

April 2007

# Sierra

## North Alabama Group



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

**Dinner Celebration and Meeting,**  
**Thursday, April 19, 6:30 p.m.**

WildFlour Bistro, 600 Jordan Ln.  
Celebrate John Muir's birthday and  
Earth Day.

**Tuesday Night Hikes**

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

### **Dinner Celebration for John Muir and Earth Day**

In place of the April meeting, the Sierra Club of North Alabama will be holding a dinner celebration and fund raiser. The dinner will be held on Thursday evening, April 19 at WildFlour Bistro to celebrate Earth Day and John Muir's birthday. All Sierra Club members, guests and friends are welcome. Ron Warren, a local nature photographer will be the guest speaker. Ron currently has a number of his photos on display at WildFlour and he will talk to us about photographing wildlife in the North Alabama area.

WildFlour Bistro is located at 501 Jordan Lane in the old Fratelli's location, just south of Holmes Ave. Owner Kathy Biltz puts an emphasis on fresh, locally grown ingredients and innovative dishes. For our celebration dinner, \$25 provides your choice of entrée, dessert and beverage. Alcoholic beverages are extra. \$10 of each dinner will go to the local Sierra group.

For more information, call Helga Sowa, 534-5656.

### **Backpacking Class Graduates 18**

A Beginners Backpacking Class was taught by Tom Burley of the North Alabama Sierra Group on Saturday, March 10. 18 eager students participated, the class was highly successful and all of the participants were very pleased with the outcome. Topics included introduction to backpacking basics, selecting gear, backcountry health issues, first aid, and basic orienteering. There was very good interaction by the participants and hands on demonstrations with gear such as packing packs and setting up tents. Students had a working lunch during which they continued to ask questions and discuss what they had learned during the morning session. One participant related that he should have had this class before he attempted a trip in the Sipsey during which he became lost. Several participants inquired about the possibility of an advanced backpacking class and orienteering class.

Ten of the participants were able to go on the graduation backpack in the South Cumberland. The weather was beautiful allowing for extraordinary vistas. After arriving at Alum campground everyone pitched in to gather firewood and filter water. The new backpackers did so well that there was ample time after setting up camp for a side trip to Greeter Falls. A good time was had by all and campfire stories were told. The next morning brought a new story about the visitor that wandered into our campsite during the early morning hours unable to find his way back to his campsite after a visit to the privy. Everyone wanted to know when the next backpack was scheduled stating that they definitely intended to continue with backpacking. In fact three of the participants want to test their new skills on a backpacking trip to the Big Frog Wilderness in June.

- Tom Burley

### **Follow the Kingfisher**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual North Alabama Birding Festival will be held May 4-6 in Decatur, AL. The free festival offers a day-long birding EXPO with children's activities, craft workshops, and live wildlife demonstration; nationally known speakers; guided field trips; and other art exhibits and presentations.

On Saturday, May 5 from 9am to 4pm there will be various workshops and activities designed for children and adults at the riverside Rhodes Ferry Park in Decatur. Workshops include dissecting owl pellets, constructing a birdhouse, carving a bird decoy, landscaping to attract wildlife, and Birding 101. Guided field trips to be held on Friday, Saturday include a driving tour to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge for an opportunity to see many waterfowl species such as ducks, geese, wading geese, and other

migratory birds. Field trips to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and Swan Creek Wildlife Management area are also offered on Sunday mornings. There is a small fee associated with the field trips and you must pre-register.

For more information or to request a festival brochure, contact the Decatur-Morgan County Convention & Visitors Bureau at 256.350.2028 or 800.239.7219 or visit their website at [www.decaturocvb.org](http://www.decaturocvb.org) and click on the Birding Festival icon. To request a visitor's guide to the North Alabama Birding Trail, call 866-23VISIT or download a copy at [www.northalabamabirdingtrail.com](http://www.northalabamabirdingtrail.com).

### **Earth Day 2007 at the Hays Nature Preserve**

Earth Day 2007 on April 21 is now in its 37th year of commemorating the day that many historians recognize as the birth of the modern environmental movement. Since its inception, interest and participation in Earth Day has only increased and spread around the world, with activities, celebrations, and events growing steadily over time and millions of concerned citizens taking part.

