

# The Adventures of Team Butterball

April 14<sup>th</sup> thru April 17<sup>th</sup> 2016

Anyone following the exploits of Team Waterfall on Facebook knows that they have set a pretty high standard for others to follow after. At times it seems as if they are participating in X Games for waterfallers. The photos and videos that they have posted have provided access to scenes that may never be seen in person by the average waterfall explorer. It is amazing to see and read about their triumphs over the likes of Windy Falls and their winter time adventures at Stillhouse Falls where they continued on downstream to rappel over the face of Elmo's Falls. Later in the spring some challenged Flat Creek Falls in much the same way. Others have stretched cables across the face of such beauties as Bradley Falls and then walked the rope across the face of the falls. There have been numerous discoveries along creeks in southern NC and upstate SC and they have been very generous to share their finds with others who might someday want to explore these places on their own.

But this write-up isn't about this loosely knit group calling themselves Team Waterfall. My intent is to share the adventures of a more tightly knit group of waterfall lovers that I choose to call Team Butterball. A little over five years ago our number 2 daughter (in order of birth) was sharing pictures from a photo book that I had made of some of our favorite waterfalls, with a group of very close friends. This group was captivated by their beauty and expressed an interest in possibly seeing some of them in person. My daughter thought she could convince her dad to guide them on a waterfall expedition sometime in the future. The rest is history and we have just completed our 5<sup>th</sup> trip as a group.

This year's excursion began on Thursday, just late enough to miss the worst of the morning traffic. The bulk of the younger part of our group rode together in a large van with one couple following behind in their personal vehicle. Mimi and Poppi (my wife and I) started out a bit ahead with our youngest daughter and her husband along providing delightful company. Though out of the office (currently living in NYC), the son-in-law was still on the job and dealt with a number business matters as we headed toward our first major stop at the Veranda Café in Black Mountain. The rest of the group was a bit behind us and had decided to stop at Fresh - Wood Fired Pizza & Pasta, also in Black Mountain. After our smaller group finished eating, the ladies wanted to browse some of the quaint little shops in town while son-in-law found a coffee shop with WiFi where he could do some more work. Poppi decided to make a quick trip south on Hwy 9 to Old Fort Road to search out a waterfall on Laurel Branch described in the Asheville Hub of Kevin's new book. 0.6 miles after turning north onto Flattop Mountain Road, I came across a pretty little falls right next to the road.



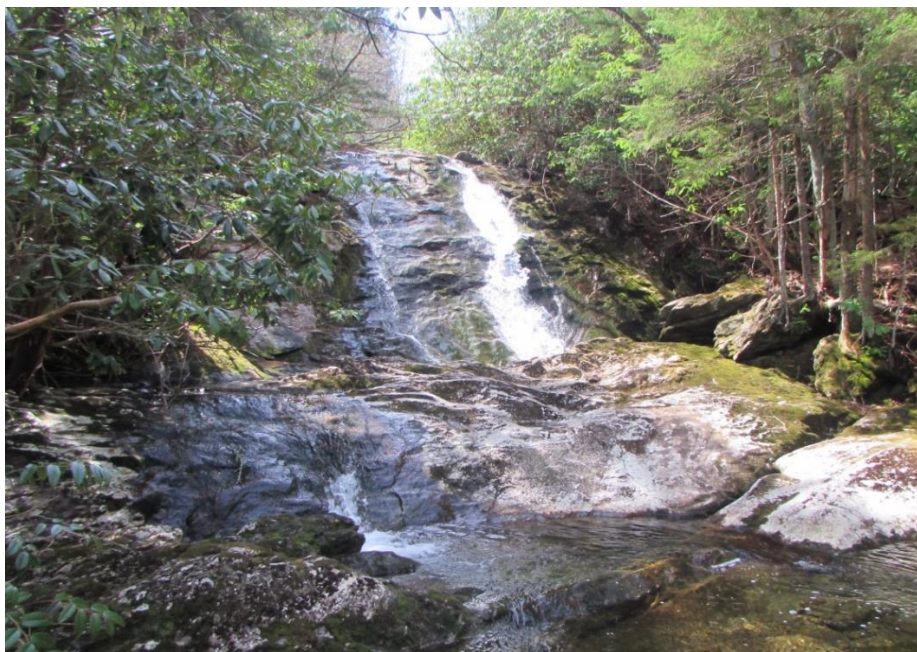
Back in Black Mountain, the other group had finished their pizza and was headed to our next destination. I picked up my crew and we met them at Antique Tobacco Barn in Asheville. This place is massive and it took a while for folks to see

what they wanted to see. After a quick pass through looking for interesting old books, I had a bit of free time on my hands and while my son-in-law sat in the RX330 working, I decided to call KA and see how he was getting on. We had a nice chat about various things related to waterfalls and then said our goodbyes.

