

SNOWBIRD AREA HISTORY

The Snowbird Creek basin is near the convergence of the Snowbird and the United Mountain Range. The Cherokee Indians hunted this area for centuries, but the land is so rugged that it was one of the last areas of western North Carolina to be settled by white men.

When the first white settlers arrived in Graham County in the 1830s, there was not a single road in the county. To create homesteads, they followed Indian paths and game trails into the wilderness. In fact, cattle herders were among the first white men to camp and live in the Snowbird Area. King Meadows on the divide between Big Snowbird and Squally Creeks was named after Wally King who built a cabin and cleared the meadows for pasture. In 1861, General Hooper settled his family on King Meadows, where they remained until 1906.

The arrival of the white man opened the beginning of the end for most Cherokees in the region. In 1836, President Andrew Jackson ordered the removal of the Cherokees from the Southern Appalachian Mountains. They were moved to Oklahoma over the infamous "Trail of Tears." A number of them, however, led by Trail, fled to the Snowbird wilderness and escaped sale. Approximately 300 direct descendants of these families now live in the Little Snowbird community.

In 1908, George Moore conceived the idea of establishing a shooting preserve for wealthy clients and friends in the headwaters of the Snowbird Creek drainage. He obtained the use of 1,000 acres from the Whiting Manufacturing Company and spent the next three years preparing for the preserve. A wagon road, now Mitchell Link Trail, was constructed across the head of Snowbird Creek into Tennessee. A lodge and caretaker's house were built below Hooper Bald.

Later, fenced enclosures were erected on Meadow, Rock Bar, and Bear Pen branches to contain the big game animals. The shipments of animals began arriving in 1912 and included bunnies, Russian wild boar, elk, Colorado mule deer, native and Russian brown bear, and wild turkeys. Within a few years, many of the animals had escaped from the impoundments or were poached. Moore became disenchanted with his project and gave the preserve to Garland "Victor" McGuire. McGuire and his family remained at the lodge until the 1940s.

The pioneers also prospected for minerals in the Snowbird Mountains, with little success. Later settlers however, found "treasures" in the wealth of native virgin timber that covered the ridges and valleys. In 1927, Bonita Hardwood Lumber Company purchased the Big Snowbird watershed and began extending its standard gauge railroad up Snowbird Creek. A big log yard was developed at Junction and a narrow gauge railroad and incline tracks were extended into the upper watershed. As the logging progressed, camps were established at Sasunfra Creek, Moose Knob Branch, Meadow Branch, Rock Bar Branch, Bear Pen Branch, and Little Flat Branch. At the peak of operations, 240 men worked out of two camps. From 1925 to 1942 more than 100 million board feet of timber was hauled out over the Buffalo-Snowbird Railroad.

The Federal government acquired Big Snowbird in 1943 and made it a part of the Nantahala National Forest. From the start, Forest Service management has consisted mainly of fire protection and custodial care. Time, protective management, and a new forest are slowly erasing the old logging scars. Snowbird Creek, once maddened with silt, runs clear and sparkling again.

Archaeological and historic artifacts and sites of the early Indians and settlers may be found in the Snowbird Area. Because these finds hold clues to America's past, such sites and artifacts on public land are protected by federal law. If you discover such remains, please leave them undisturbed and report them to the District Ranger's office in Robbinsville, NC.

How Do You Rate as a No-Trace Camper?

Your challenge is to leave no evidence of your visit so that the most person can enjoy a natural scene. **Trace** lightly so that nature can endure and replenish.

Read the list of recommended no-trace use procedures. Check those you actually use and give yourself one point for each item checked. If you check 25-33, you are a first rate no-trace camper; 34-39, you are coming right along; below 20, you may be doing more harm than good to your favorite backcountry spots than you can stand.

WHEN I CAMP IN THE BACKCOUNTRY I...

