



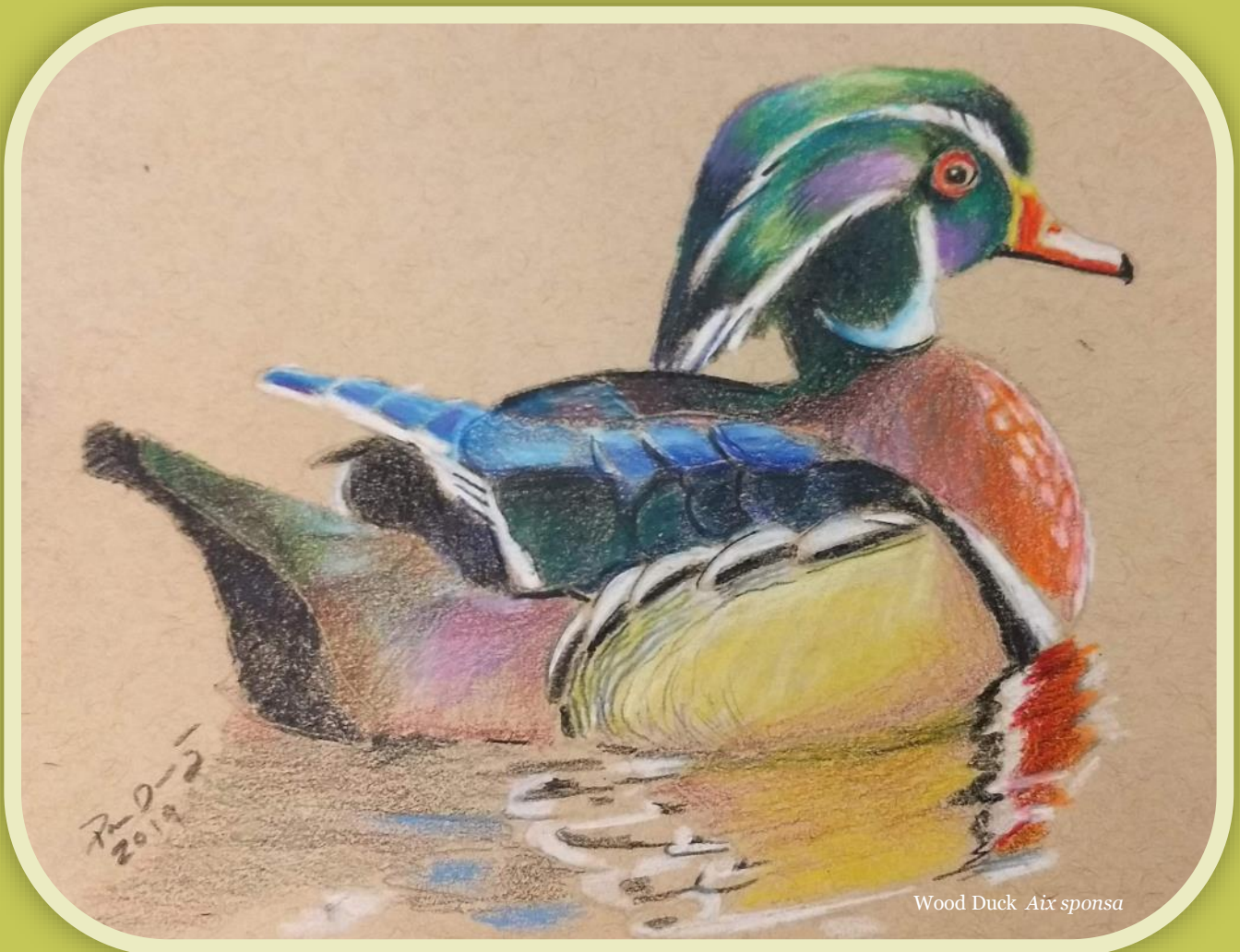
**GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES

# ROADS LESS TRAVELED

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

*Spring 2020*



Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

**Spring 2020**

**Volume 5, Issue 4**

**PRHS Interpretive  
Newsletter  
Personnel**

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## **Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites**



