

Shenandoah and Beyond





This book is a hodgepodge of trips that we have taken down the Appalachian Mountains over the years. Both of us visited Shenandoah National Park with our parents when we were children, and that introduced us to this beautiful area on the eastern side of the United States.

Side trips off the parkway included Luray Caverns and the Natural Bridge. When Sarah and Rachael were young we drove from Washington DC (*where Jim was living and working*) to Shenandoah and the Luray Caverns; and it was just a day trip. And that is probably the reason we didn't return here for years... it was too close... to convenient and too familiar. We wanted to see the more spectacular, unique parks in the western part of the country.

That all changed in June of 2005. We were invited to a friend's wedding in West Virginia, we had a brand new Prius and finally, decent digital cameras. We decided to drive to Fancy Gap, Virginia and from there head north up the Blue Ridge Parkway and on through Shenandoah National Park.

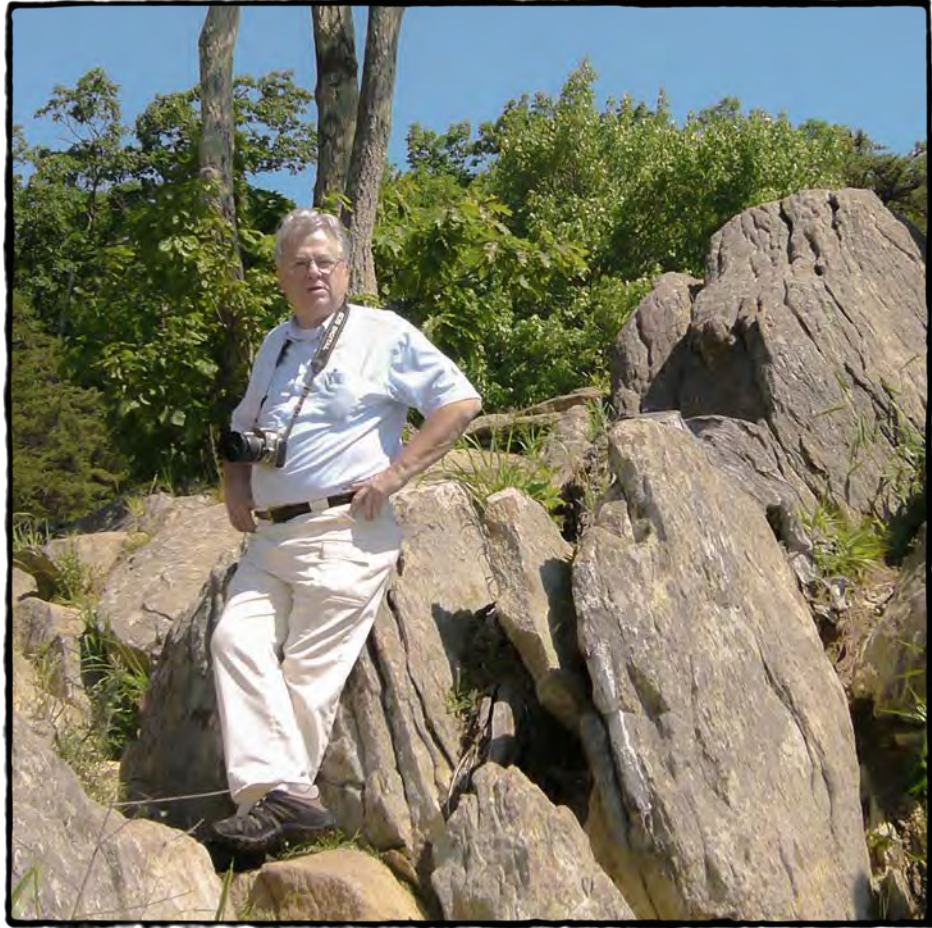
Since then we have returned several times. We realize that having a nearby National Park has advantages. We can be at our accommodations in Skyland in six hours. (*It takes us at least four days to drive to Colorado.*) We have visited the park as late in the year as early December; we have gone down the North Carolina Blue Ridge in very early April... and run into a late season snow storm that forced us off the parkway. We stay away in the summer because there's too much traffic. Spring 2017 was our most recent trip, but we anticipate more to come.



