



The High Knob Herald

Official Newsletter of The Clinch Coalition

No. 11 Fall 2016



Endemic Crayfish Protected in Far Southwest Virginia

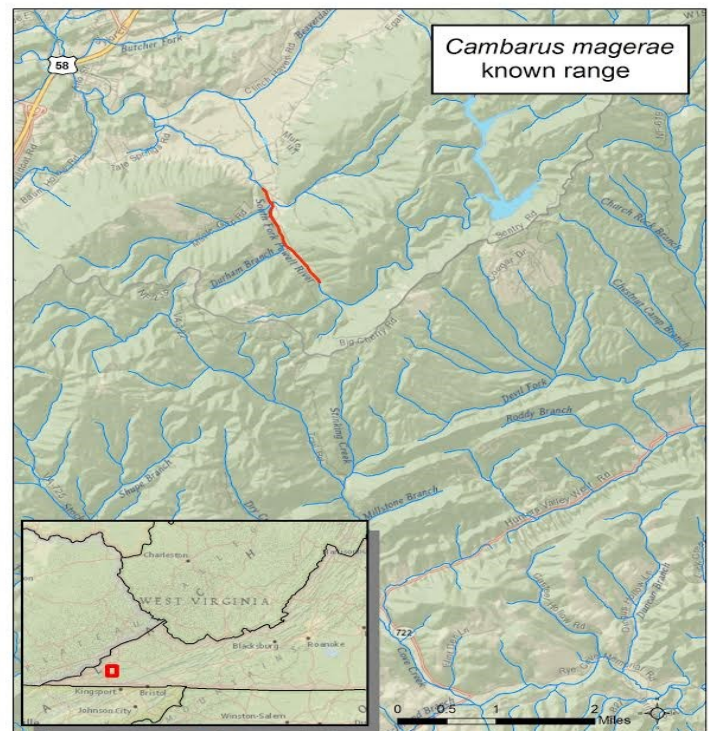
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently protected a crayfish known only from a handful of counties in southwest Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and southern West Virginia. The April 2016 decision by USFWS formally listed the Big Sandy Crayfish (*Cambarus callainus*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, providing the species formal federal protection. The decision came following a 2010 public petition to list the Big Sandy Crayfish, a move that triggered a scientific review and decision by federal biologists. The primary threat to this species has been cited as increased sedimentation in waterways as a result of land disturbance, which can result from coal and oil/gas extraction, unsustainable timber harvesting activities, illegal ATV use, and other sources.

The Big Sandy Crayfish is unique in that it is currently only known from a handful of headwater tributaries to the Big Sandy River, itself part of the Ohio River drainage. In southwest Virginia, this includes portions of the Pound and Cranesnest Rivers, both heavily impacted by mineral extraction and other human activities. The new ruling on this species will allow for increased protection for the Big Sandy Crayfish and require federal agencies to collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before approving funding activities or permits related to projects that could directly or indirectly impact the species.



Big Sandy Crayfish (*Cambarus callainus*). Credit: Zachary Loughman, West Liberty University

The Big Sandy Crayfish is not the only narrowly-ranging species found in the High Knob area. In 2015, a new species, named the Big Stone Crayfish (*Cambarus magerae*), was discovered on High Knob by researchers investigating local crayfish diversity. This particular species is known to inhabit only the South Fork Powell River Gorge between Big Cherry Reservoir and Cracker's Neck, although surveys to date have been limited. This latest species has been discovered too recently to have the type of intensive review that was performed on the Big Sandy Crayfish, but it is just another example of the wealth of unique - and rare - biodiversity that inhabits our local waters.



News From The Knob

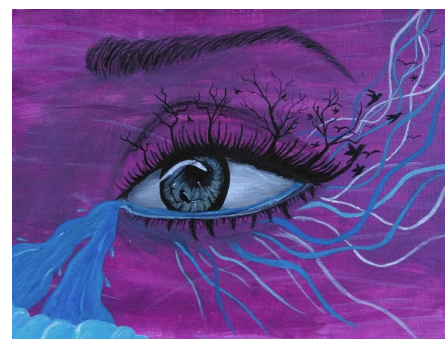
“Why Are Forests Important?”

This year's 10th Annual Earth Awareness Essay Contest poised the question “Why are Forests Important?” Over 163 students responded with eloquent essays and beautiful artwork expressing the critical role of forests in their lives and community. The Clinch Coalition worked with local teachers and schools in three counties in southwest Virginia, awarding 26 students with over \$800.00 in prize money. Board member and long-time judge of the contest, Gerry Scardo, had this to say: “Helping judge the art and essay contests has always been a real highlight of my being part of TCC. One can see the high promise of the students!”

EARTH AWARENESS ART AND ESSAY CONTEST



Check out www.clinchcoalition.net to see all of the winning art entries.