In Madison County, Earth Day is annually celebrated at the J.D. and Annie S. Hays Nature Preserve, an idyllic location on the Flint River. The cool green of trees bursting into leaf, combined with the songs of migratory birds provides a peaceful backdrop for this free family event.

Earth Day will begin with a birding hike at 7:30am in the parking lot of the Preserve. The remainder of the events begin at 10:00am and include Dr. Bloom of the Lookout Mountain Zoological Park in Mentone, EarthScope Teachers to entertain young children with environmental activities, a mountain bike of the preserve's remote trails and guided ecotours at 1:00 and 2:30. Professional photographer Robert Schuffert will instruct camera bugs in as we walk through the swamps and bottomlands at the wildlife sanctuary's 2:30 hike.

Exhibitors from various conservation organizations and earth-friendly vendors will be on hand. Come enjoy the natural heritage of our Earth. We have plenty of Earth Day activities for you to learn about and appreciate.

For more information contact Soos Weber, Ecologist, City of Huntsville at [susan.weber@hsvcity.com](mailto:susan.weber@hsvcity.com). Or go to [www.huntsvillepreserves.com](http://www.huntsvillepreserves.com) or call 427-5116.

- Soos Weber

### **Proposed Port for Wheeler Wildlife Refuge**

The Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is currently under threat by yet another construction proposal, this time for a barge port. The North Alabama Sierra Group is against this proposal and believes the proposed port is superfluous and will harm the Refuge. The Wheeler Refuge affords greater opportunity for varied outdoor activities than any site within hundreds of miles. Its abundant wildlife, both resident and migrating, remains wild and accessible for viewing, hunting and fishing. Locals and visitors hunt, fish, canoe, kayak, hike, run, ride bicycles and horses at the Refuge. They bring their children and grandchildren and teach them to enjoy the outdoors and to appreciate nature. What the Wheeler Refuge provides now is worth far more than the proposed barge port.

There will be numerous community meetings regarding the proposed port on the Wheeler Refuge so please attend and show your opposition. If you would like to be on an email list for alerts regarding the Refuge or other local environmental threats, please send an email to Liz Poleretzky at [hiker@knology.net](mailto:hiker@knology.net).

Just as we defeated the proposed gas line across the Refuge, we believe that with all of our support we can defeat this latest threat to a beautiful piece of North Alabama.

- Brenda Cummings and the Editor

# North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

## April - May 2007

### 2007 ExCom Members

Chair	Liz Poleretzky	461-5819
Vice-Chair and Treasurer	Sam Denham	539-1033
Conservation chair	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Fund Raising	Helga Sowa	534-5656
Membership	Dave Kostowny	325-2296
Newsletter	Jack Drost	880-2644
Outings	Lee Hollingsworth	461-3060
	And Tom Burley	883-4267
Publicity	Sandy Kiplinger	256/498-1023
Programs	Judy Burley	883-4267
Secretary	Judy Burley	883-4267
Tuesday Hikes	Nancy Dudney	882-9408
Web Page	Steven Baty	489-0990

### Meeting and Fund Raiser Dinner

**Thursday, April 19, 6:30pm.**

**WildFlour Bistro, 600 Jordan Ln.**

\$25 covers entrée, beverage and dessert. Speaker Ron Warren. Call Helga Sowa, 534-5656.

### Hike Ratings

**General Notes:** Saturday outings may take all day and last into early evening. The Sierra Club encourages carpooling to save fuel, but you should be prepared to drive your own car on club outings.

**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.

### Saturday, April 14 - Wade Mtn hike.

**Easy.** Meet at the trail head on Spraggins Hollow Road at 9:00am. Bring plenty of water, bug repellent and sturdy hiking boots. We will be looking at spring glade wildflowers. For more information Doug Horacek at 772-6788.

**Saturday, April 14 - Walls of Jericho hike. Strenuous.** The Walls of Jericho is a large natural amphitheater that shoots water out of holes and cracks in the canyon wall during times of high water flow. This is a unique area that consists of more than 21,000 acres of rivers, forested uplands and caves spreading across the Alabama and Tennessee state line. This beautiful tract, once the hunting grounds of Davy Crockett, contains a diverse array of plants and animals. The hike is approximately 7 miles and has a 1000 ft elevation gain. Bring lunch and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at 9:00am at the Publix in Hampton Cove. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@knology.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@knology.net)

**Tuesday, April 17, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Liz Poleretzky, (wk) 461-5819.

**Thursday, April 19, 6:30pm - Fundraiser Dinner at WildFlour Bistro.** \$25 per person includes entrée, beverage and dessert. For more information call Helga Sowa, 534-5656.

