Jocassee Journal
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The north-facing interpretive panel at Sassafras Mountain Overlook shows the distinctive line of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina. The panoramic photos for the four panels atop Sassafras were taken by former SCDNR photographer Taylor Main. (SCDNR photo by Ken Forrester)

Interpretive panels installed at Overlook

Sassafras' surrounding topographic features identified in new signs placed at highest point

One of the most beautiful places in South Carolina just got more interesting!

Interpretive panels showing landmarks around the Sassafras Mountain Overlook were installed in early May. Among the features that are shown in the four panels—East, West, North and South—are surrounding mountain peaks in North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina. Other landmarks shown on the panels at the Overlook include lakes Jocassee and Keowee, some nearby towns, the Carolina Point Young Life Camp and Oconee Nuclear Station.

"We hope that these interpretive panels will add to the enjoyment of visitors to Sassafras Mountain Overlook," said Emily Cope, deputy director of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). "Knowing more about the region will help visitors understand what a special place Sassafras Mountain is."

Cope gave the go-ahead to create the panels more than a year ago, and SCDNR acquired the services of Melanie Amick of Amick Designs to design them. Amick Designs is an award-winning exhibit, graphic and web-design firm in Lexington, and Amick designed many interpretive panels for the mountain state parks that are close in proximity to Sassafras Mountain.

The four 36-inch-by-24-inch outdoor wayside panels, each one different, are installed in front of stone "pillars" on the concrete floor of the Overlook and they face East, West, North and South.

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Sassafras' Dividing Waters

One of the most intriguing features on Sassafras Mountain is what scientists call a tri-point—a divide that separates three different watersheds.

When rainwater drains off the eastern side of Sassafras Mountain, it ends up in the South Saluda River, then travels to the Atlantic Ocean through either the Santee River south of Georgetown or through Charleston Harbor by way of the Cooper River. If raindrops flow off the south side of the mountain, they drain into Eastatoee Creek, through lakes Keowee and Hartwell, down the Savannah River and into the Atlantic Ocean near Savannah.

Water flowing off to the north and part of the western side of Sassafras will end up in the French Broad River. The French Broad flows toward the Tennessee River, merges with the Ohio River and into the mighty Mississippi River, where it ultimately drains into the Gulf of Mexico at New Orleans.

The south-facing interpretive panel atop Sassafras Mountain Overlook describes the three different watersheds that form at South Carolina's highest point. The identified mountain peaks shown in this panel are all within South Carolina, and other features shown include Lake Keowee and Oconee Nuclear Station.

New panels identify landscape in all four directions

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The panels are housed in an angled wayside sign framing system built by Fossil Industries of Deer Park, NY. The signs face in toward the center so visitors can view the sign looking out past the railing at the view.

The collaborative effort to create the panels, which took about a year from inception until the panels were installed at the Overlook, featured the contributions of many people. Among the contributors were Taylor Main, Tom Swayngham, Rusty Holland, Kaylyn Gruber, Hope Mizzell, Dennis Chastain, Heyward Douglass and Greg Lucas. The panels were installed atop Sassafras Mountain Overlook by the SCDNR Jocassee crew of Ken Forrester, Art Breedlove, Justin Anderson and Chad James.

Sassafras Mountain is the highest point in South Carolina at 3,553 feet. The Sassafras Mountain Overlook, designed by Pickens architect Gil Stewart, opened April 22, 2019, on Earth Day. Its creation was the collaborative work of many people and groups, who are honored on a brass plaque near the entrance to the Overlook. It is constructed of pre-formed concrete but has a natural stone appearance and sits on the South Carolina/North Carolina line. A compass rose etched into the Overlook follows the state line as it runs through the structure. The Overlook sits 11 feet above the mountain's highest point, and its floor is 44 feet in diameter.

A mobility-impaired trail and ramp, along with a paved road that travels to the top, allows access for people of all abilities, and bathrooms are in place beside the parking lot. On a clear day from the Overlook, a visitor can see 30-50 miles into the states of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia.

