On the trail again...
RATC’s Hikemaster rallies the troops and covers many miles

Hike Reports
By Jennifer Frye and Dee Case

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is a recreational hiking association of volunteers who preserve and improve the Appalachian Trail as the nation’s premier, continuous, long-distance footpath.

The following few pages present a compilation of group hikes which took place from mid-summer through November under the auspices of the RATC. The designation of “RATC Hike #X” refers to a specific section of the trail which the RATC maintains; these hikes are numbered for reference and convenience. Dee Case is working on covering all 120 miles of the RATC-maintained AT sequentially from 1-14. All club members are welcomed to join a hike!

Hike: Bottom Creek Gorge
Date: July 24th 2021
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Janice Metzger, Clive Hillyard, David Gloudemans, Ted Byron

Hike: Virginia Tech Section (Start of 635 and down Groundhog Trail)
Date: July 31, 2021
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Peg Alderman, Clive Hillyard, Madeleine Taylor, Patricia Starks, Tee Godsey, Carol Rowlett, Fred Meyer Jim Webb
Hike: RATC #5 Sawtooth Ridge  
Date: August 13, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Wyatt McCarney, Richard Harris, Adele Shaffer, Chris Means

Hike: Virginia Tech Section (Start at 641 down Groundhog Trail)  
Date: August 21, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Carol Rowlett, Patricia Starks, Fred Meyer, Madeleine Taylor, Peg Alderman, Steve Farris, Tom Behrman, Tee Godsey

Hike: Tye River Spy Rock  
Date: August 21, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Sara Cuthbertson, Maya Bohler, Jennifer Frye, Clive Hillyard, David Wickersham

Hike: Hoop Hole  
Date: September 9, 2021  
Participants: Kris Peckman (Lead), Bob Peckman, Suzy Fay +1  
I think Kris sent you the information for this hike

Hike: Crabtree Meadows Campground to Spy Rock and back  
Date: October 17, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Carol Rowlett, Jennifer Frye, Maya Bohlar, Hilary Williams

Hike: Big Horse Gap to Bear Wallow Gap  
Date: November 9, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Jeff Edwards, Connie Edwards Ana, Madeleine Taylor, Tom McAvoy, Dave Gloudemans, Rob Clark Janice Metzger, Adele Shaffer Jennifer Frye

Perfect day for a hike. The temperature was moderate. The trail crosses the Blue Ridge Parkway several times. The views were lovely. There were still colorful leaves on the trees. We picked up a couple of escaped dogs for a mile or so of hiking. Our conscientious hikers were able to contact the owners. They left us when we kicked up a deer. We received a text by the owner that they had returned home so it ended OK.

Hike: Explore Park  
Date: November 17, 2021  
Participants: David Wickersham (Lead), Linda Nguyen, Caryl Connolly, Alison Robinson

Hike: RATC Hike #2 Curry Gap to Daleville  
Date: November 21, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Carol Rowlett, Rusty Havens, Peg Alderman, Madeleine Taylor, Bob Peckman, Maya Bohler, Jennifer Frye, Dawn Lamb

Hike: Crabtree Meadows Campground to Spy Rock and back  
Date: October 23, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Dawn Lamb, Madeleine Taylor Richard Lovegrove, Janice Metzger, Jennifer Frye, Gary Adams, Dave Gloudemans, Ken Myers  
The weather was great. Hike #1 was repeated on December 14 with Adele Shaffer, Tee Godsey and Alison Robinson taking advantage of sunny skies and delightful weather.

Hike: Bear Wallow Gap to Jennings Creek  
Date: November 16, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Adele Shaffer, Christa Neher, Peg Alderman, Connie Edwards, Rob Clark, Jennifer Frye, Jeff Edwards, Hilary Williams

Hike: Explore Park  
Date: November 17, 2021  
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Hike: Bear Wallow Gap to Jennings Creek  
Date: November 16, 2021  
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Adele Shaffer, Christa Neher, Peg Alderman, Connie Edwards, Rob Clark, Jennifer Frye, Jeff Edwards, Hilary Williams
Hike: RATC Hike #4 McAfee Knob to Andy Layne Trail
Date: November 28, 2021
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Richard Lovegrove, Mirna Hosny, Madeleine Taylor, Clive Hillyard, Dawn Lamb, Peg Alderman, Adele Shaffer, Mangala Kumar, Jennifer Frye, Carol Rowlett
This was quite strenuous and is close to 14 miles. Beautiful views along the trail. As the days are shorter we were hustling to get to the Andy Layne parking lot before dark. Due to the leaves on the trail, we also had a few falls that day.

