

March 2022



Great Smoky Mountains Spring Clean

WE NEED A LEADER! SMHC will participate

Please reply to Cindy Spangler (spangler@utk.edu) if you are interested and/or have questions. Basically, our club leader will accept sign-ups from members, inform workers to also sign up with SaveOurSmokies, and then show up on workday April 23. Please consider volunteering for this event, either as leader or participant! --Cindy Spangler

Save Our Smokies is hosting a park-wide cleanup event in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and we really want the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and the 900-Miler Club to be a part of it. On April 23rd we are partnering with the Tremont Institute and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to host our inaugural "Great Smoky Mountains Spring Clean". We're celebrating Earth Day by cleaning up the Smokies.

As you may know already, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is seeing record numbers of visitors, but they are also seeing record amounts of litter. Last year our volunteers removed 10,133 lbs of litter from the roadsides, parking lots, pull offs and overlooks in the park. We only removed litter in the park 9 months last year as we took the summer months off to keep from adding to the overcrowding in the park during its busiest months.

That's why we are asking businesses and other organizations to form teams and join us for this April 23rd event. Each team will need to register online and will be given a start time and specific location in the park to clean up. Registration will begin March 1st and is available on our website, <u>www.saveoursmokies.org</u>

This will be an all-day event with staggered start times beginning at 9:00 am. Each team will work 2 to 3 hours, break for lunch, then help gather all the collected litter and meet back up at the Tremont Institute by 3-4 pm. We are also planning a Celebratory Finish at Tremont Institute with live music, food and drink from 3 pm to 6 pm.

This is a family-friendly event. By volunteering, not only will you be making a positive impact on the park, but GSMNP will also be able to count your volunteer hours towards extra, much-needed funding. Our goal for this event is to collect 5,000 lbs of litter and trash in a single day.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Benny Braden Save Our Smokies Vice President (865) 310-7584

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.

March 5-Saturday Little Cataloochee, off-trail

This hike into Little Cataloochee will entail off-trail exploration of some of the remote homesites of the former inhabitants of the three major tributaries of Little Cataloochee Creek. We will wander over the ridges and down the streams separating the early nineteenth century farms of the Bennett, Woody, and Conard families. Considerable detritus from the homesites will be examined along the way. Leaders will bring photos of the former cabin and barn structures to compare with the current sites. Hike is rated moderate. Pre-registration with leaders is required. **Pre-register** with Ken Wise at kwise@utk.edu. Co-leader: Mike Knies

March 6-Saturday AT Work Trip

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 with removal of debris after it is cut, removal of smaller limbs from the trail, and repair any tread as needed where trees have fallen. Specific work locations and quantity of trees will not be known until a walkthrough is completed in late February and based on number of sawyers and volunteers signed up. Ideally, we would like to have 4 crews. Each crew would hike no more than 7 miles over moderate terrain. Alternate badweather date is Saturday March 12th.

Carpool from the Maryville Walmart on Hwy 411 at 7:30 am. Alternate meeting points are either Fontana Marina or Robbinsville Ingles at 9 am. RT travel is approximately 110 miles and may include drive/ride behind FS 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. Loppers and small pruning saws may also be helpful.

Pre-register at smhclub.org or with a leader.

Leaders: Franklin LaFond 678-464-3380 <u>ox97GaMe@aol.com</u> Dick Ketelle, 865-483 3792 <u>rhketelle@comcast.net</u>

March 12-Saturday Chestnut Top

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. Meet at the Townsend Wye parking lot at 9:00 AM.

Pre-register at smhclub.org or with a hike leader. Leaders: Cindy Spangler, spangler@utk.edu, 865-776-1301

March 16-Wednesday Laurel Snow State Natural Area—Laurel Falls and Buzzard Point Overlook

This is a moderate in-and-back hike in the Laurel Snow SNA near Dayton. We begin by following a section of the Cumberland Trail along an easy former railroad grade thru a deep river gorge and will pass many artifacts from the early mining operations. In about 1.7 miles we will climb about a mile to the 80 foot Laurel Falls. We will then back-track about a mile to join the trail climbing to Buzzard Point for a spectacular view. Watch for hawks and buzzards flying below the plateau. Meet at Lowe's in Harriman (Midtown exit from I-40, exit 350) at 8:00 or at Trailhead at 9:00. Approximately 10 miles. Rated moderate. Drive 80 miles RT (\$4.00).

