



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

May 2017

WEDNESDAY HIKE: ACE GAP TO BEARD CANE TRAIL May 3 – Wednesday

We will hike the Ace Gap trail to the Beard Cane trail and return. Hike: 11 miles RT. We may encounter some blowdowns. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am. Drive: 50 miles RT {@4¢=\$2}.

Leader: David Grab, digrab@aol.com, 865-671-5779.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL MAINTENANCE May 6 – Saturday

We will start at Davenport Gap and work up toward the Mount Cammerer side trail. We plan to clean water-bars, trim vegetation, remove smaller blow-downs, perform light trail maintenance, and inspect the shelters. A moderate hike of 6 to 8 miles is required depending on the interest level. Meet at **Comcast on Asheville Hwy <see list>** at 8:00 am for carpooling to Davenport Gap, or at the trailhead at 9:00am. Drive: 100 miles RT {@4¢=\$4}. We plan to enjoy watermelon at the end of the hike. Please preregister with the leaders to assist planning. Leaders: Tim Bigelow, bigelowt2@mindspring.com, 865-607-6781; Steve Dunkin, jsdinkin@roaneschools.com 865-202-3286.

VIRGIN FALLS POCKET WILDERNESS May 7 – Sunday

This lollipop hike offers 3 impressive waterfalls as well as the usual karst landscape common to the Cumberland Plateau. One of the most unusual features of Virgin Falls itself is that the water drops over a hundred feet only to disappear in a sinkhole. This hike is unusual in that the hike in is almost all downhill, meaning, of course, the hike out is considerably tougher! Hike: about 9 miles with an option to add a mile for an overlook. This could be a wet hike, so plan accordingly. Hiking poles recommended. Rated moderate to difficult depending on weather conditions and water level. Meet at the **Lenoir City Walmart on Hwy 321 <see list>** at 8:30 am. Drive: 100 miles RT {@4¢=\$4}.

Leaders: Brad Reese, brakkt@gmail.com, and Steve Dunkin.

EASY HIKE: LITTLE GREENBRIER TRAIL TO LITTLE BRIER GAP May 13 – Saturday

We will hike up this gentle slope along the ridge with views into Wears Valley and as well as the mountains. This hike is 3.8 miles, RT. Afterwards, we have an optional stop for a little lunch or ice cream at Elvira's restaurant in Wears Valley! Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 9:00 am or the trailhead (limited parking) at Wear Cove Gap at 9:45 am. Drive: 50 miles RT from Alcoa {@4¢ = \$2}.

Leader: Priscilla Clayton, sigmtngirl@earthlink.net, 865-255-8711.

Visit our website: www.smhclub.org

CUMBERLAND RIVER TRAIL LOOP (KY) May 13 – Saturday

It has been 13 years since the Club has visited the crown jewel of Kentucky's state parks, Cumberland Falls State Park. We'll walk the park's longest loop alongside the Cumberland River, climb up and over a plateau, and return to the river along the Shelton Trace Trail. Along the way, we'll see spring wild flowers, sandstone rock houses, visit an abandoned fire lookout, and finish at the magnificent Cumberland Falls. Hike 7.1 miles, rated moderate. Drive 165 miles RT {@4¢=\$6.60}. Meet at **Outback Steakhouse on Merchants Road <see list>** ready to leave at 7:30 AM.

Leaders: Hiram Rogers, hiramrogers@yahoo.com, 865-584-7310, and Jean Gauger, jeanguager@yahoo.com, 865-584-7310

