



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

March 2021

Dear SMHC Membership,

For a change, this is a letter that is not about COVID! It is, however, about another important topic.

As you know, one of the central missions of the SMHC is the maintenance of the Appalachian Trail for 102 miles between Wesser, NC, and Davenport Gap, TN. Our Club has been proud to do this for many decades, and our volunteers work thousands of hours each year on the A.T. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which oversees the management and conservation of the A.T., publishes a wonderful quarterly magazine called A.T. Journeys. In the Winter 2021 edition of the A.T. Journeys magazine, there is an excellent article by Mills Kelly, a professor of history at George Mason University and a historian of the A.T., called "The A.T. and Race."

In Dr. Kelly's essay, he talks about the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club: *"From its founding in the 1920s, membership in the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club was open to 'any reputable white person,' according to the early club handbooks. In 1960, a member wrote to the Club's president, 'I think the time is ripe to amend our constitution to eliminate the racial discrimination clause. It is too embarrassing to admit to a foreigner that you belong to a club, which he could not join, though we may invite him to a hike — just on account of the color of his skin.' The Club's president responded that he was sympathetic to this concern and would be happy to see the Club integrated. Although I found no further discussion of the issue in the archives, the 1963 club handbook had dropped its racially exclusionary language, so perhaps that lone member's protest had an impact."*

Dr. Kelly goes on to discuss the entire topic of the A.T. and race in a balanced, clear way, and certainly not focused on the SMHC. We hope you will read the article in its entirety by going to: <https://journeys.appalachiantrail.org/issue/winter-2021/the-at-and-race/>

We acknowledge the history described above as a part of our Club's past, but something that was rightfully changed for the better. In fact, the membership policy was changed before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We appreciate the leadership in the Club who accomplished that.

Discussion of inclusivity is a relevant topic. In our recent Board retreat, a recurring theme of our meeting was keeping our membership numbers strong and growing and ways to reach out to other demographic groups. Perhaps this article and this time in history can stimulate further discussions about how we can reach out in the most effective ways to even more people who love the outdoors.

We welcome your comments and discussion.

Respectfully,
Diane L. Petrilla M.D.
President, on behalf of the SMHC Board of Directors
petrillad@gmail.com

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."

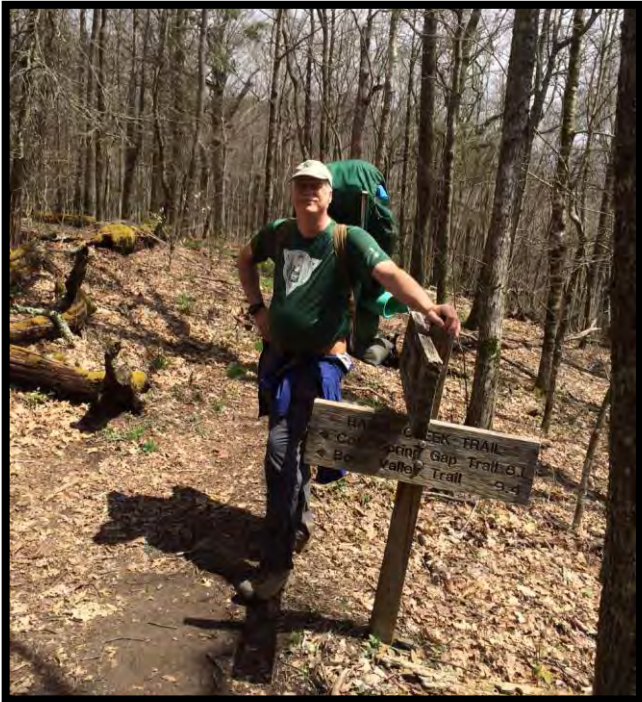
SMHC Hiking Guidelines During COVID

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 Treasurer Tim Bigelow

Tim has been a member of SMHC since 1993. He has served on the SMHC Board since 2006 and as Treasurer since 2010. Tim regularly leads hikes and backpacks for the Club.



The ATC continues to advise long-distance hikers to postpone hikes until 2022 or when the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has deemed the pandemic under control, and/or a COVID-19 vaccine or effective treatment is widely available and distributed. Visit appalachiantrail.org/COVID-19 for more information.