Santana Yeary 1st Place High School
Eastside High School



Madison Hawkins 1st Place Primary
Dungannon Intermediate School

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10th Annual High Knob Naturalist Rally

On September 24, 2016, we celebrated our 10th Annual High Knob Naturalist Rally. This year we moved the event from our traditional location at Bark Camp Lake to High Knob Lake. Despite the change in location, we had excellent attendance estimated at 275 people. The weather was sunny, warm, and accommodating, and the crowd really enjoyed themselves as they participated in hikes and presentations throughout the day – highlighted by a wonderful free lunch of homemade goodies.

This year we featured multiple hikes surrounding the lake. With our hike naturalists leading the charge, participants explored the incredibly unique and diverse natural environment offered at this beautiful location in the Jefferson National Forest. Hike opportunities included “**Wetlands**” led by Lois Boggs; “**Edible Plants**” led by Phil Meeks; “**Mushrooms**” led by Gabrielle Zeiger and Eddie Yates; “**Geocaching**” led by Karen Davidson; “**Nature Photography**” led by Jason Wamsley; “**Tree Identification**” led by Bill Cawood; “**Wilderness First Aid**” led by Jane Sandt; “**Salamanders**” led by Wally Smith; “**Wild Medicinals**” led by Annie Jane Cotten; “**Climate and Biodiversity**” led by Wayne Browning; “**History of the High Knob Recreation Area**” led by Harry Warren; “**Insects of Virginia**” led by Chris Allgyer; and “**Wilderness Survival**” led by Mark and Carol Caruso of Pathfinders Outfitters.

In addition we had several exciting presentations throughout the day: “**Wolves**” was presented by Rhonda Goins. Ryan Huish taught us how to “**Tap Maples Trees.**” Johnnie Stanley joined us again this year to discuss “**Mushroom Identification.**” Mitch Whitaker also reprised his popular presentation on “**Birds of Prey.**” John Hootman spoke about “**Bats.**” And the ever popular “**Reptiles**” show was once again presented to an enthusiastic crowd by Chuck Hurd. We also had multiple activities for children this year. “**Nature Art**” was conducted by the EHS Ecology Club. Karen Hartsock presented “**Nature with Kids.**” And the good folks from the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and CRVI presented “**Enviroscape.**”

We hope to see everyone again next year at High Knob Lake and don’t forget to bring some new friends along!



EHS students demonstrating some local biological diversity.



TCC Board Member and emcee Trevor Makal gives a warm welcome to the crowd at the amphitheater at High Knob Lake.



A glimpse through the forest on Tree Identification.

Thanks to all the volunteers, presenters and hike leaders for another successful Naturalist Rally!

TCC and Community Comment on Timber Sale Planned for Nettle Patch on High Knob

The Forest Service (FS) has proposed a major timber sale for High Knob. Known locally as the “Nettle Patch”, the sale covers some 6,693 acres of National Forest and includes three major watersheds with a total of 1,552 acres selected for cutting. Beginning just east of Norton, heading toward Coeburn, the Clear, Machine and Burns Creek watersheds will be affected. In addition to the tree removal, 1,155 acres of forest are being proposed for burning.

The plan was first presented to the public on January 25, 2016 followed by two field trips into the Nettle Patch area. A second more detailed plan was made available to the public on April 1, with comments due by the end of the month. Several TCC members and other interested citizens attended their meeting and outings, and also participated in a field trip to the proposed area, sponsored by TCC.

With the input of several of our members, our comments to the FS expressed concerns about the effects of the project on erosion and flooding, water quality, species diversity, invasive species growth, future recreation use, and climate change. Concerning tourism, several of the major cuts would take place directly adjacent to roads leading to popular recreation areas, including along the Tacoma road to Bark Camp Lake and the road from there to High Knob Lake and the High Knob Tower. We also noted that several of the stands proposed for cutting contained trees aged at 100 years or more, which should classify those areas as Potential Old Growth Forests. Because of the need for more Old Growth Areas we feel that these stands should be left alone.

Many other issues were covered in our comments (**which can be seen at www.clinchcoalition.net**). We concluded our comments with a statement that “we do support uneven-aged forest management with limited low impact and sustainable harvesting, and we hope that the FS will work with us to identify areas on our Forest that can be managed in ways which will benefit all parties concerned. We hope the FS will develop and seriously consider a range of alternatives that will both satisfy the supposed need for this project and be able to garner broader public acceptance than the current proposal.”

The Forest Service plans to have a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) out for comments by late November or early December. There will be 30 days for public comment. After this, a final EA and draft decision on the proposed project will be issued by the end of January. Be sure to check back in on our website or give us a call to find out more about ways to plug into this process. **Every voice counts!**



TCC members Ryan Huish and Gena Kiser listen to Shelby Williams, FS Silviculturist, during an informational hike in the proposed area of the Nettle Patch Timber Sale



TCC members conducting old growth surveys in the Nettle Patch, between Norton and Coeburn.

