 or hiker@knology.net

Christmas Party Set for December Meeting

Mark your calendars for Thursday evening, December 21 for the annual North Alabama Sierra Club Christmas/Holiday party. As usual there will be plenty of food (start planning your best covered dish now), good company and a photo contest. More details will be in the December newsletter.

For the photo contest, photos should have been taken in 2006 and there is a limit of three entries per category. The categories are 1) people on outings, 2) animals in the wild, 3) Mother Nature (plant life) and 4) awe-inspiring views. Start going through your photos now!

- the Editor

Interstate Proposed from Savannah to Knoxville

A proposal to cut a new interstate across the South has sparked a multi-state, grassroots effort to stop the project before it gets started. Proposed Interstate 3 would run approximately 400 miles from Knoxville to Savannah, through wetlands, fields and forests. The massive project is estimated to cost between \$10 billion and \$50 billion. Initial plans show the highway would run for miles along the southern edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and cut through parts of the Cherokee, Nantahala and Chattahoochee national forests (in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia, respectively).

Also in the works is another proposed interstate; Interstate 14 would run from Natchez, Mississippi across the South and join I-3, perhaps in Georgia, to end in Savannah. Both projects are being pushed by Georgia Congressman Charles Norwood, who says they would spur economic development in the underserved region. Norwood also touts I-3 to relieve traffic congestion north of metro Atlanta. As of yet a route for the highway has not been officially designated. In August 2005, Congress appropriated \$1.3 million to study the highway.

Numerous groups have banded together with local governmental organizations to fight the proposed interstate under an umbrella organization called the Stop I-3 Coalition. To find out more about the proposed interstate routes and the organizations and community groups that have joined together to fight it, go to the Stop I-3 web site at <http://www.stopi-3.org/>

- the Editor

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

November – December 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 Nov 16, 6:30pm.

Downtown Library auditorium

Dixon Tidmore and Steven Baty talk and show slides of their backpacking trip in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Hike Ratings

General Note: Most Saturday outings take all day and last into early evening. Please allow for this in your schedule

Easy-Less than 5 miles, no serious elevation changes, no trail obstacles.

Moderate-5 to 10 miles, some elevation changes or rough trail (rock hopping), or trail obstacles such as creek crossings.

Strenuous- Over 10 miles, substantial elevation change (1000 ft or more), trail may be rocky, obstructed or nonexistent.

Exploratory- event the leader has not experienced before, may fit any class.

Fri-Sun, Nov 10-12 - Mammoth Cave Backpack/Carcamp, Moderate.

This is a 14.7 mile self sufficient backpack over two days. We will depart on Friday around 10:00am arriving at Mammoth Cave around 3:00pm. We will carcamp Friday night and begin the backpack on Saturday. First Creek is the gem of backcountry trails with plenty of scenery. The variety of forest growth along with the scenery make this entire section of trail memorable. Time permitting we may do the tour of Mammoth Cave (optional). Group size will be limited to a maximum of ten. For further information contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@knology.net

Saturday, Nov 11 - Flat Rock hike.

Moderate. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking Lot at 8:00am. Bring lunch, water and sturdy hiking boots. The hike is 8.4 miles. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more information.

Sunday, Nov 12 - Honeysuckle Jihad.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot across from Fagan Spring Apartments at 1:00pm. Bring clippers, gloves, saws, water and bug repellent. Call Doug Horacek for more info at 772-6788.

Tuesday, Nov 14, 6:00pm - Downtown

Evening Hike. Easy.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Virgil DeStefano, 539-0348.

Saturday, Nov 18 - Pinhoti Trail

Construction. Help build the trail that will connect Alabama's Blue Ridge

Mountains to the AT in Georgia. Bring loppers, lunch, water, and work gloves. Other tools provided. Free early supper afterwards for everyone who shows up! Meet at Publix in Hampton Cove 7:00am. Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Sunday, Nov 19 - Galaxy of Lights

(Hsv Botanical Gardens). Easy.

Public Walk-Through Nights (no cars), Nov 17-20, 5-8 pm. A fun family atmosphere with Santa, crafts, refreshments and entertainment. Children \$3, Adults \$6.

