

# THE ALL TAXA BIODIVERSITY INVENTORY OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

BECKY NICHOLS, GUEST EDITOR

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## Prologue

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PARKS IN OUR SOCIETY IS CLEARLY AND ELEGANTLY STATED in the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916. Managing the natural systems of national parks unimpaired, and accessible for present and future generations, has inherent intellectual challenges as well as implications for society that are larger and more fundamental than Congress could have realized. To fulfill this mission, a logical place to start is to know what we manage—the species that live in national parks. A fundamental reason for All Taxa Biodiversity Inventories, for me, is stated in the caption for a recent letter from Russell Train to the editor of the *New York Times*: “National Parks are for Americans of All Species.” We should get to know them.

A second park management task would be to know how these resources interact with their world and with each other. Thomas Jefferson apparently understood this, opining “For if one link in nature’s chain might be lost, another might be lost, until the whole of things might vanish by piecemeal.” We must understand these links.

The National Park Service thus owes a great deal to the pioneers that conceived and launched our first All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory. In this case, the initiative of a few individuals working in a national park have demonstrated world leadership in answering the intellectual challenge of park management, and have made a tangible contribution to the preservation of biodiversity through the practical pursuit of knowledge, education, and public enjoyment.

This volume is one result of the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory in Great Smoky Mountains National Park—a remarkable effort that will benefit the future of our parks and our own particular species most of all.

**Michael Soukup**

*Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship & Science  
National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240  
mike\_soukup@nps.gov*