



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Newsletter

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

PO Box 51592
Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

March 2024



Save the Date!

SMHC Centennial Fish Fry and Square Dance

May 11, 2024

4:30 p.m. -9:00 p.m.

Appalachian Club, Elkmont
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



Save the date for the SMHC Centennial
“Tom and Meta Dewine Fish Fry and Vaughn Browder
Square Dance” celebration.

SMHC held regular fish fry events and also Square Dances over many of the early years of the club as social events, banquets and election picnics. Plans are being finalized to celebrate and relive this history which will include a fish dinner and then a square dance. We've lined up old time square dance caller Leo Collins and friends and live music from Boogertown Gap and friends. Further details and registration will be available soon on the SMHC web site.

Attendance will be limited to 100.

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

March 2-Saturday Nantahala National Forest Work Trip

Join in on the first work trip of 2024 as we meet at the Yellow Creek Gap AT crossing in the Nantahala National Forest. This hike will focus on a few areas North of Cable Gap Shelter using mattocks, rakes and shovels to reclaim short sections of trail corridor using cribbing where needed. The overall hike distance is less than 8 miles out and back over moderate terrain. The trailhead at Yellow Creek adjacent to the AT has lots of parking and the area generally has cell coverage. Bring gloves, eye protection and any PPE you find useful along with lunch and water. From NC 28 turn onto Upper Tuskegee Road and drive approximately 2.8 miles. From NC 129 (Topoco Road) turn onto Yellow Creek Road and drive 8.9 miles. Meet at Yellow Creek trailhead at 10:00 a.m. For more information, call trip leader.

Leader: Randy Bullock, 850-554-8509 or email jrbperfusion@gmail.com

MARCH 9-Saturday Lost Creek State Natural Area to Virgin Falls

The Tennessee State Natural Area's website states that "Lost Creek State Natural Area is a diverse area situated on the western flank of the Cumberland Plateau. Its scenic highlight is the beautiful Lost Creek Falls in White County. Lost Creek Falls is geologically similar to its nearby cousin, Virgin Falls, in that the creek emerges from large spring, or collapsed cave on top, drops over the 40' falls, and disappears underground again."

<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/environment/program-areas/na-natural-areas/natural-areas-east-region/east-region-/na-na-lost-creek.html>

This hike includes the Lost Creek Falls and Cave loop, the Rylander Cascades trail to Virgin Falls, with out and back to Dry Creek Falls. From Virgin Falls we will hike a loop to Sheep Cave, and to the backcountry campsite on Caney Fork. Total approximately 11 miles, 900 feet elevation gain. Rated Difficult.

Carpool hikers can meet at Lowes, Harriman, 1800 Roane State Hwy and be ready by 7:30 am to drive 1 hour 30 minutes, 75 miles one way to the Lost Creek Falls and Cave Trailhead. All hikers meet at Lost Creek Falls and Cave parking area on White's Cave Rd, Sparta TN and are ready to start hiking by 9:15 am ET.

All times are EASTERN...NOT Central- Be aware your phone may switch to Central.

There are no restrooms at Lost Creek trailhead. Riders plan to pay exact change in cash to drivers, \$10.50, (OK to round up to \$11.00. Rate: \$0.07 per mile x150 miles RT).

Leader: Larry Johnson

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

March 9-Saturday UT Arboretum-Easy Hike

Meet at the visitor parking lot just inside the entrance to the Arboretum at 10:00. We will experience the variety of trails and winter scenery for about 2 miles through the woods and grounds of this local treasure. We just might see some signs of some early spring sproutings. The Arboretum is located at 901 S. Illinois Avenue on the way into Oak Ridge.

Register at smhclub.org

Leader: Priscilla Clayton, sigmtngirl@earthlink.net (<mailto:sigmtngirl@earthlink.net>) or 865-966-4142



March 13-Wednesday
Rainbow Falls to Mount LeConte
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike

After the club was organized on October 27, 1924, the first hike scheduled was on December 6, 1924. Led by A.G. "Dutch" Roth, the hike went to Mount LeConte from Cherokee Orchard with eight hikers. There was no trail then; hikers followed LeConte Creek up the mountain, past and above the falls. In the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps built today's trail on a more roundabout route. We start the hike at the trail head near Rainbow Falls Parking Lot A and ascend along the creek to the falls at mile 2.7. Continuing, we reach LeConte Lodge at mile 6.7. Return the same way. The Lodge will not yet be open for the season. Total miles 13.4 with about 4,000 ft. elevation gain. Be prepared for possible late winter snow and ice, micro spikes recommended. Rated very difficult. Carpooling recommended due to parking considerations. Meet at Cracker Barrel 1510 Cracker Barrel Lane, Knoxville (exit 398) at 6:00 a.m. Drive 70 miles roundtrip @ \$0.07 = \$4.90 to the driver (OK to round to \$5). Or meet at Cherokee Orchard Lot A at 7:30 a.m. Hikers must register at SMHClub.org.
Leader: Randy Mitchell, mitchell1982@tds.net, 865-406-6469

