

Tennes=Sierran

The bi-monthly state newsletter for the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

Volume 53, Number 3 - May / June 2020

Club Adapts to New Challenges

Both in Tennessee and nationally, the Sierra Club is stepping up to help lessen the impact of the pandemic.

Read the story on page 3.

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Bi-Monthly Newsletter for the Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club
Vol. 53, No. 3 - May / June 2020

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Sadie Corbutt, seen here with State Senator Richard Briggs, gave "bag lady" a whole new meaning at Conservation Education Day 2020 in Nashville. See page 5 for more.

Photo taken at LakeShore Park in Knoxville by Emily Ellis

Explore, Enjoy, and Protect

Tennes-Sierran

The bi-monthly newsletter of the
Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club

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CONTENT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Send all submissions as email attachments to news wrangler Rita Bullinger (wranglerSCTN@gmail.com) by the deadline.
2. Articles should be in Word or Notepad format and single spaced. Images should be in jpg or tif format.
3. Limit submissions to no more than 900 words.
4. Single space between paragraphs. Include a two-space indent at the beginning of each paragraph.
5. Spell out names of organizations, universities, etc., the first time they appear, with the initials in parentheses afterwards. Thereafter, use only the initials.
6. Submissions will be considered for publication based on the order received and at the editor's discretion.
7. Please direct any questions about submissions to the news wrangler.

Submission Deadlines

July / August Issue of *The Tennes-Sierran*:
May 31

June Issue of the Chapter E-newsletter:
May 22

Send submissions to

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

All Creatures Great and Small



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and small, needs defense”

- John Muir

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creatures, great and small.

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RETREAT SCHEDULE

Spring 2020	Booker T. Washington State Park	CANCELED
Fall 2020	Pickett State Park	October 23 - 25
Winter 2021	Cedar of Lebanon State Park	January 29 - 31
Spring 2021	Fall Creek Falls State Park	April 30 - May 2

COVID-19: Sierra Club Adapts to New Challenges

by Sinclair Sparkman, Communications Team Member

As society settles into a changed pace, the Sierra Club remains rooted in its mission to preserve the environment. March and April were tumultuous months for all of us. Many Tennesseans were affected by some of the 41 tornadoes that touched down across the Southeast on March 3. Those who did not suffer losses in the disaster have now been suffering from separation as we learn to cope with the threat of COVID-19 by avoiding physical proximity to others.

But during these uncertain times, we are learning to connect in meaningful ways through the use of technology and creative thinking. As we peer into the home offices, workspaces, and productivity nooks of our friends and colleagues via video chat, we find that social connecting itself isn't so hard, but it is physical distancing that stresses our relationships.

The national Sierra Club implemented significant changes in planned activities, as have so many organizations, beginning on March 12, by suspending all planned in-person events and outings for the foreseeable future. Even so, the Club has been working to stay in tune with everyone in its 64 chapters across the country through email outreach and open video calls. One such call was on April 1, when Sierra Club national leaders voiced Sierra Club's response to the pandemic in a video conference. Participating were Michael Brune (Executive Director), Hop Hopkins (Director of Strategic Partnerships), Leslie Fields (Director, Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships Program), and Jason Mark (Editor, *Sierra* magazine).

"We're currently looking into how far we're going to extend [event cancellations]. Our priority has been to maximize the safety of our staff and volunteers," Brune said. "We're also maximizing our own organizational stability. We are grateful that



Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club

we entered into this period in good and strong financial health, in part because of our generous donors."

Brune mentioned a number of concerns of focus during the crisis, which includes: helping those affected by utility shutoffs, whether it be ensuring clean water or electricity access; encouraging legislators to maximize benefits for everybody, not just a select few industries; preventing utilities from shutting off electricity and water supply to low income communities; maximizing a just recovery for workers and communities to make sure billions of dollars aren't going to oil, coal and gas industry bailouts, and ensuring the clean energy industry and its

workers see the same benefits as other businesses.

"One example is in Puerto Rico where the small business agency did not receive funding as it should have," Fields said. "We are working on those inequities to make sure these important industries and their workers receive the help they need right now."