Union troops removing artillery projectiles from Fort McAllister in 1864

# ROADS LESS TRAVELED

## **Interpretive News:**

As interpreters one of our primary goals is to engage our visitors with timely and creative programs. This is especially true when we have resource management projects occurring on our parks and sites. Whether it is prescribed fire, timber management, invasive species removal, native plant restoration, storm clean ups, or any other resource based project, we have a duty to interpret those activities to the public. This helps the visitors and our neighboring landowners understand our processes and procedures related to resource management. Since it is such an important aspect of interpretation, beginning in this issue we will be including a new feature entitled *Far Afield: Happenings in the Resource Management Unit*. In it the Resource Management Unit will highlight projects and activities its members are engaged in around the state to help springboard ideas for interpretive programs on your parks and sites.



Prescribed fire at Panola Mountain State Park



Park Spotlight: Black Rock Mountain

Black Rock Mountain State Park is nestled on the Eastern Continental Divide. The park was established in 1952 and includes 1800 acres. While there are cottages, campsites, and hiking trails, 90% of the park is still undeveloped. Many people don't realize that Black Rock Mountain is the highest state park in Georgia reaching an elevation of 3,640 feet.

Being on the mountain seems far away from the rest of the world. Ruffed grouse walk in the middle of the road, wild turkeys walk the trails, and deer frolic by the iron rangers. Springtime at Black Rock Mountain State Park is exceptionally pleasant with mayapples, trillium, and rhododendron blooming in the cooler temperatures.

For decades, visitors have enjoyed activities on the mountain. Even as the towns around have grown and changed, life on the mountain remains the same, offering visitors and staff alike a respite from the ever-changing world below.

*By: Jessica James, Manager BRM*



## Hooked on Fishing: Angler Gateway Training 2020



On February 25 and 26, 2020 Georgia State Park Rangers participated in an angler training hosted by the DNR Fisheries Management Section of the Wildlife Resource Division at Georgia Veterans and the Go Fish Center in Perry. Over the two-day course, the 18 attendees learned how to teach a fishing class, how to identify fish, how to avoid getting hooked (order barbless hooks), and how to tie knots.

The Fisheries instructors also took attendees out on their electrofishing boats and demonstrated how to electrofish. This technique provides no lasting harm to the fish and is used to monitor and survey fish populations in our lakes and waterways.

On the second day, the rangers assisted Fisheries personnel at the Go Fish Education Center with a school program for 110 third graders, got a behind the

scenes tour of the center, and were able to watch fish being spawned.

This training opportunity provided our rangers with the tools and knowledge to conduct these programs on our sites. Many thanks to the Fisheries biologists, technicians, and other personnel that made this special training a reality.

*By: Jamie Madden  
Park Manager PMT*



## Meet the Interpreters: Ashley Aultman and David Burke, Roosevelt's Little White House Men of Action

David Burke has served as an Interpretive Ranger at the LWH since 2001. Prior to that he held several positions including being a certified instructor with the US Office of Personnel Management and the Internal Revenue Service.

In 2005 David earned "Ranger of the Year" honors for his skill and dedication. In his spare time he has served as President of the Harris County Cattlemen's Association and is an avid researcher, having co-authored the book [Images of America - Warm Springs](#).

Ashley Aultman is the site's other Interpretive Ranger. A 23 year veteran of PRHS, he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelors Degree in History and a Minor in Anthropology from Georgia Southwestern University. He began his career in interpretation with positions at Andersonville NHS and Franklin

D. Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, NY. Before coming to LWH, he served at New Echota and at the Robert Toombs House.

Outside of work Ashley enjoys hiking, kayaking, rafting, visiting other parks and watching foreign language and espionage films.

These two rangers are consummate team players. Many of their programs have won "Most Innovative Programming" awards, and their efforts have also been recognized with several other awards. As veteran interpreters they know how to "do it right." They have worked hard to help Roosevelt's Little White House be recognized as the system's "Most Outstanding Operation" on more than one occasion. The next time you are at the LWH look them up and get a tour. You'll be glad you did.



Ashley Aultman (left) and David Burke (right)

## Interpretation In Strange Times: Parks and Historic Sites eRanger Series of Web Based Programs



For more videos and information check out  
<https://gastateparks.org/eRanger>

For many of us, the month of March marks the end of our slower season and the beginning of peak season which will carry us through Labor Day weekend. Calendars are typically full of upcoming field trips, major special events, and a variety of other programs that our park or site staff put so much effort into planning.

