

March 2009

Sierra

North Alabama Group



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

**Wheeler Wildlife Refuge,
Huntsville Public Library
Auditorium, Thursday, March 19
at 6:30pm**

Tuesday Night Hikes

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

Wheeler Wildlife Refuge

For the March 19 meeting, we will have a presentation on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, a 35,000 acre refuge established in 1938 to provide habitat for wintering and migrating birds. Considered the easternmost Refuge in the Mississippi flyway, this 34,500 acre Refuge attracts thousands of wintering waterfowl each year and supports the southernmost and Alabama's only significant concentration of wintering Southern James Bay Canada geese. It also serves as winter habitat for the State's largest duck population.

Wheeler NWR is comprised of a great diversity of habitat types such as bottomland hardwoods, wetlands, pine uplands, agricultural fields, and backwater embayments. These habitats provide excellent feeding, loafing, and roosting sites for waterfowl, as well as nesting sites for migrating songbirds. The Refuge provides a much needed oasis in one of the fastest growing regions in the state, with Madison being ranked as one of the top ten fastest growing cities in the nation in 2002.

There will be no meeting in April.

The North Alabama Sierra Club meets at 6:30 the third Thursday of every month at the Huntsville Madison County Public Library in the main auditorium. The library is in downtown Huntsville on Monroe St. just off Governor's Drive. Everyone is invited.

- The Editor

Paper or Electrons

Like everyone else, the Sierra Club is being affected by the downturn in the economy. Donations and membership renewals are down so the national organization has less money to pass on to the local groups. The North Alabama Chapter is seeing a decrease in the amount of funds we receive from the National office, and we are looking for ways to cut back on expenses.

One of the larger expenses the North Alabama group has is the printing and postage for the 1,000 or so paper newsletters we mail each month. We can reduce that expense if people are willing to forego the paper newsletter in lieu of receiving the newsletter by email and/or going to the website to read the newsletter and checking the outings for each month. The website has the newsletter in a pdf format, so you can print a copy from there if you want a paper copy of the newsletter.

And of course mailing fewer paper newsletters saves paper and trees.

If you would like to stop getting the paper newsletter, please email the editor at drostj@bellsouth.net.

- The Editor

Back on the Mountain Tuesday Nights

Tuesday night hikes are back up on the trails of Monte Sano where the wildflowers are starting to bloom. See the hike schedule for details and come join us.

Tuesday night hikes leave at 6:00pm, from the Monte Sano State Park Hiker's parking lot. There is a small hiker fee. All dogs must be on a lease while in the parking lot and while on the trail.

Come join us up on the mountain Tuesday nights!

- The Editor

Renewable Energy Outreach Event

The Alabama Technology Network at UAHuntsville in coordination with Ruchi Singhal - Director of Renewable Energy Outreach (REO) at Biztech and the Southern Growth Policies Board are hosting Renewable Energy Outreach event on March 25, 2009 at Biztech in Huntsville, AL. Anyone interested in renewable energy and economic development is encouraged to attend.

Information on renewable energy technologies, starting an energy business, new farm energy crops, biodiesel and ethanol, incubation services available to new businesses, and more will be available. This event features a guest speaker from Southern Solar Systems located in Huntsville. Besides being a wonderful networking opportunity and sharing of what is current and forthcoming in renewable energy, we will be soliciting feedback about the current state of renewable energy from those in attendance to go into a report produced by the Southern Growth Policies Board. This report will be sent to all the Governors in the Southeast. It is very important that Huntsville's voice be heard in this report.

For more information, contact Ruchi Singhal at Biztech at ruchi@biztech.org

- The Editor

5,500 acres on the Cumberland Plateau preserved

A multimillion-dollar land deal will preserve one of Tennessee's best-known scenic views, the cliff-hugging overlooks of the Cumberland Plateau's Savage Gulf. The \$6 million, 3,000-acre Savage Gulf property will be added this spring to the South Cumberland State Park and Natural Area, which has a million annual visitors. The Conservation Fund and the Land Trust for Tennessee orchestrated obtaining nearly 5,500 acres on the Cumberland Plateau from a timber company and private landowners. The deal also includes more than 2,400 acres that will preserve a portion of the South Cumberland's Fiery Gizzard trail, ranked among the nation's best trails.

