



GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

*News From the Georgia State Parks, Recreation and
Historic Sites Interpretive Unit*

Winter 2020



Red-tailed hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Winter 2020

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**PRHS Interpretive
Newsletter
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Georgia State Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites



Entrance to Vogel State Park ca. 1930s

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

Interpretive News:

Happy New Year!

Once again, the Interpretive Unit is pleased to announce the start of our new programming year with the annual First Day Hikes (FDH) program. Our Division has taken a lead role in the FDH program for the past several years, but this year our own Ellen Graham has passed the torch of nationwide coordinator on to Florida State Parks. We continue to look forward to being part of the program for many years to come.

D.I.R.T. Programs that have earth based concepts are being highlighted with this year's annual theme. All types of outdoor education interpretation, muddy spokes bike programs, hiking and trail walks, Earth Day adventures and many, many more great programs will be offered throughout the Division this year. The D.I.R.T. theme is a perfect vehicle for our interpreters to connect our guests to our numerous cultural, natural, and recreational resources found in our parks and historic sites.



Discovery. Interpretation. Recreation. Travel.

Meet the Interpreter: Scott Smith, General Coffee State Park



Photo courtesy Deborah Britton

Scott Smith is the Interpretive Ranger at General Coffee State Park, and he has always been interested in exploring the outdoors and nature. He graduated from Yadkin Early College in his hometown in North Carolina, and then continued his education at Armstrong State University in biology and microbiology.

Scott began his career with PRHS at Fort McAllister in 2016. Initially, he was interested in an internship for school, but was offered the position of Naturalist. There he was able to share his love of nature and his passion for wild plants with guests by planning informative hikes throughout the historic park.

After gaining valuable experience, Scott accepted his current

position. While he still enjoys nature hikes, he also tends to the animals at the park's heritage farm. He even occasionally has help with his farm chores from park visitors.

Outside of work Scott enjoys visiting other parks with his dog, Finn and his partner Teagan, while his cat, Simba enjoys the comforts of the house.



Photo courtesy Deborah Britton

Heritage Farm at General Coffee

The 2020 First Day Hikes Program



This year for the 2020 First Day Hikes (FDH) our Division hosted 66 hikes to 3,013 hikers covering 7,555 cumulative miles, which is almost double from the previous year.

Our interpreters crafted some memorable hikes and terrific programs. Many parks saw large crowds. Some, like Sweetwater Creek, Smithgall and Wormsloe had over 150 hikers. James H. Sloppy Floyd had 464 hikers and served over 300 guests a black-eye pea, rice and cornbread lunch sponsored by the Friends of Floyd. Along the coast, Fort McAllister offered a First Day Bike program that included birding, fishing/crabbing, brunch, fort tour, astronomy, and a bike rental. Fort Mountain's hike was followed by the 8th annual Black Bear Plunge which had 150 participants this year.

Black Rock Mountain hosted their inaugural First Day Hike since the park has been closed in January in previous years. By working together, Unicoi State Park and Anna Ruby Falls partnered with Hardman Farm Historic Site to

offer an 11 mile hike from Anna Ruby Falls to Hardman Farm. There were even two University of North Georgia cadets who ran the entire 11 miles in 2 hours.

Many visitors were able to spot wildlife along the trails. At Stephen C. Foster hikers enjoyed seeing an otter looking for fish, heard pileated woodpeckers call, watched a yellow-bellied sapsucker drill sap wells, found a mystery bone, and looked at "catfaces" on pines leftover from the old turpentine operations.

Once again Hofwyl-Broadfield got a head start by starting at 10:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve with 75 guests taking a walking tour complete with ringing in the new year on the plantation's bell and a toast of sparkling cider.

The Interpretive Unit would like to thank all the parks and sites who made this year's FDH a success.

*Ellen Graham,
Chief Naturalist*

2019 Southeastern State Parks Programs Seminar



In December 2019, our Division was proud to host the 42nd annual Southeastern State Parks Programs Seminar (SSPPS) in beautiful and historic Savannah, Georgia.

SSPPS began in Georgia in 1977 at Unicoi State Park. The seminar's mission is to improve the participants' knowledge and skills to allow them to present highly effective interpretive and recreational programs to park visitors.

In addition to our own Georgia contingent, this year's attendees included park rangers from Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

Our Program Advisory Committee consisting of Jamie Madden, Elliot Murrer, Tommy Turk, Josh Snead, Christina Weeks, Bud Fuller, Kim

Hatcher, and Lieren Merz helped Ellen Graham and Judd Smith plan and carry out the conference. Kudos to them.

The Interpretive Unit would also like to thank Director Jeff Cown, Assistant Director Eric Bentley, Operations Manager Terry Trowbridge, all the staff at the sites we visited, and those who helped drive vans and shuttles. A special thanks also goes out to the Marketing Unit and our Statewide Friends of Georgia State Parks and individual Friends chapters for their input and assistance as well.

