

THE CHEROKEE HIKER
JUNE 2026
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NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"The truth is in the rocks." - John Otto

Guaranteed to last for a lifetime. We smile when we hear this. After all, nothing lasts for a lifetime. Or maybe some things do. Certainly not things that break or wear out. Contrary to popular belief, there are a few precious things in this world that can last a lifetime.

First, a love for nature can last a lifetime. Living in Tennessee we are especially fortunate. What better place to appreciate the beauty of nature – dogwoods, daffodils, lilies, green grass, mountain views, colorful foliage, wildlife, mountain streams, peaceful lakes, balanced seasons. A love that can last a lifetime – guaranteed.

Second, a love for the written word can last a lifetime. In response to a question by the famous writer and teacher C.S. Lewis, "Why do we read?" a student replied, "We read to know that we are not alone." He's right. There has been greatness before us and greatness will surely follow. Tap into this greatness by reading great books. Check out our website recommendations for worthy books that relate to the great outdoors. A love that can last a lifetime – guaranteed.

Third, a healthy love for yourself can last a lifetime. Live in such a manner you develop an unashamed conscience. There are so many choices to make, many of them difficult. Since the choices we make determine whether we are a part of the problem or a part of the solution, it's important to choose wisely.

Seek the additional help of family, friends, and club members for support when the need arises as you develop a healthy love for yourself. A love that can last a lifetime – guaranteed.

Fourth, a deep and wonderful appreciation of the life within you can last a lifetime. If you have lived the other parts of your life well, this perception will not be nearly so difficult. But, ultimately, even with good perception, you must have faith, faith to believe that everything is not within what can be touched or tasted or felt or smelled or heard. Reach beyond yourself and within yourself. A love that can last a lifetime – guaranteed.

See you at our next scheduled club meeting at the Etowah Senior Center on Thursday, June 11, 2026. Our presentation will be "Riding Horseback Across America" presented by Steve Biatowas.

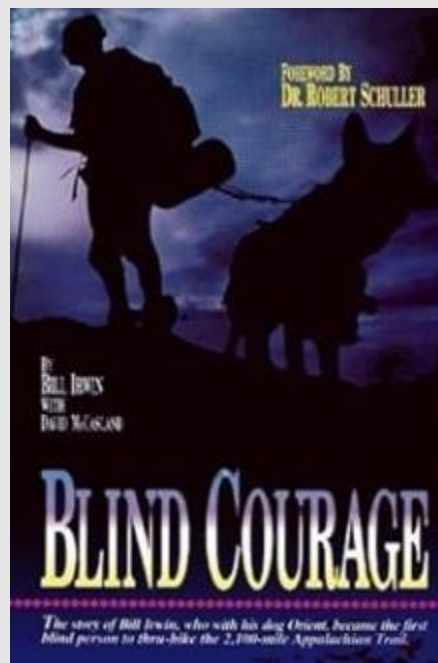
Rob Coombs, Club President



HIKE CLUB BOOK RECOMMENDATION . . .

Blind Courage, by Bill Irwin

In a remarkable true story of commitment, perseverance and the will to survive, Bill Irwin, the first and only blind person to hike the entire Appalachian Trail, through fourteen states, along 2,168.9 miles, Bill and his dog, Orient, walked, sending a message to all of us, reminding us of and encouraging us to pursue our own impossible dreams.



REMINDER:

TO ATTEND ANY EVENT, YOU MUST CONTACT THE EVENT LEADER AS THERE ARE TIMES DUE TO WEATHER OR OTHER CONDITIONS WHERE A HIKE IS CANCELED OR RESCHEDULED. THE EVENT LEADER WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTACT YOU IF YOU DO NOT GET ON THE ATTENDEE LIST

JUNE EVENTS

Attention all Club Members!!! WE NEED YOUR HELP

We are going to have a trail workday on **TUESDAY JUNE 23** beginning at 8:00 a.m. on the club's Childers Creek section of the BMT. Please note: We are beginning at 8:00 a.m. in order to beat the heat and we hope to be concluded shortly after noon. Please text me 423-715-8824 or email me jeandersonishere@gmail.com to let me know you are participating. If you have your own personal safety equipment such as hard-hats, safety glasses, gloves etc. and tools, please bring those. At this point I'm not aware of needing any chainsaw work, so we will focus on trimming the brush/weeds back, lopping, and we have a short section where we will do a little digging/trail restoration work. Please bring plenty of water, snacks and lunch if you want. I plan to have some cold drinks available at the end. Wear boots, long pants and long sleeves to help protect you. Be sure to use insect repellent because of ticks.