On the Trails: Our Work In 2016



Our trail work days have led to maintenance of trails throughout our region. This year involved multiple days working in the Stone Mountain Wilderness Area. As no motorized equipment is permitted to be operated in wilderness areas, our volunteers have been gaining significant experience using crosscut saws and axes, humping equipment in and out of the first approximately 2.5 miles of trail originating from the Cave Springs recreation area.



We expect many more trips out to the Stone Mountain Wilderness Area to clear out the large blowdown that has recently plagued hikers in the area. Maintenance of this area will help alleviate some of the difficulties encountered by those interested in making the 14.3-mile trek to the Roaring Branch Trailhead.

Financial support from an American Hiking Association grant has provided the means to purchase new tools and personal protective equipment, helping elevate our work to the next level. We have completed over 485 hours of trail work with over 81 volunteers so far this year.

Partner Spotlight



TCC would like to recognize a local environmental group for their hard work in protecting the water quality in southwest Virginia. Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS) together with the Sierra Club and Appalachian Voices have been working diligently for over a decade to defend our area from detrimental effects of strip mining in our mountains. Since 2010 SAMS members have been monitoring waterways together with Matt Hepler, SAMS' Water and Enforcement Organizer. By testing local waterways, mines were found that were releasing selenium (a heavy metal) into our streams. This heavy metal has been linked to deformities in freshwater fish and can also cause neurological damage in humans. The high selenium levels violated the Clean Water Act and Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement Act criteria for permitted mine pollution.

With the evidence gathered by SAMS and legal support from the Sierra Club, A & G coal has agreed to pay over \$300,000 to repair legacy coal sites that are causing damage in the Powell River watershed. These projects will reduce surface water pollution and decrease the risk to public health. SAMS has worked for years for stricter water quality mandates and stronger enforcement of our current laws. Without the watchdog work of Matt Hepler and SAMS members these incursions into our watersheds could have continued indefinitely. For more information go to www.samsva.org.

3rd Annual Hellbender Race

Sixty-four people participated in the third annual High Knob Hellbender 10K on Oct. 1. The running race climbs more than 2,000 feet from downtown Norton to the High Knob summit. This year, the weather was sunny and warm, a much appreciated change from last year's rain and chill. Runners and walkers were treated to the beauty of High Knob in fall splendor as they made their way to the High Knob Tower, where an enthusiastic crowd cheered them on as they crossed the finish line. We are so proud of all of our runners, participants, volunteers and sponsors who made this year's race a success!

Shawn Becker, a Duffield resident and longtime Clinch Coalition volunteer, won the race in 58 minutes.

Bess Mathisen, of Norton, was the top female finisher in 62 minutes.

For more information and photos from this year's race, visit www.highknobhellbender.wordpress.com.

The fourth annual run is set for Oct. 7, 2017.

We hope to see you there!



New logo design by Adam Jones



2016 Hellbender Race Winners at the High Knob Tower



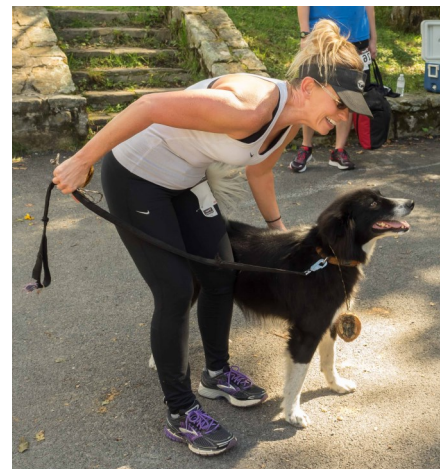
Katie Dunn, race coordinator, presents the award to Shawn Becker

Male

1st	Shawn Becker
2cd	Allen Moore
3rd	Randall Statzer
Masters	Dale Riddle

Female

1st	Bess Mathisen
2cd	Emily Wells,
3rd	Julie Scott
Masters	Patricia Carter



Phil Shelton

Appalachian Renaissance Man

Do you want to know the name of the bird singing high up in the hemlock tree? Or the name of a distant star on a dark night? Would you enjoy some classical violin music? Are you curious about ancient glacial activity? Are you interested in learning about the rock you are standing on? Who should you call? Phil Shelton, of course. Phil has studied the relationship between moose, beavers and wolves on Isle Royal, jumped out of airplanes to fight forest fires, worked with the Smithsonian on bird studies and has taught thousands of young minds the beauty of science. Most important of all, Phil Shelton has been a friend to the Earth and all her life forms. If ever there were a *Homo sapien* that treads lightly on the environment, it is he. While his footprint is small on Earth's resources, his impact is huge on the lives of those around him. As he "walks the walk", demonstrating every day how we all can live a life more in tune with nature. He is rich in folks that love him. We are all smarter from his company and benefit from his kindness and generosity.



