

# TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Summer 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

**Cornboil – July 30**  
**6:00 – 9:00 PM**  
**Catawba Community Center**

### WORK HIKES

**Monday, July 11 - 8:30 AM**  
**Monday, July 25 - 8:30 AM**  
**Monday, August 15 - 8:30 AM**  
**Monday, August 29 - 8:30 AM**  
**Monday, September 12 - 8:30 AM**  
**Monday, September 26 - 8:30 AM**

**Trail Supervisor**  
**Jim Webb**

562-8896 – [startover14@peoplepc.com](mailto:startover14@peoplepc.com)

**Hike Scheduling**  
**Contact Bob Peckman**  
540-366-7780 – [hikemaster@ratc.org](mailto:hikemaster@ratc.org)

### BOARD MEETINGS

(All members are always welcome.  
Please let the host know you plan to attend.)

**Monday, July 11 7:00 PM**  
**Maybe Hollins Branch Library**  
**Monday, September 12, 7:00 PM**  
**TBD**

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Blanche Brower and the entire board of RATC want to thank all who contributed to RATC, Path Finders for the Greenways and/or First United Methodist in honor of Mervin. He meant a lot to us but we also meant a lot to him.

The Konnarock Crew will be working with RATC June 25 through June 29 and from July 30 through August 3. They will be working the relocation on the VA-42 side of Sinking Creek Mountain. It is a very steep and badly eroded section. The relocation will require rock work to cross at least 5 rock slides and will be our Konnarock projects for the next 3 years.

Please come out and work with us. It is a great learning experience as they tackle the jobs that we find most difficult and our support makes them most efficient.

## Welcome New Members

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club welcomes the following new members:

*Julian Kryzanosky*

*Ray Shup*

*Lisa and William Whalen*

*Steve Marshall*

*Jared Webb*

We look forward to meeting you soon: hiking on the trail, at work, social event, or a board meeting.

***Brendle Wolfe***

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## President's Report

What a Spring! We had flowers and showers and bears (oh my). Also pipelines (see separate article) and partnerships. We added new members to our board of directors: welcome to Bruce Agnew, Butch Kelly, Susan Powell, and David Youmans! And also welcome to Matt Allenbaugh, our first-ever full-time seasonal Ridgerunner. He will be working with the volunteer ridgerunners of the McAfee Knob Task Force to patrol the AT section that includes Dragon's Tooth, McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs.

For me, the highlight of this Spring was a nine-day backpack in late April and early May that started at Virginia Route 611, the southern end of our RATC section, and ended at Virginia Route 621, in Craig Creek Valley. I had not hiked most of those miles since completing my section hike of the entire AT in 2008 (my trail name is DC Turtle), so I could see it with fresh eyes. Wow. If you want beautiful, wild yet well-maintained hiking, this entire stretch is a great destination. My hiking partner was Donna Logan (Signage '07), and we only saw about 100 hikers during our entire walk. Most of them were thru hikers, and we are happy to report that what we saw in the Class of 2016 was thoughtfulness, good humor and excellent bear bagging skills.

After sitting in on the RATC Maintainer Meeting in early April, I wrote the names of each section's maintainers on my map. It was great to know whose hands had cleared the trail of blowdowns and greenbrier. Now I know why so many maintainers insist that their section is the most beautiful of our 120+ miles! There is a lot of

beauty to go around. I will say that crossing the slanted slabs of Sinking Creek Mountain with full packs in the rain was a bit more adventure than I had hoped for, but we both made it safely, and there was the usual rush of satisfaction and achievement afterwards.

### Bears

On the first weekend in May, we received multiple accounts of five to six bears at a time approaching Lamberts Meadow Shelter and Campsite in search of food. They knew how to remove properly hung bear bags, and they were not intimidated by people. The ursine group appeared to include at least one large sow as well as cubs and possible yearlings. Kathryn Herndon of ATC staff immediately arranged a phone call involving Chief Ranger Todd Remaley of the National Park Service, three wildlife biologists from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Ridgerunner Matt Allenbaugh, and RATC Shelter Supervisor Therese Witcher and myself. We decided to close the shelter and the campsite and made detailed follow up plans. Since that time, Homer and Therese have arranged an alternate campsite at Hay Rock and ordered certified bear-resistant boxes for food storage for Campbell Shelter and Pig Farm as well as the Lamberts Meadow sites. DGIF provided most of the funding for this effort, and RATC member David Horst also stepped in with a generous financial contribution and help in the actual transport of the storage boxes. Volunteer ridgerunners like David Foster, Eric West and Jim Webb helped Ridgerunner Matt Allenbaugh clean up and place signage at the Lamberts Meadow area after the closures.

### Virginia's Triple Crown

As the bears returned, more robust planning was underway for management of the very busy section we maintain between Dragon's Tooth and US 220. The narrow AT corridor trail north of Virginia Route 624/Newport Road is entirely administered by the National Park Service.

Thanks to the presence of our volunteer ridgerunners as well as the paid ridgerunners, we know that traffic on this section has been increasing by about 55% each year, that a busy spring or fall weekend can bring as many as 600 visitors to McAfee Knob on a sunny Saturday, and that over half of the visitors are usually coming from Virginia Tech. This will be an ongoing challenge, with two important developments so far this year. First, our club has received a grant from LL Bean to support the work of a Virginia Tech graduate student (Johanna Arredondo), to prepare messages and begin training messengers at Virginia Tech for Leave No Trace ethics as well as knowledge of the special rules in the Triple Crown segment of the AT. Johanna is a student of Jeff Marion, the Virginia Tech professor who is doing a detailed, three-year study of the entire AT to

help develop strategies for addressing increased traffic. In addition, RATC joined with the ATC and the National Park Service to host a day-long meeting to kick off a long-term effort to address both the challenges and the opportunities of the Triple Crown.

### Final farewell to a friend

We all lost a friend and longtime guardian of the trail when Mervin Brower passed away in February, a topic that was covered in the last Blazer. Another chapter was added in April when many of us joined Mervin's Canadian family members at a wonderful memorial service in Salem, where his children and work colleagues shared stories both poignant and hilarious about his long and productive life. Much love from all of us to his wife Blanche, who remains on our board and continues her work building and maintaining trails all over the region. And thanks to the many who have sent Memorial gifts in honor of Merv.

*Diana Christopulos*

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## Attention Leaders & Hikers

RATC is going to try a different way of scheduling hikes, but it will not work as differently as it first sounds:

We are discontinuing the Blazer hike schedule and changing to Meetup, scheduling hikes weeks, but as short as five days in advance. We will continue posting hikes for non-Meetup leaders, with telephone contact information, and start to service non-Meetup hikers with email and non-email hikers with postcards. Meetup works the best so we prefer to coach you through the hurdles to get on Meetup.

We are changing after fifty years so leaders won't have to schedule sometimes four months in advance and can reschedule/cancel if needed, and hikers will get notices and reminders.

