

Walker Valley

The newsletter of
Great Smoky Mountains
Institute at Tremont
Winter 2013

Reflections

“Nature is not a place to visit.
It is home.”

- Gary Snyder

From our home to your home,
wishing you the peace, wonder,
and joy of the holiday season
throughout the coming year.

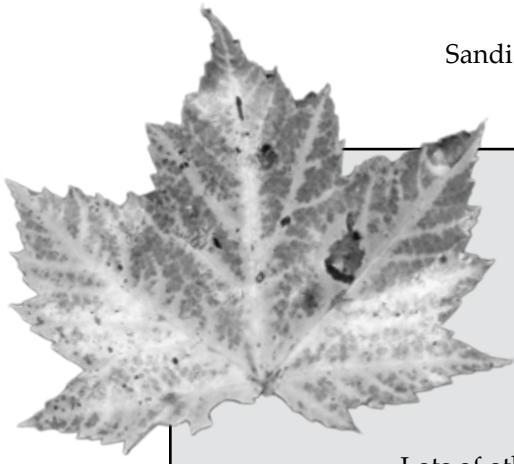


www.gsmit.org

GSMT Archives

Tremont's Silent Fall

Sandi Byrd, director of development & public relations



Ordinarily, fall is a very busy time at Tremont.

Hundreds of school children and their teachers are all over our campus—wading in the Middle Prong looking for salamanders; hiking to Spruce Flats falls; traveling back in time to learn what Walker Valley was like in 1924 before this land became a national park—and generally making the happy sounds of kids who are having a good time outdoors while they are learning.

Lots of others—some with their family, some with friends, and some by themselves just because they love the park—are taking part in citizen science projects like tagging monarchs in Cades Cove, monitoring a salamander plot along the Middle Prong, or simply enjoying the awe of participating in their first bird banding.

Unfortunately, the government shutdown made Tremont a very different place this fall. Because the park was closed, roads were blocked and our programs had to be suspended.

Schools that were scheduled during these weeks had to change their plans. When we contacted them and shared the news, all understood our challenge and were able to reschedule for a later date. We are very grateful for their willingness to work with us and make the best of a difficult situation.

And, here's the really good news! We realized that we could adapt too, and that even as we were limited in what we could do on campus, there were many opportunities that we could take advantage of while we waited for the park to reopen—things we might not have the staff capacity to get done otherwise.

Here are some examples of the things that kept Tremont moving forward during the shutdown:

- Monarch tagging scheduled for Cades Cove was moved to Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge, allowing our loyal volunteers the beauty of this experience even if not inside the park.
- Education staff made visits to area schools, taking Tremont to them and answering questions about our programs.
- Daily videos were produced highlighting an aspect of programming otherwise unavailable. These were placed on our website and on Facebook.
- Staff continued to monitor the phenology plots and other citizen science projects that volunteers would have been doing if not for the shutdown.
- A new school programs video was released on themiddleprongpress.com and Facebook. This 4-minute video informs the viewer about our school programs.
- Staff updated lesson materials and worked on a high school curriculum—a long-term project the shutdown provided precious time to continue!

Even with a government shutdown, Tremont continued to function and staff continued to work to provide the very best in environmental education programs for our participants.

Although Tremont is located inside the national park, it is not part of the federal government. As an independent non-profit organization, we rely on contributions from a variety of donors to enhance and expand the programs that have been the hallmark of Tremont since 1969.

We hope you will give Tremont a little extra consideration this year as you contemplate your year-end gifts. We truly appreciate any donation you can make to help us get through the financial difficulties created by the suspension of our programs.

The Citizen Science Internship at Tremont: Not Your Average Internship

Tiffany Beachy, citizen science coordinator

Imagine you are a motivated high school or college student in late May, eagerly anticipating the beginning of a new and adventurous summer as a citizen science intern (CSI) at Tremont.

Questions course through your mind: What will this summer hold for me? Will I be able to learn everything I'm required? How am I ever going to get up out of bed in the wee dark hours of the morning for all those bird banding days? Will the campers find me to be a fun, engaging, and educational naturalist?

Tremont has employed CSI's during the summer months for years, and each season brings a fresh crop of enthusiastic learners. Some of our interns started out as campers and have since gone on to work in the field of environmental education and natural resource management.

This year, the citizen science internship was revamped to make it a deeper, richer experience. We established a portfolio assignment for the summer that included several written responses to readings and journal entries, culminating in a group research project.

The interns also developed and taught their own three-hour nature club during one of our Discovery Camps, observing their fellow naturalists to learn about different teaching methods and philosophies.

The CSI's wrote reflections on their summer experiences, and the following are excerpts. Put yourself in their shoes as you read their words . . . live their rewarding and challenging moments. You'll see why the citizen science internship at Tremont is not your average internship!

*My favorite outdoor experience this summer has been bird banding. I love birds in general and to be able to extract them from the nets was amazing. I felt like I was actually doing real research (which we were). I loved the feeling of holding a bird in my hands. I will take the whole bird banding experience with me into college. **Halyse***

[One of my favorite memories was] the Hellbender we caught on our last official day. This was something I had been waiting for all summer. Hellbenders are one of the oddities of the Smokies, possibly even the US, and to see a full-grown one at the Tremont swimming hole was so ridiculous, crazy, and awesome that I was practically speechless.

*I had been waiting to see one for so long and holding one so close was amazing. I could see the wrinkly, mottled skin and the slime that coated my hands was so thick. It was awesome. The toe pads were huge and so adorable; and the flattened head with tiny eyes was something that I had only seen in pictures. I couldn't have asked for a cooler group of close encounters that will stay with me forever. **Reilly***



For the majority of my life, summertime in the Smokies has meant long humid days, icy refreshing water, synchronized fireflies, early morning Cades Cove bike rides, and an overall abundance of what has cemented my connection to the natural world.

So spring 2013 had me excited about spending ten weeks of my summer as a citizen science intern at Tremont. But while I was thankful to return to my old stomping grounds, the internship transformed into an experience that solidified my dream to pursue field research by immersing me in over two months of constant discovery.

*By the end of July, I finally felt that I could at least doggy paddle in the seas of ornithology. Birding became empowering. It helped me refine my observation skills and become more aware of and absorbed in my surroundings. Listening to bird songs and identifying the individual singing has also helped me appreciate the web of life that both humans and birds share. **Ellen***

Read more from Ellen's journal on page 11, Reflections on Citizen Science: Can Volunteers Do Real Research?



Tiffany Beachy



Next Generation Science Standards: A Look at Crosscutting Concepts

John DiDiego, education director

In any conversation I have with a teacher at Tremont, it is only a matter of time before I hear the word ‘standards.’

In the past few years, it has been associated with the Common Core Standards. This year, however, much of the talk revolves around the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which will soon be implemented in Tennessee. Learn more at <http://www.nextgenscience.org/final-next-generation-science-standards-released>.

I thought it would be useful to examine these standards, and highlight some of the innovative ways they get kids engaged in science and engineering, not as an isolated subject, but as an integral part of understanding how the world works.

Standards That Make Sense

These standards are not a government mandate handed down from above – rather the creating and writing has been spearheaded by teachers at the state level in over two dozen pioneering states, including Tennessee.

The framework uses ‘crosscutting concepts’ to unify subject areas. I will focus in on these crosscutting concepts in a series of short articles to introduce readers to this forward-thinking way to teach complicated concepts.

Crosscutting Concept: Cause and Effect

One of the seven crosscutting concepts, cause and effect, describes a relationship common to all areas of life, but particularly important with engineering and science. Students cannot understand the scientific method without having a working knowledge of the concept of cause and effect.

As written in the standards, “Events have causes, sometimes simple, sometimes multifaceted. Deciphering causal relationships, and the mechanisms by which they are mediated, is a major activity of science and engineering.”

Resource managers in the Smokies know that they cannot plan a response to a threat, like exotic species or poor air quality, without having a clear idea for the causes of the threat. So how do we teach this critical concept?

Field Applications - Observation

For over 40 years, Tremont has kept records of specific seasonal changes that occur year after year – including phenomena like flowers blooming, migratory birds returning, and trees leafing out.

This fall, students from dozens of schools are gathering phenological data, and guess what?

As they determine when a specific tulip tree lost its leaves, or if a black-throated green warbler passes through en route to her wintering grounds, they are noting specific effects.

The observation begs the question – why this tree, why now? As we make our observations, hypotheses fly. This makes the perfect lead in to cause and effect in nature.

Wild Hogs – Cascading Negative Effects

I have heard kids (and some adults) ask – “What’s so bad about hogs digging up some dirt? Isn’t the negative impact restricted to that one area?”

These questions show lack of understanding of cause and effect. It is easy to observe the destructive effect of wild hogs in the Smokies. Overnight, hogs can remove multiple years of organic matter on the forest floor, destroying habitat for whole communities of organisms.

It goes further, however, as this effect causes additional degradation. Where hogs have removed the leaf litter and uprooted plants, erosion carries soil to streams. This increased siltation of the stream habitat and increased stress can decrease native populations of insects which impacts organisms all the way up the food chain. Ouch!

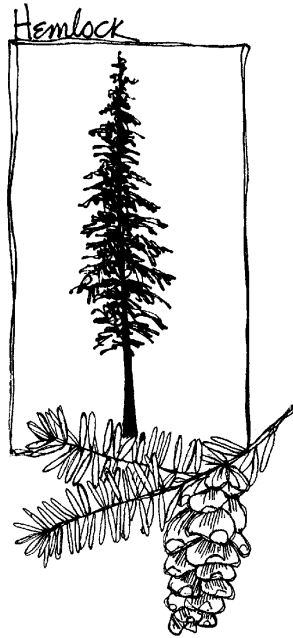
An understanding of cause and effect makes it clear that hogs cause widespread damage to the environment, and we can predict that where hogs are present, water quality and stream diversity will suffer.

Causation or Correlation?

At the middle and high school levels, students must differentiate between correlation – things that happen concurrently (but may have no other connection), and causation – things that cause one another.

I brush my teeth after I eat breakfast, but the one event (eating breakfast) doesn’t cause the other (brushing teeth).

In the Smokies, we monitor salamander populations in hemlock-dominated forests. As hemlocks are weakened and die as a result of the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid (cause), will salamander populations decline (effect)?



We attempt to isolate the factors to tell. We need data collected through careful observation:

- salamander populations
- air/soil temperature and moisture level
- health of hemlocks

We may predict that a decline in hemlock health will lead to a decline in salamander population, but only careful monitoring of the effects observed in the environment will lead us to know if that happens, and what the causes were. It’s analogous to building a criminal case — the more evidence, the more likely you will get a conviction.

We are excited about these crosscutting concepts, because they involve the application of science and how we learn. We can work closely with teachers to provide real world experiences that highlight complex concepts that transcend traditional school subjects.

Tremont provides a place for students to observe cause and effect playing out in the real world, and to see how the park service uses science and engineering when managing their precious resources.

Former Tennessee K-12 Science Coordinator, Linda Jordan, noted, “I also believe NGSS is a perfect fit with informal science and should serve [that] community well. All of [TN contributors to NGSS] agreed that NGSS was more than appropriate for use in informal science settings.”

Other such concepts include: patterns, similarity, and diversity; scale, proportion and quantity; systems and system models; energy and matter; structure and function; stability and change.

Search Continues for New Executive Director

The search for a new executive director for Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont continues.

The individual who had accepted the position made the decision to stay with the organization he founded.

We are confident that the search committee will find a leader that can continue to build on Tremont’s reputation for providing world-class environmental education.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about this position, go to gsmit.org/jobs.html.

Placing Ourselves: Special Programs Foster Sense of Place

Jeremy Lloyd, special programs coordinator

Learning about nature's nuts and bolts in the Smokies – its natural history – plays a big part in what we do at Tremont.

I have the privilege of teaching two of the eight courses in our naturalist certification program each year, and always enjoy these special weekends. I get to unplug, get away from the phone and email, and explore the natural world alongside fellow learners.

During these weekends, we push beyond generalities and learn about specific organisms – long-tailed weasels, for example, or cardinal flowers.

In so doing, we deepen our sense of place. After all, nothing on earth exists apart from a particular place that has its own particular climate, soils, sounds and smells. Learning in this hands-on, feet-on-the-ground way is vastly different than the ordinary classroom method with which most of us grew up.

I suspect many people who attend Tremont programs struggled like I did during their school years with detached and abstractified deskbound learning which is the norm in our American school system.

The antidote is to expand our idea of what defines the classroom and go outside. When we do, rewards are virtually guaranteed.

In his book, *The Long-Legged House*, Kentucky poet-farmer Wendell Berry recalls his desire to learn the natural history of his home after moving back there following an absence of several years.

"As soon as I felt a necessity to learn about the non-human world, I wished to learn about it in a hurry. And then I began to learn perhaps the most important lesson that nature had to teach me: that I could not learn about her in a hurry."

I can relate. When I first started working in the Smokies, I got pretty good at identifying the more common wildflower species, perhaps fifty or more. Then I picked up a copy of the park's list of flowering plants filled with over 1,500 species (as of 2012 it had climbed to more than 1,600). The learning curve suddenly got a lot steeper.

Knowledge is power. I've known several "experts" over the years who wanted me to know how smart they were by naming every plant or bird as fast as possible. Fortunately, I've met a larger number of naturalists who are aware of how little they really know.

Berry clearly falls into this latter group when he says, "I expect to learn many things before my life is over, and yet to die ignorant."

Learning about nature – any kind of learning – takes a lifetime.

Berry again: "The thing is to be attentively present. To sit and wait is as important as to move. Patience is as valuable as industry. What is to be known is always there. When it reveals itself to you, or when you come upon it, it is by chance. The only condition is your being there and being watchful."

One challenge many of us face is that it's easy to forget that we live in actual places. We race out the door, hop in our car, drive to work, and hurry back home again. Most of our waking hours are spent between four walls or on four wheels, while often staring at computer screens or handheld devices rather than the blooming wild world beyond the glass pane.

When the weekend comes around, we step away from our routine and may perhaps go outside. We may even take a trip to a park, the beach, the city – or to Tremont.

Something magical happens when we spend time in a specific place, learning its textures and moods. We grow attached to it. We begin to care.

Places are of major concern to conservationists, not to mention anybody who's conscious of our dependency on the non-human environment for the world's survival. This is one more reason why residential environmental education is so vital.

Berry one last time (paraphrasing): "Our places are asking questions of us and we don't have the answers."

He's referring to the disappearance of many places due to rampant development as well as from neglect, worsening air and water quality, and a host of other threats.

At least one partial answer I know of is to listen, stay attached, stay connected and keep listening to the questions our places are asking us. Because by taking the time to listen, we've already begun to care.

What questions is your place asking you?



Emily Julian

The Nature Journal: A Year-Round Family Activity

Caleb Carlton, teacher/naturalist

For both students and parents, back to school means the onset of a whirlwind. Let's face it, even the thought of the modern-day school year is overwhelming.

Students are scheduled to the limits, while parents struggle to balance professional demands and experiencing life with their children. Even when everybody's home, there's homework, television, smart phones, and pure exhaustion to detract from family time.

It's easy to arrive at the Thanksgiving break and wonder what happened to September, October and November. The big challenge is how to foster meaningful and consistent relationships with the ones you love the most in the midst of hectic schedules and tired minds.

So let's be realistic: you need the most from the free moments you might have with your children during the school week. Why not consider a daily or weekly nature journal?

Picture this: you and your children spending fifteen minutes observing the happenings of the backyard or local park while writing and drawing in an effort to record your discoveries.

Together, you actually watch the fall reds fade into the winter browns. Together, you watch Monarch butterflies fly by, headed for a winter in central Mexico. Together, you bear witness to the wonder of life and the simple joys of being a part of it.

By creating and keeping a nature journal, and falling into the routine of regularly making entries, you are ensuring that you are fully engaged in experiencing the moments that you have with your children. You are opening them to the wonder and awe that perpetually surround them, and forging an unbreakable bond like that shared connection to the natural world and all of its majesty.

Furthermore, in journaling, you are creating a memory book in real-time like a material record of the time that you took to explore the world with your children and what you discovered together.



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You don't need to know anything about the natural world.

Nature journaling is not about knowing, it's about observing. The process of discovery can unfold for parent and child alike. Feel encouraged to learn alongside your child and don't hide your lack of knowledge from them—that way, you can enjoy your discoveries together.

You don't need to go anywhere.

There are incredible insects, virtually everywhere, to watch and sketch. Watching a single tree day after day can yield continuous discovery and new perspectives. The seasonal

changes in this part of the world do enough on their own to keep things perpetually interesting.

You don't need to spend any money.

Nature journals needn't be leather bound. If you really want to pinch the pennies and get creative, cut out two pieces of cardboard from a finished cereal box to use as a front and back, place blank or lined paper between, and staple-bind together. Personalize your journal with nature-inspired art!

You don't need much time.

Ten minutes can be plenty of time to sit quietly on the porch and watch a spider or a songbird go about its life, but don't be surprised if you find it hard to pull away from the peaceful curiosity that's overcome you! Fifteen to twenty minutes will ensure time to complete drawings or thoughts. Keeping your journaling slot consistent will help to make it an anticipated routine, while periodically switching from morning to evening sessions can reveal a new set of wonders.

By consistently opening yourself and your family to the small wonders of nature that are with you, even through the chaos of the school year, you'll also be setting the stage for a grand set of family-based activities: camping, hiking, traveling, star-gazing, and so on.

When you're ready to move beyond the backyard, we'll be ready for you here at Tremont, where you can turn a new page in your nature journal with the wonder of your other backyard, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

For tips and tricks on nature journaling:

www.simplehomemade.net/nature-journaling-with-kids
www.sierraclub.org/education/nature_journal.asp
www.donnayoung.org/science/nature-journal.htm

Explore Tremont's Online Nature Journal:

www.themiddleprongpress.com

Here are a few more reasons that nature journaling is the perfect activity to keep you close to your children, and your children fully experiencing the world that sneaks by while we're all too busy to take notice:



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A Valuable Lesson

The hike for eight miles didn't show many smiles.
Paranoid of yellow jackets at every corner,
and extremely frightened to make a stir.
Also falling off the steep contour to go
rolling down hill in a blur.

Luckily we were together, birds of a feather.
To keep spirits up with a good wind up.
Wasn't easy being positive, but that was our
very motive.

The same situation occurred through the thorn
bushes we staggered.

Jenny withstood them without a moan to
make a beeline for the road.
Though we were getting stabbed and pricked,
to stay positive, Jenny, was very strict.

This proved to be more enjoyable than we
thought, And we learned as an afterthought,
That there can be twice as much laughter
as long as you are not a "Debbie Downer."
- Nicole -

Emily Julian



Car Secrist



John Rakes



Caery Franklin



Sherry Ball



Tiffany Beady



Nature

Nature is a beautiful sight,
Especially with the sun shining so bright.
I look at the blue sky that is so bare,
and I smell the scent of the nice, fresh air.
And as the sky darkens and the night
creatures come out,
I run fearfully from an animal that
thrashes about.

Taya



WELCOME TO GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT

A Look Back at Summer Adventures 2013

TREMONT
WILDLIFE, WHEREVER YOU DWELL
WHETHER IT BE IN A TREE OR IN THE DELL
I DO NOT WISH TO BE HIGH IN THE RANK
I'LL RESPECT EVERY HILL AND RIVERBANK
EVERY MOUNTAIN, EVERY VALLEY
ALL THE BEAUTY I CANNOT TALLY
YOU GIVE US FOOD SO WE CAN LIVE
SO IN RETURN, WE MUST GIVE
- JOSEPH

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Caleb Carlton



Emily Julian



Tiffany Beachy



Tiffany Beachy



Casey Franklin

Nature vs The City

The wind whips through my hair,
I just don't really care.
For when I go to sleep tonight,
I'll dream about the morning
Light.
For whenever I go outside,
Nature and I collide.
I hear the birds singing their song,
So I know this is where I belong.
Now in the city where the cars honk their
horns,
The sound pricks me a lot like thorns
For when I am in the city,
on the people I take pity.
Because I know most of them have not,
Experienced the beauty of nature
that this world has got.
- Sydney

School Groups at Tremont

January 2013 — August 2013

Engaging and interactive environmental education programs for elementary, middle, and high school students are available year-round at Tremont.

Our curricula are time-tested and inquiry-based, and best of all we have the national park as our classroom. Whether schools choose a three or five-day program, teachers team up with our staff to provide educational experiences that create lifelong memories and learning.

Between January and August, fifty-three elementary, middle, and high schools from eleven states brought students to Tremont.

If your school is not listed, contact us for more information on how your students can live and learn in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Visit www.gsmit.org/teachers.html.

Bernheim Middle School
(Shepherdsville, KY)

Berrien County Math &
Science Center
(Berrien Springs, MI)

Berry College Middle
School
(Mount Berry, GA)

Boyd Christian School
(McMinnville, TN)

Cedar Springs Homeschool
Group
(Knoxville, TN)

Christian Academy of
Knoxville
(Knoxville, TN)

Coalmont School LEAPs
(Coalmont, TN)

Concord Christian School
(Knoxville, TN)

Cornerstone School
(Ocala, FL)

Crestwood School
(Paris, IL)

Eagleton Elementary
(Maryville, TN)

Eagleton Middle School
(Maryville, TN)

Episcopal School of
Knoxville
(Knoxville, TN)

Fairview Elementary
(Maryville, TN)

Grace Christian Academy
(Knoxville, TN)

Harpeth Hall School
(Nashville, TN)

Hewitt-Trussville High
School
(Trussville, AL)

Hickory Valley Christian
School
(Chattanooga, TN)

Holy Comforter Episcopal
School
(Tallahassee, FL)

Immaculate Conception
Cathedral High School
(Memphis, TN)

Jones Valley Elementary
(Huntsville, AL)

Knoxville Adventist School
(Knoxville, TN)

Lebanon Special School
District
(Lebanon, TN)

Lenoir City Middle School
(Lenoir City, TN)

Macdonald Intermediate
School
(Fort Knox, KY)

Maplewood Richmond
Heights Middle School
(Saint Louis, MO)

Maryville College
(Maryville, TN)

McDowell Early College
(Marion, NC)

Montessori Academy
(Mishawaka, IN)

Montessori Academy at
Sharon Springs
(Cumming, GA)

Oak Hill School
(Nashville, TN)

Old Trail School
(Bath, OH)

Oliver Springs Middle
School
(Oliver Springs, TN)

Oxford High School
(Oxford, AL)

Porter Elementary School
(Maryville, TN)

Portland Christian School
(Louisville, KY)

Prospect Elementary School
(Seymour, TN)

Purcell Marian High School
(Cincinnati, OH)

Rainbow Mountain
Children's School
(Asheville, NC)

Randolph School
(Huntsville, AL)

Rockford Elementary
School
(Rockford, TN)

Rockwood Middle School
(Rockwood, TN)

Rockwood School District
(Wildwood, MO)

Scottsboro City Gifted
Program
(Scottsboro, AL)

Seymour Community
Christian School
(Seymour, TN)

Spring City Middle School
(Spring City, TN)

St. Luke's Episcopal School
(Mobile, AL)

St. Mary of the Lake School
(New Buffalo, MI)

Tate's School of Discovery
(Knoxville, TN)

Union Grove Elementary
School
(Friendsville, TN)

Visitation Academy
(Saint Louis, MO)

Woodlawn School
(Davidson, NC)

Woodward Academy
(Atlanta, GA)



John Rakes



Shelly Jacques

Reflections on Citizen Science: Can Volunteers Do Real Research?

Ellen Rigell, citizen science intern

Perhaps the most challenging aspect to scientific research is relaying results and discoveries to a wide audience. While some students and field researchers may read through stacks of peer-reviewed articles, most of the public never even touch *Scientific American*.

Jeffrey Cohn examines the process of allowing volunteers to participate in field research with little to no background or experience in his analytical article "Citizen Science: Can Volunteers Do Real Research?"



Emily Julian

While Cohn weighs the pros and cons of citizen science logistically, the more powerful argument of the connection volunteer research develops is only lightly touched on, but still an underlying theme throughout.

The largest risks of citizen science are inherent—without background, volunteers will not be efficient or accurate; without supervision, volunteers may not be consistent. But Cohn points out that volunteers "often are themselves scientists or science teachers and their students," and while they may be new to the current project, they are often familiar with scientific processes and data collection techniques.

Even with some inconsistencies, the sheer amount of data generally collected from citizen science projects provides much more insight to ecological studies than could have been gleaned without the help of volunteers.

Besides having a broader spectrum of data collected, what does all the effort culminate in?

As Cohn points out, some volunteers will never "understand the context of the study," and others will not have the chance to participate in a project long enough to see any conclusive results.

Only brushed over by Cohn, the overarching product of citizen science stems from the intrinsic appreciation the volunteer has for the natural world that is amplified by his or her participation in research.

While the data volunteers collect many times equals that collected by a trained professional, the more notable benefit of citizen science is the empowerment volunteers get from the contribution they give to discovery.

From empowerment inevitably comes meaning. When meaning is attached to a place, person, or concept, it becomes, by Merriam Webster's definition, significant. Cohn includes this benefit of citizen science research through a quote by Marc Albert, "We want to inspire the public to appreciate nature through hands-on research projects."

If places like the Great Smoky Mountains attain that much meaning in the lives of volunteers because of the research they have done, then citizen science is always worth the risk of shaky data if conscientious, thoughtful individuals are produced at that expense.

But as Cohn's report shows, the information volunteers are providing for citizen research projects has only furthered the boundaries of field research. A practice dating back over a century, citizen science has gone much further than solely providing assistance to researchers and education to volunteers.

It has transformed into an opportunity for participants to connect to the natural world in an intrinsic and empowering fashion, tackling conservation issues not only with research, but with the beginnings of the paradigm shift necessary to transform humans' current role to one that holds sustainability and stewardship higher than consumerism and social status.



Tiffany Beachy

Learning Never Stops

Gina Lappé, teacher/naturalist

"You are like an infant again," said my Portuguese teacher in Brazil.

I didn't know a word of Portuguese and my host family knew just about that much English. So I listened.

Eventually, I could understand most of what was said around me, then even communicate using simple phrases.

My arrival at the Smoky Mountains felt strangely similar to my arrival in Brazil. The birds, trees, flowers, insects, and temperatures were all strangers. The thick August air felt more like swimming than breathing, and there was not a coastal redwood tree in sight.

The language of this place felt far removed from the crash of the Pacific Ocean, the bark of sea lions, and the consistency of the relatively seasonless California climate.

But this time, instead of a foreign language forcing me into infancy, an entirely new ecosystem allowed me to become a child again. The learning process was similar—I listened.

Naturalists poured out their knowledge about things big and small; strange birds and insects called from the trees; and the rush of the Middle Prong served as the backdrop to it all.

Then, simple words: Tulip Poplar, Fraser Magnolia. Later came phrases: the difference between a mayfly and a stonefly larva.

It took nearly a year for me to realize I was fixated on the wrong vocabulary.

When students come to this place, they are immersed in an entirely new world—a world removed from technology and surrounded by natural wonders. They are not here to learn the name of every species around them. They are here to be

immersed in, and connect with, the natural world.

A student's time at Tremont might be the first time he or she has ever splashed in the clear, cool, water of a mountain stream, hidden amongst leaves in a game of Camouflage, or found a salamander under a rock.

Once students are given guidance into the skills and language of discovery, they begin reaching out and touching things around them, asking questions about plants they walked right by moments before.

Suddenly, turning over a log transforms the forest floor from a dirty, bug infested, mess, into an ecosystem full of creatures to discover. Touching a soft, new leaf of spring changes a tree from a faceless mass, into a delicate individual.

The biodiversity and cultural richness of this place means the learning never stops, the discoveries stay fresh, and the ability to see complex relationships opens new doors.

When I arrived at Tremont, I thought I was supposed to become a language teacher.

What I have learned in the past two years is that I am purely a fellow explorer—just maybe one slightly more familiar with the map.

Note: Gina Lappé was one of our teacher/naturalists until leaving this fall for a new adventure.



Emily Julian

Marblegate Farm Event Raises over \$125,000 for Tremont Endowment

3 Photos to right by Jack Williams



The third annual Marblegate Farm event this past June netted \$126,954 for Tremont's endowment.

On a beautiful June day, 275 guests enjoyed a bountiful buffet under a tent set up on the lawn of Bill and Donna Cobble's lakefront farm in Friendsville, TN.

Over the past three years, this event has netted almost \$300,000, all going to the endowment fund that helps Tremont provide life-changing experiences for kids living and learning in the national park.

Pictures:

(Top) Right to left: Natalie and Jim Haslam, along with Suzanne Ditmanson enjoy guest speaker, Tennessee Supreme Court Chief Justice, Gary Wade.



(Bottom left) It was a full house at the 2013 Marblegate Farm event. Cathy Ackermann, board chair, is seen here speaking to this year's guests.

(Bottom right) Left to right: Earl & Margit Worsham are seen here with Sandy and Gary Wade.

Homecoming—Bringing Tremont Supporters Together to Celebrate

3 Photos to right by Jolanda Jansma



Greg & Esther Bell enjoyed the program exhibits, but also met Sterling Fisher who is participating in Tremont's 2016 program. Esther's company Global Intellectual Property Asset Management was the presenting sponsor for Homecoming for both 2012 and 2013.



September 15th marked Tremont's seventh annual Homecoming at Tremont. A record 203 tickets were sold, with Global Intellectual Property Asset Management as presenting sponsor for the second year.

Attendees were treated to special guest speaker, Sam Venable, great music by the Early Bird Special, and a delicious BBQ dinner, with Tremont education staff providing program exhibits.



(Top right) Vern Lindsey performed at this year's Homecoming as part of the Early Bird Special. Guests were seen swaying and singing along for most of their performance.

(Bottom right) Left to right: Park Superintendent Dale Ditmanson, Tremont's Education Director John DiDiego, new Park Deputy Superintendent Patty Wissinger, and long-time Tremont volunteer Robin Goddard.

THANK YOU

to the many generous individuals, organizations, and companies who helped support Tremont in 2013. Without you, we would not be able to serve the thousands of students and adults each year in this awesome place. We hope you will continue your support in 2014. You can donate online at www.gsmit.org/donate.html.

From January 1, 2013 — August 31, 2013

Annual Fund

Dan & Shirley Atwald
W. Alan & Debra Ballew
Jennifer Bausman
Bobbie Beckmann
Tommy Bird
David & Judy Birdwell
Kenneth & Amy Bishop
Jim & Kati Blalock
Ernie Blankenship
Dorie Bolze
Jennifer Bostick
Bruce & Susan Brower
Dick & Sandi Byrd
Jim Casey
Jay & Linda Casselberry
Ray (Bucky) Colclough
James Davis
Joe Dreimiller
Mary Dresser
Else Drusts
Darrel Ellis
Nannette Enloe
Margaret Epperly
Elizabeth Estill
Ruth Ewald
Barbara Foglesong
Sheila Franklin
Randy & Robin Gibson
Mark Gilreath
Jennifer Gimbel
C. Keith Goff
Liza Greenberg
Edna Grosskopf
Jan Haft
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Eric Hoeppner
Mrs. Charles Hultquist
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Carolyn King
Lois Klein
Michael & Karen Kohner
Frank & Elisabeth Lambert
Norm Levy
Robert & Linda Lloyd
Wilbur & Jane Logan

Carole Lopez
B. & Carol Manshady
Susan & Bruce Marshall
Benjamin Mayer
Paul McKown
Peter McLean
Kathryn McNeil
Charles & Clara McNutt
Robert Moore
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Libby Mundy
Dianne Naff
Kathy Newman
Max Nickerson
Denny O'Neal
Jennifer Oliphant
Sarah Oram
Jerry & Joan Paul
Mark & Nancy Peacock
Ronnie Powers
Erna Prickett
Linda Proffitt
Robert Ramger
Robert Reily
Ricki Robbins
Jerry & Vicki Roddy
Harold Roth
Mildred Ruen
Richard Ryburn
Paul & Jeanne Sanders
Paul Schuch
Raymond Sellers
William Shields
David & Judy Shuck
Mark & Janet Snyder
Jeffrey Spitzer
Lori Steiner
Jerry & Sharon Stiner
Don Taylor
Claudia Thomas
Michael Turley
Nord & Susan Unbehaun
Betty Voorhis
Robert & Pat Watson
Phil & Ann Weinrich
Eileen Wilson
Nicholas Young
Jerome & Rozanne Zeiger
Boeing

Grants

Clayton Family Foundation
Cornerstone Foundation
Denso
First Tennessee Foundation

Class of 2016

Paige Christie
Jimmy & Bonnie Clark
Susan Cooper
Wilfred "Mac" Post
Fred & Wanda Szak

George W. Fry Science Chair

Douglas Fry
Don & Carolyn Hartman

Arthur & Margaret Stupka Scholarship Fund

Conley & Carolyn Murrell

General Endowment Fund

Alicia Buenaventura
Heather Davis
Mary Dresser
Ken & Jennifer Voorhis

2013 Marblegate Farm Event

Ackermann Public Relations
Alcoa
Neal Allen
Esther Bell
Charley & Patricia Bible
Jim & Kati Blalock
Randy & Jenny Boyd
Betsey Bush
Ben Chandler
Jeff & Vicki Chapman
Clayton Family Foundation
Bill Cobble
Joey Collins
Bobbie Congleton
Cornerstone Foundation
Covenant Health
Robert Dickie
Hank & Margaret Dye
Elizabeth Estill
Friends of the Smokies
Sam & Ann Furrow
Randy & Robin Gibson
Paul Green
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George Hashbarger, Jr.
Jennifer Holder
Joe Hollingsworth
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John Johnson
Richard Johnson
Raja & Michelle Jubran
Dale & Barbara Keasling
Jon Lawler
Sherri Lee
Frank March
William Morrison
Randy Massey
Mortgage Investors Group, L.P.
Pershing Yoakley & Associates
Doug Peters
Ted Phillips
Pilot Travel Centers
PYA Waltman Capital
Dick Ray
Billie Shelby
Jim & Jane Sidwell
John Sims
SmartBank
Wes & Liz Stowers, Jr.

Joe & Becky Swann
Trust Company of Knoxville
University Health Systems
Bill & Susan Varner
Nancy Voith
Covenant Health
Steve West
Tim & Amy Williams

2013 Homecoming

Tim & Janet Bigelow
Ernie Blankenship
Deborah Bowman
Mike & Evelyn Bryant
Dick & Sandi Byrd
Henry & Marty Callaway
Mark Campen
Nicholas & Rebecca Cazana
Glenn & Debbie Claypool
Susan Cooper
Betsey Creekmore
Clay & Margie Crowder
Sam & Jody Curtis
David Dickey
Larry & Beth Dicus
John & Suzette Donovan
Patti & Chuck Edwards
Elizabeth Estill
Jim & Melinda Ethier
Carolyn Forster
June & Jim Gerding
Roger & Maria Goetz
Jim Hands
Cale Hanie
Charlie & Debe Hanie
Michael & Lora Harvey
Gary & Sherry Hensley
Jeanie Hilten
Mrs. Charles Hultquist
Bill & Patricia Irby
Homer & Betty Isbell
Kathleen Kerin
Steve & Sue Kiefer
Rufus & Beccie King

Harold & Jean Lambert
Bob Lash
Patria Leath
Russell & Sheri Liles
Lloyd Luketin
Frank March
Spence & Elizabeth McCachren
Bob & Sandy Merriman
Doug Overbey
Randall Pope
Wilfred "Mac" Post
John & Carolyn Pullias
Robert Ramger
Dick Ray
Christopher & Juliann Rigell
Jerry & Vicki Roddy
Michael & Sharon Roeder
Richard Ryburn
Saul & Joan Solomon
Don Taylor
Gary Teper
Peggy Tollison
Trust Company of Knoxville
Barry & Jeanie VanWinkle
Georgiana Vines
Steve Watts
Camille & Ronnie Wheeler
Jim & Georgie Whitley
John & Kathy Wilbanks
Eileen Wilson
Ralph & Karen Wynn

Scavenger Hunt Sponsor

Foothill Striders

Scholarship Fund

Ed Alessandrini
Anonymous
Kevin & Irene Anton
Andrea Ball
Tom & Diane Ballard
Albert Bauman
John & Sara Berry
Charley & Patricia Bible

A Simple, but very meaningful gift

With a bequest to Tremont, you are making a very special gift. Options for doing so include cash bequests, gifts of property, gifts of life insurance, gifts of securities, a share of the residue of your estate or the remainder of a trust.

If you have included a bequest to Tremont in your will or in a codicil to your will, please let us know so we can thank you.

If you have not yet made such a gift and would like more information about how you can leave a legacy to Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, please call Sandi Byrd at 865-448-6709 or send an e-mail to Sandi@gsmit.org.

Donors Continued

Beth and Jake Breazeale
Andrew Brown
Laura Burton
Dick & Sandi Byrd
Sue Charles
Timothy & Gail Crawford
Joan Cronan
Connie Cundiff
Sarolyn Davis
Pete DeBusk
Mary Dresser
Nannette Enloe
Elizabeth Estill
Ross & Gladys Faires
Foothills Kiwanis
Phil Francis
Shawna Frazier
Mark Grayson
Jim & Natalie Haslam
Larry Holt
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Larry Trueblood
Tyson Wepprich
Mary Wolford
Pat McNutt & Brian Worley
Earl & Margit Worsham
Leyton Wright

Ken Voorhis Scholarship Fund

Charlotte Appleton
Esther Bell
Tim & Janet Bigelow
David Bryant
Dick & Sandi Byrd
Henry & Marty Callaway
Gary Carpenter
Ray (Bucky) Colclough
Joy Coursey
Dawn Dextraze
John DiDiego
Mary Dresser
Carolyn Forster
Great Smoky Mountains Assn.
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Patria Leath
Jeremy Lloyd
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Jane Qualls McGuire
Dick Ray
Gar Secrist
Richard & Spain Secrist
Charlene Stewart
Linda Vananda
Barry & Jeanie VanWinkle
Georgiana Vines
Kenny & Donna Wiggins
John & Kathy Wilbanks
DiAnne Wilson

In memory of

Helen Grant

Dick & Sandi Byrd
Mary Dresser
John Rakes
Charlene Stewart
Ken & Jennifer Voorhis

Gene Hill

Brenda Sellers
Thomas Walker

Herbert Ogle

Beverly Ogle

Glenna Short

Rindall & Mamie Dunston
Ken & Jennifer Voorhis

Eric Wilson

Vi Biehl
Mary Dresser

Kenneth Wright

Nedra & John Blankenship
Pickens High School
Gene Roberts

In honor of

Evelyn Bryant

David & Sandy Martin

Elizabeth Estill

Dale & Wendy Wortham

Judy Hill

The Romanetz Family

Margie Hunter

Saul & Joan Soloman

Citizen Science Research & Other Volunteers

January 1, 2013 August 31, 2013

Katie Bechner
Aalyssa Benedict
Lisa Benedict
Rebekah Benedict
William Benedict
Esther Bell
Emery Benson
Haley Best
Lisa Best
Jake Best
Sarah Best
Janet Bigelow
Larry Bolt
Evelyn Bryant
Dick Byrd
Debbie Claypool
Glenn Claypool
Susan Cooper
Audrey Crawford
Lindsay Crawford
Lewis Culpepper
Jim Cunningham
Leana Cunningham
Aimee Davis
Larry Davis

Mallory Davis
Will Davis
Wanda DeWaar
John DiDiego
Jodi Eanes
Ron Faulkner
Heather Floan
Michael Floan
Robin Goddard
Ruthie Groth
Charlie Hanie
Marianna Harrison
Donna Higdon
Steve Higdon
Amelia Horton
Erin Horton
Claire Horton
Becky Huffer
Rachel Huffer
Bill Irby
Pat Irby
Jolanda Jansma
Karen Jernigan
Madie Jinks
Noah Jinks

Oiken Jinks
Seth Jinks
Jitu Kumar
Andrew Lawson
Danny Lawson
Darunee Lawson
Patria Leath
Richard Ledyard
Meredith Liemohn
Master Gardner's Club
Isabelle Morstatt
Joseph Morstatt
Leslie Morstatt
Mariana Morstatt
Joan Nelson
Andrew Oneil
Kade Parker
Davis Parker
Robyn Parker
Mike Peterson
Emilia Pickett
Paul Pickett
Mac Post
Carolyn Pullias
Colleen Riley

Taylor Rinehart
Gar Secrist
Keane Secrist
Richard Secrist
Spain Secrist
David Styles
Jared Swensen
Debbie Talbot
Andy Troutman
Debbie Troutman
Kestrel Troutman
Terry Uselton
Terry Webb
Jeannie Van Winkle
Frank Whetstone
Stacy Whetstone
Kathy Wilbanks

New Faces at Tremont

Heather Davis, marketing communications specialist

GSMIT Archives



KENSEY FUN FACT: Kensey worked with us in the summer of 2010, and she loved it so much she's back for more!

Kensey Baker spent the first 18 years of her life in Atlanta, where she attended Pace Academy, kindergarden - 12th grade. She always wanted to go camping as a child, even though neither of her parents (or any relatives for that matter) shared this interest.

During the summers in high school, Kensey sought to relieve this camping "itch" by participating in three separate Wilderness Ventures programs in Oregon, California, and Alaska.

It was in Alaska, on a 39-day kayaking, ice climbing, and backpacking trip, standing face to face with a wolverine that she decided this was too cool to just be a hobby. She attended The University of Montana and majored in Wildlife Biology. Kensey spent the last two years in and out of Jackson Hole, working for Wilderness

Ventures in a variety of capacities, from leading 2 and 3-week trips in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado, to giving informative presentations to families up and down the east coast, to working in the Wilderness Ventures office.

Last fall, she interned with AmeriCorps at the Teton Science School working to enhance her knowledge of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and capture the attention of youngsters.



GSMIT Archives

GSMIT Archives



DYLAN FUN FACT: Dylan joined us in 2013 as a summer teacher/naturalist so it's hard to find a serious picture of him. A summer supervising 239 campers will do that to you.

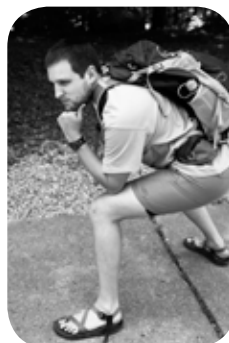
Dylan Amerson graduated from Georgia College and State University in 2012 with a degree in Outdoor Education.

Following graduation he accepted an internship position at TRAIL Ministries where he co-led multiple backpacking, rafting, and rock climbing trips.

Afterwards, he was hired as a seasonal naturalist by Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center.

As a naturalist, he was responsible for day and overnight environmental education programs for children ages 5 to 18. He was in charge of the care of native raptors and reptiles at Charlie Elliot.

A certified wilderness first responder, he looks forward to gaining more experience at Tremont as a teacher/naturalist.



3 Photos above by Emily Julian

Enter Tremont's Photography Contest for a Chance to Win

This year, Tremont's photo contest has one round, one theme, and two ways to win. Tom Vadnais, who has been one of the instructors for both our Spring & Fall Photography Weekend workshops since 2004, will be our judge. After the submission deadline, Tom will review the photos, then pick and critique the top three.

In addition, we will also post all of the entered photos on Tremont's Facebook page for all the world to see. Find a favorite? "Like" the photo, and that's your vote! When voting closes, the photo with the most "likes" will be named our Facebook Favorite. Voting on Facebook begins at 9 AM on March 3, 2014 and ends at 9 AM on March 10, 2014.

Winners will be announced on March 14, 2014 on our web site, our Facebook page, and in our spring newsletter.

All photos must be submitted by 11:59 PM EST, February 28, 2014.
To learn more about how to enter, go to gsmit.org/photocontest.html.



Caleb Carlton

Tremont is Now Part of the Combined Federal Campaign

For the first time, individuals participating in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) will be able to designate their gifts to Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont.

The CFC supports and promotes philanthropy to all federal employees. Each fall these individuals—military, federal civilian, and postal employees—get the opportunity to select the charitable organizations they want to support and make their contributions through payroll deduction throughout the year.

The CFC is the only entity authorized to solicit federal employees on behalf of charitable organizations.



Gift certificates available!

Need just one or two really special gifts to complete your holiday shopping? What about a gift certificate for two weeks backpacking in the park next summer for that special teen in your life, or a weekend learning adventure for a special friend? With a Tremont gift certificate, you can provide an experience that will last a lifetime. Call now and purchase a gift certificate in any amount to be credited toward any Tremont program.

Call (865) 448-6709 or email Tremont at mail@gsmit.org to learn how you can give your loved ones an educational treat right here at Tremont!



Looking Ahead? Join Tremont for programs in 2014



JANUARY

Wilderness First Responder

January 19-26, 2014

If you are interested in the wilderness or in emergency medical training, you will benefit from this course. Instructors from Roane State Community College lead the program, with a curriculum that meets the Tennessee Emergency Medical Services and national registry standards for First Responder training. When you complete the program, you will be eligible for national registry and state testing.

Cost: \$795. Includes instruction, meals, and lodging.

Winter Woody Plant ID—Advanced SANCP Program

January 25, 2014

Discover a number of characteristics that will help you identify trees even in the wintertime.

Cost: \$55 per person. Includes a sack lunch.



John Rakes

Wilderness First Responder Refresher

January 31-February 2, 2014

If you have taken Wilderness First Responder in the past, this program will satisfy the requirements to renew certification on the national registry. It is also an excellent review of wilderness medical information and skills. Limited enrollment!

Cost: \$393. Includes instruction, meals, and lodging.

FEBRUARY

Family Adventure Weekend

February 7-9, 2014

This family weekend is chock full of hikes, crafts, games, waterfalls,

beautiful views, campfires, and plenty of time to enjoy being with the ones you love. We will provide discovery and adventure AND we do all the cooking. It doesn't get much better than this! *Cost: \$443 for family of four ages 6 and up (\$97 for each additional person).*

If a weekend just isn't enough, check out our Smoky Mountains Family Camp held July 7-12, 2014. Visit www.gsmiit.org/Family.html.

Muriah Bottemiller



Educators' Workshop: Salamanders & Storms—Climate Change in the Smokies

February 21-23, 2014

Gain a deeper understanding of this complicated phenomenon through classroom activities, field science, and presentations. You will learn the current state of climate change in the Smokies and possible future outcomes for the park and region. Space is limited, so register early!

Cost: \$281

Interpretation: A Teachable Art & Naturalist Skills

February 21-23, 2014

Learn to make deeper connections to the natural world through the art of nature interpretation. Finish off the weekend with a historical survey of the study of natural history and its practice. *Cost: \$317*



Dylan Amerson



Dawn Dextraze

MARCH

Smokies Scavenger Hunt

March 22, 2014

It's not too early to start gathering your team—friends, family, co-workers—for the 7th annual Great Smoky Mountains Scavenger Hunt! You and your team will seek answers to questions that will test your knowledge of

the national park. You'll enjoy a scrumptious Tremont dinner while the judges tally the answers. Go to gsmit.org/hunt.html for more information.

Cost: \$50 per team

GSMT Archives



APRIL

Spring Hiking Road Scholar

April 6-11, 2014

Discover the beauty of spring in the most rugged mountains in Appalachia! Led by our education staff, you will enjoy daily hikes of 5-13 miles exploring the cultural and natural history of this region with its unique traditions and rich biodiversity. Start each day with a hot breakfast, then pack a lunch, grab your daypack, and head out on the trail. In the evenings, enjoy a fine meal at Tremont followed by Appalachian music and stories or educational sessions.

Cost: \$621. Find more information and registration at www.roadscholar.org using program code 2263.

Le Conte Lodge Overnight

April 25-26, 2014

Hike to the top of the Smokies and spend the night at historic LeConte Lodge, the highest elevation lodge in the eastern United States. Along the way, your friendly Tremont teacher/naturalist will share his/her knowledge of natural history, high elevation ecology, and science. While at the top, you'll relax and enjoy spectacular views, hearty meals, and a cozy bed. We suggest you sign-up with a friend, or be prepared to bunk with a new one.

Cost: \$305.

Springtime in the Smokies Photography Workshop

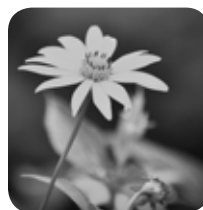
April 25-28, 2014

Capture the wonder of sunrise, sunset, wildflowers and lavish landscapes! Nationally-recognized nature photographer Bill Lea will lead a workshop emphasizing

wildlife, landscape, and macro photography. Price includes meals and lodging, plus instruction by one of the finest teams of photography instructors anywhere in the country.

Cost: \$611.

Amy Wilson



See complete listing of 2014 programs in our online program guide at www.gsmit.org/calendar.html.

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

Program catalogs are available by contacting our office: www.gsmit.org (865) 448-6709 mail@gsmit.org

STAFF

teacher/naturalists

Dylan Amerson
 Kensey Baker
 Muriah Bottemiller
 Caleb Carlton
 Dawn Dextraze
 Casey Franklin

summer teacher/ naturalists

Simone Carbone
 Gretchen O'Henley
 Amy Wilson

environmental education summer interns

Emily Bader
 Jialun Jiao
 Wyatt Moore

citizen science research interns

Reilly Jackson
 Ellen Rigell
 Haylse Taylor

citizen science educator

Gar Secrist

backpack leader

Rebecca Day

citizen science coordinator

Tiffany Beachy

school programs coordinator

Jennie McGuigan

special programs coordinator

Jeremy Lloyd

program specialist

Mary Dresser

education director

John DiDiego

food service

Heather Adams
 Nola Austin
 Linda Hatcher
 Patti Walker

food service director

Harrison Haun

grounds & facilities

Sam Crowe

grounds & facilities manager

Doc Johnson

registrar/assistant office manager

Julie Brown

media communications intern

Emily Julian

marketing communications specialist

Heather Davis

development/pr director

Sandra Byrd

sales

Linda Vananda

sales manager

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 Dick Ray
 Bill Varner
 Chad Youngblood



**DID YOU?
KNOW**

Did you know that you can receive *Walker Valley Reflections* by email? Some people prefer to get this newsletter by email rather than through regular mail. If you would like to join them, just let us know at mail@gsmit.org. You can also find past newsletters on our Web site at www.gsmit.org.