

Hiwassee Hiking Club

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Seven members participated in the Cades Cove camping/hiking trip for the weekend July 25-27. It's hard to believe it has already been one year since we camped at Gee Creek Campground for our first club outing. That one was hampered by bad storms which made us even more determined this year to accomplish completed hikes. Friday evening we were able to establish the campsite and set out for a 2.5 mile evening hike with Ranger Mike and his intern Owen. There were a total of 65 participants in this event. They first had us place red cellophane on our flashlight beams to preserve our night vision as we walked along the cove road to Sparks Lane where we actually completed a small stream crossing and then headed back to the information center via a road through the park stables. While on the road Ranger Mike shared historical data and some myths regarding the life in Cades Cove. He allowed us to listen to bat radar through a radar device and shared a cove mystery around Josiah Gregory's cave. Many wondered through the years on whether Josiah really had a nightclub and a still in the cave. Josiah would only say "maybe and then again maybe not." Saturday morning we woke to a down pour of rain which didn't stop us from cooking our pancake and bacon breakfast, accented by blueberry flavored coffee (a special treat). Our canopy was large enough to provide shelter from the rain. Ron, Joann and Paul Ketron did most of the cooking. Paul and Barbara brought the special coffee from their site. We hung around for a couple of hours to see if the rain would let us set out for a hike. We finally decided to start down the cove road in the auto tour. We were determined that this trip was not going to keep us at the campsite. When we visited the first stop at the Oliver residence the rain stopped and never restarted for the rest of the day. We observed several doe and wild turkeys along the cove road. We then hiked to Josiah's cave to inspect this cove mystery. We found the cave has been barred by park officials (no exploring) and we also agree that maybe this was the place for underground activities but then maybe not. We did a couple more off road hikes. One in particular was to the John Oliver house where we met a park volunteer guarding a copperhead that had sought refuge in a hollow stump. He actually came to observe it because he has a keen interest in snakes. We viewed this snake which appeared to be satisfied at its location. Of course Ron had to take a picture of the snake. Along this trail we had the chance to observe a small fawn and its mother. The fawn was very curious of us and would run back to mom upon several attempts to investigate us. Upon returning to our vehicles we noticed five bucks in the field and took sometime to observe them (total miles hiked at this point 3+).

By the time we made it to Abrams Falls trailhead (total 4.6 miles) it seemed a definite go. The skies looked fairly clear so we packed up our gear and set on the trail. The trail was very busy and seemed to be a busy thoroughfare at one point with people coming down the trail passing as many people heading up the trail. Once we reached the falls we enjoyed a snack and putting our feet in the water, a refreshing break. We spent one-half hour at the falls before heading back. On the way down the trail some of us enjoyed dips in the cool stream. Along this trail we found some wild blueberries, bleeding hearts and several of the little brown Jug plant.