However, the events of March 2020 proved to be uncharted waters for all of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, especially for our front-line interpreters. With school closures and "social distancing," it became clear our traditional means of interpretation were going to have to change if we wanted to continue to engage with our public in meaningful ways.

On Wednesday, March 25, 2020 the eRanger Series launched to the public. It is a collaborative effort between the Interpretive and Marketing Units and our Interpretive Rangers and other interpretive staff. Its goal is to provide Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites' digital visitors with engaging distance learning programming that they can enjoy from their homes, especially during school closures.

As a front-line interpreter, you might be thinking "How can I offer digital programs at my park or historic site?" The good news is that it is easier than you might think. As interpreters we have already done the leg work of researching engaging topics and knowing what our visitors want to learn about. Don't recreate the wheel, you can take programs that you are already offering in person and offer them digitally.

Some of the challenges of digital programming are dealing with technological issues and self-acceptance of our own flaws.

Anytime that modern technology is involved, there are bound to be glitches. Take the time to familiarize yourself with the equipment that you are using to create your digital programs and the platforms that you are utilizing to share them.

A second challenge is self-acceptance. We all understand that there are things about ourselves that we wish that we could change such as, our weight, or how we sound or look on camera. You can help overcome this by practicing your performance and setting up your recording device in such a way that shows you in the best light.

Another way to limit issues with your digital program be sure to follow the guidelines about filming: wearing your uniform properly, avoiding distracting sounds and movements during your recording, and making sure your content is on point and factually accurate.

Above all, it is important to remember that our digital visitors are not judging us by our physical appearance, but rather are grateful for the eRanger Series because it provides them with a way to engage with their favorite places to visit, learn, hike, and camp during this challenging time.

Comments on the website and Facebook pages have been overwhelmingly positive and the Interpretive Unit wants to encourage all parks and sites to become involved in this worthwhile endeavor.

*By: Erica Lanier  
Interpretive Ranger, PMT*





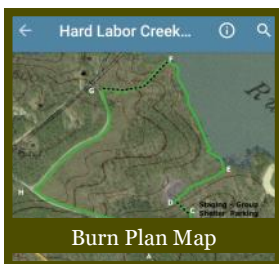
## Far Afield: Happenings in the Resource Management Unit

The beginning of the new year marks the start of the fire season for the PRHS Natural Resource Management Unit (RMU).

Fire is a natural part of Georgia's forests and is important for the growth and reproduction of many of Georgia's species like long-leaf pine, native grasses such as little blue stem, and an assortment of wildflowers. Prescribed burning helps to remove excess vegetation and invasive species which opens up the understory and facilitates native vegetation and grass growth underneath our diverse pine and hardwood canopies. Much of Georgia's wildlife depend on seasonal fire. Gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, and red-cockaded woodpeckers depend on fire-adapted environments to nest and feed. Fox squirrels, many of Georgia's native birds, and the rare pine snake also utilize the open understory that prescribed fire creates.

So how does the RMU go about handling the responsibilities of safely applying fire to our public lands?

It starts with the RMU team creating an environment that makes burning safe for both wildlife and people. While the humidity is down and the vegetation is brown they



prepare the parks planned to be burned for conservation. Rain or shine the RMU crew focuses



Georgia Interagency Burn Team Members

on prepping or removing fire hazards such as fallen dead trees, improving fire breaks, blowing away leaf litter around important park structures, and mapping units so that when its time to burn it can be done with peace of mind.

wildland firefighter training and are passionate about conserving Georgia's forests. They are an essential element to each burn that is executed throughout the season.



PRHS Resource Management Unit team members at HLC

The next phase is executing the burn, and for that the RMU relies on its own in-house team and the help of the Georgia Interagency Burn Team.

The Interagency Burn Team is made up of private, non-profit, and governmental agency personnel. These individuals and volunteers have undergone

During a burn, the crew is split up between those who are watching the fire and surrounding area to make sure everything is safe, and those who are inside the unit igniting. Each job is both rewarding and tiring and requires a lot of cooperation and sharing of resources, information, and expertise

between the groups.

