

**Name: Ash Cove**  
**Acres: 5,885 acres**

## Description of Area

### Location & Access

The Ash Cove area is located in Cherokee County, NC on the Tusquitee Ranger District of the Nantahala National Forest. It lies to the northeast of US19 and the town of Andrews and the Snowbird Mountains ridge; and is east of Tatham Gap Road (NFSR423).

### Surroundings

The northern and eastern boundaries are adjacent to National Forest System (NFS) lands. The southern boundary is adjacent to private lands and nearby US19. The town of Andrews lies across US19 and a municipal airport is to the west.

### Topography & Vegetation

The Ash Cove area is characterized by the Snowbird Mountains ridgeline that defines the northern boundary of the area and is also the Cherokee and Graham County borders. Elevation drops substantially from the ridgeline down to the Valley River valley and range from approximately 4,700 feet on Teyahalee Bald down to approximately 1,900 feet along Gipp Creek to the southwest. Generally, the area has a southwestern aspect, toward the nearby town of Andrews.

Ecozones include high elevation red oak, acidic cove, rich cove, mesic oak, dry-mesic oak, dry oak, and pine-oak/heath. Portions of the area have old growth characteristics.

### Current Uses

The Ash Cove area is currently managed for scenery, dispersed recreation, wildlife, and timber. A portion of the Bartram Trail extension runs along the Snowbird Mountains ridge to the north. There are several timber harvest units aging 21-40 years old, and a linear wildlife opening along the closed NFS Road 2616. Hunting is popular in the area, as is forest products gathering. There is also a portion of a major communication site in the northwestern corner of the area.

## Evaluation of Wilderness Characteristics

### Apparent Naturalness

Most of the area has natural appearing forests that have recovered from past logging activities and portions of the area have old growth characteristics. Impacts to naturalness include a maintained linear

wildlife field that runs the entire length of NFSR2616, and a portion of Teyahalee (Joanna) Bald communication site also lies within area boundaries.

### Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive & Unconfined Recreation

Some opportunities for solitude exist in sheltered coves of the area, though sights and sounds of civilization are very evident in the Valley River below. About 0.3 miles south of the area is US19, with the town of Andrews just beyond. A variety of commercial, agricultural, and residential development is visible in the valley, as is an active railroad and Andrews-Murphy Airfield. The previously mentioned communication site is also visible along the ridge to the northwest. These developments are primarily seen and heard from ridges and southwestern slopes within the area and adversely affect solitude.

The area offers many opportunities for primitive recreation, such as hunting, fishing, nature study, hiking, and backpacking. The Bartram National Recreation Trail extension traverses the Snowbird Mountains ridge along the northern boundary and is designated as a hike-only trail. There are no trails in the area designated for mountain bikes. Much of the area also offers opportunities for unconfined recreation, though some of the narrow arms of the area adjacent to non-federal lands would restrict movement within the area.

### Other Values - Unique or Outstanding Qualities

Although the high ridge of the Snowbird Mountains form a scenic backdrop for the town of Andrews, the mountains are typical for the area and not particularly unique or outstanding. The area also offers diverse ecosystems, clean water, and old growth characteristics, but these are also well represented on NFS lands outside area boundaries.

### Size & Manageability

The southern boundary of the area is irregular and follows a combination of topographic features, roads, and NFS ownership boundaries; a narrow protrusion extends to the southwest. Most of the southern boundary is adjacent to non-federal lands. Approximately 3,864 acres have outstanding or reserved subsurface mineral rights. All of these factors combine to make management to preserve wilderness characteristics difficult.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the Ash Cove area does not have wilderness characteristics. The Ash Cove area has impacts to naturalness from a communication site within the area and managed linear wildlife openings. There are impacts to solitude from sights and sounds of development visible in the valley, including the town of Andrews, and an active railroad and airfield. The southern boundary is irregular, reducing manageability as well as confining recreational opportunities. There are no outstanding qualities of this area that are unique on the National Forest.

## Quantitative Summary of Items/Activities within the Ash Cove Area

Disclaimer: Information was generated from FS spatial datasets. All figures are approximate.

<b>Description of Area</b>		
Spruce-Fir Ecozone:	ac.	0.7
Northern Hardwood Ecozone:	ac.	75.3
High Elevation Red Oak Ecozone:	ac.	367.8
Acidic Cove Ecozone:	ac.	191.3
Rich Cove Ecozone:	ac.	2,659.4
Mesic Oak Ecozone:	ac.	658.0
Dry-Mesic Oak Ecozone:	ac.	1,115.0
Dry Oak Ecozone:	ac.	218.2
Pine-Oak/Heath Ecozone:	ac.	578.6
Shortleaf Pine Ecozone:	ac.	14.2
Alluvial Forest Ecozone:	ac.	0.4
<b>Apparent Naturalness</b>		
Maintenance Level 1 National Forest System Roads:	mi.	0
Closed Maintenance Level 2 National Forest System Roads:	mi.	1.5
Road Stream Crossings, Bridge:	no.	0
Road Stream Crossings, Other:	no.	2
Trail Stream Crossings, Bridge:	no.	0
Vegetation Management, 0-20 years old:	ac.	0.02
Vegetation Management, 21-40 years old:	ac.	286.1
Maintained Wildlife Fields (may overlap Bald Management Area):	ac.	5.9
Existing Wilderness Study Area (WSA):	ac.	0
Existing Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA may overlap WSA):	ac.	0
<b>Solitude or Primitive &amp; Unconfined Recreation</b>		
Current Backcountry Management Area (may overlap WSA & IRA):	ac.	0
Inventoried Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Setting:	ac.	0
Inventoried Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS Setting:	ac.	2,224.4
Inventoried Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS Setting (buffer of adjacent roads):	ac.	2,110.1
Inventoried Roaded Natural ROS Setting (buffer of adjacent roads):	ac.	1,549.6
National Forest System Trail, Hike-only Allowed Use:	mi.	4.5
National Forest System Trail, Hike-Bike Allowed Use:	mi.	0
National Forest System Trail, Hike-Horse Allowed Use:	mi.	0
National Forest System Trail, Hike-Bike-Horse Allowed Use:	mi.	0
<b>Unique &amp; Outstanding Features</b>		
Current Special Interest Management Area (scenic, geologic, botanical, zoological):	ac.	0
Current Designated Wild & Scenic River Corridor (1/4 mile each side):	ac.	0
Current Eligible Wild & Scenic River Corridor (1/4 mile each side):	ac.	0
Research Natural Area:	ac.	0
<b>Size &amp; Manageability</b>		
Area, Total:	ac.	5,884.9
Private/Non-Federal Inholdings, Total:	ac.	0
Private/Non-Federal Inholdings, Count:	no.	0
Outstanding or Reserved Subsurface Mineral Rights:	ac.	3,864.0
Current Bald Management Area:	ac.	0
Forest Research Plots, Count:	no.	0

