



# SMOKIES GUIDE



FREE RANGER-GUIDED TALKS & WALKS—PAGES 12-13

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ♡ SPRING 2017



BILL LEA PHOTO

Wildlife biologists estimate that 1,600 black bears live in the park.

## Of Bears and Wildfire

When wildfires impact a forest, biologists usually receive only anecdotal information about how wildlife responds. For bear researchers in the Smokies, last year's late November wildfires were different.

Serendipitously, researchers from the University of Tennessee, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, and Appalachian Bear Rescue (ABR) were monitoring eight bears using GPS-tracking collars within the park's burn area.

The eight bears are among 66 that have been collared as part of a large-scale study. The bears received their GPS tracking devices either because they tended to leave the park in search of garbage and other people-related food or because they had been rehabilitated by ABR. The study's main objectives are to learn how bears become habituated to human food and determine

the fate of bears that were rehabilitated at the ABR and then released.

None of the collared bears in the park's 11,000 acre burn area were killed. However, park staff know of two male bears that were not involved in the research that did die as a result of the fires.

What did the collared bears do when the wildfire swept through their habitat? Judging from the GPS records, all of the bears chose to hunker down rather than flee. Some of the bears, particularly females, may have already been in their winter dens, either high in a hollow tree or in a cave-like ground den.

Perhaps because the wind-driven fire moved so rapidly, it was wiser to stay put rather than retreat. Researchers cannot say for sure, but black bears are excellent climbers and would have the ability to climb high into trees above most of the flames.



### SPRING-BEAUTY

Glorious masses of this wildflower bloom from March to May in the Great Smoky Mountains. The pink-striped blossoms open only when the sun shines, which is when pollinating insects are most likely to be out and about in spring.

Look for it along the Appalachian Trail.



Fishing is open year-round in the national park. Because there is no stocking of game fish, anglers must test their skills against wild trout.

## Anglers Pursue Wild Trout in Park Streams

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is one of the rare places in the southeastern U.S. where anglers can pit their skills against wild trout (even wild native trout) in free-flowing mountain streams.

Although rainbow and brown trout were stocked in park waters up until 1975, the practice has since been discontinued in favor of a more natural approach to managing streams and rivers. Hence the rainbows and browns that live in the park now are self-sustaining populations, as are populations of brook trout, which are native to the Great Smokies and southern Appalachian Mountains.

Park officials estimate that over 800,000 anglers ply the park's waters each year. Most anglers prefer to use fly fishing gear as the flies best resemble the fishes' natural foods. Recent angler surveys

indicate that more people are fishing in the park for pure sport and fewer are actually keeping the fish they catch.

In fact, over 80% of anglers practice "catch and release," which helps sustain fish populations. According to the surveys, the average Smokies angler catches 2-3 fish per hour.

Anglers in the Smokies who are 16-years-old or older must have either a Tennessee or North Carolina fishing license. Either license is good throughout the park.

While the late November wildfires did burn considerable acreage in the watershed of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River, park fisheries biologists have not seen any negative impacts on fish. In fact, the burned vegetation could temporarily improve stream pH and make the waters more productive for aquatic insects and trout.



# earth laughs in flowers

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## a year in wildflowers...

People come from all over the world to enjoy wildflowers in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Over 1,600 types of flowering plants bloom here, more than in any other North American national park. Why such a wealth of wildflowers? Lots of precipitation, moderate temperatures, and a range of habitats associated with the height and aspects of the mountain range are the main reasons.

Wildflowers bloom most every month of the year here. The following listings show the main periods when a large number and impressive

variety of flowering plants are in bloom.



*trout-lily*



*cardinal flower*

### July-September

Big, bright late summer blooms: Cardinal flower, monk's hood, bee-balm, Turk's cap lily, jewelweed, cone flower.

### March 15-April 15

Spring Ephemerals: This is the most prolific bloom of the year, featuring favorites like trilliums, spring-beauty, dwarf crested iris, bloodroot, violets, lady's slipper orchid, and trout lily.

### May-July

Summer Shrubs: Mountain laurel, flame azalea, Catawba rhododendron, rosebay rhododendron.



*flame azalea*

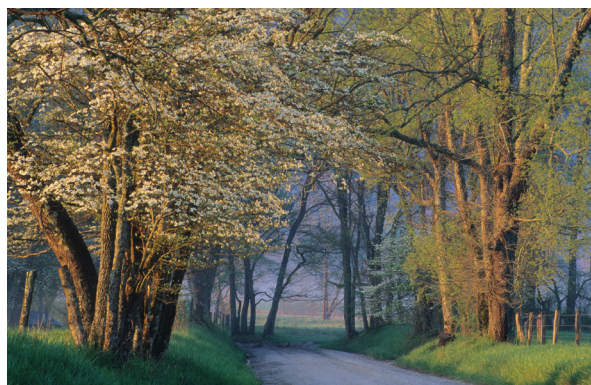


*asters*

### September 15-November 15

Fall flowers: Asters, New York ironweed, Joe-Pye weed, gentian, goldenrod.

## ...tracking the progress of spring



For many decades biologists and casual observers have tracked the progress of spring, noting on what dates certain wildflowers bloom and trees leaf out each year. Lately, spring has sometimes sprung weeks ahead of schedule.

More recently, to scientifically track the progress of spring in the Smokies, scientists have teamed up with volunteers to observe and keep notes on Mother

Nature's calendar. In Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this volunteer work is being done at specific monitoring plots set up by researchers near Deep Creek, Fontana Lake, Cataloochee, Clingmans Dome, Newfound Gap, Greenbrier, and elsewhere. Volunteer citizen-scientists can also help by simply taking photos from set photo points throughout the year.

The pace of spring can have profound effects on park wildlife. If trees leaf out and insects emerge before the arrival of migratory birds, the birds can miss the feast and insect populations may explode. If trees flower too early, then suffer a hard freeze, the nuts and fruits that bears and wild turkey and other wildlife depend on can fail. Since 1991,

average March temperatures in the park have risen by nearly three degrees Fahrenheit.

For more information about volunteering with these projects, please contact [usanpn.org](http://usanpn.org) or 828-497-1945.





# smokies trip planner

to order maps and guides: [www.SmokiesInformation.org](http://www.SmokiesInformation.org)

## smokies guide

Smokies Guide is produced four times per year by Great Smoky Mountains Association and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Publication dates are roughly as follows:

SPRING: March 15

SUMMER: June 1

AUTUMN: September 1

WINTER: December 1

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BILL LEA PHOTO



Nine campgrounds will be open in the national park this year.

## camping in the the national park

The National Park Service maintains developed campgrounds at nine locations in the park. There are no showers or hookups other than circuits for special medical uses at Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Smokemont.

Campsites at Elkmont, Smokemont, Cataloochee, Cosby, and Cades Cove may be reserved. For reservations call 1-877-444-6777 or contact [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Sites may be reserved up to six months in advance. Reservations are required at Cataloochee Campground. Other park campgrounds are first-come, first-served.

Site occupancy is limited to six people and two vehicles (a trailer = 1 vehicle). The maximum stay is 14 days.

Special camping sites for large groups are available seasonally at Big Creek, Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Cosby, Deep Creek, Elkmont, and Smokemont. Group sites must be reserved. Call 1-877-444-6777 or contact [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Group sites may be reserved up to one year in advance.

The list below shows number of sites, elevations, fees, approximate 2017 operation dates, and maximum RV lengths. **Dates are subject to change.** Visit [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm) for current information.

