



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program Elective: Likin' Lichens!** We have included these elective courses over the years to augment our popular certification program with interesting taxa that play a significant role in the southern Appalachians. Whether you are brand new to lichens or a seasoned veteran, if you love or *want to love* lichens, this weekend is for you. We hope this is one of many weekends we will spend together, practicing naturalist skills in the Great Smoky Mountains. **Please read this letter in full, as it contains information about our procedures related to COVID-19.**

This weekend will focus on the fascinating world of lichens. Because this presents a vast and complex topic, we will break our time down to three blocks.

- 1) Lichen basics - morphology, structures, roles in ecosystems
- 2) Field work
  - a) Observation - fill your naturalist journal with sketches, notes, and questions.
  - b) Investigation - follow your curiosity and delve deeper.
- 3) Discussion - we learn best when we do it collaboratively, sharing our findings and questions

[See the full schedule here.](#)

We will take full advantage of both online and printed resources. Some goals for the weekend are that each of you gains first-hand experience investigating lichens, and by the end of our time together, you feel emboldened through new knowledge and curiosity to continue exploring and sharing the wonder of lichens with others.

#### **Instructor:**

I am pleased to be your instructor for this workshop. I have been a lichen enthusiast since my early days at Tremont, and have been a co-instructor on many of our Lichen Teacher Workshops. I find the lichens to be fascinating, accessible, and quite humble(!), considering their diversity and critical importance in ecosystems. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty](#).

We will also be joined virtually by Smokies lichen expert Dr James Lendemer, co-author of *Field Guide to the Lichens of Great Smoky Mountains National Park*.

#### **Arrival and Departure:**

**Plan to check in at the gift shop between 4 and 5 pm on Friday.** The gift shop is in the parking area on your left after you cross the bridge. You can then drive up the hill either to the dorm or the tents to upload. After unloading your belongings, please move your vehicle to the bottom of the hill to accommodate others who are arriving.

Late arrivals: If you arrive after 5 pm, please plan to meet the group in the pavilion (or nearby dining hall after 6:00). The program will end after lunch on Sunday.

**Weather – Being Prepared:**

In an average year, February has average daily highs in the 50°'s F, and lows in the 30°'s F. We will be outdoors, so bring appropriate layers. We also ask that you bring a small backpack to be hands-free and a water bottle to stay hydrated while out on the trail. 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.

The “[Your Visit to Tremont](#)” document includes 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. You may also want to consider bringing some additional items with you for this weekend such as binoculars, hand lens, notepad and pencil, field guides, and camera.

*Note: wifi is available in the Activity Center and Pavilion, but 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:**

The Backyard Nature website has a nice collection of lichen information with other links – this will give you a great introduction to the topic and a common starting point for us during the weekend. <http://www.backyardnature.net/lichens.htm>

For more lichen fun, explore these [virtual lichen resources](#).

Finally, we are offering you a 15% discount in our bookstore during the workshop - a great chance to pick up Dr Lendemer’s amazing lichen field guide to the Smokies.

I hope that this information is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming visit to Tremont. If you have further questions, please feel free to call or email.

Sincerely,

John DiDiego  
Education Director  
[john@gsmmit.org](mailto:john@gsmmit.org)

PS. As Valentine's Day is this week, it is a perfect weekend to fall in love with lichens!