



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

February 2021

Park Recruits Volunteers for Monitoring Program

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is recruiting volunteers to monitor visitor use patterns in several of the most popular locations in the park in both North Carolina and Tennessee. Volunteers may choose to participate in a variety of opportunities that best align with their interests and preferred locations. Opportunities include recording observations on popular hiking trails, monitoring parking availability, and monitoring traffic flow patterns at busy locations.

Monitoring data will be used to provide park managers with timely and accurate information about current visitor use patterns and resource conditions at a variety of sites including Clingmans Dome, Deep Creek, Big Creek, Cades Cove, Laurel Falls Trail, Alum Cave Trail, Rainbow Falls Trail, and Trillium Gap Trail. Park visitation has increased by more than 30% over the last decade, resulting in crowding and congestion at some of the most popular destinations. Additionally, issues like roadside parking have become increasingly commonplace, leading to damage along the road shoulders and potentially unsafe conditions as visitors walk along busy roads from their cars to the intended destinations. This monitoring data will help managers develop recommendations for safety and access improvement proposals.

Each volunteer is asked to work at least one, four-hour shift per week during peak visitation season from April through the November. Training will be offered virtually in March. Interested volunteers should email Kendra Straub, Management and Program Analyst, at Kendra_straub@nps.gov. For more information about visitation in the Smokies, please visit www.nps.gov/grsm/VES.

**Welcome new Life Members
in SMHC**

Jennifer and Joe Costner

MASKS UP!!!!

"The COVID Committee of the SMHC would like to respectfully remind everyone to have "Masks Up!" when congregating at trail junctions or other stops, not just at trailheads. In addition, with rising COVID case numbers this winter, if any hike leader feels uncomfortable leading a hike, please notify spangler@utk.edu."

SMHC Hiking Guidelines During COVID

1. One hike leader will serve as pre-registration contact, with e-mail and phone # available in the write-up. Pre-registration is required for all hikes.
2. **No more than 10** total participants may be on a hike (including leader, co-leader). Registration will have to be halted when there are 10 participants.
3. All meetups will be at the trail head, so adjust meetup drive time accordingly.
4. No carpooling except for people in their trusted "bubble."
5. Hikes will be chosen to avoid crowded trailheads and crowded trails.
6. Events should be no more than a 2-hour drive from the Knoxville area.
7. Avoid hikes that will involve a key swap or shuttle.
8. Hikers must sign a release form, with accurate contact information.
9. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill with in a few days of the event, with symptoms concerning for COVID-19, to contact the hike leader immediately. (In addition to the usual pre-hike info). For regular pre-hike prep, see <http://www.smhclub.org/outingpreparation.htm>.
10. All participants must have a face mask, to use at trailhead meetup, and then if needed, when distancing on the trail from other hikers is not feasible.
11. Maintain 6 ft. of distance between hikers, and if possible 10-12 ft.
12. Stop at junctions to be sure group is all present, given the spacing out.
13. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
14. No sharing of food.
15. If leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
16. If leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.

MEET YOUR 2021 BOARD MEMBERS

This month's Board member is the Club Vice President Ken Wise.



Ken Wise Photo by Hillary Tune

My first foray into the Smoky Mountains backcountry was as a twelve-year-old backpacking for an overnight stay on Spence Field at the old shelter near the junction of the AT and the Jenkins Ridge Trail. The shelter was a small, box-shaped, rather nasty looking affair that I suspected was infested with fleas, so I opted to spend the night out on the thick turf of Spence Field where I could gaze at the stars and see the lights on Fontana Dam. At that time, Spence Field was largely free of trees, and the bald was the largest expanse of open space I had ever seen. Early the next morning, while tossing an empty can into the dump below the shelter, I enjoyed my first encounter with a Smoky Mountain black bear. The bear snarled, laid back his ears, and charged. I panicked and ran.

A year later, I was sitting in the dust underneath the overhang of Alum Cave Bluff, eating lunch before climbing for an overnight stay at the former campground just east of Le Conte Lodge. All I had for lunch was an apple, which I unfortunately dropped and watched as it rolled through the dust, off the edge of Alum Cave, and into the woods below. I searched for the apple to no avail. To this day, I cannot pass Alum Cave Bluff without wondering whatever happened to my apple – did a raccoon find it, did it sprout into a nice apple tree, or did it just lay there and rot?

