

Welcome to Cheaha State Park

Established 1933



**CHEAHA
STATE PARK
ENTRANCE**

Alabama's Highest Point 2,407 feet

Thank you for visiting Cheaha State Park

Alabama's highest point (2,407 feet).

**This mountain getaway is surrounded by the
Talladega National Forest (235,000 acres).**

***"It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes
a claim upon men's hearts as for that subtle something, that quality
of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes
and renews a weary spirit."***

-Robert Louis Stevenson



Important numbers to have during your stay:

Main Park Line: (256) 488-5115

Mountain Store: (256) 488-5111

Restaurant: (256) 488-5115 Extension 2808



**Cheaha State Park
where
adventure is
limitless! Hiking,
biking, cycling,
hammocking,
repelling, birding,
photography, or
relaxing.**



Cheaha State Park

Alabama's highest point 2,407 ft



Cheaha State Park

19644 Hwy. 281
Delta, AL 36258

(256) 488 - 5115
(256) 488 - 5111



<https://www.alapark.com/cheaha-state-park>
<https://www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark/>

Mountain Store & Welcome Center

The Mountain Store Welcome Center is located at the park entrance. The front desk processes all reservations, check-ins, sells souvenirs, snacks and cold drinks. The store is stocked with food, supply items necessary for camping, picnicking, and maps. Gift cards are also available, which are redeemable in all 21 Alabama State Park facilities. If you have any questions the staff at the Mountain Store will be happy to answer them. Across the street is a coin-operated laundry.

Store Hours: 7:00 AM -9:00 PM
Sunday-Saturday
(256) 488-5115 and (256)488-5111



Gate Admissions

Age 0-3:	Free
Age 4-11:	\$2
12 and older:	\$5
Senior Citizens (62+):	\$2
Veterans & Active Military:	Free
(Please show ID)	

Annual Passes

Senior/Disabled:	\$55
Individual Pass 12 & Older:	\$105
Family Pass up to 6:	\$155

Thanks to Amendment 2, Alabama State Parks are self-funded. Every dollar spent in a state park stays in a state park.

Thank you for your support!

Park Beginnings

In 1929 the United States of America fell into the Great Depression. This was a period of great hardship for most Americans. Many lost their jobs, homes, and hope. President Franklin D. Roosevelt developed several programs to help Americans through this difficult time.

He created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was designed for young single men. They were paid \$1.00 a day and only kept \$5.00 a month. The remainder of their paycheck was sent home to their struggling families. These young men worked in camps that built state parks, planted trees, fought forest fires, prevented erosion, constructed roads and much more.

In 1933 Cheaha State Park was built by the CCC. They created the road to the park, roads within the park, trails, cabins, pavilions, the Bunker Observation Tower, the Bald Rock Lodge, Cheaha Lake, and so much more. The CCC was a program to give jobs to all young men who were willing to work. Jobs were offered to all races. Later they included WWI veterans. Cheaha State Park was created through their labor of love!



SEVERE WEATHER

Guest Information for SEVERE WEATHER AT CHEAHA:

Occasionally the park experiences severe weather. We want you to be safe and peaceful even when things get rough outside.

The Mountain Store is the main connection for guest weather information and severe weather alerts. The park is in three counties: Cleburne, Clay, and Calhoun (in case you are monitoring weather news).

Chalets and cabins have flashlights for guest use in case of power outage.

If there is an extended power outage, a staff member will visit your room/cabin/chalet to update you and to check on you as soon as it is safe to do so.

In case of a tree down on a driveway or road, staff will remove these obstacles as soon as it is safe to do so.

Safe Zones in the park are as follows:

- Campground Bath Houses (Upper and Lower Improved Campgrounds)
- Hotel Eastside Lower Units (House Keeping Area and Rooms 132-140 which are partially underground) If weather is severe enough to warrant use of these areas we will have a staff person located at the back (East) of hotel directing guests into safe areas.

Emergency Numbers (often a text works best for cellular connection in the park):

Cheaha Mountain Store 256-488-5115 or (256)488-5111 (Land Lines)

Cheaha State Park Superintendent Renee Raney (256) 276-2841

Cheaha State Park Assistant Superintendent Bill Sykes (256) 276-2457

Cheaha State Park Naturalist Mandy Pearson (256)412-9938

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you for choosing to visit Cheaha State Park!

www.alapark.com/cheaha-state-park

<https://www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark>

Play Time

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing. -George Bernard Shaw

My childhood may be over, but that doesn't mean playtime is.
- Ron Olson

Play makes us feel younger and connects us to nature. Although play is often related to children, scientific research has proven the existence of play behavior during adulthood in most animals. It seems that expression of play during mature stages could be a way for adults to release tension and stress.

Nevertheless, not only primates keep playing as adults: otters have fun sliding down natural slides, lizards toss objects at each other and crows love sliding in the snow and mud. Scientists haven't discovered any reason for all behaviors apart from a mere recreational objective. In other words, play is fun for everyone!

STAFF SUGGESTIONS TO GET OUT AND GO PLAY:

- Make and fly a kite.
- Have a picnic lunch.
- Play horseshoes.
- Make a fairy house.
- Climb a tree.
- Skip stones at Cheaha Lake.
- Photograph or sketch nature.
- Jump off the lake platform.
- Find all 5 park USGS survey markers.
- Watch the wildlife, especially as the sun sets.
- Listen to the frog symphony at the CCC Reservoir.
- Lay on a blanket and look for shapes in the clouds.
- Lay on a blanket and watch for shooting stars.
- Find all of the bigfoot cut outs on the LNT Bigfoot Trail.
- Play flashlight tag.
- Make shadow puppets.
- Tell stories by fire light.
- Create a skit.
- Start a nature journal.
- Go birdwatching.

Vista Cliffside Restaurant



Hours of Operation

12:00 pm- 8:00 pm CDT

Thursday through Monday (March through November)

11:00 am- 7:00 pm CDT

Friday through Monday (December through February)

Serving TO GO ONLY:

A limited carryout menu is (stone-baked pizzas, awesome burgers, veggie burgers, chicken tenders, chili, fries, salads, desserts, coffee, sodas/wine/beer)is offered at the restaurant. Although meals are served "to-go," guests may social distance inside the dining room or on the beautiful deck. All guests are REQUIRED to wear a mask or face covering to enter all Cheaha facilities.

Winter & Holiday hours are subject to change.

Activities at Cheaha

Lake Cheaha

This five acre lake is the perfect place to spend the day swimming, paddling, fishing or resting on the beach. The lake is open year round from 8 am - Sunset for all park visitors (gate fee applies).



Cheaha Pool

This is the highest pool in the state of Alabama, filled with cool mountain spring water, and has one of the most incredible views in the park. The pool is available to OVERNIGHT guests ONLY (hotel, cabins, chalets and camping) from Memorial Day Weekend to Labor Day Weekend (8 am- 10 pm).

Picnic Areas/ Playgrounds

Traveling through the park you will find two designated picnic areas with playgrounds Cheaha Imagination Tree (Tower Road) and Cheaha Lake. Both areas feature picnic tables, pedestal grills, and playground equipment.

Cheaha Gem and Mineral Mine

There is more than just gold in the hills! Years ago many settlers searched the area for gold and gems. At the Cheaha Gem Mine you can search for gold, fossils and gems. A variety of gem buckets are available in the Mountain Store.



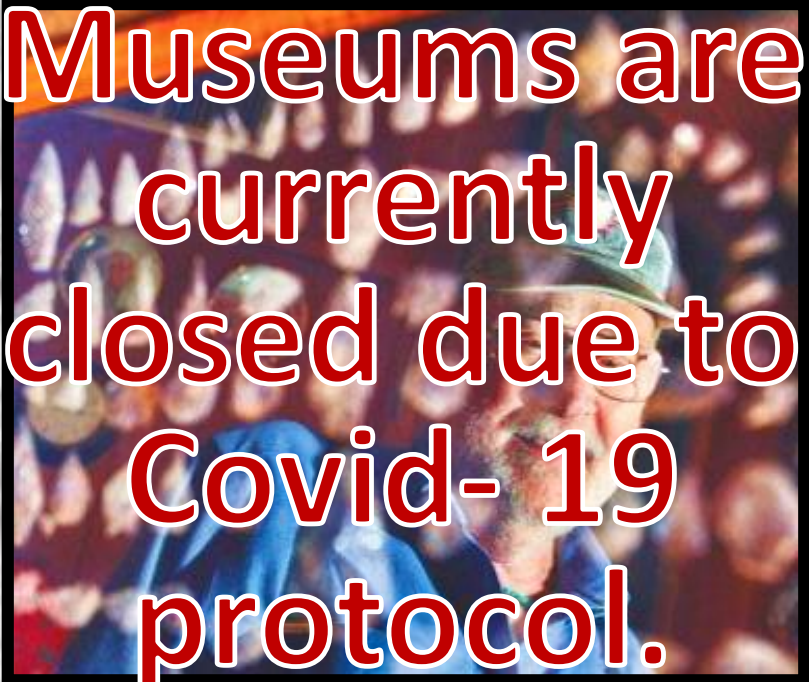
Mike Bosarge Memorial Dog Park

Dogs are more than pets. They are family! After a long car ride, your furry friend might need to run and play. We have the perfect place for happy dogs! The dog park is located on Tower Road beside the LNT Education Pavilion.

