

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program Elective: Likin' Lichens!**

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

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 and staff](#).

We will also be joined for the weekend by Ph.D. candidate [Laura Boggess](#), Instructor of Biology and Environmental Science at Mars Hill University. She loves lichens and their habitats - she even studies them up close and personal while rock climbing in the southeast!

Finally, this year, we will have NPS Ranger Sydney Rainone to share a lichen monitoring project that you could conduct wherever you live!

Arrival and Departure:

Plan to arrive at Tremont on Friday 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. The program will end after lunch on Sunday.

[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:

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](#) 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. Also, lichen parts are tiny - we will be using hand lenses and even microscopes to look at them - while we will loan them out, you may want to get one ahead of time and practice using it before the course. You may also want to consider bringing some additional items with you for this weekend such as binoculars, notepad and pencil, field guides, and camera.

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:

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](#).

Last but Not Least...

We offer a 15% discount to all program participants in our Visitor’s Center during the workshop. We will have copies of the *Field Guide to Lichens of the Smokies* on hand for purchase. **Please note that the store may only be open on arrival day.**

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,



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