

Chattooga River Trail Upper Section - Trip Log

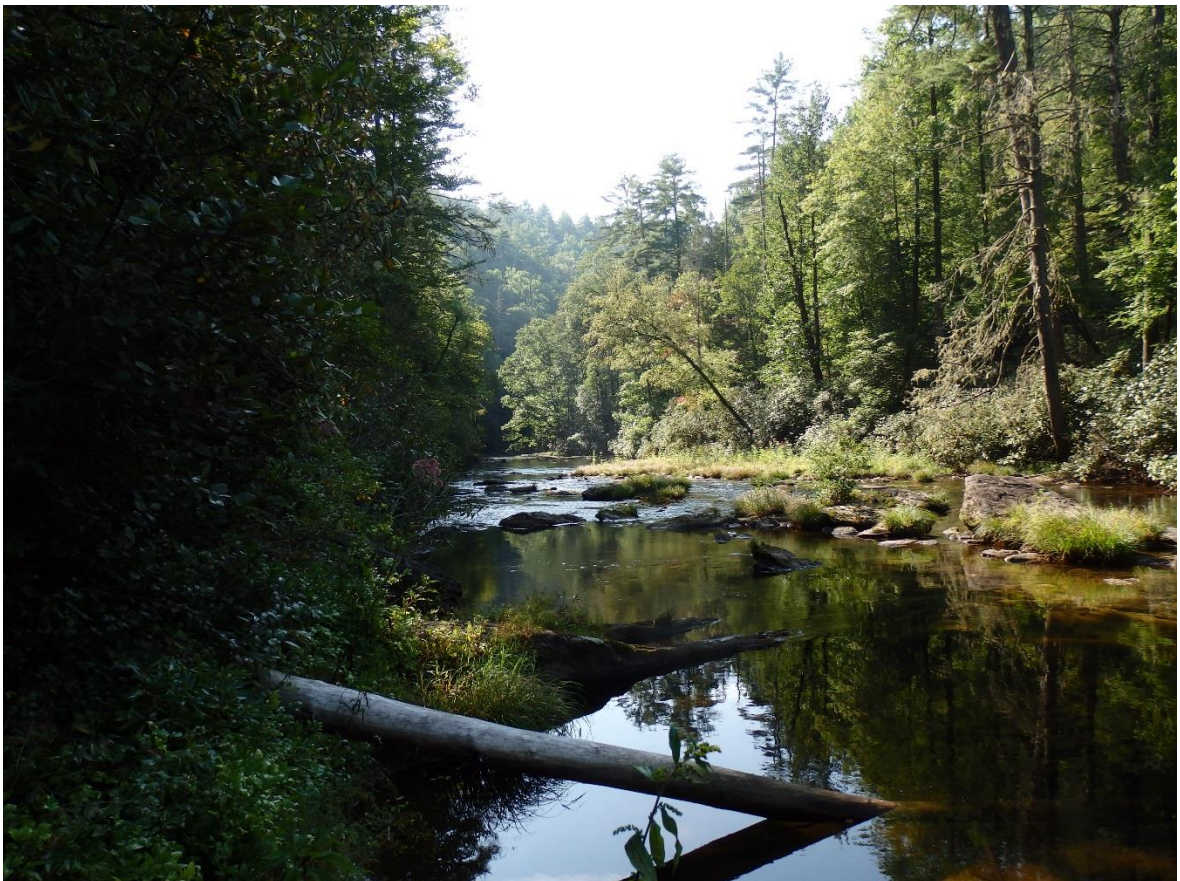
Directions to Trail Head: From Highlands N.C., take Horse Cove Road 4.7 miles to Whiteside Cove Road. Turn left on Whiteside Cove Road and proceed approximately 3.0 miles to the marked trailhead on the right.

Directions to Trail End: From Highlands N.C., take Hwy 28 south for 14.2 miles to the parking area located just prior to crossing the bridge over the Chattooga River.

