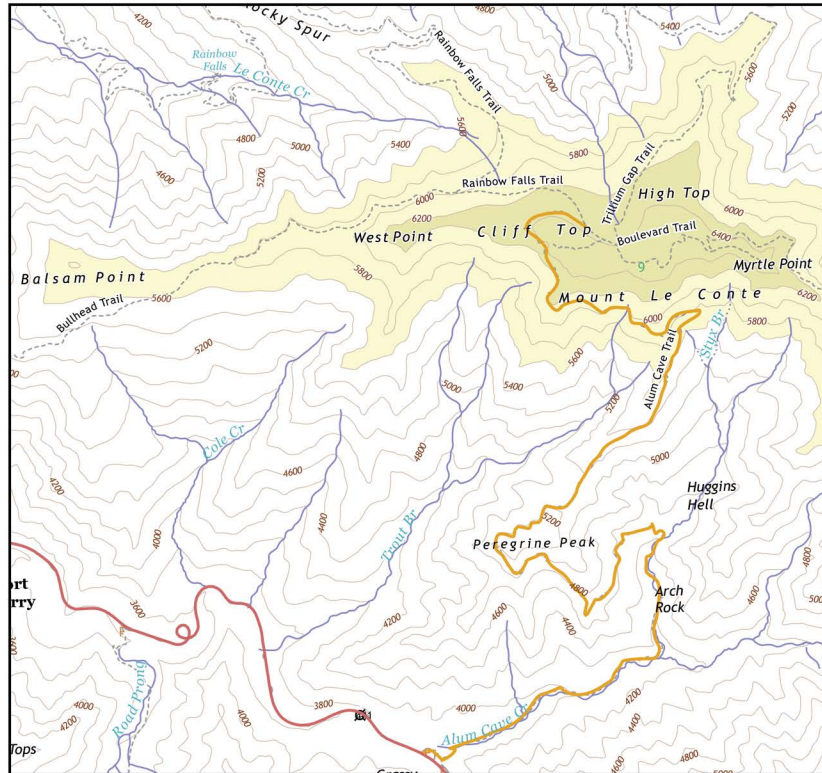


- 1.1 - Styx Branch (drains Huggins Hell)
- 1.4 - Arch Rock (formed by freezing and thawing)
- 1.6 - after footbridge, 1993 slide removed stretch of mountain 0.25 m long and 20' deep
- 1.8 - entering heath bald
- 2.0 - Inspiration Point (heath bald), Little Duck Hawk Ridge W (anakeesta formation), Eye of the Needle at the top, Myrtle Point NE
- 2.3 - Alum Cave Bluffs - dust contains minerals found in the driest areas of the world
- 2.5 - side trail to Gracies Pulpit - named for Gracie McNichol who climbed to LeConte on her 92nd birthday (200th time) - from the rocks you can see the 4 points of the LeConte massif: **West Point, Cliff Top, High Top, and Myrtle Point**
- 3.8 - stairs to replace a washed out switchback (1970s and 1992)

Legend has it that a man named Huggins once declared he would "explore the area or go to hell trying." He was never heard from again, and is presumed to have suffered the latter fate.



"The current record for leaving the lodge, descending Alum Cave Trail, driving to Gatlinburg, purchasing beer, then returning is 2 hours and 50 minutes. Another Le Conte employee, on an emergency quest for popcorn and a newspaper, descended the trail in 33 minutes, then completed the return trip in only 1 hour and 18 minutes."

Name: When Swiss-born geologist Arnold Guyot first visited the Smoky Mountains in the 1850s, he learned that the local mountaineers referred to the peaks on Mount Le Conte collectively as the Bull Head. The name was apparently suggested by the shape of the mountain's western face when seen from a distance.

Guyot learned from botanist Samuel Buckley that the highest peak on the Bull Head had been named "Mount Le Conte" in honor of John Le Conte, a professor from the University of South Carolina who assisted Buckley in measuring the elevation of Clingmans Dome by monitoring a stationary barometer situated near Waynesville, North Carolina. Over the course of time, this highest peak came popularly to be known as High Point and the name "Le Conte" applied generally to the mountain as a whole. The name "Bull Head" temporarily dropped out of Smoky Mountain nomenclature, only to be later reinstated and assigned to a minor ridge point three miles west of the summit of Le Conte.

Anakeesta is Cherokee for "place of the balsams" referring to the native Fraser fir. But today Anakeesta means the fine grained contemporary of Thunderhead Sandstone, which forms the backbone of the main Smokies range. Unlike the Thunderhead, which came from sand deposits, the Anakeesta was originally oceanic mud.

When the Smokies were being uplifted, as the continent buckled while colliding with Africa, the weaker mud was squeezed more readily than sand. The Anakeesta was squeezed between the more competent Thunderhead.

Of course, the Anakeesta is not mud but solid rock. When rock is forced to flow like toothpaste, it changes its internal structure. This is what happened to the Anakeesta, and it bears the signature of intense deformation. Its jagged appearance is caused by the original layering in the rock intersecting a secondary fabric called cleavage. Cleavage results from squeezing rocks so much their minerals realigned themselves perpendicular to the direction of stress; in this case at a sharp angle to the original layering. **(Hiking Trails of the Smokies)**

Over the millions of years since they were first thrust up, the southern Appalachians have seen very significant erosion. The original height of these mountains is commonly estimated as greater than the Himalayas (**29,032ft/5.5m**), and their peaks just as sharp, rocky, and barren. Over the last **350 million years** the wearing agents of time have reduced the once towering peaks of the Appalachians to gently rounded, relatively smooth mountains.

While the Smokies cannot claim the highest or steepest massifs, they can boast membership as one of the world's oldest mountain chains, one on which plants and animals have lived continually for enormous stretches of time. All of North America has experienced slow but monumental climatic changes, so the flora has changed dramatically; but very few places on earth outside of the Smokies have witnessed such a long unbroken history of green vegetational covering. **(A Natural History of Mount Le Conte)**