March 16-Saturday
Chestnut Top Trail

This classic hike allows us to experience the Smokies with relatively easy access, just off the Townsend "Y." From the trailhead, we have a steady, gradual ascent of about 1200 feet through deciduous and pine forest. There are beautiful views of the Smokies to the left, including Thunderhead Mountain, Townsend and Tuckaleechee Cove to the right, views easier to appreciate in the winter. At 4.3 miles we intersect Schoolhouse Gap Trail, our turn-around point. Hike 8.4 miles rated moderate. Carpool from Kroger 244 S Hall Road, Alcoa, meet on the side of the building near the old KARM store at 8:00a.m. Roundtrip 40 miles @ \$0.07 = \$2.80 to the driver (ok to round) or meet at the Wye parking lot in Townsend at 9:00 a.m.
Register at smhclub.org.
Leaders: Johnny Lee (johnjlee67@gmail.com) and Keith Blanton



March 20-Wednesday
Gregory Bald via Gregory Ridge Trail
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike

When the Smokies were being considered for a national park, one of the areas showcased to Washington dignitaries was Gregory Bald. We will start by climbing the Gregory Ridge Trail followed by a short section of the Gregory Bald Trail which opens up to the bald. Once there we will explore the ten acres of an amazing grassy meadow with (hopefully) stunning views. We will return the same way. The hike is 11.3 miles with an elevation gain of 3,000 ft. Rated difficult. Be prepared for winter-like conditions, micro spikes may be needed. Meet 6:00 a.m. at Kroger in Alcoa to carpool 70 miles @ \$0.07 = \$5.00 to reimburse the driver. Or meet at the Gregory Ridge Trailhead off Forge Creek Road in Cades Cove at 7:30 a.m.
Hikers must register at SMHClub.org.
Leader: Randy Mitchell, mitchell1982@tds.net, 865-406- 6469



March 23 - Saturday
Alum Cave Trail to Mt. Le Conte
Qualifying Centennial Challenge Hike

When about 20 YMCA members from Knoxville hiked to Mt. Le Conte and Cliff Top in 1924 (via a different route than we'll take), the idea for a "Smoky Mountains Hiking Club" was born. Mt. Le Conte is iconic in its own right, and certainly iconic for SMHC. Let's take one of the most beautiful routes to the top: Alum Cave Trail. It is 5 miles to Le Conte Lodge, and another .5 mile to Cliff Top, where we'll hope to have lunch (we may seek a more sheltered area, depending on the weather). Le Conte Lodge will not officially open until Monday, March 25. Since March can still be quite cold, and the trail might have patches of ice, be prepared to bring micro-spikes or the like. The leader will communicate closer to hike-time with recommendations. Rated Moderate to Difficult, 11 miles RT and ~2,700 ft. climb. The leader strongly encourages carpooling from Sugarlands Visitor Center with a meet-up there at 6:30 am, on the restroom side. We'll meet at the Alum Cave trailhead ready to start by 7:00 am. Carpool fee for 18 miles RT @ \$.07/mile = \$1.25.

Register at smhclub.org.

Leaders: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com and Eric Sundstrom, sundstrom.eric@gmail.com.

March 30 - Saturday
Mount Winnesoka via Big and Little Dudley Creeks—Off-trail
Ernie Dickerman Legacy Hike

Ernie Dickerman led essentially the same hike that we are planning in 1964. In the handbook write-up for the March 15 hike that year he said, "Little Dudley and Big Dudley will be along as our native guides, but as they usually give out before reaching the top, don't count on these two streams to lead you all the way." Ernie was a strong advocate for wilderness designation in the Smokies before and after the Wilderness Act was passed that year. The first schedule of hikes for SMHC in 1926 listed a hike on September 18-19 to Round Top via Gatlinburg on trail number 5. Altitude 4900 feet. Distance 5 Miles. Over the following years of hiking in the Smokies by the club, there have been numerous other hikes on this mountain, climbing it from all sides. On this hike we will start from the Gatlinburg Community Center, hike across HWY 321 to Big Dudley Creek where we will mostly follow old roads but with some off-trail hiking to the Levi Ogle place on the Grapeyard Ridge Trail. From here we will continue up this creek on an old road for a while then bushwhack on to the crest of Mount Winnesoka at the summit of Round Top. Our descent will be down the dividing ridge between Dudley Creek and Roaring Fork Creek then dropping down to Little Dudley Creek and following it back to near the beginning. Hike around 9 miles with 3 ½ miles off-trail and the other on unmaintained old roads. Rated difficult. Contact one of the leaders for the meeting time and place.

