



# Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

April 2017

## APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTENANCE

April 1 – Saturday

Due to uncertainty in the date for opening Clingman's Dome Road and the window for chainsaw use in the Park, this work trip has been moved to the Nantahala National Forest. We hope to get enough volunteers to staff 2 work crews – one to work at Browns Fork Gap to repair erosion-related deterioration of a roof support post, and the second crew to work on treadway rehab near Stecoah Gap. This is a great opportunity to learn about general trail maintenance activities. Bring sturdy footwear, work gloves, water, lunch/snacks, and raingear; tools are provided. The hike to the shelter is 2.5 miles each way on mostly moderate trail. The hike for treadway rehab is less than 1 mile each way on moderate trail. Meet at the **Maryville Walmart <see list>** at 7:00 am for carpooling to Stecoah Gap. Drive: 120 miles RT {@4¢=\$5}. Please preregister with leaders to assist planning. Leaders: Dick Kettelle, [rhkettle@comcast.net](mailto:rhkettle@comcast.net), 865-483-9345, and Franklin LaFond, [ox97game@aol.com](mailto:ox97game@aol.com), 678-464-3380.

**ALSO** – We plan to reschedule the originally planned workday to remove slowdowns on the AT within the Park, as soon as the Park schedule for road openings and chainsaw use is confirmed.

## FROZEN HEAD WILDFLOWER HIKE

April 8 – Saturday

Frozen Head State Park encompasses over 24,000 acres of wilderness and wildflower diversity. Typically, we will be able to enjoy dozens of species of wildflowers at this time of year. Besides the wildflowers, on this year's hike (Panther Branch and North Old Mac Trails) we will enjoy waterfalls, footbridge crossings, cascades and cascade crossings, and an overlook with distant valley views. Hike is 6 miles, rated moderate. Meet at the **Oak Ridge Books-a-Million <see list>** at 8:00 am. Drive: 50 miles RT {@4¢=\$2}. Leaders: Billy Heaton, [bheaton8@yahoo.com](mailto:bheaton8@yahoo.com), 865-924-0095; and Lynda Bryan, [ellymay2015@aol.com](mailto:ellymay2015@aol.com).

## WEDNESDAY HIKE: BRADLEY FORK TO CABIN FLATS

April 12 – Wednesday

We will go to the Smokemont area of the Park to explore the trail along the Bradley Fork of the Oconaluftee River, hoping to find wildflowers along the way. We will take the Bradley Fork Trail to the Cabin Flats Trail, and then follow that to Campsite 49 to enjoy our lunch by the water. We will return to the Smokemont campgrounds the same way. Hike: 9.2 miles rated moderate. Those wanting a challenge can take the Smokemont Loop Trail back to the campgrounds instead of Bradley Fork (11.4 miles rated difficult due to the distance and elevation gain), but you will need to plan your carpool accordingly. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 7:30 am, **Sugarlands Visitor Center** at 8:30 am, or the parking lot on the right as you enter the **Smokemont Campground** at 9:15 am. *Be sure to email the hike leader if you plan to be at Sugarlands or at Smokemont so we'll know to look for you.* Drive: 126 miles RT {@4¢=\$5}. Leader: Pat Watts, 901-487-7941, [watts\\_at\\_home@yahoo.com](mailto:watts_at_home@yahoo.com).

## PORTERS CREEK TRAIL

April 15 – Saturday

On this classic spring wildflower hike we will look for lady's-slippers in the first mile, then visit a cemetery, a house site, the former SMHC cabin, the Messer barn, and possibly a still. After crossing Porters Creek on a foot-log we will be surrounded by phacelia, phlox, anemone; at Fern Falls (2.7 miles) we will find wild ginger, and past there, Fraser Sedge and boreal Clinton's lily. We will have lunch at Campsite 31 and then return the same way. Since this is a very popular spring hike, we will try for an early start. Hike is 7.2 miles, rated moderate. Meet at **Comcast on Asheville Hwy <see list>** at 7:30 am or at the trailhead in Greenbrier at 8:30 am. Drive: 80 miles RT {@4¢=\$3}. Leader: Doris Gove, [DorisGove@aol.com](mailto:DorisGove@aol.com), 865-456-8198.

