



# Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

*Exploring the Smokies Since 1924*

April 2022

## **SMHC policy regarding recent update to the CDC recommended COVID guidelines**

SMHC members may be aware that the CDC issued new guidelines related to wearing masks for the prevention of COVID transmission on 2-25-22. Approximately 30% of the United States remains at a "high" level of community COVID transmission, while about 70% of the country is at medium or low levels.

**All of East Tennessee remains at high levels of COVID transmission.**

This means that our Club mask guidelines, particularly as they relate to carpools, remain in effect. (i.e. drivers and passengers wear masks in carpools or shuttles). Many are making their own decisions regarding the issue of masks, but out of respect for other passengers, we strongly encourage you to abide by the Club guidelines. Western NC community transmission is "medium", but since so many of our hikers live in East Tennessee, it's important to follow the most conservative recommendation for wearing masks in indoor spaces (such as carpools and shuttles.)

SMHC COVID Committee (Jean Gauger, Cindy McJunkin R.N., Diane Petrilla, M.D., Neil Snapp, Taylor Weatherbee, M.D.)

## **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 at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) is still required for all hikes.
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.

# Upcoming Hikes

**Pre-registration at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with the leader** is required for all hikes to ensure that 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.

## April 2-Saturday AT Maintenance Outing

This April's scheduled AT maintenance outing will be a bit different from recent years. The National Park Service has scheduled the annual chainsaw window for blow-down removal to occur between April 15 – May 15. This means that on April 2 we will get out on our AT sections from about Icewater Spring to Double Spring Gap to remove limbs and smaller trees amenable to cutting with hand tools. If the ground is not frozen this will be an opportunity to clear out the water drains along the trail for the first time of the season. We will poll our AT Section Leaders in the area to arrange for dispersing our volunteers to cover different areas in the company of the Section Leaders. **If you are a new volunteer, this would be an excellent opportunity to go out with an experienced maintainer and get a sense of what we do!**

Meet in the Sugarlands Visitor Center parking area at 8 a.m. to form teams before heading up to Newfound Gap and beyond. Advance registration puts your name on a list so that we can make plans to connect volunteers with Section Leaders on this outing.

**Pre-register with leader**

Leader: Dick Ketelle, [rhketelle@comcast.net](mailto:rhketelle@comcast.net)

## April 9-Saturday Courthouse Rock and Quilliam Cave, Off-Trail

This off-trail excursion leads to a waterfall, Courthouse Rock, and eventually to Quilliam Cave. The hike will entail clambering over a few blowdowns and a short steep climb to the cave. After exploring the cave area, we will bushwhack around the adjacent ridge to the Sugarland Trail, connect to the Huskey Gap Trail and follow it out to Newfound Gap Road and back to the cars. Hike is about six miles and rated moderate.

**Pre-register with leader**

Leaders: Mike Knies at [knies06@att.net](mailto:knies06@att.net) or Ken Wise at [kwise@utk.edu](mailto:kwise@utk.edu)

## April 10-Sunday Porter's Creek

We plan to hike 3.7 miles to backcountry campsite 31 and return after eating lunch at the campsite. The hike starts on an easy gravel jeep trail on the Greenbrier Road and continues up past the turnoff to the SMHC Cabin and the remnants of an old cemetery and the Messer Farmstead. We will cross a double log foot bridge and continue up the trail. The hike is a slow gradual climb, passing Fern Branch Falls (at the 2.7-mile mark on the trail) and continuing on to the campsite. We should have a chance to see early wildflowers along the trail. The hike is rated moderate at 7.4 miles. We will meet at the parking lot at the end of the Greenbrier Road. Hike from the road to the trailhead is about 1 mile. Meeting time will be 10:00 am.

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with leader**

Leader: Steve Dunkin, [jsdunkin1302@gmail.com](mailto:jsdunkin1302@gmail.com).