My family moved to Knoxville when I was beginning the tenth grade, affording me more convenient opportunities for exploring the mountains. I visited the Smokies on an irregular basis through college and on into adulthood, at which point I got married, bought a house, and became the father of three children, all decisions which severely cramped my backpacking style. I once attempted to encourage my wife, Deborah, to become an off-trail hiking enthusiast. I took her on a hike up the old Essary route to the summit of the Chimney Tops and then down off the nose end of the lower chimney. She somehow managed to get herself stuck on a narrow ledge, which she feared she could not negotiate. While lying on an adjacent ledge, I managed to wrap my belt around her wrists and gently lower her down to the next ledge. She was never again willing to hike off-trail with me.

Nevertheless, I continued exploring the Smokies backcountry with friends who had similar interests as well as in my role as a scoutmaster with Troop Six and as a function of my research as a member of the library faculty at the University of Tennessee. I have been outrageously fortunate in having friends who enjoy venturing into the remote accesses of the mountains even at the expense of getting lost after dark, encountering all manner of cold and wet conditions, and having to endure interminable fun-with-rhodo climbs interspersed with sawbriers so aggressively vicious that they snap and snarl like packs of mad dogs.

My exploration of the Smokies has not been confined to the mountains themselves. I have also availed myself of the rich history of the Smokies preserved in various archives in Tennessee and North Carolina. I have been fortunate to be able to share some of the results of my research through articles and books that have been published.

When I am home recovering from my most recent venture into the mountains, I enjoy reading theology and philosophy, which I once studied as a student at the University of Edinburgh. I have an affinity for reading Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Denis Diderot, and Friedrich Nietzsche. When I have time, I enjoy reading the novels of William Faulkner, Joseph Conrad, Flannery O'Connor, Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka, and Goethe.

~ Ken Wise

For additional information, please [click this link](#).

UPCOMING HIKES

Meeting Places

Pre-registration with the leader is required for the hike and to ensure you know when and where to meet. We request that you cancel your registration ASAP if unable to hike to allow someone on the waiting list to take your spot. Please familiarize yourself with the Club guidelines in this newsletter.

Norris Dam SP Lakeview Trail Loop

Wednesday — February 3

For this beautiful winter hike, we will begin behind the old CCC Tearoom at the East Campground area of Norris Dam SP. We will hike down a brief section of the Christmas Fern Trail, pick up the Tall Timbers Trail, then the Lakeview Trail. This trail is situated several hundred feet above Norris Lake, so views are expansive in the winter, and the ascents and descents are gradual, not choppy. Our view across the lake is of Cove Creek WMA, so there is a feeling of remoteness. We will do this entire trail, then pick up Highpoint Trail, and hike down on the north leg of the Lakeside Loop Trail. Then we will retrace our steps on Lakeview, Tall Timbers and Christmas Fern. Mileage 10.9. Rated Moderate. Meet at CCC Tearoom parking lot, East Campground area Norris Dam SP.

Pre-registration with Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602.

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com. (Group 1 at 8 am) and Ron Brandenburg (Group 2 at 8:30 am).

Visit our Website: www.smhclub.org

Devil's Racetrack
Saturday — February 6

The Devil's Racetrack rock formation is located to the east of I-75 and can be reached via a section of the Cumberland Trail. On the Cumberland Trail beside Bruce Creek, we will visit a scenic series of falls on our way to the open, steep mountainside to be climbed via several switch-backs. On top, panoramic views of the valley are stunning. After exploring the top, we will return the same way. Hike about 3 miles one way with a 720' climb. Meet at the trailhead.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Amanda Beal, 865-207-1469, amandaw455@gmail.com