The following will not change:

We will still have a hike schedule, but now it will be on Meetup instead of in the Blazer.

The Blazer editor will still beg you for reports.

The hikemaster will still help you find substitute leaders.

Hike leaders will still receive awards.

Please ask for help getting on Meetup. Let us know if you need emails or postcards instead of Meetup. If you are reading this message only in the Blazer without getting an email, please send us your email address.

Congratulations to Brian Mason & Wesley Schmidt for completing all of our AT section for the 113-mile patch!

*Bob Peckman*

## Pipeline site visit reveals misstatements by developer, leads to RATC opposition

On April 28, 2016, three RATC members (Donna Logan, Bill Hackworth and I) accompanied staff from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the US Forest Service (USFS) on a site visit to the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline crossing of the Appalachian Trail near Symms Gap Meadow on Peters Mountain, accompanied by four employees of EQT, the lead company in the proposed pipeline.

RATC's board has been studying and commenting on this pipeline for over a year, starting with the work of an RATC Pipeline Task Force in Spring 2015. The 42-inch transmission pipeline would be filled with fracked natural gas headed for markets overseas and on the East Coast. Many more details are available on the RATC website, but I wanted to share a few key points here.

In the Preliminary Plan of Development filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on December 24, 2015, the developer made the following claim about the proposed crossing of the AT on Peters Mountain:

"With the introduction of Project elements, which will bore underneath the Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor, the landform, vegetation patterns, and cultural features would still combine to provide high scenic quality in these areas. Because of the landscape's ability to absorb visual

change and *the fact that the pipeline right-of-way will not be visible from the trail* [emphasis added], the overall scenic attractiveness class would not change and, therefore, the total acreage of land classified as Scenic Class 1 would not be affected."

In fact, the pipeline right-of-way would be highly visible from the AT, since the developer proposes

to use a shallow, conventional bore that would start and end only 100 feet from the trail on each side. In the upper picture, I stood on the AT. The orange flag in the foreground is the centerline of the proposed underground bore. The man in the blue-gray shirt is near the tree that is 100 feet from the AT. From that point a 125-foot swath of vegetation would be completely removed for construction of the trench, and approximately 50 feet would never be allowed to revegetate beyond ground cover. In addition, the entire construction process would be visible and audible for AT hikers. The same would be true

on the other side of the AT.

The second photo looks back up to the AT from the tree, with a US Forest staff member noting that his tape measure is showing 100 feet at this tree.

After the site visit, the ATC filed comments with the FERC stating that, "The proposed pipeline crossing location is an area of unbroken wild landscape ... of forest, rocky outcropping and grassy bald with no impacts of any kind. As a



100 feet from the camera on the AT to guy in blue-gray



Measuring 100 feet from the AT

result, this location is unsuitable to cross the A.T. [emphasis added]" The ATC's 2015 Policy on Pipeline Crossings of the Appalachian Trail specifically states that ATC will oppose such crossings unless they meet specific criteria. These include: "The pipeline proposal includes use of best practices to minimize its impact on the A.T., including. . . using construction techniques that minimize disturbance to A.T. landscapes, e.g. horizontal directional drilling (HDD)." Instead of a deep, long HDD bore, the developer is proposing a short, shallow conventional bore.

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The RATC Board of Directors passed the following resolution on May 16, 2016 for conveyance to the FERC:

WHEREAS, the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) was established in 1932 by Appalachian Trail (AT) co-founder Myron Avery, 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;

WHEREAS, it is the purpose of the RATC, as noted in its Bylaws, 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;

WHEREAS, Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC proposes to build a 42-inch fracked natural gas pipeline 301 miles long that would cross the AT near Symms Gap Meadow (mile 646.8)<sup>1</sup> 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;

The USFS also filed comments with the FERC identifying several concerns and concluding that the proposed conventional bore does not comply with the scenic integrity objectives of the Jefferson National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan because it would be visible very close by on both sides of the AT.

In addition, the USFS filed a second set of comments noting that the developer had actually flagged the pipeline route inside the Peters Mountain Wilderness east of the proposed AT crossing, and much too close to the same wilderness for a significant distance.

WHEREAS, the RATC has previously presented detailed comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (June 2015 and November 2015) noting very serious concerns about the potential impact of the proposed pipeline on the AT and its users, specifically noting the following issues:  
Necessity of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to examine cumulative impact of all proposed major natural gas pipeline crossings of the Appalachian Trail.  
Avoidance of threats to regional air quality and human health,  
Satisfaction of criteria in the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's 2015 Policy on Pipeline Crossings of the Appalachian Trail,  
Avoidance of threats to regional water supplies and to drinking water for Appalachian Trail hikers,  
Avoidance of karst topography and active seismic zones in the proposed AT crossing locations,  
Avoidance of specific impacts, including scenic impacts, likely with currently proposed AT crossing alternatives,  
Careful and realistic study of visual impacts of the proposed Alternate 200 route, with specific viewpoints and criteria noted in the club's November 2015 comments;

WHEREAS, the comments made by the RATC have neither been acknowledged by the developer nor significantly included in the plans and comments of the developer;

WHEREAS, the proposed pipeline poses significant negative impacts and safety concerns for AT hikers, including the following potential impacts identified

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<sup>1</sup> All mileage references are to the April 2016 version of the Guthook application, showing distance from Spring Mountain, Georgia.

on an April 2015 backpack trip by two RATC members (described from south to north on the AT): Both the pipeline and the proposed widening of Pocahontas Road will be visible from Angel's Rest Rock (mile 632.4) near Pearisburg, one of the premier viewpoints on the AT in this region, as it descends Peters Mountain in Giles County.

The conventional bore under the AT proposed near Symms Gap Meadow (mile 646.8) on Peters Mountain – which was flagged when visited on April 28, 2016 and confirmed by MVP representatives on site at the time – is entirely unacceptable.

The shallow bore would emerge only 100 feet from the AT on each side.

Heavy boring equipment would be visible and audible throughout construction.

At a distance of 100 feet away on each side of the trail, the developer proposes to remove all vegetation to a width of 125 feet (trees and understory) in order to dig the trench for the pipeline. Construction would be visible and audible at very close range throughout the proposed effort. In addition, there would be a permanent scar where no trees would be permitted to grow.

Flagging shows that expansion of Pocahontas Road as an access road for pipeline construction would parallel the AT very close by for a significant distance, producing a further construction cacophony.