Plan Ahead to Avoid Impact:

- ▣ Avoid holidays and weekends
- ▣ Avoid popular, high-use areas
- ▣ Limit group size (six or less, optimum)
- ▣ Rehearse food to reduce containers
- ▣ Take along a litter bag to carry out all refuse
- ▣ Carry a stove and foods requiring little cooking
- ▣ Buy only gear in enclosed forest areas
- ▣ Leave pets at home
- ▣ Leave radios and tape players at home

Travel to Avoid Impact:

- ▣ Travel quietly
- ▣ Stay on main trail, even if it is wet
- ▣ Never shortcut trail switchbacks
- ▣ Look at and photograph; never pick or collect
- ▣ Avoid popular areas
- ▣ Never discard cigarette butts, candy, or gum wrappers
- ▣ Walk softly; don't kick up dirt and stones or trample vegetation

Make No-Trace Camps:

- ▣ Use existing campsites in acceptable condition
- ▣ Avoid using existing campsites that are obviously "camped out"
- ▣ Avoid establishing traditional camps when disrupting the beaten track
- ▣ Never cut standing trees and vegetation or pull up plants
- ▣ Never dig hibernics or trenches
- ▣ Wear lightweight, soft-soled shoes around camp
- ▣ Avoid building campfires or make only small fires in safe places using only dead and down wood that can be broken by hand
- ▣ Never wash dirty dishes, clothes, or soap directly in stream or spring
- ▣ Use biodegradable soap and dispose of wastewater at least 100 feet away from water
- ▣ Carry a supply
- ▣ Carry human waste 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 100 feet from water and campsite
- ▣ Stay as quiet as possible

Leave a No-Trace Campsite

- ▣ Pick up every trace of litter
- ▣ Down any campfires and close out the fire ring
- ▣ Remove all evidence of a campfire built where there is no existing fire ring
- ▣ Replace and secure twigs and leaves cleared for a sleeping area
- ▣ Pack out all garbage
- ▣ Check for any evidence of my stay



Backcountry Trails

Participating in an integral part of the backcountry experience. To ensure this opportunity, backcountry trails are kept primitive, rugged and often steep. You will experience the challenge of traveling through these mountains similar to that which confronted the early pioneers and settlers. Most of the trails in the Snowbird Area are signed at the trailheads and marked, however, routes may not be obvious in places. It is best not to depend on these signs and blazes to find your way. To be safe, you should know how to read a topographic map and use a compass. Also, trail locations on the map are approximate, so you should also be able to read and interpret mountain terrain.

Experienced hikers might wish to leave the trails to explore untraveled terrain or to experience maximum solitude and challenge. This should be attempted only by those who have the equipment, knowledge, and survival skills to most any condition of terrain, weather, or exertion.

Trails are noted by difficulty levels - easiest, more difficult, and most difficult - based on steepness, clarity of the trail, and roughness of the terrain. The easiest trails have obvious routes requiring little skill or challenge to follow. They have easy grades, with some short pitches up to 20 percent maximum and a relatively smooth tread. More difficult trails have routes that are usually recognizable, but require some skill and challenge to travel. They have moderate grades, with some steep pitches up to 30 percent maximum, and a smooth to rough tread. A most difficult route may not be recognizable, requiring a high degree of skill and challenge to follow. It has a steep, strenuous grade, with some pitches greater than 30 percent, and a rough tread.

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If You Get Lost

- **Keep calm.** Panic is your greatest enemy.
- **Stop.** Do not walk aimlessly. Try to remember how you got to where you are. Look for familiar landmarks.
- **Stay put.** Do not try to travel at night, or in bad weather, or if you are injured or on near exhaustion, or if the terrain is rugged.

- **Signal for help** using three shouts, whistle blasts, flashes of light or anything that will attract attention. Use these three only as a last resort.
- **If you move on, go slowly and carefully.** Trust your map and compass. If you are off on a trail, don't leave it. Use landmarks to keep constant track of where you are and where you're going.