HORSE CREEK / AT / MID-SPRINGS RIDGE LOOP May 20 – Saturday

On this hike, we enter both the 7,992-acre Sampson Mountain Wilderness and the Bald Mountain Ridge Scenic Area. After parking in the Horse Creek Recreation Area in Chuckey, TN, we begin our climb to Coldspring Mountain by way of Horse Creek Road (also known as Coldspring Mountain Road). Horse Creek Road has an excellent grade, but the uphill climb is fairly relentless (~2800 feet of climb in 4.7 miles). (NOTE: In the first mile, there are several stream crossings that may require wading, so water shoes are recommended.) We'll take a break near the top at an overlook before continuing our climb to the Appalachian Trail. After a brief walk along the AT, we'll join the sometimes maintained Middle Springs Ridge Trail along which we'll pause for lunch at an impressive rock outcropping. Once we've refueled, we'll be ready for the steady descent down the rest of Middle Springs Ridge where we'll pick up the Squibb Creek Trail to complete our loop. Unless some extremely unusual weather phenomenon occurs in 2017, expect to see mountain laurel and Catawba rhododendron in bloom. With a little luck, we might come across some pink lady slippers. Total hike distance: about 10 miles, rated difficult because of the steep ascents and descents. Meet at **Comcast on Asheville Hwy <see list>** at 7:30 am. Drive: ~175 RT {@4¢ = \$7}.

Leaders: Mary Anne Hoskins, mhoskins@utk.edu, 865-523-1051, and Steve Madden, hikermadd@gmail.com.

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

SLIDE SCAR ON BALSAM CORNER CREEK OFF-TRAIL May 20 – Saturday

In the early morning hours of July 15, 2011, a severe thunderstorm plowed into the flank of Balsam Mountain sending a torrent of water rushing down Balsam Creek and into Straight Fork. The intense rain, reaching bedrock quickly and having nowhere to seep, acted as a lubricant, loosening the soil-root mass, separating it from the bedrock, and sending it down the slope, taking everything in its path and leaving one large scar and several smaller ones along the side of the mountain. Our hike to the slide scar entails a 2.5-mile hike up fishermen's trails and some rock-hopping up Straight Fork Road and then a 3-mile rock-hop up the washed-out Balsam Corner Creek. The hike out will either be a reversal of the hike in, or follow an old railroad grade leading out to the Beech Gap Trail, or a continuation up Balsam Corner Creek to the Balsam Mountain Trail. Depending on the route, the hike will involve a total distance of 10 to 12 miles with at least 6 miles off-trail requiring considerable rock-hopping and some bushwhacking. Since this hike involves a lot of walking in and/or along Straight Fork and Balsam Corner creeks, we will have to reschedule if water is running high due to heavy rains. **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: Mike Harrington, mike_harr@bellsouth.net, 865-765-4604; and Ken Wise, kwise@utk.edu, 865-310-7764.

WEDNESDAY HIKE: NEWFOUND GAP TO CHARLIE'S BUNION May 24 – Wednesday

We will hike the AT from Newfound Gap to Charlie's Bunion and return. Hike: 8 miles RT. Meet at **Alcoa Food City <see list>** at 8:00 am. Drive: 100 miles RT {@4¢=\$4}.
Leader: Malcolm McInnis, mcinnism@tds.net, 865-675-6002.

MEMORIAL DAY BACKPACK WITH CMC May 27-29 – Saturday-Monday

Let's take advantage of the long holiday weekend to try a rare two night backpack in the eastern end of the park. We'll leave from the Big Creek parking area and head up the challenging Baxter Creek Trail to the Mount Sterling fire tower, where we'll camp the first night. While this trail is only 6.1 miles, it gains about 5000 feet of elevation. On day two we'll follow Mt. Sterling Ridge 1.4 miles then head down Swallow Fork to camp night two near Big Creek at campsite 37. Total distance for day 2 will be about 5.5 miles. On day three we will have the opportunity to do some exploring, possibly hiking up to view the Gunter Fork cascades, before we link up with the Memorial day SMHC/CMC day hike and hike out together on the Big Creek Trail, 5.1 miles. Aside from the climb the first day this is not a difficult trip, but participants must be ready to spend three days in the backcountry. The trip will be limited to six people, so please pre-register early if you are interested. Also note that due to the popularity of this area, especially on a holiday weekend, there may be changes in the plan. **Pre-registration with the trip leaders is required for this trip, so please contact the trip leaders to learn the meeting place and time.**

Leader: Steve Dunkin, jsdunkin@roaneschools.com.

