



PO Box 51592
Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

March 2023

Upcoming Hikes

Pre-registration at SMHClub.org is required for all hikes unless stated in description.
Please contact the leader if you are not sure of when and where to meet.

March 4, Saturday ATMC Work Day

This work trip will focus on treadway rehab and small blowdown removal in National Forest. Specific locations of work will be based on number of volunteers and weather. All work locations will be less than 5 miles round trip from the trailhead. Participants will need to wear sturdy footwear, bring work gloves, lunch, snacks and plenty of water. Meeting times and locations: Maryville Walmart on 411 S. at 7:30am or at the Robbinsville Ingles at 9:00am. Roundtrip travel is approximately 110 miles. At 10 cents per mile= \$11.00. Alternate weather delayed date will be Saturday, March 11. Please contact the work trip leaders to sign up for this event:
Franklin LaFond: Ox97game@aol.com 678-464-3380 Randy Bullock: jrbperfusion@gmail.com

March 11, Saturday Elkmont Loop

From Elkmont we'll take the Little River trail with its water views. Next we'll make a moderate but steady climb to Huskey Gap. Then we will descend on the Sugarland Mountain trail to Mids Gap. From the Gap is a climb which will take us to some mountain views. After descending to Fighting Creek Gap we will return to our cars via the old road. Hike is 9.5 miles rated moderate. Meet at the old Food City location, 131 N. Hall Rd in Alcoa at 8:00. Round trip of 66 miles at 10 cents per mile (\$6.60).
Pre-register at smhclub.org.

March 15, Wednesday Cosby Connector Trails-Map Marker Hike

The maze of trails around Cosby Campground can be confusing. But since they are on the "Dollar Map" and in the 900 Miler excel sheet they are necessary for anyone wanting to complete all the trails in the Smoky Mountains. The inset in the upper right of the dollar map is actually a pretty good guide to those trails. We will hike a clockwise circuit of Cosby Campground in the most efficient way (I think). Along the way we will see what is left of an old Dodge Business Coupe and an intact double-sided chimney and possibly some early wildflowers. From the parking lot near the campground check-in we will begin by going a short distance on Gabes Mountain Trail then a connector back to the campground loop A. The Snake Den Trail is a short distance away past a restroom. Next we will connect to the Horse Trail which will take us to Low Gap Trail and then a bridge over Cosby Creek. Doubling back after the bridge we will return again to the campground, B loop. A right there puts us on Lower Mt Cammerer Trail. Off trail here is the old car. Suttons Overlook is 1.3 miles away and possibly our lunch stop. Another off-trail detour will take us to an old homestead location where a chimney remains. On our return we can decide if the water level is low enough to take the Horse Trail back to the entrance road. Combining all the connectors, the trip to Suttons and the off-trail attractions the mile total is 7.3 with about 1250 ft of elevation gain. Rated moderate. Meet at Cracker Barrel off exit 398 and be ready to leave at 8:00. Drive 112 miles roundtrip 10 cents per mile = \$11.20. Or meet at the Cosby Campground parking near the Campground Kiosk at 9:15.
Pre-register at smhclub.org
Leader Randy Mitchell, mitchell1982@tds.net, phone 865-406-6469

March 18, Saturday
Abrams Falls from Cades Cove—New Member Hike

We had to cancel the hike shown in your handbook for this date. So, due to popular demand, we will be hiking to Abrams Falls instead (originally scheduled in January but cancelled due to road closures). Beautiful Abrams Falls is stunning any time of year. From the parking lot about half way around Cades Cove, we hike 2.5 miles to the falls. We climb a little over Arbutus Ridge, where we'll have views of Abrams Creek gorge. The falls themselves plunge 20 feet over a wide-stepped sandstone ledge. Then we'll retrace our steps back to the cars. Hike is 5 miles total, rated Easy-Moderate. Meet at Alcoa Food City, 131 N Hall Rd., Alcoa (note this store is now closed) *ready to leave at 7:15am* {drive: 60 miles RT @ 10¢/mile = \$6.00} or at the parking lot for Abram Falls at 8:30am. *The leader will meet the group at the trailhead, not the carpool site.*

Pre-register at smhclub.org.

