



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

January 2024

PO Box 51592
Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Celebrates its Centennial!

On the third Saturday of October 1924, a group of twenty, organized under the auspices of the Knoxville YMCA, climbed to the summit of Mount Le Conte for an overnight stay at a provisional camp high under the lee of Cliff Top. At some point while enjoying the panorama from Cliff Top, the twenty agreed to form the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club. Come October 2024, the Club will have been in continual existence for one hundred years - a momentous achievement! To celebrate this achievement, the Club will have Centennial Events each month. Look for the special logo - these Centennial Events will be listed in the appropriate newsletter, and they will also be listed at SMHClub.org under the Centennial tab and in the Club Handbook.



Centennial Challenge Hikes - Are you up for the challenge?

As part of our Centennial celebration, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club is sponsoring ten Centennial Challenge Hikes, the mileage of which adds up to approximately 100 miles, for our 100 years! Any hiker (SMHC member or non-member) who hikes all of the specified hikes between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024 is eligible to purchase a commemorative patch designed specifically for this Challenge. The hikes may be hiked in any order, and can be hiked with the Club, or on your own - completion is based on an honor system. Once all of the hikes are completed, the hiker will fill out a form and submit a form, and they will then be eligible to purchase the specially designed Challenge Patch and their name will be listed on the SMHC website as completing the Challenge! All ten hikes will be listed at smhclub.org at the "Celebrating 100 Years" tab, and instructions and forms will be available there after the first of the year.

SMHC Annual Awards
2023 SMHC Recognition of Appalachian Trail Maintainers

Submitted by Philip Royer

Our hiking club recognizes the efforts of our Appalachian Trail (A.T.) maintainers every year at the Installation Banquet. Maintainers devote many volunteer hours to improving over 100 miles of trail. We remove blowdowns, improve drainage, trim vegetation, supply mulch to privies, and tackle large projects, all with a deep sense of stewardship for the trail and a desire to “give back.”

Below is a list of our SMHC maintainers who have achieved special levels of performance during 2023.

SMHC Awards- Hours for One Year Ending 9/30/2023

New awards are underlined; (*) indicates awards in prior years

Bold indicates they did it again this year

Platinum and Gold repeaters receive an ATC pin for their cap

Platinum (200 hours): **Pete Berntsen***, **Randy Bullock***, Ed Fleming*, Dick Ketelle*, **Franklin LaFond***, Randy Mitchell, Diane Petrilla*, Bill Pyle*, Steve Reagan*, Janet Snyder*, Mark Snyder*, Stewart Taylor*, **Taylor Weatherbee***. 17 maintainers have won this award previously.

Gold (100 hours): Amanda Beal*, **Sunaree Bullock***, Rick Hughes*, Terry Martin*, Keith Mertz*, Philip Royer*, Neil Snapp*, Jerry Troxler*, Rick Waggener*. 28 maintainers have won this award previously.

Silver (50 hours): Adam Beal*, Tim Bigelow*, Jack Bray*, **Jonny Bruce***, Mark Buckles*, **Ann Farrar***, **David Gall***, Kathy Gardner*, **Patti Grady***, Melanie Harmon*, Mike Harrington*, John Lee, Peter Lloyd, **Charlie McDonald***, Cindy Mease, **Jim Rugh***, Judy Wade*, Elizabeth Weikert*, Ernie Wiles*. 60 maintainers have won this award previously.

Bronze (25 hours): Barbara Allen*, Debra Barton*, **Patricia Bryant***, **Kelly Conway***, Elizabeth Davis*, Gene Desrosiers*, Aenan Fee, Brian Groenhout*, Debbie McDonald*, **Scott Medlyn***, **Randy Rainey***, Karen Reagan, Betty Royer*, Tim Ryan*, Nicole Samu*, Jay Schmid*, Mark Shipley*, **Lisa Sumter***, Yugong Tan*. 103 maintainers have won this award previously.

ATC Awards- Hours since 10/1/2000

(Start of the Database; only new awardee maintainers are listed)

ATC Vest (1000 cumulative hours): These maintainers have provided the greatest and longest commitments over the history of our A.T. involvement and have our deep gratitude: Randy Mitchell. 28 maintainers have previously earned the ATC Vest.

