



# Big South Fork Visitor Guide

2011

The official newspaper of  
Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area



# Welcome from the Superintendent

Welcome to Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. For years my family and I have come to Big South Fork to hike and bike. Now we live in the local community, and I am very fortunate to be able to work here.

This is a land of amazing natural and cultural resources highlighted by free flowing rivers, dramatic gorges, imposing sandstone bluffs, and some of the nation's largest naturally formed arches. The river gorge provides habitat for native vegetation affected by flooding during heavy rains. Big South Fork has biologically diverse ecosystems that include shady ravines, dry ridge tops, open fields, and dense forests.

People have always been drawn to this very special part of the world. Almost every day, archeologists find signs of people who occupied these lands more than 13,000 years ago. People have continued to come here over the ages to hunt, camp, log, mine, and sometimes to settle down and raise families. If you get the chance, stop and visit some of the area's former homesteads and communities. One of these is the Oscar Blevins farmstead that was built in the 1880s and was

occupied until 1979. You may want to visit Blue Heron, an abandoned coal mining town where the mines operated from 1937 to 1962.

The recreation opportunities here are enormous. I hope you will have the time to participate in as many activities as you want. Whether your pleasure is horseback riding, bird-watching, camping, attending an interpretative program, hunting, rafting, backcountry driving, fishing, or a whole host of other activities, Big South Fork can be the place for you to enjoy the outdoors.

Regardless of how you experience Big South Fork, the entire park staff and I hope that you have a wonderful time exploring the area and the Cumberland Plateau. Come visit us often!



Niki Stephanie Nicholas  
Superintendent

## 2011 Special Events Calendar

All events are Eastern Time.

### Spring Planting Festival - April 30

9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Join in a celebration of spring at a 1920s era farm. Demonstrations of horse and mule drawn equipment, plowing, planting, dulcimer music, farm animals and tasks of the homemaker will be presented throughout the day at Bandy Creek and the Lora Blevins homeplace. Craft demonstrations and sales items will also be available.

### Astronomy

Paul Lewis from the University of Tennessee will be presenting astronomy programs with the help of astronomy volunteers (weather permitting).

May 28 - Solar Viewing - Bandy Creek - 3:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

May 28 - Astronomy - Bandy Creek - 9:00 p.m.

July 2 - Astronomy - Bandy Creek - 9:30 p.m.

August 20 - Astronomy - Bandy Creek - 9:30 p.m.

October 1- Solar Viewing - Bandy Creek - 3:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

October 1 - Astronomy - Bandy Creek - 8:30 p.m. Fall Astronomy Day.

### National Trails Day - June 4

Volunteers will be working throughout the park on hiking, biking, horse and multiple-use trails. National Trails Day is held each year throughout the United States on the first Saturday in June. Thousands of volunteers participate in work projects in national areas, parks and forests. If you would like to volunteer, contact Wally Linder for further information at (423) 569-2404, ext. 321 or online at [www.americanhiking.org](http://www.americanhiking.org).

### Daily and Evening Programs

#### Memorial Day through Labor Day

Throughout the summer months 15 minute programs will be held daily at Blue Heron Mining Community and at Bandy Creek Visitor Center. Evening programs will be offered at Blue Heron and Bandy Creek Campgrounds on Saturdays. These programs will feature different natural, cultural or recreational topics of the area. Program schedules with exact times and locations will be posted at Bandy Creek Visitor Center, at Blue Heron and the Stearns Depot Visitor Center.

### Annual Endurance Horse Ride - September 8 - 10

Contact Eric Rueter for more information at [Eric@RueterConsultingInc.com](mailto:Eric@RueterConsultingInc.com) or call (865)-986-5966.

### Ride and Tie - September 9 - 11

Contact Joanne Mitchell at (423) 337-6194 or visit [www.RideandTie.org](http://www.RideandTie.org). This is a combination foot and horse race for a team of two persons.

### Storytelling Festival - September 17

#### Dulcimer Workshop

Bring your own dulcimer and learn to play a tune. Beginners' sessions will be held on the hour beginning at 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. A limited number of dulcimers will be on hand for the public's use. Please sign up the day of the classes.

#### Craft Workshops

Learn about some old time crafts of the region through classes, demonstrations and sales. Crafts offered may include candlewicking, wood carving, needle felting, survival skills and basket making. Class participants will be asked for a donation to assist with class materials and instructor fees. Registration for classes will be on Saturday morning. Classes will be scheduled throughout the day beginning at 10:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 p.m. Some classes are up to four hours in length. To check on classes that will be offered call Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275.

#### Haunting in the Hills Storytelling Presentations

1:00 p.m. Family Oriented Stories  
3:00 p.m. Special Local Tellers  
5:00 p.m. Knoxville Area Dulcimer Club Concert  
6:30 p.m. Bluegrass Music  
8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Ghost Stories

### National Public Lands Day - September 24

This is another opportunity for people to get involved with the park. Volunteers will be working on hiking, biking, horse and multiple-use trails. Public Lands Day is an annual event traditionally held on the last Saturday in September. Thousands of volunteers participate in work projects in national areas, parks and forests. If you would like to volunteer, contact Wally Linder for further information at (423) 569-2404, ext. 321 or online at [www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org).

### Cross Country Trail Foot Race - September 24

8:30 a.m. - 17.5 mile foot race. Contact Bobby Glenn (865) 688-0715 for information or online at [KnoxvilleTrackClub.atkctc.org](http://KnoxvilleTrackClub.atkctc.org).

### Cumberland Heritage Month - October Saturdays - Blue Heron Mining Community

Enjoy a different cultural heritage activity each Saturday in October. Demonstrations and presentations might include blacksmithing, woodworking, spinning, old timey toys, dulcimer music, pioneer history, and coal mining displays. Activities will be located at the Blue Heron Depot and surrounding area. Times and schedules will be announced.

#### All Interpretive Programs are Subject to Change.

All events are Eastern Time.

Contact Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275 (PARK), the Stearns Depot Visitor Center at (606) 376-5073 or the Blue Heron Interpretive Center at (606) 376-3787 for program details.

For special events information check on page 6.



On the Cover: Looking out from behind Slave Falls.  
Photo by Chuck Summers.

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# General Information

## Accessibility

### Visitor Centers

Tennessee - Bandy Creek Visitor Center (423) 286-7275 (PARK).

Kentucky - Stearns Depot Visitor Center (606) 376-5073.

Kentucky - Blue Heron (606) 376-3787.

### Bandy Creek Visitor Center

The visitor center and its restrooms are accessible to mobility impaired visitors. One or more rangers are trained, to some degree, in sign language.

### Stearns Depot Visitor Center

The visitor center and restrooms are handicapped accessible.

### Campgrounds

Bandy Creek and Blue Heron campgrounds have designated mobility impaired accessible sites for families and groups. Restroom facilities are also handicapped accessible. Water and electric hook-ups are available at both campgrounds. Alum Ford in Kentucky is also handicapped accessible, but restrooms are primitive and there are no water or electric hook-ups.

### Overlooks and River Access

East Rim and Honey Creek Overlooks in Tennessee and the Devils Jump Overlook in Kentucky are accessible to individuals with mobility impairments. Leatherwood Ford river access offers handicapped accessible trails and restrooms.

### Blue Heron/Mine 18

The scenic train ride into Blue Heron is fully accessible to individuals with mobility impairments. Blue Heron offers accessible restrooms and is partially accessible to individuals with mobility impairments (some steep grades and steps exist).

### Backcountry Camping

Backcountry camping is allowed in Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. **Backcountry permits are required** to camp in the backcountry overnight. The permit provides valuable information in case of an emergency. There are no designated campsites, but there are rules that indicate where you can and cannot camp. Rangers may check backcountry campers for permits. Visit the Bandy Creek or Stearns Depot Visitor Center or at Blue Heron for more information. Please contact (423) 286-8368 for more information.

Permit fees are as follows:

1 - 6 people	\$5.00
7 - 12 people	\$10.00
13 - 18 people	\$15.00
19 - 24 people	\$20.00
25 - 30 people	\$25.00

A yearly permit is available for \$50.00. In addition to the visitor centers, see the following list of vendors for authorized backcountry camping permits.