Sassafras Mountain, in northern Pickens County, is about 20 miles north of the city of Pickens. It sits on the Eastern Continental Divide, is the tri-point of three distinct watersheds, and is home to the Foothills Trail, a 77-mile footpath between Table Rock and Oconee state parks. The Palmetto Trail, which will one day link the South Carolina mountains to the sea in a continuous trail of 500 miles, is also on the flanks of Sassafras Mountain.

(Sassafras Mountain is part of the Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges, and the Franklin L. Gravely Wildlife Management Area, all managed by SCDNR.)

In addition to being one of the most beautiful lakes anywhere, Lake Jocassee serves as the annual venue for Paddle Splash, which brings paddlers from all over to race and enjoy the lake's scenic waters. (Photo by Christopher Rucker)

Racers make a big splash on Lake Jocassee

Paddlers came from five states to race at South Carolina's most scenic lake

By Christopher Rucker

The fifth annual Lake Jocassee Paddle Splash, a paddle sports race sponsored by the Friends of Jocassee, brought 81 competitors to Lake Jocassee last fall.

They traveled from five states to South Carolina's premier inland paddling destination to compete on Oct. 8, 2022, for points in the Southeast Paddle Sports Championship Series (SEP), which brings a dozen races to the Carolinas and Georgia between January and October.

Racers competed in either the 3-mile or 6-mile race, paddling in divisions based on age and boat class. Competitors used kayaks, surf skis, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) of every size and description.

The race is a family affair with paddlers from 12 to 80 years, and an enthusiastic crowd of friends, families and dogs cheered from shore. Beginners and seasoned competitors vied for medals and personal bests, but the real star of the event is the lake itself. Racers return each year to enjoy its clear water and the spectacular scenery of its mountain vistas.

After the races, everyone met for the awards ceremony at the Jocassee Valley Brewing Company. Racers enjoyed local brews and German food prepared by the proprietors, while door prizes from area merchants were distributed and winners were awarded their custom medals.

'Race proceeds are used by the Friends of Jocassee in its mission to preserve, protect and promote the Jocassee Gorges as a recreational resource.'

Race proceeds are used by the Friends of Jocassee in its mission to preserve, protect and promote the Jocassee Gorges as a recreational resource. Details on the upcoming October 2023 race are at *www.friendsofjocassee.org.*

(Christopher Rucker is vice president of Friends of Jocassee.)

Loons on Lake Jocassee start molting into their summer look in February. They go from gray to their spectacular summer coloring. In their summer glory, loons become very pretty, dotted with white speckled patterns that help them attract mates. (Photos by Brooks and Kay Wade)

‘Zugunruhe’ and the spring loon journey

One of the great migrations of the world occurs right here, on Lake Jocassee

By Brooks Wade

It’s early morning on April 1 at precisely astronomical twilight, about an hour and a half before sunrise. It’s time to leave the dock. It takes about 30 minutes or so to idle across the still waters of the big water on lower Lake Jocassee, to be in position by nautical twilight, that magic time when darkness is moments away from giving dominance to the coming morning.

The place to be is the confluence of the two great rivers of Jocassee, the Whitewater and the Toxaway. It is this place, exactly, where the Keowee River begins. It is this spot more than any other on the lake that loons choose to rest and gather on their long way back to their breeding lakes.

It is silence that defines nautical twilight, broken only perhaps by the call of a barred owl. In the absence of a breeze, it is utterly still. Now is the time the wonder begins. As the morning approaches civil twilight the first loon hoots can be heard, the tender conversational sound loons make when congregating. Just one, then another, as if carrying on an increasingly animated conversation. Then a wing flap, the first of many.

There is this marvelous German word, “zugunruhe,” that perfectly captures the moment. It is the zugunruhe that is building, the kinetic energy of animal migration as it gains morning momentum. Migratory animals, especially birds, express this energy as they begin each day’s journey. On some mornings this time of year it may be just a few birds leaving, on other mornings it can be hundreds.