Hike: Carvins Cove - Trough - Gauntlet Loop
Date: December 11, 2021
Participants: Maya Bohler (Lead), Rita Krasnow, Bob Peckman, Kris Peckman, Dawn Lamb, Mary Harshfield, Jimbo Harshfield, Dee Case, Rusty Havens
Our group of 10 car-pooled to the parking lot on Timberview Road. Starting out on the Horse Pen Trail for a very short distance, we took the Trough Trail up to Brushy Mountain, a moderate climb of a little more than an hour. Once on the ridge of Brushy Mountain, we followed the Fire Road for a while, heading east. Then we took the Gauntlet Trail back down. It was a cloudy, warm day with rain in the forecast later in the afternoon. We enjoyed the spring-like weather, and everybody was eager to make good time to get done with the hike before the rain.

Hike: RATC Hike #5 Sawtooth Ridge (McAfee Knob parking lot to Dragons Tooth parking lot)
Date: December 15, 2021
Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Dawn Lamb, Jennifer Frye, Madeleine Taylor, Tom Mcavoy, Janice Metzger, Alison Robinson, Carol Rowlett, Ana Anderson
We had had extraordinarily good weather so far for the section hikes. Sawtooth Ridge is one of my favorite hikes.

If there are any sections RATC which members need to hike in order to complete your quest for hiking the entirety of the RATC’s section of the AT, please let me know and I will work to get your hike on the schedule. – Dee Case

New hike leader training

The eight people who attended to become hike leaders seem to have a wealth of experience of the outdoors, hiking the AT & other trails, & being scout leaders. Several had EMS & first aid knowledge. They will do a great job as new leaders.

Those who attended:
Officers: Bill Neilan, Jennifer Frye Carol Rowlett, Dee Case
Trainers: Molly Armistead, Janice Metzger, Hilary Williams, Clive A. Hillyard, Dave Hartzig, Stacey Rorie, Daniel Rorie, Randall Eakin
Twenty-two-one was a great year for the club as far as receiving grants for tools, equipment, and material to improve our section of trail. When side trails--also known as blue-blazed trails--are added in, the RATC maintains over 150 miles of trail. Through the end of December we have received over $18,000 in funding. The bulk of this money ($11,900) came from grants from the Virginia AT license plate fund. This fund is administered by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

These funds paid for the following projects: $4,400 was used to pay for materials for the re-decking and new railings installed on the two bridges on the Andy Layne Trail. The club also purchased a new chainsaw with this grant.

Twenty-five hundred was used to hire a contractor to improve the fire road from Route 311 to the AT crossing. The fire road is used fairly frequently each year by rescue vehicles bringing out injured hikers. Over the years it has deteriorated to the point that it is barely passable for vehicles. This work is a first step in getting the fire road to McAfee into the same condition as other fire roads in the area. Hikers should find it easier to walk on the fire road after the work is completed in late January. The RATC board also voted at our December meeting to match the $5,000 grant from club funds to continue the contractor’s work there.

All of these projects were an excellent used of the funds provided by Virginia drivers with the AT special license plate. The number of drivers with these plates is increasing so we should be able to look forward to getting future projects funded.

This year the club also received a $6,500 grant from the National Park Service (NPS). We used this money to purchase tools for our maintainers as well as several chainsaws. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Josh Kloehn, one of the staff members at the office in Roanoke. Josh was instrumental in developing and submitting the grant request as well as following up with the NPS on it. Without Josh’s work on this we would not have received this much needed grant.

Josh has recently relocated to Ohio. He will be working remotely for a while until his replacement is hired. Josh is an AT thru-hiker who has worked tirelessly for the trail. He is most dedicated person to the AT that I have ever met. His steady professionalism will be sorely missed.

