

A view of the Smokies from upper Kirkland Creek



Kelly Bennett was standing at a little over 3,000 feet elevation when he took this photo from a cornfield near the head of Kirkland Creek, likely in July. The patch he's standing in was planted after the patch below, which has tassled out and looks to be near maturity. Kirkland Creek empties into the Tuckasegee about a mile and a half upstream of downtown Bryson City, after over a 1,250 foot drop from this location.

Cornfields on hillsides like this were common through the early decades of the 20th century, but I doubt if there are more than a handful – if any - corn patches of any size on this sort of terrain today in not only Swain County, but all of Western North Carolina.

This is a testimony to the challenges our forebears were forced to deal with. When one stops to consider what we think are challenges of modern life juxtaposed against the circumstances of making do when this picture was taken, I'm afraid it tells us that we're a soft, spoiled lot. lacking the gumption of those gone before.

Don Casada 4 Jan 2025