ATC Cap (500 cumulative hours): Randy Bullock, Patti Grady. 27 maintainers have previously earned the ATC cap.

ATC Patch (100 cumulative hours): Jonny Bruce, Kathy Gardner, Melanie Harmon, Doug McFalls, Karen Reagan, Jim Rugh. 147 maintainers have previously earned the ATC patch.

ATPO Awards- 250 hours since last eligibility date, to earn National Parks Pass for 1 year

Maintainers who have become eligible are contacted individually to choose whether they want the Pass. 34 maintainers are eligible this year; many have earned this Pass more than once.

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

Centennial Challenge Hikes



Look for these hikes throughout the year and complete all 10 to be eligible for a special patch!

Instructions and forms will be available on January 1, 2024 on the club website.

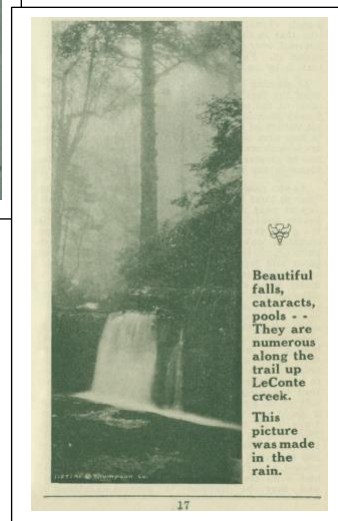
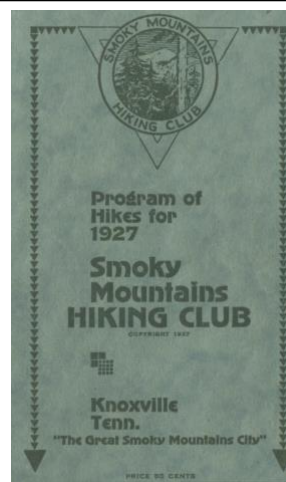
smhclub.org
"Celebrating 100 Years"

January 6-Saturday LeConte Creek Off-trail Louise Smith Legacy Hike

In the old days, before the creation of the national park and its groomed trails of gently ascending switchbacks, hikers reached the summit of Mt. LeConte by a more direct route. Early adventures closely followed the mountain's namesake creek through a wild and rugged landscape. It was in 1924 that a group of twenty-some hikers, including Louise Smith, took this route on a trip that would make history. It was on this beautiful little stream that the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club was born and activism for the creation of a national park in the Smokies was stirred. Just a few years later, the 1927 Smoky Mountains Hiking Club handbook, emblazoned with the iconic emblem designed by Louise, contained a beautiful description of a hike up LeConte Creek. Tales of scrambling up Rainbow Falls and glorious pictures of the awaiting scenery likely enticed many to join that hike nearly a century ago. I can make similar promises to you now. We, too, will scramble up Rainbow Falls, rock-hop along a sparkling creek, negotiate large boulders, hike steeply through high-elevation forest, and enjoy the wintry solitude of a route up Mt. LeConte that has been nearly forgotten with the passage of time. Rated difficult. Ten miles on-trail + 1 mile off-trail.

Contact dsands314@yahoo.com for meet up time and location.

Leaders: David Sands and Ken Wise



Beautiful falls, cataracts, pools - They are numerous along the trail up LeConte creek.

This picture was made in the rain.

17

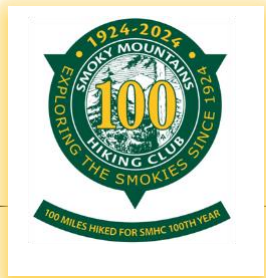
January 6-Saturday Albright Grove- New Members Hike

(NOTE: This hike will occur on Saturday January 6th instead of January 13th as shown in the 2024 handbook.)