In addition, Hopkins said that the Club is working alongside other organiza-

tions to support moratoriums on mortgage and rent. "The Sierra Club sees itself as part of an interconnected, multi-issue movement and we contribute to that broader movement by being clear about where we lead and show up, he said. "Moratoriums on mortgage and rent are not necessarily our main issues, but we have partners that we work with that do that and we support the larger social justice movement. And we find it very important and necessary to stand in a position of solidarity and not charity [with those] we work alongside, co-creating with our partners for the good of all, especially in times of disruption,"

A recent statement from the national Sierra Club emphasizes the importance of our interconnectedness: "Our environment is more than just beautiful landscapes; it is also the world that surrounds us: the air we breathe, the water we drink, the communities where we live. It's critical that we stand in solidarity through public health emergencies such as the one we are currently facing,"

"We know we can adapt and evolve our work. Just as nature has done, the Sierra Club continues to adapt, innovate, and connect, person to person, to unite individuals in different ways. Going forward, we'll continue to build a powerful force for protecting our communities and each other."

—Leslie Fields, Director, Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships Program, said.

In the interest of solidarity, the Club redirected its fundraising temporarily during the first couple of weeks of the pandemic crisis. "As we have done under extreme weather events in the past, we helped fundraise for other organizations. Members have contributed more than \$2.5 million to other organizations in need and I'm really proud of our Sierra Club community for doing that," Brune said.

In Tennessee, Sierra Club members have continued to stay connected by participating in calls and organizing virtually. The well-anticipated spring retreat is canceled, though important business will still be conducted through online communication as needed.

All Tennessee Chapter and Group events have been suspended through the end of May, including outings and

group programs, according to Mac Post, the Tennessee Sierra Club Chapter Chair.

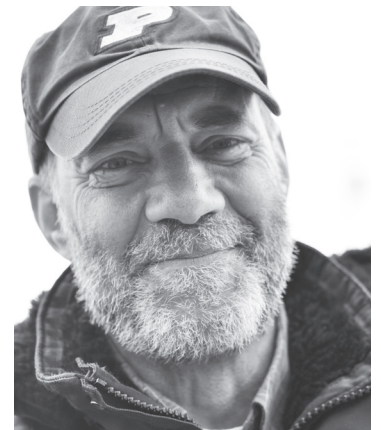
"Unfortunately, it is impossible to replace these important outdoor activities with electronic equivalents, especially during this exciting time of the year when our natural world is in full spring awakening," Post said.

Though group activities are suspended, the outdoors remains a center point of focus for many members who are staying active individually while keeping to physical distancing standards.

We may not know what the future will hold, but Sierra Club leaders are resolute in their belief that moving through and beyond this disruption will bring members and partners

closer together and create new avenues for collaboration. "When we can get back together again in person, we will be even stronger and better able to make sure that everyone has a safe and clean environment," Fields said.

Contact the writer at sinclairsparkman@gmail.com



Mac Post, Sierra Club Tennessee State Chair

HBG Political Committee Approaches 2020

by Kent Minault, Member, State Chapter Political Committee

Things sure are different this year. The Harvey Broome Group (HBG) political committee is as committed as ever to mobilizing an energetic membership and electing climate champions to public office. But last year we got behind candidates with strong environmental platforms, worked through a largely civil campaign, got out the vote through phone banks and canvassing, and ended up with most of our endorsees in office. This year we will focus on the United States District 2 Congressional race playing out on a far wider geographic area, and since it is a national race, we will likely see the emergence of snarky partisanship and rough play. And all this will happen against the background of COVID-19 and the proscriptions against large crowds and public meetings. We'll have to work a lot harder and with our hands tied in a number of ways.

At least one thing is easier. We won't have to write up our own questionnaire. Former Chapter Political Chair Bill Moll sent us the federal questionnaire for 2020 and told us we can't change it under any circumstances. The Chapter Political Committee will evaluate the responses to the questions and maybe even consider our own local recommendations, then send on their recommendation to the National Political Committee. The process went fairly quickly in 2018 and we hope the same will be true this year. (continued on page 6)

Chapter Spring Retreat Canceled

by Mac Post, Tennessee State Chapter Chair

Amidst the ongoing circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and with guidance from Sierra Club operations, we have made the decision to cancel our Tennessee Chapter Spring Retreat, which was to be held the third weekend of May at Booker T. Washington State Park. This was a difficult decision to make, given the significance of our retreats for sharing our work and experiences across the state, develop collaborations, spark new ideas, and spending some time having fun together.

Many of us were really looking forward to going to Booker T. Washington State Park and experiencing this historically significant park first hand. Hopefully we can schedule a retreat there in the near future.

