



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

October 2023

PO Box 51592
Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Crucial Appalachian Trail Maintainer Committee Volunteer Opportunities PLEASE consider helping

As of the end of 2023, we have several very critical volunteer positions open.

Mulch Bagging: Charlie McDonald is retiring after 4 years of steady work to prep our 20lb. mulch bags (hikers) and 40lb. mulch bags (horses) to get mulch to our composting privies on the A.T. This position involves going to the mulch tent at Elkmont (we'll show you where) and bagging mulch, as well as spreading additional mulch out to dry under the tent. It involves 6-8 trips a year, usually lasting 2-3 hours per trip. Charlie will train you. This job is foundational to keep Mulch Ops running.

Contact: petrillad@gmail.com.

Annual ATMC Awards Distribution: Diane Petrilla is moving to the west coast in 2024 and transitioning our volunteer database to other leadership. However, one critical function of the yearly reports is generating the list of Club and ATC Awards that are presented at the Christmas banquet. Our new database manager will give this volunteer the data on Award recipients each October, and our new volunteer makes sure we have awards on hand. The ATMC Chair usually presents them at the banquet. Diane Petrilla will train you on reading the Awards report, how to order Caps when needed (we have a good supply now), and how to order ATC Awards (patches, caps, vest, pins, and National Park passes). The work involves the prep for the banquet, then getting awards to maintainers after the banquet by mail when necessary, so this is a job that lasts just few weeks, but is reportable as volunteer hours, and of course greatly appreciated by our volunteers! All costs are reimbursed by the ATMC of course.

Contact: petrillad@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Again, with the departure of the current newsletter publisher, Diane Petrilla, next year, we would love to see the ATMC monthly Newsletter continue to be published. This Newsletter always includes the monthly work trips, as well as information from the Park, NNF, and ATC that is not published in the SMHC newsletter. It also highlights our work trip reports. If you enjoy working with Word (or any other document-creating platform), creating the Newsletter is a wonderful way to be creative yourself, and keep the communications lines open for our maintainers. About 4-6 hours per month.

Contact: petrillad@gmail.com.

Tools Manager: Steve Dunkin will be assuming the role of SMHC president in 2024. He has been our ATMC Tool manager for several years. This job involves gathering and providing tools for National Trails Day each year (first Saturday in June) and leading a tool-cleaning and sharpening workday the first Saturday in November. We have a beautiful new tool shed near Park Headquarters.

Contact: jsdunkin1302@gmail.com.

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.

Please review [How We Rate Outings](#) and [Hiker Responsibilities](#) found on SMHClub.org as you consider a hike

October 7-Saturday Fontana Lake and Forney Creek Float/Hike

We'll have a leisurely paddle (bring your own kayak or canoe, maybe a hammock) across Fontana Lake for about an hour to the mouth of Forney Creek. At that point, we'll have several options: fishing in Forney Creek, relaxing at campsite #74, or a four-mile loop hike on Whiteoak Branch. Participants can do one, two, or all three. Our starting point is the Flat Branch Boat Ramp (3200 Greasy Branch Road). Because the route to this boat ramp is long and winding, let's meet at the McDonalds in Bryson City at 9am. From there, we'll drive to the Flat Branch Boat Ramp. (The boat ramp is not in the park, so no parking pass is required.)

We'll need decent weather to make this trip, so a list of all participants is needed to allow a last-minute cancellation of the trip by the leaders, if necessary.

Please register by calling or texting Greg Hoover at 865-475-7832.

Leaders: Greg Hoover and Kindel Page.

October 7-Saturday AT Work Trip-North from Newfound Gap

This month's work trip we plan to move large rock/boulders off the treadway. We will carry needed tools to 1.3 miles where our first efforts will take place. When we have completed this task, we will retreat back to the parking lot while attempting to clear or at least move many rocks/boulders to the side of the treadway. All participants will be asked to carry two tools, except anyone carrying the large rock bar. Tools are provided, unless you prefer to bring your own pick, shovel, sledgehammer or rock bar.

Meet at 8:25 at Sugarlands Visitor Center (restroom side) where Co-Leader John Lee will organize a carpool to drive to NFG. Or drive directly to NFG arriving at 9 am. for a tailgate safety meeting. Bring plenty to drink, snacks and/or lunch, sturdy footwear, gloves, and rainwear as October's weather is unpredictable at high elevations. Hope to be back at the parking lot by 2pm.

Please call Leaders Mark and Janet Snyder at 865 448-1183 or Co-Leader John Lee at 815 549-5096, thus we will know what tools to bring.

*UT is not playing this weekend.

