



Smoky Mountains Hiking Club

P O Box 51592 Knoxville, TN 37950-1592

Exploring the Smokies Since 1924

A Message to Our Members from SMHC President Dr. Diane Petrilla June 7, 2020

Another month has passed for all of us living with the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope you have remained safe and well. The COVID-19 committee of the SMHC (which includes medical professionals and Club and/or BOD members) has now made the recommendation to the BOD to resume Club hikes in July, and the BOD has approved this recommendation. The COVID-19 committee will continue to meet monthly for the time being, and closely monitor the pandemic situation, especially in Tennessee and North Carolina, and adjust recommendations based on data. Guidelines have been created to promote safe hiking and Club events. We know this represents some inconvenience and change. One day this will be behind us! In the meantime, we appreciate your patience and adherence to the following guidelines for safe hiking:

1. One hike leader will serve as pre-registration contact, with e-mail and phone # available in the write-up. Pre-registration is required for all hikes.
2. No more than 10 total participants may be on a hike (including leader, co-leader). Registration will have to be halted when there are 10 participants.
3. All meetups will be at the trail head, so adjust meetup drive time accordingly.
4. No carpooling except for people in their trusted "bubble."
5. Hikes will be chosen to avoid crowded trailheads and crowded trails.
6. Events should be no more than a 2-hour drive from the Knoxville area.
7. Avoid hikes that will involve a key swap or shuttle.
8. Hikers must sign a release form, with accurate contact information.
9. Inform hikers if anyone becomes ill with in a few days of the event, with symptoms concerning for COVID-19, to contact the hike leader immediately. (In addition to the usual pre-hike info). For regular pre-hike prep, see <http://www.smhclub.org/outingpreparation.htm>.
10. All participants must have a face mask, to use at trailhead meetup, and then if needed, when distancing on the trail from other hikers is not feasible.
11. Maintain 6 ft. of distance between hikers, and if possible 10-12 ft.
12. Stop at junctions to be sure group is all present, given the spacing out.
13. All participants should have hand sanitizer or wipes.
14. No sharing of food.
15. If leader(s) or any participant feels sick, please stay at home.
16. If leader(s) need to alter planned activity, please contact an SMHC Board member ASAP to discuss proposed changes.

Diane Petrilla, M.D.
President, Smoky Mountains Hiking Club
Knoxville, Tennessee

JULY HIKES

KNOXVILLE BOTANICAL GARDENS

July 5 – Sunday

This hike will feature a wooded area, community gardens, a pollinator garden, a bamboo squeeze, beautiful stone architecture, and a story book. We will ID special trees, such as Kentucky coffee, American chestnut, cedars of Lebanon, and a beech with beechnuts. We will try to stay in the shade. If I get permission, I can take you to a place not open to public. Bring mask, hand sanitizer, water, and snacks.

Hike: 2-3 miles. We will meet at 2743 Wimpole Street parking area 1 at 1:00PM. Limit: 10 people.

Preregister with Doris Gove, 865-456-8198 or dorisgove@aol.com

Leaders: Doris Gove and Betty Glenn

AT Work Trip
July 12 – Saturday
TBD

RICH MOUNTAIN TRAIL AT ACE GAP TO INDIAN GRAVE GAP TRAIL TO SCOTT MOUNTAIN TRAIL TO CAMPSITE 6 AND RETURN

July 15 - Wednesday

8.3 miles. Rated moderate due to a 1,600 foot climb in the first 2.3 miles, 2,100 foot total elevation gain. Meet at Ace Gap Trailhead to begin hiking at 8:30AM.

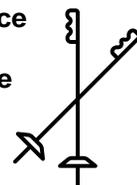
Leader: David Grab 865-405-5779, digrab@aol.com

MEETING PLACES FOR JULY

Reminder that all hikes will meet at the trailhead.

Preregister with the leaders to ensure space for you with the group.

Also, please cancel if needed, in case there are other people on the waiting list.



