

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

It will probably not be news to many Wilson Club members that your President has a considerable degree of enthusiasm in matters pertaining to the Southern Appalachian Highlands. It is to me, therefore, a source of great gratification that the Club will soon be meeting, for the second time in three years, in this region of endless fascinations. Those who know the Great Smoky Mountains will need no urging to attend; those who will be coming for the first time have a rewarding experience in store.

Rich in scenic, historic, and biotic values, the Great Smokies are a fitting climax to the Appalachian system. Upon thousands of acres of mountain slopes the original forest is, perhaps, the finest deciduous stand in any mid-latitude area of the earth's surface. At the highest summits is the extreme southeastern outpost of boreal spruce-fir. In the foothills Yellow-throated Warblers nest, and Chuck-will's-widows call at dusk. Only a few miles away on the crests are Olive-sided Flycatchers, Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Winter Wrens.

For those bird students who look also at other vertebrates, the region is rewarding. The Smokies can claim a longer list of lungless salamanders than any other region, and the handsome red-cheeked Jordan's Salamander has been found nowhere else. Bears are abundant, and may be seen along the trails or at picnic and camping areas. Native Brook Trout and other cold-water fishes are found in the tumbling mountain streams.

From the breakfast table in Gatlinburg the visitor may look up an unbroken slope to the myrtle-clad summit of Mount Leconte five thousand feet above. Cars may be driven to within one-half mile of the top of Clingman's Dome, highest point in the range. Two miles beyond this parking area is Andrews Bald, one of the grassy openings whose presence in the Southern Highlands has aroused great ecological interest and controversy. The Appalachian Trail follows the highest ridge, and along it hikers may visit many scenic areas.

Late April is a season of blossoms in the mountains. On lower slopes spring will be well advanced, and its succession may be traced in reverse as one climbs. We shall be too early for the rhododendrons, but others of the heaths will be opening. Redbud, serviceberry, flowering dogwood, silverbell, and other showy plants should be blooming at some level on the mountains.

By no means least among the region's attractions are the people and their ways of living. For two centuries they were isolated, and, with low incomes, had to depend upon home crafts and arts. Some of these crafts persist. Handmade articles, useful and beautiful, are marketed in Gatlinburg, and there are still a few producing handicraft artists. On the eastern slope is the Cherokee Indian reservation, where traditional basketry is still a tribal craft.

This will be the first Wilson Club meeting in one of our national parks. Here we may see at work the program of preserving our forests, waters, wildlife, and other wilderness values. We are privileged to share in this great heritage.

MAURICE BROOKS