ABRAMS CREEK 16 sites, elev. 1,125', \$14, open May 26-Oct. 9, 12' trailers

BALSAM MOUNTAIN 46 sites, elev. 5,310', \$14, open May 26-Oct. 9, 30' RVs

BIG CREEK 12 sites, elev. 1,700', \$14, open April 14-Oct. 29, tents only

CADES COVE 159 sites, elev. 1,807', \$17-\$20, open year-round, 35'-40' RVs

CATALOOCHEE 27 sites, elev. 2,610', \$20, open April 7-Oct. 29, **reservations required**, 31' RVs

COSBY 157 sites, elev. 2,459', \$14, April 8-Oct. 31, 25' RVs

DEEP CREEK 92 sites, elev. 1,800', \$17, open April 14-Oct. 29, 26' RVs

ELKMONT 220 sites, elev. 2,150', \$17-\$23, open March 10-Nov. 26, 32'-35' RVs

LOOK ROCK *Closed*  
SMOKEMONT 142 sites, elev. 2,198', \$17-\$20, open year-round, 35'-40' RVs.

## accommodations

Le Conte Lodge (accessible by trail only) provides the only lodging in the park. Call (865) 429-5704.

For information on lodging outside the park:  
Bryson City 1-800-867-9246  
Cherokee 1-828-788-0034  
Fontana 1-800-849-2258  
Gatlinburg 1-800-588-1817  
Maggie Valley 1-800-624-4431  
Pigeon Forge 1-855-716-6199  
Sevierville 1-888-889-7415  
Townsend 1-800-525-6834

## pets in the park

Pets are allowed in frontcountry campgrounds and beside roads as long as they are restrained at all times. Pets are not allowed on park trails, except for the Gatlinburg and Oconaluftee River trails. Dogs on these trails must be leashed.

## special events

April 11-15  
Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage: parkwide

April 15, 16; May 27, 28  
Blacksmithing @ Cades Cove  
10 - 4

April 16, May 7, 21. 1 p.m.  
Old-Time Music Jam  
Oconaluftee Visitor Center

May 9-13  
Wilderness Wildlife Week

May 20  
Science @ Sugarlands 1 p.m.  
*Learn about current research!*

June 17  
Womens' Work  
Mountain Farm Museum

## picnic areas

Please see pages 8-9 for locations of picnic areas. Collins Creek opens April 7; Cosby and Big Creek open April 14. Heintooga opens May 26. All others are open have charcoal grills for cooking.

## visitor centers

Spring hours of operation are, Oconaluftee & Sugarlands: 8-5 in March; 8-6 in April & May. Cades Cove: 9-6:30 in March; 9-7 in April; 9-7:30 in May. Clingmans Dome: 10-6.

## other services

There are no gas stations, showers, or restaurants in the national park. Mt. LeConte Lodge is the only lodging.



Bicycles and pedestrians only mornings in Cades Cove start on May 10 this year.

## bicycling

Most park roads are too narrow and heavily traveled by automobiles for safe or enjoyable bicycling. However, Cades Cove Loop Road is an exception. This 11-mile, one-way, paved road provides bicyclists with excellent opportunities for viewing wildlife and historic sites.

Helmets are required for persons age 16 and under and are strongly recommended for all bicyclists.

From May 10-Sept. 27, on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from sunrise to 10:00 a.m., only bicycles and pedestrians are allowed on Cades Cove Loop Road. Bicycles may be rented at the Cades Cove Campground store.



# park information

for additional information, visit [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm)

Gatlinburg, TN elev. 1,462'				Mt. Le Conte elev. 6,593'			
	AVG. HIGH	LOW	PRECIP.		AVG. HIGH	LOW	PRECIP.
Jan.	49°	27°	4.0"		36°	18°	6.7"
Feb.	53°	28°	4.1"		37°	19°	5.6"
March	62°	35°	5.5"		44°	25°	7.0"
April	71°	42°	4.5"		52°	31°	6.7"
May	77°	50°	5.7"		58°	39°	8.0"
June	82°	58°	5.8"		64°	47°	8.7"
July	85°	62°	6.3"		67°	50°	9.0"
Aug.	84°	61°	5.3"		67°	49°	7.6"
Sept.	79°	55°	4.7"		62°	44°	7.2"
Oct.	70°	43°	2.9"		55°	35°	4.7"
Nov.	60°	34°	3.4"		46°	27°	6.8"
Dec.	51°	28°	4.6"		38°	20°	6.4"

The above temperature and precipitation averages are based on data for the last 20 years. Temperatures are in degrees fahrenheit. An average of over 84" (7 feet) of precipitation falls on the higher elevations of the Smokies. On Mt. Le Conte, an average of 82.8" of snow falls per year.

## horse riding

Horseback riding is generally available from early March through November. Rates are \$30 per hour. Most stables have maximum rider weight limits of 225 or 250 pounds and age restrictions for children. Please call the stables below or stop at a visitor center for detailed information.

CADES COVE (865) 448-9009  
[cadescovestables.com](http://cadescovestables.com)  
SMOKEMONT (828) 497-2373  
[smokemontridingstables.com](http://smokemontridingstables.com)  
SMOKY MTN (865) 436-5634  
[smokymountainridingstables.com](http://smokymountainridingstables.com)  
SUGARLANDS (865) 436-3535  
[sugarlandsridingstables.com](http://sugarlandsridingstables.com)

Hayrides and carriage rides (\$12 per person) are available from Cades Cove Riding Stable. Wagon rides (\$10 per person) are offered at Smokemont. Souvenir photos, tee-shirts, hats, and ice may be available. Soft drink vending is available.

The Park Service operates horse camps at Cades Cove, Big Creek, Cataloochee, and Round Bottom. Call 877-444-6777 or visit [www.Recreation.gov](http://www.Recreation.gov) for reservations.



Cassius Cash is the Superintendent at Great Smoky Mountains national park service

Great Smoky Mountains National Park is managed by the United States National Park Service. The agency manages the park in accordance with its mission "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The Park Service is in charge of over 400 natural and historic sites, including national rivers and recreation areas, seashores, battlefields, parks, and monuments.

DRIVING  
DISTANCES &  
ESTIMATED  
TIMES

Cherokee, NC to:  
Gatlinburg: 34 miles (1 hour)  
Cades Cove: 57 miles (2 hours)  
Newfound Gap: 18 miles  
(½ hour)  
Clingmans Dome:  
25 miles (¾ hour)  
Cataloochee: 39 miles  
(1½ hours)  
Deep Creek: 14 miles (½ hour)

Gatlinburg, TN to:

Cherokee: 34 miles (1 hour)  
Cades Cove: 27 miles (1 hour)  
Newfound Gap: 16 miles  
(½ hour)  
Clingmans Dome:  
23 miles (¾ hour)  
Cataloochee: 65 miles (2 hours)  
Greenbrier Cove: 6 miles  
(¼ hour)  
Deep Creek:  
48 miles (1½ hours)

Townsend, TN to:

Cades Cove: 9 miles (¼ hour)  
Newfound Gap: 34 miles  
(1¼ hours)  
Gatlinburg: 22 miles (¾ hour)  
Cherokee: 52 miles (1½ hours)  
Look Rock: 18 miles (½ hour)  
Cataloochee:  
87 miles (2¼ hours)



Primitive backcountry shelters like this one at Mt. Collins are located along the Appalachian Trail and near the summit of Mt. Le Conte. Reservations are required for all campers in the backcountry.

## Backcountry Camping in the Smokies

Camping at a backcountry campsite or shelter can be an exciting adventure for persons properly equipped and informed. To facilitate this activity, the National Park Service maintains over 800 miles of trails and more than 100 backcountry campsites and shelters throughout the park. One of the greatest challenges for backcountry campers is deciding where to go. Here are some tools to help.

