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Pair of waterfall hikes rescheduled

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The popular waterfall hike series got a little bit wetter than planned this fall.

Rain forced cancellation of two of the popular hikes, said Cami Ruppe, program director for the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, and they've been rescheduled for January.

The hikes are part of the Duke Energy Waterfall Trek Series. Hikes are led by Dan Whitten, a master naturalist and avid hiker, who shares information about fauna and flora as well as historical and geological facts about each waterfall.

Participants must be 12 or older and are urged to bring water and a heavy snack. Each hike begins at 10 a.m. Register in advance by calling: 803-771-0870.

For more information, visit www.palmettoconservation.org

Here are the new dates:

■ Jan. 9 – Lower Whitewater Falls. This is a moderate, 45-minute one-way hike to Lower Whitewater Falls begins at 10 a.m. The powerful falls have a dramatic 200-foot drop.

Directions: From Walhalla, take S.C. Highway 11 east past Tamassee to Salem at the intersection of S.C. 11 and S.C. 130. From that intersection, turn left and drive 10 miles on S.C. 130 to the Duke Power Bad Creek Project. Turn right, drive up to the gate and wait for it to open automatically. Drive two miles to the Foothills Trail trailhead parking lot. There is a $2 vehicle fee.

■ Jan. 16 – Station Cove Falls and Oconee Station. This is a 2-hour easy hike that includes seeing the Oconee station. This hike, which begins at 10 a.m., features a gorgeous hike through Appalachian cove forest and the destination is the 60-foot waterfall.

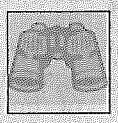
Directions: From the intersection of S.C. 28 and S.C. 11 in Walhalla, drive north on S.C. 11 for 6.3 miles and turn left onto Oconee Station Road (Oconee County S-37-95). Drive 2.4 miles to the trailhead on the left.

NATURE BECKONS

Compiled by Scott Keepfer, Outdoors Editor



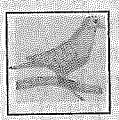
New view: This is a great time of year to hike mountain trails. Almost all leaves are on the ground now, which takes away those wonderful colors but allows hikers a different and refreshing perspective -- faraway vistas can be seen for miles, as well as the land's topography and rock outcrops.



Deep divers: The common loon is a regular sight this time of year on Upstate reservoirs. These large seabirds can be seen frolicking and diving under the water's surface to feast on herring and shad. They average 45 seconds per dive, but some dives may last up to 3 minutes.



Winter aid: Backyard feeders take on an added importance in winter. Birds with access to feeders during cold weather maintain higher weights and are able to replace depleted energy reserves with minimal foraging, which can be critical to their survival.



Hanging on: If small birds such as chickadees, nuthatches and finches are your preference, use sunflower seed in a hanging tube without perches. These expert clingers will be able to hang on at the portals while they eat; bigger birds will look for an easier meal.



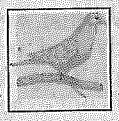
Strange sight: Bryozoans are invertebrate animals that occur in colonies on submerged objects such as docks, logs and sticks in lakes and ponds. Appearing as large clear, gelatinous masses, bryzoans - also known as "moss animals" - have the appearance of fish or frog eggs or a human brain.



The right time: Putting up its spore stalk now is the grape fern, a common, widespread plant that comes up in the fall and winter and dies back down in the early summer. The plant, which is common both in mountain and piedmont terrain, has an easy-to-spot stalk with yellow spores.



Communal living: Mixed feeding flocks of birds are common in woodlands this time of year. Birds such as ruby crowned kinglets, chickadees and tufted titmice comprise the bulk of these flocks, which stick together through winter months to insure safety and help find food sources.



Strange bird: The white-breasted nuthatch can be a fun bird to observe. The smallish, gray-and-white birds have a call that sounds almost like a kazoo, but stranger still is the way they creep down trees headfirst and tuck away seeds for safekeeping.