Park Museums

Civilian Conservation Corps Museum

The CCC Museum is located in Bunker Tower, Alabama's highest point. The museum houses a collection of items used by the CCC. Company 465 (African American Jr. Enrollees), Company 468 (Caucasian Jr. Enrollees), and Company 2420 (World War I Veterans) built Cheaha State Park. There are original photographs, uniforms, tools, and yearbooks. The museum is a great place to connect with the past and maybe even find pictures of a family member who served in the CCC. Please check with the Mountain Store for museum hours.



Museums are currently closed due to Covid-19 protocol.

Walt Farr Native American Relic Museum

Cheaha is a Muskogee word from the Creek language that means "High Place." Thousands of years ago a group of people from the Mississippian Period settled in east Alabama known as the Creek Nation. They were farmers, hunters, and fishermen with a fascinating culture. Learn more about the Creek Nation and Native Americans at the Walt Farr Native American Relic Museum. Please check with the Mountain Store for museum hours.



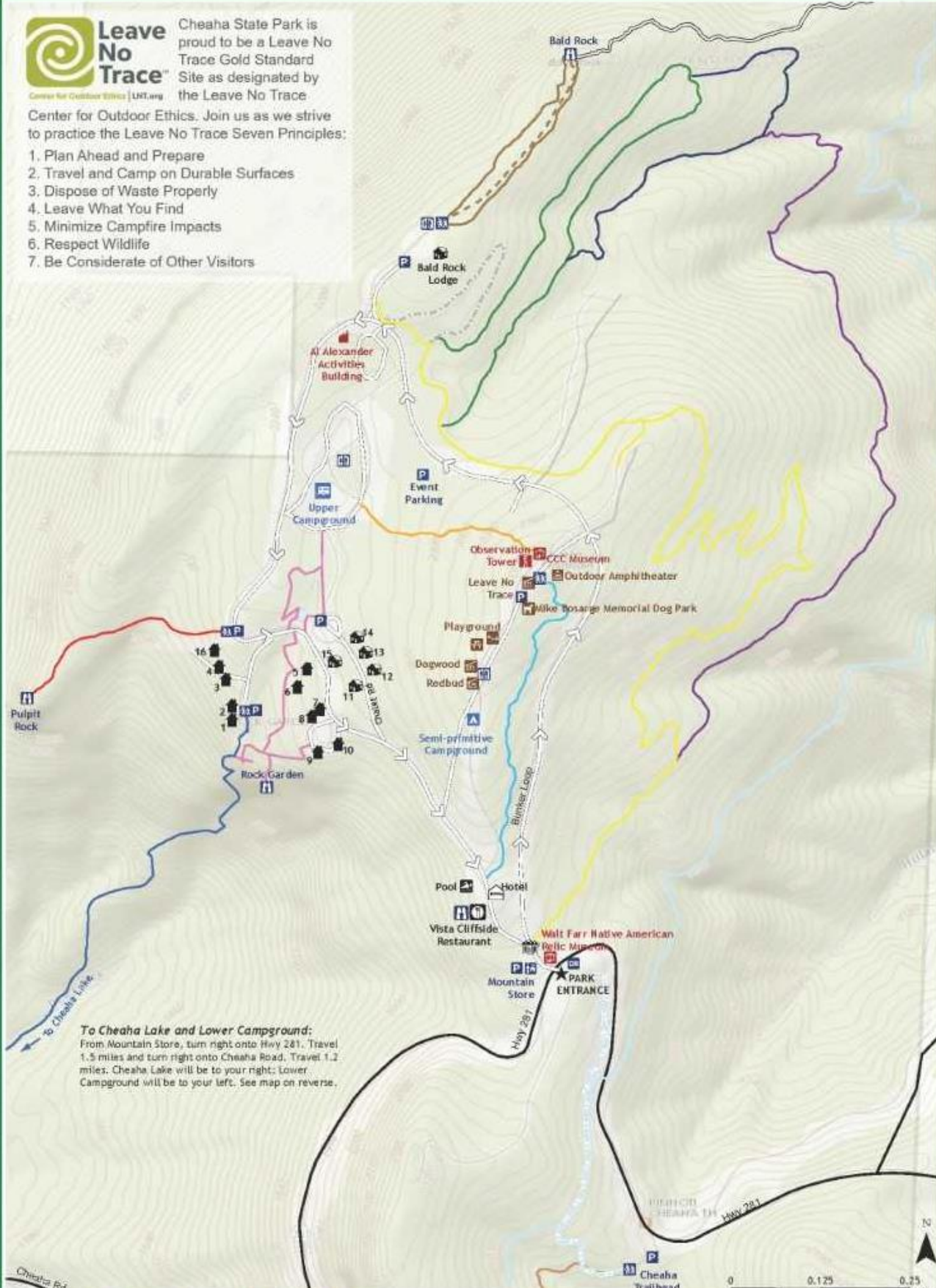
Museums are currently closed due to Covid-19 protocol.



Cheaha State Park is proud to be a Leave No Trace Gold Standard Site as designated by the Leave No Trace

Center for Outdoor Ethics. Join us as we strive to practice the Leave No Trace Seven Principles:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors



To Cheaha Lake and Lower Campground:
From Mountain Store, turn right onto Hwy 281. Travel 1.5 miles and turn right onto Cheaha Road. Travel 1.2 miles. Cheaha Lake will be to your right; Lower Campground will be to your left. See map on reverse.



Est. 1933 • Home of Alabama's Highest Point
19644 Highway 281, Delta, Alabama 36258
(256) 488-5111 • www.alapark.com
www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark
In case of emergency, dial 911

- Bathhouse
- Parking
- Scenic Overlook
- Trailhead
- Guest Laundry
- RV Camping
- Tent Camping
- Amphitheater
- Dog Park
- Pavilion
- Picnic Area
- Playground

- Swimming
- Museum
- Tower
- Hiking Trails (mileage)**
- Bald Rock Trail (0.5)
- Bald Rock Boardwalk (0.3)
- Bigfoot Trail (0.5)
- Heritage Education Trail (0.2)
- Lake Trail (1.0)
- Mountain Laurel Trail (1.4)
- Pulpit Rock Trail (0.3)
- Upper Spring Loop (1.2)

- Hiking & Biking Trails (mileage)**
- Cheaha Express (2.4)
- Cheaha Run (0.4)
- Deer Run (1.2)
- Lower Spring Loop (0.7)
- USFS Trail Connections (mileage)**
- Pinhoti (338.5)*
- Cave Creek (4.0)
- High Point Spur Trail (0.5)
- Bald Rock, Pinhoti Connector (0.7)

*The Pinhoti National Recreation Trail is 338.5 miles total and extends beyond Cheaha State Park and USFS boundaries.

Information presented on this map is for reference, and subject to change without notice. Be alert to park signage and other markers.

TRAIL MAPS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE MOUNTAIN STORE.

Hiking Trails



Cheaha's hiking trails are surrounded by a mosaic of forest, rolling rocky ridges, and breathtaking scenic vistas. There are a variety of trails available: 0.3 mile ADA outlook boardwalk to access to 130 miles of Alabama's longest trail, the Pinhoti Trail.

-Bald Rock Accessible Trail **0.3 mi**

There are three paths that lead to Bald Rock Outlook: a boardwalk and a dirt trail on either side of the boardwalk.

-Pulpit Rock Trail **0.3 mi**

This trail has some steep terrain, but it takes you to a beautiful scenic outlook. Pulpit Rock is a popular repelling area. Repelling/rock climbing is only permissible in the park with a permit. For more information or to obtain a permit, visit the Cheaha State Park Mountain Store.

-Mountain Laurel Trail **1.4 mi**

The Mountain Laurel Trail wanders along a streambank in a beautiful laurel thicket to Rock Garden Outlook. Cheaha creek spills out over the Rock Garden overlook creating Angel Falls. This is Cheaha's only natural waterfall. Rock Garden Outlook showcases the beauty of Talladega National Forest and has very few man-made structures within view.

-Lake Trail **1.0 mi**

The Lake Trail connects Cheaha Lake to Rock Garden. This trail is very steep and rugged. You will climb 1,000 feet in a half mile distance. It is a fun challenging trail, but make sure you have proper footwear.

-Leave No Trace Bigfoot Trail **0.5 mi**

The Leave No Trace Bigfoot Challenge Trail connects the hotel to the highest point in Alabama. As you climb to the highest point, learn how to take care of the park.

You will encounter LNT teaching exhibits along the trail. Bigfoot silhouettes are scattered along the trail. How many will you see?

-Fisherman's Trail **0.6 mi**

The Fisherman's Trail circles Cheaha Lake. This is a nice loop for finding the right fishing hole, exploring the park, or connecting to nature.

Hiking/ Biking Trails/ Wilderness Ethics

Bike Trails:

There are five bike trails on the east side of the park. Hikers are welcome on these trails, but need to yield to mountain bikers. The trails that you will encounter on the east side include Cheaha Express, Deer Run, Lower Spring Loop, Upper Spring Loop, and Cheaha Run. This unique trail system showcases a view that is only visible on these trails. They also cross and parallel mountain springs. (See map)

Leave No Trace Wilderness Ethics:

Once upon a time this area was so covered with trees that a man could walk for days through a forest before seeing sunlight. Nature provides resources for us to use and survive, but it is also the home for many animals and plants.