- **As a last resort, follow a drainage or stream downhill.** This can be hard going, but will often lead to a trail or road.
- **Use your watch as a compass.** Using standard time (subtract 1 hour when daylight savings time is in effect) point the hour hand of your watch at the sun. Halfway between the sun and 12 o'clock is south (works only between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.).

- **Be alert to symptoms of hypothermia.** Hypothermia occurs when the core body temperature is reduced below normal because of overexposure to cold and wet conditions. It can and does occur at temperatures well above freezing. Look for uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, fumbling hands, stumbling and drowsiness. Treat it by providing immediate shelter from wind and rain and quickly drying and warming the victim. Prevent it by avoiding exposure and fatigue. Dress for warmth and wind and rain protection. Cook shelter if you can't stay warm and dry.

If someone in your party is lost or overdue, notify the county sheriff or the district ranger office. They will take steps to alert or activate a local search and rescue organization. If the missing person returns later, be sure to advise the sheriff or ranger.

In Case of Injury

Stop immediately! Remain calm and use your head. Treat the injury if you can and make the victim comfortable. If you must go for help, leave one person with the injured party. If there is no alternative but to leave the victim alone, provide cover and shelter and leave food, water, and a light within reach of the victim. Attach a note to the victim that gives his or her name, a description of the injury and the time it occurred, the first aid administered, your name, your intended destination, and the time you left the site. Be sure you know your way back to the location of the victim.

A Backcountry Experience

As a visitor to the backcountry, you should be aware that you are entering a primitive environment. You will face the challenge of being entirely self-sufficient for the time you remain there. There will be no shelters, campgrounds, water spigots, restrooms, nor detailed trail signs. In addition, you will be traveling on foot because no motorized vehicles, bicycles, horses, or pack animals are permitted in the Snowbird Area. You will meet and live with nature on its own terms. You will become familiar with the sometimes scary feeling of being completely on your own away from the comforts of civilization. Before you enter this rugged area, ask yourself if you truly want a primitive experience.

Trail Opportunities in the Snowbird Area

TRAIL NAME	(#)	BLAZE	MILES	DIFFICULTY LEVEL	TYPE OF USE
Big Snowbird	(94)	Blue	12.7	More Difficult	Hiker
Burntrock Ridge	(65-A)	4	1.7	More Difficult	Hiker
King Meadows	(63)	Yellow	7.6	More Difficult	Hiker
Middle Falls	(64-A)	Orange	1.1	Easiest	Hiker
Mitchell Link	(154)	Silver	1.5	More Difficult	Hiker
Sasunfra Creek	(65)	Silver	3.3	More Difficult	Hiker
Snowbird Mtn.	(415)	Green	9.4	Most Difficult	Hiker

Avoid Close Encounters of the Worst Kind

- **Carry a map and compass** and know how to use them. An altimeter is also very useful for cross-country navigation. Plan your route and consult your map frequently during travel.
- **Travel with a companion.** You must rely on yourself or a companion in case of an emergency during travel.
- **Be in good physical condition.** Allow plenty of time and energy for rugged terrain (average pace in mountain terrain is 2 miles per hour plus 1 hour for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain). Set your pace to make your body feel good, not bad. Fatigue leads to exhaustion - exhaustion leads to exposure or accidents.
- **Make camp before dark.** Travel only during daylight hours.
- **Think before you drink.** A stream or spring may look clear and pure, but it may harbor microscopic organisms that can make you sick. Be safe. Boil or treat all drinking water. Treatment is particularly important when using turbid water after a storm.
- **Avoid dehydration.** Drink as often as you feel thirsty. An adult needs 3 to 4 quarts of water per day when hiking.
- **Be alert to symptoms of hypothermia.** Hypothermia occurs when the core body temperature is reduced below normal because of overexposure to cold and wet conditions. It can and does occur at temperatures well above freezing. Look for uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, fumbling hands, stumbling and drowsiness. Treat it by providing immediate shelter from wind and rain and quickly drying and warming the victim. Prevent it by avoiding exposure and fatigue. Dress for warmth and wind and rain protection. Cook shelter if you can't stay warm and dry.

