

Winter Preview

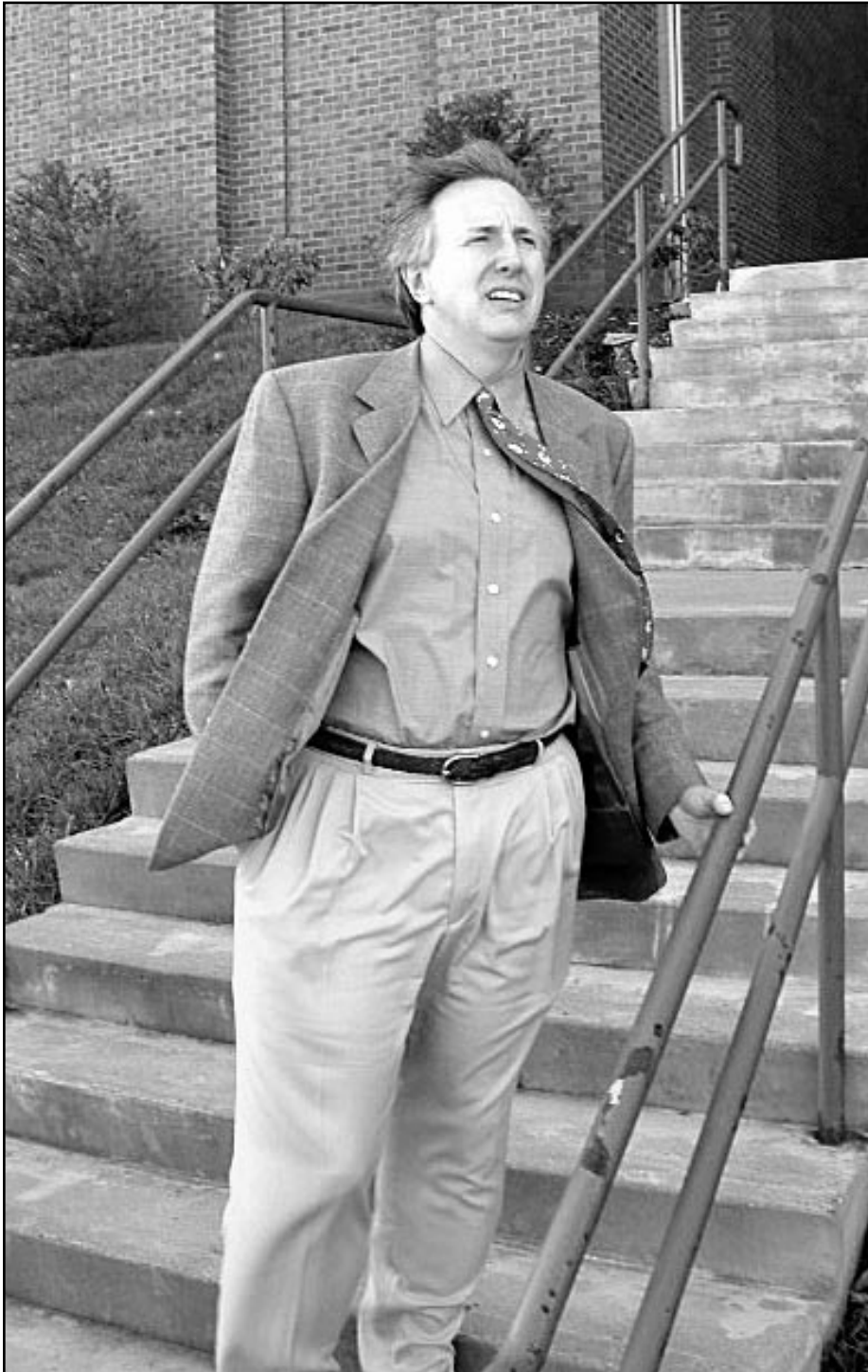
2003 - 04



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Ray's Winter Forecast 2003-2004



Peter Larkins | The Appalachian

Dr. Ray Russell braves the weather outside his office in the CAP building. He is a computer science professor at Appalachian State University, while an avid amateur meteorologist on the side. Dr. Russell operates currently 14 weather stations from Asheville to Sparta and runs a Web page with the weather data and local forecasts.

