

**SATURDAY MORNING PROGRAM (9:30 a.m.)**

- ◆ **Monica Johnson** “*Roan Mountain State Park Hurricane Helene Recovery and Eastern Hellbender Research*”



**Speaker bio:** With over twenty years of experience in the Tennessee State Parks system, Monica Johnson brings extensive leadership and field expertise to her role as Park Manager at Roan Mountain State Park. She has demonstrated a strong ability to engage volunteers and visitors alike, connecting them to the park’s natural and cultural resources. Monica oversees diverse park operations, including campground, camp store, cabins, visitor center museum, gift shop, day-use facilities, and a variety of seasonal and full-time staff. She holds a Master of Science degree in Parks and Recreation Management from Middle Tennessee State University. Monica is also the author of *Benny the Hellbender: Don’t Dam the Doe*, a children’s book promoting river conservation and environmental education. Outside of work, Monica enjoys hiking, photography, rock climbing, and inspiring the next generation to explore and protect Tennessee’s natural treasures.

- ◆ **Dr. Blaine Schubert** “*The Gray Fossil Site, Appalachian Bears, and Beyond*”



**Speaker bio:** Dr. Blaine Schubert is a vertebrate paleontologist at East Tennessee State University. There he serves as the Executive Director of the Center of Excellence in Paleontology, which oversees the Gray Fossil Site & Museum. He is also Professor in the Department of Geosciences where he teaches courses in

paleontology. Dr. Schubert’s research focuses on late Cenozoic amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Primary areas of concentration include the paleobiology of prehistoric bears, Pleistocene extinctions, and cave paleontology.

- ◆ **Kelly Porter** “*Slowing Down to See More: The Benefits of Nature Journaling*”



**Speaker Bio:** Kelly Celeste Porter has been a member of the faculty at East Tennessee State University since 2014, where she teaches graphic design and visual communication. She holds an M.F.A. in Graphic Design from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and a B.F.A. in Graphic Communication from the University of Southern Mississippi. Prior to academia, Kelly worked as a designer and design researcher with Ryobi Power Tools and for cultural and tourism organizations including the B.B. King Museum, Mississippi Delta Tourism, and the Mississippi Blues Trail. Her teaching and creative practice emphasize cross-disciplinary, real-world, and service-learning experiences, often developed in collaboration with campus partners and the surrounding community. Kelly’s work in branding, identity, sustainable design, and photography has received local, regional, national, and recognition. In 2024, she earned her Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification from the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. Her current work focuses on the intersections of environmental education, sustainability, and visual communication.



**LUNCH (12:30p.m.)**

**POST-LUNCH ACTIVITIES (1:30p.m.)**

**19TH ANNUAL  
FRIENDS OF ROAN  
MOUNTAIN  
WINTER NATURALISTS’  
RALLY**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026**

**Speakers include:**

**Monica Johnson, CPRP, M.S., CIG**  
“*Roan Mountain State Park Hurricane Helene Recovery and Eastern Hellbender Research*”

**Dr. Blaine Schubert**  
“*The Gray Fossil Site, Appalachian Bears, and Beyond*”

**Kelly Porter, M.F.A.**  
“*Slowing Down to See More: The Benefits of Nature Journaling*”



**Join Friends of Roan Mountain on Saturday, February 21st at Roan Mountain State Park for a winter celebration of the Roan Highlands!** Since 2007 the Winter Naturalists' Rally has drawn hardy nature enthusiasts from far & wide to Roan Mountain on a Saturday close to Valentine’s Day. The 2026 Winter Rally continues this celebration of our natural world by providing expert speakers on topics concerning the environs of the Roan Highlands. Top naturalists volunteer their time and energy to make the event both enjoyable and educational for people of all ages.

**Online registration available!**  
friendsofroamtn.org

**GARY BARRIGAR, PRESIDENT  
FRIENDS OF ROAN MOUNTAIN  
708 ALLEN AVENUE  
ELIZABETHTON, TN 37643**



**OR CURRENT RESIDENT**

**NONPROFIT ORG  
PRSR STD  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
ELIZABETHTON TN  
PERMIT NO. 20**

2026 Winter Rally Registration Form

(Online and on-site registration also available)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Members, please check if this is a change of address.

Registration Fee:

(Members & children - FREE REGISTRATION)

Non-member Adults # \_\_\_\_ @ \$10.00 ea.

Fee Amount = \$ \_\_\_\_

Bag Lunch (Conference Center at 12:30 p.m.)

