

SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

WATERFALLS



Big Bear Falls

At just over 20,000 acres in size, South Mountains State Park is the largest in the North Carolina State Park system. The park contains headwater streams for both the Jacob Fork and the Henry Fork watershed. The protection of these waters help sustain our outstanding resource waters. Shiny Creek cascades over large boulders in a boulder field to create Big Bear Falls, named by staff after spotting a large black bear observing their work.

Challenge: Unfortunately, lots of people like to stack rocks to create cairns. This is harmful to microorganisms and destroys salamander homes and eggs. If you see stacked rocks, gently unstack them and put rocks where you think they would belong. Take a picture of your work. If you don't see a cairn, fantastic! Draw a picture of a waterfall without any trash or cairns.

Safety Tip: Stay on the Trail

There is no off-trail access at High Shoals Falls because it is dangerous to leave the trails. In addition to the safety issues, hiking off trail introduces the likelihood of trampling vegetation.

Waterfall Keepers of North Carolina

Junior Waterfall Keeper Water Passport Program

www.waterfallkeepersofnc.org

Detailed hiking directions can be found online.

High Shoals Falls

Hike distance: 1.86 mile out and back or 2.7-mile loop

GPS for trailhead: 35.60236, -1.62917

Hike difficulty: Moderate

Elevation changes: Lots of stairs

Big Bear Falls

Hike distance: 1.2 mile roundtrip

GPS for trailhead: 35.60236, -1.62917

Hike difficulty: Easy

Elevation changes: relatively flat

Waterfall on Clear Creek

Hike distance: 1.6 mile loop

GPS for trailhead: 35.64295, -1.75291

Hike difficulty: Moderate

Elevation changes: Relatively flat

Pot Branch Falls

Waterfall is in South Mtns Gamelands

Hike distance: 1 mile roundtrip

GPS for trailhead: 35.56570 -81.72227

Hike difficulty: Easy

Elevation changes: Relatively flat

Additional Waterfalls:

