



PO Box 51592
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Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

June 2023

Hiker Responsibilities

We all have different reasons for loving to hike – to appreciate the beauty of nature, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow hikers, and sometimes to challenge ourselves with new adventures. When participating in SMHC hikes, we want everyone to have fun and enjoy the hiking experience. But of primary concern is to ensure that everyone stays safe on their outing. With these thoughts in mind, hikers are responsible for following these guidelines:

1. Evaluate the overall difficulty of the hike and be confident that you can complete it comfortably and within a reasonable amount of time. Only you can assess your own physical capabilities and decide if the hike is right for you. *Be sure to see questions to ask yourself described below in Evaluating the difficulty of a hike.*
2. If you have registered for a hike but later determine that you cannot attend, cancel your registration at smhclub.org as soon as possible, or contact the hike leader directly. You might be taking up a slot that keeps someone else from attending.
3. Always arrive at trailheads or car-pool meeting locations, *ready to leave*, on time if not early.
4. The hike leader is the leader, and that's who everyone listens to.
5. Communicate with the hike leader if you need to leave the group for any reason.
6. Stop and regroup at all trail junctions, no exceptions.
 - a. If there's a long distance between junctions, the hike leader will determine intermediate stopping points ahead of time.
 - b. The hike leader will let you know if there are any other stopping points - difficult sections, such as creek crossings or areas involving climbing over obstacles, special points of interest.
7. If you are separated from the main group, pause, and think about the safest and most secure way to reconnect. Don't make assumptions.
8. All hikers are expected to abide by the SMHC's Code of Conduct and treat fellow hikers with respect. You can find SMHC's Code of Conduct at <https://www.smhclub.org/code-of-conduct>.
9. All hikers are expected to follow "leave no trace" principals and all rules and regulations of the trail or wilderness area visited.

Don't forget that a group hike is not a solo hike. Courtesy and consideration for the entire group is key to everyone having a safe and enjoyable time.

Evaluating the difficulty of a hike:

You should evaluate the overall difficulty of the hike and be confident that you can complete it comfortably and within a reasonable amount of time. Only you can assess your own physical capabilities and decide if the hike is right for you. Be sure to take the following into consideration.

- Distance: How many miles are you able to hike? While it's good to try to increase your endurance, you may not want to embark on a 12-mile hike if you've only ever hiked 5.
- Terrain: What is the condition of the trail? Does it have a soft footbed or will you be scrambling over rocks? Will there be stream crossings and, if so, how deep? You can find a lot of information on trails online, in a number of publications, or by talking to fellow hikers.
- Elevation: Does the trail involve steep climbs? It doesn't take a **great** change in elevation to significantly increase a hike's difficulty. An elevation change of 300 feet over a mile may not sound like much. But if you have to do that for 3-4 miles straight, it can be challenging.
- Timing: The season and its accompanying weather can greatly affect trail conditions. The higher the elevation in the winter, the more likely you are to encounter snow and ice. Recent rains can significantly impact the difficulty of stream crossings. And remember that winter hiking hours can be much shorter than summer ones - no-one wants to get stuck in the woods after dark.

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.

June 4, Sunday Easy Hike-Fittified Spring in Greenbrier

We will hike on the Porters Creek and Brushy Mountain trails to the site of the former fittified spring stopping along the way to visit the Ownby Cemetery, the Hiking Club Cabin, and a few home sites. Hike around 4 miles total. Meet at the first parking area in Greenbrier, on the right just off HWY 321 at the Greenbrier entrance to the park, at 10:00 am to carpool to the Porters Creek trailhead.

Leader: Ed Fleming, edwrdfm@aol.com or 865-548-2489.