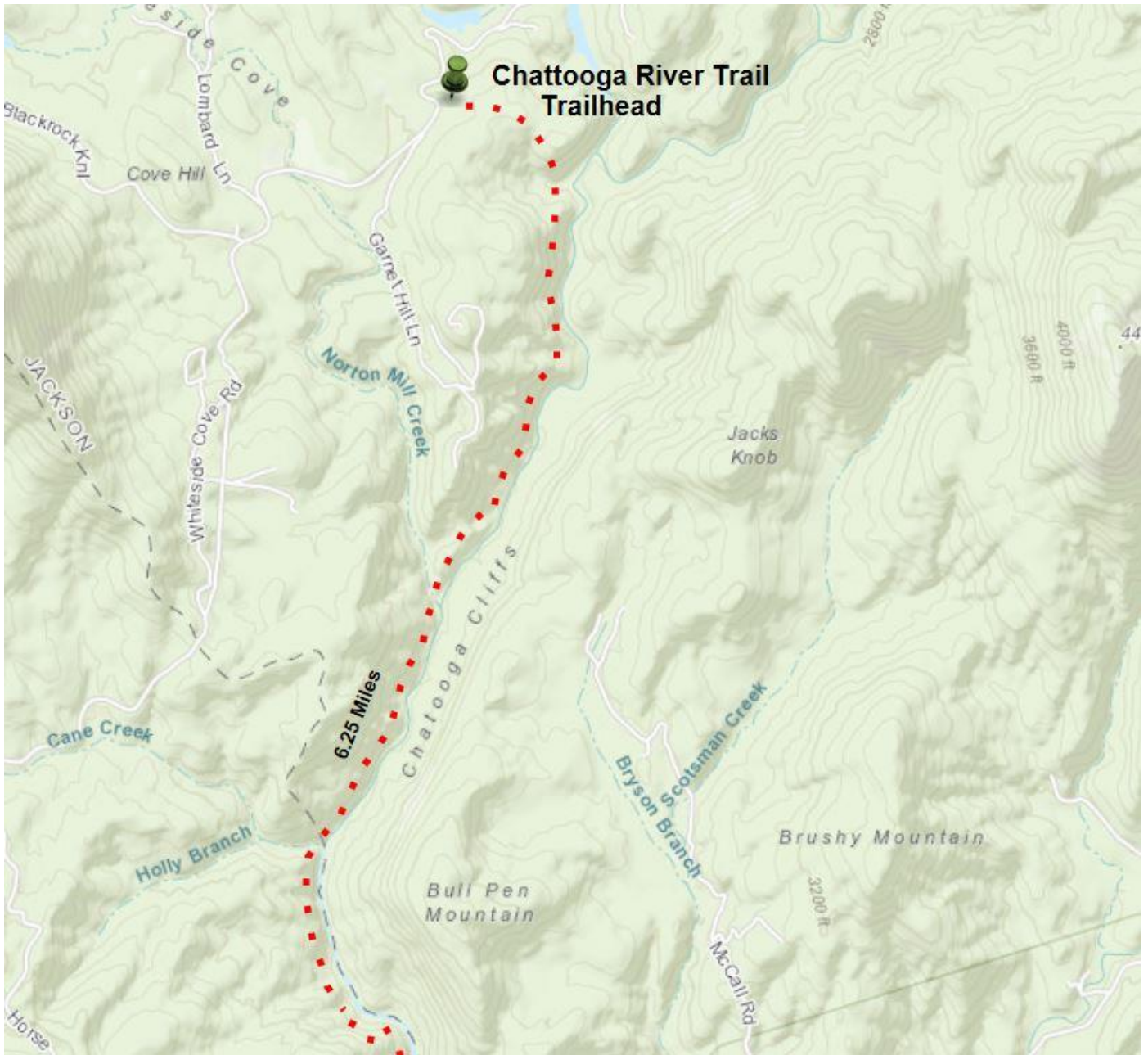
Day 1 – Friday, August 28, 2014

Trailhead on Whiteside Cove Road to Junction of Ellicott Rock Trail and Chattooga River

10.25 Miles (approximately)



Day 1 Trail Map – Part 1



The Madhatter and Doc Livingston started the morning by leaving their car at the parking area on the Georgia side of the Chattooga River at the Hwy 28 Bridge, the end of the upper section of the Chattooga River Trail (CRT). Doc is fortunate to have friends in Highlands, North Carolina who picked them up and took them to a restaurant for fancy coffee. Next was a tour of his friend's beautiful home in Horse Cove not far from the trailhead. Not a bad view from the front porch.



Front Porch View in Horse Cove

Whew, what a rough day it had been up to that point! After finally remembering what they were there to do, the hikers were dropped off at the trailhead on Whiteside Cove Road.

From the trailhead (2,825 ft) they hiked about 0.5 miles before getting their first glimpse of the Chattooga River (2,600 ft), which was not much more than a small creek due to the proximity of its headwaters just a few miles upstream. After paralleling the river for a while, they entered a large clearing where the river poured over a small cascade and into a pool, perfect for a cooling off swim on such a hot sunny day and Doc plunged in. The Hatter exhibited his usual squeamish distain for cold water and managed only a knee-high wade.

