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PO Box 33522, Decatur GA 30033  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Geologist talks about Appalachians November 5**

Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of the popular guide, *Roadside Geology of Georgia*, will present a talk, "The Buzzard's Wings: Recent Insights into the Shaping of the South's Mountains," at Northlake Library at 6:30 PM Tuesday, November 5. The event, hosted by the Friends of Northlake Library at 3772 Lavista Rd, Tucker, GA 30084, is free and open to the public.

Witherspoon notes that the Southern Appalachians contain Eastern North America's highest summits, as well as spectacular cliffs at places like Tallulah Gorge, Whiteside Mountain, and Chimney Rock. A famous Cherokee creation legend told about a tired buzzard whose wings scraped valleys into the still-soft landscape. It captured the truth that the mountains were carved out rather than individually pushed up or piled up. The scientific story is a work in progress, with notable advances within the last decade or so.

With slides and animations, Witherspoon illustrates that, although colliding continents cooked and compressed the region's rock to its present state hundreds of millions of years ago, the rugged landscape is far younger. Twenty million years ago, only modest mountains comparable to the Ozarks likely existed here. Witherspoon shares recent studies indicating that thousands of feet of uplift took place since then and may be ongoing. A massive effort to "see" Earth's mantle beneath North America, analysis of mountain valleys where debris flows swept away houses, and trenches along Tennessee lakeshores confirming a present risk for damaging earthquakes are all part of the quest for answers.

*Roadside Geology of Georgia*, a full-color 320-page guide, has sold more than 7,000 copies, and is part of a Mountain Press Publishing series for the general reader that has sold over one million copies. "Our goal is to take the reader to Georgia's natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery," says Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 students and their teachers for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools' Fernbank Science Center, and co-authored the 2013 book with Dr. Pamela Gore of Georgia Perimeter College.

Contact for information: Dr. Bill Witherspoon, [bill@georgiarocks.us](mailto:bill@georgiarocks.us).