June 7, Wednesday Lumber Ridge Trail

We will hike 8 miles round trip. The elevation for the first part of the hike is 1,200 feet to the ridge with a 2.4-mile ascent. Then you go downhill about 200 feet for around 1.6 miles. It's a hardwood forest. The trail ends at Buckhorn Gap where it intersects the Meigs Mountain trail and Meigs Creek Trail. This trail is rated moderate. Meet at the old Food City 131 Hall Road Alcoa at 8:00 am or the trail head at 8:30 am. Carpool 46 miles roundtrip at 10 cents/miles = \$4.60 to the driver.

Leader: Thomas Welch 224-944-3333, coast5588@yahoo.com

June 10, Saturday South Citico Creek-Jeffery Hell Loop, Cherokee National Forest

We will explore the headwaters of South Citico Creek in the Citico Creek Wilderness on this car shuttle hike along Cherohala Skyway. Cars will be left at Rattlesnake parking area and we will shuttle over to Beech Gap. We begin hiking the Fodderstack Trail along the state line toward Strawberry Knob which is also a portion of the Benton MacKaye trail. In about 2 miles we turn off and head sharply downhill on the South Fork Citico Creek trail. At the bottom of the hill, we meet up with the creek and follow it downstream a ways through the Citico Creek Wilderness area. The trail makes a few crossings of the lovely creek (which could be high if rainy) At the Jeffery Hell trail we turn off and begin hiking back uphill to the Rattlesnake parking area and cars. Hike 6.5 miles with 1500 ft elevation gain. Rated moderate to difficult due to creek crossings and possibly overgrown trail conditions.

Meet behind Ruby Tuesday at I-75 Exit 81, Lenoir City at 8:00 am or at Tellico Plains Visitor Center at 9:00

Drive 140 miles RT to trailhead. Carpool @ 10 cents per mile = \$14.00 to driver.

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

June 17, Saturday Huggins Creek--Off-trail

Escape the summer heat with an excursion through the wild and rugged Huggins Creek watershed. We'll begin at Clingmans Dome and descend the Forney Creek Trail to Campsite 69, making a quick stop along the way to ride the Forney Slide. At the campsite, we'll leave the trail and turn back uphill, following Huggins Creek for a little over three miles to the AT. There will be plenty of opportunity to get wet as we pass by secret cascades, deep pools, water slides, and one big waterfall. We'll spend a full day exploring one of the most incredible streams in the Smokies. E-mail the leader for meet-up location and time.

Leader: David Sands, dsands314@yahoo.com

**June 17, Saturday
Gregory Bald via Gregory Ridge
Azalea Hike**

When the Smokies were being considered for a National Park, one of the areas showcased to Washington dignitaries was Gregory Bald during the blooming of its Flame Azaleas. We will repeat that hike from 99 years ago in hopes of seeing them at their peak colors. We will follow the Gregory Ridge Trail and climb steadily to its junction with the Gregory Bald Trail. From there, it is a short climb to the summit of Gregory Bald. On a very clear day, one can see numerous landmarks including Fontana Lake, Clingmans Dome, and even portions of Knoxville. This hike is 11.3 miles with 3,000 feet elevation gain and rated Difficult, due to the unrelenting climb. Meet at the Gregory Ridge trailhead at 9am.

Register at smhclub.org

Leader: Steven Miller, samiller71@rocketmail.com, 865-318-9882

**June 21, Wednesday
Curry Mountain Trail**

We will hike round trip 6.6 miles with a climb of 1,500 feet to the junction at Meigs Mountain Trail. Look for patches of crested dwarf iris during the hike. This trail is rated moderate. Meet at the former Food City location at 131 North Hall Road, Alcoa at 8:00 am or the trail head at 8:30 am. Park in Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area. Carpool 52 miles roundtrip at 10 cents/mile = \$5.20 to the driver.

