A Near Thing

Whenever I am asked to speak to a new audience in a new place, I try to learn all I can about the story of the place, and the possible expectations of the audience.

So I asked, and Jennifer very kindly sent me her book….. which I have read cover to cover with great relish.

I now feel I have a much deeper understanding about Roan Mountain and what it means to people. It is not as if I have never been to the beautiful southern Appalachians before, having passed several pleasant days exploring the National Park, the Joyce Kilmer Forest; even drove over Roan itself on the way to see NC grandkids once.

So I already had an impression of the lush richness of this land’s unique forests, valleys, streams and coves. And had often given silent thanks that these precious places – and others – have been protected for all to enjoy.

But until I read the book, which detailed the massive logging in the early years of this century, the landslides and floods, the ruined towns, the too-often blighted landscapes, I had had no idea what near thing it was.

A near thing that anything at all was protected – and just in the nick of time. A near thing, which came to pass only because so many native southerners loved and cared for these mountains and the spiritual and natural treasures they guarded. Now still there they stand, safe and tall, as nature does its healing work. My prayers of thanksgiving to you, and those who came before you, have increased.

I feel doubly fortunate to have the honor of being invited to join you at the Rally: fortunate to meet some wonderful people who love Roan Mountain, their special place – and also fortunate to be back once again in this most beautiful part of the world.

So I have thought to myself – what might I offer to such people, as they gather to celebrate their own special and beautiful place?

Perhaps two things: first, since nearly all my career I have traveled everywhere about the country working with other Americans to save – protect -- their own beautiful places, how about a short slide tour of a few of these other, special, “green areas on the map,” as I call them, like Roan? How many, for example, have ever heard of, much less visited, the Pasayten and Glacier Peak Wilderness Areas – each larger than Great Smokies National Park – in my own state of Washington?

Or Hells Canyon, about 700,000- acres enclosing the deepest river canyon in North America, now protected? Or some of the most beautiful places in Southeast Alaska – no, actually anywhere on earth – glorious rainforests and glaciers, and lush valleys in places like the West Chichagof Island Wilderness, or the magnificent new Misty Fiords National Park, as large as Yellowstone?

Or, closer to home, places like Congaree National Park near Columbia South Carolina – a wonderful bottomland hardwood forest, or Sparta Mountain, New Jersey, a recovering mid-Atlantic forest with bears, coyotes, and rhododendrons? Each of these, and the hundreds of others like them, represent what the British Ambassador once said to President Taft in 1912: “ [Your protected places, set aside for all the people, are] America’s Best Idea.”

The idea that beautiful lands and the precious biodiversity of plants and animals they protect should be not
exploited -- but protected, and enjoyed, as they are. That is a very special American idea, as I will explain.

My second reason is because I know, from my own long experience, that each of these special places on our maps has a beautiful people-history. None of them are now here because of some accident; all of them exist now, today, because some local people knew of them, loved them enough to give parts of their lives to see them protected.

So I hope to take us on a short tour of a few of these other places which others may not know very much about yet. And also share a few stories about how each one of them was protected -- which was not always easily!

To me, Roan Mountain and its story is a reflection, and a symbol, of how all the other places we Americans now enjoy got there, and are now safe. I think people will enjoy our journey together.

Brock Evans is an advocate, a writer, a lecturer, and a lawyer; but above all, Brock is an environmentalist. He is currently the president of the Endangered Species Coalition. His program, America’s Best Idea: Our Nation’s Parks, Refuges & Wilderness, begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 6 at the RMSP Conference Center.

Friends of Roan Mountain Gives Grant To RMSP Junior Ranger Youth Camp

In February the Friends of Roan Mountain Board of Directors have approved a grant for financial assistance in the amount of $1000.00 for funding Roan Mountain State Park’s annual Junior Ranger Camp. The popular camp offers children, ages 8-12, the opportunity to learn outdoor skills from experienced Ranger staff. Hiking, rappelling, swimming, learning survival skills and knot tying are among the activities. The kids receive take-home each day, including t-shirts, badges and certificates.

Roan Mountain State Park’s Junior Ranger Camp is an excellent fit with the goal of Friends of Roan Mountain which to foster greater awareness and understanding of the natural, historical, and cultural significance of Roan Mountain. For more information about the camp call RMSP, 1-800-250-8620.

CONGRATULATIONS, JACOB YOUNG, TENNESSEE PARK RANGER OF THE YEAR!!

Many of you are familiar with Roan Mountain State Park Ranger, Jacob Young, who was recently chosen Tennessee Park Ranger of the Year for 2010. The award is based on a ranger’s performance in each aspect of the position including programming, medial aid and law enforcement.