Leaders: Ed Fleming, edwrdfm@aol.com and Mike Harrington, mike_harr@bellsouth.net

March 30-Saturday
Cumberland Gap: White Rocks and Sand Cave

The White Rocks signaled early settlers that they were about twenty miles, or a day's journey, from Cumberland Gap. Today it provides a destination for determined hikers (who will climb 1700' in 3 miles) with a wonderful view of Powell River valley and beyond. After leaving White Rocks we will visit Sand Cave, a huge rock shelter carpeted in fine sand. Then we will head back down the mountain. The hike is 9 miles rated moderate.

Meet at Outback Steakhouse on Merchants Dr. at 7:55 a.m. Drive 140 miles RT @ 7 cents = \$9.80.

Register at smhclub.org.

Leaders: David Smith dcsmith041@gmail.com and Val Beers vbeers@aol.com

**March 30 and 31—Saturday and Sunday
AT Trail Maintenance Backpack Hike**

We plan to hike up Middle Prong and Greenbrier Ridge Trails to the AT and Derrick Knob Trail Shelter where we spend the night along with possible through hikers. After resting up a bit we will hike southbound on the AT a mile or so and perform some light trail maintenance such as trimming vegetation, small blowdown removal and waterbar cleaning. We will return to the shelter for the night. In the morning after packing up, we will head northbound on the AT and continue working on the trail over to Buckeye Gap and the Miry Ridge Trail. There we head downhill to the Lynn Camp Prong trail and return to Middle Prong and back to the cars. Hike 8.3 miles plus 2-3 on the AT Saturday with 3000 ft. elevation gain and 12.7 Sunday. Rated Difficult. Drive 60 miles RT

Please register in advance with a leader. We plan to reserve several bunks at the trail shelter.

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

Steve Dunkin, Jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

For the Record

**January 10
Chestnut Top**

After 2 days of rainstorms, road closures and high water precluded the planned hike on Rich Mountain Loop Trail. Plan B was Chestnut Top Trail. On Wednesday morning, rain had ended and winds had calmed when 23 hikers, including 1 visitor, assembled at the Chestnut Top trailhead for the group photo. Another hiker joined later, for a total of 24. We set out under a cloudy sky with temperatures in the 30s. As usual the group spread along the trail as we went up the ridge, enjoying increasingly expansive views, east and north at first, then all around us. We passed the trail's high point at mile 2.8 surrounded by light snow. Scenic views continued on the way to Schoolhouse Gap. We went 0.2 mile to the picnic table at the Park boundary (and junction with Scott Mountain Trail), for an early lunch. Most of us returned the same way (9 miles total). Four hikers went down Schoolhouse Gap Trail to the Turkeypen Ridge Trail junction and back before returning. Those 4, having hiked 11 miles, arrived at the trailhead about when the last hiker returned from the picnic table.

- Eric Sundstrom



January 13
Stinging Fork Falls Section of the Cumberland Trail

Sixteen hikers, including a few visitors, hiked from the picnic trail head of the Piney River Recreation Management Area north, along Soak Creek about 5 miles each way, (10 miles total), 1,271 feet elevation gain to Stinging Fork Falls where we had lunch. A few continued 1 mile up the steep canyon wall to the Indian Head overlook before returning the same way. Warm bright sun appeared about 2 miles into the hike and for the rest of the day. The difficult trail included several short but steep climbs and drops. We navigated many rock steps. The spectacular scenery and camaraderie were highlights.