Canceling, however, is what we believe to be the most responsible course given the uncertainty we are navigating. For the next few months, protecting our families, our communities, and ourselves is the highest priority and we have a social responsibility to be good actors.

Please join us for our next Tennessee Chapter retreat October 23-25, 2020 at Pickett CCC Memorial State Park. This will be a fun-filled retreat with hikes, youth activities, and outings leader trainings at a great time to be in the Cumberland Mountains.

Contact the writer at mpost3116@gmail.com

Meet The New Chickasaw Group Co-Chairs: Ramie Bell and Tony Cernosek

Ramie Bell's commitment to the environment blossomed during 160 hours of trail maintenance in the beautiful Allegheny National Forest with the Student Conservation Association in high school. Following this, back in Memphis, Ramie joined the Sierra Club Chickasaw Group and has truly grown from the experience. Chickasaw Group members encouraged Ramie to find her voice and to foster environmental stewardship through developing individual connections.



Ramie's interest in environmental injustices grew engaging with the community while tabling at local events. The more people she spoke with, the more ideas and questions she had. "People react to environmental injustice so passionately," Ramie said.

"They are either grateful to be informed, ready to share something with you, want to disagree, or a combination of them all."

Her interests snowballed. Ramie volunteered at Overton Park Old Growth Forest and volunteered with the local food movement. She then attended a Youth Empowerment Summit (Y.E.S.!) led by Sierra Club environmental leadership-trained high schoolers.

At the weeklong summit, she participated in confidence building activities and leadership workshops that taught her to organize meetings, events, and environmental action. She went on to be a board member of this student-led organization hoping to involve Tennessee youth in environmental activism and volunteer work. She developed skills in youth and community outreach, planned days of action and organized two high school environmental leadership week-long overnight camps.

Following this, Ramie attended Warren Wilson College, in Asheville, North Carolina, where she supported the successful divestment campaign, spent school breaks volunteering at the Mountain Justice Convergence and at climate change marches, and constructed an industry level compost system on the student renovations work crew. In a gap year from school, Ramie thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail before returning to Memphis to pursue a degree in Civil Engineering.

Ramie has been on the Sierra Club Chickasaw Group Executive Committee for a year now. As the Chickasaw co-chair she is excited to support the group in expanding the volunteer network and opportunities and bolstering local communication efforts.

Contact Ramie at ramie.bell@gmail.com

A native Memphian, Tony Cernosek was a spelling bee contestant in grade school, a straight-A student in high school, and always an avid reader with a passion for science and he realizes now he should have been a biologist. He studied chemical engineering at Christian Brothers University, and electronics in the USAF.



He has always loved to watch plants grow, enjoyed being outdoors and achieved Eagle Scout rank. (His strongest talent? Building fires!) In 1990 he designed and built a passive solar cabin (without a nail gun), and is now developing a small nature preserve/wildlife habitat near Sardis Lake, Mississippi. He is also designing an off-grid "demo" house.

He was a computer programmer for 16 years, helped start two companies, and was an information technology manager for 11 years, a position in which he also designed and managed an email database, created marketing emails, wrote the company newsletter and developed training materials.

After retiring in December 2016, he became more focused on global warming news. In January 2019, inspired by Greta Thunberg's early TED Talk, he created his own presentation about global warming, which is focused on outreach to the public, and designed to inspire personal, individual action. The presentation will be displayed at libraries and other public places.

On Earth Day 2019, he joined Sierra Club. In September he helped organize the Youth Climate Strike in Memphis. He is now studying the psychology of effectively motivating people, constantly expanding and improving his display for maximum effect, and developing systems for rapid, widespread distribution. He will continue this work both within Sierra Club and independently. He plans to share his material with any environmental group that will use it.

In January 2020, he was elected co-chair of the Chickasaw Group. Using his business experience, he is now helping increase membership, educate and motivate new members, and utilize volunteers more efficiently.

He is also a member of the Climate Reality Project (Al Gore's international group) and will attend the formal training in June. He will then use their excellent presentation, hopefully doing a live presentation at least monthly. "It's for Greta," he says. "It's for the kids."

Contact Tony at tonycernosek@gmail.com.

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT COAL ASH?

Our Anderson County Commissioners need your power behind them to resist TVA's proposed new Bull Run coal ash landfill. You're invited to a Public Hearing at 4 pm Tuesday, February 18, in Room 312 of the Anderson County Courthouse in Clinton.

