



TENNESSEE NATURALIST PROGRAM

FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER



Photo by Kari Cox

CELEBRATING TNP VOLUNTEERS

TNP FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN SEPTEMBER 21-25

As any Tennessee Naturalist knows, volunteering is a key part of our program. TNP volunteers put their knowledge into action to make a positive difference in their communities and in the natural world around them.

There are so many ways to be a TNP volunteer. Some volunteers dedicate their time to habitat restoration or stewardship projects, while others share their knowledge through environmental education, and still others participate in community science activities. **Whatever form it takes, volunteering gives each Tennessee Naturalist a chance to share their own interests, skills, and passions.**

This year we are celebrating **the Impact of TNP**, and we invite you to join us as we recognize the meaningful work of TNP volunteers. From September 21–25, we are launching a weeklong fundraising campaign with a goal of raising **\$15,000 to support the future of TNP**.

Plus, our Board of Directors has come together to offer a matching gift challenge: **the first \$5,000 will be matched dollar-for-dollar, doubling your impact.**

Your donation will help us invest in new projects and initiatives to support our volunteers and improve the program. TNP does not receive any outside funding from grants, sponsors, or subsidies; we are completely self-sustaining. Your support is crucial to our mission and helps make all of this possible.

If you'd like to give early, you don't have to wait until September 21.

Make your early donation [here](#) - it will still qualify for the matching gift challenge!

Thank you for being an essential part of TNP. Together, let's celebrate the impact of TNP volunteers and continue investing in the people who bring TNP's mission to life across Tennessee.



TNP CORE COURSE

UPCOMING CORE COURSES

West Tennessee, we know you've been waiting for TNP core courses to open near you, and now's your chance! Become a Tennessee Naturalist today at tnnaturalist.org/register.



Paris Landing State Park

Buchanan, TN | Saturday classes

September 26, 2026 - June 5, 2027

[View full schedule here](#)

Coordinators:

Brandon Baker brandon.baker@tn.gov

Christa Davidson christa.davidson@tn.gov

Registration open now - only five spots left!

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



Memphis - Pinecrest Camp

Moscow, TN

Only 1 hour from Memphis and Jackson!

September 14, 2026 - November 14, 2026

Full schedule will be posted soon!

Coordinator: Charity Siebert

charity@camppinecrest.org

Registration opens soon

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

There will be many more courses beginning early 2027, with schedules posted later this year. Stay up to date with open registrations by watching for TNP announcements via email and social media and checking [the registration webpage](#) regularly.

Visit [the "TNP Chapters" webpage](#) to see each chapter's typical schedule. Be sure to join the [interest list](#) so you'll be notified when your preferred chapter(s) opens for registration!

CORE COURSE RECAP

This summer, several TNP chapters finished up their core course. It's a bittersweet feeling when classes come to an end, but there are plenty of opportunities to stay involved with TNP! Dig deeper into your favorite class topics with TN2 Continuing Education workshops, or keep volunteering to earn TNP milestone pins, or reach out to your chapter about helping with classes next year. Your TNP experience doesn't end with your last class!



Beaman Park
Photo Credits: Lisa Glaser



Paris Landing State Park
Photo Credits: Ryan Dowdy



Ijams Nature Center
Photo Credits: Jordan Davis



Long Hunter State Park
Photo Credits: Slava Trotz

TN2 - TNP CONTINUING EDUCATION

UPCOMING TN2 WORKSHOPS



TN2: Herpetology Family Fun

Saturday, October 10 9:30am-12:30pm CT

Fiery Gizzard State Park

Adults (15+) \$20

Children (14 and under) \$10

Registration open now!

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

Get ready for a hands-on adventure with reptiles and amphibians! TNP is excited to offer our first TN2 for naturalists and their family members. Families will learn fascinating facts about Tennessee's snakes, turtles, lizards, frogs, and other amazing herps through fun activities, interactive demonstrations, and up-close encounters. The program will include a short hike to learn what to do when a snake is encountered. This engaging program is perfect for animal lovers of all ages and is designed to spark curiosity and appreciation for these incredible creatures.



TN2: Bird Banding and Avian Research

*rescheduled from February 2026

Saturday, October 17

Warner Park Nature Center (Nashville)

Registration opens September 11

*Students who were registered for the cancelled February offering will receive early registration access

Calling all bird lovers! Warner Park Nature Center (Nashville) is offering a TN2 continuing education workshop exploring their Bird Program and its legacy of avian research. The program will highlight the important role of volunteers and community citizen science in ornithology, and will include species-specific research projects (Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Purple Martin, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Bluebird). You will also engage in a Motus radio-tracking exercise, and end the day observing a park bird banding session!