The conventional bore under Peters Mountain would present a significant safety hazard to AT hikers, since it would contain highly volatile natural gas under 1,440 psi of pressure, located in karst topography near the middle of the Giles County Seismic Zone, scene of the largest earthquake in Virginia's recorded history. The US Forest Service has already expressed deep reservations about construction in this environment in its March 9, 2016

comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. In addition:

The 2014 edition of the Pipeline Association for Public Awareness "Pipeline Emergency Response Guidelines" minimum evacuation distance for natural gas pipeline leaks and ruptures for pipelines of the size (42 inches – largest shown on the guidelines chart) and pressure (1,440 psi) is approximately 3,600 feet – about 0.68 mile on foot. AT hikers on Peters Mountain would have to walk miles on steep terrain to evacuate the area around the proposed pipeline. The closest evacuation route – via Pocahontas Road – would take hikers closer to the pipeline rather than away from it. The Groundhog Trail, providing access to the West Virginia side, is over a mile away. There is no sensible evacuation route, and hiker safety does not appear to have been considered in selecting the construction location and method.

Continuing north on the AT, the proposed pipeline route almost certainly re-enters the AT viewshed between Kelly Knob (mile 671.4) and the Audie Murphy Monument (mile 690.2) on Brush Mountain.

The developer map shows that the route is only 1.8 miles from the AT in Sinking Creek Valley. The pipeline route is probably visible from numerous points on the AT in this course, including locations in the Brush Mountain Wilderness.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club this 16th day of May 2016, to oppose construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline as proposed across the Appalachian Trail on Peters Mountain and in the Appalachian Trail viewshed in numerous locations, including Angels Rest and along the Alternate 200 route.

***Diana Christopulos***

## HOW TO JOIN THE RATC MEETUP GROUP

1. Go to the web site [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and click [Sign Me Up]
2. If you intend to sign up for RATC hikes, supply your full name. Enter your email and password and click [Sign-up] Alternatively you could sign up with the Facebook or Google options and let them supply your information.
3. On the next page only city & state is required (Roanoke, VA is a good choice)
4. Enter a photo now or when prompted later.
5. Open the confirmation email message and click on the confirmation link.
6. In the upper left corner is a Meetup logo and it says Sign Up. Click the logo.
7. Select Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club box.
8. Click on [Join Us].
9. Answer the questions which were written by RATC and add a photo so hikers get to know you.
10. In the upper right corner is a little face. Click on it to adjust your profile.



## Hike Reports

### **Saturday December 5, 2015 8:00 AM Peaks of Otter : Flat Top and Sharp Top**

Hugh Hall (leader), Madeleine Taylor & Sassy, Jim Constantin, Karen L. Major, Heidi Scherzer, Janani Raman, Georgia Shaurette, & Grace Niu

We hiked Flat Top in the morning. We met four members of the group at the Peaks of Otter Lodge. The restaurant and lodge were closed until December 11 for renovation. All restrooms were locked. We used the Great Outdoors ! We dropped a vehicle so we could hike the entire Flat Top Trail. Jim shared his experience of spending six weeks in Rwanda, Africa during the summer on a mission trip. We ate lunch at Flat Top summit and enjoyed the view. Four hikers remained to tackle Sharp Top in the afternoon. We saw a number of Liberty University students along the trail. This was a full day ( ten hours ) but great fun, exercise, and companionship. We were late getting home which made us late attending the Potluck dinner at Christ Lutheran.

### **Sunday, March 13, 8:00 am A.T.: Punchbowl to Long Mountain Wayside**

Kris Peckman (leader), John Brandt, Fred Meyer, Susanna Williams

Weather-wise, the Irish would call today a "soft" day, cloudy with mild temperatures, a hint of mist and occasional light showers. Fred and Kris met John and Susanna (PATC members from Charlottesville) at the Long Mountain Wayside on Route 60. We shuttled from there to Milepost 51.7 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, where we began with short ups and downs and eventually down to the Pedlar River, now crossed by a substantial bridge. There we met a man and woman repacking, headed south on the first day of a flip-flop thru hike. Later we met the first man's brother and a friend of his, also hiking south with very heavy packs. We had lovely views of the Lynchburg reservoir as we walked more than halfway around it before heading up Brown Mountain Creek with more lovely water. Partway up the creek are the remains of a community of former slaves, sharecroppers who grew tobacco, corn, and oats and had a few animals to feed their

families, until they were bought out by the Forest Service in 1920. The remains are primarily long rock walls and a few rock piles, which may once have been chimneys. We took a short break at the Brown Mountain shelter, and shortly thereafter walked past a curious collection of a few items of clothing which looked to have been left to dry, and one plastic food container. Finally, it was uphill to Route 60 and the cars. At both ends of the hike were spicebush just beginning to bloom.

### **Sunday, March 13, 2016 1:00 PM Roanoke River Greenway, Bennington Trailhead (13<sup>th</sup> St) to Black Dog Salvage**

Rained out.

### **Sunday, March 13, 2016 1:00 PM Chestnut Ridge Trail**

David (leader) & Linda Sutton, Kathy Arrington, and Luna.

A little bit of rain did not stop us from enjoying a walk amongst nature. Kathy brought her friend, Luna (canine) with her to enjoy this not-so-far-away hike just off Mill Mtn Pkwy. A few trees had fallen across the trail from last month's ice storm. No problem for us, as we just casually went under and over those trees. Actually, it might be a deterrent for the mountain bikers who still take their bikes on the trail. The signs posted clearly say "No Bikes" yet mountain bikers still like the ride around Chestnut Ridge. It was a great hike despite the small amount of precipitation!

### **Monday, March 14, 2016 8:00 PM Cove Mountain Loop Aka Little Cove Mountain**

Greg Edwards (leader), Jerry Anderson, Madeleine Taylor and Maya Bohler

The forecast for rain did not deter these optimistic and hardy hikers. After only 30 minutes on the trail, the rain subsided and it turned out to be a very nice day in the mid 50's. The lingering fog did obscure the views on the ridges but along the creek it was gorgeous. The streams were flowing full, and the spring flowers such as Trout Lilies and Spring Beauty brightened our path. The hike ascended 1913' as we hiked southbound on the

A.T. for 4.6 miles, where we joined the Little Cove Mountain Trail, and returned to Rt. 614 via the footbridge across Jennings Creek. After a mile on Rt. 614, we had concluded our 8.2-mile hike. Another great day.

**Wednesday, March 16, 2016 8:00 AM  
Spec Mines**

David Horst (leader), Steve Bowles, Mike Vaughan with Kent, Chris Yates, Joanne Derryberry, Nancy Reid, Greg Edwards, Madeleine Taylor with Sassy, Lois Smith, Jerry Anderson, Dave Agnor, Jeff Edwards, Val Dymond, and Julie Petruska with her famous trail mix.

On a beautiful day, 14 hikers descended the 2.8-mile Spec Mines Trail just across from the Montvale Overlook on the BRP. A short walk on the service road brought us to Spec Mines Branch where we hiked up a rudimentary trail and partial bushwhack. Up into Iron Ore Hollow. A mile and a half in, we stopped briefly at the munitions building that used to house the explosives used in the mine. Another  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile brought us to the entrance to the main mine, an abandoned 19th century iron ore mine. The mine today still has remnants of the rail used to cart out the ore. The six inches of cold standing water discouraged most from entering. But previous exploration by a few of us led to several passages on different levels and an air shaft. After a quick lunch, we took the old rail road upward following a south facing ridge. This led to what I call the chute...a straight down  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile trail that is better hiked off of the trail than on. A few that did stay on it often slid down portions. Eventually we met up back at the service road that would lead back to the base of Spec Mines Trail for our steep ascent to the parking. Great weather and a great group!