Pre-register at smhclub.org or with the leader.

Leader: Lloyd Chapman 865-719-3769 Irchapman6667@yahoo.com

March 19-Saturday Bradley Fork to Cabin Flats

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-register** at smhclub.org or with the leader is required.

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

March 26-Saturday Easy Hike-UT Arboretum

Come join us as we check out several urban forest trails that are suitable for first-time hikers. There are some gentle hills in the woods and roadbeds with many benches along the way. You may want to bring a drink or snack. This will be approximately 3 to 4 miles. The Arboretum is located on the way into Oak Ridge at 901 S. Illinois Ave. We will meet at 1:00 at the parking lot by the Visitor Center just inside the entrance gate. **Pre-register** with Priscilla Clayton at <u>sigmtngirl@earthlink.net</u>, or 865-966-4142.

March 26-Saturday Rich Mountain Loop

This is a favorite loop hike in the Smokies. We will make the loop in a clockwise direction, starting at the Cades Cove Information Kiosk and making our way down Rich Mountain Loop Trail. We'll stop for a visit at the John Oliver Cabin before starting the climb to the intersection with the Indian Grave Gap Trail. We'll follow this trail, enjoying views of the valley and a possible side trip to the site of the Rich Mountain fire tower (no longer there). We'll then descend on the Crooked Arm Ridge trail to return to the Information Kiosk. Hike is 8.6 miles with a 2,000 ft. elevation gain, rated Moderate. Meet at Alcoa Food City at 8:00 a.m. {drive: 60 miles RT @ \$0.05/mile = \$3.00} or at the Cades Cove Information Kiosk at 8:45 am. The leader will NOT be at the carpool site but will meet the group at Cades Cove. **Pre-register** at smhclub.org or contact leader.

Leader: Pat Watts, watts_at_home@yahoo.com, 901-487-7941

March 26-Saturday Blindside Ridge-off trail

Deep in the Smokies wilderness, about as far from any road as it's possible to be, there exists a fascinating and barelyexplored landscape composed of knife edge ridges, towering cliffs, rocky scars, and open meadows of sand myrtle affording glorious views of an unbroken sea of mountains stretching to the distant horizon. You won't see Blindside Ridge labelled on any official map. That is merely the name that former SMHC member Jenney Bennett bestowed upon a ridge that she saw only from a distance and never got to visit in person. We'll take the AT out to near Laurel Top, descend the narrow crest of Blindside Ridge, drop off the side into a dark ravine with a small creek, and then ascend the thrilling Laurel Top Scar. This is a big hike that will likely extend to long after sunset. Rated Difficult. **Preregistration** required with leader.

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

March 30 Cumberland Trail—Hwy 68 to Black Mountain

We will start this hike from the Hwy 68 Trailhead and climb through beautiful forest land up the southwest flank of Black Mountain. We will stop by Windless Cave and terminate at the top of Black Mountain where we will be met by impressive overlooks facing South and East overlooking Grassy Cove. Note that Grassy Cove is the largest sink hole in North America. Meet at Lowe's (SE corner) in Harriman (Midtown exit 350) at 8:00 or Hwy 68 Trailhead no later than 8:45. Drive 50 miles RT (\$2.50). Hike total about 8 miles, approximately 1300 feet elevation gain. Rated moderate.

Pre-register at smhclub.org or with leader.

Leader: Lloyd Chapman. 865-719-3769, Irchapman6667@yahoo.com

For The Record

September 18, 2021 Wilson Falls Off-trail

We are very late in submitting this for the record due to events that have caused those involved to dub this trip the Wilson debacle! It would seem this falls has earned a reputation branding it as nefarious for mishaps, going back to the ill-fated 1991 SMHC attempt that required an all-night stretcher carry-out! That being said, we have decided to share the story.