The week started off Monday with pre-conference trips including a paddle at George L. Smith State Park and a tour of Fort King George State Historic Site. Many thanks to the staff and trip leaders at GLS and FKG for providing a quality interpretive experience for our neighboring park professionals.

Director Cown and Asst. Director Bentley opened the seminar with words of welcome and from there it was three days crammed with park showcases, breakout sessions on a variety of interpretive topics and, most fun of all, field trips!

The first field trip took participants to spend quality time at Skidaway Island State Park where they were treated to guided marsh and bird hikes. Others were able to experience a kayak paddle in the nearby Skidaway Narrows and still others went to the UGA Marine Center for a tour of their aquarium and invertebrates lab. Later, a stop at Wormsloe took the participants back into the 18th century to play a game of cricket, tour the tabby ruins and interact with park staff and volunteers conducting living history demonstrations.

Fort McAllister was the second

field trip and here the participants got to experience the full cultural and natural resources offered at this unique site. Park staff provided living history of 19th century life and conducted tours of the fort. The keynote speaker UGA Professor "Ranger Nick" Fuhrman, offered a wonderful program on interpretation, complete with his "animal ambassadors." The FMC staff then ended the trip with a night-time cannon blast!

Overall, we hosted 89 participants and created many memories for our partner professionals from nearby states. The week could not have been better and was a great way to show off our professional interpreters.

On the whole it was a terrific end to 2019.

By: Judd Smith,

The Naturalist's Easel



Yellow Crowned Night Heron at Minnie's Lake at Sunset—2019—Digital Color Photograph

“As a kid my parents would get me disposable cameras to use on vacations or field trips. I don't think very many of those pictures turned out well but it spurred an interest in photography. Later on I played with my Mom's more serious cameras, and eventually my parents got me one of my own. I've tried taking pictures in a lot of scenarios like caves, bad weather, and windy beaches with mixed results. Every once in awhile I walk away with one I feel proud of.

This photograph was taken at Minnie's Lake in the middle of the Okefenokee Swamp around sunset. I took my brother on a trip to this area about 4 miles into the swamp from Stephen C. Foster State Park. I wanted to show him how cool the place is at that time of day. We motored through the black water of the swamp, slipping between cypress trees amid a chorus of cricket frogs as sunset approached. With daylight fading it can be hard to capture good pictures. One of the easiest ways around that is to go for silhouettes against the backdrop of the sunset. We noticed this yellow-crowned night heron as we turned around on the lake. It was positioned perfectly as a silhouette and the Spanish moss provided a nice frame for the picture. When I look at it now it takes me back to sitting in the boat with my brother in the middle of the swamp taking in a fantastic, swampy sunset.

The image was captured with a Nikon D610 DSLR camera and a Nikkor 70-300mm f/4-5.6g lens.”

Josh Snead, Photographer

Georgia State Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites

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gastateparks.org

Connecting people with our state's cultural and natural resources

Mission

To protect our state's natural beauty and historic integrity while providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education.

Vision

Using our system's diversity and a commitment to excellence as our strengths, we will be a national model for quality service, resource protection, outdoor recreational opportunities, ecosystems management and interpretation of our heritage. We will provide an excellent work environment for our employees through effective leadership, proper training, challenging opportunities and a guarantee of fair treatment.

Sheep at General Coffee State Park, 2019
Photo courtesy Deborah Britton



Parting Thoughts and Takeaways:

Sometimes you find interpretive inspiration in the strangest of places. Recently, I picked up a neat little publication at an antique store entitled *Infantry School Quarterly* dated July 1956. It was produced by the United States Army to help further educate its soldiers. As I flipped through it an article caught my eye entitled, "Are you Teaching or Telling."



As I read the article, I was intrigued at how the author was explaining to potential army instructors how to grab and maintain the attention of a class. He likened the lecture, or in our case an interpretive program, to a leaf. Your goal is to start at the stem and make it to the tip of the leaf.

The trouble is that along the way your

audience can be lost down the numerous veins of the leaf. The author attributes this to a few main issues such as the material (program) not being organized or the presentation lacking a coherent pattern, but he stressed that not making a presentation interesting is the main reason for losing the audience down one of those tiny veins.

The goal of a good presenter then is to provide "road blocks" at certain junctures to keep your audience from heading the wrong way, and the author's solution might as well have been written by Freeman Tilden himself. Always ensure you have what he called "interest factors." We would refer to them as interpretive techniques. These can be thought provoking questions (call and response), practical exercises (hands on challenges), audio-visual aides, and demonstrations among many others.

As the author wrote, "Teaching points must be made interesting, they must be made understandable and, in the end, must be put to practice...to insure retention."

This author was writing over sixty years ago to a predominately military audience, but for us as interpreters the same is still

true today. People will take away much more from your programs that allow them to do something, touch something, build or make something, or go somewhere.

The author's conclusions and observations were spot on regarding how we should approach our own environmental and cultural resource programs. We must be sure that we are not losing our audience "in the veins."

Always ask yourself as you plan for a program, just as the author of this article did, "are you teaching or telling?"

Until Next Time,

Happy Programming,

Judd Smith

