

Field Trip Descriptions – All full day trips

1. North Chickamauga Creek State Natural Area (SNA) - Barker Camp/Vortex, TN

Join us for a hike to a remote area of the 7,500 acre North Chickamauga Creek State Natural Area. The field trip will focus on the restoration of a loblolly pine plantation, managing invasive species, and protecting federal species habitat in a public use area. The field trip will include a two mile back country hike down into the deep gorge to the “Vortex” which, during the winter, attracts expert (or crazy) kayakers who take on the Class V rapids. We will get wet in the creek. There are large boulders in the creek so closed-toed shoes are required. If you want a swim, bring shorts or swimsuit.

Field trip leaders: Ranger Andy Wright, Cumberland Trail State Park and Andrea Bishop, a botanist with the Tennessee Natural Heritage Program.

Driving time from Chattanooga: approximately 20 minutes

Notes: wear hiking shoes or boots, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15

Difficulty: moderate to difficult

Fee: none

2. Hike to Laurel Falls and Snow Falls on the Cumberland Plateau, TN

Laurel-Snow Falls Designated State Natural Area is a 2,259-acre natural area located in Rhea County, Tennessee. The natural area occurs on the Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau and contains a section of gorge that is deeply dissected by four creeks, Morgan, Henderson, Laurel, and Richland Creeks. The site is named after two scenic waterfalls, Laurel Falls (80 feet) and Snow Falls (35 feet), and features two prominent overlooks, Buzzard Point and Bryan Overlook (also known as Raven Point). The eight mile hike winds through scenic creeks, steep gorges, unique geologic features, and a small stand of virgin timber. A wide variety of native plants can be viewed in the natural area. Depending on the weather, people can swim in Henderson Creek, one of the best swimming holes in the area!

The land use history of this area remains evident in places, logging and deep mining took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some remnants of the mining activities can still be seen along the trail. The Laurel-Snow trail was the first National Recreation Trail designated in Tennessee and is part of the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail, the state's only linear state park. When completed the Cumberland Trail will be 300 miles in length cutting through 11 Tennessee counties from the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park on the Tennessee-Virginia-Kentucky border to the Signal Point near Chattanooga.

Field trip leaders: Lisa Huff, East Tennessee Stewardship Ecologist with the Natural Areas Program within Tennessee State Parks.

Driving time from Chattanooga: approximately 40 minutes

Notes: wear hiking shoes or boots, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15

Difficulty: moderate to difficult

Fee: none

3. Behind the Scenes Tour of the Tennessee Aquarium

The Tennessee Aquarium is one of the finest Aquariums in the United States with two buildings: River Journey featuring freshwater rivers of the world and Ocean Journey featuring a large saltwater tank with six sharks and hundreds of tropical fish. This building also houses the Butterfly Garden with tropical butterflies and the Penguins' Rock exhibit. This three hour behind the scenes tour demonstrates how computers monitoring water temperatures, water levels, and other vital information link the entire Aquarium campus. Attendees will learn about food preparation and visit the pump room. Visitors will also go to the top of the 30 foot salt water tank to observe divers in action. During this tour, you will learn many interesting things about what it takes to prepare this facility for the public on a daily basis.

Field trip leaders: Tennessee Aquarium staff

Driving time from Chattanooga: you're already there

Notes: wear comfortable walking shoes, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15-20

Difficulty: easy

Fee: \$19.95 for entrance to Aquarium or \$25.95 for entrance to Aquarium and IMAX

4. Little River Canyon National Preserve, AL

Little River Canyon National Preserve was established in 1992. It protects one of the deepest canyons in Alabama through which runs the Little River. The Little River is the first river in the state to be declared an Outstanding National Resource Water under the federal Clean Water Act. The Preserve encompasses habitat for many plants and animals, including rare and endangered species. Forested uplands, waterfalls, canyon rims and bluffs, pools, boulders, and sandstone cliffs offer settings for a variety of inhabitants as well as a diversity of recreational opportunities. Within these many special places, there are also areas shaped by a history of use that is echoed throughout the Southeast. Silviculture, exotic species invasions and fire suppression have brought about a change in the landscape that Preserve staff is working to turn around.

Visit some of these special areas that Preserve staff is working to restore and enhance including Cumberland sandstone glades, green pitcher plant habitats and areas where exotic plants infest and are being removed. No trip is complete without a visit to some of the beautiful scenic vistas along the canyon rim.

Field trip leaders: Little River Canyon National Preserve staff Mary Shew, Resource Management Specialist and Shawn Waddell Biological Science Technician

Driving time from Chattanooga: approximately 1 hour

Notes: wear hiking shoes or boots, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15-20

Difficulty: easy to moderate

Fee: none

5. Cherokee National Forest invasive plant control and restoration, TN

The Cherokee National Forest, created in 1936, will host a day trip to visit several sites on the Ocoee District of the forest. Trip leaders will discuss the long history of human use of forests in this area of the Southern Appalachians. This trip will focus on the use of fire to restore upland forests, including oak savannah and shortleaf pine stands. We will also hear about the US Forest Service's management strategies to control invasive species. Some exotic plant management (primarily kudzu) has been accomplished using innovative cooperative funding, as well as enhancing powerline ROW's for wildlife habitat. The Forest has an extensive network of roads allowing us to visit several sites and enjoy the mountains with minimal hiking in this steep and rugged terrain.

A stop at the 1996 Olympic Whitewater Center will be included; this area was landscaped with native plants.

Field trip leaders: TBA

Driving time from Chattanooga: approximately 1 hour

Notes: wear hiking shoes or boots, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15-20

Difficulty: easy to moderate

Fee: none

6. Lookout Mountain/Lula Lake invasive plant control and restoration, GA/TN

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park's Lookout Mountain Unit will be the first stop on this multi-site field trip. Here we will see exotic plant control and recreational climbing management to protect rare cliffside plants. Historic Civil War sites and great views of the Tennessee River's Moccasin Bend are included. Nearby we will learn about the Lookout Mountain Conservancy's various strategies for kudzu control, including the use of goats. Lookout Mountain Conservancy has spent over \$50,000 in the last 10 years to try to rein in this highly invasive species. From there we will travel about 15 miles south to the Lula Lake Land Trust, where the manager will take us along Rock Creek to see several different plant species including the threatened Virginia Spiraea and an experimental chestnut grove, then head up to the bluff where you can see all the way to the Blue Ridge mountains on a clear day (the same view that Rock City claims-"see seven states"). We can then hike back down to Lula Lake and Lula Falls. There is a steep trail that goes to the bottom of the 100' Lula Falls-you can get wet there if you choose to and walk behind the waterfall. The small lake is just upstream from the waterfall. There

are picnic tables and a restroom nearby. All of this is probably about 1.5 mile round trip, but does involve some elevation change.

Field trip leaders: Christine Bok, Lookout Mountain Conservancy and Kristine Johnson, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Driving time from Chattanooga: approximately 15 to 20 minutes

Notes: wear hiking shoes or boots, bring water and a camera

Capacity: 15

Difficulty: moderate

Fee: none