Most migratory birds move in pulses, dependent on just the right weather conditions to make their move. The loons that use Jocassee as a stop-over lake are migrating from the northern Gulf of Mexico, where most of the loons from the upper midwest spend their winter. Some loons spend their winter on Jocassee, and surely most every other large reservoir in the southeast, but the vast majority winter on the Gulf, as they have been doing for millions of years.

Your mind may wander as you wait for the morning to unfold, but not for long. The zugunruhe will silence your thoughts. First you hear the birds nearest you, then your

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It is a relatively new phenomenon for loons to overwinter on freshwater lakes in the southeast. This is likely due to the fact that man-made lakes are a modern development, that has resulted in new site grounds for loons. Lake Jocassee was completed in 1973 and is one of the newest reservoirs in the Southeast.

'The most overwhelming, exciting event in nature...'

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ear starts to hear others farther apart across the lake. The hoots become a crescendo, the wing flaps a constant sound of momentum. Then the first bird leaves, running a long distance across the lake to get airborne. First one then another in the small raft from which it departed.

Separate rafts of loons are becoming visible across the lake as the morning light increases. Inevitably some of the birds from the first raft fly over other rafts of loons in preparation. The departure is obviously socially motivated, as each group this is flown over becomes stimulated to depart as well. Now the zugunruhe is palatable, and thrilling. On big days of migration, the energy can be explosive. You've heard the sound of the helicopters landing on old reruns of M*A*S*H*? That's the sound of countless loons running across the water simultaneously.

On clear mornings, most of the departures occur from a half hour before sunrise until about a half hour after. Then the quiet returns, but not entirely. Some loons get aloft only to return to wait for another day. Much decision making is observable as the loons circle the lake, gaining altitude. Some gain the elevation to get over the Escarpment, then return. Are the conditions different at 3,000 feet than the lake's 1,100 feet? Are they assessing their preparedness overall, deciding a few more days of rest and nourishment is needed? It is obvious that all is not instinct driven in loons, as some leave and some return for another day.

So travel the world if you want, seeking the most dramatic wild animal events. But one of the great migrations of the world occurs right here, to be observed on Lake Jocassee. If you are out there on a big morning, it can be transformative. It is simply the most overwhelming, exciting event in nature I have ever been blessed to experience. The strongest pulses of loon migration have taken place historically towards the end of March through the first week or so of April, continuing, with decreasing numbers, through mid-April. Who knows what this warm winter will bring, though.

If you're out there early one of these mornings, blink your boat lights. I'll know I'm with kindred spirits.

(Brooks Wade is co-owner, with his wife, Kay, of Jocassee Lake Tours. For more information, visit www.JocasseeLake-Tours.com.)

‘Where the Blue Ridg

Clemson professor writes book about Southern Appalachian folks looking at family land differently than the rest of us

