



# TENNESSEE NATURALIST PROGRAM SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER



# TNP CORE COURSES

## CUMMINS FALLS STATE PARK CHAPTER

From Chapter Coordinator Holly Taylor: "Many who visit Cummins Falls State Park only come to see the waterfall, but there is a rich diversity to be found in other areas of the park! Students get to explore the unique ecology of the Eastern Highland Rim by playing in the State Scenic Blackburn Fork River, visiting nearby natural areas, and getting to know some of the unique flora and fauna native to the park and the region. I especially enjoy bringing students into the gorge of the Blackburn Fork River to take a closer look at the fauna that resides in between the stones."



### 2025 Schedule

Tuesday, April 1 9:00-1:30 - Becoming a Naturalist  
Wednesday, April 2 9:00-1:30 - Geology and Ecology

Tuesday, April 8 9:00-1:30 - Birds of Tennessee  
Wednesday, April 9 9:00-1:30 - Tennessee Forests

Tuesday, April 15 9:00-1:30 - Tennessee Mammals  
Wednesday, April 16 9:00-1:30 - Reptiles and Amphibians

Tuesday, April 22 9:00-1:30 - Forbs, Ferns, Mosses, and More  
Wednesday, April 23 4:30-9:30 - Nocturnal Naturalist

Tuesday, April 29 4:30-9:30 - The World of Invertebrates  
Wednesday, April 30 9:00-1:30 - Tennessee's Living Waters

**Registration closes March 30 | Register at [tnnaturalist.org/register](https://tnnaturalist.org/register)**

Help us spread the word by sharing with friends and family!

# FROZEN HEAD STATE PARK CHAPTER

From Chapter Coordinator George Hawver: "We're excited to offer our second series of Tennessee Naturalist core classes in April, when the park is resplendent with wildflowers and is arguably the most beautiful time of year in the park. We will once again take our field trips at Frozen Head and at nearby Obed Wild and Scenic River and Lone Mountain State Forest. This year we have custom Naturalist Volunteer t-shirts that will be awarded upon completion of the course and 40 hours of volunteer time at the park."



## 2025 Schedule

Monday, April 7 10:00-4:00 - Geology and Ecology

Tuesday, April 8 10:00-4:00 - Becoming a Naturalist

Thursday, April 10 10:00-4:00 - Reptiles and Amphibians

Friday, April 11 4:00-10:00 - Nocturnal Naturalist

Tuesday, April 15 10:00-4:00 - Forbs, Ferns, Mosses, and More

Thursday, April 17 10:00-4:00 - Birds of Tennessee

Friday, April 18 10:00-4:00 - Tennessee Mammals

Monday, April 21 10:00-4:00 - Tennessee's Living Waters

Wednesday, April 23 10:00-4:00 - Tennessee Forests

Friday, April 25 2:00-8:00 - The World of Invertebrates

**Registration closes April 4 | Register at [tnnaturalist.org/register](https://tnnaturalist.org/register)**

Help us spread the word by sharing with friends and family!

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Additional TNP core courses will begin in fall 2025. Stay up to date with open registrations by watching for TNP announcements via email and social media and checking [tnnaturalist.org/register](https://tnnaturalist.org/register) regularly.

# TN2 - TNP CONTINUING EDUCATION

## UPCOMING CLASSES

We have several exciting TN2 classes coming up. Celebrate the start of spring by getting outside and learning something new! Stay informed on other upcoming TN2 classes via our mailing list, social media, and our website.



### **TN2: Fossil Discovery**

**Saturday, April 26 9-12pm CT**

Fort Negley - Nashville, TN

Instructor: Molly Miller

Price: \$45 CE Hours: 3

**Registration opens March 17**

<https://tnnaturalist.org/register/>

This TN2 will be a deep dive into the history, geography, and geology of Tennessee through the exploration of fossils! Fort Negley's fossil program and its unique resources offer engaging, hands-on experiences that help students understand the deep history of Tennessee that spans hundreds of millions of years. We will also explore how the ancient past impacted more recent history with the building of the fort, and how it environmentally impacts citizens today.



