

Great Smoky Mountains
National Park



75th Pilgrimage

Art Work by: Nina Grauley

FEATURED ARTIST

AN ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

Bio - Andi Kur is an artist currently based in Chattanooga, TN. In an unconventional twist, she found her way into art initially through science. While pursuing her Bachelor's in Biology at UTC, she began working in the lab of Dr. Joey Shaw and assisted in drafting illustrations for the 2nd Edition of the Guide to the Vascular Plants of Tennessee. Andi carried this experience with her as she pursued a Master's in Plant Science from the University of Vermont in 2018. While conducting her research, Andi continued to practice science illustration, but her art transformed over time. Rather than drawing exactly what she observed, she began to leverage her illustrations to tell stories about science through the format of comics. Andi has built on this style over the last few years and currently works full time as a painter and illustrator out of her studio at Clearstory Arts. She believes that her understanding of science and her love of art go hand-in-hand to inform and catalyze each other, and she is grateful for the opportunity to continue learning and creating in the space between these two disciplines.



ANDI KUR

Exhibition- In her first ever solo show, Andi Kur will be displaying a wide range of her artwork that spans a decade of her life, starting in 2015 when she first joined a plant science lab, all the way to the present, when she works as a full-time illustrator and painter. Her work centers around themes of science and nature, and our (sometimes) very goofy relationship with it.

Workshop - During her all-day art workshop, participants will receive beginner instruction in the art and science of botanical illustration. The morning session will include detailed examples and practice with sketching various native plants using both graphite and pen. In the afternoon session, participants will focus on studying a single plant of their choice and will work towards creating a "plant portrait" in full watercolor.



EVENING SPEAKER

HOW THE CENTER FOR PLANT CONSERVATION WORKS TO SLOW THE SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION



WESLEY KNAPP

Wesley Knapp was recently appointed the Chief Executive for the Center for Plant Conservation, a non-profit organization which focuses on the conservation and restoration of rare plants in North America. Wes has over 20 years' experience working in the NatureServe Network as a Botanist and Ecologist with both the Maryland and North Carolina Natural Heritage Programs. His research interests include identifying and preventing plant extinction events, undescribed plant species, systematics, ecology, and taxonomy. He has a B.S. from Catawba College, a M.S. from Delaware State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Wes resides in Asheville, NC with his wife, Heather, and two high school aged girls, Sidney and Bella.

Biodiversity conservation is at a critical point as we navigate Earth's 6th mass extinction, in which species are going extinct at a rate 1,000 times faster than ever before in human history. Our decisions today will meaningfully impact what species exist in the future.

For over 40 years, the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) has been on the front lines in preventing plant extinction and has served as a leading authority on science-based best practices to conserve rare and endangered native plants—with particular expertise in collecting, storing, and utilizing wild rare plant seeds for conservation purposes. CPC is the hub of an 81partner network found on three continents. The CPC National Collection safeguards the 4,400 most imperiled native plants in North America north of Mexico. This living conservation resource ensures the long-term survival of rare species through strategic *ex situ* (off-site) stewardship.

CPC's work is grounded in its Best Plant Conservation Practices to Support Species Survival in the Wild, an evolving set of science-based guidelines that inform *ex situ* and *in situ* (on-the-ground) conservation strategies. Continually refined through research and fieldwork, these guidelines are integrated into CPC's Rare Plant Academy (RPA), a digital hub providing conservationists with educational training materials, a video library, and a knowledge-sharing forum. Through key initiatives such as regional seed collection in biodiversity hotspots across the U.S., pioneering scientific research studies, and cutting-edge database tools, CPC is expanding practitioners' collective knowledge while building capacity and streamlining conservation efforts. Looking ahead, CPC will continue to lead initiatives and best practices to prevent plant extinction while providing leadership and assistance to plant conservation practitioners in new but essential ways, such as plant taxonomy, data synchronization, and prioritization efforts. By integrating best practices with cutting-edge research and training, CPC and its partners are shaping the future of rare plant conservation and ensuring a legacy of stewardship for generations to come.

EVENING SPEAKER

INSPIRED BY THE WILD: RESTORING NATURE TO YOUR OWN BACKYARD



MARGARET LYNN BROWN

Margaret Lynn Brown is the author of *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, a popular environmental history recently re-issued with a new chapter by University of Florida Press. Unlike many of the western parks, where land was “preserved” before major development, the Smokies were farmed, hunted, and logged. Protecting these lands involved pioneering work in restoration by the National Park Service. Professor Emeritus from Brevard College, Brown taught Environmental history and Wilderness in American Life and served as a leader in higher education for almost 30 years. Her passion for restoration work led her to become a native plants gardener, re-wilding two city lots with many of the beautiful plants she first encountered on the trails of the Smokies. A full-time writer, she lives and hikes in Brevard with her husband, two dogs, and a son now in college.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the greatest biological treasure in the eastern United States, with more than 100 species of native trees, at least 200 species of birds, and 1,500 flowering plant species. In her talk, Brown will explore ways that visitors can bring their pilgrimage home by planting native species and re-wilding smaller patches of land in the area where they live. A survivor of Hurricane Helene, Brown will discuss the lessons of this historic regional storm. Humans, plants, and animals are adapting to climate disruption, but for the diversity we love to survive humans must also continue to mitigate climate change by reducing their carbon footprint. This message of hope will talk about the rewards of bringing the inspiration of nature into our daily lives.



EVENING SPEAKER

DIVERSITY ON THEIR OWN TERMS: LESSONS ABOUT SPECIES AND COEXISTENCE IN THE 'SALAMANDER CAPITAL OF THE WORLD'



BEN FITZPATRICK

Dr. Ben Fitzpatrick is a Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Specializing in conservation biology of Southern Appalachian salamanders and using tools from genetics, he and his students explore how different species evolve and adapt in wild environments. His lab has produced nearly 80 research articles that have accumulated over 6000 citations on big-picture questions like: What makes one species different from another? Or, how can understanding genetic diversity help protect animals facing extinction? To learn more, you might check out his lab's website: <https://fitzpatrickabc.blogspot.com>. Dr. Fitzpatrick's work goes beyond textbooks—it's about saving unique species and ensuring their ecosystems thrive. Whether discovering a previously unknown species, studying the effects of insecticides on salamander skin, or helping reintroduce trout to local rivers, his lab is on a mission to use science as a tool to best inform successful conservation efforts.

Diversity, like some other familiar concepts, seems easy to recognize but difficult to precisely define. The southern Appalachians, and the Great Smoky Mountains in particular, are renowned as a hotspot of salamander diversity. But what is salamander diversity? Where does it come from? How is it maintained in an ever-changing world? To seek answers to these questions is to address the fundamental goals of biodiversity science. The most basic definition of biological diversity is 'the number of species,' but many groups of southern Appalachian salamanders defy traditional species classification. In this talk, I will use examples from our ongoing research to raise questions and draw lessons about the conceptualization and measurement of diversity, the processes that promote the evolution of diversity, and the ecological interactions that constrain or facilitate coexistence of different kinds of salamanders. We find that the most diverse groups of salamanders form more complex and fluid patterns of variation than can be summarized as a list of discrete and static taxonomic species. To appreciate, explain, and preserve salamander diversity requires us to look for a more nuanced description of biological variation – diversity on their own terms.



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Legend

-  **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**
-  **Light on the Legs Hikes**
-  **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles: Birds, Fungi, Insects, Mammals, Plants, Reptiles & Amphibians, Other**

Wednesday AM

1. Birding at Townsend Wye and Chestnut Tops Trail

2. Warbler Watch: Birding Among the Smoky Mountains

3. Lichen Hikin' on the Spruce-Fir Nature Trail

 **4. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies**

 **5. Insects: Aquatic Insect Diversity Walk at Twin Creeks**

 **6. Nature Journaling with Mary and Thorunn at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area**

7. Skills of a Naturalist: Observing Nature

8. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

 **9. Photography Workshop for Beginners**

10. An Exploration of Ferns Along the Little River trail above Elkmont

11. Moss Walk: Engine Creek Trail (formerly Injun Creek) in Greenbrier

12. Branching Out: A Beginner's Guide to Tree Identification

13. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

14. Blossoming Wisdom: The Heart of Flowers - Structures, Form, and Function

15. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

16. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

17. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

18. Wildflowers at High Elevation: Appalachian Trail from Newfound Gap to Indian Gap

Wednesday PM

 **19. Edible Mushrooms at Chimneys Picnic Area (Moved to Metcalf Bottoms)**

20. Lichens of the High-Elevation Smokies

 **21. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?**

22. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

23. Secret Stories of The Wildflowers Along Meigs Creek Trail

 **24. Moss & Fern Adventure along the Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail**

25. Foliage Fascination: Understanding Leaves of Trees, Shrubs, and Lianas

26. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

27. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

28. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

29. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to Old Settlers Trail at Greenbrier)

30. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

31. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

32. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

33. The Wild Wild West... Prong

34. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

35. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

36. Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

37. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Wednesday Evening

 **38. Owl Prowl at Mynatt Park**

 **39. Lichens at Night in the Smokies**

40. A Trip to Salamander Island after Dark

 **41. Bugs at Light at Ash Hopper Branch**

 **42. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area**

43. How The Center For Plant Conservation Works to Slow the 6th Mass Extinction

Thursday All Day

44. Salamander Picnic

 **45. An Enthusiast's Guide to Botanical Illustration**

46. All Day Wildflower Hike at Old Settlers Trail

47. An Extended Journey into Wildflower Wonders on Porters Creek Trail

48. Petals, Sepals, and Peoples at Meigs Creek

49. Wildflower Hike at Grapeyard Ridge Trail

Thursday AM

 **50. Bird Banding Basics at the Premier Seven Islands State Birding Park**

51. Birding and Wildflowers on School House Gap Trail

52. Birding on Bullhead Trail

 **53. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies**

 **54. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies**

  **55. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet**

55.5. Evolutionary Ecology of Mammals in the Smokies


56. Imprinting Art with Leaves and Plants

 **57. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks**

 **58. Nature Journaling with Mary and Thorunn at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area**

59. Skills of a Naturalist: Observing Nature

60. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

 **61. Photography of Flowers Using iPhone**

62. A Pilgrimage to the Hidden Avent Cabin for Wildflower Tea

 **63. Ferns Everywhere You Look in Greenbrier Cove**

64. Moss Basics and Beyond at the Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Kephart Prong Trail)

65. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

66. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

 **67. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway**

68. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

69. Sedge ID for Everyone!

 **70. Wildflower & Fungi Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Short Version**

71. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

72. Wildflowers and Shrubs on Grapeyard Ridge, an iNaturalist expedition

Thursday PM

73. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

74. Lichens along a High-Elevation Ridge

 **75. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies**

 **76. Insects: Aquatic Insect Diversity Walk at Twin Creeks**

  **77. Explore the Wonders of Animal Communication at the UT Field Station**

78. Imprinting Art with Leaves and Plants

79. Geology: Tremont Faults and Falls

80. History, Wildflowers, and Culture of Big Greenbrier

 **81. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks**

82. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

  **83. Parasites! An Important Component of Our Hidden Biodiversity**

 **84. Photography Workshop**

 **85. Sketching Wildflowers at Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Cades Cove Picnic Area)**

86. Forest Foods and Pharmacy at Metcalf Bottoms

87. Moss Walk: Appalachian Trail from Indian Gap to Newfound Gap

88. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

89. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

90. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to Kephart Prong Trail)

 **91. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway**

 **92. Nature Explorers: Kids' Educational Wildflower Walk**

93. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

94. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

95. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Thursday Evening

 **96. Owl Prowl at Mynatt Park**

 **97. Lichens at Night in the Smokies**

 **98. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area**

99. Artist-of-the-Year Reception at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts for Andi Kur (Open to all Pilgrims)

100. Inspired by the Wild: Restoring Nature to Your Own Backyard

Friday All Day

101. Feathers and Footsteps: A Birding Adventure on Alum Cave Trail

102. Fungi, Lichen, and Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail

 **103. All Day Salamander Foray to Albright Grove**

104. Petals, Sepals, and Peoples at Meigs Creek

 **105. Vegetation Communities of the Appalachian Trail**

106. Wildflower Hike at Abrams Falls Trail - Long Version

Friday AM

107. Birding from Sugarlands to Newfound Gap

 **108. Birding on the ADA Accessible Sugarlands Valley Trail**

109. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

 **110. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies**

 **111. Pollinators and Plants: Lessons in Pollination Biology**

  **112. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet**

 **113. Geology from Afar - Viewed from Foothills Parkway**

 **114. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks**

 **115. Fun with Names: Botanical Latin for Beginners**

 **116. Photography of Flowers with Mirrorless or SLR Cameras: Advanced Workshop**

117. A Pilgrimage to the Hidden Avent Cabin for Wildflower Tea

118. Herblore of Appalachia

119. Moss Walk: Engine Creek Trail (formerly Injun Creek) in Greenbrier

120. Wildflower Roundup, exploring Porters Creek Trail with iNaturalist

121. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to the West Prong Trail)

122. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

123. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

124. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

125. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

126. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

127. Wildflowers at High Elevation: Appalachian Trail from Newfound Gap to Indian Gap

Friday PM

128. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

129. Butterflies in Cades Cove

 **130. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies**

130.5. Evolutionary Ecology of Mammals in the Smokies

131. Geology: Tremont Faults and Falls

 **132. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks**

133. Nature Journaling with Andi and Clare

  **134. Parasites! An Important Component of Our Hidden Biodiversity**

 **135. Sketching Wildflowers at Twin Creeks Pavilion**

136. Ferns at Baxter Creek Trail, along Big Creek (Moved to Engine Creek Trail at Greenbrier)

137. Exotic Plants on the Gatlinburg Trail

138. Moss Walk: Appalachian Trail from Indian Gap to Newfound Gap

139. Tree and Shrub Identification Walk at Metcalf Bottoms

140. Trees, Shrubs, and Wildflowers of High Elevation, an iNaturalist expedition at Indian Gap Trail

141. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

 **142. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway**

 **143. Nature Explorers: Kids' Educational Wildflower Walk**

144. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

144.5 Wildflower Enchantment along the Picturesque Snake Den Ridge Trail

 **145. Wildflower Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Short Version**

146. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Friday Evening

 **147. Bugs at Light at Ash Hopper Branch**

 **148. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area**

 **149. Stargazing**

150. Diversity on their own terms: Lessons about species and coexistence in the 'Salamander Capital of the World'

Saturday All Day

151. Rambling with Wildflowers, Mushrooms, and Lichens on the Big Creek Trail (Moved to Bradley Fork Trail at Smokemont)

 **152. Photography of Flowers Motorcade**

 **153. Beneath Towering Giants: Exploring Albright Grove**

154. Balds! Plants so Unique They're Only Found at The Peak

 **155. Wildflower Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Long Version**

Saturday AM

156. Birding and Wildflowers on School House Gap Trail

157. Birding at Townsend Wye and Chestnut Tops Trail

158. Wings Above, Trails Below: Avian Wonders on Bullhead Trail

159. A Trip to Salamander Island

 **160. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?**

 **161. Pollinators and Plants: Lessons in Pollination Biology**

  **162. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet**

 **163. Geology from Afar - Viewed from Foothills Parkway**

164. Secret Stories of The Wildflowers Along Meigs Creek Trail

165. Exotic Plants on the Gatlinburg Trail

166. Moss Basics and Beyond at the Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Engine Creek Trail at Greenbrier)

167. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

168. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

169. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

170. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

171. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

172. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

173. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

174. Wildflowers and Shrubs of Mingus Creek Trail

Saturday PM

175. In Search of the Rarest Lichen of All

 **176. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies**

 **177. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?**

178. History, Wildflowers, and Culture of Big Greenbrier

 **179. Sketching Wildflowers at Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Cades Cove Picnic Area)**

 **180. Moss & Fern Adventure along the Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail**

181. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

182. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

183. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to School House Gap Trail)

184. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

185. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

186. Wildflowers along Kephart Prong Trail, an iNaturalist expedition

187. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

188. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

Saturday Evening

 **189. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area**

 **190. Stargazing**

1. Birding at Townsend Wye and Chestnut Tops Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Embark on a bird's-eye adventure exploring diverse habitats around Townsend Wye. Witness the playful acrobatics of northern rough-winged swallows near the bridge, observe the eastern phoebes nesting along the river, and search the banks for charming Louisiana water thrushes with their distinctive tail-bobs. As we ascend Chestnut Tops trail, we'll tune in to the delightful melodies of spring migrants. Don't forget your binoculars, water, rain gear, and comfy walking shoes for this immersive journey.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

2. Warbler Watch: Birding Among the Smoky Mountains

Time: 7:00:00 AM to 1:00:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitors Center Chimneys Picnic Area
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.