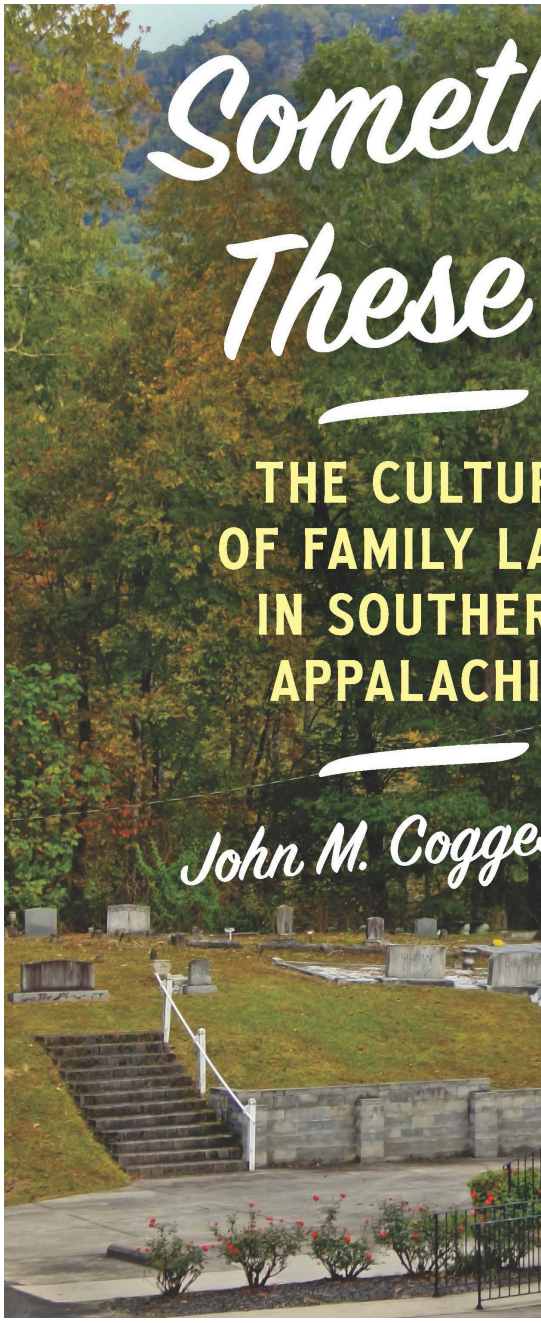
By John M. Coggeshall

U.S. Senator J.D. Vance (R-Ohio), author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, described his Central Appalachian home as a “hub of misery” (p. 4). And yet, Clemson University’s most iconic phrase is “there’s something in these hills” and the university’s alma mater song proclaims, “Where the Blue Ridge yawns its greatness.” How is it possible that the same geographic location can be both miserable and majestic at the same time?

In summer 2007, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) asked that I collect stories of people who had lost their mountain homes to development, but I quickly became puzzled by the apparent contradiction of menacing and majestic mountains, and so I focused on this theme by interviewing long-term occupants (“inhabitants”) and more recent arrivals (“residents”) in Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville counties. In total, 89 people were interviewed for about 144 hours of taped discussions, primarily between 2008 and 2012. Residents were white, college-educated, and upper middle-class males and females; inhabitants included both African Americans and Euro-Americans, males and females, with varied levels of education. While I was side-tracked by other research projects in the intervening years, my discoveries have recently appeared as Something in These Hills: The Culture of Family Land in Southern Appalachia (University of North Carolina Press, 2022; see below for ordering information). This article summarizes my book.

Residents described the beauty of the region, which had drawn them to reside in or to retire to the area. They actively participated in community organizations, paid local taxes, shopped locally, and considered themselves “locals.” But they also described themselves as “pioneers living in the middle of nowhere,” a metaphor to explain their sense of potential dangers from residing in a frontier wilderness haunted by wild animals and eccentric hillbillies.

Bob’s Place was a local landmark for 50 years in the Horsepasture/Jocassee region until it burned in 2017. (Photo by Bob Spalding)



What is the "something in these hills" that ties mountain families to professor John M. Coggeshall explores this in his new book “*Something* (Photos by John M. Coggeshall)

But inhabitants also recognize the contrast. “There’s something in these hills,” a Clemson alumnus wrote, trying to capture the grandeur of the mountains. Inhabitants lovingly described their mountain homeland in intimate detail, even to their favorite coves or trees or rocks. But at the same time, inhabitants also recognized the dangers of their home, from treacherous waterfalls and wild rivers to dangerous animals to eccentric neighbors and even some supernatural threats. “There’s always been something in these hills,” an inhabitant said as we sat in his mobile home

ge yawns its greatness’

family land in the southern Appalachians? Author and Clemson *g in These Hills*,” published by UNC Press.

near the South Carolina- North Carolina border, and his wife quickly added: “Liquor making, chicken fighting, dope growing.” This statement perfectly summarized the contrast for my first theme.

But there is another theme hiding in these mountains. The longer I conducted my fieldwork, the more frequently I heard inhabitants talking about family land differently from the way most of us in the United States perceive land. For us, land is a commodity, having value due to its beauty and/or location. We may have sentimental connections to places, but only because of pleasant memories from earlier in our lives. We may move frequently for a variety of reasons, and we typically do not retain former homesteads unless they have commercial value.