BOTE MTN TO LEAD COVE TO TURKEYPEN RIDGE TO SCHOOLHOUSE GAP

July 18 - Saturday

This loop hike will start at the Bote Mtn trailhead, with parking at Schoolhouse Gap, across the road. We will hike up Bote Mountain, for 1.2 miles to the ridge crest, then further ascend Bote Mtn. to the junction of Lead Cove Tr. Hiking down Lead Cove is a pleasant forest walk along the mountain slope. Reaching Laurel Creek Rd., we will cross, to pickup Turkeypen Ridge, where the trail weaves in an out along the sides of the ridge. Then at Schoolhouse Gap Tr, we'll turn right, to head to the parking lot. 10 miles, rated Moderate. Meet at Schoolhouse Gap parking area at 8:30 AM. Pre-registration is required.

Leader: Jeff Cooper at jeffcooper100@yahoo.com or 865-804-5065.

MIDDLE PRONG TRAIL – EASY HIKE

July 19, 2020 - Sunday

Join us for an easy 4.6 mile hike along the Middle Prong Trail in Tremont. This is a favorite trail that runs closely to the river tumbling over cascades and waterfalls. We will hike to the junction with Panther Creek where we will stop for a bite to eat. We will pass an old bridge, the remains of dams and the rusted frame of an old car. This trail is on an old railroad bed which was used when the area was logged. Please follow the club's rules for hiking during the pandemic. We limit the hike to 10 people. You MUST phone the leader to make a reservation to be on this hike. No carpooling allowed. Wear masks, social distance and have an emergency contact phone number. Meet at the trailhead ready to begin the hike at 9:30AM

Leader Adele Soucy, 865-352-9156, ftom4141@aol.com

MOUNT LE CONTE VIA TROUT BRANCH OFF-TRAIL

July 25 - Saturday

Trout Branch, Off-Trail. The two dominant watersheds of the upper sections of the south face of Mount LeConte are Trout Branch and Styx Branch. These two watersheds offer fantastic access to the mountaintop and along the way provide the incalculable pleasures of cool mountain streams, beautiful pools, large single-drop waterfalls, long cascades, huge rock walls, landslide scars, rhododendron choked sluices, and innumerable blowdowns. This hike will ascend Trout Branch all the way from Highway 441 to the central origin of the creek at Cliff Tops. The return will be by Alum Cave Trail and probably Big Duckhawk. Total distance is 8 miles (5 mi on-trail 3 mi off-trail). Hike is rated difficult and is limited to hikers with previous Smokies off-trail experience. Pre-registration for this hike is required. Please contact the leaders for meeting place and time.

Leaders: Greg Harrell, gsharrell@milligan.edu 865-719-0173 and Greg Hoover ghoover@cn.edu 865-475-7832.

CUMBERLAND TRAIL: COVE LAKE SP TO CROSS MOUNTAIN

July 26 – Sunday

We will hike in the southerly direction on the Cumberland Trail from the "Bruce Gap Road Trailhead" in Cove Lake SP and under and along I-75 a short distance to Cove Creek which we follow a ways then cross "old TN Route-63" and the tracks and head uphill. This was coal and logging country and the trail crosses old roads and RR grades as it ascends Cross Mountain. Cross Mountain gets its name for the way it runs perpendicular to the prevailing direction of the Walden Ridge escarpment all around. A view across the valley over to Devils Racetrack and Cove Lake is along the way. It's an interesting area geologically! At the higher elevations, there are some open meadows where summertime wildflowers should be out and about. TWRA manages the meadows and fields. After following the Cross Mountain Ridge a ways, we will turn around at the Big Bruce Ridge crossing point and re-trace our steps back down. Hike 10 miles with 2000 ft elevation gain. Rated moderate. Drive 75 miles RT from either Oak Ridge or Knoxville. To reach Bruce Gap Road, take I-75N exit 134 and go across the interstate and right along Old Route 63 past Shoney's a short ways and turn right under the interstate and into the north end of Cove Lake SP. Park at the CT trailhead parking area or along the road nearby. Meet at 8:30AM.