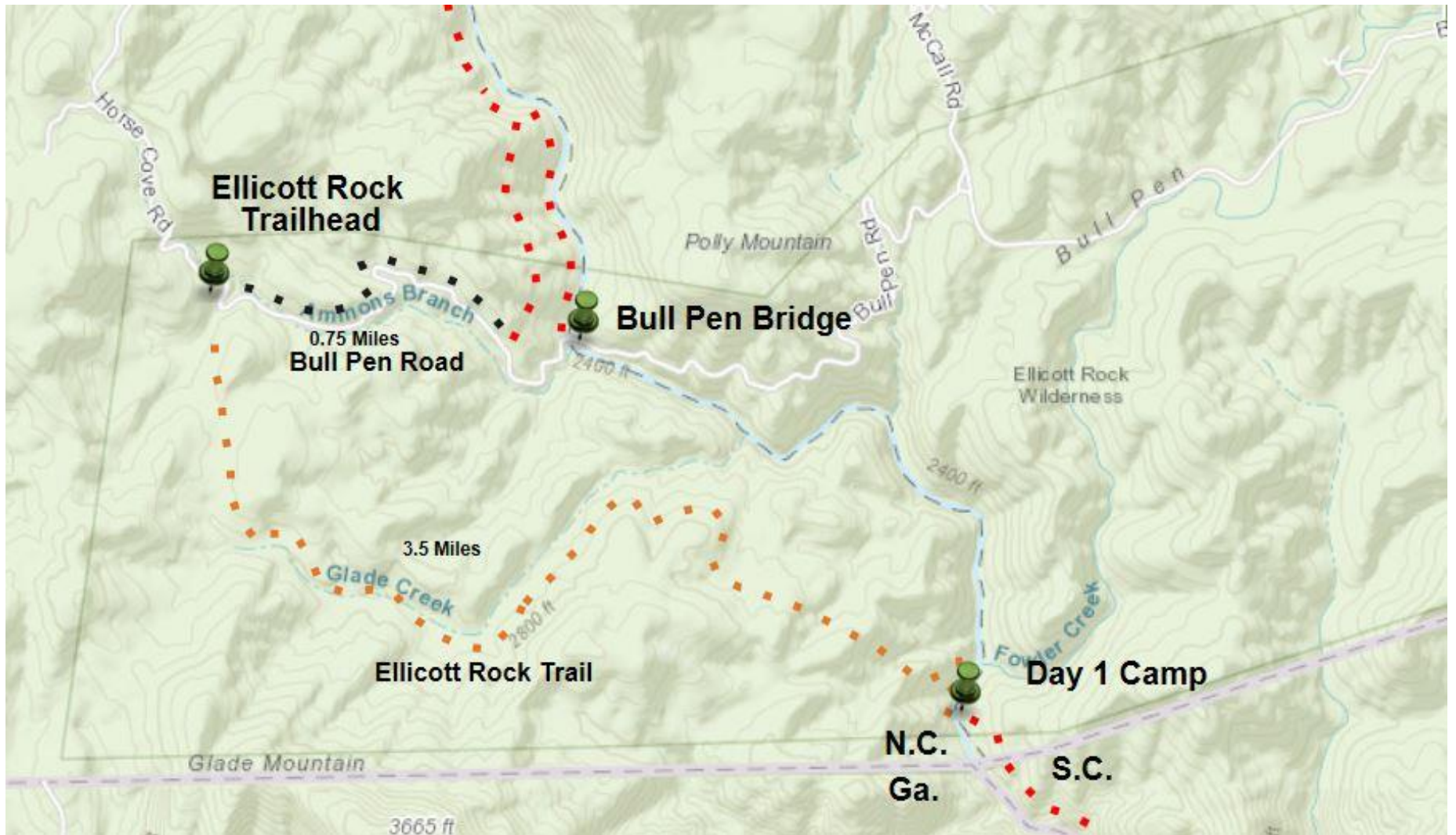


Steel Bridge over a Chattooga Tributary

They shared the pool with a big snake (Copperhead maybe) that was sunning itself on a rock. Doc toyed with the notion of sneaking it into the Hatter's backpack, but thought better of it. Practical jokes of that magnitude should wait until at least the second day. The trail stayed fairly close to the river but sometimes climbed to as much as a hundred feet above it.

