

LINVILLE, N.C. — Visitors are familiar with Grandfather Mountain's resident animals, including black bears, bald eagles, cougars, river otters and elk.

But what do they do after dark?

Guests can find out Saturday, Sept. 21, at Grandfather Mountain's annual Creatures of the Night & Bonfire Delight, a nighttime event that features fun and spooky stories told by firelight, along with rare after-dark tours.

From 6 to 9:30 p.m., guests young and old can enjoy hot chocolate and warm apple cider by the glow of a bonfire. The event is BYOS (Bring Your Own S'mores), but the park will provide marshmallow roasting sticks, cider, hot chocolate and seating.

From there, guests will join Grandfather staff members on a nocturnal trek to the top of the mountain (via shuttle) and the environmental wildlife habitats.

"It's a whole different way to experience the animals," said Jenny Condron, habitat keeper at Grandfather Mountain. "When you see them in the daytime, it's all just a visual experience. But at night, you hear their unique noises and rustling around way before you actually see them, and it can be quite exciting and eerie."

An "Owl Prowl" will take participants on a search for the mountain's feathered denizens of the night, during which guides will attempt to communicate with the birds through recorded owl calls.

"On our last Owl Prowl, the barred owls were very, very responsive, talking back a lot," chief habitats curator Christie Tipton said. "By the time we take the last tour, it's pitch black, and you can't see anything. Although the owls can see you."

In fact, the event casts Grandfather Mountain in a whole new light — or lack thereof.

"Creatures of the Night is an amazing opportunity to see the new world that is Grandfather Mountain after the sun goes down," Tipton added. "The mountain comes alive with inhabitants not seen during daylight hours, and experiencing the majesty of this in complete darkness, with no outside lights, is an awe-inspiring experience."

Grandfather Mountain's Creatures of the Night & Bonfire Delight returns Saturday, Sept. 21, from 6 to 9:30 p.m.

The cost is \$50 per person and \$10 for Bridge Club members, and participants must be at least 8 years old to attend. Space is limited, meaning registration is required by visiting [grandfather.com/event/creatures](https://www.grandfather.com/event/creatures).

For the event itself, guests are encouraged to dress warmly and bring blankets, flashlights and s'mores ingredients to enjoy around the fire.

For more information, call 828-733-2013, or email habitats@grandfather.com.

The not-for-profit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation strives to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain. For more information, call 800-468-7325, or visit www.grandfather.com to plan a trip.

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<https://media.visitnc.com/Grandfather-Mountain-Hosts-Creatures-of-the-Night-Bonfire-Delight>