

THE HIGH KNOB HERALD

SUMMER EDITION

The Clinch Coalition
Newsletter

JUNE 2021, ISSUE 6

The Clinch Coalition Tours Site of USFS Proposed Timber Sale

TCC Members Review Devils Hens Nest Management Project

Since its founding in 1998, The Clinch Coalition has prioritized the health of the forests and watersheds of High Knob. A new timber/vegetation management project, referred to as Devils Hens Nest, is being proposed by the US Forest Service and covers over 13,000 acres on Powell Mountain in Scott County, between Duffield and Big Stone Gap. Earlier this month, members of TCC went on an excursion of Devils Hens Nest to evaluate the old growth and state of the trees at present. "It is incredibly important that we do not diminish the sequestration of the carbon in our forests," President Sharon Fisher comments. "Our forests are the key to carbon absorption and if too many are cut down, that could pose a serious threat to the world's fight against climate change."

This is especially the case for an area like Devils Hens Nest, where some of the trees in the location range from 80-120+ years in age. TCC member Wayne Browning states on the issue that the "best thing we can do for climate [change] is to allow existing trees to stand and grow old. This being especially true for Devils Hens Nest, where the mean age of old growth has made the area a literal carbon bank." In other words, anything done now with respect to timber extraction and burning is only going to remove carbon from that bank.

Upon reviewing the Forest Service's scope of the project, we found that the information that was provided in regards to protection of endangered species, rare community types, and mitigation measures was lacking in detail. Comments and concerns have been submitted for the management project in the hope of curbing the impact on the forest. During our summer excursion we found a breathtaking forest abundant in species richness and old growth. TCC will continue to vigorously protect and preserve the forest, wildlife, and watersheds of our National Forest and surrounding communities for present and future generations.



Activities

What's new on High Knob?

High Knob Naturalist Rally: We are working on our High Knob Naturalist Rally for September! Keep up to date with our plans on our Facebook and Instagram (@theclinchcoalition), as well as our website! If you would like to be involved or volunteer, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at clinchcoalition@gmail.com.



Shrub of the Month

Flame Azalea
(*Rhododendron calendulaceum*)

The flame azalea is a lovely deciduous shrub! When summer is in its peak, you can find the azalea quite easily with its vibrant orange petals. The flame azalea got its name from its color and the unopened buds, which look like the flame of a candle. Also, the seeds are so tiny that they often need to be germinated under a mist or plastic tent! Ecologically speaking, it is in family Ericaceae, or heaths! The flame azalea is a producer, transforming the sun's energy into food energy. It provides food for hummingbirds, songbirds, and butterflies. Isn't it beautiful?



Fun Fact:
Climbing 2500 to 3000 vertical feet from the karst terrain of the Clinch and Powell river valleys into the High Knob Massif is analogous to traveling northward 300+ air miles (from the valleys).

Animal of the Month

Beaver - *Castor canadensis*

The beaver, scientifically known as *Castor canadensis*, is a shy animal. It is quite rare to encounter a beaver during the day, as they are most active during the night and dusk. Beavers live in lodges near water embankments. While hiking throughout marshes and wetlands you may often see a beaver trail, complete with bite marks on the trees nearby. These trees have been bitten because the beavers construct their lodges using tree branches, mud and aquatic debris! Beavers are fundamental to the creation, maintenance and support of fragile wetland ecosystems. Wetland ecosystems provide habitat to a diverse range of fish, birds, and mammals. Beavers breed in winter and raise their young together. Gestation is 12 to 15 weeks. Young are born in May and June and weaned in 6 weeks! So there's a chance if you go to a beaver lodge at dusk, you may observe some kits!