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

Taylor Weatherbee, tweatherbe@aol.com, 865-984-3382.

March 25, Saturday
Crooked Arm Branch and Gregory's Cave

This on and off-trail hike will explore regions around familiar trails near the entrance to Cades Cove. The hike starts on the Crooked Arm Ridge trail but leaves the trail to continue straight up the Crooked Arm Branch to explore the cascades and territory above. It will be steep and may involve wet feet so you may want to bring dry socks to change for the latter parts of the hike. After about a mile climbing Crooked Arm Branch we will regain the trail and follow it west and then south for about 2.5 miles to what used to be an overlook. Then we again leave the comfort of the trail to head steeply down Cave Ridge and see if we can find Gregory's Cave near the bottom of the ridge. We will just look in so as not to disturb the bats and then follow the woods to the Rich Mountain Loop Trail which will take us back to the cars. The hike is about 7.5 miles long with about 2200 ft elevation gain, rated difficult due to the off-trail parts.

Pre-register with leaders for meeting time and place.

Leaders: Steve Dickinson (winston.fob@comcast.net) and Mike Harrington (mike_harr@bellsouth.net)

March 25, Saturday
Cumberland Trail, Laurel Snow Section

This is a "Y" shaped out and back hike within the 710-acre Laurel-Snow State Natural Area, (formerly Bowater Pocket Wilderness) near Dayton, TN. In the future the trail will connect to the 300-mile Cumberland Trail. The Laurel-Snow CT Section contains an area of gorges deeply cut into Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau by Morgan, Henderson, Laurel, and Richland Creeks and is named after two scenic waterfalls, Laurel Falls (80 feet) and Snow Falls (35 feet). This hike features scenic creeks, steep gorges, geologic features, a small stand of virgin timber, and a wide variety of plants and animals but will exclude Snow Falls due to the required shallow ford crossing of Morgan Creek. Lunch will be at Buzzard Point which offers views of the gorge and the Tennessee River Valley.

Total 10.6 miles, about 1700 feet total gain. Rated Moderate. Meet at Lowe's, 1800 Roane State Hwy, Harriman, TN which is near I-40 at Midtown exit, Exit 350.

Be ready to leave at 8:00 am. The carpool drive is 42 miles, 1hour. Total round trip is 84 miles @ 0.10/mile = \$8.40 total. Those not carpooling should meet at the Laurel-Snow Trailhead ready to hike at 9:15. (1098 Pocket Wilderness Rd #100, Dayton TN).

Pre-register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Larry Johnson, larryj11320@gmail.com, 865-776-6434

March 26, Sunday
Middle Prong Trail in Tremont, Easy Hike

We begin this family friendly walk on Middle Prong trail that follows the railroad bed of the old Tremont Lumber Company. Lynn Camp Prong will be on our left and views of Lynn Camp Cascade at .3 mile, remnants of a former orchard, and at 1.7 miles, an old rusted Cadillac which makes a fine photo op. We may go .3 more to the junctions with Panther Creek. Hopefully, we will see the beginnings of many spring wildflowers as we go. Round trip is a little over 4 miles, rated easy.

Carpool from the old Food City location at 131 N Hall Road in Alcoa at 1:00. Carpool round trip is 50 miles. At 10 cents per mile = \$5.00 to the driver. Or meet at the end of Tremont Road parking area at 2:00.

Preregister at smhclub.org or with leader.

Leader: Priscilla Clayton, sigmtngirl@earthlink.net, 865-966-4142

**March 29, Wednesday
Bradley Fork to Cabin Flats**

We will explore a bit of the North Carolina side of the Smoky Mountains as we walk to road/trail up Bradley Fork to campsite 49 at Cabin Flats. Being March, expect to encounter a mild early spring day or an icy chill late winter blast. Hopefully the former, as we spend the day on this 9 mile round trip. There are several cascades to pass on Bradley Fork of the Oconaluftee River. Early spring wildflowers like dwarf crested iris, foam flower, wild geranium, hepatica, yellow mandarin, and others line the trail. A little less than 1000 ft of elevation gain, rated moderate. Total miles 9.8. We will meet at the far end of the Smokemont Campground at 9:30 a.m. Carpool from the old Food City location at 131 N Hall Road in Alcoa leaving at 7:30 a.m. Roundtrip is 124 miles. At 10 cents/miles = \$12.40.

