

MOUNTAINS

Park scientists, writers reflect on 'habitat'



Word from the Smokies
Frances Figart
Columnist

When the United Nations designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day, the intent was for people to reflect on the state of our cities and towns, and on the fact that everyone has a basic right to enjoy adequate shelter.

"Shelter is My Right" was the theme of the very first World Habitat Day celebrated in Nairobi, Kenya. Here we are 35 years later, and for many who work in and around Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the word "habitat" conjures up images of the homes of wildlife, who also have the right to shelter.

"When I hear the word 'habitat,' I think about wetlands," said Alix Pfenigwerth, a biological science technician with the Smokies' Inventory and Monitoring program.

"Wetlands are small but mighty. They're rare: they cover just one percent of the Smokies' landscape. Yet they provide critically important food, water, and shelter for so many of the species we love — birds, fishes, insects, mammals, frogs, salamanders, and plants."

Of course, habitat, in the broadest sense, is simply where things live.

"It can be the soils of forests and fields, it can be the waters of a stream or river, or it can be an ancient log slowly decaying and providing food and cover for a variety of plants, animals, and microorganisms," said Matt Kulp, supervi-

sory fishery biologist for GSMNP.

"Habitat isn't always just places we see," he continued. "Some of the rarest species in the park live on or under rocks in streams, in the duff layers of forests, on the bark of trees, in wetlands, and even on — or inside — the bodies of other living organisms."

Kulp, Pfenigwerth, and their colleagues have a great challenge in educating visitors about how harmful it is to move rocks to create rock cairns and dams in the park's 2,900 miles of beautiful streams and rivers. Many aquatic species, including some federally threatened and endangered fish and salamanders, live and nest under rocks. When a nest rock is disturbed, these vulnerable creatures are forced to abandon their homes. Just think how you would feel if someone turned your house upside down!

"Many critters, including humans, can live in a broad range of habitats," said Todd Witcher, executive director for Discover Life in America, a nonprofit park partner documenting the Smokies' diversity. "When you start to look at things that have very specific requirements to survive, habitat becomes extremely complex. For example, I have always been fascinated by species of plants and animals that require a habit that is wet, but well-drained. It's hard to be wet without some standing water; a seep, though, creates this habitat. Certain mosses and the beautiful, glowing, fungus gnat larvae require these kinds of habitats for survival."

Elly Wells of Asheville provides public relations services for a host of regional conservation clients, including Great Smoky Mountains Association. "Living in the southern Appalachians and work-



Alix Pfenigwerth maps and surveys wetlands as a biological science technician with the Inventory and Monitoring program at GSMNP.

PROVIDED BY BECKY NICHOLS/NPS

ing on communications related to public lands and regional land conservancies, I'm reminded daily that the backbone of our mountain habitat is its diversity," she said. "While the sheer number of community types and species shout 'Abundance!' the growing threats to our water and land cry 'Protection!' — making clear the need for greater education and awareness about preservation of habitat."

Korin Bishop is a freelance writer whose passions for the great outdoors led her to the Great Smoky Mountains after living amongst the California redwoods, the South Dakota badlands, and the Florida everglades.

"To me, 'habitat' conveys what it takes to thrive in and belong to a place," she said. "In writing about the Smokies during my first two years living here, I've learned what different species need in their habitats to survive and how subtle changes in elevation, temperature, or human impact can determine whether those species continue to call a partic-

ular habitat their home. Now, as I hike the park's trails, continuing to find my own sense of belonging in this region, I see these species as my blueprint for how to adapt and grow within changing spaces and time."

Bishop was a 2020 writer-in-residence at Sundress Academy for the Arts in Knoxville. She is now a regular contributor to Great Smoky Mountains Association's "Smokies Life" magazine and has written for "Sierra" magazine and "Fodor's Travel," among others.

Three generations ahead of Bishop, another writer began interpreting the Smokies' habitats and inhabitants back in the 1970s. George Ellison, whose "Nature Journal" has long been a fixture of the Asheville Citizen Times, was named one of the 100 most influential people in the history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. His and Janet McCue's book "Back of Beyond: A Horace Kephart Biography" (2019, Great Smoky Mountains Association) won the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award two years ago.

"For me, the designation 'habitat' implies a distinctive 'natural area' within which a given set of plants, animals, and land forms living in harmony might be anticipated," Ellison said. "Such places can also serve as 'places of refuge' for us human critters so long as we value and protect them."

Frances Figart is the editor of "Smokies Life" magazine and the Creative Services Director for the 29,000-member Great Smoky Mountains Association, an educational nonprofit partner of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Learn more at SmokiesInformation.org and reach the author at frances@gsassoc.org.

30 parcels in Seven Falls development sold at auction

Rebecca Walter Hendersonville Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Around 20 people gathered Sept. 29 at the steps of the Henderson County Courthouse to bid on 30 parcels of land in the failed Seven Falls development in Etowah.

The Henderson County Sheriff's Office, which handles tax foreclosure judgements, auctioned off the properties.

Shortly before the auction began, the sheriff's office handed out an updated notice for sale from the clerk's office, which included both price decreases and increases for almost all of the properties. The parcels were priced according to the judgments against them, including interest and costs.

The first parcel of land auctioned off was originally listed for \$2,485.30 and increased to \$5,400. The parcel had one bidder and sold for the higher price.

Many of the parcels only climbed a couple of hundred dollars in price and a majority sold for the increased amount or sometimes higher.