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

LAUREL FALLS TRAILHEAD (FIGHTING CREEK GAP) TO ELKMONT BY THE OLD ROAD TO LITTLE RIVER TRAIL TO HUSKEY GAP TRAIL TO SUGARLAND MTN TRAIL TO LAUREL FALLS TRAILHEAD.

July 29 - Wednesday

9 miles. moderate. Meet at Laurel Falls Trailhead by 8:45AM.

Leader: David Grab 865-405-5779, digrab@aol.com

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. Bring rainwear, water, spare food. Each carpool rider should reimburse driver about 4¢ per mile. Doubts? Call a leader.

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

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Florence Abad-Turner abadturner@charter.net
865/406-6806, 1000 Clay St Knoxville TN 37934

Monette Tilson monettetilson@gmail.com
865/776-0262 130 Bicentennial Dr Jeff City TN 37760

SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual Election Picnic is tentatively scheduled be held on Saturday, August 8, at Seven Islands State Birding Park located at 2809 Kelly Lane, Kodak, TN 37764. We will gather near the barn located at the large parking area on Kelly Lane. Due to the pandemic, attendees will be asked to bring their own lunch, drink, and chair. The decision to have the picnic will be confirmed in the August newsletter.

Tim Bigelow will lead a short hike across the new pedestrian bridge (with social distancing in place) prior to lunch. The 2021 Hike Schedule will be posted so come prepared to select a hike to lead or co-lead!

Following lunch, we will have a short business meeting at which the 2021 Board of Directors and Officers will be elected.

Following is the proposed slate:

- President, Diane Petrilla;
- Vice President, Ken Wise;
- Communications Director, Cindy Spangler;
- Treasurer, Tim Bigelow;
- Recording Secretary, Steve Dunkin;
- Membership Secretary, George Ritter;
- Historian, Brian Worley;
- Trust Account Advisor, Jean Gauger;
- Director, Dale Potter;
- Director, Will Skelton;
- Director, Taylor Weatherbee;
- Director, Amanda Beal.



Photo credit: State of TN website

SMHC History

The club, throughout its history, has maintained a social fabric that extends beyond hiking. Such activities have included square dancing, fish fries, biking, canoeing, photo contests, and instructional events. The earliest club social events grew out of the election banquet and the installation banquet. The events included games, stunts, and singing. One hundred percent attendance by club members was urged. The Bird Preserve clubhouse, the Magnolia Woodward Lodge, was a popular event locale. In fact, the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society had close ties to the club and its members and other key conservationists. One founding member, Paul Adams, managed the first campsite on Mt LeConte. Charter members also included H.P. Ijams and Brockway Couch.

In the 1930 handbook, there was the following call for social events: "... there has been too little opportunity for all our members to get together...". So on January of that year the club met at Charlie Barber's house to include short talks on good hiking and nature books. The Lawson McGee library book truck was there to enable those interested, and with a card, to check out some of the books of interest. A spring event at the Bird Preserve was added as well. And so began the official start of planned club social ("get together") events outside of the election and installation meetings. The following years' social events included nature topics, mountain literature and games, and in 1933 the first square dance social event lead by Fred Colby and Theresa Hickman. The square dances become a common social event for many years afterward until the 1960s. Also in 1933, the first photo contest was announced and this became an event for almost every year of the club history. Singing songs was another pastime that eventually lead to the publication of a small pamphlet entitled "Smoky Mountain Hiking Club Songs," which include the words to 22 songs.

The next year, 1934, the club cabin raising in the Greenbrier was announced as a special event. Although not so much a social gathering as a work effort, the building of the cabin has a special place in the history of the club and will be covered separately in a future history blurb. The major social event started in 1934 and lasting for over 20 years was a fish fry at Tom DeWine's spring. The announcement in the handbook also noted that you could get a fishing license from Brockway Crouch or Meta Schwoegl. The following years added watermelon feast, mountain ballads and folk songs, many educational meetings, and non-hiking outings.