October 14 and 15-Saturday and Sunday Backpack—Fontana Ferry to Hazel Creek and Bone Valley

We will meet at 9:00 am in the backpacker parking area on the Fontana Marina Docks to begin the backpacking trip. After collecting everyone, we will walk down to the docks and take the ferry across Fontana Lake to Hazel Creek. From the Hazel Creek unloading area we will hike up Hazel Creek 5.3 miles to Backcountry Campsite 83. After setting up camp, we will walk up Bone Valley trail for 1.8 miles to the cabin, graveyard, and ruins at the top of the trail and then return to camp for the night. Please note that there are five water crossings on Bone Valley. Early the next morning we hike back down to Fontana and take the ferry back to our cars. If you are interested in this backpacking event you will need to make a ferry reservation and a backcountry reservation before the day we leave. The distance from Knoxville to Fontana is approximately 65 miles. Travel time is about 1 ½ hours.

Email the hike leader for details on costs, making reservations and the meetup location.

Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Steve Dunkin, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com.

**October 18-Wednesday
Cumberland Trail-Devil's Breakfast Table**

For this beautiful Fall hike on the CT, we will set up a car shuttle, leaving cars at the Devil's Breakfast Table, then drive to our trailhead on Peavine Rd. We hike approximately 8 miles north, exploring some short spur trails to stunning overlooks of the Daddy's Creek Gorge. We will also admire the very impressive stonework that went into building this section of trail. We have confirmation that there are no hunts in Catoosa WMA on this date, and that we can access the DBT. Wearing orange is your choice. Rated Moderate. Meet at Lowes in Harriman, 1800 Roane State Hwy at 7:30 am or at the Devil's Breakfast Table, Otter Creek Rd., Lancing at 8:30 am. Drive 50 miles RT {@\$.10/mile = \$5.00}.

Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com. Co-leader: Dan Feller

**October 21-Saturday
Gibson Gap and Lewis Hollow Trails
Cumberland Gap National Historic Park**

We will explore an interesting area on a beautiful autumn day. This hike will begin on the Gibson Gap Trail, also known locally as the Boy Scout Trail, in the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park. After a long traverse, we will quickly climb to the top of the prominent ridge that formed such a formidable barrier to the early settlers of the region, where we will head west to connect with the Lewis Hollow Trail to return to the trailhead, forming a loop of about 10.5 miles. Rated moderate. Meet at 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. Leave at 8 a.m. Driving distance to our destination is 57 miles. At \$0.10 per mile, suggested reimbursement to driver = \$11.40. Driving time 1hr15min.

Register with the leader.

Leader: Brian Worley, Baw2222@aol.com, 865-207-2625.

**October 25-Wednesday
Low Gap to Mount Cammerer: Out and back.**

For our annual Mount Cammerer hike, we will start at the Cosby trailhead parking area, taking Low Gap Trail for a steep but beautiful climb up to the AT. Then we will head north on a short stretch of the AT, until we reach the Mount Cammerer spur trail. The Mount Cammerer Fire Tower, restored and picturesque, offers stunning 360 degree views of the surrounding mountains, which will hopefully be showing some Fall color. Elevation gain 2800 ft. 11.4 miles. Rated Difficult. Meet at Cracker Barrel, Strawberry Plains exit, at 7:30 am or at Low Gap TH at 8:45 am. Drive 115 miles RT {@ 0.10/mile = \$11.50}. Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com.

**October 28-Saturday
Mount Cammerer via Chestnut Branch**

There are outstanding views to be found by hiking to the Mount Cammerer fire tower. We'll start at the Big Creek Ranger Station and follow the Chestnut Branch Trail to its junction with the AT, then turn left onto the AT and continue climbing to the Mount Cammerer Trail junction. A right turn and a half-mile hike will bring us to the impressive Mount Cammerer Lookout Tower and beautiful 360-degree views of the mountains. We'll return the way we came. Hike is 12 miles with 3300 feet elevation gain, rated difficult. To carpool, meet at the Cracker Barrel off the Strawberry Plains exit 398 of I40 (1510 Cracker Barrel Lane), *ready to leave at 7:30am* {drive: 110 miles RT @ 10¢/mile = \$11.00}. Or meet at the Chestnut Branch trailhead (at the hiker parking lot) at 8:30am. *The leader will meet the group at the trailhead, not the carpool site.* Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Pat Watts, patty.watts@aol.com, 901-487-7941.

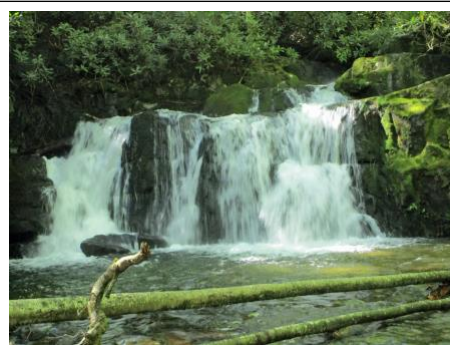
For the Record

August 5 Deep Creek

On a recent hot and sunny Saturday, seven members and a couple of visitors enjoyed a long trek up the remote Left Fork of Deep Creek. Three of the hikers dropped down from the trail early to shorten the hike's length and leisurely fish the legendary stream. Others walked further down the path and visited more of the creek. All were reunited further up the mountain. Rocks were slippery and footing unstable, but those are prices all were willing to pay to immerse themselves in true Smoky Mountain wilderness. The adventurers encountered beautiful cascades tucked away in hidden valleys and deep pools inviting cooling plunges. As the day grew long, different paces strung the hikers out and separated routes. Some made the mountaintop before sunset, while others relished the experience of losing the last vestiges of daylight before finding a trail. The hike was of the type that will linger in the memory of all who were there for years to come.
-David Sands

