

NEWS RELEASE

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Exclusive Sams' Summits Loop Trail Hiking Guides Now Available

*The Haywood TDA Releases a Second Illustrated Hiking Guide by
Blue Ridge Naturalist Ken Czarnomski*

Waynesville, NC – He has done it again! Certified Blue Ridge Naturalist and local hiking advocate, Ken Czarnomski, has truly outdone himself with his latest work of art. In partnership with the Haywood Tourism Development Authority, Ken has officially released his latest creation: the Sams' Summits Loop Trail Hiking Guide, located in the Shining Rock Wilderness Area of Haywood County. Available exclusively through the Haywood TDA, this beautifully illustrated guide is hot off the press and available to lead hikers through one of the areas most extraordinary hiking gems.

Inspired by the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, Ken wanted to give back something special to honor the occasion. "Having one of the first ecologically diverse wilderness areas here in Haywood County is amazing. Doing a map of this small part gives me an opportunity to share what I see with others, so they can see this area in a new way," said Ken. The Shining Rock Wilderness Area is located in a southeastern quadrant of Haywood County and is part of the Pisgah National Forest. This area is both geologically and environmentally dramatic as the landscape is still recovering from logging and fires nearly a century ago, offering breathtaking contrasts, especially in the fall.

As with his first illustrated hiking guide which covered the Purchase Knob area of Haywood County, which borders the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Ken wanted to highlight a year-round accessible hike. He chose Sams' Summits Loop Trail because it offers a hike that will appeal to the entire family and provide a special experience no matter the season. Because of the trailhead locations, the loop can be accessed even when the Blue Ridge Parkway is closed, making for a perfect winter hike. Ken's overall goal with his guides is to get people out and embrace the joys of hiking, while also serving as advocates for our wild lands. "When they have an opportunity to explore this place and realize how special it is, my map is successful. These places are our heritage. If we do not care about them and support them in every way possible, they can disappear. Just as easily as these places appeared on the map, they can be erased. We need to lobby for their continuing mission and wildness," advised Ken.

Ken has been hiking Shining Rock and the Pisgah National Forest for years and has been keeping weather and flora journals for almost three years now. He continues to frequent the area often and is always adding to his catalog of natural highlights. They diversify seasonally, offering an ever-changing abundance of interests. "My favorite is the fall when the mountain ash is in red berry against the clear, Carolina sky. The cascades, especially along Flat Laurel Creek, are phenomenal," boasts Ken. This information, along with hours of research, digging up some details as far back as the late 1800's, is what adds a unique spin to the hiking guide. Ken's guide doesn't just provide a highly useful map, but offers a variety of concepts you won't often find on a typical hiking map. The Sams' Summits Loop Trail guide offers area history, geology, a special story of a local mountain trapper, tips for a safe and enjoyable hike and not to mention his elegant hand-drawn illustrations of flora, fauna, and scenic features. Nowhere else will you find a useful hiking guide with this much character and appeal rolled into a full color map. "After learning so many details about the history, determining what to include and what to leave out was difficult. The artwork itself took about six months from planning and conception to a full color 22 x 30 inch original using primarily water color and pen and ink," said Ken. For further information about the map and to request a complete bibliography, email phoenix2reach@gmail.com.

So what is next for Ken? More guides, of course! The outstanding success of his first map fueled his passion to continue to create these useful works of art, which gave us the Sams' Summits Loop Trail Guide. Ken has other ideas for future maps in the works and they are all right in his backyard. "Haywood County is my first desire because we have a lot to share. So my research continues here. I remain intrigued by the Cataloochee area, Big Creek and areas getting pushed by development, like Rough Fork in Canton, and those folks out there pursuing land conservancies in our county," said Ken.

Want to get your hands on the Sams' Summits Loop Trail guide? As previously mentioned, the maps are available exclusively in Haywood County and for a good reason. They want you to come visit! "We are so excited about Ken's work and forging a partnership with him to promote hiking exclusively in Haywood County has been a tremendous accomplishment. I have had the pleasure of hiking in our mountains with him recently and his love of and dedication to our natural resources is truly special. He is giving back something extraordinary to our community and we want people to come here and experience it themselves," said Anna Smathers, Communications Manager for the Haywood TDA. The guide highlights 6 various trails throughout the area, ranging from easy to difficult, so there really is something for every hiker, no matter your skill level.

A free guide can be picked up at either of the Haywood Visitor Centers – 44. N. Main St., Waynesville or 2511 Soco Rd., Maggie Valley. The TDA is also more than happy to mail you a guide by calling and requesting it at 1-800-334-9036.

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Along with its picturesque beauty, Haywood County offers year round activities and events centered around our five homegrown initiatives: Food, Heritage, Music, Art and the Outdoors. No matter what experience you choose, we guarantee it will always be Fresh From the North

Carolina Smokies! For more information visit www.visitncsmokies.com or contact the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority at 800-334-9036.