



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

May 2021

President Message

With the arrival of Spring and the sight of wildflowers on the trail, I believe we have all felt some lightening of the weight of the last year. We are certainly not beyond the pandemic, but vaccines and beautiful outdoor weather certainly feel hopeful!

You may have noticed last month that we published updated COVID guidelines for hikes for the SMHC. The updates were based solidly on the CDC Interim Guidelines for Fully Vaccinated People:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

We are now permitting carpools (if members desire) with fully vaccinated riders and shuttles of no longer than 15 minutes with masks and a ventilation source (window) for each rider, since shuttles may include a mix of vaccinated, partially vaccinated, and unvaccinated people. Group size increase decisions will occur after carpooling becomes more comfortable for members to avoid overcrowding at trailheads. The COVID Committee continues to meet once a month to look at each scheduled hike, assess safety, and make recommendations to the Board. Please stay vigilant and continue to protect yourself and others, as you have so kindly done in the last year.

We would also like to share the news that SMHC will soon have a new website using a software platform that will allow us to manage membership, hike and event registration more efficiently, and other key Club functions. We are deeply grateful to Michael Vaughn for his management and stewardship of our SMHC website for the last 16 years. Using the new platform will allow several people to manage Club functions, so there is redundancy in knowledge and functionality. Of course, there will be kinks to work through when we do go live! We will let you know when that happens and ask for your patience with a change that the Board feels is important for the future of SMHC.

Stay safe, and thank you for your membership and what you do for our Club.

All my best,
Diane Petrilla
President

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. **Shuttles or key swap shuttles that involve drives of 15 minutes or less are acceptable. Since there may be a mix of vaccinated, partially vaccinated and unvaccinated people in shuttles, all riders must be able to sit next to a cracked window, and wear masks.**
5. Hikes will be chosen to avoid crowded trailheads and crowded trails.
6. **Carpooling among individuals who are fully vaccinated and have waited at least 2 weeks since their last vaccination, is permissible. However, hikers should still do what is comfortable for them, including driving alone if that is their choice.**
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.

Abrams Falls Trail Closure Dates For Rehabilitation

The Forever Trail Team will begin a rehabilitation project on the popular Abrams Falls Trail, due to work to be done on the Trail, a full closure will be necessary for the safety of both the crew and visitors. The Abrams Falls Trail and associated parking areas will be closed May 10, 2021 through November 10, 2021, excluding federal holidays, on Monday mornings at 7:00 a.m. through Thursday evenings at 5:30 p.m. weekly. The trail will be fully open each week on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

From The Archives

The club has a rich history in promoting and helping to ensure that lands are set aside for experiencing wilderness as close to its natural state as possible--not only in our area of the country but in the nation and beyond. The story begins with the efforts of two early club members, Harvey Broome and Ernie Dickerman, and continues with the efforts of other club members such as Leroy Fox, Ray Payne, and Will Skelton. The efforts of the latter three will be the subject of a future history blurb.

In October 1934, Harvey Broome was traveling in a car to the construction site of Norris Dam with TVA foresters Benton MacKaye and Bernard Frank. Also traveling with them was Robert Marshall. Mr. Marshall was the director of forestry of the Interior Department's Office of Indian Affairs. It was at a stop during the drive that the four men decided to form a new organization devoted to the preservation of wilderness. The following January 1935, this group of four joined with four other chosen members (Aldo Leopold, Robert Sterling Yard, Ernest Oberholtzer, and Harold Anderson) and met at the Cosmos Club in Washington DC to form the new organization, called the Wilderness Society. The tireless work of the society helped the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations to prevent development in still-existing wilderness areas such as the San Bernadino National Forest, Minnesota's Quetico wilderness, Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument, and many other areas of the country. These efforts led to the idea of a wilderness bill, first drafted in 1955, calling for permanent protection of lands to be designated as wilderness areas. The Wilderness Act was finally passed into law on September 3, 1964, by Lyndon Johnson. Harvey Broome was President of the Wilderness Society from 1957 until his death in 1968. Specific to the Smokies, Harvey worked tirelessly to prevent a cross-mountain road from Bryson City to Townsend and organized and led the 17-mile Save the Smokies hike to oppose the plan, which was finally abandoned seven years later. Some good accounts of the early efforts to preserve the wilderness in the Smokies can be found in the Autumn 1965 and Spring 1966 issues of the Living Wilderness (the Wilderness Societies quarterly publication at the time) and in the July 1, 1966 issue of Science magazine.