TN2: Introduction to Bird Banding

Seven Islands State Birding Park

Sunday, October 25 7:00-11:30am ET

Friday, November 6 7:00-11:30am ET

Registration opens soon!

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

Designed for beginners and experienced birders alike, this workshop gives you a rare, up-close look at wild birds and the science used to study them. You'll watch skilled banders safely capture and handle birds, learn how scientists collect critical data like age, weight, and migration patterns, and you might even get the opportunity to hold and release a bird yourself!



TN2: Leave No Trace

Sunday, November 1 1:00pm-5:00pm CT

Cummins Falls State Park

Registration opens soon!

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

Partnering with Leave No Trace and Nolichucky Outdoor Learning Institute, this TN2 workshop introduces the history, principles, and global impact of Leave No Trace (LNT) and applies them to Tennessee Naturalist Program settings. Participants gain practical skills in low-impact outdoor practices and develop confidence in educating others through respectful, stewardship-based communication.



TN2: Winter Tree ID

Beaman Park (outside of Nashville)

Saturday, December 5

Saturday, December 12

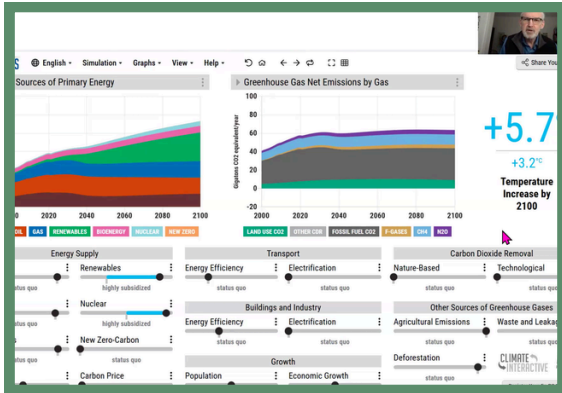
Registration opens soon!

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

Although winter can be a difficult season to identify trees, learning basic characteristics of twigs will open the door to identifying Tennessee trees without leaves or fruit. We will discuss bud scales, lenticels, opposite and alternate growth, and other twig clues then head outside for field work with tree shape, bark structure, and other clues for "naked" identification.

TN2 ON-DEMAND WORKSHOPS ALWAYS AVAILABLE!

Did you know TNP offers online on-demand workshops? These workshops are video recordings of past virtual workshops and are always open for registration. Currently there are two offerings, with plans to add more in the future.



TN2 On-Demand: Climate Change

Price: \$20 CE Hours: 1.5

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

Learn about climate change using En-ROADS, a user-friendly model similar to those used by climate scientists. Recorded from the January 2025 virtual workshop.



TN2 On-Demand: Environmental Advocacy

Price: \$20 CE Hours: 1.5

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

Learn effective skills to advocate for environmental issues in the private or public sector at local, state, and federal levels. Recorded from the August 2024 virtual workshop.

TN2 RECAP

Summer was an exciting time for TN2 workshops! Here are some photos of the best moments.

TN2: THE KINGDOM OF FUNGI



June 7 Seven Islands State Birding Park

Students enjoyed hiking in the park and identifying a variety of fungi!

Photo credits to Steacy Lucchesi

TN2: CAVES AND KARST

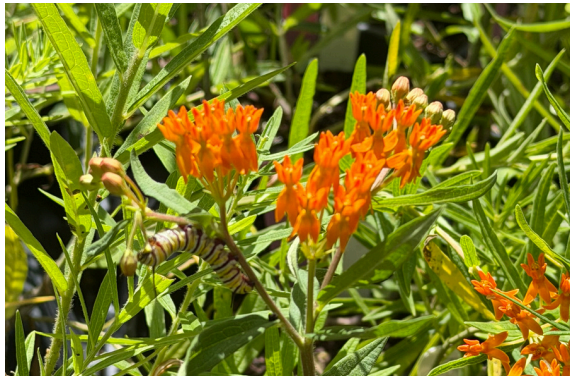


July 11 Cedars of Lebanon State Park

Students loved getting to explore three caves in one day!

Photo credits to Margie Hunter

TN2: BUTTERFLIES OF TENNESSEE



August 15 Lichterman Nature Center

Despite the heat, students enjoyed the field portion and getting to see butterflies in various phases of their lifecycle.