Leader: Thomas Welch 224-944-3333 , coast5588@yahoo.com

**June 24, Saturday
Roan Mountain day hike
Carvers Gap to Yellow Mountain Gap**

In the past, the Club has offered this hike primarily as a backpacking weekend with a shuttle. Let's do a day hike this year! This stretch of the Appalachian Trail is considered by some to be the most scenic in the southeast. There are opportunities to see Catawba rhododendron, Grays lilies, and vast mountain views from expansive grassy balds, including Round Bald, Jane Bald and Grassy Ridge Bald. Although it will be a long day of travel, we'll start early from Knoxville. Hike 11 miles, in and out. Rated Moderate - Difficult. Meet at Cracker Barrel at Strawberry Plains exit, 1510 Cracker Barrel Lane at 6:30am. RT drive 260 miles = \$26 carpool fee.

Leader: Diane Petrilla, 931-224-5149, petrillad@gmail.com

Greenbrier Road and Porters Creek Trail open

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials announced that Greenbrier Road, Porters Creek Trail, Brushy Mountain Trail, and campsites 31, 32, and 33 are now open to public use. Old Settlers Trail and Grapeyard Ridge Trail re-opened to public use earlier this month.

Ramsey Cascades Road and Ramsey Cascades Trail are closed Monday through Thursday to allow trail crews to reroute sections of the trail and rebuild foot log bridges that were washed out last summer during a July 2022 flood event.

Greenbrier Road was closed beyond the ranger station after the road and area trails and culverts sustained damage during the flood event. Earlier this year road crews repaired the road, stabilized the slope, and replaced culverts.



For the Record

March 26

Crooked Arm Branch and Gregorys Cave Off-trail

The hike was rescheduled for Sunday March 26 due to the foul weather forecast for March 25. A group of 7 members and 2 visitors had a very enjoyable time. A few wildflowers were beginning to bloom along lower Crooked Arm Branch. It was cloudy early, turning sunny and warm after noon. The cascades were still lit up from rainfall the day before—the uppermost one was so challenging to climb that all but 3 hardy souls found the steep bank more to their liking. Rhododendron eventually forced us to climb an open ridge to the trail and a lunch stop attended by aggressive and plentiful gnats. After a 40 minute walk, Cave Ridge provided an easy but steep shortcut down to Gregorys Cave. We viewed the dank interior of the cave through iron bars, then a short walk through open woods brought us to an old limestone quarry followed a quarter of a mile later by several mysterious fenced enclosures. Then we examined ruins of an old homestead with a standing mud-mortared rock chimney. Crossing Martha's branch, we found the Rich Mountain Loop Trail for an easy walk back to the cars.

-Hiram Rogers and Mike Harrington



March 26

Middle Prong

Four hikers and the leader came out on this beautiful spring Sunday afternoon to enjoy the sights along the creek, wildflowers, as well as 6 or 7 large blowdowns to crawl over and under. Unfortunately, the old Cadillac was also not spared from two fallen trees! It was a very pleasant afternoon!

-Priscilla Clayton



**April 4
Norris Watershed-Easy Hike**

On April 4th two visitors and three members explored Clear Creek, Dyer Hollow and Reservoir Hill in the Norris Watershed where we enjoyed several varieties of spring wildflowers. One main goal was to see an extensive display of trout lilies which were past peak, but we know where to look for them next spring. Reservoir Hill was a climb and we all survived experiencing a beautiful spring day and great camaraderie.