The Savage Gulf cuts 1,500 feet deep into the western edge of the Plateau, more than 80 miles southeast of Nashville. Sheer sandstone cliffs fringed in hemlocks, pines and hardwoods plunge to the gorge floor, where creeks spill over spectacular waterfalls and vanish into mysterious sinkholes. The Gulf rivals a tropical rain forest in plant diversity, with more than a third of native Tennessee plants appearing there, including rarities such as lady's slipper orchids.

The Fiery Gizzard parcels are valued at more than \$3 million. An anonymous private owner is donating an easement worth about \$1 million, and the Friends of the South Cumberland also contributed. And U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander helped direct federal highway money, meant to protect scenic routes, for the rest. More land between the Foster Falls and Grundy Forest trailheads is for sale, and the Land Trust will continue to pursue acquiring them. But financing it will be harder because the Savage Gulf purchase exhausts the state's conservation land funds.

The state's land acquisition fund and the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund provided \$5.5 million of the Savage Gulf's \$6 million purchase, with a private donor making up the difference.

- Excerpted from The Tennessean, February 12, 2009, Jenny Upchurch

Looking for a Slower Hike?

Hikers come in all levels of ability and energy. The hikes on the Outings page are rated from Easy to Strenuous, but even the hikes rated Easy can be a bit more than some hikers are able to do. Bob Goodwin, a member of the Sierra Club who lives in Murfreesboro, TN, teaches hiking classes at UAH as part of the Institute for Lifelong Learning and also leads hikes in the Huntsville area. These are non-Sierra Club hikes, so the Club assumes no responsibility or liability for these events. If you are interested in a slower hike or a hiking class geared for those who want to take things a little slower, you can contact Bob Goodwin at camel40@earthlink.net.

- The Editor

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

March – April 2009

2009 ExCom Members

Chair	Mirko Rakigijja	772-8548
Vice-Chair	Judy Burley	883-4207
Treasurer	Sam Denham	539-1033
Conservation	Doug Horacek	772-6788
Fundraising	Charlotte Buening	
Membership	Dave Kostowny	682-1233
Outings	Tom Burley	883-4267
Political chair	Joe Imhof	858-3626
Publicity	Sandy Kiplinger	498-1023
Secretary	Linda Griffin	772-8653
Tuesday Hikes	Nancy Dudney	882-9408
Newsletter	Jack Drost	880-2644
Web Page	Steven Baty	489-0990

Thursday, March 19 - Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. Downtown Library Auditorium, 6:30pm

Hike Ratings

General Note: 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 – the leader is not familiar with the area, may fit any class above.

Saturday, Mar 14 - Spring Wildflower hike. Easy. We will walk along Fagan Spring looking for wildflowers, the Trout Lilies especially. Meet at Cleermont trail head on Land Trust at 9:00am. Bring water and hiking boots. This will be an easy hike with some elevation. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for information.

Tuesday, March 17, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Judy Burley, 883-4267.

Saturday, Mar 21 - 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, overlooks, and rock formations. We will descend into the gorge and climb out by way of the Stagecoach Historic Trail and return along 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 the Publix on Winchester Road at 8:00am. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net

Sunday, March 22 - Monte Sano State Park hike. Moderate. The "Out of Hibernation" Spring hiking series. Part 1. Crawling out of your cave after a long winter's nap? Need some time to stretch your legs, figure out which way to hold the map and relearn all those settings on your camera? Then join me as we rediscover the trails at Monte Sano at a leisurely pace. We'll start with 5 1/2 miles, adding small increments (total not to exceed 6 1/2 miles) on different trail combos. Bring your stories, snacks, water, good hiking gear and a few bucks for the Park's fee. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot at 12:30pm. Rain cancels. Sandy Kiplinger, sandykip@juno.com

Tuesday, March 24, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Virgil DeStefano, 539-0348.

Thursday, March 26 – Excom meeting 5:30pm. Mirko Rakigijja, 772-8548.