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike."

- John Muir

Enjoy the scenic wild spirit of Cheaha, but make sure to leave some wild for others to enjoy! Below are 7 Leave No Trace Wilderness Ethics :

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Hiking Tips

- Wear appropriate clothes/footwear for the season.
- Pack water and snacks in your day pack.
- Stay on the trail.
- The trails close when the sun sets, so make sure you give yourself enough time to finish your hike.
- Watch your step. There are many rocks, roots, and stumps that line our mountainous terrain.
- Have fun exploring the beauty of Cheaha State Park!



Talladega National Forest

Part of the USDA United States Forest Service

History

On July 17, 1936, President Roosevelt, by proclamation, created the Talladega National Forest out of the Talladega and Oakmulgee Purchase Units. The Talladega National Forest, at one time, consisted of four ranger districts: Oakmulgee or the Cahaba Working Circle, Tuscaloosa or the Pondville Working Circle, Shoal Creek and Talladega. On October 1, 1945 the Talladega Unit was divided into two districts: the northern district, Shoal Creek Ranger District, headquartered in Heflin and the southern district, Talladega Ranger District, headquartered in Talladega. Thirty percent of the Shoal Creek/Talladega land was cut-over, cultivated and vacated farmland.

Wilderness

The 7,245-acre Cheaha Wilderness offers high elevations, with numerous overlooks for panoramic views of east-central Alabama. Cheaha Wilderness is named for the nearby Cheaha Mountain. Elevations within the Cheaha Wilderness range from 1,100 feet, along the bottom of the eastern slopes, to Odum Point with an elevation of 2,342 feet. Over 1,000 acres are above 2,000 feet in elevation affording hikers the challenge and solitude that is a vital part of the true wilderness experience.

Campgrounds

Trailers and motorhomes are permitted in all developed recreation areas. Generally, most of the recreation areas in the forest will accommodate trailers up to 22 feet long. Primitive camping is allowed in the national forest unless posted otherwise. Permits are not needed for primitive camping, except during gun deer hunting season. Campers are responsible for fire and any wildfire that results from a spreading campfire. Remember to leave your campfire "dead out."

Turnipseed Camp

Enjoy nature at its best especially during the fall when mother nature dazzles you with an array of vibrant colors. This primitive camp is located near the Cheaha Wilderness Area and offers camping and hiking. Turnipseed Camp has sanitary facilities. There is an \$8.00 per site per night camping fee.

Hunter Camps

If you're a natural for the outdoors, this is the place to be. Enjoy the forest and the home of many wild game species. Hunter Camps are open year round and free for users.

Talladega Ranger District

1001 North Street
Talladega, AL 35160
(256) 362-2909

Shoal Creek Ranger District

45 Highway 281
Heflin, AL 36264
(256) 463-2272

Talladega National Forest Trails

Part of the USDA United States Forest Service

Hiking

Chinnabee Silent Trail

This 6-mile trail, in the Talladega National Forest-Talladega Division, goes by waterfalls near Lake Chinnabee Recreation Area, and near the Talladega Scenic Drive. There is a \$3.00 per vehicle per day parking fee. USFS day passes sold at the Cheaha Mountain Store.

Lake Shore Trail

A two-mile nature trail around Lake Chinnabee in the Talladega National Forest-Talladega Division. USFS day passes sold at the Cheaha Mountain Store

Cave Creek Trail

A four-mile trail in the Cheaha Wilderness Area located in the Talladega National Forest-Talladega Division.

Nubbin Creek Trail

This four-mile trail traverses the eastern slopes of Talladega Mountain in the Cheaha Wilderness Area.

Odum Scout Trail

This trail is about 4.7 miles long in the Cheaha Wilderness and located in the Talladega National Forest-Talladega Division.

Pinhoti Trail

This trail includes more than 100 miles of hiking trails that run from Piedmont, its northern terminus, to a point south of Talladega. The trail winds through rugged pine and hardwood forests along ridgetops passing through shady hollows and along mountain streams. The Pinhoti Trail meanders through mountains and valleys which are rich in history and legend.

Skyway Loop Trail

This 6-mile trail provides wilderness-like solitude in the upland forests of eastern Alabama. Skyway Loop Trail is located in the Talladega National Forest - Talladega Division.

Kentuck ORV Trail

This trail is designed for motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), and mountain bikes. Kentuck ORV Trail is located in the Talladega National Forest Talladega Division. Licensed off-road vehicles (ORV) are permitted on all national forest roads that are open for public travel. Vehicle drivers must be licensed and conform to all state laws. Unlicensed ORV's are permitted only on designated trails. There is a \$5.00 per operator per day fee. USFS permits sold at the Cheaha Mountain Store.

Mountain Biking Trails

Check out the new Sylaward Mountain Bike Trails. Mountain biking is also permitted on all Forest Service Roads including behind closed gates and on the ORV and Horse Trails.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/alabama>

Park Accommodations

CCC Cabins

Cheaha's CCC cabins were built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The cabins are a one of a kind experience! From bluffside cabins with their breathtaking views to deluxe cabins that offer a romantic getaway for two. Cabins 2, 4, 8, 10 & 16 are pet-friendly with an additional charge of \$16.50 per pet per night.



Chalets

Cheaha has 5 spacious A-framed Chalets. The chalets have two bedrooms with a queen size bed, a full bathroom and a kitchen. Chalets 12-15 are pet-friendly with an additional charge of \$16.50 per pet per night.



Hotel Rooms

Cheaha Park Hotel is across the road from the Vista Cliffside Restaurant and offers 30 hotel rooms: king, king deluxe, double, ADA accessible, and 9 pet friendly rooms. There is an additional charge of \$16.50 per pet per night.



Campgrounds

Improved Campgrounds

The park has 77 improved campsites including 4 ADA camp sites in the Upper and Lower Improved Campgrounds. All campsites have a have 20, 30, and 50 amp electrical hook-ups with water and sewer hook-ups, picnic table, grill or fire ring, and access to a bathhouse.



Upper Primitive Campground

Semi-Primitive sites are located along the Tower Road, Alabama's highest point. There are 26 sites available. Each site has a picnic table, fire ring, shared water spigots, and public restrooms (no bath house access).

CCC Primitive Campground

The CCC Campground is on the site where our last Civilian Conservation Corps Co 2420 camped as they built the park. We have 28 rustic sites available. With a tent pad, fire ring, access to a vault toilet, and access to community water spigots (no bath house access).



Group Campground

Groups can camp in our private group camping area for tent and hammock camping. There are 5 sites that accommodate up to 25 people per site. Each site has a fire ring, access to a community water spigot, and access to bathrooms (no bath house access).

Park Event Rentals

Located at the top of Alabama's highest point and surrounded by the Talladega National Forest, Cheaha State Park's convention facilities are the perfect place for your meeting or event.

Cleburne Room

A stunning view is a perfect backdrop for a reception, social, or business meeting. Catering is easily arranged with the park's restaurant.

Al Alexander Activities Building

Chapel-style with pews, it is perfect for lectures. There is a sound system, a piano, and organ available for use.

Picnic Pavilions

Cheaha has four picnic pavilions. Located both on the mountain's top (2) and near Cheaha Lake (2). Pedestal grills and picnic tables provide a rustic gathering place for any event. The CCC stone pavilions feature 2 fireplaces in addition to the picnic table and pedestal grill.

Bald Rock Group Lodge

The Bald Rock Lodge includes 12 rooms, sleeping up to 32 overnight guests, a full-service catering kitchen, a large conference/banquet hall, and a small conference room with seating for 12.

**For rental information call
(256) 488-5885**



Public Park Events

Cheaha offers a wide variety of public events in the park. Check out our website for more information:

<https://www.alapark.com/cheaha-state-park>

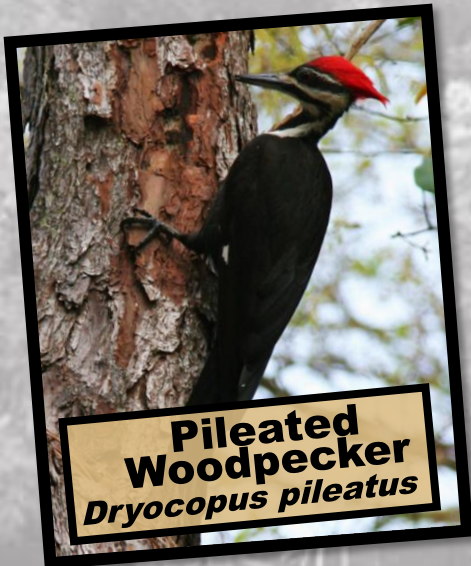
<https://www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark>

**All public
program
events are
tentative and
subject to
COVID-19
protocol.**

Wild About Wildlife



Cheaha State Park is home to many common and rare animals. In the mornings and evenings, you might see deer grazing or reptiles basking on warm rocks. You might wake up to the sound of woodpeckers “drumming” on trees. As the sun sets a symphony of songs from owls, frogs, katydids, and many night sounds will lull you to sleep. If you would like to learn more about park wildlife, attend one of the interpretive programs Animal checklists and Explorer’s Club Booklets available at the Mountain Store. . A list of programs is available at



<https://www.alapark.com/events/58>

<https://www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark>



Common Park Plants



Longleaf Pine
Pinus palustris



Cumberland Azalea
Cumberland Rhododendron



American Chestnut
Castanea dentata



Sparkleberry
Vaccinium arboreum

There is a vibrant botanical tapestry which covers the park in hues of emerald green, scarlet red, golden amber, and tawny brown from the grasses, vines, shrubs and trees. Plants are not only beautiful but provide food, shelter, clean water, clothes, tools, and medicine.

