

Outdoor Life: Fall activities abound

By ALVIN RICHARDSON



Even though the dog days of summer are still in front of us we yearn for cooler temperatures and it's a good time to start planning some outings for later in the year. The months of October and November offer beautiful, comfortable weather and it's a great time of year to get away from your desk and out of the house to enjoy what the outdoors has to offer. Today we'll give an overview of some of these activities and we'll take up some of these topics in detail. For now just think about these possibilities and then forge ahead with the planning stage.

When the leaves change in North Georgia you and the family can take advantage of this spectacular scenic wonderland. The typical peak is late October but the brilliant red, yellows and oranges will show up even earlier. This annual spectacle will be on display into the first half of November. Don't miss it. Some of the most popular places to soak up this scenery are

Amicalola Falls, Tallulah Gorge, Vogel State Park, Black Rock Mountain, Cloudland Canyon and Unicoi State Park. You can go to www.GeorgiaStateParks.org/Leafwatch for advice on where and when to find the best colors at Georgia's state parks. Additionally there is a web cam that shows the mountain side of Black Rock Mountain State Park located near Dillard, Georgia. Later in the fall the parks in Central and South Georgia can put on quite a display as well. A couple of good bets are George L. Smith State Park and the brand new Chattahoochee Bend State Park.

As you shuffle through all your outdoor options that are currently available don't forget about hiking. Georgia is full of places to hike, the most famous of which is the Appalachian Trail. When the leaves changing it's an opportune time to hit the trail.

Along with the Leaf Watch there are numerous activities planned at Georgia's state parks in the next couple of months. Here are a few samples.

In North Georgia at Cloudland Canyon State Park near the town of Rising Fawn there are hayrides and campfires each Saturday afternoon in November. Call 706-867-4050 for information.

If you prefer to recreate in South Georgia there are opportunities there as well. There is the Sunset Tour at Stephen C. Foster State Park near Fargo in November. This is a close up look at Billy's Lake in the Okefenokee Swamp. The sights and sounds of one of nature's last great swamplands is a feast for the senses and might even send chill up your spine when the red eyes of alligators are spotted. The tour usually costs about \$15 to \$20 and the number is 912-637-5274.

Also worth checking out in South Georgia is the Canoe trip to Lewis Island. This is an overnight trip that begins at Fort King George Historic Site and includes canoes, paddles and life jackets. You will have to bring your own food and any other supplies you need. Cost is around \$65 and it's advisable to register in advance. Call 912-437-4770 for details.

If you want to enjoy the outdoor scenery and do some hunting there's a great opportunity to do that as well. Firearms season for white tailed deer will open in October statewide and it is one of the most popular outdoor activities in Georgia. The season typically lasts through early January in the Northern Zone and through mid-January in the Southern Zone.

If wing shooting is more your style the second round of dove season opens in early September will conclude in mid-October followed by the final portion of the season that begins in November and runs through early January.

Those of you who prefer hitting the lakes and ponds are probably foaming at the mouth at the prospect of fall fishing. The fish get frisky and the bass and crappie are there for the taking.

The list of things to do outside just goes on and on. Biking is a popular activity and camping in the fall is hard to beat. The temperature will be just right for a fire on your campsite and as mentioned earlier our state parks are brimming over with cool stuff to do.

With all these choices it may be hard to decide which one to do first. My advice is to get out there and take advantage of as many as you can in those pleasantly cool months. If the temptation arises to watch a football game just do like I do. Tape it and watch it after the sun goes down.