



Dear Aquatic Ecology Enthusiasts,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Aquatic Ecology!**

Whether this is your first course or eighth course, we hope this is one of many weekends we'll learn and practice naturalist skills together as we gain knowledge about the Great Smoky Mountains.

This course will engage you with an overview of the unique ecology of aquatic systems in the southern Appalachian Mountains, particularly as it relates to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, through lectures, discussions, field trips and most of all, first-hand experience. Topics will include aquatic macroinvertebrates, fish, habitats, stream health, and conservation issues. Field trips will include visits to examples of the most common aquatic systems in our area. We will have a fabulous time and *get very wet!*

Get ready! You have registered for an intense three days 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. See *Preparation* below. We will keep lecture time to a minimum in order to have ample time learning skills and practicing them in the field.

Instructors:

My name is Erin Canter and I am pleased to be your main instructor for this course. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty](#).

Arrival and Departure:

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Monday between 4:00 and 5:00 pm in order to have enough time to move into the dorm and meet other participants before our 6:00 pm evening meal. When you arrive, head to the Gift Store at the Main Office for name tags and check-in. You can then pull up to the pavilion to unload your belongings if you are staying on campus. Please move all vehicles to the blacktop at the bottom of the hill before dinner.

Late arrivals: If you arrive after 5:00 pm, please park on the blacktop across from the activity center next to the field. We will give you your nametag and check in materials in the pavilion.

[See the full schedule here.](#)

Weather:

The average daily high temperature during this time of year is 89°F, and the daily low is around 66 degrees °F here in Walker Valley. Come prepared for warm and humid weather. Bring a raincoat! The Smokies are a very wet and humid climate and you can *expect precipitation in one form or another* at some point during your stay here.

Logistics:

Please read our latest [COVID-19 guidelines](#) and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. In order to slow the spread of **COVID-19**, please bring a mask and wear it when social distancing is impractical.

Please also refer to [“Your Visit to Tremont”](#) for important packing information. Along with your 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. If you’d like to bring a camp chair for the outdoor classroom you may find that more comfortable than the provided benches. Please bring clothes that you don’t mind getting wet and closed-toe shoes for wading and swimming. If you don’t own any, we have a few pairs of old tennis shoes to loan, but bringing some that are sure to fit is ideal. Also bring a notepad or journal and pencil and any field guides you like. Sturdy walking shoes/boots, sunscreen, and a hat are also important for your comfort. *Note: though wifi is available in the Activity Center, we invite and encourage you to unplug for the weekend.* Learn more about our [food](#) and [facilities](#). Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm.

Preparation:

Please watch [this short video](#) on dragonfly nymph adaptations, and get inspired with [this mini-intro](#) to our region’s aquatic diversity. Read: [Selections from A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America](#) by J. Reese Voshell*, Jr. Also, check out the optional readings:

- [“Building Up Our Mussels”](#) by Sarah Shipley Hiles — Includes Freshwater Mussel Fact Sheet
- [“Native Waters”](#) by Amy Leinbach Marquis — includes GSMNP Fisheries Fact Sheet
- [“Conservation Fisheries, Inc. and the Reintroduction of Our Native Species”](#) by J.R. Shute and Pat Rakes

It is important that you read and reflect on these materials in order to prepare for the class. The more you become acquainted with concepts and vocabulary ahead of time the better! If you are a novice, reading related sections in a biology text and/or exploring online resources will be helpful and will assist you in being involved in discussion.

A special offer just for YOU...

You will receive a copy of *Guide to Aquatic Insects and Crustaceans* during the weekend. Also, during the weekend, you will receive a 15% discount on any merchandise you purchase from our gift shop—this is a great deal!

I hope 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,



Erin Canter
Manager of Science Literacy and Research

*I know this reading is a bit pedantic BUT it has a lot of great information and is a good overview of classification and ecology of freshwater invertebrates