

NCNPS Toe River Field Trip

May 9-11, 2008

Avery County, the 100th and last county to be formed in North Carolina, contains thousands of streams and creeks that flow into major rivers. Approximately three miles outside of Newland, Avery's county seat, the North Toe River runs strong between two mountains. It is here that NCNPS members and friends will have the opportunity this spring to walk and observe the thousands of plants that have grown on the mountainside, virtually undisturbed for many years.



Trillium rugelii by Mary Baumeister, May 2007

At one time, this unique property had a well-known NC icon along the river : Tweetsie Railroad. Tweetsie's history dates back to 1866 in Tennessee; by 1896 the rail connected the communities of Cranberry, Minneapolis, Newland, Montezuma, and Saginaw (now Pineola) to Linville and later to Boone. The land in between these areas remained sparsely populated, leaving much of the mountainside flourishing. Mother Nature can be cruel, of course, and in 1940 a major flood wiped out the tracks along the Toe River. The competition of trucking spelled the end of railroad days in these communities.

Thus these lands fell into the ownership of a local banker, Gene Penland, and later to Lennie Suttles, who gradually added more acreage to what became a trout fishing club. Fifteen years ago the Toe River Club was established and members have kept the now 200 acres of land along the

mountainside in its natural state. Wildflowers and other native plants along the river continue to surprise and delight visitors to the club. Although trout fishing is the primary purpose of the club, nature watching, relaxing and enjoying the surroundings are also important to members.

On the south side of the river a separate 140 acres, known as the Levitt property, goes up to Big Haw Mountain (4,687'), while the ridge of Jake's Mountain on the club side is slightly lower. Visitors will have the opportunity to hike both sides of this river to enjoy the outstanding scenic beauty with many native plants.

Although one can never guarantee what will be blooming in the mountains this time of year, visitors can expect to see many plants typical of the mafic zone, according to Jerry Reese, local biologist. "Typically

we find more plant diversity and some rare flora ... *Trillium rugelii* finds its most northern point of distribution here at the club property,” he adds. Birders will also find many interesting types.

Both properties have a well-marked slowly ascending trail that groups will follow, alternating Saturday to Sunday so that participants will be able to walk both trails. In addition, the former Tweetsie railroad bed has created a lovely level walk alongside 7200 feet of the river, and those who do not want to climb the trails can explore an array of wildflowers at a pace that permits closer study.

In order to enjoy these hikes, participants are asked to sign a liability waiver for these private owners, and access to these properties will only be on the designated days of the hikes arranged by NCNPS.

Tentative schedule

Friday, May 9, 2008

Arrive Linville/Newland area:

- 1:00 – 5:00 Optional tour Treetops, native plant habitat of Pat and Guy Ross in Little Switzerland or Waterfalls Park Hwy.194 north of Newland)
- Dinner on your own
- 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Meet & Greet at the Fire Dept.
(no alcohol, but bring a sweet or savorie to share)

Saturday, May 10, 2008

- 9:30 a.m. - Meet at the Toe River Club
- 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 - Botanize, Toe River Club or Levitt Farm*
Lunch along the trail. Bring your own, or purchase box lunch \$8.00, which will be delivered to you along the trail.
- 6:00 p.m. – Dinner \$12.00 at Fabios, Newland
(no alcohol)
- 7:30 p.m. – Presentation: “The Natural History of the Southern Appalachians, A Photographic Essay.”
Dr. Stewart Skeate, Department of Biology, Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk and author of *A Nature Guide to Northwest North Carolina*. Native plant auction to follow.
- Be sure to bring plants to donate for the auction. Proceeds become part of the B. W. Wells Fund.

Sunday, May 11, 2008

- 8:30 a.m. Meet at the Toe River Club
- 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Botanize, Toe River Club or Levitt Farm*
- Depart for home or
- 2:00 – 5:00p.m. Optional visit to the Ross’s garden in Little Switzerland.

*Note: Participants will alternate hikes each day. Some participants may elect to stroll along the river on the level path. We will divide the group after the meeting on Saturday a.m. Some bottled water will be provided, but we recommend that you bring extra water, snacks, sturdy walking shoes and a walking stick, binoculars, rain jacket, field guides, hat/sunscreen, insect repellent, and enthusiasm.

There are no motels in Newland; in the
area are the following:

Buck Hill Campground
6401 South US 19E
828-765-7387

-
Elk River Campground
Elk River Rd, Elk Park
828-733-0455

-
Whispering Pines Campground
24 Whispering Pines, Newport
828-726-4902

Huskins Court & Cottages
2450 Highway # 221
828-733-2564

Pineola Lodging

Roan Mountain State Park Cabins & Campground
TN SR143 (423) 772-3030 for cabins, or 1-800-250-8620
(This campground does not take reservations- First come basis)

Linville Lodging

The Eseeola Lodge \$\$\$
175 Linville Avenue
800-742-6717

The Pixie Motel
US Highway 221
828-733-2597
Jim & Buddy Hughes

Other Lodging

Best Western
Banner Elk
828-898-4571

Pineola Inn
Pineola
828-733-4979

Food

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Newland

Fabio's Restaurant

112 Pineola Street

828-733-1314

B (8-11) – L (11-2) – D(6-9), Tuesday – Sunday

Newland Country House

110 Pineola Street

828-737-0076

Bill & BJ Close

McDonald's

Hardee's

Linville

The Tartan Restaurant

1 Henningway St

828-733-0779

Donnie Peters

Old Hampton Store

77 Ruffin St

828-733-5213

restaurant 11-5

Driving Directions will appear in the April newsletter.

NCNPS Event Policy

“Members or guests who are not registered before April 25th will be accepted on the day of the hike only as space is available. To check availability, you must contact Lynda Waldrep (lyndawaldrep@aol.com or 336-643-5555 before April 25th; after May 6th call 336-708-1196, or 828-297-2943) before making plans to attend. Those who show-up without calling ahead may be disappointed to find that there are no slots available. In all cases, lunch and dinner will not be available for later-comers, as reservations are required two weeks in advance.”