The trail crossed a tributary on a very substantial steel bridge. Some serious overachievers went

Day 1 Trail Map – Part 2





An Encounter with one of the Chattooga Locals

to a lot of trouble to haul all that metal so far in from the nearest road. Another highlight was the massive rock overhangs in a couple of places that made for treacherous footing and some really fun rock scrambles.

At approximately 6 miles, the trail split with the left fork going about a half mile to the Bull Pen Road Bridge over the Chattooga. They took the right fork which put them out on Bull Pen Road about a quarter mile up from the river. Take the left fork if you've not seen the bridge (2,382 ft). It's an impressive sight and a popular place for

swimmers and a starting point for day hikers. This 6.25 mile segment from the bridge to the trailhead is one of Doc's favorite trails and it's not to be missed, even if you only have time to day hike it. It has moderate ups and downs and is not particularly strenuous.



Bull Pen Bridge over the Chattooga River

Chattooga River where the CRT reappears. The trail appeared to have been lightly traveled and was in desperate need of some serious chainsaw work to remove the dozens of trees of all shapes and sizes that were down across the trail. Bulling

The CRT inexplicably dead ends at the Bull Pen bridge before it picks up again several miles downstream. To deal with this they took Bull Pen Road, which was paved, for about 0.75 miles of moderate uphill walking, gaining about 500 ft of elevation before reaching the Ellicott Rock Trail (ERT) on the left (2,871 ft).

The ERT started out with some moderate uphill climbing but then settled down to descending over 700 feet for most of its 3.5 miles back down to the



Ellicott Rock Trailhead on Bull Pen Road



One of the all-too-Common Blow Downs on the Ellicott Rock Trail

through blow downs is strenuous work with a backpack and soon Doc and the Hatter were feeling like a couple of exhausted giant chipmunks as they scrambled over, under, and through the trees. Around 6:30 pm they finally reached the end of the trail and were back at the Chattooga River and the CRT (2,156 ft)

There was a small clearing on the west side of the river just large enough for their tents. They dropped their packs at this spot and wandered over to the river

to have a look. Out of the corner of his eye, Doc saw the Hatter begin to frantically spin like a whirling dervish before making a mad dash into the river. As Doc struggled to process this odd behavior, several simultaneous stabs of pain at very places on his body had him gyrating and dashing right on the Hatter's heels. Seems the Hatter was standing directly on top of a yellow jacket nest and while he received the brunt of their displeasure, about 15 stings, Doc collected significant collateral damage. They submerged in the river and let the cold water put out the fires on their skin.

Later, after taking care of bathing, cooking, and eating, they lounged around a fire in the darkness joking about what a dangerous, hostile place this was with its copperheads, blow downs, and yellow jackets and, since this was the Deliverance River, the potential for banjo-toting hillbillies lurking in the forest with bad intent.