MEMORIAL DAY HIKE WITH CMC May 29 – Monday

This year's joint hike with our neighbor club to the east will be a challenging loop out of the Big Creek area. This hike will start by hiking up the Chestnut Branch Trail to the AT, then follow it south to Low Gap, with a lunch stop at the Mt. Cammerer fire tower (side trail, in-and-out.). At Low Gap, we'll turn onto the Low Gap trail down to Big Creek, and follow the Big Creek Trail back to the campground area. We hope to hook up with backpackers from both clubs who will be doing a different loop in the area for the 5 mile walk out Big Creek. This hike will be about 16.2 miles, and for that reason is rated difficult. Meet at **Comcast on Asheville Hwy <see list>** at 7:30 am or the Big Creek picnic area at 9:00. Drive: 61 miles RT from Comcast (@4¢=\$2.50).
Leaders: Brad Reese, bradktn@gmail.com, and Carroll Koeplinger from CMC.

MEETING PLACES: **Alcoa Food City** = On right between 3rd & 4th stoplight (on Hall Rd., TN 35), a block before Big Lots. [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](#). **Lenoir City Walmart** = From I-75 Exit 81 take US-321 North toward Lenoir City ~1.5 mile, to Franklin Centre at 911 US-321. [Map Link](#). **Outback Steakhouse on Merchants Drive** = From Exit 108 off I-75, Merchants Drive, go west towards Clinton Hwy. Park in front part of large lot at Outback Steakhouse (314 Merchants Drive), near McDonalds. [Map Link](#).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Joseph Carson, 865-675-0236,
10953 Twin Harbors Drive, Knoxville, TN 37934
Richard Redano, redano@yahoo.com, 713-409-3109,
1601 Emerson Park Drive, Knoxville, TN 37922
Lisa Sawyers, lisasaw1426@outlook.com, 219-413-4012,
1426 Craigs Chapel Road, Greenback, TN 37742
Alan Welch, welch91@lcs.net, 865-712-6845,
739 Ball Road, White Pine, TN 37890

COMING EVENTS – JUNE 2017

3 Saturday	National Trails Day - AT Maintenance
4 Sunday	Ramsey Cascades
10 Saturday	Cumberland Gap Sugar Run
10 Saturday	Mt. LeConte via Cannon Creek OT
18 Saturday	Greggory Bald and the Azaleas
24-25 Saturday-Sunday	Roan Mountain Backpack

SMHC Newsletter Editor: Don Dunning 865-705-2154

Send hike write-ups & photos to: dedz1@aol.com.
Please include preferred contact method (email, phone).

FOR THE RECORD

SMHC Cemetery Hike

3/11/17

Ten members and one guest braved snowy conditions to hike the Maddron Bald Trail and the Gabes Mountain Trail, visiting five cemeteries during the day. We met at the Cosby picnic area and drove to the Maddron Bald Trail trailhead. We stopped at the Gunter Cemetery on the Cosby entrance road on our way to the trailhead. We hiked up the Maddron Bald Trail and took an old roadway to the Old Settlers Trail and continued a short distance to the Maddron Cemetery. We then walked back on the Old Settlers Trail to the Maddron Bald Trail. We started up the Gabes Mountain Trail and stopped for lunch at Campsite 34. By this time, snow was falling. After lunch, we continued on the Gabes Mountain Trail, visiting the Sally Sutton grave and the Jennifer Sutton grave. At the end of the hike, we visited the Campbell Cemetery. All participants agreed that it was a nice day in the woods.

Frank March



Bearpen Hollow and Big Duckhawk

3/18/2017

The annual SMHC spring wildflower pilgrimage - also known as the Bearpen Hollow Off-Trail Climb Up Mount LeConte - turned out to be an excellent outing. Torrential rains filled the rivers, streams, cascades, and waterfalls providing exceptional sights to see everywhere in the mountains. A total of 16 bushwhackers made the steep ascent on the southwest face of Mount LeConte. We completely avoided the Entryway Rhododendron Hell by following advice from those steeped in Le Conte knowledge. The carpet of Spring Beauties that Bearpen Hollow is known for was just starting to cover the slope. The cooler weather preceding the hike resulted in only sporadic showings of spring ephemerals for well over a thousand feet of elevation gain. Once into the off-trail wonderland the terrain opened into the lovely, wide-open, steep, ravine of Bearpen Hollow. In true Anakeesta Formation fashion, the terrain increases in steepness until the apex of narrow ridgeline is attained. It is good to note that the steepness of the valley, the relatively short confining ridges, and the southern exposure combine to make Bearpen an excellent spring wildflower habitat. As the main ridge was approached exposed rock and cliffs became a playground for climbers. We visited the site of the small cliff that claimed a small airplane and its passengers on December 26, 2016. We then remained on the ridge-crest all the way to West Point, which sits a full 2,700 feet above the starting point. The bears had nicely cleared the bear-tunnel through the Rhododendron Minus that leads to the Bearpen Heath Bald. Minimal views were captured because of whipping wind and low clouds. From West Point we followed the well-established bear-trail over to Alum Cave Trail. After a brief stop at the Le Conte Lodge the majority of the group descended Alum Cave Trail to the Old Scar on the west side of Big Duckhawk then frolicked