To learn more about the park plants, attend one of the interpretive programs. For more information email

Mandy.Pearson@dcnr.alabama.gov



Fringed Orchid
Platanthera ciliaris



Witch Hazel
Hamamelis virginiana



Sourwood
Oxydendrum arboreum



Lion's Mane
Hericium erinaceus

Park Nature Programs



Outdoor environmental education programs embrace teachable moments that occur regularly in an outdoor nature classroom. The instructors have their own teaching style and choose activities for classes that best suit their area of expertise. Instructors will cover the key terms and principles of each class and classes are correlated to state Course of Study and the Environmental Education Association of Alabama Environmental Literacy Plan (Best Practices in EE).

Nature Programs

Cheaha State Park is covered in 2,799 acres of scenic wooded adventure. The park offers many nature programs on a wide variety of topics and skills.

Program Topics May Include:

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Featherless Flyers, Birds of Prey, Mammals, Reptiles, Trees and Me, Interpretive Hikes, Waterfall Hikes, Leave No Trace Ethics, Primitive Skills of the Appalachia, Wonders of Water (Watershed/Water Cycle), Tree Talk (Botany), Animal Encounters, Night Creatures (Scat & Tracks), Insect Safari, Geology/Geography of Cheaha, Adventures in Hammocks, American Black Bears: Amazing Omnivores, and Wilderness Survival Skills. For a listing of all Cheaha State Park Nature Programs, please visit our website: www.alapark.com/events/58
<https://www.facebook.com/CheahaStatePark>

Group and Troop Programs (Adults & Kids)

Would you like to bring a group for a private program, tour, or field trip? We would love to teach your group. We have a wide variety of programs to choose from. Our curriculum guide for teachers and group leaders to build a custom field trip is available on our website at: <https://www.alapark.com/csp-field-trips>

Support Your State Parks

Alabama State Parks have provided wild, rustic, and scenic spaces for over 80 years. With your support Amendment 2 passed securing the funding to provide park improvements. With your help and support we can provide and improve so much more in your Alabama State Parks. Here are a few ways that you can support your state parks.

-Visit a Park

Many of Alabama's best natural wonders are nestled away in one of the 21 Alabama State Parks. Adventure, excitement, wonder and beauty await you in a state park

-Gift Cards

Looking for a gift for the person who has everything? Share an Alabama State Parks adventure by purchasing a State Parks Gift Card. Gift cards are redeemable in all Alabama State parks and can be used to purchase, food, golf, lodging, camping, and in gift shops. Purchase your gift card in the Mountain Store or online.

<https://www.alapark.com/alabama-state-parks-gift-cards>

-Make a Donation

The Alabama State Parks Foundation hosts a community of people who love our State's parks. A philanthropic partner of the Parks Administration, the Foundation seeks gifts that will support and enhance park programming, parks facilities, and parks experiences. Members of the Foundation are people dedicated to building and sustaining a great, statewide park system.

<https://asparksfoundation.org/our-mission>

-Purchase a Car Tag

Simply request an Alabama State Parks car tag during the renewal procedure and 80% of your money will go directly to help fund the Alabama State Parks (20% goes to normal administrative fees).

<https://revenue.alabama.gov/motor-vehicle/license-plate-information/specialty-license-plates-all-vehicles/state-parks/>

-Volunteer

State parks are always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering at Cheaha contact the Park Naturalist at Mandy.Pearson@dcnr.alabama.gov



Clay County Attractions

Ashland City Park

The park is 27 acres, with walking paths, creek, mixed hardwood and pine. The land to the left (east) of the entrance road provides an opportunity to survey old-field habitat. Expect Eastern meadowlark, Northern bobwhite, and Field sparrow throughout the year. Red-tailed hawks hunt here, and this is a good spot for Great horned-owl. Look for Wild turkeys along the edges of the fields, particularly at dawn and dusk.

Clay County Public Fishing Lakes

The land to the left (east) of the entrance road provides an opportunity to survey old-field habitat. Expect Eastern meadowlark, Northern bobwhite, and Field sparrow throughout the year. Red-tailed hawks hunt here, and this is a good spot for Great horned-owl. Look for Wild turkeys along the edges of the fields, particularly at dawn and dusk. [More Info](#)

Flat Rock Park

Day-use park. Swimming, picnicking, fishing and a short nature trail await. The unique location sits on 25 acres of granite with excellent access to beautiful Lake Wedowee. Address: 7115 CR 870 Wedowee, AL 36278 Phone: 256-396-2338. Hours of Operation: May-Sept. 9 am-8 pm. Admission Fee

Lineville City Park

Lineville City Park provides access to two lakes, one of which is used for fishing. As one enters the park, the lake is surrounded by a walking trail bordered by woods, and featuring views of the highest point in Alabama, Mt. Cheaha. The lower lake is more secluded, and is more likely to be visited by wild waterfowl in the colder months. Expect to see herons and egrets. Search for resting night-herons and possibly American Bitterns where the vegetation is the thickest.

Piedmont Plateau Birding Trail

From the edges of the black belt to the Southern Appalachians, the PPBT offers over 3.6 million acres to explore with several excellent sites in Clay County. East Central Alabama is a pathway during Spring and Fall migration.

Oxford Attractions

Chocolocco Park

This sports a recreation venue hosts athletic events and features water and natural resources, picnic pavilions, walking and biking trails, and a boundless playground.

954 Leon Smith Parkway, Oxford, (256) 342-0174

Cider Ridge Golf Course

This 18 hole par 72 course is quite mountainous and challenging with its terrain. The breathtaking views and scenery provide a beautiful backdrop to each round.

200 Apple Blossom Way, Oxford, (256) 831-7222

Floating Fun

Alabama's 'Premier Tube Trip' with many tubes in stock, offers a floating fun trip down Chocolocco Creek, with a variety of rapids and a steady current to enjoy.

460 Bobwhite Drive, Oxford (256) 589-4418

JC Morgan Art Gallery

JC Morgan art gallery is home to several up & coming and house & market artists, offering paintings, sculpture, glass, jewelry, pottery, photography, books, gift items and much more.

324 Snow Street, Oxford (256) 223-7784

Oxford Lake and Coldwater Covered Bridge

Stretch your legs on this paved and gravel track around the lake or spread out a picnic for the whole family, while the kids play on the adventure park playground. This area also houses tennis courts, a swimming pool, baseball complex, indoor basketball courts, a newly renovated and expanded civic center space and more. It is also home to one of Alabama's oldest remaining covered bridges, moved from Coldwater Creek to Oxford Lake and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

401 McCullars Lane, Oxford, (256) 831-2660

Oxford Performing Arts Center

This performance and concert venue accommodates 1,130 seats in the middle of historic downtown Oxford. With additions to the former historic school and city hall facility, this venue houses state-of-the-art lighting and sound, an orchestra pit, dressing rooms, and a proscenium stage with large wing space and storage.

100 Chocolocco Street, Oxford, (256) 241-3322

Anniston Attractions

Anniston Museum of Natural History

Explore the wilds of Africa, the wonders of the North American wilderness, and the mysteries of 2,300 year old Egyptian Mummies in the Anniston Museum of Natural History. More than 2,000 natural history items are on display, and children can get hands on experience with nature in the discovery room and animal shows.

800 Museum Drive, Anniston, (256) 237-6766

Anniston Longleaf Botanical Gardens

Stroll around the premises of Alabama's newest Botanical Garden to see a variety of perennials, trees, and shrubs.

The Longleaf Nature Trail is a third of a mile path into the adjoining oak-hickory-pine woodlands. The trail feature native azaleas and hydrangeas. Open on the third Thursday of the month.

920 Museum Drive, Anniston, (256) 237-6766

Berman Museum of World History

See Colonel Berman's incredible and fascinating collection of weapons, like a flute that shoots, and thousands of objects like bronzes by Remington and Russell, Asian Art, Winchesters, Civil War artifacts, and a Greek helmet, more than 2,000 years old.

840 Museum Drive, Anniston, (256) 237-6261

Blackberry Hill Alpacas

Blackberry Hill Alpacas is a 60 acre alpaca farm & gift shop. Call to meet the animals and shop.

6330 Saks Road, Anniston, (256) 453-4147

Cane Creek Golf Course

This 18 Hole par 72 golf course is located off Baltzell Gate Road on the former Ft. McClellan in Anniston.

66 Galloway Gate Road, Anniston, (256) 820-9174

C.A.S.T. – Community Actors Studio Theater

This community theater performs a variety of shows each year, including plays, musicals and dramas.

Centennial Memorial Park

Since 1999, this site serves as the official home of Alabama's Veterans Memorial and State Law Enforcement Memorial. The names of every Alabamian killed during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and officers killed in the line of duty are engraved on the granite wall. Resolutions have been passed to add Afghanistan and Iraq as well as Firefighters.