## WEDNESDAY HIKE: WHITE OAK SINKS

April 19 – Wednesday

We will visit White Oak Sinks - after all, who can go too many times to see the wildflowers there? This will be a shuttle hike. We will park at the Townsend Wye, then take as few cars as possible to the Schoolhouse Gap trail head, knowing that parking can be crowded this time of year. We will hike the Schoolhouse Gap trail, take the manway to the Sinks, then come out the Chestnut Top Trail. Hike: about 8.2 miles rated moderate. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am or the Townsend Wye at 8:30 am. Drive: 50 miles RT {@4¢=\$2}. Leader: Pat Watts, 901-487-7941, [watts\\_at\\_home@yahoo.com](mailto:watts_at_home@yahoo.com).

## BIG LOOP OUT OF TREMONT (NOTE: HIKE CHANGE)

April 22 – Saturday

Due to the closure of the Sugarland Mountain Trail, we must postpone the previously scheduled Little River/Huskey Gap/Rough Creek Loop. Instead, we'll opt for a different industrious loop in the Smokies. We will leave cars at the Institute at Tremont and pack everyone into as few cars as possible for a short shuttle to the trailhead of Middle Prong. We'll begin our hike with a gentle climb up Middle Prong to the junction with Panther Creek. Be ready for a fickle creek crossing (this is rarely a rockhop!) as we begin a fairly steep climb up the Panther Creek Trail. In a couple of miles, we will lose all the elevation we just gained as we descend the Jake's Creek Trail to the junction with Cucumber Gap and the Meigs Mountain Trail. Meigs Mountain along with the Lumber Ridge Trail closes our loop. We will then retrieve the cars. Cross your fingers for lovely spring wildflowers, and pack water shoes just in case. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 7:30 am. Hike rated strenuous due to distance and elevation gain. Hikers habituated to 15+ mile dayhikes are a good fit for this hike. Total hiking distance: 17.6 miles. Drive: 46 miles RT {@4¢=\$2}. Leaders: Mary Anne Hoskins, [mhoskins@utk.edu](mailto:mhoskins@utk.edu), 865-523-1051, and Rebekah Young, [rebekahy27@aol.com](mailto:rebekahy27@aol.com).

**SMHC Newsletter Editor: Don Dunning 865-705-2154**

Send hike write-ups & photos to: [dedz1@aol.com](mailto:dedz1@aol.com).

Please include preferred contact method (email, phone).

## PORTERS CREEK TO CHARLIES BUNION OFF-TRAIL April 22 – Saturday

Walking along Porters Creek this time of the year offers a range of spring wildflowers, perhaps a still blooming carpet of phacelia, a good view of Fern Falls, some climbing to a campsite, and meandering to find the steep climb to the main ridgeline of the Great Smoky Mountains and onto the Appalachian Trail. Our path will take us up the well-known Dry Sluice Gap manway not far from a lookout and Charlies Bunion. Here the warmth of spring may leave us for a bit depending on the weather. After a rest and lunch, we will have a few options for our descent. This is a long-time favorite hike for the club and a good test of lungs and muscles for those wanting to experience an off-trail hike with very little rock-hopping. On the return trip down Porters Creek Trail we will have a chance to observe the changing character of the wildflowers as the day has past and eventually feel the cool breezes as we pass closely along the stream. Because of the elevation gain and steep ascent, the hike is moderately difficult. Hike is 10 miles. **Pre-registration with the trip leaders is required for this off-trail hike; please contact the leaders to learn the meeting location and time.**

Leaders: Brian Worley, [baw2222@aol.com](mailto:baw2222@aol.com), 865-207-2625; and Ed Fleming, [edwrdfm@aol.com](mailto:edwrdfm@aol.com), 865-548-2489.

## EASY HIKE: SMOKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD HIKE April 23 – Sunday

We will hike part of a new section and also hike the section between Charter Doyle and parks. The Smoky Mountain RR operated between downtown Knoxville and Sevierville between 1909 and 1961. The entire route was scouted in 1967 by members of the SMHC as a possible greenway route. We will walk some segments of the route and look for historic remnants of the days when the line was operational. Hike about 3 miles total. We will arrange for return transportation for those that don't want to hike out and back. No hills to cover but uneven terrain can be expected. Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Meet at 2:00 pm at **Charter Doyle Park at 5100 W. Martin Mill Pike <see list>**. Leaders: Tim Bigelow, [bigelowt2@mindspring.com](mailto:bigelowt2@mindspring.com), 865-607-6781, and Michael Vaughn, [mvaughn@knology.net](mailto:mvaughn@knology.net).

