



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

April 2020

Still happening: **APPALACHIAN TRAIL WORK TRIP**

April 6 - Saturday

This month's "First Saturday" AT maintenance activity we will be starting blowdown removal from our AT sections in the National Park. Our plan is to deploy certified sawyers along with other volunteers to cover sections readily accessible as day trips in the high country with access from Newfound Gap and points along the Clingman's Dome access road.

Please contact the leaders by email prior to this trip so we can pre-organize teams based on available sawyers. On the workday we will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Sugarlands Visitor Center parking area near the restrooms to organize our teams. Watch weather conditions during the week prior and judge the clothing (and possibly traction devices for icy trail) you may want to have in addition to work gloves and appropriate footwear, lunch, and water. Mileages will vary depending on work section. Maximum mileage approximately 10 miles.

Leaders: Dick Ketelle, rhketelle@comcast.net, 865-483-9345
And Diane Petrilla, petrillad@gmail.com, 931-224-5149.

SMHC Hiking Outings are Canceled through 4/12/2020

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Smoky Mountains Hiking Club hikes of any size between now and Sunday, April 12, are CANCELED with the exception of the Saturday April 4 AT work trip, which must occur within the chainsaw window.

The hike cancellation window may be extended depending on medical updates.

We will be back in touch to let you know when outings will resume. Be safe and healthy! ~The SMHC Board of Directors

Canceled: SAMS CREEK – Off-Trail

April 4 – Saturday

The upper Tremont road was damaged by the February 6 flooding (highest flow since 2003) and is currently closed. This off-trail route is lovely in April, and much of the valley should be carpeted in wildflowers. As described in the Handbook, the route follows old railroad grades on Sams Creek and Starkey Creek to Starkey Gap on the AT. After hiking 0.6 mi on the AT, we again go off-trail to retrace most of the route along Sams Creek. Although we are not hiking in Sams Creek we will need to cross it several times, making wet feet a possibility—so an extra pair of socks will be desirable for some. If the upper Tremont Road is not open on April 4 we will do a Tremont alternative hike, e.g., following the closed road to its end and then climbing up to the abandoned CCC trail which leads to Upper Buckhorn Gap and from there by trail and manway back to the trailhead. Sams Creek is almost totally off-trail and rated difficult.

Mike Harrington, mike_harr@bellsouth.net, 865-765-4604 and
Steve Dickinson, Winston.fob@comcast.net

Canceled: PORTER'S CREEK WILDFLOWER HIKE

April 11 – Saturday

It is time for the classic spring wildflower hike in Greenbrier up the Porters Creek trail to BCS31 and back. In addition to the abundance of wildflowers on this hike, there are several historical sites including the Messer barn and former SMHC cabin to see in the first easy mile. This hike is 7.2 miles. Leaders: Nancy and Don Dunning, ngdpt@aol.com, (865)705-9416.

BRADLEY FORK TO CABIN FLATS

April 15 - Wednesday

We will go to the Smokemont area of the Park to explore the trail along the Bradley Fork of the Oconaluftee River, hoping to find wildflowers along the way. We will take the Bradley Fork Trail to the Cabin Flats Trail, and then follow that to Campsite 49 to enjoy our lunch by the water. We will return to the Smokemont campgrounds the same way. Hike: 9.7 miles rated moderate. Elevation gain about 1,100 ft. Meet at Alcoa Food City at 7:30am (note earlier time), or at the Bradley Fork trailhead (at the back of Smokemont Campgrounds) at 9:15am. Drive 126 miles RT (@5¢=\$6.30). Leader: Pat Watts, 901-487-7941, watts_at_home@yahoo.com.

WHITE OAK SINK

April 18 - Saturday

White Oak Sink, basically a basin surrounded by steep hills, is without a doubt one of the most popular wildflower hikes in the Smokies. Every April this natural botanical garden comes alive with more than 40 varieties of native wildflowers. The name "Sink" comes from the caves that are found in the area, more like rocky sinkholes. Wildflowers, history, and geology will comprise our day. Hike: Roughly 8 miles RT with a steep climb out of the Sink, rated moderate. Meet at Alcoa Food City, 121 North Hall Road, at 8:30 AM. Drive: 40 miles RT @5¢ = \$2.00. Leader: Alan Sweetser, 865-938-7627 and Doris Gove, dorisgove@aol.com, 865-522-9896.