1. Go online to view the park's official trail map ([www.nps.gov/grsm/plan-yourvisit/maps.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm/plan-yourvisit/maps.htm)), which shows all park trails, campsites, and shelters. Park rules and regulations are also listed here. If you wish, you can purchase the printed version of the trail map for \$1 by stopping at any park visitor center or calling (865) 436-7318 x226 or shopping online at [www.SmokiesInformation.org](http://www.SmokiesInformation.org).
2. Call or stop by the park's backcountry office, which is open every day from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office is located in Sugarlands Visitor

Center, two miles south of Gatlinburg on Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441). (865) 436-1297.

3. Make your reservation through the backcountry office at Sugarlands Visitor Center (by phone or in person) or online at [www.smokiespermits.nps.gov](http://www.smokiespermits.nps.gov).

Reservations and permits are required for all overnight stays in the backcountry. The cost is \$4 per person per night. Reservations may be made up to 30 days in advance.

Spring hikers should be especially aware of the danger of hypothermia—the lowering of body temperature. The combination of rain, cold, and wind is especially dangerous. At the park's higher elevations, hypothermia can be a threat even during summer.

To prevent hypothermia, carry good rain gear at all times. Layer clothing that provides warmth when wet (not cotton). Be prepared for sudden weather changes, especially at the high elevations.



# great sights to see

*A dozen must-see sights in the Great Smoky Mountains*



KENT CAVE PHOTO

The observation tower atop the Smokies highest peak, 6,643'.

## 1. clingmans dome

A paved, but very steep, 0.5 mile trail leads to an observation tower that offers 360° views of the Great Smoky Mountains and beyond. To get there: turn off Newfound Gap Road 0.1 mile south of Newfound Gap and follow the 7-mile-long Clingmans Dome Road to the large parking area at the end. A visitor center is located along the trail to the tower.

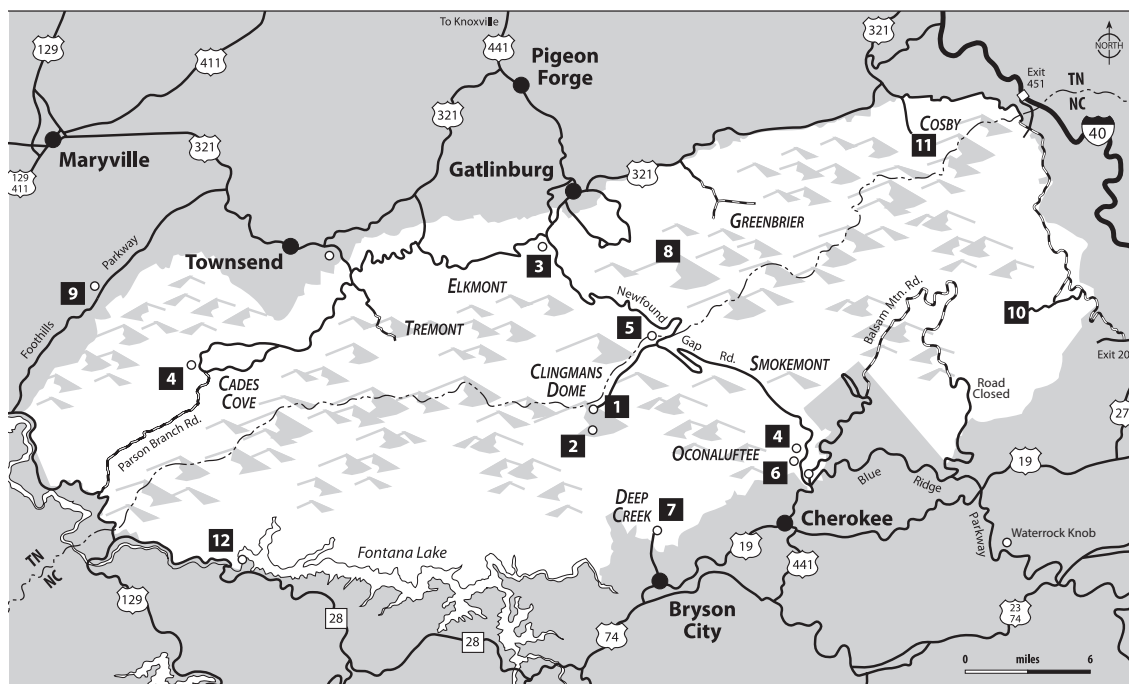
The road to Clingmans Dome is closed from December 1 through March 31 due to weather.

## 2. andrews bald

"Balds" are mountaintop meadows of mysterious origin. Andrews offers panoramic mountain views in favorable weather. The 3.6 mile roundtrip hike to Andrews Bald is along Forney Ridge Trail and starts from the end of Clingmans Dome parking area. The trail leads through high elevation spruce-fir forest with evergreen trees and unusual flora and fauna.

## 3. sugarlands visitor center

It's fun, it's free, and it's easy to find. Sugarlands Visitor Center is located 2 miles south



of Gatlinburg, TN on U.S. 441. Highlights include flora and fauna exhibits, a 20-minute film in the surround-sound theater, an information desk, and bookstore. Several short nature trails also begin at the center, as do ranger-led walks and talks. Open 8-5 (March), 8-6 (April-May).

## 4. water-powered grist mills

Two historic, water-powered grist mills operate from 9-5 daily, grinding corn into corn meal. Cable Mill sits in Cades Cove (halfway around the one-way loop road) and opens March 18. Mingus Mill is 2 miles north of Cherokee, NC on U.S. 441 (Newfound Gap Road) and opens April 9.

## 5. newfound gap

This gap is a low point in the mountain range and straddles the boundary of North Carolina and Tennessee. From here one can enjoy spectacular views into both states and take a short stroll along the famous Appalachian Trail. There are also restrooms and the historic Rockefeller Memorial.



BILL LEA PHOTO

The Mountain Farm Museum near Cherokee, NC.

## 6. oconaluftee museums

This history buff's paradise now offers free indoor and outdoor museums. It also features old-time breeds of livestock (seasonally) and an heirloom garden and row crops. The new visitor center and mountain farm museum are located on U.S. 441, two miles north of Cherokee, NC. Open 8-5 (March), 8-6 (April-October).

The 1.6-mile long Oconaluftee River interpretive trail leads from the mountain farm to Cherokee, NC and features exhibits on Cherokee culture.

## 7. deep creek waterfalls

The Deep Creek area features a campground, picnic area, mountain stream, and miles of hiking trails. Around 2 miles of walking will acquaint you with beautiful Deep Creek and three pretty waterfalls (Juney Whank, Tom Branch, and Indian Creek). The trails to the waterfalls start from the large parking area at the end of Deep Creek Road (across the creek from Deep Creek Campground).

## 8. Mt. Le Conte

The Rainbow Falls Trail to Mt. Le Conte and LeConte Lodge will be closed Mondays-Thursdays for trail repairs starting in early May. However, there are plenty of alternatives for hikers to this popular peak. The Boulevard Trail starts from Newfound Gap and runs 8.1 miles to LeConte Lodge. Bull Head Trail begins from Cherokee Orchard and is 6.7 miles. Alum Cave Trail starts from Newfound Gap Road and runs 5 miles to the top. Brushy Mountain & Trillium Gap trails lead 9.1 miles to the top of Le Conte.

## WHERE TO BEAT THE CROWDS

If you want to beat the weekend crowds, try some of these off-the-beaten-path destinations.

9. Look Rock walking trail and tower. Great views, just off the Foothills Parkway West, 18 miles from Townsend, TN.

10. Cataloochee Valley. This remote area is accessible only by narrow, winding secondary roads. But when you arrive, there are elk to watch, historic buildings to explore, and plenty of trails to walk. 39 miles from Cherokee; 65 miles from Gatlinburg.

11. Cosby Campground, Picnic Area, and hiking trails. The campground rarely fills, and there are short and long trails to waterfalls, views, and Mt. Cammerer fire tower. The campground is 20 miles from Gatlinburg, TN.