-Barbara Allen



**April 5
Ace Gap Trail to Beard Cane Trail to Campsite 3**

Spring fever must have struck with a vengeance, because we had 31 hikers (yikes!), 2 of which were visitors. It was a very nice spring morning, with cool temps and cloudy skies. Neither of those would last for long. To make the hike more manageable, we split into two groups - my big thanks to Michael for taking the lead with the first group. We very quickly became spread out along the trail when the second group started. One hiker stayed behind the group to "do her own thing." Another hiker was caught by surprise by the rolling hills of Ace Gap, and she turned back after a couple of miles. It was somewhat early in the season for most wildflowers, but the dwarf crested irises were very plentiful and just beautiful. I was the sweep on the hike, and when I arrived at the intersection with Beard Cane, I found that about half of the group had ventured down that trail to find CS 3 (as usual, the creek wasn't easily crossable). I also found that nature has taken its toll on the large fallen log we utilize for lunch seating. Most of us sat on the ground instead. As we started our return trip back down Ace Gap, the cool temps and cloudy skies we enjoyed at the start disappeared. My thermometer registered temps in the high 80's, and the sun was unrelenting on that south-facing slope. It was a rude reminder of the summer hikes to come. And it was also a wake-up call for some to be sure to pack plenty of water! There were a couple of hikers who struggled with the heat, and some of us shared our water (along with electrolyte packets) to help them make it through. Everyone arrived back at the cars safe and sound. I hope everyone enjoyed the hike - I didn't get to talk with very many of you!! And now that summer is arriving, remember: **PACK PLENTY OF WATER!!**

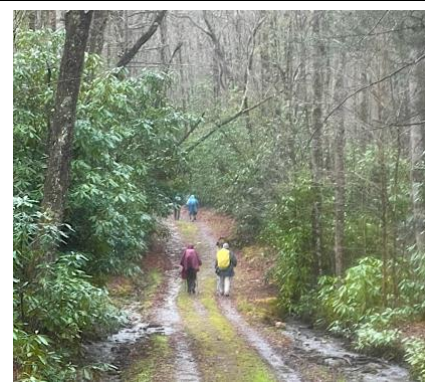
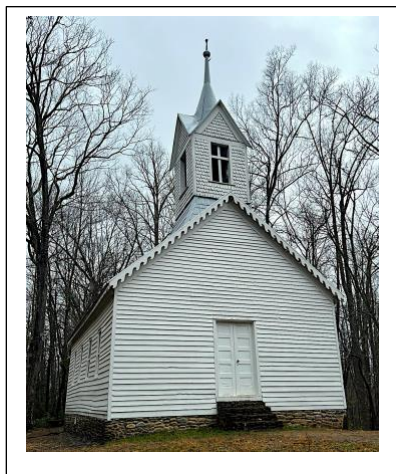
-Pat Watts and Michael Zielinski



April 8
Little Cataloochee Trail to Pretty Hollow Campsite 39—Map Marker

The forecast of all-day steady rain didn't dampen 9 club members' spirits at the beginning of the quest to mark off the 5.4-mile Little Cataloochee trail. We spotted some elk and turkeys while setting the car shuttle prior to starting at the gravel trailhead on Mount Sterling Road. This trail passed through the rarely visited Little Cataloochee Valley, one of the several scattered farm villages in this area of the park. After coming upon some spring wildflowers, we saw the Hannah Cabin and, shortly thereafter, arrived at the shelter for lunch at the Little Cataloochee Baptist Church. The church's white paint was fresh and bright, and inside were an open bible and reading glasses on the pulpit and a large iron woodstove by the "Fair Foundry" in Knoxville stationed in the middle of the room. Following lunch, we climbed 700 feet over 0.7 miles to reach our high point at Davidson Gap. Then, we carefully rock-hopped (or just splashed through) many swollen creeks before getting to the junction with Pretty Hollow Gap trail where we celebrated finishing the Little Cataloochee. We continued hiking next to the roaring Pretty Hollow Creek to Pretty Hollow Gap CS39. After "touching" the CS39 post, we expeditiously backtracked 1.8 miles to our cars and dry clothes. This was a moderately difficult hike about 9.2 miles long and 1,100 ft elevation gain.