The Antique Tobacco Barn was the last major attraction for the day and it was time to head on towards Franklin where we would sleep and eat for the next few days. After finding the cabin, unloading and making room assignments, there was important business to be addressed: where do we eat in Franklin? There is one thing that must be understood up front, although within this group I've called Team Butterball there is wide variety of shapes and sizes and a multitude of varied interests, but one thing is common to us all – we love to eat. There are a number of criteria that must be met when selecting an eating establishment: appetizers, main entrees, and perhaps most important of all, the desert menu. There was some concern as to what might be available in the Franklin area, but YELP recommended a place called Caffè REL which was attached to a gas station called The Pit Stop. Some people can be a bit skittish about places like that, but there wasn't a lot else to choose from and the decision was made to give it a shot. Turned out to be a pretty good choice – not only tasty entrees, but a pretty decent desert selection as well.

With everyone back at the cabin that night, we gathered together to discuss our options for the next three days. Everyone seemed excited about what lay ahead for the weekend and as Friday morning dawned we began the day with a hearty home cooked breakfast of sausage, bacon, eggs, grits, and biscuits. On two of our previous trips, we had been privileged to historic guided tours of Whiteside Mountain one year and then nearby Devil's Courthouse the next. Highlands historian Randolph Shaffner had graciously been our guide on these previous trips, and the group wanted to do a similar hike that would lead to extended vistas in all directions. I felt that Sam Knob near Shinning Rock wilderness would provide them with exactly what they wanted. As we discussed it during the day on Friday, some (or one) of our group had somehow come to believe that we were going to climb Sam "Bob" Knob and that is what it was called the remainder of the weekend. I may consider petitioning the USGS to formally change the name – perhaps they could also rename its neighbor knob to Little Sam "Bob" Knob. Back to the point, Sam "Bob" Knob would be our primary hiking destination for Friday. We also determined that our primary culinary destination for the day would be Pisgah Inn for lunch. All other activities would have to fit in around these two.

Following breakfast we headed toward Waynesville and took Hwy 215 up to the BR Parkway. Along the way we stopped to check out the Lower Waterfall on Bubbling Spring Branch. Although not at all strenuous, I think the group enjoyed the challenges of this short hike with its multiple stream crossings required to reach the base of the falls. Normally we would have continued on to the Upper Waterfall, but we needed to get to the Inn by 1:00 pm so that our son-in-law (still on the job) could call in to a meeting.





There is a combination of things that make Pisgah Inn a uniquely worthy destination: the food is always tasty (including the desserts), the view from the dining area is without peer, and the drive to and from surely can't be beat anywhere.

Needing to burn a few calories after our delicious lunch, Team Butterball headed for Black Balsam Road and the trailhead to Sam "Bob" Knob. As I pointed out our destination from the parking area, they recognized that we had a bit of work ahead of us. The climb from the meadow below to the top involves an increase in elevation of ~400'. There were 14 in our group and as the photo below confirms, all made it to the top. This mountain is distinctive in having two peaks with a "saddle" in between. On our ascent, we headed for the north peak and enjoyed spectacular views on this spectacularly clear spring day. After posing for a few photos and enjoying the breathtaking view, most of the group worked their way over to the south peak. From here you can look down and see the trail we had just traversed on our way as it crossed the meadow below. Our son-in-law followed a faint little trail down to a little rock outcrop and decided to see if he could bushwack his way down to the trail that curves its way around the south face of the mountain. I was a bit dubious, but by the time I got there it was too late to stop him. Turns out he was correct in his estimation and hooked up with the trail ahead of the rest of the group which had taken the more traditional route down. You could tell that there was sense of accomplishment when everyone had made it back to our starting point. Knowing that we had a good amount of driving left before we got back to the Franklin area, thoughts began to stir as to where we would eat supper.



