

Around The Mt. Mitchell Forest Service District

By George Vitas, U. S. Forest Ranger

Gus Hultman, Ranger on the Blue Ridge Parkway, tells us that the out-of-state traffic has more than doubled. Last year, at about this time, he could count between 125 to 150 out-of state cars per day on the Parkway. But this year it is not at all unusual to see as many as 300 or more per day. Out of state Parkway visitors seem to run in Regional cycles. During early spring, the New Englanders and Eastern Seaboard residents, mostly adults, pour in. Then in early summer the sight seeing school children come. In mid and late summer, the mid westerners, along with hundreds of cars from other states take over. Since school is out at this time of the year, most of the summer traffic consists of family groups. Since the Blue Ridge Parkway cuts the southern division of the Mt. Mitchell District in two, visitors get an excellent view of the Forest in Yancey County when they look north and McDowell county when they gaze south. It is our personal belief that the number of out of state visitors will increase; because when you combine the scenic beauty of these mountains with a friendly courteous welcome, the folks who've been here are bound to be

come some of Western North Carolina's best promoters. They'll go home and tell others about it. And others, their curiosity aroused, are bound to come to see for themselves. Reports from most of the Southern states tell of powder dry drought conditions. Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina, along with parts of North Carolina, predict crop losses running into the millions unless relieving rains show up soon. Water tables are dropping dangerously and many streams are dwindling into trickles. In Spruce Pine, the unusual drought conditions have placed a severe strain on the city water supply. The Board of Alderman has requested residents not to sprinkle lawns or gardens. The Board warned that it has "full authority to arrest and prosecute any water users who sprinkle lawns or gardens after being notified not to do so, and hopes not to be obliged to do so." And, like everybody else, we too are sweating out this drought on the Forest. Up until we got some scattered showers last Sunday, the ground was so badly parched that any fire that started would have burned very deep and would have done great damage not only to the trees

but to the soil as well. Let's hope that a good general rain comes soon. Dwight Rivers, N. C. Wildlife Protection Supervisor for District 8, which covers 11 Western North Carolina counties, including Yancey, McDowell and Mitchell, dropped into the office the other day. Mr. Rivers states that the Game protection Division of the North Carolina Resources Commission is not only interested in apprehending violators of fish and game laws, but is also striving to prevent violations through and intensive and educational program. All State Game Protectors are given two weeks of training each year at the Institute of Government (a Division of the University of N. C.) at Chapel Hill. This year's school will start June 7 and much of the emphasis will be on public relations and the prevention of game law violations. The Commission has a library of films dealing with North Carolina Wildlife which are available, free, to schools, clubs and other organizations interested in this vital resource. Mr. Rivers states that the Game Protection Division works closely with all other federal and state conservation agencies in its efforts to improve and increase the wildlife resource of North Carolina. We didn't have space in which to mention it then, but ten weeks ago this column had its first birthday. This is the 62nd consecutive weekly issue.

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