

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Fall 2016

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.

CALENDAR OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

Holiday Potluck - December 3

WORK HIKES

**First Saturday, every month
Bruce Agnew**

540-846-6180 csc236inf@gmail.com

**Monday, October 10 - 8:30 AM
Monday, October 24 - 8:30 AM
Monday, November 7 - 8:30 AM
Monday, November 21 - 8:30 AM
Monday, December 5 - 8:30 AM
Monday, December 19 - 8:30 AM**

**Trail Supervisor
Jim Webb**

562-8896 – startover14@peoplepc.com

Hike Scheduling

Contact Bob Peckman

540-366-7780 – hikemaster@ratc.org

BOARD MEETINGS

(All members are always welcome.)

**Monday, October 3, 7:00 PM
Salem Mill Mt Coffee**

**Monday, November 14, 7:00 PM
Salem Mill Mt Coffee**

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Susan Powell will be conducting Hike Leader Training for us Thursday, September 22 from 6-9 pm at Backcountry Ski and Sport in Salem, VA. If you want to join your hikemaster in training, email Susan at susan.e.powell07@gmail.com.

November 11-13: Join your fellow A.T. volunteers from the Roanoke and New River Valleys for a Volunteer Maintainer Workshop, weekend of training, fellowship, and getting on the A.T.! Josh Kloehn - jkloehn@appalachiantrail.org

RATC will be tabling at a Boy Scouts of America event on November 12, 2016 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for a large number of Boy Scout troop leaders and troops from all over the state. If you can volunteer for a two-hour shift, email our membership coordinator Brendle Wolfe at blwolfe@mail.roanoke.edu.

Reprinted from The Long Distance Hiker Spring 2016

'Did you see the documentary?'
or, **Why I hiked the Appalachian Trail**
By Timo Grüneberg - "UHaul"

When you hike Appalachian Trail (or any other long distance trail) there are several obligatory questions: What's your name? When did you start? Are you going all the way? How is it going so far? And in my case, with my "slight" accent, Where are you from? "Germany."

On the AT, a split second later a next question pops up, "Did you watch the documentary? Is that the reason why you're hiking the AT?"

Department of Natural Resources. Just having quit football (yes American football and not soccer - I played quarterback and lineman), I was heavily overweight and looking for some outdoor activities to lose weight and get back in shape.

A few days into my new research project I went to the wood shop to order some samples from the wood shop manager. We spoke for a while about my research and my plans; and he looked like an outdoors person so I asked him for some local hiking trails close by. He



COURTESY OF TIMO 'UHAUL' GRÜNEBERG

The thru-hiker UHaul stands atop Mount Katahdin at the end of his 2015 thru-hike.

"Well I have seen the documentary, and no, that is not the (primary) reason why I hike the AT, there is another, much stronger reason why I hike the AT - the people."

But let's go a few years back and explain how I got in touch with the AT. After I graduated from the University of Göttingen in the Lower Saxony region of Germany, I got a research position at Virginia Tech's

started laughing and told me about this trail spanning from Georgia to Maine, just 10 miles down the road. A trail he had thru-hiked in 1990.

He had what?

I had no idea what he was talking about and said I would have a look into that. The next moment he scanned me from head to toe and asked me if I had

plans for the upcoming weekend; he was leading a work hike on this trail and could use some help to move some BFR's* and improve one of the most traveled sections of the whole Appalachian Trail, the 3.9 miles from VA-311 to McAfee Knob. Little did I know what would come in the next two years and how it changed my time at VT and in Virginia.

The first trail project I worked on was in 2011 - rock steps just north of Route 311 up to the iconic McAfee Knob, one of the heaviest traveled sections - and they are still working well.

Over the next two years I spent pretty much every weekend in the woods, to help maintain sections of the AT between VA-611 and Black Horse Gap. Cutting blowdowns, lopping, installing and maintaining water bars, and my favorite rock work became kind of second nature to me and for almost two years I filled the position of assistant trail supervisor of the RATC.

On one hand I enjoyed the nature and the beauty of South-West Virginia in all seasons, but mostly the camaraderie and the people out there. Early in the season the maintainers go out and take care of their sections, cutting blowdowns and whacking weeds, and shortly after that the first hikers show up on their way to Maine.

In the summer months, plenty of weekend warriors show up and try to tackle the "little triple crown" (Dragon's Tooth, McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs), before the early fall and the Southbounders come through on the way to Springer Mountain.

One of my personal highlights was the cleanup of the devastating Derecho storm in June 2012. Within days thousands of blow-downs were cut and cleared on our 120-mile section, by maintainers that had no power at home, due to the major damage to the power system. In 2011 and 2012, friends and I went to Trail Days and I made a promise to myself, I will thru-hike to participate officially in the parade and be part of this family.

Fast forward to 2015. After years in my job in a highly dynamic industry, I pulled the release cord. With a couple thousand hours of overtime, I remembered the dream of thru-hiking. Within two weeks I received my visa, booked a flight and organized a shuttle to Springer Mountain. At the tail end of the NoBo season I set my way North and reached Mount Katahdin 4½ months later.

The hike was everything I had envisioned and expected: the physical exhaustion, the rewarding scenery, and the people. Yes, the people you meet along your way. The generosity, friendliness and helpfulness whenever needed. Several times when I hitch-hiked I wouldn't have given myself a ride, dirty and smelly as I was, but there wasn't a single hitch that I had to wait for more than 15 minutes.

Coming back to why I hiked the trail, I can say yes, I have seen the documentary and it is not the reason why I hiked the trail — the people I have met before and during my hike are the reason.

But why are so many Germans hiking the trail then? Simply because the documentary shows these emotions, the relationship of the hikers and trail angels, talks about failure, mistakes, a learning curve, the rewards and what it takes to hike the AT.

Unfortunately, the movie version of "A Walk in the Woods" is cutting short on this unique trail culture and the benefits for every single hiker.

To finish, I like to use a quote from a friend who hiked in 1990 and it took me almost 2,200 miles to fully understand: "You can leave the trail, but the trail never leaves you!" Spot on, spot on.

* Big Friendly Rocks, used on the Appalachian Trail for pretty much everything, starting from steps to water bars, bridge bases, and supporting structures (e.g. shelters and outhouses). Two simple rules apply: the bigger the better and gravity is not your friend while moving them.



Mountain Valley Pipeline: a massive scar on the Appalachian Trail

The proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline poses many threats to the Appalachian Trail, and our club has documented and shared them with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

We have recently learned that the potential visual impacts of the project would be much greater than we originally knew. It would leave a massive scar on the landscape and be intermittently visible for approximately 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia between Sugar Run Mountain in Giles County and Black Horse Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

A quick background summary:

The proposed pipeline is 301 miles long and 42" in diameter. It would require a clearing of about 125 feet during construction.

In addition to the pipeline itself, numerous access roads would be constructed, perhaps affecting more land than the pipeline.

The pipelines must be built vertically straight up the steep slopes because they could not withstand the pressure of the earth above them if they were built diagonally, at a gentler grade.

The pipeline would repeatedly climb up and down steep mountain slopes, with some grades exceeding 60 percent. Ernst Kastning, a highly respected geologist who has retired from Radford University, has studied the route and calls it a "no-build zone" due to the combination of steep slopes, poor soils, an active seismic zone, karst/sinkhole topography, the likelihood of major erosion and sedimentation problems, and significant threats to water quality.

It has not yet received a permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), but the FERC will probably have issued a Draft

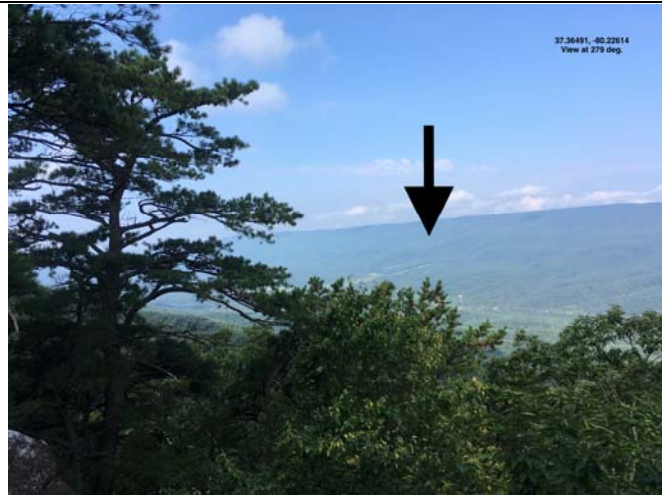
Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) by the time you read this. A 90-day comment period will follow.

The new Celanese pipeline on Peters Mountain near Pearisburg and US 460 is built on Peters Mountain, the same mountain where Mountain Valley Pipeline proposes to cross the AT. The Celanese pipeline has a 10" diameter; the MVP would be 42" and carry 17 times the volume of natural gas.

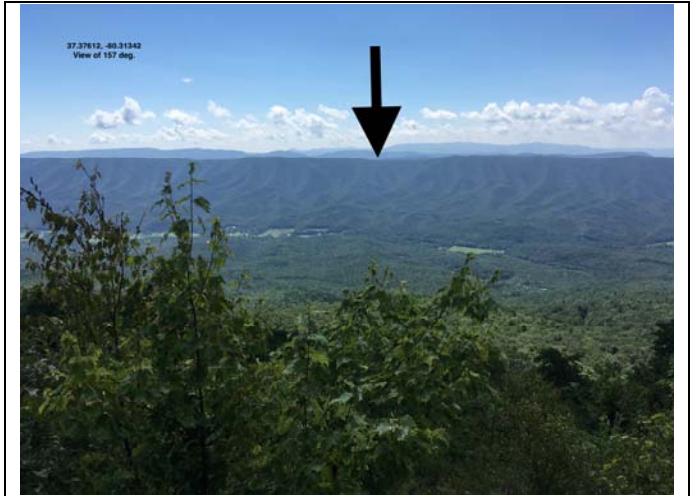
The pipeline would cross the AT near Symms Gap Meadow (mile 646.8)¹ on Peters Mountain in Giles County, Virginia and Monroe County, West Virginia and come within 1.8 miles of the AT again in Montgomery and Craig Counties as it climbs up and down Sinking Creek Mountain, along Craig Creek and up and down Brush Mountain; then make its way steeply up Poor Mountain in Roanoke County, where it could be visible for more than 2 miles from each prime vista on Virginia's Triple Crown: Dragon's Tooth, the back side of McAfee Knob, and Tinker Cliffs.

Our Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) was established in 1932 in order to build, maintain, explore and protect over 120 miles of the AT in central and southwestern Virginia, from Route 611 in Giles County to Black Horse Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Our Bylaws require us to support the monitoring and managing of lands that were purchased for trail protection, to participate in and encourage the development of laws and regulations that protect the AT and its related interests, and to use all legal means to protect and defend the AT and its related interests.

¹ All mileage references are to the April 2016 version of the Guthook application, showing distance from Springer Mountain, Georgia.



Typical view from Brush Mountain.
Arrow shows where scar will be.



Typical view from Sinking Creek Mt.
Arrow shows where scar will be.

For photos and more details, please see our website at www.ratc.org.

Diana Christopulos

How To Comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Diana will keep RATC.ORG current with what to do. You can also search Save Craig and all the other pipeline sites for additional ideas, but Diana is also working with the other groups; we all work together. It is important that all of us who love the AT comment on the effect that the pipeline and its construction would have on the AT. Any misstatements or omissions in the DEIS need to be brought to FERC's attention. Put each point in a separate comment. Write a comment every day.

We need to make sure that all shortcomings in the DEIS are documented, so that in the event that the final EIS (FEIS) is faulty and the pipeline is approved, we have a solid basis for legal action.

Now, how to comment? Preserve the NRV has very good instructions on their website at <http://preservethenrv.com/federal-energy-regulatory-commission-ferc/> but they may not have updated the docket number. The docket number changed when MVP went from a preliminary filing to a regular one, so the docket number is now **CP16-10-000**.

Bob & Kris Peckman

Member News

Congratulations to Martha Armistead, Kathryn Herndon, Susan Powell, Michael Morris, Brian Mason, Wesley Schmidt, and Brian Voyles for earning their 113-mile patches.

We extend our thanks to Tom & Doris Berdeen, Guy & Betty Bowers, Janet, Elaine, Wes & Glenn Brower, Gary & Barbara Duerk, Jim & Mary Lou Lewis, Doreen Olds, Tom Skelly, Suzanne Thorniley, and Carolyn Wilkerson for donating to RATC,

and to the following who gave in Memory of Mervin Brower/& in honor of Blanche Brower: Steve Burt, Diana Christopulos, Jim & Kathy Overholser, Robert Simpson, Jr., Bruce Agnew, Rob Crittenden, Russell & Angela Dee Howard, Michael D. Morris, Bob & Kris Peckman, Ronald T. Sloan, Bruce Agnew, John Miller and Les & Kathy Brown.

Also to out-of-towner Nancy Snyder who honored Bob for assistance with their family AT adventure and to the Commonwealth of VA Game & Inland Fisheries and Roanoke Outdoor Adventure Group and David Horst who gave money for bear boxes.

GO Fest 2016

Who's ready for GO Fest 2016? The annual Anthem Go Outside Festival is October 14-16 at the Rivers Edge Sports Complex in the heart of Roanoke. With over 125 free events and activities during peak fall foliage, GO Fest has grown every year and become the premier yearly event for outdoor enthusiasts in our region.

RATC and ATC are teaming up to make GO Fest a great event for the Trail. The AT tent is always popular, and this year we're offering a competitive (and silly) Hiker Obstacle Course. How quickly can you do a series of tasks like jumping in a sleeping bag, zipping it up, then jumping out and stuffing it in a stuff sack? Throughout the festival, RATC volunteers and ATC staff will be on hand to show folks how the obstacle course works and

run a stopwatch to see who wins in different age groups. There will be prizes!

GO Fest is a great event for recruiting new members as well. Anyone who joins RATC at GO Fest will be entered into a drawing to win a free Gregory backpack! We'll also be ready with plenty of maps and information about the Trail and about the Club, along with RATC hats, shirts, and decals for sale.

If you can help out as a volunteer at the RATC/ATC table, please contact Kathryn Herndon at kherndon@appalachiantrail.org. You can also let other RATC folks know what your GO Fest plans are on Meetup. Don't forget to stop by our tent and say hi!

Kathryn Herndon

Hikemaster's Report

Our experiment for the Summer Quarter, scheduling hikes only on Meetup, went rather well. My biggest fear was that I would not get hike reports, and that fear was unfounded. It is always difficult to keep a full schedule of hikes in the hot summer months but, without any prodding from your hikemaster, it was a good summer schedule. I plan to return to prodding again, but Meetup should make even that easier. I have always had problems knowing my own availability three months in advance. Now I will be asking every week that you schedule two weeks in advance. That will allow me, as a musician, to also lead hikes. Of course you can still schedule on the spur of the moment and it is also much more acceptable to cancel as needs arise. Please be mindful of what others have scheduled. It will be a waste to have three 10-mile hikes on one weekend and three 4-mile hikes the next, especially if the three fall on the same day.

I have enjoyed many of the long week-day hikes that we have had in the last few years. Many of

these hikes have been new experiences.

Aside from breaking my arm this quarter, I have been busy collecting, augmenting, and refining our library of hikes, maps, and directions. You can get to the list from our website by following: **Ratc.org>Regional Hiking>Regional Hiking Resources>RATC's Regional Hiking List**. (You can also cut to the chase and go directly to **peckmanjazz.com/HIKERATC**. Feel free to go to my home page and listen to my music.)

Please contribute to this effort. If a description is inaccurate, or could be improved, email me a correction. Measure driving and shuttle miles and correct them. Inform me of additional meeting places and measure miles from them. We need to establish more "standard" meeting places to add to Daleville and the Orange Market such as Hamricks at Cave Spring Corners or a store in Dublin. And if you have a new hike, I will help you research it.

Bob Peckman

Hike Reports

Sunday, May 15 , 2016 Read Mountain Preserve

David (leader) & Linda Sutton, Caralee Eicher, Karen Major, and William Hoover

A really good day to hike up Read Mountain. A few good views were available through the trees at certain points along the trail. When we reached the "top" we could see the vast Roanoke Valley below. We ran into a few other hikers who were enjoying the scenery and nature just as much as we were. A really great way to spend a Spring day!

Tuesday, June 7, 2016 Poor Mountain Nature Preserve

Jimbo and Mary Harshfield (co-leaders), Georgia Shaurette, Maya Bohler, Fred Meyer, Chris Yates, Ken Myers, Rahid Zaman, Judy Nelson, Victoria Cassels

It was a beautiful day to be out in the woods. Although the day was quite warm, we stayed comfortable since the trail was mostly in the shade. We took the Overlook Trail and then the Canyon Trail which descends down to a lovely creek. We enjoyed eating our lunch on the rocks beside the creek that cascades steeply downhill at that point. Before starting the long uphill climb on the Cascades Trail, we noticed a blind turtle sitting on the trail. We found one more turtle later on. We finished the hike on the Piratebush Trail which has the largest concentration of the rare piratebush plants in the preserve and in fact anywhere in the world. Piratebush plants have a lime green hue but at this time of year, they don't stand out as much as they do in the Fall. We finished up by about 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday & Wednesday, June 7&8, 2016 Styles Falls Work Hike

Jim Webb, Homer and Therese Witcher, Steve Marshall, John ?, and Dave Horst

This was the second phase of a 2-day work hike arranged by Homer Witcher and Jim Webb. The work took place at Camp Alta Mons, a Methodist affiliated summer camp for youths. The objective was to rehabilitate or relocate the creekside trail heading up to Styles Falls, a 60-foot cascading

waterfall feeding the creek. In the first phase, we cleared out some blowdowns blocking the trail near the falls and began relocating the creekside trail to higher and more stable ground. The second phase on June 8 was to get the creekside trail in safer condition for the opening of the camp in mid June. High water during heavy rains had eroded the trail and damaged handrails making it unsafe. With limited resources, we reestablished a handrail using cable, turnbuckles, and eye bolts placed into holes drilled into rock and trees. The trail was widened into the mountain side by removing locust trees and some rock, creating cribbing and filling the trail with crush. Although we did not finish the project, it was safe enough for the ensuing onslaught of summer campers.

Saturday, June 11, 2016 8:00 AM Bearwallow Gap (Rt 43) to Troutville (Rt 11)

Linda Conner, Bill Conner, Mangala Kumar

A lovely early summer hike. The afternoon rain storm was a most welcome relief from the very hot temperature. A good day in the woods.

Sunday, June 12, 2016 Pickle Branch Shelter

David Sutton (leader) Laurie Spangler, Sarah Sherrill, and Tina Gibson

A little on the warm side this beautiful day, but a great day for a hike. We eagerly left our parked vehicles and headed north on the AT for the Pickle Branch Shelter. It looked as though an overloaded hiker left about eight ears of corn, four apples AND one warm Bud beer at the intersection of the trail with the road. We reached the shelter after about 1 hour, so we stopped to relax and chat. We headed back with just a few sprinkles overhead, all for a great hike with some pretty amazing hikers!

Monday, June 13, 2016 Workhike: Sinking Creek relocation

Mike Vaughn, John Miller, Kevin Hegg & Jim Webb

Another day's work on the relocation, another 40-minute uphill hike. The hike distance to the worksite is slowly getting longer and the terrain is getting steeper and more rocky. Now we have to

make a decision as to what type of work we want to do, rock work or digging sidehill. Different tools are used and we can't bring both up the hill. On this day we managed to complete another 100 feet of sidehill.



Completed trail up to one of the many rockslides we will have to traverse.

Tuesday, June 14, 2016
Cascades to Butt Mountain

Carina Hughes (leader) and Ed Burgess

We enjoyed a beautiful hike along the Little Stoney Creek where we saw a few hikers and two men fly fishing in different spots in the morning. We arrived at Barney's Wall mid-morning and enjoyed the breathtaking cloudless vista. After some snacks and chatting with two other hikers we had seen earlier, we continued to Butt Mountain. The sun was shining and the temperature stayed in the upper 70s on this late spring day. We walked back down where we encountered many more hikers and bathers walking towards the Falls for an afternoon dip. Everyone we encountered seemed to be glad to be out on this glorious day. Ed and I agreed it was a wonderful day to be out walking in the woods!



Carina

Burgess

Sunday, June 26, 2016
Old Hotel Trail/Cold Mountain/Mt. Pleasant

Dave Socky (leader), Fred Meyer, David Wickersham, Heng Dy

A good time was had by all.

June 25 thru June 29, 2016
Workhike: Sinking Creek Relocation

Day 1 - Fred Meyer, Bruce Agnew, Kevin Hegg, Sue Hegg, Josh Kloehn & Jim Webb

Day 2 - Bruce Agnew, Kevin Hegg, James Rudder & Jim Webb

Day 3 - Mike Vaughn, Bruce Agnew, Kevin Hegg, Susan Powell, Kathryn Herndon, David Horst & Jim Webb

Day 4 - Bruce Agnew, Kevin Hegg, John H & Jim Webb

Day 5 - Kevin Hegg & Jim Webb

This is the first visit this year of the Konnarock crew to begin a relocation on the East side of Sinking Creek Mountain. This relocation is necessary to eliminate a very steep and eroded uphill section of our trail. The relocation will be about 4000 ft long with a much reduced grade and only 1 switchback. Much of the relocation is simple sidehill digging which our club can easily handle and is taking the lead in doing. Konnarock's contribution will be in putting a trail across all of the 6 rockslides we have to cross. This will be very labor-intensive construction dealing with rocks ranging in size from 200 to 1000 lbs.

The Konnarock work week began on Sat. 6/25 with setting up their camp at Joes Trees on Rte 42 in the Sinking Creek valley. The crew then hiked their tools up the mountain to the worksite, arriving mid-morning. They wasted no time in setting to work on the first rockslide using the trail that our club had dug earlier. Over the course of the next 3 days this plan was repeated as Konnarock built a trail across the first rockslide and proceeded to work their way up the mountain.

Konnarock will return the first week of August to continue the trail up the mountain.

Friday, July 1 2016
McAfees Knob Sunset Hike

Brendle Wolfe (leader), Doug Knighton, Lora Crowley, Susan Terwilliger, Maya Bohler, Graham Nessler, and Jenny Wilson

We encountered several weekend backpackers along the way and a few north bound thru hikers at the top. The weather was hot and humid but we were welcomed with a nice breeze once we made it to the top. We made it to the Knob just in time for the sunset and it was amazing as always.

Saturday, July 2, 2016
Sinking Creek Relo

Bruce Agnew & Jim Webb

July 2nd of this year saw the restart of the RATC weekend trail work trips. Jim Webb and I pulled our way up the west flank of Sinking Creek Mountain to a section of the AT being relocated due to the gradient and erosion. This relo involves approximately 2000+ feet and one switchback while crossing about six rock slides. Rock slides may not be the proper geologic term to describe these massive jumbled piles of rocks. The ATC Konnarock Crew was in their element this season breaking, sliding, pushing, pulling whatever it would take to create a trail through the slides. Jim and I then picked up where others had left off continuing to dig side hill between the slides on some rather steep slopes. The RATC weekend trail crew will be working on this relocation project for a few years so join us on the first Saturday of the month thru the fall and picking up in the Spring. We meet at 8am at the Orange Market and generally

return by 4pm. There is plenty of side hill and rock work to go around so don't get left out; join us.

Wednesday, July 6, 2016
Carvins Cove Trough-Gauntlet Loop

Maya Bohler (leader), Marlyse Whitaker, John Newberry, Beverly Appel, Georgia Shaurette, Karen Callahan, Teresa McDaniel

Despite the bad weather forecast which called for rain on and off all day, the seven of us showed up for this hike. As it happens so often, the weather turned out much better than expected, and we had some sunshine early on, then clouds and only a little sprinkle towards the end. As is to be expected at this time of the year, it was quite muggy. We climbed up to Brushy Mountain on the Gauntlet trail and followed the road to the "Barbecue Grill", an old stone fireplace where we took a break. Then we continued on to the Gauntlet trail which took us down to the Horsepen trail. Along the Horse Pen Marlyse and Maya found lots of Chanterelle mushrooms and one large Boletus. They made for a delicious dinner that night. We were back at the parking lot at 12 noon. Everyone had a good time.

Saturday, July 9, 2016
Sunset Field to Petites Gap

Chris Means (leader), Shawn Buck, Jackelyn Bader, Jeffrey Miller, Wilma Vargas, Susan Furniss



L to R Julie, Susan, Shawn, Wilma, Chris, Kim, Jeff and Jackelyn

We had 4 brand new hikers joining for their first hike with the RATC and all seemed to enjoy themselves. One individual was visiting from Ohio with her only desire being to put a boot on the AT,

which we helped her accomplish. Another person actually drove from Richmond to join us, and this was a repeat for her as she's made this trip before just to hike with us. The weather was a bit warm but with a few added breaks we as a group endured. During this outing it was discovered a few people from the group were going to explore the AT near Mt. Lake the following day and by the end of the initial hike we'd coordinated 8 of us to meet up and hike together near Wind Rock. After a second day of enjoying the outdoors the group met for dinner in Ironto, a truly enjoyable experience.

**Saturday, July 9, 2016
Pickle Branch Shelter Reroofing**

Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Jim Webb, E.J. Allred, Hannah Tornow, Taylor & Nathan Peterson, Bennett Witcher, Adam Day and John Hvoxdovic



Adam, Bennett, & Nathan

Taylor Peterson

Successful day replacing the roof at Pickle Branch shelter. We wish to thank the Forest Service for their support, such as providing the new tin for the roof and lending us a trail maintenance cart. Thanks to Nathan Peterson for using his ATV to haul the new tin roof close to the shelter site so that we didn't have to haul it too far on the cart. The young crowd was not only entertaining, but also proved to be extremely hard workers. Thanks to

everyone who lent a hand and made short work of this project. We completed the work by 1 PM. Photos courtesy of Taylor Peterson



Homer, Therese, E.J, Jim, Hannah, John, Adam, Nathan, Taylor, & Bennett

**Sunday, July 24, 2016
Ferrier-Lick Branch Loop**

John Merkwon (leader), Kris & Bob Peckman, Val Dymond, Crystal & Tony Wright.

It was a very warm or you might say HOT day. Earlier in the week I had shortened the hike and removed a couple of hills but we still logged in 6 1/2 miles finishing by noon when the heat index was at 105! Actually it did not seem like 105 since the trail was in the forest and we had the tree canopy to protect us from the sun. Previously this hike had some nice berries but they were absent on this day. We did see one softball size box turtle on the trail and had to endure the stench from a decomposing deer as the trail brought us by this olfactory delight. The hike was composed of two trails. The first was Lick Branch which we followed the stream bed up the hollow. The water was very low so we had an opportunity to see all the curious rock formations on the stream bed. This section of the hike also had quite a few blow-downs which we had to maneuver around. After lunch we were on the second trail-Ferrier Trail-which is much more of a woodland trail with valley views and mostly downhill hiking and is in excellent condition.

**Sunday, July 31, 2016
St. Mary's Wilderness**

Kris Peckman and Maya Bohler (leaders), John Brandt, Carl Cornett, Marie Moss, Wilma Vargas

We had a lively, rather international group hiking today: natives of France, Switzerland, and Ecuador, two native southwest Virginians, and one Damn Yankee. The countless stream crossings were accomplished in a variety of ways. Marie definitely did not want her good boots to get wet, which meant she was changing in and out of her water shoes over and over, once right in midstream. Maya brought large Ziploc bags which she put over her boots and fastened with rubber bands. Wilma, with her superb balance and keen eye, always found dry rocks to negotiate. Carl and John, and eventually Kris as well, simply waded across. We took the trail along Sugartree Branch but all but John missed the turn toward Mine Bank Trail, instead heading up a flagged but little used trail that went straight ahead. When John didn't catch up to us, we went back, deciding to return to the St. Mary's River trail and swimming holes. Before we got to the river, however, we explored a little side trail that led along a rock wall to a campsite and then up a steep and slippery trail to a cliff. Only Wilma and John reached the top of the cliff.



When we reached the waterfall swimming hole, we found several people and one dog also enjoying the cool water on this hot summer day. Two young girls were fearless in climbing barefoot over and jumping off rocks into the water. A toddler, also fearless but carefully watched by her mother, explored the rocks. We had a late lunch and plunged into the water, which felt wonderful. After lingering for a good while, we dressed and headed

back to the cars, just in time to avoid getting wet again, this time from a brief downpour.

**July 30 - Aug 3, 2016
Sinking Creek Relocation**

Day 1: E.J. Allred, Michael Enz, & Jim Webb

Day 2: Bruce Agnew, Josh Kloehn, Kathryn Herndon, Matt Allenbaugh, Conner McBane, Michael Enz, & Jim Webb

Day 3: Fred Meyer, Dave Horst, & Jim Webb

Day 4: Fred Meyer, Roger Holnback, Tom Berdeen, & Jim Webb

Day 5: Rain

Four short weeks after first working on our relocation on Sinking Creek Mountain, the Konnarock crew returned for their last workweek of the season. This was a very veteran crew with over 70 years of Konnarock experience. As before, the RATC members went ahead to lay out the trail and do the sidehill digging ahead of the Konnarock crew who followed up with the tough heavy work of building a trail through the many large rockslides.



Before

Webb

The rockwork has progressed at different rates depending on the difficulty of the terrain. The first rockslide required that the trail gain 8 - 10 feet which meant the installation of 12 -14 steps. Holes had to be drilled and pins put in to support the steps across a massive angled rock that could not be moved. This first slide took a crew almost the full 2 weeks to cross. By comparison, the second slide required no steps and was completed in about 3 days.



After

Webb



Work on the third slide.

Webb

The Konnarock crew will be back the next 2 years for 2 weeks each year for a total of 4 more weeks of work. The scheduled opening should be in the summer of 2018.

Sunday, August 7, 2016
Mountain Lake Trails

John Merkwan (leader), Kris Peckman, H.R. Blankenship, Frank Morgan, Sally Paulson and Elisabeth Kostel.



Frank, Kris, and H.R. in the Mist

Merkwan

During my previous hike a couple weeks ago the heat index was 105 but today the temperature maxed out at a much cooler 71 degrees. Because we endured a light rain for most of the hike and experienced what it was like to be in the clouds, the views from Bald Mountain could only be imagined. Frank, who was visiting the area from Baltimore and decided to join us, is an avid bird watcher and recorded 21 different species during our hike. I think I heard a crow once. Usually after a summer hike it is important to check for any ticks one may have encountered. That was not necessary but we did check for leeches as it seemed we were hiking in a tropical rain forest. Remember Humphrey Bogart in **The African Queen**? This hike was 7 1/2 miles and took about 4 hours.

**Monday, August 8, 2016
Stone Mountain**

Chris Means (leader) and Julie Shumaker



Julie & Stone Mountain

Means

It turned out that only Julie and I attended. It was a very hot day, appearing to be heightened by the fact that some of the main trails at Stone Mountain Park are along gigantic bare rock. A refreshing rain came during the last .5 mile which couldn't have been timed better. Lots of water was drunk and many snacks were had.. Great day !!!

**Sunday, August 14, 2016
McAfee Knob**

Chris Means (leader), Dee Case, Suzanne Thorniley, Virginia Stewart, Kim Dulaney, Julie Shumaker, Pam & Dan Chitwood



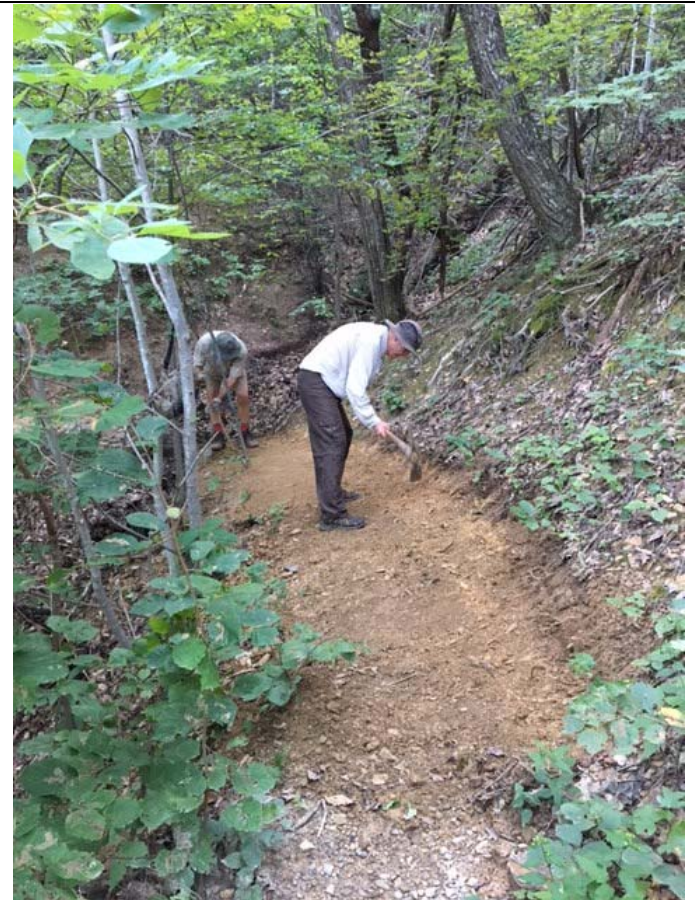
Kim Dulaney ready for flying lessons

Means

It was a very hot hike but the humidity was down so that kind of balanced it out for us. 7 attendees, 2 of which were new to the group, went up the hill to enjoy an exhilarating lunch-time view. The trail was less crowded by normal standards which we all enjoyed.

**Monday, August 29, 2016
Rte 620, 1 mile North**

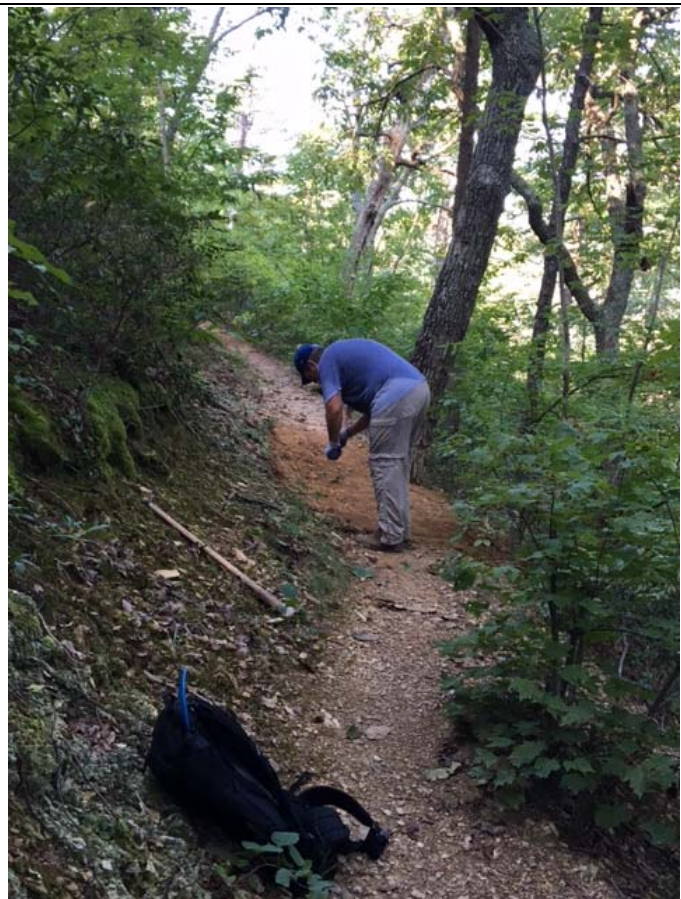
Kevin Hegg, Jerry Anderson, Gary Bible, Mike Vaughn & Jim Webb



Jerry & Gary widen the trail

Webb

On another warm, humid morning we met at the Orange Market and carpooled to the parking at Millers Cove Road. The worksite was on the trail heading North about a mile. This is where we started the day by widening about 30 yards of trail by digging into the hillside. We then proceeded to work back down the mountain by putting in some drainage ditches to remove rainwater from the trail and prevent erosion.



Kevin widens a narrow section of trail Webb



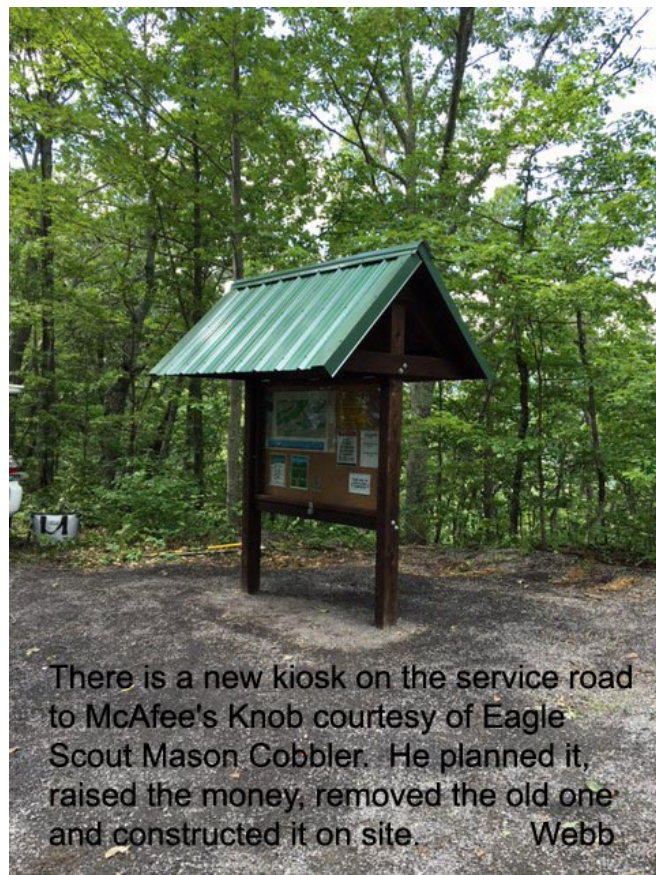
One day's work.

Webb

Monday, September 12 Sinking Creek Relocation

Attending: Jeff Edwards, Dave Horst, Jim Beeson, Kevin Hegg & Jim Webb

Once again we headed over to Newport and up the trail past the Keffer Oak to the new relocation. The weather was cool and sunny, a good day for playing with large rocks on one of the many rock jumbles. Progress is very slow when working with such heavy rocks. Five people working all day with only 20 feet of trail to show for it.



There is a new kiosk on the service road to McAfee's Knob courtesy of Eagle Scout Mason Cobbler. He planned it, raised the money, removed the old one and constructed it on site. Webb

Hiking Guidelines

<http://www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Appalachian-Trail-Club/#calendar>

Going on a group hike can fulfill a number of worthwhile purposes. These include such things as physical conditioning, social interaction, the enjoyment of nature, and the thrill of reaching a spectacular viewpoint. The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club consistently tries to provide a wide range of hiking opportunities for people of all ages, interests and abilities. Guests are always welcome to join us.

Hikes are rated by length and terrain so hikers can evaluate them based on their individual strengths.

Easy terrain – Greenways or old roads

Moderate terrain – Typical AT

Strenuous terrain – long climbs and rough trails

Challenging – neglected trails and bushwhacking

Shuttle lengths are included to calculate carpool fees. Carpooling is encouraged to save gasoline

and because trailhead parking may be limited. The hike leader is responsible for arranging the carpool. While there is no fee to hike with the club, the carpool fee is for the driver.

If you are new to hiking or unfamiliar with the hike, contact the leader who will be glad to help you evaluate whether the hike is appropriate for you and also if you are properly equipped. Hike leaders should recommend that you don't come if you are not prepared with equipment or condition.

The club is always looking for experienced hikers to help lead club hikes. Uncle Bob Needs You! Please lead or assist for one or two hikes on the next schedule. Contact Bob Peckman at hikemaster@ratc.org. For Blazer matters blazer@ratc.org

Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Application New and Renewal

If accepted for membership I agree to:

1. Support the objectives of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
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 \$5.00 _____

Address _____ Indiv. # of years _____ x \$15.00 _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____ Family # of years _____ x \$20.00 _____

Home Phone _____ Second Phone _____ Individual Life membership \$250.00 _____

Email _____ Family life membership \$300.00 _____

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks payable to RATC.

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to our treasurer, Blanche Brower, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024, treasurer@ratc.org (540)387-9732. You can also use PayPal at ratc.org.

Donation \$ _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

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The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is an affiliate of
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy
and a member of The Nature Conservancy and the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy