



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

February 2024

PO Box 51592

Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

From the President:

Greetings and Happy New Year!

I hope everyone in SMHC had a great Christmas and rang in the new year with friends and family. I had the opportunity to visit my son and his family in Japan, which was wonderful. I just wanted to take a minute to update you on the December Banquet and encourage you to participate in our 2024 Centennial Celebration events and hikes. The Board of Directors of SMHC sees our mission for 2024 to help each of you enjoy SMHC's 100th birthday events. This process started with the 2023 December Banquet.

The annual SMHC Banquet was held December 9, at the Fox Den Country Club. As always, it was a wonderful event, organized by Debbie Goddard and the Social Committee. Our guest speaker was Lucas Coe-Starr, the "Oak Ridge Bird Man" who provided an interesting talk on "Birds of the Smokies". I admit I cannot tell a crow from a red bird, but I really enjoyed the presentation. Ken Wise led the business meeting, and you can review the list of club officers who were installed that evening on the last page of every newsletter and in the handbook. In addition, the membership approved a dues increase, our first in 10 years, after extensive review by our club treasurer and several other board members showed that our dues were not covering the costs associated with managing the club. Starting in 2024, the new dues structure is: \$30 for an Individual Membership, with additional family members (same household, same address) \$2 each, up to 4 additional; \$40 for a Supporting Membership, covering 2 family members (same household, same address); and \$1,000 per person for a Life Membership. The membership also voted to approve changes to the Club's Constitution and Bylaws required because of these dues changes, along with other clarifying revisions.

As a sidenote from me: we as your Board of Directors, know that in the East Tennessee area there are many organizations and groups that hike in the Smokies. Our Smoky Mountains Hiking Club does more than hiking. The individuals that founded the club in 1924 not only wanted to hike but protect and preserve this unique place we just happen to live next to. Their early efforts, along with others, protected the Smokies from further logging destruction. As a result, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park became an economic powerhouse for the area with the creation of a dynamic tourist industry and has become the most visited national park in the country. People like you who join the club not only hike but are part of a powerful voice that helps to ensure future generations will get to enjoy the Smokies.

To celebrate our early founders and those who have continued their legacy, we have planned several events and hikes for 2024. The major categories of events include monthly hikes to commemorate our early founders (these hikes are taken from early SMHC Handbooks), off-trail heritage hikes, history hikes, and a 100th anniversary banquet in October, as well as a fish-fry square dance in May! Amanda Beal (our awesome web site manager, along with Scott Walker) has created a special section of the website, smhclub.org/centennial, where you can see all the events planned for the upcoming year as well as a link to the merchandise section for special Centennial items. We look forward to seeing you during this special year!

Steve Dunkin
SMHC President

You Can Volunteer for the Appalachian Trail even if you don't work on the Trail!

The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club has been a maintaining club for the Appalachian Trail for decades. Volunteerism related to the A.T. is one of our cornerstone missions as a Club, and the hours our volunteers contribute, whether on the Trail or off, are important to garner matching federal funds for the Great Smoky Mountains NP, Nantahala NF, and the National Appalachian Scenic Trail.

Most maintainers enjoy digging waterbars, clearing limbs, trimming vegetation and just being outside working. But the Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee of the SMHC needs folks who can help with some organizational tasks. Again, hours spent on this still count towards our fiscal volunteer hours we submit each year.

Examples of more "organizational" tasks we need help with are:

Supervisors (2) needed for AT north and AT south of Newfound Gap in the GRSM . This position involves answering maintainer questions, and coordinating with committee chairs on the ATMC about projects planned. You would learn which maintainers have which sections, north and south in the Park, help fill vacancies with folks who volunteer, and answer questions. *You would be trained.*

Volunteer Recruitment. This is easier than it sounds! We regularly get inquiries about working on the A.T. through our website. These inquiries would be directed to the coordinator, who would be sure the new recruit receives introductory information and discussion of possible roles, in conjunction with the Trail supervisors. *You would be trained.*

National Trails Day Coordinator. On the first Saturday in June each year, our flagship A.T. maintainer event is National Trails Day. Volunteers sign up to work on crews for a day, and are treated to a picnic afterwards. The NTD coordinator would work on communications about NTD, crew leader recruitment and crew volunteer assignments, as well as solicitation of donations to cover costs of the picnic and our iconic NTD T-shirts. This is all done by an NTD committee- it's not a one-person job! *You would be trained.*

If you might have some interest in one of these positions, please contact Franklin LaFond, at ox97game@aol.com. Thank you!

