



Jocassee Journal

Information and News about the Jocassee Gorges



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Mark Hall, recently retired as Jocassee Gorges land manager, looks out over the iconic viewpoint of Jumping-Off Rock, overlooking Lake Jocassee. Hall shepherded the changes at the overlook that helped protect nesting peregrine falcons. (SCDNR photo)

Legendary Jocassee land manager retires from SCDNR

Wildlife biologist, forester Mark Hall was professional conservationist at Jocassee

Mark Hall, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) land manager at Jocassee Gorges for the past two decades, recently retired.

Hall was both a S.C. Registered Forester and a Certified Wildlife Biologist and his service at SCDNR, at Jocassee and in other positions, stretched over three decades. Hall's list of accomplishments are many and are legendary within the conservation community.

The Jocassee Journal invited some of Hall's peers and colleagues to talk about his service during his time with SCDNR.

Billy Dukes, SCDNR chief of wildlife: Mark was the second Small Game Project Supervisor, following Billy McTeer. Those two laid a foundation for small-game management in South Carolina and their legacy continues to this day in the form of a thriving project that is now staffed by five biologists and provides technical assistance to private landowners throughout the state for small game management.

Mark is a small-game biologist at heart, but he is always concerned with holistic management of the land to benefit multiple species. One example is the pollinator project which benefits multiple species (pollinators, small game, songbirds) and provides societal benefits as well. I consider Mark a mentor and a true friend. He and I always discussed small game management, initially quail, doves, and cottontails, but we shifted to grouse and rabbits after he took the position at Jocassee. He is one of the most knowledgeable forest managers I have ever been around, and he has been a leader in advancing the science of prescribed fire in mountainous environments.

I want to thank Mark for maintaining the essential character of Jocassee, all the while improving it for wildlife and visitor experiences. I wish him the best of luck in retirement.

Wes Cooler, Upstate conservationist: Though his retirement is hard earned and well deserved, I hate to see Mark Hall's tenure in the Jocassee Gorges come to an end. Arriving on the job before the ink was really dry on the acquisition of some of the most diverse and precious 32,000

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Jocassee manager responsible for many conservation achievements

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acres in the State, Mark brought with him just the right, rare set of skills the job required. Building a small, dedicated team, he quickly put this remarkable place on a steady course that not only achieves the delicate balance of protecting the natural resources and providing access to a diverse user community, but also lays the foundation for the long-term ecological health of the remarkable natural resources themselves. The positive impact of Mark's work on this region and the State, both now and into the future, is incalculable. As a lucky guy who lives literally surrounded by Jocassee Gorges property, I've seen daily the positive work being done by SCDNR during Mark's time here, and I salute him for a job well done, wishing all the best in his future endeavors!

Johnny Stowe, SCDNR Heritage Preserve manager: My close friend and colleague Mark really loved to burn the woods. For him, "settin' the woods on far" was more than a means to an end, but an end in and of itself. Such a mindset, such a connection to the land, is what makes a paragon prescribed fire lighter and a great land manager – and Mark is one of the best of both. When Mark took a hiatus from the department a couple of decades ago, he launched from scratch a very successful forestry and wildlife management consulting business, a big part of which was restoring and managing small game habitat using controlled burning, the ancient, ecological imperative. As a result of his personality and high integrity, and his technical skills and hands-on, common-sense approach to achieving on-the-ground results for his clients, he became very successful and was in great demand. He especially loved taking a banged-up piece of land, a tract that had been abused and neglected, and turning it into something special.

Not long after I came to SCDNR in the mid-90s, Mark came back to the department and was number two man in the Wildlife Diversity Program, where I worked. We became close friends and burning buddies, and I recall him telling me how much he loved consulting, and how he hated to leave it, with his business ever-growing, but it was requiring him to travel too much, and he wanted to be home every night to be with his "young'uns." He was very involved in rearing his daughter, Hunter, and his son, Colter. I know for sure he considers them his greatest achievement. Through them, and through his judicious use of timber harvesting and especially his artful drip torch in the longleaf pineywoods and the fire-

oak ridges of Jocassee Gorges, he has left his legacy on the Southern landscape we all love. But he ain't dead yet, and so after he gets some of his yearning for fishing Out West tamped down, I hope he will now-and-then do a little consulting here in the Carolinas. Maybe I can get some volunteer work out of him dragging a torch in Lee County. Congratulations, Mark, on a good race run, but not yet over. I look forward to more Sharing the Flame!

Dennis Chastain, Upstate naturalist, historian: Mark came to work at a critical and very exciting time in the long and varied history of the expansive property now known as the Jocassee Gorges. The SCDNR had just acquired the property and for the first time ever it was going to be managed, first and foremost, for the benefit of the resource itself, rather than simply timber extraction.

'Mark is one of the most knowledgeable forest managers I have ever been around, and he has been a leader in advancing the science of prescribed fire in mountainous environments.'


--Billy Dukes, SCDNR Wildlife Chief

I remember going up to Mark's office at Laurel Valley several times in those early days and spending hours and hours looking at satellite views of the property. I pointed out where all the roads and skidder trails were, some of which were drive-able but in need of repair, and some that were so grown up as to be un-usable. He and I both dialed in on where the numerous monocultural 30-year-old yellow poplar

white pine stands were.

I was impressed right off the bat with Mark's keen interest in learning as much as he could about the property and establishing a bucket list of critical needs in terms of management activities. He realized that among other things, the poplar and white pine stands were a "biological desert" and had to go.

To Mark's credit, as soon as he had a good feel for the property, he hit the ground running. He hired the right people and obtained the right equipment to get the job done. When Mark arrived on the scene, you really needed 4-wheeled drive just to get to Jumping Off Rock and the Camp Adger road was sometimes impassable in wet weather. Today you can drive a car on both those roads. And the large majority of those yellow poplar and white pine stands have made their way to the saw mill.

On balance, as time passes, I think Mark's legacy will be three things: the great improvement in the extensive network of roads, the restoration of fire into the Jocassee Gorges ecosystem, and a management philosophy that puts the needs of the resource itself above and beyond everything else. 



The new 95-foot suspension bridge over Eastatoe Creek was completed Dec. 28, 2020. (Alison Rauch photo)

Two bridges reopen on Palmetto Trail's Eastatoe Passage

Both of the bridges on the Palmetto Trail's Eastatoe Passage that were destroyed during a massive rainfall in Spring 2019 have been rebuilt and reopened to the public.


Eastatoe Passage opened in Fall 2018 and connected Keowee-Toxaway State Park to the Dug Mountain Angler Access Area on Roy F. Jones Highway in the Jocassee Gorges region of northern Pickens County.

A massive storm that felled trees and caused a flash flood down Eastatoe Creek on Friday, April 19, 2019, took out two pedestrian bridges on the Palmetto Trail's Eastatoe Passage. One of the bridges that was damaged in the flood—a 70-foot structure over the Eastatoe—was the longest fiberglass pedestrian bridge on the 500-mile Palmetto Trail. Local officials estimated that the storm dumped between eight and 10 inches of rain into the region in just a few hours' time.

The Zeke wilderness trail bridge construction was completed Dec. 28, 2020, by The American Adventure Service Corps, Beanstalk Builders and Palmetto Trail staff. The

second bridge was completed in Spring 2021 and features the same extension bridge.

The 4.6-mile Eastatoe Passage of the Palmetto Trail opened in late 2018. This critical passage took the Palmetto Trail one step closer to connecting the entire Upstate and being able to complete the trail. As you head out on the Eastatoe Passage from the Dug Mountain Angler Access Area, hikers will enjoy the sights and sounds of walking along Eastatoe Creek. Hikers will then begin to gain elevation and cross a boardwalk above a waterfall on a small feeder creek. The trail begins to descend back towards the creek where the hiker is met with their reward—the opportunity to enjoy the new 95-foot suspension bridge over Eastatoe Creek. The distance from the parking lot to the bridge is three-quarters of a mile.

For more information on the Eastatoe Passage, and/or to download a map, visit: [Eastatoe Passage – Palmetto Conservation Foundation](#). 

Oconee bells rescued from development

Tenacity of one woman results in protection of rare plant with intimate Jocassee Gorges connection

By Dennis Chastain

I am usually pretty suspicious of e-mails from people that I don't know, but this one mentioned Oconee bells, (the wildflower once described by 19th century Harvard botanist, Asa Gray, as "the most interesting plant in North America") in the subject line. I opened the e-mail and that simple act led to a series of events that taken together constitute what I consider one of the great conservation success stories of our time.

The e-mail was from someone over near Lake Jocassee by the name of Cydney "Cyd" Phillips. She lives on the road to Lake Jocassee not far from SC Highway 11. It was apparent from the e-mail that she was highly distressed that a 40-acre tract on Boone's Creek across the road from her was up for sale and destined to be cut up into lots for a housing development. She rattled off a half-dozen reasons why she thought the property ought to be protected from development, but the one that caught my attention was the fact that there were large colonies of Oconee bells (*Shortia galacifolia*) on the property.

My wife, Jane, and I met Cyd over at Boone's Creek Baptist Church, and we listened to her plaintiff pleas for help in trying to get this property preserved. Her words and body language telegraphed her desperation. Tears welled up in her eyes as she vowed that she would sell her home and her cherished Jeep to get an option on the property, if that were what was required. I told her that I would do whatever I could, but I had to be frank with her about the uphill struggle she was facing. I had just spent a year working with the owners of another property that they were seeking to protect with funding by the S.C. Conservation Land Bank and I knew for a fact that there were many more requests before the Land Bank than there were funds available. The competition for funds was stiff, and you would have to make a pretty compelling case to make this happen.

She said that she had already contacted Frank Holleman and Mac Stone at Naturaland Trust, and that they had told her pretty much the same thing—it was going to be an uphill battle. That was actually the one bright spot in the whole situation. I told her that she had contacted the right people. I know from long experience that if there is anyone who can preserve a



The legendary French botanist, Andre Michaux, first collected Oconee bells in 1787. Since then, the plant has become one of the enduring symbols of the region known as Jocassee Gorges. (Scottie Fredrickson photo)

worthy property, it is Frank Holleman and Mac Stone. Those two people and their Naturaland Trust Board of Directors and their extensive network of patrons, donors and benefactors have a truly remarkable track record of preserving and protecting endangered properties in the Upcountry of South Carolina. They really are a phenomenon.

At this point, I necessarily must condense a story that played out over the next year into a few paragraphs detailing the milestone events. Jane and I toured the property with Cyd, but I was deeply disappointed that in the section of Boone's Creek that I saw there were only a few scattered colonies of Oconee bells. She assured us that there were many, many more colonies downstream, and even more beyond that on adjacent properties. We had to leave but I asked if she would try to get an estimate of the number of plants and let me know as soon as possible.

I didn't hear from her for a week or so and pretty much wrote the whole thing off as a sad and pretty much hopeless situation. Then I got an excited email from Cyd indicating that she had spent untold hours on her hands and knees meticulously counting plants. She said she had documented a grand total of 30,000 Oconee bells just on that property, and as she had said before, "many more downstream." Now we had something we could work with. There was at least a chance that this might happen. She had sent the same e-mail to Frank and Mac and later that day I had a call from Frank Holleman.

Frank just asked one question, "What do you think?" I told him that Oconee bells were an imperiled plant. We lost 60 percent of the global habitat for this species the day they closed the gates on the Jocassee dam about 50 years ago, and these were the last two streams

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Naturaland Trust protects Oconee bells

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(Boone and McKinney creeks) that harbored significant colonies that were not protected by virtue of being located on publicly owned lands. So there was that.

I went on to apprise him of my long-held theory that these particular plants were the southernmost colonies in the world, and that they may well have a genetic profile that had allowed them to survive and even flourish in a warmer and drier climate compared to those plants on the northern end of their range up in North Carolina. I went on to assert that their genetic diversity may well give them a selective advantage when those same conditions become the norm as the effects of global climate change become reality. In short, these plants may well end up being the salvation of the entire species. Frank took all this under advisement, asked me to put all this in writing, and said they would see what they could do.

I didn't hear anything for a few weeks until I had an astounding phone call from Mac Stone. Mac informed



Naturaland Trust, the Greenville land trust started by conservation legend Tommy Wyche, recently protected significant populations of Oconee bells on private land in the South Carolina mountains. (SCDNR photo by Greg Lucas)

me that their board was “all in” on this project and had approved using their own operating funds to acquire the Boone Creek property. And it gets better. Mac also said that they had started talking with downstream property owners and were making inroads in maybe protecting those properties as well. He also said they were taking a look at a significant property on McKinney Creek near the old historic Chapman Bridge, all of the above with significant colonies of Oconee bells.

I am reminded of the prophetic words of the late great sociologist, Margaret Mead, that I first read way back in the 1960s: “Some people doubt the ability of a small group of highly dedicated people to change the world. In truth,

it's the only thing that ever has.” 🌿

(Dennis Chastain is an Upstate naturalist, hunter and historian who has written for South Carolina Wildlife magazine for more than three decades.)

The Road Not Taken

Musterground Road adventure leads to trek to see Hilliard Falls

By Emelyn Jones

In 2018, I fulfilled a goal when I hiked the 77-mile Foothills Trail with my husband, Neil, and our friend and neighbor, David Delahunty. My only regret was not taking the spur trail to Hilliard Falls, which is arguably one of the most elusive and remote falls in the Carolinas. These falls were named after Glenn Hilliard, one of the original founders of the Foothills Trail. I have worked with Glenn through our service on the Upstate Forever board, which deepened my desire to see this waterfall!

Three years later and after doing some research, I discovered that one of the trailheads to Hilliard Falls is Line Rock Gap, which can be accessed via Musterground Road at Duke Energy's Bad Creek Hydro Station. We



Hilliard Falls is named after Glenn Hilliard, one of the founders of the Foothills Trail. The author (shown here) especially wanted to see the waterfalls, since she serves with Hilliard on the Upstate Forever Board of Directors.



David Delahunty (left), author Emelyn Jones and her husband, Musterground Road adventure.

had been on this road a few times to hike to Lower Whitewater Falls, but never ventured as far as we needed to today. The gravel road is only open for about two months in the spring, and then from Sept. 15 through January 15. One of my favorite resources when exploring is my “SCDNR Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges” map. This free map can be found at many of the State Parks in this area, and is a must for anyone wanting to discover the riches of the Gorges. Pulling out my SCDNR map, the trailhead at Line Rock Gap was located about six miles from Bad Creek, and on a perfectly sunny April day, the tenacious trio of Neil, David and Em set out for a memorable venture. We packed lots of water and fruit, and set off to Musterground Road in Neil’s Jeep Gladiator...and yes, you do need a 4x4 high clearance vehicle (and a keen sense of adventure!) for this quest. It is not for the faint of heart!

What a wonderful gift it was to be heading to our destination with no time limits! As we drove past the

... delayed three years!



Neil, are excited as they get ready to head out on their

Bad Creek access, we had beautiful views off to our right of Lake Jocassee, the purest lake in South Carolina. There were “many mini” waterfalls along the way that tempted us to stop and savor. My favorite stop was about five miles in—right before we crossed the Thompson River. We strolled along a beautiful sandy bank to get a great view of the extremely “unique” bridge over the Thompson built from old boilers, drainpipes, or something of their likeness!

Crossing Whitewater and Thompson Rivers was a thrill that provided first class views. These are two of the four mountainous rivers that feed Lake Jocassee with their beautiful, cold, clear water, providing many of us with our drinking water. If you believe, like I do, that water is our most valuable resource on the planet, this is a glorious sight!

Six miles deep into the rugged Jocassee Gorges, we pulled over to the left at Line Rock Gap and found the red gate at the trailhead. Watch carefully for the gate as it is easily missed! Here is where set out on foot to hike

the 0.4-mile spur trail to The Foothills Trail. Connecting with the trail felt familiar as we turned right and headed towards Horsepasture River.

As my mother says, nature is the best gardener! We especially enjoyed the blooms of the wild dogwoods and mini purple irises as we hiked. About two miles in, we found the sign pointing us to our final destination - the 50-foot spectacular waterfall that is Hilliard Falls! I was struck by the solitude and peacefulness of the pools beneath the falls that flow into Bearcamp Creek. The water temperature was a cool 58 degrees (yes, I carry a water thermometer in my backpack!) which made me think how refreshing it would feel in the heat of the summer. Mission Accomplished! Was it worth the wait? Absolutely! And just like that, it was time to head back.

On the hike out, we ran into some thru-hikers from North Carolina looking for some guidance on campsites. There is such a camaraderie on the trail and I was happy for the five-minute rest as we stopped to chat with them. A gentle rain cooled us off, reminding me that we were in the only temperate rain forest east of the Rockies. In all, the round-trip hike was 4.4 miles. There was a good bit of elevation but nothing that our easy and steady pace couldn't handle.

Reflecting on the day, I continue to be thankful for the visionaries who preserved this area and who continue to work tirelessly to protect this special, special place in our state and our country. There is much work to be done, and the time is now! Please get out and enjoy the outdoors – and let me tag along! 🌿

(Emelyn Jones is a resident of Salem, SC, and serves on the Board of Directors for Upstate Forever, a nonprofit conservation organization.)



The Thompson River is one of four major rivers flowing into Lake Jocassee—the other three are Toxaway, Whitewater and Horsepasture. The Thompson River bridge is built from old railroad tanker cars.

‘77 miles of trail, 1.2 billion years of geology’

SCDNR, Hampton Wildlife Fund, Furman publish ‘Geology Guide to the Foothills Trail’

A new book, “Geology Guide to the Foothills Trail,” will guide readers through the geology of the Foothills Trail from start to finish. Geologic maps for the entire Trail show readers the rock types they are hiking over, and where they can see interesting rock outcrops that help geologists understand the geologic history of the region. The book is spiral-bound for easy use and page copying.

The book, made possible by a grant from the Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, is a collaborative effort among three authors: Robert H. Morrow IV, a geologist with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources’ (SCDNR) South Carolina Geological Survey; Dr. William A. Ranson, retired geology professor with Furman University; and Tanner Arrington, GIS manager for SCDNR.

The Foothills Trail is a 77-mile trail across the Blue Ridge Escarpment and its foothills in South Carolina and North Carolina. The trail crosses ridge tops with expansive views, including Sassafras Mountain (the highest point in South Carolina at 3,554 feet) and winds through mountain stream and river valleys with views of breathtaking waterfalls. The dramatic landscape experienced along the trail is a result of the region’s geology.



An outcrop of interlayered muscovite schist and gneiss are seen just east of the trail to the Whitewater campsite on the Foothills Trail.



Geology Guide to the Foothills Trail

77 miles of trail, 1.2 billion years of geology



Ever wonder what kind of rocks are along the Foothills Trail? A new book will help. Author Ranson says “by understanding our local geology you will come to better appreciate the uniqueness of the region.”

The geology along the Foothills Trail crosses through nearly 1.2 billion years of Earth’s history. The rocks here record the existence of two supercontinents, an ancient ocean, and a mountain chain of Alpine proportions. Many of the features seen along the trail reflect processes related to early mountain-building events, while others are the result of modern geologic processes that continue to shape the landscape.

Author Ranson writes in the book’s Foreword: “So why study the geology of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge region along the Foothills Trail? What’s the need or use in understanding how our local mountains, valleys, waterfalls, and other natural features came to be? In other words, why did we write this guidebook? One reason, of course, is simply to satisfy our nature human curiosity about the world around us. Perhaps we want to know how our little piece of the plant Earth formed, and how it fits into the ‘big picture.’ Also, by understanding our local geology you will come to better appreciate the uniqueness of the region and to value the land entrusted to us as residents of the region.”

The book is available from the Foothills Trail Conservancy for \$28.25, which includes shipping. To order the book, visit www.foothillstrail.org and click on “Store.”

What is going on with that funny boat?!

Electroshocking on Lake Keowee gives SCDNR biologists valuable fish population information

By William Wood

If you're ever on Lake Keowee and see an odd-looking silver boat with boom arms extending out and two people holding long-handled nets on the front, do not worry.

These fisheries' biologists and technicians from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) are sampling fish populations to see how abundant and healthy the fish are. They are electrofishing, that is to say a boat-mounted generator carefully applies electricity to the water, which stuns fish, causing them to float to the surface where they are netted and placed in a live well.

Once in the live well the fish revive quickly, allowing

SCDNR biologists and technicians to weigh, measure and return the fish to the lake unharmed. If the thought of a boat driving around Lake Keowee, applying electricity to the water makes you nervous, you don't need to be. The electricity only extends a short distance from the boat and we are always careful to watch for anyone in the water, in a kayak, on a paddleboard, or just fishing. We always keep our distance from these people.

We target native largemouth bass and black crappie, along with introduced Alabama bass (also known as spotted bass). This focus allows us to see how healthy our native sportfish are, and how Alabama bass are impacting the health and population levels of our native

species. SCDNR is currently looking at various ways to help native species compete with Alabama bass. Annual electrofishing is our biggest tool in monitoring what is happening in the lake and informing us on how well native species are doing.

When conducting electrofishing surveys, we shock near the shoreline so that electricity can reach the fish. Electrofishing is not effective in deeper water because the electricity simply does not reach deep enough to stun the fish, which allows them to escape. We sample Lake Keowee in the spring when bass of all sizes and age classes are nearshore. We end up sampling large reaches of the

total shoreline to meet our sample goals. This technique gives us an accurate picture of as to what is happening in different parts of the lake and how population levels differ in different parts of the lake.

This knowledge allows us to focus other management activities, such as habitat improvement, on areas where they are most

likely to be effective. We hope that our efforts result in better managing the sportfish resources in Lake Keowee.

Just like all our actions, we conduct these electrofishing surveys to monitor and improve the natural resources we are so fortunate to have in the Upstate. If you see us out there, don't be afraid to say hello after we finish shocking; we might even have a lunker to show you. 🌿

(William Wood is an SCDNR fisheries biologist based in the Clemson office.)



Some nice black crappie that were collected during an electroshocking survey at Lake Keowee are displayed by Weston Houck (left) and Hailey Goyette of the SCDNR Freshwater Fisheries Section staff. (SCDNR photo by William Wood)

Toxaway Bridge photo wins contest

‘Star-gazing’ on Foothills Trail captures State Park Directors’ award

This year’s grand-prize winning photo of the National Association of State Park Directors’ fourth annual America’s State Parks 2020 Photo Contest was submitted by Thomas Moors and was taken in Gorges State Park of the Toxaway River Bridge, a part of the Foothills Trail.

Qualifying submissions were judged based on originality, artistic composition, technical quality, and whether the photograph showcases the best of America's State Parks camping and outdoor activities.

Interview with photographer Thomas Moors:

I grew up in Minnesota and moved to South Carolina in 2000. I’ve always been into outdoor adventures—hiking, camping, canoeing, skiing...anything that gets me out into nature. My wife and I took our 10-year anniversary trip to Yosemite National Park, and I bought a “nice” camera thinking I would take amazing photos. However, I didn’t know how to work the camera and was very disappointed in the images from the trip. That inspired me to learn how to use the camera and learn how to take better photos. Especially as it became another reason for me to get outside and hike, camp, canoe, etc. Eventually it became a side business for me taking scenic photos for local marketing campaigns, magazine editorial assignments, outdoor product photography, selling prints, and teaching others what I’ve learned.

What is the story behind your photo?

Photographing the Milky Way is one of my favorite things to do as it is an exciting adventure being outside (often alone) in the dark, late at night, in a remote location. As the location of the Milky Way is predictable, I spend many hours looking at maps trying to find spots where I can compose an image with the Milky Way in the background. I knew the Milky Way would be above the bridge over the Toxaway River in Gorges State Park in May and I waited for a clear night with no moon that month to make the trip. I hiked five miles down the Canebrake trail to the state park campsites near the bridge and spent the day relaxing, wading in the river, and waiting for the sun to go down. Around 2 a.m. I woke up and went to the river. I carefully set up my camera in the river and then went up on the bridge to pose for the photo.

What device did you use to take the photo?

I used a Sony A7Riv with a 16-35mm f/2.8 lens and tripod. I had the camera take an image every 15 seconds while I posed on the bridge trying to be very still to prevent the bridge from swaying during the long exposures to capture the stars.

Was this your first visit to this location or is it a place you visit often?



This photo by Thomas Moors, “Star-gazing from the bridge over the Toxaway River,” captured first-prize in a national contest and it appears on the cover of “America’s State Parks” calendar for 2021.

I’ve visited by boat before, but this was my first-time hiking and camping in the location.

How did you find out about the contest? What made you enter this photo?

I saw the South Carolina State Parks Facebook page encourage participation in the contest with the hope that a South Carolina Park image could be a finalist. So, I entered several images from South Carolina and just this one from North Carolina (I hope South Carolina isn’t upset!).

What do state parks mean to you and how have they inspired you?

As a landscape photographer they are many of the best locations to be inspired and create my art while at the same time enjoying being outdoors. I love the adventure of planning out a hike or camping trip to a location so -I can be in the right place at the right time to capture an amazing photograph. Besides the obvious well-maintained trails and campsites, the parks have inspired some of my best photography through Artist in Residence programs, and other special programs like guided hikes (moonlight hike up Table Rock).

Are there other state park locations you plan to visit in the near future?

Grayson Highlands State Park, Virginia; Cheraw State Park and Hunting Island State Park, South Carolina; Grandfather Mountain State Park and Pilot Mountain State Park, North Carolina 🌿

New plant to science discovered at Nine Times Preserve

Saxifrage named after distinguished USC botanist

A plant that is new to science has been discovered at Nine Times Preserve in northern Pickens County, and last year it was named after a distinguished South Carolina botanist.

The only known population of Shealy's saxifrage (scientific name *Micranthes petiolaris* var. *shealyi*) exists at Nine Times Preserve, a property of The Nature Conservancy near Sunset.

The plant was named by Clemson University botanists Laary Cushman, Patrick McMillan and Vincent Richards after Dr. Harry E. Shealy Jr., distinguished professor emeritus at the University of South Carolina, Aiken. Shealy is a former member of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' Heritage Trust Advisory Board and is a member of The Nature Conservancy Board of Trustees.

Shealy's saxifrage flowers from February to May where it grows along the canopy edges of mildly sloping granite outcroppings, on moss mats, or within spring-fed crevices. It features a delicate white flower with yellow and red accents on the petals. The scientific paper that named the new plant was published in 2020.

"This is a new variety



The new variety of saxifrage discovered at Nine Times Preserve was named after Dr. Harry E. Shealy Jr., distinguished professor emeritus at the University of South Carolina, Aiken.




Saxifrage named after distinguished USC botanist Dr. Harry E. Shealy Jr.

of *Micranthes* (a genus of flowering plants in the saxifrage family), similar to the high-elevation *Micranthes petiolaris* found at places like Black Balsam Knob (a peak of 6,214 feet) near the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina," said Kristin D. Austin, Upstate Conservation Director with The Nature Conservancy based in Greenville. "This variety, Shealy's saxifrage, is only known at Nine Times Preserve, growing along the forested boundary of an open granite outcrop.

"Granite outcrops are globally rare places that take thousands of years to develop plant communities to host such rare flowers like this one," she said. "Granite outcrops are very fragile and can be loved to death, so it's best to love them from afar—thus, it's best to love this special little flower from a distance."

Nine Times Preserve, owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy since 2008, is 560 acres and features a trail system including the easy Trillium Trail, an excellent place to view early spring wildflowers. It is open to the public for hiking from sunrise to sunset. South Carolina DNR manages hunting and fishing on the property through the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program.

To learn more about Nine Times Preserve, visit [Nine Times Preserve \(nature.org\)](https://www.nature.org). 



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Renowned Upstate hiker Jan Jackson passes away

Served on the Foothills Trail Conservancy board

Jan Jackson, legendary
Upstate hiker and former
Foothills Trail Conservancy
board member, died Jan. 15,
2021, at the age of 90.

Mrs. Jackson was a graduate
of Bob Jones University,
received her master's degree
from Clemson University and
obtained her Registered Nurse
Certificate from Park View
Methodist Hospital in Fort
Wayne, Ind. She was a retired
nurse and health occupations
educator.

Jan was a member of
Easley First United Methodist
Church and traveled on
numerous mission trips
in the United States and
other countries including



Jan Jackson, with her trusty hiking poles and sporting
a Foothills Trail cap, gets ready to take a walk at
Conestee Nature Park in Greenville County.

Zimbabwe, the Philippines,
Costa Rica, India, Cuba and
Mexico.

She was an avid hiker and
had completed the 2,190-mile
Appalachian Trail (through
14 states) and the El Camino
de Santiago in Spain. Jan had
hiked many times the 77-mile
length of the Foothills Trail,
which goes between Table
Rock and Oconee state parks,
and she was a longtime board
member with the Foothills
Trail Conservancy, which
oversees the trail. Jan also
belonged to the Greenville
Natural History Association
and many other conservation
groups.

Memorials may be
made to the Foothills Trail
Conservancy, PO Box 3041,
Greenville, SC 29602.