1701 Quintard Avenue, Anniston

Anniston Attractions

Civil Rights Trail & Freedom Riders National Monument

In Downtown Anniston, visitors can take a walking tour of the Civil Rights Trail through Anniston. Located at 1031 Gurnee Ave. and on the corner of 9th and Noble, two murals and panels recap the events of 1961, depicting the history of Calhoun County during the Civil Rights movement.

Civitan Marksmanship Program Indoor Air Gun Range

The CMP South Competition Center contains 80, 10 meter firing points with electronic targets and monitors.

1470 Sentinel Drive, Anniston (256) 835-8455

Coldwater Mountain Bike Trail

Located on 4000 acres of Coldwater Mountain in Anniston, this brand-new trail offers both 1.5 mile beginner loops, for riders of any level, and a 10 mile Blue Loop for intermediate riders. The trail is open to hikers and runners as well. Currently, more than 35 miles of trails have been built under the supervision of IMBA Trail Solutions, with more than 35 miles of trails scheduled to be built. For more information, visit www.neaba.net.

Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge

With more than 7,000 acres, this area was designated as a National Wildlife Refuge to protect a unique and endangered ecosystem, the mountain longleaf pine forest. This land is also home to the Bains Gap Waterfall and trails.

Bain Gap Road, Anniston, (256) 848-7085

Pine Hill Country Club

This 18 hole par 72 course and driving range is located off Choccolocco Road in Anniston.

175 Pine Hill Drive, Anniston, (256) 237-2633

White Oak Vineyards

White Oak Vineyards is a small farm winery that grows the fruit used to produce wines for their trademark label, Southern Oak Wines. Their tasting room is open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

1484 Dry Hollow Road, Anniston, (256) 231-7998

Cleburne County Attractions

Cleburne County Mountain Center

A partnership between Jacksonville State University and Cleburne County, this beautiful visitor center and meeting center hosts hundreds of nature and recreation programs for the general public and people of all ages. Open M-F 8 am – 4 pm and weekends for scheduled programs or events. <http://www.jsu.edu/epic/tm/index.html> (256) 463-3838

Coleman Lake Recreation Area

The newly renovated Coleman Lake Recreation Area is peacefully nestled into the Talladega Mountains. For recreationists who want to get away from the crowds, but want a few modern conveniences, Coleman Lake Recreation Area is your place to be. There are 39 campsites with water and electrical hookups, bathhouses, 29 picnicking units, a 21-acre lake and access to the Pinhoti Trail. Two new comfort stations and seven camping sites are fully accessible for the physically challenged.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/alabama/recreation/fishing/recarea/?recid=30157&actid=31> (256) 463-2272

Cahulga Creek Watershed

Cahulga Creek Watershed located in Heflin, AL sits on 84 acres adjacent to the Talladega National Forest. The Watershed park area features a fishing pier and boat ramp. Fishing is available by permit only which may be purchased at the City of Heflin City Hall, or Heflin Recreation Center. Non-gas powered motors only are allowed in the lake. Cahulga Creek is home to the Lake Point Disc Golf course and Passport to Fitness Trail. Cahulga Creek Watershed features restrooms and a picnic pavilion.

www.cityofheflin.org (256)463-2290

Fruithurst Winery Co.

The Fruithurst Winery Co. is nestled just north of the town of Fruithurst, AL. Its name comes from one of the original wineries in the state. Surrounded by fifteen acres of muscadine vineyards, now owned and operated by two cousins, it carries the elegance and culture of what was then and will forever be the vineyard village. Drop in and taste some of their award winning wine. www.thefruithurstwineryco.com (256) 463-1003

Heflin Arts Council

Founded in 2004, the Heflin Arts Council is a membership organization dedicated to promoting the arts in Heflin and Cleburne County. The Arts Council holds regular theatrical and music events including Music in May, Murder/Mystery Dinner Theater, a annual spring play, and sponsors the music for the Cleburne County Fair.

[Heflin Arts Council Facebook page](#) (256) 463-2290

Cleburne County Attractions

Heflin Community Archery Park

The Heflin Community Archery Park was developed through a partnership between the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Archery Trade Association and the City of Heflin. The park features adult and youth known distance targets from 15-50 yards and 5-20 yards, respectively. A 12-foot high elevated platform provides bow hunters with an opportunity to simulate hunting conditions at targets from 10-40 yards. There is also a 10-target walk through course for archers to shoot at targets at unknown distances. Archery license required.

High Country Cellars

Located one mile North of I-20 Exit 199 on Highway 9 in Heflin, Alabama High Country Cellars is home to over 60 custom made wines. Their diverse assortment of fruits comes from the regions finest vineyards and orchards and is sure to please!

www.highcountrycellars.com (256) 463-3456

Historic Downtown Heflin

Historic Downtown Heflin, AL is a live action Norman Rockwell painting where businesses are both old, handed down through many generations, and new. Start your tour at the corner of Hwy 9 and Hwy 78 (Ross Street). Love antiquing? Sarah Matilda's is your next stop. Shop at the Bell Ringer and tell Clara that the Chamber sent you. Purchase paintings by local artists at The Colonial Cottage, also listed on the National Historic Registry. Eat lunch at China Panda. Shop the Nifty Nest where you can find the newest Market trends. And for that thing-a-ma-bob that you can't find anywhere else, there is KoJacks. Grab a soft serve at The Tasty Dip, est. 1948 for a bit of refresher. And on your way out of town pick up dinner – get your home-grown vegetables at the Cleburne County Farmer's Market.

www.cityofheflin.org/ (256) 463-2290

Hollis Haunted Chicken House

Consistently ranked one of the best haunted houses in the Southeast, Hollis Haunted Chicken House is clearly not for the faint of heart. It was founded to provide extra funds to the Hollis Fire Department. Each year members volunteer their time to raise money for the fire department. Their goal is to build a new fire station with all the funds taken in. Only open in October, the Chicken House has become one of Cleburne County's most popular attractions. Keep an eye out for the Haunted Chicken House Hearse in your area.

www.hauntedchickenhouse.net

Cleburne County Attractions

Lake Point Disc Golf

It is true that you can find beauty and relaxation all in one place. When you visit Lake Point Park Disc Golf Course you will experience a get away from the busy hectic world. Lake Point Park Disc Golf Course was established in 2008 in Heflin, Alabama. The course is surrounded by gorgeous woodlands and breathtaking views of the mountains and lake. Lake Point features a permanent course type with 20 holes. The landscape of the course features beautiful but moderate hills and wooded areas.

<http://toureastalabama.com/attraction/lake-point-disc-golf/> (256) 463-5434

Lake Point Trail

The start of the Lake Point Trail is on Heflin's eighteen-hole Lake Point Disc Golf Course. The hiking trail is accessed by walking along the scenic Cahulga dam surrounded by the lake on one side and the spillway on the other. The trail meets an incline ascending a mountain that will border the Talladega National Forest for a mile. A bench and sign mark the end of the first mile. This trail is intended to be a hiking trail, not a walking trail. Some walkers may find the trail difficult.

<https://www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org/attraction/lake-point-hiking-trail-passport-to-fitness/> (256) 463-5434

Lloyd Owens Canoe Trail/Tallapoosa River

The Lloyd Owens Canoe Trail, dedicated on September 10, 1999, meanders along the scenic Tallapoosa River from the Georgia state line in northern Cleburne County to Highway 431 in the southern part of the county. Forty-four miles of the Tallapoosa have been designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as the cleanest river in the Eastern United States. The river teems with fish, including some rare species, ducks, and other wildlife year round as well as a unique tapestry of plant colors and textures.

www.tallapoosariveroutfitters.com

McIntyre Park

Located across from the Heflin Recreation Center, McIntyre Park sits along a beautiful stream. The park has several play areas for children along with a pavilion, picnic tables, and grills. There is also a sand volleyball court and horseshoe area for sporting events. McIntyre Park also features restrooms and batting cages as well. Each year the City of Heflin holds their Salute to America 4th of July Celebration in the park with live music and more.

Pine Glen Recreation Area

This popular area is adjacent to a mountain stream and offers 21 campsites, cooking grills, sanitary facilities, picnicking, fishing, hiking, and access to the Pinhoti Trail. Pine Glen Recreation Area is a favorite with hunters because it is centrally located in the Choccolocco Wildlife Management Area. (256) 463-2272

Cleburne County Attractions

Pinhoti Hiking Trail

Alabama's premiere long-distance recreation trail, spanning 110 miles and traversing the ridges and crests of the Talladega Mountains; starts in the southern end of the Talladega National Forest and extends through Calhoun and Cleburne County to the Georgia Line.

<http://www.americantrails.org/NRTDatabase/trailDetail.php?recordID=2096>
(256) 362-2909

Shoal Creek Church

Shoal Creek Church is a historic church located in Talladega National Forest just north of Edwardsville. It was built in 1895 and added to the National Register of Historic Places on December 4, 1974. www.shoalcreekchurch.net (256)463-7523

Sweetwater Lake

Sweetwater Lake is located in the Talladega National Forest area of Cleburne County. The 58 Acre lake is located on the Pinhoti Trail between Coleman Lake and Pine Glen Recreation Area. The lake has a boat ramp and parking for eight vehicles and trailers.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/alabama/recarea/?recid=30169> (256) 463-2272

Talladega Scenic Drive

As part of the national Scenic Byway System, the Talladega Scenic Drive allows you to see the natural treasures from the comfort off your car. The 26-mile drive travels the backbone of Horseblock and Cheaha Mountains. Along the way, there are overlooks and informational points of interest.

