



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

February 2019

Little Cataloochee – Off-Trail

February 2 – Saturday

This hike entails moderate off-trail exploration of the early nineteenth century mountains farms of the Bennett, Woody, and Conard families in a remote section of Little Cataloochee of the National Park. After taking an access trail for about a mile, the hike will follow ridges and streams as hikers examine the considerable detritus remaining from the farmsteads. Leaders will bring photos of the former cabins and barns for comparison with the current sites. Hiking distance about 8 miles. Meet at 7:00 (pre-register for location). RT 120 x .05 = \$6. *Pre-registration for this off-trail hike is required.*

Leaders: Mike Knies knies06@att.net and Mike Harrington mike_harr@bellsouth.net (865) 765-4604.

Meigs Mountain to Lumber Ridge

February 3- Sunday

This is an 11-mile shuttle hike starting at Jakes Creek trailhead in Elkmont to Meigs Mountain trail and across Meigs Mountain to Lumber Ridge and out at Tremont. We will climb 3500 feet along the way with a stop at a cemetery before descending to Lumber Ridge.

This hike is rated moderate. Meet at Alcoa Food City, 121 North Hall Road, at 7:15 AM or the Townsend Wye at 7:45 AM, to shuttle cars from the Wye to Tremont and then to Elkmont to begin the hike. 80 miles x \$.05 = \$4.00.

Leader: Dale Potter, dalepotter55@gmail.com, 865-773-8114

Ijams: Mead's Quarry, Ross Marble Quarry and thereabouts

February 9- Saturday

We'll begin by walking some of the trails in Ijams Nature Center, loop around Mead's Quarry and head off to Ross Marble Quarry and back. Depending on weather and enthusiasm we'll walk 5-7 miles. Bring a lunch and water. This hike is moderate, with one steep climb around Mead's Quarry and the possibility of muddy trails.

Meet 9:30am in Mead's Quarry parking area just south of Ijams Nature Center (2915 Island Home Avenue) and on the opposite side of Island Home Ave.

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

Bullhead Trail / Rainbow Falls

February 13- Wednesday

For this challenging hike, we will begin at the Cherokee Orchard Rd. trailhead for the Old Sugarlands Tr, hiking to the newly re-opened Bullhead Tr. We have a 5.9- mile climb of 3500 ft. on Bullhead, to the intersection of the Rainbow Falls Tr. On the way, we'll get to observe the changes in the landscape and re-growth since the fires of 2016, as well as great views! We then hike down Rainbow Falls for 6 miles, to return to our cars. If weather is snowy or icy, some may make this an in and out hike, others may just want to clamp on micro-spikes and go on! 12.4 miles, rated Difficult. Meet at Alcoa Food City at **7:30am** (Note earlier time) or at Old Sugarlands TH on Cherokee Orchard Rd. at 8:30am. Earlier start time due to length and difficulty of hike. Drive 80mi. RT = \$4.00.

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

Rich Mountain Loop

February 16- Saturday

The Rich Mtn. Loop hike will begin at the entrance of the Cades Cove Loop Road. (park near the info/orientation shelter near loop entrance). We will hike the Rich Mtn, Loop Trail, part of the Indian Grave Gap Trail and all of the Crooked Arm Trail. Along the way we will look at 6 former home sites, some are a short distance off trail, plus check out old chimney locations and truck parts. We will also stop at the site of the former Rich Mountain Fire Tower and Warden's cabin. Total distance about 9.5 miles. Rated moderate with about 1600 ft. climb. Meet at Alcoa Food City at 8:00 AM or Cades Cove at 9:15 AM. RT 60 miles x .05 = \$3. Leaders Mark and Janet Snyder (865) 448-1183

markandjanets@gmail.com

Twin Arches/Charit Creek Loop/Slave Falls Connector Tr

February 20- Wednesday

The magnificent Twin Arches of Big South Fork could be considered the premier sandstone arch features of the BSF National Recreational Area. For this interesting and visually exciting hike, we will start at the Twin Arches TH, taking the short loop to the base of the enormous arches. We will then pick up the Charit Creek Loop going counter-clockwise, heading towards the Slave Falls Connector Trail. Along the way, we pass under more fabulous Cumberland Plateau bluffs on a trail lined by healthy hemlocks, rhododendron and laurel. At the connector, we proceed 1.5 miles to the slender but very powerful Slave Falls, which plunge 60 ft, their roar amplified by a deep rockhouse. Then we retrace our steps, and do the other half of the Charit Creek Loop, pausing at Charit Creek Lodge (closed in winter) on one of the lovely porches, before climbing back up to the Twin Arches. There are intermittent boggy places in low-lying areas, so please wear appropriate footwear. Rated Moderate, 9.5 miles.. Meet at Books A Million, Oak Ridge at **7:30am** (Note earlier time) or at Twin Arches TH at approx. 9:15am. Drive 150mi RT (\$7.50).