Saturday, Mar 28 - Borden Creek/Big Tree dayhike. Strenuous. This 14 mile hike is in the Sipsey Wilderness. We will begin at the Borden Creek Bridge hiking up the old logging road and down to the Big Tree. We continue along the Sipsey River to the intersection with Borden Creek and return to the trailhead. Bring lunch and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at the Cracker Barrel in Madison at 8:00am or at 7:00 am for breakfast. Optional meeting place at the Warrior Mountain Trading Post in Wren at 9:00am. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net

Sunday, March 29 - Monte Sano State Park hike. Moderate. The "Out of Hibernation" Spring hiking series, Part 2. Crawling out of your cave after a long winter's nap? Need some time to stretch your legs, figure out which way to hold the map and relearn all those settings on your camera? Then join me as we rediscover the trails at Monte Sano at a leisurely pace. We'll start with 5 1/2 miles, adding small increments (total not to exceed 6 1/2 miles) on different trail combos. Bring your stories, snacks, water, good hiking gear and a few bucks for the Park's fee. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot at 12:30pm. Rain cancels. Sandy Kiplinger, sandykip@juno.com.

Tuesday, March 31, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Alan Greene, 534-7849.

Saturday, April 4 - Buck's Pocket hike, Moderate. Meet at the Franklin Building at 8:00am. Car camp optional. We will hike from overview down to Sauty Creek, Lunch at High Falls, the slide rapid. If there is any interest, we will set up camp late afternoon or early evening. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for details.

Saturday, April 4 - Reuben Creek hike. Moderate. Near Sherwood, TN. There will be numerous creek crossings, interesting rock work and abundant flowers. 5 to 7 miles easy to moderate (creek crossings are the hard part). Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Publix on Winchester Rd at 9:00am. For more info call Joette 776-3551.

Sunday, April 5 - Monte Sano State Park hike. Moderate. The "Out of Hibernation" Spring hiking series. Part 3. Crawling out of your cave after a long winter's nap? Need some time to stretch your legs, figure out which way to hold the map and relearn all those settings on your camera? Then join me as we rediscover the trails at Monte Sano at a leisurely pace. We'll start with 5 1/2 miles, adding small increments (total not to exceed 6 1/2 miles) on different trail combos. Bring your stories, snacks, water, good hiking gear and a few bucks for the Park's fee. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's Parking lot at 12:30pm. Rain cancels. Sandy Kiplinger, sandykip@juno.com.

Tuesday, April 7, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Gerdi Keyser, 922-2251.

Newsletter Labeling

Wednesday, April 8, 5:30pm. Stanlieo's Sub Villa, corner of Monroe St. and Governor's Dr. Liz, 461-5819.

Saturday, April 11 - Sharp/Bingham Mt. Preserve hike. Strenuous. Rain date April 12. Re-scheduled due to bad weather in February. This new Nature Conservancy preserve, at the western edge of Paint Rock Valley, is about 3170 acres, on the order of the size of Monte Sano State Park; "There's not a house in sight!" The Sierra Club has been given permission for this hike by the Nature Conservancy and Horace Clemmons, who bought the property to preserve it, and sold it in 2004 to the Conservancy. Horace still lives adjacent to the preserve and will let us cross his property to access the wilderness. This hike is rated strenuous because it is exploratory and will include a very steep 1200 ft climb over 1/2 mile. Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Publix Hampton Cove at 8:15am. Call Sam Denham at 539-1033 (h) 961-0436 (w).

Tuesday, April 14, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Nancy Dudney, 882-9408.

Saturday, April 18 - Walls of Jericho hike, Strenuous. The Walls of Jericho is a large, bowl-shaped 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, which was once the hunting grounds of Davy Crockett, contains an extraordinarily diverse array of plants and animals. The hike is approximately 7 miles but rated strenuous due to the 1000 feet elevation gain. Bring lunch and we will dine afterwards at a local restaurant. Meet at 10:00 am at the Publix in Hampton Cove. Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net

Tuesday, April 21, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Ken Shrider, 772-9442.

Fri-Sun, Apr 24-26 - Silver Comet Bike Trip. Moderate. The Silver Comet is a paved rails-to-trail running 60 miles from the AL/GA border to Smyrna, GA. Highlights include a tunnel and a 700 ft long, 100 ft high trestle. Depart Friday at 7:00am and set up camp near the trail (campground has restrooms & showers). Or make your own arrangements for a nearby motel. We will bike 45 miles on Friday and 75 miles Saturday, Contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.net

Tuesday, April 28, 6:00pm - Mountain Evening Hike. Easy. 3-4 mile hike. Different location each week. Meet at the Monte Sano Hiker's parking lot. Michael Stewart, 656-5836.