### Kentucky Vendors

Big M's Discount	(606) 376-8500
Fastway Marathon	(606) 376-2364
One Stop Chevron	(606) 376-9200
Sheltowee Trace Outfitters	(606) 526-7238



### Tennessee Vendors

Bandy Creek Stables	(423) 286-7433
BSF Discovery Center	(931) 752-4273
Big South Fork Hitching Post	(931) 752-4230
Buckhorn's	(423) 569-9452
Big Orange Country Store	(423) 569-5010
Five Star Market and Deli	(931) 863-3354
Miller's General Store	(423) 286-3737
Rogers Automotive	(931) 879-7909
Rugby Commissary	(423) 628-5166
Scott County Welcome Center	(423) 663-4556
Sheeks Package Store	(931) 265-0383
Stop N Go Market, Elgin	(423) 627-4100
Wild Horse Market	(931) 879-6987

### River Information

The Big South Fork of the Cumberland River is a free flowing river. Sections of the river are calm enough for beginners while other parts are more challenging and have exciting whitewater. Peak times for river use are in the spring and sometimes late fall or winter. There is only one commercial company which provides equipment and trips for canoeing and rafting the river. If you are planning on a river trip with your own equipment and expertise, please check in at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center to file a trip plan, register for overnight river trips, and obtain information that will help you have a safe trip. The website for current stream flow information is: <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/tn/nwis/current/?type=flow>.

### Permitted Outfitters

Sheltowee Trace Outfitters - River Trips  
P.O. Box 1060  
Whitley City, Kentucky 42653  
1-800-541-RAFT or (606) 376-5567

Southeast Pack Trips, Inc. - Horseback Trips  
299 Dewey Burkes Road  
Jamestown, Tennessee 38556  
(931) 879-2260

Saddle Valley - Horseback Trips  
350 Dewey Burkes Road  
Jamestown, Tennessee 38556  
(931) 879-6262

Hitching Post General Store - Horseback Trips  
Highway 297  
Jamestown, Tennessee 38556  
(931) 752-2888

### Safety Facts

To help you enjoy your trip to Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, be aware of some safety precautions:

- (1) There are poisonous snakes (copperheads and timber rattlesnakes), ticks, chiggers, and poison ivy found in this area. Be cautious as you hike the trails or use the backcountry. Always use a flashlight when walking at night to avoid stepping on a snake.
- (2) Leave information about your trip with someone at home.
- (3) Backcountry camping permits are required. These provide information to park rangers in case of emergencies. File a trip report with rangers at the one of the visitor centers or at any of the vendors mentioned above.
- (4) Store all food, food containers and coolers out of reach from wildlife. Hang food in the backcountry so bears cannot reach it. A copy of the food storage regulations can be obtained from the visitor centers or the campground kiosks.

(5) Ticks and chiggers can cause irritating itchy bumps and sometimes a rash. Other insects like gnats, deer flies and mosquitoes can also be a nuisance while camping, horse back riding or hiking. Ticks can carry diseases so protect yourself and your pets by using an insect repellent with DEET. Remember to check yourself after being outdoors to remove ticks.

### Lost and Found

Report any lost items to rangers at Bandy Creek Visitor Center in Tennessee, and at Stearns Depot Visitor Center or at Blue Heron Mining Community which are both found in Kentucky. Found items should be turned in at Bandy Creek or Stearns Depot Visitor Centers or at Blue Heron.



### Concessioners

Bandy Creek Stables - (423) 286-7433  
Big South Fork Scenic Railway - (800) GO-ALONG  
Charit Creek Lodge - (931) 879-2776  
Eastern National - (423) 286-7275  
Station Camp Horse Camp - (423) 569-3321  
Bear Creek Horse Camp - (423) 569-3321

## Emergency Numbers

For emergency assistance dial 911 or:

### Tennessee

**Bandy Creek Visitor Center**  
(423) 286-7275 (PARK) -  
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time daily.  
Memorial Day through Labor day -  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time daily.

**Scott County Hospital**, Highway 27, Oneida, TN  
(423) 569-8521

**Scott County Ambulance**, Oneida, TN  
(423) 569-6000

**Scott County Sheriff**  
Huntsville, TN  
(423) 663-2245

**Jamestown Regional Medical Center**  
W. Central Avenue, Jamestown, TN  
(931) 879-8171

**Fentress County Ambulance**  
(931) 879-8147

**Fentress County Sheriff**  
Jamestown, TN  
(931) 879-8142

### Kentucky

**Stearns Depot Visitor Center**  
(606) 376-5073  
9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time -  
April through November.

**Blue Heron Interpretive Center**  
(606) 376-3787

**McCreary County Ambulance**  
(606) 376-5062

**McCreary County Sheriff**  
(606) 376-2322

# Campgrounds

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area offers three campgrounds (Bandy Creek, Blue Heron, and Alum Ford) operated by the National Park Service and two horse campgrounds (Station Camp and Bear Creek) operated by a concessioner. Bandy Creek Campground and Station Camp Horse Camp are located in Tennessee. Blue Heron, Alum Ford and Bear Creek campgrounds are located in Kentucky. Holders of Senior and Access Passes are entitled to a 50% discount for campsites at Park Service operated campgrounds. Discounts do not apply at the concession operated horse camps.

## Bandy Creek Campground

Bandy Creek Campground is open year round. Sites may be reserved April 1 through October 31 online at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Although a reservation system is in place, campers are still welcome on a first-come, first-served basis for unreserved campsites. It is always a good idea to call the Bandy Creek Campground at (423) 286-8368 before arriving. The campground does fill up during holidays, special events, weekends and the whole month of October. Check-in for the campground is at the entrance station kiosk.

From November 1 through March 31, campsites are only taken on a first-come, first-served basis. During this time campers self-register by filling out an envelope from the entrance station, picking their site and then placing the fee into the provided envelope. Drop the envelope into the fee collection box at the campground entrance station.

Areas B, C and D offer 98 sites which have electric/water hookups. Area A offers 49 tent sites. Restroom/bathhouse facilities are located in areas A, C and D which have hot showers and are handicapped accessible. By the end of the 2011 season all restrooms/bathhouses in the campground will be mobility impaired accessible. Once completed, there will be a total of three accessible campsites in area A, one campsite in area C, four campsites in area D and one campsite in each group camp.

Bandy Creek sites in areas B, C, and D are \$22.00 for water/electric hookups per night and \$19.00 for tents per night in Area A. Although Area A has no electric hook-ups, RVs, pop-ups, and horse trailers are permitted in sites A1 – A12. Sites A13 – A49 are restricted for tents only.

Bandy Creek Group Area E-1 and E-2 are for large groups of 25 or more. E-1 offers 19 individual sites and E-2 offers 16 individual sites. These sites do not have electric/water hookups. The group areas offer a covered pavilion with electric/water and a cooking area. A fire ring for campfires is available. Separate bathhouses for each area offer hot showers. The cost is \$75.00 minimum charge per night for up to 25 persons, plus \$3.00 for each additional person. Reservations can be made for the group camp up to one year in advance by calling 1-877-444-6777 or by going online at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov).

## Blue Heron

Blue Heron Campground sites may be reserved from April 1 through October 31 by calling 1-877-444-6777. Blue Heron is closed during the winter season. Blue Heron offers 45 sites, with one site designated as accessible to mobility impaired individuals. Restroom facilities are also handicapped accessible. There is a fire ring and a dump station provided. Sites are \$17.00 per night with water/electric hookups. Although a reservation system is in place, campers are still welcome on a first-come, first-served basis for unreserved campsites. For additional information call (606) 376-2611.

## Alum Ford

Alum Ford is a primitive campground and offers seven campsites with a vault toilet facility. No drinking water is located at this area. The fee is \$5.00 per night. For additional information call (606) 376-5073. Alum Ford also has a boat ramp but, due to Lake Cumberland draw-down, the boat ramp is not usable at this time.

## Horse Camps

Both Station Camp and Bear Creek are operated by a concessionaire. There are water and electric hookups plus a tie out area for four horses at each site. The bathhouses have hot water showers. For more information about the horse camps or to make reservations, call (423) 569-3321.

Horseback riders staying at Bandy Creek Campground need to make separate reservations for their horses at Bandy Creek Stables. The stables are located a short distance across the road from the campground. Paddocks and stalls are available for rent. For more information about Bandy Creek Stables, please call (423) 286-7433 or go online to [www.bandycreekstables.net](http://www.bandycreekstables.net).