Preregister at smhclub.org

Leader: Randy Mitchell, mitchell1982@tds.net. Phone 865-406-646

For the Record

**January 7
Asbury Trail**

On the first Saturday of the new year, cold, gray, and overcast, twenty-one hikers, including one husband and wife pair, convened at Cove Creek Gap, munching on donuts and muffins while making last minute adjustments before venturing off on an off-trail excursion along the Asbury Trail, an unmaintained track that adheres closely to the eastern boundary of the Smokies park. The wife discovered she had failed to bring boots, an oversight that precluded her from continuing with the hike. Her husband, to the total bafflement of the remainder of the group, made the inexplicable decision to return home with his wife rather than participate in the adventure and comradery of spending the day with the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club.

With the group now reduced to nineteen, Mike Knies offered a brief informative introduction to the Asbury Trail, particularly a history of the trail's relation to the early nineteenth century Cataloochee Turnpike. Shortly into the hike, Mike pointed out where the trail began following the old turnpike as well as a stone structure that is believed to be the turnpike tollbooth. Farther along, Mount Sterling came into view and the trail began descending steeply to Cataloochee Creek, which was crossed on a one-lane bridge that services NC284. A lunch break at the bridge offered hikers an opportunity to socialize and to observe a young man in a Jeep contemplate by-passing the bridge and driving his vehicle through the stream at the horse crossing. Much to the consternation of many, the young man elected to err on the side of prudence and drove his Jeep over the bridge. Nevertheless, Cindy McJunkin assuaged everyone's dismay by distributing nice treats of delicious chocolate.

Soon after departing from Cataloochee Creek, hikers found themselves enjoying a steep climb under light rainfall, and later, a markedly steeper climb with a few intervening blowdowns to give a nice accent to the steepness. The final climb terminated at a freakishly large red oak tree that commands the immediate ridge. As hikers approached the crest of the ridge, a lone figure attired in a hooded sweatshirt was spotted in the distance sitting at the base of the oak tree. Nearing the tree, hikers recognized the lone figure to be David Sands, one of the more adept off-trail hikers in the Club. Explaining why he did not join the group at Cove Creek Gap, David offered the rather lame excuse of needing to attend some conference for work. Upon passing the oak tree, the air temperature dropped noticeably as hikers donned hats and coats and began following an exceedingly rutted road down to trail's end at Mount Sterling Gap. The major excitement on this last stretch occurred when two hikers turned right instead of left, missing Mount Sterling Gap and setting off a moment of anxious bewilderment when the final head count came up short. But, to the great relief of the hike leaders, the missing hikers were soon seen trotting down the trail into Mount Sterling Gap, bringing a fitting conclusion to a day well spent in the Great Smokies.

-Cindy McJunkin and Ken Wise

January 7
Chestnut Top via Schoolhouse Gap Trail

The weather forecast was scattered showers and cool temperatures. Fifteen hikers, 12 members and 3 visitors gathered at the Townsend Wye then shuttled over to Schoolhouse Gap to begin the hike. Everyone began walking with hats, gloves and jackets but then took off layers as they warmed up. We passed by the intersection with Turkeypen Ridge Trail and the unmarked entrance to White Oak Sinks. At the next intersection with Chestnut Top the group stopped briefly to put on rain gear as the mist turned into a light rain. Many of the group took the slight detour to Scott Gap to see the "Keebler Elf House" at the Park boundary. We met a couple of horseback riders on the return to the Chestnut Top junction. There were some intermittent views of Townsend to our left and the higher peaks of the Smokies on our right as the light showers came and went. The lack of leaves helped with the distant views. On the high point of Chestnut Top we stopped for a snack as it was too early for lunch. At least we were able then to put away the rain gear. As we approached the turn to begin the decent towards our cars at the Wye the river could be heard. Although it is too soon for the spring wildflowers the area that parallels the river is interesting. At the parking lot we made sure each hiker had a ride home or a shuttle back to their respective cars. One adventuresome hiker decided to tackle another short trail section nearby to work towards a 900-miler map. Thanks to Jean Schackman for being our sweep.