Leader: Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-22-45149.

Tremont Naturalist Led Hike up Spruce Flats Manway and Upper Buckhorn Gap Manway to Middle Prong Trail

February 23- Saturday

This hike allows us to enjoy both creek side walking and ridge views. We'll begin by walking up the Spruce Flats manway past Spruce Flats Falls. There are approximately 10-12 small creek crossings on Spruce Flats manway, which may be rock-hopped in low water (in high water we may take Lumber Ridge instead). We'll then transition to the ridge, following Upper Buckhorn Gap manway to the Middle Prong trail, with excellent views across Walker Valley to the north, west, and south. There is a crossing of Lynn Camp Prong near the end of our route that will be a refreshing opportunity to get our feet (and possibly knees) wet. Elizabeth, a naturalist at Tremont Institute, will provide insight into the history and ecology of this section of the park as we walk.

We will meet at the Alcoa Food City parking lot at 8:00. Drive time to Tremont is around forty-five minutes. RT: 44 miles. Carpool reimbursement: \$2.00. Total of approximately 8-9 miles hiking – give or take. Hike rated moderate due to being manway and winter weather. Weather Note: If snow or ice is predicted the hike will be cancelled. In case of high water, the route may be altered.

Hike leaders: Steve Dunkin, 865-202-3286, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com and Elizabeth Davis, elizabeth@gsmiit.org

MEETING PLACES: Alcoa Food City = On right between 3rd & 4th stoplight (on Hall Rd., TN 35), a block before Big Lots. Comcast on Asheville Hwy = From Exit 394 ramp off I-40 go left (east) on Asheville Hwy, US-11E/25W/70, to signal light at top of hill; turn right, down into Comcast lot, 5720 Asheville Hwy; park to left of entry, about 2 lanes over toward the exit end of lot. Gold's Gym & Books-a-Million in Oak Ridge = 310 South Illinois Avenue 3-1/2 traffic lights in, on left coming from Knoxville, opposite Walmart. Meet next to Illinois Ave. in front of Books-a-Million.

COMING EVENTS – March 2019

- 2 Saturday A.T. work trip
- 9 Saturday GRSM Schoolhouse hike
- 16 Saturday Burnt Mill Bridge loop
- 23 Saturday Virgin Falls
- 30 March Anakeesta. Off-trail

NEWCOMER TO HIKING WITH SMHC?

Some hints: Our 'difficulty ratings' are gauged to SMHC members with some experience with our hikes, not to the general public, nor to sometime or flatland hikers who are all likely to find our 'easy, moderate, or difficult' seem to under-rate the difficulty. Always be prepared for worse weather (wetter, colder) than expected. Wear adequate boots. Always bring rain gear, water, and food. Each carpool rider should reimburse the driver 5¢ per mile. If you have any doubts or questions, please contact the hike leader.

And please note: No dogs or firearms are permitted on any Club hikes, whether inside or outside of GSMNP

*New members will be recognized in the March newsletter

FOR THE RECORD

Backpack to Laurel Gap Cataloochee Balsam Mtn Loop 11-17 and 11-18 -18

We saw the whole elk herd on the way to the Palmer Creek parking place on a sunny cool morning. Three members started out following the creek and even enjoyed a few late fall colors. The trail got steep and a lunch break was welcome at Balsam Mtn road. Then on to the Balsam Mtn trail over to Laurel Gap Shelter on a real nice warming afternoon. Not much of a crowd at the shelter on a night that got fairly cold and clear so a fire in the fireplace was welcome. The next day was quite sunny and warmed up a lot while hiking along the Ridge and down Pretty Hollow Gap trail and back to the car.



Tim Bigelow and Steve Dunkin

Hidden Passage, Pickett SP 12-15-18

Six members and 3 visitors braved a gloomy forecast and traveled to Pickett State Park to hike the Hidden Passage trail, a true "hidden gem!"

The first half of the hike was rain-less, and we admired healthy hemlocks, lush rhododendron and laurel-filled gorges, full waterfalls including Crystal Falls, and spectacular rock houses. The trail meanders above and below the bluff line, allowing views of Cumberland plateau bluffs



across gorges, especially at Thompson Overlook. The rock houses are home to the federally endangered Cumberland sandwort, which we were privileged to see. We ate lunch under a rock-house with a slim waterfall pouring off the edge of the sandstone bluff ledge above and in front of us. After lunch, rain began, and although it was steady, it was never drenching. Each hiker had come prepared with rain gear and excellent spirits! Our total hike was about 8.5 miles and a true pleasure. Diane Petrilla and Karen Brackett

Curry Mountain Trail and Lunch at Elvira's 12-19-2018

As we gathered at Metcalf Bottoms to start the hike up Curry Mountain trail, the weather was cool and the group was large. I never did get an accurate count of the number of hikers. I thought there were 29 hikers, but Dave thought there were 30. The layers began to be shed as several hikers attempted to reduce the insulation they were wearing. Most of the group decided to continue to Campsite 19. The rest of the group stopped at the intersection and started back down. Two of the hikers, who had decided to finish the loop, continued past the campsite to Meigs Creek trail and



down to the Sinks. The group returned to Metcalf Bottoms to go to Elvira's. When twenty-two of us got there we had a noisy, happy, lunch in a room of our own.