Park Manager, Pat Gagan, in his letter of nomination stated, in part:

As a commissioned Law Enforcement Officer, Ranger Young’s duty performance is exemplary. Quick to respond to any emergency, he was recently the first officer on the scene of an emergency requiring administration of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). He initiated CPR and assisted arriving emergency medical personnel until the patient was evacuated to a hospital. After a recent park arson, he acted quickly and decisively by removing park vehicles from the burning motor pool and insuring the safety of cabin guests.

At the annual Friends of Roan Mountain Naturalist Rallies, Jacob leads popular flower and herpetology programs. His snake prow, incorporating venomous snakes, was a kid’s favorite at the 2010 Fall Rally. He also organized and led Roan Mountain’s successful and popular Junior Ranger Camp.

Ranger Young’s dynamic interpretation of early Tennessee history has brought history alive to hundreds of children in the park and in area classrooms. He is frequently asked to present his long hunter program to students, scout groups and families alike.

Ranger Jacob shares his knowledge of herpetology and his snake-handling skills to the delight of captivated Naturalists’ Rally attendees.
"Dragons" on the Mountain

— Marty Silver

The highlands of the Roan are a delight at any time or season. High country hikers delight in the
awesome views, and in the complex geology (and meteorology!) behind these views. We take pleasure
in discovering and identifying rare, endemic plants. We wonder at the diversity of birdlife, and the
complexity of their altitudinal migrations. And we Roan hikers especially cherish the opportunity to be a
part of the on-going resource protection.

One small but significant part of both the enjoyment of Roan’s resources, and the protection of
those natural gifts, is the Odonates of the Roan. These fascinating insects are easy to find, and so give
us many opportunities to enjoy first-hand nature observations. And because odonates depend on sensitive wetland habitats, they are
important indicators about the health of natural places.

First some basics: Odonata (named for the teeth on their
mandibles) includes both dragonflies and damselflies. There are several
differences between these two groups. The most obvious is their wings:
dragonflies at rest usually hold their wings out to the sides, while
damselflies usually perch with their wings folded behind them.

Both dragonflies and damselflies start out as water creatures
called nymphs. Damselfly nymphs are thin, with leaf-like appendages on
the ends of their abdomens. Dragonfly nymphs are wider, with pointed
abdominal ends. Both have an amazing lower lip which can protrude
several times the size of their head. They use this lower labium as a “super
-duper creek creature scooper” to catch other water insects.

Depending on the species, it may take anywhere from several
months to several years for the nymph to mature. Unlike butterflies, there
is no pupa (resting) stage. A nymph just crawls out of the water, locks its
feet onto a suitable surface, splits its back open, and pulls itself out as a
(rather damp and wrinkled) new adult! The newly emerged adult is soon
flying, but it may take several days for it to reach its final color & pattern.

It takes careful attention to details to learn to identify the more than 27 species of dragonflies
and damselflies native to Roan Mt and nearby Carter County. Keep in mind that accurate identification is
the first step towards protecting any resource.

Notice odonate details. Do the eyes touch at one point, along a seam, or are they separated? Is
the abdomen narrow or clubbed? What colors and patterns are on the thorax and on the wings?

Also notice behavior patterns. Some species choose a favorite perch, and keep coming back to
that perch. A dragonfly watcher need only observe from a distance until we locate that perch, and then
slowly and cautiously approach it. Other species seem to fly ceaselessly and randomly. But if we watch
closely, we’ll see that they usually follow a specific flight pattern. To get close to these species, observe
until we figure out the flight pattern, and move closer while they are on a more distant part of their
course. And other species, especially many of the more delicate odonates, will skulk in the dense
vegetation. It’s easy to miss these species unless we take the time to look closely and slowly. A key tool
for odonate watchers is patient observation!
We are blessed with an amazing diversity of odonates in our region, thanks in part to the amazing diversity of suitable habitats. Odonates of the Roan range from tiny damselflies that inhabit boggy seeps, to huge dragonflies on the balds that eat other dragonflies! Some are common species, found across the state. Other species are restricted to rare and disappearing habitats. Changes in odonate populations can give clues to changing environmental conditions. For example, recent records of a formerly more southern species – the Swift Setwing – here in East Tennessee may be a hint of climatic changes.

On your next warm sunny day at the Roan, seek out the odonates. Try taking a few photos to confirm your findings. You may come back both muddy and thoughtful, shoes damp with dragonfly habitats, and mind filled with the wonder of these fine and diverse insects. Learning to appreciate the odonates’ role in the balance of nature can help us learn more about our role as well. Our careful, accurate observations of these delightful insects can be an important step for protecting the odonates and their rich, diverse habitats.