In contrast, I heard inhabitants talking about family land as if it were a part of their own families (a perspective supported by research from other Appalachian areas). From an inhabitant’s perspective, land symbolically animates. Inhabitants even used metaphors of family land being “in my bones” or land “embracing” them.

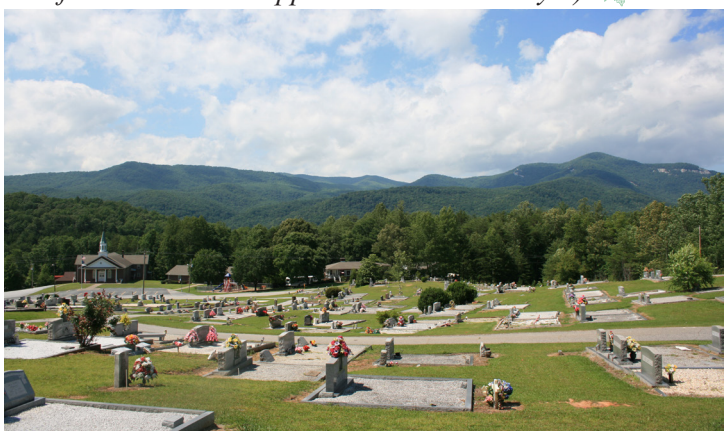
This connection puzzled me as a cultural anthropologist. How does ordinary dirt transform into a symbolic family member? In my book I offer an explanation. Families place their names upon the land, they build homes from materials on family lands, they use family lands for multiple purposes, they own family lands (over multiple generations), they occupy family lands (over multiple generations), they tell stories about family lands, and they are buried in family lands, literally merging with family lands. Thus, the loss of family lands (perhaps due to suburban expansion or artificial lakes) creates tremendous anxiety and sadness in inhabitants because they had symbolically lost a family member. Often, inhabitants save objects from lost family lands, as grieving survivors may save locks of hair from deceased relatives. Legends arise about lost lands, like ghost stories of dead ancestors.

It took me years to recognize this deeper cultural value, but I believe it best expresses the attitude that most inhabitants have toward their family lands in southern Appalachia, and why they grieve so deeply should family lands be lost. There is indeed “something in these hills,” but it requires a careful and empathetic understanding to discover it.

How to order: https://uncpress.org/book/9781469670256/something-in-these-hills/

I will donate royalties from book sales to Upstate Forever, to assist families in saving land.

(John M. Coggeshall is professor of anthropology at Clemson University and author of “Liberia, South Carolina: An African American Appalachian Community.”)



The view of the Blue Ridge, with Pinnacle Mountain clearly visible as the highest point on the right side of the photo, is one of the best from the top of Holly Springs Baptist Church’s cemetery.

‘Many hands make light work!’

Volunteers gather for a ‘planting party’ with native plants at Keowee-Toxaway State Park

The old proverb of “many hands make light work” was never truer than it was at the “Pick Up the Park” event sponsored by the non-profit Friends of Jocassee at Keowee-Toxaway State Park.

More than two dozen volunteers representing four different entities gathered at Keowee-Toxaway on a beautiful fall day, Nov. 12, 2022, to plant and mulch 140 native perennial plants and shrubs near the back entrance to the park’s visitor center. The “planting party” was planned in connection with “Pick Up Pickens,” an anti-litter program sponsored by Pickens County. Under the supervision and direction provided by professional landscaper Jon Fritz, owner of Bluestem Landscape Design, the spirit of cooperation and collaboration was very evident.

In addition to park staff, the successful joint effort included volunteers from three Upstate non-profit groups: Friends of Jocassee, the S.C. Native Plant Society and the Upstate Master Naturalist Association. Park Manager Kevin Blanton had initially met with Jon Fritz to determine a landscape design for the project. Fritz then carefully selected the 140 native perennials to ensure that no plants were used that did not already grow in the park.

