

# Welcome to the Pot Point Property

The Pot Point Self Guided Nature Trail is a 3.5 mile loop trail. It is a moderately strenuous trail with some steep climbs that reach over 1,000 feet in altitude around Azalea Point. Please note that you will cross the road between Stop 11 and Stop 12 to continue your hike. The trail traverses examples of most of the habitats found in the Tennessee River Gorge and contains many examples of native flora and fauna.

The Pot Point Cabin is the "crown jewel" of the Gorge surrounded by 491 acres of pristine forest. This historic cabin is available for day and overnight rentals (sleeps 10). Call the TRGT office for availability at (423) 266-0314. Please be considerate of others if the Pot Point Cabin is being used at the time of your hike.

Remember, take only pictures and leave only footprints.



## The Tennessee River Gorge

The mission of the Tennessee River Gorge Trust is to enrich our community by conservation of the Tennessee River Gorge through land protection, education and the promotion of good land stewardship.

The Tennessee River Gorge, 27,000 acres of land carved through the Cumberland Mountains by 26 miles of the Tennessee River is one of the most unique natural treasures in the Southeast. It is the only large river canyon bordering a mid-size city and is the fourth largest river canyon east of the Mississippi.

## You can help preserve the life and natural beauty of the Gorge

A contribution to the Trust helps to protect the scenery, wildlife and open lands of the Grand Canyon of Tennessee. Your membership support is critical to the success of the Trust. Please show your commitment to the Gorge by joining other members in the preservation of these lands.

**Yes, I want to help.** I am contributing at the following membership level:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member .....\$25 - \$99        | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend .....\$100 - \$249             | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron .....\$250 - \$749         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor.....\$750 - \$1,249 | <input type="checkbox"/> Protector .....\$1,250 - \$1,749      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer .....\$1,750 - \$2,499  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charter.....\$2,500 - \$4,999  | <input type="checkbox"/> Chestnut Society....\$5,000 - \$9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle Society.....\$10,000 and up |

Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

The Tennessee River Gorge Trust is designated as a 501 (c)(3) charitable corporation. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible within the limits of federal and state law.

For more information on the Tennessee River Gorge Trust, visit our web-site at [www.trgt.org](http://www.trgt.org) or call (423) 266-0314.

Please clip this form and mail to: Tennessee River Gorge Trust  
535 Chestnut Street, Suite 214  
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (day) (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening)

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

# Pot Point Self-Guided Nature T R A I L



*Special thanks to  
our project sponsor  
The Peckerwood Foundation*



Tennessee River Gorge Trust  
535 Chestnut Street, Suite 214  
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402



### Stop 1

Where you stand here on the northeastern slopes of Pot Point is a forest more typical of the cove hardwood forests of the Smokey Mountains. It is characterized by a rich suite of hardwoods like: American beech, white oak, northern red oak, scarlet oak, sugar maple, red maple, green ash, ironwood and hop hornbeam. The cool moist soil hosts a rich carpet of wild flowers and shrubs in the spring when trillium, toothwort, hepatica, violets and azaleas fill every fold and rock cavity with color and scent. The forest here is also home to over 190 species of birds, many of them migrants from the tropics who depend on these unbroken forests for survival.

### Stop 2

As you climb upward along the trail you leave the lower limestone rock strata and enter strata composed of sandstone. The limestone rocks at the base of the Cumberland Plateau were laid down around 340 million years ago during the Mississippian geologic period. The sandstone rocks date from around 300 million years ago. The plants growing here in this limestone area today benefit from the lower (acidic) ph of the soil.

The forest composition at this point is still primarily hardwoods such as: ash, black cherry, scarlet and northern red oak, sweet-gum, sugar maple, many species of hickory, tulip poplar and chestnut oak. The forest here is 80 to 100 years old - just teenagers in the world of trees. Are you surprised? Actually most of the trees in this area average around 60 to 100 years old. They are products of the latest in a series of deforestation events that have occurred over the last 200 years. It is a measure of the favorable growing conditions in the Southern Appalachian area that allows this rapid recovery from deforestation. Keep in mind though, that with each cycle the forest composition may change. Some species of plants and animals may decline or disappear entirely while others are enhanced. Sometimes new species take hold, with disastrous results!

### Stop 3

We are even higher now, yet the forest hasn't changed that much. It is still dominated by 80 to 100 year old hardwoods. But, this is the beginning of a transition zone into a dryer area of the mountain and the trees that can better tolerate a dryer site are beginning to make their appearance - chestnut oak, post oak and white oak.

