

Patterson Gap

Approximate size: 5,681 acres
Old-growth known: 647 acres

Patterson Gap is a microcosm of north Georgia. The area has plateaus and cliffs, wildflower coves and rock outcrops, ridges and waterfalls, and everything in between. A steep and rugged landscape packs all of this diversity close together, and many of these ecosystems remain in nearly pristine conditions. Old-growth oak forest covers many of the high ridges, and no timber operations have occurred in the area in the last 40 years. Human intervention in the area has declined in recent decades as dead-end roads and wildlife openings have been abandoned. Over 5,000 acres are Inventoried Roadless.

This area goes beyond natural examples of common ecosystems. Rare ecosystems, like high elevation rock outcrops, occur in several places. They support rare species like Diana's fritillary, but rare species also live scattered in more common habitats throughout the area. Common species also become exceptional, such as the state champion red hickory and cucumbertree magnolia. Bears, while not of exceptional size, are especially abundant in this area.

Most of this natural beauty is enjoyed from afar. An unmaintained trail leads past waterfalls on Keener Creek, but no official trails traverse the area. However, numerous

people see this area as the backdrop to scenic Betty Creek and Wolf Fork valleys. The area is even visible from Highway 441 between Mountain City and Dillard. The waters on that side form the headwaters of the Little Tennessee River. Out of view, the other side supplies water for trout in Persimmon Creek.

Access: From Dillard, go west of Bettys Creek Rd 3.4 miles, and turn left onto Patterson Gap Rd. Follow it 1.5 miles to Forest Service property. The Mountain Treasure is on the left.
 N34.9716 W83.4587

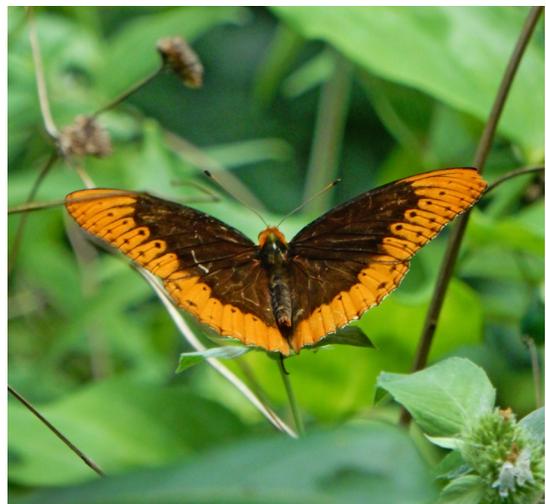


Photo by Jess Riddle

A rare Diana fritillary pollinates mountain mint in the Patterson Gap Mountain Treasure.