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ROC Monthly Newsletter

Thanks for being a part of ROC!

Go to our website for our weekly outdoor schedules, information on the ROC Race Series, local trails, and more.

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NEWS



Welcome to all of our new and returning ROC members and sponsors!

Toni Belhu

Daniel du Toit

Joseph Lattimore

Jeff Brookshire

Joe Philyaw

Deborah A Burns

Kyle Hankinson

The money we receive from memberships helps us to continue improving local trails, leading group hikes and river floats, and creating new outdoor programs. Membership is only \$35 for individuals and families, and \$100 for businesses. We also offer multiple sponsorship opportunities for businesses to help expend and enhance recreational opportunities in Rutherford County.

Members get discounts at Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park, Barley's Taproom, Copper Penny, Main Street Coffee, The Scoop, and more.

Click the link below for more details.

[Get Involved](#)



ROC Monthly Meeting

Join ROC for our monthly meeting! We will discuss upcoming outings, trail workdays, and all other ROC news.

When: Tuesday, March 21st at 5:30 pm

Where: Barley's Taproom in Spindale

ROC has a NEW Newsletter just for our 2023 Race Series!



Contact Outdoor Programs Director Gabe Isaac at gabe@rutherfordoutdoor.org to join our Race Series email list.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ROC Hike: Strawberry Gap Trail



Join ROC on an exciting hike on the Strawberry Gap Trail. It was recently opened in September 2022, so it will be the first time ROC has led a hike here! The Strawberry Gap Trail was created as a partnership between the land trusts Conserving Carolina and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.

The section of trail we will be hiking is a 6 mile long out-and-back. At 1,450' of elevation gain, this trail is rated as an B-1. Some unique features of the Strawberry Gap Trail include: stunning panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, rock outcroppings, wildflowers, meadows, native trees and shrubs (including blooming rhododendrons), boulders, and connections to other trails in the Upper Hickory Nut Gorge trail network.

We will summit at the Blue Ridge Pastures' grassy bald (at an elevation of 3,760'!) and go back the way we came. This trail also features a connection to the Trombatore Trail- taking this route (from Blue Ridge Pastures to the Trombatore trailhead) would add ~2.2 miles one way. This is a great option to add onto ROC's hike for folks that prefer a longer distance hike.

Like many trails ROC leads hikes on, the Strawberry Gap Trail is located on

private property. For more information, including a map and trail rules, visit [Conserving Carolina's website](#). This hike will be led by ROC's Trails Coordinator, Brenna Johnson.

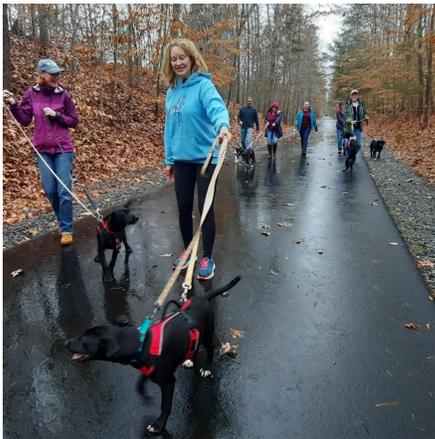
When: Saturday, March 4th at 10:00 am

Where: Strawberry Gap Trailhead Parking (Google Maps)

The carpool meeting location is the parking lot of the Rutherford Co. Administrative Offices (289 N. Main St in Rutherfordton). We will meet there at 9:00 am on 3/4.

You MUST RSVP for this event. Contact Brenna, our Trails Coordinator, at trails@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call/text 828-351-4068 to RSVP or for more information.

ROC Outing: HFAR Dog Walk



Come walk the Thermal Belt Rail Trail with one of the shelter dogs from Heart of the Foothills Animal Rescue in Rutherford County. HFAR is a local no-kill shelter and has many dogs that would love to go for a walk on the trail with you. Carriers and leashes will be provided. You must be at least 16 years old to walk a dog but all ages are welcome to attend. Dogs will be assigned on a first come, first serve basis in the order of RSVPs. The dog walk will be

led by ROC's Outdoor Programs Director, Gabe Isaac.