## WHITE OAK SINKS April 29 – Saturday

For this hike into White Oak Sink, we will enter from the Dry Valley side. We will meet in the parking lot of Tuckaleechee Caverns out of Townsend and carpool about two miles, park, and begin our walk on Schoolhouse Gap Road outside the Park. After a one-mile walk, we will enter the Park and follow the Scott Mountain boundary trail about ¾ mile to a manway that drops off into the Sink. Wildflowers, history, and geology will make our day. Allen knows a lot about the Sink and will lead folks to several of the historical farm sites. He plans to visit all of the sinkholes and caves unless they are blocked by the Park Service. The return will be up Schoolhouse Gap Trail from the Turkeypen Ridge intersection. Hike is about 6 miles with a steep climb out of the Sink. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am or at Tuckaleechee Caverns at 9:00 am. Drive 80: miles RT from Alcoa {@4¢=\$3.20}. Leaders: Allen Sweester, 865-223-9914; and Cindy Spangler, [spangler@utk.edu](mailto:spangler@utk.edu), 865-776-1301.

## EAGLE CREEK BACKPACK April 29-30 – Saturday-Sunday

This spectacular spring backpack trip begins with an uphill challenge up to Spence Field via the Lead Cove and Bote Mountain Trails. At Spence Field, we pause for lunch and views then head down the North Carolina side on the Eagle Creek Trail. After a short steep descent, we pick up the headwaters of Eagle Creek which we follow the rest of the day to Campsite 89 for the night. The trail makes numerous creek crossings along the way that are increasingly wide and deep as the trail descends. We can expect many spring wildflowers in the higher elevations and an increasing spring canopy of leaves as we descend. There are a number of historical remnants along the way. In the morning, we will break camp and continue several more miles and make several more creek crossings until we intersect the Lakeshore Trail where Eagle Creek meets Fontana Lake. The Lakeshore trail is a rollercoaster style trail with occasional glimpses of Fontana Lake and some more historical artifacts to see. Campsite 89 is limited to 8 hikers, and the trip leaders plan to reserve the campsite spots as a group, so pre-registration with the leaders is required. We will hike about 12 miles the first day and 7 miles the second day. Rated difficult. Be prepared to hike many miles with wet boots. We plan to station cars at the trailhead near Fontana Dam the night before to simplify the logistics. Drive: 120 miles RT {@4¢=\$5}. **Pre-registration with the trip leaders is required for this trip, so please contact the trip leaders to learn the meeting place and time.** Leaders: Tim Bigelow, [bigelowt2@mindspring.com](mailto:bigelowt2@mindspring.com), 865-607-6781; and Steve Dunkin, [jsdunkin@roaneschools.com](mailto:jsdunkin@roaneschools.com), 865-202-3286.

### In Memoriam: Verne Gilbert, 1931-2017

We are deeply saddened to report the passing of Dr. Verne Ephram Gilbert, age 85, in a tragic bicycle accident on February 19. He was a native of Los Angeles, CA, and a graduate of UCLA and the University of Maryland medical school, and a resident of Oak Ridge since 1970. After retiring from a long and distinguished medical career as an infectious disease specialist and internal medicine physician, Dr. Gilbert authored several books. He was an avid bicycling and hiking enthusiast, and traveled the world biking with his wife Jeannette. He was a member of the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge and an Hadassah associate.

### In Memoriam: Geoffrey Greene, 1954-2017

Geoffrey Rennick Greene, age 62, passed away on January 19, at his home in Sevierville after a brief battle with lung cancer. Geoff attended Fleming College in Florence, Italy, and the University of Tennessee. He had many careers, including musician, carpenter, printer, newspaper editor, and Director of the American Contract Bridge League. His leisure time was spent hiking and volunteering in the GSMNP and making and playing musical instruments.

We extend our sincere condolences to these families.

**MEETING PLACES:** **Alcoa Food City** = On right between 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> stoplight (on Hall Rd., TN 35), a block before Big Lots. [Map Link](#). **Charter E. Doyle Park** = at 5100 W Martin Mill Pike, Knoxville, TN 37920. [Map Link](#). **Comcast on Asheville Hwy** = From Exit 394 ramp off I-40 go left (east) on Asheville Hwy, US-11E/25W/70, to signal light at top of hill; turn right, down into Comcast lot, 5720 Asheville Hwy; park to left of entry, about 2 lanes over toward the exit end of lot. [Map Link](#). **Maryville Walmart** = On Hwy 411 S between Market Pl and Legends Way, 2410 Hwy 411. Meet near fuel center [Map Link](#). **Oak Ridge Books-a-Million** = 310 South Illinois Avenue (same lot as Golds Gym) 3-1/2 traffic lights in, on left coming from Knoxville, opposite Walmart. Meet next to Illinois Ave. in front of Books-a-Million [Map Link](#).

