

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Fall 2017

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

RATC Holiday Potluck
December 2, 6:00 PM
Christ Lutheran Church

First Saturday Work Hikes
Bruce Agnew
540-846-6180 - csc236inf@gmail.com

Monday Work Hikes
Monday, October 2- 8:30 AM
Monday, October 23 - 8:30 AM
Monday, November 6 - 8:30 AM
Monday, November 20 - 8:30 AM

Trail Supervisor
Jim Webb
540-266-8537 – startover14@peoplepc.com

BOARD MEETINGS
Glenvar Public Library
3917 Daugherty Rd, Salem 24153
(All members are always welcome.)

Monday, October 2, 7:00 PM
Jim Beeson - My 2016 Thru Hike

Monday, November 6, 7:00 PM
Bill Hackworth & M. Cupka-Cons.Easements

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New Steps on the Andy Layne Trail

Webb

Member News

We are happy to welcome the following new members:

Allison Bouslog

Danielle Girard

Dale & Penny Hall

Alan Henry

Ryan King

Jeremy Kitchen

Phillip & Judy

Lochbrunner

Preston Long

Angela Vitale

Donations to RATC

Peggy Bryant

Rob Crittenden

Siegfried Kolmstetter

Dr. Pauline Merry

Roanoke Outdoor

Adventure Group

Preserve Giles Co.

113-Mile Patch

Peter & Jennifer White

Michael Lee

Joe Berney

Tim Lion

Colleen Gentry

Matt Gentry

David & Peggy Agnor

RATC's McAfee Knob Task Force - August 24, 2017

With support from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the National Park Service, the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club created the McAfee Knob Task Force in May of 2015 to address management challenges surrounding the beloved landmark of McAfee Knob. The primary function of the Task Force has been to organize and support a cadre of Volunteer Ridgerunners. Each trained volunteer patrols the parking lots and trails around McAfee Knob or Dragons Tooth at least one weekend day each month April through October, educating the public about how to hike safely and minimize their impact on the area. They also perform minor trail maintenance, monitor conditions, submit reports and serve as a friendly, knowledgeable management presence. ATC's full-time Catawba Mountain Ridgerunner, Dave Youmans, facilitates training and communication for the group in addition to his regular patrol duties.

2017 by the Numbers

65 priority patrol days since April 1, every Friday/Saturday/Sunday, plus a few holidays

Only 4 days had no Volunteer Ridgerunner on patrol.
Task Force presence 94% of the time

140 patrols completed in 2017 by 32 Volunteer Ridgerunners

13,392 visitors seen, compared with 8,661 at this time last year

9,713 visitors contacted, compared with 3,886 at this time last year

829 miles hiked
432 gallons of litter removed
36 illegal fire rings removed

Prepared by Kathryn Herndon-Powell

Hikemaster's Report

It's been a busy summer for me as an outdoor educator. As I transition into my fall work schedule, I am finding I want to spend all of my free time outdoors. The weather has cooled a bit, and we're enjoying a little less humidity. It's the perfect time to go for a hike. There are several hikes already scheduled on the Meet-up calendar and current RATC hike leaders are hoping to add more soon. If you have interest in becoming a RATC hike leader, don't hesitate to reach out to me at hikemaster@ratc.org. We're always looking for folks with local outdoor experience to lead hikes in our area.

In other news, our RATC website has undergone some updates. There are now interactive maps of the 14 AT hikes in our region, as well as links to parking and trailhead coordinates. Many thanks to our webmaster Jonathan Eagle for putting so much work into this. You can check out the new maps at: <https://www.ratc.org/ratcs-14-at-hikes-2/>

Hope to see you all on the trail soon!

Susan Herndon-Powell

A Quick Lesson in Trail Building

The Read Mountain Trail is a good place to learn about trail building. The trail was built by our finest and most qualified workers. But it is also used by mostly inexperienced hikers who have put it to the most difficult tests. When you walk this trail, watch carefully to see how the current treadway differs from where the trail was constructed. Also observe how the treadway goes next to orphaned steps.

Human nature is not driven by logic. It is logical that, if you drop off the trail on the down-hill side, that you will have to climb back onto the trail later which will be more difficult than the climb to stay on the trail. But if there is a tree in the middle or down-hill side of the trail, some hikers will go to the down-hill side of the tree. Their footprints will encourage more and more to follow this easier-looking path until the original treadway fades into the past. This is the Charles Parry lesson that was the most difficult for me: If it is a small tree, cut it down. Large trees are less of a challenge, especially if we decide to build the trail on the low side or very cleanly on the high side.