As you stop here listen quietly for the sounds of the residents of this part of the forest. Even a few moments of stillness on your part will embolden chipmunks and squirrels to continue their ceaseless scurrying in search of food. Listen for woodpeckers at any season. Their raucous calls and hollow tapping carries for great distances. In spring and summer the calls of wood thrushes can be heard here along with many other nesting songbirds, including what may be the most numerous forest nesting bird in this area - the red eyed vireo.

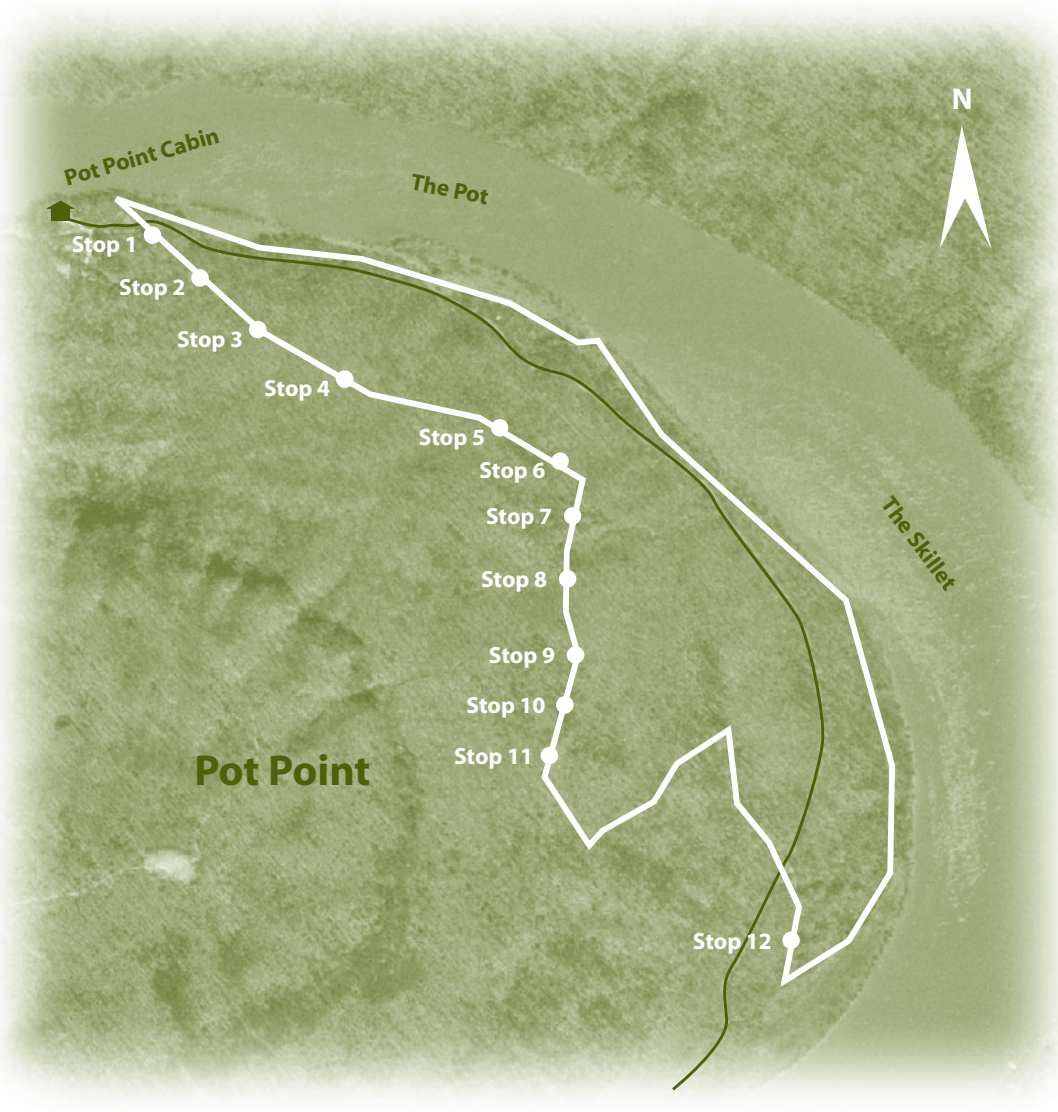
### Stop 4

Here we have left the more moist and shaded forest. The forest is dominated by tree species that can tolerate a dryer position: chestnut oak, post oak, scarlet oak, hickory and sassafras. The under story is beginning to fill with dogwood and a medium sized shrub known to the local people as "buby" or more commonly as Carolina allspice. In spring its inconspicuous red-brown flowers exude a strong scent of spice which Native Americans and later European settlers would cut and bring into their homes as a early form of room deodorizer. It still works!

### Stop 5

As you can see, pines are beginning to make their appearance. Their presence signals a much drier and sunnier site, but, they still associate in mixed forest stands with the hardwoods. Some trees like the tulip poplar and the hickories are found throughout the area, but black jack oak and black oak prefer these dry uplands.