BY ANNA OAKES
Staff Writer

Bundle up, Appalachian State University students, and get ready for a cold and snowy winter in Boone.

Local amateur meteorologist Ray Russell of Ray's Weather Center predicts a winter much like last year, with temperatures averaging two degrees colder than normal and more than average snowfall, according to his "Fearless Forecast" published on WoollyWorm.com.

"Ocean temperatures give us the best indication of what lies ahead," Russell, who is also a professor of computer science at Appalachian, said.

Russell compared different current ocean temperatures and patterns, including the El Nino pattern in the Pacific Ocean, with temperatures and patterns of past years. He looked at the temperatures and snowfall amounts from years with similar ocean trends and concluded that this year we would have comparable temperatures and snowfall amounts.

"For the current situation with [ocean trends], the best comparison years are 1959-60, 1978-79, 1979-80, and 1980-81," Russell said. "For those who know their winters in the High Country, this list has two of the biggest snow years ever."

Last year, Russell's forecast was fairly accurate.

"If you can just get on the correct side of normal, you're doing well," he said. "Only God knows exactly what'll happen, and for that forecast, you'll have to visit www.god.com."

Russell expects more snow in the middle of winter rather than the end. A neutral El Nino pattern like the one we are experiencing now usually generates more snow for the southeast, he said.

"We'll get good snows."

Russell has been predicting

weather since 1995. He launched www.booneweather.com in fall 1999. In January 2000, the *Watauga Democrat* ran an article about Russell and his Web site, and soon the Associated Press and *The Charlotte Observer* were writing stories about him as well.

Ray's Weather Center now has 14 weather stations, including stations in Asheville, Hickory and West Jefferson, in addition to four stations located in Watauga County.

Ray's Weather Center has just launched the online "Ray's Weather Store." The online store includes T-shirts, caps and other accessories featuring the Ray's Weather Center logo.

Russell is especially excited about the 2004 Ray's Weather Center Calendar, which features photos from winners of Ray's Weather Photo Contest, normal and record highs and lows for each day of the year and dates for all the most important weather events ever recorded for the High Country.

Russell suggests that students prepare ahead of time and buy good tires for their cars.

"Obviously, dress in layers," he said. Of course, check Ray's Weather Center to know how to prepare each morning, he said.

"I think Ray's really reliable, I've always thought that," Lindsay A. Dula, a junior at Appalachian, said. "If he says it's going to be colder than normal I guess I'm going to go buy some good snow pants and get some more firewood."

"[Russell's forecast] doesn't surprise me," junior Jonathan Clark said.

"Last year was worse than the year before, so it'll probably be worse this year," Clark said.

The record low temperature for Boone is -24 degrees Fahrenheit. The most inches of snow ever received in one winter was 104 inches.

Ray's Weather Center is located on the Web at www.booneweather.com.

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Winter "Week by Week" Breakdown

- Week 1 (12/22 - 12/28): Cold and Snowy
- Week 2 (12/29 - 1/4): Cold
- Week 3 (1/5 - 1/11): Mild
- Week 4 (1/12 - 1/18): Cold and Snowy
- Week 5 (1/19 - 1/25): Cold and Snowy
- Week 6 (1/26 - 2/1): Cold and Snowy
- Week 7 (2/2 - 2/8): Cold
- Week 8 (2/9 - 2/15): Cold and Snowy
- Week 9 (2/16 - 2/22): Mild
- Week 10 (2/23 - 2/29): Cold
- Week 11 (3/1 - 3/7): Cold and Snowy
- Week 12 (3/8 - 3/14): Mild
- Week 13 (3/15 - 3/21): Mild



Economic Impact in the High Country



BY SAMANTHA SIERRA
Intern Writer

Economics professors Dr. Steve Millsaps and Dr. Peter A. Groothuis conducted a survey for North Carolina Ski Association's economic impact report for 2002-2003. Research findings were released during a conference held at Sugar Mountain resort on Nov. 20.