Note your sandwich choice(s) below:

# \_\_\_\_ Turkey/Swiss    # \_\_\_\_ Ham/Cheese

# \_\_\_\_ Chicken Salad    # \_\_\_\_ Pimento Cheese

Total # \_\_\_\_ @ \$9.50 ea. = Lunch Amount \$ \_\_\_\_

LUNCH BY PRE-PAID RESERVATION ONLY  
RESERVATION DEADLINE: TUES., FEB. 4th

Friends of Roan Mountain Membership:

Membership status:

Current member (no payment needed) ☐

Renewing member ☐    New member ☐

Individual \$20 \_\_\_\_    Family \$30 \_\_\_\_

Student \$10 \_\_\_\_    Corporate \$50 \_\_\_\_

Lifetime Ind. \$350 \_\_\_\_    Lifetime Family \$450 \_\_\_\_

Membership Amount = \$ \_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED = \$

MAIL THIS FORM ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK  
PAYABLE TO FRIENDS OF ROAN MOUNTAIN to:

NANCY BARRIGAR, TREASURER  
708 ALLEN AVENUE, ELIZABETHTON, TN 37643

SCHEDULE OF  
EVENTS



Saturday, February 21, 2026

Roan Mountain State Park, Conference Center

- <http://tnstateparks.com/parks/about/roan-mountain>
- Address: 1011 TN-143, Roan Mountain, TN
- Phone: (423) 772-0190

9:00 a.m.      REGISTRATION

9:30 a.m.      INDOOR PROGRAM BEGINS

9:35 a.m. — Monica Johnson “Roan Mountain  
State Park Hurricane Helene Recovery and Eastern  
Hellbender Research”

10:30 a.m. — Dr. Blaine Schubert “The Gray Fossil  
Site, Appalachian Bears, and Beyond”

11:30 a.m. — Kelly Porter “Slowing Down to See  
More: The Benefits of Nature Journaling”

12:30 p.m.    LUNCH  
Bag lunches available by pre-paid reservation.  
Deadline for reservations is Tuesday, Feb. 17th

1:30 p.m. POST-LUNCH ACTIVITIES

Indoor Program: “Seeing, Not Perfecting: A  
Beginner’s Nature Journaling”    Leader: Kelly  
Porter. Materials provided

Hikes will leave from the Roan Mountain State  
Park Conference Center. Pre-registration for  
these activities is not required. Meet trip leaders  
at the Roan Mountain State Park Conference  
Center at 1:15.

⇒ Hike #1. Peg Leg Mine Trip leader: Philip Hysten,  
Park Ranger at Roan Mountain State Park. (easy,  
kid friendly)

⇒ Hike #2. Fungus Finds in Winter Trip Leader:  
Mike Gartin  
Roan Mountain has many deep connections to the  
boreal forest. Learn about these ancient  
similarities while exploring the ecology of winter  
in the spruce-fir forest. (carpooling; moderate; kid  
-friendly)

To register Online and access other  
resources for Friends of Roan Mountain



- \* Visit our website: [friendsofroanmtn.org](http://friendsofroanmtn.org)
- \* Follow us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/friendsofroanmountain](https://facebook.com/friendsofroanmountain)

WHAT WE DO

In addition to rallies, the Friends  
of Roan Mountain provides  
volunteer labor and grants  
to support Roan Mountain State  
Park and the U. S. Forest  
Service in their naturalist and  
environmental missions, as well  
as scientific studies and  
conservation and restoration  
projects on the Roan.

- \* Check out our species lists from previous  
studies: [friendsofroanmtn.org/species-database](http://friendsofroanmtn.org/species-database)



LODGING

North Carolina:

Chinquapin Inn, Penland, NC (828) 765-0064

Holston Camp and Retreat Center, Banner Elk, NC  
(844) 465-7866

Richmond Inn Bed & Breakfast, Spruce Pine, NC  
(828) 765-6993

Pinnacle Inn Resort, Beech Mountain, NC  
(828) 387-2231

Tennessee:

Roan Mountain State Park (cabins)      423-772-0190

Roan Mountain Bed & Breakfast      423-772-3207

Americourt Hotel, Elizabethton, TN      423-542-4466

Lakeshore Resort, Hampton, TN      423-725-2201

Mountain Harbour, Roan Mtn., TN      423-772-9494

Riverbend Cottage, Roan Mtn., TN      423-512-1665

Traveler’s Inn, Elizabethton, TN      423-543-3344

SAVE THESE DATES!



The 68h Annual Roan Mountain  
Spring Naturalists’ Rally will be held  
April 24-26 2026

The 20th Annual Xtreme Roan  
Adventures Kid’s Naturalists’ Rally  
will be held July 25, 2026

The 64th Annual Roan Mountain  
Fall Naturalists’ Rally will be held  
September 18-20, 2026