BOARD MEMBER BEGINS NEW ROLE WITH FTC

Your FTC Board has been busy on many fronts this season. When Maija resigned her position as Executive Secretary of the FTC last summer it left a lot of work to be done. Thanks go to the many Board members and FTC members who have chipped in to help keep things organized and operating. But this opening for the FTC created an opportunity for the Conference Board to do some real thinking and strategizing about the Foothills Trail, the Conference, and what needs to be done to keep the Foothills Trail the best footpath in the Southeast. The outcome of this effort was to recognize that the Conference needed more than a staff person for administrative duties, but also needed a person that could do more to promote the Foothills Trail and the work of the Conference to Upstate organizations, businesses, and individuals. We want the Foothills Trail to be recognized as the magnificent resource that it truly is so it will be used and maintained for years to come. So, to this end, the Board developed a job description for an Executive Director, interviewed some candidates, and then realized we had the best person for the job right in our midst! None other than Mr. Foothills Trail himself, Heyward Douglass! Heyward has assumed the duties of Executive Director of the Foothills Trail Conference effective June 1, 2012. Among his many duties, Heyward will be responsible for the administrative functions of communicating to hikers, FTC members, and stakeholders; processing merchandise orders and memberships; maintaining the Conference books; as well as working to increase our membership and member relations; improve our relationships with the stakeholders who manage the land the trail passes through; promoting the Trail in Upstate business, recreation, and visitor organizations; and raising funds to support the efforts of the FTC and keep the trail maintained. Obviously, a tall order, but one which Heyward is so uniquely qualified to fill. We are thrilled with Heyward’s decision to continue serving the Foothills Trail Conference in this capacity, and look forward to seeing the results of his efforts. We know you, our membership, will also support and encourage him in his efforts.
The FTC held their annual spring picnic on April 21 at Table Rock State Park’s White Oaks shelter. Despite the chance of showers, all 40 in attendance stayed dry and enjoyed grilled burgers, hotdogs, and chicken with an assortment of salads and desserts that participants provided. After the meal, Heyward Douglass shared interesting photos and highlights of his 2011 through-hike on the AT (starting at Table Rock). Unknown to all of us, a few other guests were present on the picnic grounds that day. A pair of Red-Tailed Hawks had a nest in place in the fork of a big oak that contained at least two fuzzy chicks. The parents were seen feeding the nestlings on May 1 but sadly, a few days later the birds mysteriously disappeared. No telling how many thousands of wildlife stories are being carried out unnoticed as we pass by on our hikes along the Foothills Trail and elsewhere. The ones we do happen to notice can be quite rewarding.

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The 2012 Foothills Trail Conference Annual Meeting will be held Friday - Sunday, November 2 - 4, at Oconee State Park. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for speakers, hikes, great food, and great fellowship. Our Saturday night speaker will be Winton Porter, owner of Mountain Crossings, a AT hiker stopover, gear shop, you-name-it, near Blairsville, GA. Winton is the author of “Just Passin’ Thru” which highlights the stories and personalities of hikers and locals as they meet at Walasi-Yi. Go to www.mountaincrossings.com for more info on Winton and his stories.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED

The FTC is working to improve communications with our members, and we need your e-mail to do so. If you DO NOT already get FTC announcements via email, it is because we don’t have your address. Please send us a message to info@foothillstrail.org
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Participants must be members of the Foothills Trail Conference. Notifications will be sent through the FTC’s online registration system. Please sign up to receive outing notification by providing your e-mail address and contact information on our Web site www.foothillstrail.org. The number of registrants per hike is at the discretion of the hike leader and will be limited. Registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be asked to sign out an Acknowledgement of Risk form prior to your hike. The Foothills Trail Conference does not permit dogs on group hikes.

Saturday, February 18—Winter Views Hike. While the leaves are off the trees, drink in the beautiful views on the Foothills Trail from Sloan Bridge to Upper Whitewater Falls on a one-way, moderate 5.5-mile hike with trip leader Heyward Douglass, FTC board member. Meet 9 a.m. at Upper Whitewater Falls parking lot on NC 281. (U.S. Forest Service parking fee required.) Bring lunch, snacks, water and appropriate clothing and footwear.

Friday, March 16—Dusk to Dark Nights Walk. Join John Garton, Ben Sill and Heyward Douglass on an exploration of night sounds in the Cl farming, including frogs, owls and who knows what else?! Bring a flashlight and shoes that may get damp. If the weather is good, this outing will last about three hours and include a small amount of easy walking. Meet at the Clemson DNR office, 311 Natural Resources Drive, Clemson, SC 29631, at 4:30 p.m. Bring binoculars, snacks, water and appropriate clothing and footgear.

Saturday, April 14—Whitewater Falls Wildflower Walk. Led by Steve Hill, former Clemson University herbarium curator and currently a botanist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, this annual rite of spring will get your spring season started off right with a lovely display of wildflowers. Hill, who returns frequently to the South Carolina mountains, is also the plant identification expert for the S.C. Native Plant Society. This will be about a 3-mile walk to the Bad Creek Hydro Project parking lot, mostly easy and much of it along the Whitewater River, although if hikers need to return to the Whitewater Falls parking area, remember that it is a steep climb back to the top!. Meet at 10 a.m. at the Upper White water Falls parking lot on NC 281. (U.S. Forest Service parking fee required.) Bring lunch, snacks, water and appropriate clothing and footgear.

