

*Walker Valley*

The newsletter of  
Great Smoky Mountains  
Institute at Tremont  
Spring 2015

# Reflections

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2014 Annual Report Information

[www.gsmi.org](http://www.gsmi.org)

Caleb Carlton

## Only Time Will Tell...

Recently I had a powerful reminder of a timeless lesson: ***sometimes the impact we make in this world is only known many years later.***

Today, many of us exist in a professional and personal culture that is increasingly built on instant gratification and immediate validation of our actions, efforts and contributions. We post a picture on Facebook, and anxiously wait for the 'likes' to start rolling in while the seconds race past. It feels like an eternity when anticipating two-day rush delivery of that new book or random household item to appear on my doorstep. I itch with impatience as I agonize over the five seconds it takes for an online movie to begin streaming while I laze on my couch. My goal for this article is not necessarily to opine about whether these elements of the 'right now society' are virtues or vices. I'm sure many of us have strong feelings on multiple sides of this issue. But I have been thinking a lot about how not everything in the 21st century can be sped up, not everything can be delivered overnight; some things take time. Some things take lots and lots of time.

In the Fall of 2001, a volunteer with Tremont Institute captured a monarch butterfly in Cades Cove. They gently affixed a special sticker with a unique ID number to the butterfly's wing and then released it. The hope was that within a few months, the butterfly would migrate to its winter habitat in Mexico and that perhaps in the coming months or year a park guide or a random forest visitor in Mexico might find the sticker. Hopefully, they would follow the instructions of how to report it to scientists who are using the data of the tagging location and the discovery location to determine the migration routes for these wonderful critters.

As we rang in the new year of 2015, none of us at Tremont Institute expected to get word from Mexico that one of our monarch tags had just been discovered on the forest floor. The little sticker was found nestled amongst the leaves, long after the butterfly turned to dust. Thirteen winters had come and gone since that butterfly was netted, and during that time volunteers had tagged hundreds more butterflies in Cades Cove, and 50,000 participants had experienced a Tremont program. Time had marched onwards. Lots of new relationships had been formed, new connections to nature had been discovered, and hopefully many positive impacts had been made on those thousands of folks who came to Tremont.



Warren Bieleberg

What this story reminded me of is the fact that the impact we make in this world, the influence we have on people's lives, it is not always known in an instant. And just because it is not known does not lessen its powerful impact. As a teacher or mentor, sometimes you witness a student have a light bulb moment or you watch a kid blossom and transform right in front of your eyes as you walk on a trail. That is wonderful and important feedback and why many of us work in education. But it's worth reminding ourselves that transformation and impact can also take years to materialize or to become known. We may never fully see or learn about the positive change we help create in the world, but I think we should rest assured that it exists. Be mindful that

many great things in nature take years to grow and develop. In the Smokies, time can be measured in the grandest of scales, through cycles and eons that stretch over millions of years. But it's worth the wait! A moment at the foot of Spruce Flats Falls gazing at the mist or hearing an otter chirp while sitting on the banks of the Middle Prong proves it's worth the wait.

***To each of you who strive to make a positive impact in the lives of others as a teacher or mentor, to those who take a family member on a nature walk, to those who inspire someone to stop and smell the roses, I say thank you. And remember that when you impact the mind and heart of another, when you help connect someone to nature, when you provide for the conservation of a special place, you leave a lasting legacy. One that may only be known many years in the future, but it is there, just waiting to be discovered amongst the leaves!***

***Time will tell.....***



Article by  
Jen Jones, PhD  
President &  
CEO



video link!



## Not Such a Boar

When I ask students what threats they think are most daunting to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, common answers are air pollution, litter, and car exhaust. But rarely do people think about the animals and plants that do damage to our park everyday. We refer to these problem species as invasives. Most often, exotic invasive species come here from Europe or Asia. One of the many exotic invasive species that threatens our park is the European wild boar.



GSMNT Archives

The story of how the wild boar came to the Smokies starts in the early 20th century when a hunting preserve on Hoopers Bald, North Carolina (now located in the Nantahala National Forest) ordered a shipment of boar

from Eastern Europe. Hunting preserves, or game preserves, are fairly commonplace. They enable hunting enthusiasts an opportunity to hunt a variety of species, native and exotic, in one easy location. Though the preserve was fenced off, it wasn't long until the boars found a way out. Sometime in the 1940s, the boars made their escape and headed toward the Smoky Mountains, where they have been a management issue ever since.

In the fall and winter months, wild boars are found in the lower elevation pine oak forests, where the hard mast (acorns and other nuts) is common. They spend the nights rooting around the landscape like a rototiller, digging through the top soil for acorns, tubers, grubs, flowering plants, mushrooms, bird eggs, snails, snakes, salamanders, and just about anything else you can imagine. This is extremely destructive and leaves the habitat looking like a construction zone. Eating these resources not only leaves less for the native species, like black bears, but some of the species destroyed or eaten by the boars are endemic (only found here in the Smokies). One example is Jordan's Red-cheeked salamander, which has frequently been found in the stomach of exterminated boars.

When boars aren't foraging buffet-style through the habitat, they are creating mud wallows to cool off. Even in cool months, boars wallow regularly to help maintain a low body temperature because they don't have sweat glands. These wallows are often located next to creeks and streams. Added sediments from these vegetationless wallows end up eroding into the stream, creating problems for the native brook trout and other freshwater critters.

One mission of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is maintaining the greatest natural biodiversity possible. This means an entire division of park biologists work to exterminate the European wild boar. January through March is their busiest time, when it is slightly easier to find boars while they linger in the lower elevations, closer to roads and human activity. Park staff bait traps with corn. Each trap has a small escape hole so if smaller critters, like raccoons, find their way inside, they can easily escape. The traps are checked daily, and should they get lucky and catch a boar, it is exterminated. The carcass is then dragged out into the ecosystem, away from trails and roads, and left as carrion for other species to forage on. The idea behind this is simple. All the energy that went into making that boar (that was born and raised here in the park) needs to be returned to the system from which it came.