**Saturday, April 21 - Earth Day at the Hayes Nature Preserve.**

**Saturday, April 21 - Land Trust Rock Hop. Moderate-Strenuous.** Two thirds of this hike will be off-trail in a creek bed. You will see parts of the Land Trust you're not accustomed to, and get a good aerobic workout. You can keep your boots dry on this hike. 3 hours; bring snack and water. Optional lunch at Thai Garden after hike. Meet at Land Trust Parking Lot. Sam Denham 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

**Sunday, April 22 - Wade Mountain Hike. Moderate.** Meet at 1:00pm at the Wade Mountain Greenway on Pulaski Pike. Moderate 5 mile hike along the greenway (paved) and then up the hill and through the woods (unpaved). Liz Poleretzky, 461-5819 [hiker@knology.net](mailto:hiker@knology.net).

**Tuesday, April 24, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Judy Burley, 883-4267.

### Excom Meeting

**Thursday, April 26, 5:30.** Liz Poleretzky, 461-5819.

### Fri-Sun, April 27-29 - Big Frog Wilderness backpack. Strenuous.

15-mile self-sufficient backpack with significant elevation changes over two days. Depart Friday at noon, stay at the Thunder Rock Campground Friday night. Saturday we will ascend to the summit of Big Frog Mountain where we will camp Saturday night. The trip promises vistas and a variety of possible wildlife sightings. Sunday we will descend to the trailhead and return home. Group size limited to ten. Contact Tom Burley 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@knology.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@knology.net)

**Sunday, April 29 - Big Cove Creek Rock Hop. Moderate-Strenuous.** Hike up this little-known but beautiful rocky creek in the recent Forever Wild "Big Cove Creek" addition to Monte Sano State Park. Normal hiking boots are fine as you will be able to keep them dry. Four hours; bring snack and water. Optional dinner after. Meet at Sam Denham's house. 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

**Tuesday, May 1, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Virgil DeStefano 539-0348.

**Saturday, May 5 - Bike Chief Ladiga Trail. Moderate.** Bike at your own pace, out and back 44 miles (or less if you wish) on smooth blacktop bike path on old railroad bed. Beautiful scenery. From Piedmont Park we will bike north a few miles to end of trail, turn around at Terrapin Creek, stop at the Visitor center, and return to the park for picnic lunch. Then head south thru JSU to Anniston and back. Stores with drinks and ice cream located along the way. Meet at 8:00am Hampton Cove McDonalds. Bike, helmet, lunch and water required. Lee Hollingsworth, 461-3060.

**Saturday May 5 - Collins Gulf Dayhike. Strenuous.** This 13 mile loop in the South Cumberland descends into the Collins River Gorge and has many beautiful geological features including waterfalls and overlooks. We will descend into the gorge and climb out by way of the Stagecoach Historic trail and return on the Collins Gulf rim. This is a difficult but rewarding hike. Bring lunch and water and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at Publix on Winchester Road at 8:00am. Tom Burley 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@knology.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@knology.net)

**Sunday, May 6 - Mill Hollow Rock Hop. Moderate-Strenuous.** Hike to the top of Mill Hollow (Three Benches near The

Sinks), then down the dry ravine to the old pump house built by CCC, and the pastoral creek at the bottom, then back up the mountain (the "other" waterline trail). The old farm at the bottom will soon be developed, so this may be the last chance to see it. 3.5 hours. Bring snack and water. Optional restaurant supper afterward. Meet at 2:00pm at Monte Sano Hikers' Parking Lot. Sam Denham, 539-1033(h), 961-0436(w).

**Tuesday, May 8, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Bruce Martin, 256-725-2168.

### Newsletter Labeling

**Wednesday, May 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, May 12 - Tribute to Mother's Day Hike at DeSoto State Park.