FROZEN HEAD STATE PARK WILDFLOWER HIKE

April 19 - Sunday

Frozen Head State Park encompasses over 24,000 acres of wilderness and wildflower diversity. We will begin the hike by parking a couple of cars at the picnic area (our ending point) and shuttle folks about 1 mile to the trailhead. Typically, we will be able to enjoy dozens of species of wildflowers this time of year. Besides the wildflowers, on this year's hike (Panther Branch and North Old Mac Trails) we will enjoy waterfalls, footbridge crossings, cascades and cascade crossings, and an overlook with distant valley views. Hike 6 miles and drive 50 miles RT@ 5 cents per mile = \$2.50. The hike is rated moderate. Meet at Oak Ridge Books A Million on S. Illinois Avenue ready to leave @ 9:00 AM. A reminder: This is a wildflower hike and as such WILL be at a much slower pace. Leaders: Lynda Bryan, ellymay2015@aol.com, 865-661-3117, Jim Quick, jghiker37@aol.com, 865-660-3351

SHORT EASY EVENING HIKE: EAST FORK POPLAR CREEK AND WILDFLOWER GREENWAYS IN OAK RIDGE

April 20 - Monday

We'll enjoy a pleasant evening stroll on the new East Fork Poplar Creek greenway in Oak Ridge. This nice trail along Poplar Creek was recently completed by Clinch Valley Trail Alliance and Greenways Oak Ridge. We'll hike out to the current end of the trail and back and might see a few wildflowers. The trail can be a little muddy. If there is time, we will also hike a little of the nearby Wildflower trail and look for some larkspur. If the evening is pleasant and anyone is interested, we may stop by Crafters Brew just up the Turnpike for dinner. Meet at 5:30 at the Boys & Girls Club parking lot off S. Jefferson Circle just off the Turnpike in west Oak Ridge. Leader: Tim Bigelow, 865-607-6781, Bigelowt2@mindspring.com

CHESTNUT TOP TO WEST PRONG

April 22 - Wednesday

Shuttle hike. We'll start up the Chestnut Top Trail, enjoying the wildflowers as we go. Then it's out Schoolhouse Gap to Bote Mountain to West Prong. Hike: 10.2 miles rated moderate. (Those wanting to do a longer 14.5-mile hike can loop out to Turkeypen Ridge and Finley Cane, but be sure to carpool accordingly). Elevation gain about 2,100 ft. Meet at Alcoa Food City <see list> at 8:00am, or at the Townsend Wye at 8:30am. Drive 60 miles RT @5¢=\$3.00. Leader: Pat Watts, 901-487-7941, watts_at_home@yahoo.com.

JAKES CREEK / BLANKET MOUNTAIN

April 25 - Saturday

This hike will begin at the Jakes Creek Trail Head parking lot. Along the way to the Blanket Mountain Fire Tower site we will stop at other places people may find interesting, for example Lem Ownby's home site as well as that of two of his sisters and one of his brothers. Chimneys and artifacts are all that remains. The stories are hilarious, and photos will be shared. Railroad and logging will be pointed out with map and picture verification, as the current trail follows the old RR - logging bed. We will also make a stop at the Avent Cabin and try to get to the Avent's daughter's cabin. The daughter urged her mother to buy the Cabin for her studio. We will travel through some briers and if the water is down, we will continue up Jake's Creek on the opposite side of the Creek. We will vote on it! There are home sites on that side of the creek. Regardless, when we get to the foot bridge we will continue to the gap, with an occasional stop along the way. On the way to the top of Blanket mountain some vistas may still be opened to see westward to Cades Cove. I promise the walk down from Jake's Gap will be easier than the walk up! Hike distance 8 miles, rated Moderate to Strenuous due to Blanket Mt off-trail. Park at the Jakes Creek trailhead ready to depart by 9 AM. Leaders: Mark and Janet Snyder, 865-448-1183.