### **TN2: Swamps Ecology**

**Saturday, April 12 9-3pm CT**

Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge

Instructor: Dr. Tom Blanchard

Price: \$75 CE Hours: 6

**Registration full - join the waitlist!**

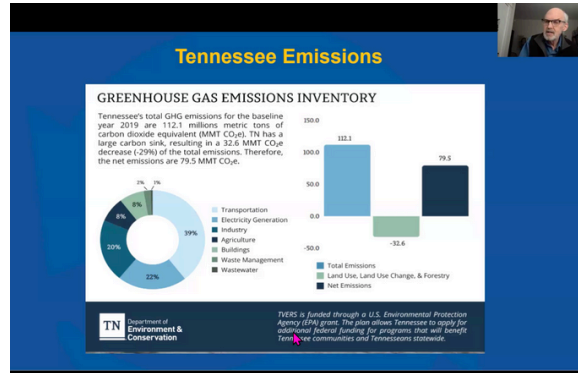
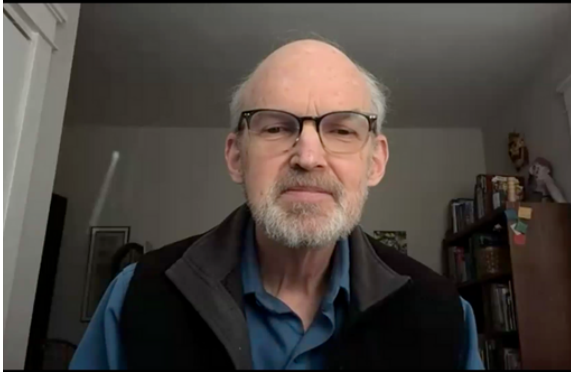
<https://tnnaturalist.org/register/>

Discover the incredible diversity of the swamps surrounding Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee's largest natural lake. The classroom portion covers features of swamps, unique organism adaptations, and select species found solely in the coastal plain region of Tennessee. The field component includes a canoe float among the cypress trees of Brewers Bar, with a stop along the shoreline where we'll take a short walk to the swamp. There we will collect and observe a variety of animals and plants characteristic of the swamp habitat.

# TN2 RECAP

We've already had two TN2 classes this year! Here are some photos of the best moments.

## TN2: CLIMATE CHANGE



### January 25 Online Webinar

Students were able to learn about climate change using MIT's En-ROADS model.

## TN2: BIRD BANDING AND AVIAN RESEARCH



### February 15 Warner Park - Nashville, TN

Students learned about Warner Park Nature Center's Bird Program and its legacy of avian research. They even got to practice a MOTUS radio-tracking exercise!

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

TNP welcomed five new board members on March 1. We are excited to have them join TNP!



**Stephanie Durman**  
*Treasurer*

Stephanie is currently enrolled in TNP at the Owl's Hill Chapter. Stephanie is an environmental attorney with over 20 years of experience and is a recognized expert in Tennessee water law. Stephanie is a lifelong birder and hiker with a passion for learning about and protecting the natural world. She believes that environmental education is critical to building public understanding and support of conserving our natural resources for future generations. Stephanie holds a B.A. in Economics and Political Science from Yale University and J.D. with a concentration in environmental law from the University of Washington School of Law.



**Marlee Mitchell**  
*Director-at-Large*

Marlee is currently enrolled in TNP at the Long Hunter State Park Chapter. Marlee is a life-long resident of Tennessee, having lived in all three grand divisions, except for summers spent living and working in Yellowstone National Park and Bar Harbor, Maine. She has visited 55 national parks (lacking only the Alaska parks) and many state parks. Professionally, she recently retired after 41 years practicing law in Memphis and Nashville. She has previously served on several nonprofit boards, including Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee, Tennessee State Parks Conservancy, and Historic Rugby. In addition to the TNP Board, she currently serves on the board of Boys & Girls Clubs of South Central Tennessee.



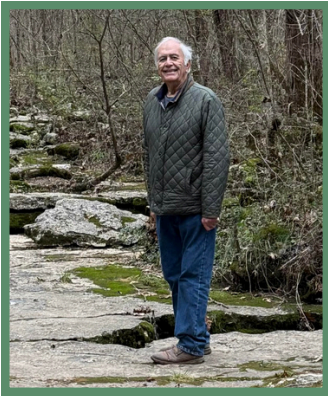
**Karie Falder-Saeed**  
*Director-at-Large*

Karie became a certified naturalist in August 2024 at the Long Hunter State Park chapter. Since then, she has joined TNP's TN2 Committee and helped create the homeschool nature education days at Bowie Nature Park where she currently teaches. "I was lucky enough to stumble upon TNP at just the right time in my life: in my 'middle ages,' no longer using my nursing college degrees, nor wanting to, and developing a deep love for nature and native plants while homeschooling my children. I was feeling a pull to do more, learn more, grow more and share my knowledge with my family and the community. I now have the foundation, tools, support and the inspiration I need to help protect this planet for my kids and all of its amazing inhabitants."



