

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Aquatic Ecology!** Whether this is your first or eighth course, we hope this is one of many weekends we'll learn and practice naturalist skills together in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. **Please read this letter in full, as it contains essential information for your visit to Tremont.**

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 weekend during which we will cover material and skills most people receive in a semester-long class. If you think this sounds ambitious, you are right! To accomplish our goals, you must do some homework in the form of readings, which will give you the background information needed to participate in discussions and build your naturalist toolkit. Lecture time will be kept to a minimum so we can learn and practice these skills.

**Instructor:**

I am pleased to be your instructor for this workshop. Visit our website to learn more about me and the rest of our [faculty and staff](#).

**Arrival and Departure:**

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Monday between 4:00 and 5:00 pm 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 Visitor's Center 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.

[View the full course schedule here.](#)

**Parking Passes**

Valid parking tags are required on any vehicles parking for longer than 15 minutes inside Great Smoky Mountains National Park as part of the Park it Forward program; this includes when parked at Tremont. **Please purchase your parking tag in advance, not when you arrive.** Click here to [purchase your daily or weekly pass online](#). All revenue will stay in the park to provide sustainable,

year-round support focusing on improving the visitor experience, protecting resources, and maintaining trails, roads, historic structures, and facilities. [Learn more about Park it Forward.](#)

### **Weather – Being Prepared:**

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.

### **Logistics:**

Please read our [latest COVID-19 guidelines](#) prior to your trip and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

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.

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.

*Wifi is available in the Activity Center, 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:**

Please watch [this short video](#) on dragonfly nymph adaptations, and get inspired by [this mini-intro](#) to our region’s aquatic diversity.

Be sure to read [selections from A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America](#) by J. Reese Voshell, Jr. (I know this reading is a bit pedantic BUT it has a lot of great information and is a good overview of the classification and ecology of freshwater invertebrates.)

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 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.

**Last but Not Least...**

You will receive a complimentary copy of *Fishes of the Smokies* during the weekend. Also, we offer a 15% discount to all program participants in our Visitor's Center during the workshop

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin Canter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erin Canter  
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