Step into the world of Tennessee birders as we delve into the vibrant behaviors, habitats, and melodies of this brilliantly colored bird family. Our exploration takes us through low and mid elevations, where we'll observe these feathered wonders up close. Pack your binoculars, lunch, water, rain gear, and comfy walking shoes for short, easy walks into the heart of avian enchantment.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot, and carpool in as few cars as possible to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

3. Lichen Hikin' on the Spruce-Fir Nature Trail

Time: 8:45:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Spruce-Fir Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Join lichen expert Jason Hollinger on an exploration of a fascinating group of organisms that are estimated to cover up to 8% of the earth's surface. Learn the basics of lichen identification, anatomy, morphology, reproduction, and their importance on the landscape. Bring warm clothing, rain gear, and comfortable footwear. A 10x hand lens is highly recommended. This is a short, easy hike on relatively level ground.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Because of limited parking at the trailhead, consolidate into a maximum of 5 cars and then carpool to the site. From Rockefeller Memorial drive southwest 2.75 miles along Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Road. The pull-off for the Spruce-Fir Nature Trail will be on the left (35.59568, -83.45873). **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

4. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail, Indian Gap, Newfound Gap, Ash Hopper Branch
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.



Embark on a thrilling journey from lofty peaks to lowland realms in pursuit of Tennessee's enchanting slimy jewels. These brief hikes promise a whirlwind exploration, unveiling the rich tapestry of salamanders that make Southern Appalachia the undisputed salamander capital of the world. The adventure begins at Indian Gap, offering a glimpse of high-elevation salamander communities and the exclusive endemic species of the Smokies. The finale awaits at the Sugarlands Visitor Center (Ash Hopper Branch), revealing a dramatically different community of mid to low elevation salamanders. Every amphibian-focused hike starts and ends with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—essential measures to shield these species from perilous pathogens. Get ready for the possibility of wet or muddy conditions, adding an extra layer of excitement to your quest.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot. Fit as many people into as few cars as possible for this motorcade adventure. Fewer cars helps with traffic and parking. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

5. Insects: Aquatic Insect Diversity Walk at Twin Creeks

Time: 9:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM

Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion, Twin Creeks Stream

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



Learn to identify and collect insects in pristine streams with entomologists (scientists who study insects). During this program, you will take short walks on multiple streams in order to learn about the differences in the preferred habitats of a variety of insects. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group in the gravel parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

6. Nature Journaling with Mary and Thorunn at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)

Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).



Keeping a nature journal is a fun way to create a record of your experiences in the natural world, using primarily images - usually drawings - or writing. We'll talk about different methods and ideas for ways to make your journal a lively, informative treasure to enjoy for years to come. No drawing skills are necessary - just the desire to keep a thoughtful notebook about what you observe. Bring at least a pencil and paper. Additional materials will be provided.

Logistics: Park at the north parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

7. Skills of a Naturalist: Observing Nature

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM

Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Nature is a remarkable teacher, and the GSMNP has been called a great outdoor classroom. Naturalists tap into their knowledge with observational methods of study. Through patience, awareness, and the five senses, you can discover a great deal about the natural world. Valuable tips and simple tools explored in this program will help cultivate and sharpen the skills needed to derive the greatest benefit from time spent outdoors and begin your journey as an amateur naturalist. Bring a small notebook or journal and writing implement of choice.

Logistics: Meet in the gravel parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

8. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM

Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Learn about the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program and what kind of data collection NEON performs around the GSMNP. There will be a tour of the NEON Tower and Aquatic sensors, and a demonstration of sampling techniques used for measuring fauna and flora data. In this program, you'll walk about 600 yards in total, some of it off trail.

Logistics: Meet in the gravel parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

9. Photography Workshop for Beginners

Time: 8:15:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Sugarlands Training Room
Meeting-Location: AB - Sugarlands Visitor Center Training Room.



Learn how to improve your wildflower images with mirrorless and SLR cameras. Jack Carman, author of *Wildflowers of Tennessee*, and Robert Hutson, co-author of *Great Smoky Mountain Wildflowers: When and Where to Find Them*, will give a short visual presentation and then migrate outside for hands-on instruction in composition and photo technique. Bring hiking boots, a mirrorless or SLR camera, and a tripod. An easy 1-mile walk.

Logistics: Park in the third lot on the right. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

10. An Exploration of Ferns Along the Little River trail above Elkmont

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Little River Trail
Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Ever caught a glimpse of an adder's tongue, a sang pointer, or the intriguing southern lady hitchhiker? Explore the mysteries of ferns and fern allies on this adventure. Discover the secrets behind what constitutes leaves versus stems in these fascinating plants. Join us to encounter a diverse array of common ferns, unravel their structures, explore their growth and reproduction, and delve into their biodiversity within the Park. Don't forget your hand lens for a closer look. This leisurely 2-mile walk promises a captivating journey into the enchanting world of ferns.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

11. Moss Walk: Engine Creek Trail (formerly Injun Creek) in Greenbrier

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Engine Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: M - Greenbrier Road Ranger Station.

Learn about the diminutive world of mosses: a diverse group of very beautiful, unique, and small non-flowering plants that are found throughout the Smokies. You will learn about a variety of mosses, liverworts, and hornworts as you observe them along the trail. You will also discuss their life cycle and basic ways to distinguish them from one another. Bring a 10x hand lens or a strong magnifying glass if possible. An easy 2-mile hike that includes a narrow but sturdy stream crossing with a handrail and a short rocky area that is often wet and muddy.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 1 mile, and park and meet your group at the Greenbrier Road Ranger Station (35.729633° -83.406016°). You will then head out onto Engine Creek Trail from the Ranger Station. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

12. Branching Out: A Beginner's Guide to Tree Identification

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavillion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavillion.

This journey is tailor-made for nature novices hungry to unlock the secrets of trees and shrubs. Your leaders will teach you how to read leaf shapes, providing you with the keys to deciphering the language of the forest. After an informative beginning, the real adventure begins on a short, invigorating hike, where you'll put your newfound knowledge to the test and reinforce what you've learned. While a hand lens or magnifying glass adds to the experience, it's not a prerequisite. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile walk—a delightful blend of discovery and immersion into the captivating universe of foliage.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

13. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Jakes Creek Trail Cucumber Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Stroll through a beautiful secondary cove hardwood forest, immersing yourself in the diversity of wildflowers that grace the path. This adventure kicks off at Jakes Creek, tracing the footsteps of an old railroad route, before culminating near Tulip Branch on Cucumber Gap Trail. Revel in the enchanting scenery before retracing your steps. Lace up your walking shoes and prepare for a brief escape into the heart of a living, breathing forest on this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. After walking 0.7 miles on Jakes Creek Trail with your group, you will turn left onto Cucumber Gap Trail.
Transportation: None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

14. Blossoming Wisdom: The Heart of Flowers - Structures, Form, and Function

Time: 9:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Mingus Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AO - Mingus Mill Parking Lot.

Unlock the secrets of wildflowers and elevate your Wildflower Pilgrimage experience! Join us early in the week for a captivating lecture-style presentation on flower structures. After immersing yourself in this engaging program, you will solidify your newfound knowledge with a delightful stroll through the field, applying your skills to study flowers up close. This immersive experience is designed to enhance your observational skills for the remainder of the event, making it a must-attend, especially for beginners. Don't miss this opportunity to sharpen your botanical eye and truly appreciate the beauty of wildflowers!

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 50 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

15. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South) Metcalf Bottoms Trail
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Uncover the fascinating world of plant communities and their intricate associations across the landscape! Join us for an engaging program where we delve into the technical distinctions between trees, shrubs, and the wildflowers that accompany them. As we stroll through nature's classroom with seasoned experts, you'll not only gain insight into identifying various trees and shrubs but also discover the captivating dance of associated wildflowers. This easy 2-mile walk promises an enlightening exploration into the harmonious relationships shaping our natural surroundings.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

16. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead

Join our botanical experts as they guide you through stunning wildflowers on the Kephart Prong Trail. Wander alongside the remnants of a CCC camp, a former fish hatchery, and an ancient narrow gauge railroad, each adorned with wildflowers like wood betony and rue-anemone. Ascend to the Kephart Prong Shelter before retracing your steps, soaking in the rich heritage and floral wonders. This moderate 4-mile walk promises not just a hike but a fascinating exploration of the past and the blooming beauty that surrounds it.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

17. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Kanati Fork Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

The Kanati Fork Trail has many spring ephemeral wildflowers including trilliums, Clinton lily, foam flower, Indian cucumber root, brook lettuce, and Canada mayflower as well as a lot of the more common species in the Park. Turn around when the group is ready. A moderate 2 mile walk.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. There is limited parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead, so carpool in as few cars as possible with your group from Rockefeller Memorial to the Kanati Fork Trailhead. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive 8.4 miles east along Newfound Gap Road, and parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead will be on the left (35.58790, -83.36387). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

18. Wildflowers at High Elevation: Appalachian Trail from Newfound Gap to Indian Gap

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Experience a unique journey as you transition from the dense, closed canopy of an old-growth spruce-fir forest into the open, airy canopy of a pristine beech gap forest. Along this moderate 1.5-mile hike with a 500-foot elevation gain, you'll encounter early spring ephemeral wildflowers like trout lilies, a carpet of spring beauties, white phacelia, and various trilliums—flourishing here thanks to the protection provided by feral hog exclosures. This hike offers a rare glimpse into these thriving ecosystems where nature's delicate balance is carefully preserved.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

19. Edible Mushrooms at Chimneys Picnic Area (Moved to Metcalf Bottoms)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Mingus Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AO- Mingus Mill Parking Lot.



Learn the do's and don'ts about recognizing edible mushrooms and their habitat preferences with mycologist Hill Craddock. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the picnic area/outdoor classroom above the parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 50 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

20. Lichens of the High-Elevation Smokies

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail, Sugarland Mountain Trail to Mt. Collins
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

There are currently over 1,000 known lichen species in GSMNP, and globally, lichens are estimated to cover as much as 8% of the earth's surface. Join lichen expert Jason Hollinger on a 1.5- mile hike along the Appalachian Trail to explore the noteworthy lichen diversity in high-elevation spruce-fir and hardwood communities. Learn the basics of lichen identification, anatomy, morphology, reproduction, and their importance on the landscape. Bring warm clothing, rain gear, and comfortable footwear. A 10x hand lens is highly recommended. This is a moderate walk with a maximum elevation gain of 500 ft.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Because of the potential for limited parking at Collins Gap, participants will consolidate into as few vehicles as comfortably possible. From Rockefeller Memorial drive southwest approximately 5 miles along the Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Road. The Collins Gap parking area will be on the left (35.57794, -83.47990). After your hike, caravan back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

21. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavillion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavillion.



Prepare for an engaging adventure that kicks off with a concise yet captivating herpetology discussion. Dive into the world of identification, life history, and ethical considerations before setting out on short walks around the pavilion in search of Tennessee's prized treasures—salamanders, the true gems of the region! Traverse a mid-elevation landscape where densely forested streams and seeps seamlessly merge with open woodlands, creating the perfect habitat. Keep your eyes peeled for scaly relatives along the way, adding an extra layer of excitement to the journey. As with every amphibian-focused hike, the experience begins and concludes with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—vital measures to safeguard these remarkable species from the threat of dangerous pathogens. Get ready for an exploration that combines education, ethics, and the thrill of discovery!

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

22. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

Time: 1:00:00 PM to 3:00:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Learn about the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program and what kind of data collection NEON performs around the GSMNP. There will be a tour of the NEON Tower and Aquatic sensors and a demonstration of sampling techniques used for measuring fauna and flora data. In this program, you'll walk about 600 yards in total, some of it off trail.

Logistics: Meet at the Twin Creeks Pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

23. Secret Stories of The Wildflowers Along Meigs Creek Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Meigs Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Come on this relaxed, thoughtful, and sensory-immersive hike for a unique blend of wildflower folklore, indigenous plant usage, and our relationship to the natural world. This florally rich and rigorous hike will culminate with a unique wild tea ceremony where participants will have a chance to relax and reflect on their experience while sipping on a delicious brew of freshly foraged ingredients. Total round-trip will be 3-4 miles.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the north parking area at Metcalf Bottoms. There is limited parking at the Sinks Bridge parking area, so carpool with your group in as few cars as possible from Metcalf Bottoms to the Sinks Bridge parking area (35.669493° - 83.662464°). From Metcalf Bottoms, turn right onto Wear Cove Gap Rd. Then, turn right onto Little River Gorge Rd, and follow this road for 2 miles. The trailhead will be on the left. After the hike, shuttle back to Metcalf Bottoms. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool and car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

24. Moss & Fern Adventure along the Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AQ - Sugarland Valley Nature Trail



Delve into the intricate tapestry of ferns, mosses, liverworts, and hornworts as you traverse the trail, encountering them amidst rock fences and remnants of chimneys. Explore their life cycles and uncover simple yet effective methods to distinguish these botanical wonders from one another. Enhance your experience with a 10x hand lens or a robust magnifying glass if you have one. This wheelchair-accessible program unfolds along the smooth concrete of the 0.5-mile Sugarland Valley Nature Trail, meandering alongside the Bullhead Branch creek for an immersive nature encounter.

Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. NOTE: the parking area for Sugarland Valley Nature Trail IS NOT at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

25. Foliage Fascination: Understanding Leaves of Trees, Shrubs, and Lianas

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Old Settlers Trail
Meeting-Location: Q - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #3.

Understanding how to interpret leaves, leaflets, stems, and axillary buds is a vital part of being able to interpret the basics of plants and distinguish species. This program will begin with an engaging lecture on these structures and finish up with a short walk to apply what you have learned. This program is the key to unlocking a deeper understanding of the botanical wonders that await you throughout the event—get ready to see the plant world with fresh eyes!

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

26. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

Time: 1:45:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Join us on a captivating journey from the sanctuary of a closed canopy old-growth spruce-fir forest to the expansive openness of a pristine beech gap forest. Witness the landscape transform before your eyes, revealing the grandeur of towering beech trees. As you delve into the heart of this mountain top realm, keep a lookout for the colossal remains of Fraser firs, standing testament to the invasion of the balsam woolly adelgid, an insect. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile walk that not only unveils the beauty of nature but also brings to light the challenges faced by these majestic forests. This hike has an elevation gain of 500 feet, promising an adventure filled with wonder and discovery.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

27. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Jakes Creek Trail
 Cucumber Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Stroll through a beautiful secondary cove hardwood forest, immersing yourself in the diversity of wildflowers that grace the path. This adventure kicks off at Jakes Creek, tracing the footsteps of an old railroad route, before culminating near Tulip Branch on Cucumber Gap Trail. Revel in the enchanting scenery before retracing your steps. Lace up your walking shoes and prepare for a brief escape into the heart of a living, breathing forest on this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. After walking 0.7 miles on Jakes Creek Trail with your group, you will turn left onto Cucumber Gap Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

28. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Porters Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

Join our leaders on one of the Park's most celebrated wildflower trails, promising a few hours of enchantment. Immerse yourself in a profusion of wildflowers, with trilliums taking center stage, as you weave through remnants of old homesteads, encounter a haunting cemetery, and find solace in the embrace of an ancient cove hardwood forest. Ascend Porters Creek Trail, choosing to veer onto Brushy Mountain Trail at the 1-mile mark or press onward to the captivating Fern Branch Falls just shy of 2 miles, before retracing your steps. Enjoy the ease of this 2-4 mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

29. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to Old Settlers Trail at Greenbrier)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Old Settlers Trail
Meeting-Location: Q - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #3.

Cove hardwood forests are one of the most biologically diverse communities in North America. This easily accessible trail is a great place to see a lot of different wildflowers as well as trees, shrubs, and vines. There are more species of wildflowers along this short, easy walk than just about any other place in the Park, making it a must for those wanting to learn about spring wildflowers like fringed phacelia, several trillium species, golden saxifrage (can you spot this tiny little plant?), wild ginger, and more. Short walk with elevation gain.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the third parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Old Settlers Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd. The Old Settlers Trailhead will be on the left (35.708638° -83.377394°).

Transportation: None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

30. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South)
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Uncover the fascinating world of plant communities and their intricate associations across the landscape! Join us for an engaging program where we delve into the technical distinctions between trees, shrubs, and the wildflowers that accompany them. As we stroll through nature's classroom with seasoned experts, you'll not only gain insight into identifying various trees and shrubs but also discover the captivating dance of associated wildflowers. This easy 2-mile walk promises an enlightening exploration into the harmonious relationships shaping our natural surroundings.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

31. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Join us on an enchanting adventure along the Chestnut Top Trail, where nature unveils one of the grandest wildflower spectacles in the Smokies. As you traverse this narrow path, brace yourself for a dazzling showcase of wildflower wonders. Encounter a diverse array of species, from the charismatic Jack-in-the-pulpit to the charming little brown jug, the delicate stonecrop, and the elusive Carey's saxifrage. The trail also unveils treasures like miterwort, foam flower, fire pink, longspur violet, cross-vine, and many more. This moderate 2-mile walk promises not just a hike but a captivating journey through a floral wonderland that's sure to leave you in awe.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye, across the road from the Chestnut Top Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

32. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead

Join our botanical experts as they guide you through stunning wildflowers on the Kephart Prong Trail. Wander alongside the remnants of a CCC camp, a former fish hatchery, and an ancient narrow gauge railroad, each adorned with wildflowers like wood betony and rue-anemone. Ascend to the Kephart Prong Shelter before retracing your steps, soaking in the rich heritage and floral wonders. This moderate 4-mile walk promises not just a hike but a fascinating exploration of the past and the blooming beauty that surrounds it.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

33. The Wild Wild West... Prong

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: West Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AJ - West Prong Trailhead

Prepare for an adventure as we embark on the West Prong Trail near the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont! We're setting out on a plant safari, where the wildflowers are the stars of the show. Our journey kicks off with a stroll past a cemetery in the first 0.3 miles. Then, it's uphill we go, tackling the first mile like botanical explorers on a mission. But fear not, the trail gives you a break with a delightful downhill stretch, where gravity becomes your new best friend. As we venture further, we'll find wildflowers playing hide-and-seek in seeps and around stream crossings, just waiting for you to discover them. Your mission—should you choose to accept it—is to reach Campsite 18 before turning back. With 750 feet of elevation gain and up to 4 miles of trail to put under your boots, this hike promises to be a rewarding adventure.