What do you know - or feel - about these issues?

Coal ash toxicity ~ Cancer or other health concerns ~ Worker safety
Groundwater and drinking water contamination ~ Wind-blown fly ash dust
Past air pollution ~ Asbestos ~ Illegal dumping of coal ash from other sites
Removing vs. capping in place the main wet fly ash pond ~ Removing coal ash by sealed train or barge ~ Proper cleanup of the plant's site when it shuts down in 2023 ~ Future county tax income ~ Visions for future site use ~ Restoring the beauty of the lakefront site ~ Restoring property values

If you can't come, before the hearing, make your views known to County Law Director Jay Yeager, jyeager@aclawdirector.com, 865-457-6290, or at 101 South Main Street, Suite 310, Clinton, TN 37716-3619. And contact your Mayors, City Council, and Commissioners. Thank you!

Anderson County Unites Against New Coal Ash Landfill

by Todd Waterman, Harvey Broome Group and Bull Run CAG member

It was standing room only at the February 18 hearing, and out in the hall, and all the media were watching as Bull Run Coal Plant's closest neighbors, coal ash workers, scientists, engineers, mayors, and environmentalists all let TVA know loud and clear we weren't accepting a new coal ash landfill here. Our grassroots organizing team, frustrated by the forced cancellation of two successive community meetings, had teamed up with commissioners, local media, and municipal officials to turn out 150 people for the Anderson County Commission's public hearing on the proposed dump.

Commission Chair Tracy Wandell said they'd give us many more chances to weigh in. Oak Ridge City Council plans a public hearing. Anderson's Zoning Commission has happily discovered the landfill site is still zoned residential.

The county is insisting the Thacker case ruling that TVA is a public utility, not a government entity, means it's subject to Anderson's Jackson Law, barring it from



Above, nearby resident speaks out.

Photo by Todd Waterman

dumping in the new landfill. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, prompted by our comments, is asking TVA to justify once again its permit application to reroute the Worthington Branch for the landfill now that Bull Run will be closing in 2023. And we organizers are researching legal and engineering coal ash precedents to better inform the public at yet more meetings. How much more public pressure can TVA withstand?

Contact the writer at jtoddw@gmail.com

Advance Showing: TVA's Water Monitoring Program at Bull Run

by Todd Waterman, HGB Group and Bull Run CAG Member

On February 13, five days before the Anderson County Commission's public hearing on TVA's widely-condemned proposal for a new coal fly ash landfill at Bull Run (see opposite page), Jodie Birdwell, TVA's General Manager in charge of moving wet coal ash to dry storage, showed Bull Run Community Action Group (CAG) members a new PowerPoint detailing TVA's Water Monitoring Program at Bull Run. Her presentation covered water quality as it relates to surface, ground, and drinking water, monitoring programs, and regulating agencies.

Although the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) is the regulating agency which mandated and now oversees the ongoing Bull Run Environmental Investigation Plan (EIP) for which the testing is primarily being conducted,



Bull Run Fossil Plant reflected in Melton Hill Reservoir

no TDEC officials were on hand as they had been for a previous meeting on coal ash and the mystery dust Bull Run's neighbors had thought looked like fly ash. Thus the program was an informative but TVA-spun presentation on TVA's thorough-sounding test regimen. See one slide from the presentation to the right. You can view the full slideshow on the Bull Run Fossil Plant website.

Tennessee Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate Randy McNally, Anderson County's Senator, after being thanked for attending, said "I'm concerned, too." Several of Bull Run's nearby neighbors were also on hand, and got in some tough questions. Ben Pounds of *The Oak Ridger* was the only reporter.

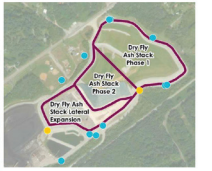
Two critical questions in the Q&A that went unanswered included: "The reason we're all here is because we know coal ash is toxic. So why is TVA making more of it? We know Bull Run emits 2,700,000 tons of CO2 a year even at only 30% capacity. So why is TVA still burning coal?" and "Why hasn't TVA included shipping coal ash by sealed train or barge to someplace where it could be more safely stored, for example in Utah's salt desert, as an alternative in its TDEC permit application justifying its locally hated proposal for a new on-site coal ash landfill at Bull Run?"

