

THE HIGH KNOB HERALD

NATURALIST EDITION

The Clinch Coalition
Newsletter

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Examining the Wilderness

The Continued Analysis of Devils Hens Nest

One of many focuses that our organization aims to uphold is the importance of forest monitoring throughout High Knob. With the end of the year nearing, the Clinch District has proposed a new project occurring on Devils Hens Nest. This potential project has led to frequent monitoring of the area by TCC members.

On September 4th, 2021, members of The Clinch Coalition went on their second excursion to Devils Hens Nest to evaluate the old growth and vitality of the area.

DHN encompasses over 13,000 acres in the National Forest between Big Stone Gap and Duffield, with members inspecting several sections of the vast area. The excursioners were able to note the mesophytic quality of the dense forests. Mesophytic forests usually rely heavily on moist climate and rainfall to maintain its biome. As such, there was a lot of lush understory that shrouded the forest floor. Old growth loomed overhead, with certain areas containing larger trees than others.

The Clinch Coalition has provided extensive comments to the USFS protesting this logging operation. Additionally, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has raised a number of concerns about the DHN project. The forests on High Knob rely on its moist temperate climate to flourish, develop, and grow. TCC will always strive to make sure our forests are preserved, defended, and maintained.

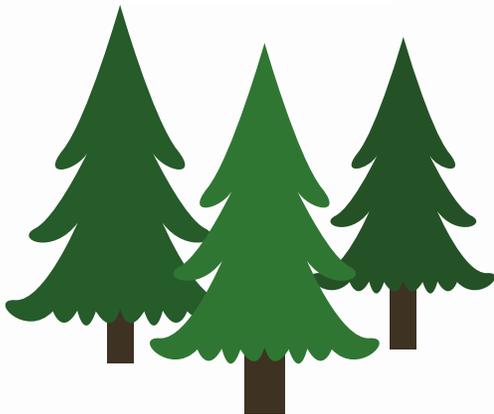
Written and Designed by Jala Tyler, Program Director.



Activities

Annual High Knob Naturalist Rally 2021

The High Knob Naturalist Rally is going to be virtual this year, with videos throughout the week of September 20th preparing for the live webinar that will be occurring on September 25th, 2021. The videos can be viewed on our [Youtube](#) and [website](#)! At our webinar, there will be several live presenters speaking on topics of the natural world! To register for the webinar, you may [click here](#). You may also use the QR code below!



Monday 09/20: Saving Our Trees! @12pm

Tuesday 09/21: Bats, Elk, and Bear Oh My! @12pm

Wednesday 09/22: Pollination & Sustainable Energy @12pm

Thursday 09/23: Nature Journaling @12pm

Friday 09/24: Mycology & More! @12pm

Saturday 09/25: HKNR Webinar! @9am

PRE-REGISTER FOR OUR LIVE WEBINAR HERE

TCC Reading Nook

New guide draws attention to High Knob trails
By Sharon Fisher

“Standing at just more than 4,200 feet above sea level, Southwest Virginia’s High Knob is likely the most important Appalachian summit you’ve never heard of.”

This begins the newly published trail guide, *High Lonesome Trails: Hiking Virginia’s High Knob Region*, recently published by conservation biologist Wally Smith. Smith is an Associate Professor of Biology at The University of Virginia’s College at Wise and Vice-President of the Southwest Virginia nonprofit, The Clinch Coalition.

To highlight “one of central Appalachia’s most underrated hiking destinations,” Smith, a lifelong hiker, mountain biker, and trail runner, describes 25 hiking trails in the High Knob region, including an overview of trails in the Natural Tunnel State Park.

The guide forms the first comprehensive summary of trails published in print for the High Knob area of far Southwest Virginia.

The guide’s trails are within much of the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest, extending from Pennington Gap on the west and eastward to St. Paul. The guide’s southern boundary extends to the Clinch River, home to Virginia’s newest state park, while the northern region is framed by the crests of Stone and Pine Mountains.

Smith says his trail guide is not meant to be comprehensive. “I encourage readers to use this guide to become familiar with what the region has to offer and then explore some the area’s other hiking routes,” he writes.

What the reader will find is a succinct description of each trail’s distance, difficulty, directions and other considerations. Smith also provides a detailed narrative of the terrain the hiker will encounter and informative Natural History Notes interpreting the wildlife and ecosystems hikers will find along the trail. Trail offerings range from shorter day hikes to overnight backcountry hikes.

Southwest Virginia’s “trail renaissance” is a catalyst for local economic development centered around cultivating recreational opportunities in a region largely unknown to outsiders. Adds Smith, “My broader goal with this guide has been to raise an increased awareness of what a fascinating place the High Knob Region is.”