<http://www.alabamabyways.com/2012/05/26/talladega-scenic-drive/> (256) 463-2272

Terrapin Creek

Canoe down the beautiful Terrapin Creek and take in the scenery of Alabama like you've never seen.

Terrapin Outdoor Center-4114 County Road 175, Piedmont, AL 36272, (256) 447-8383

Warden Station Horse Camp

This camp is convenient for horseback riders and provides an opportunity for hiking and 45 campsites with sanitary facilities and water. Warden Station Horse Camp is open year round.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/alabama/recarea/?recid=30161> (256) 463-2272

Regional Attractions

Cherokee Rock Village

Marvel atop the Lookout Mountain Ridge, and you won't forget the breathtaking views of Weiss Lake. This 200+ acre park has boulders as large as 200 feet tall, dating back 300 million years. With one natural arch, eight mountain springs, miles of trail and rock climbing. This site was also used in the 2006 film Failure to Launch with Matthew McConaughey and Sarah Jessica Parker.

2000 County Road 70, Leesburg (256) 927-7275

CMP Talladega Marksmanship Park

This more than 500 acre public facility offers sport shooters opportunities to practice and participate in competitive events, with state of the art electronic targets and monitors for participants and spectators.

4357 Turner Mill Road, Talladega (256) 474-4408

Desoto Caverns Park

Retrace Hernando DeSoto's expedition through the south over 450 years ago. Explore the caverns, the Lost Maze, and pan for gold and gemstones. The park features a picnic area, camping, hiking, and activities for the whole family.

5181 Desoto Caverns Pkwy, Childersburg (256) 378-7252

Noccalula Falls

Gaze upon this beautiful waterfall that plunges 90 feet into a rock gorge. This landmark is named after Noccalula, the legendary Indian Princess, who leaped to her death into the waters below. Other features include the Pioneer Village, a train ride, campgrounds, and picnic areas.

1500 Noccalula Road, Gadsden (256) 549-4663

Talladega Short Track

Stock car races every Saturday night including Super Late Models, Sportsman, Crate Late Model, Thunder cars, Street Stock and Hot Shots.

4343 Speedway Boulevard, Eastaboga, (256) 831-1413

Talladega Superspeedway and the International Motorsports Hall of Fame

Visit the fastest closed track in the world with records exceeding 200 miles per hour. The museum showcases vehicles that have set world records, antique automobiles, speed boats, planes, and more. They are open daily from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

3018 Speedway Blvd., Talladega, (256) 362-5002



Thank you for supporting Alabama State Parks: where every day is an adventure and vacation!



Cheaha State Park: Legends and Bed Time Stories



The Story of Tankersly "Tank" McSteel **A CCC Legend of Cheaha**

by Bill Wilson Writer & Photographer Cleburne County

Tankersly "Tank" McSteel was one of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) members who helped build stone structures at Cheaha State Park during the 1930s. The CCC was a public work relief program initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the New Deal. He belonged to Company 468 SP-7. This is his story...which continues to this day.

Tuesday, March 12, 1935, Tank was laying stones with his crew at what would eventually become Bunker Tower at Mount Cheaha, the highest point in Alabama. Tank was a meticulous worker and very careful about making the Cheaha quartzite rocks fit together perfectly because he knew the tower would last for a very long time. "This tower will stand for decades and decades," Tank told the other workers. A strong breeze was blowing from the west and the barometric pressure began to drop rapidly.

One of the other workers, William "Skunk" Bartley, said "A storm must be brewing Tank! I can feel it in my bones. We better head on back to camp!"

A very cold wind started blowing and would not stop. Tank's hat blew off and landed in a long leaf pine tree about 30 yards away.

"Y'all go on; I've got to get these last few stones set." Tank said as the others took off for the warmth of the CCC campsite.

A snowflake fell on Tank's arm. "Snow!?" Tank exclaimed to his dog Banjo. "Snow in March! Well I just be dipped in gravy!" he told his dog.

Suddenly and without warning the heavens opened up and it started to snow. Not a happy bunch of little snowflakes, but a blizzard!

Within minutes, everything was engulfed in snow and the winds roared through the trees. Banjo barked when he heard a large limb snap and land precariously close.

Tank grabbed his flickering lantern and said, "Banjo, let's get back to camp before it gets any worse by golly!" Tank and Banjo set off to camp in the great blizzard of '35 and were never seen again.

The next day, search parties were organized by CCC workers, the sheriff's office and Cheaha State Park personnel to find the missing pair in the huge drifts of snow.

Days later when the snow finally melted, Skunk found Tank's harmonica. The CCC workers remembered how much they enjoyed sitting around the campfire, listening to his tunes after a hard day's work.

A few months later after all hope was gone of finding him, CCC officials held a memorial for Tank. He would be missed.

A few months later after all hope was gone of finding him, CCC officials held a memorial for Tank. He would be missed.

Hundreds of people gathered around the now-completed fire tower to pay their respects to the man who could pull nails out of wood with his teeth. Afterward, there was not a dry eye to be seen. Park officials put up plaques and photos of Tank and Banjo in the Bald Rock Lodge and some of the cabins.

Life eventually moved on and the CCC program was disbanded. Most members of Company 468 SP-7 went on to fight valiantly in World War II.

As years crept by, the memory of Tank and Banjo faded. Until 30 years later...

March 12, 1965

A bulletin about a missing family at Cheaha State Park was broadcast over the radio. Soon over 100 people gathered at Bunker Tower to search for the family from Lick Skillet, Alabama. Their direction of travel was unknown as search parties fanned out over the rugged terrain of Alabama's highest peak. Time was of the essence as it was getting dark and snow was in the forecast!

The searchers were having no luck locating the family and it was dark. The winds were picking up and snow began falling.

James "Chubbs" Ivytree, leader of the rescue effort, told the search parties to keep looking. "I'm not leaving this tower until we find them!"

Just before midnight, the lost family walked up to the tower, amazing everyone in attendance.

Chubbs spoke first. "Where have y'all been? We've been lookin' for you for hours!"

The father, Gill Tatum, said "We knew we were lost. We were down at Lake Cheaha. A man with his dog and lantern appeared. He gestured for us to follow him and kept pointing in this direction. As soon as we got up on the mountain we saw the light in the tower and knew we were safe! Where is he? We want to thank him!"

Chubbs looked perplexed. "We didn't send anyone to the lake to look for y'all and there ain't no lights in the tower."

About that time everyone looked upwards at the tower and a flickering amber glow illuminated the windows. At the stroke of midnight, the light in the tower went out!

Chubbs asked Darlene "Opossum" Hedgepath to find the source of the mysterious light that was in the tower. Opossum climbed the snow strewn stairs and noticed a set of boot and dog paw prints going up, but not down.

She yelled down from the tower window, "I don't see anything!" The group then went to the Bald Rock Lodge to warm up by the fire and have some hot chocolate and pie.

Everyone wanted to know who the mystery man was who saved the lost family.

Emily Tatum, Gill's youngest daughter, said, "Look Daddy, there he is!" and pointed to the picture of Tankersly McSteel on the wall.

All heads turned to the photo and Chubbs read aloud the inscription under the photo. "Tankersly McSteel was lost in the great blizzard on March 12, 1935." Emily, who was a whiz at math, said, "That's exactly 30 years ago!" After that night the legend of Tankersly McSteel began. Every year on the night of March 12 the Bunker Tower windows glowed with a distinctive and flickering amber light. Strange happenings at the park started to occur on a regular basis which could not be explained.

June 12, 1972

A couple camping at the park hiked out to Bald Rock. It was supposed to be a special day. Greg Ponds and his girlfriend Elissa Green were on Bald Rock. A thunderstorm was brewing to the right near Oxford and the winds were picking up. Greg got on his knees to propose to Elissa. He reached in his pocket to reveal a beautiful, vintage engagement ring with diamonds and amethyst. As soon as Elissa's eyes saw the ring, a bolt of lightning struck nearby and Greg flinched! The ring flew into the air and fell off the cliff.

The couple was devastated but had no time to look for the one-of-a-kind ring as a torrential downpour commenced. They ran back to their camp heartbroken. The next morning, a very sad Greg woke up to make a fire. He started to pull his axe from a stump and notice something unusual. The ring was next to his axe just sitting there!

Elissa was elated that the ring was returned! But how? Who? Greg told the story of the ring to the park ranger, Bob "Squirrel" Adams. Squirrel said, "I'm so glad Tank is here!" Greg looked puzzled and said "Who is Tank?"