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### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Cassandra Boone, [Tourist67@att.net](mailto:Tourist67@att.net), 601/992-5662  
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John & Linda Cammack, [jwc.patriot@gmail.com](mailto:jwc.patriot@gmail.com), 813/716-7246,  
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Robert Heydasch, [bobheydasch@gmail.com](mailto:bobheydasch@gmail.com), 865/216-2461,  
4440 Nathan Drive, Knoxville, TN 37938

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### COMING EVENTS – MAY 2017

6 Saturday	AT Maintenance
7 Sunday	Virgin Falls Pocket Wilderness
13 Saturday	Cumberland River Trail Loop (KY)
20 Saturday	Horse Creek/AT/Mid-Spring Ridge Loop
20 Saturday	Slide Scar on Balsalm Corner Creek OT
27-29 Saturday-Monday	Backpack with Carolina Mtn Club
29 Saturday	Day-hike to meet backpackers

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### FOR THE RECORD

**Chestnut Top/West Prong** **2/4/17**  
Despite a cold start, 25 hikers showed up and were rewarded with abundant sunshine. All kept a good pace but we had breaks at Schoolhouse Gap and Campsite #18 beside West Prong. Most of the group opted to add the Dorsey Branch trail making the hike 11 miles.

David Smith and Mary Brewer



Visit our website: [www.smhclub.org](http://www.smhclub.org)

### SMHC Photo Show 2/9/17

Four and a half club members, (sadly one person had to leave early), enjoyed seeing slides from several trips in the past year, including Yosemite, Glacier, and a nice presentation on hiking and biking all the trails in the Big South Fork. What we lacked in numbers we made up for in enthusiasm.

Brad Reese

### Old Sugarlands/Twin Creeks 2/11/17

Thirty-two hikers (22 members, 10 visitors) set out from the Sugarlands Visitor Center under a gray and threatening sky for an approximately ten mile loop. Among the hikers were an Appalachian through-hiker, class of 2016, AND a class of 2017 hiker, planning to start the following week! We also had new members and long-time members join us, making for pleasant conversation as we journeyed. We went up the Old Sugarlands trail, which changed from a gentle incline to a genuine up-hill along an old gravel road. Signs of the recent fires began to pop up all along the way, and by the time we reached Cherokee Orchard Road, the sight and smell of scorched wood was all around us. Heading on down the Twin Creeks trail to downtown Gatlinburg, some of the hikers enjoyed the Best Italian Restaurant or Five Guys, while others made their way back to Sugarlands. The rain never came, and given the warm temperatures, the cloud cover helped keep us cool.

Rebekah Young and Brad Reese



### Snag Mountain via abandoned CCC trail 2/18/2017

Under the adroit leadership of Mike Knies, seventeen intrepid hikers (13 members, 4 visitors) ventured out from Jack's Market on US321 under overcast skies in search of the remnants of the abandoned trace of the old Snag Mountain Trail, constructed by the CCC in the early 1930s. At strategic points, Mike informed the group about the early history of the area and pointed out the ruins of old home sites, barns, and apple houses. Along the CCC trace, hikers experienced the exhilaration of clambering under and over dozens of blowdowns and scrambling through thickets of sawbriers. One exasperated hiker finally announced, "I've had enough torture!" After a visit to a waterfall, Mike led the group off the trace and into a cove that once harbored several mountain farms, most notably the Rockford Stultz home place and a fine stone apple house at the Williams place. Mike led the convivial group back by way of the Old Settlers Trail, getting everyone safely down with a still yet a little daylight to enjoy.

Rebekah Young and Ken Wise





**Concord Park**

**2/19/17**

A perfect day for a hike! It was a sunny day and quite warm for late February. We had a turnout of 19 which included 10 visitors. The route started from the dog park along the lake with views across to Concord then up along a ridge and down across to a second shorter loop. Although popular with bikers there were not many to contend with. The trail was a bit muddy in places but otherwise good for an afternoon stroll. After about 5.3 miles the group decided it was time to relax on the veranda a while at the Lakeside tavern.

