

Center for State of the Parks



CHICKAMAUGA AND CHATTANOOGA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

For two days in September 1863, a formidable piece of Georgia woodland became the site of the second-bloodiest battle of the American Civil War—the Battle of Chickamauga. The South claimed victory and forced the retreat of Union soldiers. Just two months after the Battle of Chickamauga, however, Union forces claimed victories at nearby Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain in the Battles for Chattanooga, November 23–25, 1863. By successfully pushing the Confederates back into Georgia, Federals ultimately won control of Chattanooga and nearly all of Tennessee.

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park—established in 1890 and straddling two states, Georgia and Tennessee—is the nation’s oldest and largest military park. Among towering oaks, more than 600 monuments and markers invite visitors to pause and reflect on the costly battles waged here. In addition to cannons, monuments, and markers, the park’s historic cabins, living history program, and extensive museum collection all serve to transport visitors back in time.

The park also encompasses about 755 acres at Moccasin Bend National Archeological District, an area containing evidence of human habitation going back at least 10,000 years.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Cannon tubes mark the locations of artillery batteries during the battles.

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park contains rare cedar glades harboring sensitive ecosystems and karst geology that is responsible for the extensive cave system in the park. Hundreds of animal species live in the park, from tiny salamanders to songbirds to deer.

Nearly a million people visit Chickamauga and Chattanooga every year, making it one of the most popular parks in the National Park System.

CHALLENGES

- The park’s scope of interpretation must be expanded to include Moccasin Bend National

Archeological District. This will require the park to train permanent and seasonal rangers in American Indian culture and history. In addition, the park may need to hire a full-time archaeologist or anthropologist to document and interpret archaeological sites, which have increased with the addition of Moccasin Bend.

- The park contains hundreds of historic structures, including monuments, markers, plaques, and buildings, yet it lacks a preservation crew to maintain these irreplaceable resources. Historic structures in the park are susceptible to threats such as bronze leaching, damage from dead trees, and overgrown vegetation.
- With the addition of Moccasin Bend, an ethnographic overview and assessment and an ethnographic landscape study are both needed to inform management of the park’s ethnographic resources. Both are on hold until funding is secured.
- Non-native plant species such as Chinese privet and kudzu threaten ecosystems as they aggressively compete with native plants for water, nutrients, sunlight, and space. Mowing of park fields has raised issues regarding ecosystem health—alternative mowing regimes must be considered to increase habitat for wildlife and restore fields to a more natural condition. A vegetation management plan, which would address



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forest issues, mowing, and pasture/field practices, is needed for managers and maintenance staff, for the protection of both natural and cultural resources.

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of park ecology, further study is needed. With the recent addition of Moccasin Bend, inventories, surveys, and monitoring are needed to provide initial data on natural resources. The majority of research conducted at the park so far has established baseline data for communities and populations of species. With baselines established, regular monitoring of Chickamauga and Chattanooga's species and habitats (including caves) is vital to note ecological changes and allow the park to adjust its management practices accordingly.
- The areas surrounding the park are becoming more developed as they fill with bedroom communities for Chattanooga and possibly even Atlanta. The park is keenly interested in maintaining nonurbanized areas as buffers to their borders. Unfortunately, suburban sprawl is encroaching and there are strip malls and housing developments just outside the park. The Lookout Mountain portion of the park is near tourist attractions and single-family homes. Other portions of the park are considered parts of the Chattanooga urban area—small units such as those on Missionary Ridge and Orchard Knob are actually tiny islands of protected land within neighborhoods.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

- In 2007, five acres of woods between the Kelly Farm and Battle Line Road were rehabilitated. Crews removed non-native plants, dead trees, and other unwanted vegetation.
- Four monuments commemorating Minnesota soldiers, erected on the Chickamauga Battlefield in 1893 and 1894, were restored in 2007. Bronze state seals had been stolen from the monuments. The seals were recast and installed.
- March for the Park, an annual 3-mile walk through Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, raises money to recast missing historic tablets that serve as interpretive markers on the battlefields. Students from Graysville and West Side Elementary Schools raised about \$3,000 for tablet restoration in 2008.
- To guide natural and cultural resource protection at Chickamauga and Chattanooga, the park is in the process of developing a new general management plan.
- In April 2008, 382 acres of historic battlefield near Lookout Mountain were added to Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The land, acquired from the CSX Railroad Company, is the site of Union advancement to drive out Confederates from the mountain on November 24, 1863. Federal funding for the acquisition was secured through the efforts of Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Rep. Zachary Wamp (R-TN). Assistance from The Trust for Public Land, a national private nonprofit conservation organization, was instrumental in the land acquisition and transfer process.

ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Tennessee's Civil War National Parks, including Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit www.npca.org/stateoftheparks or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at jnations@npca.org.

For more information on Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park contact NPCA's Southeast Regional Office at 865.329.2424, or visit the park online at www.nps.gov/chch. For media inquiries, please contact Shannon Andrea, NPCA senior media relations manager, at 202.454.3371 or sandrea@npca.org. To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit www.npca.org/take_action.