My second difficult Charles Parry lesson was for building steps. We need to start the steps by taking a very good flat stone and sinking it level with the ground. Then start the first step from there. We hit

the ground harder coming down from a step than from an ordinary pace. Without the ground-floor step, coming down from the first step will tend to dig a hole under the first step. Two things will happen: The first step will become too high and hikers will not use the steps. And the hole will loosen the bottom step. Each step supports the one above it. If the ground-floor step does not support the first step, the first step cannot support the second step, and eventually all that hard work will collapse.

The third lesson was easier for me. When you build steps, don't think about making them wide enough to walk on. All hikers hate steps. If you have to build steps to control erosion, make them so wide that there is no choice. Don't think logically; think where a five-year old would go, the guys who walk through mud puddles. Part of us will always be that five-year old.

I enjoy the Read Mountain Trail very much. If I don't have time for a longer hike, this one is perfect. It is very pretty and well constructed. But as a trail builder, I can't help seeing the challenges that hikers have brought to it and what we can learn from them.

Bob Peckman

AmazonSmile

Did you know that if you use Amazon you can financially help RATC?

You can support the mission of RATC by using AmazonSmile when you make purchases through Amazon. AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets you enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices and convenient features, including Amazon Prime, as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to eligible charitable organizations, such as RATC.

Got your attention and want to help RATC?

- Use your internet browser and go to Smile.Amazon.Com (At this time purchases not made using an internet browser (for instance, Amazon Shopping App, Kindle Store, etc. are not eligible for donations).
- You will be prompted to select a charitable organization – Select Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC).

- Bookmark - Smile.Amazon.Com
- You can manage your purchases or other account information on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile using a single account. You can use your existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile if you have one, or create a new account if you don't.
- Use Smile.Amazon.Com each time you utilize Amazon.

We trust this information is helpful and if you use Amazon you will utilize AmazonSmile for your purchases and at the same time financially support RATC.

If you have questions please feel free to contact Amazon Customer Service or RATC Counselor – Jim Beeson (540-986-5301).

Jim Beeson

Hike Reports

Thursday, May 18, 2017 Wilburn Ridge/Pine Mountain Loop

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Beverly Appel, Julie Petruska, Mary Psiaki and Nancy Wallace

Every now and then, one stumbles upon the perfect day for hiking: This was that day. It had rained heavily in the days leading up to the hike and would do the same in the days following (I spent those days dodging downpours on an island behind Tent City at Trail Days), but our day in "Virginia's Rooftop" was fabulous.

After gathering at Christiansburg, we made the long drive to Highland State Park. The long drive made for a late starting time for the hike, but luckily we had a group of light-foots and made good time through the highlands, We barely made it out of the parking lot before seeing our first pony.



Leonard

We laced along the high knobs of Wilburn Ridge for our start. We had planned to save Wilburn Ridge for the return leg of our loop, but decided to hit it early in case rain came in the afternoon and blotted out the views. The views were exceptional just about every place we looked. If we weren't looking over craggy ancient volcano peaks, we were seeing beautiful alpine forests or herds of ponies. We had lunch at Thomas Knob Shelter, and there was little doubt that we would add the out-and-back to Mt. Rogers, Virginia's highest point. Nancy was convinced that the top of the mountain was made of chocolate, so she bit the rock to make sure.

On the return leg, we took the Pine Mountain Trail from Rhododendron Gap. The rhododendrons were starting to bloom a little, but we were too early for the big bloom by a solid couple of weeks. I can only imagine how stunning that must be at its height. Nancy and I proved to be a bad influence on Mary as we peer-pressured her into climbing a giant tooth of a rock with a view over the plateau. Julie and Beverly were having none of that! We eventually decided (actually, I kind of hijacked the group) to jump over to the horse trail which stayed in the open through the highlands rather than staying in the woods on the Pine Mountain Trail. We made it to the Scales, then it was a nice half-wooded, half-open walk back to Massie Gap and our cars. The ladies were great sports allowing me to climb rock after rock along the ridge.

Back at the cars, we parted ways as I was headed to Damascus for Trail Days / Daze and everyone else was heading home. I could not have asked for a better hike or a better group of hikers with whom to enjoy some of Virginia's finest scenery!