Please note we will meet at the Big Bend parking lot **PROMPTLY AT 8: A.M.** for our safety meeting and for the work assignments. **PLEASE BE ON TIME AS WE WANT TO GET FINISHED BEFORE IT GETS TOO HOT!** Let me know if you plan to participate. Thanks in advance. James Anderson

Thursday, June 11, 2026 - Thursday Monthly Club Meeting - We will meet at the Etowah Senior Center in Etowah at 6:00 p.m. for a potluck supper and a presentation by Steve Biatowas on "Riding Horseback Across America."

Friday, June 12, 2026 - Turtletown Creek Falls - Hike Leader: Ken Cissna. Location: Turtletown Creek Falls Trail. Hike Difficulty: Moderate. Brief Description: Dog friendly trail, 5 miles. Turtletown Creek plus two of the most beautiful falls you'll ever see on a short hike. Contact: kcissna@bmta.org.

Tuesday, June 16, 2026 - Huckleberry Knob - Hike Leaders - Margaret & Jack Callahan. Location: About 43 miles past North Carolina state line on the Tellico Plains. Meet at Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 10 a.m. to carpool. Departure time: 10:00 a.m. Return Time: 4:00 p.m. Rating: Moderate. What to Bring: Lunch, warm clothing, rain gear, and a lightweight chair or blanket. Brief Description: This is a 2.5-mile round trip hike on a good trail. We will spend about 2 hours on the bald. Contact Email: Jackn1945@bellsouth.net. Cell phone: 423-284-7885.

Thursday, June 18, 2026 - Monthly Hike Club Breakfast - Join us for conversation over breakfast at 8:30 a.m. at Old Fort Restaurant on 25th Street in Cleveland. For more information, contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885.

Thursday, June 18, 2026 - Boyd's Gap to Brush Creek - Hike Leader: Doug Lynch. Location: Meet at Boyd's Gap, Polk County Tennessee. Departure Time: 9:00 a.m. Return Time: 1:30 p.m. Hike Difficulty: Moderate. Brief Description: A very easy downhill hike of seven miles. Very good trail. Contact Email: dhiker10@gmail.com; Cell Phone: 865-850-7243.

Saturday, June 20, 2026 - Gregory Bald - Hike Leader: Jennifer Schroll. Location: Off Cades Cove in Smoky Mtn. National Park. Departure Time: 7 a.m. Return Time: 10 p.m. Hike Difficulty: Strenuous. Bring: Water and lunch. Brief Description of the Hike: We will hike about 10 miles round trip starting from the Parsons Road Trailhead. There is significant elevation gain, but it will all be worth it if the Flame Azaleas are blooming. We will likely stop for dinner on the way home. Meet at the Cleveland Home Depot parking lot at 7 a.m. Contact: jennifergeologist@gmail.com; Cell phone: 423-284-1256.

Monday, June 22, 2026 - BMT - Hike Leader: Ken Cissna. Location: From Thunder Rock Campground, up Thunder Rock Express Trail, across Chestnut Trail, and down BMT. Hike Difficulty: Moderate. Brief Description: Dog friendly trail. 5.2 miles. Loop hike. Contact: kcissna@bmta.org.

Friday, June 26, 2026 - The Hangover Cherohala Skyway - Hike Leaders: Rick & Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog). Location: Meet at Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center. Departure Time: 9 a.m. Return Time: 4 p.m. Hike Difficulty: Strenuous. Bring (food, water, etc.): Lunch, water, your dog on leash. Brief Description: THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This 7.0-mile fairly difficult iconic hike takes us from the Wolf-Laurel Trailhead up 500' or so on the Stratton Ridge Trail to the BMT, then right on the BMT to Naked Ground (down 500'), then Haeo (up 500'), then on to the Hangover (down and up 200' or so). This is a must-do if you have never done it before and if you are healthy and strong enough to hike it. In places the trail is quite steep and rocky and there may be significant brambles to hike through. We will eat lunch at the Hangover, which is about a mile high rocky overhang with great views into the Smokies, Santeetlah Lake, Tellico Lake and the Tennessee River, the Cumberland Plateau, and the ridgelines we just hiked. We will return the way we came. Afterwards, we can eat supper at one of the two Mexican Restaurants in Tellico Plains. This hike is in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness; therefore, we must limit it to 12 hikers. Contact: Email: HarrisRi1947@gmail.com Cell phone: 513-260-1184.

