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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geologist Talk in Franklin June 27

Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of the popular guide, *Roadside Geology of Georgia*, will present a talk, "The Buzzard's Wings: Recent Insights into the Shaping of Southern Mountains," as part of the Franklin Gem and Mineral Society monthly meeting at 6:30 PM Thursday, June 27. The event, at the Carpenter Community Center at 1288 Georgia Rd (US 23), Franklin NC, is free and open to the public.

Witherspoon notes that the Southern Appalachians contain Eastern North America's highest summits, as well as spectacular rocky slopes at places like Tallulah Gorge, Whiteside Mountain, and Chimney Rock. A famous Cherokee creation legend told about a tired buzzard whose wings scraped valleys into the still-soft landscape. It captured the truth that the mountains were carved out rather than individually pushed up or piled up. The scientific story is a work in progress, with notable advances within the last decade or so.

In a slide show, Witherspoon will explain that, although colliding continents cooked and compressed the region's rock to its present state hundreds of millions of years ago, the landscape is far younger. Twenty million years ago, only modest mountains comparable to the Ozarks likely existed here. Witherspoon shares recent studies indicating that thousands of feet of uplift took place since then and may be ongoing. He will show how river basins' competing for territory, and eroding into old weaknesses in the rock, produce some of the Southeast's finest scenery.

Preceding the talk, at 3:00 PM, Witherspoon will lead a tour of the large outcrop and overlook adjacent to the visitor center at Black Rock Mountain State Park, high above Mountain City, GA. A \$5 parking pass or annual State Park pass is required. Both the contortions the rock experienced hundreds of millions of years ago and the ongoing sculpting of the landscape can be seen at this location.

Roadside Geology of Georgia, a full-color 320-page guide, has sold more than 7,000 copies, and is part of a Mountain Press Publishing series for the general reader that has sold over one million copies. "Our goal is to take the reader to Georgia's natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery," says Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 students and their teachers for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools' Fernbank Science Center, and co-authored the 2013 book with Dr. Pamela Gore of Georgia Perimeter College.

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