Sunday, June 11, 2017, 8:30 AM
Rock Castle Gorge

Dee Case (leader), Fred Meyer, Carol Rowlett, Robin Bagby and Heidi Maren

Carol, Fred and I were joined by Robin and Heidi at the trailhead. We had beautiful summer weather for the Rock Castle Gorge hike. The 10.8 miles started out with a strenuous climb, followed by beautiful views along the Parkway, then a gradual descent along the creek.

Saturday, July 3, 2017
Workhike - Andy Layne Trail

Susan Terwilliger, Bill Neilan, Randy Pennington, Jill Pennington, Mike Vaughn & Jim Webb



Before (above) and after (below)

Webb



On a very warm and humid Monday we headed up the Andy Layne trail to place more log steps on the steep section of trail. With multiple interruptions from the holiday hikers, the installation took a little longer than usual. The 20 log steps installed completes another section of the steep trail.

**Saturday, July 8, 2017, 9:30
Smith Mountain Lake**

Dee Case (leader), Ken Myers, Sharon Probst, Roger Huffman & Fred Meyer

We enjoyed a sunny day hiking to Turtle Island at Smith Mountain Lake. We stopped for a bit to watch the boaters, then headed back along the Stripper Trail. The estimated 4 mile hike was closer to 6 miles, but everyone was a good sport about the additional length.

**Sunday, July 9, 2017, 8:30
Cascades, Barney's Wall, Butt Mountain**

Fred Meyer (leader), Bob & Kris Peckman, Kim Dulaney, Dee Case, Jennifer Harvey, Brent Scott, Ken Myers, Georgia Shaurette



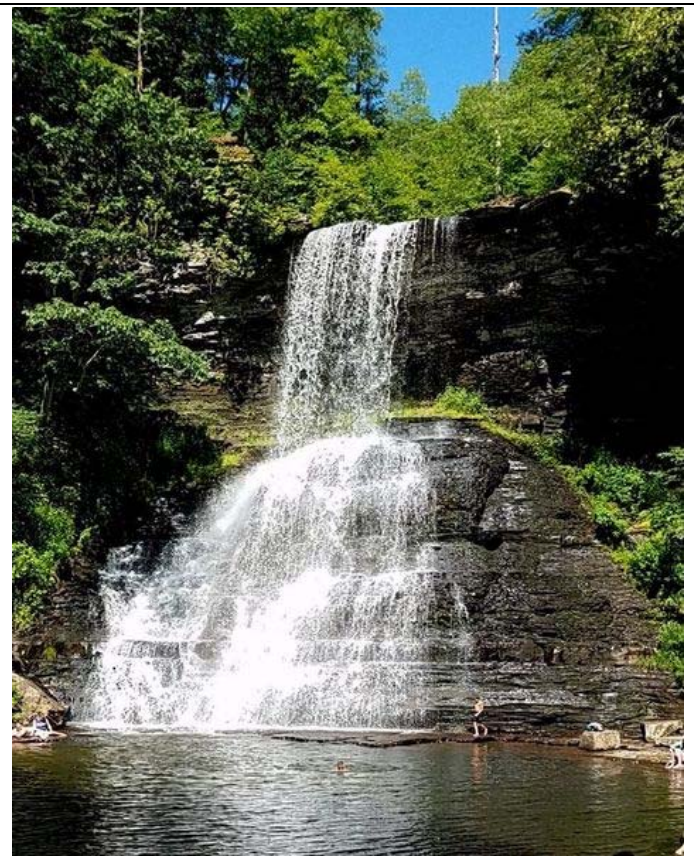
Selfie at the Wall

It was a wonderful hike but a bit exhausting. The view at the top was fabulous and so it was worth the effort. We also stopped at Barney's Wall and Cascade Falls on the way to the top. The total mileage was about 12 miles. Some people decided to get ice cream afterward. The weather was bright and sunny.



At Barney's Wall

Frye



Ken Myers

**Tuesday, July 11, 2017, 6:45 PM
Green Hill Trash Dash, RATC/ROAG**

Chris Means (leader), Dee Case, Pam Clement, Wilma Vargas, William McClellen, and Chastity Graham



Six members comprised from both the RATC and ROAG groups joined at Green Hill Park in Salem to gather up some debris on a muggy summer evening. We strolled along the Greenway skirting a calm Roanoke River and then veered off on the Paw Paw Trail and hiked up the hillside to the Equestrian ring on top of the park. Walking on the ridgeline towards the East we got back into the trail system coming down on a creek where we encountered the largest Sycamore tree I've personally ever viewed. As a group we were able to dispose of 5 shopping bags of trash, cool side note to that; that's the least amount of trash I've ever gathered at this particular park during one of our Trash Dashes !

**July 12 - July 15, 2017
Konnarock Week 2**

7/12 - Fred Meyer and Jim Webb
7/13 - Fred Meyer, John HvozdoVIC and Jim Webb
7/14 - Peter Whiteis and Jim Webb
7/15 - Chris Dadak and Jim Webb

The Konnarock crew was back at the Sinking Creek relocation for the second of three weeks with a group of 12 volunteers from the Conservation Leadership Corp., A large but inexperienced group, they did well in the hot, humid weather as they cleared the large rocks from the third rockslide and revealed a trail underneath. The remainder of the crew was busy putting the finishing touches on the switchback and the crib wall leading to it. The R.A.T.C. members were busy pushing the upper leg of the switchback closer to completion.

**Saturday, July 15, 2017, 6:00 PM
Sunset Hike to Rice Fields Overlook**

Maria Bowling (leader), Susan Terwilliger, Blake Mitnick, Anton Baudoin, and Bill Reilly



Bowling

Four hikers joined me on this fairly easy climb up to the Rice Fields from Clendenin Rd. Although the day wasn't unbearably hot, we appreciated the relocation at the top of the trail that bypassed that last, steep climb with an easy switchback! The sun set right on schedule, and we watched as lights came on in Rich Creek, down in West Virginia. It was a beautiful evening with an uneventful hike down, though we did add a detour to the trip back to help a thru-hiker get to Pearisburg.

**Sunday, July 16, 2017, 9:30 AM
Three-trail Peaks of Otter Hike**

Chris Means (leader), Jennifer Frye, Dee Case, Chastity Graham, David Hartzig, Jennifer Hollis, David Jermann, Andrew McDonald, Fred Meyer, Kris & Bob Peckman, Georgia Shaurette, and Houston Skipper



The Group

Frye

Our group of 13 met up early at the Bonsack Lowe's to carpool up to the Visitors Center on a beautiful morning. The group was comprised of members of both the RATC and ROAG groups and once we all had signed in we shuttled to the Flat Top parking area, just off the parkway past the Peaks of Otter lodge. We first scaled up Flat Top and enjoyed some snacks sitting on a huge outcropping of rocks, looking to the south, one of my favorite vantage points. Visible was Smith Mtn and the lake, the Bedford reservoir and you could barely make out Chandler Mtn in Lynchburg.

After a brief lunch we trekked down the far side of Flat Top and hiked around Abbott Lake back to the Visitors Center. A few members took this opportunity to shuttle back to their cars and regroup, some choosing to end their hike at this spot. The majority went on to climb up Harkening Hill and circle around and visit the Johnson Farm house, totaling 9 miles for the day. An enjoyable hike with some great company, the Peaks area has a lot to offer the day hiker.



A Happy Tree

Frye

Monday, July 17, 2017 Workhike - Andy Layne Trail

Bill Neilan, Jim Beeson, Mike Vaughn, Jill & Randy Pennington & Jim Webb

On another hot July day we headed up the Andy Layne trail to put in more log steps. A couple more work hikes up here are needed to finish up this steep section of trail. The popularity of this trail is evident by the fact that on a non-holiday Monday morning almost 50 hikers were seen heading to the cliffs, including 21 Boy Scouts and their adult supervision.

July 20 - July 23, 2017 Konnarock Week 3

Colin Owens and Jim Webb plus Dave Youmans on 7/20 and Robert & Jennie Bomber on 7/23

The last Konnarock visit of this year saw a smaller but more experienced crew. With a crew of 6 they concentrated on a set of steps coming off one of the rockslides and going up a steep incline towards the switchback. Again this week the R.A.T.C. members concentrated on improving the upper section with the exception of Colin who chose to work with the Konnarock crew moving large rocks.



The Stairway to Heaven

Webb



Measuring a Candidate for a Step

Webb

Saturday, July 31, 2017
Workhike - Andy Layne Trail

Mike Vaughn, Jim Beeson, Randy & Jill Pennington & Jim Webb

Much cooler temperatures on this Monday as we worked to put a total of 19 more steps on the Andy Layne trail. Very few hikers on this beautiful day.

Saturday August 5, 2017, 8:00 AM
Workhike: Sinking Creek Relo

Bruce Agnew (leader), Craig Rightmire and Jim Webb

Wednesday August 9, 2017, 8:00 AM
Workhike: Andy Layne Trail

Jim Beeson, Bill Neilan, Brent Scott & Jim Webb

The work hike consisted of cutting and hauling cedar logs for the steps on the Andy Layne trail. After this cutting we will probably have enough logs to finish the steep section, A separate workhike is needed since these logs are coming from much farther up the trail.

Monday August 21, 2017, 8:00 AM
Workhike: Plan B - Bridge Beams

Bill Neilan & Jim Webb



Hand-cut Bridge Beam

Webb

With only the two of us attending, it didn't make much sense to try to put steps on the Andy Layne trail as planned so the two of us decided to finish up the bridge beams needed for the replacements at the creek. Lots of chainsaw work to do.

Saturday September 2, 2017, 8:00 AM
Workhike: Sinking Creek AT Relo

Bruce Agnew (leader), Mike Vaughn, Denise Hendon and Jim Webb

Monday September 4, 2017
Workhike: Bridge 1 mile north of VA-624

Jim Beeson, Bill Neilan, Craig Rightmire, Mike Vaughn, Fred Meyer & Jim Webb

After finishing the construction of two white oak beams to use as stringers for the new bridge, the old one having been washed out late last year, the task remained as to how to get them down to the bridge site from their location 250 yards up the hill. What would seem to be a simple task is complicated by the weight of these beams, about 600 lbs. each. After careful thought, and the fact that the 6 of us could not lift one, we determined that the best course of action would be to drag each one straight down the hill to the bridge site. With gravity working with us, we managed to persuade the first one down the hill and across the creek in about 60 minutes. The learning curve was pretty steep as we avoided the mistakes of the first trip and delivered the second one in about 30 minutes.



The crew looks over their handywork.

Webb

**Thursday September 7, 2017, 9:30 AM
Habitat Management at the Burrus Tract
RATC, ATC & Bland Correctional Center**

Conner McBane (leader), Jeanne Duddy, and Jim Webb

**Saturday September 9, 2017, 7:30 AM
Mountain Shepherd Wilderness Survival School
Log Step & Sidehill Construction**

Joshua Kloehn, Bruce Agnew, Terry Shipley, Bill Neilan and Jim Webb

**Sunday September 10, 2017, 10:00 AM
Habitat Management at the Burrus Tract
RATC, ATC & RU Outdoors**

Conner McBane (leader), Denise Hendon + 1 and Jim Webb

**Wednesday, September 13, 2017, 8:00 AM
Sawtooth Ridge and Lost Spectacles Gap
RATC Section #5**

Susan Herndon-Powell & Dave Youmans (co-leaders), Ken Myers, Dee Case, Jill & Randy Pennington, and Guests: Melanie Fitzgerald and Amanda Kulkeski



Herndon-Powell

It was a beautiful foggy morning when we all met at the Dragon's Tooth Parking area. After a quick shuttle back to the McAfee Knob parking area on VA-311, we were on the AT heading south along Sawtooth Ridge. It stayed foggy through our first overlook about a mile in, but it started clearing up as we hiked further along the ridge. By the time we made it to the pastures down to VA-785 the skies had cleared. We stopped for lunch as we crossed the stream where a storm had washed out the bridge back in the spring. Hard-working maintainers have been busy rebuilding the bridge and plan to complete it by the end of September. We ran into Jim Webb as we crossed VA-624/Newport Road as he was bringing in some supplies to the bridge reconstruction project. Most of the group chose to hike on to Lost Spectacles Gap and down the blue-blaze Dragon's Tooth Trail to finish the hike, while two headed down the yellow-blaze Boy Scout Trail for a slighter shorter hike back to the parking area.

Hiking Guidelines

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

Both hikers and leaders, please go to <https://www.ratc.org/regional-hiking-resources/> and click on Bob Peckman's Regional Hike List to consult the hike descriptions at <http://peckmanjazz.com/HIKERATC.HTM>. Tell me how to make the descriptions better. Try to use the name and description when posting a hike on Meetup, or maybe suggest changes or new hikes.

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. Make requests if we don't fill your needs.

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 driving expenses.

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. RATC needs you! Get on Meetup and lead a hike or contact the leader on a hike and offer to assist. Come out for the next hike-leader training. Contact Susan Herndon-Powell, hikemaster@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	\$ _____

TRAIL BLAZER
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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