Wednesdays, June 3, 10, 17, 24 - Wednesday Walks on the Cleveland Greenway - Every Wednesday Jack Callahan leads a 3.75-mile walk on the Cleveland Greenway, meeting at the lower end of the parking lot across from Perkits and the Gondolier restaurant adjacent to Keith Street. Meet time is currently 4:30 p.m. A note on the walk is sent out the beginning of each week on Messenger. Hike difficulty is rated Easy. Contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885 if you want to be included in the messages.

JULY AT-A-GLANCE

Thursday, July 2, 2026 - July 12, 2026 - Lake Superior Circle Tour - Hike Leader: Jerry Schneider. Location: 1300-mile tour of Lake Superior, beginning at Canadian border in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Departure Time: 9:00 a.m. Return Time: 4 p.m. Hike Difficulty: Moderate. What to Bring: Car, tent, RV, travel gear, passport for re-entry. Brief Description: This will be a scenic 1,300-mile loop around the largest freshwater lake on Earth. The route is known for stunning natural beauty, including cliffs, beaches, and waterfalls. We will complete the drive in five days or longer if desired exploring the varied landscapes, the Provincial and National Parks, traveling through Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. Start and end dates are malleable. Contact: Email: jschneider@floptics.com; Cell Phone: 513-324-4564.

Monday, July 6, 2026 - BMT Lost Creek Section - Hike Leader: Ken Cissna. Location: BMT Lost Creek Section. Hike Difficulty: Easy. Brief Description: Dog friendly trail. 5.2 miles. Beautiful walk along Big Lost Creek. One stream crossing will probably get your feet a little wet so come prepared. Contact: kcissna@bmta.org.

Thursday, July 9, 2026 - Thursday Monthly Club Meeting - We will meet at the Etowah Senior Center in Etowah at 6:00 p.m. for a potluck supper and a presentation by Jack Callahan on Wildflowers.

Tuesday, July 14, 2026 - Candies Creek Greenway - Hike Leader: James Anderson. Location: Parking lot on left side of Candies Lane just before it crosses Candies Creek if heading west. Departure Time: 8:00 a.m. Return Time: 9:30 a.m. Hike Difficulty: Easy. Contact: James Anderson, the event leader, 423-715-8824 so you will be aware of any event changes or cancellations.

Thursday, July 16, 2026 - Monthly Hike Club Breakfast - Join us for conversation over breakfast at 8:30 a.m. at Old Fort Restaurant on 25th Street in Cleveland. For more information, contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885.

Friday, July 17, 2026 - Bob Bald - Hike Leaders: Rick & Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog). Meet at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center. Departure Time: 9 a.m.; Return Time: 4 p.m. Hike difficulty: Moderately Strenuous. Bring: lunch, water, your dog on leash. Description of the Hike: THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This 7.0 mile somewhat difficult iconic hike takes us from Beech Gap at the State Line on the Cherohala Skyway up 900' to the summit of Bob Bald, with its iconic views mostly to the south and east. In the distance we can see the Skyway wind its way toward Robbinsville. We will eat lunch at the top, then return the way we came. We can plan to eat supper at one of the restaurants in Tellico Plains or maybe just get ice cream at the Tellico Beach Drive-In. Contact: Email: HarrisRi1947@gmail.com Cellphone:513-260-1184.

Sunday, July 18, 2026 - Saturday, July 25, 2026 - Mt Katahdin, Mt Washington, NY backpack - Hike Leader: Jennifer Schroll. Location: Maine to New York Adirondacks. Departure Time: unknown. Return Time: unknown. Hike Difficulty: Strenuous. Bring: backpack gear. Brief Description: I plan to fly into Bangor, Maine, rent a car and drive to Baxter State Park or a nearby campground. Car camp for 3 nights, giving us 2 possible days to hike Katahdin. I plan to summit using the AT/Hunt trail from Katahdin Stream. It is a 5-mile rugged, rocky ascent up a stream channel and then exposed alpine ~ 10+ hours. On the 4th day drive across NH and VT and stay 1 night at a hotel. Maybe make quick stops at Mount Washington and/or Ben & Jerry's Ice Creamery. Next stop, a trailhead into the high peaks area of the Adirondacks probably starts near Adirondack Loj (near Lake Placid. Backpack 4 days and 2 nights. 8th night at a hotel and fly back from a NY airport on the 9th day. More detailed planning will be conducted with those interested. Contact: jennifergeologist@gmail.com; Cell phone: 423-284-1256.