- **Know how to identify and be wary of ticks, biting insects, poisonous snakes, and poisonous plants.**
- **Know first aid for injuries and sudden illnesses.**
- **Carry the 10 essentials on all backcountry trips.**
 - Whistle (three blasts signify help)
 - Map
 - Waterproof matches
 - Compass
 - First aid kit
 - Flashlight
 - Extra food
 - Sharp knife
 - Warm clothing
 - Fire starter (sand)



Today, backcountry should leave no signs of their presence so that the next person can enjoy natural scenes and solitude. You must trail lightly so nature can endure and replenish.

No-Trace Use

In years past, we spoke of wilderness survival as the ability of man to survive the land. Now we speak of wilderness survival as the land's capability of surviving man. The popularity of backcountry travel, combined with improper travel and camping techniques, is creating major human impact problems. If we are to retain the high quality of our outdoor recreation experiences and the unrestricted freedom of backcountry travel, each individual must accept responsibility to minimize the impact of his or her visit. After you pass this way, will the forest be as it was? With your help, the backcountry resource can be managed to ensure that its unique character and values remain dominant.

No-Trace Use Techniques

CAMPFIRES
Like most hikers, you probably would like to build a classic, old-fashioned campfire, but the no-trace ethic asks you to reconsider this practice. Campfires create the most adverse visual and ecological impacts of any backcountry camping practice. The fire ring roasts the naturalness of the area and mars its appearance with blackened rocks, and piles of ash, charcoal, and unburned wood. The ecological impacts of campfires include trampling of vegetation associated with firewood collection, removal of woody debris critical to a healthy forest ecosystem; loss of vegetation and compaction of soil around the fire ring; and sterilization of the soil, which retards plant recovery.

*It is best to go without a fire. Use a backcountry stove instead.

- If you build a fire:
- Use an existing fire ring, or
 - If no fire ring exists, choose a site with little or no vegetation and clear it to mineral soil. A rock fire ring is unnecessary.
 - Do not add rocks to an existing fire ring.
 - Keep fires small.
 - Burn only dead and down wood that can be broken by hand. Leave saws and axes at home.
 - Burn all wood to ash.
 - Never leave a fire unattended. You are responsible and liable for damage for a campfire that becomes a wildfire.
 - Never build a fire on a windy day.

- Exuse your campfire:
- Drown the fire with water and stir the water into the ashes.
 - Feel with your hand to make sure the fire is dead out.
 - Remove unburned fuel and plastic and pack them out.
 - If you used an existing fire ring, clean out the cold ashes and scatter or bury them.
 - If there was no existing fire ring, scatter the ashes and camouflage the burned area with organic matter. Return any rocks you may have used to their original location.
 - Scatter unused firewood in the forest.

CAMPSITES

We all like to imagine ourselves traveling through virgin country, and the sight of an obviously "camped out" site destroys this vision. Your choice of a campsite and how you use it are important to the protection of the forest environment. A campsite can deteriorate quickly, but recovery takes a very long time.

- When you select your campsite:
- Use existing campsites that are in acceptable condition. On these sites, the understory vegetation is worn away on some or most of the site, but humus, litter, leaves, or needles cover most of the ground. Bare soil may exist around a fire ring.
 - Avoid lightly impacted campsites. They are on the threshold of rapid deterioration. On these sites, the vegetation is worn away only around a fire ring or center of activity, and no bare ground is present.

Planning Your Trip

Backpacking is the most popular and economical way to get into the backcountry. It is strenuous but has certain advantages including a wider choice of trail head entries, routes, and campsites. Proper equipment, good physical condition, and careful planning are necessary for a successful and enjoyable backpacking trip. The most important items of equipment include comfortable footwear; a sturdy, well-fitting pack; a rainproof poncho; and a warm sleeping bag, comfortable to a temperature of 20°F during summer months.