Visit our Website: www.smhclub.org

**Welcome new Life
Members in SMHC**

Glenn and Raette George

White Oak Sink Volunteer Recruitment

Who: Eager volunteers able to hike 3+ miles in steep terrain

What: Rove manway: remind visitors to stay on path, provide resource interpretation

When: April, and the first week of May, half day shifts

Where: White Oak Sink

The Inventory and Monitoring Branch of the Resource Management and Science Division would like to recruit a number of volunteers for April and the first week of May 2021 to provide resource damage interpretation to visitors on topics including: soil compaction, plant trampling, and social trail creation. Volunteers are needed to rove White Oak Sink during peak days, mainly weekends. For example, in April 2017 alone, White Oak Sink saw 5,673 visitors. Sixty-five percent of visitation occurred on weekends (Fridays through Mondays). Peak hours of the day are 7am to 4pm.

*Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, volunteers are strongly encouraged to bring a face covering, hand sanitizer, maintain social distancing, and use Covid-safe precautions when interacting with visitors in White Oak Sink. Background:

White Oak Sink is a unique, sensitive area which hosts many populations of rare plants. The area also contains important bat hibernacula. White Oak Sink is an area accessible by manway off of Schoolhouse Gap Trail. The manway to White Oak Sink is not found on official park trail maps, yet it receives a high amount of foot traffic because of the well-known spring wildflower displays. Visitor impacts to the area include social trail creation, soil compaction, and plant trampling.

The following bulleted paragraphs provide background information about White Oak Sink and its special resources.

Plant species present in White Oak Sink considered rare in the park:

- Three are from White Oak Sink only (guyandotte beauty, shootingstar, and wall-rue).
- Five are from three or fewer locales (Virginia bluebell, fairywand, dwarf larkspur, horse gentian, and green violet).
- Two are vulnerable to poaching (pink lady's slipper and yellow lady's slipper).

Anecdotal changes in White Oak Sink over the years:

- Increase in extent of social trail network.
- Increase in non-native plant species in disturbed areas.
- Large yellow lady's slipper population poached and trampled; only two plants remain where there was once more than a dozen.
- Soil compaction observed around showy plants due to heavy use.

Volunteer qualifications: · Eagerness to learn several spring wildflowers

- Have the ability to safely hike 3 miles (to White Oak Sink floor and back) partly on an unmaintained manway that has steep elevation change in some places.

- Comfortable interacting with visitors amidst the Covid-19 outbreak.

Interfacing with visitors is a significant portion of volunteer responsibilities, however certain precautions and safety steps can help mitigate contracting the virus (maintain social distancing, wear a mask/face covering, carry sanitizer, etc).

- Have knowledge of hiking preparedness (i.e. bring food and water, wear sturdy footwear, and be prepared for possible rain showers).
- Have a willingness to engage the public about White Oak Sink, its wildflowers, and hiking etiquette (i.e. stay on the main footpaths and obey fencing and restricted area signs)

We will provide: · Brief training sessions · Laminated photos of the common wildflowers found in White Oak Sink · Bulleted talking points · Radios Those interested need to contact Kendra Straub at Twin Creeks Science and Education Center. Kendra Straub, grsm_whiteoak@nps.gov All SMHC volunteers will need to sign a copy of the Job Hazard Analysis as well as the Volunteer In the Park (VIP) agreement. Contact Cindy Spangler(spangler@utk.edu) for access to these documents.

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.

A.T. Work Trip

Saturday — March 6

This work trip is designated toward clearing the 30 miles of trail between NOC and Fontana of any trees and limb debris that has fallen over the winter and prepping the trail for the upcoming thru hiker season. ATMC needs sawyers, and volunteers to assist the sawyers with removal of debris after it is cut, and repair any tread as needed where trees have fallen. Specific work locations will not be known until a walkthrough is completed in late February and also based on number of sawyers and volunteers who sign up. Ideally, we would like to have 4 crews. Each crew would hike no more than 7 miles over moderate terrain. Alternate bad weather date is Saturday, March 13th.

Driving from the Maryville Walmart on Hwy 411 at 7 am. Roundtrip travel is approximately 110 miles and may include drive/ride behind Forest Service gates. Participants will need to wear sturdy footwear and weather appropriate attire. Bring gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water. If you have a hardhat, ear protection, and/or safety glasses, please bring those as well.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Franklin LaFond 678-464-3380, ox97GaMe@aol.com

Dick Ketelle: 865-483-3792 rhketelle@comcast.net

Lower Mt Cammerer Trail

Wednesday — March 10

We will do a moderate 15.6 mile hike on the Lower Mt Cammerer Trail to the AT and back. The trail has been described as an upside-down cupcake where the trail goes around the ridges as it slowly climbs to the AT. The hike can be adjusted to accommodate weather conditions and allows hikers to shorten the distance by turning back at any point. Meet at the hikers parking lot (not the picnic parking lot) at the Cosby area at 8:00 for the first group and 8:30 for the second group.

Pre-registration with the leader via email is required.

Leader: Lloyd Chapman, 865-719-3769.

lrchapman6667@yahoo.com

Walker Sisters Cabin

EASY HIKE

Saturday — March 13

Come join us and get some fresh air as we hike about 5 miles (with 550 ft elevation gain), going to Little Greenbrier School to get a little learning and then continue to the Walker sisters' cabin to look around and eat a snack, then hike back to the cars the same route. This will be a great hike for young, senior (young at heart) and first-time hikers. Please bring a mask, hand sanitizer, snack, and drink. We will meet at 10 am in the picnic parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms located within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We are limited to 10 hikers.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Ernie Wiles 865-315-0109, ernestwiles09@comcast.net

Chestnut Top

Saturday — March 13

This classic hike allows us to experience some early Spring wildflowers such as trillium, bloodroot, hepatica, spring beauties and trout-lilies. From the trailhead, we have a steady ascent of roughly 1400 feet through deciduous and pine forests. We will hopefully enjoy some nice views to the north (Tuckaleechee Cove) and south into the heart of the Smokies. At 4.3 miles we intersect with the Schoolhouse Gap trail which we will hike a short distance to our lunch spot. We will return via the same route on Chestnut Top. Hike: 9 miles, rated moderate. All COVID practices will be in place. Meet at the Townsend Wye parking lot at 9:00 AM.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Cindy Spangler, spangler@utk.edu, 865-776-1301

Joan Tomlinson, jptomlinson@gmail.com, 865-567-8051

Bradley Forks to Cabin Flats

Saturday — March 20

This hike begins at the Smokemont campground and follows a relatively open old logging road up the Bradley Fork watershed. The valley offers open views this time of year as it ascends 4.1 miles up towards the trail to the Cabin Flats campsite 49. During the walk, we will pass a few small cascades and enjoy the beginnings of spring wildflowers. We will explore the campsite area before returning via the same route. Total hiking distance is 10.4 miles round trip, rated moderate. Meet at the trailhead at the back of the Smokemont campground at 9 am.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: Brian Worley, 865-207-2625, baw2222@aol.com

Elkmont Backpack to Campsite 30

Saturday-Sunday — March 20-21

BACKPACK

If you want to get out this spring for a nice walk in the woods with an overnight stay at a beautiful campsite, this is it. We will meet at the Elkmont Little River Trailhead parking lot and hike up Cucumber Gap Trail to the Little River Trail and on up to BCS 30 (Three Forks campsite) for a total of 6.0 miles. We will cross the stream to the other side of the campsite to set up and build a nice fire and enjoy conversation. On Sunday, we will decide if we want to hike up Rough Creek and down Sugarlands (13.2 miles) or back to Elkmont via the Little River Trail (6.0 miles).

COVID guidelines are still in place, including group size limitation, distancing at the campsite, and masking. Hikers will make their own individual Backcountry Reservations after preregistering.

Pre-registration is required. Contact Steve Dunkin at

jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

Leaders: Steve Dunkin, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com, 865-202-3286

Tim Bigelow, 865-607-6781

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.

Russell Field/Spence Field/Rocky Top Option

Wednesday — March 24

We will hike to Spence Field with option to continue to Rocky Top. We begin at the Cades Cove picnic area and hike up Anthony Creek then Russell Field Trail to the AT. After resting at the shelter, we will continue to Spence Field on the AT. Once at Spence Field the option is available to continue to Rocky Top. We will return via Bote Mountain and Anthony Creek. Distance to Spence Field and back is about 14 miles. Rated as difficult. First group meet at Trailhead at 8:15 (gate to picnic area opens at 8:00). Second group meet at 8:45.

Pre-registration with the leader via email is required.

Leader: Lloyd Chapman, 865-719-3769.

lrchapman6667@yahoo.com

Sugar Fingers

Off Trail

Saturday — March 27

Our hike will take us up one of the precipitous finger ridges running down the face of Sugarland Mountain. We will push through dense vegetation, scamper up imposing boulders, crawl along knife-edge ledges, and enjoy fantastic views of the Chimneys and Mt. LeConte. On the way down, we will pay a visit to the spectacular Birthday Falls. The hike is around 3 miles and rated very difficult.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: David Sands, dsands314@yahoo.com, 865-978-0146

Welcome SMHC New Members

Julie Barnes, Lydia Birk & Michael Toomey, Dale & Terri Gerhardt, Paige Gibson, Julie Glibbery, H.D. Khalsa, Rhonda Lewis, Bobbie Nettle, Jay Schmid, Larry West, Jeannette Widman

Special Training Event for A.T. Volunteers: Effective

Communication of Leave No Trace to Visitors is a skill that can create endless positive impacts for the A.T. and your future work! Join a special event by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and fellow A.T. volunteers on **Thursday, March 4 from 6-8 p.m.** for an interactive, online training event. Visit this link to register.

https://volunteer.appalachiantrail.org/s/atc-project-details?c_recId=a0q1U000005AxCU

“Winter hiking is when the mountains are most beautiful and peaceful, the trails (usually) easier to negotiate, the bugs absent, and your companions most companionable.”