Another early club member famous for his devotion to wilderness preservation was Ernie Dickerman. Ernie was one of the Wilderness Society's charter members and joined the staff of the society in 1966. Ernie traveled the country to raise public awareness of the damage the cross-mountain road would inflict on the park. After seven years of controversy, the park service was forced to abandon the proposal.

Ernie devoted the remainder of his life to working to apply the newly passed Wilderness Act to areas in the eastern United States. He traveled widely, giving lectures on the importance of wilderness and the benefits the Act offered. Like Harvey, he had a quiet and respectful passion and also gained a reputation as a formidable speaker. Ernie moved to Washington, D.C., headquarters of The Society, in 1969, and through his perseverance and hard work, he contributed to the efforts leading to President Ford's signing of the Eastern Wilderness Act. While working for The Wilderness Society, Dickerman also acted as manager for the Robert Marshall Wilderness Fund.

~ Brian Worley, Historian

**Welcome new Life
Member in SMHC**

Jamie Herman

Welcome SMHC New Members

Susan Faidley, Anthony David Lawson, William Sharp

Road Closures

Cades Cove Loop Road- Vehicle-free Wednesdays
May 5-Sept 1, 2021

Cades Cove Loop Road- Fully Closed for resurfacing
Sept 7-Sept 27, 2021

Forge Creek Road- through July 31, 2021

Heintooga Round Bottom Opens May 14

Newfound Gap Road- Intermittent delays through Nov 30, 2021
Bridgework Replacement

Ramsey Prong Road & Greenbrier Road- Closed through
May 15, 2021

Reminder for Members: Dues for 2021 are due. If you have not paid your dues for this year, please do ASAP. Dues are important in the operation of the club. COVID has resulted in a delay in collecting dues for 2021. For information about membership and paying your dues visit <http://www.smhclub.org/membership.htm>

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club WANTS **YOU**

Have you wanted to lead a hike? Have you wanted the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club to schedule a specific hike that you enjoy? Have you wanted input into the hikes that the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club schedules each year?

This is your chance. Ken Wise and the Program Committee are looking for hike leaders to lead one or more hikes in 2022. The Program Committee would like to include new leaders and new trails for 2022, but your input is needed. If you are interested in leading a hike in the Smokies, or any of the surrounding National Forests, National Parks or State Parks, you need to respond to this request immediately. Ken Wise is waiting to hear from you. Email Ken at kwise@utk.edu put Hikes 2022 in the subject line. Suggest what hike or hikes you would like to lead and when. You should include in your email a brief write up of the hike similar to upcoming hikes in this newsletter. If you are interested in leading hikes, but do not have a specific hike, you can email Ken and tell him where you would like to lead a hike, what time of year, and how long of a hike.

If you are interested in leading a hike but have questions before you commit to leading a hike, email Ken with your questions.

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 — May 1

Davenport Gap to Mt. Cammerer Side Trail

This work trip will concentrate on the east end of the Smokies beginning at Davenport Gap and working as far as the Mt. Cammerer side trail. Although a lot of progress in these sections has been accomplished already this spring, we will work on cleaning any remaining waterbars and trail drains and repair of a few log steps as time allows. Some tread repair, vegetation trimming and removal of downed trees may also be required. Several work groups that are willing to hike different distances up to 5 miles into the far end of the section would be good.