**April 13-Wednesday**  
**Ace Gap Trail to Beard Cane Trail to CS 3**

We'll hike the rolling hills of the Ace Gap trail to the intersection with Beard Cane, looking for the remaining pink Lady Slippers and hopefully early blooming Mountain Laurel along the way. Then we'll turn down Beard Cane to Campsite 3, a nice place to enjoy lunch. Return the same way. Hike: 12.4 miles with elevation gain of 2,300 ft., rated Moderately Difficult.

For those stopping at the Ace Gap/Beard Cane intersection: Hike 11.2 miles with elevation gain of 1,900 ft., rated Moderate.

Meet at Alcoa Food City at 8:00am {drive: 40 miles RT @ 5¢/mile=\$2.00} or at the Ace Gap TH at 8:30am. *The leader will meet the group at the Ace Gap TH, not the carpool site. Pre-registration required.*

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602.**

Leader: Pat Watts, watts\_at\_home@yahoo.com, 901-487-7941.

**April 16-Saturday**  
**Panther Branch/North Old Mac Flower Hike**

This hike includes energizing climbs and spring flowers. We'll park at the Old Mac trailhead parking and walk about a mile up the Flat Fork road to the Panther Branch trail. We'll stroll past DeBord Falls, taking time to admire it, and hike up the rocky trail to Emory Falls before returning to Panther Branch trail. We'll continue upward on Panther Branch trail to North Old Mac, enjoying both flowers, sections of rough trail and aerobic climbs. We then follow North Old Mac down to the Old Mac trailhead.

Depending on weather and flowers, we may choose to add a small loop of Judge Branch-South Old Mac, for an extra 2 miles. Hike 7 - 9.5 miles. Moderate, but includes some steep grades and rough, rocky trails. 1800 feet total elevation gain.

Meet 7:45 AM at Books A Million, 310 S Illinois Ave, Oak Ridge, TN 37830 or Old Mac Trailhead parking area, Frozen Head State Park at 8:30 AM. (\$2.50 payable to driver for carpooling @ \$.05)

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or leader-Claudia at [claudiadean0@gmail.com](mailto:claudiadean0@gmail.com) or 865-206-0145**

Leaders: Claudia Dean & Jean Gauger

**April 20, Wednesday**  
**Shuckstack Mountain**

Some of the best views in the Smokies can be had from the Shuckstack Fire Tower. So, let's hike there via the Twentymile trail and the AT (returning the same way). Those willing to climb the creaky stairs can enjoy the outstanding views to be seen from the top of the tower (I'll just look at your pictures). Hike: 10.8 miles with total elevation gain of 2,700 ft. (1,400 in the last 2 miles), rated Moderately Difficult (because of that last tough climb).

Meet at Walmart-Supercenter far right side of the parking lot, on US 411 South in Maryville at **7:30am** {Drive: 80 miles RT @ 5¢/mile=\$4.00}, or at the Twentymile Ranger Station at 8:30am. *The leader will meet the group at the Twentymile Ranger Station, not the carpool site.*

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with Ron Brandenburg, ronb86@comcast.net or text 865-898-7602**

Leader: Pat Watts, watts\_at\_home@yahoo.com, 901-487-7941.

**April 23, Saturday**  
**Black Mountain to Ozone Falls**

After leaving several cars at the Ozone Falls parking area, we will travel by car to Black Mountain (about a 9 mile drive). We will explore the wonderful sandstone outcroppings there, rockhouses, views, and of course wildflowers. We will then start to hike "north" on the Cumberland Trail. The CTC is now completed between Black Mountain and Ozone Falls. There is a fair amount of easy walking on flat upland second-growth forest on this segment, but plenty of descending and ascending of plateau gorges with creeks. The rockwork done to build the trail by the CTC is phenomenal, especially as we approach Ozone Falls. We get a stunning view of the Falls from below before climbing up to our cars and concluding the shuttle. Distance about 8 miles, with exploration of Black Mountain. Rated Moderate. Meet at Lowes, Harriman, 1800 Roane State Hgwy at 8am.

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with leader.**

Leader: Diane Petrilla, [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com) or 931-224-5149.