Backpack: LEAD COVE TO JENKINGS RIDGE TO 84 THEN OUT VIA LAKESHORE TRAIL THEN BOAT OR SPENCE SHELTER AND OUT CADES COVE

April 25-26 – Saturday- Sunday

This backpack trip has two options and will combine high elevation late spring views and wildflowers with lower elevation lake views. We will begin climbing the Lead Cove trail and stop for lunch at the always spectacular Spence Field. From there we head over toward Rocky Top. Part of the group will head down the Jenkins Ridge Trail which is a long steady downhill trek to Hazel Creek trail and Campsite 84 where we camp for the night. The other group will stay at Spence Field shelter for the night and will head down via Russell Field to Cades cove in the morning. The Jenkins Ridge group in the morning will follow Hazel Creek trail to Lakeshore Trail. Lakeshore east of Hazel has some ups and downs and some long level sections and frequent views of Fontana Lake. We plan to hike as far as Lakeshore site 81 where the Fontana boat will take us back to previously stationed cars. Rated Difficult. Hike distance is either 6 or 15 miles Saturday and 10 miles Sunday. Drive 100 miles RT = \$5.00. Contact a leader to pre-register (required). Tim Bigelow, Bigelowt2@mindspring.com, 865-607-6781 Steve Dunkin, jsdunkin1302@gmail.com

COMING EVENTS – May 2018

4 Saturday	AT Work Trip
11 Saturday	Ramsey Cascades
11 Saturday	Sams Creek Off-Trail
18 Saturday	Bald River Falls
18-19 Sat/Sun	Ladies only backpack Cabin Flats
25 Saturday	New Section of CT
27 Monday	Joint Hike with Carolina Mtn Club

MEETING PLACES: **Alcoa Food City** = On right between 3rd & 4th stoplight (on Hall Rd., TN 35), a block before Big Lots. **Map Link** **Boys and Girls Club of Oak Ridge** = Oak Ridge Turnpike/ Hwy 95 to Jefferson. Immediate left onto S. Jefferson Circle. On your right **Map Link**. **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 **Map Link** **Jakes Creek Trailhead** at the end of the campground in Elkmont, in GSMNP **MapLink** **Oak Ridge Books-a-Million** = 310 South Illinois Avenue. (same lot as Golds Gym) 3-1/2 traffic lights in, on left coming from Knoxville, opposite Walmart. Meet next to Illinois Ave. in front of Books-a-Million. **Map Link**

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Christie Bruns	bryanjr911@yahoo.com	865/748-3500
130 Konawa Way	Loudon TN	37774
Bryan & September Helton	bryanjr911@yahoo.com	865/748-3500
13111 Clear Ridge Rd	Knoxville TN	37922
Linda and M. Jennings		865/659-6148
4900		
Avis Ln	Knoxville TN	3791
Cynthia West	clynnwest@yahoo.com	423/312-5161
1576 Quarles Rd	Jefferson City TN	3776
Ken Yeiser	kyeiser@windstream.net	270/879-0612
345 Caney Creek Rd	Caneyville KY	42712

Wildflowers: Did you know that the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a world-renowned preserve of wildflower diversity—over 1,500 kinds of flowering plants are found in the park, more than in any other North American national park. A group of flowers known as spring ephemerals begins the yearly show. Ephemerals are so named because they appear above ground only in late winter and early spring, then flower, fruit, and die back within a short two-month period. They emerge from February through April and are gone (dormant) by May or June. Spring ephemerals include flowers such as trillium (the park has 10 different species), lady slipper orchids, showy orchis, crested dwarf iris, fire pink, columbine, bleeding heart, phacelia, jack-in-the-pulpit, little brown jugs, and violets, to name just a few.

Credit: <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/nature/wildflowers.htm>