spring flowers - Shenandoah National Park



June 2005 - our first real experience at Shenandoah National Park



Jim - June 2005



June 2005



June 2013



Mountain Laurel - June 2013



June 2013



June 2013



June 2017





Mountain Laurel - June 2017



Honeysuckle - June 2017





June 2017



June 2017



June 2017



June 2017





spring fog - Shenandoah National Park



June 2013



June 2013



June 2013



June 2013



June 2013





June 2013



June 2013



June 2013 - near our room in Skyland



June 2013





the mountains of Shenandoah National Park



June 2013







June 2017



June 2017 - When you are on the mountain tops, you are still not far from civilization.



June 2017



June 2017



June 2017



June 2017



Appalachian Trail marker - 2017



One of the many “easy” parts of the Appalachian Trail that meander through the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah National Park.



June 2017



June 2017







Dusk - June 2017



June 2017



June 2017





sunsets in Shenandoah National Park



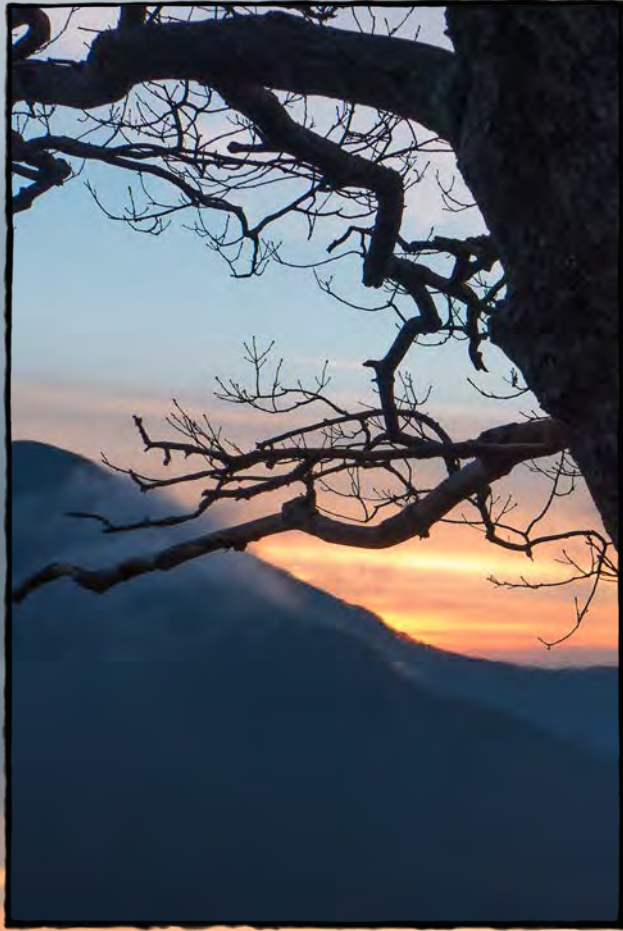
December 2013



December 2013



December 2013



December 2013



View from our room in Skyland - June 2017



the rocky cliffs of Shenandoah

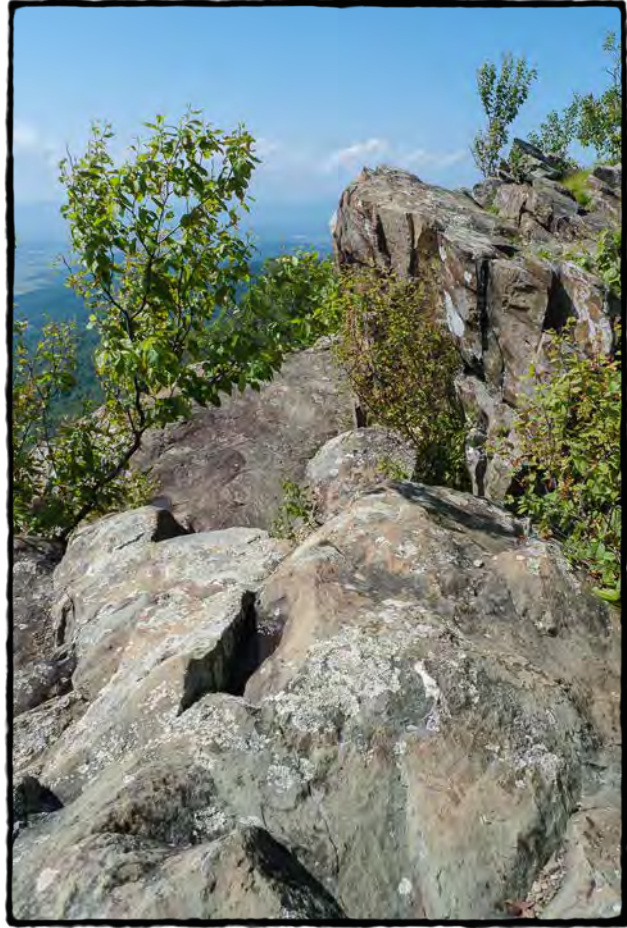


December 2013





September 2010



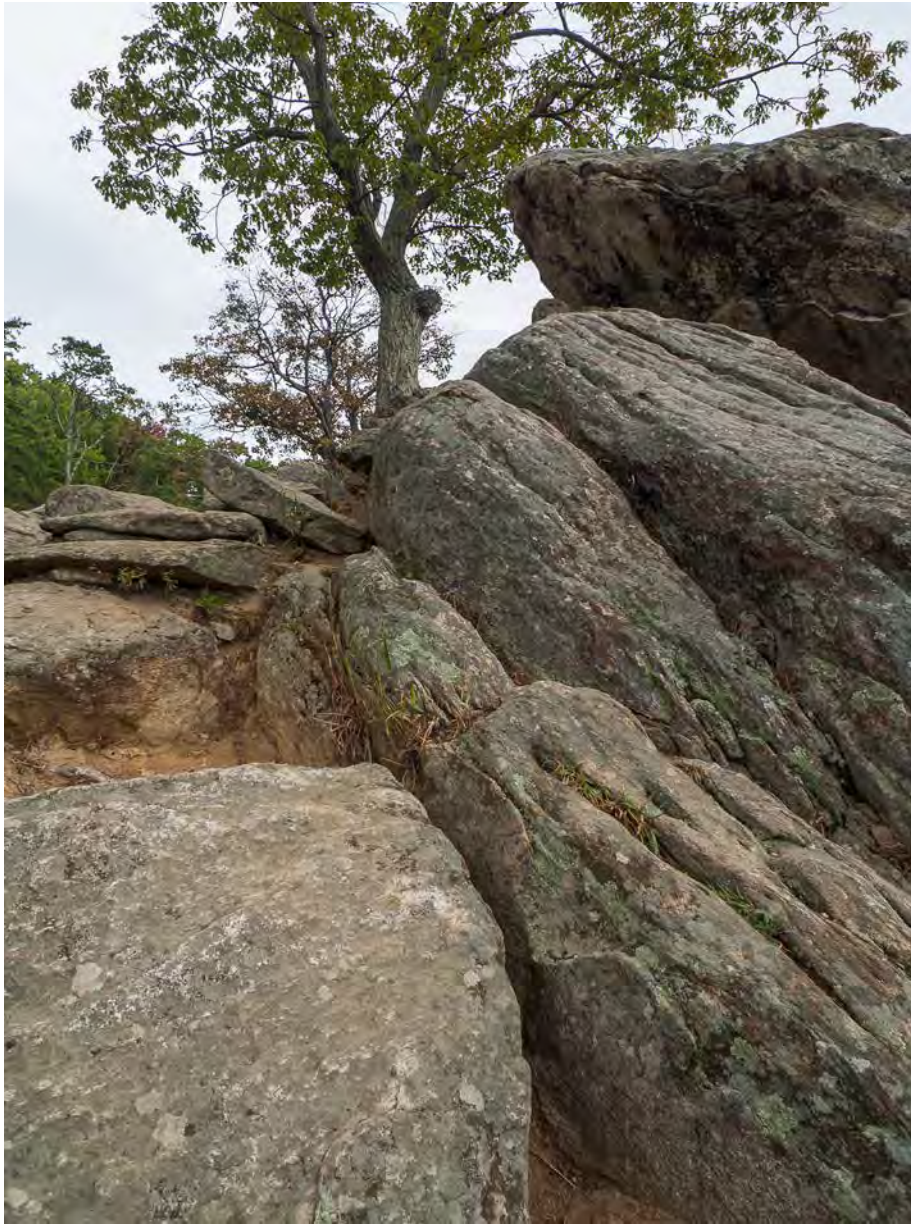
June 2013



June 2017



September 2010



September 2010



June 2017





June 2017



June 2017



June 2017



June 2013



the big meadows of Shenandoah



June 2013



June 2017



June 2017



A curious deer - June 2017



Our room at Skyland overlooking the Shenandoah Valley - June 2017



autumn in Shenandoah National Park



September 2010



Franklin Cliffs overlook - September 2010



September 2010



September 2010



September 2010



September 2010



September 2010



Franklin Cliffs overlook - September 2010



October 2010



September 2010



September 2010





December 2013



December 2013



December 2013



December 2013



December 2013



Blue Ridge Parkway- Virginia



Mabry Mill - June 2005



Mabry Mill - 2005



Mabry Mill - 2005



June 2005



Native Azalea - 2005



June 2005



Mountain cabin- June 2005



Mountain Rhododendron on the Falling Water Cascades trail - June 2005



June 2005



Jim taking photos from the bridge over Falling Water Cascades - June 2005



Falling Water Cascades - June 2005



Otter Lake and the motel where we spent the night - June 13, 2005



Where the James River is crossed by the parkway is the lowest place on the Blue Ridge - June 2005



The Natural Bridge of Virginia - June 2005 (Visiting here in the late 1940's was a favorite memory of Marcia's, but now commercialism has ruined the area.)

