

TNP VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JOHN HENKELMAN

BAYS MOUNTAIN CHAPTER, 2021

CERTIFIED TENNESSEE NATURALIST + 500 HOUR MILESTONE

TRAIL BUILDING/MAINTENANCE

TRAIL WORK IN ERWIN, TN



get to know...

JOHN HENKELMAN



Retired to Erwin in 2021, joined TNP, and immediately began volunteering at local outdoor organizations



Involved in habitat restoration, trail design and maintenance, and tree inventory volunteer projects



Current volunteer sites:

- **Nolichucky Restoration Project**
- **Cherokee National Forest, Northern Districts**
- **Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park**
- **Erwin National Fish Hatchery Naturalist Trail**



VOLUNTEER WORK

WHAT DOES TRAIL WORK INVOLVE?

Installation - building a trail

- Trail design
- Clearing and leveling
- Mulching
- Trail markers on trees
- Identifying points of interest
- Designing and installing kiosks

Maintenance - keeping the trail safe

- Remove downed branches and deadfalls
- Routing stream overflows
- Trim bushes, small trees, and low branches
- Remove rock falls, slides, and debris
- Repair steps
- Remove invasive plants

CHEROKEE NATIONAL FOREST

- Trail maintenance
 - Long distance trails
 - Wilderness areas
 - Streams, waterfalls, overlooks
- Carolina Hemlock Tree Inventory

NOLICHUCKY RESTORATION PROJECT

- River clean up
 - Remove Hurricane Helene construction, trash, and other non-natural stream debris
- Re-planting trees and native vegetation along the banks and in the basin
- Restore river basin to pre-Helene state

ROCKY FORK STATE PARK

- Trail maintenance
- Swimming holes
- Long distance trails

ERWIN NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY

- Trail work
 - Trail installation
 - Trail maintenance
- Provide access for discovering the other points of interest at the Hatchery

THE IMPACT OF TNP

TNP gave me the foundation required to have a sense of what is in the natural world around me. It introduced me to a number of instructors that continue to show up at Naturalist Rallies, and at the various sites I volunteer at, doing projects of their own. They have helped me find old growth forests and champion trees, and I have helped with their work.

I am quickly moving from the maintenance mode to leading hikes and tours at the various places I volunteer. I love hiking the mountain trails. **There is no better way to spend a day, except maybe showing trails that I have discovered to others to share in the wonder of this beautiful mountain wilderness.**



HOW IT STARTED

The Tennessee Naturalist Program introduced me to the variety of flora and fauna in East Tennessee. Combined with my ETSU Environmental Science class, I met a number of professors doing various projects. The many ETSU staff that are involved in Naturalist activities are helpful in creating a network to get things done and learn new skills and subjects. I was introduced several trails and rafting rivers - showing me the need for maintenance and attention if others were to enjoy the area.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, I was introduced to the whole community of environmentally aware people, organizations, and general public that work, recreate and want to **improve our outdoor accessibility and improve the quality of the many activities enjoyed in the mountains.**

Hurricane Helene was a unique opportunity that brought together so many people and organizations that wanted to help in recovery, and also improve what we have as we do that. It was encouraging to see so many people helping others in need, and continue to improve life so that **our new normal will be even better than before. It's been wonderful to be a part of this whole effort.**

VOLUNTEER IMPACT

I have learned so very many things - how to design and build a hiking trail, how to identify champion trees and now help State Park staff do the same, how to manage invasive plants, efficient ways to clean and maintain a trail, and how to work as a team extracting so many types of debris, from plastic piping to whole tractor trailer storage trailers.

With the river cleanup, I see rafters and kayakers using the river again and visitors returning to the various recreation areas in the National Forest along the river. I see the vegetation returning, bringing the river basin back into a green lush look again, without all the trash and debris.

As I clean trails to overlooks and waterfalls, I meet weekend hikers and help them find the key spots and hike safer along the trails. I see regular use of the trails by various groups of people, often having great conversations with them.

At the Hatchery, we now have visitors hiking the Naturalist Trail and we have a Certified Champion Tree now registered. The new signage should be installed this coming season.