-Randy Mitchell



January 11, 2023
Big Creek Trail to Campsite #36 and back

On a cool morning with beautiful weather in the forecast – sunny with temperatures in the 50s – a total of 23 (!) hikers gathered at the Big Creek Trailhead for the photo, including 2 frequent visitors and at least 2 members hiking with us for the first time. We ascended gently under blue skies and white clouds. As the trail that was once a logging road grew closer to the creek, we heard the roar of the high water from recent rains. Some paused to take photos of cascades even before the usual stop at mile 2 for pictures of Mouse Creek Falls, which flowed unusually full and fast. (One hiker turned around there.)

We enjoyed a delightful walk beside the loud, lively creek, which is joined along the way by a dozen smaller creeks. We appreciated the crossings on well-built bridges, and the winter views through largely leafless trees. At Campsite #37 (mile 5.2) at Lower Walnut Bottom, one hiker stopped for lunch, to return from there. The rest of us continued to Campsite #36 at Upper Walnut Bottom for a leisurely lunch, where we lingered for conversation in the sunshine. On the way back we saw few other hikers, unlike summer days when the trail fills with visitors of all ages. We had the parking lot mostly to ourselves after the hike (total 11.4 miles and ~1,350 ft. climb).

- Eric Sundstrom



January 18
Curry Mountain-Meigs Mountain to Campsite #20

Another beautiful Wednesday! Forecasts proved accurate: temperatures in the 50s and sunshine in the GSMNP. So perhaps it was no surprise that 28(!) hikers (including 2 visitors) drove through thick fog to meet at the Metcalf Bottoms parking lot. When we assembled at the trailhead for the group photo the fog had cleared. Once we started, as usual, the faster hikers quickly went ahead. (One hiker stayed behind for a shorter route.) The initial ascent of the northeast face of Curry Mountain – ~800 ft. climb in 2 miles – left us shedding layers. Emerging from Curry Gap we enjoyed long views south and east through leafless trees, as the trail leveled along Long Arm Ridge toward the junction with Meigs Mountain Trail. When 4 slower hikers arrived at the junction, all but 2 of the faster group had gone on. Two of the slower hikers opted to head west on the Meigs Mountain trail from the junction, toward Campsite #19 and beyond, and return from there (~7.6 miles total). The others headed east toward Campsite #20, going gently downhill along the north face of Meigs Mountain on the foot-friendly trail through open forest. We meandered above steep slopes in and out of the coves, easily crossing the first four creeks, all running high. We met one of the faster group who had turned around at the fifth crossing. There we met another of the faster group who found the crossing too challenging, and – along with two more of us – opted to turn around. The last to arrive at Campsite #20 (the leader) made the count 21 for lunch. We lingered at the inviting campsite before slowly leaving, a few at a time, for a pleasant return under blue skies and white clouds. Crossings seemed easier on the way back (11 miles total and ~1,600 ft. climb). The last of us (the leader) arrived at the parking lot before 3pm.

-Eric Sundstrom



January 21, 2023
Rich Mountain Loop

There were 16 of us (or was it 17?), one a visitor, who gathered at the entrance to Cades Cove for the Rich Mountain Loop hike. It was a chilly 29 degrees for our start, but the sky was clearing and the group was enthusiastic. After the obligatory picture was taken at the trail head, we headed down the Rich Mountain Loop trail with the John Oliver cabin being our goal. The patches of water that one can usually walk across along this section of trail had to be more carefully rock-hopped that day as the mountains continued to let loose waters from previous rains. We continued up the more challenging (steep) part of the trail beyond the cabin with a handful of us falling behind the pack. One hiker opted to turn around and head back to the cars. That left 2 of us to continue making our way up. There were plenty of other hikers enjoying the trail on this beautiful day. We stopped midway down Indian Grave Gap for a bite of lunch, chatting with a group that had paused there. We continued on Indian Grave Gap, enjoying the incredible views of Cades Cove, Dry Valley and Townsend along the way. The Crooked Arm Ridge trail was an easy descent, and the sparkling rushing waters of Crooked Arm Falls was a sight to see. We finished back at our cars, thankful to have had such a beautiful winter day to enjoy the mountains.