12. Fontana Dam and Lake. A TVA visitor center and tours highlight the highest dam in the East. Fontana Marina offers boat rentals and shuttles for access to remote, historic areas of the park like Hazel Creek and Eagle Creek.



# national park news

## National Park Service News Briefs



### Rainbow Falls Trail Will Get Major Makeover

THE VERY POPULAR RAINBOW FALLS Trail to Mt. Le Conte will close four days per week beginning May 8 this year and continuing through fall. The trail will be closed every Monday through Thursday so the Trails Forever crew can rehabilitate some badly eroded sections. Hikers to Mt. Le Conte should consider alternative trails such as The Boulevard, Brushy Mountain/Trillium Gap, Bull Head and Alum Cave. The weekday trail closure will end for the season on November 16.

### Park to Hold Lottery for Firefly Viewing

DURING THE EIGHT-DAY PEAK synchronous firefly display in the Elkmont area, the park organizes a shuttle service from Sugarlands Visitor Center to the viewing area. Due to the popularity of the fireflies and to protect their habitat, the Elkmont area is closed at night except to registered Elkmont campers and the park's shuttle service to the viewing area. Because of high demand, passes are distributed through a lottery. Visit the website [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) and search for Firefly Event.

### Endangered Gray Bats Documented in Park

PARK OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED that researchers from The University of Tennessee captured three male gray bats (*Myotis grisescens*) in the Cosby area of Great Smoky Mountains National Park last year. These three individuals are the first gray bats to be captured in the park and increases the number of bat species known here to 13. Gray bats are an endangered species and year-round cave residents. Although gray bats have contracted white-nose syndrome, their populations have not declined like other cave dwelling species.

### Please Leave Your Firewood at Home

WOOD-BORING INSECTS FROM EUROPE and Asia have the potential to devastate over 40 species of hardwood trees in the Great Smoky Mountains. To help prevent this catastrophe from ever happening, the National Park Service has imposed restrictions on the type of firewood that can be brought into the national park. Only certified, heat-treated firewood may now be brought into the park, though dead and down wood may still be collected inside the park for campfires here. Certified wood is now available inside and outside the park. For more information visit [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm).

## Work Underway at Elkmont District

BILL LEAPHOTO



The Park Service is preserving the Daisy Town portion of the Elkmont historic district.

Work has begun in the Elkmont Historic District to preserve four structures and to remove 29 others as specified in the 2009 Memorandum of Agreement among the National Park Service and state historic preservation agencies. This year park crews will preserve the Levi Trentham Cabin, Mayo Cabin, Mayo Servants' Quarters, and Creekmore Cabin in the Daisy Town area. The 29 structures slated for demolition are along Little River Trail and Jakes Creek Trail.

"Elkmont has long been recognized as a special place that tells the story of early logging and tourism, while at the same time harboring a rare alluvial forest that supports unique species like the synchronous fireflies," said Superintendent Cassius Cash. "I'm pleased that we have the opportunity to move forward in helping both preserve pieces of the rich cultural history and restore natural habitats."

Park staff plan to complete the stabilization work of the four Daisy Town structures by this November. Workers will repoint masonry features, replace rotted wood, paint, and make needed repairs to windows, doors, and

roofs. The Daisy Town area, Elkmont Cemetery, Spence Cabin, Appalachian Clubhouse, and Elkmont Campground will remain open throughout the work project.

If spring weather cooperates, demolition work will be completed by May 26 for the 29 structures located along Jakes Creek Trail and Little River Trail. Both trails will be closed during the demolition work to accommodate heavy equipment. Access to the river near the structures will also be restricted during demolition.

The lower section of Little River Trail will be closed, Monday through Friday through March 24 to remove six structures in the area known as Millionaire's Row. Jakes Creek Trail will be closed, Monday through Friday from March 27 through May 26 to remove 23 structures in the area known as Society Hill. Crews have already salvaged useable items from the structures for use in preserving historic structures in the park.

From 1992 through 2008, the park entered into a series of public planning efforts including an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) that led to

an agreement and an amendment to the park's General Management Plan defining the disposition of the 74 remaining summer homes and other structures in the Elkmont Historic District.

The EIS defined a full range of possible actions in seven alternatives for management of the historic district with the expected impacts and projected costs of each alternative. These alternatives ranged from full removal of all buildings as described in the park's 1982 General Management Plan to incrementally greater preservation and reuse of the buildings for a variety of purposes with costs estimated between \$1.4 million to over \$30 million.

As specified in the decision documents, 19 structures were designated to be preserved for public visitation, while 55 structures were identified for demolition. Park officials continue to seek funding to complete the needed work.

To date, the Appalachian Clubhouse and Spence Cabin have been fully restored and can be rented for day use activities such as wedding receptions. Visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov) to make a reservation.



# behind the scenery

*The park is a sanctuary for over 19,000 species of plants and animals!*

## Crews Open Trails Closed by Fires



JOSHI SHAPIRO PHOTO

Trail crews have been able to reopen several park trails that were closed by the wildfires, including Rainbow Falls and Cove Mountain.

Park trail crews have now reopened eleven of the sixteen trails originally closed by the late November, 2016 wildfires. Some of these trails that have been reopened now offer hikers close-up views of how the fires impacted the forest. Old Sugarlands, Cove Mountain (lower end), and Baskins Creek, for example,

offer vivid glimpses of the forest mosaic created by the wind-driven fires. Hikers on these trails this season will be able to observe and photograph how the forest recovers from the historic wildfire.

Five of the park trails that received the heaviest damage are expected to remain closed at least through spring

of this year. Chimney Tops, Bull Head, Sugarland Mountain, Rough Creek, and Road Prong will all take considerable work before they can be reopened. Damages to trails include fallen trees, weakened (and therefore hazardous) trees, trail treads destroyed by the root balls from fire-damaged and windthrow trees, and even places where the rock and soils beneath the trail treads have been altered.

The ever-popular Chimney Tops Trail may be partially opened later in 2017. Trail crews are working on expanding a scenic overlook just short of the trail's old rock spire summit. The two rock spires known as the Chimney Tops were the point of origin for the massive Chimney Tops 1 & 2 fires last November and the heat and winds obliterated the final section of trail leading to the promontory and its unobscured views.

The expanded overlook will offer hikers mountain views without the perils of scaling the sheer rock face of the Chimney Tops spires. The new trail length will be approximately 1.8 miles.

## Eclipse May Attract Too Many to Park

Park officials are anticipating the likelihood of record visitation for the solar eclipse on August 21 during the traditional tourist high season. Rangers and partners will provide guided viewing opportunities at Oconaluftee Visitor Center and at Cades Cove near Cable Mill for those who want to experience the eclipse within the park and are able to arrive early in the day. With the park's limited roads and parking areas in the "path of totality," though, the risk of traffic jams and road



closures increases through the morning.

Managers suggest visitors plan ahead to find the right eclipse experience for their situation. Many communities outside the national park are hosting special events to observe and celebrate the celestial phenomena and those locales may be a great alternative for locals or travelers not wanting to risk traffic congestion in the park. Visit the park website for more information: [www.nps.gov/grsm/plan-yourvisit/2017-solar-eclipse](http://www.nps.gov/grsm/plan-yourvisit/2017-solar-eclipse).

WARREN BIELENBERG PHOTO



Over 2,200 volunteers give their time to help the park each year.

## Cades Cove Bike Patrol Honored with Awards

The Cades Cove Bike Patrol team was recently awarded the Southeast Regional Group Volunteer Service Award and the national George and Helen Hartzog Outstanding Group Volunteer Service Award.

