

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Charges of trafficking in ginseng

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

One of my oldest daughter's first camping trips was to the Cosby section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was a delightful weekend, early in the season before the campground had become crowded. As a gateway to the Smokies, Cosby is a little off the beaten path and the area definitely locks the commercial development of Gatlinburg or Cherokee, offering up a far more subdued experience with low-key groceries and tourist offerings perhaps a little reminiscent of an earlier age in mountain tourism. However, life in Cosby may not have been as tranquil as it appeared.

In late August, a Cosby couple was arrested by agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and U. S. Marshals Service after the couple was indicted by a federal grand jury.

In addition to drug and firearm charges, one of the couple is charged with illegally trafficking in American ginseng in violation of the Lacey Act, a century-old federal law enacted to combat illegal trafficking in wildlife, fish and plants. He's charged with trafficking in both ginseng taken in violation of Tennessee state law as well as ginseng taken illegally from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in violation of federal law. The indictment alleges that he conducted his criminal activities from the Park Entrance Grocery in Cosby, often trading oxycodone for ginseng and firearms.

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