

LINVILLE, N.C. — At Grandfather Mountain, education is literally a top priority.

After all, when your classroom is a mile high, the sky is the limit. Even for grown-ups.

The Linville-based nature preserve and attraction is bringing its Adult Field Courses series back for 2018, offering participants the chance to explore Grandfather Mountain like never before.

“These courses allow students to examine specific aspects of the park ecosystem through fun field excursions,” said Amy Renfranz, director of education for the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, the nonprofit organization that oversees and operates the park. “Our course leaders are experts in their fields and include professors, naturalists, scientists and acclaimed photographers, writers, historians and artists.”

The series runs from April through September, with topics including bird migration, weather, geology, rare plants, fungi and forest ecology.

According to Corey White, Grandfather Mountain naturalist and course instructor, the series is not only educational, but extremely fun.

“It was a blast!” White said of the 2017 series. “Being with adult students in the field and seeing their faces light up with ‘Aha!’ moments was just fantastic.”

Each course is limited to only 12 participants, making for a more intimate, personalized experience.

“As an instructor, you get to give more attention to any questions that come up from any particular guest,” White said. “Also, these are very hands-on programs, offering more engagement between the resource itself (e.g., the mountain) and the participants, where I can even kind of step back out of the way.”

In fact, about halfway through his previous geology course, White noticed that his class size had somehow grown.

“It turns out I had some passersby — or hikers-by, I guess — kind of drop in on some of our lessons during the presentation on the trail,” he said. “I asked if they wanted to go ahead, and they said, ‘No, we’re just eavesdropping.’”

They eventually moved on — and may very well register for one of 2018’s offerings. Courses cost \$40 per person (or \$20 for members of Grandfather Mountain’s Bridge Club program), with registration required in advance.

Most courses run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., unless otherwise stated, and participants are asked to bring their own lunch to be eaten in the field.

Courses include:

Spring Migration in the Canadian South – April 28

Hosted by Jesse Pope, executive director of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, this

six-hour program will explore the birds of Grandfather's mountaintop island.

Extreme Weather of Grandfather Mountain – May 30

Grandfather Mountain is home to an official weather station in partnership with Appalachian State University's Dr. Baker Perry, who has studied weather and the changing climate in regions around the world. Hosted by Perry, this course will introduce participants to the extreme weather of Grandfather Mountain. Activities will include a short classroom session on mountain meteorology, participation in the collection and reporting of daily weather data, and a visit to the Grandfather Mountain meteorological station on the Mile High Swinging Bridge.

Grandfather's Geology by Foot – June 16

There are 300 million years of history written into Grandfather's rocks. Join naturalist Corey White, MEd., to learn to decipher the stone, and discover a world so complex and amazing that it will change your perspective of the Appalachian Mountains forever.

The Rare Plants of Grandfather's Rocky Summits – July 21

Grandfather Mountain is a hot spot of endemism, as well as home to many peripheral populations of the High Country's native flora. This course will meet at the height of blooming endemics on Grandfather. Join Amy Renfranz, naturalist and GMSF director of education, in an exploration of these plant species, including Blue Ridge Goldenrod, Roan Mountain Bluet and Heller's Blazing Star.

Fungi of the Cloudland Forest – Aug. 11

The Southern Appalachians are world-renowned for different types of fungi, from mushrooms to lichens, and are home to more than 2,000 species. Join expert Dr. Coleman McClenaghan for a chance to observe many kinds of fungi at higher elevations and learn how to identify them by size, shape and color.

Exploring the Disappearing Spruce-Fir Forest – Aug. 25

Join John Caveny, GMSF's own natural resource specialist, and explore, examine and discuss one of the most endangered forest types in the United States, the spruce-fir forest. During this field course, participants will explore off the beaten path to find some of the largest red spruce trees on the park property. Participants will learn about the forest ecology and wildlife and assist Caveny in gathering scientific data to benefit the foundation's Natural Resource Management Program.

Celebrate Migration on Grandfather Mountain – Sept. 15

Join Jesse Pope for a six-hour course on raptor migration. In 2015, more than 11,000 raptors were observed in September as they soared over Grandfather Mountain on their annual migration South. Learn why they do this, and become an official "watcher" yourself.

Each adult field course is limited to 12 participants and costs \$40 for general registration or \$20 for Bridge Club members.

To register, or for more information, contact Judi Sawyer at judi@grandfather.com or (828) 733-2013. To learn more about the Bridge Club membership program, visit <http://bit.ly/2Cq88Bf>.

About Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation:

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.

###

CONTACT:

Frank Ruggiero
frank@grandfather.com
828-733-2013

Additional assets available online:

[Photos \(1\)](#)

<https://media.visitnc.com/Grandfather-Mountain-Presents-Adult-Field-Courses>