Old Settlers Trail via Big Copeland
Off Trail

Saturday — February 13

This hike will begin at the Greenbrier entrance to the park. We will start up the east side of the river, then go by the Price Cemetery and a Price home place on our way across the Copeland Divide to Big Copeland Creek. We will follow this creek up to the OST, passing numerous historical sites. We will then hike west on OST, crossing back over the Copeland Divide to an area formerly called "Parton Town," where we will pick up another old road/trail going down the east side of the river back to the beginning, passing more historical sites along the way. Hike around 9 miles, rated difficult.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Ed Fleming 865-548-2489 edwrdflm@aol.com, Frank March frankamarch@gmail.com

Forks of The River WMA
Saturday — February 20

We will begin at the 2.25 mile marker on the Will Skelton Greenway (WSG), next to the Forks of The River WMA parking lot. We will proceed on the WSG along the shore of the TN river, past the confluence of the Holston and French Broad rivers, and then along the shore of the French Broad River to the terminus of the WSG. We will continue on the Whaley trail into Knoxville's Urban Wilderness until we reach a bluff overlooking the southern end of Pickel island and return by the same route. There are several sections of slick rock on the Whaley trail where hiking poles are recommended. This hike will occur on the perimeter of a WMA during fox and mink hunting season. Brightly colored outerwear is recommended, and fur coats are discouraged. Total Distance: 4.5 miles; rated Easy. Meet in front of the large map at the Forks of The River WMA parking lot, located at the end of McClure Lane, at 10:00 am.

Pre-registration with the leader via email is required.

Leader: Richard Redano rredano@yahoo.com 713-409-3109

"When I put on a pair of snowshoes and trudge through fresh snow I feel 8 years old again!"

~Anne Duggan

Trillium Gap Trail
Wednesday — February 24

Let's hike the newly rehabilitated Trillium Gap Trail. Beginning at the Rainbow Falls Trail parking area, we will hike 5.2 miles to the Brushy Mtn Trail, and walk out the spur to Brushy Mountain itself. Along the way we'll pass Grotto Falls, walk among old growth trees and have wonderful views. Be prepared for lots of new steps on the trail! Mileage 11 miles RT (with spur to Brushy Mtn), elevation gain 2100ft. Rated Moderate- Difficult. Meet at Rainbow Falls parking area off Cherokee Orchard Rd.

Pre-registration with Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602.

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com. (Group 1 at 8:30 am) and Ron Brandenburg (Group 2 at 9 am).

Painter Branch and Snowbird Creek
Off Trail

Saturday — February 27

The Appalachian Trail has been re-routed four times to facilitate crossing of the Pigeon River. This off-trail excursion will trace the first relocation in 1938 below Peaked Knob. After brief discussion of the history of the trail locations, we will hike a couple of miles on the current trail from the trailhead at Green Corner Road. We will follow the former trail paralleling Painter Branch down toward Pigeon River and then bend around to a spectacular view of the Pigeon George before continuing down to intersection with Snowbird Creek. From that point we will follow former settler traces and remnants of logging grades up Snowbird to re-connect with the AT and return to our starting point. There are many interesting features along the way and many minor creek crossings. Rated Difficult since it is mostly off-trail.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Mike Knies (knies06@att.net) and Mike Harrington (mike_harr@bellsouth.net), 865/984-7167

Rich Mountain Loop
Saturday — February 27

We will start this hike from the Cades Cove Ranger Pavilion. We will hike up Crooked Arm Ridge climbing 1500 feet to Campsite 6. From Campsite 6 we will hike Indian Grave Gap Trail across the ridge to Rich Mountain Loop Trailhead. We will hike Rich Mountain Loop Trailhead to the John Oliver Cabin and then back to the parking lot at the Ranger Pavilion. This is a moderate hike but can be difficult depending on the weather. Dress appropriately and expect some small water crossings. Total mileage is 8.6 miles. Meet at the Cades Cove Ranger Pavilion at 7:30 am.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Dale Potter dalepotter55@gmail.com, 865.773.8114

SMHC Newsletter Editor: Dale Potter

Send hike write-ups to smhcnewsletter@gmail.com. Please include both email and phone contact information. Please submit photos from your hike if available. Submit photos from your hike to the above email and to Website Manager Michael Vaughn mvaughn@knology.net.

