

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Endangered Species Day

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

May 22 is Endangered Species Day. The phrase endangered species often brings to mind animals like panda bears and elephants, but the Southern Appalachians is home to a plethora of fascinating imperiled species.

Our region is home to the spruce-fir moss spider – the world’s smallest tarantula, coming in about the size of a pencil eraser. It lives in the moss beds beneath the spruce-fir forests on our highest mountaintops.

The Nantahala Gorge draws thousands of boaters from across the region each summer. Yet unbeknownst to them, the gorge is home to the endangered noonday globe snail. In the entire world, the snail is known only from the north-facing slope of the gorge.

Southern Appalachian bogs are one of the rarest habitats in the world, and they in turn are host to a number of endangered species, including the bog turtle, North America’s smallest turtle that finds a home in the mud and muck of the bog. These bogs are also home to a pair of endangered carnivorous plants – the green and the mountain sweet pitcher plants. They have a modified leaf, shaped like a pitcher. The plants lure insects down into their pitcher from which the insects can’t escape. The insects are eventually killed and digested by the plant.

These fascinating plants and animals are a reflection of the imperiled diversity here in our backyard, a diversity we have the responsibility to protect.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.