We cannot report the usual info which goes like "we did the hike, weather was great, everyone enjoyed it, we saw flowers and great views, etc. etc." As a matter of fact it did start out normally, 7 members and 3 visitors set off walking down the Sugarland Mountain trail and then headed off-trail to descend the lush Sweet Creek valley to the confluence of Sweet Creek and Meigs Post Prong. As we reached Meigs Post Prong and turned uphill to follow that creek up to Wilson Falls, everything changed as it became apparent that one of the hikers, a guest, would notthrough sickness or being out of condition we never ascertained— be able make it uphill under his own power. A war council was held and the plans were changed to respond to the situation. It was decided that the only practical plan would be to evacuate the disabled hiker downhill to the Little River trail and thence on-trail to the Elkmont trailhead. Three hikers proceeded on with the original hike plan so they could shuttle cars down to Elkmont. In the meantime, all the rest of the crew became rescuers to assist the disabled hiker down to the Little River trail and then head to the Elkmont trailhead. The difficulty was extreme at times as the first mile of the extraction was off-trail and involved thick growth of rhododendron, and the path was mostly in the creek, and with intermittent rain. But everyone pitched in and worked together, finally coming out in the upper part of the Little River trail. There they met with the hikers who had gone to get the cars and hiked up Little River Trail to meet them. The rescue then became a somewhat simpler assisted walk-out of about 5 miles on trail. It was dark by the time the group reached the Little River Trail and very late by the time Elkmont trailhead was reached. We didn't finish the hike as planned but everyone can be proud of reacting heroically to help the disabled hiker back to safety and avoid a night out under miserable conditions or worse. Everyone was home by 2:00 am.

--Kindel Page and Todd Long

January 1 Seven Islands State Birding Park

What a great way to start out the New Year, hiking at Seven Islands State Birding Park! We had really nice weather with temperatures up to 74 degrees and some cloud coverage. We hiked about 6.5 miles total, through grassland, wetland and woodland areas seeing whitetail deer, a couple of snakes and geese along the way! We visited Steamboat Island and also stopped to see an old homestead, enjoying the front porch view! We ended our hike by climbing to the highest point at Hickory Ridge to see a beautiful view of Seven Islands State Birding Park, surrounded by the French Broad River.

--Kristi Knight





January 5 Snake Den Ridge

After minor confusion about the meet-up location, and last-minute additions, 16 hikers gathered at the Cosby Campground parking lot. We formed 2 groups for different versions of the hike: 3 would go up and back – Snake Den Ridge Trail to the Maddron Bald junction for lunch and return (10 miles total with 3,520 ft. climb); 13 would make the loop – up to the A.T., down to Camel Gap, up past Cosby Knob, and down to the parking lot via Low Gap II Trail (~13.5 miles with 3,942 ft. climb).

We had a cold hike under brilliant blue skies with few clouds, sunshine, occasional winds, and beautiful views past snow-encrusted trees. By the 8th (last) switchback the trail was covered in snow, about 10" deep before we packed it down with our boots. Where the trail turned behind the north face of the ridge toward the Maddron Bald junction, the snow got even deeper. Two of the original up-and-back group stopped at the 8th switchback for lunch; the third went ahead to let us know they stopped, about the same time one member of the loop group passed on the way down, feeling "whupped." The last 0.7 mile of the Snake Den Ridge Trail seemed much, much longer in foot-deep snow. At the A.T. junction, 3 more hikers turned back (11.4 miles round trip), leaving 9 who made the loop.

The ridge-top sections of the A.T. offered unusually clear views north and south, plus snow drifts more than 2 feet deep, and brisk winds to remind us how they formed. The last 4 hikers in the loop group arrived at the parking lot comfortably before dark, where two of the loop group waited to let us know that everyone had returned safely.



