

Running Head: Origin and Maintenance of Grassy Balds

Vegetative Evidence for the Origin and Maintenance of Grassy Balds

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Abstract

Grassy balds are treeless, grassy meadows that occur on ridgetops in the southern Appalachian Mountains. We are certain that grassy balds have existed for a long time, but an actual age cannot be determined. This makes it difficult to understand an exact origin. Vegetation analysis of the majority of grassy balds shows a lack of exotic species, which suggest that the majority of grassy balds occur naturally. Through observations, we are able to assume that grazing is the best method of maintenance. After the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, all of the cattle and sheep were removed. Soon after, woody plants began to invade grassy balds. However, there are many theories of the origin and maintenance of grassy balds that are able to be supported through vegetative evidence.