This relatively short hike is full of history and beautiful trees! Beginning at the Maddron Bald trailhead in Cosby on Laurel Springs Rd., we'll hike 2.9 miles up to the junction of the short Albright Loop trail. We'll pass the historic Baxter cabin on the way, old stone walls and hear about the namesakes for Maddron Bald and Albright Grove. Although a number of the famous old-growth trees on the loop trail have died, there are still some remaining, which will give us an idea of the majesty of the forests that once covered the mountains. We'll return the way we came. Hike 6.7 miles, Rated Easy but does include an elevation gain of 1475 ft. Meet at Cracker Barrel, Strawberry Plains, 1510 Cracker Barrel Lane, Knoxville, at 9am. Trailhead parking is very limited, so please try to carpool. RT mileage to TH 110 miles = \$7.50 carpool fee.

Please register at smhclub.org.

Leaders: Diane Petrilla and Rik Robinson, petrillad@gmail.com.



January 10-Wednesday
Rich Mountain Loop/Crooked Arm Ridge/Indian Grave Gap
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike

For this popular loop hike, the trailhead is just off Cades Cove Loop Road near the entry gate. We follow the Rich Mountain Loop Trail clockwise, west to the historic John Oliver cabin (mile 1.4). After a brief stop, we go north along Martha's Branch and up Tater's Ridge to Indian Grave Gap Trail (mile 3.4). The junction offers nice views of Cade's Cove, weather permitting. We follow the ridgeline northeast, past the junction with Rich Mountain Trail (mile 4.2). We'll stop for lunch at Cerulean Knob (mile ~4.5, elevation 3,686 ft.) where the Rich Mountain Fire Tower once stood. After lunch we continue east on Indian Grave Gap Trail to Crooked Arm Ridge Trail at the junction with Scott Mountain Trail (mile 6). We descend along the ridge-top, past two overlooks and Crooked Arm Falls (mile 7.9) on the way to the junction with Rich Mountain Loop Trail (mile 8.2), and back to the trailhead. Total of 8.7 miles, with 1,958 ft. of climbing, rated Moderate. For carpooling, meet at Kroger, 244 S. Hall Rd., Alcoa (park at the side of the building, near the SE corner), in time to leave at 8:00 am. Drive 56 miles RT @7¢ = \$3.92. Alternatively, meet near the entry gate of Cades Cove Loop Road, ready to hike at 9:00 am.

Register at smhclub.org by 6pm Jan. 9th.

Leader: Eric Sundstrom, sundstrom.eric@gmail.com, 865-406-8794 text.

January 13-Saturday
Stinging Fork Falls Section of the Cumberland Trail

(NOTE: This hike will occur on Saturday January 13th instead of January 6th as shown in the 2024 handbook.)

For this section of the CT, we will hike from south to north, along Soak Creek and return the same way. We ascend and descend several bluff areas, and will see several waterfalls, including Stinging Fork Falls itself. The falls are part of the Stinging Fork Falls State Natural area and plunge 30 ft. in a fan shape, to the rocky creek below. Hike 11.6 miles RT. Rated Moderate.

Those wanting to carpool can meet at Lowes, Harriman, 1800 Roane State Hwy and be ready by 8:00 am to drive 35 minutes (26 miles) to the Piney River RMA Trail head. Riders plan to pay exact change in cash to drivers, \$3.64, (OK to round up to \$4.00. Rate: \$0.07 per mile x 52 miles RT.) All hikers meet at Piney Creek trailhead, (700 Shut in Gap Road, Spring City, TN, 37381) and be ready to start hiking by 8:45 am.

Leader contact information is included under Additional Information in the email you receive after registration.

Leader: Larry Johnson

January 14-Sunday
Alcoa Greenway
Easy Hike

With potential cold weather and icy roads, I'm keeping it simple. The plan is to hike a new-ish section of the Alcoa Greenway which offers beautiful long bridges and stellar bird habitat near the Clayton Academy. We'll meet at the Alcoa Greenway parking lot located adjacent to the Martin Luther King Community Center, 209 E Franklin St, Alcoa, TN at 1:00 PM. Hike distance will be approximately 5 miles, rated easy.

