



GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Frequently Asked Questions about the Firefly Lottery

Updated 4/21/2020

2020 Event Cancelled, for more information go to www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/park-announces-cancellation-of-synchronous-firefly-viewing-event.htm

The NPS encourages people who choose to visit the national parks during this pandemic to adhere to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local public health authorities to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. As services are limited, the NPS urges visitors to continue to practice Leave No Trace principles, including pack-in and pack-out, to keep outdoor spaces safe and healthy. See more information at www.nps.gov/coronavirus.

During the shuttle operating period, parking confirmation is required for evening access to the Sugarlands Visitor Center parking area and the firefly shuttle to the Elkmont viewing area. Access to the Elkmont area is closed at night to all but the shuttle system and campers.

All parking confirmation will be distributed via a lottery system on [Recreation.gov –Firefly Event page.](#)

The lottery uses a randomized computer drawing, known as the Firefly Event Lottery, to assign parking passes.

Please visit the [Firefly Event webpage at recreation.gov](#)

**Where can I find information about the lottery?
When can I submit my application?**

Applications are ONLY accepted when the lottery is open:

No preference is given to the order in which applications are received.

Where will I find the lottery application?

A link to APPLY FOR THE LOTTERY will be added to the Recreation.gov – Firefly Event page when the lottery opens. The link will remain active until the lottery closes . If you visit the web page prior to the lottery opening date the link to register will not be visible until the lottery opens.

Is the parking confirmation for a specific date and how many date choices do I have?

Yes. A parking confirmation is only valid for one specific date.

You may enter two choices of dates during the lottery application – your preferred choice and an alternate choice.



Will I know if my application has been received?

When you apply to the lottery and provide your e-mail, you will receive a confirmation e-mail that your application has been submitted.

Please add Recreation.gov to your e-mail address book or safe senders list and check your “spam” or “junk mail” folder for notifications.

How much does it cost to enter the lottery?

There is a \$1.00 application fee. Successful applicants will automatically be awarded parking passes and charged a \$24.00 fee to the same credit or debit card used for the application fee. The \$25.00 reservation fee covers the cost of awarding the confirmation, viewing supplies, and nightly personnel costs for managing the viewing opportunity at Sugarlands Visitor Center and Elkmont.

How does the park choose the dates of the shuttle operating period?

Park biologists monitor environmental conditions, mostly temperature, in an effort to predict when the display will peak; however, it is impossible to predict accurately in advance and conditions which affect the intensity of the “show” from year to year are beyond the control of the National Park Service.

When will I know the lottery results and whether I have been awarded a parking pass?

The results of the lottery will be announced on May 7, 2020.¹ You may also log into your Recreation.gov account on or after May 7th to see the lottery results.

How many applications may I submit?

You may only submit one lottery application per household per season.

Is the shuttle and the viewing area accessible?

A handicapped accessible trolley will be available. Please alert a Ranger upon arrival at the Sugarlands Visitor Center if someone in your vehicle will need an accessible trolley. The viewing area and shuttle stop is a natural, outdoor environment with minimal shelter. There are several small paved areas at the Elkmont shuttle stop where fireflies can be viewed.



May I submit an application by telephone?

Yes, by calling 1-877-444-6777. The call center will complete an application for the caller and results will be emailed on May 7th.

How does the lottery work?

Successful applicants will automatically be awarded parking passes and \$24.00 will be charged to the same credit or debit card used for the application fee.(collected on Recreation.gov) to help cover the cost of viewing supplies, and nightly personnel to manage the viewing opportunity at Sugarlands Visitor Center and Elkmont.

Why must I obtain parking confirmation to view the Synchronous Fireflies at Elkmont during their peak display?

Access to the Elkmont area has been limited to shuttle service since 2006 in order to reduce traffic congestion and provide a safe viewing experience for visitors that minimizes disturbance to the fireflies during this critical 2-week mating period.

Are there other places to view synchronous fireflies in the park?

We receive reports each year from people who have seen synchronous fireflies in areas in and around the park. There are likely many places of similar habitats, low to mid elevations with rich, alluvial forests, where people may find fireflies displaying. Unfortunately, we are not aware of another location in the park with adequate parking to sustain visitation associated with firefly viewing.