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Geology and Natural Communities Talk and Walk July 15 at Brasstown Bald

Two authors will team up July 15 to reveal the geology of the Brasstown Bald area and how it influences plants and animals. Geologist Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of *Roadside Geology of Georgia* and biogeographer Dr. Leslie Edwards, co-author of *Natural Communities of Georgia*, will present a slide talk, “A Window through Time: Geology and Nature at Georgia’s Highest Summit,” followed by a book signing and a walk along the mountain. Both books “take the general reader to Georgia’s natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery,” according to Witherspoon.

The event, free with \$5 admission to Brasstown Bald, will begin at 11:30 AM with a slide presentation at the Brasstown Bald Visitor Center. The program traces the path of a once-separate tectonic plate that was first thrust over this part of North America more than 400 million years ago, then partially eroded away. Lying in a “window,” Brasstown Bald’s craggy rocks, with their tiny red garnets, are surrounded by very different rocks from a far-distant ocean floor. These include the gray-green soapstone Indians found and carved at nearby Track Rock Gap. Biologically, Georgia’s highest peak is like an “island in the sky,” sheltering plants that were more widespread in the southeast when the climate was cooler, and are now in their southernmost outpost here.

Following the talk, attendees can explore mountaintop paths with the authors and see the many rock types and plant communities that make Brasstown Bald an exceptional Georgia destination.

Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 teachers and their students for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools’ Fernbank Science Center, says *Roadside Geology of Georgia* appeals to families who travel in Georgia. “This book lets you spice up your Georgia travels with a little science, by understanding the geology behind the landmarks we encounter whenever we go outside in Georgia.”

Natural Communities of Georgia teaches the public to recognize and protect Georgia’s many treasures of the natural world. “You will be amazed to learn of Georgia’s diversity, from high mountain peaks that host species that are typically found much farther north, to the incomparable Okefenokee Swamp, where alligators and plants combine to form a lush, tropical feel,” according to Edwards, who retired in 2015 from Georgia State University.

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