along the main ridge-crest of Big Duckhawk in full warm sunshine (just as had been predicted) all the way to the highway.

Greg Harrell and Greg Hoover

Kephart Prong/Sweat Heifer/Grassy Branch 3/19/2017

Nine members and one visitor undertook this challenging 14.2 mile hike with its 3200 foot ascent on a chilly but beautiful Sunday. Kephart Prong was full and tumbling, as were the waterfalls along the steep climb of Sweat Heifer. The northbound AT was ethereal with a thick rime frost. There was also ice underfoot making this AT section challenging, but each hiker was sure-footed and patient with this difficult stretch. We got to talk to some NOBOs at Icewater Springs shelter, before catching some views at Charlie's Bunion and then descending on Dry Sluice and Grassy Gap. We shared homemade cookies and all marveled at the beauty of the day from low altitudes to high ones!

Diane Petrilla and Cliff Caudill



Pecks Corner Backpack & AT Maintenance 3/25-26/17

Four hikers set out north on the AT at Newfound Gap on a blustery morning with a few light trail maintenance tools. We were immediately stopped by a Tremont Scavenger Hunt group needing their picture taken with some AT backpackers so we obliged and were given some light Trail Magic. Despite lots of dayhiker use, the trail is in amazing shape all the way to Charlies Bunion where most hikers were headed. After a brief stop for lunch at Ice Water shelter and refilling the privy mulch buckets (no trash to be found anywhere) we hiked on to Charlies Bunion and enjoyed the view since the skies were starting to clear a bit. Past Charlies bunion, vegetation trimming, small blowdown removal, waterbar cleaning and other activities were performed while slowly hiking up and down small hills all the way to Hughes Ridge side trail. There were a few larger blowdowns left for future clearing, but generally the trail was in excellent shape thanks to all the hard work from ATMC volunteers! Many lovely, slightly overcast, views were seen along the way such as Cat Stairs on Greenbrier Pinnacle and spectacular Bradley's View looking down into Bradley Fork drainage. Pecks Corner was overflowing with through-hikers. Probably 20 tenters and about 12 in the trail shelter. We enjoyed a nice evening at Pecks Corner chatting with some of the many thru-hikers. In the middle of the night, a monsoon overtook quiet Pecks Corner and it rained hard for several hours. Wake up time was rain-delayed but fortunately the rain slowed a bit so trash could be picked up and privy buckets filled and general state of the area surveyed. The steep trail to the shelter and heavy use in the mud has made for some erosion and the bear cables were even suffering a bit. The group started out in light rain heading down Hughes Ridge trail which needed a bit more maintenance than the AT. Although not part of the job, the group was in maintenance mode and pitched and trimmed a bit on the way down (and up in places) to Chasteen Creek trail. We were looking for a small continuation of the old

Hughes Ridge trail shown on the NPS Smokies trail marking map but somehow never located it near the Chasteen junction. The skies were clearing off and it warmed while we were hiking down the steep trail. We stopped for lunch at Campsite 48. Further on there were some forsythia seen blooming at an old home site. We arrived at Oconuluftee campground and returned via shuttle car on a warm sunny afternoon

Tim Bigelow and Steve Dunkin



ELKMONT TRAIL CLOSURE SCHEDULE UPDATE

As described in the April newsletter, work is underway in the Elkmont Historic District to preserve 4 structures and to remove 29 structures. The Park has announced the following schedule update for trail closures associated with this Elkmont Historic District demolition project. The Little River Trail will be closed from the trailhead to the junction with the Cucumber Gap Trail Monday through Friday until May 5, 2017. The Jakes Creek Trail will be closed from the trailhead to the junction with the Cucumber Gap Trail Monday through Friday from May 8 to May 26, 2017. All campsites and shelters in the backcountry will remain open and can be accessed via any routes that do not utilize the closed section of these trails. During these closures, access to the river near the structures also will be restricted. Both trails will be open on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the work project. For the latest information, please contact the Backcountry Office at 865-436-1297.