**Thursday, March 17, 2016 8:00 AM  
Seely-Woodworth Shelter/Spy Rock Hike**

Jeff Monroe, Madeleine Taylor, Kris Peckman, Howard Davis, Jr., Gracie the Ultimate Hiking Dog, Sassy the Ultimate Pee Wee hiking dog

The group hike scheduled for March 17, 2016 on the Cellar Mountain Trail proved to be a great exercise in flexibility. First, the original 10 people dropped to just 4 when a large number of hikers

dropped out within the last 24 hours before the hike. Then, the hike leader arrived near the trailhead only to find the access road closed! The group met along the side of the road and decided to explore the National Forest between the Seely-Woodworth Shelter and Spy Rock, using trails most hikers had never seen but are found only on the brand new PATC Map 13. (Unfortunately, the hike leader didn't bring a copy, because the group was hiking further north - covered by a different map.) We would leave the Cellar Mountain Trail for another time.



The Spy Rock Group

Monroe

After meeting up again at the Montebello Fish Hatchery Hiker Parking Lot, the group headed up the Spy Rock Road before peeling off on a side road that connects with a forest road. The group connected with a second forest road (likely an old railroad bed) and approached the Appalachian Trail near Porters Field, but took the old A.T. route rather than the present one. This unmarked trail is a northern continuation of the Lovingson Spring Trail, which they took to the Seely-Woodworth Shelter Access Trail. After lunch at the shelter, the group looped back to Porters Field on the A.T. before deciding to continue north on the former A.T. alignment, an old road separated by a ridge from the present A.T. Madeleine



Taylor chose the trail less followed at each intersection, so she could claim the maximum possible newly hiked trails when she next sees Dave Horst. The trail merged back with the A.T. and took the group to Spy Rock, a vista never before experienced by both dogs and Madeleine.

On the way home, the Charlottesville contingent noted a large wildfire in the area originally scheduled for the group's hike. News reports later confirmed that a wildfire on Cellar Mountain had spread across 150 acres as of 7 p.m. Thursday, according to officials from the U.S. Forest Service. This is right in the area where we were originally scheduled to hike, and all trails in St. Mary's Wilderness were closed. Good choices were made this day.

**Saturday, March 19, 2016 1:00 PM**  
**Boy Scout Loop**

Jean Warren (leader)

Well, that was fun! I went to the meetup parking lot at Hanging Rock---no one was there. I drove to the Dragon Tooth's parking lot where we were to start the hike---again, no one was there except for three lonely cars. Even though it rained the day before, this day was not bad at all. It was cloudy and about 42 degrees. SO, I went with me, myself, and I. I was surprised that the ground was only soft, not muddy, and the forest was absolutely quiet. It's rare to hear complete silence – no birds singing or voices on the trail. It was almost deafening—what a beautiful “sound.” Hiking beyond Lost Spectacles Gap there was mountain laurel ready to bloom, and in some cases were wide open to welcome spring. The rhododendrons were budding, and should be ready for viewing in a few weeks. I only met few hikers the whole time, and to keep myself company I sang the song, “The Happy Wanderer.” You know the lyrics, “I love to go a wandering, along the mountain path. And as I go I love to sing my knapsack on my back.” Actually, I know all the verses. All three of us (me, myself, and I) had another wonderful walk in the woods.

**Monday, March 21, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Sprouts Run/Wilson Mountain Loop**

Greg Edwards (leader), Madeleine Taylor, Maya Bohler, Mary Harshfield, Georgia Shaurette, John Boatwright, Christine Yates, and Lois Smith

This hike is located off route 622, approximately 2 miles from Jennings Creek. Parking is limited to about four cars. There are two substantial stream crossings in the first 0.1 mile regardless of which direction you do the hike. The first part of the trail goes through private property, so it is important to remain on the trail. It was a beautiful, sunny yet brisk, and breezy, 35-degree morning. Sprouts Run was running full due to recent, heavy rains. We hiked the loop clockwise to avoid as many early stream crossings as possible, and to warm ourselves as we climbed Wilson Mountain. The 3.6-mile Wilson Mountain trail provides amazing views of the river and farms as it overlooks the expansive James River valley below. The Wilson Mountain trail ends on a forest service road, but the loop continues south on the road for 0.9 miles to Hoop Pole Gap. At the Rockbridge & Botetourt County line you enter the 3.4-mile Sprouts Run trail and follow it all the way back to the parking area. The character of the hike changes dramatically from the ridgeline hiking, with vast views on the Wilson Mountain trail, to beautiful stream side hiking on the Sprouts Run trail. Just as planned, by the time we reached the nearly 20 stream crossings, the temperature had warmed to 50 degrees. Only the most skilled rock hoppers, or hikers with overboots could avoid getting wet feet. The beautiful cascading waters provided ample photo opportunities, and plenty of moisture for an amazing variety of flowers and trees. We saw hepaticas, anemones, wild ginger, galax, and lots of different tree species, including American Chestnut. The hike concluded after 8.4 miles, with 1558 feet of elevation gain, under sunny skies. This would be an excellent wildflower hike in April. GPX file available at:  
<https://connect.garmin.com/modern/activity/1094014435>

**Monday, March 21, 2016  
Work Hike – McAfee's Knob**

Mike Vaughn, John Miller, Kevin Hegg & Jim Webb

On a cool spring day with the sun shining brightly we arrived at the 311 parking lot. It was a good day for a long hike but we didn't have far to go. Our chosen work site was the trail directly across from the parking lot. Anyone that has hiked McAfee Knob knows that after a rainy day this starting piece of trail becomes a slippery mud hole. We spent the next 5 hours bringing large flat rocks down from the hillside to use as stepping stones. In addition, we used our rock drill to cut a couple of steps out of a piece of nearby sandstone. I think visitors will find using the steps much better than starting their hike to the Knob with wet feet.

**Saturday, March 26, 2016 8:00 AM  
Sunset Field to Petites Gap**

Chris Means (leader), John Miller, Kim Dulaney, Julie Shumaker, Kathy Arrington, Madeleine Taylor, Jackelyn Bedee, John Bewst, & Marie Moss

The weather held, it was a bit overcast but we didn't get wet on this one. Great group, had one hiker drive down from Richmond (her first ever AT hike) to attend, and two people came from Charlottesville as well. The views were long range and the group also had 3 doggie attendees, Luna, Sassy and Gracie. There are about 40 pictures on the Meetup site for this hike so choose whichever you deem the best, hard choice there :) One of the hikers from Charlottesville was also nice enough to demonstrate his gift of healing knees thru the art of massage. Very enjoyable hike.