Over the past three months we have finished up with some improvements to the lower part of the trail up to McAfee Knob. This included replacing about 120 feet of rotted crib logs and installation of about 20 rock steps. We also did a few work hikes north of route 624 in Roanoke County, installing nearly 50 log steps and ten water bars.

Over the past three years we have had 32 well as about 50 log steps and 300 feet of crib log replacements. This included replacing about 120 feet of rotted crib logs and installation of about 20 rock steps. We also did a few work hikes north of route 624 in Roanoke County, installing nearly 50 log steps and ten water bars.

Five thousand was used to repair other bridges on our section of trail. With 52 bridges on our section, we have by far the most bridges to maintain out of all of the 31 trail maintaining clubs on the AT.

Five thousand was used to hire a contractor to improve the fire road from Route 311 to the AT crossing. The fire road is used fairly frequently each year by rescue vehicles bringing out injured hikers. Over the years it has deteriorated to the point that it is barely passable for vehicles. This work is a first step in getting the fire road to McAfee into the same condition as other fire roads in the area. Hikers should find it easier to walk on the fire road after the work is completed in late January. The RATC board also voted at our December meeting to match the $5,000 grant from club funds to continue the contractor’s work there.

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Adopt-a-Shelter

Every year since becoming shelter supervisors, we have gone out and checked all 16 shelters before the thru hikers get to the RATC section, typically in the spring and early summer. We dig out the fire rings and sweep the shelter and privy. We check to make sure that there are no hazard trees around the shelter, there is no graffiti, the privy doesn’t need to be moved and that they have a broom and a hiker register. We pick up any trash around the shelter and privy. We also make a note of any work we feel needs to be done that year and we schedule work hikes to complete.

Since we have 16 shelters, we do not visit all of them more than once a year. For that reason, it is greatly appreciated if we have hikers reporting to us when an issue needs to be addressed. We also have established an Adopt-a-Shelter program, but in the past year, we only received reports on 5 shelters.

If anyone is interested in participating in the Adopt-a-Shelter program, please let us know. Also, when hiking by a shelter, if you notice any issues that need to be addressed, send us an email at witchers4@junoc.com

Thanks,
Homer and Therese Witcher

RATC shelter supervisors

Expectations for the shelter adopters are:

1. Coordinate with your fellow adopter to visit the shelter at least once a quarter.
2. Bring a shelter register and ink pen with you in case the shelter needs one.
3. Inspect the shelter and out-house for leaks and other repairs that may be needed.
4. Check the outhouse to see if it needs to be moved. If it is not a moldering privy, add a small bucket of lime to the pit.
5. If the shelter has a moldering privy, it may be necessary to knock down the cone in order to prevent the privy from filling too rapidly. Make sure there is a bucket and a rake.
6. Inspect the picnic table and bear boxes (if present).
7. Shovel out the fire pit if needed.
8. Ensure there is a broom at the shelter and sweep out the shelter and outhouse.
9. Perform any minor repairs that you feel comfortable performing.
10. Take out any trash left at the shelter or privy site.
11. Either send a report to the shelter supervisor (witchers4@junoc.com) or call Homer Witcher at 540-266-4849 to report that you have visited the shelter. Report any maintenance needs and any items that you have needed to purchase. Any expenses over $20 need to be pre-approved by the shelter supervisors.
12. Check the entire area around the shelter and surrounding camping areas for any dead trees that could potentially fall and be a hazard to persons congregating in that area.
13. Expectations for the shelter include:

   • Wilson Creek
   • Lambert Meadow
   • Campbell
   • Catawba Mountain
   • Johns Spring
   • Niday
   • War Spur
   • Bailey Gap
   • Pine Swamp Branch
   • Wapiti
   • Johns Spring
   • Catawba Mountain
   • Campbell
   • Lambert Meadow
   • Fullhardt Knob
   • Wilson Creek

New board member:
Membership Coordinator
by Cathy Butler

I’m Cathy Butler, the new Membership Coordinator, and want to introduce myself. First though, I want to thank Mark Farrell for all of his work in this position over the last several years but mostly for his help as we transferred this role.

