



Jocassee Journal

Information and News about the Jocassee Gorges



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State Rep. Davey Hiott of Pickens (left) stands alongside Tunky and Sam Stokes Sr. following the dedication of the Sam W. Stokes Work Center, DNR's Jocassee field station in the Eastatoee Valley on Cleo Chapman Road in northern Pickens County. (DNR photo by Greg Lucas)

Jocassee Gorges field office dedicated in honor of 'living legend' biologist Sam Stokes Sr.

Retired DNR wildlife biologist from Pickens was a mentor for many

The Jocassee Gorges field office in northern Pickens County was dedicated Friday, June 12 as the Sam W. Stokes Work Center in honor of retired wildlife biologist Sam W. Stokes Sr.

"Sam Stokes is truly a living legend among wildlife biologists in the Palmetto State and also among everyone in the South Carolina conservation community," said Alvin Taylor, director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) "Among his most notable achievements is that he played an integral role in the protection of the Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges."

Stokes, a Pickens native, graduated in 1962 from the University of Georgia with a degree in forestry with a wildlife concentration. His first job with DNR (then the S.C. Wildlife and Marine Resources Department) was in September 1963, when he was hired as a wildlife biologist in Union. He came to Clemson in June 1965, where he remained until his retirement in 2004. For much of his career, Stokes was the leader of the state's Black Bear Project, and he was

instrumental in the re-establishment of deer and turkeys in the mountains of South Carolina.

State Rep. Davey Hiott of Pickens attended the dedication and presented Stokes with a Joint Resolution by the South Carolina General Assembly officially naming the Jocassee Gorges field office the Sam W. Stokes Work Center. The Joint Resolution was also endorsed by state Sen. Larry Martin of Pickens.

Stokes was a mentor for many Clemson University students who went on to become DNR wildlife biologists, according to DNR Director Taylor.

"Sam had a tremendous impact on natural resources protection in South Carolina," Taylor said. "The Jocassee Gorges land protection project was a result of his developing a relationship over the years with Duke Power and Crescent Resources. He was the leader of the state's Black Bear Project and research effort, and partnered with Duke and Clemson on some of the most important black bear research efforts in the state. He also developed a great partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the largest landowner in the Wildlife Management Area program, and that's an incredibly important partnership." 



A multi-day prescribed fire of about 2,800 acres is planned on the South Carolina/North Carolina border. (DNR photo by Mark Hall)

Burn planned to re-introduce fire to South Carolina/North Carolina border

Prescribed fire will be first step toward restoring plant, animal communities

A large controlled fire is being planned for the rugged terrain between Jocassee Gorges and North Carolina conservation lands.

This burn will be a joint operation between N.C. State Parks, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Forest Service, S.C. Forestry Commission, The Nature Conservancy and S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The cooperative burn is planned to span about 2,800 acres in 2016 or 2017 along the rugged North Carolina/South Carolina border. It will include most of Crossroads Mountain in the upper reaches of Lake Jocassee, a remote section of land between the Horsepasture and Toxaway rivers. It will also include more than a thousand acres of North Carolina's Gorges State Park and several hundred acres owned by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. It is expected the burn will require four or five individual days of fire management in a number of smaller blocks of land in order to safely manage

the operations and comply with smoke management regulations.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) plans for Jocassee Gorges emphasize minimizing land disturbance. The state's largest parcel of land harbors hundreds of headwater tributaries, so protection of soil and water resources is an important priority. Thus, carefully planned timber harvests and use of controlled fires are the key land management practices used to restore natural plant communities and enhance habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Timber harvests have been used on a few hundred acres within Jocassee in the past decade. However, fire has been applied to thousands of acres during the same time period.

"We've implemented burns on Lake Jocassee before," said Mark Hall, South Carolina DNR's Jocassee Gorges project manager, "but never in cooperation with other agencies across political boundaries. The landscape does not 'understand' political boundaries, so this is a really special opportunity to apply fire in a managed,

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Prescribed fire on Jocassee lands targets 2,800 acres in both Carolinas

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cooperative effort to restore fire-adapted communities in the mountains."