Logistics: Park in the gravel lot and meet your group at the West Prong Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 45 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

34. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Stroll with expert botanists and conservationists along Middle Prong Trail while stopping along the way to enjoy many of the spring ephemeral wildflowers, ferns, and flowering trees of the Smokies such as tulip trees, wild ginger, and violets. Interestingly, this trail used to be a railroad bed, and carried out the last logs from the Smokies in 1939. A moderate 4-mile walk.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

35. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Little River Trail
Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

This hike beautifully showcases a landscape shaped by both history and nature's resilience. The former logging railroad bed, now a peaceful 2-mile trail, offers a unique experience where visitors can witness nature's ability to heal and reclaim its own. As you walk along the path, you'll encounter the vibrant life that has sprung up in the wake of the early 20th-century logging operations. Wildflowers, ferns, and trees flourish, creating a living tapestry that tells a story of renewal and endurance. The trail's gentle elevation gain of 200 feet makes it accessible for most, allowing you to immerse yourself in this testament to nature's enduring spirit.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

36. Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Rainbow Falls Trail
Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

This botanical adventure takes place along the enchanting Rainbow Falls Trail, where a tapestry of wildflower diversity unfolds. Commence your journey by strolling through the remnants of M.M. Whittle's apple orchard, a historic haven from 1930 to 1960, where a few resilient trees still blossom and bear fruit. As you venture deeper, Le Conte Creek becomes your companion, revealing the delicate beauty of rosebay rhododendron, galax, and tea berry around the two-mile mark. Cross a picturesque walking bridge before deciding when to turn back. While the trail spans a challenging 4 miles, your group may choose the turnaround point, ensuring an exploration tailored to your pace. Let the wonders of Rainbow Falls Trail captivate your senses and kindle a newfound appreciation for nature's diverse floral symphony.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Rainbow Falls Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

37. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Ramsey Cascades Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

A 4 to 5-mile round trip (not going all the way to the falls) will allow you to hike among the rich forests of the Ramsey Cascades Trail. You will hike along the mountain rivers and experience a rich display of wildflowers, ferns, and Fraser's sedge. Try to make it at least 2.5-miles to a hobbit-like tunnel of rhododendrons that canopy the trail. Elevation gain: ~1000 ft.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group at the second parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd, where you will find the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead (35.702716° - 83.357737°). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

38. Owl Prowl at Mynatt Park

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Mynatt Park
Meeting-Location: W - Mynatt Park.



Come learn about the night predators that reign supreme after the sun goes down. This 2-hour "Owl Prowl" is guided by Karen La Mere. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Park in the Mynatt Park parking area off of Cherokee Orchard Road. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

39. Lichens at Night in the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitor Center Parking Lot
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Come explore the fascinating world of lichens at night! Many lichens produce secondary chemicals and metabolites that fluoresce brightly under UV light. Using handheld UV lights to scan tree trunks and rocks, we will search for lichens with brilliant colors of yellow, orange, electric blue, and more on this unique lichen night walk. Bring a flashlight, warm clothes, and comfortable walking shoes. The leaders will have 4-5 UV lights that you can borrow, but if you have one, bring it along. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the benches in front of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

40. A Trip to Salamander Island after Dark

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:00:00 PM
Trail: Newfound Gap Parking Lot
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Amphibians are notably rare on oceanic islands because they are dried out by saltwater. However, the high elevation "islands" of damp and cool spruce-fir forests like those here in the Smokies offer the perfect habitat for many species of salamanders who could not survive in the hotter, drier low elevation forests. Join us at the Spruce-Fir nature trail where we hope to see at least 4 species that you won't see at low elevations. Every amphibian-based hike will begin and end with decontamination, and a short discussion of survey protocols/ethics in order to protect these species from the spread of dangerous pathogens.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

41. Bugs at Light at Ash Hopper Branch

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitor Center Parking Lot
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



If you want to see a lot of really cool insects, join University of Tennessee at Chattanooga entomologists as they attract nocturnal moths, beetles, and a wide diversity of other insects using a black light. Dress warmly, bring a headlamp or flashlight with a red cover, and hand lens if you have them. No trail walking. This is a great event for people of all ages and any who are interested!

Logistics: Meet your group in the Sugarlands Visitor Center bus parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

42. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



In this program, learn from chiropterologists (people who study bats) about the ecology, distributions, feeding and mating behaviors of bats as well as why bats are important and economically beneficial to preserve. You will also get to use some high-tech gadgetry to listen to bats echolocating to hunt insects. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

43. How The Center For Plant Conservation Works to Slow the 6th Mass Extinction

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM
Trail: Arrowmont Wolpert Gallery
Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

Biodiversity conservation is at a critical point as we navigate Earth's 6th mass extinction, in which species are going extinct at a rate 1,000 times faster than ever before in human history. Wesley Knapp was recently appointed the Chief Executive for the Center for Plant Conservation, a non-profit organization which focuses on the conservation and restoration of rare plants in North America. For over 40 years, the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) has been on the front lines in preventing plant extinction and has served as a leading authority on science-based best practices to conserve rare and endangered native plants—with particular expertise in collecting, storing, and utilizing wild rare plant seeds for conservation purposes. Through key initiatives such as regional seed collection in biodiversity hotspots across the U.S., pioneering scientific research studies, and cutting-edge database tools, CPC is expanding practitioners' collective knowledge while building capacity and streamlining conservation efforts.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

44. Salamander Picnic

Time: 10:00:00 AM to 3:00:00 PM

Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)

Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.

Join this all-day program to hunt for the hidden treasures of the Smokies that are just out of sight. Make sure to bring a lunch for this all-day program. You will learn about the broad diversity of Tennessee's salamanders from high to low elevation, how to identify them, their life history, and threats to their long-term viability. Depending on the weather, this hike will move from mountains to foothills, where you may find some scaly friends. Come armed with questions and shoes you don't mind getting wet. Every amphibian-based hike will begin and end with decontamination, and a short discussion of survey protocols/ethics in order to protect these species from the spread of dangerous pathogens.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot, and carpool to the Indian Gap Parking Area, along Kuwohi Rd. Then around lunch time head towards Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area. Finally, return to Gatlinburg. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

45. An Enthusiast's Guide to Botanical Illustration

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 3:00:00 PM

Trail: Arrowmont Painting Studio

Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.



During this workshop, participants will receive beginner instruction in the art and science of botanical illustration. The morning session will include detailed examples and practice with sketching various native plants using both graphite and pen. In the afternoon session, participants will focus on studying a single plant of their choice and will work towards creating a "plant portrait" in full watercolor. Lunch is provided at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. Additional fee: \$100.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. Walk from your parking location to meet your group at the Arrowmont Art Studios: Fibers studio **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

46. All Day Wildflower Hike at Old Settlers Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Old Settlers Trail

Meeting-Location: Q - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #3.

Walking through these former homesteads, discover the many wildflowers now growing in the abandoned fields and among the stone chimneys and fences. Elevation change: 700' ascent. A 6 to 8-mile, strenuous hike. Bring lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the third parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Old Settlers Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd. The Old Settlers Trailhead will be on the left (35.708638° -83.377394°). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

47. An Extended Journey into Wildflower Wonders on Porters Creek Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Porters Creek Trail

Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

Are you ready to commit to a full day of wildflower enchantment along one of the Park's most renowned trails? You will encounter a kaleidoscope of wildflowers, like trilliums, phacelias, toothworts, spring beauties, liverleaf, bloodroots, phlox, black and blue cohosh, golden alexanders, foam flower, bishops cap, golden saxifrage, and many more. Traverse the trail's storied path, passing by old homesteads and a captivating cemetery, ultimately leading to an ancient cove hardwood forest. Follow the Porters Creek Trail to its endpoint at backcountry campsite number 31 before retracing your steps on this 7.2-mile round trip moderate walk. Delight in a half-hour of downtime, savoring the memories of a day woven with the colors and scents of wildflower wonders.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

48. Petals, Sepals, and Peoples at Meigs Creek

Time: 8:15:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Curry Mountain Trail Meigs Mountain Trail Meigs Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Embark on a floral odyssey along this trail, where a diverse array of wildflowers dots the landscape, weaving through both wet and dry habitats with numerous stream crossings. Venture to the upper, drier ridges, where shortleaf pine, white pine, mountain laurel, huckleberries, oaks, maples, and their entourage of wildflowers paint a vivid picture. Transitioning through the wetter coves and creek crossings, discover the elegance of hemlocks, pawpaw, lush ferns, and the intriguing seersucker sedge (plantain-leaved sedge). Brace yourself for a strenuous 8.7-mile one-way hike from Metcalf Bottoms to the Sinks Bridge, traversing Curry Mountain and Meigs Mountain trails. Sixteen non-bridge stream crossings and enchanting waterfalls lie in wait! With an elevation gain of 1,400 feet, pack your lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes for an immersive journey through nature's vibrant tapestry.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the north parking area at Metcalf Bottoms. Send two to three cars to the Sinks Bridge parking area (35.669493° -83.662464°), leaving one or two cars at the Sinks Bridge for a shuttle after the hike. Once everyone returns to the Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area, start the hike on the Curry Mountain Trail, then go over Meigs Mountain, and finish on the Meigs Creek Trail. Once finished, shuttle drivers back to Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool and car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

49. Wildflower Hike at Grapeyard Ridge Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:00:00 PM
Trail: Grapeyard Ridge Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

This 4-6 mile out and back trip is packed with stream crossings, cemeteries, and the remains of the old Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. Once known as "Winnesoka", Cherokee for "place of grapes", Grapeyard Ridge is known for its abundance of grapevines. Follow knowledgeable leaders on this moderate hike while they help you read the landscape.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group at the second parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Grapeyard Ridge Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, park along the road right before the turnoff for Ramsey Prong Rd. (35.707682, -83.382683). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

50. Bird Banding Basics at the Premier Seven Islands State Birding Park

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Seven Islands State Park (outside of GSMNP)
Meeting-Location: AM - Seven Islands State Birding Park.



Join experienced birders and conservationists in a hands-on birding program outside of the GSMNP. Seven Islands State Birding Park is a premier birding park along the French Broad River where more than 215 species of birds have been documented! In this program, you will get closer up views of birds than programs in the GSMNP can offer; you will experience catching, identifying, measuring, aging, banding, and releasing many species, including spring migrants. You will be able to observe the whole process and release the birds after data are recorded. An additional fee of \$25 per person is requested, 100% of which will be donated to Seven Islands State Park to support their bird banding research.

Logistics: Meet your group at the Bluebird Barn near the main parking area, and walk approximately one mile to the banding site with your leaders. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 60 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles: Birds, Fungi, Insects, Mammals, Plants, Reptiles & Amphibians, Other**

51. Birding and Wildflowers on School House Gap Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: School House Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

The School House Gap Trail follows a beautiful stream lined with rhododendron, and ultimately enters into an upland deciduous habitat with scattered pines containing a variety of colorful spring warblers, vireos, and tanagers. Bring binoculars, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes.

Logistics: Leaders may elect to hike a trail in the Townsend Wye area, or they may organize carpool to travel from Townsend Wye to School House Gap Trailhead. If going to Schoolhouse Gap Trailhead, then carpool may be needed to drive 3.9 miles towards Cades Cove on Laurel Creek Rd to School House Gap Trailhead. There is limited parking there. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

52. Birding on Bullhead Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Bullhead Trail
Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

Join expert birders for a hike on the Bullhead Trail. Bring binoculars and rain gear. The walk ascends the moderate Bullhead Trail for 2.2 miles. The total round-trip hike is 4.5 miles.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Bullhead Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

53. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Spruce Fir Nature Trail, Ash Hopper Branch
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.



Embark on a thrilling journey from lofty peaks to lowland realms in pursuit of Tennessee's enchanting slimy jewels. These brief hikes promise a whirlwind exploration, unveiling the rich tapestry of salamanders that make Southern Appalachia the undisputed salamander capital of the world. The adventure begins at the Spruce Fir Nature Trail, offering a glimpse of high-elevation salamander communities and the exclusive endemic species of the Smokies. The finale awaits at the Sugarlands Visitor Center (Ash Hopper Branch), revealing a dramatically different community of mid to low elevation salamanders. Every amphibian-focused hike starts and ends with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—essential measures to shield these species from perilous pathogens. Get ready for the possibility of wet or muddy conditions, adding an extra layer of excitement to your quest.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot. Fit as many people into as few cars as possible for this motorcade adventure. Fewer cars helps with traffic and parking. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

54. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavillion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavilion.



It is estimated that there are over 20,000 ant species worldwide. Approximately 133 of those species live in Tennessee! Come explore the fascinating world of ants with Dr. DeAnna Beasley from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. We'll set up stations to observe food preferences, learn about different ant behaviors, and conclude with a short hike to seek out different ant homes.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

55. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM

Trail: UT Field Station

Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Join zoologists at the University of Tennessee Field Station to explore the seldom-seen diversity living in the fallen leaf layer under the trees. Leaf litter provides habitat to many organisms and plays an important role in nutrient cycling in the forest. In this program, you will learn some of the methods that scientists use to study the animals that call leaf litter home. You will look under cover boards for salamanders and snakes, check live animal traps to find small mammals, and use Berlese funnels and microscopes to see the tiny invertebrates that live under our feet.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 11:30am and 11:45am from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min.

Drive Time: [Click here for MAP.](#)

55.5. Evolutionary Ecology of Mammals in the Smokies

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Little River Trail

Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Join a wildlife biologist and evolutionary ecologist for a hike to explore the evolutionary ecology of mammals in the Smoky Mountains. We'll discuss both broad themes—such as how mammals have evolved to survive in the diverse habitats of the park—and more specific adaptations and behaviors of individual species, from black bears to bats. Along the way, we'll examine the ecological roles these animals play and how their strategies are intricately tied to the environment of the Smokies.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

56. Imprinting Art with Leaves and Plants

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 12:00:00 PM

Trail: Arrowmont Fibers Studio

Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

Create original artwork from leaves and plants all while cooking in a turkey roaster! Participants will learn to stack bundles with watercolor papers, botanicals, color influencers, and cook for an hour. During cooking time, students will prepare a canvas to mount a watercolor paper tile for greeting/frameable cards. After the hour wait is up, we will be opening the bundles to reveal original Eco-Art Imprinting originals. Additional fee: \$100.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

57. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks

Time: 9:30:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM

Trail: Twin Creeks Science and Education Center

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



Come tour the natural history collections that have been used to document the biodiversity of the GSMNP since its beginning. In this behind-locked-doors tour of the GSMNP Natural History Museum, you will see specimens of mammals, birds (including the now-extinct passenger pigeon), fungi, insects, and plants. You will also learn how these specimens are prepared, stored, and cataloged as well as their importance to the Park.

Logistics: Meet your group in the Twin Creeks Science and Education Center. Park in the Twin Creeks Public Parking Area, cross the street, and walk up the short trail to the south end of the Science and Education Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

58. Nature Journaling with Mary and Thorunn at Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trial: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).



Keeping a nature journal is a fun way to create a record of your experiences in the natural world, using primarily images - usually drawings - or writing. We'll talk about different methods and ideas for ways to make your journal a lively, informative treasure to enjoy for years to come. No drawing skills are necessary - just the desire to keep a thoughtful notebook about what you observe. Bring at least a pencil and paper. Additional materials will be provided.

Logistics: Park at the north parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided.
Drive Time: 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

59. Skills of a Naturalist: Observing Nature

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trial: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Nature is a remarkable teacher, and the GSMNP has been called a great outdoor classroom. Naturalists tap into their knowledge with observational methods of study. Through patience, awareness, and the five senses, you can discover a great deal about the natural world. Valuable tips and simple tools explored in this program will help cultivate and sharpen the skills needed to derive the greatest benefit from time spent outdoors and begin your journey as an amateur naturalist. Bring a small notebook or journal and writing implement of choice.

Logistics: Meet at the Twin Creeks Pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

60. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trial: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Learn about the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program and what kind of data collection NEON performs around the GSMNP. There will be a tour of the NEON Tower and Aquatic sensors and a demonstration of sampling techniques used for measuring fauna and flora data. In this program, you'll walk about 600 yards in total, some of it off trail.

Logistics: Meet at the Twin Creeks Pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

61. Photography of Flowers Using iPhone

Time: 8:15:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trial: Sugarlands Training Room
Meeting-Location: AB - Sugarlands Visitor Center Training Room.



Learn how to improve your wildflower images with an iPhone. Join Robert Hutson, co-author of Great Smoky Mountain Wildflowers: When and Where to Find Them, and Jack Carman, author of Wildflowers of Tennessee as they give hands-on instruction in composition and photo techniques. Bring hiking boots and a smart phone (the focus of this program will be on iPhones, but Samsungs are welcome). An easy 1-mile walk.