We will meet at the Davenport Gap at 9:00 am. Bring gloves, lunch, snacks, and plenty of water.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Tim Bigelow, 865-607-6781 bigelowt2@mindspring.com

Ace Gap

Saturday — May 8

With luck, we will see pink lady's slippers (endangered) that usually bloom in May along this hiking + horse trail. We go northwest from Rich Mountain Gap, following the Park boundary above Tuckaleechee Cove, through Kelly Gap (Campsite #4), Ace Gap (Campsite #7), and 0.9 mile on Hurricane Mountain to Beard Cane Trail. Return the same way. 11 miles RT, total climb 1,569 feet, rated Moderate. Limit 10 hikers. Meet-up info by return email.

Pre-registration with the leader is required by 2pm May 7th

Leaders: Eric Sundstrom sundstrom.eric@gmail.com text 865-406-8794; Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net text 865-898-7602.

NEWTON BALD/MINGUS CREEK

Saturday — May 15

Let us do a couple of trails on the NC side. Newton Bald climbs 2900' in the first 4.7 miles then passes Newton Bald which is no longer bald on the way to campsite 52 where we will have lunch. After backtracking a short distance, we will head down Mingus Creek to Mingus Mill. Distance is 11.5 miles rated difficult due to the initial climb after which it is a quite pleasant hike.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: David Smith dcsmith041@gmail.com Claudia Dean claudiadean0@gmail.com

**Bunches Creek Hike
Off Trail**

Saturday — May 15

As the heat of Summer moves in, we will cool off with an adventurous rock-hop/wade up beautiful Bunches Creek. We will splash our way past numerous fantastic cascades and waterfalls, including one that Ken Wise considers the Smokies' most unique. This gem roars through a narrow canyon, slams into a gigantic boulder, bounces off at a right angle, and then slides on down the mountain. If the water is low enough, some of us might try to ascend through the canyon. Water shoes and swimming attire are recommended for the best experience of this route.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leader: David Sands, dsands314@yahoo.com, 865-978-0146 Cindy McJunkin, mcjfive@aol.com, 828-712-9646

Backpack from Abrams Creek Campground to BCS 3 (Hesse Creek) on Beard Cane Trail

Saturday-Sunday — May 15-16

BACKPACK

This is an out and back hike beginning at the Abrams Creek Campground Ranger Station and proceeding up Cooper Road Trail to Beard Cane Trail. We will hike along one of the primary roads the early Cades Cove settlers used to move in and out of "The Cove." This is a seldom-used portion of the backcountry, and therefore we will probably see few other hikers or backpackers. Hesse Creek backcountry campsite (BCS #3) is a wonderful campsite and is off the beaten path. If we feel energetic, Saturday or Sunday, we can hike the short distance up to the intersection with Ace Gap Trail. So, if you want something off the beaten path and want company knocking out a remote 900 Miler trail, here is the opportunity. As an option, if you are interested in hiking in from Cades Cove on the Cooper Road Trail, we can start as two groups that will meet at the campsite. Let Steve know if you are interested in hiking in from Cades Cove.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Steve Dunkin, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com, 865-202-3286 Tim Bigelow, bigelowt2@mindspring.com 865-607-6781

**Ijams Nature Center
EASY HIKE**

Sunday — May 16

We'll gather at the Ijams Visitor's Center (2915 Island Home Blvd) at 4 PM and explore all or parts of several trails--the Tower Trail, the River Trail which affords a gorgeous view from a lovely boardwalk, the Imry Trail through the magic keyhole, and the Will Skelton Greenway --kudos to our SMHC board member Will Skelton! Route is rated easy, approximately 4.5 miles total.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

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

**Leader's Choice
Sunday — May 22
CANCELED**

**Ramsey Cascade
Saturday — May 29**

The 8-mile roundtrip hike to Ramsey Cascades is a perennial favorite of the SMHC. A high elevation hike through a forest of magnificent trees to a majestic waterfall simply cannot be beaten. The trail follows the Middle Prong, then Ramsey Prong, gradually ascending 2,200 feet. The last mile is rocky and slow going, but the reward is seeing a roaring cascade with a 90-foot drop.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

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

Memorial Day joint SMHC/CMC hike: Kephart Prong to A.T. by two routes!