Established in 2010, the Bike Patrol was created to provide assistance and safety awareness to bicyclists riding the 11-mile Cades Cove Loop Road on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, May through September, when the road is closed to vehicle traffic. Since the program began there has been a 50% reduction in serious bicycle accidents during these morning closures, in spite of a 30% increase in bicycle use over the same time period.

"Because of the dedicated service of these men and women, our visitors have benefited greatly," said Park Superintendent Cassius Cash. "The Bike Patrol has not only prevented accidents, but they have also encouraged countless bicyclists through their knowledge, support, and

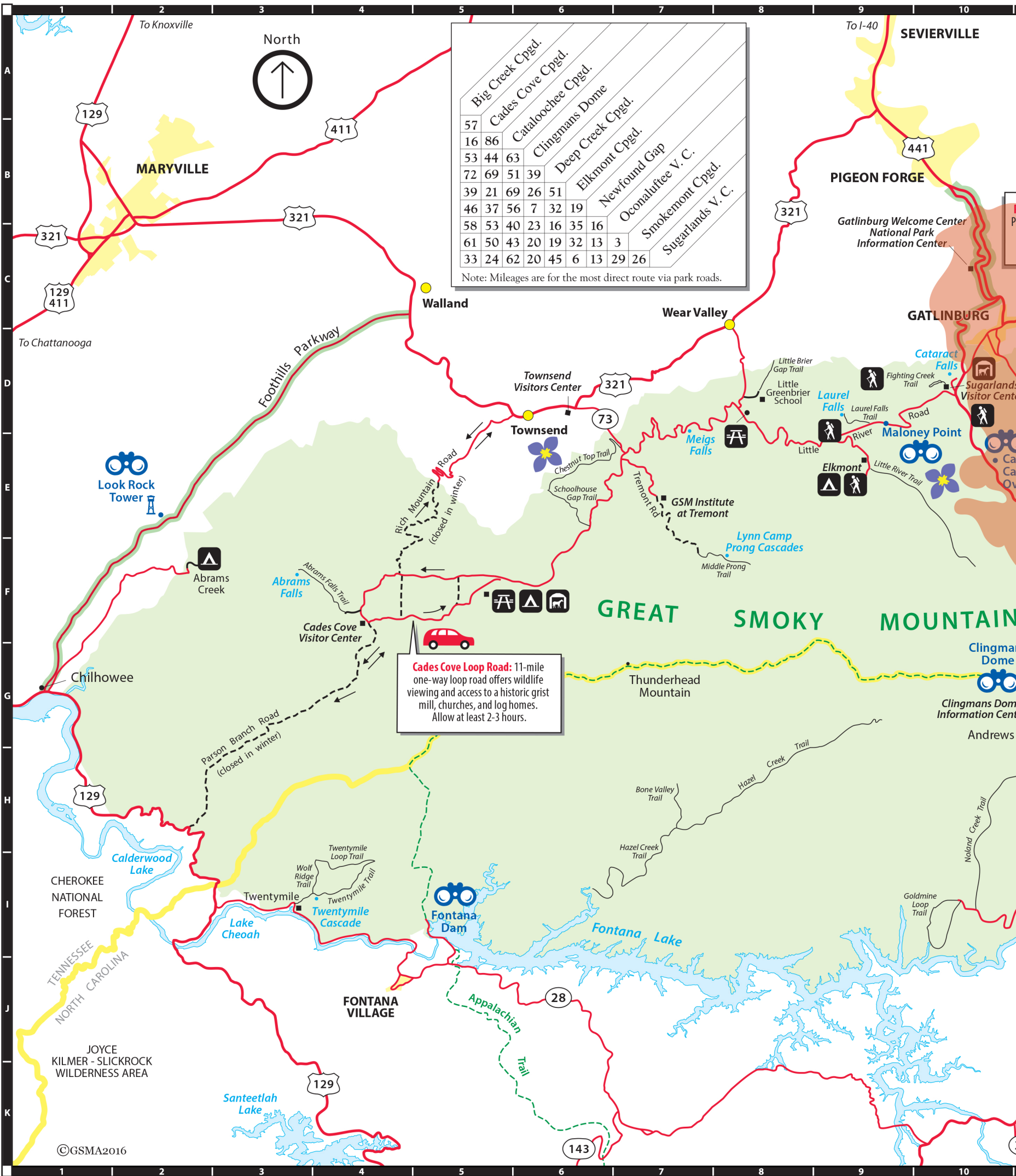
assistance."

The Bike Patrol volunteers have contributed over 7,000 hours of service. Members include: John Peychal, Yvonne Peychal and Donald Bzydl of Sevierville, TN; Tom Barnard, Janie Barnard, and Dwight Elliott of Knoxville, TN; Herb Payne and Denise Schmidt of Townsend, TN; Randall Bradley of Dandridge, TN; Johnny Warren of Seymour, TN; Wanda DeWaard of Maryville, TN; and Jim Whittle of Daleville, VA.

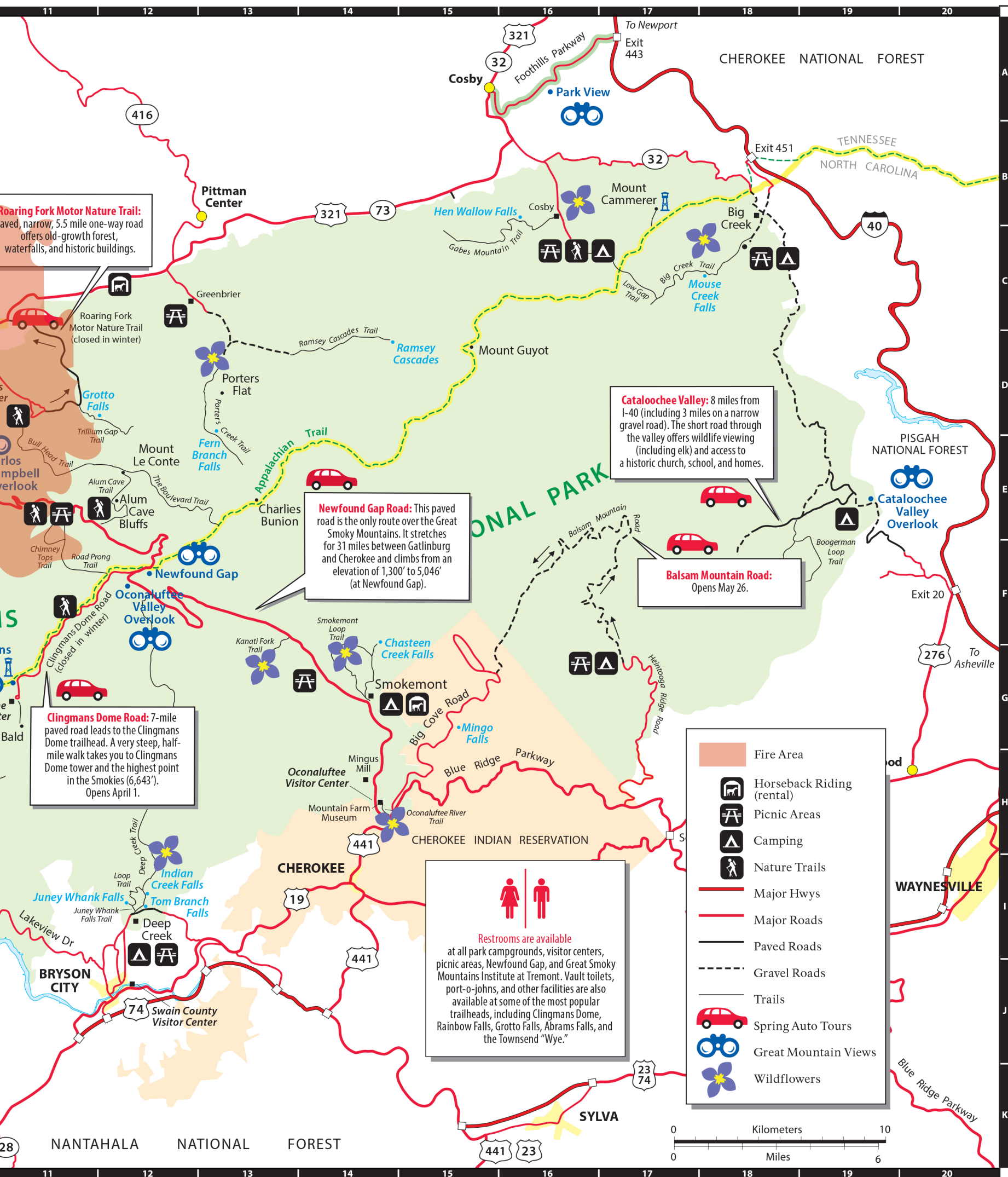
Every year volunteers perform a variety of activities including assisting with cultural demonstrations, providing visitor information, participating with special events, patrolling the roads and trails for visitors in need, removing litter, maintaining backcountry campsites and trails, removing non-native plants, assisting campground staff, and helping fisheries biologists monitor trout populations. The park has approximately 2,200 volunteers who provide over 117,000 hours of service to the national park



GREAT SPRING DRIVING TOURS, VIEWS, AND WILDFLOWER TRAILS IN THE SMOKIES











# Of Forests & Fires

During late November of 2016, the Chimney Tops 2 fire burned an area of approximately 11,000 acres in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Although this area comprises only about two percent of the park's total acreage, and some of the forest within the burn area is untouched or only lightly impacted, it was still a major fire by Great Smoky Mountains standards and park biologists and visitors are anxious to discover what happens next.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL LEA

**Q: What will happen to the trees scorched by the fire?**

**A:** In about 8% of the burn area, mostly on south-facing ridges with lots of pine and oak trees, the plant mortality is 100%. These sunny sites were tinder dry from the drought, and the fire, stoked by hurricane-force winds, became an inferno. The duff on the forest floor, which was 4-6" deep, was incinerated, exposing mineral soils. Only about 900 acres in the park were severely impacted in this way.

Even these heavily impacted pine-oak sites will rebound. Fire ecologist Rob Klein expects grasses and herbaceous plants like wildflowers to green up at these sites over the next few

years and within five years he foresees chest-high thickets of young, vigorous Table Mountain pine trees. Table Mountain pines, which grow only in the southern Appalachian Mountains, actually depend on fire to reproduce. Because the duff layer on the forest floor acts like mulch in your garden, impeding new plant growth, the absence of the layer allows the tiny seeds of orchids and numerous other species to get started.

**Q: What about the magnificent cove hardwood forests with their huge trees and expanses of spring wildflowers?**

**A:** Most of the moister areas in the park, like the cove hardwood and northern hardwood forests, received

low- to moderate intensity fire impacts. Although even some of the largest trees in these rich woodlands may die, their absence will create major gaps in the forest canopy and increase sunlight on the forest floor. Increased energy from sunlight, combined with the greater availability of plant nutrients released from the burned vegetation, could produce a robust wildflower bloom in some areas as early as this year. Any young trees that survived the fires should get a similar boost.

**Q: What about the rhododendron that burned?**

**A:** These evergreen shrubs often grow in damp places, so fires are uncommon in their habitats. The lightly burned

rhododendron has a good chance of re-sprouting, but the severely burned shrubs are unlikely to survive. It will be interesting to see what regrows in these sites that experienced such rare, high intensity fire.

**Q: What other unknowns are out there?**

**A:** A couple of large heath bald thickets burned on the slopes of Mt. Le Conte. Two of these are visible from Carlos Campbell scenic overlook on Newfound Gap Road. How these nearly-impenetrable evergreen shrub-lands originated has always been a mystery, but one theory is they got their start after severe fire. So scientists will be watching closely to see what grows back now.

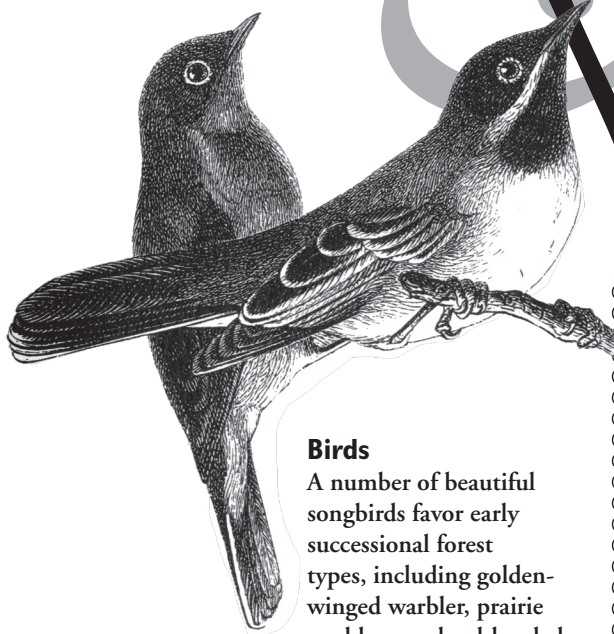
Oak forest also poses

a mystery. Though many oaks possess adaptations to fire, fire ecology studies in the southern Appalachians have shown mixed results regarding the regeneration of oak forests following fires. "Where the overstory oak trees have been killed, we don't really know if oak will replace oak or if it will be replaced with species like maple, pine, and blackgum," Klein said.

A critical factor for forest recovery and wildflower abundance will be the rainfall that the Smokies receive this season. If last year's drought continues into 2017, more of the trees impacted by the fires could die and the overall forest recovery could take longer.



# Of Wildfire & Wildlife



## Birds

A number of beautiful songbirds favor early successional forest types, including golden-winged warbler, prairie warblers, and red-headed woodpeckers. All of these species are uncommon in the Smokies because disturbances like large fires are rare in the park's usually soggy environment.

While last year's late November wildfires killed at least two black bears (see page 1) and probably killed many small mammals such as chipmunks, squirrels, and mice in the park, the fire's long-term impact on wildlife habitat should be positive.

"Fire creates early successional forest habitat," said wildlife biologist Bill Stiver. "Which is good for elk, deer, bear, turkey, rabbits—and lots of other wildlife."

Disturbances like fire open up the forest canopy and allow energy in the form of sunlight to reach the forest floor. This, along with the nutrients released by the burned vegetation, triggers a surge of growth for plants like grasses and forbs that are nutritional for wildlife.

"Wildlife flourishes when there is a mosaic of habitats, from old-growth forest to open, early successional zones," Stiver added.

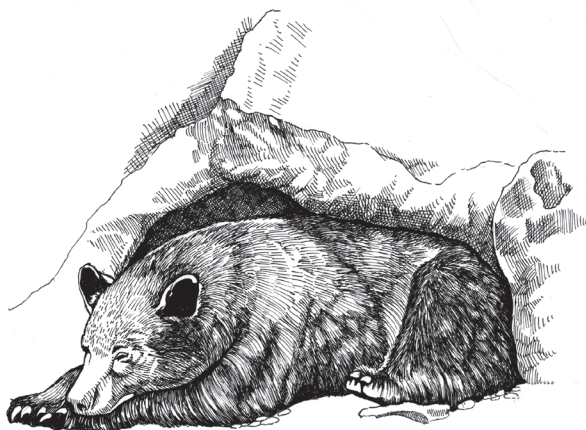


## Pollinating Insects

The burning of the duff layer, a more open forest canopy, and the influx of nitrogen and other nutrients from burned wood should lead to a proliferation of flowering plants. These flowers will attract native bumblebees, butterflies, moths, and other insects that should in turn flourish themselves.

## Bears

Black bears will benefit early in the year from the grasses that emerge in burn areas where the duff layer on the forest floor has been reduced or eliminated. Duff, like mulch in your garden, inhibits the growth of new plant life. The native shrubs that produce the blackberries, blueberries, and huckleberries that bears love also get a boost in the post-fire cycle of forest succession.



## Bats

Most bats have a hard time flying through dense vegetation, so a more open forest makes hunting insects easier.



## Deer, Elk

Browsers will benefit from the boost to grasses and other herbaceous plants. Root sprouts from burned trees and shrubs also make excellent browse.



# free, fun talks & walks

SUGARLANDS/ELKMONT AREA		MEETING LOCATION	DURATION	DIFFICULTY
<b>A Walk in the Woods:</b> Do you have a few minutes? Get away from the hustle and bustle by taking an easy stroll and discover stories of history and nature along this scenic, wooded trail.		Sugarlands Visitor Center	1.5 hours	Easy
<b>Creature Feature:</b> Did you know that the Smokies is one of the most diverse places in the world? Join a ranger to learn about some of the creatures that live here and how they prepare for winter during this “Ranger’s Choice” style program.		Sugarlands Visitor Center	30 minutes	Easy
<b>Old Town of Elkmont:</b> Take an afternoon stroll with a ranger and learn about Elkmont when it was a turn-of-the-century logging boomtown.		Elkmont Ranger Station	2 hours	Easy
<b>Art in the Park:</b> Art has a long history in our national parks and the works of artists have captured the imaginations of the public, spurring them to preserve these lands. Get your creative juices pumping and develop your own park inspired masterpieces.		Sugarlands Visitor Center	1.5 hours	Easy
<b>What’s in the Water?:</b> Learn about and look for critters found in the waterways of the Park while discovering what they reveal about the health of our streams.		Sugarlands Visitor Center	1.5 hours	Easy
METCALF BOTTOMS AREA				
<b>School Days at Little Greenbrier:</b> Go back in time to discover what it was like to live in a mountain community and go to school in a one-room schoolhouse. Fun for all ages, and great for Junior Rangers. Please arrive 15 minutes before program start; space is limited.		Little Greenbrier School	1.5 hours	Easy
CADES COVE AREA				
<b>Ranger-led Hayrides:</b> Enjoy a ranger-led open air hayride viewing wildlife and discovering the diversity of Cades Cove. \$14.00/person.		Cades Cove Riding Stables	2 hours	Easy
<b>Precious Memories:</b> Discover the importance of the Primitive Baptist Church in Cades Cove’s everyday life.		Primitive Baptist Church	30 minutes	Easy
<b>WILD Program</b> A short talk and demonstration about the wild things in the Smokies.		Cades Cove Visitor Center	30 minutes	Easy
<b>Junior Ranger Program:</b> Bring the kids for a hands-on exploration of the Smokies. Earn a badge and certificate.		Cades Cove Visitor Center	45 minutes – 1 hour	Easy
OCONALUFTEE AREA				
<b>Charismatic Mega-fauna!:</b> What is it? Where can I see it? Find out from a ranger if there is something we’re not telling you!		Oconaluftee Visitor Center Porch	30 minutes	Easy
<b>Coffee With a Ranger:</b> Join a Ranger for a cup of coffee and find out what’s happening in the park! Coffee provided. Bring a cup if you have one. Topics may vary based on visitor interests and things going on the park.		Oconaluftee Visitor Center Porch	1 hour	Easy
<b>Springtime on the Farm:</b> Walk down to the Mountain Farm Museum and see what activities settlers may have been engaged in such as fence building, woodworking, or gardening. Activities vary.		Mountain Farm Museum	1 hour	Easy
<b>Junior Ranger Program: Smoky Mountain Elk:</b> It’s all about connection and balance in nature to insure survival for elk and other species living together in an ecosystem. Learn about the history of the elk through “show and tell” activities. Then stay and watch the elk come into in the fields!		Palmer House in Cataloochee Valley	45 minutes	Easy
SPECIAL PROGRAMS				
<b>Science at Sugarlands:</b> Join a scientist on the 3rd Friday of the month to learn about and engage in on-going scientific research happening inside Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Topics vary each month.		Sugarlands Visitor Center	2 hours	Easy
<b>Return of the Elk:</b> Come enjoy a guided hike to the elk acclimation pen and explore how, when, and why the elk were returned to the Smokies. Hike is less than one mile.		Cataloochee Valley, Rough Fork Trailhead	1.5 hours	Moderate
<b>Back Porch Old-Time Music Jam:</b> Bring an acoustic instrument and join in on this old-time jam. Or just sit back and enjoy the sights and sounds as others play traditional Appalachian music.		Oconaluftee Visitor Center Porch	2 hours	Easy
<b>Welcome Home!:</b> After more of than a century of absence, the elk have returned. Relax, have a seat on the visitor center porch and hear the story of the return of the largest mammal to the Great Smokies.		Oconaluftee Visitor Center Porch	45 minutes	Easy



**PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IN GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS  
NATIONAL PARK—APRIL 1 – MAY 6, 2017 ONLY**

ACCESSIBLE	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
No					10:30 A.M.	10:30 A.M.	10:30 A.M.
Yes	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.
No						1:30 P.M.	
Yes						1:00 P.M.	
Yes							1:00 P.M.
No		11:00 A.M. & 2:00 P.M.					
No				2:00 P.M.			
No		11:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M.		11:00 A.M. & 1:00 P.M.			
Yes						2:30 P.M.	
Yes						1:00 P.M.	
Yes						10:30 A.M.	
Yes					10:00 A.M.		
Yes							2:00 P.M.
Yes							5:30 P.M.
Yes					1:00 P.M. May 20		
No		3:00 P.M. except April 25					
Yes						1:00 P.M. April 16, May 7, & May 21	
Yes					5:30 P.M. April 7, 21 & May 12, 26		



# if you love the smokies...

*help protect this place for ourselves and future generations*

## become a member



Since 1953, Great Smoky Mountains

Association has supported the educational, scientific, and historical efforts of the National Park Service through cash donations and in-kind services. In 2017 alone, the association plans to provide more than \$1.3 million in assistance that includes saving hemlock trees, living history demonstrations, environmental education programs, salaries for wildlife personnel, and historic preservation.

Association members receive a number of benefits to keep them informed about special events in the park and issues affecting the Smokies:

- Subscription to the semi-annual, full-color magazine *Smokies Life*
  - Digital access to the award-winning quarterly park newspaper, *Smokies Guide*, and the association's newsletter, *The Bearpaw*
  - A 15-20% discount on books, music, gifts, and other products sold at park visitor centers and at our web store
  - Special GSMA "Hiking 101" outings to Twentymile Loop, Porters Creek, Gregory Bald, Boogerman Trail, Charlies Bunion, cemeteries, and more. All hikes are led by knowledgeable staff who love to share the park with others. Groups are limited to 20 people. Also this year, ask us about "Gear Fest" programs and special gear discounts.
- Join today using the coupon to the right or visit [www.SmokiesInformation.org](http://www.SmokiesInformation.org), or call us at 1-888-898-9102 x349. Memberships start at just \$35. per year.

MARY ANN KRESSIG PHOTO



Great Smoky Mountains National Park is one of the few large national parks without an entrance fee. Most parks now charge \$20 or \$30 per vehicle. Without this supplemental income, it is difficult for the Smokies to adequately protect wildlife, preserve historic areas, and provide educational opportunities. You can help by using some of the money you saved at the entrance to support the park partners that support our park!

## field school

An exciting variety of adventures await adults who long to get out and explore the park accompanied by expert guides. Programs are offered by the Smoky Mountain Field School and include Mt. Le Conte overnights, wildlife workshops, edible plants, wildflower photography, animal tracking, bird watching, salamanders, mountain cooking, and more. One-day programs start at as little as \$79. Contact: (865) 974-0150 or [smfs.utk.edu](http://smfs.utk.edu)

## gsmi at tremont

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont provides residential environmental education programs in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Up to 5,000 students and adults annually attend workshops and school programs at the Institute. Tremont's adult workshops include birding, backpacking, environmental education, naturalist weekends, and photography. Contact (865) 448-6709 or [www.gsmit.org](http://www.gsmit.org)

## summer camps

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont offers a variety of summer youth camps in the national park. Camps last from 6-11 days and cost from \$589. Fees include meals, lodging, and most equipment.

This year's offerings include: Discovery Camp (ages 9-12), Wilderness Adventure Trek, Girls in Science (ages 12-15), and Teen High Adventure (ages 13-17).

Contact: (865) 448-6709, or [www.gsmit.org](http://www.gsmit.org)

## support the friends

Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a nonprofit organization that assists the National Park Service by raising funds and public awareness and providing volunteers for park projects.

Since 1993, Friends has



raised over \$50 million for park projects and programs. These donations help:

- protect elk, bear, brook trout, and other wildlife
- improve trails, campsites, and backcountry shelters
- support educational programs for school children
- improve visitor facilities
- fund special educational services like the park movie
- preserve log cabins and other historic structures

Your donation can help make these projects a reality. Put a few coins or a few dollars in one of the donation boxes located at visitor centers, roadsides, and other locations around the park. Buy the Smokies license plate for your car (available in Tennessee and North Carolina).

However you choose to give, your donation will really help protect the Great Smoky Mountains for many years to come!

Friends of the Smokies  
P.O. Box 1660  
Kodak, TN 37764  
(865) 932-4794  
1-800-845-5665  
[www.friendsofthesmokies.org](http://www.friendsofthesmokies.org)

## GSMA MEMBERS

*"Get Rooted in the Smokies"*

- ☐ Acorn (youth) Membership \$15
- ☐ Buckeye Annual Membership \$35
- ☐ Chestnut Annual Membership \$100
- ☐ Dogwood Membership \$200
- ☐ Hemlock Lifetime Membership \$1,000  
*payable in 5 installments*
- ☐ Lookout League Business Memberships  
\$250-\$10,000

## SIGN ME UP!

Name(s)\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email (for Cub Report) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Please include your check with this form. Mail to:  
GSMA, P.O. Box 130, Gatlinburg, TN 37738



# preserving a place in time

*protecting nature & history in Cades Cove*



WARREN BIELENBERG



BILL LEA



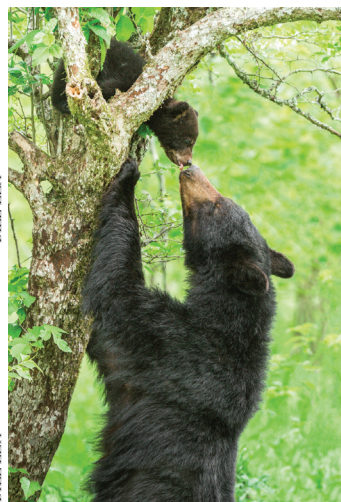
BILL LEA



WARREN BIELENBERG



BILL LEA



BILL LEA

Clockwise from top left. Members of the park's elite historic preservation crew use hand tools and traditional methods to maintain and restore historic buildings like the Elijah Oliver place in Cades Cove. Resource management crews plant native meadow grasses in the open fields. White-tailed deer at the Tipton house. Repointing a chimney. Clearing fields with fire maintains the area's historic integrity. Sow and cub.

If you have ever seen the sunrise in Cades Cove, you know that dawn's light illuminates an extraordinary place. As the fog rises from the stream valleys and the morning light touches the mountaintops, a few fortunate visitors behold a scene that is unusually rich in both nature and cultural history.

Black bear, wild turkey, and white-tailed deer browse among early 19th century log homes and barns. Flocks of colorful songbirds flit from historic fences to rare wetlands brimming with river cane and wildflowers. No other site in our entire national park system can boast such a rich and well-balanced combination of native fauna, flora, and human history.

Maintaining this balance,

however, requires some effort. Especially while accommodating about two million visitors a year.

Without active management such as prescribed fires and field mowing, many of the open areas of the cove would revert to a forest thicket. That lack of openness would distort the Cove's historic landscape of small farms and misinterpret the historical significance to visitors.

Consequently, most of Cades Cove is on a three-year rotation of prescribed burns conducted by National Park Service crews, and regular field mowing carefully scheduled and conducted to minimize harm to native wildlife.

To encourage the proliferation of native plants and the wildlife that depend on them, park resource management crews cultivate grasses and

wildflowers in small plots within Cades Cove. They then harvest the seeds from these "increase fields" and use them to transform unproductive areas of non-native fescue grass into lush, prairie-like meadows. The quick success of this effort has been proven by the return of birds that prefer open grassland habitats like northern bobwhite quail, Henslow's sparrow, and short-eared owl. Burning and mowing also enhance wildlife viewing opportunities for motorists, bicyclists, and walkers using the 11-mile Cades Cove Loop Road.

The historic buildings that are preserved in the Cove are there to help visitors imagine what life was like on a small farm in the mountains when much of the food you ate and the clothes you wore came

from your own land and hands. The preserved structures include three churches, a working gristmill, springhouses, log and frame homes, and barns. Without the persistent efforts of the park's highly skilled historic preservation crew, these artifacts would rapidly succumb to the weather and decay. Like the maintenance required to keep up your own home, the to-do list for the historic structures of Cades Cove is a long one and includes things like roof repairs, patching a rotting mill race, replacing broken windows, and shoring up sagging foundations.



## Cades Cove Checklist

- o river cane
- o river otter
- o black bear
- o white-tailed deer
- o gristmill
- o barn swallow
- o eastern bluebird
- o eastern meadowlark
- o pileated woodpecker
- o northern bobwhite quail
- o springhouse
- o coyote
- o blacksmith's shop
- o cantilever barn
- o fringed polygala
- o Indian pink
- o rattlesnake hawkweed
- o bird's foot violet
- o blue-eyed grass



# visitor information

for more information, [www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm) or follow us on Twitter @GreatSmokyNPS

## information

**General park information:**  
(865) 436-1200  
[www.nps.gov/grsm](http://www.nps.gov/grsm)  
**Backcountry information**  
(865) 436-1297  
[www.smokiespermits.nps.gov](http://www.smokiespermits.nps.gov)  
**To order maps & guides**  
(865) 436-7318 x226  
[www.smokiesinformation.org](http://www.smokiesinformation.org)

## emergencies

For emergencies that occur in the park, call 9-1-1 or one of the numbers below:  
Park Headquarters (865) 436-9171  
Cherokee Police (828) 497-4131  
Gatlinburg Police (865) 436-5181

## hospitals

Le Conte/Sevier County (865) 446-7000, Middle Creek Rd., Sevierville, TN.  
Blount Memorial (865) 983-7211, U.S. 321, Maryville, TN.  
Haywood County (828) 456-7311, Waynesville, NC.  
Swain County (828) 488-2155, Bryson City, NC.

## regulations

Picking or digging plants is prohibited in the park.  
Persons feeding wildlife are subject to a \$5,000 fine.  
Pets are not permitted on most park trails. Only the Gatlinburg and Oconaluftee River trails allow dogs on a leash.

## accessibility

Restrooms at all park visitor centers (Cades Cove, Clingmans Dome, Oconaluftee, and Sugarlands) are fully accessible. The Sugarlands Valley all-access nature trail is located on Newfound Gap Road just south of Sugarlands Visitor Center.