Logistics: Park in the third lot on the right. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles: Birds, Fungi, Insects, Mammals, Plants, Reptiles & Amphibians, Other**

62. A Pilgrimage to the Hidden Avent Cabin for Wildflower Tea

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Jakes Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Embark with Nina @blueridgebotanic, on a relaxed and soul-stirring hike to the historic and curious Avent Cabin, nestled in the heart of the park. Along the way, participants will explore and reflect on universal pilgrimage themes as you pass through rich wildflower displays along Jakes Creek and then sneak to this little-visited destination to relax and savor a moment of serenity by partaking in a unique wild tea ceremony at one of the oldest cabins in the park. Delicately brewed with freshly foraged ingredients, the tea offers a taste of the mountains' essence. This sojourn blends nature, history, art, and sensory delight, leaving pilgrims with a profound connection to the beauty of the Smoky Mountains. Moderate 2-mile round trip with 500ft of elevation gain.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

63. Ferns Everywhere You Look in Greenbrier Cove

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Greenbrier Cove
Meeting-Location: M - Greenbrier Road Ranger Station.



Set out on a captivating journey with skilled pteridologists—specialists in the world of ferns—guiding you through an exploration of the Park's diverse fern species. Discover the intricacies of fern anatomy, explore the distinctions between various forms, and unravel the life cycle and ecology of these botanical wonders in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Bring along a hand lens if you have one! This easy 2-mile stroll promises to be an educational and enriching adventure.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 1 mile, and park and meet your group at the Greenbrier Road Ranger Station (35.729633° -83.406016°). You will then head out onto Engine Creek Trail (formerly Injun Creek) from the Ranger Station. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

64. Moss Basics and Beyond at the Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Kephart Prong Trail)

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead.

Mosses—a delightful array of small, non-flowering wonders that grace the landscapes of the Smokies with their unique beauty. Join us on the trail to discover a variety of mosses, unraveling the secrets of their life cycle and exploring the fundamental methods to distinguish one from another. Elevate your experience by bringing a 10x hand lens or a sturdy magnifying glass, to immerse yourself in the intricate details. This moderate 2-3 mile walk, featuring a mix of uphill and downhill sections, promises an engaging journey through the charming world of mosses.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

65. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Join us on a captivating journey from the sanctuary of a closed canopy old-growth spruce-fir forest to the expansive openness of a pristine beech gap forest. Witness the landscape transform before your eyes, revealing the grandeur of towering beech trees. As you delve into the heart of this mountain top realm, keep a lookout for the colossal remains of Fraser firs, standing testament to the invasion of the balsam woolly adelgid, an insect. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile walk that not only unveils the beauty of nature but also brings to light the challenges faced by these majestic forests. This hike has an elevation gain of 500 feet, promising an adventure filled with wonder and discovery.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

66. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Rainbow Falls Trail

Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

This botanical adventure takes place along the enchanting Rainbow Falls Trail, where a tapestry of wildflower diversity unfolds. Commence your journey by strolling through the remnants of M.M. Whittle's apple orchard, a historic haven from 1930 to 1960, where a few resilient trees still blossom and bear fruit. As you venture deeper, Le Conte Creek becomes your companion, revealing the delicate beauty of rosebay rhododendron, galax, and tea berry around the two-mile mark. Cross a picturesque walking bridge before deciding when to turn back. While the trail spans a challenging 4 miles, your group may choose the turnaround point, ensuring an exploration tailored to your pace. Let the wonders of Rainbow Falls Trail captivate your senses and kindle a newfound appreciation for nature's diverse floral symphony.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Rainbow Falls Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

67. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM

Trail: Riverview Quiet Walkway

Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Ladies and gentlemen, gather 'round for an easy stroll like no other! We're talking about a delightful meander from Newfound Gap Road straight to the magical West Prong Little Pigeon River—a botanical bonanza just waiting to be discovered! This 2-mile walk is a true gem, brimming with a dazzling array of wildflowers, trees, shrubs, and plant communities that would make even the most seasoned naturalist swoon!

The trail is as flat as a pancake, following the river's gentle floodplain through a wonderland of towering hardwoods. Keep your eyes peeled for those secretive seepages—they're like nature's hidden watering holes! And for the grand finale? You'll get to feast your eyes on the elusive silky willow, one of the rarest sights in the entire Park! Trust me, this is one easy walk you won't want to miss!

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot at Sugarlands Visitor Center and take provided transportation to the Riverview Quiet Walkway. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Riverview Quiet Walkway is past the Bullhead View Quiet Walkway and directly across from Huskey Gap Trail. After hiking the loop trail, the bus will pick you up at the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead between 11:30am and 11:45am and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

68. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Chestnut Top Trail

Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Join us on an enchanting adventure along the Chestnut Top Trail, where nature unveils one of the grandest wildflower spectacles in the Smokies. As you traverse this narrow path, brace yourself for a dazzling showcase of wildflower wonders. Encounter a diverse array of species, from the charismatic Jack-in-the-pulpit to the charming little brown jug, the delicate stonecrop, and the elusive Carey's saxifrage. The trail also unveils treasures like miterwort, foam flower, fire pink, longspur violet, cross-vine, and many more. This moderate 2-mile walk promises not just a hike but a captivating journey through a floral wonderland that's sure to leave you in awe.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye, across the road from the Chestnut Top Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

69. Sedge ID for Everyone!

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Do the smallest, most overlooked, and ridiculously tricky-to-identify plants get your heart racing? Are you ready to dive headfirst into the intricate, mind-bending world of the tiny and mysterious? Then you absolutely have to join our plant-whisperer extraordinaire, John Shelton, for an educational escapade like no other—a deep dive into the wondrous world of sedges!

Forget the old saying, "sedges have edges"—John's taking you far beyond the basics, plunging into the nitty-gritty details of sedge identification that'll blow your mind. This isn't just a walk in the park; it's a journey into the marvels of miniature flora, where the small becomes mighty and the complex becomes clear.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

70. Wildflower & Fungi Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Short Version

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Huskey Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.

The Huskey Gap Trail is one of the few trails that was chosen for the first SWFP in 1951, and this plant and fungi packed trail continues to be a must-see after 72 years! Walk the old trail that connected settlers of Sugarlands Valley to Little River while passing old homesites and viewing the wildflower and fungi displays. A moderate 2-mile walk. Elevation gain: 500'.



Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the Huskey Gap Trailhead. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Huskey Gap Trailhead is directly across from the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead. The bus will pick you up between 11:30am and 11:45am from the Huskey Gap Trailhead to return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

71. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Kanati Fork Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

The Kanati Fork Trail has many spring ephemeral wildflowers including trilliums, Clinton lily, foam flower, Indian cucumber root, brook lettuce, and Canada mayflower as well as a lot of the more common species in the Park. Turn around when the group is ready. A moderate 2 mile walk.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. There is limited parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead, so carpool in as few cars as possible with your group from Rockefeller Memorial to the Kanati Fork Trailhead. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive 8.4 miles east along Newfound Gap Road, and parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead will be on the left (35.58790, -83.36387). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

72. Wildflowers and Shrubs on Grapeyard Ridge, an iNaturalist expedition

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Grapeyard Ridge Trail
Meeting-Location: AG - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #1.

When the Park was formed in 1934, Greenbrier Cove was a sprawling mountain community with working farms, pastures, and hunting lands in the surrounding mountains. Because of its past, Greenbrier Cove is a great place to see a multitude of shrub and tree species as well as low elevation common wildflowers. You will also get the chance to see a few Magnolia species, rhododendrons, azaleas, sweet shrub, spice bush, buffalo nut, little brown jugs, and a couple of orchids. Once you learn how to identify these species with expert botanist Shawn Krosnick, post them to iNaturalist with out iNat expert, Janet Wright!

Logistics: Meet at first parking lot on the right on Greenbrier Rd, 225 ft from Hwy 321. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to Grapeyard Ridge Trailhead. Head down Greenbrier Rd for 3 miles, and the trailhead will be on the right just before the intersection of Greenbrier Rd and Ramsey Prong Rd. There is limited parking on the road shoulder at this trailhead (there may be a few extra parking spots up Ramsey Prong Rd, but still take as few cars as possible). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

73. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Embark on a journey of fungal fascination with seasoned mycologists who will unravel the mysteries of fungal biology and showcase the pivotal role these organisms play in the intricate nutrient and life cycles of forest ecosystems. Dive into riveting discussions led by experts, exploring the classification of fungi and the intriguing realm of edible versus poisonous varieties. The adventure continues with a leisurely 2-3 mile walk, making learning about fungi not just informative but also delightfully easy.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

74. Lichens along a High-Elevation Ridge

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Thomas Divide Trailhead
Meeting-Location: AV - Thomas Divide Trailhead

There are currently over 1,000 known lichen species in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, lichenologically speaking the most biodiverse park in the lower 48. Join local lichenologist Jason Hollinger on this walk along a high elevation ridge through oldgrowth montane oak forest with fabulous views and -- more importantly! -- spectacular lichen habitat. This is where the biggest, showiest macrolichens such as the ubiquitous beard lichens of the genus *Usnea* thrive on the diffused light and humidity these high elevation ridges receive from frequently being hidden in the clouds. Learn the basics of lichen identification and how to recognize the specialized ecological niches they fill. Warning: you may never see the forest the same way again! Bring warm clothing, rain gear, and comfortable footwear. Moderate out and back. Elevation gain - 500 ft. We hope to reach at least the first high point near where the trail intersects Beetree Ridge. A 10x hand lens is highly recommended. A high-powered UV flashlight, even during broad daylight, can reveal a fascinating and hidden dimension to these organisms: bring one if you have one!

Logistics: Park at the trailhead. If additional parking is required, the leader will arrange a carpool from overflow parking at the Charles A. Webb overlook about 0.5 mile west of the trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 35 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

75. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavilion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavilion.

It is estimated that there are over 20,000 ant species worldwide. Approximately 133 of those species live in Tennessee! Come explore the fascinating world of ants with Dr. DeAnna Beasley from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. We'll set up stations to observe food preferences, learn about different ant behaviors, and conclude with a short hike to seek out different ant homes.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)



76. Insects: Aquatic Insect Diversity Walk at Twin Creeks

Time: 1:00:00 PM to 3:15:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion, Twin Creeks Stream
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Learn to identify and collect insects in pristine streams with entomologists (scientists who study insects). During this program, you will take short walks on multiple streams in order to learn about the differences in the preferred habitats of a variety of insects. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group in the gravel parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)



- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

77. Explore the Wonders of Animal Communication at the UT Field Station

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:00:00 PM
Trail: UT Field Station
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Why do birds sing? Did you know that some fireflies lie to each other? Do bees do the tango or fox trot when they are excited? Loren Hayes and Monica Miles will lead a discussion, game, and walk focused on why and how animals communicate in the GSMNP. Bring your dancing shoes (hiking boots).

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 4:00pm and 4:15pm from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min.
Drive Time: [Click here for MAP.](#)

78. Imprinting Art with Leaves and Plants

Time: 2:00:00 PM to 5:00:00 PM
Trail: Arrowmont Fibers Studio
Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

Create original artwork from leaves and plants all while cooking in a turkey roaster! Participants will learn to stack bundles with watercolor papers, botanicals, color influencers, and cook for an hour. During cooking time, students will prepare a canvas to mount a watercolor paper tile for greeting/frameable cards. After the hour wait is up, we will be opening the bundles to reveal original Eco-Art Imprinting originals. Additional fee: \$100.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

79. Geology: Tremont Faults and Falls

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Take a walk up the Middle Prong Trail to explore a particularly vexing area of the Smokies geology. We will talk about faulting in this area where the geologically younger Gatlinburg Fault broke up and reactivated the older Greenbriar Fault. We will tie it all in to how the Smokies were built and how they fit in with the study of mountain building and view a lovely waterfall or two along the way. Approx. 3 miles of easy walking.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

80. History, Wildflowers, and Culture of Big Greenbrier

Time: 1:15:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Cove
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

In this program, you will discover a diversity of wildflowers and hear stories of life in Big Greenbrier prior to and following the establishment of the Park. What were the communities like in this area? How did people use this magnificent landscape? What was a day in the life like for people who made Big Greenbrier their home? Park Volunteer and VIP Frances Hensley, also known as Granny Frannie, will be in character to convey these things and much more during this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

81. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 3:00:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Science and Education Center
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



Come tour the natural history collections that have been used to document the biodiversity of the GSMNP since its beginning. In this behind-locked-doors tour of the GSMNP Natural History Museum, you will see specimens of mammals, birds (including the now-extinct passenger pigeon), fungi, insects, and plants. You will also learn how these specimens are prepared, stored, and cataloged as well as their importance to the Park.

Logistics: Meet your group in the Twin Creeks Science and Education Center. Park in the Twin Creeks Public Parking Area, cross the street, and walk up the short trail to the south end of the Science and Education Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

82. NEON: Learn about how our National Science Foundation is monitoring long-term climate change in the GSMNP using NEON!

Time: 1:00:00 PM to 3:00:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

Learn about the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program and what kind of data collection NEON performs around the GSMNP. There will be a tour of the NEON Tower and Aquatic sensors and a demonstration of sampling techniques used for measuring fauna and flora data. In this program, you'll walk about 600 yards in total, some of it off trail.

Logistics: Meet at the Twin Creeks Pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

83. Parasites! An Important Component of Our Hidden Biodiversity

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: UT Field Station
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Parasite Ecologist Dr. Ricky Fiorillo from Georgia-Gwinnett College will discuss the natural history and ecology of an often-unappreciated component of our hidden biodiversity, while guiding you through a hands-on dissection searching for worm parasites in a natural host. You will examine the heart, liver, and digestive tract of common freshwater fish species. See for yourself just how interesting and beautiful parasites can be, and why they are an important component of our ecosystem. The minimum age to perform dissections is high school, but anyone can watch.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 4:30pm and 4:45pm from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

84. Photography Workshop

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Training Room
Meeting-Location: AB - Sugarlands Visitor Center Training Room.



Learn how to improve your wildflower images with mirrorless and SLR cameras. Jack Carman, author of Wildflowers of Tennessee, and Robert Hutson, co-author of Great Smoky Mountain Wildflowers: When and Where to Find Them, will give a short visual presentation and then migrate outside for hands-on instruction in composition and photo technique. Bring hiking boots, a mirrorless or SLR camera, and a tripod. An easy 1-mile walk.

Logistics: Park in the third lot on the right. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles: Birds, Fungi, Insects, Mammals, Plants, Reptiles & Amphibians, Other**

85. Sketching Wildflowers at Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Cades Cove Picnic Area)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Cades Cove Picnic Area, Anthony Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: Cades Cove Picnic Area



View wildflowers through the eyes of expert botanical artists, and explore your own creativity in the natural world. Bring your own art materials (at least a pencil and paper). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the Anthony Creek Trailhead at the back of the Cades Cove Picnic Loop. **Transportation:** None provided.
Drive Time: 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

86. Forest Foods and Pharmacy at Metcalf Bottoms

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Ethnobotany--the relationship between plants and people--entails learning about how wild plants can be used for medicines, foods, dyes, and tools. Take a walk in the Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area with expert naturalists to identify many plants and trees that were used by the people of the Smoky Mountains as a part of their daily lives.

Logistics: Park at the north parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided.
Drive Time: 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

87. Moss Walk: Appalachian Trail from Indian Gap to Newfound Gap

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail, Indian Gap, Newfound Gap
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Discover the distinctive flora of high elevation mosses and liverworts along the Appalachian Trail. Learn about their adaptations to higher elevation habitats and how they differ from low elevation species. Bring a hand lens. A moderate 1-2 mile walk.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, group members need to shuttle everyone in as few cars as possible to the start point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there and begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle those that need to pick up their car at the Indian Gap parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

88. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

Time: 1:45:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Join us on a captivating journey from the sanctuary of a closed canopy old-growth spruce-fir forest to the expansive openness of a pristine beech gap forest. Witness the landscape transform before your eyes, revealing the grandeur of towering beech trees. As you delve into the heart of this mountain top realm, keep a lookout for the colossal remains of Fraser firs, standing testament to the invasion of the balsam woolly adelgid, an insect. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile walk that not only unveils the beauty of nature but also brings to light the challenges faced by these majestic forests. This hike has an elevation gain of 500 feet, promising an adventure filled with wonder and discovery.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

89. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Porters Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

Join our leaders on one of the Park's most celebrated wildflower trails, promising a few hours of enchantment. Immerse yourself in a profusion of wildflowers, with trilliums taking center stage, as you weave through remnants of old homesteads, encounter a haunting cemetery, and find solace in the embrace of an ancient cove hardwood forest. Ascend Porters Creek Trail, choosing to veer onto Brushy Mountain Trail at the 1-mile mark or press onward to the captivating Fern Branch Falls just shy of 2 miles, before retracing your steps. Enjoy the ease of this 2-4 mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

90. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to Kephart Prong Trail)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead.