The survey gathered information pertaining to two areas: demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of skiers and expenditures by visitors to the area and at the resorts. Millsaps said the spending behavior is significant for two reasons.

"One is that the magnitude of the spending is large, and the other is the timing of spending during winter

months when the number of visitors to the area is small," Millsaps said.

Five ski resorts completed 261 surveys. These areas include Appalachian, Beech Mountain, Cataloochee, Hawksnest and Sugar Mountain.

In 2002-2003 a total of 544,219 skiers visited North Carolina slopes. The skiers brought more than \$23 million to the resorts.

According to the study by Millsaps and Groothuis, there has been a 21.6 percent increase from the 2001-2002 ski season.

Groothuis and Millsaps used an economic tool called a "multiplier" to aid their research. Groothuis said the multiplier's effect suggested the money from outside of North Carolina is spent in the local economy. He said that money be-

comes someone else's income, which is then spent in the local economy.

"It provides jobs as well as recreational opportunities for locals," Groothuis said.

Results showed \$23 million spent on ski resorts is just part of the \$67 million spent in total by skiers. Lodging expenditures came to \$14.5 million and restaurant spending totaled \$7.3 million. Millsaps said the five studied resorts made up two-thirds of the total skier revenue for N.C.

"The ski industry and tourism really generates a lot of business. Our future expectations are so heavily weighted on the weather," Kim Jochl, president of the North Carolina Ski Areas Association, said.

Millsaps said spending was generated

mostly in December. December, January and February have the lowest hotel occupancy rates at 40 percent, versus 73.5 percent in July and 67.5 percent in October. The research showed the local business would struggle without the ski industry bringing revenue to the area.

Skiers made up 40 percent of the visitors in the area. Georgia accounted for 18 percent of the skiers and 16 percent came from South Carolina. The last 14 percent of visitors came from Florida.

Groothuis said he was surprised to see so many different groups like scout troops and church groups visiting the area. Groothuis' and Millsaps' research shows that the South looks toward the mountains of N.C. for winter recreation.

The staff at *The Appalachian* would like to wish all its readers and supporters a safe and happy winter season.



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ABOUT THE COVERS: Original concept and cover design by Chad Treadway. Photographs by Mike Rominger University Photographer.



High Country

Sugar Mountain

COMPILED BY JANA NORDSTRAND
Staff Writer

Number of slopes:
20 trails and eight lifts
Operation Hours:
Day Session: 9a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Half-Day Session: 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Twilight Session: 12:30 - 10 p.m.
(closed 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.)
Night Session: 6p.m. - 10 p.m.

Distance From Campus: About 20 to 25 minutes from Appalachian State University Campus

Rental prices:
Adult: \$12-\$21
Junior: \$8-\$15
Snowboard: \$19-\$29 plus \$400 refundable deposit

Classes Offered: Yes
Learn to Ski Special \$51
Learn to Snowboard Special \$64

Contests: Yes

NASTAR Races
NASTAR stands for National Standards Race and it is a way for recreational racers to compare their progress with racers nationwide. The NASTAR races are held at Sugar Mountain on Saturday and Sunday each week at 12 noon plus during some special events. All races at Sugar are subject to weather and slope conditions.



File Photo



File Photo

Appalachian Ski Mountain

COMPILED BY JENNIFER SCHNEIDER
Staff Writer

Number of Slopes: Nine slopes
Operation hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.
Lodge open 8 a.m. – 10:30 p.m.