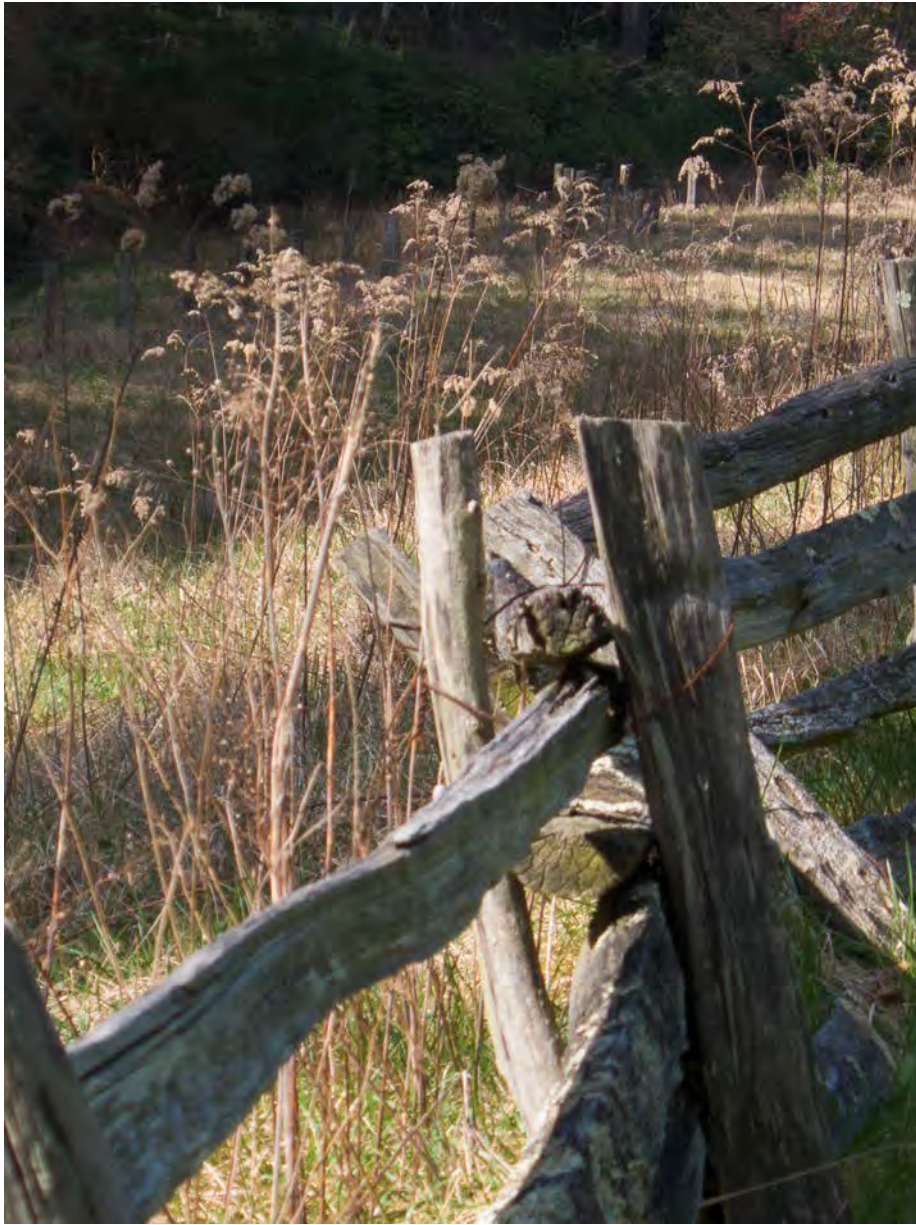




Blue Ridge Parkway - North Carolina



*We begin our trek down the North Carolina section of the Parkway -
April 5, 2007*





Spring is just beginning - April 2007



April 2007







This cabin was lived in by the Brinegar family until 1935 when the parkway was built. - April 2007



Carolyn Briniger's loom is still visible inside the main cabin.





The inbetween season - April 2007









April 6, 2007





Blue Ridge tunnel - April 2007



The view from our room as the sun set at Mt. Pisgah - April 6, 2007





A morning surprise - snow - and the parkway is closed! April 7, 2007



Now this was the view from our room at Mt. Pisgah - April 7, 2007







Stranded, with unplowed roads was the start to our day, but we had spectacular scenery.



We were finally able to travel a short way south on the parkway - past Cold Mountain - and then took a back road down off the mountain.





beyond the Blue Ridge - Nantahala, North Carolina



April 7, 2007 - No snow down here at our final destination, and the beginning of our Sierra Club week in Nantahala. Our hotel was located on the Cheoah River and in the Nantahala National Forest. This is one of the most diverse regions in the United States. Plants from many unique environments can be found here... and that's why we came.



Spring is finally here!



We immediately discovered this wonderful nearby stream and began to photograph.



Even though we were too early for the Rhododendrum to be in bloom, their leaves were an important part of the scenery.



April 8, 2007



A visit to Joyce Kilmer National Forest was our first group experience.





Rocky streams were everywhere.





Joyce Kilmer is an old growth forest that has been preserved for posterity.



Moss - April 9, 2007





"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree..."



April 10, 2007 - Our group hiked to a bald on the crest of one of the nearby mountains. (A "bald" is a mountain summit covered by grass or shrubs; they are located in the southern Appalachian Mountains and are located where heavy forest would be expected. Wikipedia)



This was definitely a grassy bald, and the view was great.





Truly the "blue ridge."





On the way back we visited this abandoned cabin overlooking a large stream.





Several people were fishing further down the stream. - April 10, 2007





Since we were driving our own car, we were free to stop at interesting places - and this wall of dripping water and spring greenery was a place to stop. The above photo was accepted in the Phillip's Mill photo show in 2008.