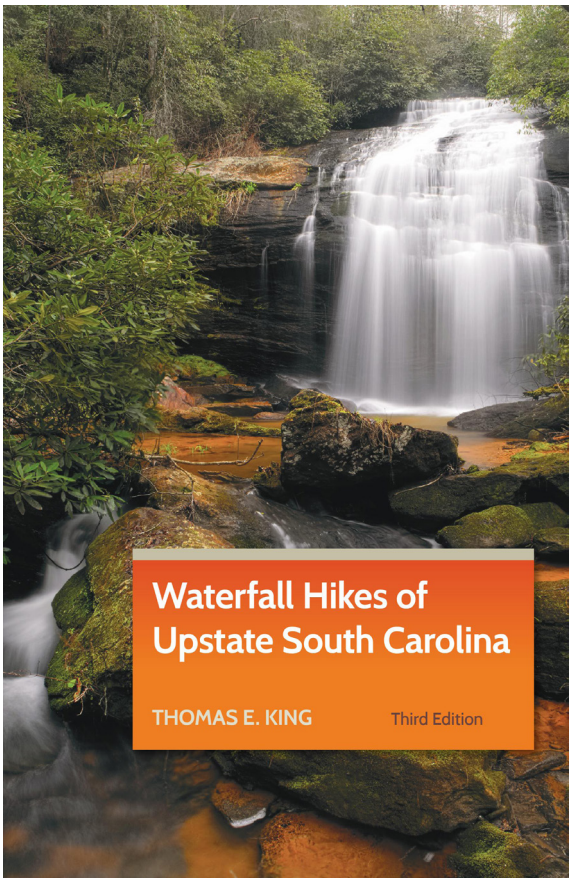
You might ask, “Why the emphasis on installing only native plants?” Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. Native plants properly placed are hardy and adapted to normal weather extremes. Because native plants are adapted to local soils and climate conditions, they generally require less watering and fertilizing than non-natives do, which is an important management issue for a rural park setting such as Keowee-Toxaway State Park. Native plants are often more resistant to insects and disease as well as being beneficial for local and migratory wildlife that use these plants for food and cover.

The whole gang of planters posed for a photo in front of the Jocassee Gorges Visitors Center at Keowee-Toxaway State Park. More than two dozen volunteers representing four different entities gathered to plant and mulch 140 native perennial plants and shrubs.

Jennifer Bausman of Friends of Jocassee works on putting native plants in the ground during the “Pick Up the Park” event at Keowee-Toxaway State Park. (Photos by Gene Rochester)

If you would like to learn more about the importance of native plants in your home landscape or volunteer for future projects, please contact the S.C. Native Plant Society (www.scnps.org) or the Friends of Jocassee (www.friendsofjocassee.org). Both non-profits can also be found on Facebook.

(Founded in 2011, Friends of Jocassee is a community that shares a love for the Jocassee Gorges and a commitment to protect the abundant natural resources of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. Friends of Jocassee hosts seasonal events that give opportunities to enjoy the lake, grow friendships and make a difference. For more information, visit www.friendsofjocassee.org.)



The newest edition of Thomas King's popular waterfalls book is now available from the University of Georgia Press at *ugapress.org*.

Third edition of 'Waterfall Hikes of Upstate South Carolina' published

Book is still the go-to guide for finding falling waters in the three-county mountain region

The third edition of the popular book "Waterfall Hikes of Upstate South Carolina" has been published by the University of Georgia Press.

A waterfall is a perfect destination for a day hike. In this guide, author and South Carolina native Thomas E. King Sr. lists 169 of them in the mountains of upstate South Carolina. Ranging from roadside to 6 miles in length, these hikes feature some of the most famous—and some of the most remote—waterfalls in the region. Each entry includes complete driving and hiking directions, trail length and estimated hiking time, difficulty rating, and a detailed description of the waterfall itself, including a photograph. There's also information on how to classify and rate waterfalls.