When: Saturday, March 4th at 10:00 am

Where: Heart of the Foothills Animal Rescue (380 US-221, Rutherfordton, NC 28139)

You MUST RSVP for this event. Contact Brenna, our Trails Coordinator, at trails@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call/text 828-351-4068 to RSVP or for more information.

ROC Outing: March Bird Walk at the River Bend Preserve

Calling all bird enthusiasts to join ROC at the River Bend Preserve for an early spring birding walk!

Participants will learn some bird identification techniques such as

bird calls/songs and physical characteristics. We will try to spot some winter birds before they migrate. Some species we will be looking out for include the Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Golden Crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and the Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker. Binoculars are highly recommended in order to get an up close view of the birds.



This walk will be led by ROC's Board President, Jerry Stensland, an avid birder.

When: Thursday, March 2nd at 8:00 am

Where: River Bend Preserve
(Directions will be sent to RSVPs)

ROC Hike: Little Bradley Falls Trail



Join ROC on a hike to Little Bradley Falls in the Green River Gamelands near Saluda, NC.

At 2.0 miles and 164' of elevation gain, this trail is rated as a D-4. The grade is fairly steep at the beginning with small elevation changes throughout the rest of the trail. Certain parts of the trail

are technical, with a small boulder field and several downed trees to traverse, so younger hikers may need assistance. There are two creek crossings, but they can be easily managed by kids and dogs. The water in the creek is mostly shallow and slow-moving.

The payoff for this short distance is amazing. Little Bradley Falls is a beautiful, 50' high waterfall with 3 cascades. There is a large pool at its base, which makes the falls a popular swimming spot during the warmer months. In late March, it will hopefully be warm enough for some wading. We can also look for some macroinvertebrates, such as the freshwater left coiled snail and crawfish. This hike will be led by ROC's Trails Coordinator, Brenna Johnson.

[Click here](#) for more information from our website, including a printable map and driving directions.

When: Saturday, March 18th at 10 am

Where: Little Bradley Falls Trailhead (Google Maps)

The carpool meeting location is the parking lot of the Rutherford Co. Administrative Offices (289 N. Main St in Rutherfordton). We will meet there at 9:00 am on 3/18.

You **MUST** RSVP for this event. Contact Brenna, our Trails Coordinator, at trails@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call/text 828-351-4068 to RSVP or for more information.

We're using a new trail rating system!

Trail Rating Code Key

Distance	Elevation
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D = less than 3 miles	1 = + 1200'
C = 3.1 to 5 miles	2 = 900 to 1200'
B = 5.1 to 8 miles	3 = 600 to 900'
A = 8.1 to 12 miles	4 = less than 600'
AA = 12.1 +	



EARLY EXPLORER'S CLUB MARCH MEETING: ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15TH AT 5:30 PM
SPINDALE HOUSE



Bring your kiddos to learn about various animals' physical and behavioral adaptations through hands-on activities.

When: Wednesday, March 15th 5:30-6:30 pm

Where: Spindale House (119 Tanner St)

We will play a game where we guess "What Animal Am I?" based on questions about adaptations. Kids will be assigned charismatic species like the tiger, fox, and zebra to learn how to distinguish between different adaptations.

We will discuss the differences in behavior and appearance of grizzly bears, black bears, and polar bears.

We will also cover topics like the physical and behavioral adaptations some animals use to protect themselves from predators, like mimicry and camouflage, how animals store their resources in extreme environments, and how some animals use their appearance to attract mates!

The students will play the games "Bat and Moth" and "Poison Frog", to help them learn about the adaptations echolocation, warning coloration, and poison.

For our final activity, the kids will be tasked with creating new, completely original animals with unique adaptations. Using fun crafting

supplies like crayons, glitter glue, and googly eyes, kids will create fantastical animals and explain how their adaptations make them advantageous in their environment.

Early Explorer's Club programming is targeted at kids ages 5-12.

To get more information, to RSVP, or to sign-up for our Early Explorer's email list to receive updates, contact our Trails Coordinator, Brenna Johnson, at trails@rutherfordoutdoor.org, or 828-351-4068.

February Volunteer Days



Saturday, March 4th:

Heart of the Foothills Dog Walk: 10 am - 12 pm

Come walk shelter dogs with us! Expect to walk about 2 miles on mostly level terrain.