Monday — May 31

Last year we did not get to do our joint hike with the Carolina Mountain Club, so let's make up for it this year! 10 members from each club will meet at the Kephart Prong TH at 8:45am on Memorial Day. Using good social distancing and masking at the trailhead, we will draw cards for 2 groups, mixing up the members a bit! Using staggered start times, Group 1 will hike Kephart Prong to Sweat Heifer, A.T. North, then down Dry Sluice and Grassy Branch. Group 2 will hike Kephart Prong to Grassy Branch, Dry Sluice, A.T. South and then down Sweat Heifer. Both groups can choose to go to Charlies Bunion, the "real" bunion, both or neither. We will cross paths somewhere in the middle! Hike is 14.2 miles total, rated moderately difficult due to elevation gains. Choose your challenge! (Actually, it will be randomly chosen for you!) Are you up for it!?

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149 Cindy McJunkin, mcjfive@aol.com, 828-712-9646

MASKS REQUIRED IN NATIONAL PARKS

Masks are required to be worn by everyone in the National Parks and on Federal Property.

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.

Digital Newsletter Suggestion

Thanks to those who changed from the print version to the digital newsletter. If you are receiving the newsletter by mail, please consider going digital. If you would like a digital copy emailed to you, send me a request to smhcnewsletter@gmail.com. If you have a printer you can print out a personal copy from the online pdf. Email smhcnewsletter@gmail.com to make the change.

"Rocks and waters, etc., are words of God, and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love."

~John Muir

For The Record

Norris Dam SP Lakeview Trail Loop

February 3

Group 1 Report:

10 Group 1A hikers and 3 Group 1B hikers assembled (keeping their proper distance!) on this very chilly morning at Norris State Park "tearoom." The wooden cabins and tearoom at the SP are on the National Register of Historic Places, having been built by the CCC. The tearoom has indeed been a tearoom, but also a dance hall, camping store, and most recently an event venue. Group 1A started about 10 minutes ahead of Group 1B. We took the short trail behind the building to head down the Christmas Fern Tr, picked up Tall Timbers, then onto Lakeview, our primary trail for this hike. The trail sits high above the lake, with wonderful winter views to the water. The sun was out intermittently, but a chilly wind kept us all bundled up. We had a snack at the peninsula picnic table, then continued beyond and up Lakeview. We hiked a short segment of High Point in the NWRA, then headed down the Lakeside Loop Tr. Group 1B had stopped at the peninsula picnic table when they reached it, so we were happy to see them there. We enjoyed lunch in full sunlight, then retraced our steps back to the tearoom.

Group 2 Report:

On a cold Wednesday morning, 10 hikers in group 2 gathered at the Norris Dam tearoom to start the hike. The first leg of the hike leads you down a steep incline including two flights of steps (what goes down must come up later). Our trail followed the shore of Norris lake for much of the Tall Timber and Lakeview trails but well above the lake level. The lake was low exposing a lot of bare shoreline. The brown land between the blue water and the foliage created a nice color contrast. The day stayed cold, especially when the breeze picked up, but sunny until we got nearly back to the Tearoom when it finally started to feel warm. We passed several picnic tables along the way but the important one was at the intersection of the Lakeview trail and the Lakeside Loop trail. We passed it on the way out and looped around to come back to it for lunch (always an important part of a hike). After retracing our steps on the Lakeview and Tall Timbers trails, we came back to the dreaded steps and the finish. See Jim's pictures to see everyone finishing the second flight of those steps.