**Strenuous.** Ample April Showers bring abundant May wildflowers and flowing waterfalls on this 8-1/2 mile hike. We'll lunch in a camera worthy spot and then continue our moderate pace by Little River. Afterward, we will hike in another location, scramble over (and back up) a cliff to see caves of questionable origin. Not for the fair of foot. We'll end it with a Kodak moment and optional dinner at Western Sizzlin, Ft. Payne. We will leave the gas station at Wal-Mart (11610 S. Memorial Pkwy, Hsv) at 7:15 sharp. Bring snacks, lunch, water, good hiking boots and bug spray. Sandy Kiplinger, [sandykip@juno.com](mailto:sandykip@juno.com).

**Tuesday, May 15, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Liz Poleretzky, (wk) 461-5819.

**Saturday, May 19 - Rainbow Mtn. Hike. Moderate.** Meet at Rainbow Mountain Trail Head at 9:00am. Bring water, bug spray, and sturdy hiking Boots. Call Doug Horacek for information 772-6788.

**Tuesday, May 22, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Nancy Dudney, 882-9408.

**Saturday, May 26 - Pisgah Gorge Rockhop.** Sam Denham 539-1033(h).

**Tuesday, May 29, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy.** Meet at Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot. Leader: Judy Burley, 883-4267.

**Thu-Sun, June 14-17 - Max Patch to Hot Springs Backpack. Strenuous.** 20-mile self-sufficient backpack with significant elevation changes over two days. We will depart Thursday at 9:30am arriving in Hot Springs around 3:00pm and take a shuttle to Max Patch. The hike is a gentle climb across the southernmost bald on the AT abounding with wildflowers that is reminiscent of the opening scene from the Sound of Music. We will spend Saturday night at the Hot Springs Campground on the French Broad River with a one-hour soak in the mineral hot springs. Cost approximately \$25 per person for shuttle, campsite, and hot tub. Group size limited to a ten people and participants must commit by May 27th. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or [tdburleyhiker@knology.net](mailto:tdburleyhiker@knology.net)

### Other Outings / Events

The following are not sponsored or administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety,

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## North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar April - May 2007

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supervision or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because they might be of interest to our readers.

### Flint River Conservation Association

#### Saturday, June 2 – Flint River

**Cleanup.** As part of National Rivers Clean Up week, the FRCA is sponsoring a cleanup of the Flint River. Canoe rentals will cost us \$10 per person, so we are asking those that do not have their own canoes to chip in and we will give them a membership in FRCA to boot! We may clean up several sections of the Flint based on the number of volunteers, and of course we will have Landlubbers clean up around bridge crossings. For more information, call Soos at 427-5116.

### Forever Wild - Walls of Jericho

**Saturday, April 14** - The Huntsville Wildflower Society at 9:00am.

**Saturday, April 28** - Dr. Wayne Barger, Botanist, ADCNR State Lands Division – wildflowers at 10:00am.

**Saturday, May 12** - Nick Sharp, Land Stewardship Officer, ADCNR State Lands Division – natural and human history of the Walls of Jericho 10:00am.

**Saturday, May 19** - Eric Soehren, Terrestrial Ecologist, ADCNR State Lands Division – songbirds at 10:00am.

All hikes are free to the public. Walls of Jericho hikes begin at the hiker's parking lot off of Highway 79 in Jackson County. The hike is six miles roundtrip, strenuous and involves a 1,000 foot elevation change. Hikes will last approximately five hours. Hikers should bring a sack lunch and plenty of water.

Directions: From Highway 72 just west of Scottsboro, turn north on Highway 79 and travel approximately 20 miles, through the town of Hytop. The hiker's parking lot is on the left after the horse trail parking lot.

To learn more about the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources visit [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com).

### Huntsville Wildflower Society

#### Saturday, April 14 - Walls of Jericho.

From AL to TN. Paul Tidwell, 536-7290, 508-8501. Strenuous. 7 miles, all day. Leave @ 8:00am.

#### Saturday, April 21 – Shakerag.

Sewanee, TN . Ann Yates, 534-8006. Moderate. 1 mile, all day. Trilliums.

**Sunday, April 22 - Holmes Garden, Newsome Sinks.** Brian Finzel, 489-4184, 508-8848. Easy. 1 mile, ½ day. Trilliums.

**Saturday, April 28** - Cane Creek Canyon Preserve. Jerry Green, 536-9712, 658-9713. Moderate. 4-5 miles, all day. French's Shooting Star.