Cove hardwood forests are one of the most biologically diverse communities in North America. This easily accessible trail is a great place to see a lot of different wildflowers as well as trees, shrubs, and vines. There are more species of wildflowers along this short, easy walk than just about any other place in the Park, making it a must for those wanting to learn about spring wildflowers like fringed phacelia, several trillium species, golden saxifrage (can you spot this tiny little plant?), wild ginger, and more. Short walk with elevation gain.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

91. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Riverview Quiet Walkway
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Ladies and gentlemen, gather 'round for an easy stroll like no other! We're talking about a delightful meander from Newfound Gap Road straight to the magical West Prong Little Pigeon River—a botanical bonanza just waiting to be discovered! This 2-mile walk is a true gem, brimming with a dazzling array of wildflowers, trees, shrubs, and plant communities that would make even the most seasoned naturalist swoon!

The trail is as flat as a pancake, following the river's gentle floodplain through a wonderland of towering hardwoods. Keep your eyes peeled for those secretive seepages—they're like nature's hidden watering holes! And for the grand finale? You'll get to feast your eyes on the elusive silky willow, one of the rarest sights in the entire Park! Trust me, this is one easy walk you won't want to miss!

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot at Sugarlands Visitor Center and take provided transportation to the Riverview Quiet Walkway. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Riverview Quiet Walkway is past the Bullhead View Quiet Walkway and directly across from Huskey Gap Trail. After hiking the loop trail, the bus will pick you up at the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead between 4:30pm and 4:45pm and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

92. Nature Explorers: Kids' Educational Wildflower Walk

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AQ - Sugarland Valley Nature Trail



Join us on a delightful educational wildflower walk crafted just for kids! Led by passionate naturalists, this hands-on adventure transforms nature into a vibrant classroom. On this interactive walk, children will engage with the diverse flora, learning about colors, shapes, and scents, fostering a love for the environment. This immersive experience not only nurtures a connection to nature but also inspires the next generation to become enthusiastic stewards of our planet.

Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. NOTE: the parking area for Sugarland Valley Nature Trail IS NOT at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

93. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South)
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Uncover the fascinating world of plant communities and their intricate associations across the landscape! Join us for an engaging program where we delve into the technical distinctions between trees, shrubs, and the wildflowers that accompany them. As we stroll through nature's classroom with seasoned experts, you'll not only gain insight into identifying various trees and shrubs but also discover the captivating dance of associated wildflowers. This easy 2-mile walk promises an enlightening exploration into the harmonious relationships shaping our natural surroundings.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

94. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Little River Trail
Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

This hike beautifully showcases a landscape shaped by both history and nature's resilience. The former logging railroad bed, now a peaceful 2-mile trail, offers a unique experience where visitors can witness nature's ability to heal and reclaim its own. As you walk along the path, you'll encounter the vibrant life that has sprung up in the wake of the early 20th-century logging operations. Wildflowers, ferns, and trees flourish, creating a living tapestry that tells a story of renewal and endurance. The trail's gentle elevation gain of 200 feet makes it accessible for most, allowing you to immerse yourself in this testament to nature's enduring spirit.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

95. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Ramsey Cascades Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

A 4 to 5-mile round trip (not going all the way to the falls) will allow you to hike among the rich forests of the Ramsey Cascades Trail. You will hike along the mountain rivers and experience a rich display of wildflowers, ferns, and Fraser's sedge. Try to make it at least 2.5-miles to a hobbit-like tunnel of rhododendrons that canopy the trail. Elevation gain: ~1000 ft.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group at the second parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd, where you will find the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead (35.702716° - 83.357737°). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

96. Owl Prowl at Mynatt Park

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Mynatt Park
Meeting-Location: W - Mynatt Park.



Come learn about the night predators that reign supreme after the sun goes down. This 2-hour "Owl Prowl" is guided by Karen La Mere. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Park in the Mynatt Park parking area off of Cherokee Orchard Road. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

97. Lichens at Night in the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitor Center Parking Lot
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Come explore the fascinating world of lichens at night! Many lichens produce secondary chemicals and metabolites that fluoresce brightly under UV light. Using handheld UV lights to scan tree trunks and rocks, we will search for lichens with brilliant colors of yellow, orange, electric blue, and more on this unique lichen night walk. Bring a flashlight, warm clothes, and comfortable walking shoes. The leaders will have 4-5 UV lights that you can borrow, but if you have one, bring it along. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the benches in front of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

98. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



In this program, learn from chiropterologists (people who study bats) about the ecology, distributions, feeding and mating behaviors of bats as well as why bats are important and economically beneficial to preserve. You will also get to use some high-tech gadgetry to listen to bats echolocating to hunt insects. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

99. Artist-of-the-Year Reception at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts for Andi Kur (Open to all Pilgrims)

Time: 5:30:00 PM to 7:00:00 PM
Trail: Arrowmont Wolpert Gallery
Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

In her first ever solo show, Andi Kur will be displaying a wide range of her artwork that spans a decade of her life, starting in 2015 when she first joined a plant science lab, all the way to the present, when she works as a full-time illustrator and painter. Her work centers around themes of science and nature, and our (sometimes) very goofy relationship with it.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

100. Inspired by the Wild: Restoring Nature to Your Own Backyard

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM
Trail: Arrowmont Wolpert Gallery
Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the greatest biological treasure in the eastern United States, with more than 100 species of native trees, at least 200 species of birds, and 1,500 flowering plant species. In her talk, Brown will explore ways that visitors can bring their pilgrimage home by planting native species and re-wilding smaller patches of land in the area where they live. A survivor of Hurricane Helene, Brown will discuss the lessons of this historic regional storm. Humans, plants and animals are adapting to climate disruption, but for the diversity we love to survive humans must also continue to mitigate climate change by reducing their carbon footprint. This message of hope will talk about the rewards of bringing the inspiration of nature into our daily lives.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

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- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
 - **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

101. Feathers and Footsteps: A Birding Adventure on Alum Cave Trail

Time: 7:00:00 AM to 2:00:00 PM
Trail: Alum Cave Trail
Meeting-Location: B - Alum Cave Bluffs Trailhead on Newfound Gap Road.

On this hike, be on the lookout and listen for the captivating songs of black-throated blue, black-throated green, and perhaps even the vibrant Blackburnian warblers. Delight in the early melodies of blue-headed vireos and the calls of southern Appalachian residents like black-capped chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, and winter wrens. As you reach Alum Cave, immerse yourself in the melodies of early spring warbler migrants and keep an ear out for the majestic peregrine falcons that call this area home. Ensure you're prepared with binoculars, lunch, water, rain gear, and comfy walking shoes for this invigorating 4.6-mile hike with an elevation gain of 1100 feet.

Logistics: Park at either of the parking lots for Alum Cave Bluffs (the U-shaped lot or the long, straight lot). Meet your group in the long, straight parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

102. Fungi, Lichen, and Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Ramsey Cascades Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

Join professional mycologists, ecologists, and botanists to discover the rich diversity of wildflowers, fungi as well as how these unrelated organisms interact in the forest. An 8-mile strenuous hike. Elevation gain: ~1000 ft. Bring lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

103. All Day Salamander Foray to Albright Grove

Time: 10:00:00 AM to 3:00:00 PM
Trail: Maddron Bald Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Join herpetologists on a roughly 7-mile (round trip) moderately difficult hike to Albright Grove via the Maddron Bald trail. Due to the 1500ft elevation gain, it will be possible to see a range species starting with the low elevation species around the Baxter Cabin, aquatic species in and around Indian Camp Creek, and high elevation species in the old growth of Albright grove around 3400ft. Every amphibian-based hike will begin and end with decontamination, and a short discussion of survey protocols/ethics in order to protect these species from the spread of dangerous pathogens.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the Maddron Bald Trailhead, located off of Hwy 321 and Baxter Road (behind Imagination Mountain Camp Resort). The bus will pick you up between 4:00pm and 4:30pm from the Maddron Bald Trailhead to return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 40 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

104. Petals, Sepals, and Peoples at Meigs Creek

Time: 8:15:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Curry Mountain Trail Meigs Mountain Trail Meigs Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Embark on a floral odyssey along this trail, where a diverse array of wildflowers dots the landscape, weaving through both wet and dry habitats with numerous stream crossings. Venture to the upper, drier ridges, where shortleaf pine, white pine, mountain laurel, huckleberries, oaks, maples, and their entourage of wildflowers paint a vivid picture. Transitioning through the wetter coves and creek crossings, discover the elegance of hemlocks, pawpaw, lush ferns, and the intriguing seersucker sedge (plantain-leaved sedge). Brace yourself for a strenuous 8.7-mile one-way hike from Metcalf Bottoms to the Sinks Bridge, traversing Curry Mountain and Meigs Mountain trails. Sixteen non-bridge stream crossings and enchanting waterfalls lie in wait! With an elevation gain of 1,400 feet, pack your lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes for an immersive journey through nature's vibrant tapestry.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the north parking area at Metcalf Bottoms. Send two to three cars to the Sinks Bridge parking area (35.669493° -83.662464°), leaving one or two cars at the Sinks Bridge for a shuttle after the hike. Once everyone returns to the Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area, start the hike on the Curry Mountain Trail, then go over Meigs Mountain, and finish on the Meigs Creek Trail. Once finished, shuttle drivers back to Metcalf Bottoms Picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool and car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

105. Vegetation Communities of the Appalachian Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
 Dry Sluice Gap Trail
 Grassy Branch Trail
 Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Step right up, trailblazers and flower fanatics, to the Great Smoky Mountains' wildest wandering yet! Join us for a STRENUOUS 10.5 mile one way hike along the legendary Appalachian Trail, led by none other than The GSMNP Botanist, Ian Sabo—think Indiana Jones, but with fewer whips and more wildflowers! Marvel as Ian points out the different natural and ruderal vegetation communities we encounter along the way, the plants that commonly inhabit them and how elevation, aspect, geology, and disturbance events inform these vegetation communities. Lace up, tune in, and let's get gloriously lost in nature's encyclopedia! Bring a lunch, rain gear, proper hiking shoes, and a hand lens if you have one.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the Newfound Gap Parking Lot. The bus will drop you off at the Appalachian Trail. The bus will pick you up between 4:15pm to 4:30pm from the Kephart Prong parking lot and take you back to the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

106. Wildflower Hike at Abrams Falls Trail - Long Version

Time: 9:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Abrams Falls Trail
Meeting-Location: A - Abrams Falls Trailhead in Cades Cove.

Against the backdrop of Abrams Creek, discover wildflowers like gay wings and rhododendron, which flourish in this geologically unique and regionally rare limestone valley. Bring snacks, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes. A moderate 5-mile up-and-back hike that displays one of the Park's more picturesque waterfalls. Elevation gain: 500'.

Logistics: Park and meet your group in the parking area by the Abrams Falls Trailhead off of Cades Cove Loop Rd. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 75 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

107. Birding from Sugarlands to Newfound Gap

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitors Center Newfound Gap Parking Area
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.

Join expert birders to search for spring migrants and Appalachian residents. These walks will begin at Sugarlands, a low elevation area, then you will carpool to Newfound Gap, a high elevation area, where the program will end. Bring binoculars and rain gear. Short, easy walks.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot, and carpool in as few cars as possible to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

108. Birding on the ADA Accessible Sugarlands Valley Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AQ - Sugarland Valley Nature Trail



Join in on this birding adventure along the ADA-accessible Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail! Nestled in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains, this paved, gentle path winds through the remains of old homesteads and beside the babbling waters of Fighting Creek. Keep your binoculars at the ready, you never know which birds might make an appearance! With plenty of opportunities to pause and enjoy the scenery, this inclusive experience is perfect for birders of all levels.

Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. NOTE: the parking area for Sugarland Valley Nature Trail IS NOT at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

109. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Learn from expert mycologists about fungal biology and the importance of fungi in nutrient and life cycles within forest ecosystems. Leaders will also discuss classification of fungi and edible vs. poisonous fungi. An easy 2-3 mile walk.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

110. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Spruce Fir Nature Trail, Ash Hopper Branch
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.



Embark on a thrilling journey from lofty peaks to lowland realms in pursuit of Tennessee's enchanting slimy jewels. These brief hikes promise a whirlwind exploration, unveiling the rich tapestry of salamanders that make Southern Appalachia the undisputed salamander capital of the world. The adventure begins at the Spruce Fir Nature Trail, offering a glimpse of high-elevation salamander communities and the exclusive endemic species of the Smokies. The finale awaits at the Sugarlands Visitor Center (Ash Hopper Branch), revealing a dramatically different community of mid to low elevation salamanders. Every amphibian-focused hike starts and ends with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—essential measures to shield these species from perilous pathogens. Get ready for the possibility of wet or muddy conditions, adding an extra layer of excitement to your quest.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot. Fit as many people into as few cars as possible for this motorcade adventure. Fewer cars helps with traffic and parking. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

111. Pollinators and Plants: Lessons in Pollination Biology

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Grapeyard Ridge Trail
Meeting-Location: Q - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #3.



Did you know that oftentimes you can predict the types of insects that will pollinate certain plants based on the shapes and colors of their flowers? Join experts in pollination biology to learn how to predict pollinators based on floral characteristics.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the third parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Grapeyard Ridge Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, park along the road right before the turnoff for Ramsey Prong Rd. (35.707682, -83.382683). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

112. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: UT Field Station
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Join zoologists at the University of Tennessee Field Station to explore the seldom-seen diversity living in the fallen leaf layer under the trees. Leaf litter provides habitat to many organisms and plays an important role in nutrient cycling in the forest. In this program, you will learn some of the methods that scientists use to study the animals that call leaf litter home. You will look under cover boards for salamanders and snakes, check live animal traps to find small mammals, and use Berlese funnels and microscopes to see the tiny invertebrates that live under our feet.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 11:30am and 11:45am from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

113. Geology from Afar - Viewed from Foothills Parkway

Time: 8:45:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Foothills Parkway
Meeting-Location: AW - Boat Ramp on US 129 (Clark Bar Rock)



Learn about the geologic landscape of the southern Smokies from the Foothills Parkway. The vegetation of the Southern Appalachians has always been an impediment to studying the rocks of the region. East coast geologists often rely on roadcuts to provide rock exposures that are otherwise hidden. The Foothills Parkway offers both roadcuts and expansive views that allow us to get a full picture of both the rocks and how they are laid out on the mountainside. We will view both the Smokies and the Tennessee Valley and learn about their shared origins.

Logistics: Meet at the parking area for the boat ramp on US 129 (the road that becomes "The Tail of the Dragon"), approximately 0.1 miles south of the intersection with the end of the south segment of the Foothills Parkway. Google Maps lists the location as "Chilhowee, TN" or "Clark Bar Rock". Note it is about 1.5 hr drive from Gatlinburg. We will then motor north along the parkway making several stops (including one at Look Rock that has a restroom), ending at the large overlook above Tuckaleechee Valley at Caylor Gap Overlook. The route is almost 30 miles long so plan accordingly. Maps will be provided so we all stay on the same page. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 90 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

114. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks

Time: 9:30:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Twin Creeks
 Science and Education Center
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



Come tour the natural history collections that have been used to document the biodiversity of the GSMNP since its beginning. In this behind-locked-doors tour of the GSMNP Natural History Museum, you will see specimens of mammals, birds (including the now-extinct passenger pigeon), fungi, insects, and plants. You will also learn how these specimens are prepared, stored, and cataloged as well as their importance to the Park.

Logistics: Meet your group in the Twin Creeks Science and Education Center. Park in the Twin Creeks Public Parking Area, cross the street, and walk up the short trail to the south end of the Science and Education Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

115. Fun with Names: Botanical Latin for Beginners

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Trail
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).



On this leisurely hike, observe a variety of beautiful wildflowers, learn to identify them, and hear the stories behind their Latin names. You will discover that learning botanical names can be as much fun (or more fun!) as knowing the common ones, discuss the importance of botanical names, and realize that knowing a little basic Latin helps you better understand various aspects of plants and their relationships to others. Previous experience is not needed.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

116. Photography of Flowers with Mirrorless or SLR Cameras: Advanced Workshop

Time: 8:15:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Sugarlands Training Room
Meeting-Location: AB - Sugarlands Visitor Center Training Room.



Learn how to improve your wildflower images with mirrorless and SLR cameras. Robert Hutson, co-author of Great Smoky Mountain Wildflowers: When and Where to Find Them, and Jack Carman, author of Wildflowers of Tennessee, will give a short visual presentation and then migrate outside for hands-on instruction in composition and photo technique. Bring hiking boots, a mirrorless or SLR camera, and a tripod. An easy 1-mile walk.

Logistics: Park at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

117. A Pilgrimage to the Hidden Avent Cabin for Wildflower Tea

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Jakes Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Embark with Nina @blueridgebotanic, on a relaxed and soul-stirring hike to the historic and curious Avent Cabin, nestled in the heart of the park. Along the way, participants will explore and reflect on universal pilgrimage themes as you pass through rich wildflower displays along Jakes Creek and then sneak to this little-visited destination to relax and savor a moment of serenity by partaking in a unique wild tea ceremony at one of the oldest cabins in the park. Delicately brewed with freshly foraged ingredients, the tea offers a taste of the mountains' essence. This sojourn blends nature, history, art, and sensory delight, leaving pilgrims with a profound connection to the beauty of the Smoky Mountains. Moderate 2-mile round trip with 500ft of elevation gain.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

118. Herblore of Appalachia

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Learn about the edible, medicinal, and generally useful plants of the Smokies with Ila Hatter and Brittney Hughes. Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Park at the north parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

119. Moss Walk: Engine Creek Trail (formerly Injun Creek) in Greenbrier

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Engine Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: M - Greenbrier Road Ranger Station.