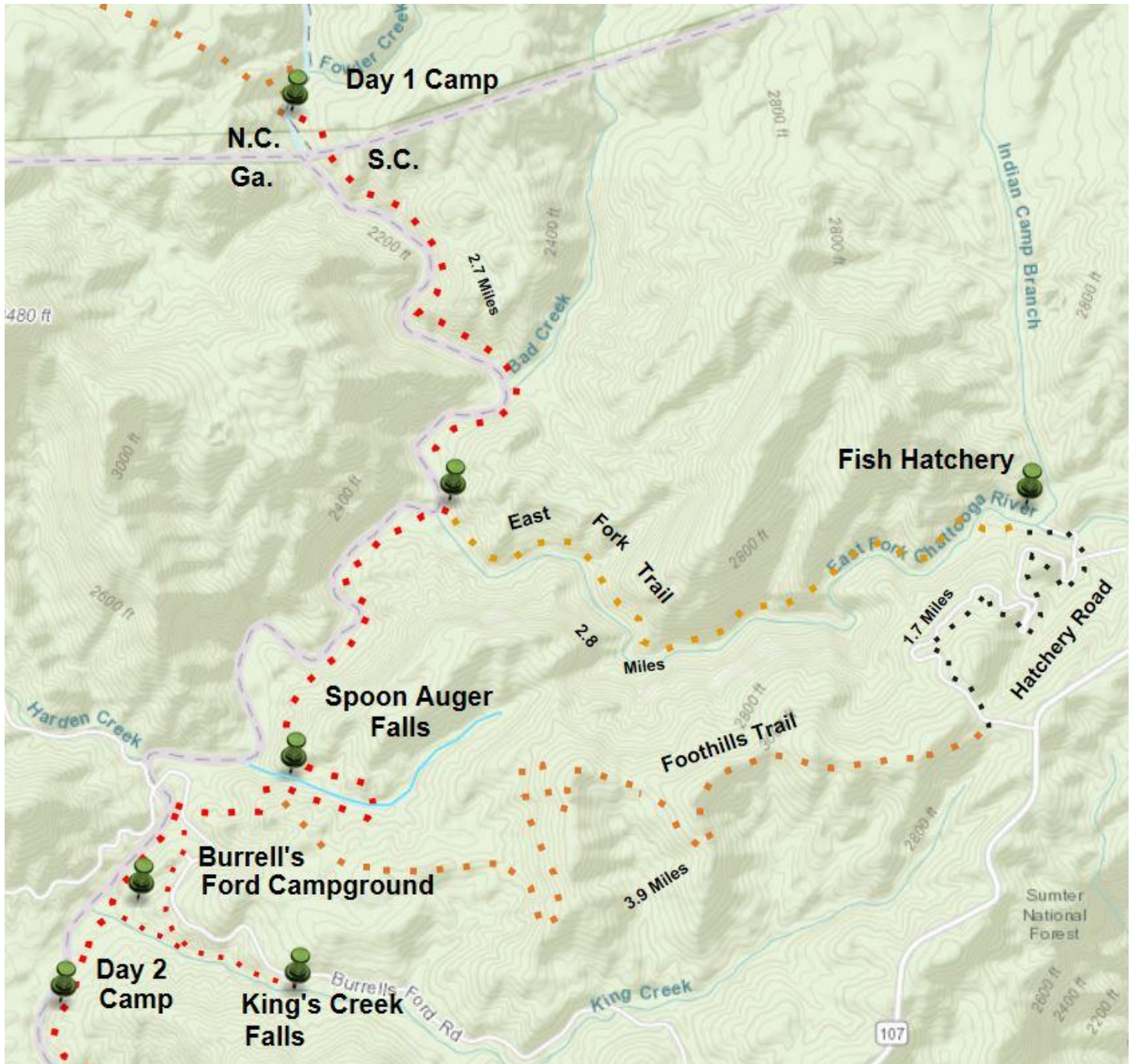
Forget Water Levels - what about Copperheads, Blow Downs, and Yellow Jackets?

Day 2 – Saturday, August 29, 2014

Ellicott Rock Trail/Chattooga River Junction to Burrell's Ford Campground via the Fish Hatchery/Foothills Trail loop

11.1 miles (approximately)

Day 2 Trail Map

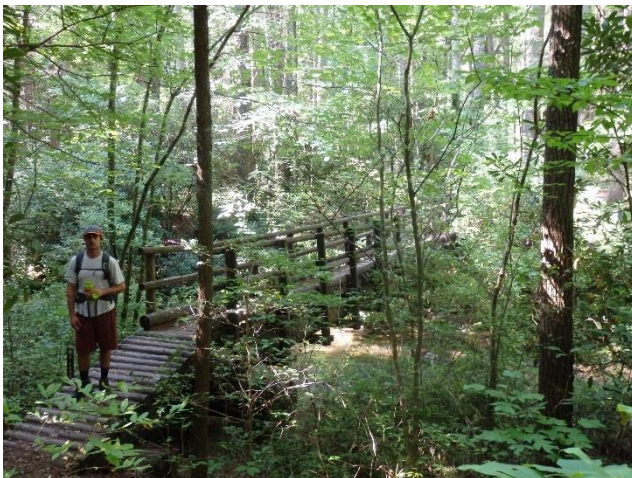


Day 2 dawned warm and sunny. Camp was broken, the yellow jacket nest was given a wide berth, and the river was crossed. The river was wide at this point and crossing at higher water levels would be very tricky.

Shortly after crossing, they neared historic Ellicott Rock. In 1811, Andrew Ellicott, a renowned surveyor from Pennsylvania, was contracted by the governor of Georgia to resolve a boundary dispute between Georgia and North Carolina. Ellicott engraved a large rock in the Chattooga River with "N-G" for North Carolina - Georgia. A couple of years



The Hatter Attempts to Stay Dry While Crossing the Chattooga



Bridge on the CRT Over the East Fork of the Chattooga

after Ellicott's survey, officials representing North and South Carolina marked a large rock along the river bank with the inscription "Lat 35 AD 1813 NC + S.C." as the point where the South Carolina and North Carolina boundaries joined. The rock marked in 1813 is called Commissioners Rock but is often mistakenly called Ellicott Rock. Commissioners Rock is the point where the boundaries of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia intersect. The history of this survey has many more twists and turns including the fact that

errors Ellicott made in his original survey continue to result in disputes along the Georgia border to this day. Despite all this interesting history, Doc and the Hatter had a long way to go so they didn't take the time to locate the rocks and their inscriptions.

