

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Naturalist Skills!** 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 weekend will focus on learning and practicing skills that will connect you to nature in significant ways. We will take inspiration and tips from the rich history of naturalist-explorers, learn to use a journal as a place to capture observations and grow, and share our wonder and curiosity with each other as we probe the secrets of the world around us.

**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 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. Check-in will be at the Visitor's Center. If arriving after 5:00 pm, after crossing the bridge, pass the office on your left, continue past the wooden 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.

[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:**

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. You may want to consider bringing some additional items with you for this weekend such as binoculars, a hand lens, a notepad and pencil, field guides, and/or a camera. *Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm.*

*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](#).

**Preparation:**

While most of the courses in this certification series focus on specific taxonomic groups, (e.g. birds and mammals,) this is the course where you will learn and hone the skills we use to study those groups—the skills of being a naturalist. It begins with noticing details in the natural world. Spend some time sitting, drawing, writing, and just being still in nature, and come ready to share your experience and take your skills to the next level!

For your pre-course readings, I've curated a few pieces that I think will help frontload a lot of what we hope to accomplish over our weekend together. Please read and watch the following before the course begins:

- [A selection from \*The Law's Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling\* by John Muir.](#) It is about being intentionally curious, and how that mindset leads to deep engagement with our surroundings.
- [Video about the simple art of holding journals in the field](#), taught by John Muir Laws. Note, we will provide you with blank journals for the course, but if you have one that you are really partial to you should bring it!
- A blog post, "[How to Know the Birds: Q.T. With a Great Blue,](#)" that I think shows some of the ways that naturalist investigations can lead to unexpected and memorable moments. Ted Floyd is a great author and example of a naturalist who is always questioning and observing.

Lastly, we offer a 15% discount to all program participants in our Visitor's Center during the workshop. **Please note that the store will 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,

Logan Rosenberg  
Youth Program Director  
logan@gsmmit.org

**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT**

9275 Tremont Road • Townsend, TN 37882 • Phone: 865-448-6709 • Fax: 865-448-9250 • gsmmit.org • mail@gsmmit.org