Food is also an important item for your backpacking trip. Plan menus to utilize food that is easy to prepare, nutritious but substantial, and light in weight. Basic dehydrated foods are available in most grocery stores, while specialized items are found in sporting good and backpacking stores. Backpackers should be able to get by with 1-1 1/2 to 2 pounds, dry weight, of food per day. High energy snacks such as nuts, dried fruit, and jelly should be included.

Plan to leave canned and bottled foods at home. They are bulky, heavy, and empty containers must be carried home. Repackage items such as sugar, cereal, coffee, dry milk, and powdered foods into small plastic bags; this saves weight and the bags fit easily into your pack.

A small, lightweight gas stove is an excellent item to take along. Accounting for fuel, fuel can be prepared faster with a backpacker stove than a wood fire, especially during severe weather conditions.

Before heading into the backcountry, study maps of the area and visualize the terrain. Consider alternate routes of travel and possible changes in the weather. Keep in mind the shorter daylight hours during fall and winter.

- Always leave a note with friends or relatives telling where you're going and when you'll return.
- Use a backpacking stove instead of a fire.
- Avoid spreading out and expanding the area.
- Avoid "site engineering." Never flatten the site, trench a tent, or build rock or log fireware.
- Do not trample vegetation.
- Never cut standing trees and vegetation or pull up plants.
- Vary your traffic patterns to avoid creating paths.
- Wear lightweight, soft-soled shoes around camp.
- Keep length of stay at one site short (1 to 2 nights).

- When breaking camp:
- Pack out all trash and garbage.
 - Leave the campsite cleaner and more natural than you found it.
 - Clean out the fire ring and scatter unused firewood.
 - Naturalize the site by scattering leaves and humus over bare areas.
 - Leave no evidence of your visit.

- Camping off the beaten track requires special care and skill.
- Avoid establishing a "typical camp." Sleep and eat in different places to avoid repeated use patterns that result in trampled vegetation. To do this:
 - ▣ Prepare and eat supper in one location.
 - ▣ Clean up and travel farther to a good toilet site.
 - ▣ Move on the next morning to a good breakfast site.
 - Do not build a campfire.
 - Select a sleeping area that is out-of-sight of trails and other camping parties and away from water sources and beauty spots.
 - Clear the minimum debris necessary for a sleeping area and replace this debris when breaking camp. Do not pull-up or cut vegetation.

- Sanitation
- Proper disposal of human waste is critical and cannot be stressed enough. No one should venture into the backcountry without a means of burying waste and the knowledge of how and where to bury it. Use the following steps for the cut-hole method.
 - ▣ Locate the cut-hole at least 100 feet from water sources and campsites.
 - ▣ Removing the sod, dig a hole 6 to 8 inches deep.
 - ▣ After using the hole, fill it with the sod and trample lightly back into place.
 - ▣ The length of the cut-hole, not the depth, will vary with the number of people using it. Spread a light layer of soil in the hole after each use.
 - It is difficult to make a cut-hole if the ground is frozen or now covered, but is absolutely necessary.