~Paul Miller

For The Record

Abrams Creek Hike

January 2

On an unseasonable, warm day, five SMHC members braved Cades Cove traffic to take a traditional hike from the Abrams Creek trailhead to the falls. The day was absolutely beautiful. The falls were overflowing and the hike was one of the best ever to the falls and back. Plus, the traffic actually moved on the way out of the Cove.

~ Steve Dunkin



Cumberland Trail Anderson Mountain

January 9

Five hikers caravanned from Oak Ridge to New River Valley and along the way saw an amazing bald eagle flying ahead. At the top of the mountain, the scenery became winter wonderland with snow on the ground and all-white trees. The group also made a quick photo stop to look at the old steam train water tank at Shea along the way. Fortunately, roads were clear all the way to the trailhead. We started out hiking in light snow which became increasingly deeper as we gained elevation. No other hikers' footprints were there to lead the way and, although there are many nice CT trail blazes, the trail makes many turns, so we had to back up a few times where the correct route was hard to see in the snow. At higher elevation several sets of larger animal tracks appeared and followed the trail quite a distance leading the way. It was quite interesting to attempt to identify the large regular hoof or paw prints. There were a few views of snowy mountains across the valley, but gray clouds blocked any distant views. About 4 miles in almost to the peak, the trail crosses a major ATV route which was a wide muddy mess. Since the wind was picking up the group decided it was a good time for a quick lunch and then head back down the mountain.

~ Tim Bigelow

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



Snake Den Ridge to Low Gap

January 13

Group 1: What a beautiful day for a hike! After the morning fog cleared, we had sunny blue skies with patches of light snow on the ground, at 30°. Group 1 (8:00 am) included 8 hikers, of whom 7 made the short walk to the trailhead for the photo, eager to get moving. We stopped at mile 1 where the old road becomes trail, to shed layers. The 8th hiker, who arrived late, passed us then. We carefully crossed the first footlog bridge, covered in ice, and continued up Snake Den Ridge.

This year we also saw a layer of snow + icy footprints in stretches shaded from the sun. By the time we reached the 1st switchback our group had spread far along the trail. On the 5th switchback a few Group 2 hikers caught up with the last Group 1 hiker (me). By the 7th switchback, on the north side of the Ridge, we hiked almost entirely on snow, surrounded by accumulations up to 9" deep. The snow allowed easy hiking to the Maddron Bald junction, and then to the A.T.

Six hikers met briefly at the A.T. junction all of Group 2, of whom 3 had just finished lunch and had started packing, and the last of Group 1, leaving just 3 for the second (quick) lunch seating.

The A.T. down from Inadu Knob offered a sunny, smooth walk with few blowdowns and spectacular views south, on the way to Camel Gap. At 3 pm, when the last 2 hikers started the (surprisingly easy, partly ridge-top) climb up Cosby Knob, three hikers from Group 1 were already in their cars. After we passed the path to Cosby Shelter the A.T. got rockier and icier.

After stopping for water and spikes for the icy slope we headed down Low Gap Trail. Unfortunately, the last hiker soon fell, saying he felt "wobbly." Diane gave him an electrolyte tablet and we discovered that he needed water, too. We gave him time to rest and had him finish his sandwich. Then it was slow going. He took a few more falls and needed more help. After sunset we used headlamps to navigate back to the parking lot and help the hiker safely into his car at 8 pm – under a sky filled with stunningly bright stars. Overall a fine day with an overly difficult hike for one of us. [~13.3 miles, 3,942 ft. climb].