The author was born in Anderson and has been an avid hiker and backpacker all his life. Long before established trails were commonplace, King was hiking along the Chattooga River in northwestern South Carolina, throughout the Sumter National Forest, and in Table Rock State Park. He followed trail markings on topographical maps and practiced the "leave no trace" ethic before it became widely known.

King's love of photography, especially nature photography, has won him prizes in several local contests and a state-sponsored contest by the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.

He appeared in an educational production, "Upstate, Episode #31—Protecting the Future of our Blue Ridge Mountains," with the late conservationist, photographer, author, and attorney Thomas (Tommy) Wyche of Greenville. The University of South Carolina Upstate produced this video.

Southern Living Magazine recognized King in the October 2007 issue for the first edition of his waterfalls book and his volunteer work in maintaining trails in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

King has lived in the rural area of Williamston with his wife, Fay, for 55 years. They have one daughter, Deborah, and one son, Thomas. At an early age, he introduced his two granddaughters, Kaitlin and Ashley, to the thrill of the trail, the splendor of Upstate waterfalls, and the pleasure of wading and splashing in the cold, calm pools of mountain streams.

King established and maintains the website, www.waterfallwalker.com, which contains photos and videos of some waterfalls in his book and other information of interest to hikers and backpackers.

King can be reached at *tekingsr@outlook.com*.

Parella Lewis (right) and other Xtreme Hikers pause for a moment during their 30-mile walk to raise money for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. (Photos by Parella Lewis)

Greenville WYFF weather anchor hikes 'Xtreme' fund-raisers

Thirty-mile hike on Foothills Trail raises funds for Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

By Parella Lewis

Every summer a handful of hikers invade the Carolina mountains with a purpose. Each foot of elevation gain represents a step towards finding a cure. The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation has been around since 1955 and has hosted hundreds of fundraisers throughout the country over the years, but in 2020 those efforts were brought closer to home as the South Carolina Chapter was born, bringing the first Xtreme hike to my backyard! It was the vision of local TV station WYFF 4 President and General Manager John Humphries and his wife, Anita, who helped bring this "Xtreme" hike for a cure to the Upstate.

And this is how I became involved.

Up until 2020, the longest hike I had ever ventured may have been 12 miles? And that was on a special occasion or two. I had never even considered anything longer. I mean, why would I ever do that?

But in learning about cystic fibrosis through a convsation with John Humphries at work one day, I was surprised by how many people have been diagnosed with this disease. He told me about his amazing daughter, Jenny, who has cystic fibrosis and what life has been like throughout the years before recent advancements had been made, and of course, how far there is to go.

My wonderment was quickly overshadowed by the almost miraculous strides made by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in a relatively short time span without much money. You see, I am quite used to large organizations collecting millions of dollars if not billions with little to show for it. Needless to say, I was impressed. I felt the least I can do is help raise a little more money and see what can they do with that. Although, if I'm being honest, I've never been much of a fund-raiser and the thought of hiking 30 miles in a single day left me feeling like I had just jumped off a cliff after officially signing up and committing to the big hike!

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This year's Xtreme Hike Oct. 21 on Foothills Trail

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But within a couple of months, official training began in July. This is where people who were interested showed up for a shorter hike to help get a feel for levels of ability and find out for themselves if this hike is something they could do. The reason wasn't to weed anyone out. It was then and, still is, to help build and grow from where we are so that each participant can cross the finish line in October when the Xtreme hike takes place. The first hike and each one after is laced with encouragement and helpful tips along the way.

I was both nervous and excited so having the training leaders say things like, "Of course you can do this. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other and don't stop…" helped me tremendously.

Over the weeks and months of training, it wasn't just my physical endurance that grew. More than the ability to see that the crazy long 30-mile day hike may actually be possible after all! No, something else was growing as well. Friendships and bonds expanding and deepening with each new trek, creating a shared experience so unique that while making tracks on the ground beneath us, we were also forging imprints on the soul that connects us for life.

The training hikes continue to progress in length and challenging elevation gains. And since these hikes start in the summer, the Carolina heat adds a challenge of its own.

