

October 18, 2016

To Whom It May Concern

The Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society strongly encourages support of the Oklawaha Greenway and the extension of the Oklawaha Greenway to the Blue Ridge Community College.

Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society is one of 10 National Audubon chapters in North Carolina and represents more than 1,200 members in Henderson, Buncombe and surrounding counties.

Greenways provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife. Extensive development from population growth leads to fragmentation of natural habitat. Population growth is inevitable but good planning can mitigate the loss of natural habitat. Jackson Park in Hendersonville is a wonderful birding site, attracting thousands of birds, especially during spring and fall migration. Birders from across the state visit Jackson Park during these periods, staying in local hotels, eating in local restaurants and visiting other attractions in the area.

The Oklawaha Greenway plans to connect Jackson Park to Blue Ridge Community College, providing important additional feeding habitat during the critical migration periods and expanding opportunities for local and visiting birders.

Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society leads bird walks in various locations in western North Carolina and we are already planning to extend our regular Jackson Park bird walk to include the Oklawaha Greenway at Patton Park.

Completion of the Oklawaha Greenway is another important step in making Henderson County and western North Carolina a wonderful place to live and to visit.

Respectfully,

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