

Leave No Trace Principles

[Leave No Trace Recommendations for Getting Outside During Covid-19](#)

The Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally has adopted the Leave No Trace Principles as a guiding reference for participant and guide etiquette. “Take only photographs and leave only footprints”. Substitute a photograph or sketch to share your find and learn more about it after your trip. There are many reasons for leaving special objects behind. Consider the cumulative effect of millions of visitors to our public lands. If we each picked a few flowers the cumulative effect would be devastating. Please refer to their [7 Principles](#) for more information.

Wildlife

Wildlife need recreationists who will promote their survival rather than add to the difficulties they already face. Carry the equipment you need to store your food out of reach of animals.

- Don't disturb animals, especially during mating or birthing season. If you see their behavior change due to your presence, you are too close. Change your travel path, move away and lower your voice.
- Observe animals from a distance. Carry binoculars, a telephoto camera lens or a spotting scope to enhance your viewing.
- Pick up all food scraps, even tiny crumbs, and pack them out with your garbage so animals don't come to associate humans with food.
- Supervise youth around wildlife. Educate them about the rationale for not chasing, disturbing, feeding or getting too close to animals. Get excited about observing animals without disturbing them.

Salamanders, Amphibians and Reptiles*

Care and discretion should be used when handling amphibians and reptiles. Only handle an animal if it is needed to make a positive identification and is safe to do so. Remember that handling can cause stress, injury, and even mortality to amphibians and reptiles.

Please abide by these general procedures:

- Do not handle dangerous herpetofauna (e.g., snapping turtles, large or venomous snakes).
- Always use wet hands that are free of lotions, chemicals, etc. to handle amphibians. Clasp small individuals within both hands.
- Hold large frogs at the pelvis with legs fully extended to prevent injury and fractures. This restraint technique should prevent the frog or toad from kicking and twisting. Apply only gentle pressure/resistance – take care not to squeeze too hard.
- Do not grab salamanders or lizards by the tail. Although the tail can be regenerated, tail autotomy creates potential for infection and loss of an important fat reserve.
- Support snakes at multiple points along the body. Gentle pressure can be applied behind the head of the snake to reduce the potential for a bite. Do not handle an agitated snake.

- Lift or roll cover objects towards your body. If the cover object is particularly heavy, make sure herps are clear from underneath before returning the cover object to its original position. If a herp was removed, return it so that it is oriented facing the cover object so that it may return on its own.
- Amphibian eggs should not be handled
- Do not disturb reptile nests or hibernacula.

**Chytridiomycosis, ranavirus, and other diseases are among the growing threats to amphibian populations. Respiratory and other infections also pose a major risk to turtles and other reptiles. Chytrid fungus (Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis), in particular, has been identified as the cause of decline and extinctions of hundreds of frog species worldwide. Like other invasive organisms, Chytrid spreads easily; it is transferred from amphibian to amphibian as well as in water and on damp materials. Therefore it is critical to disinfect boots, gear, and any items that come in contact with rivers, streams, wetlands (especially seasonal pools), and moist leaf litter.*

The disinfection procedure consists of soaking or rinsing boots and all equipment in a 10% bleach solution for at least one minute. Equipment with a smooth surface can be scrubbed with a scrub brush using a 10% bleach solution. Wear lug sole boots only— felt sole boots/waders are major disease vectors and will not be treated under this disinfection protocol. After soaking and scrubbing have been completed, rinse with freshwater. The disinfection procedure can be easily accomplished with two spray bottles – one with a 10% bleach solution and one with freshwater. It is easiest to prepare these at the beginning of your field day and leave them in a vehicle before moving on to another site.

Skin that comes in contact with herpetofauna or water during search activities should be cleaned with alcohol-based hand sanitizer as part of the disinfection procedure. Use plastic bags only once per field day – they can be disinfected and re-used for the next visit. Note: Please be conscientious when disposing of bleach solutions so not to disturb and pollute any freshwater habitats (particularly seasonal pools).

Native Plants and Wildflowers

Flowers flourish when they're left untouched by visitors. Stay on designated trails when viewing flowers, and avoid trampling flowers as they can take years to recover, if ever. Given the magnificence and infrequency of blooms, think about your impact and extend courtesy to those around you trying to enjoy a finite resource.

Restrooms

Use restroom facilities where they are available. If none exist where you are, prepared to dig a cathole for properly disposing of human waste. Bring a lightweight trowel for digging a 6-8" deep hole at least 200 feet from water sources and trails. Either bury the toilet paper deep in the hole or pack it out, then cover the hole with soil.