

Upper Bald River WSA

9,038 acres, Monroe County, Tennessee

Description

The Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area is the only stand-alone area recommended by the U.S. Forest Service for wilderness designation. The 9,112 acre area was identified as a Wilderness Study Area in the 2004 Forest Plan, and is currently managed consistent with wilderness guidelines.

The Wilderness Study Area, along with the existing Bald River Gorge Wilderness (designated in 1984) constitutes most of the Bald River watershed. The area proposed for wilderness designation offers the rare opportunity to protect an entire watershed, thus securing the water quality, trout and wildlife habitat in a well-defined and geographically distinct area. In the process of defining the wilderness boundaries for bill introduction, the total acreage of the Upper Bald River was reduced to 9,038 acres. When the Upper Bald River Wilderness is designated by Congress, this will be the first new wilderness area designated in Tennessee in almost 25 years.



The Upper Bald River area is a beautiful and rugged landscape dominated by hardwood forests. The area is traversed by the Benton MacKaye Trail, the Brookshire Creek Trail and the Kirkland Creek Trail. These trails are open to and frequented by both hikers and horseback riders. The area is also popular with both hunters and anglers, and is home to sizable populations of Black Bear, White-tailed Deer and native Brook Trout. The area serves as the headwaters for the Bald River, including numerous tributaries and the upper portion of the river.

Tributary streams including Brookshire Creek, Kirkland Creek, and Waucheesi Creek are part of an important and popular trout fishery that includes the entire Bald River drainage and the Tellico River. The area is also home to a dizzying array of flora and fauna, the type that makes the southern Appalachian Mountains the most biologically diverse temperate forests on earth.

Location

The Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area is located in Monroe County, Tennessee – approximately 20 miles east of Tellico Plains. To the south lays the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. The northern boundary is Bald River Road (FDR 126) The area is an easy 90-minute drive from Knoxville and from Chattanooga Tennessee.



Tennessee Wild is a coalition of organizations dedicated to protecting wilderness on the Cherokee National Forest for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Please visit tnwild.org for more information.