The Clinch Coalition appreciates his wisdom and would like to thank him for all he does to make our mountain home sustainable.

THANK YOU!

The Clinch Coalition would like to thank the individuals, businesses and organizations for their support in making this year's programs a success. Our work has been made possible by generous donations from:

Patagonia Sharon Daniels Frank Frey Jane Branham Frank Kilgore Gena Kiser Sherman Bamford Randy Moore Joe & Gerry Scardo Michael Wheatley Neal Davis, DDS Crestline Farms Quality A/C & Heating The Bank of Marion Miners Exchange Bank Eric & Cara Hall Sugar Hill Brewery	Pound IGA Home Hardware Co. Wildcat Pharmacy Inn at Wise First Bank & Trust Rent Wise Food City Walmart CVS Apple House Food Lion CSE Insurance Vic's Paint Cinema City Kari Kilgore Jim Moran	Scott Co VA Star Coalfield Progress Pathfinder Sporting Mt. Rose Winery UVAW Bookstore Broadwater Trading Cavalier Pharmacy New People's Bank Auto World Big Boy's Pizza China Garden Huddle House Crafts from the Gap Gale Keebler Bill Wasserman Bebos Music David Rouse	Mi Finca Reno's Roma's Sonic Subway Taco Bell EHS High School Burger King Ingles Belk's Anne Dibala Teresa Guice Kathleen Huser Marjorie Marcy Applebee's Lowe's	American Hiking Society Tucker & Becky Coleman Crafts from the Gap Byron & Carmen Cantrell Kirsty Zahnke & Clay Skarda Pepsi Cola Seven Up Bottling Co. Frontier Communications Patrick & Diana Withen Robert & Shannon Dwyer McDonald's RNSE Enterprises McCarty's Appraisals Robert Findley, DDS Robert Gillenwater Todd & Shelley Cassel Darrin and Ruth Sutherland The Appalachian Showcase Bill Harris Photography
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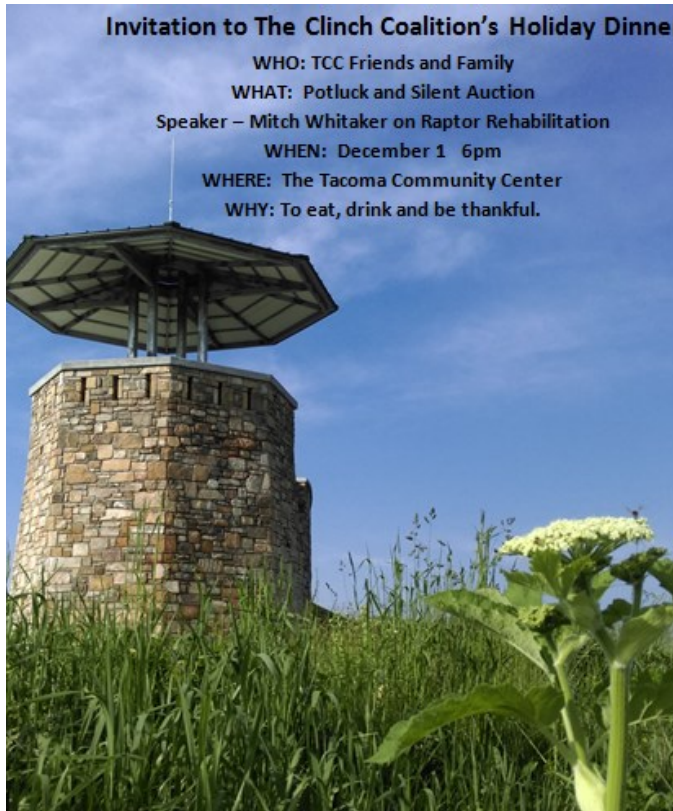
To:

Get in touch with us...

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clinchcoalition@gmail.com
or
Call us at 601-946-0159

Invitation to The Clinch Coalition's Holiday Dinner

WHO: TCC Friends and Family
WHAT: Potluck and Silent Auction
Speaker – Mitch Whitaker on Raptor Rehabilitation
WHEN: December 1 6pm
WHERE: The Tacoma Community Center
WHY: To eat, drink and be thankful.



Mitch Whitaker presents "Birds of Prey"

THE CLINCH COALITION'S 10TH ANNUAL
HIGH KNOB



NATURALIST RALLY

It is the mission of The Clinch Coalition to protect and preserve the forest, wildlife, and watersheds in our National Forest and surrounding communities for present and future generations.