



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Birds of the Smokies!** 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. **Please read this letter in full, as it contains information about our new procedures related to COVID-19.**

This weekend we will focus on the avifauna of the southern Appalachians. The diversity of vegetation types and physical characteristics of these mountains promote a species-rich bird community. By the end of the weekend our heads will be abuzz with birdsong and our eyes grown accustomed to searching out birds in forest and field. We will learn their habits, habitats, and physical and behavioral characteristics that help in their identification.

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 — you'll find more information about readings and other ways you can prepare for the class below. We will do our best to keep lecture time to a minimum and actually work on learning skills and practicing them in the field.

Instructor:

I, Logan Rosenberg, am pleased to be your instructor for this workshop. My graduate research focused on naturalist skills acquisition (such as birding!) to enhance a sense of place in students. I particularly love to bird by ear and decode the language and interactions of birds. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty](#).

Arrival & Departure:

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Friday 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. Check-in will be at the Pavilion. After crossing the bridge, pass the office on your left, continue past the portable stop sign, pass the field on your right, and then take a left up the steep gravel driveway between the Pavilion and the Dining Hall. The program will end around 3:00 pm on Sunday.

[Explore the full tentative schedule here.](#)

Weather – Being Prepared:

The weather here is usually pleasant in April. Over the past five years, the average daily high for April was 74° F. and the average daily low was 42° F. here in Walker Valley. Bring a rain coat! 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 [COVIDSafe 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 read the "[Your Visit to Tremont](#)" document for important packing information. Along with your linens and toiletries, you may want to bring a mattress pad to ease the firm mattress, plus a bedside light or headlamp 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. Our classroom will be outdoors, so bring layers for bundling up as well.**

Also bring binoculars if you own a pair. If you don't own any, we have a limited number of 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 a must for personal 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.

Please read the following before your class:

- [Violet-Green Swallow chapter from *The Animal Dialogues* by Craig Childs](#)
- [Selections from *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold](#)

Begin to tune your ears to bird song.

You can do this by simply spending some time each day in your backyard or nearby natural area. Begin by listening to the birdsong around you and trying to pick out the different types of songs. Listen for pitch, tone, quality, and repetition. The more you do this, the better you will become. Many of us can identify the "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" of a Carolina Chickadee or the raucous "Caw!" of the American Crow. See if you can also hear the "Peter, Peter" of the Tufted Titmouse or the "teakettle, teakettle, teakettle" of a Carolina Wren. Don't worry! You won't be expected to memorize every birdsong we hear throughout the weekend. However, you will find birding-by-ear easier if you have begun to hear differences between some bird songs.

Begin to see different bird characteristics.

Spend time looking at birds at your feeder, in the yard, while you are driving, etc. Concentrate on the particular characteristics that stand out on each bird. What makes that bird unique? Perhaps it is the large size and glossy black feathers on an American Crow or the slightly de-curved bill and bright white stripe over a Carolina Wren's eye. Learning to "see" bird characteristics will help you as you begin to study them in earnest.

A special offer just for YOU...

You will receive a copy of *Birds of the Smokies* 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!

The gift store will be open until 5:30 on arrival day.

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.

Let's go birding!

Logan Rosenberg
Youth Programs Manager

