

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the **Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Southern Appalachian 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.**

The physio-geographic characteristics of the Southern Appalachian mountains have contributed to create an amazing diversity of plant communities, and by the end of the weekend, you will have become familiar with the ecology of many of them. It's going to be a fun-filled learning experience, full of discovery and wonder.

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 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.

[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 – Be Prepared:

The average daily high for September is 82 degrees F. and the average daily low is 56 degrees F. here in Walker Valley. However, some activities will occur in higher elevations, which can sometimes mean a difference of 15 degrees cooler temperatures or greater. 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.

Bring a notepad and any field guides you like including *Plants, Ferns, Birds of the Smokies* and others you've acquired through the Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program. They will come in handy this weekend! Sturdy walking shoes/boots, outdoor clothing, and a hat are a must for personal 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 read the following materials ahead of time — doing so is crucial to helping you understand much of the material covered during the course. Some material therein will be a part of your assessment at the end of the course:


- Selection from *Great Smoky Mountains National Park: A Natural History Guide* by Rose Houk and excerpt from *Hollows, Peepers & Highlanders* by George Constantz. ([Read both at this link.](#))
- [Forests of the Smokies](#) by Amber Parker

Last but Not Least...

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,



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