The hike to the Campground 19 and back from the trailhead is 7.6 miles with about 1290 feet of elevation gain plus about 0.1 miles from the parking lot to the trailhead. For those who stopped at the intersection it is 6.6 miles from the trailhead with 1,211-foot elevation gain. Ron Bradenburg

Concord Park 12-22-2018

On a lovely morning after several days of rain, seven hikers gathered at the Concord Park trailhead for a nice walk along the lake and back on slightly higher elevation. The trail was surprisingly dry and pleasant walking. The lake scenery was beautiful on the sunny morning. The route took us through an area of significant devastation caused by what must have been a small



tornado. Fortunately, the trail volunteers had cleared the way. Tim Bigelow

Cooper Road and Cane Creek

12-26-2018

The day was cool and cloudy as 12 hikers gathered at the Abrams Creek ranger station but later the sun came out and it was a beautiful warm day. The theme of this hike was creek crossings. Water levels were high enough that the crossings ranged from sorta difficult to definitely difficult. In most cases some of the rocks for rock hopping were under water. Not deeply under water,

but enough that your shoes were in the water and they could be slick. Sometimes it was hard to even find the row of rocks. One crossing had a large tree across it and some of us walked across it. There was a large limb that would be used for a railing for most of the crossing. We were pretty sure that we would not get across the last crossing and on to the park border but when we got to the next to the last, there did not appear to be any way across without getting wet so we stopped there and went back to campsite 2 for lunch. The length of the hike was shortened by about 0.5 miles with the early stop. 10.7 mile with 1,156-foot elevation gain.

Ron Brandenburg



Ann Davis Commemorative Hike

12-29-18

Nine members and two visitors enjoyed a gorgeous hike that resulted in a slight

alteration due to a road closure (high water). The road walk next to the gushing river was incredible! After turning around on the Middle Prong trail beyond the spectacular cascades, we hiked back to the Tremont Institute and explored the dramatic Spruce Flats Falls.

Ann Davis'

birthday was celebrated with cupcakes. (She is credited with inspiring the development of GSMNP). Thanks to new SMHC member Carter Hall of the Wilderness Society for joining us and providing updates on the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Cindy Spangler



Seven Islands

1-1-19

Nine hikers (including 4 visitors) said, "Hello" to 2019 with a 3.7 mile hike at Seven Islands State Birding Park on January 1, 2019. We noted a number of changes at the park. There is a wooden viewing platform overlooking Schumpert Pond. This pond has no fish in it in order to encourage amphibians, insects, etc. Coming down from the Upland Trail

Inner Loop we noted and heard construction on the foot bridge between the park and one of the large islands. Park officials stated they are not sure when it will be finished as TDOT is in charge of this. They hope, though, it might

be finished by April. We were unable to view Wayne's Pond via the Seven Islands Loop Trail due to its wet condition. The French Broad river was running fast and high. As a result of flooding on the Seclusion Bend Trail we had to make several detours in order to arrive at the Maple Leaf Barn. Right before the parking lot to the right of Kelly Lane we noted a newly



developed trail named Walnut Ridge. We elected not to hike this 1.2 mile out and back trail as it was up hill and muddy with many fallen wet leaves. We were sad to miss the "wonderful" view from the top of the hill where the trail ends. We had a nice day with some bird sightings, lots of good company and conversation. Adele Soucy and Beth Eades.

Chestnut Top

1-2-2019

Twenty-six hikers gathered at the Townsend "wye" to hike up Chestnut Top trail to the picnic table. Four hikers did not go all the way and four other hikers decided to go down Schoolhouse Gap trail and make a longer

loop. So, eighteen hikers enjoyed lunch at the picnic table. The weather was cool and cloudy as we



started but climbing up the trail warmed us and jackets were shed as we went. At the picnic table it got cool again and many of the jackets went back on. The trail is not very photogenic this time of year, unlike how it will be in April and May when the wildflowers are out. The choice of trail was fortuitous because it could be easily reached. Many of the roads are closed due to the government shutdown making many of the trails in the park inaccessible. Rain was predicted for later in the afternoon. As the early hikers waited at the cars for the later arrivals, the rain started. It was light but enough that we got in the cars to wait for a few minutes. 9.0 miles with 1,156-foot elevation gain.

