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Schuffert's Strides

Newsletter

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Follow along with Robert Schuffert on his recent photographic expeditions

Alabama's Highest Point



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Cheaha State Park

Cheaha State Park - The Pinhoti Trail

On March 16th 2008, Alabama's 30-year old Pinhoti Trail officially joined with the nationally known Appalachian Trail (AT). Pinhoti is the Creek Indian word for "turkey home". The AT previously extended 2,174 miles through 14 states from Mount Katahdin in Maine to Amicalola Falls on Springer Mountain near Dahlonega, Georgia. Years of sustained efforts by the US Forestry Service, Alabama and Georgia conservation agencies and many volunteers led to this historical event.

Traversing the highest peaks of the Appalachian Mountains, the AT is now 2,504 miles in length, requiring about seven months to hike its entire length. Alabama's 136.9 mile Pinhoti Trail begins in Sylacauga, crosses Cheaha State Park, the state's highest point, continues north through the Talladega National Forest and across Dugger Mountain. The trail then goes eastward from the Piedmont area to the Georgia state line. Here, it joins with Georgia's Pinhoti and Benton Mackaye Trails continuing northeasterly to join the AT. Georgia's trail system nears Cave Spring, Rome, Summerville, Lyerly, Calhoun, Lafayette, Dalton, Chatsworth, Ellijay and Blue Ridge. The trail system will soon be extended southward to Flag Mountain in Coosa County, the southernmost peaks of the Appalachian Range. The Alabama Hiking Trail Society (AHTS) (<http://www.alabamatrail.com/>) has been instrumental



in getting the Alabama section of this extension completed and celebrated at their 6th Annual Conference in the Bald Rock Lodge at Cheaha State Park during the weekend event, sponsoring many hiking related activities. I was privileged to be invited to speak at the event and gave a presentation on Hiking & Photography.



During my day long visit, I took these photographs around the park. When I first arrived at 8 am, clouds covering the mountains created a foggy environment and interesting scenery. For a while, the fog was extremely thick, limiting visibility to just several hundred feet. After clearing, the lingering thunderclouds presented a dramatic highlight at the park's overlooks. Saturday morning there were several severe thunderstorm warnings and high winds, but the weather never became too threatening and there was no lightning and very little rain. With the sun briefly breaking in and out of the clouds, a variety of lighting situations were presented during the day.

The Observation Tower is at Alabama's highest point, 2,407 feet above sea level. The handicap accessible overlook, deck and 1/4-mile boardwalk leads to Bald Rock Point. Facilities at Cheaha State Park were constructed during the 1930's by members of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) using stone native to the area.



Bald Rock Point



**Bald Rock Lodge
and boardwalk**

