

Anthony Lamprose
Superintendent, Blackrock Mountain State Park

Has Black Rock Mountain always been a significant place for you?

Well it was a big mountain. Clayton is my hometown and Blackrock Mountain essentially forms the background or the skyline for the community in Clayton, and all the mountains in Rabun County just looked to be huge to me. But to be honest with you, I didn't really start to see these mountains, really, really notice them until after I left for college and found myself in communities and locations that didn't have mountains. I got my degree at the University of Georgia, and Athens isn't very far from here, but it is pretty flat. And I remember coming home on weekends and just noticing for really the first time just how pretty this section of the mountains really were. And it really made a big difference. Anyway, that's a recollection I have that's pretty vivid.

What is the climate like all the way up here?

Well in summer, our average temperature is 69, 70 degrees, which is interesting because it's about the same as Burlington, VT. So even though we're in Georgia, you climb up the mountain and essentially you drive into New England. And it's really surprising for people that have not been here, when they get on top of the mountain, just how unbelievably cooler it can be from the places they came from. And it's real, real common for people to come up here and want to buy a sweatshirt or a sweater because they just didn't bring the right clothing.

Can you describe how diverse the plant life is at Black Rock Mountain State Park?

Well because of the way the mountains come through this part of Rabun County, we have a northern exposure on the Blue Ridge and a southern exposure, and we have just a lot of different habitats inside the park. There are sections where we have beautiful examples of Appalachian cove forests, and then other places where we have Northern hardwood forests in place along the tops of our highest ridges. And then we have our southern exposures where we have sort of a mixed oak and hickory and pine forest. And then, in some of the sections in the park, we have some creeks and streams where there's laurel thickets and just real, real thick tangles of rhododendron and hemlock and eastern white pine. The diversity is amazing here. It truly is.

What is the strangest question you've been asked about Black Rock?

We get a lot of questions and some of them are a little bit offbeat. One time I had somebody ask me about the elevation of our lake, and what was the elevation of the little fishing pier that we have on one side of the lake. And I told them. And then they looked at me with a straight face and asked me what the elevation of the other side of the lake was. And I'm trying to imagine a lake that's tilted. You know, lakes by their nature are the same elevation all the way around. And I thought that was pretty funny. But I tried to answer their question respectfully, but I thought, "Gosh, I don't believe I've ever heard anything quite like that before."