**Amy Balentine, Ph.D.**  
*Director-at-Large*

Amy became a certified naturalist in September 2023 at the Memphis Pinecrest chapter. Amy holds a Ph.D. In Clinical Psychology from the University of Kentucky. She is a psychologist, author, and CEO of Memphis Center for Mindful Living, a counseling center dedicated to holistic treatment that incorporates ecotherapy into its practices. She integrates nature as a cotherapist in her outdoor sessions and seeks to deepen the connection of her clients with the natural world. Her center maintains a garden featuring native flowers, as well as vegetables, fruits and herbs, which offers a healing space for clients. She is currently a Master Gardener intern with the UT Extension Office in Memphis. She is a member of Wild Ones and the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. Amy volunteers at Overton Park in Memphis leading nature walks and removing invasive species.



**Richard Hoover, Ph.D.**  
*Director-at-Large*

Richard became a certified naturalist in November 2022 at the Paris Landing State Park/TNWR chapter. Richard earned his doctorate degree in biology at Michigan State University in 1972 and recently retired from Vanderbilt university after 35 years of research and teaching. This followed 2 years at the University of Glasgow and 10 years at Harvard Medical School. Although his research focused on cell biology, he has always had a passion for exploring and trying to understand our natural environment. Richard has continued to help with his home TNP chapter and is also a board member of the Friends of the Harpeth River State Park, which is working to develop programs that will involve more of the community in understanding the benefits of our reciprocal relationship with nature. He also enjoys frequent hikes at local state parks and national parks.

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Thank you to our exiting board members, Kristin Hopkins, Michael Doochin, Tom Blanchard, and Cori Williams for their service to TNP over the years. Also, congratulations to Margie Hunter, TNP's newly elected chairperson, and Jenny Fitzgerald, TNP's newly elected Recording Secretary.

As always, we are grateful for our board members' dedication and service to TNP!

# VOLUNTEER AND CE OPPORTUNITIES

## PRE-APPROVED HOURS

The following events have been pre-approved for TNP volunteer or continuing education hours. You will still need to enter their volunteer hours into the database.

### **Trails & Trilliums - [Click here to register!](#)**

April 4-6 Beersheba Springs, TN

#### **Volunteer and CE opportunities:**

- Trails & Trilliums is a weekend long naturalist rally put on by the Friends of South Cumberland State Parks. The festival offers a slate of guided hikes and walks as well as nature-themed presentations, workshops, and exhibits. Come meet fellow Tennessee naturalists from across the state!
- The majority of sessions can be used for TNP CE credit. Please refer to this site when logging CE hours: <https://www.trailsandtrilliums.org/tnp.html>
- Volunteers are needed from Thursday, April 3 - Sunday, April 6. There are many different shifts and tasks to choose from. [Click here for more information.](#)

### **Land Between the Lakes Naturalist Surveys**

April 12-13

#### **Volunteer opportunities:**

- The Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area is home to thousands of acres of protected forest called the Core Areas. Volunteers will explore a selection of the core areas to conduct informal surveys of their flora, fauna, and other characteristics.
- Email [wdmounger@gmail.com](mailto:wdmounger@gmail.com) or [dnicke157@gmail.com](mailto:dnicke157@gmail.com) or call (423) 877-4616 or (270) 816-0837 to sign up.
- Log hours under Citizen Science > Animal/Plant Count, Survey, Monitoring.

### **Junior Naturalist Summer Camp - Nature Explorers School**

June 9-13 Franklin, TN

#### **Volunteer opportunities:**

- Share your passion for nature by speaking on naturalist topics at the Junior Naturalist Summer Camp! This can be through a lecture or hands-on activity such as a creek walk, insect hunt, showing how to use field guides, etc.
- Contact Cori Williams at [cori@natureexplorers.org](mailto:cori@natureexplorers.org) or call or text (615) 542-3311
- Log hours under Environmental Education > Lecture or Class Instructor/Presenter.



## **Native Plants and Cedar Glades Series - UT Extension Rutherford County**

Class: March 26, April 2, April 9; Hikes: April 11th, April 19th, May 5th

Class: Murfreesboro, TN; Hikes: Cedars of Lebanon SP, Barfield Park, Flat Rock Cedar Glade

### **Class description:**

- The course covers native plants of middle Tennessee and the unique cedar glade biome. This is a three part series with three class sessions and three hikes.
- The program fee is \$30 per person. Register by calling the office 615-898-7710.
- [Click here for more information](#)
- Log hours under Plant Education or Ecology/Natural Systems Education.

## **State of the Environment - Vanderbilt Law School**

Wednesday, March 19 12:00 CT Nashville, TN

### **Class description:**

- The free conference will bring together faculty, policymakers, and other experts in the Nashville community and surrounding areas for roundtable discussions of major environmental issues in the Southeast. The conference will include a presentation of the State of the Environment report along with four panels on the state of water, energy, land use and conservation, and innovation.
- [Click here for more information](#)
- Log hours under Environmental Issues.