Depending on the size of the units and the needs of the parks, burns can take a few hours or can be all-day affairs. For example, a unit recently burned at Mistletoe State Park was 120 acres in area and contained a diverse amount of flora and fauna whose growth the RMU hoped to promote. In contrast, earlier in the season, the team focused on a small five acre unit at Hard Labor Creek State Park where the primary goal was to promote the growth and maturation of a Long Leaf Pine restoration area.

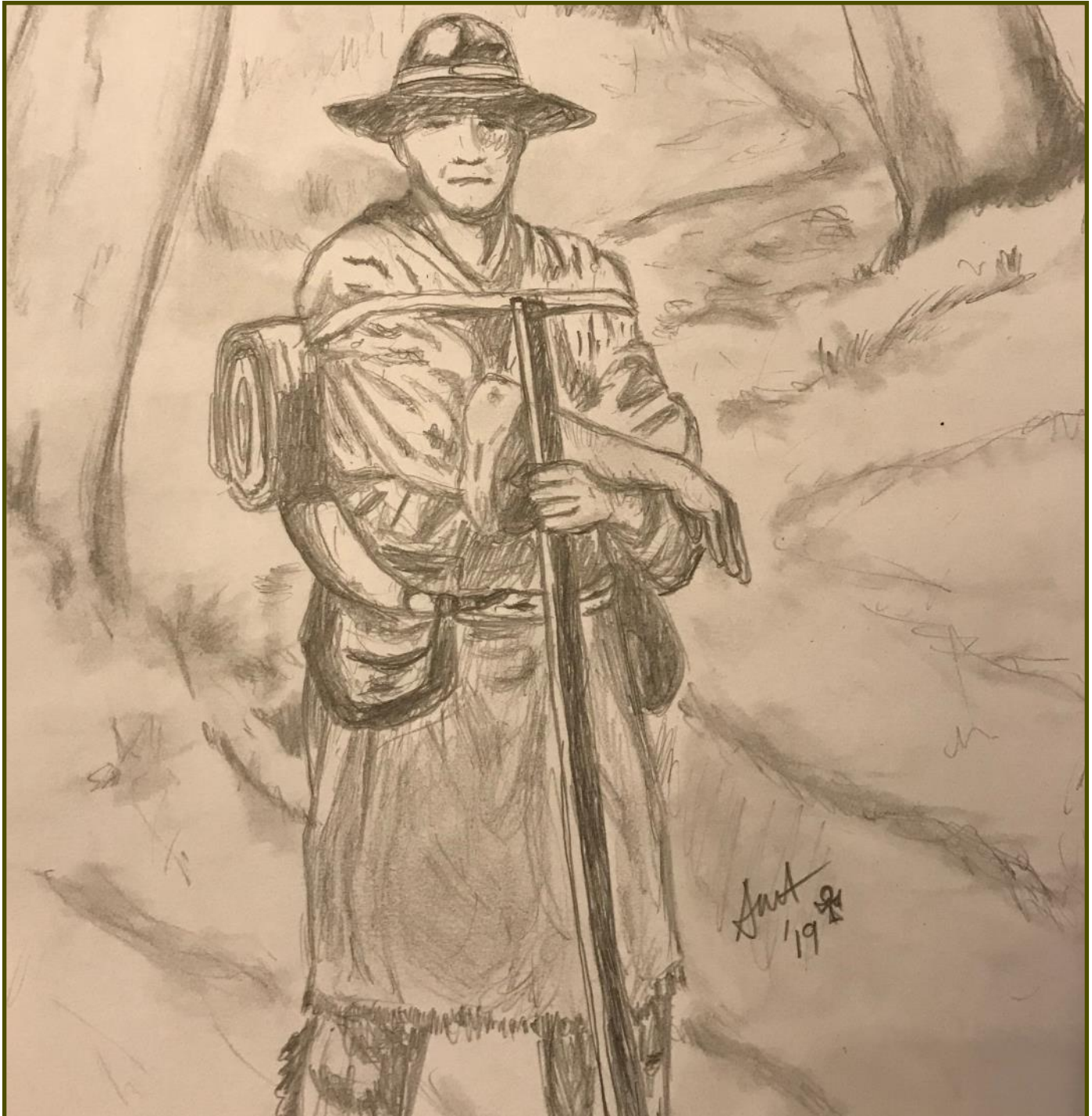
Interpreters can help share the important work being done by the RMU with our site visitors to help encourage understanding of the positive effects fire has on Georgia's parks and sites. This not only aids the Resource Management Unit it also provides a ready source of programs for the public.