On March 13, TVA indefinitely postponed the next Bull Run CAG meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Planned for April 9 at the Bull Run Fossil Plant, it was to have included the conclusion of a fascinating plant tour cut short to allow enough time for the meeting following it, and hadn't covered fly ash collection and disposal.

Contact the writer at jtoddw@gmail.com

Groundwater Program Summary

- 30 monitoring wells
- Over 750 samples collected since 1988
- 5 wells contain either arsenic, cobalt, lithium or molybdenum above drinking water standards
- Remedies are being evaluated
- Groundwater monitoring and reporting will continue for minimum of 30 years after closure



12 TVA

The yellow dots indicate where the exceedences were found: on the left, beside Melton Hill Reservoir/Bull Run Creek, and on the right, beside the new, lined dry fly ash stack next to Claxton Community Park.



Photo by Todd Waterman

After the meeting TVA's Knoxville P.R. person Scott Brooks (foreground, right) told Ben Pounds (foreground, left) coal ash was "nonhazardous waste." While the EPA does classify coal ash as "nonhazardous," many Kingston cleanup survivors know all too well that's not true.

Conservation Education Day 2020



Pictured above are some of the 60 members of the Sierra Club, Tennessee Conservation Voters, Tennessee Environmental Council and Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light who met with 50 legislators at this year's Conservation Education Day in February, built on the success of the previous two years. Sadie Corbutt, a member of the Chickasaw Group, made a big impact as the plastic bag lady (see front cover), posing with several key legislators and making an appearance at a committee hearing. The plastic bag ban bill, which would no longer allow stores to give out single-use plastic bags, did not pass this year. Because of the hard work of the Sierra Club and other organizations, it should pass next year. We did change some votes on the bill, but not in time for the legislative calendar.

Each year, we establish more relationships. We need to keep that connection up throughout the year to make the biggest impact. To learn more about Conservation Education Day, contact Bill Moll, Chapter Conservation Chair at 404-401-7899 or whmoll@aol.com.

Lessons from the Trail

By Joan Tomlinson, Trail Name Blue Jay

The Sounds of Silence



After a day of hiking while on a long backpacking journey, I enjoy the task of finding a good campsite for the night. It can be a bit stressful if the terrain or weather is challenging or if I've put in a lot of miles that day. More often than not, though, the finding of a good site is an interesting part of my day. I love my time in camp when I quiet the chatter in my head and become awash in my senses, and a good campsite can enhance the experience. I remember one place I camped along the Pacific Crest Trail in southern Oregon

that was at the base of a stone wall, had some interesting vegetation nearby, and was protected from any wind that might happen by. I was the only one camping there. As my evening progressed, after the noise of my camp stove and the slurping of my soup were gone, my attention was drawn to how quiet it was. Most of my nights on the trail have some sound, even if it's subtle and barely heard. This night, though, was silent. No tree frogs, not a single cricket, no wind rustling the leaves overhead, no scampering critters, no woodpeckers or owls, no flowing water in the distance. There was a slight eeriness to this silence, and it was memorable because it was so unusual.

My time in and around wild places has shaped me. These wilderness experiences have opened in me the desire to connect what I have experienced out there to what I experience off-trail and at home. I find great wisdom in the natural world, and I've wondered what insights into life I might find in my night of stillness and silence. That night in Oregon has shown me that there are many forms of silence, and they are not all serene. Silence can have an edge - and a call to action.

If there is a toddler in my house and she is quiet too long, I'm motivated to see into what she's gotten. If a server passes silently by my table and I want more iced tea (or beer), I'm motivated to get his attention. If my repairman has the guts of my washer strewn over my laundry room floor and leaves to get an essential part, his silence is deafening after a few hours. Silence is not always golden.

Silence also can come in the form of inaction. In this critical election year, we - you and I - must not be silent. Not if we care about our beautiful planet. Not if we care about those who reside here: trees, polar bears, blue jays, my children, your grandchildren, my community, your friends, those who are different, wildflowers, gray whales. We are tied inextricably to Earth; she is our common denominator. We all sink or swim with the health of our planet. Earth is not an endless resource to be plundered. She is our home. She is worth our time and attention.