The parcel originally priced the highest at \$10,365.49 was reduced to \$1,500.

A handful of the properties received no bids and will remain under their original ownership.

A few bidders walked away with more than one parcel, and a couple of the properties received multiple bids. The highest bidder was required to put down a 10% cash deposit on the land after the auction ended.

Buyers have few uses for the proper-

ty. While the values of the parcels have plummeted since the planned upscale golf course community failed about a dozen years ago, conditions in the subdivision have not changed, with the land still unusable.

There are no paved roads or utilities such as water, sewer and power. Some lots in the subdivision are unreachable except on foot, as a bridge would need to be built for vehicle access. Any restrictive covenants originally placed on the parcels remain.

A majority of the lots were purchased from 2007-2009 by individuals and corporations who have not been able to use the land.

A full history of the development is available on the county's website and starts at 2007.



The 30 parcels of the failed Seven Falls development in Etowah are auctioned off Wednesday on the steps of the Henderson County Courthouse. REBECCA WALTER/TIMES-NEWS

Leaf Filter
GUTTER PROTECTION

BACKED BY A YEAR-ROUND CLOG-FREE GUARANTEE

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

15% OFF & **10% OFF**
YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE
SENIORS & MILITARY!

+ 5% OFF
TO THE FIRST 50 CALLERS ONLY!

WE INSTALL YEAR-ROUND!

FINANCING THAT FITS YOUR BUDGET!
Promo Code: 285
*Subject to credit approval. Call for details.

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE **1-877-649-1190**

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

*For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. **Offer valid at time of estimate only. The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the #1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America. Manufactured in Plainville, Michigan and processed at SMT Mercer Group in Ohio. See Representative for full warranty details. CSLB# 1035795 DGPL #10783658-5501 License# 7656 License# 50145 License# 41354 License# 99388 License# 128344 License# 218204 WA UB# 603 238 977 License# 2102212986 License# 2109212646 License# 2705315154 License# 144579460272 License# WV455012 License# WC29998417 License# NC License# 101067000 Registration# 176447 Registration# NC 1649905 Registration# C127220 Registration# C122230 Registration# 366200918 Registration# FC6475 Registration# #271882 Registration# 13449293300 Registration# #A069383 Suffolk HIC License# 8222948 License# 2705169445 License# 262006022 License# 262000403 License# 0086990 Registration# H-19114 AN-GC10742437-15

Grilling Perfection Pack

- 4 Butcher's Cut Filet Mignons (5 oz.)
- 4 Steakhouse Chicken Breasts (6 oz.)
- 4 Omaha Steaks Burgers (5 oz.)
- 4 Gourmet Jumbo Franks (3 oz.)
- 4 Individual Scalloped Potatoes (3.8 oz.)
- 4 Caramel Apple Tartlets (4 oz.)
- 1 jar Signature Seasoning (1 oz. jar)
- 8 **FREE** Omaha Steaks Burgers (5 oz.)
- 1 **FREE** Digital Meat Thermometer

66093JYS separately \$219.94
SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY PRICE \$129.99

Get 8 Burgers & a Digital Meat Thermometer FREE

AMERICA'S ORIGINAL BUTCHER
OMAHA STEAKS
SINCE 1917

ORDER NOW! 1.833.634.1814 ask for 66093JYS
OmahaSteaks.com/grillpack737

*Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. Photos exemplary of product advertised. Limit 2, 8 free (5 oz.) burgers & free thermometer will be sent to each shipping address that includes (66093). Free product(s) may be substituted. Standard S&H added per address. Offer available while supplies last. Cannot be combined with other offers. Other restrictions may apply. Expires 10/31/21. ©2021 OCG | Omaha Steaks, Inc. AN-GC10742437-14

LIFE LINE SCREENING
The Power of Prevention

Are you at risk for stroke or cardiovascular disease?

Call Life Line Screening at 833-744-1626

Special Offer for Readers
5 screening package for \$149

AN-GC10742437-10

Citizen Times
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Customer service

To view important information related to your subscription, visit aboutyoursubscription.citizen-times.com. You can also manage your subscription at account.citizen-times.com. Contact the Citizen Times for questions or to report issues via email at citizen-times@gannett.com or 1-800-672-2472.

Operating hours are:

- Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
- Saturday: 7:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. for technical support only
- Sunday & holidays: 7:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Full access subscriptions

Subscribe and save today by visiting citizen-times.com/subscribe. Subscriptions below are billed per month and include access to citizen-times.com, tablet and smartphone apps, and the e-Edition, a digital replica of the print edition.

- Delivery of the Monday through Sunday print editions: \$68.00*
- Delivery of the Friday through Sunday print editions: \$39.00*
- Delivery of the Sunday and Wednesday print editions: \$32.00*
- Delivery of the Sunday print editions: \$25.00*

*Plus applicable taxes

Corrections and clarifications

Our goal is to promptly correct errors. Email us at accuracy@asheville.gannett.com to report a mistake or call 828-232-5829. Describe the error, where you saw it, the date, page number, or the URL.

Contact us

Customer Service 1-800-672-2472

News Director Jewell Walston | 828-232-5829

Advertising 828-252-5611

Obituaries 828-232-5966

Postal information

Citizen Times, USPS #236-000, ISSN #0336-0000, is published Monday through Sunday at 14 O. Henry Ave., Asheville, NC 28802. Periodicals postage paid at Asheville, NC 28802.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Customer Service, PO Box 5830, Augusta, GA 30916