*By: Jordan Argrett, Sami Wilson, William Park, RMU Seasonal Resource Team*



Working the engine requires good coordination between team members

## The Naturalist's Easel



*In the Backcountry* –2019–Graphite Pencil on Charcoal Paper

Judd Smith, Artist

This sketch details the dress and equipment that one might see on a late 18th century militia soldier in Georgia's Backcountry. He is wearing a fringed hunting frock typical of the period. He also carries a bed roll along with his powder horn and rifle.

The Backcountry of the 18th century included parts of northeast central Georgia between the Savannah and the Oconee Rivers. It was sparsely populated by Europeans and was the scene of several skirmishes during the American Revolution. The most famous of those was the Battle of Kettle Creek where Patriot forces routed Loyalist militiamen. Among the leaders of the Patriot forces was Elijah Clarke. Clarke's gravesite and a replica 18th century cabin are located at Elijah Clark State Park near Lincolnton. Check out the park at <https://gastateparks.org/ElijahClark>



## Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites

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**gastateparks.org**

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*Connecting people with our state's cultural and natural resources*

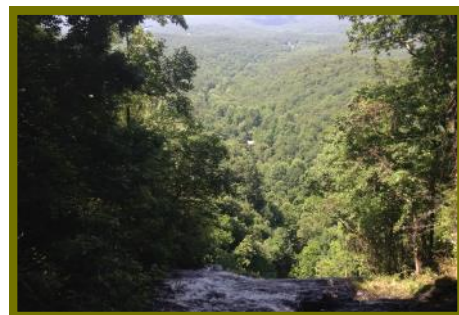
### Mission

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.

View from the top of the falls at Amicalola Falls State Park, 2015



## Parting Thoughts and Takeaways:

How many times have you ever been in the woods, in a historic building, at a waterfall, or on a mountain trail and asked yourself, "I wish this place could talk?" I would offer to you that places, whether natural or cultural, can speak to us and tie us to the land in ways that we sometimes do not always understand. They affect us on a subconscious level that no amount of active interpretation can ever provide. It can be both sublime and profound.

As a historian, a sense of place has always been important to me. I find myself at historic and natural sites thinking about who was here before me. Sometime ago I was at the San Jacinto Battlefield Site in Texas just before they were closing the park. It was in the twilight, or to use an old fashioned term, the gloaming, and I was standing near the place where Sam Houston was wounded and very near the Mexican lines. As I stood there in silence with the wind gently moving the grasses, the place began to speak to me. I could hear the tinkling of canteens and plates being brought out for supper. The breeze carried sounds across two centuries to share those soldiers' experiences with me. It was an inspirational immersive experience and no one but the site itself was talking.

At a recent meeting it was mentioned that tourists today seek an inspirational message at sites they visit. Allow your park's and site's unique senses of place to provide that inspiration. You only need to be a facilitator.

As you plan your tours and other outdoor interpretation think about those areas on your parks that you can let the places themselves talk to the visitors. Then set the stage for the visitor, take a step back, and let the place speak. A quiet minute or two where the visitor can interact in their own way with the site. My guess is that it may be the most emotional part of your entire program and you won't even have said anything.

Another way you can let the place have a voice is by using it as a vehicle to create dialogue. At Hyde Park rangers have started a program of a rocking chair talk on the porch of one of the Roosevelt's cabins. There the rangers lead a discussion and encourage audience members to share their thoughts and feelings about Roosevelt and his legacy. Again, they become facilitators as much as they are interpreters. You can do this at your parks and sites as well. Think about a location that might be a good place to host a dialogue. Prepare some

good leading questions that would open the door to having the visitors share their personal experiences about the site. The rangers at Hyde Park who created this program were amazed at how quickly the audience became active participants and not just attendees.

Maybe you can try something similar to these techniques at your parks and sites. I hope you do.

Until Next Time,

**Happy Programming,**

**Judd Smith**



Another place that speaks -  
Roosevelt's Little White House