The Sierra Club sees the importance of having environmental champions at all levels of elected office. To ensure the Sierra Club only endorses the best environmental candidates, volunteers and staff have developed a multi-step process and criteria for selecting which candidates receive our support. Watch for these endorsements as the year progresses. Please stand with the Sierra Club and vote for the candidates we endorse. The leaders of our nation can lead the world in addressing the issues created by our changing planet. Let's elect those who will. And the time merely to vote is over. Our actions must not be silent. Our actions must be commensurate with the risk at hand. Throw some energy and time into volunteering for the candidates we endorse. Make a plan for when and what you can contribute. Involve and engage your family and friends. If you've never volunteered for a candidate, this is the year to give it a try. If you have experience volunteering for candidates, up your time. Collectively we can make a difference.

In this time of fear and uncertainty created by Covid-19, we still must keep an eye on the November elections. Perhaps more than ever, we must elect people for our highest offices - President, Senate, House - who will use science and facts and the advice of the best professionals to make sound decisions for our country and the world about our health, social and economic justice, and our climate. This election season may be hugely different from those in the past because of the coronavirus. We should not reduce our efforts to elect those whose values match the Sierra Club's values, but we may have to change the form of those efforts. The impacts of climate change are not in the news everyday like Covid-19, but they have not gone away. Science has long indicated that many of the root causes of climate change also increase the risk of pandemics. It's all connected.

There are times in wild places when the silence of a sunset is golden. There

While We're Stuck in the House

by Tony Cernosek, Chickasaw Group Co-Chair

Being confined at home is frustrating for all of us, but you can make it a great opportunity. Here are some helpful tips.

- Turn down the noise. Have you noticed how many commercials you see on TV? Or how few shows interest you? I was only watching Nature, Nova, and PBS - which were available for free on the internet. So, I cancelled my cable contract and hooked the internet to my wide screen TV.
- Discover a gold mine of information. A whole new world is waiting for you to explore on the web: On YouTube - Educational videos on every subject, including environmentalism. On TED.com - the latest thinking by experts on many topics. A great way to expand your mind.
- Become a self-taught environmental expert. Knowledge empowers you to answer questions with confidence. Search for your topic of interest.
- Read a book! You can't get a full understanding of a subject from a Google search, Wikipedia, or a video. You're getting small disconnected pieces. Lack of broad understanding can lead you to believe fake news. Reading is still the best way to get a complete picture of any subject. Reading empowers you to think for yourself.
- Take written notes. None of us can remember all the good things we read or hear. Like fleeting butterflies, you have to capture them. Later, one little idea may be exactly what you need.
- Imagine new ways to be an activist. Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than information." Re-read your notes and visualize new possibilities. What are other activists doing?
- Talk to others who share your passion. Discuss your new ideas, especially with people in your "action group." Develop new plans to empower what you're doing.
- Write a summary of your vision and action plan. What's your group's goal or mission? Why should a volunteer get excited about helping? What specific actions can they do? Type a descriptive handout to give new members.
- Create something beautiful. We all know the environment is being destroyed - by habitat loss and by overuse of pesticides and herbicides. To fight back, I cancelled my lawn service and planted a wildflower garden to feed beneficial insects and birds. I'm putting up a sign "I Love Butterflies," along with a flyer to explain what I'm doing, to draw my neighbors into environmentalism.

Contact the writer at tonycernosek@gmail.com

HBG Political Committee (continued from page 3)

We've gotten started by getting the questionnaires to Congressman Tim Burchett and candidate Renee Hoyos. We asked that they return the answered questionnaires to us within three weeks. Good relationships are in place with both campaign managers, and we look forward to studying their positions.

The real challenge will be handling communications and get out the vote campaigns over a wider geographical area. Not to mention the constraints we might experience if social distancing remains in force throughout the summer and into the fall. We're already communicating with Sierra Club members in other counties who are willing to be focal points for local activities in their communities. We've been upgrading membership lists and getting rid of obsolete phone numbers. After we get the questionnaires back and the candidates' records and positions are compared, and we have a definite endorsement from the National Political Team, we'll swing into action to mobilize our membership and allies to get a serious bump in voter turnout.

Contact the writer at kminault@gmail.com

are times when the silence of a campsite has an eerie edge to it. Now - today, this summer, this fall - is the time for us to be like a raging mountain stream swollen from a heavy rain. Let's not be silent in this election year. Let's ROAR!!

Blue Jay seeks the wisdom of Earth in wild places. She has completed hikes of the Appalachian Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail, and all the trails in the Smokies. She is a member of the Harvey Broome Group and may be contacted at BlueJayAT@gmail.com

Dear Eartha :

Advice from An Eco-Guru

Dear Eartha,

All around me as the coronavirus infection numbers shoot up, the feeling of dread and fear seeps in dulling my brainstem. I'm online most of the day with work and kids' assignments. Can you offer some ways to ground myself in real time and off-line during the COVID-19 pandemic?