~ Diane Petrilla and Ron Brandenburg

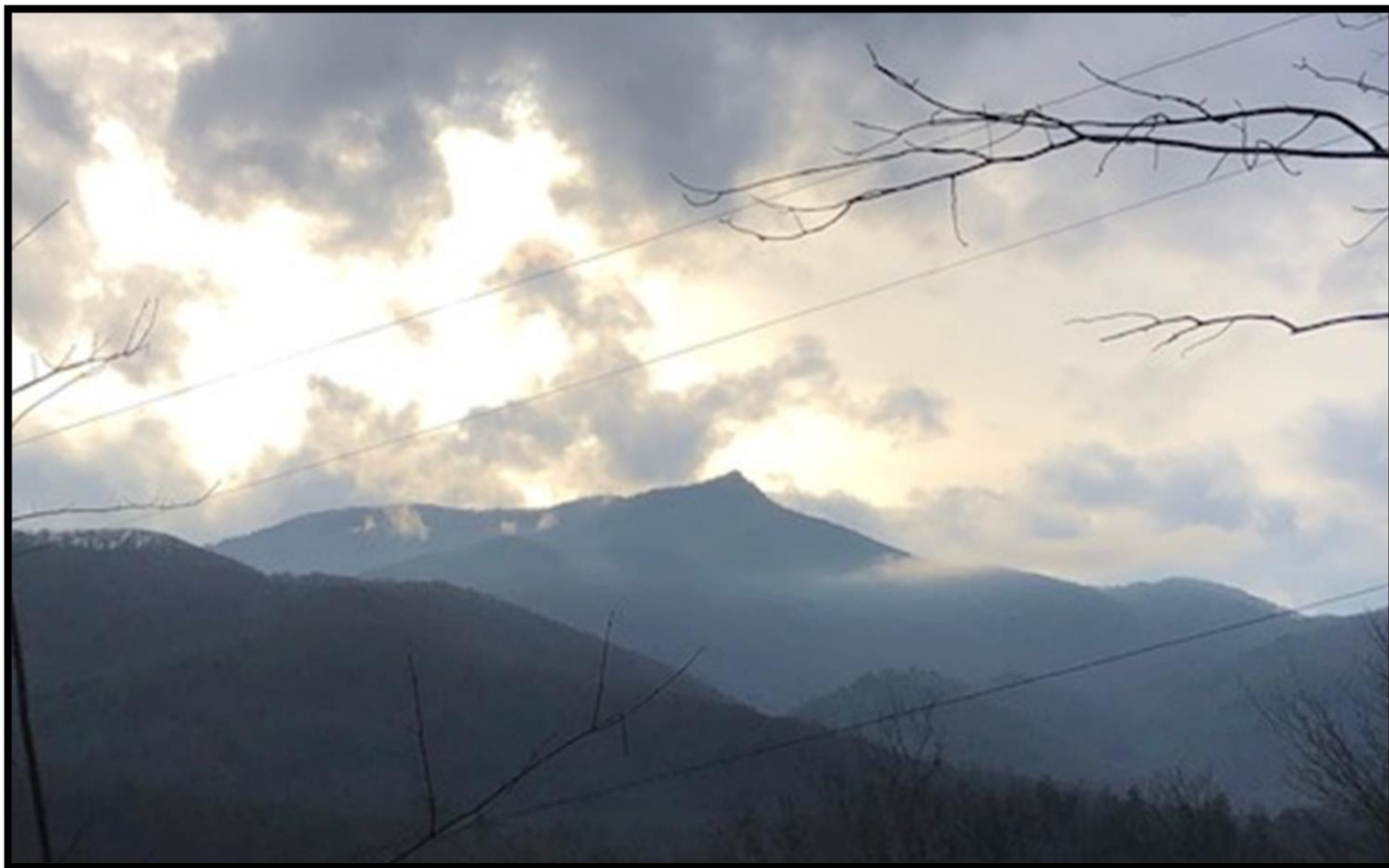


Painter Branch & Snowbird Creek Off-trail

February 27

Eight members braved the iffy weather report to explore old trails along two creeks on the north side of the Pigeon River. After a walk up a segment of the present AT and then down the old first relocation of trail along Painter, the group stopped to enjoy lunch atop high cliffs overlooking I-40. The climb up Snowbird Creek passed by evidence of an old settler homesite then followed an old logging grade that featured still existing railroad ties. Another old trail took us back to the present AT and the walk back to the cars. No rain fell during the day. As we neared the cars the dramatic view of Mt. Cammerer illustrated its former name, Sharptop.