Learn about the diminutive world of mosses: a diverse group of very beautiful, unique, and small non-flowering plants that are found throughout the Smokies. You will learn about a variety of mosses, liverworts, and hornworts as you observe them along the trail. You will also discuss their life cycle and basic ways to distinguish them from one another. Bring a 10x hand lens or a strong magnifying glass if possible. An easy 2-mile hike that includes a narrow but sturdy stream crossing with a handrail and a short rocky area that is often wet and muddy.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 1 mile, and park and meet your group at the Greenbrier Road Ranger Station (35.729633° -83.406016°). You will then head out onto Engine Creek Trail from the Ranger Station. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

120. Wildflower Roundup, exploring Porters Creek Trail with iNaturalist

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Porters Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

Join our expert botanist and iNaturalist leaders on one of the Park's most celebrated wildflower trails, promising a few hours of enchantment. Immerse yourself in a profusion of wildflowers, with trilliums taking center stage, as you weave through remnants of old homesteads, encounter a haunting cemetery, and find solace in the embrace of an ancient cove hardwood forest. Ascend Porters Creek Trail, choosing to veer onto Brushy Mountain Trail at the 1-mile mark or press onward to the captivating Fern Branch Falls just shy of 2 miles, before retracing your steps. Enjoy the ease of this 2-4 mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

121. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to the West Prong Trail)

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: West Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AJ - West Prong Trailhead.

Cove hardwood forests are one of the most biologically diverse communities in North America. This easily accessible trail is a great place to see a lot of different wildflowers as well as trees, shrubs, and vines. There are more species of wildflowers along this short, easy walk than just about any other place in the Park, making it a must for those wanting to learn about spring wildflowers like fringed phacelia, several trillium species, golden saxifrage (can you spot this tiny little plant?), wild ginger, and more. Short walk with elevation gain.

Logistics: Park in the gravel lot and meet your group at the West Prong Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

122. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Rainbow Falls Trail
Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

This botanical adventure takes place along the enchanting Rainbow Falls Trail, where a tapestry of wildflower diversity unfolds. Commence your journey by strolling through the remnants of M.M. Whittle's apple orchard, a historic haven from 1930 to 1960, where a few resilient trees still blossom and bear fruit. As you venture deeper, Le Conte Creek becomes your companion, revealing the delicate beauty of rosebay rhododendron, galax, and tea berry around the two-mile mark. Cross a picturesque walking bridge before deciding when to turn back. While the trail spans a challenging 4 miles, your group may choose the turnaround point, ensuring an exploration tailored to your pace. Let the wonders of Rainbow Falls Trail captivate your senses and kindle a newfound appreciation for nature's diverse floral symphony.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Rainbow Falls Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

123. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South)
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Uncover the fascinating world of plant communities and their intricate associations across the landscape! Join us for an engaging program where we delve into the technical distinctions between trees, shrubs, and the wildflowers that accompany them. As we stroll through nature's classroom with seasoned experts, you'll not only gain insight into identifying various trees and shrubs but also discover the captivating dance of associated wildflowers. This easy 2-mile walk promises an enlightening exploration into the harmonious relationships shaping our natural surroundings.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

124. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Join us on an enchanting adventure along the Chestnut Top Trail, where nature unveils one of the grandest wildflower spectacles in the Smokies. As you traverse this narrow path, brace yourself for a dazzling showcase of wildflower wonders. Encounter a diverse array of species, from the charismatic Jack-in-the-pulpit to the charming little brown jug, the delicate stonecrop, and the elusive Carey's saxifrage. The trail also unveils treasures like miterwort, foam flower, fire pink, longspur violet, cross-vine, and many more. This moderate 2-mile walk promises not just a hike but a captivating journey through a floral wonderland that's sure to leave you in awe.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye, across the road from the Chestnut Top Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

125. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead

Join our botanical experts as they guide you through stunning wildflowers on the Kephart Prong Trail. Wander alongside the remnants of a CCC camp, a former fish hatchery, and an ancient narrow gauge railroad, each adorned with wildflowers like wood betony and rue-anemone. Ascend to the Kephart Prong Shelter before retracing your steps, soaking in the rich heritage and floral wonders. This moderate 4-mile walk promises not just a hike but a fascinating exploration of the past and the blooming beauty that surrounds it.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

126. Wildflower Hike at Little River Above Elkmont

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Little River Trail
Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

This hike beautifully showcases a landscape shaped by both history and nature's resilience. The former logging railroad bed, now a peaceful 2-mile trail, offers a unique experience where visitors can witness nature's ability to heal and reclaim its own. As you walk along the path, you'll encounter the vibrant life that has sprung up in the wake of the early 20th-century logging operations. Wildflowers, ferns, and trees flourish, creating a living tapestry that tells a story of renewal and endurance. The trail's gentle elevation gain of 200 feet makes it accessible for most, allowing you to immerse yourself in this testament to nature's enduring spirit.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

127. Wildflowers at High Elevation: Appalachian Trail from Newfound Gap to Indian Gap

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Experience a unique journey as you transition from the dense, closed canopy of an old-growth spruce-fir forest into the open, airy canopy of a pristine beech gap forest. Along this moderate 1.5-mile hike with a 500-foot elevation gain, you'll encounter early spring ephemeral wildflowers like trout lilies, a carpet of spring beauties, white phacelia, and various trilliums—flourishing here thanks to the protection provided by feral hog exclosures. This hike offers a rare glimpse into these thriving ecosystems where nature's delicate balance is carefully preserved.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

128. Fungi of Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Thunderhead Prong Quiet Walkway
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Learn from expert mycologists about fungal biology and the importance of fungi in nutrient and life cycles within forest ecosystems. Leaders will also discuss classification of fungi and edible vs. poisonous fungi. An easy 2-3 mile walk.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

129. Butterflies in Cades Cove

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Cades Cove Loop Road
Meeting-Location: D - Cades Cove Campground Store.

Retired National Park Service Ranger, Warren Bielenberg and Outdoor Educator, Wanda DeWaard have been chasing birds and butterflies for over 30 years. Join them to explore a variety of habitats in Cades Cove to identify birds and butterflies on the wing. Dress for the weather and bring a field guide if you have one, binoculars, water, and rain gear. Short, easy walks.

Logistics: Meet your group in the store's parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 50 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

130. Wild about Ants! Discovering Ants of the Smokies

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavillion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavillion.



It is estimated that there are over 20,000 ant species worldwide. Approximately 133 of those species live in Tennessee! Come explore the fascinating world of ants with Dr. DeAnna Beasley from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. We'll set up stations to observe food preferences, learn about different ant behaviors, and conclude with a short hike to seek out different ant homes.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

130.5. Evolutionary Ecology of Mammals in the Smokies

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Little River Trail
Meeting-Location: S - Little River Trailhead past Elkmt Campground.

Join a wildlife biologist and evolutionary ecologist for a hike to explore the evolutionary ecology of mammals in the Smoky Mountains. We'll discuss both broad themes—such as how mammals have evolved to survive in the diverse habitats of the park—and more specific adaptations and behaviors of individual species, from black bears to bats. Along the way, we'll examine the ecological roles these animals play and how their strategies are intricately tied to the environment of the Smokies.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the parking area at the Little River Trailhead. The parking area and trailhead are just past the Little River Bridge. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

131. Geology: Tremont Faults and Falls

Time: 1:45:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Take a walk up the Middle Prong Trail to explore a particularly vexing area of the Smokies geology. We will talk about faulting in this area where the geologically younger Gatlinburg Fault broke up and reactivated the older Greenbrier Fault. We will tie it all in to how the Smokies were built and how they fit in with the study of mountain building and view a lovely waterfall or two along the way. Approx. 3 miles of easy walking.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

132. Tour the GSMNP Natural History Museum at Twin Creeks

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 3:00:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Science and Education Center
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



Come tour the natural history collections that have been used to document the biodiversity of the GSMNP since its beginning. In this behind-locked-doors tour of the GSMNP Natural History Museum, you will see specimens of mammals, birds (including the now-extinct passenger pigeon), fungi, insects, and plants. You will also learn how these specimens are prepared, stored, and cataloged as well as their importance to the Park.

Logistics: Meet your group in the Twin Creeks Science and Education Center. Park in the Twin Creeks Public Parking Area, cross the street, and walk up the short trail to the south end of the Science and Education Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

133. Nature Journaling with Andi and Clare

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)

Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Keeping a nature journal is a fun way to create a record of your experiences in the natural world, using primarily images - usually drawings - or writing. We'll talk about different methods and ideas for ways to make your journal a lively, informative treasure to enjoy for years to come. No drawing skills are necessary - just the desire to keep a thoughtful notebook about what you observe. Bring at least a pencil and paper. Additional materials will be provided.

Logistics: Park at the north parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

134. Parasites! An Important Component of Our Hidden Biodiversity

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: UT Field Station

Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Parasite Ecologist Dr. Ricky Fiorillo from Georgia-Gwinnett College will discuss the natural history and ecology of an often-unappreciated component of our hidden biodiversity, while guiding you through a hands-on dissection searching for worm parasites in a natural host. You will examine the heart, liver, and digestive tract of common freshwater fish species. See for yourself just how interesting and beautiful parasites can be, and why they are an important component of our ecosystem. The minimum age to perform dissections is high school, but anyone can watch.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 4:30pm and 4:45pm from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

135. Sketching Wildflowers at Twin Creeks Pavilion

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



View wildflowers through the eyes of expert botanical artists, and explore your own creativity in the natural world. Bring your own art materials (at least a pencil and paper). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

136. Ferns at Baxter Creek Trail, along Big Creek (Moved to Engine Creek Trail at Greenbrier)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Engine Creek Trail

Meeting-Location: M - Greenbrier Road Ranger Station.

Come join expert pteridologists (people who study ferns) on this walk to learn about fern species in the Park. You will learn about the parts of ferns and the life cycle and ecology of ferns, as well as how to distinguish different forms. Bring a hand lens if you have one. An easy 2-mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 1 mile, and park and meet your group at the Greenbrier Road Ranger Station (35.729633° -83.406016°). You will then head out onto Engine Creek Trail from the Ranger Station. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

137. Exotic Plants on the Gatlinburg Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Gatlinburg Trail
Meeting-Location: Z - Park Headquarters Road.

Since the 1700s, botanists have used the term "exotic" to describe plant species from elsewhere introduced into a new area. During this hike, you'll focus on learning to identify exotic plant species, the differences between naturalized exotic species and those that aren't, what makes a species "invasive," and about the negative impact these species have on our native plants and animals. An easy 2-3 mile walk.

Logistics: Meet your group outside of the gated area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

138. Moss Walk: Appalachian Trail from Indian Gap to Newfound Gap

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail, Indian Gap, Newfound Gap
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Discover the distinctive flora of high elevation mosses and liverworts along the Appalachian Trail. Learn about their adaptations to higher elevation habitats and how they differ from low elevation species. Bring a hand lens. A moderate 1-2 mile walk.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, group members need to shuttle everyone in as few cars as possible to the start point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there and begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle those that need to pick up their car at the Indian Gap parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

139. Tree and Shrub Identification Walk at Metcalf Bottoms

Time: 1:45:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South) Metcalf Bottoms Trail
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Embark on a journey that goes beyond the basics—this program isn't just about terms, it's a dive into the captivating world of woody plants. Discover the intricate characters that unlock the secrets of identifying trees, shrubs, and woody vines. Uncover the art of distinguishing between genera and species by mastering the subtle nuances of leaf and bark characteristics. It's not just a walk; it's an exploration of the Park's diverse woody wonders. While field guides and hand lenses are welcomed, they're not essential—just bring your enthusiasm! Join us for an easy 2-mile stroll that promises both education and adventure.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

140. Trees, Shrubs, and Wildflowers of High Elevation, an iNaturalist expedition at Indian Gap Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Learn to ID trees, shrubs, and wildflowers with John Shelton-Sarabia, a botanist for the TVA! Then post all of the cool plants you find on the iNaturalist App with the iNat expert Janet Wright. On this journey you will pass from the closed canopy of an old growth spruce-fir forest into the open canopy of a pristine beech gap forest. Notice the giant dead Fraser firs, which have succumbed to the spread of the invasive insect, the balsam woolly adelgid. A 1.5-mile moderate walk. Elevation gain: 500'.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Road Prong Trail parking area while others wait at the Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Road Prong parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial drive southwest 1.5 miles along the Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Road. The Road Prong parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

141. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Porters Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road
 Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

Join our leaders on one of the Park's most celebrated wildflower trails, promising a few hours of enchantment. Immerse yourself in a profusion of wildflowers, with trilliums taking center stage, as you weave through remnants of old homesteads, encounter a haunting cemetery, and find solace in the embrace of an ancient cove hardwood forest. Ascend Porters Creek Trail, choosing to veer onto Brushy Mountain Trail at the 1-mile mark or press onward to the captivating Fern Branch Falls just shy of 2 miles, before retracing your steps. Enjoy the ease of this 2-4 mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

142. Floral Frenzy on the Riverview Quiet Walkway

Time: 1:00:00 PM to 3:45:00 PM
Trail: Riverview Quiet Walkway
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Ladies and gentlemen, gather 'round for an easy stroll like no other! We're talking about a delightful meander from Newfound Gap Road straight to the magical West Prong Little Pigeon River—a botanical bonanza just waiting to be discovered! This 2-mile walk is a true gem, brimming with a dazzling array of wildflowers, trees, shrubs, and plant communities that would make even the most seasoned naturalist swoon!

The trail is as flat as a pancake, following the river's gentle floodplain through a wonderland of towering hardwoods. Keep your eyes peeled for those secretive seepages—they're like nature's hidden watering holes! And for the grand finale? You'll get to feast your eyes on the elusive silky willow, one of the rarest sights in the entire Park! Trust me, this is one easy walk you won't want to miss!

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot at Sugarlands Visitor Center and take provided transportation to the Riverview Quiet Walkway. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Riverview Quiet Walkway is past the Bullhead View Quiet Walkway and directly across from Huskey Gap Trail. After hiking the loop trail, the bus will pick you up at the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead between 3:30pm and 4:00pm and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

143. Nature Explorers: Kids' Educational Wildflower Walk

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AQ - Sugarland Valley Nature Trail



Join us on a delightful educational wildflower walk crafted just for kids! Led by passionate naturalists, this hands-on adventure transforms nature into a vibrant classroom. On this interactive walk, children will engage with the diverse flora, learning about colors, shapes, and scents, fostering a love for the environment. This immersive experience not only nurtures a connection to nature but also inspires the next generation to become enthusiastic stewards of our planet.

Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. NOTE: the parking area for Sugarland Valley Nature Trail IS NOT at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

144. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Join us on an enchanting adventure along the Chestnut Top Trail, where nature unveils one of the grandest wildflower spectacles in the Smokies. As you traverse this narrow path, brace yourself for a dazzling showcase of wildflower wonders. Encounter a diverse array of species, from the charismatic Jack-in-the-pulpit to the charming little brown jug, the delicate stonecrop, and the elusive Carey's saxifrage. The trail also unveils treasures like miterwort, foam flower, fire pink, longspur violet, cross-vine, and many more. This moderate 2-mile walk promises not just a hike but a captivating journey through a floral wonderland that's sure to leave you in awe.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye, across the road from the Chestnut Top Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

145. Wildflower Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Short Version

Time: 1:45:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Huskey Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



The Huskey Gap Trail is one of the few trails that was chosen for the first SWFP in 1951, and this botanically rich trail continues to be a must-see after 72 years! Walk the old trail that connected settlers of Sugarlands Valley to Little River while passing old homesites and viewing the wildflower displays of crested dwarf iris, trillium, wild ginger, and bloodroot. A moderate 2-mile walk. Elevation gain: 500'.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the Huskey Gap Trailhead. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Huskey Gap Trailhead is directly across from the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead. The bus will pick you up between 4:30pm and 5:00pm from the Huskey Gap Trailhead to return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

146. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Ramsey Cascades Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

A 4 to 5-mile round trip (not going all the way to the falls) will allow you to hike among the rich forests of the Ramsey Cascades Trail. You will hike along the mountain rivers and experience a rich display of wildflowers, ferns, and Fraser's sedge. Try to make it at least 2.5-miles to a hobbit-like tunnel of rhododendrons that canopy the trail. Elevation gain: ~1000 ft.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group at the second parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd, where you will find the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead (35.702716° - 83.357737°). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

147. Bugs at Light at Ash Hopper Branch

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Visitor Center Parking Lot
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



If you want to see a lot of really cool insects, join University of Tennessee at Chattanooga entomologists as they attract nocturnal moths, beetles, and a wide diversity of other insects using a black light. Dress warmly, bring a headlamp or flashlight with a red cover, and hand lens if you have them. No trail walking. This is a great event for people of all ages and any who are interested!

Logistics: Meet your group in the Sugarlands Visitor Center bus parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

148. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM
Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion
Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).