# The Bandy Creek Pool

By Letitia Casada,  
Supervisory Visitor Use Assistant

Built in 1988 by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bandy Creek pool is a rare amenity for a National Park Service campground. The complex contains a main pool, wading pool, accessible restrooms, outdoor shower, volleyball court, playground, and picnic shelter. The pool is open to campers as well as non-campers. The daily use fees are based on age:  
**Adults 13 years and older: \$3.00**  
**Children 6 to 12 years: \$2.00**  
**Children 5 years and under: FREE**



All Bandy Creek pool patrons must pay at the campground entrance station and obtain a hand-stamp in order to enter the pool area. Wristbands will only be available to season pass holders. Season passes are available for purchase by families and individuals. The family season pass covers up to six family members and is good through Labor Day weekend for a one-time fee of \$35.00. Individual passes are \$25.00. Wristbands may be replaced if damaged or if a receipt is presented for the original purchase.

After-hour pool rentals can be made depending upon availability. The pool may be rented up to three hours after closing. Pool rental includes the picnic shelter, swimming pool, wading pool, restrooms and a lifeguard. Additional lifeguards may be needed depending on the number of persons using the pool. For groups with more than 25 persons, a Special Use Permit (SUP) is required. In order to obtain an SUP, please contact Effie Houston at (423) 569-9778 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Payments must be received at least one business day prior to the planned event.

### AFTER-HOURS RENTAL FEES

#### One hour (7:30 to 8:30):

\$25.00 for up to 25 persons (Special Use Permit NOT required)  
\$50.00 for 26 to 50 persons  
\$75.00 for 51 to 75 persons  
\$100.00 for 76 to 100 persons

#### Two hours (7:30 to 9:30):

\$40.00 for up to 25 persons (Special Use Permit NOT required)  
\$80.00 for 26 to 50 persons  
\$120.00 for 51 to 75 persons  
\$160.00 for 76 to 100 persons

#### Three hours (7:30 to 10:30):

\$65.00 for up to 25 persons (Special Use Permit NOT required)  
\$130.00 for 26 to 50 persons  
\$195.00 for 51 to 75 persons  
\$260.00 for 76 to 100 persons

## America the Beautiful National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Pass

### ANNUAL PASS



America the Beautiful - National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Annual Pass photo will be replaced each year. A Federal Lands photo contest is held each year. The grand prize winning image will be featured on the subsequent year's annual pass. Information on the current contest for the 2012 annual pass image can be found at [www.sharetheexperience.org](http://www.sharetheexperience.org). The annual pass sells for \$80.00 and is good for one year from date of purchase. The pass covers entrance fees at National Park Service and other federal areas. The pass can be purchased at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

### SENIOR PASS



The Senior Pass replaces the Golden Age Passport. Golden Age Passports will continue to be honored. The Senior Pass sells for \$10.00 and is good for life. Any permanent resident of the United States 62 years or older may purchase the Senior Pass. This pass covers entrance fees to federal areas. Camping and guided tour fees are discounted 50% for cardholders. The pass can be purchased at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

### ACCESS PASS



The Access Pass replaces the Golden Access Passport. Existing Golden Access Passports will continue to be honored. The Access Pass is free. Any age U.S. citizen or permanent resident who has medical proof of a permanent disability can apply. The Access Pass covers the entrance fees to National Park Service and other federal areas. Camping and guided tour fees are discounted 50% for cardholders. The pass can be obtained at federal recreation sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.



## Hunting Seasons

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area does allow hunting during regular state seasons. Check with the visitor centers or at Blue Heron for maps of the safety (no hunting) zones and regulations. Hunters must be licensed in the state in which they will be hunting.

### Kentucky Big Game Hunting Seasons

**Deer Archery** - Zone 1-4: Third Saturday in September through third Monday in January.

**Deer Muzzleloader** - Zone 1-4: Two consecutive days beginning the fourth Saturday in October and seven consecutive days beginning the second Saturday in December.

**Deer Modern Gun** - Zones 1-2: 16 consecutive days, beginning the second Saturday in November. Zones 3-4: 10 consecutive days, beginning the second Saturday in November.

**Deer Youth Hunt** - Zones 1-4: Two consecutive days beginning the third Saturday in October.

**Boar** - Wild hogs may be taken during open deer season and during the extended hog season. Extended hog season is from January 21 through February 28. Hunters must have a valid hunting license and a Big South Fork hog permit during the extended hunt.

Big South Fork NRRRA is in Zone 4.

For exact dates, contact Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, 1 Game Farm Road, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601, (502) 564-4336. Website: [www.fw.ky.gov](http://www.fw.ky.gov).

### Tennessee Big Game Hunting Seasons

Permanent Opening Dates

**Quail and Rabbit** - Second Saturday in November.

**Squirrel** - Fourth Saturday in August.

**Deer/Archery** - Last Saturday in September.

**Deer/Gun** - Saturday before Thanksgiving.

**Deer/Juvenile only** - First Saturday and Sunday in November.

**Boar** - Wild hogs may be taken during open deer season and during the extended hog season. Extended hog season is from January 21 through February 28. Hunters must have a valid big game hunting license and a Big South Fork hog permit during the extended hunt.

For exact dates, please contact Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Region III, 216 East Penfield, Crossville, Tennessee 38555, (931) 484-9571 or 1-800-262-6704 in Tennessee. Website: [www.tnwildlife.org](http://www.tnwildlife.org). Check Kentucky and Tennessee hunting guides for small game seasons.

### Parks on the Internet

Most national park areas have a web page, and camping reservations for many parks may be done online. To find more information about camping and park facilities, special events and programs that each National Park Service area has to offer, use [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area's page may be directly accessed through [www.nps.gov/biso](http://www.nps.gov/biso). Follow us on Twitter @BigSouthForkNRR and on Facebook at BigSouthForkNRRRA.

## Big South Fork Bookstores

If you are looking for information and unique items concerning Big South Fork, check out the bookstores located at Bandy Creek and Stearns Depot Visitor Centers. The bookstores are operated by Eastern National, a non-profit cooperating association founded in 1947 and authorized by Congress to work with America's national parks and other public trusts. The mission of Eastern National is to provide quality educational and interpretive products to the public.

Eastern provides a variety of unique items that will enhance your visit. Items offered for sale include maps, trail guides, books of local interest and unique craft items. By purchasing an item from the bookstore, you are supporting Big South Fork. Eastern returns a percentage of its profits to use for promoting the historical, scientific and conservation activities of the National Park Service. Among other projects, these donations are used to fund publications such as this newspaper. Membership in Eastern National entitles you to a discount on merchandise and helps support the programs of the National Park Service. For more information about Eastern National or to become a member, visit [www.EasternNational.org](http://www.EasternNational.org).

Any item you see in our bookstore can be ordered by mail. Mail orders must include a personal check made payable to "Eastern National". All items are subject to applicable tax, shipping and handling charges. Call (423) 286-7275 or write to Eastern National Bookstore, 4564 Leatherwood Road, Oneida, Tennessee 37841 for more bookstore information.



Above - The Stearns Depot Visitor Center and Eastern National bookstore located in Kentucky. Below - Eastern National bookstore at Bandy Creek Visitor Center in Tennessee.



Eastern National donations fund special events and the printing of the park newspaper.

## Fee Free Weekends at Big South Fork

Rough economic times call for economical fun, and you can't beat America's 394 national parks for family time, fresh air, and opportunities to learn about our great country. Every day there are more than 200 national parks that never charge an entrance fee. Find one close to you at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

April 16 - 24, 2011, is National Park Week. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that 394 national parks will have free admission during National Park Week. Normally, 146 of 394 national parks charge entrance fees ranging from \$3.00 to \$25.00. In addition to the free fees, parks will be offering family friendly activities and special promotions. Check out the website at [www.nps.gov/npweek](http://www.nps.gov/npweek).

Although Big South Fork does not collect entrance fees, we do have use fees. The park will have free fee days for backcountry camping, swimming pool use, and camping at Alum Ford Campground. Permits will still be required, but there will be no charge. The following dates are the official fee free days of 2011:

April 16-24 - National Park Week  
June 21 - First day of summer  
September 24 - National Public Lands Day  
November 11-13 - Veterans Day weekend





## ELEVENTH ANNUAL Spring Planting Day Festival Saturday, April 30, 2011

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area will be hosting its Eleventh Annual Spring Planting Day on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at Bandy Creek and the Lora Blevins homeplace. Help us celebrate the heritage of farming life on the Cumberland Plateau with a day long planting festival. Come join park neighbors, volunteers and park staff as they demonstrate the many skills and tools that were once so commonplace here on the plateau and important to a subsistence farming community.