Saturday, May 19—Pantheratown Adventure. Join Cathy Foster, geologist and Foothills Trail Conference board member, as she leads another exploration of the “Yosemite of the East.” Pantheratown is a 6,300-acre bowl perched at an elevation of 3,600 feet in North Carolina’s Nantahala National Forest. It is, arguably, one of the East’s most unusual wild treasures. A collection of rounded granite domes rim the valley where the rugged Tuckasegee River

is born amid a blend of waterfalls and high-elevation bogs. This is also prime bloom time for pink lady’s slippers! A strenuous hike of about 11 miles from the Cold Mountain trailhead, the Pantheratown outing will include spectacular waterfalls, mountain vistas, and forest. Meet at 9 a.m. at Upper Whitewater Falls parking lot on NC 281. (U.S. Forest Service parking fee required), and carpool from there. Driving time from Upper Whitewater Falls to the trailhead is about 45 minutes. Bring lunch, snacks, water, binoculars and appropriate clothing and footwear.

Saturday, May 26—Bat Foray. Join Mary Bunch, DNR biologist and former Foothills Trail Conference board member, for a look at the newly erected bat roost on Abner Creek near Sassafras Mountain. This 16-foot-tall concrete bat roost was designed to help the state-endangered Rafinesque’s big-eared bat but may also be providing habitat for some other uncommon bats as well as chimney swifts. Rafinesque’s big-eared bats, a state endangered species, require large open structures for roosts, and natural roosts tend to be massive hollow trees now in short supply. There will likely be a small amount of easy walking. Meet 10 a.m. at Holly Springs Country Store at intersection of SC 11 and US 178 in Pickens County. Park in the upper parking lot closest to the volunteer fire department. Bring lunch, snacks, water, binoculars and appropriate clothing and footgear.

Saturday, June 9—Lower Bearwallow Falls Adventure. This adventure will start at 9 a.m. from the Grassy Ridge Parking area of Gorges State Park near Sapphire, N.C. Beginning with a 5-mile 4x4 ride to the heart of Gorges State park, this trek will be followed by a short but extremely strenuous hike to Lower Bearwallow Falls. Limited to 12 participants, this is a rain or shine event! Everyone will want to remember their cameras, snacks, water, and appropriate gear for weather conditions. For more information, contact Gorges State Park Superintendent Steve Pagano at (828) 966-9099.

Friday, June 6—Wintergreen Falls Trek. This trek begins at 9 a.m. from the Frozen Creek Parking area of Gorges State Park off of Frozen Creek Road outside of Rosman, N.C. The outing will begin with a 4-mile 4x4 ride to the heart of Gorges State Park, followed by a 3-mile moderate to strenuous hike to Wintergreen Falls on the Tomaway River. This adventure is limited to 12 participants and is a rain or shine event! Everyone will want to remember their cameras, snacks, water and appropriate gear for weather conditions. For more information, contact Gorges State Park Superintendent Steve Pagano at (828) 966-9099.

Friday, October 12—Bearwallow Bushwhack. This hike, crawl and wade adventure will start at 9 a.m. from the Grassy Ridge Parking area of Gorges State Park near Sapphire, N.C. The adventure will head to the interior of Gorges State Park, along Bearwallow Creek, and then a moderate to strenuous hike will take participants OFF TRAIL to several falls along the Bearwallow Creek. This bushwhack is limited to 12 participants and is a rain or shine event! Everyone will want to pack light and remember their cameras, snacks, water, and appropriate gear for the weather. For more information, contact Gorges State Park Superintendent Steve Pagano at (828) 966-9099.

Saturday, October 13—Hemlock woolly adelgid field trip. Join LayLa Burgess from Clemson’s School of Agricultural, Forest, and Environmental Sciences as we walk to Virginia Hawkins Falls in Laurel Fork Heritage Preserve and learn about the hemlock woolly adelgid and what it means for the future of Eastern and Carolina hemlocks in the Jocassee Gorges region. This hike will be about 2.5 miles round trip, easy to moderate. Meet 10 a.m. at Holly Springs Country Store at intersection of SC 11 and US 178 in Pickens County. Park in the upper parking lot closest to volunteer fire department. Bring lunch, snacks, water and appropriate clothing and footgear.

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Registered hikers at Table Rock State Park 31,391 (record high) 28,588
Registered FT hikers 582 694 (record high)

Hikers starting at Table Rock but exiting at another point 186 256
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2011 Hiker data from registrations, notes and personal contacts:

*Starting at TR: 256 total
**Ending at TR: 223 total
113 TR to Oconee 74 Sassafras to TR
38 TR to Sassafras 73 Oconee to TR
22 TR to Laurel Valley 30 Laurel Valley to TR
21 TR to Bad Creek 21 Caesars Head to TR
19 TR to Palmetto Trail 8 Whitewater Falls to TR
18 TR to Gorges State Park/Frozen Creek 6 Caneflake to TR
9 TR to Caesars Head 4 Bad Creek to TR
7 TR to Whitewater Water Falls 2 Chimney Top Gap to TR
5 TR to Chimneytop Gap 2 Sloan Bridge to TR
2 TR to Hwy 107 (Sloan Bridge) 2 Rocky Bottom to TR
1 TR to Chattooga 1 Gorges State Park to TR
1 TR to Bartram Trail/AT

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