**Sunday, March 27, 2016 1:30 PM  
Mill Mountain – Woodthrush Trail**

Linda Akers (leader), Michelle Twitchell, Marlyse Whittaker, Georgia Gallaher, Christine Wickham, and Caryl Connolly

Five lovely women joined me on Easter Sunday afternoon for a very pleasant stroll along this meandering trail on Mill Mountain. Skies were overcast, but rain held off; pleasant 60 degrees. Spotted my first bluets this spring. Georgia chose to hike up the road and return by the Star Trail while the remainder did an about-face. A good time was had by all – including our two canine hikers.

**Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:00AM  
Hanging Rock**

David Horst (leader), Jeff Edwards, Steve Bowles, Drew ?, Madeleine Taylor with Sassy, Carina Hughes, Dave Agnor, Chase Davidson, Nancy Reid, Rachel U., Val Dymond, Julie Petruska

After a short car drop to make the hike more interesting, we began from a remote trail head in Craig County on Cove "Rd". We followed the abandoned Cove Trail (recently lopped) up to the ridge on Potts Mountain. We walked along the ridge for about 2 miles taking in extraordinary north-facing views. We picked up the short Hanging Rock Trail which brought us to out to the outcropping with amazing 270-degree views of Hanging Rock Valley and out into West Virginia. It was hard to leave after a prolonged, lazy lunch and the warmth of the sun. Our next chapter took us on a 1-mile bushwhack around private land, skirting the forest service boundary, to Potts Arm Trail. The 2 ½-mile trek brought us along the ridge of Potts Arm and then descending to the cascading Cove Branch. A few of the lead hikers stopped to view the memorial where Peggy Agnor had fallen on a previous hike in this area. A short ¾ mile along the branch took us to the car drop area. This is a new hike for our club. The remoteness, moderate difficulty, and beauty of Potts Mt and Hanging Rock should bring more hikes up here in the future. It can be done as an out and back up Cove Trail or the more adventurous route that we took.

**Saturday, April 2, 2016 8:00 AM  
Read Mountain**

Bruce Agnew (leader), Beverly Appel, Georgia Shaurette, Marlyse Whitaker & Ted Clay

The Read Mountain hike proceeded as planned. All who signed up showed up with a sense of adventure. The weather cooperated, the forecast called for a 25 % chance of precipitation with the first few drops arriving as we were saying goodbye at the conclusion of the trip. There were no problems negotiating the trail which was in excellent condition, no blowdowns. While everyone was looking forward to seeing at least one Buzzard at Buzzard Rocks we had to be satisfied with watching two Hawks take flight. The two four-legged critters who joined us on our hike behaved themselves.

**Sunday, April 3, 2016 8:00 AM  
Whetstone Ridge**

Kris and Bob Peckman (official leaders), John Merkwan (real leader), Val Dymond, John Brandt, Marie Moss

The only other time I have done this hike, John Merkwan was the leader. So when he signed up, I knew we would find the way and have a great hike. His gps won the prize just for getting us to the endpoint on Irish Creek Road. The directions I had prepared might have worked, too, but were 0.8 miles longer.

After a 5-mile shuttle on winding and partly gravel Irish Creek Road, we arrived at the Whetstone Ridge Visitor Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway, where we met Charlottesville-based John B. and Marie. It was chilly and still a bit windy after a very windy overnight, but we warmed up quickly as we walked the easy first four miles along the ridge. We had lunch in a sunny spot, commenting that it was so quiet, not a bird to be heard. Later, though, John B. spotted a red-bellied woodpecker, and eventually we heard a few birds chirping.

After lunch the sharp peaks began. John counted nine of them, all steep up and down, but none long. The wind had died down, the sun was brilliant, and the views from these high peaks were spectacular. It was good to do this hike in leaf-off season. To the west were wooded mountains and

the Blue Ridge Parkway; to the east, the Shenandoah Valley with fresh green pastures. We longed to identify one mountain just the other side of I-81, but while it looked like Jump Rock Mountain, it didn't seem far enough away.

The trail was well marked, and we had no problem finding where it turns left to gradually make its way down the mountain. Along the ridge we saw serviceberry, but on the way down we also spotted birdsfoot violets, redbud, wild ginger, and trailing arbutus. Right by the road were bloodroot blooming and lots and lots of trout lily leaves. We also saw a shy little lizard clinging to a tree.

We started hiking at 9:50 and finished at 4:00, doing the 11.3 miles in 6 hours and 10 minutes, including lunch. Beautiful weather, spectacular scenery, and good company. It doesn't get any better than that.

**Wednesday, April 6, 2016 8:00 AM  
Fuller Rocks, Big Rocky Row – Easy Way**

David Horst (leader), Mike Vaughn with Kent, Nancy Reid, Chase Davidson, Madeleine Taylor with Sassy, Lois Smith, Dave and Peggy Agnor, Jeff Edwards, Josiah Leonard, and Julie Petruska and her magic mixture.

On a cool windy day, we avoided the long steep series of switchbacks up the AT that is the traditional route up to Fullers Rock. Instead taking the more moderate Little Rocky Row Run, we intersected the AT in about 2 ½ miles. Heading north, we immediately came to the outcrops and cliffs of Fullers Rock with the James River below. The brisk wind limited our time here and we began the steep, rutted and rocky climb up to Big Rocky Row. We stopped for lunch at one of the few viewpoints at the top. We continued after lunch to the intersection with Saddle Gap Trail. While waiting for everyone to regroup here, I bushwhacked up to a rocky pinnacle to see if it would be worth it for this group and future hikes. After descending and gathering the rest, we all went up to the top to take in views of the entire cliff line of Fullers Rock. We nearly lost Dave Agnor as he dove after Madeleine's water bottle to save it from tumbling down the mountain. The rest of the hike was uneventful as we descended the Saddle Gap Trail to our waiting cars. Another great hike with an experienced and fun group.

**Sunday, April 10, 2016, 1:30 PM  
Mason Creek Greenway out and back**

Cheryl Crowell (leader), Judy Kniskern, Linda Harrison, Bill Modica

After meeting up at the southern terminus trailhead parking area on Kessler Mill Road, our small but enthusiastic group donned protective gloves and gathered up garbage bags (courtesy of Bill and Linda) before heading north on the trail, picking up various trash items as we chatted and walked along at a leisurely pace. When compared to the previous day's flurry-filled 40+ mph wind gusts, temperatures in the mid 50's on this particular afternoon seemed quite pleasant. Numerous stops were made to read and discuss informational signs that tell of the battle that occurred in the nearby "Hanging Rock" area during the Civil War. We encountered quite a few other walkers and joggers also out enjoying the trail at various points. One of these walkers was even nice enough to snap a picture of our entire group sitting along Mason Creek, at the still-fairly-new handicap accessible concrete bridge. After properly disposing of several bags of trash that we had collected along the trail, we turned around and began the southbound journey back to our cars. A good time was had by all and we felt good about leaving the trail a little bit cleaner than we had found it.