Team Butterball on top of Sam "Bob" Knob

Some had thought that it might be good to go back to Café' REL, but once again YELP came to the rescue and pointed us to Haywood Smokehouse in Waynesville. This was quite an experience, but not just from a culinary perspective. These young folks we were with really enjoy being together and on occasion (actually most of the time) can be quite expressive of their delight in life in general, but after having conquered Sam "Bob" Knob, they were really pumped. It just so happened that our waitress was of a kindred spirit and added her own twist to the party. Unfortunately it turned out they didn't have enough banana pudding for everyone, but we managed to find a few other tasty treats to top off the meal. That was pretty much it for Friday.

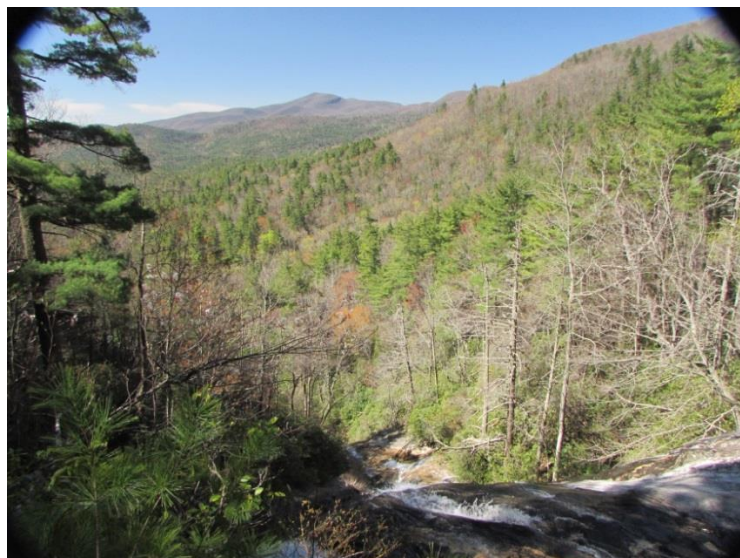
Saturday morning was pretty much the same as far as the breakfast menu was concerned. Supply of some items was a little diminished, but there was still plenty to eat for everyone. We had considered heading back over in the direction of Brevard and to see how many waterfalls we could add to their list, but eventually we decided to head up toward Highlands

since it was a much shorter drive and there is certainly a great deal to see in that area as well. On one of our previous trips we had made it down Hwy 64 from Highlands as far as Cullasaja Falls, but because it was pouring down rain that day most of the group did not get a good view of it. This time as we were heading up 64 to Highlands from Franklin, the group caught a glimpse of the splendid waterfall. When we stopped at Dry Falls, I was accosted by those wanting to see that beautiful waterfall that we had just passed along the way. I told them that we could check it out on the way back although we would have to work our way past the falls, find a good turnaround spot for the van and then hope that there was space for us to pull off at the overlook. After spending some real quality time at the astonishingly powerful Dry Falls on a stunningly beautiful morning we headed on to our main hike of the day at Glen Falls.



Members of Team Butterball taking pics of Dry Falls

Mimi and I had been to Glen Falls many years ago and could vaguely remember what a beauty it is, but it was time to renew our mental vision and allow the others to see it for the first time. Although not particularly long, the trail has a considerable drop in elevation. Kevin gives it a difficulty rating of “7”, so it can certainly provide a significant level of exertion for the average hiker. It was enough at least to help work up an appetite for our traditional lunch at Cornucopia Restaurant in Cashiers.



Looking out over the Blue Valley from the top of Glen Falls





The first sheer drop of Glen Falls



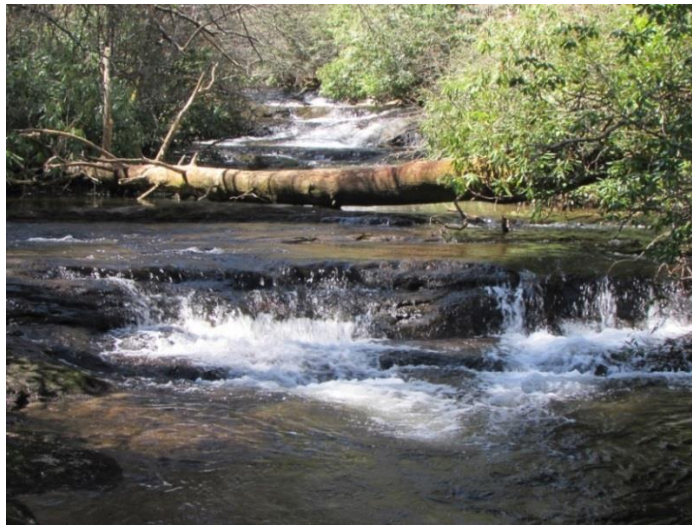
The cascading second drop of Glen Falls

After a delicious lunch, followed for most by a tantalizing dessert, we were ready to head back up to Highlands to spend a little bit of time checking out the shops on Highland's main drag. Before getting there however, we took a short detour to investigate a couple of waterfalls in the Highlands Hub described under the heading of *Other Waterfalls in the Highlands Region*. A while back I read a review of KA's book in which the reviewer, in referring to Kevin's practice of giving brief



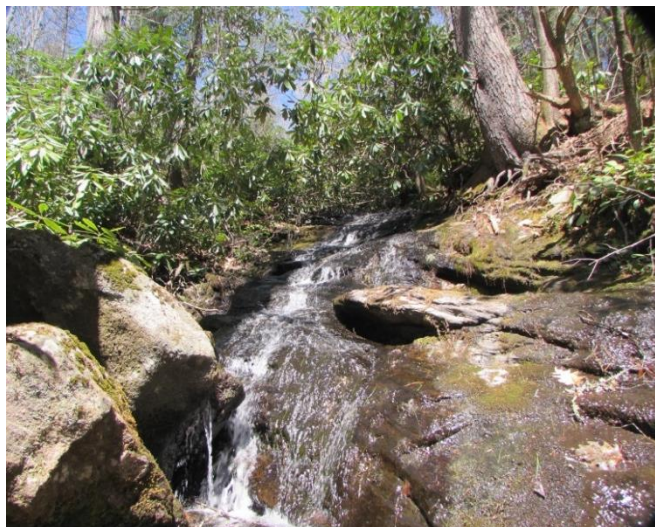
descriptions of “Nearby Waterfalls” or “Other Waterfalls in the ... Region,” says the following: *“Very poorly written and poorly organized. After you waste time reading about several waterfalls the author tells you they are on private land and you cannot see them-what a waste!”* I guess everyone sees things in their own way, but first of all KA is a gifted writer who presents his information with clarity and wit, and secondly these sections scattered all throughout his book, are absolutely fascinating and delightful. In many cases, these waterfalls are on private property and not viewable to the public, but in many other situations these waterfalls are near roadways and can be seen. Even if not it is a treat for the true lover of waterfalls to be aware of their presence and try to imagine what they may look like, or perhaps be stimulated to do additional research to see if there are socially acceptable ways to actually view them. Several examples follow and there are others we could have seen in the area that fit into this category that we just didn’t have time to see.

In the Other Waterfalls section, Kevin describes a little waterfall called Pinky Falls. Shortly before reaching downtown Highlands, we turned off onto Flat Mountain Road and followed his directions to a little pull off at the trailhead for a short path to Pinky Falls. Admittedly, it is not much of a waterfall, but it was still a scenic location with a beautiful swimming hole that would be quite tempting in warmer months.



Pinky Falls near Highlands

A little further down Flat Mountain Road is another minor waterfall that Kevin described and it was right beside the road. This one is on Skitty Creek and it drops ~20' and flows down under the road, ultimately emptying into the Cullasaja River.



Waterfall on Skitty Creek near Highlands



Since we were planning to eat supper at the cabin, we needed to move along in a timely manner and after spending a little less than an hour perusing the shops, we headed west on Hwy 64. When we arrived at the narrow roadside view of Cullasaja Falls, there were already several vehicles in the pull off area. We drove past about a mile, found a good turnaround spot and headed back toward the falls. When we reached that tight little bend in the road I wondered if there was room to squeeze off the road beyond where several other vehicles were stopped. Fortunately we were able to shoehorn our way in off the road surface and everyone got out to view the falls. The Cullasaja was thundering down through the gorge and all were struck by its dramatic drop and the majesty and power the falls displayed.



That was it for the day, at least as far as waterfalls' was concerned (with one exception). It was time to get back to the cabin for relaxation for some and supper preparation for others. What a beautiful drive into our cabin after we turned off of Hwy 28N. The sun was low in the sky and shown brilliantly on the ridge across from us producing a beauty that can only be seen in late afternoon. Poppi (me) was planning to go back out and check out another waterfall listed in the Nearby Waterfalls section of KA's description of Indian Camp Creek Falls. There were a few items needed from the grocery store, so I was able to be helpful as well as satisfy my desire to do a little exploring. For a number of years I had been aware of a Burningtown Falls (Kevin says of it: *"This is among the more spectacular waterfalls in the region. Unfortunately, it's on private property"*). There are mentions of it online as well as a couple of really poor photos. Kevin provides enough detail that I thought that I had a good chance of finding it. I headed out and following his directions through a beautiful valley, made my way toward Burningtown Falls Road. After turning up this road, the falls shortly came into view. The view was somewhat obstructed by the trees, but because they had not as yet leafed out I could tell that this one was a beauty. I continued the drive up the steep road until I neared a house next to the falls. The view opened up at this point and was relatively unobstructed, marred only by the presence of the house immediately adjacent to the falls. It was definitely worth the search and I'm so glad that Kevin included it in his book.





Burningtown Falls near Franklin

One of the wonderful members of Team Butterball prepared Chicken Pot Pie casserole style for Saturday night supper and everyone really chowed down. In the end, nothing remained of the two large portions that she had fixed. For the younger members of the team, much of the rest of the evening was spent sitting around the fire pit making S'mores for dessert, playing foosball and pool in the game room downstairs, with a few spending a bit of time soaking in the Jacuzzi. Poppi watched a bit of the NBA playoffs and then headed for bed. We were planning to get off to an earlier start on Sunday morning.

Our original plan had been to go see High Falls on Sunday morning (we had even scheduled our trip around the release dates), but after some discussion it was decided that since we had already been there twice, we would instead head north and make our way toward Crabtree Falls near the BR Parkway north of Asheville. We would first veer off course a bit and stop at the Blue Ridge Biscuit Company near Black Mountain for brunch. What a meal. I think everyone was stuffed and there was talk that some would not need anything else to eat on this day. From the BRBC we gassed up and headed over to the Parkway for what I thought would be a relatively short drive up to Crabtree Meadows. The plan was to do Crabtree Falls and if everyone felt like it, take the short hike to Roaring Fork Falls. We would then head down Hwy 80 to Marion and I-40E, where most of Team Butterball would head home to see their "babies" that they had left behind. Well about a mile north of the Folk Art Center, there was a sign stating that the Parkway was closed six miles ahead. So much for that plan! My son-in-law informed me that his phone told him that it was actually shorter to go back and take I-40 on to Marion and then up 80 to the Parkway. Although we would miss the splendid views around Craggy Gardens and Mount Mitchell, at least we would see a gorgeous waterfall. Shortly after we got back on the Interstate, it suddenly dawned on me that we would pass right by Catawba Falls as we headed towards Marion. Poppi made a quick executive decision and the next thing you know we had pulled off at Exit 73 and turned onto Catawba Falls Road. The parking lot was pretty full at the trailhead and I realized that we would not be alone on the trail or at the falls.





Team Butterball crossing the Catawba River on the way to Catawba Falls



Catawba Falls in all of its glory

It seemed that everyone was quite pleased with their experience at Catawba Falls. Although the second longest hike of the weekend, it has a difficulty rating of only 5 and the gradual ascent to the base of the falls was managed quite well by all. Our younger son-in-law was tempted to head up the “trail” to Upper Catawba Falls, but restrained himself this time around. The two of us had tackled this strenuous climb back in October. It’s tough, but truly worth the effort to see this incredibly beautiful waterfall. Both falls are magnificent and it is fascinating to see the difference between the two—completely different in character, but each spectacular in its own way.



We parted ways at this point with many affectionate hugs for and from our little extended family. These young couples have welcomed us into their circle of friends and we have been blessed to see their love and dedication for one another. They are always there to support each other through the many ups and downs of life, and I hope that all are proud to be a part of Team Butterball. There was no rappelling or rope walking with this group, but they truly enjoyed the beauty of all they saw, whether waterfall, scenic vistas, or simply the pastel colors seen throughout the landscape as the new spring foliage began to escape winter's hold. All were thankful for the opportunity to share together the incomparable beauty of God's wonderful creation.

Our little group in the '04 Lexus stopped to eat supper in Greensboro and as we sat waiting for our meals, I wondered aloud what I might have changed if I could have placed a weather order for the weekend. Not a thing came to my mind. Four days of impeccably beautiful spring weather – who could have asked for more?