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

February 3-Saturday Haw Ridge Park

Haw Ridge is an Oak Ridge City Park that occupies former TVA land on a peninsula along Melton Hill Lake. Our route will trace the perimeter of the park along a series of rolling trails with good views of Melton Hill Lake. We will hike clockwise with the first 1 ½ miles on the greenway. The total hike is just under 8 miles and should take approximately 4 hours. This is a popular area for wildlife watching. Meet in the Haw Ridge Park paved lot on Edgemoor Rd which is .8 miles after exiting TN 62 (differs from original write up). Note that you will pass boat launch sites prior to Haw Ridge parking.

Please register at smhclub.org. The leaders will be at the trailhead. The hike is 8 miles, rated moderate.
Leaders: Lyn Irving, Randy Mitchell



**February 7-Wednesday
Baskins Creek/ Grapeyard Ridge
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike**

For this Wednesday version of this Centennial Challenge hike, we will begin in the former Cherokee Orchard area, 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, and discuss the history of this once well-populated area.

The hike is 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 very first parking area on the right in Greenbrier at 8:00 am. Drive 68 miles RT @ \$0.07 per mile = \$4.75 from Cracker Barrel. The leader will meet the car-poolers at Cracker Barrel but will be asking some of the other hike attendees to set up the short shuttle between the Grapeyard Ridge trailhead and the first parking lot area in Greenbrier prior to everyone's meet-up at 8:00am.

All participants must register at smhclub.org.

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

**February 10-Saturday
Canal & Baker Hollow Branches of the East Lakeshore Trail-Tellico Lake**

Enjoy the winter views of Tellico Lake on this hike! We will begin at the Canal Branch Trailhead of the East Lakeshore Trail and wind our way south along the shoreline of the lake. We'll pick up the Baker Hollow Branch and continue south for a total of 4.5 miles. After enjoying a rest and our lunch, we will return north on the same trails back to our vehicles. The hike is a total of 9 miles, rated Moderately Easy. Meet at the Lenoir City Cracker Barrel, 325 Fort Loudoun Medical Center Dr., Lenoir City, TN *ready to leave at 8:30am*. Drive 10 miles RT {@ 7¢ = 70¢ or round up to \$1}.

Register at smhclub.org.

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

**February 14-Wednesday
Loyston Point, Norris-Official SMHC Hike**

We won't venture too far today, since you may want to spend part of Valentine's Day with your sweetheart! Let's do all of the "Outer" trails of Loyston Point, starting with the entire Mill Creek Loop, then the outer part of Loyston Loop, to Hemlock Bluff SWA, to Point 19 Trail and back to our cars. Although the mileage is about 13 miles, there are not a lot of steep climbs, and if anyone wants to exit back to the parking lot after the first 7.3 miles of Mill Creek Loop, they can. Rated Moderate. Meet at Hardees in Clinton (107 Buffalo Rd.) at 8am, or at the Loyston Point Trailhead parking lot at 8:30am. RT 25 miles = \$1.75.

All participants must register at smhclub.org.