### Featured Events

- Draft horse and mule drawn plowing demonstrations.
- Gardening, herb lore, wood working, blacksmithing, basket weaving, hand spinning and lye soap making.
- Farm animal petting zoo for children. Junior Ranger activity booklet.
- Craft demonstrators and sales of traditional items.
- Displays of women's life, planting and old woodworking tools, along with historical photographs of past residents of the area.
- Antique tractor and farm equipment display. If you have equipment dated from the 1930s through the 1960s and would like to participate, please call for details.



The event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Everyone is invited to attend this free event. Food will be available for purchase from a vendor or bring your picnic lunch and enjoy the day. For further information call (423) 286-7275.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Photos courtesy of Angela Graham 2010 and Meyer's Photography 2008.

## Let's Take a Gander at a Salamander - The Red Eft

By Sherry Fritschi, Park Ranger



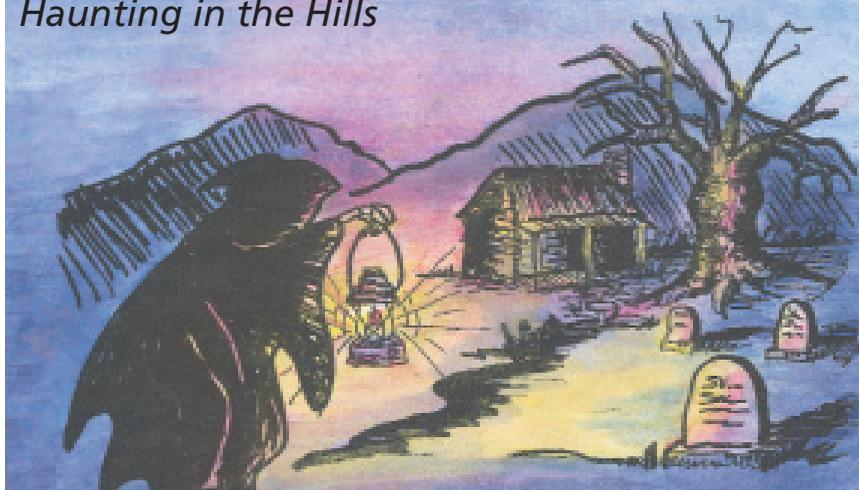
What common animal in the park is three inches long, looks like it's made of red-orange plastic and has red spots outlined in black? It's a small salamander called a red eft that lives in moist woods. You could easily mistake it for a child's toy until it moves! The bright color is nature's way of warning predators to leave it alone. Skin secretions make a red eft taste bad.

In the spring, red efts migrate to calm bodies of water. Their movement ensures diversity in their genetic makeup. These little amphibians live complicated lives! After two or three years of wandering and eating insects and worms, red efts slip into pools of water. Their bodies gradually change from bright red-orange into slimy, greenish, aquatic salamanders called red spotted newts. Rudder-like tails propel them through water as they search for insects, small mollusks, crustaceans, frog eggs and young amphibians to eat.

In the adult newt stage, they lay eggs on plants. After hatching, the brownish-green larvae breathe through gills and must remain in water for several months. Gradually, larvae lose their gills and transform into red efts.

Look for red spotted newts in the ponds near Bandy Creek Visitor Center and the Litton Farm. After a summer rain, you might see red efts on the forest floor. Please do not touch or disturb salamanders. Their delicate skin can be damaged if handled. Plus, secretions from these brightly colored salamanders can cause irritation to your skin.

## Nineteenth Annual Storytelling Festival *Haunting in the Hills*



**Saturday, September 17, 2011**  
**Big South Fork NRRRA - Bandy Creek Field**

- 10:00 a.m. Folk Art Workshops, Demonstrations and Sales
- 1:00 p.m. Family Oriented Storytelling
- 3:00 p.m. Local Tellers
- 5:00 p.m. Dulcimer Concert
- 6:30 p.m. Bluegrass Music
- 8:00 p.m. Ghost Stories guaranteed to thrill and chill listeners of all ages.



### Featuring Nationally Known Storytellers

Come join us for a full day of fun and activities. Free and open to the public. For further information contact Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275.



## Cultural Heritage Days

Enjoy October Saturdays at the Blue Heron Coal Mining Community in celebration of the area's cultural heritage. Each Saturday a different activity or event will be presented. Handspinning, candle wick embroidery, old timey toys, blackpowder rifle firing, woodworking, blacksmithing, dulcimer concerts and coal mining programs are just a few of the events presented by park staff and volunteers. All events are free to the public and everyone is invited to attend. Times and dates of these events will be announced prior to each Saturday in October, or call: (606) 376-5073 or (606) 376-3787.



NPS Photos: Top Left clockwise Volunteer Sam Perry, Park Ranger Howard Duncan, Park Ranger Sue Duncan, Volunteer Rita Perry, Volunteer Mack Davenport, and Park Guide Jessica Moore.

# Teacher - Ranger - Teacher

## Big South Fork Receives Funding to Hire Teacher



By Sherry Fritschi, Park Ranger

If you visited Bandy Creek last summer, chances are you met Ranger Donna Tompkins, an enthusiastic teacher who gave children's programs and worked at the visitor center. As our first participant in a new National Park Service program called Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT), Donna brought to Big South Fork her expertise and classroom skills along with a deep desire to share nature with children. She returned to school in the fall with fresh ideas about connecting kids to the outdoors and the national parks.

Here's how the TRT program operates: Throughout the nation, national parks and public schools work together to provide teachers opportunities to connect with park resources. They gain understanding and appreciation of America's special places that belong to all of us.

When Teacher-Rangers return to their classrooms, they share their knowledge and interests about natural resources with students and other teachers .

The best part of this program happens when the school year begins. The Teacher-Ranger takes back to her classroom curriculum-based programs that draw on her summer's experience. During National Park week in April, Donna will wear her uniform to school. Students and other teachers will participate in activities that she develops about Big South Fork and other national parks.

This summer, Big South Fork will give another educator the opportunity to participate in the Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program. The park signs an agreement with a local public school district to allow a teacher to work as a park ranger during the summer. While wearing the gray and green uniform, the teacher researches, develops and presents programs, plus works in the visitor centers.

Our busy lives are often filled with distractions to the point of losing sight of what really matters. Often, today's children spend so much time inside, kids don't even know what's in their own backyards. In order to preserve our natural and cultural heritage for future generations, we as adults need to share our knowledge,

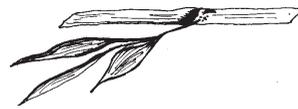
experiences and enthusiasm with children, the future caretakers of America's special places. That's what Teacher to Ranger to Teacher is all about.



Teacher -Ranger Donna Tompkins conducting a Project Wild activity with children and parents.

# Canebrakes

By Sherry Fritschi, Park Ranger



If you've walked a trail along the Big South Fork River, chances are you've encountered a green stalk that looks like bamboo. You might have wondered how it got there, all the way from China! Actually, the plant is the only bamboo that's native to the United States. Today, this member of the grass family grows sparsely throughout the Southeast.

Years ago, great stands of bamboo called canebrakes stretched for miles. Some stalks grew forty feet tall and four inches in diameter. An old English word for "thicket" was "brake". Anyone who tried to walk through a canebrake could find himself caught in the "thick of things". Let's pretend you are a young man traveling back in time who talks to a frontiersman smack dab in the middle of one.

"Pardon me sir, but what are you doing here?"

"Shh! Don't you know better than to make a bunch of noise when a fella's hunting bear?"

"Bear, in a canebrake?"

"Were you born yesterday? Bears love to chew the stuff. Why, it tastes sweeter than a bowl of porridge. Where's your long rifle, son? You'd better watch your back. A buffalo might charge you or a panther could be crouching just out of sight. They've all come to feed on the cane or each other. Oh, and did I mention the Indians? They're probably looking for me right now."