Meet at 6:00pm in Space and Rocket Center/Marriot Hotel parking lot. Easy mile walk along paved roads viewing Christmas lights. A thermos of your favorite hot beverage is suggested. Rain date Nov 20. For more information, Lee Hollingsworth, 520-6659 or 461-3060.

Tuesday, Nov 21, 6:00pm - Downtown

Evening Hike. Easy.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Friday, Nov 24 - Walk off the

Turkey hike.

Join us at 9:00am at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot for a 5-mile stroll through the ridges and hollows of Monte Sano. You spent all day Thanksgiving stuffing your face, so come with us for a turkey stroll. Rated easy, lots of rest time. Bring water and a mandatory turkey sandwich. Bruce Martin 256-725-2168.

Saturday, Nov 25 - Signal Point hike.

Moderate.

Signal Point is the highest point on Signal Mountain. The hike from Signal Point to Edwards Point is part of the Cumberland Trail with striking overlooks of the Tennessee River Gorge. The hike is about seven miles. Bring lunch and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at 8:00am at the former Winn Dixie on Winchester Road. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@knology.net

Tuesday, Nov 28, 6:00pm - Downtown

Evening Hike. Easy.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Nancy Dudney, 882-9408.

Excom Meeting

Thursday, Nov 30, 5:30. Sam Denham, 539-1033.

Saturday, Dec 2 - Fagan Spring

Wildflower hike. Easy. Meet at Cleermont trail head of the Land Trust at 9:00am and walk along Fagan Spring looking for Hepatica, then loop back to the trailhead. Bring water and sturdy hiking boots. Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more info.

Saturday, Dec 2 - Monte Sano Hike.

Moderate. We'll take the new Trough Springs Trail to the bottom of the mountain, then hike cross country to the Arrowhead Trail to loop back to the starting point. You'll learn to identify Hartselle Sandstone. 4-5 miles, 2-3 hours. Meet at 9:00am at the new Trough Springs trailhead parking lot just off Monte Sano Blvd about 200 yards north of the Burritt Museum driveway. Bring water and snack. Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Sunday, Dec 3 - Honeysuckle Jihad.

Meet at 1:00pm at the Land Trust across from Fagan Spring Apt. Bring clippers, gloves and water. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more information.

Tuesday, Dec 5, 6:00pm - Downtown

Evening Hike. Easy.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Helga Sowa, 534-5656.

Friday, Dec 8 - Walking Tour of Old

Decatur Christmas Lights. Easy.

Meet at 5:00pm at Captain D's Madison Hwy 20, or 5:30pm at Decatur Public Library. Dinner at trendy Decatur restaurant afterwards. Please call so I can make reservations at the restaurant. Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

Saturday, Dec 9 - Blackwell Swamp

Bike Ride. Easy.

Bike ride around Blackwell Swamp on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Fat tires- dirt and gravel roads. Easy eight miles with an optional 12 more miles along the river. Meet at 10:00am at the Captain D's on Hwy 20 in Madison. For more information, call Brenda at 881-7447

Tuesday, Dec 12, 6:00pm - Downtown

Evening Hike. Easy.

Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Liz Poleretzky, 461-5819.

Newsletter Labeling

Wednesday, Dec 13, 5:30pm. Down South Condominiums clubhouse. South Mem Parkway. Entrance on right between Big Ten Tires and Schlotzsky's. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, Dec 16 - Stonedoor dayhike.

Strenuous. 8 to 10 miles. The Great Stone Door is a 150-foot deep crevice at the crest of the plateau by which we will enter Savage Gulf. We will follow the Big Creek Gulf trail with a side trip to Ranger Falls and return by way of the Big Creek Rim trail that promises spectacular

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

November – December 2006

vistas. Bring lunch and water. We will eat at a local restaurant on the way back. Meet at the Publix on Winchester Road at 8:00am. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@knology.net

Tuesday, Dec 19, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: Bruce Martin, 256-725-2168.

Thursday, Dec 21 – Christmas Party. Bring a dish to share and your best outdoor photos for the photo contest. Details in next month's newsletter.

Tuesday, Dec 26, 6:00pm - Downtown Evening Hike. Easy. Meet at the Land Trust parking lot at 907 Franklin St. Leader: TBD, 461-5819.