Please register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Cindy Spangler, spangler2@gmail.com, 865-776-1301



**January 20-Saturday
Baskins Creek-Grapeyard Ridge Trails**

To kick off the Centennial 100 hike series, we will begin this hike in the former Cherokee Orchard where the first SMHC hike originated in 1924, but instead of climbing a mountain as the first hike, we will hike through six formerly settled creek watersheds which have all been frequently visited by numerous club outings over the past 100 years. We will go by Baskins Creek Falls, the wrecked steam engine on Injun Creek, Laurel School site, Friendship Baptist Church site, and numerous home sites as we reflect on the history of the people who lived here and of the earlier hikers who passed through. Hike, 10.3 miles, rated moderate. A shuttle will be provided by the Gatlinburg recreation department from the first parking area in Greenbrier (on the right just off HWY 321) to the entrance of the Motor Nature Trail in Cherokee Orchard with a 24-person bus for a fee of \$60 to be split equally between the group. The bus is too large for the roads in Greenbrier so some vehicles will be parked at the Grapeyard Ridge trailhead prior to the bus shuttle to carry the hikers out at the end of the hike. To carpool, meet at the Cracker Barrel at Strawberry Plains exit 398 of I-40 (1510 Cracker Barrel Lane), ready to leave at 7:00 am or at the first parking area in Greenbrier at 8:00 am. Drive 68 miles RT @ \$0.07 per mile = \$4.75. The leader will meet the group at the first parking area in Greenbrier, not the carpool site.

Register at smhclub.org

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

**January 24-Wednesday
Curry Mountain Trail and Meigs Mountain Trail to Campsite #20**

This pleasant out-and-back hike starts on an old logging road up the side of Curry Mountain and continues on Curry Mountain (both about 3,000 ft. high) to Meigs Mountain Trail (mile 3.3). We head east, through open woods, with a half-dozen easy creek crossings, to Campsite #20 (mile 5.5), where we'll have lunch. Return the same way. Totals: 11 miles and ~1,500 ft. climb. Rated Moderate. For carpooling, meet at Kroger, 244 S. Hall Rd., Alcoa (park at the side of the building near its SE corner), in time to leave at 7:30 am. Drive 54 miles RT @ 7 cents = \$3.78. Meet at Metcalf Bottoms picnic parking (southeast end) ready to hike at 8:30 am.

Register at smhclub.org by 6 pm Jan. 23rd.

Leader: Eric Sundstrom, sundstrom.eric@gmail.com, 865-406-8794 text.

**Saturday, January 27
Bird Mountain/Ross Gap Loop**

We'll leave our cars at the visitor center and loosen up for the climb ahead on the Storybook trail. We'll march into Big Cove Campground, onto the Tower Trail and very soon turn off onto the Bird Mountain Trail. Then we'll go up (about 1300' over 1.8 miles) to the Cumberland Trail where we'll take a short detour to the east to admire Castle Rock. We'll turn back and go west on the Cumberland trail until the Ross Gap Trail, where we'll have big fun going perilously downhill on a rutted and rocky old "road". After making us suffer for a mile or so the Ross Gap Trail turns and becomes a nicely built trail that will spit us out into the Rocky Fork Field. About half a mile of road walking takes us back to the Visitor Center. This hike is about 7.5 miles long, rated moderate for length but challenging for elevation gain and rough trail. The leader may change the hike depending on weather conditions. Meet at Books A Million in Oak Ridge ready to leave at 8:00 a.m. or at the Frozen Head Visitor Center at 8:45.

Drive 50 miles RT @ \$0.07 per mile = \$3.50 (cash only).

Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Claudia Dean, claudiadean0@gmail.com, 865-206-0145

For the Record

November 11 Sampson Mountain Wilderness

Six members and one visitor participated in this exploration of a portion of the Sampson Mountain Wilderness in Greene County. The group persevered up the steep Middle Spring Ridge and enjoyed a lookout at Buzzard Roost/Rock before arriving at the Appalachian Trail (AT). Once at the AT, the group took lunch at another lookout at Big Rocks. The AT was then traced to the north and then to the trailhead for the Sarvis Cove Trail. After a steep descent, the trail started to widen and become more gradual. Ultimately, the group arrived at FS 94 where the typically wet crossings of Horse Creek were mostly dry due to the excessive drought in the area.