**Saturday, April 16, 2016 8:00 AM  
Audie Murphy Memorial**

Butch Kelly (leader), Val Dymond & Judy Langenhorst

The views were really pleasing due to the cloudless sky. Spring had not completely leafed out yet. Lots of wildflowers to see. Especially pleasing was fringed polygala, also called gaywings.

**Sunday, April 17, 2016 1:00 PM  
Carvins Cove-Hi-Dee-Hoe/Buck/Hotel Trails**

Jean Warren (leader), Sue Scanlin, Sue Pierce

One word describes this day: PERFECTION! Seventy two degrees, Colorado blue skies, slight breeze, and great company. Arriving at Bennett Springs, there must have been 100 cars in the parking lot. We managed to be there the same day

they were having a mountain bike race, with various levels of difficulty. Luckily, we managed to pick the route they were not on and saw only five cyclists, as well as two horseback riders. We hiked to the top of Hi-Dee-Ho, west on the fire road, down Buck Trail, and then Hotel. The scenery consisted of views of McAfee's Knob, Carvins Cove, Sharp Top, and other mountain ranges in the distance. Wild violets and irises were showing their colors, while it looked like the cold snap from last week hurt most of the mountain laurel. Evidence of the fire from 2008 was evident, due to some blackened trees. This was Sue Pierce's first hike with RATC, and we hope to see her again soon. With three females hiking on the trail, there was no issue of finding conversation. Another perfect day with RATC!

**Wednesday, April 20, 2016 8:00 AM  
Big Horse Gap - Ribble Trail Loop**

David Horst (leader), Maria Bowling with Sumner, Jeff Edwards, Julie Petruska, Barbara Martin

Starting and ending at the top of Sugar Run Mt, we had a fast group as we started down the Ribble Trail. Passing the fallen forestry service cabin we continued down through Rhododendron groves to the north branch of the Ribble Trail. In a short couple of miles we passed the restored game pond and intersected the AT where we headed north. We stopped at Wapiti shelter for a snack and conversation with a German through hiker. The next couple of miles is a relentless ascent of Sugar Run Mountain. But we were rewarded with a stop at a couple of outcroppings with great views and some of Julie's magic mixture. We finished up with a short ridge hike back to the Ribble Trail and our parking area. A nice fast hike, we completed the 10 miles in under 4 hours.

**Saturday, April 23, 2016 8:00 AM  
Huckleberry Loop**

Fred Meyer (leader)

No one showed up for the hike so I hiked it myself.

**Saturday, April 23, 2016 8:00  
Dragons Tooth from Trout Creek (VA-620)**

Maria Bowling (leader) Carina Hughes and her daughter Zoe, Sarah Ulrich (a good friend from my Wilderness First Responder Training), Susan Pierce, and Steve M



A Slow Hiker

Bowling

The skies were a mixture of sun and clouds that kept the day from being too warm. Starting at the AT crossing of Miller Cove Rd., we proceeded at a comfortable pace up Cove Mountain and two miles to the first overlook. We reached the Tooth without incident and enjoyed a snack as we climbed around. We had two folks who were new to the peak, which always makes it a little more exciting. We returned by continuing on the AT as far as the Boy Scout Trail, which gave us a little extra scrambling to do. Steve posted several pictures on the Meetup site.

**Sunday, April 24, 2016 1:00 PM  
Buffalo Mountain**

Carol McPeak (leader), Noel Stroner, Christine Yates, Rudy Yates, John Miller, Katia Fiorentina, Donna Repz, George Repz, Kathy Arrington and Luna

Beautiful afternoon on the "Buffalo". We had wonderful views in every direction and could see Pilot Mountain in the far distance. We were surprised to see so many wildflowers in bloom so early. It's a short hike but I think worth the trip.

**Wednesday, April 27, 2016 8:30 AM  
Black Horse Gap to New River (Rt 460)**

David Horst (leader), Maria Bowling, Mike Vaughn with Kent, Julie Petruska, Jeff Edwards

After working on the relocation for the past few years, I wanted to actually hike it, check the change in mileage for this hike, and admire the wonderful rock work put in place by many. Another small nimble group, we made few stops except for lunch at the power line. Saw and talked with a few through hikers at lunch and as they blistered by us on the trail. Amazing how fast a 25-year-old through hiker with a 40-lb pack can go after 700 miles on the trail and 20-mile days! No substitute for youth and endurance training. The new section looked great and added about a mile to the section with my GPS reading 12.4 miles. Mike, who was behind the rest of the group when we hit the relocated trail, took the old AT down through Pearisburg and beat us by about 15 minutes. The new trail is definitely an improvement over walking through back yards.

**Sunday, May 1, 2016 1:00 PM  
Murray Run Greenway**

Linda Akers (leader)

I walk alone (just one no-show). Lovely walk!

**Monday, May 2, 2016 8:30 AM  
Tinker Creek 1/2 mile in from Rte 220**

John Miller, Steve Marshall, Dave Horst, Homer Witcher, Kevin Witcher & Jim Webb

A very warm and humid day as we started to work with the intention of building what is called a puncheon bridge across a low and sometimes flooded area of the trail near the railroad tracks. The first order of business was to locate some suitable trees for the needed lumber. A stand of large Eastern Red Cedar about 1/8 mile away was our worksite for the day. With the amount of lumber needed we would have to drop, limb and split about 15 trees with chainsaws. It took most of the day but we managed to obtain and carry the building materials over to the wet area of the trail. Assembly of the bridge would await the next workhike.



**Wednesday, May 4, 2016 8:30 AM**  
**Johns Creek Mountain North**  
**Roaring Run - Lower Hoop Hole**

Dave Horst (leader), Lois Smith, Jeff Edwards, Maria Bowling, Donna Brinkman, Beverley Appel, Julie Petruska, Steve Bowles

With recent rains, Stoney Run and Hipes Branch proved to be higher than normal and just as beautiful. Starting near the historic furnace at Roaring Run, we ascended up the Roaring Run Trail about 2.5 miles taking a short cut to keep the mileage to the advertised length and avoid complaints by Maria that it was 0.1 miles too long. We picked up the eastern branch of Upper Hoop Hole and descended to the Lower Hoop loop and Stoney Run. This was another fast group, but slowed by the many crossings over Stoney Run. Jeff still managed to stay dry while the rest of us were knee high in water. After the last crossing, we headed over to Hipes Branch with its cascading pools and canopies of Rhododendrons. There is such a stark difference in these two streams so close together, both with unique beauty. After lunch along Hipes Branch, we finished the hike the same way we began with part of the upper loop and Roaring Run trail. Great weather and a great group that managed to stay together most of the hike.... a rarity on my hikes!