My husband and I moved to Roanoke from Atlanta in 2007. We came up for a weekend and before we left town we had decided we could live here. The Roanoke area is a perfect home for us because we love all things outdoors.

About 12 years ago we decided we wanted to give back. We have become regular volunteers with Mountain Junkie trail races, volunteered for Muddy Squirrel’s triathlon and Gran Fondo, helped with trail building the Rock and Roll trail at Carvins Cove, gone out on Roanoke Parks and Recreation work days, and mentored several Fleet Feet running programs.

More recently we’ve become involved with the RATC. We’ve done several RATC weekday work hikes. In October I saw a Meetup post for help with Roanoke’s GoFest in October. I signed up and went to help, not really knowing what I was getting myself into. It was a blast! I sold tee-shirts and recruited new members. It was so much fun helping people learn about the AT and the RATC. I also learned a lot. Mark joked that I should become an officer in the club and I responded that I’d like his job as membership coordinator and now I have it! I’d seriously love to have everyone who uses and enjoys the Appalachian Trail as a member of our awesome club.

Be sure to regularly check out our website at RATC.ORG, our Facebook page at Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club - RATC and if you haven’t already done so sign up for our Meetup group at http://www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Appalachian-Trail-Club.
Roanoke AT Club at the Salem Museum

RATC has been added to the Salem Museum’s newest feature exhibit, The Other Side of the Mountain: Life in the Catawba Valley, explores the history of everyday life in this region and features information about the following:

- the Virginia Native Americans who first settled in Catawba
- the culture which subsequently developed in the largely agrarian community
- the stunning scenery of Dragon’s Tooth and McAfee Knob
- the modern institutions that have formed here

RATC was on hand sharing the history of local sections of the Appalachian Trail running through Catawba, and providing information about how best to hike the Blue Ridge Triple Crown: McAfee Knob, Dragon’s Tooth and Tinker Cliffs.

The Club, founded in 1932, maintains 120 miles, 16 shelters/privies and 53 bridges on the Appalachian Trail from Lick Skillet Hollow in Giles County to Black Horse Gap in Botetourt County. An exhibit of backpacking gear is on display and includes the ten essentials for hiking along with RATC t-shirt and cap.

Club members Cathy Butler (Membership Coordinator) and Bill Neilan (President) attended the feature’s kick off day, December 11, 2021. Visitors wandered the museum viewing the many exhibits and taking in all the historical information about Catawba; many asked questions about the A.T. Please consider a visit the Salem Museum for this display as well as to see an elaborate electric train layout set up for the holidays.

This exhibit will continue through March, 2022. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10-4. Masks are recommended for all visitors and required for those who are unvaccinated or attending with a group.

Training sessions are planned for both McAfee Knob Volunteer Ridge runners as well as for new hike leaders. If you want to help with trail maintenance then by all means please contact Mike Vaughn.

Remember, this is your club. Our success depends on your participation and support. Why not make one of those New Year resolutions to get involved in some activity? Every little bit you can do helps!


President’s Report
by Bill Neilan

The new year has arrived! I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday. As we enter this New Year, we all have much to look forward to out on the trail.

We will be making some desperately needed repairs to the McAfee Knob fire road in January. In March we will have our annual meeting (this year’s meeting will be virtual) and we will have our Corn Boil in July. Of course there is the GoFest event that was so successful last year. Our recreational hiking program is busier than ever and the trail maintenance crews will continue to keep our 120 miles of AT safe and environmentally sound.

Our membership numbers keep growing and participation in club events is expanding. Speaking of club membership, did you remember to renew for 2022? If not, you can do so right now by going to the website (ratc.org). We need your membership so we can continue with all the activities we pursue in support of the ATC in this area.

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Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Application

New and Renewal

IF ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP, I AGREE TO:
1. Support the objectives of the RATC
2. Abide by the rules of the national and state parks and forests
3. Respect the interests of the owner when on private property
4. Keep trails and woodlands free of litter, and
5. Abide by the instructions of the leader on group hikes and trips

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Total Amount Enclosed $   

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to “RATC” or use PayPal at ratc.org

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024

RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via treasurer@ratc.org or by calling 540-521-5435