Friday, July 31, 2026 - Conasauga River Trail with swimming and spider lilies - Hike Leader: Anne Anderson. Location: Conasauga Blue Hole. We will try to meet and carpool depending on who is coming. TBA. Departure Time: TBA Return Time: TBA. Hike Difficulty: Easy. Bring: Bring water, snacks, and/or lunch, swimsuit and towel if you want to swim or you can always wade, snorkel and mask if you want to look for fish, need shoes for wading, Chacos or similar and adequate for this trail. Brief Description: Plan to walk along Conasauga River on flat, easy trail searching for spectacular spider lilies. Swim along the trail and/or back at the Blue Hole. Probably will hike less than 3 miles. This is a joint hike with BMT association. Contact: Email: ahander@aol.com; Cell Phone: 423-284-7032.

Wednesdays, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 - Wednesday Walks on the Cleveland Greenway - Every Wednesday Jack Callahan leads a 3.75-mile walk on the Cleveland Greenway. Contact Jack Callahan at 423-284-7885 if you want to be included in these events.

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Biography of Laura and Bill Hodge and a History of SAWS by Richard Harris Based on Zoom Interviews with Bill & Laura Hodge Updated May 5, 2026

This is the life story of two friends of mine whom I have known since around 2009. This couple contributed to the preservation of Wilderness, not just here in East Tennessee, but all over the Appalachians and even far out West.

Bill Hodge was born in Romney, West Virginia, on a family farm, a farm which has been in the family since 1763. His mother was a teacher, and his father was a plastics engineer in Evansville, Indiana. They met at 15th and E Street in Washington, DC, at a USO dance when Bill's father was in the Navy.

Laura Hodge (Dannheiser) was born in Madisonville, Kentucky. She attended the University of Kentucky and has been entrepreneurial her whole life, something that she developed in running several family businesses with her parents.

Bill began his college at Purdue University, majoring in Forestry, but then transferred to the University of Evansville and graduated with a degree in telecommunications. He became a radio broadcaster and eventually worked in radio advertising in Evansville where he met Laura in 1992 across the river in Henderson, KY, when Bill sold her advertising. They married, eventually moving to Salisbury/Ocean City, MD, then Jackson, TN to follow Bill's career. In 1999, they moved to Coker Creek a few months after Bill secured a position in college athletics, working for Action Sports Media, handling marketing for 17 various universities across the country including the University of Tennessee. Having been a key part of the company's growth, Bill eventually became the Chief Marketing Officer of Action Sports Media. Bill was instrumental in moving the company to Alcoa, Tennessee in 2005 and growing the company to over 16 million in annual sales. The company sold in 2008.

After many years in corporate America, Bill wanted the second half of his career to "make a difference". And living in the Cherokee National Forest, Bill became interested in the many hiking trails in the area. On Bill's birthday, April 16, 2009, he hiked from Waucheesi Bald down to Sandy Gap on the BMT, then down the Kirkland Creek Trail to Holly Flats Campground, where Laura picked him up. With that trip, he fell in love with hiking in Wilderness areas, specifically the Cherokee National Forest area around the Bald River. He soon learned of Tennessee Wild (TNWild) and Jeff Hunter through Facebook and joined up with Jeff Hunter in his campaign to push forward designation of the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area as actual Wilderness. Laura also became very involved with TNWild. TNWild was working closely with Lamar Alexander, Bob Corker, and other politicians on this project.

Laura and Bill were heavily into nature photography and bought the Coker Creek Gallery, where they displayed and sold their works. Finding that running the gallery required them to physically be at the gallery led to their selling the gallery so they could pursue their interests in the TNWild Wilderness Campaign and other endeavors.