Thursday, March 16th:

Volunteer Information Session: 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Come learn about all of the latest volunteer opportunities with ROC, including how to become a Trail Ambassador and a River Steward!

Thursday, March 23rd:

Dittmer-Watts Nature Trails Workday: 9 am - 11 am

We will be improving drainage on rolling grade dips, filling in eroded areas, and removing downed trees. Expect to walk at least 1 mile.

Thursday, March 23rd:

Volunteer Information Session: 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Come learn about all of the latest volunteer opportunities with ROC, including how to become a Trail Ambassador and a River Steward!

Tuesday, March 28th:

Buffalo Creek Park Trail Workday: 8 am - 1 pm

We will be improving drainage, removing downed trees, and filling in eroded areas of the trails. Expect to walk at least 2 miles.

Date TBA:

Isothermal Community College Trail Workday: 9 am - 11 am

We will be removing downed trees, cutting back overgrowth, and picking up trash. Expect to walk about 2 miles.

Contact Brenna, our Trails Coordinator, atrails@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call/text 828-351-4068 to RSVP or for more information.

UPDATES

ROC's Annual Ice Hike



Thank you to everyone who came to ROC's annual Ice Hike on the Blue Ridge Parkway! We had a great time exploring the parkway on foot, stopping at overlooks, looking at amazing ice formations, admiring mountain ranges, and spending quality time with friends. Some notable views included: the East Fork Overlook, frozen pools of water surrounded by large icicles, big boulders from a rockslide blocking the road, a beautiful river, several giant walls of ice, craggy rock formations, a meandering waterfall, and the famous Looking Glass Rock.

[Ice Hike Album on Flickr](#)

ROC Hike: Spence Ridge Trail



Thank you to everyone who came to ROC's guided hike on the Spence Ridge Trail. The weather was beautiful and we had a great time hiking to the Linville River!

[Spence Ridge Album on Flickr](#)

Trail Building with the Carolina Climbers Coalition



Leading up to the Rumble in Lake Lure, Gabe and Brenna assisted the Carolina Climbers Coalition with the construction of a new (soon-to-be) 1.4 mile trail in Buffalo Creek Park. It provides access to a stunning boulder field north of the BCP Loop trail. [Visit CCC's website](#) for updates on future workdays to continue building this awesome trail!

[CCC Workday Album on Flickr](#)

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN ROC

Volunteer Opportunities



Volunteering is a great way to build skills, meet people, and give back to the community all while having fun. We invite and encourage individuals and groups of all backgrounds and ages to get involved and help grow a stronger community.

ROC offers many types of volunteer opportunities throughout the year with varying levels of involvement and physical activity. Our volunteer opportunities include trail projects, fundraising events, festivals, group outings, clean-ups, and more.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities, contact Gabe Isaac at gabe@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call 828-351-3235.

Trail Boss and River Steward Programs

ROC needs Trail Bosses for the ICC Trails in Spindale. If you are interested, please contact us and we will get you started!



- We need people like you to become trail bosses and river stewards for our local trails and river system.
 - Trail Bosses walk their section of trail at least once a month, report any issues they see, and help keep their section clean.
 - River Stewards float their river section once a month and report downed trees and other obstacles that need to be addressed. There is a River Stewards meeting held on the 2nd Thursday of each month to discuss river improvements and plan future clean-ups.
- If you are interested in learning more about becoming a trail boss or river steward, contact Gabe Isaac at gabe@rutherfordoutdoor.org or 828-351-3235.
- Click Here for more information on Rutherford County trails.

Trail Ambassador Program

If you are out enjoying the Thermal Belt Rail Trail, look out for our fantastic group of volunteers who are walking, running, and biking the trail to assist other users. If you have any questions or concerns about the trail or local information, a Trail Ambassador would be happy to help!

Just look for the bright green shirts, like Steve and Betty are wearing, to ask questions on where to stop for lunch, where the nearest bike repair station is located, or anything else you are looking to do!

- If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Trail Ambassador, contact Gabe Isaac at gabe@rutherfordoutdoor.org or call 828-351-3235.
- Click Here for more information on Rutherford County trails.



Rutherford Outdoor Coalition

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828-351-3235

Contact Us