**UT Arboretum Trails
EASY HIKE**

Sunday — February 28

Come join us to enjoy this wonderful woody jewel! We will hike/walk about 3 to 4 miles and experience various habitats, a great experience for young or first time hikers. Feel free to bring a snack or drink. We will meet at the parking lot by the Visitor Center just inside the entrance at 1:00. The Arboretum is located on Hwy. 62 on the way to Oak Ridge. We are limited to 10 hikers.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Priscilla Clayton,

865-966-4142, sigmtngirl@earthlink.net

For The Record

Brookshire Creek Trail To Beaverdam Bald CNF

December 5

Four SMHC member hikers made the long drive to the Upper Bald River Wilderness area in the Cherokee National Forest to explore a remote rugged trail on this chilly December day. Brookshire Creek Tr follows the Bald River for a time (past some gorgeous large and small waterfalls), then picks up the Benton MacKaye Tr to ascend along Brookshire Creek. For nearly the whole way, we were accompanied by the sounds of rushing, tumbling water. There were 3 challenging log crossings (no rails, slippery, high at times); some folks walked the logs, some, tough-as-nails, waded barefoot, and one person had come completely prepared with gaiters and sealskinz socks!(gotta get me some of those!) As we got closer to Beaverdam Bald, a rime frost made the trees sparkle against the blue sky. There were no beaver dams at the bald, but there were views of the Unicoi mountains and a sunny dry spot to eat lunch. Total hike mileage 13.6 miles, ascent about 2300ft. What a great group, and what a beautiful day!

~~ Diane Petrilla



Meigs Mountain

December 12

Three masked men met at the Jakes Creek trailhead in Elkmont to enjoy a walk through the woods on the Meigs Mountain trail. The hikers came prepared for rain as the forecast in the area was for the chance of rain to increase to 45% during the hike and, after all, this is the Smokies. We had the trail to ourselves as we gradually climbed up to the intersection with the Curry Mountain trail, where we took a short break for lunch. The intersection was a popular place. Shortly after we stopped, four women came running (for fun, they claimed) up the Curry Mountain trail, followed in short order by two hikers coming from Tremont and two more up Curry Mountain. We had the trail back to ourselves until we neared the parking lot. We arrived back at Elkmont without encountering any rain. We all enjoyed the 55% chance of partly sunny and breezy with the temperature close to 60 degrees.

~ Neil Snapp



Three adventuresome hikers braved the cold temperatures to enjoy a fantastic hike under a sunny blue sky. We explored a large selection of well maintained horse bridle paths for an easy ramble. Started out in the mid teens but warmed up to high 20's as we shed several layers. Enjoyed many historical discussions about the early years in Roane County, especially the fact that Roane County was the second largest producer of peaches in the US prior to a blight and the depression shutting down this industry. Also pointing out the origin of some of the roads surrounding the farm, such as Suck Egg Hollow, derived from school children during the depression stopping off on the way to school to suck the eggs of a local farmer. Overall, a perfect day for a most fun hike.

~ Lloyd Chapman



Welcome SMHC New Members

Mary Ann Baird, Joshua Combs, Jamie Desmond,
Troy Galyon, Charlie Hammock, Joel T. Shor

Congratulations to the following A.T. Maintainers!

Each year the Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club recognizes volunteers who have provided exceptional volunteer service for our prior fiscal year, October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. Normally, we would announce these awards at our December Club banquet, which unfortunately had to be cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are the maintainers who have earned awards this year, based on work and travel hours (excludes administrative hours).

SMHC cap or medal (hours in 1 year; caps for new winners, medals given for repeat gold or platinum earners)

Bronze cap (25 hours): *Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock, Gene Desrosiers, Melanie Harmon, Tracy Kressler, Michael Roque, Rick Waggener, Elizabeth Weikert.*

Silver cap (50 hours): *Patti Grady, Charlie McDonald*

Gold cap: (100 hours): *Dick Ketelle (medal), Terry Martin (medal), Randy Mitchell (new), Bill Pyle (Medal).*

Platinum cap: (200 hours): *Taylor Weatherbee (medal)*

ATC patch or cap (cumulative hours since start of volunteering)

ATC Patch (100 hours): *Jay Schmid*

ATC Cap (500 hours): *Randy Mitchell, Taylor Weatherbee*

Please know ***how much*** your work means to the National Appalachian Scenic Trail, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Nantahala National Forest, both in facilitating matching federal funds, and for the preservation and enjoyment of the Trail. ***Thank you all!!***

~Diane Petrilla

“Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer. Camp out among the grasses and gentians of glacial meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of nature’s darlings.”