**April 23, Saturday  
Bent Arm Manway, Off-Trail**

This loop hike begins at Elkmont, where we will leave the Cucumber Gap Trail to follow a long abandoned CCC-era trail to meet the Miry Ridge Trail on Dripping Springs Mountain. Be prepared with long pants/long sleeves for two briery sections of the manway. We will return to Elkmont via the Miry Springs and Jakes Creek trails. Hike: 11.8 miles, rated moderately difficult.

**Pre-register with leader.**

Leader: Hiram Rogers, 865-584-7310(H) or [hiramrogers@yahoo.com](mailto:hiramrogers@yahoo.com). Co-Leader: Jean Gauger

**April 23-24, Saturday and Sunday  
Deep Creek and Indian Creek Trails, Backpack**

(The original Cataloochee-Balsam Mountain hike posted in the 2022 Handbook has been changed.)

Backpack up Deep Creek Horse Trail to BCS 57 at Martin's Gap on Day 1 (7.3 miles). On the second day we will hike up and over Martin's Gap (3 miles) to the intersection of Deepplow Trail and Indian Creek Trail. From this intersection we will continue on to the Deep Creek Parking lot and our cars (2.9 miles). Total mileage is 12.9 miles. The hike is rated moderate. I will obtain reservations and permits for the backpack. We will meet at the Deep Creek Trailhead Parking at 9:00 am.

**Pre-register at [smhclub.org](http://smhclub.org) or with leader.**

Leader: Steve Dunkin, [jsdunkin1302@gmail.com](mailto:jsdunkin1302@gmail.com)

## For The Record

**February 5  
Old Sugarlands/Twin Creeks/ Gatlinburg Trails**

Undeterred by the threat of icy roads and full-running creeks, 10 members and one visitor showed up to marvel at a landscape of silvery frosted trees and a dusting of new snow that looked for all the world like powdered sugar on funnel cake. We stayed more or less warm, saw all the advertised sights, and navigated a couple of high streams and a slick bridge without mishap. Near the end the group diverged. Three hikers spurned the delights of Gatlinburg to forge ahead to the finish. Three more stopped for a restaurant lunch, and the remaining five tarried to check out the tattoo parlors.

-Dan Feller





## February 12 Heintooga-Balsam Bike/Hike

We added another layer of activity to our off-trail hike this month with a bicycle ride on the closed, one-way Heintooga and Balsam Mountain Roads. Our shuttle was long and complicated with bicycles, but everyone agreed that the payoff was worth the effort. After an initial climb, we took a break at Polls Gap. We parked our bicycles to explore an old incinerator site previously used by the Park service and detritus left by loggers. Continuing to the Balsam Mountain Picnic area, we stopped at the overlook to identify peaks of the Smokies that we recognized. Leaving the high point at the picnic area, we descended on the gravel road and passed the trailhead to the former location of the Spruce Mountain fire tower. Two spuds in our group peeled off to explore Potato Hill Bald, while the rest of us continued to an old railroad grade in Beech Gap. A couple of weary cyclists rested but the rest of us hiked on the old railroad grade to see the artifacts of an old logging camp. We returned to our bicycles by way of Ledge Bald and the Balsam Mountain Trail. Some of us enjoyed the descent to Straight Fork at a faster pace than others, but we all made it back to our vehicles before dark, without any mechanical failures or accidents.

Leaders: Mike Knies, Cindy McJunkin. Photo credits to Steve Dickinson.



## February 19 Rainbow Falls

What a gorgeous winter day in the Smokies!! 19 new members turned out to hike up to Rainbow Falls, a relatively short (5.4 miles RT) hike, but with a steep climb (over 1600 ft.). For some, it was their very first hike in the Smokies; for others, it was a shared experience with other new Club members. Every single person made it to Rainbow Falls, in spite of climbing, some icy mud towards the top, and slippery mud on the way down! This was an absolutely delightful group of hikers for the 2 leaders to meet and share their love of the Park, as well as SMHC history. We hope to see them again soon!

