



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

October 2021

Dear SMHC Members,

As I am sure you are aware, our part of the country is in the midst of a surge in COVID cases, and Tennessee is ranked Number 1 in the daily average number of cases per 100,000 people, with a 79% rise in the last 14 days (as I am writing this on September 2). Our current COVID guidelines remain in place with an **important update**. The highlights of those are hike group size of 20 or less and **masking for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, who is participating in carpools, shuttles, or key swap while in the car. Window venting is also encouraged.** The CDC recommends masking for all people vaccinated or unvaccinated in indoor public areas and in crowded outdoor spaces if six ft. distancing cannot be observed. The GRSM has a federal mask mandate for all park indoor spaces, whether or not you are vaccinated. In the next few weeks, our COVID Committee will be meeting to discuss the feasibility/ safety of having our Annual Holiday Installation banquet. As much as I enjoy that event, it is not worth anyone becoming ill. I want to express my gratitude to all of you again for following safe practices as hikers and maintainers, and Club members. This has certainly been a historic and challenging time for our state, country, and world, but I think all of us know how the feeling of footsteps on a trail or in the forest raises our spirits and give us hope that things will indeed improve!

All my best,
Diane Petrilla
President

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 still required for all hikes. Pre-registration may also now occur through smhclub.org.
2. **Group size may now be up to 20.** Higher numbers of registrants should be split into 2 groups.
3. **Meet-up locations with carpooling to the trailhead, shuttles and key swaps are acceptable.** Hikers may still choose to drive to the trailhead independently, depending on their comfort level.
4. **Masks are now required for all those participating in carpools, shuttles or key swaps, regardless of vaccination status. Window venting is encouraged. You may also choose to drive your own vehicle to the trailhead.**
5. Hikers must sign a release form, with accurate contact information.
6. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill within 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>.
7. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
8. If leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
9. If leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.
10. Guidelines for A.T. maintainers will have to be reconciled with the National Park, National Forest, and ATC, particularly in regard to group size.

Update to SMHC COVID guidelines

In light of the fact that we are in an area of "high or substantial transmission" of COVID as per the CDC, as well as the increased incidence of breakthrough COVID infections in vaccinated people throughout the United States, the SMHC COVID Committee has updated our COVID Guidelines to the following:

"Masks are now required for all those participating in carpools, shuttles or key swaps, regardless of vaccination status. Window venting is also encouraged. You may also choose to drive your own vehicle to the trailhead."

For additional information, please see:

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

Road Closures

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

Heintooga Round Bottom - closed September 13-24 except on weekend for re-gravel work

Newfound Gap Road- Expect nighttime delays on Newfound Gap Road (Hwy 441) from Chimneys Picnic Area to Newfound Gap. Lane closures are permitted from 7:00 p.m. on Sundays through 7:00 a.m. on Fridays. No lane closures will occur on weekends or holidays. Due to heavy summer traffic, daytime work will not resume until August 16, 2021. Beginning August 17, 2021, expect single-lane closures between Chimneys Picnic Area and Newfound Gap from Monday mornings through Fridays at Noon while contractors repave this section of Newfound Gap Road (Hwy 441). Please allow for extra time when traveling through the project area.

For current Smokies Closures, please contact the Park at 865-436-1200 UPDATES or follow current road status updates on Twitter at [SmokiesRoadsNPS](https://twitter.com/SmokiesRoadsNPS) or access from the internet using this link: <https://twitter.com/smokiesroadsnps>.

Federal Mask Mandate Back in Effect in the GRSM-Please Be Aware

1. Masks are worn, regardless of vaccination status, in federal buildings such as Backcountry Office - including if they were to be in a government vehicle (example: Ridge runner RR Shuttle)
2. Masks are worn, regardless of vaccination status, in the outdoor areas when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of physical distance

“The hardest mountain to climb is the one within.”

~ *J. Lynn*

“Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.”

~ *George Washington Carver*

Facebook Administrators Needed

SMHC has a Facebook page with some 7,000 followers. Consideration is being given to changing this page to an interactive page where you could post about a hike, inquire about a trail or campsite, seek out others to join you on a hike, but to do that Facebook group administrators are needed to screen out the posts that are not related to hiking and issues that would involve the SMHC. If you have are interested in doing this for the SMHC Facebook page, you need to contact Scott Walker at swalker.dev@gmail.com. If the page is made interactive, then hike leaders would be able to share any last-minute changes to a hike due to road conditions or the weather, giving everyone on that hike a chance to see the latest information. This change to an interactive group could benefit everyone in SMHC but volunteers are needed to make it work.

WEBSITE CHANGES

Have you been to <https://smhclub.org/> in the last month? You need to check out the latest changes on the website. On the Home Page there is a Member Log In where you can log in and see your membership profile along with accessing the membership directory. **You can pay your dues by the website** which is much quicker and easier than mailing in a check. Under **HIKE WITH US**, you can find a list of all the Upcoming Events for SMHC. You will want to check that area often to see the latest events that have been added. Take a few minutes and check out the website. Encourage your hiking friends to check it out and join SMHC.

CONSIDER GOING GREEN!!!

If you receive this newsletter by US Mail, please consider changing to the digital PDF version distributed by email. Contact Newsletter Editor smhcnewsletter@gmail.com or swalker.dev@gmail.com to change from print to digital. You will find the digital version much easier to read. Changing to digital will help save considerable time from printing to preparing the newsletter for mail, in addition to the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.

SMHC Election Picnic on August 14 Enjoyed by all Attendees

On Saturday, August 14, we were able to hold our Annual Election picnic, our first Club group event since December of 2019! Dr. Alan Solomon, an SMHC Club member for over 60 years, generously allowed us the use of GATOP Gardens, his private, nationally recognized, wooded, and landscaped gardens and arboretum. GATOP stands for “God’s Answer to Our Prayers,” named by the original owners in 1941 who had prayed for property overlooking both mountains and water. Views from the high areas of GATOP indeed allowed views of the distant Smokies as well as the Tennessee River. Strolling among the extensive native tree and plant collection, the conifers, hollies, stunning sculptures and limestone walls, steps and ponds was a true delight to Club members. We were also honored to be joined by special guests Richard Powers and his brother and sister-in-law Bob and Christina Powers. Richard Powers is the author of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize-winning book “The Overstory” and is a gifted writer of many other novels. For COVID safety, lunch was provided by the Club with catering by Goodness-to-Go. We ate on the shaded lawn by the “Dancing on Lily Pads” sculpture. The business meeting included the election of the slate of officers and directors listed below, approval of Constitution and Bylaws review conducted by Ken Wise and a Club sub-committee, as well as the awarding of 3 Marshall Wilson Presidential Citation Awards. SMHC President Diane Petrilla explained that it was unlikely we would be able to have an indoor Christmas event this year, so she was making up for awards in 2020 and 2021! The awards were presented to:

Amanda Beal: outstanding work in development and creation of new SMHC website

Scott Walker: outstanding work in development and creation of new SMHC website

Ron Brandenburg: outstanding leadership for over ten years of the SMHC “Wednesday” hiking group.

The following slate of officers was approved by the membership:

President: Ken Wise

Vice President: Steve Dunkin

Communications Director: Cindy Spangler

Treasurer: Diane Petrilla

Trust Liaison: Jean Gauger

Recording Secretary: Kristi Knight

Membership Secretary: Scott Walker

Historian: Brian Worley

Director: Tim Bigelow

Director: Randy Mitchell

Director: Will Skelton

Director: Taylor Weatherbee

Altogether, the day was beautiful, and it was wonderful to see and talk to so many friends again in this lovely outdoor setting. Thank you to all who prepared and helped run this event (Debbie Goddard, Jeannette Gilbert, Tim and Janet Bigelow, Priscilla Clayton, Ray Garret, Dave Grab, and others). Our appreciation goes out to all who attended and all who made the event possible!

~Diane Petrilla





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. Maintenance Work Trip

Saturday — October 2

This work trip will take place about 1.2 miles North of NFG. We will work to return the trail tread to its proper location, while improving water drainage on the trail. The work will require moving rocks and adding steps if needed. Participants will need to dress for the weather and bring work gloves, lunch, and beverage. Rock bars will be provided. Meet at Newfound Gap at 8:45 a.m. and we'll be back at NFG at 4 p.m.

Pre-registration is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Mark and Janet Snyder, markandjanets@gmail.com, 865-448-1183

Ramsey Cascades

Wednesday — October 6

This is an out and back hike. With the access road closed for so long, it has been a while since we hiked to Ramsey Cascades. Hiking first along the Middle Prong, then Ramsey Prong, we have classic Smokies creek scenery, before we hike past a number of spectacular old-growth trees. The last mile or so is a challenging rocky climb, but the reward is the 90 ft. waterfall. Elevation gain 2200ft. 8 miles. Rated Moderate. Meet at Comcast, Asheville Highway at 8 am or at Ramsey Cascades TH at 9:15 am. Drive 85 miles RT { @ 0.05/mile = \$4.25}.

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

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149, Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

Fiery Gizzard- South Cumberland State Park

Saturday — October 9

The Fiery Gizzard loop trail in Grundy Co., TN is considered one of the most beautiful and diverse trails in the country, rated #25 in the USA by Backpacker magazine. With Sycamore Falls and others, the Blue Hole, and Ravens Point overlook, the hike is stunning, but strenuous. It will be a long drive (about 2.5 hrs. one way) from the Knoxville area to Tracy City, TN. The hike is about an 11.4-mile loop; we will not hike all the way to Foster Falls but turn around at Anderson Falls. Rated Difficult. Meet at Lenoir City Cracker Barrel, 325 Fort Loudon Medical Center Drive, Lenoir City at 6:30am. 280 miles, RT { @.05/mile= \$14.00}. Depending on our time, inclination, and availability of outdoor seating, some may want to stop in Chattanooga for dinner.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org

Leader: Diane Petrilla at 931-224-5149, petrillad@gmail.com or Amanda Beal at amandaw455@gmail.com

The Spire

Off Trail

Saturday — October 16

This off-trail adventure is the third annual installment of the ever-popular women-led hikes. This year the girls will lead us to The Spire, a rugged prominence rising sharply from the western end of the ridge that bisects the upper Water Camp Prong watershed just southeast of Anakeesta Knob. From its intercept with US 441, they will have everyone rock-hopping Walker Camp Prong a half mile upstream to the confluence of the stream's left and right forks where they will direct us up a climb of a knife-edge ridge immediately west of The Spire. From this vantage point, we will be able to survey the vast watershed defined by the state-line divide, the Boulevard, and Anakeesta Ridge as well as the rugged steepness of The Spire. After descending the knife-edge, a hand-over-hand climb through sand myrtle and over exposed slate leads to the summit of The Spire with its exceptional panoramic views. The return may be either a continuation of the climb from The Spire to the AT on the state-line divide or a descent to Walker Camp Prong by way of a recovering landslide scar on the ridge's north face. The hike is fairly short but rated difficult in deference to the creek scrambling and strenuous ridge climbing.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Leaders: Cindy McJunkin @ mcjfive@aol.com or 828-712-9646

Shuckstack

Saturday — October 16

This classic hike will begin at Fontana Dam. We will follow the AT northbound for 3.5 miles to the Shuckstack fire tower. Climbing the tower is optional, but the views from the top are some of the best in the park. We will return the way we came for a round trip hike of about 8 miles, rated moderate. Meet at 9am at the Fontana Dam visitors center. Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org

Leaders: Adam Beal, adam.s.beal@gmail.com, 865-384-455, Jack Beal

Lost Creek State Natural Area to Virgin Falls

Wednesday — October 20

This is an out and back hike. We have hiked to Virgin Falls many times, but this alternate route starts at the western end of the state natural areas that includes Lost Creek Falls, Lost Creek Cave, and Virgin Falls. We will first hike a short distance to see Lost Creek Cave and Falls, then pick up the main trail which passes Rylander Falls and goes onto Virgin Falls. The cave is huge, the several waterfalls we will see are beautiful! 10 miles, Rated Moderate. Meet at Lowes, Harriman, 1800 Roane State Highway at 7:30am or at Lost Creek State Natural area parking at 9am. Drive 150 miles RT { @ 0.05/mile = \$7.50}.

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

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149, Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602

Brushy Mountain

Sunday — October 24

Brushy Mountain is a spectacular knob perched on the north slope of Mt LeConte and is a relatively open heath bald with nice views above the thick and brushy azalea, rhododendron and laurel covering. We should also expect some fall colors to add to the scenery. The hike begins at the Porters Creek trailhead, and we will pass a few historic buildings including the "Hiking Club Cabin" and also a few remnants of older cabins before starting the climb up to Trillium Gap and over to the knob. We may also locate the Fittified Spring along the way. After a lunch break at the top, we will return back down the same route. Meet at the Porters Creek trailhead at the end of Greenbrier Road at 9:00. Hike 12 miles roundtrip with about 3000 ft elevation gain. Rated difficult.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org

Leader: Tim Bigelow Bigelowt2@mindspring.com, 865-607-6781

Sharps Ridge Veterans Memorial Park

Sunday — October 24

EASY HIKE

We will be walking some recently completed trails in Sharps Ridge Veterans Memorial Park. These new trails show off some of the best forestlands in Knox County, with many large trees and a great diversity of understory plants. Fall colors should be putting on a show with vibrantly colored sourwood, black gum, and maple trees. After a short walk down the road, we will start on the south slope with a short downhill on the Sharp Shin trail to get to the Lincoln Trail. We will take the new section of the Lincoln trail to the north side of Sharps Ridge, where we will connect to the Independence trail that will take us back to our starting point. This part of the hike on the new section of the Lincoln Trail and the Independence trail is entirely uphill. However, since they are adaptive mountain bike trails, the grade is very gradual – 200ft elevation gain spread over nearly 3 miles. Hike: about 4 miles, rated easy. Meet at the Independence Trail trailhead, 121 Sharps Ridge Memorial Drive, 2:00 pm.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leader: Mac Post, mpost3116@aol.com, 865-806-0980

Mt. Cammerer

Saturday — October 30

We will hike the Low Gap Trail to the AT and then head northbound to the Mount Cammerer Trail and enjoy lunch at the lookout tower. Return will be via the same route for a total of 10.4 miles. Rated moderate. Meet at the Cosby Campground hiker parking lot at 8:45 AM and be ready to hike at 9:00 AM.

Pre-registration with the leader is required.

Register at smhclub.org or contact leader

Leaders: Jeff and Angela Cooper jeffcooper100@yahoo.com, 865-804-5065

Post Hike Write Ups

Post-hike write-ups and photos should be submitted to SMHC Newsletter Editor Dale Potter at smhcnewsletter@gmail.com and Scott Walker, swalker.dev@gmail.com, Facebook Manager. For your write-up, please include the following: Hike name and date, total number of members and visitors, and description of hike.

For The Record

The Gorges

August 7

Of the half-dozen most ruggedly scenic waterfalls in the Smokies, it is arguable that six are in The Gorges of Raven Fork. While interest in the hike to The Gorges was high, the leaders had deemed the trip unsafe if the flow of water in Raven Fork was in excess of 300 cfs. On the Friday night before, the flow was 322 cfs. By the next morning, the flow had dropped to 295 cfs. Not great, but good enough for the leaders to abandon all sense of responsibility and decide to carry on with the hike. An hour later and under threatening skies, nine of the Club's bigger fools plunged into Raven Fork and soon were wading waist deep pools, fighting stiff currents, clambering around the raging waterfalls, and negotiating extremely slick boulders, each struggling to avoid being the next Clementine to be swept into the foaming brine. We escaped with no serious falls, however David Sands, while on the edge of a cliff high above the stream and plying through a tangled thicket of rhododendron, enjoyed the hospitality of a colony of yellow jackets whose nest he managed to step into. It was a strenuous day, but all agreed that The Gorges is among the crown jewels of the Smokies, notwithstanding the yellow jackets.

~Ken Wise

A.T. Vista Hike Clingmans Dome to Silers Bald

August 8

A.T. Vista is the new name for the A.T. Biennial, which brought people together every two years in one location to celebrate, learn and participate in activities related to the Appalachian Trail. The new forum is virtual, and on the weekend of August 7/8 this year, all maintaining Clubs were asked to host a hike on the A.T. to mark the event, take photos and videos, and share them. We had a small but mighty group of 3, who had a beautiful day weather-wise to hike from the CD parking lot to Silers Bald. The Trail was brushy in many places, but there are plenty of views along this stretch. We went to the Dome itself on the way back and had some good views. We were grateful for Benton MacKaye's vision, published exactly 100 years ago, in the American Institute of Architects magazine of "*An Appalachian Trail, A Project in Regional Planning*," and where that's led us today!

~ Diane Petrilla



"Mountains are not stadiums where I satisfy my ambition to achieve, they are the cathedrals where I practice my religion."

~ Anatoli Boukreev

"On a hike, the days pass with the wind, the sun, the stars; movement is powered by a belly full of food and water, not a noxious tankful of fossil fuels.

On a hike, you're less a job title and more a human being. A periodic hike not only stretches the limbs, but also reminds us: Wow, there's a big old world out there."

~ Ken Ilgunas

Middle Prong to Indian Flat Falls

August 11

17 hikers assembled on this humid morning to hike up Middle Prong. 4 hikers branched off at Panther Creek (which was a definite wet crossing!) to hike Panther Creek to Miry Ridge to Lynn Camp Prong. The main group continued directly to Indian Flat Falls, where they had lunch and looked for salamanders. The smaller group continued their hike with intermittent thunder and light rain, but circled back to Indian Flat Falls, long after the other group had left. Large group hiked 8 miles; smaller group hiked 14.9 miles. As one hiker put it: "It threatened rain, but only produced humidity!"

~Ron Brandenburg and Eric Sundstrom



Clingmans to Newfound Gap

August 28

What a beautiful day to spend time out on the trail! The weather could not have been more perfect for our hike from Clingmans to Newfound Gap. We enjoyed shade from the Spruce Firs and other trees, along with the nice breeze to keep us cool through the ascents and descents of the trail. We were able to identify some of the flowers/foilage and appreciate some of the handiwork of many Trail Maintainers along the way. We enjoyed some friendly conversation with the group of eight members and nonmembers that joined together for the hike! It was great to see everyone come out and to spend time together on the Trail!

~Kristi Knight, Diane Petrilla



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Diane Petrilla petrillad@gmail.com
 Vice President: Ken Wise kwise@utk.edu
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 Treasurer: Tim Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com
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