



"Autumn in the North Georgia Mountains"

When the leaves begin to change in color, then fall to the ground; when the acorns begin to bombard you as you are walking to the mailbox; when the chipmunks fill their cheeks with nuts looking as if they have the Mumps, it is easy to tell that autumn has arrived.

There are fewer times of the year that visitors from other areas drive to our beautiful area in such great numbers. They come to see the amazing colors that autumn has brought to us once again. Each year, sometimes briefer than others, the view from our window changes from different shades of green to a palette of oranges, reds, yellows, and browns.

Autumn is the most vital time of the year for the majority of wildlife. This is the season where they supply themselves with enough food to last the winter. Squirrels scamper around collecting acorns; deer

are eating leaves off Mountain Laurels, and bears fill themselves with hickory nuts. The bear are filling their bellies for a long winter and preparing for the birth of cubs that will happen early in the New Year.

The coats of the canine (*domestic and wild*) begin to grow fuller and thicker, as if they are putting on their winter sweaters and coats as we do! *What a great defense from the colder months to have hair grow in fuller in order to keep warmer.* But we are not so lucky. While their fur is filling in, we are busy digging our cold weather gear out of storage. Fortunately, when the cold season comes to an end, we can simply pack our warm clothes away. On the other hand, your beloved pet Fido will shed his coat everywhere he touches (on furniture, on the carpet, on your bed). *So I guess that it may be a better defense, but it is easier the way us humans do it, and much less of a mess!*

Not only are the leaves changing in color, but have you ever noticed that the deer become darker in color?

This is due to the thickening of their hair, like with the canines. Also, the buck will shed the fur lining around his antlers by rubbing against trees, then his full hard rack will appear, *only to fall off during the winter.* The fawns from this year are losing their spots and looking more like small versions of their parents.

Most of the wildlife in the North Georgia Mountains will become mothers during the colder times, so when you get the opportunity to see them in autumn, you will notice that most appear to be getting bellies. Unlike the black bear in northern states, our black bear actually do not hibernate. They will *den down*, but usually continue to hunt for food and live their normal existence as during the warmer months. If the sow becomes a mother during the winter, she will spend more time in her den to care for her young; otherwise she will only use her den for sleeping, and keeping warm during the colder times.

The falling leaves serve an abundance of purposes. Not only are they

beautiful to look at, but they add nutrients to the ground around the trees; they become warm bedding for such wildlife as chipmunks, squirrels, fox, and bear, and can be used for numerous craft projects. So when the autumn time has arrived, try to keep in mind all of the wonderful things that occur during this time. It may be the most beautiful time of the year, especially in the North Georgia Mountains. But, what most people don't see, *especially those driving along the mountain roads viewing the colors*, are the numerous other occurrences that are happening.