~John Muir

A.T. Vista Inauguration to Be Conducted in 2021 and 2022 – Be a Part of the History!

With the great news of vaccines for COVID-19, the planning team for the inaugural A.T. Vista has updated the program to provide for both a virtual experience in 2021 and an in-person experience for 2022. This expanded program presents a great opportunity to allow wide participation each year, and we seek assistance from your club members.

We know it has been since 2017 that we've been together to spend time on the trail, learn, and socialize together; however, the uncertainties involved in rolling out COVID-19 vaccinations has led us to avoid a trail-wide in-person event in 2021. We want the inaugural A.T. Vista to be memorable and this expanded two-year program rollout will allow us to develop and maintain momentum so that we can continue to share in the great camaraderie of the kindred spirits that cherish the Appalachian Trail.

As we want to continue to honor the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Benton MacKaye's 1921 article, "*An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning*," the 2021 A.T. Vista program will be conducted with dispersed local hiking opportunities all along the Appalachian Trail (and perhaps even elsewhere!) plus virtual gatherings providing an opportunity for participants at any location to follow the hikes online as photos and videos are posted.

For the 2021 program, we are seeking hiking leaders from trail clubs to conduct small group hikes along the Appalachian Trail and other trails in your serving area. We are also seeking workshop proposals for topics that are conducive to an online presentation. We anticipate the 2021 program will still be a 4-day event with virtual experiences available August 6-9, 2021. A planned itinerary is below (details are in process):

1. **Friday, August 6 (in the evening):** A virtual keynote program with welcome remarks, highlights of the virtual program, and online entertainment (components may be pre-recorded).

2. **Saturday, August 7 from 8AM to 5PM:** Local hikes to be conducted along the Appalachian Trail (and other trails in your area). Afternoon and Evening: Pictures and videos from these hikes to be uploaded and shared as armchair activities to engage people with various fun facts and opportunities for viewers to experience the hikes vicariously.

3. **Sunday, August 8 and Monday, August 9 from 9AM to 4PM:** Various workshop tracks

We are still working out many details for this expanded program while we continue to pursue the in-person program now scheduled for August 5-8, 2022, at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz.

If you have members of your club that would be interested in making this a memorable and ongoing future event, email us at atvistainfo@gmail.com to join the team. Provide the requested information below for the hikes and workshops, and if you have other ideas, feel free to send those too. The A.T. Vista organizing team will be putting together an online program and registration system based on the submitted opportunities.

Hike Submission:

1. Leader Name and Contact info (email, phone)
2. Co-Leader Name and Contact info
3. Location
4. Trail Name/Section
5. Description to be used
6. Number of Miles
7. Level (easy, moderate, strenuous)
8. Roundtrip or one-way hike?

Workshop Submission:

1. Workshop Name
2. Workshop description
3. Workshop Leader Name and Contact info (email, phone)
4. Length of session (average is expected to be one-hour)
5. Session Date: Sunday or Monday (or both!)
6. Would you be able to host more than one session if needed?
7. Would you also like to conduct this workshop online or in-person for the 2022 program?

A.T. Vista Committee

atvistainfo@gmail.com

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

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Reminder for Members: Dues for 2021 are now due. For information about membership and paying your dues visit <http://www.smhclub.org/membership.htm>

Digital Newsletter Suggestion

Thanks to those who changed from the print version to the digital newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter by mail, consider going digital. Check out and review the club digital club newsletter at <http://www.smhclub.org/index.htm> under Outings on the menu bar. If you have a printer you can print out a personal copy from the online pdf. Email smhcnewsletter@gmail.com to make the change.