

TENNESSEE TRAILS

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Calendar:

- March 1, Nashville Chapter hike, Bearwaller Gap Trail, Bill Hager.
- March 5, Reception for Friends in Government, Tenn. Botanical Garden
- March 15, TTA membership hike, Grundy Co., Dave Stidham.
- March 29-30, Overnight backpack, Big South Fork, Joe Gaines.

The Bearwaller Gap hike on Cordell Hull Lake March 1 will have an added attraction, the all-new exhibit at the Resource Manager's office. Meet at the office, about 2 miles north of Carthage on State Highway 85 at 9:00 a.m. CST. Call Bill Hager, 374-2227, or David Stidham, 859-3621, for information.

The second annual reception for "Friends in Government" will be held at the Tennessee Botanical Gardens (Cheekwood) Wednesday, March 5, at 7:30 p.m. The Audubon-Harpeth Chapter of the Audubon Society is coordinating this one. We hope that all TTA members who can make it will attend.

The membership hike this month will be a visit to Conley Hole, a 164-foot deep vertical cave, which is considered to be one of the most spectacular pits in America, on the rim of the Cumberland Plateau in Grundy County. It is a registered natural landmark, a free fall cone-shaped pit. Dave says, "although the descent to the bottom of the pit is for experienced cavers only, don't miss this hike. There will be large timber, sinkholes and interesting rock formations. The hiking distance is about 6 miles, Class II or III on a woods road. Lunch will be at the huge gate entrance to the Conley Hole. Meet at 9 a.m. CST at the postoffice in "Downtown" Viola, about 9 miles south of McMinnville on Hwy. 108 at a 90-degree turn. Nashville hikers meet at Cumberland Museum at 7 a.m. to form car pool. For information, call Dave at the above number or at his office, 251-5115.

Pres. Joe Gaines writes, "Hikers for the Big South Fork overnight hike should meet at the Pickett State Park office at 8 a.m. CST on March 29. Tentatively, we plan to go into the Laurel Fork of Station Camp Creek, camp on the Big South Fork River, then on Sunday, pass up Station Camp Valley past Parchcorn Lodge and exit through the Twin Arches. Portions of the hike will be fairly rugged, as we will be going across country."

Catching Up On Hike Reports

Bob Brown reports that 21 hikers enjoyed the views from Brady Bluffs and "Contact Point" on an extraordinary clear January day, Saturday, the 19th. The Smokies stood out in bold relief across the Tennessee Valley. After finding an airplane wing tip on the rocky outcrop that served as a lunch stop, Charles Klabunde discovered the rest of a Piper Cherokee fuselage about 200 yards down the mountain to the southwest.

All those making the hike were concerned about the Conservation Department's tentative plan, announced at the last annual meeting, to run the Cumberland Trail through Grassy Cove, rather than along the crest of Brady Mountain, as originally envisioned by the founders of TTA. The trail was found to be virtually as clear and as well-marked as it was 6 or 8 years ago. It is obviously being used by hikers. Incidentally, Harry Williamson says he knows of no plan to reroute the CT from Brady Mountain.

Diane Davidson led the Nashville Chapter hike on the Twin Forks Trail, Percy Priest Lake, Jan. 26. Others on the trip were Ann and Tom Rogers, David Stidham, Bill Hager, Gail Caste, and Paul Wanter. They hiked the section of the trail along the West Fork of Stones River from Nice's Mill Recreation Area, following the river bank for 2 miles, then alternately using the foot trail and the parallel horse trail on the bluff above. The group noted that the trail needs some maintenance and reconstruction in that section.

Heavy snow and terrible road conditions kept most of the 32 people who

signed up for the Roan Mountain ski trip Feb. 9 from attending. Because of road conditions, the group spent the day skiing at Panther Creek State Park, near Morristown. Mike Dahl says they were surprised to find excellent cross country ski opportunities and an effort may be made to designate some ski trails there in the future. Mike writes:

"To add to the spectacular beauty of the snow-clad landscape, we encountered whitetail deer and a red fox while out in the park. By 1:00 p.m. the snow had warmed so much that the skiing was only marginal. After a hot lunch, everyone packed up and headed for home."

Betty Smith reports that four others joined her for the hike at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Area Feb. 16. There was snow in the air and it was cold, but the group enjoyed the hike. Park Superintendent Jim Robb served as guide. He takes great pride in maintaining the trails, which were very clean. Only one drink container was found on the whole trip. They followed the loop trail around the mysterious fort, then had lunch at the forks of the Little Duck and Duck Rivers, returning upriver past spectacular waterfalls.

Trail Administration Changes

Harry Williamson has been given broader responsibilities and Terry Bonham succeeds him as State Trail System Administrator. Terry comes to the Dept. of Conservation with 8 years experience in the Metro Nashville Parks Department. TTA welcomes him and looks forward to working with him.

Mike Dahl will take over the job of project administrator for the Cumberland Trail March 3. Bob Richards will continue to handle the work from Bledsoe County southward. Controversy over a strip mine permit is affecting landowner relations between Prentice Cooper State Forest and U.S. 127. Fourteen miles of the CT between Caryville and Oliver Springs have been improved, using YACC help, and the entire stretch from Poplar Creek Gap to Cove Lake is expected to be "officially open" by summer. This section, built by TTA originally, has been in use since the early 1970's.

Charlotte Zerfoss reports that trail problems in Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park, brought to our attention by TTA member Thurman Simmons, will be alleviated shortly. Pres. Gaines thanks the officials of the Dept. of Conservation and the Division of State Parks who were so responsive to our concern.

Bill Stutz Dies

TTA mourns the loss of Bill Stutz, who died Feb. 6 and was buried Feb. 9. Bill was a member of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and the Tristate Trail Club, as well as TTA. His memory will be kept alive through the Bill Stutz Trailblazer Trophy.

Enclosed with this issue is a brochure on the TENNESSEE CONSERVATIONIST. Pres. Gaines has pledged that TTA will get 500 new subscribers in the drive to save the magazine. Starting March 1, the first 2,000 new subscribers will receive an 8x10 color print of waterfowl in flight, titled "Before the Storm", by Memphis Wildlife Artist Allen Hughes.

TTA membership lists may be obtained by sending 50 cents for the cost of copying and a self-addressed business envelop (with stamp) to Dorothy R. Lingerfelt, P. O. Box 4913, Chattanooga, TN 37405. (That's also where you send your dues.).

Next month we'll present the proposed amendment to the Constitution to establish paid-up life membership in TTA. The proposal advanced by the Board of Directors will call for payment of \$125, subject to adjustment after 1982. The money would be placed in a fund to provide income for operation of TTA programs.

There will also be a report on the progress in organizing local chapters in the April issue.