Photo credits to Kathleen Barker

TN2: MUSSEL BIOLOGY ECOLOGY



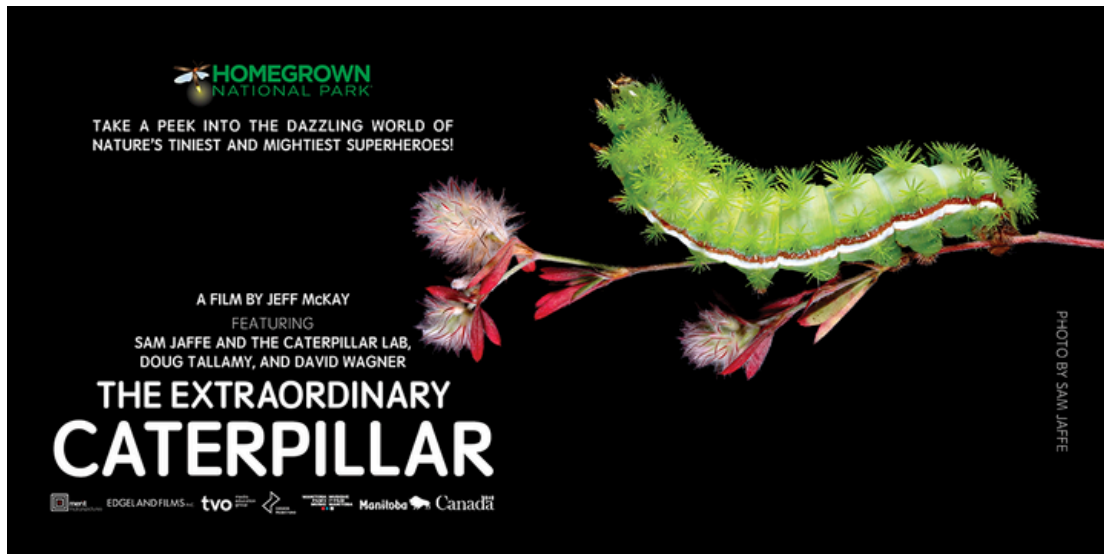
August 21 Duck River

The Duck River is home to 71 different mussels - in less than two hours the class saw more than half!

Photo credits to Leigh Anne Chandler

SPECIAL GIFT FROM TNP BOARD!

THE EXTRAORDINARY CATERPILLAR DOCUMENTARY FROM HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK



Please enjoy a FREE gift from the Tennessee Naturalist Program Board of Directors.

We're offering a special screening of *The Extraordinary Caterpillar*, a beautifully shot 60-minute documentary* from Homegrown National Park that reveals the vital — and often overlooked — role caterpillars play in our ecosystems.

To access the film, visit tnnnaturalist.org/register, scroll down to the listing, and click "Register Now." Our license is valid through April 2027, so we encourage you to take advantage of this special gift while you can!

Documentary Description:

From blooming meadows to city parks and backyard gardens, this inspiring film celebrates the magic of nature while showing families practical ways to make a difference. Along the way, you'll see the groundbreaking work of The Caterpillar Lab, entomologist David Wagner, and Doug Tallamy, co-founder of Homegrown National Park.

*Please note: Documentaries are NOT eligible for CE hours, but this is still a wonderful learning opportunity!

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 your hours into the database for approval.

TNP Table - Leave the Leaves Day

Saturday, November 14 10:00am-2:00pm CT Shelby Bottoms Nature Center (Nashville)

- TNP needs volunteers to interact with visitors and promote TNP at “Leave the Leaves” Day. Responsibilities include picking up and dropping off table materials, greeting visitors, handing out brochures and flyers, answering questions, and sharing your TNP experience.
- Email info@tnnaturalist.org to sign up. More info will be sent closer to the event date.
- Log volunteer hours under Environmental Education > Outreach, sponsoring organization “Tennessee Naturalist Program”

Ashland City Clean Up - Harpeth Conservancy

Saturday, October 3 10:00am-12:00pm CT

Volunteer:

- Join Harpeth Conservancy for a walking cleanup along a creek and recreation area in Ashland City! By removing litter and debris from riparian areas and streams, we'll help restore streamside habitats for Tennessee's wildlife while safeguarding water quality.
- All cleanup supplies and equipment will be provided. Please wear sturdy closed-toe shoes, long pants, and weather-appropriate clothing.
- **Register at [this link](#)**
- Log volunteer hours under Stewardship > Habitat Improvement/Maintenance