Suddenly, a dark cloud rises from the canebrake as a flock of passenger pigeons takes flight. "Funniest thing. Next year if I come back to this same spot where the birds have been roosting, the stalks will be taller than those surrounding them. Do you suppose the bird droppings make it grow better?"

Being from the future, the boy knows it's a fact that bird dung acts like fertilizer. He nods and says, "I think you're on to something there."

The frontiersman's beaming smile fades as the dark cloud of pigeons continues to fly above them. "Hate to admit it, but I've been wandering through this canebrake for days. Can't seem to find my way out. Mind if I follow you? By the way, I know I've been in the woods a long time, but you sure do talk and dress funny."

"I'm not from around here", the boy replies. "I need to get home before dark. Just

follow me and we'll backtrack through this maze." So they did and bid fair-well as the frontiersman walked off into a forest of huge trees and the boy traveled in the opposite direction towards a city of skyscrapers.

What happened to the canebrakes? When settlers cleared the land for farming, thick mats of roots were dug out, killing most of the cane. Where cattle frequently grazed and hogs rooted up nutritious stems and roots, the plants couldn't recover.

Today, native cane survives in much smaller size and quantity. Efforts are underway in Alabama to reestablish large stands of cane along rivers. Benefits to the environment include erosion control and filtration of pollutants from water as well as habitat for wildlife. Years of careful monitoring and fertilizing of young shoots will be necessary since botanists believe at least 30 years of undisturbed growth must occur before the plants flower and produce large quantities of seeds. Perhaps someday tall cane again will grace the shores of American rivers.

Three places to see cane in the park are the Leatherwood Ford area, the confluence of Parched Corn Creek with the Big South Fork, and the lower section of the Blue Heron Loop. Enjoy looking for this native bamboo. Walk among its tall stalks. Just remember how to get out so you won't be wandering around for days. Also please remember that all plants and animals are protected. Do not dig up, collect or disturb the growth of this or any other plant or tree within the park.



Above: Remnant stands of river cane can be found along the Big South Fork River. Photo by Park Ranger Kristy Slaven. Right: River Cane - Photo courtesy of Ted Bodner @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / James H. Miller, and Karl V. Miller. 2005. Forest plants of the southeast and their wildlife uses. University of Georgia Press, Athens.



# SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

By Debby Zimmerman, Park Guide

Throughout the National Park Service there are people dedicated to making your park visit enjoyable and safe. Permanent and temporary employees work in many different jobs in the parks. You may meet many of these employees during your visit at the park, but what about those who use their time, skills and talent as a park volunteer? They play a huge role in making your visit positive and enjoyable.



Volunteers in Parks (VIP's) are people of all ages who spend anywhere from a few hours per week to several months per year working for the park. Volunteers work to help permanent and seasonal employees accomplish their jobs. They may provide services that might often go unattended to or incomplete. These valuable and well appreciated people are essential to the park, willingly pitching in and lending their skills and talents. Volunteers can be found in many different locations within the park. Many serve on trails and maintenance crews, helping with natural resources projects, working in visitor centers and serving as campground hosts. Others share their talents and skills by demonstrating at special events.

Many VIPs have interesting life stories to share. Mack and Pam Davenport are a good example of dedicated volunteers with an interesting life story to share. They have served as volunteers for the last nine years. The Davenports started coming to the park many years ago as campers at the Blue Heron campground. They fell in love with the beauty and recreational opportunities of the Big South Fork. Fee collection supervisor, Tish Casada, recruited them as campground hosts.

The Davenports reside in Richmond, Kentucky and have been married for 24 years. Mack has lived there all his life. Pam has been there for over 39 years. Mack works as a flooring and carpet salesman, but from 1963 to 1973 he was the original drummer for the rock group Exile. Besides volunteering as a campground host, Mack demonstrates blacksmithing. He has done so for the past five years during special events like Cultural Heritage Days and the Spring Planting Day Festival.

Pam is a retired special education teacher who taught for 28 years. Pam has a special talent she brings with her as well. She learned to crochet when she was 13 years old. She demonstrates crocheting at special events and has done this for over four years. The Davenports enjoy meeting people from all over the world while volunteering at the park. They have made many friends throughout the years from many different countries. By sharing their knowledge and experiences of the park with people they meet, they help promote visitation.

The Davenports do an excellent job as campground hosts. The staff at Big South Fork appreciates all the hours and dedication they have given to the park and the public. They will be serving the park again in 2011. If you are visiting, stop and talk to them at the Blue Heron campground. They will be glad to share their volunteer experiences.

There are many opportunities to volunteer at Big South Fork. If you have a special interest or skill that you want to share and would like to participate in the VIP program, please contact Sue H. Duncan, Volunteer Coordinator, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, 4564 Leatherwood Road, Oneida, Tennessee. You may also call (423) 286-7275 (PARK) or visit the Big South Fork website at [www.nps.gov/biso](http://www.nps.gov/biso) or check out [www.nps.volunteer.gov](http://www.nps.volunteer.gov).



Mack Davenport (above left) demonstrating blacksmithing at Blue Heron Cultural Heritage Day. Pam Davenport (above right) demonstrating crocheting to girls at Spring Planting Day. NPS Photos.

# JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM



Big South Fork has a Junior Ranger book and a cool cloth patch for you to earn for your jacket or book bag. Kids from age 4 to 12 are invited to use this book to explore Big South Fork with Oscar, the river otter. Many activities will help you learn about animals, plants, rocks, rivers and a coal mining town.

In addition to completing your book, you will be encouraged to explore the park by hiking a trail, riding a horse or a bicycle or paddling on the river. After successfully completing the Junior Ranger Program, you will receive a badge and a certificate to hang on your wall.

Come by one of the visitor centers and pick up your free Junior Ranger book today!



Paul Lewis (left) and volunteer, Joe Cambell set up solar observing at Bandy Creek. NPS photo.

# More Stars Than You Can Count?



By Paul Lewis, Director of Astronomy Outreach and Education, Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Tennessee

"My God... it's full of stars!" is a line from the book *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clark first published in 1968. It is in reference to an astronaut's view into a black obelisk in space near Jupiter. Well, you don't have to go all the way to Jupiter just to look into a fictional obelisk to see thousands of stars littering the night sky. All you need to do is hang around the Big South Fork until the sun goes down to enjoy a truly dark night sky - a night sky that reveals the wonders of our universe with a little help from the Big South Fork Volunteers in the Park. After a presentation on astronomy, the volunteers will set up their telescopes and binoculars and offer views of the moon, the stars, planets, galaxies, star clusters and nebulae. We also provide solar observing in May and October. The sun is now much more active since the new solar cycle has gotten underway, and we are happy to give you the opportunity to observe sunspots and prominences and many other solar phenomena. There are four evenings of programs and observing scheduled for this year so look for the calendar of events in this issue.

If you happen to own a pair of binoculars, we encourage you to bring them with you so we can show how much of the night sky you've been missing. The naked eye will gather up about 6000 stars over the course of one year. 50MM diameter binoculars will allow you to take in almost 400,000+ stars. Now just imagine how many more are available for your viewing in a telescope that is 10 or 12 inches in diameter.

We can help you there. Put us on your list of things to do this year at Big South Fork's Bandy Creek Visitor Center and you will not be disappointed.

# Fire Is Natural



Firefighter Ronnie Bennett is using a drip torch to start fire on the 2006 Bald Knob Prescribed burn.

By Tommy Barnes, Park Ranger

For many years we were taught at an early age by Bambi, Smokey Bear and others that fires burning in the woodlands are bad for the forest. This was the official policy for almost 100 years in the United States, and all fires were to be suppressed as soon as possible. The goal was to have every fire out by 10 a.m. the next day.

Through years of scientific research we have learned that fire is an essential, natural process. It has helped shape our woodlands for thousands of years, and is important for the survival of many plants and animals. Fires removed the layers of dead and down trees, leaves, and other vegetation from the forest floor that can inhibit plant growth. Fire recycles nutrients back into the environment and increases

the diversity of plant and wildlife habitat. Some plants such as American Chaffseed have disappeared from the area because they needed fire to reproduce. Research tells us that prior to human settlement, the fire history of the Southern Appalachian Region was a pattern of small low intensity fires interspersed over the landscape at irregular intervals with occasional large fires.