In this program, learn from chiropterologists (people who study bats) about the ecology, distributions, feeding and mating behaviors of bats as well as why bats are important and economically beneficial to preserve. You will also get to use some high-tech gadgetry to listen to bats echolocating to hunt insects. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs**  , **Light on the Legs**  , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

149. Stargazing

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM

Trail: Carlos Campbell Overlook

Meeting-Location: AR - Carlos Campbell Overlook



Experience the natural history of the universe in a truly dark sky. In this program, you will learn the basics of skywatching, star names, and constellations, and examine the wonders of the deep sky through a variety of optical instruments. Bring warm clothes and binoculars if you have them, but not a flashlight. Very short, easy walk. Not recommended for children under 10.

Logistics: Parking is limited. Park and meet your group at the Carlos Campbell Overlook. If Carlos Campbell Overlook parking is full, alternate parking can be found 0.1 miles north and south of the Carlos Campbell Overlook. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

150. Diversity on their own terms: Lessons about species and coexistence in the ‘Salamander Capital of the World’

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM

Trail: Arrowmont Wolpert Gallery

Meeting-Location: C - Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts on Gatlinburg Parkway.

Diversity, like some other familiar concepts, seems easy to recognize but difficult to precisely define. The southern Appalachians, and the Great Smoky Mountains in particular, are renowned as a hotspot of salamander diversity. But what is salamander diversity? Where does it come from? How is it maintained in an ever-changing world? To seek answers to these questions is to address the fundamental goals of biodiversity science. The most basic definition of biological diversity is ‘the number of species,’ but many groups of southern Appalachian salamanders defy traditional species classification. In this talk, I will use examples from our ongoing research to raise questions and draw lessons about the conceptualization and measurement of diversity, the processes that promote the evolution of diversity, and the ecological interactions that constrain or facilitate coexistence of different kinds of salamanders. We find that the most diverse groups of salamanders form more complex and fluid patterns of variation than can be summarized as a list of discrete and static taxonomic species. To appreciate, explain, and preserve salamander diversity requires us to look for a more nuanced description of biological variation – diversity on their own terms.

Logistics: There is limited parking on the Arrowmont campus. There are two parking options with a fee near the campus: 1) the city parking garage located at 526 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #3), which has an adjoining walkway to the Arrowmont campus, 2) or the Anakeesta parking lot. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

151. Rambling with Wildflowers, Mushrooms, and Lichens on the Big Creek Trail (Moved to Bradley Fork Trail at Smokemont)

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM

Trail: Bradley Fork Trail

Meeting-Location: AS - Bradley Fork Trailhead

This strenuous hike will take you through magnificent cove hardwood and hemlock forests, eventually crossing the Big Creek at the Mouse Creek Falls. On this adventure, you will catch glimpses of unique lichens and mushrooms inhabiting a multitude of microhabitats. Majestic trees and wildflowers are also plentiful. Bring lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes. 5-6 mile out and back, elevation gain: 1000’.

Logistics: Meet your group at the Bradley Fork trail head within the Smokemont Campground. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 50 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

152. Photography of Flowers Motorcade

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Trails TBD
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.



Travel with Jack Carman, author of *Wildflowers of Tennessee*, and Robert Hutson, co-author of *Great Smoky Mountain Wildflowers: When and Where to Find Them*, to nearby wildflower locations to learn basic and advanced techniques for photographing wildflowers. They provide hands-on instruction and assistance. Short, easy walks.

Logistics: Meet your group at the city parking lot, and leaders will decide which trails to carpool toward from there. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

153. Beneath Towering Giants: Exploring Albright Grove

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Maddron Bald Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Join this hike to one of the Park's most awe-inspiring havens of ancient trees—a living testament to nature's grandeur. Encounter towering tulip poplars, majestic fraser magnolias, delicate silverbells, resilient maples, and the once-majestic hemlocks now grappling with the encroaching hemlock woolly adelgids, an invasive insect. Stroll past enchanting wildflower displays and a well-preserved 1889 chestnut cabin. Keep your eyes peeled for the elusive epiphytic elderberry, perched high in the canopy. Pack a lunch, hydrate, gear up for potential rain, and don comfy walking shoes for this moderate 6.5-mile hike that promises a captivating ascent. Elevation gain: 1,600'.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the Maddron Bald Trailhead, located off of Hwy 321 and Baxter Road (behind Imagination Mountain Camp Resort). The bus will pick you up between 4:00pm and 4:30pm from the Maddron Bald Trailhead to return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 40 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

154. Balds! Plants so Unique They're Only Found at The Peak

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Gregory Ridge Trail Gregory Bald Trail
Meeting-Location: AX - Gregory Ridge Trailhead

Strap on those hiking boots, channel your inner explorer, and join us on a wild, plant-powered pilgrimage up the legendary Gregory Ridge Trail! Our botanical wizards (yes, real-life wizards of flora!) will guide you through this exhilarating 11-mile round-trip trek. Expect heart-thumping climbs, mind-blowing views, and a parade of plant species that you won't find anywhere else—except on these mystical Balds!

Once you huff and puff your way to Gregory Bald's summit, let the mesmerizing panorama of Cades Cove steal your breath away. But don't get too distracted by the view—you're here for the quirky, the rare, the downright bizarre plant life that thrives in this unique mountain-top oasis! Pack your essentials: water, lunch, rain gear, and proper hiking shoes.

Logistics: Meet your group in the Gregory Ridge Trailhead Parking lot. DO NOT PASS THE PARKING LOT! THE ROAD BECOMES A ONE WAY AND RE-ENTRY TO THE PARK IS VERY DIFFICULT **Transportation:** None **Drive Time:** 80 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

155. Wildflower Hike at Huskey Gap Trail - Long Version

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Huskey Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Follow expert botanists on a physically challenging, one-way trek from Huskey Gap to Little River Trail, Cucumber Gap, and then Jakes Creek Trail. Hikers may elect to take a short detour to the Mayna Treanor Avent Studio Cabin, which was once used as a retreat for the noted artist. Bring lunch, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes. A strenuous 6-mile one-way hike. Maximum elevation gain: 1,500'.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot at Sugarlands Visitor Center and take provided transportation to the Huskey Gap Trailhead. The bus will travel two miles south from Sugarlands Visitor Center on Newfound Gap Rd. The Huskey Gap Trailhead is directly across from the Riverview Quiet Walkway Trailhead. The bus will pick you up between 4:15pm and 4:30pm at Jakes Trailhead in Elkmont to return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 5 min. **Drive Time:** [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

156. Birding and Wildflowers on School House Gap Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: School House Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

The School House Gap Trail follows a beautiful stream lined with rhododendron, and ultimately enters into an upland deciduous habitat with scattered pines containing a variety of colorful spring warblers, vireos, and tanagers. Bring binoculars, water, rain gear, and comfortable walking shoes.

Logistics: Leaders will organize a carpool to drive 3.9 miles towards Cades Cove on Laurel Creek Rd to School House Gap Trailhead. There is limited parking there. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

157. Birding at Townsend Wye and Chestnut Tops Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD - Townsend Wye "Y" on Little River Road.

Embark on a bird's-eye adventure exploring diverse habitats around Townsend Wye. Witness the playful acrobatics of northern rough-winged swallows near the bridge, observe the eastern phoebes nesting along the river, and search the banks for charming Louisiana water thrushes with their distinctive tail-bobs. As we ascend Chestnut Tops trail, we'll tune in to the delightful melodies of spring migrants. Don't forget your binoculars, water, rain gear, and comfy walking shoes for this immersive journey.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

158. Wings Above, Trails Below: Avian Wonders on Bullhead Trail

Time: 7:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Bullhead Trail
Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

Follow along with seasoned birders for an immersive journey along the Bullhead Trail. Don't forget to pack your binoculars and rain gear for this adventure. Ascend the moderate Bullhead Trail, covering 2.2 miles each way for a total round-trip hike of 4.5 miles. It's a birdwatching escapade you won't want to miss!

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Bullhead Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

159. A Trip to Salamander Island

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail, Indian Gap
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Amphibians are notoriously rare on oceanic islands because they are dried out by saltwater. However, the high elevation "islands" of damp and cool spruce-fir forests like those here in the Smokies offer the perfect habitat for many species of salamanders who could not survive in the hotter, drier low elevation forests. Join us at Indian Gap where we hope to see at least 4 species that you won't see at low elevations. Every amphibian-based hike will begin and end with decontamination, and a short discussion of survey protocols/ethics in order to protect these species from the spread of dangerous pathogens.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Because of limited parking at the trailhead, consolidate into a maximum of 5 cars and then carpool to the Indian Gap Trailhead off of Kuwohi Rd. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

160. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM

Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavilion

Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavilion.



Prepare for an engaging adventure that kicks off with a concise yet captivating herpetology discussion. Dive into the world of identification, life history, and ethical considerations before setting out on short walks around the pavilion in search of Tennessee's prized treasures—salamanders, the true gems of the region! Traverse a mid-elevation landscape where densely forested streams and seeps seamlessly merge with open woodlands, creating the perfect habitat. Keep your eyes peeled for scaly relatives along the way, adding an extra layer of excitement to the journey. As with every amphibian-focused hike, the experience begins and concludes with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—vital measures to safeguard these remarkable species from the threat of dangerous pathogens. Get ready for an exploration that combines education, ethics, and the thrill of discovery!

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

161. Pollinators and Plants: Lessons in Pollination Biology

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM

Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (North)

Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).



Did you know that oftentimes you can predict the types of insects that will pollinate certain plants based on the shapes and colors of their flowers? Join experts in pollination biology to learn how to predict pollinators based on floral characteristics.

Logistics: Meet your group at the picnic area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

162. Life in the Leaf Litter: A Tour of the Seldom-Seen Animal Diversity at Our Feet

Time: 9:00:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM

Trail: UT Field Station

Meeting-Location: AC - Sugarlands Visitor Center.



Join zoologists at the University of Tennessee Field Station to explore the seldom-seen diversity living in the fallen leaf layer under the trees. Leaf litter provides habitat to many organisms and plays an important role in nutrient cycling in the forest. In this program, you will learn some of the methods that scientists use to study the animals that call leaf litter home. You will look under cover boards for salamanders and snakes, check live animal traps to find small mammals, and use Berlese funnels and microscopes to see the tiny invertebrates that live under our feet.

Logistics: Meet your group in the bus parking lot, and take provided transportation to the UT Field Station at Greenbrier. The bus will drop you off at the entry gate, and you will walk up to the Field Station with your group. The bus will pick you up between 11:30am and 11:45am from the entry gate at the Field Station and return you to Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** Van shuttle provided. DT: 30 min.

Drive Time: [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided**
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

163. Geology from Afar - Viewed from Foothills Parkway

Time: 8:45:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Foothills Parkway
Meeting-Location: AW - Boat Ramp on US 129 (Clark Bar Rock)



Learn about the geologic landscape of the southern Smokies from the Foothills Parkway. The vegetation of the Southern Appalachians has always been an impediment to studying the rocks of the region. East coast geologists often rely on roadcuts to provide rock exposures that are otherwise hidden. The Foothills Parkway offers both roadcuts and expansive views that allow us to get a full picture of both the rocks and how they are laid out on the mountainside. We will view both the Smokies and the Tennessee Valley and learn about their shared origins.

Logistics: Meet at the parking area for the boat ramp on US 129 (the road that becomes "The Tail of the Dragon"), approximately 0.1 miles south of the intersection with the end of the south segment of the Foothills Parkway. Google Maps lists the location as "Chilhowee, TN" or "Clark Bar Rock". Note it is about 1.5 hr drive from Gatlinburg. We will then motor north along the parkway making several stops (including one at Look Rock that has a restroom), ending at the large overlook above Tuckaleechee Valley at Caylor Gap Overlook. The route is almost 30 miles long so plan accordingly. Maps will be provided so we all stay on the same page. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 90 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

164. Secret Stories of The Wildflowers Along Meigs Creek Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Meigs Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AU - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (North Parking Lot).

Come on this relaxed, thoughtful, and sensory-immersive hike for a unique blend of wildflower folklore, indigenous plant usage, and our relationship to the natural world. This florally rich and rigorous hike will culminate with a unique wild tea ceremony where participants will have a chance to relax and reflect on their experience while sipping on a delicious brew of freshly foraged ingredients. Total round-trip will be 3-4 miles.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the north parking area at Metcalf Bottoms. There is limited parking at the Sinks Bridge parking area, so carpool with your group in as few cars as possible from Metcalf Bottoms to the Sinks Bridge parking area (35.669493° - 83.662464°). From Metcalf Bottoms, turn right onto Wear Cove Gap Rd. Then, turn right onto Little River Gorge Rd, and follow this road for 2 miles. The trailhead will be on the left. After the hike, shuttle back to Metcalf Bottoms. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool and car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

165. Exotic Plants on the Gatlinburg Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Gatlinburg Trail
Meeting-Location: Z - Park Headquarters Road.

Since the 1700s, botanists have used the term "exotic" to describe plant species from elsewhere introduced into a new area. During this hike, you'll focus on learning to identify exotic plant species, the differences between naturalized exotic species and those that aren't, what makes a species "invasive," and about the negative impact these species have on our native plants and animals. An easy 2-3 mile walk.

Logistics: Meet your group outside of the gated area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

166. Moss Basics and Beyond at the Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Engine Creek Trail at Greenbrier)

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Engine Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: M - Greenbrier Road Ranger Station.

Mosses—a delightful array of small, non-flowering wonders that grace the landscapes of the Smokies with their unique beauty. Join us on the trail to discover a variety of mosses, unraveling the secrets of their life cycle and exploring the fundamental methods to distinguish one from another. Elevate your experience by bringing a 10x hand lens or a sturdy magnifying glass, to immerse yourself in the intricate details. This moderate 2-3 mile walk, featuring a mix of uphill and downhill sections, promises an engaging journey through the charming world of mosses.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 1 mile, and park and meet your group at the Greenbrier Road Ranger Station (35.729633° -83.406016°). You will then head out onto Engine Creek Trail from the Ranger Station. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 25 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

167. Summit Splendor: Exploring High-Elevation Trees and Shrubs

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Appalachian Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

Join us on a captivating journey from the sanctuary of a closed canopy old-growth spruce-fir forest to the expansive openness of a pristine beech gap forest. Witness the landscape transform before your eyes, revealing the grandeur of towering beech trees. As you delve into the heart of this mountain top realm, keep a lookout for the colossal remains of Fraser firs, standing testament to the invasion of the balsam woolly adelgid, an insect. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile walk that not only unveils the beauty of nature but also brings to light the challenges faced by these majestic forests. This hike has an elevation gain of 500 feet, promising an adventure filled with wonder and discovery.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. Before beginning this hike, some group members need to shuttle their cars to the end point of the hike at the Indian Gap parking area, while others wait at Rockefeller Memorial. Leave as many cars at the Indian Gap parking area as will be necessary to shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial after the hike. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive one mile north on Kuwohi (Clingmans Dome) Rd, and the Indian Gap parking area will be on the right (35.60937, -83.44654). Leave cars there, and return to Rockefeller Memorial to begin your hike. After your hike, shuttle everyone back to Rockefeller Memorial. **Transportation:** None provided. Car shuttle needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

168. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Jakes Creek Trail
 Cucumber Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Stroll through a beautiful secondary cove hardwood forest, immersing yourself in the diversity of wildflowers that grace the path. This adventure kicks off at Jakes Creek, tracing the footsteps of an old railroad route, before culminating near Tulip Branch on Cucumber Gap Trail. Revel in the enchanting scenery before retracing your steps. Lace up your walking shoes and prepare for a brief escape into the heart of a living, breathing forest on this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. After walking 0.7 miles on Jakes Creek Trail with your group, you will turn left onto Cucumber Gap Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

169. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

Time: 8:00:00 AM to 11:00:00 AM
Trail: Rainbow Falls Trail
Meeting-Location: AI - Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap Parking Area.

This botanical adventure takes place along the enchanting Rainbow Falls Trail, where a tapestry of wildflower diversity unfolds. Commence your journey by strolling through the remnants of M.M. Whittle's apple orchard, a historic haven from 1930 to 1960, where a few resilient trees still blossom and bear fruit. As you venture deeper, Le Conte Creek becomes your companion, revealing the delicate beauty of rosebay rhododendron, galax, and tea berry around the two-mile mark. Cross a picturesque walking bridge before deciding when to turn back. While the trail spans a challenging 4 miles, your group may choose the turnaround point, ensuring an exploration tailored to your pace. Let the wonders of Rainbow Falls Trail captivate your senses and kindle a newfound appreciation for nature's diverse floral symphony.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Rainbow Falls Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

170. Nature's Symphony: A Harmonious Exploration of Trees and Wildflowers

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area (South)
Meeting-Location: U - Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area off Little River Road (South Parking Area).

Uncover the fascinating world of plant communities and their intricate associations across the landscape! Join us for an engaging program where we delve into the technical distinctions between trees, shrubs, and the wildflowers that accompany them. As we stroll through nature's classroom with seasoned experts, you'll not only gain insight into identifying various trees and shrubs but also discover the captivating dance of associated wildflowers. This easy 2-mile walk promises an enlightening exploration into the harmonious relationships shaping our natural surroundings.

Logistics: Park at the south parking lot at Metcalf Bottoms, and meet your group at the picnic area. Then, head out onto Metcalf Bottoms Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

171. Serene Wildflower Hike along Kephart Prong Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead

Join our botanical experts as they guide you through stunning wildflowers on the Kephart Prong Trail. Wander alongside the remnants of a CCC camp, a former fish hatchery, and an ancient narrow gauge railroad, each adorned with wildflowers like wood betony and rue-anemone. Ascend to the Kephart Prong Shelter before retracing your steps, soaking in the rich heritage and floral wonders. This moderate 4-mile walk promises not just a hike but a fascinating exploration of the past and the blooming beauty that surrounds it.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

172. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Stroll with expert botanists and conservationists along Middle Prong Trail while stopping along the way to enjoy many of the spring ephemeral wildflowers, ferns, and flowering trees of the Smokies such as tulip trees, wild ginger, and violets. Interestingly, this trail used to be a railroad bed, and carried out the last logs from the Smokies in 1939. A moderate 4-mile walk.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

173. Wildflower Hike at Ramsey Cascades Trail - Short version

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:30:00 AM
Trail: Ramsey Cascades Trail
Meeting-Location: P - Greenbrier Road Parking Lot #2.

A 3 to 4-mile round trip (not going all the way to the falls) will allow you to hike among the rich forests of the Ramsey Cascades Trail. You will hike along the mountain rivers and experience a rich display of wildflowers, ferns, and Fraser's sedge. Try to make it at least 2.5-miles to a hobbit-like tunnel of rhododendrons that canopy the trail. Elevation gain: ~1000 ft.




Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 0.3 miles, and park and meet your group at the second parking lot on the right. From there, carpool in as few cars as possible to the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead. To get to the trailhead from the parking lot, continue driving on Greenbrier Rd, and turn left onto Ramsey Prong Rd, where you will find the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead (35.702716° - 83.357737°). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

174. Wildflowers and Shrubs of Mingus Creek Trail

Time: 8:30:00 AM to 11:45:00 AM
Trail: Mingus Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: AO - Mingus Mill Parking Lot

Embark on a captivating journey up the Mingus Creek Trail, venturing 2 miles into the heart of nature's wonders. Along this scenic hike, discover the vibrant tapestry of fire pink, dog hobble, blue and creeping phlox, four enchanting species of violets, anemones, various trilliums, wild geraniums, may apples, liverleaf, shrub yellow root, buffalo nut, sweet shrubs, spice bushes, rhododendrons, azaleas, and the graceful mountain laurel. Each step promises a treasure trove of botanical delights, making this expedition a feast for the senses.

Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 50 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

175. In Search of the Rarest Lichen of All

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Bradley Fork Trail
Meeting-Location: AS - Bradley Fork Trailhead

Join local lichenologist Jason Hollinger on an exploration of an ecologically important and strikingly beautiful group of organisms. This walk will nicely complement earlier lichen walks in the spruce-fir zone, this time focusing on cyanolichens -- lichens which consort with cyanobacteria instead of green algae -- in prime habitat deep in the heart of the Smokies. Learn the basics of lichen identification and ecology... and perhaps find a species collected only once before decades ago from this very same valley: *Leioderma cherokeense*. Bring rain gear and comfortable footwear. This is a short, easy hike on level ground. Long pants or gaiters are recommended for those sensitive to poison ivy. A 10x hand lens is highly recommended to appreciate the full beauty and intricacy of our quarry.

Logistics: Meet your group at the Bradley Fork trail head within the Smokemont Campground. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 45 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

176. Salamander Safari: Journey from Peaks to Seeps in a Motorcade through the Smokies

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Spruce Fir Nature Trail, Ash Hopper Branch
Meeting-Location: G - City Parking Lot on Reagan Drive By Gatlinburg Fire Station.



Embark on a thrilling journey from lofty peaks to lowland realms in pursuit of Tennessee's enchanting slimy jewels. These brief hikes promise a whirlwind exploration, unveiling the rich tapestry of salamanders that make Southern Appalachia the undisputed salamander capital of the world. The adventure begins at the Spruce Fir Nature Trail, offering a glimpse of high-elevation salamander communities and the exclusive endemic species of the Smokies. The finale awaits at the Sugarlands Visitor Center (Ash Hopper Branch), revealing a dramatically different community of mid to low elevation salamanders. Every amphibian-focused hike starts and ends with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—essential measures to shield these species from perilous pathogens. Get ready for the possibility of wet or muddy conditions, adding an extra layer of excitement to your quest.

Logistics: Meet your group at the parking lot. Fit as many people into as few cars as possible for this motorcade adventure. Fewer cars helps with traffic and parking. **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 10 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

177. Salamanders: Streams, Springs, and Leaves... What Hides Beneath?

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Picnic Pavillion
Meeting-Location: O - Greenbrier Road at Picnic Pavilion.



Prepare for an engaging adventure that kicks off with a concise yet captivating herpetology discussion. Dive into the world of identification, life history, and ethical considerations before setting out on short walks around the pavilion in search of Tennessee's prized treasures—salamanders, the true gems of the region! Traverse a mid-elevation landscape where densely forested streams and seeps seamlessly merge with open woodlands, creating the perfect habitat. Keep your eyes peeled for scaly relatives along the way, adding an extra layer of excitement to the journey. As with every amphibian-focused hike, the experience begins and concludes with decontamination, accompanied by a brief discussion on survey protocols and ethics—vital measures to safeguard these remarkable species from the threat of dangerous pathogens. Get ready for an exploration that combines education, ethics, and the thrill of discovery!

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, drive 3.5 miles, and park and meet your group at the picnic area/pavilion (35.703623° - 83.386516°). **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

178. History, Wildflowers, and Culture of Big Greenbrier

Time: 1:15:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Greenbrier Cove
Meeting-Location: N - Greenbrier Road Terminus at Porters Creek Trailhead.

In this program, you will discover a diversity of wildflowers and hear stories of life in Big Greenbrier prior to and following the establishment of the Park. What were the communities like in this area? How did people use this magnificent landscape? What was a day in the life like for people who made Big Greenbrier their home? Park Volunteer and VIP Frances Hensley, also known as Granny Frannie, will be in character to convey these things and much more during this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

179. Sketching Wildflowers at Collins Creek Pavilion (Moved to Cades Cove Picnic Area)

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Cades Cove Picnic Area, Anthony Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: Cades Cove Picnic Area

View wildflowers through the eyes of expert botanical artists, and explore your own creativity in the natural world. Bring your own art materials (at least a pencil and paper). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the Anthony Creek Trailhead at the back of the Cades Cove Picnic Loop. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)



180. Moss & Fern Adventure along the Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Sugarlands Valley Nature Trail
Meeting-Location: AQ - Sugarland Valley Nature Trail

Delve into the intricate tapestry of ferns, mosses, liverworts, and hornworts as you traverse the trail, encountering them amidst rock fences and remnants of chimneys. Explore their life cycles and uncover simple yet effective methods to distinguish these botanical wonders from one another. Enhance your experience with a 10x hand lens or a robust magnifying glass if you have one. This wheelchair-accessible program unfolds along the smooth concrete of the 0.5-mile Sugarland Valley Nature Trail, meandering alongside the Bullhead Branch creek for an immersive nature encounter.



Logistics: Meet your group in the parking area. NOTE: the parking area for Sugarland Valley Nature Trail IS NOT at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

181. A Joyful Wildflower Stroll on Cucumber Gap Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Jakes Creek Trail Cucumber Gap Trail
Meeting-Location: R - Jakes Creek Trailhead past Elkmont Campground.

Stroll through a beautiful secondary cove hardwood forest, immersing yourself in the diversity of wildflowers that grace the path. This adventure kicks off at Jakes Creek, tracing the footsteps of an old railroad route, before culminating near Tulip Branch on Cucumber Gap Trail. Revel in the enchanting scenery before retracing your steps. Lace up your walking shoes and prepare for a brief escape into the heart of a living, breathing forest on this moderate 2-mile hike.

Logistics: Park at the Jakes Creek Trailhead parking area that is 0.1 miles past the Little River Trailhead parking area. Meet your group at the Jakes Creek Trailhead. After walking 0.7 miles on Jakes Creek Trail with your group, you will turn left onto Cucumber Gap Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 20 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

182. A Peaceful Wildflower Hike through the Beauty of Porters Creek Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to
4:30:00 PM

Trail: Porters Creek Trail
Meeting-Location: N -
Greenbrier Road
Terminus at Porters
Creek Trailhead.

Join our leaders on one of the Park's most celebrated wildflower trails, promising a few hours of enchantment. Immerse yourself in a profusion of wildflowers, with trilliums taking center stage, as you weave through remnants of old homesteads, encounter a haunting cemetery, and find solace in the embrace of an ancient cove hardwood forest. Ascend Porters Creek Trail, choosing to veer onto Brushy Mountain Trail at the 1-mile mark or press onward to the captivating Fern Branch Falls just shy of 2 miles, before retracing your steps. Enjoy the ease of this 2-4 mile walk.

Logistics: Turn onto Greenbrier Rd from Hwy 321, and drive for 4.5 miles, all the way to the end where you will reach the Porters Creek Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

183. A Tranquil Wildflower Hike on the Cove Hardwood Nature Trail (Moved to School House Gap Trail)

Time: 1:45:00 PM to
4:45:00 PM

Trail: School House Gap
Trail
Meeting-Location: AD -
Townsend Wye "Y" on
Little River Road..

Cove hardwood forests are one of the most biologically diverse communities in North America. This easily accessible trail is a great place to see a lot of different wildflowers as well as trees, shrubs, and vines. There are more species of wildflowers along this short, easy walk than just about any other place in the Park, making it a must for those wanting to learn about spring wildflowers like fringed phacelia, several trillium species, golden saxifrage (can you spot this tiny little plant?), wild ginger, and more. Short walk with elevation gain.

Logistics: Leaders will organize a carpool to drive 3.9 miles towards Cades Cove on Laurel Creek Rd to School House Gap Trailhead. There is limited parking there. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

184. Colors of Nature: A Joyful Wildflower Hike at Rainbow Falls

Time: 1:30:00 PM to
4:45:00 PM

Trail: Rainbow Falls Trail
Meeting-Location: AI -
Rainbow Falls and
Trillium Gap Parking
Area.

This botanical adventure takes place along the enchanting Rainbow Falls Trail, where a tapestry of wildflower diversity unfolds. Commence your journey by strolling through the remnants of M.M. Whittle's apple orchard, a historic haven from 1930 to 1960, where a few resilient trees still blossom and bear fruit. As you venture deeper, Le Conte Creek becomes your companion, revealing the delicate beauty of rosebay rhododendron, galax, and tea berry around the two-mile mark. Cross a picturesque walking bridge before deciding when to turn back. While the trail spans a challenging 4 miles, your group may choose the turnaround point, ensuring an exploration tailored to your pace. Let the wonders of Rainbow Falls Trail captivate your senses and kindle a newfound appreciation for nature's diverse floral symphony.

Logistics: Park at the Rainbow Falls and Trillium Gap main parking lot. If the main parking lot is full, a second parking lot can be found 0.3 miles down the road on the right. Meet your group at the main parking lot, and then head out on the Rainbow Falls Trail. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

185. Petals and Peaks: Wildflower Hike along Chestnut Top Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to
4:30:00 PM

Trail: Chestnut Top Trail
Meeting-Location: AD -
Townsend Wye "Y" on
Little River Road.

Join us on an enchanting adventure along the Chestnut Top Trail, where nature unveils one of the grandest wildflower spectacles in the Smokies. As you traverse this narrow path, brace yourself for a dazzling showcase of wildflower wonders. Encounter a diverse array of species, from the charismatic Jack-in-the-pulpit to the charming little brown jug, the delicate stonecrop, and the elusive Carey's saxifrage. The trail also unveils treasures like miterwort, foam flower, fire pink, longspur violet, cross-vine, and many more. This moderate 2-mile walk promises not just a hike but a captivating journey through a floral wonderland that's sure to leave you in awe.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at the Townsend Wye, across the road from the Chestnut Top Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

186. Wildflowers along Kephart Prong Trail, an iNaturalist expedition

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:45:00 PM
Trail: Kephart Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: T - Kephart Prong Trailhead

Join our botanical and iNaturalist experts as they guide you through stunning wildflowers on the Kephart Prong Trail. Wander alongside the remnants of a CCC camp, a former fish hatchery, and an ancient narrow gauge railroad, each adorned with wildflowers like wood betony and rue-anemone. Ascend to the Kephart Prong Shelter before retracing your steps, soaking in the rich heritage and floral wonders. This moderate 4-mile walk promises not just a hike but a fascinating exploration of the past and the blooming beauty that surrounds it.

Logistics: Park in the Kephart Prong parking lot and meet your group at the trailhead **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 40 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

187. Wildflower and Cascade Walk Along Middle Prong Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Middle Prong Trail
Meeting-Location: AE - Tremont Road (parking lot at end of gravel road).

Stroll with expert botanists and conservationists along Middle Prong Trail while stopping along the way to enjoy many of the spring ephemeral wildflowers, ferns, and flowering trees of the Smokies such as tulip trees, wild ginger, and violets. Interestingly, this trail used to be a railroad bed, and carried out the last logs from the Smokies in 1939. A moderate 4-mile walk.

Logistics: From the Townsend Wye, take Laurel Creek Rd to Tremont Rd, continuing after it turns to gravel until it terminates at the Middle Prong Trail Trailhead. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 55 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

188. Wildflower Hike at Kanati Fork Trail

Time: 1:30:00 PM to 4:30:00 PM
Trail: Kanati Fork Trail
Meeting-Location: AA - Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap on Newfound Gap Road.

The Kanati Fork Trail has many spring ephemeral wildflowers including trilliums, Clinton lily, foam flower, Indian cucumber root, brook lettuce, and Canada mayflower as well as a lot of the more common species in the Park. Turn around when the group is ready. A moderate 2 mile walk.

Logistics: Park and meet your group at Rockefeller Memorial. There is limited parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead, so carpool in as few cars as possible with your group from Rockefeller Memorial to the Kanati Fork Trailhead. From Rockefeller Memorial, drive 8.4 miles east along Newfound Gap Road, and parking at the Kanati Fork Trailhead will be on the left (35.58790, -83.36387). **Transportation:** None provided. Carpool needed. **Drive Time:** 30 min [Click here for MAP.](#)

- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**

189. Bats: Stirring the Cauldron at the Twin Creeks Area

Time: 7:30:00 PM to 9:30:00 PM

Trail: Twin Creeks Pavilion

Meeting-Location: AF - Twin Creeks (off Cherokee Orchard Road).

In this program, learn from chiropterologists (people who study bats) about the ecology, distributions, feeding and mating behaviors of bats as well as why bats are important and economically beneficial to preserve. You will also get to use some high-tech gadgetry to listen to bats echolocating to hunt insects. Bring warm clothes and a flashlight (preferably with a red light). Short, easy walk.

Logistics: Meet your group at the pavilion. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 15 min [Click here for MAP.](#)



190. Stargazing

Time: 8:30:00 PM to 10:30:00 PM

Trail: Carlos Campbell Overlook

Meeting-Location: AR - Carlos Campbell Overlook

Experience the natural history of the universe in a truly dark sky. In this program, you will learn the basics of skywatching, star names, and constellations, and examine the wonders of the deep sky through a variety of optical instruments. Bring warm clothes and binoculars if you have them, but not a flashlight. Very short, easy walk. Not recommended for children under 10.

Logistics: Parking is limited. Park and meet your group at the Carlos Campbell Overlook. If Carlos Campbell Overlook parking is full, alternate parking can be found 0.1 miles north and south of the Carlos Campbell Overlook. **Transportation:** None provided. **Drive Time:** 5 min [Click here for MAP.](#)



- **ADA Accessible and Light on the Legs** , **Light on the Legs** , **Transportation Provided** 
- **Color Coded Titles:** **Birds**, **Fungi**, **Insects**, **Mammals**, **Plants**, **Reptiles & Amphibians**, **Other**



Dear Leaders, Pilgrims, Partners, Patrons, Sponsors, Friends, and Donors,

Because of you our Pilgrimage is 75 years old! THANK YOU!

For 75 years Pilgrimage has connected experts of their fields with members of the public, gathering in the greatest outdoor classroom the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. For many of us, the Pilgrimage is a celebration of kicking off a new year, so Happy New Year!

As I reach my tenth Pilgrimage as Director (and 26th in total) I cannot help but to look backward, to think about those who carried it before, and forward, strategizing to ensure our Pilgrimage makes it to its 100th birthday. Looking to the past I want to recognize special devotees like Royal Shanks, Fred Norris, and A.J. Sharp who took up this idea and championed it before handing it off to Ed Clebsch and Murray Evans. Ken McFarland, Pat Cox, and Gene Wofford took over as the third generation before Shannon Gordon and I became only the fourth generation of leadership in 75 years! It should also be known that each year more than 100 leaders donate their time and travel expenses to come volunteer at Pilgrimage. What is perhaps more amazing is during the last several years our leaders collectively donate over \$10,000 annually. We owe special thanks to our leaders who truly are selfless, incredible people who believe in this event. Looking forward to our Pilgrimage's 100th birthday the singular most important thing we can all do is donate to build an endowment. Please consider donating, or better yet, becoming a partner, patron, sponsor, or friend of the Pilgrimage. <https://www.wildflowerpilgrimage.org/donate.html>.

Joey Shaw