

#### PROTECTING THE MOUNTAIN'S BEAUTY

The north ridge trail (formerly County Road 1522) and the south ridge trail are strictly for hiking. Motorized vehicles are prohibited on these areas in order to protect the landscape, the soil, and the vegetation.

Do not cut live trees for firewood or any other use.

Collection of plants or wildlife is prohibited. Please help preserve this area in its natural state for everyone to enjoy.



Blooming Mountain Laurel along the South Ridge Trail.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE SOUTHERN REGION

Southern Region - 1982

G3902\_M3 1982.45



South face of Whiteside as seen from Whiteside Cove Road

#### GEOLOGY

Whiteside Mountain stands as a landmark along the eastern continental divide. It rises more than 2,100 feet from the valley floor to the summit, to an elevation of 4,930 feet. Both the north and south faces contain magnificent, sheer cliffs ranging from 400 to 750 feet in height. These cliffs were formed from metamorphic rock commonly called Whiteside granite.

This rock, a gneiss, contains a high content of feldspar, quartz, and mica, along with such minerals as pyrite and rare monazite.

Due to the weathering and drying effects of wind and sunlight, the cliffs on the south side have little vegetation. Their blue-gray color is due to the natural color of the rock showing through. The very noticeable white streaks that decorate this side of the Mountain are feldspar and quartz.

The North face, which receives less sunlight and more moisture has a darker appearance due to the mosses and lichens that are able to grow in this more favorable environment.

#### VEGETATION

The vegetation on Whiteside represents two distinct types of plants communities (ecosystems). One is the forest. At one time, a concentration of both oak and chestnut existed here. The chestnut blight (a disease), which struck in the early 1900's destroyed all the large chestnut trees. Although chestnut sprouts are abundant in the area, they seldom reach more than three inches in diameter before dying. Now the oaks are dominant, particularly northern red oak. Also commonly found in the Whiteside forest are: Fraser's magnolia, black birch, yellow birch, striped maple, and witch-hazel.

The second ecosystem exists in the rock outcrops along the cliff's edges and along trails where sunlight reaches the lower levels of vegetation. Here grows an abundance of wild plants and shrubs — flowering and non-flowering — some rare, all beautiful. The common shrubs include rhododendron (also known as Rosebay), mountain laurel (also known as ivy), and flame azalea. Common smaller plants include false lily of the valley, several species of trillium, summer blueets, and wild strawberry.

## Whiteside Mountain

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Mountains: National Forest  
North Carolina



## Whiteside Mountain

Whiteside Mountain, located between Highlands and Cashiers, North Carolina, is a unique part of the Nantahala National Forest. The mountain offers visitors a chance to enjoy the beauty and solitude of the forest, and spectacular views from a high ridge top.

The Mountain has had a colorful past. The Indians knew it as the "sitting down place" because they camped and rested there during travels through the area. Evidence indicates that Spanish explorers also visited the mountain as they passed through this part of the country.

Later, a private corporation purchased the land and used it as a tourist attraction complete with its own Post Office at the summit. Shuttle buses carried people to the peak and back over a road built for that purpose.

In 1974, the Forest Service acquired the land and set it aside for public use. Now the road is closed to motorized vehicles; foot traffic only is permitted. Visitors hike all or part of the 2.0 mile loop trail that goes to the top and back.



A hikers view from the summit

The Whiteside Mountain Trail is designated a National Recreation Trail and is a component of the National Trail System established by PL 90-543.