The frequency at which fires occurred increased with the arrival of humans about 10,000 years ago. European settlers used fire to clear land and facilitate farming and grazing into the early 1900s. The 10 a.m. policy of fire suppression began to develop around 1910. By 1933, the policy was in full effect, and the number of fires each year decreased dramatically.

Today we see the effects of the 10 a.m. policy in the unnatural accumulations of fuels found in much of our forests. We know now that, when paired with the right terrain and weather conditions, this dense build-up of vegetation leads to fires that burn hotter, last longer, and spread faster. As a result, these fires become difficult to manage and can threaten areas of residential development. In some areas the excess vegetation and lack of fire is affecting the diversity of plant and animal life.

In 2004, the Big South Fork NRR completed a Fire Management Plan and began a long term project to restore the role of fire in the ecosystem. The park uses controlled burns to reintroduce fire into the natural landscape. These controlled burns are fires that are intentionally set by park staff when weather conditions are most likely to recreate the low intensity fires that have occurred naturally in this region for thousands of years.

During the spring of 2011, park fire crews may be conducting controlled burns varying in size from 38 to 2,080 acres at several locations throughout the park. A crew of 25 – 35 firefighters, several fire engines and a helicopter will be on hand for each burn.

The first of these controlled burns to be conducted will be at the Bald Knob which is located in the northwestern area of the park in McCreary County, Kentucky. The project would encompass approximately 2080 acres of land immediately adjacent to the Bald Knob Community and the Ledbetter Trailhead.

During a controlled burn all roads and trails in the burn area will be temporarily closed for visitor safety. Please contact the park's visitor center at (423) 286-7275 for the latest information on the current status of the prescribed burns and associated closures.



Prescribed burns help to reduce the amount of vegetation, dead trees and leaf litter from forest floors. NPS photos taken by Park Ranger Kristy Slaven.

## Orphaned Oil and Gas Wells Are Being Plugged and Mines Closed

By Todd Knoedler, Geologist, and Tom Blount, Chief of Resource Management

A high-profile effort began in June 2010 to plug and reclaim 53 oil and gas wells in Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, in Tennessee and Kentucky. This is the largest undertaking of its kind in the history of the NPS, and represents one of the most important mitigations of threat to visitor safety and resource protection currently ongoing in the eastern United States. The 53 wells to be plugged are *orphaned*, meaning no responsible party has been identified and the wells were simply abandoned.

Most of the well sites are little more than a rusty pipe sticking out of the ground and the occasional abandoned storage tank or pump jack and refuse. These wells are a hazard to visitor safety because many of them leak natural gas at the surface, which is combustible and displaces breathable air. Below ground, these orphaned wells present problems which could threaten groundwater. The Big South Fork of the Cumberland River is considered a Tier III Outstanding National Resource Water under the Clean Water Act, which mandates protection of water quality. Although there are no current indications of subsurface mixing, plugging is important to protect water resources.

Plugging of leaking wells reduces air pollution. An analysis of the air quality issues at Big South Fork indicated that 56 tons per year of volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions from open casings and shut-in wells would be eliminated by the current plugging projects.

In addition to the 53 oil and gas wells being plugged, 37 coal mines are being closed. In their present conditions, these mines present a safety hazard to visitors which include collapse, poor air quality, and confined space hazards. Mines that present suitable habitat for bats and other fauna are being fitted with gates that prevent entrance by park visitors but allow bats and other animals to easily pass through. Other mines are being closed permanently using polyurethane foam (PUF) which is similar to the material found in TUFF-Stuff® window and penetration sealant. PUF is used alternately with local stone to plug the mine. A drainage pipe is installed at the base of the closure to allow water to escape thus preventing buildup behind the plug. The portal is completed by applying 3-6 feet of natural fill to restore the appearance of the landscape and to protect the cured PUF material from ultraviolet radiation.

The Big South Fork region has an extensive extraction history. Coal mining began here in the late 1800s, and Big South Fork is also home to the first commercial oil well drilled in the United States. In 1818, the Martin Beatty well was drilled in search of brine for salt extraction. Instead, drillers hit a pressurized oil bearing zone. At that time, crude oil had no value as an energy source. Instead, the oil was shipped to Europe for its assumed medicinal value.

Most of the current wells in Big South Fork were drilled in the 1970s and '80s. Today there are over 300 wells inside the park, most of which are still operated by individuals who lease the mineral rights. The active oil wells are slow but consistent producers of oil, churning out up to five or six barrels a day. There are also actively producing gas wells. Surface coal mining is no longer permitted in the park. Remaining coal mining features within the park boundary are relics of history that are being or will be

closed, or possess cultural value to be preserved to perpetuity, such as the Blue Heron Mining Community. Funds made available from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will enable the NPS to plug 39 of the orphaned wells and all 37 of the targeted mines. The remaining 14 wells are being plugged through other funding in a joint venture with the State of Tennessee.

The Beatty well is one of the 53 wells slated to be plugged. Surface features of this well will be restored to preserve its historical significance as the first American oil well.



Above: Wildlife friendly gate used on abandoned coal mine. Right: Well plugging operation. NPS Photos.

## Firewood Ban In Effect

By Marie Kerr, Botanist

Big South Fork NRA has issued a ban on firewood of all hardwood species (non-coniferous) coming into the national area from outside the following counties: Fentress, Morgan, Pickett and Scott counties in Tennessee, and McCreary County in Kentucky. Non-coniferous firewood brought into the park from outside of these counties is prohibited, unless it is bundled and stamped with a USDA, State of Kentucky, or State of Tennessee stamp, certifying that the wood meets USDA Heat T314-a treatment standard. Firewood brought in from within the five aforementioned counties will be permitted.

Why Ban Firewood?

Many people are familiar with chestnut blight which, after an accidental introduction to North America around 1900, wiped out virtually all mature chestnut trees from their historic range in the southeast by 1940. This devastating blight is caused by fungus that is thought to have been accidentally introduced to North America through imported chestnut lumber or chestnut trees. The purpose of the national area ban on outside firewood is to prevent the introduction of insects and diseases that are known to be causing similar devastation to tree stands throughout the United States. The transport of infected firewood has proven to be one of the most common ways that insects and diseases are spread to live trees.

## They're Here: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Confirmed in Big South Fork NRA

By Marie Kerr, Botanist

We knew it was only a matter of time before hemlock woolly adelgid would show up on hemlock trees in Big South Fork NRA, but it was still a shock when we finally found some. It was a sad day in late October last year when the presence of hemlock woolly adelgid was first confirmed on hemlock trees just north of the Blue Heron Mine in Kentucky, within the Big South Fork boundary. On January 22 of this year, hemlock woolly adelgid was confirmed on a tree near the John Litton farm, north of Bandy Creek campground in Tennessee. In addition, local landowners in the immediate area have reported light to heavy infestations of hemlock woolly adelgid in their hemlock trees. If I were aboard Apollo 13, I think the appropriate phrase here would be, "Houston, we have a problem."

Preservation of hemlocks is of the utmost concern to managers. Hemlock stands comprise nearly 13 percent (16,000 acres) of the park's total 123,000 acres and play a key role in ecosystem function. Hemlock is an essential component of biological communities. It plays a particularly important role in forest coves and river habitats and is strongly tied to the health of both ecosystems. Stands of hemlock trees provide shade and shelter to smaller plants and animals. Visitors enjoy their beauty. The presence of dead trees detracts from enjoyment of backcountry experiences and scenic views, and can pose safety hazards in high use areas such as campgrounds and trailheads.

The hemlock woolly adelgid is a tiny aphid-like insect that feeds on the needles of hemlock trees. As many know by now, this insect has already devastated thousands of acres of hemlock trees in the eastern United States, including entire hemlock stands in places like Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. Because hemlock woolly adelgid has only recently been detected here, managers have the advantage of treating infestations at early stages. Park managers intend to implement an aggressive program of treatment for hemlock woolly adelgid within the park. This will include intensive inspection of prioritized stands, chemical treatment of

Two species in particular are of great concern to the national area. Emerald ash borer has decimated ash trees throughout the northeast and is rapidly spreading south. Tens of millions of ash trees have already been killed or are heavily infested by this pest. Heavily infested trees may die after 3-4 years of infestation. Another pest, the walnut twig beetle carries a fungus that causes thousand cankers disease in walnut species. Walnut trees infected with the fungus usually die within 3 years of initial symptoms.