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



February 17-Saturday
Rich Mountain Loop/Crooked Arm Ridge/Indian Grave Gap Loop
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike

This popular loop hike is a classic and one of the club's favorite loop hikes. We will begin at the entrance of the Cades Cove Loop Road. We'll approach the loop in a counterclockwise direction, starting with a short section on the Rich Mountain Loop Trail before bearing right onto the Crooked Arm Ridge Trail. We will have an uphill climb of about 1500 ft. (over 2 miles), where we'll see Crooked Arm Falls along the way as well as outstanding views of Cades Cove. Then we will pick up the Indian Grave Gap Trail where we will be hiking a ridgeline offering views of Dry Valley and Townsend to the north. Next, we will start down the Rich Mountain Loop Trail, with a stop at the John Oliver Cabin before finishing the hike back at our cars. This hike is 8.6 miles with a total elevation gain of 2000 ft., rated Moderate. For carpooling, meet at Kroger, 244 S Hall Road, Alcoa (park at the side of the building, near the SE corner), in time to leave at 8 a.m. Drive 56 miles RT @ 7 cents = \$3.92 (round up to \$4). Alternatively, meet near the entry gate at Cades Cove Loop Road, ready to hike at 9am.

Register at smhclub.org by 6 pm February 16.

Leader: David C. Smith, dcsmith041@gmail.com, (865)202-2074

Co-leader: Rik Robinson, r2@r2musings.com, (678) 469-1163

February 24-Saturday
Big Ridge State Park- Sharps Station

Big Ridge State Park is a 3,687 acre park located off Hwy 61. We will hike an elongated figure eight of about 9 miles. Our route will take us over a CCC dam that separates the 49 acres Big Ridge Lake from Norris Lake. There are traces of the nineteenth and early twentieth century inhabitants. With the leaves off the trees there will be good views from the ridge lines of Loyston Sea. There are no high elevations in the park but we will cross and recross parallel ridges. Total elevation gain will be over 1700 ft. The Indian Rock Trail does involve a very steep decent to get to our planned lunch spot on Norris Lake near the marker for the site of a fort built in the 1780's.

The hike will start from the Visitor Center/Park Office. After turning off Highway 61, pass the tennis courts and turn left at the small stone building that was the old Park Office. We will gather near the electric car charging stations. There are restrooms at the Park Office. Hike is rated moderately difficult.

Carpool from Hardees at 107 Buffalo Rd, Clinton. Be ready to leave by 8:00 a.m. Roundtrip of 24 miles at \$0.07/mile = \$1.68 (round to \$2) for the driver. Or meet at the Park Office at 1015 Big Ridge Park Road, at 8:30 a.m.

Register at smhclub.org.

Leader: Randy Mitchell

February 24-Saturday
Greencamp Manway (off-trail)
Ken and Helen Warren Legacy Hike

Kenneth and Helen Warren served the SMHC in many ways from the 1970s through the 1990s. Ken was the Handbook Editor for 13 years, ably assisted by spouse Helen. This hike is a moderate way to ease into off-trail hiking; much of the description below is taken from the 1989 Handbook, published under Ken and Helen's stewardship.

During the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a system of mid-elevation trails connecting Elkmont and Cades Cove. These trails cross the spurs and creeks coming off the state line ridge and stay primarily between the 3000 and 4000 ft elevations. Much of this trail system has been abandoned; only portions remain as part of the Park official trail system. We will locate and follow remains of the segment of the middle-elevation trail that passes through Green Camp Gap to connect the Middle Prong Trail with an abandoned railroad grade that follows Thunderhead Prong. This may not be easy in places but there has been occasional maintenance by elves, so it should be possible with reasonable effort. Besides dealing with vegetation such as rhododendron, greenbrier and blackberry, it will be necessary to rock hop or wade across Sams Creek, Shut-In Creek, and Thunderhead Prong before the day is over. Hike: 7.4 miles, although largely off-trail this hike is rated moderate. Contact one of the leaders for meeting time and place.