Bill began volunteering with our Thursday Trail Crew with me, Ken Jones and others. Bill soon learned that there were a lot of pushbacks to Wilderness designation, even among trail maintainers such as us. If these

areas became Wilderness, then we would have to maintain these trails with Wilderness tools (crosscut saws, loppers, sling blades) rather than chainsaws and gas-powered brush cutters. Also, the local hunters would not be allowed to ride their 4-wheelers into these areas and set up camp, cutting firewood with chainsaws. They would have to carry in all their gear on their backs. The politicians began receiving pleas from constituents to not allow the TN Wilderness Bill to move forward.

One of the first times, if not the first, that Bill used a crosscut saw was in 2009 when Bill joined me and Ken Jones on my section of the BMT from Sugar Mtn to Brookshire Creek on a rainy day. We cut several trees with a crosscut saw in a continuous downpour. In spite of the adverse weather, Bill fell in love with crosscut saws. And the rest is history. Soon thereafter, Bill participated in the project of clearing 100s of trees off the trails in the Cohutta Wilderness following a major wind event. There, he really learned to use a crosscut saw.

Bill became a contractor for TNWild to reach out to the various maintainer clubs to document their concerns over Wilderness designation. He met with members of numerous clubs, including the Benton MacKaye Trail Association in this regard. He also met with clubs up in Northeast TN which would be impacted if the Big Laurel Branch and Sampson Mountain areas became Wilderness.

Bill decided to address these concerns by speaking with these folks to better understand why they did not support Wilderness designation. Among the maintainers, the fear was the extra work which would be required to maintain trails in the Wilderness. There were not enough maintainers who owned crosscuts. Few people knew how to sharpen crosscut saws or even how to use them efficiently and safely. What some perceived as a chainsaw requiring five minutes of saw work to clear a blowdown might require 30 minutes to do the same with a crosscut saw, though the true work was in developing the local human capacity to do the work. These concerns, Bill discovered, were legitimate concerns.

The Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoe Club was responsible for maintaining a segment of the Appalachian Trail which would be directly impacted if the area they maintained became Wilderness, so they too were very much opposed to the Wilderness bill. Bill actually became an AT Maintainer for the TN Eastman group, maintaining a 7-mile section of the AT between the Vandeventer and Iron Mountain Shelters. He put boots on the ground, so to speak, to better connect with those concerned with the Wilderness campaign, and to provide a much-needed service to the AT. Bill also volunteered as a section maintainer for the BMT on the 4-mile Brookshire Creek section.

To address trail stewardship concerns, Bill, the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, and The Wilderness Society convened the Wilderness Trails Summit at Montreat in July of 2010. They invited trail clubs, agency staff, and conservation leaders for an in-depth conversation about the stewardship needs of trails in the southeast. The primary topics were who was going to maintain these Wilderness areas and "where are the young people?" (almost all trail maintainers were retired folks). There were 30-40 maintainer clubs represented, including the still dissatisfied Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoe Club. Near the end of this one-day summit Bill presented the room with the idea of a new organization with a sole focus on stewardship of the Wilderness of southern Appalachia - and with that Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) was born.

Soon after the Summit, on November 1, 2010, Bill moved to working under contract for The Wilderness Society as the founder of the SAWS program. He developed Bylaws, recruited an advisory board and moved forward with strong support from TWS, Regional Director Brent Martin in particular. SAWS became

a program within The Wilderness Society in the spring of 2011 and would remain so until December of 2014 when the organization became its own 501c3 chartered non-profit.

The first Wilderness Skills Institute, developed by SAWS, the United States Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to develop Wilderness stewardship capacity, was held in 2011 at the Ocoee Work Center. It was a significant part of the SAWS program objective to teach Wilderness maintainer skills. The WSI has been held annually since then, now at the Cradle of Forestry in the Pisgah National Forest near Brevard, NC. Each year this two-week long series of course offerings provide free instruction in crosscut saw use and sharpening, rock work, bridge construction, and other general Wilderness skills. Each year about 200 folks attend these courses.

SAWS has grown into a model of effective public land stewardship with a staff of 70+ employees across 6 states with offices in Asheville, Johnson City, and Roanoke. The programs at SAWS include working with communities developing support for the trails and organizing volunteer days, hiring Wilderness Specialists to develop and implement Wilderness management and education plans, collecting field data, writing technical documents, and supporting other activities in Wilderness as needed as well as the deployment of several professional trail crews. They also hire Wilderness Rangers who are out on the trails meeting with hikers and backpackers to discuss LNT and to help where needed.