Other Outings / Events

The following activities are 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 because they might be of interest to the readers of our newsletter.

Alabama Rivers Alliance

Saturday, Dec 2 – Historic Mines Hike.

Location: Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, 1214 81st Street South, Birmingham

Details: A once a year opportunity to have a guided visit into Ruffner's mining past and visit some of the less traveled areas of the mountain. \$5 members and \$7 nonmembers.

Time: 10:00am

Contact: info@ruffnermountain.org.

Weekday number for more information and to make reservations: (205) 833-8264 ext 4.

Wild South

Saturday, November 25 – Bankhead Forest hike.

Meet at the Warrior Mountains Trading Company in Wren at 9:00am. Return to Wren by mid-afternoon. We will hike into canyons, and cross streams - appropriate footwear and a walking stick will help. Bring a lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. Field guides for wildflowers or birds, binoculars, raincoat and a camera may come in handy. Please contact janice@wildsouth.org (256-974-6166) to sign up or ask questions.

Sierra Cahaba Group

Saturday, Nov 18 – Oak Mountain hike.

Moderate. We will hike the Yellow Trail at Oak Mountain State Park, passing through Maggie's Glen where there is a nice creek lined on both sides with beech

trees. From there we will hike to Old Lake where we will pass the old CCC cabins up on a hill and a waterfall created by Old Lake dam. After that we will enjoy a good walk in the woods for several miles. Meet at the parking lot at the entrance to the Pevine Falls dirt road at 9:00am. Bring water and lunch. Afterwards for those interested we will have dinner at 2 Pesos Mexican restaurant on Hwy 119. Hike rated moderate for distance of 8 + miles and a few steep hills. Trip Leader Jim Binnings 205-746-3266, jbinnings@bellsouth.net

Sunday, Nov 26 – Sipsey hike. Easy.

Family friendly 5 mile walk in the Sipsey Wilderness. We will walk along Borden Creek as it winds its way to the Sipsey River. Sandstone cliffs rise above both sides of the trail, some 300 ft high. One half mile into the hike we'll reach a 50 ft waterfall. Next to the waterfall is a cave about 100 feet long which we'll walk and crawl through. The rest of the hike will be just as easy and a chance to enjoy a cool crisp fall afternoon in the woods. Hike is rated easy and is pet friendly. Bring lunch and plenty of water. We will meet at the Jack's in Double Springs at 9:30am. Trip Leader Jim Binnings, 205-746-3266 or jbinnings@bellsouth.net

Nature Wanderers

Sunday, Nov 12 - Sipsey Wilderness Bankhead Forest Exploration.

Moderate. Hike in the Sipsey Wilderness and/or Bankhead Forest. Destination to be determined by Ted and participants on day of hike. Remember to bring your lunch and water. Meet at the Trading Post in Wren at 9:00am. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.

Saturday, November 18 - Monte Sano Mountain. Moderate.

Enjoy the last of the leaves as we take an afternoon trek to the Stone Cuts. Moderate hike 5-6 miles. Bring a snack and water. For meeting time/place, call Teresa Young 256-773-1945.

Saturday, Nov25. Sipsey Wilderness/ Bankhead Forest Hike. Moderate.

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 water. Meet at Trading Post in Wren at 9:00am. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.

Sunday, Dec10 - Sipsey Wilderness Bankhead Forest Exploration.

Moderate. Easy-to-moderate hike in the Sipsey Wilderness and/or Bankhead Forest. Destination to be determined by Ted and participants on day of hike. Remember to bring your lunch and water. Meet at the Trading Post in Wren at 9:00

am. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.

Saturday, Dec 16 - Bike Ride Muscle Shoals. Easy. Easy bike ride along paved bike path on the south side of the Tennessee River below Wilson Dam. Weather permitting we may even venture across the new bridge into Florence. Lunch afterwards at local Florence eatery. Call Teresa Young 256-773-1945 for meeting/time place.

Saturday, December 30. Sipsey Wilderness hike. Moderate. Celebrate the New Year and get a bit of exercise with our friends from Wild South on an easy – moderate hike in the Sipsey Wilderness of the Bankhead Forest. Remember to bring lunch, water and snacks. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Trading Post in Wren. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.