

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Fall 2019

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.

Board Meetings

All board meetings are 6:00pm at the Glenvar Branch of the Roanoke County Library, 3917 Daugherty Rd, Glenvar, 24153

All members are always welcome.

November 4
December 2
January 6

Join the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Meetup Group for a list of all the hikes, workhikes, training events and hiker happy hours.

RATC's Holiday Extravaganza Potluck

Saturday, December 14th, 2019 6-8pm
Unitarian Universalist Church
2015 Grandin Rd SW, Roanoke, VA
24015.

Jazzman Dr. Bob Peckman will be presenting his Grand Canyon excursion. Brian Boggs will also be instructing interested parties in the fine art of meringue dancing.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jim Beeson



If you have utilized the VA 311 McAfee Knob parking lot in the last two months you noticed a much needed improvement to the lot.

Big Thank You to RATC members, Mike Vaughn, Dan Phlegar, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan and Mark Farrell for their hard work making this much needed improvement happen! Dan Phlegar utilizing his civil engineering skills and contacts was able to secure gravel donations from Rockydale Quarry and Sisson and Ryan Quarries, along with equipment assistance from Scott Whitaker. Bill Neilan utilized his contact to secure equipment from Area Wide Protective Services. Thank you to Andrew Downs, Appalachian Trail Conservancy for financial support utilizing Virginia AT license plate proceeds and National Park Service for expeditious review and approval. Another example of multiple AT partners working in a collaborative manner to solve a problem and improve the AT experience for all hikers.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Jim Beeson

986-5301 President@ratc.org

Vice President, Bill Neilan

201-787-3139 VicePresident@ratc.org

Secretary, Susan Terwilliger

540-808-6845 Secretary@ratc.org

Treasurer, Terri McClure

375-2650 Treasurer@ratc.org

Conservation Chair, Butch Kelly

540-384-7429 butch2410@msn.com

Land Management Supervisor, Bill Neilan

201-787-3139 LandManagement@ratc.org

Trail Supervisor, Mike Vaughn

992-1350 TrailSupervisor@ratc.org

Shelter Supervisors, Homer & Therese

Witcher

266-4849, 266-8912

ShelterSupervisor@ratc.org

Hikemaster, Josiah Leonard

682-3366 hikemaster@ratc.org

Newsletter Editor, Anne Pfeiffer

556-2941 blazer@ratc.org

Membership Coordinator, Mark Farrell

797-4049 Membership@ratc.org

Counselor, Jason Thompson

434-294-9111 Counselor1@ratc.org

Counselor, Brian Boggs

954-536-5925 Counselor2@ratc.org

Counselor, Julio Stephens

540-357-1902 Counselor3@ratc.org

Counselor, Bob Peckman

Counselor4@ratc.org

ANCILLARIES

Social Chairman, Scott Karns

540-525-9964 aces_09@msn.com

Webmaster, Jonathan Eagle

354-3131 webmaster@ratc.org

Regional Partnership Committee Rep., David Youmans

302-528-1776 DavidYoumans1221@gmail.com

Regional Partnership Committee Alternate, Jim Beeson

986-5301 President@ratc.org

Roanoke College Liaison, Conner McBane

525-6812 cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org

OTHER IMPORTANT CONTACTS

SW & Central VA Regional Director, Andrew Downs

540-904-4354 adowns@appalachiantrail.org

The Mid-week Crew, Bill Gordge

774-3016 bgordge@cox.net

Roanoke Valley Greenways Liaison, Diana Christopulos

387-0930 dianak16@earthlink.net

ATC-LT Coord. New River to Damascus,

Steve Reisinger

540-951-7580 srei38@hotmail.com

WELCOMETO THE ELEVEN NEWLY-TRAINED MEMBERS OFTHE McAFEE KNOB TASK FORCE



If you are interested in joining the Task Force, contact the:

Southwest and Central Virginia Regional Office (VARO)

416 Campbell Avenue SW
Suite 101

Roanoke, VA 24016

Phone: 540.904.4393

Fax: 540.904.4368

E-mail: varo@appalachiantrail.org

HIKE MASTER'S REPORT

Josiah Leonard



This week, I participated in a hike led by Larry Austin. Larry always plans interesting routes and often has treats at the end of his hikes, which makes for a great experience. As it happens, my first RATC hike was led by Larry -- a very cool, partially off-trail hike in the Cove Mountain area. I had been registered with the club's Meetup group for a few months, but for one reason or another, I was always reluctant to sign-up for a group hike. I am glad that I finally did as I have gained many great friends and had exceptional experiences.