[Note: To see Marty’s photos in color visit our website, http://www.friendsofroanmtn.org, and click on the News link.]

Marty Silver is a Park Interpretive Specialist at Warriors' Path State Park, He has worked for Tennessee State Parks for over 30 years, sharing nature discovery with multiple thousands of park visitors and area schoolchildren. Marty will present the Saturday evening program, Dragonfly Watching, on May 7th at 7:30 p.m.

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**Xtreme Roan Adventures**

**Kid's Naturalist's Rally**

**Mark Your Calendar – JULY 30, 2011**

Get ready for another great day on the mountain!

- Last year over a hundred kids had a blast at the second Kid's Naturalist's Rally!
- "Special Guest Naturalist": Kris Light
- $3 gets you a full day of fun and a lunch prepared by Earth Fare in Johnson City.

For more info check out our website at [http://xtremeroanadventures.org/](http://xtremeroanadventures.org/), or email Larry McDaniel at [Larry@PorchLightInsects.com](mailto:Larry@PorchLightInsects.com), or to make reservations contact Ken Turner at [Ken@MountainTips.com](mailto:Ken@MountainTips.com).

Stay up-to-date with all the exciting announcements. Join Xtreme Roan Adventures on [Face Book](https://www.facebook.com/).

We still could use more volunteers to help make this the best Xtreme Roan Adventure yet. Send Larry an e-mail if you are interested in helping.

Come join us. You’ll be glad you did. See you on the mountain!

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**Bird Language**

Trying to understand the words
Offered on all sides by birds
I recognize in what I hear
Noises that betoken fear.

Though some of them I’m certain, must
Stand for rage, bravado, lust,
All other notes that birds employ
Sound like synonyms for joy.

W. H. Auden

*May, 1967*

Silent Auction at Rally of Books donated by Ed Schell!

Many of us fondly remember hikes and wildflower walks with Ed Schell at the Naturalist Rally, as well as shows of his award-winning nature photography. Since he and Barbara have moved to South Carolina to be with family, Ed has generously donated more than 50 nature books from his collection to be auctioned, with proceeds going to the SAHC and FORM. These books range from field guides of all sorts, to coffee table photography books. The silent auctions will be held on Friday and Saturday evenings before the program.

We all certainly miss Ed and Barbara, but trust there will be opportunities in the future for us to visit with him. The Friends of Roan Mountain would like to extend their sincerest thanks to Ed, for donating this portion of his collection, and to Gabrielle Zieger, who has graciously agreed to organize and conduct the auction.

Below is a list of the titles that will be on the Silent Auction table. One half of these will be out each of the two nights:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A guide to Field ID Wildflowers of N.America</td>
<td>Golden Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Illustrated Flora of the Northern U.S &amp; Canada Vol. 1</td>
<td>Britton &amp; Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Illustrated Flora of the Northern U.S. &amp; Canada Vol. 2</td>
<td>Britton &amp; Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>An Illustrated Flora of the Northern U.S. &amp; Canada Vol. 3</td>
<td>Britton &amp; Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aquatic &amp; Wetland Plants of SE US Monocotyledons</td>
<td>Godfrey/Wooten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlas of TN Amphibians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlas of TN Vascular Plants Vol. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlas of TN Vascular Plants Vol. 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attracting Birds to Your Backyard</td>
<td>Roth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big South Fork</td>
<td>Baker/Netherton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birds of the World</td>
<td>Austin, Oliver L. Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist of Vascular Plants TN</td>
<td>Wofford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everglades</td>
<td>Patricia Caulfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferns &amp; Fern Allies of Kentucky</td>
<td>Cranfill, Ray</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flora of the Indiana Dunes</td>
<td>Peattie, Donald C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Wharton/Valentine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Potter’s Field Guide to Hybrid Ferns of the NE</td>
<td>Thorne, Frank/Libby</td>
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<td>How Plants Get Their Names</td>
<td>Bailey, L.H.</td>
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<td>Knowing Your Trees</td>
<td>Collingwood/Brush</td>
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<td>Knowing, Showing &amp; Sharing Ohio Wildflowers</td>
<td>Ohio Garden Club</td>
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<td>Manual of SE Flora</td>
<td>Small, John K.</td>
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<td>Manual of the Trees of North America Vol.1</td>
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<td>Manual of the Trees of North America Vol.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mighty Giants</td>
<td>Chris Bolgiano (ed.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes on the Birds of GSMNP</td>
<td>Stupka</td>
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<td>Oceanic Birds of South America Vol. 1</td>
<td>Murphy</td>
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<td>Oceanic Birds of South America Vol. 2</td>
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<td>Ohio Trees</td>
<td>Dean/Chadwick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Only a Little Planet</td>
<td>Brower, David (ed.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sportsmen Unlimited</td>
<td>Davis, Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superior, Portrait of a Living Lake</td>
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<td>The Birds of NE Tennessee</td>
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<td>The Birds of Ohio Vol. 1</td>
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<td>The Birds of Ohio Vol. 2</td>
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<td>The Flora of GSMNP Annotated List</td>
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<td>The Mammals of Shenandoah</td>
<td>Manville</td>
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<tr>
<td>The New Field Book of American Wildflowers</td>
<td>Rickett</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Phytosociology of the Green Swamp NC</td>
<td>NC Ag.</td>
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<td>The Sea Has Wings</td>
<td>Russell, Franklin</td>
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<td>TN a Homecoming</td>
<td>Netherton</td>
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<td>Vanishing Wildlife of North America</td>
<td>Allen, Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>Hyde, Arnout Jr.</td>
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<td>Wild By Law</td>
<td>Clifton/Turner</td>
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<td>Wildflower Guide</td>
<td>Newcomb</td>
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<td>Wildflowers of Arkansas</td>
<td>Hunter, Charles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildflowers of NC</td>
<td>Justice/Bell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildflowers of Tennessee</td>
<td>Carmen, Jack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildflowers of the U.S. SE States Vol 1</td>
<td>Rickett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflowers of the U.S. SE States Vol 2</td>
<td>Rickett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflowers, Grasses &amp; Other Plants of the Northern Plains &amp; Black Hills</td>
<td>VanBruggen</td>
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Ed and Barbara Schell would love to hear from you and can be reached via their daughter and son-in-law:

Chris and Ted Driggers
481 Catawba Trail
Lexington, SC 29072 1-803-359-7067
A bright sun took the chill out of the air as Jamey Donaldson and Nora Schubert led a stalwart group up through groves of rhododendron and patches of spruce/fir to the top of round bald. The views were as spectacular as the winds blowing across snow-patched tufts of golden grasses and sedges.

Further down the mountain across from Twin Springs Jerry Greer led a crowd of enthusiasts to photograph the beautiful beech trees still holding their buff-colored tissue leaves against a background of green mossy rocks and pockets of snow. Still more crowds (the hikers for this mid-February event set a 4 year record) followed Jeremy Stout through the ancient boulders of the Park’s Peg Leg Mine area, and Marty Silver on an animal tracking hike along the Doe river.

Kudos to these Friends of Roan Mountain hike leaders—biologists, botanists, paleontologists, artists of photography—they are the stars of our naturalist rallies!

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Morning presentations at the Winter Rally brought us two extraordinary experts: Dr. Peter D. Weigl of Wake Forest University on the antiquity of the Roan’s grassy balds, and Lisa C. Huff, of Tennessee’s Department of Environment and Conservation on the lower elevation threat from exotic invasive plants. As development continues to encroach on the highlands’ slopes, it brings with it a horde of “ornamental” exotic plants and trees which quickly escape to the mountain woodlands and streams, smothering the native beauty which stands in their way. The graceful cardinal flowers by a sunny spring become the canes of Japanese knotweed; in fact, the latter has invaded streams and wet areas on both the NC and TN sides of the Roan. How quickly the forest groves of seedling oaks are shaded out by the fat leaves of faster growing Norway maples. Lisa reminded us that we have our own native invasives to contend with, without our introducing invasive exotics, no matter the pretty foliage or flower. Her slides rang many bells as they featured woodlands and byways from Bakersville, NC across the Roan to Hampton, TN. invaded by Japanese spiraea, knotweed, tall miscanthus grass, and other thugs of the plant world

Peter Weigl has been studying high elevation grassy “balds” all over the world. Shots of the eastern Carpathian grassy ridgelines in Poland and the Ukraine could have well been the Southern Appalachians. These areas play host to an assemblage of rare endemic and relict species that evolved over many thousands of years. Trees, despite a temperate latitude, never moved in to disturb this process. These grassy areas have a long Pleistocene history where they were maintained by large megaherbivores, 23 of which are known for this area. Half of these large mammals have been found as fossils from sites near the balds. Around 12,000 BP these large animals died out and were replaced by bison, elk and deer and by 1840 the tree seedlings were grazed and browsed by domestic livestock. The last half of the 20th century saw trees begin a serious march into these grassy areas. Peter insists that introduction of browsing animals is the best avenue to take. Towards this goal of grassy balds preservation, he donated his honorarium and all Friends’ expense reimbursements.