Present Day

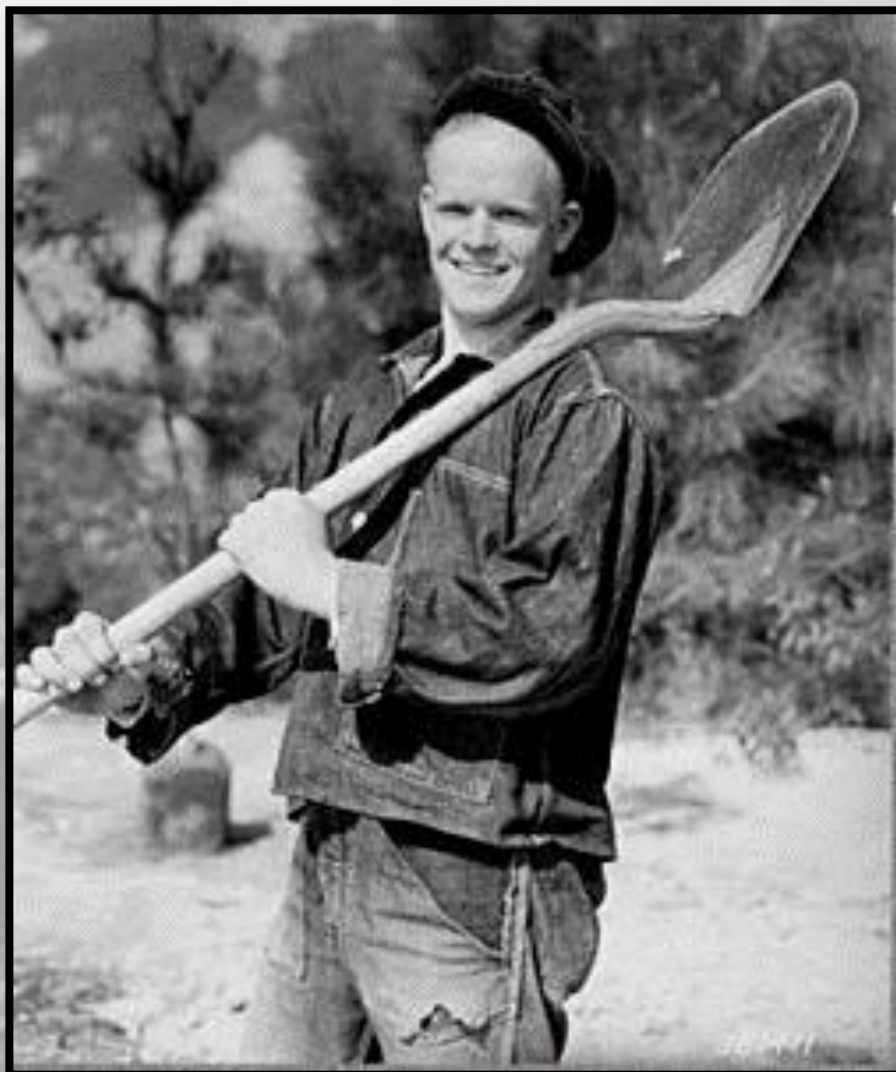
Finley A. Bushnell and his rambunctious mixed breed dog, Baby, decided to visit the new Mike Borsarge Dog Park at Cheaha last week. They walked towards the dog park to enjoy the beautiful spring day (despite the pollen). All of a sudden something caught the dog's eye. Baby ran off into the woods and disappeared.

"Baby!" Finley yelled. "Come back!" Finley alerted park security to help find him. Hours later, when Finley and Park Ranger Kim "Eagle" Stewart arrived back at the dog park, Baby had reappeared and was with another dog. The strange dog had a dusty leather pack on his back.

Eagle called Superintendent Alice “Hummingbird” Simmons on the radio. “I think we have something here,” she said. Soon the Hummingbird arrived. Hummingbird and Eagle looked at the mysterious dog. The dog had on a collar. The name on the tag was Banjo!

Eagle and Hummingbird opened the pack on Banjo’s back. Inside were personal belongings of Tankersly McSteel! Who knew! Items included his last uncashed paycheck, pocket watch, corncob pipe, a map of the park and other cool things. Later, Hummingbird placed Tank’s belongings inside the park museum for others to see. Banjo became the resident park dog and slept every night in Bunker Tower. Tank’s spirit became the official “caretaker” of Cheaha State Park.

Hummingbird knows all too well of Tank’s presence. Almost every day when she arrives at work, something is moved in her office or a little gift has been left on her desk, bringing a smile to her face.



“The Muskogee Creek and Cherokee Legends of Cheaha” by James C. Simmons (AKA Forest Walker)

A legend told by James C. Simmons (1930-2018) who was a Tsaligi Elder and father of Cheaha State Park Superintendent Renee Simmons Raney

Many years before settlers entered the forests of Alabama, there dwelt a tribe of Native Americans in the central portion of what is known as the county of Talladega. The leader of this tribe was the great Chief Choccolocco: a man of vast possessions. He had only one daughter, the Princess Chinnabee, whom he treasured above all things. Chinnabee, as every princess should be, was very beautiful and peaceful. Her father, realizing that he could not continuously keep Chinnabee within the walls of his village, began to search for a suitable mate for his treasured daughter.

In those days, a Chief had only to think a thing of importance and the world anticipated the unspoken thought and listened to it. It so happened that great chiefs, mighty and rich, old and young, from far and near, began to make offers of handsome gifts to Chief Choccolocco for the hand of his daughter. Some found favor in his sight, but Princess Chinnabee said: “No!! Give me time. The right man will come along someday, who loves the things that I love, and we can be happy wandering through life together.”

One spring dawn, Princess Chinnabee wandered down a winding path to the sparkling creek at the foot of the mountain. She heard a beautiful song in the distance. The song grew nearer and nearer, and the singer burst into view just as Princess Chinnabee dipped her clay pot into the water.

She met the dark eyes of a handsome young warrior named Cheaha, and at that moment she knew that their future would be linked. Thus began, a deep romance and each morning she answered his song.

One day Princess Chinnabee heard voices. Her name was mentioned. To her dismay, she realized that Coosa, a chief from an adjoining province, was bargaining with her father to wed her. When she saw the cruel eyes of Coosa, she knew that she could not submit to wedlock with him.

Chinnabee slept none that night, and soon after dawn she found Cheaha in the sunrise. It was indeed a sad morning they spent together. Cheaha possessed no property, and he was so overcome with the helplessness of their situation, that he disappeared into the woodland, where he wandered up and down the banks of his favorite stream for days. His thoughts were only of Princess Chinnabee. He could see her reflection in the still waters of the creek.

After Cheaha had wandered for days, he had a strong vision. He went back to speak to Choccolocco. Cheaha found the Chief alone and explained that he knew where valuable minerals and gemstones were stored in lands unpossessed, and he would bring them to Choccolocco in trade for Chinnabee's hand in marriage. As he spoke so appealingly and promised great wealth, Choccolocco listened with growing interest.

"If you can bring me these valuable ores and gems," said Choccolocco "I shall bless your wedding."

There was never a happier man since the world began than was Cheaha when he heard this. Turning away from the village, he never realized that Coosa had been listening. Coosa walked away without a word. An idea was brewing. He hastened to put it into action. Coosa asked his tribal medicine man for an herb that would put the strongest of men immediately to sleep forever.

He found Cheaha peacefully sleeping in the moonlight, with arms folded on his breast and his face turned to the heavens. Coosa poured the sleeping medicine into Cheaha's lips and the stars wept knowing he would never wake again.

Meanwhile, Chief Choccolocco, when Cheaha did not bring the treasure, ordered wedding preparations for Princess Chinnabee and Coosa. The Princess discovered her sleeping warrior and tried everything she could to wake him. Nothing worked. When the wedding day arrived, no bride was found. The woods were searched, the hills and valleys scanned, but they could not find Princess Chinnabee. In the midst of the turmoil a young lad burst into the group with the news that Chinnabee had been discovered asleep beside her warrior-she had taken the sleeping herb so she could be forever with Cheaha. Their love became the sunsets that flame in the sky.

The sleeping medicine also carried the power to make these two lovers grow for eternity. While lying there Cheaha has grown through the centuries until the mighty warrior has become a great sleeping giant, now forming a mountain range many miles long, where he can be seen from many roadsides and valleys. Nature has lovingly covered him with earth, to protect him from the cold, planted trees to shield him from the hot summer sun, and scattered flowers here and there, and each spring birds flock to the Sleeping Giant. And there he lies, still dreaming of his beloved Princess Chinnabee, the Bride of the Mountain, who became the waters that flow down Cheaha Mountain and into the valley below.

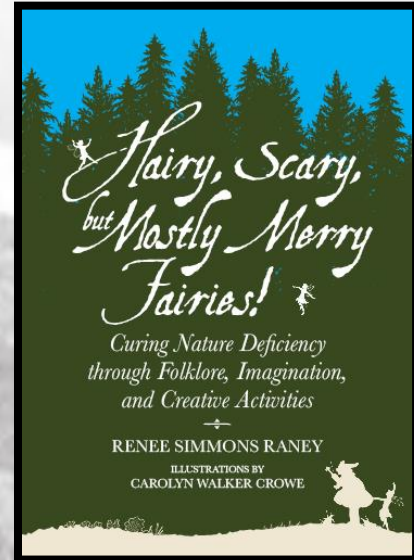
Explore Cheaha State Park and the forests of Cheaha Mountain. Hike alongside Chinnabee Creek and along the waterfalls that still bear the name of the Princess. Sometimes, if you listen closely in the moonlight, you will hear Cheaha singing.

Hairy, Scary, but Mostly Merry Fairies of Cheaha: Curing Nature Deficiency through Outdoor Play **by Renee S. Raney**

*Every man's life is a fairy tale
written by God's fingers.*
-Hans Christian Andersen

*If you want your children to be
intelligent, read them fairy tales.
If you want them to be more
intelligent, read them more fairy tales.*
-Albert Einstein

Hairy, Scary, but Mostly Merry Fairies Excerpt from Chapters 1-2 (condensed)...