Distance from Campus: About seven miles

Resort Rates:
Four houses - Two sleep 14 people
- Two sleep eight people
- Prices: \$220- \$245

Student Specials: Yes

Lift Ticket: \$15 - \$24 weekdays, \$18 weekends/holidays

Equipment rentals: Weekdays: \$11, Nights: \$9
Fridays/Saturdays/Holidays: \$11

Classes offered:
French-Swiss Ski College offers individual attention and small classes daily and nightly for all ages and abilities

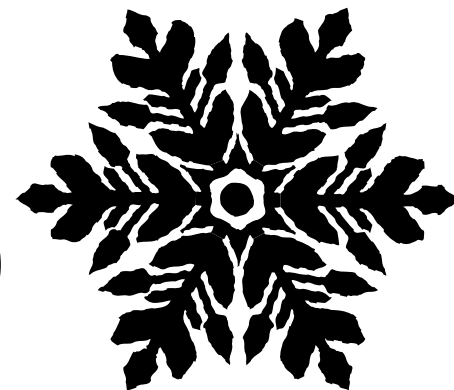
Ice skating: Yes
Open: noon-2 p.m., 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Tubing: No

Skiing/snowboarding contests: No

Contests: No

Resort Info



Peter Larkins | The Appalachian

Skiers and snowboarders enjoy the first skiing south of Connecticut at Sugar on Saturday, November 15th. Sugar had one trail open served by one lift. Sugar made snow all day Thursday and Friday, and opened for the weekend only. Rain and warmer temperatures forced Sugar to close until Thanksgiving.

Beech Mountain

COMPILED BY BRAD NORMAN

Staff Writer

Number of slopes:
15, which includes a half pipe

Operation hours:
8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., 6:00-10:00 p.m. night session

Distance from campus: 17 miles

Resort Rates:
1 Bedroom: \$100-\$110 weekday, \$125-\$140 weekend
2 Bedroom: \$135-\$170 weekday, \$170-\$200 weekend
3 Bedroom: \$190-\$220 weekday, \$240-\$270 weekend

Student Specials: No

Lift Ticket: \$18-\$28 on weekdays
\$25-\$48 weekends/holidays

Equipment rentals: \$16 - \$23 for skis
\$20 to \$35 for snowboards.

Classes: Yes

Ice skating: Yes

Tubing: Yes

Contests: Yes

Hawks' Nest

COMPILED BY JUSTIN BOULMAY

Staff Writer

Number of slopes: 12, all lit at night
Operation Hours:
Daily from 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Nighthawk (Fri, Sat) 5 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Distance from campus: Eight miles

Resort rates: no resort available

Student Specials:
ASU Snowboarding team offered. Members get reduced rates on board passes

Rental prices:
Adult: \$8-\$18
Junior: \$6-\$12
Snowboard: \$12-\$30

Classes offered: Private, group, children's, "Platinum Private," and all day VIP coaching

Ice skating: No

Tubing: Yes

Contests: Yes



Mike Rominger | Uiveristy Photographer



Local Attractions Around the High Country



BY HUGH KELLENBERGER

Staff Writer

BY LESLIE RASIMAS

Staff Writer

Did you break an ankle your first trip down the trail at an area ski resort? Hot water and cocoa mix burn the roof of your mouth while hanging out in the lodge? Is your honey making out with another snow bunny? Then you need a trip to the Fourth Annual Holiday Quilt Exhibit or other area attractions.

Mountain Laurel Quilt Guild sponsors the extravaganza, now through Dec. 21 at the Appalachian Cultural Museum in University Hall.

"There will be a bright array of colors and designs of quilts to compliment the water media paintings. These are seasonal paintings with fun flare," Sharon Kimball, director of education for University Hall said.

There will be an open house tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. There will be another group of artists there to discuss their quilts and/or artwork. Refreshments will be served along

with music.

"There will be lots of good cheer to spread around," Kimball said.

Abnormal snow flakes too much to handle? Ease your mind at Mystery Hill with puzzles, illusions and bubbles in the Hall of Mystery.

"Everyone loves the bubbles," owner Wayne Underwood said.

Mystery Hill is where mind-expanding demonstrations occur. The gravity in the building is off and water flows upward, Underwood said.

Mystery Hill is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day, except for Christmas Day. Admission is \$7 for adults, but students with Appalachian State University ID will receive a dollar off admission.

Connected to Mystery Hill is the other two-thirds of a trifecta of fun and learning. The Appalachian Heritage Museum is free to the public and is open the same hours as Mystery Hill.