The trail hugged the river for the 2.7 miles it took them to reach the fish hatchery side trail. If you skip the side trail and continue on the



Taking a Break at the Campsite at the East Fork and Main Chattooga Confluence



Rock Outcrop on the East Fork Trail

About halfway to the hatchery they came to an impressive rock outcrop over the trail that would make a nice side trip from the CRT if a quick diversion but not the entire trip to the hatchery was desired. Just before reaching the hatchery they had lunch at a large stone picnic pavilion built by the Civilian Conservation Corps probably during the great depression in the 1930s. The hatchery is open to the public and they wandered around enjoying the sights. It also had real bathrooms and drinking water, which was an added bonus.

CRT, a great camping spot is located on the other side of the bridge over the East Fork of the Chattooga. From the CRT, the trail to the fish hatchery is about 2.8 miles and was a very pleasant, mildly uphill climb along the East Fork of the Chattooga. The East Fork is a beautiful stream with frequent crossings of tributary creeks on all manner of bridges with many dripping springs.

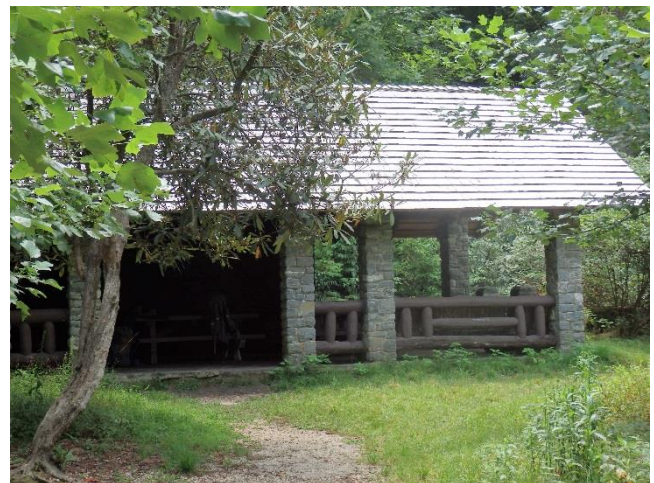


The Builders of the East Fork Trail came up with Many Novel Ways for Hikers to Maintain Dry Feet



Dripping Spring along the East Fork Trail

The only downside to this loop was the unavoidable and somewhat steep uphill hike for 1.7 miles on the fairly busy paved Hatchery Road that leads to the Foothills Trail. Nothing gets Doc and the Hatter out of a wilderness



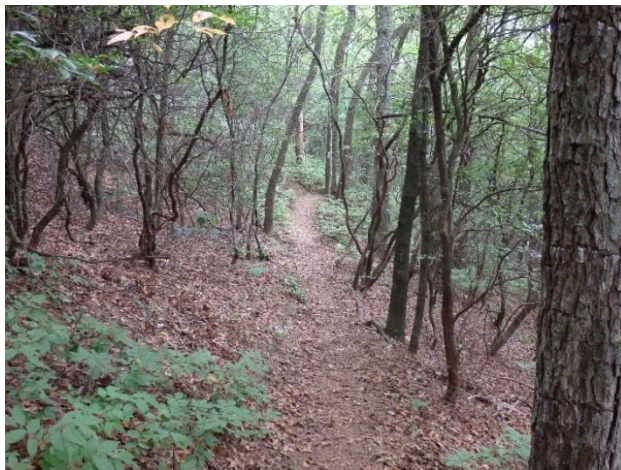
Picnic Shelter Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps



A Sweaty and Shirtless Hatter Frightening the Fish and Tourists at the Hatchery



What Backpacker doesn't enjoy a Long Hike up a Steep and Heavily-Traveled Paved Highway?



Foothills Trail on the Way Back Down to the Chattooga River

the Burrell's Ford Hike-In Campground was reached (2,031 ft). For those not familiar with this concept, you park your car and haul all your camping gear several tenths of a mile to the campground, which is on the river. But don't think this means that campers have to rough it like backpackers. People had all manner of carts to haul everything to their campsite and it looked like many had made several trips to bring in enough beer to last the weekend. Unfortunately, no one seemed inclined to offer cold ones to a couple of thirsty backpackers.

groove faster than this type of hiking experience so they were much relieved when the Foothills Trail parking area came into view. They descended the Foothills Trail about 3.9 miles back to the CRT and because it was mostly ridge walking, it was as dry as the East Fork Trail was wet. Make sure you top off your water bottle at the hatchery if you take this route.

After a long 3.5 miles and a loss of nearly 1,000 ft in elevation, they passed lovely Spoon Auger Falls (2,257 ft) and cooled off in its chilly spray. After a few hundred yards, Burrell's Ford Road and the parking area for



A Rare View of the Chattooga River Valley from the Heavily-Forested Foothills Trail

From the campground a side trail led about 0.3 miles up King Creek to King Creek Falls (2,264 ft). Having walked nearly 11 miles they decided to skip the falls and hiked out of the campground along the CRT for about a quarter



The Approach to the Burrell's Ford Walk in Campground

mile where camp was pitched at a beautiful site directly on the river. Hardly before his pack hit the ground, Doc was heading for the river to clean off the sweat and grime and sooth his over-worn body parts.



Spoon Auger Falls



Doc Embracing a Sign Relaying the Good News that they're Almost Back to the CRT



King Creek Falls

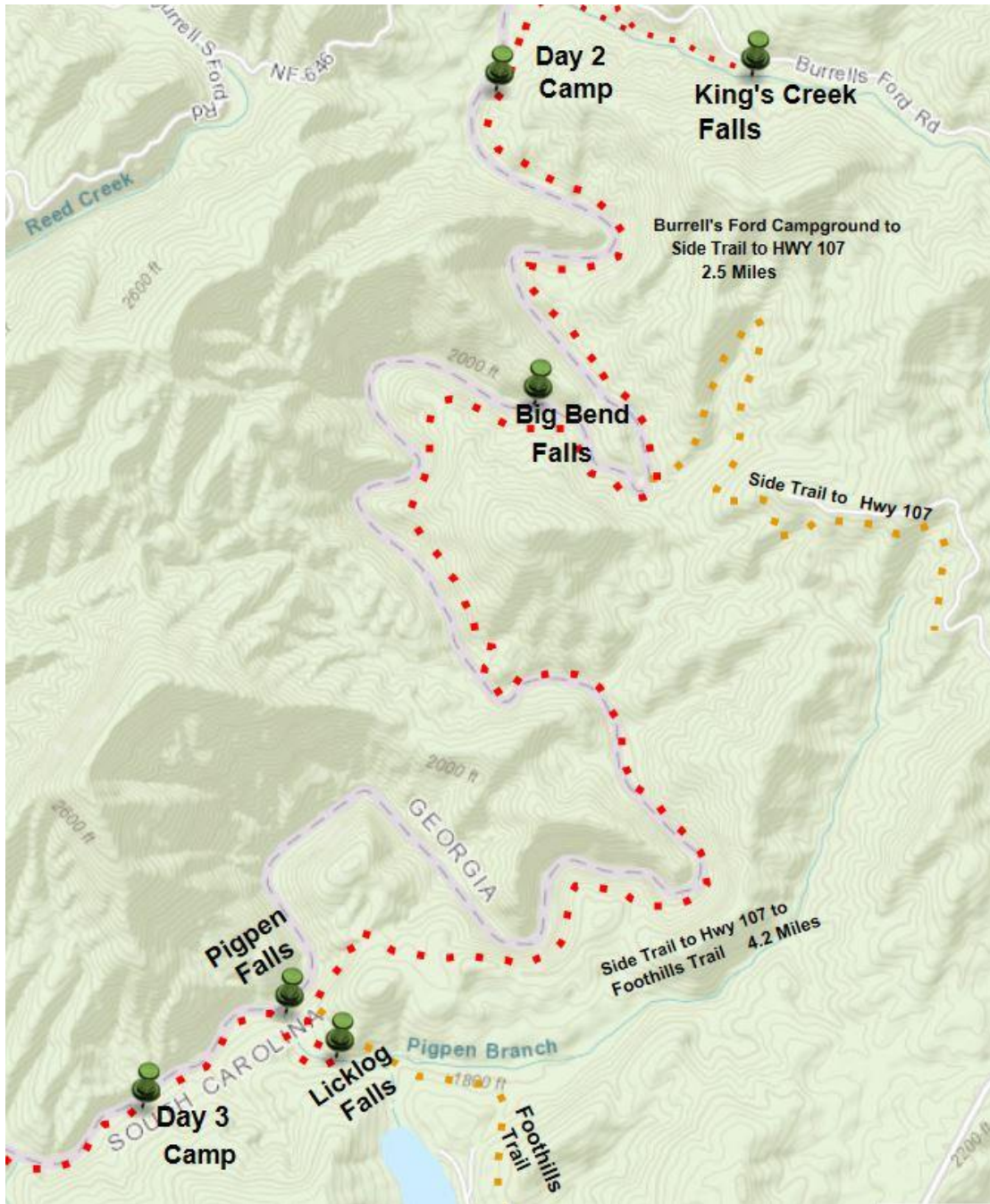
He then hauled himself out of the water to bask on a rock still warm from cooking in the sun all day. His ritual was cut short by distant thunder that sent him and the Hatter to quickly raise their tents. Everyone has a different definition of bliss but for weary backpackers it might be dozing in a cozy dry tent during a gentle rain storm after a long hard day on the trail.