~ Mike Harrington and Mike Knies



Lower Mt Cammerer

March 10

Perfect day for 10 adventurous hikers to enjoy a 15-mile hike along Lower Mt Cammerer Trail to the AT and back. Started out at 30 degrees but ended at over 70 degrees so obviously many layers were shed along the way. One hiker decided to do a loop hike up to Mt Cammerer and back along Low Gap. One hiker decided to return just shy of the AT. Overall a fantastic day.

Everyone in group 2 did the entire hike. A few hikers also went up the Sutton Ridge overlook on the way back. There are many creek crossings on this trail as it zig-zags in and out of the creek valleys. The only large creeks are early in the hike and are crossed on footlogs. All of the others were easily crossed on rocks. The slope the entire way is gentle, so the climb is not too difficult. On the way down some wildflowers appeared that were not there on the way up. Spring is coming. For the third week in a row lunch was enjoyed sitting in the warm sun on a mountain.

~ Lloyd Chapman, Ron Brandenburg



Russell Field/Spence Field/Rocky Top Option

March 24

Lloyd's report from Group 1:

A total of 8 hikers met under cloudy skies but nice Springtime temperatures to start our hike to Russell Field. After reaching Russell Field shelter surprised to find all north bound thru hikers had already left. One hiker decided to wait for the second group to return with them. Rest of us continued to Spence Field to find a cold, windy and foggy reception. Since Rocky Top was covered in fog nobody decided to visit Rocky Top. Decided to break for lunch down the trail out of the cold wind. Everyone returned safely by 3:00 back into a rather warm Spring Day with mostly clear sky.

Diane's report from group 2:

Nine of us began at the Cades Cove picnic area. One person turned off to hike up Anthony Creek, planning to cross paths with folks coming back down. One person was hiking a bit slower and told the rest of us to go on. 7 of us made it to Russell Field shelter where we saw a couple of thru-hikers and could eat lunch out of the chilly wind. Just before Russell, we passed a member of Group 1 heading down. One "kind" anonymous thru hiker had left a bag hanging in the shelter labeled "free food." We figured the only ones interested in randomly left free food would be the bears, so we packed that bag out. One of our group of 7 headed back down the trail after lunch. The A.T. was beautiful for the 6 of us who went onto Spence. 3 of us went a bit further to catch the view down to Fontana. By the time all of us were on Bote Mtn, the sun was out and the sky blue. We enjoyed snacks in the sun. On the way down Anthony Creek, we saw carpets of rue anemone, lots of hepatica, trout lily foliage, and more.

~Diane Petrilla, Lloyd Chapman



Sugar Finger Off Trail

March 27

Despite the ominous weather forecast, several brave hikers turned out to venture onto the Sugar Fingers. Clayton, being a level-headed leader, convinced us that an exposed rocky ridge would not be the safest place to be when the impending severe storms rolled in, so we decided to undertake a shorter excursion to the Third Chimney. Although the ascent was much less strenuous than we had all bargained for, we still enjoyed fine rock scrambling and the spectacular views afforded by the open pinnacle. We descended through a beautiful valley tinted green by approaching Spring and made it out just as heavy winds, rain, thunder, and lightning roared through the mountains.