-Pat Watts



January 22
Ijams Nature Center-Easy Hike

Eight members and one visitor made the best of a cold, drizzly 5-mile hike around Ijams Nature Center. Many were thrilled to see that the River Trail boardwalk has been repaired. We also enjoyed exploring the Civil War-era Stanton Cemetery on the Tharpe Trace trail. We got a full body workout as we navigated a HUGE blowdown. Per Doris Gove, it was probably the largest Hickory in the Urban Wilderness. Fun to see two recently installed "Primal Playgrounds" and the lime kilns but the highlight was the magical Key Hole structure in the middle of Meads Quarry. Huge thanks to Rebekah Young for serving as sweep. T'was a great day with an absolutely wonderful group!

-Cindy Spangler



January 28
Norris Dam State Park

On a very sunny and clear day (one of the rare ones this month!) 12 hikers assembled at the Norris Dam SP East Campground Tearoom parking lot to hike. With bare winter trees, we were able to enjoy views of the lake, and across the lake to Cove Creek WMA. We learned factoids about TVA, the CCC, George Norris and as many other things that the group could stand hearing about! And they patiently listened! Our hike took us the entire length of the Lake View Trail, Homestead Trail, and parts of other trails in the park, for a total of about 11.5 miles. The trail surfaces are wonderfully maintained, which made walking easy. We saw several hikers, mountain bikers and 2 equestrians. Everyone was out enjoying the crisp and sunny day!

Diane Petrilla and Dan Feller



February 4 Will Skelton Greenway

On a rare sunny day in recent weeks, 19 hikers gathered at the McClure Lane parking area at the Forks of the River WMA for a short but delightful walk. Led by its namesake, Will Skelton, we hiked east for about 1.6 miles along the Tennessee River. We saw where the sunflowers will bloom in July. We got to see the "forks" where the French Broad meets the Holston to form the Tennessee before it flows towards Knoxville. We heard about the decades-long effort, from the conservation, legal and political perspectives to create greenways in Knoxville and other areas (work that continues today). The hike leader was instrumental in much of this work, for which we all felt much gratitude (co-leader's words). Total hike 3.2 miles.

-Will Skelton and Diane Petrilla



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Ken Wise kwise@utk.edu

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Recording Secretary: Kristi Knight kcsknight@charter.net

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Director: Tim Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com

Director: Pat Watts watts_at_home@yahoo.com

Director: Will Skelton whshome@bellsouth.net

Code of Conduct Coordinator: Taylor Weatherbee
tweatherbe@aol.com

CONSIDER GOING GREEN!!!

If you receive this newsletter by US Mail, please consider changing to the digital version distributed by email. To change from print to digital, just send an email to swalker.dev@gmail.com. Not only is the online version much easier to read, changing will help us save considerable time and will also cut the cost of printing and mailing.

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 and Betsy Bohannon, 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.

Meeting Locations

Alcoa Food City- although the grocery store is no longer there, we use the parking lot at 131 N Hall Rd, on the right coming from Knoxville, between the 3rd and 4th stoplight, just after Walgreens.

Oak Ridge Books-a-Million- 310 S Illinois Ave. (same parking lot as Golds Gym), on the left as you come from Knoxville.

Cracker Barrel Strawberry Plains- 1510 Cracker Barrel Lane, Exit 398 off of I-40. From Knoxville, turn right off of I-40, go to the first traffic light and turn right. Park on the right side of the lot.

Lowe's Harriman- 1800 Roane St Hwy, Harriman, TN. Exit 350 off of I-40.

Hardee's- 107 Buffalo Road, Clinton, TN. Exit 122 off I-75. Turn left off the exit ramp then left at the first red light

Walmart Supercenter -2410 US 411 South in Maryville; park on the far right side of the parking lot.

Please be aware that when a time is listed to meet, that is the time that the group will leave. It is best to be at the meeting location 15 minutes early to sort out who is driving and who is riding.