—Back to Nature Wannabe

Dear B2N Wannabe,

Absolutely! I've got you! But first, remember, we are in this together. These are strange, eerie times. Doing natural acts will produce grounding, peaceful feelings immediately. All of these are also kid friendly.

- If you have house plants, get close to them. Bring them to your kitchen to really nurture them. Water, prune off dead leaves, repot if rootbound. Let them hang out in the kitchen sink. Soak up the natural energy and green vitality. Then, as the afternoon passes, return them to their spots throughout your house.
- If you have yard space or containers on a patio or porch, get your hands into more dirt. Pull weeds, plant flowers or herbs – it is spring after all! Just be in the present moment with nature, no earbuds or music. Feel the breeze against your skin and the sun on your face.
- Take a walk. Smell the amazing scents in the air of cherry, apple, and lilac blossoms. Stop along the way to stand under a shower of blossom confetti and feel the breeze and the fragrance in the air. Or walk briskly noticing your amazing body pulsing, lifting, pushing as your breath quickens. Just being outdoors can be incredibly peaceful if you listen to yourself.
- Bake or cook delicious healthy food from scratch. Bon Appetit, NYTimes, and Martha Stewart are a few of my favorite sites. If cooking stresses you out, try the No Knead Bread recipe or chocolate chip cookies or French toast. Be in the present moment nurturing yourself and your loved ones through the joy of slow cooking.
- Make something creative with your hands, like embroidery, Soul Collaging (google it!), knitting, needlepoint, or crochet. Put on soothing music that doesn't jar your spirits. Practice breathing and staying in the moment.
- Play with your pets. Get out that laser pen for your kitty or roll on the ground with your dog. Have you ever noticed when you sit on your floor or cushion to meditate how your pets come around to be with you? You may not want them to – Watch out! Don't knock over my candle! – yet they want to be with you on their level.
- While you're on the ground, practice restorative yoga – go slowly, listen to your body and your breath. What are they telling you to do? Maybe just lying on your mat or on the living room rug listening to the traffic or the chimes on your neighbor's balcony or the purr of the dishwasher cycling water can all be incredibly restorative. Notice what you hear and breathe into that sound. No need to change anything. No where to go, nothing to do, no one to be.

Hope these ideas help.

Eartha

[Dear Eartha is written by our Chapter News Wrangler
Rita Bullinger – wranglersctn@gmail.com]

Starlings Over Old City

by Alan May



I decided to sing to a paper birch
the wind was whipping the limbs and leaves
around I found the beauty
of all of this
annoying I left the park
I walked down Jackson Ave
and sat under the overpass I laughed
at a lone starling trying
to poke his head into an empty
beer can I sang to the bird
and it sang back then
it flipped its white-tipped glossy
black wings
and disappeared
I looked up and saw
the murmuration move
like a billowing sheet
of hard rain I sang
to the birds and they sang back
as they tumbled over
and around themselves
and I felt myself
rise and disperse and
reassemble and flow
oh to wind and weave over
the city streets



Alan May lives in Knoxville, Tennessee. Read more of his work at alan-may.com

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Thanks to These Generous Donors in Support of the Defenders Fund

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Paula Hedlund — Gene and Ruth Van Horn — JoAnn McIntosh — Dr. Kenneth Nickerson — William and Margaret Howell
Andrew Abernathy — Your Name Here!**

Chapter Works with Local Power Companies to Promote “Round It Up” Programs

by JoAnn McIntosh, Chair, Clarksville Conservation Committee

Does your local power company (LPC) have a “round it up” program that rounds up your monthly bill to the nearest dollar in order to fund charitable projects such as energy efficiency for low-income families? The Tennessee Chapter is working now to support utilities throughout the state in developing these programs before a state law restricts their authority to do so.

In a letter being sent to Tennessee’s 82 LPCs, the Chapter reports that in 2019, a state law was passed regulating the ability of LPCs to operate “round it up” programs to fund charitable purposes such as energy efficiency upgrades for low-income, energy-burdened communities. The new law requires LPCs to (1) notify their customers before November 2020 that they have an “opt-out” program, if they do, and that the customer has the right to opt out of such program; and (2) if an LPC wishes to establish such a program on or after January 1, 2021, they “shall not enroll any customer into the program without the express consent of the customer.”