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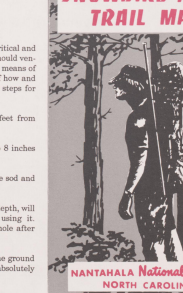
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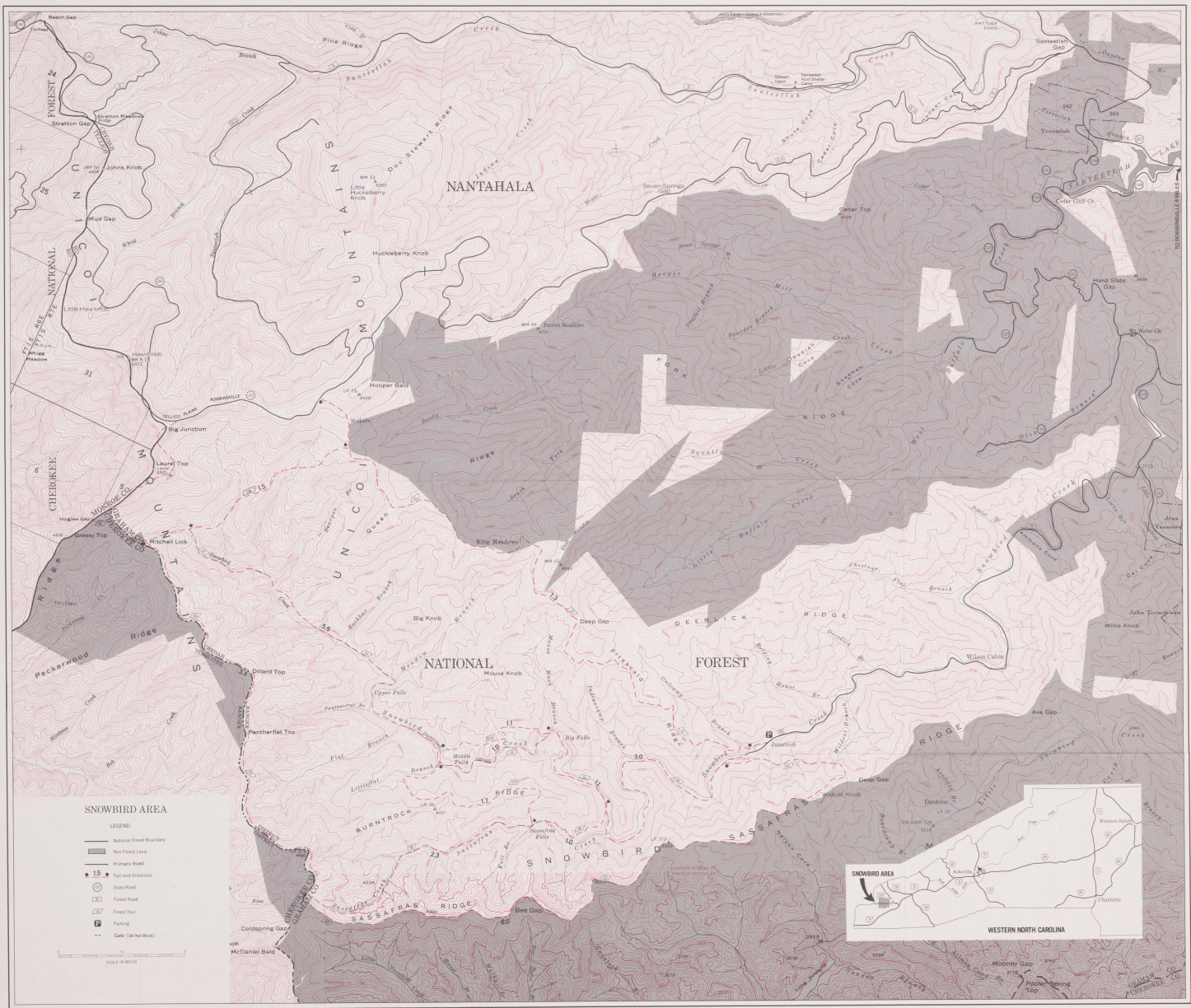


NANTAHALA National Forest NORTH CAROLINA

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
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USDA Forest Service
Route 1, Box 16-A
Robbinsville, NC 28771
704-479-6431

Persons of any race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or with any handicapping condition are welcome to use and enjoy all facilities, programs, and services of the USDA. Discrimination in any form is strictly against agency policy, and should be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

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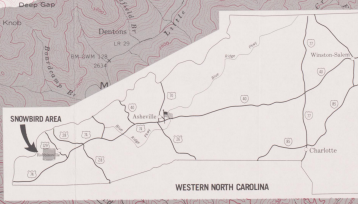


SNOWBIRD AREA

LEGEND

- National Forest Boundary
- ▭ Non-Forest Land
- Primary Road
- 15 • Trail and Distances
- ⊙ State Road
- ▭ Forest Road
- ▭ Forest Trail
- ⊠ Parking
- Gate (On Not Back)

SCALE IN MILES



WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA