

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Winter 2022

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.



On the trail again...

RATC's Hikemaster rallies the troops and covers many miles

Hike Reports

By Jennifer Frye and Dee Case

The RATC utilizes www.MeetUp.com to organize group hikes. Meetup also has a handy app for iOS and Android. Planned hikes are posted and registration follows on a first-come, first-served basis. A designated hike leader will organize the logistics leading up to the hike.

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: Booker T. Washington National Park
Date: October 16, 2021

Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Meg Carter, Alison Robinson, Connie Edwards, Micki Myers

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: RATC Hike #1, Curry Gap to Black Horse Gap
Date: October 23, 2021

Participants: Dee Case (Lead), Dawn Lamb, Madeleine Taylor, Richard Lovegrove, Janice Metzger, Jennifer Frye, Gary Adams, Dave Gloude-mans, Ken Myers



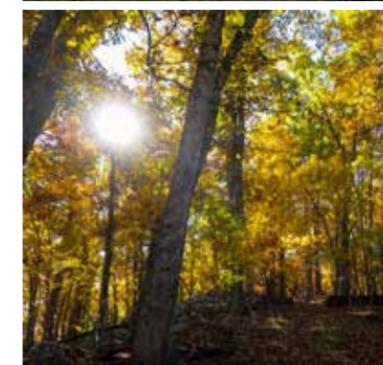
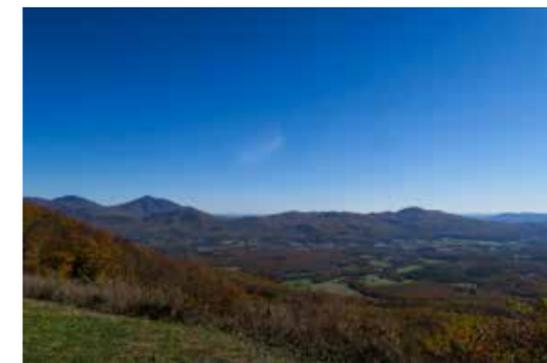
The weather was great. Hike #1 was repeated on December 14 with Adele Shaffer, Tee Godsey and Alison Robinson taking advantage of sunny skies and delightful weather.



Hike: 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 Gloude-mans, 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



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



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 Conolly, 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: 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.

We delayed our lunch break until we were down at the intersection with the Horse Pen trail. From there we took a very short detour on the Lakeside Trail to find a pleasant spot for lunch with a view of Carvins Cove Lake. From our lunch spot there was only about a mile left to return to the parking area. As we arrived at our cars, the first raindrops started to fall, and we considered ourselves lucky having avoided getting wet.

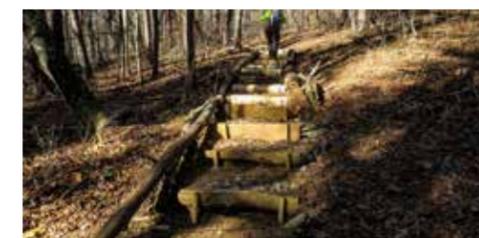
Hike: RATC Hike #5 Sawtooth Ridge (McAfee Knob parking lot to Dragons Tooth parking lot)

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 have 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



Hike report for Read Mountain Loop 12/28/2021

By Bob and Kris Peckman

Kris and Bob Peckman (leaders), Barbara Conti, Sarah Cuthbertson, Rusty Havens, Clive Hillyard, Mirna Hosny, Ken Myers, Carol Rowlett, Georgia Shaurette, Patty Starks

We started out under cloudy skies but still unseasonably warm, even before the sun came out. We were a congenial group, if somewhat spread out. The woods seemed oddly silent: no rustling of squirrels or chirping of birds. Tiny spotted wintergreen and patches of moss relieved the brown landscape. We hiked up the Buzzards Rock Trail to the Rocky Way Trail, which took us along the eastern side of the mountain with views of subdivisions and industrial/box store rooftops as well as the mountains beyond.

Then the old access road took us from the water tower on the side of the mountain up to the CCC Trail along the ridge line. An old name for this mountain is Dead Man Mountain because from Plantation Road and beyond it looks like a dead man under a shroud. We started at his knees and walked

New hike leader training

Topics presented: What makes a good hike leader ~ RATC Hike Leader guidelines ~Hike posting & scheduling Meet-up ~ Planning hikes ~ Liability & Hike Leading ~ Gear Essentials ~ Leave No Trace Review ~ Emergency Situations & Basic First Aid & Safety. Afterwards, 5 of us then went for a short hike on the new Catawba Greenway, to the McAfee Knob fire road & back, to practice some of the things we learned. William "Bill" Neilan, Dee Case & Carol Rowlett helped with this training!

The eight people who attended to become hike leaders seem to have

up to where his hands were folded on his chest. This is where the old fire tower used to be. Then we went down a little to his neck where another access Jeep road went down to the farm at the base of the mountain. A little further we passed the main trail on the right to the parking lot. When the trail made an abrupt left toward Buzzards Rock, you could still see the faint CCC Trail continuing straight ahead, but now it just takes you to the back yards of people's homes. The left turn crosses over the ridgeline. Following the ridgeline would bring you to the dead man's nose, but there are no views from there. But crossing to the west side of his nose brings you to Buzzards Rock, or rocks really, and a wonderful respite for lunch, where we could see the airport and most of Roanoke, and where we learned about chickens from Barbara. From there it was back down the Buzzards Rock trail to the parking lot.

In a ditch, Mirna noticed a green post, which she retrieved and carried all the way back to the parking lot, claiming it wasn't heavy (right!). Even if she's never been a trail maintainer, she sure has a trail maintainer's heart!

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

Trainees:
Molly Armistead
Janice Metzger
Hilary Williams
Clive A Hillyard
Dave Hartzig
Stacey Rorie
Daniel Rorie
Randall Eakin

Trail Supervisor's Report

by Mike Vaughn

Twenty twenty-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 chain-saw with this grant.

Twenty-five hundred 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.

All of these projects were an excellent use of the funds provided by Virginia drivers with the AT spe-



cialty 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 in-

strumental 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 rotting 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 work hikes on the four mile section of trail up the McAfee Knob. This is over a quarter of the work hikes. We have done this due to the heavy use this section gets, with over 50,000 hikers per year. Hopefully the work done up there will make it a more enjoyable and safer hike up there. In 2022 we will be focusing our efforts on the southern part of our section of the AT, with work hikes planned for south of Trout Creek and near Kelly Knob.



Please make note of any problems you see while out hiking on our section of trail, including the side trails. Text me at 540-992-1350 and let me know of any problems you encounter. These could include trees fallen across the trail, overgrown sections of trail, or vandalism or trash along the trail.

Send pictures if you can when you get a cell signal!

Metadata

When a picture really is worth a thousand words...

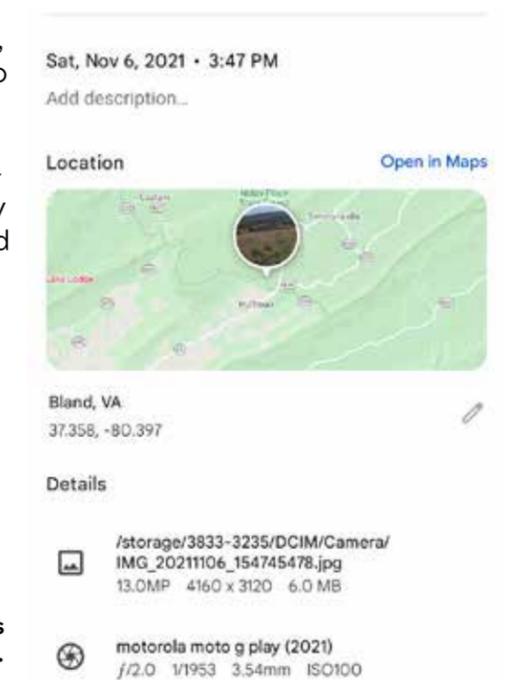
Reporting the location of a tree across the trail is not always straightforward via a narrative note. "We had hiked about 9 miles south of the trailhead, and just passed the big oak tree by the creek." Say what? Fortunately, digital meta-data makes simply sending a picture a great way to identify exactly where the problem is located.

In addition to the pixels (picture + element = pixel) which comprise the visual part of a digital image, a photo file typically contains additional pieces of information called

meta-data. Such photographic variables as F-stop, shutter speed, and ISO are often included. So too is Global Position System data, in the form of a precise longitude and latitude references. Both Android and iOS phones provide easy means to review this GPS data, and apps are available for both platforms which enhance that basic functionality.

So please take that snapshot of the trail issue and send it to our Trail Supervisor when you get a cell signal!

This phone screenshot (right) shows GPS data both as a map and as coordinates. Additional meta data shows file data and photographic variables.



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.

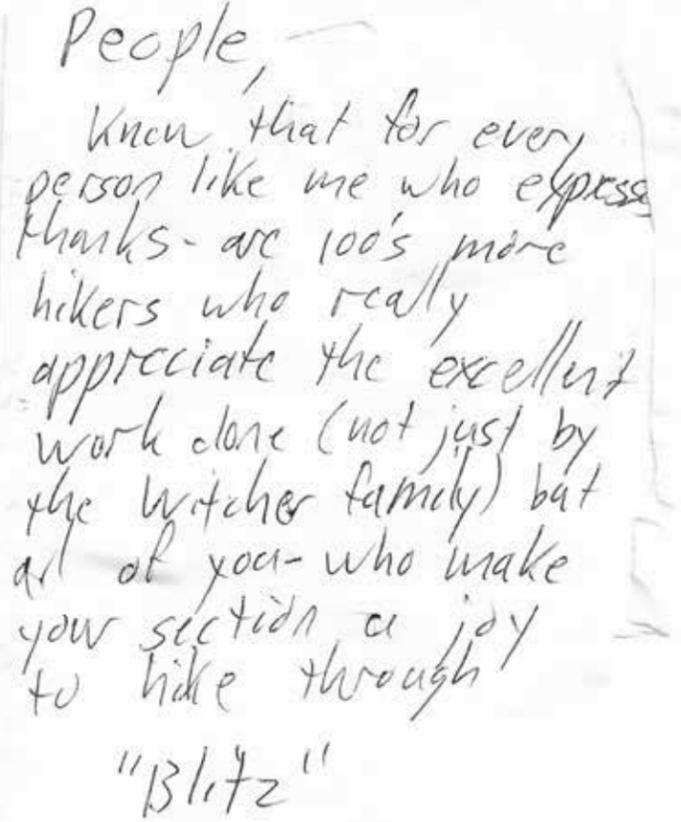
If anyone is interested in participating in the Adopt-a-Shelter program, please let us know. Also, when hiking by a shelter, if you notice any issues that need to be addressed, send us an email at witchers4@juno.com

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 outhouse for leaks and other repairs that may be needed.



People,
Know that for every person like me who express thanks - are 100's more hikers who really appreciate the excellent work done (not just by the Witcher family) but all of you - who make your section a joy to hike through
"Blitz"

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@juno.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. 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.

RATC shelters,

south to north:

- Jenny Knob
- Wapiti
- Doc's Knob
- Pine Swamp Branch
- Bailey Gap
- War Spur
- Laurel Creek
- Sarver Hollow
- Niday
- Pickle Branch
- 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>.



Volunteer Engagement Planning Workshop

From the Appalachian Trail Conservancy

The ATC is offering a workshop designed to support the stewardship and longevity of the Appalachian Trail through improved volunteer engagement.

Many people don't know that the while the AT is managed through a complex partnership between the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, and the non-profit Appalachian Trail Conservancy, most of the actual, physical maintenance of the trail is accomplished by 31 clubs staffed by volunteers.

In 2010, the National Park Service estimated that the ATC and affiliated clubs provide approximately \$3 million annually in volunteer services. In short, engaged volunteers are critical for the sustaining of the AT, and this workshop is being offered to support volunteer engagement.

For more information, contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy by email at volunteer@appalachiantrail.org

Registration is required and the sessions will meet every 4th Thursday of the month from January 28 - April 28, 2022 7-8 p.m. via Zoom.

There is no cost to attend.

The mission of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. To become a member, volunteer and learn more, visit www.appalachiantrail.org

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.



President's Report

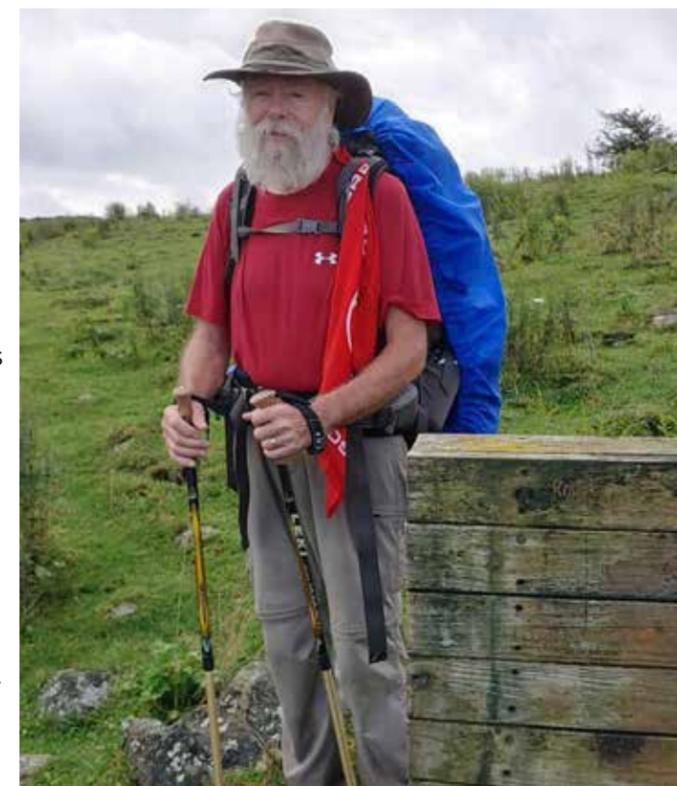
by Bill Neilan

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.



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!

Board Members and Officers		
President	Bill Neilan	president@ratc.org
Vice President	To be filled	vicepresident@ratc.org
Secretary	Susan Terwilliger	secretary@ratc.org
Treasurer	Terri McClure	treasurer@ratc.org
Membership Coordinator	Cathy Butler	membership@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Homer Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Therese Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Trail Maintenance *	Mike Vaughn	trailsupervisor@ratc.org
Hikemaster	Jennifer Frye	hikemaster@ratc.org
Newsletter Editor	Ron Bradbury	blazer@ratc.org
Conservation Supervisor	To be filled	
Land Management Supervisor	To be filled	landmanagement@ratc.org
Counselor	Jason Thompson	counselor1@ratc.org
Counselor	Andrew Bowman	counselor2@ratc.org
Counselor	Brendle Wolfe	counselor3@ratc.org
Counselor	To Be Filled	counselor3@ratc.org
McAfee Knob Task Force Liaison	Dee Case	casedee@sbcglobal.net
Webmaster	Jill Pennington	webmaster@ratc.org
Roanoke College Liaison	Conner McBane	cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org
RATC Archivist	Diana Christopulos	
ATC President's Leadership Circle	Diana Christopulos	

TRAIL BLAZER
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
PO Box 12282
ROANOKE VA 24024-2282

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Name(s)	New Member Packet Fee:	\$5	_____
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15	_____
	Family # of years	x \$20	_____
City	Individual life membership	x \$250	_____
State	Family life membership	x \$300	_____
Zip			_____
Phone	Donation	\$	_____
Email	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