Studies have shown that asking prior consent of customers results in very low rates of customer participation: 1.5-5% for such “opt-in” programs, compared to 50-85% participation for “opt-out” programs. For that reason, the

Chapter is urging all LPCs who do not currently offer an opt-out program to establish one before the end of 2020 deadline.

With such a program in place, the cost to each customer would be less than \$12 a year, but the millions of dollars generated could provide life-changing energy efficiency upgrades, particularly in low-income communities. These programs provide a means to vastly reduce people’s utility bills. They also create jobs and stimulate local economies. Dollar for dollar, they are the cheapest way to retire polluting energy sources and reduce greenhouse gasses. And they provide LPCs an opportunity to help their customers help each other.

If you can assist in the Chapter’s effort by contacting your LPC, please sign up here:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/round-it>

Contact the writer at mcijoann@gmail.com



Don’t Be a Stranger!

Keep up-to-date with when meetings happen online and eventually (Oh Happy Day!) in person.

The regular meeting schedule is posted below. Scan this QR Code or follow the link to go to the Tennessee Chapter Sierra Club Website. Scroll down to find the calendar and check for updates on virtual meetings, and, when they resume, in-person meetings.



<https://www.sieraclub.org/tennessee>

Seeking Passionate Writers

The *Tennes-Sierran* is looking for passionate news and feature writers to cover important Tennessee news about conservation. We’re especially interested in writers with background in environmental issues. If you are an experienced writer and would like to be a part of the Sierra Club movement to protect Tennessee’s environment, please contact Emily Ellis, editor, by email tnsierran.editor@gmail.com or phone at 865-924-3882.

Defender Chair Needed

The Sierra Club Tennessee Chapter needs someone to take over fundraising for the Sierra Club Defenders of Tennessee, our program for lobbying the Tennessee State Legislature. We have a lobbyist who represents us, and his salary needs to be funded. The work can all be done from home. Please contact Sherry Loller:

sherryloller@hotmail.com or 615-889-2968

Schedule for Group and Regional Conservation Committee Meetings

PROGRAM MEETINGS: The regular schedule is listed below. It is highly unlikely that May program meetings will be held. June meetings are also in question.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: Some Groups are holding executive committee meetings on electronic platforms. Contact your Group Chair for details.

We will follow the guidance provided by the Sierra Club national office regarding holding in-person meetings.

To determine a meeting status, visit <https://www.sierraclub.org/tennessee/> (scan the QR Code above or type it in). Scroll down to view the events calendar.

Questions? Contact your group chair. See page 2 of this paper for contact information.

Group Business Meetings

Group	Date	Location	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 5/4, 6/1, 7/6	Pilgrim Congregational Church, 400 Glenwood Dr., Chattanooga	6:30 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Wed 5/6, 6/3, 7/1	Cheffies Cafe, 483 High Point Terrace, Memphis	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/26, 6/23, 7/28	The Church of the Savior, 934 N. Weisgarber Rd. Knoxville	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Mon 5/18, 6/15, 7/20	House of Kabob, 216 Thompson Lane, Nashville	6:30 PM

Group Program Meetings

Group	Date	Location	Time
Cherokee (Chattanooga)	Mon 6/22, 7/27	Unitarian Universalist Church, 3224 Navajo Dr., Chattanooga No program meeting in May	7:00 PM
Chickasaw (Memphis)	Tue 5/21, 6/18, 7/16	Benjamin Hooks Public Library, 3030 Poplar Ave, Memphis	6:30 PM
Harvey Broome (Knoxville)	Tue 5/12, 6/9, 7/14	Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, 2931 Kingston Pike	7:00 PM
Middle TN (Nashville)	Thu 5/14, 6/11, 7/9	Radnor Lake Nature Center, 1160 Otter Creek RD, Nashville	7:00 PM

Regional Conservation Committee Business Meetings

Committee	Date	Location	Time
Clarksville	Tue 5/19, 6/16, 7/21	Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library, 350 Pageant Ln, Clarksville	6:00 PM
CareNET (Rogersville)	Thu 5/7, 6/4, 7/2	St. Henry Catholic Church, 114 Highway 70 North, Rogersville	6:00 PM
Watauga (Mountain City)	Tue 5/12, 6/9, 7/14	R&D Campground Pavilion 500 Mining Town Rd Mountain City	5:00 PM