January 08 Alcoa Greenway



Fifteen members and three visitors braved a chilly start only to be warmed by sunshine the whole way. We walked the newest section of the Alcoa Greenway which is an extension of the Maryville/Alcoa Greenbelt. Starting near Clayton-Bradley Academy we passed under Pellissippi Parkway, then two long bridges took us over Little River and Pistol Creek. A side trip took us around the Alcoa Duck Pond, then we walked around Springbrook Park before ending up at the Springbrook Recreation Center. Hike was 5 miles.

--David Smith

January 15 Cucumber Gap History Hike

Although earlier in the week the weather called for a rain and snow mix, come late Friday, the rain and snow forecast was pushed back to Sunday. We were fortunate because 15 people showed up to hike and they appeared to want to go regardless of the weather; whereas the hike leaders are fair weather hikers and don't like the rain, let alone the cold!

The group enjoyed the hike with the numerous stops which showed homesites of pre-logging and post-logging. An attempt was made to leave the Cucumber Gap trail and start on the Bent Arm Trail to follow the logging rail bed to where the CCC made the Bent Arm Trail. Due to the numerous briars just 50 yards off the Cucumber Gap the leader opted to turn around as the hike was not written as "clothes snagged and body bloodied type of hike." Leave that for Ken. We ate at the junction with the Little River Trail. After lunch we took a small side trip to the beautiful old stone tressels that the CCC rebuilt as a horse trail bridge.

As we walked our final leg of the hike the leader shared with the group the different ways people could view the Synchronous Fireflies without having a lottery ticket, and still be within compliance with park rules and regulations. Professor Doris Gove shared her knowledge about the coordination and timing of the lottery trollies vs the actual peak of firefly activity. As we neared the Millionaires Row, Dave Smith suggested we go to the 'Troll Bridge' so we did. We had a picture taken but did not see the Troll. Probably because he was hiding behind a nearby tree just laughing his head off. At the large stone entrance where the gravel leads to the Spence House a photo was shared of 'Happy Landings', which belonged to Mrs.Alice Townsend, Col. W.B. Townsend's third wife. Across the road and the stone entrance to 'Happy Landings' was the former site of the beautiful Swiss Chalet horse stables belonging to Mrs. Townsend. The stable was in excellent condition, but was removed anyway. From a historical perspective the leader of the hike stated that if it were not for Col. Townsend there would not have been an Elkmont, and an effort should have been made to retain that connection.



January 16 Ijams Nature Center

Three hikers and a leader spurned today's rain and snow and enjoyed a "damp" hike at Ijams Nature Center. We plowed and skidded up AND down the steep Tharp Trace trail to visit the ca.1880 Stanton Cemetery, then to the Primal Playground. Next were the gated cave where endangered salamanders reside, and the Keyhole loop. A good day!



--Cindy Spangler



January 22 North Boundary Greenway

Ten members and three visitors braved the cold January air for a fun Saturday stroll around the North Boundary Greenway in Oak Ridge. We started out on East Quarry Road and took the Big Oak trail up the ridge to the top. From there we traveled another gravel road along the property boundary until we reached the Gallaher trail to descend the ridge. At the bottom, we passed the Gallaher cemetery and stopped for a quick look at the quarry before returning to our cars. Despite the cold temps, the cloudless blue sky confirmed it was an excellent day to be outside. This was almost everyone's first time at North Boundary, so it was great to introduce some new people to this local gem. --Amanda and Adam Beal



February 2 Cumberland Trail—Soak Creek/Stinging Fork Falls

Twenty-four people came out for this hike on a day when rain threatened the whole day. We split the group up, with 4 people choosing to walk from the Stinging Fork Falls trailhead down to the falls and back, so a shorter but still challenging 2-mile round trip hike. They braved staircases, ice patches and a steep climb back up to get views of the icicle hung gorge and 30 ft. fan-shaped falls. The other 20 people split into faster and slower paced groups. The hike north on the CT towards the falls, in spite of not being very long (about 5 miles from the trailhead) had some steep climbs and frequent hills. This made it challenging for several people in both groups.