Appalachian Foothills Fruits and Nuts (AFFN)

Volunteer opportunities:

- Web services: AFFN needs volunteers to maintain the database - what has been planted, a Master Cultivar List, plant descriptions, and how to make this accessible on the web.
- Academic support: Includes genetic examination of plants, researching historic cultivars, guidance on disease control and soil nutrition, and developing descriptions
- **Contact kechance@affnorchard.org for more information**

Butterfly Big Day - Urban Butterfly Initiative

Saturday, September 12

Volunteer:

- “Butterfly Big Day” is an international effort to document butterflies and spread awareness of the importance of butterflies and other pollinators. Participation is easy – simply submit photos to iNaturalist of all the butterflies you find in the wild that day.
- **Visit the [webpage](#) for more information**
- Log volunteer hours under Community Science > Plant/Animal Count, Survey, Monitoring

Conservation Talk - Rutherford County Master Gardeners

Tuesday, November 16 6:00pm CT Lane Agri-Park Auditorium (Murfreesboro)

Continuing Education:

- The Master Gardeners of Rutherford County invite TNP members to join them at a free joint conservation talk on the new 10-year Tennessee Wildlife Action Plan with speaker Mr. Josh Campbell, Chief of Biodiversity, TWRA. We hope to socialize and get to know TNP members better through this event. There will be snacks and refreshments.
- Log CE hours under Environmental Issues/Advocacy

Owl Prowl - Boro Birders

Wednesday, September 23 5:30pm-8:15pm CT

Volunteer opportunities:

- Back by popular demand! Meet our owl ambassadors at the Wilderness Station - Screech and Barred owls - and learn a little about their diet and habitats. Then, we venture out into the park to see what birds appear at dusk and go on the prowling for owls. The sun sets at 7:40, so be sure to bring a flashlight/headlamp to hike back in the dark.
- Cost: \$3 - paid upon arrival

Park Pollinator Hike - Bays Mountain Park

Saturday, September 12 6:00pm-7:30pm ET

Volunteer opportunities:

- This 2.5-mile hike is intended for Tennessee Naturalist volunteers and will provide a relaxed opportunity to explore the park, sharpen naturalist skills, and contribute to ongoing pollinator monitoring. We'll look for, identify, and document pollinators and other species of interest as part of the Parks for Pollinators September project. Along the way, participants will practice observation and species identification skills while learning about seasonal changes, pollinator relationships, and the important role these species play in our local ecosystems. Bring binoculars, a camera, or a field guide if you have them, and be prepared to make observations and contribute valuable community science data.

LOOKING FOR MORE OPPORTUNITIES?



Join the "Tennessee Naturalist Program: Students, Instructors, and Alumni" Facebook Group!

You'll find volunteer opportunities, continuing education events, and a community of like-minded naturalists. The group is statewide and open to any current or past TNP student.

WANT US TO SHARE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S EVENT?

Fill out the form [here](#) to submit volunteer and continuing education events!



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 15 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 June 2026 - August 2026. We appreciate your dedication to TNP!

CERTIFICATION

Kathleen Dennis - Paris Landing
Terri Webb - Paris Landing
Don Gill - Long Hunter
Pamela Barras - Ijams
Scottlinn Cox - Paris Landing
Ken Crossman - Cummins Falls

Ashley Cantrell - Owl's Hill
Steacy Lucchesi - Frozen Head
Bruce Willey - Beaman Park
Emily Ertel - Long Hunter
Lisa French - Paris Landing
Randy Elam - Bays Mountain

MILESTONES

Beth Kirkland - 50 hours
Maureen May - 200 hours
Betty Blanton - 1000 hours
Tammy Peedin - 50 hours
Karl Hackenbrack - 50 hours
Alan Leiserson - 100 hours
Tera Rica Murdock - 300 hours
Matthew Shuff - 50 hours

Amy Ritter - 150 hours
Stephanie Durman - 50 hours
Katy Ginanni - 150 hours
Mindy Davis - 50 hours
Joy Long - 200 hours
Leah Berry - 200 hours
Carol Elliott - 300 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!

The 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 and go towards furthering our mission. You can donate to TNP by following the link below. Thank you for your support!

[Click here to donate to TNP](#)

TNP MERCH

Shop TNP apparel and accessories on our website! Proceeds help support the Tennessee Naturalist Program. **[Click here to shop now!](#)**