FOR THE RECORD

Snake Den Ridge / Appalachian Trail / Low Gap Loop

January 29, 2020

On a cloudy morning, 15 hikers met at the Cosby Campground parking lot. We anticipated snow in the higher elevations, and that's what we found. We started by splitting into 2 groups. One followed the paved road through the campground to the Snake Den trailhead. The other group went to the short spur trail linking the Low Gap and Snake Den trails. We reunited and continued up a slope once dominated by hemlocks, now standing dead, visible through beeches, oaks, tulip poplars, and other deciduous trees. We passed many fallen hemlocks, sometimes across the trail. We crossed Rock Creek on a foot-log bridge (icy enough to appreciate the handrail) on the way to the first of 8 switchbacks, then rock-hopped over Inadu Creek on the way to the second. By the 4th switchback (elevation ~4,000 ft.) the sun had broken through the high clouds and we enjoyed spectacular views north and east from the overlook. As we continued up the ridge-top we saw scattered snow beside the trail. By the last switchback we had entered a forest covered in a beautiful, 6-inch layer of snow – which slowed our progress and left us spread out along the trail. We finally gathered for lunch at the junction with the Maddron Bald Trail (elevation 5,360 ft). Then we again split into two groups for another hour of hiking in sunshine before cloud-cover returned. Nine hikers went back down the Snake Den trail (~10 miles, 2,840 ft. climb). The other 6 finished the loop through the snow – up to the Appalachian Trail, through more snow to Camel Gap and along the ridge-top to the Cosby shelter. On the way down the snow thinned and had disappeared for the walk down Low Gap Trail to the parking lot (~13.3 miles total, 3,942 ft. climb). The second group arrived about an hour after the first. We all enjoyed the snowy hike.

- Eric Sundstrom



Photo Program

February 9, 2020

Twelve members gathered at the Humana Health Training Center for visual excursions to Patagonia, Costa Rica, the Canadian Rockies, and East TN. Huge thanks to Sarah

Wimmer for arranging the stellar venue and to Joan Tomlinson, Dale Potter and Tim Bigelow for pics!

~Cindy Spangler

Albright Grove

February 15, 2020

Nine hikers took advantage of a glorious sunny morning to hike Maddron Bald trail to the Albright Grove loop, around the loop and back to the cars. This section of trail is among the prettiest and easiest to hike sections in the park, thanks to the work completed by the CCC and continuing maintenance by the park (a thousand thanks for the broad, stout footlong across Indian Camp Creek). It also has a well-hidden trailhead in the wilds of Cosby. We finished refreshed and fortified against more gloomy, wet February weather.



~Claudia Dean

Angel Falls/ Grand Gap Loop

February 26, 2020

Thirteen dedicated Wednesday hikers drove to Big South Fork on this overcast rain-promised day to begin our hike at the Leatherwood Ford TH on the John Muir Trail on the west side of the river. It was quickly apparent, that since this leader had scouted the hike a month ago, that all of the heavy rains we have had, caused much flooding, including at some point completely covering the trail. Although the trail was hike-able, there was debris on all sides, and we calculated the water on both sides of the BSF must have risen 25-30 ft. Debris caught on the old footbridge, debris in trees, debris piled up on the banks. Mud became a big theme of this initial 2 miles or so, especially as we navigated around a blowdown that had taken out part of the trail, and had to slip and slide down and up muddy banks. No worries, I was confident the beautiful fairly new bridge over Fall Branch would be intact. NOT! A tree had rammed into it, destroying about half of it, so we crossed gingerly, using part bridge, part rocks. I was starting to worry about my credibility as a hike leader by then.

Climbing up the gorge, parts of the trail had slipped off the bank, but were still walkable. At the top, bluff rock, used a cable and ladder to navigate rocks, and were finally on top of the plateau. The narrow gorge you pass through to get to this is lush with

rhododendron, old beech tress, moss and lovely rock. The 6.8 mile Grand Gap Loop is delightful- mostly flat, with intermittent stunning views Angel Falls (really a rapids) and the gorge below. It drizzled for about 2 hours up there, but never too hard. The rain stopped just in time for a lunch break. Upon completing the loop, we descended again, and most people crossed Fall Branch at a different spot (mud pit), and 2 people took on the bridge challenge a second time. Of the 13 hikers, 11 completed the whole hike, and 2 did a shortened versions. All made it back, muddy but intact! The BSF never fails to disappoint, and February hikes never fail to be a challenge! Total hike mileage 12.4 miles.

~Diane Petrilla



Sugarlands History Hike

February 29, 2020

A total of 14 people arrived to go on this hike. Janet was not able to make this hike, doctors orders, so Ernie Wiles was asked to serve as sweep. Ernie did a fine job, he's just not as pretty as my wife! We met at the SVC for sign in and hike instructions. The temperature was below 30, and we were all glad to get moving come 9 a.m. Within 30 minutes the Sun broke through and warmed our spirits as the moving warmed our bodies.