The hardest part for park biologists is finding the boars. They estimate that there are anywhere from 500-1500 boars in the park. However, it is hard to get an accurate estimate given how infrequently they are seen. Next time you are out hiking, look for boar sign. This can be anything from the rooting created while they forage, to a wallow, or mud whipped up on trees as they scrape their tusks after wallowing in a mud bath. This is a great way to test your naturalist tracking skills and train your eyes to look for signs of wildlife... even if it's not supposed to be there.



Article by  
Kensey Baker  
Teacher Naturalist

video link!



## watch and learn

We have videos on both invasive species and monarchs on our Vimeo channel. The videos are fun and informative. Take a minute and check a few out! Other topics include bears, hemlock woolly adelgid, salamanders, park history and more. <https://vimeo.com/channels/tremont>



#SmokiesCOOL

## The New Face of Citizen Science: The Citizen Science Association

The idea of public participation in scientific research is not new, but it has been gaining increasing attention over the past several years. Teachers, scientists, volunteers, and many others recognize the deep personal impact and vital contribution to research that citizen science facilitates.

The success of citizen science “takes dedication not just from volunteers, but from organizers, educators, scientists, data managers, technology specialists, evaluators, and others. Practitioners (paid or unpaid) work to design, support, and implement projects, manage and use data, and evaluate and research individual initiatives or the practice itself” ([www.citizenscienceassociation.org](http://www.citizenscienceassociation.org)).

We, as citizen science practitioners, knew there was a need for a community of practice for our field—we needed a professional organization dedicated to citizen science. So, after an initial conference in 2012, a collaborative effort was launched to form a new international and cross-disciplinary organization called the Citizen Science Association.

Tremont Institute is a founding member of this organization, and we are excited to be part of this global community. We are already a leader in citizen science, so we have much to contribute. We are in a position to train both volunteers and trainers, share our successes from decades of citizen science participation, and facilitate the creation of new and engaging projects.

The Citizen Science Association hosted a conference in San Jose, California February 11-12, 2015. I was excited to represent Tremont at the conference which was a great way to network with other citizen science coordinators from around the world. I presented a poster highlighting the long-lasting impact of our citizen science program on volunteers, families, students, and others, using our stream salamander study as an example.

Since the inception of this long-term salamander monitoring project, our participants of all ages have been directly involved in data collection and maintenance of our six stream transects. One of our core classes brings students on a journey of science discovery as they actively participate in the scientific method by collecting data on stream salamanders. Summer campers and adult naturalist course participants learn about amphibian conservation and population dynamics as they visit our streams. Local volunteers develop life-long connections to science and nature as they visit their

adopted plots month after month, year after year. School-teachers continue the magic their students experienced at Tremont Institute by applying data the students collected to interdisciplinary concepts in the classroom. Fifteen years later, we are still making connections and forming partnerships around our little mascots, while ensuring their health and survival for future generations of stream explorers.



Tiffany Beachy

Anyone can be a member of the Citizen Science Association—and right now, membership is FREE!

<http://citizenscienceassociation.org/membership/>



Article by  
Tiffany Beachy  
Citizen Science Coordinator

### get involved!

There are opportunities to volunteer for citizen science throughout the year at Tremont. Maybe you would like to adopt a salamander monitoring plot or join us to tag monarchs one late summer day?

Contact Tiffany at [tiffany@gsmiit.org](mailto:tiffany@gsmiit.org) to be added to our citizen science email list.

## Conservation Groups Partnering to Educate the Next Generation

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont and Little River Chapter of Trout Unlimited have partnered to bring conservation and life lessons to area youth.

We are very blessed to have many conservation groups working to protect our environment and natural resources in East Tennessee. However, often these groups don't coordinate with each other and don't benefit from one another's knowledge and strengths. This is not the case with GSMIT and LRCTU.

In recent years GSMIT has offered a program called "Great Smoky Mountains Aquatic Biology and Fishing Adventure". This program is designed for children 12-15 years old and has been supported by volunteers from Trout Unlimited. The children learn about stream ecology, brook trout restoration, stream physics, chemistry and aquatic entomology. They also learn about fly-tying and fly-fishing.

This past year the Little River Chapter of Trout Unlimited began a program in local area schools called "Trout In the Classroom." The Little River Chapter worked with Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont to identify local area teachers and schools that have a strong emphasis on conservation and our environment. The Little River Chapter of Trout Unlimited buys and sets up the tanks and needed equipment to support rainbow trout eggs. At school the children are able to watch the eggs become alevins and later fry before taking a trip to the Little River to release these trout in Townsend, TN.

Over the past 40 years our country and world has come a long way in understanding the importance of good conservation and natural resource stewardship. Passing on those lessons to the next generation is crucial. Organizations like Trout Unlimited and Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont working together to provide creative programming for children make this mission a reality.

Article by Chuck James  
Little River Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Chuck James

## Smokies Scavenger Hunt

Thank you to the 29 teams of adventurous, smart, competitive, enthusiastic people that came out on March 21st for our 8th annual Smokies Scavenger Hunt.

Congratulations to all who played and enjoyed Great Smoky Mountains National Park on a beautiful day! The top three teams won certificates to come back and spend time at Tremont Institute, and everyone was included in the drawing for door prizes from our generous sponsors.



Top 3 Teams Based on Scores  
**1st - Shining Rock Falcons**  
**2nd - Laughter and Nones**  
**3rd - Shamoanies**

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Blue Ridge Mountain Sports  
Janet & Tim Bigelow  
Debbie Claypool  
Great Smoky Mountains Association  
Great Smoky Mountains Outfitters  
Bill & Pat Irby  
Little River Trading Company  
PetSafe Village  
PetSmart (Alcoa)  
Salsarita's  
Smoky Mountain Tourism  
WBIR



Heather Davis

## Firefly Camp Starts Kids in Nature Early



Little people want to play in the woods too! That's why this summer we're starting our first-ever camp for 4-9 year olds and the big people in their lives—mothers, fathers, aunts, grandparents, etc. This overnight adventure, beginning and ending at noon each day, promises opportunities for bonding time, playing games that build confidence and awaken the senses, and getting to know the forest. We'll take an afternoon dip in the river. And in the evening, as darkness falls, we'll sing songs around the campfire and gaze at—you guessed it—fireflies.

There's another equally important reason we are naming this camp after the diminutive creatures that shine so brightly in the night. Obesity, cognitive development, and social skills are concerns every parent has for their children. Will they grow up to be healthy, well-functioning adults? Screen-time and long hours spent sitting indoors are other worries. How do we get kids to be as interested in nature and the outdoors as much as they are in computers, television, and handheld communication devices? Conservationists, too, are voicing concerns over the low value a generation alienated from nature might place on wild places years from now when it's their turn to become decision makers.

The answer? Start kids young. Light the fire early. "It only takes a spark to get a fire going," goes the campfire song from my youth. Children need such a spark for the sake of their own health, as well as for the health of the ecosystems they depend on and will someday pass on to their own children.

Help us spread the word about this potentially life-changing experience for tomorrow's leaders. Two- or three-night night adventures are also available. Imagine a smile blossoming on a child's face at the sight of their first salamander—a crystallizing moment that will pay dividends for many years afterward. Firefly Camp awaits.



Sign your little ones up at [www.gsmit.org](http://www.gsmit.org)!



Article by  
Jeremy Lloyd  
Special Programs Coordinator

## Summer in the Smokies - Sign Up Today!

### NATURE EXPLORATION

#### Discovery Camp

June 8-13, June 22-27, & July 13-18

Explore nature while getting down and dirty with the forests, rivers, and critters that make these mountains home.

Cost: \$555. Ages 9-12.

### WILDERNESS BACKPACKING

#### Wilderness Adventure Trek

June 8-13 & June 22-27

You'll start by learning the skills necessary for planning and enjoying a safe, successful backpacking trip. And before you know it, you'll be climbing a mountain carrying everything you need to survive for four days and three nights.

Cost: \$607. Ages 13-17.

#### Teen High Adventure

July 13-23

Backpack in the national park, conquer a ropes course, and experience the exhilaration of whitewater rafting. Cost: \$1,164. Ages 13-17.

### SCIENCE

#### Girls in Science

June 8-13 & June 29-July 4

Join other intrepid girls for the adventure of your life getting up close and personal with critters, plants, and the forces that shape our natural world as you work with scientists to conduct hands-on science.

See [gsmit.org/girlscience.html](http://gsmit.org/girlscience.html)  
Ages 12-15.

#### Backcountry Ecological Expedition

June 22-27 & June 30-July 5

Explore relatively undisturbed areas of the park, conducting field experiments and keeping a record of your observations. You'll explore creeks and hollows in search of the next organism new to the park or even to science! Cost: \$619. Ages 13-17.

#### Field Ecology Adventure

July 13-23

Are you a field scientist? You will be as you conduct and develop a real research case study. Field ecology adventure culminates with a group presentation of findings from the week. Cost: \$1,164. Ages 13-17.

FIND SUMMER INFORMATION AT  
[gsmit.org/SummerYouth.html](http://gsmit.org/SummerYouth.html)

# Creating a Generation of Citizen Scientists & Future Stewards

In today's world, where words like "organic" and "sustainable" seem to be on every other product on the shelf and going green is trendy, environmental stewardship is a topic that may come up in conversation. But what exactly does it mean to be a steward of the environment?

Many people have their own nuanced idea of the concept. Webster's defines it as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care," in this case, the environment. For most of us at Tremont Institute, stewardship is more than just a word; it's a purpose.

We strive not only to be stewards in our personal lives, but also to help and inspire everyone who comes to Tremont to find ways to take care of the world around them, particularly national parks. It's even in our mission statement ...

*"Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont provides in-depth experiences through education programs that celebrate ecological and cultural diversity, foster stewardship, and nurture appreciation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park."*

Whether we say the word or not, this theme runs through all that we do regardless of a participant's age or reason for coming. We talk about planting milkweed with our citizen science volunteers, encourage our Road Scholars to carpool, and collect and weigh the food waste of school groups in our dining hall. However, there is one program that is based, almost exclusively, on the idea of creating stewards, and that is our Class of 2016.

In 2016, the National Park Service will be celebrating its centennial anniversary. In order to commemorate this moment, and to look ahead to the next one hundred years, the Park Service has released A Call to Action Plan.

This plan highlights key areas where attention needs to be focused. One of these points of action is Next Generation Stewards, which aims to "create a new generation of citizen scientists and future stewards of our parks."

In 2012, Tremont answered that call and created a class of our own. We assembled a class of high school students, all of whom will graduate in 2016. They are from communities surrounding the Great Smoky Mountains and are passionate about the environment and this beautiful national park. Since the program began, the students have met with rangers, explored hidden corners of the park through backpacking trips, learned Leave No Trace principles, and much more. The goal is to teach them about the Great Smoky Mountains so they can take what they've learned and share with their communities. This is our next generation of leaders, and we hope that programs like these will help stewardship become a big part of their lives.

***So, do you consider yourself a steward? Take a few minutes to go outside and appreciate the beauty around you. Is it worth protecting?***



Article by  
Casey Franklin  
Teacher Naturalist

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## Welcoming New Faces at Tremont

*Next time you are here in Walker Valley, be sure to say hi to these new folks at Tremont Institute!*

***Did you know?***  
*Two-thirds of Tremont's faculty hold advanced degrees in fields such as biology, environmental studies, and education.*

*Learn more about our professional faculty and staff on our Web site at [www.gsmit.org/staff.html](http://www.gsmit.org/staff.html).*

### ***In the Kitchen***

**Robyn Buchanan**  
Cook

**Chris Ewing**  
Cook

### ***In the Field***

**Logan Rosenberg**  
Teacher Naturalist

**Mia Sundstrom**  
Teacher Naturalist Part-Time

**Jared Swenson**  
Teacher Naturalist Part-Time

### ***In the Office***

**Tonya Campbell**  
Director of Finance & Administration



Jen Jones

### **Superintendent Cassius Cash**

This spring, Tremont was honored with a visit from Great Smoky Mountains National Park's new superintendent Cassius Cash. Welcome to the Smokies!

## Michael Shepperd - Why Give to Tremont Institute?

Proud to speak out and have the opportunity to invite discussion on what I consider to be some very serious concerns. My whole life has had a lot of "outdoors" in it. I come from a generation of folks that were told: go play outside, go play ball, go play in the woods, and go play with your friends. All our free time revolved around being outside and using our imaginations. As a result of this, the natural world represents to me: freedom, peace of mind, romance, clean air and youth. As you get older and more educated, you realize it is even more important than that!

Ecosystems are critical not just to our happiness, but they are critical to our survival! Because of the large interest in national parks in this country, they have long been protected.

Simultaneously, over the last two decades it seems the kids in this country have become more obsessed over cell phones, social media, fake news, reality television and pop culture. This is not a criticism of this generation that is so obsessed with those things, but it is a criticism of the cause of that obsession. In my opinion, this is a big problem!

To solve any serious problem, you have to address the root cause of it. Young and old need to become more involved and invested in the natural world. Putting down all the material things we think make us so happy and spending some of our valuable time decompressing in the woods will do a lot for the things that trouble us. The fact of the matter is that a walk in the woods can cure more than just getting exercise and fresh air. The experience grounds you. It puts you back in touch with nature and gives you a respect for the things that are actually important. These are the experiences that can help some very different people come together and get along.

If social media, fake news, reality shows, and video games create distance between people and cause them to be judgmental and petty, then does it not seem obvious that the solution is found somewhere in the natural world?

When we first started GSM Outfitters we wanted to work and support a lot of different charities that are involved in supporting Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Tremont Institute is a truly proactive organization. It is the only one that I know of that so strongly makes the point that "EXPERIENCE" is the structure in the word infrastructure. Without the experience, the respect and appreciation for this most important NATURAL WORLD evaporates.

GSM Outfitters is vigorously supporting and talking about the Tremont Institute from now on. We are still involved and helping other charities but until this ship is righted, we view its goals as the most important!

- Michael and Heather Shepperd,  
Owners of GSM Outfitters LLC



GSM Outfitters LLC  
Outdoor Clothing and Gear



Earlier this year at Wilderness Wildlife Week, GSM Outfitters collected donations for Tremont Institute and gave away a kayak, paddle and tether to one generous donor! They also helped spread the word about our programs by handing out our brochures to their Wilderness Wildlife Week visitors.

Thank you, Michael & Heather!

Be sure to stop and see them at GSM Outfitters next time you are in Wear's Valley.

## Photography Workshops for Every Season

*Pick your favorite season or try them all.*

Photography workshops at Tremont feature renowned photographers such as Bill Lea, Will Clay and Tom Vadnais guiding you through the best photo spots in the Smokies. Whether you are a serious beginner or you are ready for our masters classes, you will find one-on-one assistance and helpful critiques during these energizing weekend workshops. Photo workshop prices include meals, lodging and instruction.



Use the code to the left or visit our site at [www.gsmit.org/workshops.html](http://www.gsmit.org/workshops.html) to sign up!

### UPCOMING PHOTO WORKSHOPS

#### Summer B&W Masters Class

August 14-17 Cost: \$642

#### Autumn Brilliance

October 23-26 Cost: \$611

### WATCH FOR NEXT YEAR

Winter Light Masters Class - January 2016

Springtime in the Smokies - April 2016



# Reflection Hikes - How to Build Community While Walking by Yourself?

*“Are you sure we have to?”*

I hear this almost every week, spoken imploringly, and clearly with some degree of trepidation. “Yes, you do,” I tell them. And, yes, it is a little intimidating, but once they’ve started down the trail, it may very well be their favorite experience at Tremont.



Caleb Carlton

Nearly every week I talk with a group of 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th graders, preparing them to walk into the wilderness on their own for the first time. They take turns heading down the trail each person about two minutes apart. Eventually, the leader (a Tremont Institute teacher naturalist) stops, and everyone else slowly catches up—each experiencing the same trail in solitude, but with the safety net of a teacher naturalist in the front and one of their teachers bringing up the rear.

Every week prompts a fairly predictable series of questions—what do we do if we see a bear?; what about a snake?; where should we go to the bathroom?; what if we catch up to someone else? At the root of these questions lies the real question, the one that they don’t usually ask: “What will happen to me when I’m on my own?”

In the long run, I can’t answer that question for them any better than I can for myself. I can tell them that I believe in them, I trust their judgment, and that singular experiences like this should be savored. At which point, I leave them to reflect on their fate while I head down the trail and await their arrival two miles later.

You can read it on each one of their faces as they trickle in. Though some speak, “It’s so peaceful,” “I heard birds,” “Yay! People!” or simply, “Wow.”—most are quiet. First one, then another, then another, then a group of two, who despite the directions, joined up “just at the very end,” another, another, until at last everyone gathers again. The more contemplative ones sit quietly, as if trying to hold the whole of their experience for a moment before time begins to refine the pieces into memory. Not everyone is so visibly moved. Some insist, “Boring. I didn’t have anyone to talk to.” Nonetheless, I know that none of their responses reveal what they’ve just encountered; in fact, I know of few words that fully express the deeper experiences in our lives.

When we are privileged to hear the stories, they are often shared in closing circle at the end of the week. During this culminating group reflection, many of them mention the solo hike as one of their favorite experiences. Some go further, speaking of views of distant mountains, silence, wonder at the color of fall leaves, fleeting experiences of seeing a bear (or, more likely a squirrel) crash into the brush, feeling alone in a world where, so often, we are over-connected, or the sheer joy of being fully alive. Solo hiking has a way of reminding us what it means to be a part of the wild world.

Solo hiking fits neatly into our mission of “connecting people and nature” by building community on two levels: through the ties we form with the landscape and through the shared experiences that bond us as a human community. But the solo hike does something else too; it lets us know that we can face the unknown. We can, and ultimately must, explore the world for ourselves. We can emerge on the other side as wiser human beings. And that is powerful knowledge, especially if you’re in 5th grade.

*So, try it for yourself. Pack a bag for the day, or half the day, grab a sandwich and a water bottle, let someone know where you’re going, walk into your backyard, and see what you can find.*



Article by  
Elizabeth Davis  
Teacher Naturalist



## Extending the Experience

Think of a time when you were so excited about learning that:

- A** you lost track of time
- B** you forgot to eat and drink/couldn't stop or put it down
- C** it felt less like 'learning' and more like 'discovery'
- D** it changed how you saw yourself or the world around you
- E** all of the above

If you can remember an experience with one or more of these qualities, you know that sometimes experience and learning can merge and draw you along on a life-changing wave... What if all learning was like that? We think it should be. Working closely with our classroom teachers, we strive to create these types of transformational experiences every day.

### Educational Experiences Can Be Life Changing

We know that our educational experiences can be life changing—this is at the core of what we offer teachers, schools, and their students. In addition to the programs, Tremont is also known nationally for teacher professional development, opportunities for citizen science, and our world-class setting in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. All of these strengths are part of a suite of what we offer to schools and classroom teachers. This includes:

- overnight programs tailored to meet teacher needs,
- professional development workshops,
- year-round citizen science opportunities for students and teachers
- professional education staff, many with graduate degrees
- multi-media pre- and post- extensions to classrooms
- needs-based financial aid, and
- scholarships for summer camp experiences.

### A few ideas:

#### Classroom

- Bird feeder observations
- Class recycling
- Post-trip journals



Article by  
John DiDiego  
Education Director

#### School

- School-wide food waste program
- Garden plot—with help from master gardeners
- Salamander study plot

#### Families

- Garden plots
- Tremont pre-trip lock in
- Summer camp

#### Community

- Letters to local publications
- Neighborhood clean-ups
- Community organization involvement

### Extending the experience

We envision our impact spreading way beyond what we do with students and teachers on site. For many of our schools, their three- or five-day educational experience is a springboard for learning both before and after their trip, both in and out of their classroom. These teachers have integrated their Tremont experience into their home communities. They start with their classrooms, and extend to their school, and often to families, and their broader community.

We would like to invite and encourage all of our teacher champions to consider ways of extending the impact of the Tremont experience, and really, to take full advantage of the support we offer. It's an invitation to a year-round relationship. With this relationship as a springboard, challenge yourself and your students to bring this educational experience to meaningful outcomes back home.

You may get swept away with the experience and the fun you are having, and only later realize the impact you have made!

# Naturalist Classes & Certification

The **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program** (SANCP) is a field-based program that offers “basic training” in southern Appalachian ecology and interpretive techniques. Sign up for the classes that interest you or choose a class to begin working toward certification. When you complete the core courses, you will receive certification, awarded jointly by Tremont Institute and the University of Tennessee.

Our SANCP is fun and engaging enough for all audiences. The same dynamic and professional faculty that facilitate all our school and university programs teach our SANCP courses. Additional expertise by way of park staff, research partners, and top-notch educators is brought in as needed.

## PROGRAM GOALS

Engage you in natural history



Foster your appreciation & stewardship of the mountain ecosystems

Help develop the skills needed to share your knowledge with others

## SANCP Core Courses

*Cost: Each weekend course is \$327 per person. Includes instruction, meals, and lodging.*

**Interpretation: A Teachable Art & Naturalist Skills**  
February 2016



**Birds**  
May 8-10

**Plants**  
May 8-10

**Reptiles and Amphibians**  
July 27-29

**Aquatic Natural History**  
July 29-31

**Southern Appalachian Ecology**  
September 18-20

**Mammals**  
November 6-8

## SANCP Elective Courses

In addition to the core courses, we have two bonus classes available. Neither are required for certification. Enjoy these SANCP extras!

**Winter Woody Plant ID—Day Program**  
January 2016

Discover a number of characteristics that will help you identify trees even in the wintertime.  
*Cost: \$55 per person. Includes a sack lunch.*

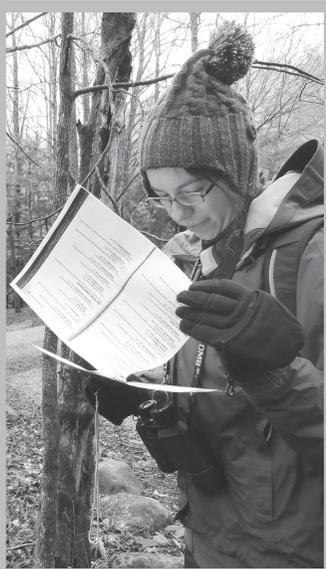
**Geology**  
November 6-8



Explore rock outcrops in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and interpret how geology affects cultural history and biodiversity in the region.  
*Cost: \$295 per person.*



Dawn Dextraze



Tiffany Beachy



Dawn Dextraze

## start this year

There are still openings in some of our certification classes for 2015. They can be taken in any order you choose.



Visit our [gsmit.org/sanpc.html](http://gsmit.org/sanpc.html) for class descriptions and more information.

# 2014 Annual Report

Early in 2014, the arrival of Tremont's new President & CEO Jen Jones brought with it excitement and a renewed enthusiasm for our mission.

It was a year to tell the world (or at the very least our small corner of it) what we are doing out here in the woods and why it's so important. We told the Tremont story in Knoxville at the Farmer's Market while people chatted with local farmers, in Washington D.C. at meetings among our peers, in Walland at a tree planting ceremony for the small school that returns year after year after year.

We were out telling the story, and other people noticed. Reporters from the *Knoxville News Sentinel* and *The Daily Times* shared our good news.

Thousands of friends online shared students' fun, educational videos through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Other centers called for our advice, and new partnerships were made with esteemed organizations like Maryville College.

Not only did the community help us by spreading the word, but businesses, individuals and families helped us by donating and by volunteering. Our annual fundraising events at Marblegate Farm and at Tremont were well attended, and attendees were generous. In November, we worked alongside our largest crowd of volunteers to clean up our campus and complete projects. Thank you!

The following pages share more about Tremont Institute in 2014.

## PARTICIPANTS

	2014
Youth Program	4,446
Adult Programs	975
Volunteer Hours	2,832
Park Visitors	11,659

## FINANCIAL

	2014
Program Fees	\$1,308,940
Retail	\$62,031
Grants & Donations	\$180,829
Investments	\$261,681
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,813,481
EXPENSES	\$1,644,165
Endowment	\$2,017,462
Financial Aid	\$48,930

Hosted **adults and youth** from

**34** states including a summer camper from  **Canada** and an adult participant from **Honduras**



**Honduras** and an adult participant from **Canada**

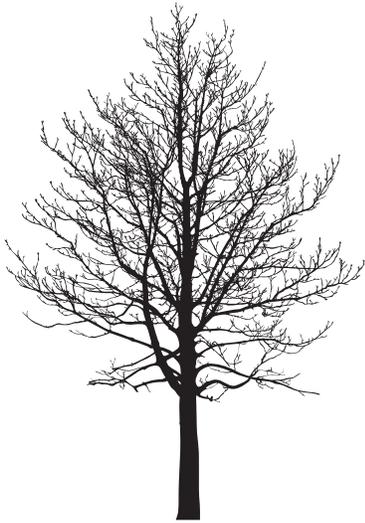


Teacher Naturalists taught **3,829** students from **83** school groups

*"Thank you very much! Also, your staff was incredible! They are always fantastic and they really helped our teachers who were new and a little hesitant when teaching the lessons. We had a great time and the students will be talking about this all year. I look forward to scheduling our next trip!"*

- Teacher from Kentucky

# In 2014, Tremont...



spent more than **149,000** hours living & learning OUTDOORS



**9,400** faces warmed by a campfire

provided more than

**19,000**

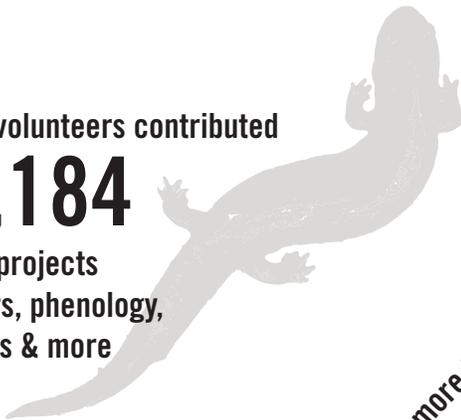
hours of training for teachers, educators, & mentors.



citizen science volunteers contributed

**3,184**

hours towards projects for salamanders, phenology, monarchs, birds & more



That is the same as walking 1 3/4 times around Earth!

**43,000** miles.

*Tremont participants hiked more than*



informed & advised

**11,659**

visitors through our Welcome Center



## Our New Approach to Teaching & Learning - B.E.E.T.L.E.S.

Since Tremont has a reputation for being a leader in providing high quality hands-on educational experiences for people that connect them deeply to nature, this year Tremont was proudly selected by UC Berkeley, Lawrence Hall of Science, to pilot the latest evidence-based science learning and teaching approaches through a teacher training program called BEETLES (Better Environmental



Education Teaching, Learning, Expertise and Sharing. In short, two staff spent one week in California training along side other staff members from

recognized residential nature centers and received training from a group of curriculum developers, researchers and educators who specialize in teacher training. What was unique about this program was that it was specifically designed for residential nature centers, based on the latest evidence-based teaching models dating as far back as the 1960's, and focuses on student-centered science pedagogy.

### What Response Have We Witnessed?

Currently, we have received a positive response after piloting it with a variety of ages, including adults. Some of these simple changes to our lessons and adjustments

to our strategies have had a ripple effect among participants. For instance, we've made small adjustments in our facilitation that focus less on content loading and more on utilizing the naturally-occurring curiosity in learners to ignite first what BEETLES would call "inquiry fever," a chain reaction of enthusiasm in students that is started by simple student-led investigation and observation activities. If done right, it can be difficult to stop students from asking questions, observing closely, investigating thoroughly, and discussing their ideas.

### What should you see in the coming year?

Using the basic principals of BEETLES, you will see our staff asking teachers and students to: slow down, step away, think critically, observe closely, ask questions, investigate further, record findings, share ideas, draw conclusions, collaborate, change mindsets, and reflect on how they arrived there. We will ask students to repeat these steps to where it becomes a discipline and a mindset that in many ways was shaped by the student – so it has personal relevance and is more likely to be repeated when students leave Tremont.

## School Groups at Tremont During 2014

Students from 83 school groups lived and learned in Great Smoky Mountains National Park with Tremont in 2014. They had the opportunity to learn through experience, to see something new, and to touch a piece of something others only read about. They also learned how to reduce their food waste. For a few days, they lived the lessons, and they had fun.

A. M. Yealey Elementary School (0.09)  
 Amana Academy (0.055)  
 Berrien County Science and Math Center (0)  
 Berry College Middle School (0.019)  
 Central Middle School (0)  
 Central Middle School (0)  
 Cherokee Bend Elementary School (0.00145)  
 Cherokee Middle School (0.041)  
 Christian Academy of Knoxville (0.024)  
 Clayton-Bradley Academy (0.044)  
 Coalmont LEAPS (0.014)  
 Concord Christian School (0.0073)  
 Cornerstone School (0.00178)  
 Egleton Middle School (0.0037)  
 Episcopal School of Knoxville (0.033)  
 Fairview Elementary School (0.04)  
 Gamble Montessori High School (0.0085227)  
 Grace Christian Academy (0.097)  
 Harpeth Hall (0.032)  
 Hewitt-Trussville High School (0.00063)  
 Hickory Valley Christian School (0.039)  
 Hickory Valley Christian School (0)  
 Holley Navarre Middle School (0.006)  
 Holy Comforter Episcopal School (0.014)  
 Hume-Fogg High School (0)  
 Immaculate Conception Cathedral High School (0.0059)

Jones Valley Elementary School (0.004)  
 Knox Doss Middle School (0.012422)  
 Lebanon Special School District (0)  
 Lenoir City Middle School (0.0142)  
 Maplewood Richmond Heights (0.005)  
 McDowell Early College (0.0016)  
 Merrol Hyde Magnet School (0.005)  
 Merrol Hyde Seniors (0)  
 Moody High School (0)  
 Moore Traditional High School (0)  
 Norris Middle School (0.029)  
 Norwood High School (0.0014)  
 Oak Mountain Academy (0)  
 Oakland Steiner School (0)  
 Old Trail School (0)  
 Oliver Springs Middle School (0.00705)  
 Oxford High School (0.023)  
 Pi Beta Phi Elementary School (0.032)  
 Pope John Paul II High School (0.012)  
 Porter Elementary School (0.036)  
 Portland Christian School (0.028)  
 Prospect Elementary School (0.02)  
 Rainbow Community School (0.0059)  
 Randolph School (0.0075)  
 Rockford Elementary School (0.031)  
 Rockford Elementary School (0.022)  
 Rockwood Middle School (0.057)

Rockwood School District Trip 1 (0.05)  
 Rockwood School District Trip 2 (0.03)  
 Rockwood School District Trip 3 (0.047)  
 Rockwood School District Trip 4 (0.038)  
 Rockwood School District Trip 5 (0.057)  
 Ruth Patrick Science Center (0)  
 Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School (0.102)  
 Sayre High School (0)  
 Shelbyville Middle School (0.01666)  
 St. Luke's Episcopal School (0.022)  
 St. Mary of the Lake School(0)  
 St. Mary of the Lake School (0)  
 Station Camp Middle School (0.1825)  
 Sycamore School (0.002)  
 Tate's School (0.029)  
 Union Grove Elementary School (0.0016)  
 Valley Springs Middle School (0.006)  
 Visitation Academy (0.025)  
 Walland Elementary School (0)  
 Walland Elementary School (0)  
 Weatherly Elementary School (0.0119)  
 West End Middle School (0.01)  
 West End Middle School (0.06)  
 Woodlawn School (0.00069)  
 Woods Charter School (0)

*(Food waste measured in pounds per person per meal)*

## Colleges and Universities at Tremont During 2014

Maryville College  
 Mississippi State University  
 University of Georgia  
 Virginia Tech  
 Purdue University  
 Penn State University

Western Illinois University  
 East Carolina University  
 North Carolina State University  
 Texas A&M University  
 University of Missouri-Columbia

### partner with us

Tremont has a long history of partnering with colleges and universities. We work closely with faculty to customize programs and tailor curriculum so students may achieve specific learning objectives in their particular field of study. Many of our programs are organized around a central theme. Our expertise and passion enables us to work with professors and students from across a wide range of disciplines, ranging from wildlife to anthropology, to art and creative writing, to environmental policy and law, and more.

The **Natural Resources College Consortium** dives deep into resource management issues related to the national park. Held each August, participating schools include the University of Georgia, Purdue-North Central, and Virginia Tech. Enrollment for this program is open to students regardless of university affiliation. This consortium may potentially have room for additional schools to participate. Interested professors are encouraged to make enquiries.

**Contact us at (865) 448-6709.**

## #SmokiesCOOL Project - Creative Outlets for Outdoor Learning

The screenshot shows a Vimeo video player interface. At the top, the Vimeo logo and navigation links (Join, Log In, Create, Watch, Upload) are visible. The video title is "Killer (Hemlock Woolly Adelgid)" and it is from Tremont Institute. The video content shows a group of people in a forest, some holding rifles, with the text "Because it's a killer" overlaid. Below the video player, there is a description: "Killer tells the story of the arrival of the hemlock woolly adelgid (Adelges tsugae) in North America, and the resulting devastation of eastern hemlock (Tsuga canadensis) and Carolina hemlock (Tsuga caroliniana). The hemlock woolly adelgid is an invasive species that has contributed to the sharp decline of the native hemlock stands in the eastern United States." At the bottom, there are five video thumbnails with titles: "Killer (Hemlock Wool...)", "Abiotic (Respect)", "The Story of All Life ...", "The Story of All Life ...", and "All the Salamanders".

At Tremont we engage youth in science education. Selected schools work with Tremont faculty to research, write, film and produce original music videos that teach the world about the Smokies.

**In 2014,**  
**360 students and 24 teachers**  
**helped create 12 videos**

The videos are posted on Tremont's Vimeo site. When first released, our videos were shared widely on social media, featured on local television stations and in Wild Ideas podcast episode 272, and our primere video "All the Salamanders" kickstarted a session at one National Association of Interpretation workshop.



Check out our site for more videos!  
 Share with your class or watch just for fun!

<https://vimeo.com/channels/tremont>

**THANK YOU 2014 GIFTS**

to the many generous individuals, organizations, and companies who supported Tremont in 2014. Without you, we would not be able to serve the thousands of students and adults each year in this special place.

**\$20,000-\$50,000**

Jim & Natalie Haslam II

**\$10,000-\$19,999**

Bill Cobble  
Cornerstone Foundation  
Bill & Susan Varner

**\$5,000-\$9,999**

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**Gifts given in memory of**



The **Abby Gibson Memorial Foundation** honors the life and memory of Abby Gibson by helping to enhance the lives of East Tennessee's children, teens, and young adults, while fostering a life-long love of animals.

In 2014, the foundation gave to support Tremont's 2015 Girls in Science camp which encourages girls ages 12-15 to get outside and get involved in science.

**Dave Barber**  
 Carol Alette  
 Gary & Sandra Wade

**Edna Baker**  
 Mary Dresser

**Dr. Henry Callaway**  
 Homer & Betty Isbell

**Leo Dextraze**  
 Mary Dresser  
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 Mary Dresser

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**Jim & Sean Fitzgerald**  
 Tom & Marian Fitzgerald

**Aiden Galloway**  
 Mark & Kim Galloway

**David Pope**  
 Marion Cheek

# Volunteers in 2014

Without our loyal volunteers, we would not be able to operate at Tremont. From monitoring a salamander plot to working in our wildflower garden, our volunteers make a profound difference, and we thank them for their dedication and many hours of service.

Carter Abbott  
Colby Abbott  
Judy Abbott  
David Anderson  
Mark Andrews  
Shirley Andrews  
David Antonelli  
Phil Antonelli  
Alan Archer  
Betsy Archer  
Jamie Archer  
Kavetza Beckner  
Jake Best  
Lisa Best  
Sarah Best  
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Josef Morstatt  
Leslie Morstatt

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Tom Shaughnessy  
Kim Simpson  
Michelle Simpson  
Mike Simpson  
Dionysi Siopsis  
Iasmi Siopsis  
Maria Siopsis  
Toly Siopsis  
Ryan Skamp  
Kylie Sliger  
Amy Sliger  
Laura Smailey  
Bailey Smith  
Elizabeth Smith  
Noah Smith  
Patti Smith  
Rebekah Smith  
Sarah Smith  
Dennis Sput  
Bryan Stache  
Holly Stache  
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Doug Stewart  
Sara Stonaha  
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Debbie Talbot  
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Paul Pickett  
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John DiDiego



Tiffany Beachy



John DiDiego

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Ethan Griggs  
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Zachary Griggs  
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Sam Herbert  
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Jacob Heslep  
Paula Heslep  
Angelique Hickman  
Garrett Hickman  
Steve Higdon  
Donna Higdon  
Steve Higdon  
Thom Hobbs  
Robert Holman  
Amelia Horton  
Claire Horton  
Erin Horton  
Tom Howe  
Hunter Hutson  
Tabatha Hutson  
Bill Irby  
Pat Irby  
Andrew Irvine  
Jamie Irvine  
Will Irvine  
Abby Jackson  
Pam Jackson  
Rob Jackson  
Jolanda Jansma

volunteers worked  
**2,832**  
hours for Tremont

Dave Johnston  
Navia Johnston  
Jason Jurkovic  
Josie Jurkovic  
Rose Jurkovic  
Tracey Jurkovic  
John Keydash  
Stephanie Keydash  
Adolph King  
Sharon King  
Dan Klingensmith  
Aaron Klingensmith  
Bruce Koopika  
Davin Kovalchik  
Jill Kovalchik  
Julie Labhart  
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Kayla Landis  
Sandra Landis  
Shana Landis  
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Richard Ledyard  
Meredith Liemohn  
Beci Lincks  
Ted Lister

Lloyd Luketin  
Richard Lyons  
Stacey Lyons  
Corbin Marine  
Glenn Marshall  
Anna Mast  
Kyle Mast  
Meagin Mast  
Sam McGroom  
Kevin McKelvey  
Dakota McMahan  
Daniel Metcalf  
Hannah Metcalf  
Joshua Metcalf  
Karen Metcalf  
Sarah Metcalf  
Timothy Metcalf  
Eleanor Mimbs  
Emmie Mimbs  
Alex Moeller

Vickie Reddick  
Mike Richardson  
Herb Roberts  
Carolyn Rogers  
Paul Rogers  
Jessica Rutgerson  
Karlee Rutgerson  
Wyatt Rutgerson  
Bob Rutherford  
Richard Ryburn  
Jacqueline Scholz  
Austin Schrock  
Carol Schrock  
Gar Secrist  
Keane Secrist  
Richard Secrist  
Spain Secrist  
Brenda Sellers  
Nancy Sentell  
Maryann Sexton

## experience

We have a variety of programs for all ages and abilities. We are known most often for our school programs, but our calendar is full of options for adults, youth and families. Options include naturalist classes, photography workshops, professional development and summer camps.

For more information, call us at (865) 448-6709 or email [heather@gsmitt.org](mailto:heather@gsmitt.org) to request a program catalog.

## volunteer

Could you give one day a month to helping Tremont Institute? Consider supporting Tremont by donating your time as a regular volunteer. There are many opportunities to pitch in. Contact us today to share your skills and know that every moment you put into Tremont gives someone the opportunity to live and learn in this beautiful place.

Volunteer opportunities include planning special events, representing Tremont at community events, assisting in the office or the kitchen, moving gravel, making fire starters, collecting donations, and more.

To find your place among the dedicated Tremont volunteers, email [mark@gsmitt.org](mailto:mark@gsmitt.org).

## connect

Sometimes you can't be here with us. That's okay! You can still connect with Tremont Institute.

**Continue reading our printed newsletter.** Share some info with a friend. The next edition will arrive later this year.



**Have you signed up for our bi-weekly newsletter?** If not, be sure you do. We'll keep you up to date on what's happening here at Tremont, and send reminders about how you can get involved when the time is right for you.  
[www.gsmitt.org](http://www.gsmitt.org)



**Have you watched our videos?** The feeling you get from dipping your toes in the Middle Prong can never be duplicated by simply watching the river flow from your computer screen, but on an every day work week, it's the next best thing. Take a break and enjoy the scenery from wherever you may be.  
<https://vimeo.com/channels/tremont>



**Find us...** We are on Facebook, and we love to share our pictures, stories, videos and announcements there. Don't forget to share with us.  
[www.facebook.com/GSMITremont](http://www.facebook.com/GSMITremont)



## Farewell Friends - Off for New Adventures



Well, we knew that the sad day would come...in case you hadn't heard, our own **Mary Dresser** will be leaving Tremont and the Smokies this spring to start a new chapter of her life in her home stomping grounds of Wisconsin. She will be taking over as the Education and Community Outreach Coordinator of Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center. They don't realize the gem they are getting! We will certainly miss her talents, warmth, and non-stop energy. We wish her all the best in her new role!



Heather Davis

**Mike Gross and Charlene Stewart retired this year. Thank you both for your years of service to Tremont and your friendship to us all.**

**GREAT SMOKY  
MOUNTAINS  
INSTITUTE AT  
TREMONT**

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
9275 Tremont Road  
Townsend, TN 37882

Visit [www.gsmit.org](http://www.gsmit.org) or call (865) 448-6709  
for more information.



*Walker Valley*  
**Reflections**

The newsletter of  
Great Smoky Mountains  
Institute at Tremont

*Spring 2015*