

The logo for the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, featuring the text "GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT" in white, uppercase letters on a dark grey rectangular background.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Southern Appalachian Ecology Weekend! We hope this will be one of many weekends we will spend together learning naturalist skills and gaining knowledge about the Great Smoky Mountains.

During this weekend our focus will be on the ecology of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The physiogeographic characteristics of these mountains have created an amazing diversity of plant communities. By the end of the weekend you will have become familiar with the particular ecology of a good number of them. It's going to be a fun-filled learning experience.

Get ready! You have registered for an intense weekend during which we will cover material and skills that most people receive in a semester-long class. If you think this sounds ambitious you are right! In order to accomplish our goals it is necessary for you to do some homework, in the form of readings, to give you the background information needed to take part in discussions and build your toolkit of skills. We plan to keep lecture time to a minimum and actually work on learning skills and practicing them. See the tentative schedule of events for an idea of what the weekend looks like.

Instructor:

I will be your instructor for the weekend. I have worked at Tremont since 1996 and have taught the Southern Appalachian Ecology course since its inception. In addition I am the author of *A Home in Walker Valley: The Story of Tremont* as well as *Great Smoky Mountains Pocket Guide & Journal*.

Arrival and Departure:

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Friday between 3:00 and 5:00 PM, giving you opportunity to move into the dormitory and meet other participants before our 6:00 evening meal. The program will end following lunch on Sunday.

Weather:

The weather here is usually pleasant in September. Over the past five years, the average daily high for September was 82° F. and the average daily low was 56° F. here in Walker Valley. Keep in mind, however, that some activities may take you through higher elevations, which can sometimes mean a difference of 15° F. cooler temperatures or more. Rain gear is always necessary here in the Smoky Mountains. Please bring it along.

Logistics & Homework:

Please read the "Your Visit to Tremont" link for important packing information. Along with your readings, linens and toiletries, you may want to bring a mattress pad to ease the firm mattress and perhaps a bedside lamp if you are a late-night reader. Please bring binoculars if you own a pair. If you don't own any we have a few pairs to loan. Also bring a notepad and pencil and any field guides you like. Sturdy walking shoes/boots, outdoor clothing, and a hat are also important for your comfort.

Readings:

Make sure to take the time to read the homework assignments for this course. Reading them ahead of time is crucial to helping you understand much of the material covered during the course. Some material therein will be a part of your assessment at the end of the course. Two readings will be emailed to you after you register: an excerpt from *Hollows, Peepers & Highlanders* (George Constantz) and *Great Smoky Mountains National Park: A Natural History Guide* (Rose Houk). The third reading, *Forests of the Smokies*

(Amber Parker), can be found by clicking on the link on the Southern Appalachian Ecology course webpage.

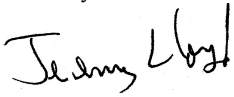
During the weekend we will also be offering you a 15% discount in our bookstore.

Health & Waiver Form:

Please fill out the Health/Waiver Form and bring it with you to turn in upon check-in. If you have special needs, dietary (go to <http://www.gsmit.org/Food.html> for more specifics), medical, or otherwise, please send in your form ahead of time. It will be challenging to accommodate special dietary needs if they are not communicated to us in advance. This form must be filled out and turned in to us for you to participate in the program. Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm.

I hope that this information is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming visit to Tremont. Please tell a friend about us so that they too can learn about the wonders of the Smokies. If you have further questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Lloyd
Manager of Field Program and Collegiate Studies

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