Day 3 – Sunday, August 30, 2014

Burrell's Ford Campground to Camp 3, about 0.50 Miles past the Junction of the CRT and Foothills Trail

7.0 miles (Approximately)

Day 3 Trail Map





Licklog Falls

The CRT and Foothills Trail are co-located on this segment of trail for about 6.5 miles before the Foothills Trail veers off on the way to its southern Terminus in Oconee State Park. The first part was a very pleasant and scenic walk along the banks of the Chattooga River. At about 2.5 miles they passed the intersection of a side trail that went 2.8 miles to Hwy 107.

After about 0.25 miles they passed a side trail to Big Bend Falls (1,913 ft) on the Chattooga

River. This trail is a very precarious drop to the falls. It's dangerous and not recommended.

Beyond the falls, the trail gained elevation, left the river for about 0.75 miles, then returned to it for about 0.5 miles. The trail again left the river and gained elevation to where the river was completely out of earshot. The trail began descending and they reached the junction where the Foothills Trail left the CRT for good. Soon they reached Pigpen Branch and stood in the pool below Licklog Falls (1,785 ft). With a name like Pigpen Branch, they were skeptical of using it for a water source but they'd depleted their bottles during the steep climb and needed to tank up. So they put their faith in science and the American legal system and hoped the UV rays of their SteriPen would nuke any micro-bugs lurking in the water.

There is considerable confusion about which falls is Pigpen and which is Licklog and don't even get us started on the spelling. The official Foothills Trail map shows the falls on Pigpen Branch to be Licklog and the falls closer to the Chattooga River as Pigpen. However, the official guidebook says the opposite is true. A few hundred yards further they passed the larger Pigpen Falls (1,699 ft) just above the Chattooga River.



Pigpen Falls

Because there was a road and parking area about 0.5 miles up the Foothills Trail, they encountered a number of day hikers exploring the falls and wading in the pools.

After leaving the falls they hiked about a quarter mile along the river till they reached a campsite where a great many large rocks had been arranged into



A Rare Group Photo of the Entire WCBI Membership at the Camp of Thrones



A Fine Piece of Trail Engineering
several elaborate stone chairs complete with arm rests. The only things missing were the cup holders.

Doc and the Hatter stared in wonder at

the site and named it "Camp of Thrones." Some people read a book after setting up camp, some play cards, some take a nap, and some haul heavy boulders hundreds of feet and arrange them into chairs. Everybody's different. Another lazy evening of swimming, sunning, cooking dinner, eating by the fire, and talking into the night. A perfect end to a great day.



Chattooga River

Day 4 – Monday, September 1, 2014

0.5 miles below Pigpen Branch to Trail End at Hwy 28

3.2 miles

Day 4 Trail Map



Once again the day began warm and sunny and camp was broken around 9:00 am. The trail initially stayed close to the river but after the first mile it ascended slightly and the river was out of sight until Hwy 28 was reached (1,578 ft). Doc spent the last hour trying to avoid thinking about the 9-hour drive home so he reflected on the perfect weather, the great swimming and camping spots, what an incredible gem the CRT was and how so few people are inclined to experience it.

As always he thought how fortunate he was to have the Mad Hatter as a backpacking companion; even if most of each day the Hatter's breakneck pace kept them separated by long distances. Of course that could have something to do with



Early Morning on the CRT

why they got along so well. Anyway, they would do what they always did on the way home; hash out the details of their next expedition – and that would make the trip much more bearable.



One of Hundreds of Small Creeks on the CRT



Heading for the Finish Line



Last Look at the Magical Chattooga – Until Next Time