Sunday, May 17 - Rainbow Mountain Wildflower hike. We will be in search of Carolina Larkspur, Meet at 2:00pm at Rainbow Mountain trail head by the water tower at the top of the mountain. Bring water and sturdy hiking boots. Call Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more information.

North Alabama Sierra Club - Outings and Events Calendar

March – April 2009

Thu-Sun, June 18-21, Max Patch to Hot Springs backpack. Strenuous.

This is a 20-mile backpack with significant elevation changes over two days. We will depart on Thursday at 8:00am arriving in Hot Springs around 3:00pm and take a shuttle to Max Patch. It is a gentle climb across the southernmost bald on the AT and abounds 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. The cost will be approximately \$30 per person to cover shuttle, campsite, and hot tub and must be paid in advance. Group size will be limited to a maximum of ten and participants must commit by June 1. For information contact Tom Burley at 883-4267 or tdburleyhiker@bellsouth.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, supervision or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because they might be of interest to our readers.

Alabama Trails Association

www.alabamatrailsasso.org

Pinhoti Trail Construction The third Saturday of each month. Contact Phillip Alexander trailtuner@earthlink.net

Sierra Cahaba Group

www.alabama.sierraclub.org/cahaba

Saturday, March 21. Pinhoti Trail dayhike (challenge hike). This month, we'll enjoy the section of trail from U.S. Highway 78 to the dirt road near the Lower Shoal Shelter. Early spring wildflowers should be in abundance on this stretch, along with several good views. We'll be taking our time with cameras, as the hike is only 6.6 miles long. The shorter distance and relative lack of major hills gains this stretch a rating of easy. Hiking boots a necessity. Bring plenty of water and a picnic lunch. Optional dinner afterwards. Trip Leader: Jay Hudson, 907-6879. Call for meeting place and time, or e-mail jay_hudson@bellsouth.net.

Saturday, March 28. Lake Guntersville Hike. Join us for some great hiking at Lake Guntersville State Park on Saturday March 28, 2009! The park has over 6,000 acres of natural woodlands and lots of hiking trails. We will hike several trails, which connect to make a loop around the park. Meet at the Golden Rule BBQ on Highway 79 at 9:00 a.m. Bring water, lunch, and sturdy hiking shoes. Rated moderate. Optional dinner after the hike at Wintzell's Oyster House. Contact Monica Crews at 205-999-3885 or mcrews@bellsouth.net.

Sunday, March 29. Waterfalls of Cheaha State Park. Join us for an easy day admiring Cheaha's best waterfalls. We will go to High Falls, Cheaha Falls, and two falls located on Hubbard Creek. Time permitting we will go to Hidden Falls and Salt Creek Falls. All of these falls are an easy walk from the car. Bring a lunch and something to drink: we will have a picnic lunch at the park before we start. Optional dinner at Cheaha State Park Restaurant afterwards. Meet at the Kmart

on Crestwood Blvd at 10:00 or meet us at the park at 12:30. Rated easy. Trip Leader Jim Binnings. 205-746-3266 or jbinnings@bellsouth.net.

Shoals Environmental Alliance

www.shoalsenvironalliance.net/firms.com

Saturday, March 14 - Workday at TVA Native Plant Garden. We will work 9am - 12noon both days. Bring handtools, workgloves, wheel barrows, etc. We will be mulching trails and planting beds, weeding, removing fallen limbs, and generally be getting the garden ready for spring. The garden is in back of the restrooms at the Nature Trails parking lot, just off Reservation Road on TVA's Muscle Shoals Reservation. For additional info call Margie Anderton at (256) 757-7064 or Charles Rose at (256) 366-1937.

Saturday, March 14 - Walls of Jericho Hike. Led by Bill Zuelke for Alabama Outdoors. Group size is limited: call (256) 764-1809 to register. Meet 10:00am at the trailhead (maps available at the AO store). Strenuous: 5+ hour, 6 mile hike, 1,000 ft. elevation change. Need sturdy footwear-lunch-snacks-copious water. 200 ft. cliffs & lovely wildflowers!