At about the same time DNR was beginning to use fire on Jocassee, The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service partnered to facilitate Fire Learning Network workshops in the Upstate to promote using fire in the mountains to attain ecological benefits throughout Blue Ridge escarpment. It was the beginning of "the perfect storm," and within a few short years, many entities came to the table, eager to use fire in the mountains to support restoration of fire-adapted communities that once flourished throughout the ridges and valleys of the landscape. The enthusiasm for wise use of fire in the mountains resulted in a precedent-setting cooperative prescribed burn that will span the boundaries of two states and involve collaboration among several entities with common management goals.

Dean Simon, wildlife biologist and forester for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and Hall were classmates years ago at the University of Georgia. "Mark and I got together at one of the Fire Learning Network meetings and we had not seen each other in over 20 years. We decided it was time to put out heads together to come up with a cooperative project," said Simon. In working with Steve Pagano and Marshall Ellis of N.C. State Parks, a plan was conceived to use fire where it fits with the overall vegetation management goals of the agencies involved.

"We expect to produce a lot of smoke, but fortunately, we will be working a fairly remote area and smoke impacts will be minimized" Ellis said. "It's also very nice to have things like rivers and lakes for firebreaks, so we think control of the managed fires will be quite practical."

Kristen Austin, The Nature Conservancy's Southern Blue Ridge Program director, along with Forester Helen Mohr of the U.S. Forest Service, have spearheaded the Fire Learning Network effort in the

Blue Ridge.

"It's very exciting to see our members truly working together as partners to restore ecosystem values and functions in the mountains," Austin said. "Fire was historically a critical component in the landscape, and The Nature Conservancy is proud to be able to support this unique venture. We are exploring ways The Nature Conservancy can provide manpower or special resource support, such as helicopter ignition crews, in order to get the job done."

All the scientists involved agree that the planned burn will be beneficial. Most of the areas scheduled for burning are higher, dry ridges and south- or western-facing slopes, where fire historically occurred naturally from lightning strikes. Early settlers and the Cherokees

recognized the value of fire and often used fire to manage the landscape as well.

"The forests and ecosystems involved deviated far from Mother Nature's plan when extensive logging was done in the early 1900's," said Helen Mohr of the U.S. Forest Service. "Smokey the Bear meant well and he did a good job, but we all recognize that it's time to reintroduce fire in the right places at the right time."

The

reintroduction of fire into the mountains is the first, small step in the lengthy process toward restoring plant and animal communities. "It took decades for the forests to get out of kilter and it will take a long time to steer them back in the right direction," said Simon.

The North and South Carolina agencies involved will spread the word among the media, communities, fire departments and others living and working in the area.

"It is important to let people know the controlled fires will be implemented by professionals with many years of fire experience under their belts" said Steve Pagano, Gorges State Park superintendent. "We find that we receive excellent support when people are informed and understand the science behind our management practices." 

"We've implemented burns on Lake Jocassee before, but never in cooperation with other agencies across political boundaries. The landscape does not 'understand' political boundaries, so this is a really special opportunity to apply fire in a managed, cooperative effort to restore fire-adapted communities in the mountains."

— Mark Hall, South Carolina DNR



Swimmers await the start at Upstate Splash, an open-water swim on Lake Jocassee. Held at Devils Fork State Park, Upstate Splash raised funds for at-risk children to receive swimming lessons.

Lake Jocassee open-water swim takes aim at 'Swimming to Save Lives'

Initial event draws more than 200 participants for 1.2-, 2.4-mile swims

By Rick Gantt

On August 29, more than 200 swimmers from across the Southeast swam in the first major open-water swim on beautiful Lake Jocassee.

Participants had a choice of a 1.2- or 2.4-mile swim that started at Devils Fork State Park at 8 a.m. The Upstate Splash is a division of the 14-year-old Low Country Splash that takes place under the Cooper River Bridge in Charleston every May. The goal of both Splash Swims is to raise money to teach children how to swim, since drowning is the number one cause of accidental deaths in South Carolina. The Low Country Splash has helped teach more than 1,200 people to swim in the past decade.

The proceeds from the first Upstate Splash will allow us to teach 60 people how to swim within the next 12 months to kick off our new movement in the Upstate.

Lake Jocassee was the perfect choice for a destination open-water swim. Many swimmers had never seen the lake, and they cannot wait to come back for

boating or camping. As a race organizer, I personally wish to thank Duke Energy, Devils Fork State Park, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, our great financial sponsors, the many volunteers that made the day safe, and of course all the wonderful swimmers with their smiles and energy!

The inaugural 2015 Upstate Splash charity open-water swim event fun facts:

1. 104 female swimmers
2. 115 male swimmers
3. Age 71, oldest swimmer, Martin Healy of Bedford Hills, N.Y.
4. Age 11, youngest swimmer, Caroline Lucas of Easley
5. 9 States represented: South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Florida.

For questions on the Upstate Splash or how you can get involved in the future, feel free to contact Rick Gantt at rick@upstatesplash.com. 

(Rick Gantt is a water bum who has grown up on Lake Jocassee, other area lakes, and swimming pools. He lives in Easley with his lovely wife, Debra, and two kids, Bridger and Hailey.)

DNR forges ahead with Sassafras improvement project

Groundbreaking expected in early 2016

Plans to improve Sassafras Mountain, the highest point in the state, have been in the works for more than two years and the project is closer to fruition.

The total project cost is estimated at around \$1 million and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has rounded up about half that much in private donations in order to initiate the first phase of the project. Architects and engineers are presently planning the “nut-n-bolts” design of the observation structure that will be built to straddle the point on the South Carolina-North Carolina border that is 3,553 feet above sea level.

The comprehensive project involves an observation platform at the peak, restrooms, improvements to the parking area, a picnic facility, accessory trails, informational kiosks and educational pavilions.

“Presently we have enough money to get the observation platform and restrooms designed and built,” said Mark Hall, DNR Jocassee project leader, who has been working on the project since its inception. “Once that initial phase is implemented, we’ll continue with the other plans for trails, parking, and pavilions as we secure additional funds.” He estimates breaking ground in early 2016. Gil L. Stewart Architects LLC of Pickens will have plans prepared by late fall 2015.

Duke Energy, The Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund and The Felburn Foundation are major contributors to project funding. Hundreds of individual contributions have been received from people who have

participated in the commemorative brick paver program which has generated almost \$40,000. Hall expects other individuals or corporate entities to step up to the plate in the near future with the funding necessary to complete the final phases of the project where the other amenities will be added. Hall said both the S.C. and national Highpointers

Associations have been involved and are currently exploring different avenues for more funding.

DNR removed the trees from the summit of Sassafras last year. The woodlands had been harvested in recent decades, before DNR acquired the land, and the forest was “ecologically out of whack,” according to Hall, who intends to restore a natural vegetative system to the top of the mountain. “We will maintain the area in native grasses and shrubs in order to permit a spectacular

view from the platform,” Hall said. He expects to have an unobstructed view about three-quarters of the way around the summit, where people can see neighboring North Carolina, Georgia and a spot of Tennessee in the distance. Lakes Jocassee, Keowee and Hartwell will all be visible on

clear days. Other prominent features in the landscape will include the Blue Ridge Parkway, Whiteside Mountain near Highlands, N.C., and the upper piedmont of South Carolina.

DNR will

discontinue the commemorative brick paver program in the near future, when the brick order is placed and ordered for shipment. Once the S.C. Natural Resources Board reviews and approves the final structural plan and design, the project will be put out for public bids to allow construction to begin in late 2015 or early 2016. 



The view from the soon-to-be-built platform atop Sassafras Mountain will be nothing short of spectacular once it's in place on the roof of South Carolina. Groundbreaking on the viewing platform is expected to take place in early 2016. (DNR photo by Mark Hall)

“We will maintain the area in native grasses and shrubs in order to permit a spectacular view from the platform.”

—Mark Hall, South Carolina DNR

Betty McDaniel honored with Jean

Pickens educator recognized by S.C. Arts Commission, McKissick Museum for advocacy of Southern Appalachian culture

The South Carolina Arts Commission and the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum recently awarded Betty McDaniel with a 2015 Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award for her advocacy of Southern Appalachian culture.

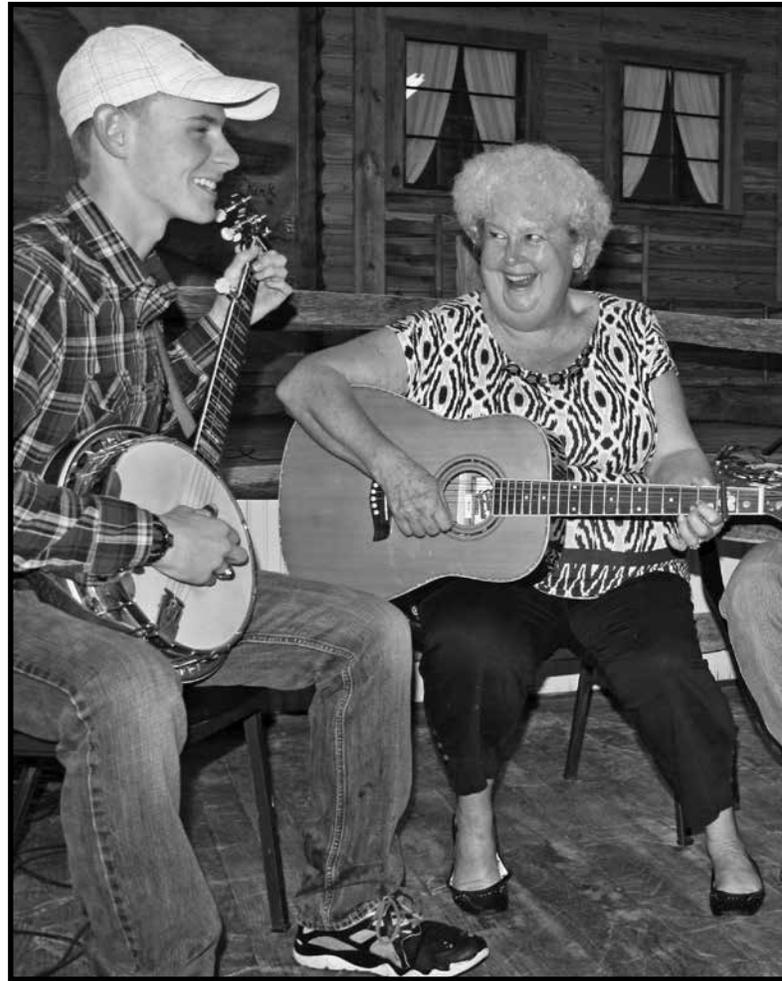
McDaniel, of Pickens, has pursued a passion for cultural heritage and traditional music in the Upstate for more than 35 years. While working as an educator, McDaniel organized annual heritage festivals at Holly Springs Elementary School to celebrate local culture in Pickens County. With support from The Humanities Council, she had children interview families in the area, write articles and develop presentations titled "Portrait of a Southern Appalachian Community."

McDaniel has continued to be a tireless advocate for folklife and traditional arts. In 2008, she organized the Young Appalachian Musicians (YAM) program. Geared toward elementary and middle school students, the program involves weekly classes on traditional music taught by experienced bluegrass and old-time musicians. Children are taught to play by ear one of four traditional instruments: fiddle, banjo, mandolin, and guitar. McDaniel also led the formation of the nonprofit Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music (POSAM), the parent organization for the YAM program. Under her leadership, the YAM program has grown from 32 students at one school to more 300 students at 13 schools in Pickens County. Several years ago, McDaniel expanded the YAM program to include the formation of a band called the Sweet Potato Pie Kids. The group performs on a regular basis throughout the region.

"It can be a challenge to engage young people through the traditional arts," says Douglas Dowling Peach,



South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (left) presented Betty McDaniel (accompanied by her husband, Ed McDaniel) with the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award at the State House in Columbia.



Betty McDaniel (second from left), takes part in a bluegrass jam (from left) Isaac Ferrell on the banjo, Andrew Lathe on the dobro Young Appalachian Musicians (YAM) program in 2008 in Pickens County and old time music to a new generation of children.

South Carolina Folklife and Traditional Arts Program Director at McKissick Museum and the South Carolina Arts Commission. "Betty McDaniel not only engages, but excites and inspires youth to learn, perform, and be proud of the traditional music of the South Carolina Upstate, all with her signature optimism and enthusiasm. Her lifelong work has created a youthful breeze through Southern Mountain music."

The Folk Heritage Award is named for the late Jean Laney Harris, an ardent supporter of the state's cultural heritage. The award was created by the legislature in 1987 to recognize lifetime achievement in the folk arts. The artistic traditions represented by the award are significant because they have endured, often for hundreds of years.

For more than 35 years, McDaniel has had a passion for the heritage and traditional arts, crafts and music of South Carolina, particularly in the Upstate. Wanting to ensure that the music program was accessible to all children regardless of their socioeconomic status, she arranged a fee scale based on the school lunch program. Students who receive free or

Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award



with three talented former Young Appalachian Musicians
ro and Danielle Yother on the guitar. McDaniel started the
ns County elementary and middle schools to teach bluegrass

reduced lunch have a discounted rate for YAM classes, as well as reduced instrument rental rates for those who have no instrument. Grants and fund-raisers such as the Winter Bluegrass Jubilee each January supplement the student fees to make the program affordable for most parents.

In order for children to continue exposure to the traditional music and culture during the summers, Betty started a weeklong camp in 2010 that is held each July. The TAM-YAM (Traditional Arts and Music – Young Appalachian Musicians) Camp is open to any child in third through eighth grade who is in the YAM program or not. Outstanding regional musicians teach the campers traditional music on fiddle, mandolin, mountain dulcimer, guitar, and banjo. Children are also exposed to traditional arts and crafts. There have been 40 to 70 children attending the camp each year since 2010.

In 2010, Betty and her fellow organizers took YAM a step further. Any YAM student who desired to do so and were recommended by their instructors, auditioned to play in

a performing band of about a dozen youth called the Sweet Potato Pie Kids (SPPK). These YAM students, mostly sixth-through eighth graders, continue to excel on their instruments and also begin singing in their performances. Auditions are held every spring to sustain the band as some of the children “graduate” from eighth grade. The SPPK band is in great demand around South Carolina and have performed for many functions, for examples, in Columbia, Greenville, Anderson, and even as far away as Dollywood this past year.

One outgrowth of the YAM program is the development of a bluegrass class and band at Pickens High School. The majority of the students in the high school band have come through the YAM program. Several YAM “alumni” have gone on to play in their own or other bands and at least five are now instructors in the program! The YAM kids and “graduates” also participate in bluegrass and old-time music festivals, and several have won first or second place in instrument competitions. At the S.C. Fiddling Championship in September 2014, 14-year-old Danielle Yother won first place in guitar and another “graduate,” Peyton O’Kelly, was second in fiddling, both competing with adults!

As interest grew among the children and their families, McDaniel headed the organization of the POSAM Evening Music Program (EMP) in 2010 which is available for third graders through adults. The EMP has expanded from its offerings in Pickens and is currently also available in Greenville, Easley, Walhalla,



McDaniel

Salem and Six Mile, with 85-100 enrolled per term. The EMP provides an avenue for children who do not want to or cannot participate in the After-School YAM program or who live in areas where it is not yet available, as well as for adults wanting to learn to play a traditional instrument in the traditional way.

To support her activities McDaniel has written or co-written many proposals and obtained funding from the S.C. Humanities Council, National Endowment for the Arts, the S.C. Arts Commission, and local ATAX grants. She tirelessly continues to write and submit proposals to these and other organizations and agencies.

McDaniel has received numerous other honors and awards, including the following: Blue Ridge Electric's Bolts of Brightness Awards; three-time Teacher of the Year at Holly Springs Elementary, Pickens County Honor Roll Teacher of the Year, Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Participant to Japan, 2001 S.C. Hero Award, Golden Apple Teacher Award 2010, Heroes of the New South (Southern Living Magazine in March 2012), and the Caring for the Carolinas Award from WSPA Channel 7 in July 2014. 

Petroglyph Site at Hagood Mill now open

Thirty-two petroglyphs on display at museum in Pickens

The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site of South Carolina, formerly known as the Rock Art Center, recently opened to the public during the Fiddling Championship at Hagood Mill. This was a soft opening with plans being made for an official dedication to recognize donors, have speakers, and unveil plaques to be held at a later date.

The Petroglyph Site will be open regularly to the public three days each week, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On Wednesday and Friday the site is free to visitors with no parking charge. On a third Saturday, there is a \$5 parking fee, but admission to the Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site as well as the Hagood Mill remains free.

This lovely building is handicapped accessible, climate controlled, includes an orientation lobby where visitors will find information from Tommy Charles's book "South Carolina Rock Art" displayed on the walls, see display cases with "portable petroglyphs" from the area, and hear a video with the story of the discovery and dig.

Visitors will move from the lobby into the main Viewing Room. From the comfort of a viewing ramp, in a darkened environment, visitors will be treated to a light show with audio narration from Tommy Charles telling about specific petroglyphs.



The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site of S.C. is open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

The program is designed for the enjoyment of a variety of audiences—small school children, academics, local community and international tourists. Thirty-two distinct petroglyphs are on display at this site. Eighteen petroglyphs represent people, and several are abstracts.

The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site of South Carolina is located on the Historic Hagood Mill property located at 138 Hagood Mill Road in Pickens.

For more information on the Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site of South Carolina, visit www.visithagoodmill.com or the Pickens County Tourism website at www.visitpickenscounty.com. ❁

Study by Pickens High teacher examines coliform levels in Upstate creek

Research shows significant increase in bacterial levels after rainfall

By Eric Anthony

Town Creek is a small stream originating near Mt. Tabor Church Road north of Pickens, South Carolina. The stream meanders through rural Pickens County for more than 6 miles. It is joined by at least three smaller tributaries before it enters the city of Pickens near the intersection of Pumpkintown Highway and Runnymede Road.

Upon entering the city limits, this stream runs adjacent to several commercial and industrial sites. These sites are used for heavy industrial work, timber processing (sawmill), and retail commercial properties. Town Creek then runs adjacent to a city park. After leaving the city limits, the stream returns to a rural area west of Pickens. The creek terminates as a tributary to Twelve Mile Creek near Shady Grove Road.

Although there are many possible contaminants based on the land use along this stream, the highest potential threat

to human health might be bacterial. The researcher chose to use total coliforms, fecal coliform, and *E. coli* as indicator samples of overall stream health.

This research study determined that the increase in bacterial levels in Town Creek after rainfall events was statistically significant. Bacterial levels then returned to baseline levels during dryer weather. Photos of the stream locations were included so that the land use around the sampling locations can be determined. Further study on this project should be completed in order to understand how adjacent land use affects bacterial levels in Town Creek and the human health implications of these increased levels. ❁

(Eric Anthony is a science teacher at Pickens High School. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from Presbyterian College and a Master of Science degree from Clemson University. He is married and has three children. The Anthonys live in Easley. His master's degree study was titled "Determining the Levels of Total Coliforms, Fecal Coliform, and E. coli Contamination of Town Creek in Pickens County, South Carolina.")



Eric Anthony

Clemson University student David Hutto samples a stream for salamanders during a research project that looked at verifying historic records for amphibians and reptiles in South Carolina's Blue Ridge region. Much of the study took place in Jocassee Gorges. (Photos by David Hutto)



Researchers study Jocassee salamanders

Amphibians highly important to Upstate ecosystems

By David Hutto, Kyle Barrett and Will Dillman

During the summer of 2015, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and Clemson University partnered to study the distribution and abundance of several species of amphibians and reptiles in the Blue Ridge region of South Carolina.

Much of this work has occurred in the Jocassee Gorges area, where researchers are attempting to verify historic records for the species and to identify additional areas where they occur. Dwarf black-bellied salamander (*Desmognathus folkertsi*), patchnose salamander (*Urspelerpes brucei*), and the seal salamander (*Desmognathus marmoratus*) are some of the species of particular interest.

Many people, even those who love to spend time exploring the woods, rarely encounter salamanders because they spend much of their time underground or hiding under rocks within a stream. Despite



Shovel-nosed salamander

their diminutive stature and secretive nature, these species can be extremely important to our Upstate ecosystems. They greatly impact the way nutrients move through our headwater streams, and one study even suggested that all the salamanders in the forest would far outweigh all the birds in the same area!

These salamanders are highly dependent on water to carry out nearly all functions of their life. Salamanders are

among the most sensitive amphibians to water quality, largely because many species spend their entire lives in and around water sources. They stay hydrated and breathe through their skin, so any pollutants in the water easily enter a salamander's body. Species such as the shovel-nosed salamander (*Desmognathus marmoratus*) live their entire lives in cool, well-oxygenated streams. Females lay their eggs on the undersides of rocks in fast-flowing areas and will stay with the eggs for more than two months to protect them until they hatch!

Because many salamanders need clean, clear-flowing water, they are vulnerable to siltation and pollution caused by housing developments or poor forestry and agricultural practices. Knowing something about how common species are now relative to their historical distribution can give us insight into how this group, and the habitats they rely on, are doing as the landscape around them changes.

Throughout the summer I have spent my time researching these salamanders, as well as other species of amphibians and reptiles. Finding the species that we have been searching for and knowing that they continue to persist in certain areas has been a very rewarding experience.

The Jocassee Gorges, along with the surrounding Southern Blue Ridge Mountains, is home to more species of salamanders than anywhere else on earth. Understanding where these species are will help us better protect them for years to come. ❁

(David Hutto is an undergraduate student at Clemson University studying Wildlife and Fisheries Biology. Reptiles and amphibians are his primary focus and preferred area of study. Kyle Barrett is an Assistant Professor of Aquatic Ecology in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation at Clemson University. His research focuses on how vertebrates respond to large-scale stressors such as land use and climate change. Will Dillman is the S.C. Department of Natural Resources herpetologist and is responsible for coordinating the reptile and amphibian conservation program throughout the state.)

Palmetto Trail Upstate terminus to be Walhalla

Mountains to the sea trail scheduled
to be 500 miles when completed

Palmetto Conservation and the City of Walhalla are celebrating a new partnership to extend the cross-state Palmetto Trail into downtown Walhalla.

At a celebratory event on July 14 in Walhalla, Palmetto Conservation presented Mayor Danny Edwards with a Palmetto Trail kiosk poster illustrating the new downtown terminus.

"We are extremely excited to partner with Palmetto Conservation Foundation," said Edwards. "The Palmetto Trail will allow us to share the beauty and history of our city and the surrounding county with visitors from all over the country and beyond. The trail will be a destination of choice as one of only 16 Trails nationwide to traverse a state, taking trail users from the mountains of the Blue Ridge to the shores of the sea, near Charleston."

The scenic Palmetto Trail is a hiking and mountain biking pathway that extends from the mountains to the sea. Until this agreement with Walhalla, the trail terminated at Oconee Station Historic Site in the State Parks system. The extension into Walhalla will add about 16 miles to the mountain end of the trail providing both biking and hiking opportunities. Prominent on the new passage is Stumphouse Tunnel Park, home to the historic pre-Civil War railroad tunnel to nowhere and the beautiful Issaqueena Falls.

"We were delighted to receive the invitation from the City of Walhalla to extend the trail," said Natalie Britt, Palmetto Conservation Foundation executive director. "Our board of directors agrees that ending the trail in a beautiful, thriving community provides countless benefits to the region and to trail users."

State Senator Thomas C. Alexander, who represents Oconee and Pickens counties in the General Assembly, spoke at the celebration. Alexander is a Walhalla businessman and champion of economic development.

"The economic impact of the Palmetto Trail on Walhalla and Oconee County will be significant," said Alexander. "Through the public-private partnerships created with this project, the area will experience increased business development and tourism. In addition, this is an opportunity for increased awareness of healthy lifestyle choices and improved quality of life initiatives for our county residents. The Palmetto Trail, when completed, will span the state with over 500 miles of trail for hiking and biking enthusiasts of all ages."

Walhalla city leaders requested the extension to promote healthy living and to stimulate the local economy. A downtown terminus will provide residents with easy access to active outdoor



During a celebratory event in Walhalla, Natalie Britt (left), Palmetto Conservation Foundation executive director, presented Walhalla Mayor Danny Edwards with a Palmetto Trail kiosk poster illustrating the new downtown terminus. At right is state Sen. Thomas C. Alexander of Oconee County. (DNR photo by Greg Lucas)

recreation. Trail visitors will appreciate Walhalla's restaurants, shops, and overnight lodging. Business leaders are pleased with the economic prospects of having trail visitors in their city.

"We see this project as a win-win for everyone—local residents and visitors to the area," Edwards said. "The City of Walhalla was already focused on making the downtown area more pedestrian friendly as part of the streetscape renovation project currently underway. Those plans will now be extended to ensure that Walhalla and the surrounding area is bike friendly as well."

The Palmetto Conservation Foundation is working with a group of local stakeholders from the city and county to develop the final trail route. The new passage will feature premier mountain biking access.

With the new extension, the Palmetto Trail will stretch across South Carolina from Walhalla in Oconee County to Awendaw in Charleston County. The trail is a free, public resource available to residents and visitors of all ages and abilities for active outdoor recreation. Trail users enjoy South Carolina's natural beauty, diverse culture, and fascinating history. Recognized regionally and nationally as a safe, scenic, and visitor-friendly attraction, the Palmetto Trail accommodates

human-powered outdoor recreation—hiking, backpacking, camping, mountain biking, and on some passages, street cycling and horseback riding. At present, more than 350 trail miles, built as 26 passages across 14 counties, are open. When completed, the trail will offer access to more than 500 miles of continuous, maintained trail from mountains to sea.

Palmetto Conservation Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization, founded in 1989, whose mission is to conserve South Carolina's natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote active outdoor recreation. Palmetto Conservation's largest and best-known project is building and maintaining the Palmetto Trail. 





John Garton (left) and author Patricia Whitener were among the local scientists and experts bringing their knowledge and experience to the week-long teacher's course centered at Bad Creek Hydro Station.

Duke Energy, Clemson help teachers experience glories of Jocassee Gorges

Week-long course engages teachers in a variety of science lessons

By Patricia Whitener

Summertime in the Jocassee Gorges is always filled with adventure: hikes under the shade of hardwood coves; the soothing sound of waterfalls and migratory songbirds; swimming in the cool, clear waters of a lake that is surrounded by ancient mountain tops making up the Blue Ridge Escarpment.

Wouldn't it be grand if we could cast aside the worries of adult life and reconnect with our youthful spirit? What we need is a camp for grown-ups. If you are lucky enough to be an in-service K-12 school teacher in the great state of South Carolina, that's just what you get. The SC Life program (or as I like to call it "grown-up camp") is a series of continuing education courses offered through Clemson University.

<http://www.clemson.edu/cafls/sclife/courses/summer%202015.html>

Funded through Duke Energy and additional grants, this week-long course engages campers (teachers) in a variety of ecological lessons ranging from limnology, aquatic macroinvertebrates, Southeastern plant and animal species, wildlife tracking and DNA,

vernal ponds, watershed dynamics, hydroelectric power generation and industry stewardship.

Among the local scientists and experts bringing their wealth of knowledge and local experience to the outdoor classroom at Duke Energy's Bad Creek Hydroelectric Station were Dr. John Hains and Dr. Barbara Speziale, Clemson University Department of Biological Sciences; Hugh "Skip" Still, retired DNR biologist; John Garton, retired Duke biologist; and Allan Boggs of Duke Energy. Teachers learned new ways to excite their students in and out of a classroom setting.

(<http://www.duke-energy.com/visitor-centers/bad-creek-outdoor-classroom.asp>)

If interested in learning more about the teacher's workshop, contact Ginger Foulk foulk@clemson.edu, (864) 656-4224. 🌸

(Patricia Whitener earned her Master of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from Clemson University and now serves Clemson Cooperative Extension as a county agent in Youth Development. In addition to hands-on learning experiences in natural resources, Greenville County 4-H has many opportunities to engage youth in developing healthy lifestyles and responsible citizenship within the community.)



Jocassee Journal

Information and News about the Jocassee Gorges

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For information on subscribing to the Jocassee Journal contact:

Greg Lucas, DNR
311 Natural Resources Drive
Clemson, SC 29631-3253

Phone: (864) 380-5201
e-mail: LucasG@dnr.sc.gov

website:

www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/index.htm

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Conservation partners offer Water and Wildlife Day

Scouts build Carolina Fence at Keowee-Toxaway State Park

By Gabe Boggs

Boy Scouts of America Troop 134 from Six Mile was invited to help out at a conservation event at Keowee-Toxaway State Park hosted by Friends of Jocassee and Friends of Lake Keowee Society.

The event, held on May 2, was called Water and Wildlife Day. It was actually a workday for the park and was co-sponsored by the Pickens County Stormwater Partners, Clemson Extension, Upstate Master Naturalists, S.C. Native Plant Society and Foothills Trail Conference.

Our task at Water and Wildlife Day was to build

a Carolina Fence. A Carolina Fence is a small section of split rail fence that represents South Carolina in a number of ways. For example, the fence features the yellow jasmine, our state flower; a wren house for our state bird, the Carolina wren; a small piece of blue granite, representing South Carolina's state rock; and some other native plant species.

All of the native plants were provided to the Friends of Jocassee from the S.C. Native Plant Society. Three Boy Scouts and four adults worked on the project, which took about three hours to complete. The lunch was delicious and was provided by the Friends of Lake Keowee Society. The whole experience was a lot of fun! 🌿

(Gabe Boggs, 13, has achieved a 1st Class rank in the Boy Scouts of America Six Mile Troop 134.)



Scouts Matthew Clark, Gabe Boggs and Trent Kokay built a Carolina Fence at Keowee-Toxaway State Park. (Clemson Extension Service photo by Cathy Reas Foster)