21ST ANNUAL GSMNP APPALACHIAN TRAIL WORK DAY ON NATIONAL TRAILS DAY – JUNE 3, 2017

The 21st Annual GSMNP Appalachian Trail Work Day will occur on National Trails Day, Saturday, June 3. Get some exercise, enjoy a day of camaraderie (RAIN OR SHINE), receive a t-shirt designed by artist and club member Karen Brackett, and conclude your day with a fabulous picnic dinner at the Metcalf Bottoms Pavilion. Volunteers of all skill and experience levels are welcome – this is a great opportunity to learn trail maintenance techniques from experienced leaders. The staging area will be the Sugarlands Visitor Center (bus parking lot) at 7:30 AM.

Pre-registration is required. Registration fee is \$20 (\$25 after May 15). These funds help with the acquisition of materials for trail improvement. For example, it costs thousands of dollars to have locust logs and construction materials airlifted to specific trail sites. Registration forms will be available at area outdoor outfitters and on the SMHC website, www.smhclub.org.

Cindy Spangler, Communications Director

The following is my brief Q&A with AT maintainer and NTD volunteer Don Dunning:

What have been some of your current and past duties as a trail maintainer? Nancy and I are Section Leaders for maintaining a 1-mile section of the AT between the Sweat Heifer and the Boulevard trail junctions. We also coordinate the mulch operations for all the backcountry privies within the Park. And I am certified as a sawyer within the Park for both chainsaw and crosscut saw work.

How long have you and Nancy been involved? Our first contact with the SMHC AT maintenance work was the National Trails Day event in 1997. That actually was the second annual NTD event in the Smokies, but we were late in discovering this great event. Since then, the first Saturday in June has become one of the very first dates marked on the calendar each year, and we have only missed 3-4 NTD events over the past 20 years due to unavoidable schedule conflicts.

I know you have a long history with the Boy Scouts. Did that program spur your interest in helping the AT? I became a Boy Scout leader in the mid-1990's, and served for about 20 years as a Scoutmaster, Commissioner and various other positions. I organized a Scout Camporee in 2007 where 200 Boy Scouts performed service within the GSMNP, including packing mulch to backcountry privies, performing trail maintenance, and front-country cleanup. My Troop also became involved in the GSMNP VIP Adopt-a-Campsite and Adopt-a-Trail programs and that service continues to this day thanks to my successor leaders.

Share a memorable incident from your time working on the trail. My most memorable trail incident actually did not involve trail maintenance work at all. Rather, I was leading a Boy Scout dayhike to Mt. LeConte on a Sunday that happened to be my birthday. About halfway back down the Alum Cave Bluff trail, we encountered two young ladies from New York who had decided to squeeze in one last hike on the last day of their vacation. One had seriously injured her ankle, so we all collectively applied our best first aid skills, but she still was not able to bear weight on the splinted ankle. So another adult leader and I took turns carrying her off the mountain. (Thank goodness I was 10+ years younger then!) We managed to get back safely and took her to the hospital to treat her broken ankle. Worse yet, these two young nurses had to be back at work the next morning in New York, so we had to teach the uninjured girl how to drive her injured friend's new sports car with a manual transmission! That was a memorable day!

You and Nancy are always front and center at National Trails Day. Why do you think this day is important? We participate in NTD primarily because it is such a fun event where we accomplish important work. NTD is our largest annual volunteer service project and it is incredible to realize that we are approaching 20,000 hours of volunteer service to maintain and improve the AT in the GSMNP. This is a great event where the long-standing partnership between SMHC, the Friends of the Smokies, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park produces great benefits, and we have a great time doing so. NTD has been the gateway for many of our current trail maintainer volunteers to become involved in maintaining the AT.