~ Ron Brandenburg

With excellent adherence to COVID precautions, Group 2 (5 people) began this hike 30 minutes after Group 1 departed, all wearing masks at the parking lot. Snake Den of course is a famous (infamous?) ascent of 3400 ft. over 5.3 miles (after a .5-mile walk from the parking lot to the TH). Early on, slippery rocks at a small stream caused this author to have a not-very-graceful fall into the creek with the biggest issue being water inside one boot and wet pants. Base layer to the rescue! As we climbed, we came upon the leader of Group 1 who then joined our group. Snow got deeper, but the trail was well packed down by others. We did wonder at times why Group 1 had not shoveled a bit better! At the A.T. junction there was a bit of a wait for the last 2 of our group of 6 to catch up, during which time I inserted hand warmers inside my wet sock! Then 3 of us began hiking north the A.T., with the others to follow. That 4.7 miles of A.T. was breathtaking! The two hikers with me were kind enough to pop down to Cosby Shelter and fill the privy mulch buckets and pack out some trash. Kudos to them! At the A.T./ Low Gap junction, we agreed the two folks with me would hike on out together. Our 4th hiker came just a few minutes later and descended Low Gap. I waited for some time until the last 2 caught up and we began our descent. Unfortunately, one of the two had some struggles going down, so we emerged at the parking lot at 8pm. Got to use those headlamps though!! And see lots of a starry winter night in the Smokies.

~ Diane Petrilla

Panther Creek Park

January 16

With snow and wind in the forecast, six members enjoyed a nearly empty park that usually hosts hundreds of daily visitors in warmer months. The wind and solitude brought out many deer, both in the fields and in the woods. At least a dozen were seen throughout the day. Cherokee Lake was also serene with only one hearty fisherman seen across the vastness riding the choppy water. At the end of the hike, we followed a meandering trail past enough sinkholes to satisfy all but the most enthusiastic of geologists. For us, enthusiasm arose when we stepped into our warm, dry cars for the ride back home.

~ Steven Miller and Claudia Dean

Big Creek Hike

January 23

Three SMHC members trekked up one of the most popular trails in the Smokies to BackCountry CampSites 36 and 37. It was a wonderful day and we passed only three hikers on the way up. Mouse Creek Falls and one of the most popular swimming holes in the park (Midnight Hole), was ours alone. At BCS 36 we ate lunch and enjoyed the solitude. On the way to the cars, we joined a hiker who was finishing up a loop around Sterling, Swallow Fork and Big Creek. Near Midnight Hole we began to pass quite a few families out for a short-day hike. It was a great day to be in the Smokies.

~ Steve Dunkin



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Diane Petrilla petrillad@gmail.com
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West Prong/Bote Mt/Finley Cane/Lead Cove January 23

At 8:30 am on a cool gray morning, 7 of the 8 hikers in Group 1 met at the West Prong trailhead for our photo. (The 8th had to cancel at the last minute.) We went briskly up the side of Fodderstack Mountain, past the unmarked trail to an old cemetery, uphill for the first 1.3 miles. We quickly formed into two subgroups: the faster three and the others. We shed outer layers before the next mile downhill to Campsite 18. By the end of the short climb to Bote Mountain Trail the cloud-cover had thinned. We started down the Finley Cane Trail under blue skies and enjoyed a sunny walk through this beautiful section of the Park. When we re-grouped at the junction near Laurel Creek Road, one hiker opted to return to the parking lot; the other 6 decided to have lunch after the 1.8 mile climb up Lead Cove Trail.

On our way to the Lead Cove trailhead, we crossed Sugar Cove Creek with care in water high enough to make it our most challenging crossing of the day.

The faster three reached the lunch site on Bote Mountain Trail and had finished eating before the last of the others arrived. We visited briefly; then the faster three headed down the trail while the others finished and followed at a more leisurely pace.

The hike down Bote Mountain offered fine views, especially along the ridge top. One of the last hikers picked up a colorful scarf that another of our group had dropped on the trail – and was happy to see again when we met at the last junction.

Group 2: It was a warm day but cloudy for the end of January. Six hikers gathered to hike up West Prong a little of Bote Mountain, Finley Cane, Lead Cove and back down Bote Mountain and West Prong. I would like to thank the hikers in Group 1 that left some parking places in the West Prong parking area. Four of us parked there and the other two parked down near the road. It turned into a nice sunny day. The predicted rain held off until later in the day. Going down Finley Cane we met one of the Group 1 hikers returning up Finley Cane. When we almost got to the intersection with Lead Cove there is a creek 0.08 miles from the intersection that had to be crossed to continue. Since some of the group had decided to turn around and go back the way we came instead of hiking up Lead Cove, we decided to not cross the creek and eat lunch there. After lunch 2 hikers continued up Lead Cove and the other 4 turned around. The hike back was pleasantly warm, but the clouds gathered as we returned. Most of the way down West Prong, 3 of the faster hikers from Group 1 caught us and followed us the rest of the way. The last three hiker from Group 1 had not yet finished by the time we left for home.

~ Ron Brandenburg

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.