April 11, 2007 - We hiked from our abode past the Cheoah Dam (built in the 1930's; and used in the movie, the Fugitive) which is located on the Little Tennessee River north. It is also where the Cheoah River converges with the Little Tennessee River.



The Little Tennessee River north



Walking along the river...



and into the woods.



Hiking boots and walking stick were essential on this vacation.



Spring green



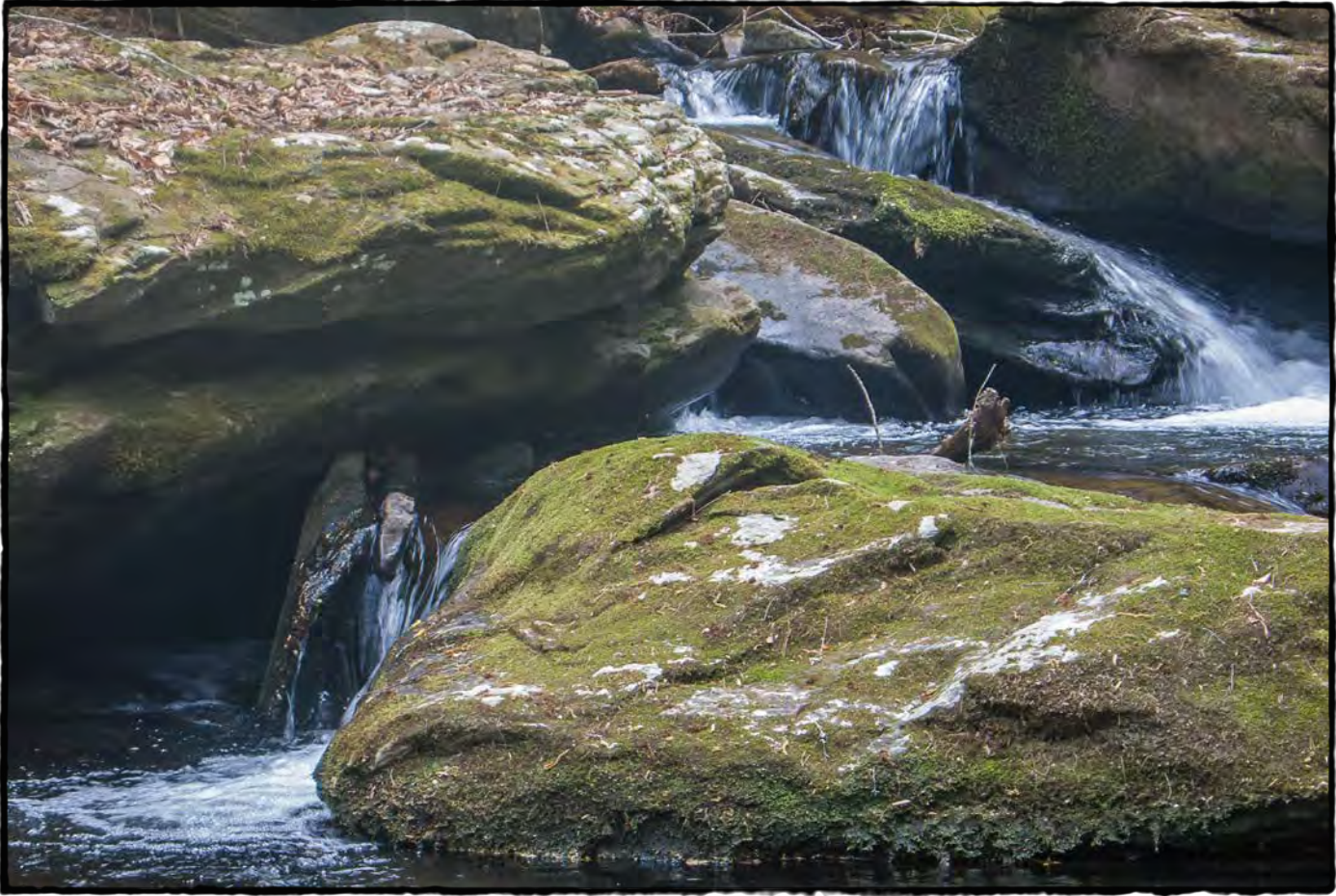


Wild orchids (above), many varieties of trillium and other wild flowers filled the woods with color



Back to our "private" stream near the hotel. - April 11, 2007









April 11, 2007 - Leaf patterns





Marcia in a familiar hat - above the stream.



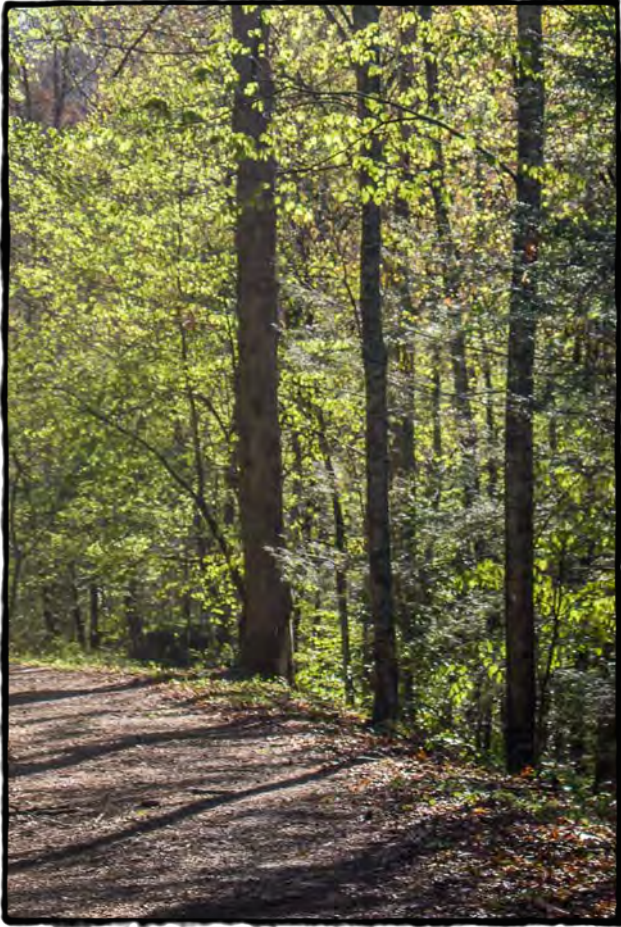


a brief look at Smoky Mountain National Park



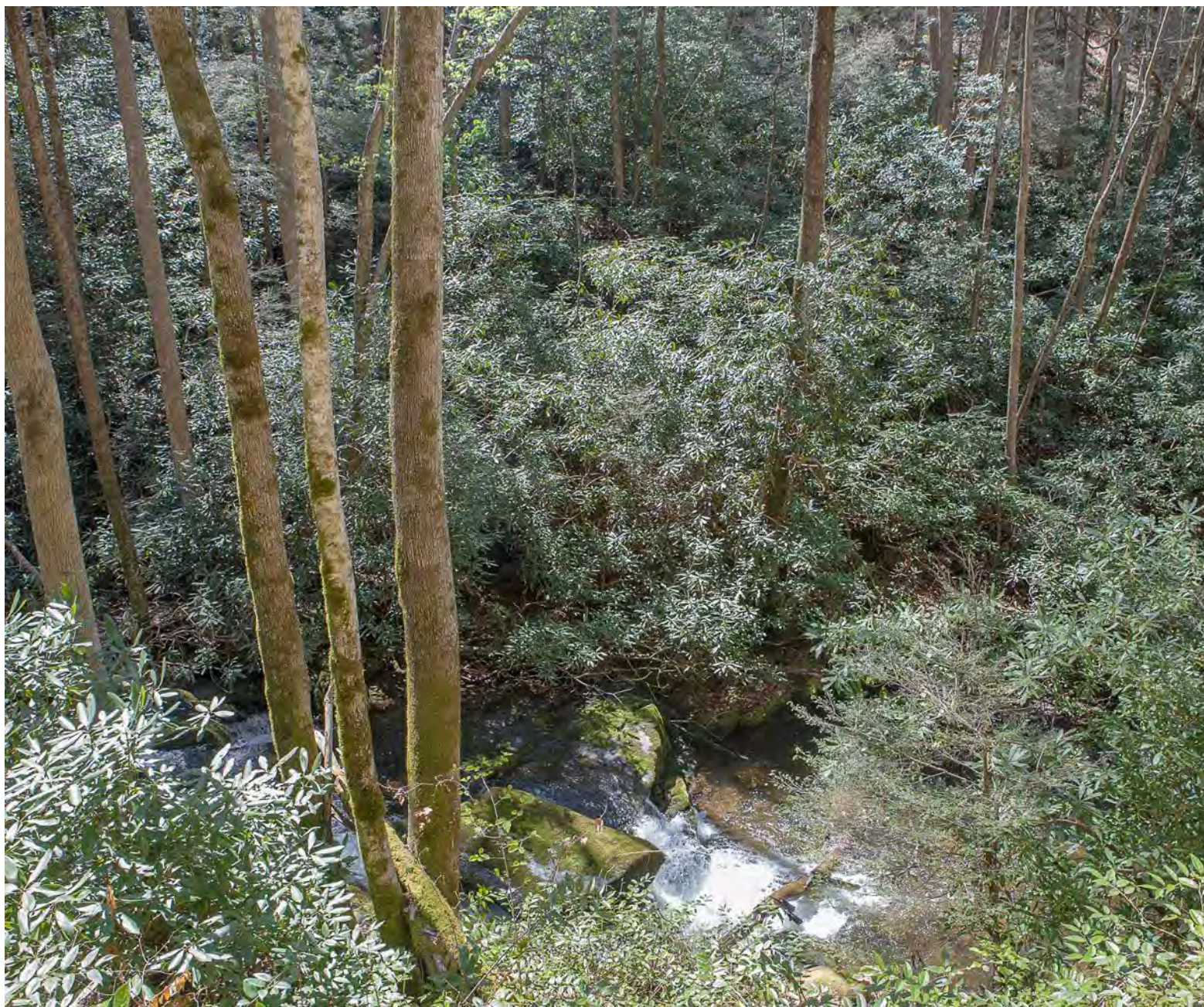
April 12, 2007 - Our one venture into Smoky Mountain National Park was through a side entrance.







The weather was perfect and spring leaves were bursting out above the streams and wild flowers.







This time it's a Smoky Mountain National Park stream with waterfalls.





We visited the impressive Fontana Dam and reservoir after leaving Smoky Mountain National Park. The Appalachian Trail crosses over the top of the dam, then it goes a short way south into Georgia or a long way north towards Maine.



On the way back to our hotel we gave apples to a girl and her companion hiking the Appalachian Trail.



April 12, 2007 - Group photo of most of our Sierra Club companions (Marcia on right end, Jim took the photo)

Shenandoah and Beyond

by Marcia & Jim Weikert



Designed using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom



The Appalachian Mountains were considered the “end of the world” to the first settlers in the United States. Early on people began to live in the mountains, and a culture was created here that was unique. There were people still living in primitive log cabins when the government decided in the 1930 ‘s to build a road along the top of the mountains in North Carolina and Virginia. The cabins can still be visited as you drive this long highway that starts at Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and ends in the Smoky Mountain National Park in North Carolina. This area has history as well as scenery. (The southern section of the Blue Ridge leads into “a rare and remarkable overlapping of forest habitats that encompass almost all forest types that occur in the eastern U.S.) Shenandoah and Smoky Mountain (with the Blue Ridge inbetween) are among the most visited parks in the National Park system; this exposes millions of people to something unique, but accessible. Marcia & Jim Weikert