Ron Brandenburg

Schoolhouse Gap/Chestnut Top

1-5-19

Twenty-one hikers showed up on a sunny winter day for a pleasant 6.8 mile stroll in the mountains. After devouring a bag of snickers at Schoolhouse Gap



we were treated to views of snow covered mountains along Chestnut Top.

David Smith & Lois Esmark

Have you paid your dues for 2019?

See the form in the January newsletter and include your check for the appropriate amount. Alternately, you can visit the website at www.smhclub.org/membership where you can also pay your dues through a secure link.

Note to Leaders:

Please send hike reports & photos to the editor at: ches1995@yahoo.com and to spangler@utk.edu For upcoming hikes, please include preferred contact method (email, phone), meet location and mileage.

PLEASE SUPPORT SMHC THROUGH KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS: It only takes a few minutes

There is an easy way to show your support for the Conservation Program of Smoky Mountains Hiking Club. All it takes is a few minutes of your time to enroll. It costs you nothing, but a fraction of your Kroger purchases will be returned to SMHC. In the most recent quarter, proceeds from only 23 SMHC member households amounted to \$110. Kroger distributes up to \$375,000 quarterly to all registered programs. Imagine if even half of our 600 hiking club members enrolled!

Here's a simple How-to Guide:

If you shop at Kroger even occasionally, you likely have a Kroger Plus Card. If so, go online to www.Kroger.com/communityrewards and click "I'm a Customer" to log-in to your account or create a new account.

1. If you have not created an account for your Plus Card, do so first.
2. Under "Find an Organization" search "Smoky Mountains Hiking Club" and click Enroll. You can also search for the SMHC Non-Profit Organization (NPO) number MV194. Alternatively, you can visit the customer service counter at your store to enroll.

That's all. It takes 7 - 10 days for your enrollment to become active. The good news is that Kroger has ended the requirement to re-enroll annually, so your choice of SMHC will last as long as you choose. Of course, your child or grandchild might persuade you that his or her marching band is more deserving, but you can change back to SMHC after she or he graduates. It's your choice, but rest assured that the club will utilize every dollar to support conservation of the areas where we love to hike.

NOTE: The Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and its Executive Board maintain a strictly non-commercial status for the club and its activities. By providing information on the Community Rewards Program, SMHC in no way endorses or advertises the Kroger Company.

**Updates from the A.T. Trail Maintainers Group:
Some ATMC Accomplishments in 2018**

For the year ending 9/30/18, 232 maintainers worked a total of 7656 hours to care for 101.9 miles of A.T. between Davenport Gap, TN and Wesser, NC. These numbers include work with 7 different visiting volunteer groups, contributing over 1100 hours. On June 2, 2018, we held another successful National Trails Day event, with 11 crews of 6-8 people working hard on different sections of the A.T. in the Park, followed by a wonderful picnic at Greenbrier.

Excellent leadership was provided by Don and Nancy Dunning, Cindy Spangler, Pete Berntsen, Steve Dunkin, Philip Royer, Karen Brackett, Ed Fleming and Tim Bigelow. In July, four maintainers, Steve Dunkin, Amanda Beal, Neil Snapp and Ruann Wood undertook a complete A.T. shelter survey in the Park; Neil completed the work in October. Their data will be collated and used to plan for future repairs and projects for the shelters.

A huge endeavor this year has been transitioning Mulch Operations to a new "model" with the retirement of Don Dunning. We were very fortunate to recruit Philip Clarkson, who works for the NPS in trail management, to head up Mulch Operations, and have been recruiting teams of folks to carry mulch to the hike-able shelters in the Park. We also hope to re-establish a regular schedule of help with the equestrian clubs in the area. The replacement of the privy at Spence was delayed by helicopter availability until Spring (hopefully). Another formidable project just accomplished in late October (and technically counted in next year's report) was the replacement of the Davenport Gap Shelter roof, under the expert leadership of Ed Fleming, and with help of 19 other maintainers, including a group of enthusiastic college students from Virginia Tech.

Looking ahead, fostering relationships with a diversity of volunteer groups, young people, and others who are our future maintainers has become a priority, as our existing strong and dedicated maintainer core ages. This is a challenge faced by all 31 maintaining Clubs along the A.T., as we learned at the Volunteer Leadership Conference in August, at the National Conservation Training Center. Come along and maintain with us! And our deepest appreciation goes out to all who worked last year and continue to work so hard on the Appalachian Trail.

Diane Petrilla

If you are interested in maintaining the A.T., contact Diane Petrilla. petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149

For those interested, there will be a chainsaw certification class in February. Act fast, as registrations are due by January 30.