The educational events are interesting as evidenced by some of those from the latter years of the 1930s: mountain literature; afield with a naturalist with newly appointed park naturalist Mr. Arthur P. Stupka; folk lore with Mrs Edna Lynn Simms; TVA wildlife program; an account of climbing Mount Popocatepet by Harvey Broome; mountain literature; an advanced showing by Dr. H.M. Jennison of his first two years of collecting specimens of every species of plant in the Smokies; climbing Mount Whitney; the centennial of John Muir's birth; and others.

~Brian Worley, Historian

Park Implements Vehicle-Free Wednesdays in Cades Cove

Great Smoky Mountains National Park officials announced the implementation of vehicle-free access along the Cades Cove Loop Road each Wednesday, from June 17 through September 30, as part of a pilot study to improve the visitor experience. The park proposed the study due to congested parking areas and disruption of visitor services associated with the vehicle-free periods on Wednesday and Saturday mornings during the summer months that have been in effect for several years.



As part of the public planning process, park officials received feedback from 2,278 individuals from 37 states during the comment period in March. More than 60% of the comments were supportive of the trial change, and 20% of the comments were in opposition of the proposal. About 15% of the comments expressed a desire for the Saturday morning closures to continue, but most of these individuals also supported a full-day closure on Wednesdays. Several respondents expressed additional concerns including 8% of comments requesting consideration of a shuttle operation, 4% of comments noting concerns about limiting access for people with disabilities during the vehicle-free days, and a variety of other suggestions regarding congestion, safety, and descendant access.

The park began collecting data on visitor use during vehicle-free time periods in 1995. Over the last 25 years, use has continued to increase with up to 1,100 people a day cycling or walking along the roadway during the 3-hour closure time period. This increased use resulted in several challenges including congestion, lack of parking, and disruption in campground and picnic area operations. During the morning closures, access to the campground, picnic area, horse concession operation, campground store, and hiking/equestrian trails is blocked to accommodate parking for the biking/pedestrian opportunity on the Loop Road. As a result, traffic leading to the Cades Cove area is often gridlocked by a line of motorists waiting for the Loop Road to open at 10:00 a.m.



A categorical exclusion was signed in June 2020, completing the National Park Service's environmental compliance process for initiation of the pilot study. Park officials have incorporated feedback from the planning process into a monitoring program to assess the effectiveness of the trial in improving safety and the visitor experience for multiple user groups. By closing the roadway for the entire day, bicyclists and pedestrians will have over 12 hours of daylight to use the Loop Road without vehicles. By spreading use throughout the day, parking should be more available with less impacts to campground, picnic area, and concession operations. By eliminating the Saturday morning closures, more motorists will have access to the Cades Cove area for these services along with scenic driving on what is traditionally the busiest day of the week for travel in the area. In addition, park staff and volunteers will be able to better support visitor programs on Wednesdays and Saturdays instead of devoting all personnel to traffic management and parking.

The results of the pilot study will be evaluated by park management to inform future planning. Vehicle access will continue to be provided seven days a week, October through April, and six days a week during the trial period, June through September, providing ample opportunities for park descendants and visitors to enjoy Cades Cove. Mobility-assisted devices are welcomed during vehicle-free days on the Cades Cove Loop Road for individuals with disabilities. If visitors need accommodation to safely access Cades Cove on designated vehicle-free days, they should call 865-448-4105 for more information in advance of their visit.

--NPS—

Seven Islands State Birding Park

2809 Kelly Lane Kodak, TN 37764

Hours of Operation Dawn to dusk. Seven Islands is a premier birding destination, with more than 180 species sighted in the 425 acre park. Located on a peninsula of land along the French Broad River, the park features over seven miles of trails passing through native grass fields along the river, wooded areas and rolling hills with views of the Smoky Mountains.

www.tnstateparks.com