-Diane Petrilla and Steve Dunkin



**February 26, 2022**  
**Abrams Falls via Abrams Creek Ranger Station**

Over the past several days had substantial rainfall so was expecting about 18 wet stream crossings and numerous blow downs to deal with. Reality lived up to expectations. Had 20 hikers sign up, 12 showed up but 4 quickly decided to sign out of the hike to pursue a drier hike. The remaining 8 hikers negotiated blow downs and high stream crossings to find the Falls flowing impressively. Made it back to the cars just before another wave of heavy showers, but who cared since everyone was already wet and muddy. Special thanks to everyone for staying together and assisting as needed with the stream crossings. Only a bit over 11 miles but turned into a bit of a technical hike but everyone had a great time.

-Lloyd Chapman



**CONSIDER GOING GREEN!!!**

If you receive this newsletter by US Mail, please consider changing to the digital PDF version distributed by email. Email [swalker.dev@gmail.com](mailto: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.



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.

## In Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart that we report the March 1 death of long-time member Jenny Macfie. Jenny was a retired Professor of Psychology at UTK. She grew up in Warwick, England and developed her love of hiking there. We share our condolences with her two brothers and four nieces in the UK.

**From our Communications Director:**

After serving for 7 years as Communications Director, I've decided it's time to pass the torch. This Board of Directors position does not require a great deal of time or expertise. If you think you might be interested, please contact me and I'll answer your questions. This job will officially begin in January 2023 so the new director will have plenty of time to become familiar with the role.

Cindy Spangler  
[spangler@utk.edu](mailto:spangler@utk.edu)



# A.T. Vista 2022

## What is an A.T. Vista?

To provide a forum for the engagement of activities on and near the Appalachian Trail, offering hiking, educational, cultural, and historical learning programs, working with trail clubs, local communities, and nearby partner organizations.

**Hike** - hiking and other trail-related excursions, such as bird watching

**Learn** - educational opportunities of A.T. Vista at workshops.

**Play** - meeting new friends, seeing old acquaintances, and engaging in evening entertainment or excursions.

The 2022 AT Vista will be held at **SUNY New Paltz from August 5-8, 2022**. The Vista is in lieu of the ATC Biennial and is being sponsored by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. We have put together an exciting program of hikes, workshops and excursions which can be viewed by going to our website - [atvista2022.org](http://atvista2022.org).

SUNY New Paltz is a beautiful venue, in reasonable proximity to wonderful hiking on the AT in northern NJ and New York, as well as to hikes in Minnewaska State Park, the Shawangunk Mountains, the Long Path, Mohonk Preserve, the Catskills, Harriman State Park and other parks east of the Hudson. Proposed hikes are listed on the website.

If you are interested in being a hike leader for the upcoming Vista, please email Steve Weissman at [sweissman@weissmanmintz.com](mailto:sweissman@weissmanmintz.com).

The hikes listed on the website can be modified to accommodate your interests. Also, we are open to adding hikes.

Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or suggestions.

Katrina Marrero and Steve Weissman, AT Vista Hike Committee



## Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Ken Wise [kwise@utk.edu](mailto:kwise@utk.edu)

Vice President: [jsdunkin1302@gmail.com](mailto:jsdunkin1302@gmail.com)

Recording Secretary: Kristi Knight [kcsknight@charter.net](mailto:kcsknight@charter.net)

Treasurer: Diane Petrilla [petrillad@gmail.com](mailto:petrillad@gmail.com)

Trust Liaison: Jean Gauger [jeanguager@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanguager@yahoo.com)

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Director: Will Skelton [whshome@bellsouth.net](mailto:whshome@bellsouth.net)

Director: Taylor Weatherbee [tweatherbe@aol.com](mailto:tweatherbe@aol.com)

## Post Hike Write-Ups

Post-hike write-ups and photos should be submitted to SMHC Newsletter editors, Connie and John Tatgenhorst at [newsletter@smhclub.org](mailto:newsletter@smhclub.org) and Betsy Bohannon, [betsybo1964@gmail.com](mailto:betsybo1964@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.

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