

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New at Grandfather Mountain in 2022

~ The Wilson Center for Nature Discovery, Synchronous Firefly Events, Programs for Junior Naturalists and other New Reasons to Visit ~

LINVILLE, N.C. – 2022 is an exciting year at Grandfather Mountain with the grand opening of the Wilson Center for Nature Discovery and a list of new programs and events. The Linville, N.C., nature preserve, operated by the nonprofit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, is known for its Mile High Swinging Bridge, Animal Habitats, 360-degree views and immersive programming meant to inspire exploration and conservation of the natural world.

This year is the perfect time for past visitors to experience something new and for first time guests to see what wonders await them at Grandfather Mountain.

Here are ten new reasons to visit Grandfather Mountain in 2022 (<https://grandfather.com/new2022>):

New in June: Wilson Center for Nature Discovery

Opening early summer, the Wilson Center nearly doubles the size of the park's current Nature Museum with 10,000 square feet of education space, including state-of-the-art museum exhibits, three classrooms, an ADA-accessible theater and expanded capacity for hosting conferences and community events. New exhibits include a 3-D interactive map of the mountain, that showcases Grandfather's ecology and history; flora and fauna walls and other exhibits focusing on the mountain's natural history, weather and geology. Outside the center, guests will enjoy new learning spaces, including an amphitheater with terraced seating and a pavilion, as well as a new botanical garden. <https://grandfather.com/wilson-center/>

Grandfather Glows: Bioluminescent Evenings on Grandfather Mountain

In 2019, *Photinus carolinus*, or synchronous fireflies, were discovered to exist on Grandfather Mountain. Since then, natural resource specialists have been studying the insects and determining how to safely and responsibly provide viewing opportunities for the public. "Grandfather Glows," new in 2022, are evening events happening late June to early July. Event goers have the opportunity to see Synchronous Fireflies, Blue Ghost Fireflies and Glowworms, weather and conditions permitting. Park naturalists will be on hand to provide interpretive lessons. Ticket sale dates and event dates will be announced May 2. <https://grandfather.com/fireflies/>

A Beary Warm Welcome for Fanny May

Grandfather Mountain is welcoming a new member to its family of beloved animals in the Mildred the Bear Animal Habitats: Fanny May, a five-year-old black bear with a big personality. Fanny May arrived in the spring of 2021 after the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission approached the nonprofit nature preserve about a bear that needed placement. Fanny has spent the last year getting acclimated to her new home and diet and showing a fun fascination for the toys and enrichments the habitat curators

share with her. Fanny is slowly being introduced to guests and will be placed in the on-display habitats sporadically throughout the year. <https://grandfather.com/fanny-may/>

New for the Smallest Naturalists

Grandfather's revamped Junior Naturalist program kicks off this summer with an updated activity book that invites children to explore the mountain, new wooden collectible badges and a seasonal e-newsletter for participants. Park Naturalists also offer an 11:30 a.m. Junior Naturalist activity (weekends in spring and fall and daily in the summer) geared toward five to ten-year-olds. "Random Acts of Science," a new daily program starting this summer, is also great for kids and families, and focuses on native plants and animals; using weather instruments to record data and investigating minerals, skulls or other organisms under a microscope. <https://grandfather.com/junior-naturalist/>

Grandfather Presents Speaker Series: Thursday Nights

The 2022 Grandfather Presents speaker series consists of a dynamic lineup of educators, adventurers and advocates who make it their life's mission to highlight the challenges, opportunities and good work happening around nature and conservation. Thursday events include light bites and drinks, the speaker presentation and a book signing opportunity. Bridge Club members have access to purchase two series pass offerings (one with VIP receptions) beginning May 1. <https://grandfather.com/grandfather-presents/>

- July 14: Rick Ridgeway, Outdoor Adventurer and Advocate
- August 4: Ginger Zee, ABC News Chief Meteorologist
- September 29: Conor Knighton, CBS Sunday Morning Correspondent

Grandfather Presents Speaker Series: Saturday Afternoons

Grandfather Presents also includes presentations focused on conservation issues and initiatives on a local or regional scale. Saturday events, included in park admission, consist of the presentation and time to interact with the speaker. <https://grandfather.com/grandfather-presents/>

- July 30: Tracy Swartout, Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent | "Protecting the Parkway: The 'Forever' Business"
- August 13: Charlie Brady, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Conservancy | "Strategically Protecting Land to Ensure Access to Natural Places for Everyone"
- September 17: Andy Hill, MountainTrue High Country Regional Director and Watauga Riverkeeper | "Watauga River Conservation: Emerging, Innovative Solutions"

Paint with a Bear

This unique experience includes a guided visit behind-the-scenes to the bear habitat. Participants pick their color choices from a selection of non-toxic paint and then watch as one of Grandfather Mountain's black bears create a work of art with its paws. The experience takes place on Saturdays and Sundays at 11:30 a.m., May through October. This is sure to be a popular new experience so booking in advance is recommended. <https://grandfather.com/paint-with-bear/>

70th Anniversary of the Bridge

Whether it was the old wooden bridge or the current steel bridge, the thrill of crossing the Mile High Swinging Bridge has provided Grandfather Mountain guests with worried anticipation, exhilaration and endless memories for decades. September 2, 2022 marks 70 years of the Mile High Swinging Bridge. Activities and special presentations will occur throughout the day. Details coming soon! <https://grandfather.com/visit/things-to-do/mile-high-swinging-bridge/>

New Naturalist-led Programs + Campfire Stories Event

With the opening of the Wilson Center, park naturalists and educators are adding to the schedule of daily programs included in park admission. In addition to “Random Acts of Science,” new for kids and families, “Ramble with a Naturalist” and “Naturalist Talk” are perfect for families and adults. “Ramble with a Naturalist” will be daily at 2 p.m. and includes a short stroll with a naturalist for seasonal topics such as wildflowers, weather, pollinators, butterflies, fall color and more. The “Naturalist Talk” program will be daily at 3 p.m. and focuses on topics like rare plant and animal species, conservation efforts on the mountain and the history of the area. <https://grandfather.com/daily-programs/>

Grandfather Mountain Campfire Stories is a new event that includes stories told around a campfire from interesting figures in the realms of science, conservation and environmental education, all while experiencing the wonders of Grandfather Mountain in the dark. The 2022 event takes place the evening of August 19, with presenter Gordon Warburton, a retired wildlife biologist and black bear project leader for the North Carolina Wildlife Commission. <https://grandfather.com/event/grandfather-mountain-campfire-stories/>

Bridge Club New Benefits

Grandfather Mountain’s revamped Bridge Club Annual Membership Program kicks off May 1 with unlimited free admission for one year, discounts at the mountain’s gift shops and restaurant, 10% discounts on experiences like Behind-the-Scenes Tours, 15% off select special event registration, exclusive access to purchase Grandfather Presents series passes, discounts to other attractions and more. Membership levels include Individual Adult (\$80), Individual Child (\$35) and Group (member +5) (\$250). <https://grandfather.com/support/give/become-a-member/>

The nonprofit 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, visit www.grandfather.com.

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