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

For the Record

July 22 Yellow Creek Mountain Trail Fontana to Tapoco

After a car shuttle from Tapoco over to Fontana Village and short hike along the Turkey Chute trail, a steep climb began up the Lookout Rock Trail. The morning was hot and humid slowing the climb however large numbers of fungi including orange “edible” chanterelles were interesting to see. At the top of the ridge we joined the Yellow Creek Mountain trail. There was a great view toward the Smokies at the Lookout Rock. The trail continues on west with many ups and downs but not many views during the summer. A lunch spot was reached where a power line crosses the mountain which provided nice views of the trail route to the west and the Slickrock area mountains. After lunch the route continued with more ups and downs and became increasingly overgrown with the last mile becoming a push through the underbrush. Some trail improvements are being worked on at the steep end section down to the Tapoco end. The hikers returned to Fontana Village and carpool beginning with the waiting shuttle cars.
-Tim Bigelow



November 25 Cumberland Trail from Servis Rd to Chimney Rock

The hike started out cool and the trail steep. The weather warmed up and six members and one visiting former member enjoyed climbing between rocks and good views of the cliffs above available with the leaves down. There were several huge blowdown trees to climb over. Finally at the top, the valley views were amazing and hiking easy. We hiked along the escarpment over to the chimney rock area and enjoyed the interesting formations and took a lunch break on the sky bridge. The hike back was equally pleasant with more pauses for the view and sunny blue skies. Only one hiker slipped in the thick leaves on the steep descent back to the trailhead.
-Tim Bigelow and Randy Mitchell



December 2 Dudley Creek History Hike

On a day with a rainy forecast, six intrepid members enjoyed a good morning visiting numerous home, church, and school sites on Little Dudley before stopping for lunch at the cemetery on Big Dudley. Rain started just as we started lunch and lasted most of the rest of the day, shortening our lunch period and afternoon tour of Big Dudley by a little bit. All, however, seemed to enjoy the day. This area is much more enjoyable for hiking since the horseback riding concession has not been in operation here for the past four years.
-Ed Fleming

**December 16
Tremont History Hike**

On a mild mid-December day, twenty-one hikers, including the leaders, led a leisurely stroll up both Thunderhead Prong and Lynn Camp Prong in search of artifacts of the Tremont settlements and CCC camps. Tremont (once known as Tarpaper Camp) was the third company town built by the Little River Lumber Company, the other two being Elkmont and Townsend. During the stroll up Thunderhead Prong, we discussed the use of car shacks to house workers, some sites of old temporary homes, and the trial introduction of the red wolves into the Smokies. Returning to the bridge at the fork where the paths meet, we walked down to Lynn Camp Prong just past the bridge and pointed out the site of the old Tremont Hotel. The walk up the road provided the usual spectacular views of cascades, water slides, falls, and swimming holes. Upon arriving at the abandoned old car site (now further damaged by a tree falling onto it), we found old homes' artifacts.

After a brief stop for snacks, the group continued up the road (old railroad bed) and explored more old sites. The group then split, half returning to the cars and the other half continuing up the road to check out the crumbling brick chimney and seek out a few smaller falls.

-Brian Worley, Mike Harrington



**December 20
Spicewood Trail to Mart Fields, Tub Spring, Tower and North Old Mac**

On the second to last day of autumn, temperature of 29 degrees; under high thin fair-weather clouds; and hardly a draft of wind, fifteen club members and one guest gathered at the Frozen Head State Park Old Mac trailhead. Holiday season warm spirits spiced the greetings, conversations and hugs among our familiar group. Many shed a layer of clothes as we climbed the steep second half of the Spicewood Trail to the junction with the Chimney Tops trail. At the junction we were bathed in low angel morning sunshine. Sunshine followed our one-mile trek to the Mart Fields backcountry campsite. The bare winter forest revealed cross valley views and icicle plastered upslope cap rock formations. At Mart Fields we ate snacks while observing almost 360 degrees ridge top vistas. Then we retraced the Chimney Tops trail along the ridge two miles to Tub Springs, our lunch spot. A few hikers climbed the Frozen Head tower. The view included sun reflections off the distant Tennessee River, Clingmans Dome And two power plant steam flumes. Hikers returned by North Old Mac or South Old Mac trails.