-Mark Shipley



November 18 Panther Stairs, Off-trail

Some hike leaders are proficient in scheduling the hikes they lead on days when the weather is reasonably nice. Others are not. Greg Hoover and Greg Harrell clearly fall in the latter category. On the morning of November 18th, fourteen hikers gathered at the lower terminus of the Groundhog Ridge manway expecting to spend the day following the leaders on a scramble up the rocky outcroppings of the Panther Stairs, then bask in the warm sunshine while enjoying surpassing views of mountains all around. But no. Hoover and Harrell picked a day when conditions were wet, cold, overcast, and visibility was zero. Nonetheless, all enjoyed a two-hour lung-busting climb to the base of Panther Stairs, a perilous adventure negotiating the precipitous ledges and precipices of Panther Stairs, followed by a welcomed rest at the newly refurbished Mount Cammerer Lookout Tower, before finishing the day with a headlong plunge down a wet and slippery Groundhog Ridge manway. Except for the usual cuts, scratches, and bruises, no one suffered injury.

-Ken Wise



**November 18
Ijams Nature Center**

Seventeen hikers including 9 new members, 5 visitors and 2 SMHC past presidents followed the leader (who lost her map along the way but never mind that) into the quarry section of Ijams on a perfect morning. Several people had never been in this part of Ijams and all of us enjoyed the Keyhole, the Rock Bridge, Cedar Glade, the Crag and Hayworth Hollow. It's hard to remember that 50 years ago this was a busy, treeless industrial area. Half the group dropped away when we returned to the quarry parking lot to continue across the street on a tamer tour of the River Walk, boardwalk and Visitors Center. We finished up shortly after noon when people dispersed to watch various football games.

-Claudia Dean



**November 29
Lakeshore Trail to Campsite 90**

At 22°, it was a very chilly morning for 13 hikers (all club members) to meet to hike the Lakeshore Trail. Due to the road across the dam being closed for maintenance, we trekked an extra mile from the visitors center before starting the real hike. Everyone was appropriately bundled from head to toe, but, as usual, the top layers started coming off very quickly. It actually was a beautiful day for a hike. The sky was a clear blue and the leafless trees provided for occasional views of Fontana Lake. As it always does, the group broke into subgroups of folks planning to complete different distances. The trail name of "Lakeshore" would have one thinking that the hike would be an easy stroll along the shores of the lake. The reality is that this trail is full of rolling hills and climbs that can catch you by surprise. But the largest group of hikers arrived at the intersection where the trail continues to Campsite 90 with no problems. Two hikers immediately turned around to head back to their car (and the driver who was waiting on them), and the hike leader went with them in the hopes of catching some of the other groups who made a shorter hike. The remaining group enjoyed a leisurely lunch, reclining in the stone "chairs" created long ago by some enterprising (and strong) individuals. All made it safe and sound back to the cars after a very enjoyable day in the woods.

-Pat Watts



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Steve Dunkin jsdunkin1302@gmail.com
Vice President (interim): Diane Petrilla petrillad@gmail.com
Recording Secretary: Tim Bigelow bigelowt2@mindspring.com
Treasurer: Pat Watts watts_at_home@yahoo.com
Trust Liaison: Jean Gauger jeanguager@yahoo.com
Membership Secretary: Scott Walker swalker.dev@gmail.com
Communications Director: Randy Mitchell mitchell1982@tds.net
Historian: Brian Worley baw2222@aol.com
Director: Ken Wise: kwise@utk.edu
Director: Will Skelton whshome@bellsouth.net
Director: Larry Johnson larryj11320@gmail.com
Compliance Director: 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.

Found at Fox Den Holiday Banquet

Grey Phonak hearing aid (probably right ear) at Fox Den in the foyer where the handbooks were distributed. If you feel it might be yours, please contact Diane. petrillad@gmail.com



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.



On clifftop of Mt. LeConte to discuss organization of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, from left, Charles Barber, Frank Wilson, Baxter Gass, Guy Barber, Charley Kane, Charley Lester, Marshall Wilson, Louise Smith, Caesar Stair, Douglas Smith, Besse Geagley, George Barber Jr., W.H. McCroskey, Carlos Campbell and T.S. McKinney

Photo by Jim Thompson