**Sunday, May 8, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Longdale North Mountain Trail**

John Merkwon (leader), Fred Meyer, Josiah Leonard

This was an out-and-back hike. The first two miles were on an old forest service road track with gentle terrain. The trail then followed a stream for 1 mile up the hollow continuing with 1/2 mile of long switchbacks to get to the top of the ridge. After that it was relatively flat until we got to our destination which are outcroppings with excellent valley views. This area is known as Pete's cave. Why? I do not have a clue but the rock formations are very interesting and many cave-like areas are there for exploration. The view, although a bit hazy, was grand with a range of spring greens and Little and Big House mountains on one side and the Rich Hole Wilderness on the other. Fred had the keenest eyes spying a bouquet of pink lady-splippers that were in full bloom. Azaleas also

provided a pleasant *aromatic* to the ridge portion of the hike. Come to think of it, there were many and varied wild flowers on this hike with the majority being in the upper elevations. Experiencing all these flowers was a fitting reminder that this was Mother's Day. The hike logged in at 10.8 miles taking a little under 6 hours.

**Saturday, May 14, 2016 10:00 AM**  
**Falls Ridge**  
**Bottom Creek Gorge**

Jimbo and Mary Harshfield (leaders), Dee Case, Caryl Connolly, Betty Remington, Wendy ?, Kirsten Herndon?, Rhett ?, Tom W.?, Georgia Shaurette

About a week before our scheduled hike someone alerted us to the fact that one of the main trails at Falls Ridge (our original destination) was closed (due to a property dispute). We decided to post a hike to another Nature Conservancy property, Bottom Creek Gorge, instead. Saturday turned out to be a beautiful day for a hike—blue skies and cool, comfortable temperatures. We saw a few wildflowers: fire pinks and wild geraniums, but we could hear many birds, including the wood thrush, scarlet tanager, acadian flycatcher, ovenbird, worm-eating warbler, black-and-white warbler, and black-throated green and blue warblers. We hiked in on the red trail and had a lovely and peaceful picnic overlooking the falls. We took the slightly longer blue trail on the return trip, for a total of about 4 miles. Towards the end of the hike, some dark clouds rolled in and the rain began. Everyone made it back to the cars before the hard downpour. It was a wonderful day for good conversation and enjoying the great out-of-doors in this delightfully quiet Nature Conservancy property.

**Sunday, May 15, 2016 1:00 PM**  
**Wolf Creek Greenway**

Cancelled, no takers.

**Sunday, May 15, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Pandapas Pond**

Cancelled.

**Monday, May 16, 2016 8:30 AM  
Tinker Creek 1/2 mile from Rte 220**

John Miller, Jeff Edwards, Steve Marshall, Julie Wullner, Dave Horst, Kevin Witcher & Jim Webb

Picking up where we left off on the work hike of 5/2, the work seemed to progress very quickly. The crew split into three groups to move the work along: one group to cut and split the last 4 trees, one group to transport the them to the bridge site and the last to notch the sill logs and assemble the bridge. The result is no more wet or muddy feet along 150 feet of the trail in this area.

**Wednesday, May 18, 2016 8:00 AM  
Your Father's Punchbowl to the James River  
North Mountain - Grouse & Deer trails**

Dave Horst (leader), Joanne Derryberry, Madeleine Taylor, Dave and Peggy Agnor, Beverley Appel, Maria Bowling with Sumner, Julie Petruska, Jeff Edwards

The meteorologist was wrong again. While less than a 15% chance of rain before 3pm, we began the hike in a misty rain alternating with a drizzle. But the temperature was in the low 60's and the

hike on the ridge was sometimes surreal as we hiked in shroud of fog and clouds. The hike immediately separated into two groups. The faster group took the planned route that included the side trails of Deer and Grouse along with a walk on the service road. The following group of Madeleine, Joanne, Dave and Peggy decided to do more of the ridge and an out and back route. They stopped for a leisurely lunch while the rest of us stopped only for some of Julie's Magic Mixture. The fact that Julie finally got the ratios correct added to our hiking time as we all had extra mouthfuls. The slower group also stopped on the way back down to pull garlic mustard for about an hour. Apparently, Dave Agnor has a great recipe for salmon that includes a garlic mustard beer marinade.

**Saturday, May 21, 2016 4-7 PM  
Ninth Annual Trail Angel Picnic  
at the Stony Creek AT crossing.**

The picnic this year was an amazing success. The rain paused and the skies remained blue up until the last minutes. RATC members Julie Petruska and Jeff Edwards ( great chili!) helped save the day, as many of our Sierra Club regulars couldn't attend. We served close to thirty hikers, who all brought hefty appetites. Those who brought food and other goodies included Julie Petruska, Jeff Edwards, Frances Arnold, Phillip "Stoney" Stone, Mary Ratliff, Tom Hoffman, and me. —Maria Bowling

**Sunday, May 22, 2016 9:00 AM  
Boy Scout Loop**

Jean Warren (leader), Susan Pierce

We met at the Orange Market/Hanging Rock parking lot for our four-mile loop hike. Another RATC group was meeting at the same time for a 10-mile hike. It was a beautiful day, with mostly sunshine and an occasional stiff breeze. What a relief from all the rain we've been having! From the parking lot, we started up the Blue Blaze to the intersection of the A.T. Trail. There was plenty of poison ivy along the way. We met few hikers, but one lady we spoke to was a through-hiker from New Zealand. She complimented the RATC several times for the wonderful upkeep of the trails. When we reached the section of the A.T. trail, some of the

rhododendrons were still in bloom. It's always such a spectacular sight to see the beautifully formed pink blossoms. At one point, heading toward the Boy Scout Trail, we were walking on a path of heavy laden rhododendron pedals. One view in particular is always so breathtaking, and today we had the clouds quickly sweeping their shadow over the valley. Susan had never been on this hike before so it was fun for me to be caught up in her enthusiasm of the whole experience. Phew! And boy did we do some powerful talking along the way!

**Sunday, May 22, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Sawtooth Ridge to Dragon's Tooth Parking**  
**113-Mile Hike # 5**

David Socky (leader), Fred Meyer, Doug Knighton, and Laura Crowley.



Laura

Socky

We had a great hike on a beautiful clear day on the AT from Sawtooth Ridge to Dragon's Tooth. It was 10.7 miles long with about 2900 feet of elevation gain - enough to get the heart going! There was a bit of mud on the trail, especially where the trail crossed farm fields. We met a lot of through hikers heading north. Some of us climbed out on the 'Dragon's Tooth' for an exhilarating view. We had a couple minutes of light rain on the way back, but not enough for me to get my rain coat out. It was actually a very pleasant day.