#### Sunday, April 29 - Wade Wharton's Garden.

Huntsville Botanical Garden. Doug Horacek, 772-6788. Easy. 3 miles, ½ day.

### Land Trust of Huntsville & North Alabama

#### Saturday, April 14 - Three Caves Tour Guide Orientation

– Registration Required. 9:00am. Want to be a summer cave tour guide? Be part of an elite cadre of folks who get to tell the secrets of the cave. This fun volunteer

opportunity includes a morning of on-site training with City Engineer Tom Cunningham. RSVP to Cathie Mayne at 534-5263 to learn details.

**Sunday, April 15 - Wildflower Stroll on Rainbow Mountain.** 2:00pm. Doug Horacek will help you identify invasive plants, as well as Alabama native wildflowers "Shooting Star" and "Iris Cristata. Wonder at famous Balance Rock. This mountain stroll includes stops to learn more about the flowers. 2-3 hours. Moderate.

Directions: West on Hwy. 72 (University Drive); turn left onto Hughes Road (in Madison) then left onto Thomas Drive. Left onto Concord and then right onto Stoneway Trail. At T-intersection at top of mountain, turn right and follow Stoneway Trail to the water tower (app. .6 miles). The Land Trust graveled parking area is at the base of the water tower. Free to the public.

#### Saturday, April 21 - Certain Trail on

**North Green Mountain.** Hike I. 9:00am.

**Sunday May 20 - Certain Trail on North Green Mountain.** Hike II. 2:00pm.

The top of North Green Mountain preserved just for you! Walk along remnants of the Spacewalk Trail and hike to "The Narrows" with Board member and avid hiker Joe Ruf. Enjoy spectacular views of Hampton Cove and South Huntsville. 1 hour. Moderate.

Directions: Meet at The Land Trust parking area (south side) at the top of Cecil B. Ashburn Drive (4 Mile Post extension) at the top of Blevins Gap. Free to the public.

#### Saturday, April 21 - Banyon Swamp

**Tour.** 1:00pm. Discover colorful azaleas, native ferns, six springs, and a bubbling creek on this stroll along a winding pathway through this extraordinary northwest Madison County wetland. This property is a Life Estate donated to The Land Trust by owner Malcolm Gillis. App. one hour. Easy.

Directions: From University Drive take Pulaski Pike North for about 13 miles. At short stretch of four lane road just past Grimwood Road, stay in right lane which turns right onto Morris Road. Follow Morris Road one mile to stop sign at Opp Reynolds Road. Turn right and go one half mile to house number 1001. Free to the public.

#### Sunday, April 22 - The Wildflower

**Trail:** Through the Camera Lens on Earth Day. 2:00pm. Join award winning photographer Jerry Green for a fun tour of The Land Trust trail named for its claim to fame: beautiful wildflowers. Bring your camera and get tips on how to identify and photograph the stars of this trail. One hour. Easy with moderate incline.

Directions: California to Hermitage Avenue, left onto Cleermont; Wildflower Trailhead at end of street. Free to the public.

#### Saturday, April 28 - Monte Sano's

**High Trail.** 10:00am. Join Lynne Weninegar for a historical tour atop along beautiful High Trail. Sinkholes, mines and the first indoor bathtub in Huntsville. Learn some fascinating tidbits as you enjoy the view. App. 1.5 miles. Moderate.

Directions to The Land Trust's parking lot: Take Pratt Avenue east to Bankhead Parkway, cross Tollgate Road. Parking lot is ½ mile further on right. Park at north end of parking lot

### Nature Wanderers

**Sunday, April 22 - Shiloh Battlefield – Earth Day.** Let's celebrate Earth Day by

taking an easy bike ride around the civil war battleground at Shiloh. It is located near the Mississippi – Tennessee border above luka. The roads through the park are paved and mostly flat. Bring a snack and water. There is an admission fee to see the video and tour the museum. Call Teresa Young 256-773-1945.

#### Saturday, April 28. Sipsey Wilderness /Bankhead Forest Exploration.

Join Ted and our friends from Wild South on an easy-to-moderate hike in the Sipsey Wilderness and/or Bankhead Forest. Remember to bring lunch and water.

This hike is a great opportunity to meet some new hiking buddies as it is always well attended. Meet at the Trading Post in Wren at 9:00 am. Call Ted Kuzma 256-974-7771.