



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

NEWS • RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

New Climbing Route Closure Protects Falcons at Whiteside Mountain

ASHEVILLE, NC In response to a new nesting location of the resident pair of endangered peregrine falcons, Forest Service is changing the annual climbing closure at Whiteside Mountain from the west to the east side of the cliff, effective March 22 thru August 15, 2010. Specifically, the cliff face east of the “Mainline” climbing route is closed to climbing and rappelling this year. When facing the cliff, east is to the right. The Forest Service has updated closure information in the trailhead kiosk and is posting signs on the trail. The west side of the cliff, normally closed during the falcon nesting season, will be open this year. For several years, the resident pair of peregrine falcons have nested on Whiteside’s west face, and the Forest Service has closed that side to climbing and rappelling. “This year, they’re mixing it up a bit,” said Chris Kelly, Wildlife Diversity Biologist with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and coordinator of the Commission’s peregrine falcon monitoring program.

“Peregrine falcons do not respond well to disturbance,” says Kelly. When falcons are tending eggs or nestlings, the presence of people near the nest may cause the adult birds to spend time away from the nest, leaving eggs or nestlings exposed to the elements and delaying food deliveries. A young bird flushed off the nest will fall to its death. By adhering to the closure, climbers can help ensure that the birds will be able to finish nesting in a timely fashion. If they are disturbed, they will attempt to re-nest, which will delay opening of this cliff significantly, as was the case in 2009. “It’s in everybody’s best interest that the falcons nest undisturbed,” said Kelly.

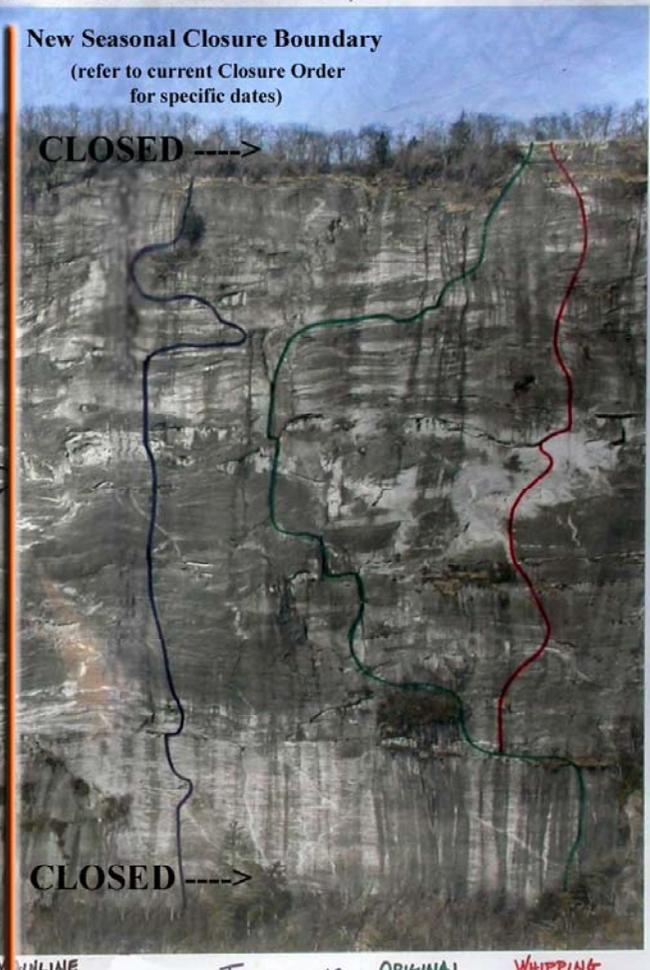
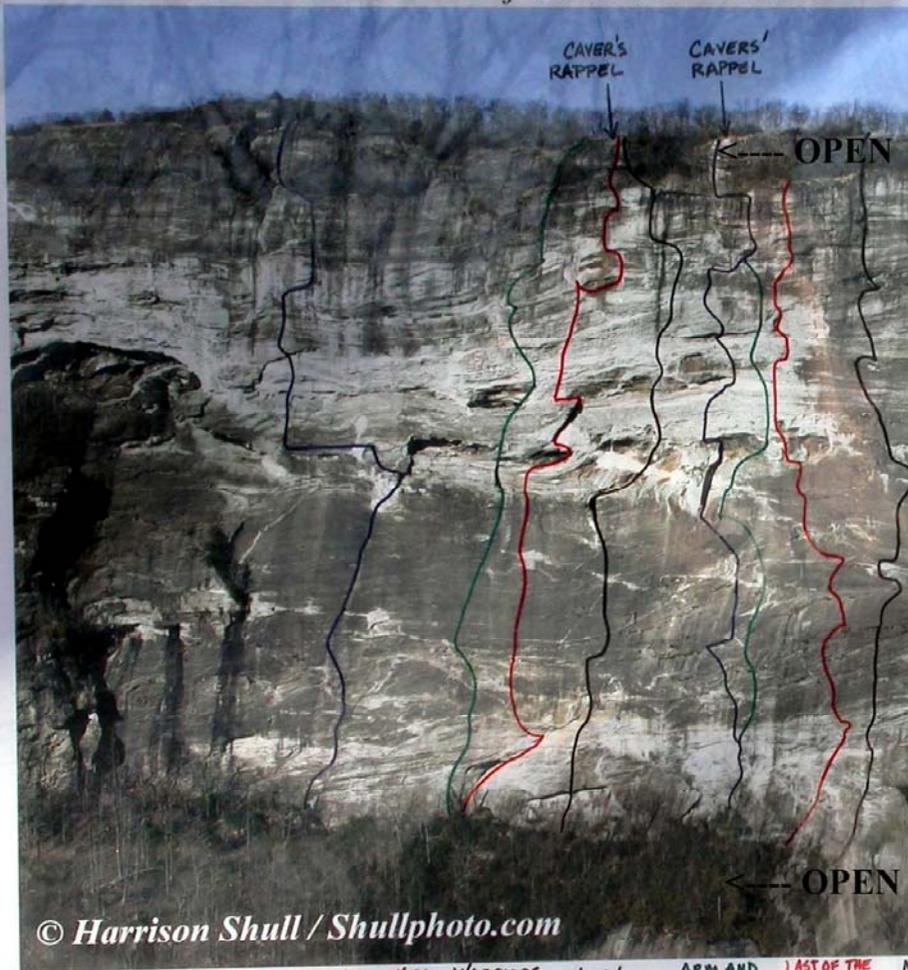
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“It’s hard to say why they moved to the other side of the cliff,” said Kelly, “but we do know that a new female is on territory this year.” The move could also be a response to disturbance. The closure order was violated last year, and the nesting attempt failed for the first time in 11 years. Whiteside Mountain Trail is open for hiking. The cliff is so enormous that the birds do not respond to hikers up top. Visitors may catch a glimpse of the falcons from the trail as the falcons wheel around chasing vultures and hawks and swooping after prey.

For more information please reference the National Forests in North Carolina website at www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc or contact Crystal Powell, Nantahala Ranger District Recreation Staff, at 828-524-6441 X424 or email her at clpowell@fs.fed.us.

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Southeast Face of Whiteside Mountain - Nantahala National Forest, NC



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Promised Land THE MATRIX LITTLE MISS DANGEROUS WARRIORS WAY VOL WALL ARM AND HAMMER LAST OF THE DIXIE TRAILS ONLINE TRADITIONS ORIGINAL ROUTE WHIPPING BOY

NOTE: ROUTE INFO IS APPROXIMATE. CLIMB AT YOUR OWN RISK.