**Sunday, May 1, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Wednesday, May 25, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Rock Castle Gorge**

Gary Oberlender (leader), Karen Callahan (assistant leader), Chris Yates, Sandra Cothran

After weeks of unseasonably cool and rainy weather we enjoyed warm temperatures, clear bright skies, and low humidity for a hike that had been previously twice-cancelled for weather. We started at the Rock Castle creek trailhead and hiked the loop counter-clockwise, taking the climb at the beginning of the hike when the temperature was still cool. We identified and enjoyed many beautiful trees, a variety of late spring wildflowers, and many songbirds including a close encounter with a red-eyed vireo. We lunched at the sun-drenched overlook just above the old shelter with commanding views of Patrick County, then happily marched onward, crossing bold side creeks to the forest road alongside Rock Castle creek. We saw evidence of last fall's powerful storms including a bridge bowed by the rain-swollen creek, several downed trees in the trail, and areas of serious washout. But the trail was generally in good condition and was easily passable. All in all, a great day in the woods for a happy quartet of hiker/naturalists.

**Wednesday, May 25, 2016 9:00 AM**  
**Mill Mountain Woodthrush, Ridgeline,**  
**Monument & Star Trails**

No Response; cancelled

**Sunday, May 29, 2016 7, 7:30, & 8 AM**  
**Garden Mountain, VA-623 to VA-615**

Maria Bowling (leader), Julie Petruska and Arietta Fleming-Davies



Laurel Fork Bridge

Bowling



Though only three of us braved this hike, we walked through lush, green woods and had a lovely time. The nine miles went quickly as we descended to the Jenkins Shelter, paused for a snack, re climbed the mountain and then finally descended to the beautiful bridge at VA 615. Though the skies were overcast, we had just one brief sprinkle.

**Tuesday, May 31, 2016 8:30 AM**  
**Sinking Creek Relocation**

Jeff Edwards, Mike Vaughn & Jim Webb

The temperature was comfortable but the humidity was high as we started the 45-minute climb from the parking lot to the worksite. This relocation will be a long project with the Konnarock crew coming to join us for 2 weeks every summer for the next 3 years. The sidehill digging was not very hard and we moved along up the hill with the new trail for about 200 feet by day's end. Mike pointed out that the 200 feet we completed made our next commute to the worksite 200 feet longer.



**Friday, June 3, 2016**  
**Tinker Cliffs Moonlight Hike**

Jeff Edwards (leader), Julie Petruska, Amber Edwards, Lori Booker, Julia Booker, John Booker

Jeff, Amber and Julie carpooled from Christiansburg and met Lori, Julia and John at Orange Market on 311. We then drove to the

Andy Layne trail parking area. We started hiking through fields of cattle and puddles of mud. The trail was quite wet from the recent rains. We climbed to Scorched Earth Gap and took a right on the AT. Another half mile and we were at Tinker Cliffs. Several thru hikers were there already and we had interesting conversations with a few of them. The sunset did not disappoint! Truly spectacular. After marveling at the scenery for a while and enjoying snacks and libations we headed down. About three quarters of the way down it was completely dark but no problem since we were prepared with headlamps. After reaching the parking area at 10:15 we headed home.

**Saturday, June 4, 2016**  
**Sinking Creek Relocation**

Jeff Edwards, Chase Davidson, John H., Jim Webb & Bruce Agnew



Chase & Bruce discuss a trail feature while Jeff digs a location for a rock step.  
Webb

The rain that was forecast for the afternoon never materialized but the humidity was high the whole day as we hiked up Sinking Creek mountain to the



proposed relocation site. Working quickly we reached the first of numerous rockslides on the side of the mountain. These are usually a jumble of rocks that have slid downhill and come to rest in no particular order. Anything from softball size to small car size. We moved a few of the less difficult ones into steps but concentrated mostly on clearing and building a trail on the steep sidehill. Since we did not bring the equipment for moving large rocks this trip, most of the steps will have to be done at a later date.

**Saturday, June 4, 2016**  
**Bearwallow Gap to Troutville**

Linda Conner (leader), Bill Conner, and Mangala Kumar

Lovely day for a 19+mile hike. We met quite a number of northbound thru hikers. A thunder storm with cooling rain came along in the afternoon and made for a pleasant end to the hike. We were glad to hike this beautiful trail and we were glad to rest our feet when it was over.

**Sunday, June 5, 2016 8:00 AM**  
**Salt Log Gap to Sheeley/Woodworth Shelter**  
**via Livingston Spring Trail**

John Merkwon (leader), H.R. Blankenship, Val Dymond, Allan and Rebecca Dickerman



H.R. Patiently waits for hike to resume-Merkwan

The weather forecast was for a 90% chance of rain with a potential of severe thunderstorms. Flash flood warnings were in effect the evening before. I wasn't too sure about this hike but decided to give it a try. Well, it never did rain and although we did have to get out of the car and remove a tree that had fallen across the road, the hike was very

pleasant with the clouds thinning so we could enjoy an outstanding scenic view from the top of an unnamed hill on the trail. I had advertised a "top ten" tree oddity on this hike of a mature tree perched on a 15' high boulder but in the six intervening years since I last hiked this section, the tree had fallen and the boulder was left standing alone. If interested, check out the photos on Meetup. Allen and Rebecca brought their trail dog, Cyrus, who on the trip got to meet Olive, a through-hiker dog. In fact it was a pretty busy hike as we encountered nearly a dozen adventurous through hikers on the trail most of whom were heading North. The Lovington Spring section was loaded with ferns and a nice selection of wildflowers. This was a lozenge-shaped lollipop hike that measured 10 1/2 miles taking 5 1/2 hours.

**Sunday, June 12, 2016, 1:00**  
**Mill Mountain – Woodthrush Trail**

Georgia Gallaher (leader), Regina Stah, Joe Nikeshia.

The day was very hot reaching the 90s, but was also breezy. A change to the Star Trail was made so that Regina, who is new to the area, could visit the Star and the top of Mill Mountain. The views from the top were beautiful and the hike was enjoyed by all.



New McAfee lot kiosk across 311 from the trail.  
 A job well done by Eagle Scout Will Kyle.



## 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 – steeper trails such as McAfee

Strenuous terrain – long climbs and rough trails

Challenging – neglected trails and bushwhacking

Driving miles are from Roanoke unless otherwise stated. Shuttle lengths are included to calculate carpool fees. You may drive your own car to the trailhead if you wish. However, carpooling is encouraged to save gasoline and because trailhead parking may be limited.

The hike leader is responsible for arranging such carpooling as may be required. While there is no fee to hike with the club, the indicated amount is to defray automobile expenses and should be given to the driver of your carpool.

**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 hikes on Meetup and post them early so hikers can plan.**

**For hikes, contact Bob Peckman at [hikemaster@ratc.org](mailto:hikemaster@ratc.org). For Blazer matters [blazer@ratc.org](mailto: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](mailto:treasurer@ratc.org) (540)387-9732. You can also use PayPal at [ratc.org](http://www.ratc.org).

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
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