Notice the old stone walls and the remnants of wagon roads. These remind us that this area was once completely clear and a mosaic of forest and fields. Yes, these slopes were pastures and in many cases fields where crops were grown. Erosion and a changing economy ended



this "hardscrabble" way of life beginning around the time of the great depression thus paving the way for the return of the forest.

### Stop 6

These large dead pines are the beginning of a process known as succession. As trees die the open areas that are created are quickly colonized by plants that prefer open sunny conditions. They in turn are out competed by still

other plants in a succession that leads ultimately to a stable (climax) plant community.

In Kansas this climax plant community might be a prairie dominated by grass, but here in this place the stable plant community is dominated primarily by trees. Pines are mid-way in this process. They grow fast and quickly occupy any open site. Young hardwoods tolerate the pines shade waiting patiently for the short lived (to a hardwood tree) pines to die. The hardwoods then occupy the site and dominate it until disease, old age or the logger's ax opens the canopy and begins the process anew.

There are three pine species native to this area: virginia pine, shortleaf pine and white pine. Virginia pine and shortleaf pine are represented here on Pot Point.

### Stop 7

If you look down into the hollow below you, you will see the remains of an old "moonshine still". Stills were common until a few decades ago. For 200 years whiskey making was a source of income and solace to the people who called these mountains home. They were the descendants of hardy pioneers who brought whiskey making with them from Ireland and Scotland. Minor inconveniences like the prohibition act and alcohol tax laws did little to stop the practice. These old abandoned stills are the reminder of a bygone era. But, is it really gone? Listen quietly as you cross these hollows and you may hear the hushed voices of men working at something far above you or the metallic clank of a mule's shoe on rock as it moves along forest paths carrying its burden of "white lightning" down the mountain.

### Stop 8

This shelf of level land once was a field fifty or so years ago.

When it was abandoned the process of succession began. Now the site is dominated by tulip poplars. Interestingly, the tulip poplar is one of the hardwood species that can function as a pioneer tree species. It is fast growing, but unlike the pine it is extremely long lived. So in this case it will occupy this site throughout its succession. The weaker tulip poplars will die and their space will be appropriated by the stronger ones until a few very large and very old individuals are left.

### Stop 9

This is Azalea Point. The slopes around you are dotted with native azaleas. In the spring they bloom pink and white and perfume the air. Their blooming lasts for about 2 weeks and comes in April or early May. Remember though, the azaleas keep time with an ancient clock only they can understand. But, when it is their time nothing in the forest can compete with them for beauty or fragrance. Come often when they bloom and linger long - bees and hummingbirds shouldn't be the only ones to enjoy their show.

### Stop 10

Here at the very highest point of the trail we encounter a mature hardwood forest over 100 years old. The maples, oaks and hickories here are large and spaced far apart. This indicates that they have occupied the site for a long time and eliminated all their competition. Barring disease or damage from wind they should be here for another 100 years or more.

The mountain shelf this forest sits on is also home to a unique and important habitat - the vernal pond community. These pools and ponds only have water in the winter and spring, but the water is here just when breeding salamanders, frogs and toads as well as numerous insects need it. Otherwise they would have to make the long and dangerous trek downslope to the river. If you are making this trip in the spring take time to investigate these shallow ponds and you will be amazed at the life they hold during their short lives.

### Stop 11

Here is an example of succession in action. An old mature tree has died and opened a space in the canopy. The increased sunlight has germinated seedlings of various species and they now are competing for the vacated space. Only one seedling will make it in a hundred years or so. Most natural climax forests of hardwoods here in the Appalachians are often a mosaic of various ages and species adapted to a site neither too dry or too wet, or as scientists call it - uneven aged mixed mesophytic forest.

### Stop 12

The old barn and fields succeeding to forest tell us that here along the river was where people found the best environment for farming, but the same conditions that make farming successful - abundant moisture and deep rich soil - also create a unique "bottom land" habitat. The bottom lands are lush and the plants and animals here prefer water and lots of it. Beavers and muskrats live along the banks as well as American otter and mink. Waterfowl of all kind can be seen in and around the river. If you are lucky you might see an osprey or an eagle fishing in the river.

But, this area is not without its problems. Most of the alien invasive plant species that plague this area prefer this habitat. Much of the shrub under story is made up of these non-native thugs. Privet, Japanese honeysuckle, bush honeysuckle, English ivy and periwinkle jostle with the native vegetation, and more often than not, completely replace the native plants. One of the reasons that TRGT is allowing these fields to succeed back to forest is that shade inhibits several of the worst of the alien invaders from setting seeds.