Once upon a time when I was a child the clouds above me were white shifting shapes moving slowly across the spring sky. The calico patchwork quilt underneath me was warm from the sun. I lay stretched on my back. My best friend, Nosy the little black dog, lay beside me like a guardian. I felt safe, loved and completely content.

Across the field I could see the silhouette of Cheaha Mountain and the park that I loved. Nearer to my nest I could hear the buzzing of honey bees as they bumbled from blossom to blossom collecting pollen. I loved to watch the bees. They seemed so focused on their task that I'm quite sure they weren't aware of an entire big world chaotically chicka-chugging around them.

My world was bigger than a bee's, but small enough that I felt like the princess of a perfectly adorable kingdom. I knew every nook and cranny of our farm. I was friends with every growing thing, every creeping thing, every crawling thing, and especially the birds and bugs. I had an innate sense that the Creator had endowed me with a duty and responsibility to take care of these little creatures. A large green dragonfly hovered over my quilt. He seemed to nod his head as if to acknowledge my presence. I waved a tiny hand at him in greeting and he zipped away.

An odd buzz-hum sound...almost like a bumble bee humming rather than buzzing swooped past. I sat up. Nosy's ears perked up as she looked toward the odd noise. It seemed to be coming from the base of the old oak tree that grew in the sparse Breezy Woods next to my meadow. I tippy-tip-toed toward the tree and stood statue-still, becoming part of the wood, as my eyes and mind registered what was making the sound. There, at the twisted above-ground roots of the white oak tree, was...I knew it! I knew they were real even though I'd never seen one. I'd found their footprints and other evidence. I'd seen them out of the corner of my eyes, but here...in plain view...a FAIRY!

He was standing with his back to me. His hands on his hips with elbows out as if he were challenging the tree. The iridescent wings on his back were folded downward like a resting damselfly. He was dressed in brown, except for a tiny orange hat. As I watched, he gathered up three acorn caps (which to him was a full arm load) and spread his wings. With a hummmm, he flew off toward the field.



I sneaked to the base of the tree for a closer look. The chipmunk would disappear inside the tree for a few seconds and then reappear pushing three acorn caps at a time out of the hole. He'd carefully stack the caps on the edge of the gnarled old root and return inside to repeat the process.

I slowly dropped to my knees to blend in with the fragrant honeysuckle vines that were growing next to the oak. Nosy sat down next to me as we waited. We were close enough to see the expression of joy on the little chipmunk's face as he peered toward the top of the trees. He looked as if he was expecting another visit. Sure enough, we heard the buzz-humm sound faintly at first. Then it grew louder.

The same fairy zipped down from the sky and stood at the base of the tree. He pointed at the six acorn caps as if counting them, reached into a little tiny pouch that he had on his side, pulled out what looked like seeds of some sort, and lay them down in front of the knot hole. The chipmunk smiled at the fairy, put all the seeds in his furry "chipmunky" cheeks and went back inside the tree. The fairy disappeared with three of the caps and then quickly returned for the other three. He buzzed a little too close to us on his last flight out and Nosy barked at him. He was so close that I saw a startled look on his beautiful little face as he realized he had an audience. He dropped one of the acorn caps in his haste to zigzag away from us.

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I waited and hoped he'd return for his dropped cap so that I might see him again. When it became apparent that he wasn't coming back, I picked up the tiny little object. What had appeared to be a regular little acorn cap was actually a tiny work of art. Obviously, the chipmunk was friend or pet to another fairy who lived deep within the oak tree and manufactured acorn-cap fairy dishes. The little cap had been slightly reshaped so that when turned upside down it sat perfectly like a little bowl. Some dainty artist had carved clever patterns in the side of the little bowl. Obviously the fairy was trading flower seed or grain as a type of payment for these little dishes.

I wanted to keep the little acorn cap, but I knew I hadn't paid for it or earned it. Instead, I put it back on the root where the fairy had picked up the other dishes.

I ran to the farm cottage and told Nonnie (my Grandmother) what I'd heard, seen and done. She began to tell me stories of fairies she'd seen when she was a young girl in Ireland. She said that not all people can see fairies. Nonnie was very happy that I could! She promised to teach me to build fairy houses and other wonderful things about these secretive little people.

The next morning I went back to the old oak tree. The little acorn-cap was gone and in its place a tiny bouquet of "bluet" flowers tied with a tiny red string: a symbol of thanks from the fairy for not stealing the bowl. Nonnie said that I had taken the first step to making friends with the wee folk.

Activities:

Tell stories to your children about your special childhood places in nature. Did you have a fort? A tree house? A special rock? Then help them find their own unique place: leaves beneath a backyard willow, the bend of a creek, or a meadow in the woods. State Parks are perfect places for connecting to nature and they belong to YOU!

Build a Fairy House: Anyone can do it!! The main tool for building one is imagination. Pretend that you are only about three inches tall. This would be the same size as your pointy finger. Where would you like to live? What would you want to see from your house? What might attract you to a special location?

Is it near a creek? Are there mushrooms or mosses or partridge berry vines growing there? The second tool is observation. You must look around in your yard, in the woods, in the fields or on the beach. Anywhere that you are, you can spot an ideal location for a fairy house. You may want to build it on the ground, in a tree, or by the roots of a tree. Get down on your knees and look closely at the ground. Climb up a tree and look around at the world. Fairies are as different from one another as humans...but all tend to be attracted to homes that meet their basic needs with lovely view, shelter, food and water. The only rule is to use all natural materials

and try not to disturb the habitat of the area. Fairies shy away from most man-made or unnatural objects. Some children place glitter in and around their fairy houses. Please do not use glitter. Fairies are allergic to it and will not come near the stuff!

To begin, I usually collect about 10 – 20 sticks that I can break into smaller pieces. These will become walls, ceilings, steps and ladders. Pine cones, hickory nuts, acorns and other objects make excellent decorations. Remember that if you are in a park or on public lands it is illegal to pick anything that is growing...so if you desire flowers to be part of your fairy house, build the house where the flowers are growing. You can also use flowers from a greenhouse or a flower shop. Fairies love real flower blossoms. Do not ever move large objects like rocks or logs. You can build your fairy house next to a log or around a large rock...but remember that log and that large rock are already a home to thousands of creatures. The fairies do not want us to damage our natural world.

Building fairy houses is an excellent way to observe nature. Many times I have observed other creatures visiting the fairy houses: crickets, ladybugs, yellow jackets, butterflies, field mice, carpenter ants, spiders, toads, frogs, birds and even a bat! Some people will say that these creatures simply were attracted to the new little habitat space that had been provided for them.

But I know better.

Creatures love to hear stories and songs. So as I build my fairy houses, I tell stories (very quietly). The creatures will take the stories back to the fairy children and repeat them. Just as we tell fairy tales to our human children, fairies tell human tales to their fairy children! Where do they get these tales? By sending out their creature spies to listen, of course! Didn't Peter Pan ask Wendy, "Do you know why swallows build in the eaves of houses?" and didn't he answer, "It is to listen to the stories."

View an exhibit of fairy houses in the hotel "lobby" or purchase this book at the Mountain Store. 100% of the proceeds go to Cheaha State Park.





*May your trails be crooked, winding,
lonesome...leading to the most amazing views.
May your mountains rise into and above the
clouds.
-Edward Abbey*

President's Message

The Alabama State Parks Foundation is a community of people who love Alabama's marvelous parks.

Our parks dot the landscape of Alabama Beautiful. From the seashores of the Gulf to the verdant hills of Appalachia, the parks welcome people to their diverse natural settings. For generations, families have gathered for reunions, hikers tramped our enchanted woodlands, fishermen relaxed on glistening lakes, and people of all ages enjoyed healthy and recreational experiences in our lovely parks.

In January 2018, a group of people from throughout Alabama formed the Alabama State Parks Foundation. The Foundation will be a community of people dedicated to the Parks. I invite you to be one of those people who love our Alabama Parks.

To celebrate the birth of the Alabama State Parks Foundation, you can join others in becoming a "First Friend and Founding Member" of the Foundation. Let us know of your interest. Join a great parks movement of people who support one of our state's precious treasures – Alabama State Parks.

Sincerely,



Dan L. Hendricks, President
Alabama State Parks Foundation

First Friends and Founding Members

The Alabama State Parks Foundation was incorporated in 2018. In these first two years of its life, we urge parks lovers to become First Friends and Founding Members of the Foundation.

You will join many other park supporters who give their time and resources to advance our wonderful Alabama State Parks system. First Friends understand the needs of our parks for strong recreational programs, modern facilities, and great staff. By their example of financial support for the parks our First Friends will spread the news about Alabama's marvelous parks.

Of course, we hope that our First Friends make a financial contribution to the Foundation, but if for whatever reason you cannot give money at this time, you may become a First Friend by pledging your time and talent. Depending upon where you live, you can volunteer at a park nearest you.

Visit asparksfoundation.org to join us and to donate to our great parks.

First Friends will be the
foot soldiers of our
great parks movement

Become a First Friend of the
Alabama State Parks Foundation today.



Parks for People
and People for
Parks.