The museum is housed in the home of Appalachian's founders, B.B. and D.D. Dougherty. The room is outfitted with authentic turn-of-the-century de-

cor. Visitors can learn how mountain families lived in the early 1900s. The house was the first in Watauga County to have electricity and running water, Underwood said.

The Native American Artifacts Museum houses more than 50,000 pieces of historical value. The majority of the collection contains artifacts from the Cherokee and Catawba tribes, but tribes from 20 different states are represented.

Admission to the Native American Artifacts Museum is included with admission to Mystery Hill, or visitors can pay \$3 for admission only to the museum.

Have an urge to revisit the good old days when all you wanted for Christmas was the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles video game? Is the newest TMNT game on your list again this year? Then make sure Santa knows all about it and visit him at two area ski resorts.

Santa will be skiing while he checks his list of all the good and naughty boys and girls at Sugar Mountain Resort

from Dec. 13-24.

Santa at the beach? No, no, no. Oh, to Beech Mountain we will go, but only for an hour on Dec. 20. Santa will visit children from 4-5 p.m. at Fred's Gazebo. Fred's Gazebo is next to Fred's General Mercantile and Deli.

Too late to sit on Santa's Lap? Find him in the woods on a snowshoe-guided tour at Sugar Mountain Resort.

Take a one-hour guided tour with up to 15 people, starting Dec. 19 and extending through New Year's Eve.

"It's really fun and good exercise," Len Dauer, director of Sugar Mountain Resort's ski school, said.

The walks are Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 3 p.m. and Saturdays at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Cost is \$15.

"We encourage people to wear hiking boots and bring a water bottle," Dauer said. "We like people to sign a waiver because it can be a bit strenuous."

Now that you have experienced every bit of fun in the High Country, sit back and relax with a lukewarm cup of cocoa and watch for signs of Santa in the sky.



Ice Skating in the Mountains



BY DUSTY TENG

Staff Writer

Skate away this winter at one of the high country's outdoor ice skating rinks. Both Appalachian Ski Mountain and Beech Mountain offer winter recreation alternatives for those wary of sports involving steep downhill slopes. Ice-skating offers winter fun for people of all ages.

"There's a lot more to do here than just ski," Appalachian Ski Mountain representative Jennifer Moretz said.

Appalachian Ski Mountain, located in Blowing Rock, boasts a lighted outdoor arena that overlooks its ski slopes, lodge and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The refrigerated rink is currently open to the

public until the end of the ski season, March 23. The rink will be closed on Christmas Eve, but will operate as normal on Christmas Day.

Learn everything from sit spins to double salchows with the rink's group and individual ice skating lessons available by appointment. The rink also offers skate rentals, group rates and birthday party packages.

Special events at Appalachian Ski Mountain's skating rink include professional ice-skating performances and Moonlight Skating sessions. Skate under the stars at the conclusion of fireworks displays from 10 p.m. to midnight on New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day.

Public sessions are held daily from noon to 2 p.m., 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Rates are \$12 for each two-hour session and includes skate rental.

Appalachian Ski Mountain's newest attraction is snow skating. Snow skates are a combination of a ski-like blade mounted on a lightweight ski boot that allows skaters to glide or skate down ski slopes.

Located at Beech Ski Mountain in the small town of Beech Mountain, NC is another popular outdoor refrigerated ice skating rink. Refrigerated rinks enable skaters to enjoy their favorite winter activity even in weather conditions that are not normally conducive to outdoor ice-skating.

Beech Ski Mountain offers both day and evening skating sessions that are

\$10 per two-hour session including skate rental. The ice-skating rink will open Fri., Dec. 5 along with the ski slopes.

Take a break from skating at Beech Tree Village, which is home to souvenir shops and restaurants. A special holiday service will be held at Beech Tree Village by the outdoor ice rink at 4:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Spectators are also invited to join various skating exhibitions throughout the season.

For more information on ice-skating at Appalachian Ski Mountain, call 1-800-322-2373 or visit www.appskimtn.com. Information regarding skating at Beech Mountain can be found by calling 1-800-438-2093 or by visiting www.skibeech.com/iceskating.html.



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