I can personally attest to donating several pounds of sweat to the soils and rocks of the Carolina mountains. A knick or bruise from a fall, even a bee sting or two is all part of the extreme hike experience. Swollen feet sprinkled with blisters, well that's just what love looks like sometimes. No one would put their bodies through this if they didn't have a really good reason. And few would continue to do it if they weren't seeing results for their loved ones.

It isn't all work, however. The beautiful sights splashed all across our area are nothing short of breathtaking at times. We live in the land of stunning waterfalls, some that can only be seen by hiking to them, which is a payoff of its own. There are forests dotted with unique flowers, mushrooms, and trees. An entire ecosystem so distinctive to this part of the country but can only be experienced by getting out in it. The fresh mountain air and beautiful sunrises from high atop mountainous views are sights and sounds that come from being on the trail itself. No picture can ever do it justice. No video can truly take you there. The real thing is far too vast and expansive to even adequately explain. But that too is part of the experience. Another reward for all of the pain and discomfort.

This coming Oct. 21 will be my third year participating in the Xtreme Hike, and again we will start at Oconee State Park and end at Lower Whitewater Falls on the Foothills Trail. Since being involved with this hike, I have been able to see what funds raised by these events actually do. The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation has produced (at astounding levels) highly effective medications resulting in an extension of life by decades. But there is still more to do, which is why their motto is "Until It's Done."

Oh the places you'll go, like to Upper Whitewater Falls on the Foothills Trail. Even though the hikers were working hard to raise funds for cystic fibrosis research, they still took time to enjoy some of Jocassee's beautiful sights.

And so, if you want to join us in the near future, we will continue to "take a hike" until a cure is found. And let's face it—there's no better place than the Carolinas to explore the outdoors for a great cause!

(Weather Anchor Parella Lewis can be seen weekday mornings on WYFF News 4 in Greenville. Follow her on Twitter and Facebook or e-mail her at Parella.Lewis@hearst.com.)

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Eagle Scout project spruces up interpretive trail

Clemson Eagle Scout candidate refurbishes Clemson SCDNR trail

Henry Turner, an Eagle Scout candidate with Boy Scout Troop 235 in Clemson, recently completed an "amazing" Eagle Scout project at the Clemson SCDNR office, which is the administrative headquarters for the Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges.

The crew also cleaned up an enormous amount of invasive plants, especially Elaeagnus, that were blocking the view of Lake Hartwell from the parking lot.(Photo by Vic Shelburne)

Henry and his crew of fellow Scouts, friends and family members replaced fading interpretive signs in the Clemson SCDNR landscape on the Lake Hartwell side and built new wooden panels to hold the signs and 4-by-4-foot wooden posts to lift the signs off the ground. Henry and his crew also removed an extremely large section of the invasive plant Elaeagnus near the parking lot, which was a monumental task.

"It is amazing how much better the lake-side landscape of our office looks with Henry's Eagle Scout project in place," said Greg Lucas, SCDNR public information officer, who is housed at the Clemson SCDNR office. "The signs had become bleached by the sun, and some were completely rotting and falling apart. The area between the office and Lake Hartwell is now much more pleasant and accessible to the public, and the interpretive signs are a great source of information for visitors who want to know about the native trees and shrubs that make up the landscape.

"Also, the invasive plant Elaeagnus had just about taken over much of the landscape at the Clemson office, especially on the lake side. With all the hard work that Henry and his crew put in, you can now see Lake Hartwell from the parking lot for the first time in years! We at SCDNR are so appreciative of what Henry and his entire crew accomplished."

Henry recently graduated from D.W. Daniel High School in Central, and he will enroll at Clemson University in the fall. He is the son of Becky and Brandon Turner of Clemson and will finish his Eagle Scout designation in August before college.

Being an Eagle Scout is important because it requires immense hard work, dedication, and service to others. It gives teenagers something to strive for and instills confidence, leadership, and a commitment to the community. These skills carry into college, career, and adult life.