August 16 Middle Prong

Was it the lower temperature, lower humidity and beautiful sunshine that made this hike seem magical? Perhaps we should credit the raging multi-tiered Lynn Camp Creek featuring spectacular waterfalls and cascades. Still yet, it may have been the enthusiasm of the 19 hearty hikers, many of whom were hiking the Middle Prong trail for the very first time. All contributed to making this a great hike.
-Steve Vittatoe



August 19
Mt. LeConte via Bullhead and Rainbow Falls

On a clear Saturday morning, Rainbow Falls Parking had filled to capacity before 9 hikers (all SMHC members) assembled at Bullhead trailhead. As we ascended, we had the trail to ourselves. Past Bullhead Mountain we entered an area burned in the 2016 fire. The forest was recovering nicely, with several kinds of flowers blooming among 5-foot saplings. At the "Pulpit," new growth partly obscured Gatlinburg, but not the spectacular views south and west opened by the fire.

At Mt. Le Conte we lunched at picnic tables near the Lodge. Four of us visited Cliff Tops; five visited the gift shop. On the steeper descent via Rainbow Falls we encountered many hikers. We passed through shaded forest into an open, burned area with blackened snags standing in new growth, and noticed the dramatic change as we returned to forest untouched by fire. We stopped at the well-attended Rainbow Falls. After a few switchbacks, we saw a small bear cross ahead of us to join another bear on the slope. Other wildlife sightings included a squirrel perched in a tree, loudly exclaiming on this perfect day. Total, 14 miles plus 0.4 for the four of us who went to Cliff Tops.

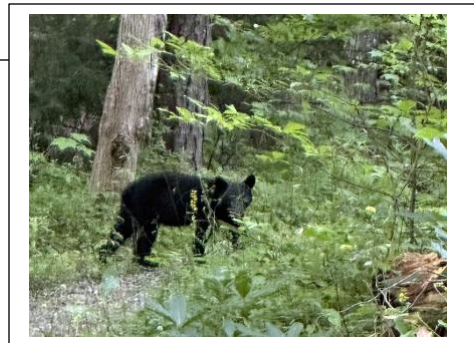
- Eric Sundstrom



September 2
Old Sugarlands, Twin Creeks, Gatlinburg

It was a nice, cool day when 5 intrepid hikers started out from the Sugarlands Visitor Center. On the Old Sugarlands trail, the hiker in front, whom we later dubbed "bear finder", heard a noise and pointed out a bear slowly moving through the brush. After watching the bear move away (and taking pictures when possible), we proceeded on the trail and down Cherokee Orchard Road to the Bud Ogle cabin. Noticing some guano on the floor of the cabin, "bear finder" found and showed us some bats nesting in the ceiling of the cabin. Once pictures were taken, we hiked down the Twin Creeks trail and, once again, bear finder heard a noise in the brush. Sure enough, it was another bear. This one moved away from the trail through the brush, circled past us, and crossed the trail behind us stopping just long enough for pictures before running away into the woods. After seeing two bears on the first two trails, the rest of the hike was somewhat anticlimactic. We stopped for a nice picnic lunch at Mynatt Park, weaved our way through the crowds in Gatlinburg, and hiked the Gatlinburg trail to our cars at Sugarlands Visitor Center. Even though no bear was seen on the Gatlinburg trail, everyone agreed it was a "beary" good hike!

-Neil Snapp



September 6
Cooper Road-Little Bottoms-Hatcher Mountain

Sixteen hikers and two visitors braved the warm temps and humidity. One hiker did a slightly shorter version. The hike up Cooper Road from the campsite was nice enough, creek crossings were easy rock hops. Then came the climb up Little Bottoms which has a short but steep 300-foot gain. Everyone made it up in good time, but the heat was on from that point on. Little Bottoms has its ups and downs and some nice views from the higher ridges. The hike across Hatcher Mountain was a bit overgrown- we battled the briars, and this leader did his best to take down the many spiders that tried to block our path. Even though this was a late summer hike, there were still some wildflowers to be seen. The hike back to the campground was a bit warm, with a couple of short climbs. A few even enjoyed a quick dip in Abrams Creek.

-Michael Zielinski

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

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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.

Lost Items at SMHC Election Picnic

This photo shows two items left at the 8-12-23 SMHC Election Picnic at Cosby. Do you recognize them? If so, please contact Diane Petrilla at petrillad@gmail.com or 931-224-5149.