Beyond the national area's desire and intent to simply save trees from invasive pests and diseases, we are also bound by both federal and state regulations that govern the movement of non-coniferous species of trees out of quarantined areas. In 2010, both Kentucky and Tennessee enacted emergency legislation that quarantines counties with confirmed presence of emerald ash borer and or thousand cankers disease, and regulates movement of firewood out of quarantined counties.

How Can You Help?

Please help us stop the spread of harmful insects into the area by heeding the firewood ban while visiting the park. Visitors may gather firewood, at no cost, from within the national area, or can obtain firewood from any of several local firewood vendors within the five aforementioned counties. For more information about firewood restrictions, call the Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275 or campground staff at (423) 286-8368.



Left: Confirmed case of Hemlock Woolly Adelgids from Big South Fork. NPS Photo. Right: Predatory beetle feeding on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. USFW photos.

known sites, preventive chemical treatment of stands deemed critical to visitor safety, resource health and species protection, and cooperation with adjacent agencies and private landowners.

Hemlock woolly adelgid has been present in the eastern United States for many years. Over the years, federal, state and private landowners have employed many different treatment techniques. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been treating hemlock woolly adelgid since 2002 and has, over the years, developed treatment plans using methods deemed to be the most successful and cost efficient. Big South Fork managers intend to emulate the well established methods employed by Great Smoky Mountains.

Based on results from other parks and agencies, managers anticipate that treatment of hemlock woolly adelgid will be an on-going, multi-year process. We are quite hopeful that the combination of early detection, rapid response to treatment of infested stands, preventive treatment of priority stands, and the ability to work cooperatively with other landowners to battle hemlock woolly adelgid will provide a successful means to preserve a large percentage of hemlock trees within the park.

To report sightings of hemlock woolly adelgid or for further information on identification, detection or treatment of hemlock woolly adelgid, or if you are interested in volunteering to help search for and or treat hemlock woolly adelgid, please call Marie Kerr, Botanist, at (423) 569-2404, ext. 251.



## Sharing the Outdoors with Black Bears

By Howard Duncan, Park Ranger

Big South Fork is home to a healthy but relatively small population of black bear. Bear sightings occur infrequently throughout the year. If you are lucky enough to spot one of these forest residents, the encounter is likely to be brief as the bear moves on to its preferred habitat. Bear sightings are becoming more frequent. As the bears continue to explore their surroundings, they are being seen well outside the boundaries of Big South Fork.

The goal of the National Park Service is to provide an environment where bears can live with minimal interference from humans and humans can enjoy the many recreational opportunities the Big South Fork has to offer. By using good judgment and common sense, humans can share the area with minimal intrusion on the bear population.

One of the biggest problems faced by park staff is dealing with bears that have become accustomed to human food. Bears that have access to human food soon lose their fear of people and frequently become nuisance animals. This situation is not good for bears or people. Instead of foraging for natural foods, bears learn to associate human scent with a food opportunity. These bears may display aggressive or destructive tendencies.

It is important that food in any form be kept away from bears and that a clean campsite is maintained. To a bear, "food" may be any item that has a scent. This may include items that you may not consider food, such as canned goods, drinks, soaps, cosmetics, toiletries, trash, ice chests (even when empty), grills and items used for preparing food. Horse feed and other animal feeds must also be stored properly as they will attract bears and animals such as raccoons and opossums. Information on proper food storage techniques is available at park visitor centers and campgrounds. Food storage regulations are strictly enforced in park campgrounds and throughout the park.

It is extremely rare for black bears to be aggressive towards humans. They will usually run away or hide from people to avoid contact. Please report any bear related incidents that have resulted in personal contact, injury or property damage. You may call the Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275 or call the Wildlife Hotline at (423) 569-2404, Ext. 505.

# Civil War Sesquicentennial -150 Years



By Howard Ray Duncan, Park Ranger and Tom Des Jean, Archeologist

A century and a half ago our nation was torn apart by a terrible conflict that altered the course of our country's history. 2011 marks the beginning of the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. For the next five years the National Park Service will commemorate the Civil War's important places and compelling stories.

As national events plunged the country into a Civil War in September of 1861, the subsistence farmers on the Upper Cumberland Plateau went about their daily life. However, as polarizing as the causes for this conflict were, they had little relevance here. The mountains and hollows did not have the large expanses of farm land necessary to support plantation agriculture. Therefore slave ownership, the labor source necessary for the lucrative profits generated by crops like cotton, tobacco, or rice, was rare on the

plateau. Despite these general facts, there were some large landowners that did purchase and use slaves.

The first recorded instance of a slave within what would become the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area is this 1820 narrative of Captain John W. Tuttle: "Fulton, Beatty, Ingram, all of Abingdon Virginia; Irvine and Zimmerman, originally from Pennsylvania, and later from Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, in order to get an increased supply of salt water for the Salt Works at Saltville, in 1820 employed a contractor, John Neal, from Cumberland Gap Tennessee, to put down a well on the east side of the South Fork near the mouth of Bear Creek, the consideration being in part, payment of a negro boy named "Surk", a slave. Isaac Powell and Mike Castello were "blowers for the large hole for the crib" and afterwards were employed as assistants. The negro boy "Surk" also worked on the well which transferred him to Neal—a singular example of the irony of fate."

Forty years later, in the 1860 census, the numbers of enslaved African Americans had risen. The census notes that there were 61 slaves in Scott County, 120 in Morgan County, and 167 in Fentress County, Tennessee, at that time. However, when the legislature for the State of Tennessee voted on a bill for secession, representatives from counties on the Upper Cumberland Plateau, and

indeed for most of East Tennessee, voted against the measure. When the bill to secede from the Union was eventually passed in the Tennessee State Legislature on June 8, 1861, the Scott County Court went further and drew up an ordinance to secede from the State of Tennessee. Like their neighbors in Tennessee, the citizens of Kentucky were also divided in their feelings regarding secession. In an effort to avoid the coming conflict, Kentucky officially declared itself to be neutral.

Due to the isolation and lack of access, the Upper Cumberland Plateau was not strategically important to North or South. The local population was largely left to deal with their own affairs as best they could. The coming of the war saw the beginning of a long period of lawlessness, bushwhacking and banditry that took a heavy physical and emotional toll on the residents of the area. Those scars would last a very long time.



## What's in a Name: National Park verses National River and Recreation Area

By Bill Herman, Park Guide

So why does the National Park Service use descriptive terms for park names? The national park system broadly classifies 393 parks into approximately twenty separate categories such as National Park (NP), National River (NR), National Recreation Area (NRA), National Historical Park (NHA), etc. Generally speaking, this classification method provides for categorizing similar areas that are alike and promotes more uniform public expectations concerning the management of those parks. Different parks are managed for different values and use. Great Smoky Mountains as a "national park" unit is classified as an area possessing outstanding natural, scenic, scientific, and cultural aspects of national significance. Therefore, it is managed in a more restrictive manner to minimize damage to resources. For instance, certain consumptive uses such as public hunting and trapping are not allowed.

On the other hand, an area such as Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area may be managed in a slightly less restrictive manner. Here recreational activities such as hunting, trapping, or walking a dog on trails are allowed. The Big South Fork NRRRA, as its title implies, incorporates two distinct management zones: a national river and a national recreation area. The national river zone area encompasses the gorges and hollows of the free-flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries. The national recreation area consists of the adjacent tableland surrounding the gorge. This management approach minimizes impact to the scenic, biological, archeological, and historical resources by restricting development and motorized boat and vehicular traffic. Managing the area adjacent to the gorge in a less restrictive manner maximizes public use and enjoyment of park lands as a whole.

**Unique Landscapes, Common Culture:** The landscapes of Big South Fork NRRRA and Great Smoky Mountains NP differ dramatically. Great Smoky Mountains NP consists of more than 500,000 acres of dense, forest-covered mountains having elevations ranging from 875 feet to 6643 feet. In contrast, Big South Fork NRRRA is

located on the Cumberland Plateau, 100 miles northwest of its sister park. The landscape here consists of 120,000 acres with elevations ranging from approximately 750 feet to slightly less than 1800 feet. The uplands consist of flat topped narrow ridges and some level terrain. The land is dissected with numerous canyon-like hollows and a gorge containing the free-flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River. The Smokys are characterized by mountain peaks and deep coves whereas the Big South Fork country is characterized by narrow ridges, deep hollows, and sandstone cliffs.

The landscape may be different, but the people and their history is remarkably similar. Both areas were home to Native Americans for thousands of years. Two centuries ago saw the arrival of hardy settlers of Scotch-Irish, German and English ancestry. In the mountain valleys, and plateau, gorges and hollows they lived an isolated, subsistence lifestyle, largely removed from the rest of the world. In the Smoky Mountains, farming communities such as Cades Cove and Cataloochee Valley with their fertile, limestone based soils served the early settlers well. Abundant crops such as corn, wheat and sometimes rye, barley, and tobacco were produced. The settlers who began farming the northeastern Cumberland Plateau were not as lucky. Here the thin, rock-laden, sandstone soils were not as productive for them. The only patches of fertile land to be found were along the Big South Fork River and the narrow stream valleys. The ridge tops were dry, rocky and infertile. Regardless, life was challenging for folks in either area. Both areas suffered the terror and deprivations of the Civil War with most residents taking a Union stand. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Smokys and Big South Fork saw a period of intense extraction of natural resources through logging, mining and railroading. Both Great Smoky Mountains NP and Big South Fork NRRRA preserve elements of Appalachian cultural.

**Crowds, What Crowds:** The Great Smoky Mountains NP is the most visited of all national parks with over 9.6 million annual visitors in 2010. By comparison, Big South Fork NRRRA had 656,374 people visiting the park last year. Traffic jams are not the norm either at Big South Fork NRRRA or when travelling through its gateway communities. Front country campgrounds at Big South Fork NRRRA are seldom full except in the fall and on a few holiday weekends. Even backcountry camping is less restricted than in the Great Smokies, although acquiring a backcountry permit is a requirement in both areas. Both

the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area are set aside for preservation and the enjoyment of the American people. They are managed somewhat differently to achieve both of these objectives.

Help protect archeological sites and habitats  
for threatened and endangered species.

Don't camp or build  
fires in rockshelters or  
along the cliffs.



## Resource Protection Hotline Available

In order to increase the number of backcountry "eyes and ears" helping protect the park's valuable and often irreplaceable resources, a Resource Protection Hotline has been established.

Any park visitor or neighbor who witnesses what they believe to be an illegal activity such as digging arrowheads, poaching wildlife or harvesting plants is encouraged to call the **Resource Protection Hotline at (423) 569-2404, ext 505**. All information will be treated confidentially. No name or phone number will be required; however, persons wishing to leave contact information may do so.

# Big South Fork Treasures

Many people visit Big South Fork every year. Visitors are surprised at all the beautiful scenery that exists here. They want to know where to go and what are the best things to see; things that shouldn't be missed if you only had one opportunity to see them or visit here.

Wander along our trails. Explore the overlooks and geologic features. Look out across the river as it meanders through the gorge. Feel the cool temperatures of the hollows nestled between the ridges high above. It doesn't matter if you choose to travel by foot, horseback, bicycle, canoe or a vehicle. You will be able to enjoy the natural beauty of Big South Fork and the Cumberland Plateau along your journey.

If this is your first time to the park, the following suggestions of attractions should help you decide what you'd like to go see. Now you just have to decide how much time you have and how long you can stay. For directions and more information, contact either the Stearns or Bandy Creek visitor centers. Park rangers will be happy to direct you to these and other sites. If you have already enjoyed seeing these places, it is always nice to share them with your family and friends who haven't been there yet. Plus, it is always nice to visit these treasures again and again like a long-time friend.

## Tennessee Scenic Wonders:

By Jessica Moore, Park Guide

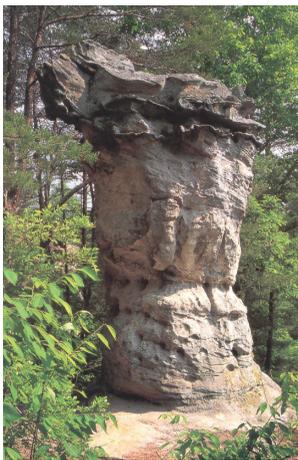
### 1. Twin Arches

The Twin Arches are the largest double arch in the Eastern United States. The best part is that they are less than a mile hike away from the trailhead! Visitors can decide to return back to their cars after visiting this wondrous site or continue on a 6 mile loop that will take them to explore Charit Creek Lodge, Jake's Place, and along several impressive rock shelters (picture of north arch right).



### 4. Leatherwood Ford

Leatherwood Ford (pictured above) is the perfect place to spend the day with family and friends; this area of the park is right along Big South Fork River! Visitors will have the opportunity to walk across the river on a wooden, low-water bridge and leisurely stroll along the boardwalks. From this area several day hikes and back country trails can be explored, and it is also a great place for picnics.



### 5. Station Camp

Station Camp is known for its equestrian camp (concessionaire operated) that allows visitors to have their horses at their campsites. This area provides easy access to several horse trails and allows visitors to ford Big South Fork River. Along with the horse trails, it is also a great area to access the river and start an exciting float trip. As you are driving to Station Camp be sure to look out for Chimney Rocks (left) along the road to the river!

## Explore Kentucky Hiking and Overlooks:

By Debby Zimmerman, Park Guide

If you are interested in hiking and scenic overlooks, then there is no better place to begin than in Kentucky.

### 1. Yahoo Falls Loop

Reaching 113 feet, Yahoo Falls (right) is Kentucky's highest waterfall. The trail to the falls is easy with the exception of some very steep metal steps. The trail leads you behind the falls and under one of the largest rock shelters in the area. Please note that the amount of water flowing over the cliff is affected by drought. The Yahoo Falls area has picnic facilities and scenic overlooks into the Big South Fork River gorge. A section of the Sheltowee Trace is located along the Yahoo Falls loop.



### 2. Blue Heron Loop

This hike combines history, geology and scenery in one moderate 6.5 mile loop. Take a step back in time and get a feel for life in a coal mining camp by starting your hike at the Blue Heron Coal Mining Community outdoor museum. The trail actually follows an old mining tram road then climbs to the gorge rim where it passes by two spectacular overlooks. It also takes in a natural opening in the cliff line known as "Crack in the Rocks".

### 3. Split Bow Arch

An overlook beside the small parking area provides a quick view of this unusual arch. For a closer look, take the 1.28 round trip path from the Bear Creek Overlook trailhead.

### 4. Bear Creek Overlook

One of the prettiest and longest views of the Big South Fork River is from the Bear Creek Overlook. An easy one fourth mile hike from the parking area rewards you with a view of this remote section of the Big South Fork River.



### 5. Devils Jump Overlook/Blue Heron Overlook

(above) For a scenic drive, short hike and two beautiful views, take Highway 742 from Stearns. Follow the park signs that point toward Blue Heron. Take the overlook road on the left just past the Blue Heron Campground entrance.



### 6. Blue Heron History/Culture

Step back in time to an era of hard work and endurance. The Blue Heron Mining Community (above) contains outside exhibits and displays. The story of life in a coal camp is told through the recorded voices of the people who actually lived and worked there. Step into the opening of Mine 18 and walk across the tippie bridge. The coal camp was only accessible by railway until the late 1940s, but today you can drive to Blue Heron or arrive by the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.



7. The Big South Fork Scenic Railway and the Stearns Visitor Center are located in the Stearns Depot. For train ride information visit: [www.bsfsry.com](http://www.bsfsry.com) or call: 1-800-462-5664. For directions to Big South Fork sites, call the Stearns Visitor Center at: (606) 376-5073. Come visit us in Kentucky!



### 2. O & W Bridge

The historic O & W (Oneida and Western) Railroad Bridge crosses over Big South Fork River. From 1915 to 1954 the train would travel from Oneida, Tennessee to Jamestown, Tennessee along North White Oak Creek. This area is accessible in many ways: visitors can drive, hike, or even horseback ride to view the O & W Bridge (above).

### 3. Maude's Crack

Maude's Crack (right) is a hike in a remote area of the park. It is approximately 3 miles roundtrip from the parking area on Terry Cemetery Road. Visitors will encounter a magnificent view overlooking the historic No Business community. While enjoying the view, be sure to look down to the right, because hikers will be standing on top of Maude's Crack. This area is a split in the rock where the adventurous can squeeze through, it's like a mini cave! Please be careful, Maude's Crack can be muddy and slick.