Took note of the power poles and old homesites along the Old Sugarland Trail. Some of the hikers admitted they never noticed the pole at the stone quarry, as they are always marveling at the quarry itself to even take note of the upright pole. We continued onto old State Rte. 71 for about 300 yds when we turned left onto the old farm lane which parallels S R 71. We came across 2 home sites along the way and

then crossed Dry Branch, which I have never seen dry, even in a drought. After crossing Dry Branch we entered into the 5 acre or so, trash dump. Barrels, oil drums, car parts, electric insulators, roof slate, culverts, railroad rails, even toilet seats.



Among this trash was the sign of a former home site with the beautiful yellow daffodils overshadowing the surrounding trash. We walked upstream to find 3 more home sites before working our way back to the CCC dam, and through the CCC dump and ate lunch at the big chimneys. Old maps of the area were shared and numerous questions asked, of which many answers remained speculative. After lunch, one hiker opted to follow the OST back to her car, she was a good hiker and kept up, just had to leave early. We continued through the forest/old farm fields to 4 more home sites and an old plow head Janet found ten years ago and I placed it on a small boulder. We continued to the Sugarlands Cemetery entering from the back of the cemetery. Pointed out that the way people come to visit today is not the path 100 years ago. After some reflection at this cemetery we proceeded to the Pi Beta Phi teacher cottage and with all helping we found the location of where the Pi Beta Phi field school stood. Our group picture was taken at this location. (note school brick in the picture). A wonderful group of people made for a fun day.
~Mark and Janet Snyder

Hen Wallow Falls and Campsite 34

March 4, 2020

Can you believe, the day started sunny with no threat of rain. Twenty-two hikers (one visitor) gathered to hike to Hen Wallow Falls and beyond. The route was not entirely along Gabes Mountain trail.

We started up the road we just drove in on until we came to the old road to Hen Wallow falls. Nature is doing a good job of reclaiming the unused road. Numerous



blowdowns, rhododendrons encroaching on the trail, and small hemlocks and other trees growing in the old roadway made the

journey challenging. After getting back to the trail we continued on to Hen Wallow Falls access trail. Some chose to go down to the falls and others continued on to campsite 34. Some turned around after visiting the falls and returned to the cars. The rest continued on to the campsite after visiting the falls. This meant that the group was strung out along a large part of the trail. At the creek just before the campsite we settled down for lunch. Only two hikers actually crossed the creek. One got a wet foot coming back across. On the way back at least two hikers went down to the falls making them the last ones back to the cars.

~Ron Brandenburg

Cucumber Gap Loop

March 7, 2020



On this beautiful day 9 members and 2 visitors came out to soak up some much-needed sunshine on this hike. As the day started out a little bit cool it ended up nice and warm. We did not have to make too many stream crossings

but the first one was swollen and made it a difficult, so 9 braved it across (a couple ended up with wet feet) 2 hikers made a u-turn and returned the way they came.

~Ernie Wiles

Cades Cove Vehicle-Free Days

Public Comment Deadline: March 27, 2020

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials invite the public to comment on a proposed change in vehicle-free access days on the Cades Cove Loop Road. For over 40 years, park managers have implemented several vehicle-free opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians in Cades Cove. Currently, the road is closed to vehicles on Wednesday and Saturday mornings until 10:00 a.m. from May through September. Due to growing use and congestion, the park is proposing to implement a pilot study for the 2020 season to evaluate changing this vehicle-free period to a weekly, full day closure on Wednesdays from May through September. Closure on Saturdays would no longer be in effect. Please click on this link (or copy and paste it into your browser), then scroll to the Comment Now Box at bottom left if you wish to express your thoughts on this topic.

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=382&projectId=94330&documentID=101928>

Notice: The SMHC board is trying to complete our collection of monthly newsletters.

If you have any from the years 2008-2014 that you're willing to donate, please let Cindy know! The Newsletters will be added to the permanent archive at UT Hodges Library.
Cindy Spangler, spangler@utk.edu / 865-776-1301

SAVE THE DATE!!

National Trails Day, Saturday June 6, 2020!

Come and help out on the Appalachian Trail for a day:

T-shirts, picnic and door prizes!

More info and registration form to follow soon!