From the start in 2011 through 2018 the organization remained an integral part of still moving forward with the Tennessee Wild mission, the passage of The Tennessee Wilderness Act. Trail maintainers were not the only groups with concerns about the legislation that would designate 20,000 acres of the Cherokee National Forest as Wilderness.

Among hunters, the concerns of easy access were part of the problem. Some hunters would not listen to the facts and were sure Wilderness designation would shut them out of hunting in these new Wilderness areas, a totally unfounded concern. But these hunters sent letters to the politicians and were very vocal in their concerns. As tensions increased and misinformation was spread about impacts on hunting, personal threats were made. This resulted eventually in some locals, presumably the same folks who were so adamantly against the Wilderness designation, shooting up the SAWS building in Coker Creek in 2016. As a result, Bill and Laura moved to Asheville, NC to set up SAWS in a more friendly environment.

Some loggers were also against the Wilderness designation since it would prevent any further logging in the newly designated Wilderness areas, and some loggers also took offence to the name SAWS, saying "saws were their tools."

In 2018 the Tennessee Wilderness Act passed as part of the Farm Bill, designating the Upper Bald River Wilderness Area and expanding the Big Frog, Little Frog and Joyce Kilmer Wilderness areas. Areas up in NE TN were included in the bill, including the Big Laurel Branch and the Sampson Mtn areas. The areas in NE TN were only included after the Tennessee Eastman switched to supporting the legislation because of the work of SAWS. Laura was proud to be the campaign director that completed the journey for Wilderness protection so many had contributed to for over a decade.

Soon after the Tennessee Wilderness Act was passed, Bill was offered the job as Executive Director of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and they moved to Montana in May of 2019. Then in 2023, after having grown the capacity for Wilderness work in another corner of the country, Bill returned to The Wilderness Society as the Montana State Director.

In September of 2025 the Hodges organized a new company, Wild Idea Media, and the weekly Wild Idea Podcast which Bill co-hosts with Anders Reynolds, a longtime friend and Executive Director of the Wilderness Land Trust. The podcast delves into issues revolving around Wilderness and connecting people to public lands in general.

So, since 2009 Bill and Laura have continually been advocating for Wilderness and our public lands in a very effective manner. They are truly an amazing couple. Check out The Wild Idea at www.thewildidea.com.



HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST EVENTS

May 8, 2026, Flats Mountain Hike

Distance: 6.5 miles

Hike Leaders: Brenda and Rick Harris

Participants: Rick & Brenda Harris, Doug Lynch, Jillaine Burley, Anne Anderson + two dogs (Nahme and Timber)

Five of us hiked the Flats Mtn. Trail on this beautiful and cool day. We met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, then carpoled to the lower trailhead leaving two cars there, then up to the upper trailhead off the Cherohala Skyway at mile 19. We hiked this beautiful trail, but it is in much need of brushing out. There were minimal stepover logs. We ate lunch at the gap at mile 3.0. The trail has significant ups and downs, but for the most part it is downhill, dropping over 2000'. With the leaves just now budding out at this high altitude, we were able to see the surrounding mountain ridges and the lakes in the Tennessee River and Little Tennessee River Basins. We also could see the lake at the Indian Boundary Recreation Area.

Afterwards, we all met at the Cherohala Outpost along the Skyway to check out the new store and restaurant there, then went down to the Tellico Brewery for beers and lots of chatter as well as food from the Peach Street Grill. We all broke up to return to our homes around 6 p.m.





Wednesday, May 18, Rock Creek Gorge

We didn't have the water we hoped for in January, but the Rock Creek Gorge is still worth visiting. The trail starts out as a rocky, rooty, and eroded uphill climb, but the tread way levels out and improves as you go deeper in the forest. The water was so low that we were able to rock hop both crossings of Rock Creek. Rock Creek Falls or Rainbow Falls had a deep, inviting swimming hole at its base that is usually hidden by whitewater. Hikers have cleared an easy to follow trail through the rhododendrons on the right of the creek to Chestnut Falls.

In the woods we heard warblers, a Northern Parula and what Merlin identified as an Acadian warbler. White skullcaps and foam flowers were blooming and so was poison ivy. We also saw more than thirty American giant millipedes out on the trail. We decided they must have been cruising for a mate.

Five hikers clamored and slid on the 3.2 mile trail: Mary Alton, Leslie Auriemmo, Melitta and John Duffy, and Anne Anderson.





