

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Birding at Ochlawaha Bog

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The dry, late-winter brush covering the field was several feet high as we walked across, side-by-side, looking for birds. Then, with startling suddenness, a bird shot out of the brush, flying for several yards before settling back down to earth.

It was a woodcock, a gamebird, and for the knowing observer, her flush gave away the existence of her nest, hidden on the ground and holding a pair of eggs.

The site was a treat regardless, but making the find even better was the place where it happened – Ochlawaha Bog. Just X years ago, Ochlawaha Bog was a farm field whose waters had been ditched to move them quickly into nearby Mud Creek. However, thanks to many, including the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and the N.C. Plant Conservation Program, Ochlawaha Bog was the site of a restoration effort to restore the farm field to wetland. One of the initial successes was last year's flourishing of bunched arrowhead, and endangered plant.

Now, wildness is beginning to reclaim the field, as brush rises six or seven feet high in places. The bird survey, the site's first, turned up 29 species, including numerous songbirds and three species of game birds, including wood duck, woodcock, and snipe. The bird numbers were encouraging, and biologists expect them to increase as spring migrants soon begin coming through.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.