-Larry Johnson and Pat Watts



January 14
Louise Smith Legacy Hike LeConte Creek

After harsh weather and road closures delayed the outing for a week, fifteen adventurers finally found a window to celebrate the first of the 2024 SMHC Centennial Celebration Legacy Hikes. A brisk walk up the trail to the fantastically frozen Rainbow Falls warmed up everyone for the scramble that lay ahead. Hikers gingerly negotiated the icy boulders to the base of the falls and then proceeded to pick their ways along and up the bluffs. Although not as thrilling as scampering up the leaning log as was done in the old days, everyone still enjoyed the fun. The old route to the mountain's summit followed beautiful LeConte Creek and its adjacent open woods, and that was the path hikers took on this day. Those with the foresight to wear spikes sprinted easily up the mountain in the snow, while the rest of us slowly slipped and slid our ways up. Eventually, everyone made it to the top, some visiting the Lodge, some venturing to Cliff Tops. The descent should have been an anticlimactic affair along a well-maintained park trail. Unfortunately, the trail was a treacherous solid sheet of ice. Two hikers, trying to compensate for their decision to not bring spikes, decided a shortcut through woods would be more efficient than the trail. The hikers ended up with an unplanned visit to Dome Falls. In this day of handheld GPS, folks are deprived of the experience of getting themselves lost but fitting for a hike celebrating the history of the SMHC, some current members relived the good ole days with a detour down the wrong side of the mountain. Course corrections were made, a trail was relocated, and another tale from the Smokies was born.

-David Sands

January 24

Rich Mountain Loop, Indian Grave Gap and Crooked Arm Ridge Trails

Under cloudy skies near the Cades Cove entry gate, 15 hikers gathered, including a new member on his first Wednesday hike with the Club – and the first Centennial Challenge hike (two others had been canceled because of snow). Despite the warmer weather, we wore jackets against the brisk winds, and watched more than 30 wild turkeys and a few deer in an adjacent field. Winds continued as we assembled for the group photo at the sign marking Rich Mountain Loop Trail, and then set out. When we passed the Crooked Arm Ridge Trail junction, the winds intensified, roaring loudly around us as we crossed a shallow tributary to the Crooked Arm Branch. Soon the leading hikers saw a tree fall abruptly onto the forest floor. They stopped where they stood, waited for everyone to catch up, and questioned whether the wind made the hike too risky to continue. We agreed to go to the John Oliver cabin (~ 0.7 mile) and figure out what to do. There, after a short conversation (including 3 Board members), we decided to cancel the Club hike (1.4 miles, total), with the understanding that any who continued were on their own. By then the wind had abated. Some hikers returned to their cars via Cades Cove Loop Road. Others went up Rich Mountain Loop Trail. Those who completed the loop individually went ~8.6 miles with ~1,958 ft. climb.

- Eric Sundstrom



Plans are underway to re-schedule this Centennial hike (yet again!) as an “official” Wednesday hike, to give folks an opportunity to participate to earn their patch (although hiking it on your own also counts!)

Note in addition to the group photo, one of our hikers was wearing a Centennial long-sleeved T-shirt!

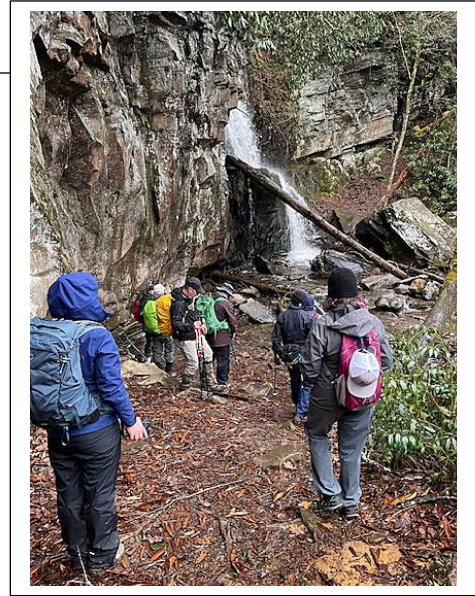
Please visit smhclub.org to check out our Centennial apparel and other items!



January 28
Baskins Creek-Grapeyard Ridge-Injun Creek Trails

On a day with a winter storm warning for the mountains, 11 members and one visitor met at the Greenbrier ranger station for this rescheduled and route-revised Centennial 100 hike. The bus shuttle to Cherokee Orchard provided by the Gatlinburg Recreation Department worked very well. Recent storms had brought down a lot of trees in the burned areas of Baskins Creek trail as well as along most of the rest of the route. Light rain, snow, wind, and swollen streams added to the challenges of the day, but the group took it all in good stride as we visited numerous historic sites. We enjoyed a dry lunch spot in the Alex Cole cabin on Roaring Fork. Side trips to Baskins Falls and the wrecked steam engine brought the hike mileage up to 11.2 miles, a good start for the 100-mile Challenge. A big thanks to Pat Watts for volunteering to be co-leader.

- Ed Fleming & Pat Watts



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club Officers and Directors

President: Steve Dunkin jsdunkin1302@gmail.com
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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.