Tuesday, May 19, 2026

A great BIG shoutout to Charlie Snow who helped James Anderson saw out three blowdowns from the Childers Creek Trail. Pictured is the largest one!!



Sunday, May 10, 2026- Stone Mountain State Park -Some 24 club members began arriving for the four-night campout at Stone Mountain State Park near Roaring Gap, North Carolina. At a campfire gathering that evening, Jack Callahan, event leader, went over the next three days' daily events.

On Monday, May 11, most of the group made the 45 minute drive to MP 213 on the Blue Ridge Parkway to tour the Blue Ridge Music Center, have a picnic lunch and enjoy the live performances by local musicians. We enjoyed the music and discussions with the four musicians during the afternoon. Upon returning to camp, the group made a short drive to Elkin, where we enjoyed the evening meal at the Angry Troll Brewery, organized by Jerry Schneider.

On Tuesday, May 12, the group drove a very short distance to the Stone Mountain trailhead and hiked 1.7 miles to the top of the granite dome. It is an impressive outcrop. While there we had our individual lunches, and a group photo was taken by Mr. Schneider. Returning to camp that afternoon, we again enjoyed a campfire at the Coombs campsite.

On Wednesday, May 13, the group met at the Lower Trailhead parking and met with our Park Service interpretive specialist, Ms. Misty Parrish. Ms. Parrish led us on a hike up to Wolf Rock and Cedar Rock, both granite outcrops. We had lunch on one as Ms. Parrish explained the geology and the history of the park. From there we hiked down off the top of the outcrop to the Hutchinson homestead. We were allowed to enter the main home and see the furnishings inside and ask questions about the history of the site. Ms. Parrish gave us an overview of the family and the different structures on the site. We then broke and made our way back to the trailhead parking. A collection was taken to make a donation to the State Park Schools in Parks and given to Ms. Parrish.

Upon arriving back in camp there was a heavy downpour for about an hour. When it cleared, we again enjoyed a campfire at Rob and Janet's campsite. Jennifr Schroll shared her campfire cooking of pastries made in her pie iron.

Thursday morning most of the group headed home. A few stayed another day to take advantage of the pleasant temperatures and visit more sites in the area. It was a great turnout and thanks to everyone for helping out to make it memorable. Jack Callahan





(Hutchinson Homestead Pictured Below)







Trip Report, Linville Gorge Campout, May 3-8, 2026

Club members Buddy Arnold, Bruce Lee, Michelle Ritter, James Anderson, Charlie Snow and Henry Mehler met at the Linville Gorge area for camping and day hikes. The Federal campground on the Blue Ridge Parkway is closed for repairs, so we stayed in a nice private campground, Linville Falls Campground and RV Park. The facility has a variety of camping sites and cabins for rent.

The first day we hiked to several overlooks around Linville Falls. The falls are very impressive. The upper falls are shown in this pic.



We also hiked the Hawksbill Mountain Trail. It was not a long trail at 1.4 miles in, but most of the 700 foot elevation gain was in the last 1/4 mile or so. Views at the top were impressive.



The next day we went to Wiseman's Overlook before starting our hike for the day. This overlook had great views of the gorge.



Then we undertook a very strenuous hike down into the gorge. The Babble Tower Trail was the start of the hike going about 1400 feet down into the gorge over about 2 miles. We then walked about 4 miles on the Linville Gorge Trail that was pretty rough from storm damage. We used the Conley Cove Trail to come out with about 1000 feet of elevation gain in 1.1 miles.



The weather took a turn for rain on Wednesday, so all the hikers except Michelle, Bruce, and Buddy decided to go home. The remaining group visited some local sites on and the rainy day and then went to Grandfather Mountain (only about 20 miles away) and the last day. We visited the Mile-High Bridge on top and hiked Black Rock Trail that afternoon.



MAY Wednesday Walks on the Cleveland Greenway led by Jack Callahan



MAY 21, 2026, Club Breakfast at Old Fort Restaurant in Cleveland, TN, hosted by Jack Callahan



MINUTES

Note: Because of the group campout, there was no monthly meeting; therefore, there were no minutes to report.

NON-CLUB OPPORTUNITIES

As always, go to the specific sponsor web page for more information on these events if you plan on attending.

TELLICO/OCOEE VOLUNTEER TRAIL CREW

Check the Facebook page for future workdays.

BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION See the calendar for upcoming events and trail maintenance sites.