Cheers to Dr. Pete!

A very loud, pleasing and deserved applause came from the rally attendees for Pat Gagan and his staff of Roan Mountain State Park for hosting this event.

—David Hall
Founded in 1974 to protect the 25,000-acre Highlands of Roan and other significant areas in the southern Appalachian region, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC), accredited by the Land Trust of America Accreditation Commission, is one of the country’s oldest and most respected land trusts. The Roan Highlands house one of the richest repositories of temperate zone biodiversity on earth, including the globally endangered grassy balds ecological community. These high elevation meadows support rare plant and animal species found in few other places in the world, the six balds of the Roan system being the most extensive and highest quality in the southern Appalachians. Early photographs and writings show that Round Bald, Jane Bald and Grassy Ridge were once a continuous open expanse, maintained through grazing, with origins possibly going back 10,000 years. While native grazers and browsers, followed by livestock of early settlers, may have kept them on the landscape, grassy balds are ephemeral “disturbance” communities that have been shrinking over time due to the cessation of grazing following U. S. Forest Service acquisition. Without active management, they will ultimately disappear due to natural succession.

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), an organization founded in 1895 to save wildlife and wild places worldwide, recently awarded SAHC a $50,000 grant to restore historic grassy bald edges and corridors that have succumbed to tree and shrub encroachment on the Roan during the last 50 years. These open grasslands and their scrub/shrub edges provide habitat for a number of priority wildlife species including the Appalachian cottontail, alder flycatcher, and golden-winged warbler. They are also important stop-over habitats for migrating birds. Populations of these and other early successional habitat species have declined steeply in recent years due to land development or forest encroachment. One species in particular, the golden-winged warbler, an imperiled neotropical migrant, is a prime conservation target in this project. The golden-wing, classified as “Highest Priority” by Appalachian Mountain Joint Ventures, a program of the American Bird Conservancy, has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Under careful habitat management, the Roan can provide a high-elevation safe haven for this bird.

SAHC works with a variety of state, federal and private entities to accomplish shared conservation goals within the Highlands of Roan, this management project being a component of a larger multi-partner endeavor to restore and maintain the imperiled southern Appalachian grassy balds and the plants and animals they support. The organization has more than two decades of volunteer hand-crew balds restoration and maintenance experience. From June through October 2011, SAHC will recruit and train new volunteer crews, as well as supervise NC Department of Corrections and professional crews, to restore and manage 50 acres of habitat to its historic extent on Round Bald, Jane Bald, Grassy Ridge and Little Hump Mountain. It’s a rewarding endeavor as attested to by the number of volunteers who return year after year. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Judy Murray, SAHC Highlands of Roan Stewardship Director, for more information. Roanwoman@aol.com. SAHC will also feature a hike to one of the beautiful project sites, Little Hump Mountain, on May 21. The views are spectacular and offer a wonderful vantage point from which to survey the extent of the Highlands of Roan grass-roots conservation initiative. Contact Judy for details.

"Appalachian Spring" a benefit event for SAHC Thursday, May 5th

Come to Farmhouse Gallery & Gardens for an event celebrating spring in the southern Appalachians with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy! Look forward to live music from the ETSU Old Time Pride Band, great food catered by Farmhouse Gallery & Gardens, and beer from Depot Street Brewing Company.

The event will last from 6-9 pm and all proceeds benefit SAHC. $15 SAHC members $20 non-members. Ticket price inclusive of food and beverage. Visit [http://www.appalachian.org/news/events.html](http://www.appalachian.org/news/events.html).

Friends of Roan Mountain newsletters are printed in color on our website. If you would like to receive the newsletter by email rather than a printed copy in the mail, send an email request to nbarrigar@friendsofroanmtn.org.
Deadline for Meal Reservations – All dinner and lunch meals must be prepaid. If you plan to eat the catered dinner or purchase a bag lunch at the rally, you must send your check in advance. The deadline is Tuesday, May 3rd. The reservation form can be found in the brochure or on our website. Mail your check and reservation form to Nancy Barrigar, 708 Allen Avenue, Elizabethton, TN 37643. We greatly appreciate your cooperation in helping us plan accurately!

Change in Parking – Due to a change in the mowing policy of the park, the parking location for all field trips will be in the field below the cabins.

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**Mark Your Calendar!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roan Mountain Naturalists’ Rallies</th>
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<td>Youth</td>
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<td>Fall</td>
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