## **Hummingbirds: Our Feathered Rainbows - UT Arboretum Society**

Thursday, April 3 7:00 ET / 6:00 CT

Free virtual webinar via Zoom

### **Class description:**

- Join the UT Arboretum Society as Michelle Campanis, education coordinator at the University of Tennessee Arboretum, and naturalist/author Stephen Lyn Bales give us an overview of our beloved hummingbirds.
- [Click here for more information](#)
- Log hours under Animal Education.

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**WANT TO GET YOUR ORGANIZATION'S EVENT  
PRE-APPROVED FOR VOLUNTEER OR CONTINUING  
EDUCATION HOURS? FILL OUT THE FORM [HERE!](#)**



## ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The organizations listed below frequently have volunteer and/or continuing education opportunities. Visit the linked websites for more information. Remember to check with environmental organizations in your community about opportunities. You can also ask your chapter coordinator and instructors.

### **TNP Chapters**

TNP has 14 chapters across the state that often need volunteers and offer continuing education opportunities. Visit the link for a list of our chapters and contact information. <https://tnnaturalist.org/chapters/>

### **Tennessee State Parks**

There are state parks all over Tennessee that need volunteers and provide continuing education opportunities. Visit the link for up-to-date opportunities and events. <https://tnstateparks.com/get-involved/volunteering>

### **Friends Groups at Tennessee State Parks**

Many state parks in Tennessee have Friends groups that offer volunteer and continuing education opportunities. Visit the link to see a list of Friends groups. <https://tnstateparks.com/get-involved/friends-groups>

### **Tennessee Environmental Council**

The Tennessee Environmental Council has opportunities in a variety of environmental sectors. Visit the link for up-to-date volunteer opportunities and events. <https://www.tectn.org/getinvolved.html>

### **Wild Ones**

There are four Wild Ones chapters in Tennessee. Visit the link to find a chapter near you and view events. <https://wildones.org/events/?state=TN>

### **Tennessee Native Plant Society**

TNPS conserves and celebrates native plants. Visit the link for up-to-date opportunities and events. <https://www.tnps.org/events/category/calendar/>

### **Cumberland River Compact**

The Cumberland River Compact has a variety of hands-on volunteer opportunities dedicated to protecting the waters of the Cumberland River. Visit the link for up-to-date volunteer opportunities. <https://cumberlandrivercompact.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

### **Harpeth River Conservancy**

There are several ongoing volunteer opportunities. Visit the link for more information. <https://harpethconservancy.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

# CERTIFICATIONS AND MILESTONES

Congrats to all the TNP students who earned their certification or reached a TNP milestone from January - February 2025. We appreciate your dedication to TNP!

## CERTIFICATION

**Susan Schmidt** - Seven Islands  
**Lisa Davis** - Audubon Acres  
**Rachel Michaud** - Cedars of Lebanon (currently Long Hunter)  
**Tammie Faulk** - Memphis at Pinecrest  
**Rene Jacobs** - Cummins Falls  
**William Jacobs** - Cummins Falls

## MILESTONES

**Anne Snyder** - 100 hours  
**Tera Rica Murdock** - 150 hours  
**Jackie Shea** - 100 hours  
**Beth Girard** - 300 hours  
**Leah Berry** - 50 hours  
**Copper Jackson Bradford** - 300 hours  
**Betty Blanton** - 200 hours  
**Carol Elliott** - 50 hours  
**Jackie Byrom** - 100 hours  
**Anne Padgett** - 150 hours  
**Amber Prater** - 100 hours  
**Melissa Berry** - 100 hours  
**Jane Powell** - 200 hours  
**Stephanie Momper** - 50 hours and 100 hours  
**George Hawver** - 1000 hours

## HOW CLOSE ARE YOU TO YOUR CERTIFICATION OR NEXT MILESTONE?

[Log in to the TNP database here](#) and click the "Tracks" tab on your homepage to see how many hours you have remaining. **You might be closer than you think!**

## CONNECT WITH TNP ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



### Facebook

Tennessee Naturalist Program

[Click here to follow TNP on Facebook!](#)



### Instagram

@tnnaturalist

[Click here to follow TNP on Instagram!](#)

## DONATE TO TNP!

Tennessee Naturalist Program is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring the desire to learn and share Tennessee's nature. We do not receive funding from any state or federal sources. All donations are appreciated. You can donate to TNP by following the link below. Thank you for your support!

[Click here to donate to TNP](#)

Thank you to our donors from December 2024 - March 2025: **Erica C.; Christine T.**  
We sincerely appreciate your support of TNP.

## TNP MERCH

TNP has various branded merch for sale on the website. Proceeds help support the Tennessee Naturalist Program. [Click here to shop now!](#)