-Larry Johnson



April 15
Bird Mountain Trail-Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area

Six SMHC hikers joined Jerry and Alice Thornton in FHSP for a 7.5 mile ramble up the Bird Mountain Trail to look at spring wildflowers on the south-facing slope of Bird Mountain. The leaders had never looked for spring flowers on this side of the park and were apprehensive that it would not be as good as the usual haunts of the Panther Branch Trail or the Spicewood Branch Trail. No need to worry! We saw at least 30 species of flowering vernal plants, including pink lady's slipper, showy orchis, dwarf crested iris, and thousands of trilliums of at least four species. After climbing to the junction with the Cumberland Trail and the North Bird Mountain Trail, we accidentally discovered a hot spot for vernal flora. This was at the beginning of the North Bird Mountain Trail, where we took a detour from the planned hike. The north-facing slope in the first 100 yards of the North Bird was awash with large white trilliums, red trilliums, yellow bellflowers, and even some late-flowering Dutchman's breeches! After the detour, we continued east on the Cumberland Trail, over the top of Bird Mountain and on to the junction with the West Tower Trail, which we used to descend back to our start at the Big Cove Campground. Three of the "rabbits" could no longer stand our slow pace and left the group to get home quicker. The other five of us poked along slowly back to the campground. A camper informed us that there was a single specimen of yellow lady's slipper across Flat Fork Creek from the playground. After some hunting, we found it and duly recorded it for posterity. It was a beautiful day in the woods and we were blessed with the view of stunning vernal flora!

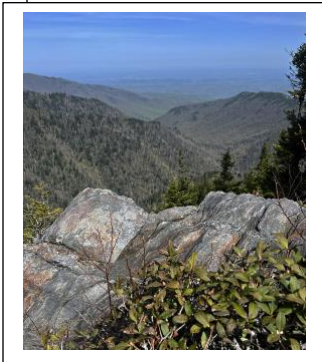
-Jerry and Alice Thornton



April 19
AT, Dry Sluice, Sweat Heifer Loop

What a beautiful day for a hike! Fifteen registered hikers plus 2 surprise hikers (who promised to always preregister in the future) arrived at Newfound Gap under sun-shiny blue skies and mild temps. We headed up the AT, stopping at the first intersection to regroup and chat with a park ranger on the trail. By that time, we had already seen masses of bluets, spring beauties, and rue anemone with trout lilies sprinkled throughout. We made it to Charlies Bunion (the tourist one), at which time the cats started to scatter. A handful of folks made their way up to the Bunion while three others, who planned to do a shorter hike, disappeared from site (I assumed to make their way to the “real” Bunion because they never said). The rest of us continued down the trail to the Bunion “exit” to meet the ones that came down from the rocks. As we headed towards the real Bunion, we heard voices from above us. Apparently the 3 who hurried ahead took a wrong turn looking for the real Bunion (if they had stayed with the group, that wouldn’t have happened – just sayin’). A handful of my group went up to the real Bunion, some went ahead (with my blessing this time) to make their way to the Dry Sluice/Grassy Branch intersection for lunch, while others of us hung back until the visitors from the real Bunion reappeared. At that point, I had totally lost count of heads and was relieved when I made it to our lunch spot that everyone making the full loop was accounted for. Because everyone had arrived for lunch at varying times, they left to continue the hike at varying times, my only hope being that they would mark their names off the “sign-out” sheet that I usually leave at my car for just this situation. Because it always seems to happen. The handful of us left at the end of lunch started our trek down Grassy Branch to the Kephart shelter, “down” being the operative word. As we approached the shelter, we encountered park workers wielding chain saws to take out blowdowns, and we thanked them profusely for their work. Their comment, when we told them we were headed up Sweat Heifer to the AT, was, “Why would anyone want to go up that trail?” That was a sentiment we would repeat to ourselves. The sun beating down on this south-facing trail was relentless, the trees not yet having leafed out to create a canopy of shade. I had hoped that everyone who signed up for the hike had taken me seriously when I rated it Difficult/Strenuous, because the 3.7 mile climb up Sweat Heifer with 2300 ft. of elevation gain was not easy. I was too delirious from the heat to totally enjoy the display of wildflowers along the way. Others took their time, which they needed to do because of the difficulty, and some of us waited an hour for them to appear at the top. Should they really have undertaken this hike? The hope (and expectation) is that everyone honestly evaluates their own capabilities before undertaking a club outing. That is for the safety and enjoyment of the entire group. Everyone made it out, and I want to thank everyone for signing out so that I didn’t continue to worry about them. Larry Johnson, thank you for sharing your pictures with me and the group!