Sunday, March 15 -Wildflower Walk, City Park West, Sheffield. 1:30pm. Registration required: call (256) 366-1937. Led by Charles Rose. Meet in front of Sheffield Library. The park hosts a population of White Trout Lily, most uncommon of local species. Easy walk, with optional return to view the historic Tusculumbia Landing site.

Saturday, March 21 --- Wildflower Walk & Americana Exhibits at Bull Skull Hollow. Meet 9:00am at Jack's, Woodward Av., Muscle Shoals. Bring water-snacks-lunch. Hosts Gordon & Cecilia Hicks will lead a tour of "The Village," 6-7 log & wooden buildings, all full of old implements & antiques. White Trout Lily, Virginia Bluebells, Barren Strawberry & more! (256) 366-1937. Info at: <http://bullskullhollow.com>

Sunday, March 22 - Wildflower Hike, Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve. 1:30pm. Led by Jim & Faye Lacefield. See Trout Lily, Hepatica, Bloodroot, Toothwort, Saxifrage, Spring Beauty. Waterfalls, scenic vistas. Moderately rigorous: at least 2-miles, with up-hills & down-hills. (256) 381-6301, 366-1937.

Saturday, March 28 - Family Wildflower Hike, Sinks Trail, Monte Sano State Park. Meet 8:00am-Florence K-Mart parking lot, by Wachovia Bank. Led by Loretta Weninegar for Fresh Air Family. Take lunch-snacks-water. Must register at: events@freshairfamily.org or call (256) 366-1937. Twinleaf, Virginia Bluebells & much more.

Friday, April 24 - Earth Day Ceremony, Old Railroad Bridge, Sheffield (north end of Ashe Blvd.).

5:30pm - Earth Day Ceremony - Call (256) 767-2909.

6:00pm - Family Fun Walk led by Summer McCreless for Alabama Outdoors (256) 764-1809.

Saturday, April 25 - Earth Day Celebration, Wilson Park, Florence. 11:00am-6:00pm. Music, environmental exhibits, kid's activities, art. More info: 256-767-2909 or <http://shoalsearth.com>

South Cumberland State Recreation Area

www.friendsofscsra.org

Saturday, March 21, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Cave Tour

Join seasonal ranger Duane to discover the natural wonders below the surface of the park. Meet at the Carter State Natural Area parking lot for this strenuous five mile round trip hike. Bring two sources of light, long pants, boots, water, and a light snack.

10:00 a.m.

Tour of Savage Falls/Suter Falls

As part of Fall Creek Falls waterfall weekend, Randy Hedgepath is leading a trip to Savage and Suter Falls. The group is meeting at the Fall Creek Falls Inn at 9:00 a.m. However, you can catch up with the tour at the Collins West parking lot at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 22, 2009

9:00 a.m.

Gizzard Rock Hopping

Tired of the leisurely Sunday Stroll? Then come out with Ranger Jason to Foster Falls for an off-trail hike up the Little Gizzard Creek. This very difficult and technical hike will require a sturdy body and even sturdier boots. Remember to bring plenty of water and a light snack.

Saturday, March 28, 2009

1:00 p.m.

BuggyTop Cave Program

Discover the strange but beautiful world below the surface of the park. This program includes some scrambling over rocks and possibly wading through underground streams. Come to the Carter State Natural Area parking lot for this strenuous five-mile round trip hike. Bring two sources of light, long pants, boots, water, and a snack. Ranger Brent will be your guide for this cave trip.

1:00 p.m.

Backpack 101

Meet seasonal ranger Duane at the Grundy Forest parking lot to learn valuable skills for the beginning backpacker.

Sunday, March 29, 2009

11:00 a.m.

Hike to Savage Falls

Join seasonal ranger Duane on this moderate four mile hike roundtrip to view the amazing 30 ft. high Savage Falls. Bring water and wear sturdy shoes.

Tennessee Trails

www.tennesseetrails.org

Saturday, March 14 – Wade Mountain hike. Easy – Over50. For information,

contact Bob Goodwin at 256-564-8417 or camel40@earthlink.net.

Saturday, March 28 - Chatanooga

Outdoor Expo: Chattanooga, TN.

www.outdoorchattanooga.com

Saturday, April 4 - Monte Sano State Park. Easy – Over50. Big Spring International Park and Harrison Brothers Hardware. Contact Bob Goodwin at 256-564-8417 or camel40@earthlink.net.