~David Sands



Curry Mountain-Meigs Mountain to BC 20

April 7

Pat's report for Group 1:

Because hiking with the Wednesday group is so popular, we maxed out the enrollment of 20 hikers for this hike. (It had nothing to do with the fabulous weather forecast and moderate hike rating.) I led the first group of 10 up the Curry Mountain trail to Campsite 20 on Meigs Mountain. It was an awesome blue-sky kind of day, though it felt quite warm in the sun. We made it past the initial steep ascent on Curry Mountain and enjoyed the forest trail to reach the Meigs Mountain intersection. After sitting for a while on the well-positioned logs to enjoy a snack break, we turned onto Meigs Mountain and were immediately greeted with an abundance of wildflowers and creek crossings, which made for many picture-taking opportunities. At Campsite 20, there were many logs for sitting and enjoying the peaceful setting. As is typical with this group, I started losing folks as some headed back down the trails helter-skelter. As best I can tell, all 10 made it back to the cars. The hike was 11.3 miles with an elevation gain of about 1900 ft. It was a great day and a great hike!

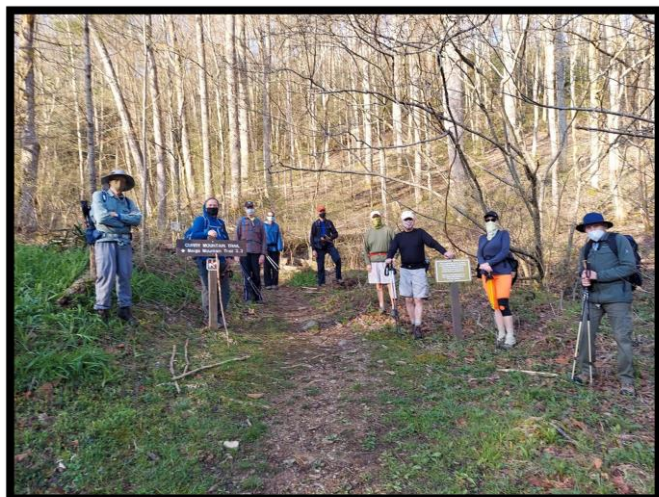
Ron's report from Group 2:

It was a glorious day for a hike! Ten hikers in group 2 headed up Curry Mountain on this warm spring morning. One visitor hiker was from Delaware and another hiker had not hiked with the Wednesday group before. Most hikers started with light jackets or long-sleeved shirts but not far up the steep beginning of Curry Mountain trail those were being shed. Curry Mountain trail had a few wildflowers, but the show really began when we reached Meigs Mountain trail. The stars of the show were the Rue Anemone and the Trout Lilies. There will be lots of trout lilies for the next few weeks as there were large areas covered with trout lilies plants that had not yet bloomed. There were also many other varieties of wildflowers. Campsite 20 was a genuinely nice place for lunch with a good supply of logs to sit on. There are several small creek crossings but none that were difficult.

~Pat Watts, Ron Brandenburg

"There are no shortcuts to any place worth going."

~Beverly Sills



Sams Creek Off-Trail

April 11

We moved this hike to Sunday April 11 because a bluebird day was in the forecast. Two groups for a total of sixteen members enjoyed Sams Creek, Starkey Creek, and a short segment of the AT on a perfect spring day. Fringed Phacelia in the lower elevations and Spring Beauty higher up carpeted the mostly open woods and a fraction of the group sampled the ramps which were rampant through much of the walk. Hikers got wet feet in the 10 creek crossings between Tremont and the AT, some of which were major. Unfortunately, one of the hike leaders sustained a painful foot injury at the lowest Sams Creek crossing and had to turn back. Most of the creek crossings were bridged in railroad days but scant trace remains; one horizontal bridge timber is visible at the mouth of Starkey Creek. After a steep climb the group enjoyed lunch and relaxation next to the AT in Starkey Gap; about a dozen backpackers, most northbound, came through during the pause. After a brief walk along the AT to Sugartree Gap, the group again plunged into the Sams Creek drainage to rejoin the manway and the way back to the trailhead. The sunshine warmed the afternoon, and shortly above the lowest Sams Creek crossing a deep pool tempted five hikers to take a brief swim. Cold water but refreshing for those with a rugged constitution. We reached the trailhead by about 4 pm without hurrying.

~Mike Harrington, Steve Dickinson

"You, who know that all the bruises and scrapes from scrambling and rambling are the best because they remind you of being alive."

~Madison Perrins

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

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