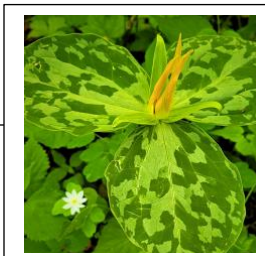
-Pat Watts



April 29
Little River and Cucumber Gap Loop

In the movie Miss Congeniality, one beauty contestant was asked what her idea of the perfect date was. After some thought, her reply was “April 25. Not too hot, not too cold...all you need is a light jacket.” April 29 was pretty close to a perfect day, weather wise. Twelve members and one visitor made the clockwise loop of Little River and Cucumber Gap Trails. One newer member missed the picture on the Troll Bridge due to GPS directions but caught up a little later. Some of the early spring wildflowers had cycled through but were replaced by later blooming varieties. Trillium were being replaced by showy orchis and jack-in-the-pulpit. Eight of the group took the side trip to the Avent Cabin. On our return over the long Jakes Creek footbridge one hiker noticed movement in a water filled knot hole in the handrail. On closer inspection there was a salamander making the handrail its home. Thanks to Pat Watts for helping lead the group.

-Randy Mitchell





Carolina Mountain Club's 100th Anniversary Celebration

You are invited to celebrate the CMC centennial with a free, family-friendly party on Sunday, July 16, at the North Carolina Arboretum.

Sunday, July 16, 1-5pm
North Carolina Arboretum, 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way, Asheville, NC, 28806
COST: Free!*

HIGHLIGHTS:
20+ booths featuring local nonprofit partners
Guided hikes
Kids Activities
Live music
Food truck, ice cream, and more!

We hope this event will inspire future conservationists and recreationists to help us continue our legacy of caring for our beautiful landscape here in Western North Carolina. Here's to 100 more years!

*Admission to the Arboretum will be free on this day for anyone attending the Carolina Mountain Club Anniversary celebration.

Learn more at <https://www.cmc100th.org/> and <https://carolinamountainclub.org>.
Follow Carolina Mountain Club on Facebook and Instagram.

Please bring your family to this special event!

Tom Weaver
President
Carolina Mountain Club

Headquartered in Asheville and founded in 1923, Carolina Mountain Club is the oldest and largest hiking and trail maintenance organization in Western North Carolina.

Exciting Preparation for SMHC's Centennial Year!

On Friday April 28, Ann Farrar and Dick Ketelle filmed interviews for 9 hours with a huge variety of SMHC members, 30 in all! Ann is the Director of the Centennial Film project, with the short film planned to premier at our SMHC centennial capstone banquet on Saturday October 5, 2024 at Bearden Banquet Hall. All footage will eventually go into the SMHC Archives at UT Hodges Library. The interviewees were lively, historical, thoughtful and engaging. Filming was also assisted tremendously by a crew of folks who guided the parking, helped the interviewees, and kept the set quiet. It was a blast! Huge thanks to the crew members: Jean Bangham, Pete Berntsen, Kathy Gardner, Becky and Les Hook, Larry Johnson, Kelsie McNutt and Diane Petrilla. Stay tuned for more announcements about activities planned to celebrate our historic Club's 100th birthday in 2024!



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Ken Wise kwise@utk.edu

Vice President: Steve Dunkin 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: Randy Mitchell mitchell1982@tds.net

Historian: Brian Worley baw2222@aol.com

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.



KROGER'S COMMUNITY AWARDS PROGRAM

YOU have the power to raise money for the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club! Follow these steps and help us:

- Create and login into your Kroger account.
- Select **My Account** and use the menu to choose **Community Rewards**.
- **Enter MV194** and hit **Save**.

By doing so, you will help support trail maintenance and other club projects. You can check each quarter to see how much money your spending at Kroger resulted in a donation to the club.

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.