Once at the falls, 5 people decided they were ready to hike out of the gorge to the Stinging Fork trailhead. One person in the faster group very kindly hiked back to the cars at a quicker pace to get his van, to be able to drive up the road and pick up the people who had hiked out. They had made it about half-way down the road towards the Piney River trailhead when he got to them. Two wanted to walk the entire road section back to their cars. The rest of the folks hiking back on the trail made it out at varying times depending on the need for rests. All were out by 4 pm. There were rain sprinkles for the last 30 minutes or so only. The length of the hike varied from 2 miles to about 11.9 miles. Cumulative elevation gain from the cars for the entire in and out hike on-trail was about 2400 ft. according to my Garmin. Stinging Fork was beautiful and worth the walk!



--Diane Petrilla



Post Hike Write-Ups

Post-hike write-ups and photos should be submitted to SMHC Newsletter editors, Connie and John Tatgenhorst at <u>newsletter@smhclub.org</u> and Betsy Bohannon, <u>betsybo1964@gmail.com</u>, Facebook manager. For your write-up, please include the following: Hike name and date, total number of members and visitors, and description of hike.

CONSIDER GOING GREEN!!!

If you receive this newsletter by US Mail, please consider changing to the digital PDF version distributed by email. Email <u>swalker.dev@gmail.com</u> 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.

Kroger has a program known as Community Rewards that they use in order to donate money to qualifying organizations, and through this, you can help support the SMHC. Log into your Kroger account online and select My Account. Under that menu select Community Rewards and enter MV194 for your reward sponsor. That will select the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club. Save it, logout, and then log back in to verify that it saved your information.

This does not cost you anything, nor does it affect your fuel points.

Each quarter Kroger donates to the SMHC a check from the Community Rewards that is used to help support trail maintenance and other club projects. If every member signed up and encouraged their family and friends to do the same, this would result in a substantial increase in the amount of money Kroger will donate to our club. Take a few minutes and enter your information in your Kroger account online. You can check each quarter to see how much money your spending at Kroger resulted in a donation to the club. You will be glad you were able to help the SMHC and the Smokies.

Whiteoak 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: Whiteoak 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 2022 to provide resource damage interpretation to visitors on topics including: soil compaction, plant trampling, and social trail creation. Volunteers are needed to rove Whiteoak Sink 7 days per week from April 1st through May 8th, 2022.

*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 Sinks.

Background:

Whiteoak Sink is a unique, sensitive area which hosts many populations of rare plants. The area also contains important bat hibernacula. Whiteoak Sink is an area accessible by manway off of Schoolhouse Gap Trail. The manway to Whiteoak 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 Whiteoak Sink and its special resources.

Plant species present in Whiteoak Sink considered rare in the park:

- Three are from Whiteoak 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 Whiteoak 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 Whiteoak 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 Whiteoak 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
- Bulleted talking points
- Radios for a subset of the volunteer corps who agrees to the added responsibility and undergoes additional training

Those interested need to contact the park at grsm_whiteoak@nps.gov

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 <u>smhclub.org</u>.

2. Group size may now be up to twenty. Higher numbers of registrants should be split into two 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. Guidelines for A.T. maintainers will have to be reconciled with the National Park, National Forest, and ATC, particularly regarding group size.

In Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart that we share the news that member Dan Meiners died August 21. Though residents of Ohio, Dan and his wife Mary have been members since 2009 and enjoyed their hiking trips to the Smokies. The Club extends our deepest condolences to Dan's family.

Visit this link for his obituary: <u>https://www.vittstermeranderson.com/obituary/Daniel-Meiners</u>

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors President: Ken Wise kwise@utk.edu Vice President: jsdunkin1302@gmail.com Recording Secretary: Kristi Knight kcsknight@charter.net Treasurer: Diane Petrilla petrillad@gmail.com Trust Liaison: Jean Gauger jeangauger@yahoo.com Membership Secretary: Scott Walker swalker.dev@gmail.com Communications Director: Cindy Spangler spangler@utk.edu Historian: Brian Worley baw2222@aol.com Director: Tim Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com Director: Randy Mitchell mitchell1982@tds.net Director: Taylor Weatherbee tweatherbe@aol.com

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club PO Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592