Tim Bigelow



**Martins Fork Backpack**

**2/25-26/17**

Ten backpackers, club members all, made the short but steep climb up the Chadwell Gap Trail to reach the Ridge Trail in the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park. Along the way we ran in to some old friends from the hiking club who were making a day hike together. Our campsite at Martins Fork provided a large flat area for our tents and lots of firewood for the much appreciated fire we kept going all evening (and the next morning), as we had a chilly and windy night. After setting up camp we made a trip to see Hensley Settlement, a restored mountain community. As usual, Cumberland Gap provided us with a wonderful hiking and camping experience that we had almost all to ourselves.

Brad Reese and Steve Dunkin

**ELKMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT WORK**

Work is underway in the Elkmont Historic District to preserve 4 structures and to remove 29 structures. This is Phase 1 of the plan to ultimately preserve 19 structures while razing 55. Park crews will preserve the Levi Trentham Cabin, Mayo Cabin, Mayo Servants Quarters, and Creekmore Cabin in the Daisy Town area. The 29 structures slated for demolition are along the Little River Trail and Jakes Creek Trail. The demolition work will be conducted March-May 2017, and the stabilization work will be completed by November 2017. During the demolition phase of the work, a section of Little River Trail (from the trailhead to the junction with Cucumber Gap) will be closed while work is conducted to remove 6 structures in the area known as Millionaire's Row. A section of Jakes Creek Trail (from the trailhead to the junction with Cucumber Gap) will be closed during the removal of 23 structures in the area known as Society Hill. The work and weekday closures will be done one trail at a time to minimize impacts on access to the backcountry. All campsites will remain open and can be accessed via any routes that do not utilize the closed section of trail. During these closures, access to the river near the structures also will be restricted. Dates of these closures are not finalized at this time. For the latest information, please contact the Backcountry Office at 865-436-1297.

**SAFETY: OUR #1 PRIORITY**

Anyone traveling in the backcountry, on a hike or a volunteer work trip, should file an itinerary with a trusted friend or family member. If there is a need for assistance due to an injury, please contact 911 or Park Dispatch at 865-436-1230.

**NEWCOMER TO HIKING WITH SMHC?**

Some hints: Our 'difficulty ratings' are gauged to SMHC members with some experience with our hikes, not to the general public, nor to sometime or flatland hikers who are all likely to find our 'easy, moderate, or difficult' seem to under-rate the difficulty. Always be prepared for worse weather (wetter, colder) than expected. Wear adequate boots. Bring rainwear, water, spare food. Each carpool rider should reimburse driver about 4¢ per mile. Doubts? Call a leader.

\*\*\*And please note: No dogs or firearms are permitted on any Club hikes, whether inside or outside of GSMNP\*\*\*

**NATIONAL TRAILS DAY 6/3/2017**

Please plan to join us on June 3, 2017, for our 21<sup>st</sup> annual Appalachian Trail Workday in the GSMNP to celebrate National Trails Day. We invite you to help with important maintenance projects. Watch for registration information soon.

**FIRE-RELATED TRAIL CLOSURES**

The following trails continue to be closed due to fire or storm damage: Chimney Tops, Road Prong, Sugarland Mountain, Rough Creek, Bull Head, Cove Hardwood Nature Trail, and Sugarlands Horse Concession Trail.

**WELCOME TO OUR 2017 RIDGERUNNERS**

We are excited to welcome our new Ridgerunner crew for 2017. This year, for the first time ever, we will have Ridgerunners supporting the entire section of the Appalachian Trail maintained by SMHC, with the addition of a new Ridgerunner dedicated to the National Forest to the south of GSMNP, in addition to our Ridgerunners patrolling the AT within the GSMNP.

Morgan Kelley, from Nashville, worked with the SWEAT Crew in 2015 as an assistant crew leader. He will start out patrolling the north end of the GSMNP (Newfound Gap to Davenport Gap), working Tuesday through Saturday, through the end of May.

Chloe de Camara, an ATC employee who also manages the Soak Ash crew quarters, will also be Ridgerunner from Newfound Gap to Spence Field through the end of May. Chloe and Morgan will switch sections midway through the season.

Nick Espinosa, from Florida, will be patrolling the section from Fontana to Spence Field. Carl Goodman, who has worked this section in past years, has graciously agreed to help Nick hit the ground running. Nick's session also will end in May.

Maury Hudson, who has worked as a Ridgerunner in the Park for the past 2 years, will be working this year in the Nantahala National Forest between Fontana and NOC during March and April. We are excited to add this new position this year.

The Ridgerunner for the June-October session has not yet been selected. Thanks to each of our 2017 Ridgerunners for their important service in keeping this section of the AT and its hikers safe.