-Larry Johnson, Michael Zelenski



**December 27
Cumberland Trail-Rock Creek Gorge**

This hike started from the Cumberland Trail Retro-Hughes Road trailhead for an easy 1.5 miles in pulp pine forest. Then the trail switched back down the steep gorge before crossing the clear, crashing waters of Rock Creek on a very slick 80 ft. bridge. We climbed and descended the slope parallel to Rock Creek in and out of bright sunshine. We saw impressive rock bluff formations and passed through the Rock Creek campsite near the river. We carefully rock-hopped about 10 side stream cascades.

One, named Leggett Branch Falls, cascaded many feet from the rim over many thin ledges. Our crossing there was over a 30 feet stream with shallow flowing water only ½-1 inch deep. Later we climbed to the rim near the Upper Leggett Road trailhead to our lunch spot at the Leggett Point overlook. We saw expansive views there before returning the same way. All 14 hikers were club members. The distance was about 12 miles with many beautiful but difficult rocky foot treads.

-Larry Johnson, Louis Miniard



December 30
Fort Dickerson/Augusta Quarry

Eighteen members and three visitors gathered at the chilly hilltop that forms Ft Dickerson, across the Henley St. bridge from Knoxville. On this site, in November of 1863, for a brief 2 days, Confederate forces attempted part of their siege of Knoxville by attacking here. Many other forts and batteries had also been built to protect our crucial city, and for the remainder of the war, it never fell into Confederate hands, unlike Chattanooga. Eric Keller gave us an excellent summary of the strategy and tactics used at the fort. We then walked a 3.5 mile loop of meandering trails in the park, to take in the Augusta (formerly Lambert) Quarry, and talked about Knoxville's heritage as the Marble City (although only limestone was quarried at Augusta). The depth of this quarry is quite astonishing, at over 200 ft. in places. We admired some of the improvements already enacted by the Aslan Foundation in conjunction with the City of Knoxville, to make the area a truly safe and usable public space; more are to come. There were many "factoids" to hear about, and this group patiently listened to the leader (and were rewarded with cookies!). All in all, a lovely walk on a less-than-lovely day!

Happy New Year everyone!
-Diane Petrilla and Eric Keller



January 6
Maddron Bald to Albright Grove

The weather reports leading up to this hike were quite discouraging, with high chances of rain and winds. Many of the folks who initially registered for this hike canceled for those reasons, which was quite understandable. However, 6 people, including the leader and co-leader, took a chance! The rain stopped as we prepared to begin the hike, and never occurred again. The winds remained calm. We were rewarded with lush, shiny Smokies foliage, full streams, and at Albright, some magnificent old growth trees. Even the old trees that had fallen had massive diameters to marvel at. At one point we had sunshine sparkling off of wet leaves. The leader gave lots of "factoids" which the group listened to patiently. All in all, a lovely group of people, on a day that turned out better than expected!

-Diane Petrilla and Rik Robinson



In Memorium

Ruth Ewald

It is with a heavy heart that we report the death of longtime member Ruth Ewald who passed away on December 22 at the age of 98. Ruth joined the club in 1955 (68 years ago!) and was very active with the club during most of those years. Both she and her husband Phillip, who preceded her in death, were Life Members and lovers of nature and the outdoors. She selected the SMHC as one of the recipients of memorial donations. Following is a link to her obituary:

<https://www.knoxnews.com/obituaries/kns063256>

Rest in peace dear friend.
SMHC

Murray Evans

The passing of Murray Evans was mentioned in the In Memoriam section of the 2024 Handbook but his obituary was just recently posted here: <https://www.ourherald.com/articles/austin-evans/>. Murray and spouse Dee Evans have been life members of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club since 1988.

Murray was a botanist and a specialist in the taxonomy of pteridophytes (ferns). Having earned a PhD in botany he taught at UT Knoxville from 1964 until 1988. His photography was used in the "Field Manual of Ferns and Fern- Allies of the US and Canada" published by the Smithsonian Institute Press in 1985. For decades Murray was a leader of the Wildflower Pilgrimage in Gatlinburg.

Our deepest condolences go to Dee and their children.
SMHC

Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Steve Dunkin jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

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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.



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.