In August, our Meetup group reached a total membership of 1,700 hikers and has added even more hikers since that time. Yet, many of our listed hikes often only have a handful of participants, as you may notice as you read the hike reports listed below, and a few are even cancelled due to a lack of participation. Sometimes there is a reason for that -- perhaps the hike is at the higher end of difficulty or happens to fall on a day with lots of other local happenings. But, I think part of the reason is just reluctance -- reluctance to join the first hike, reluctance to sign-up when we do not know anyone else on the attendees list, or reluctance to get back into group hikes after getting out of the habit of attending.

Let me encourage you to come hiking with us this fall, whether it is your first time, you are in the triple

digits of hike attendance, or any place in between. The woods are wonderful, the mountains are majestic, and we have some of the finest and friendliest people in the area who lead and participate with our group hikes. If you cannot find a hike that interests you, please let me know so that I can fix that problem, and we are always welcoming of new hike leaders. I hope to see you this fall!

Hiking Guidelines

Our hikes are listed on our the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Meetup page. Guests are welcome.

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 of \$0.10/one-way mile. We carpool to save gasoline and because trailhead parking may be limited.

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! Come out for the next hike-leader training. Contact Josiah Leonard, hikemaster@ratc.org.

HIKE REPORTS

Trail Relo Near Mountain Lake Work Hike June 24

Jim Webb (Leader), Bill Floyd , Bill Neilan, Susan Terwilliger, Mark Farrell



Today we worked with the ATC's Konnarock crew on the relocation of an eroded section of trail near the War Spur Trail in the Mountain Lake wilderness area. This was the first week that work has started on this relocation. This relocation will take three years and will involve constructing over 6,000 feet of new trail. After the long drive and the hike in to the work site the RATC crew was able to complete 150 of new trail. It was very enjoyable working with the Konnarock crew.

Welcome New Members

Krystyna Krajewski
Bruce & Fran Wessel
Francis Nowicki
Kathryn Struble

Trail Relo Near Mountain Lake Work Hike July 1

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Bill Floyd , Mark Farrell, Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers



Today we were out again working with the ATC's Konnarock crew on the relocation of an eroded section of trail near the War Spur Trail in the Mountain Lake wilderness area. After reaching the work site we all got to work digging new trail. Luckily most of the section of trail we were working on did not have many rocks, so the work went fairly quickly. Later in the day we hit a rock-fall area, which we bypassed. The Konnarock crew members will do the technical work to get through this area. By the end of the day we had completed about 150 feet of new trail. A total of about 900 feet of new trail have been completed so far.

**Blue Blazed Trail
Dragon's Tooth Parking
to the AT Work Hike
July 8**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan,
Georgia Shaurette, Jim Beeson

Today we were back up on the Dragon's Tooth trail. Our primary goal was to get step stones across the stream crossings there. We hiked up to the highest stream crossing and started to work dragging large rocks into place. The work went quickly and we moved down the trail. By lunch we had gotten step stones across two more creek crossings. After lunch we worked on improving the treadway on a rough section of trail. That work went well and we were off the trail by one o'clock. We were grateful for that.

**Jump Rock Loop Hike
July 14**

Josiah Leonard (Leader) and Jason Thompson

This hike started with a comedy of errors as one participant apparently drove to the wrong meeting location and then cancelled while another had the wrong meeting time. To his credit, Jason set a new land speed record in driving from his house to Daleville, and we were only about 25 minutes late leaving the Park & Ride.

We had a pleasant drive to the Goshen Pass area to begin our hike at the Swinging Bridge over the head of the Maury River. It was one of the hottest and most humid days of the year to date for our hike, but the air was noticeably cooler at Goshen Pass. The hike started pleasantly with a stroll along the river, but then we made the turn to begin the climb and the word pleasant stopped being thrown around. The climb from the Maury to the crest of Little North Mountain is staggering on any day, and the heat and humidity that day did not help. With sweat dripping, we made it to the first view overlooking

Goshen Pass. From there, the trail moderated as we passed over a knob, down a poorly defined section of trail to a saddle, and then up to Jump Rock, our high point for the day at 3,149 ft.

After lunch, we returned to the saddle then continued to View Rock, our best view of the day overlooking Lake Merriweather and much of the Alleghany Highlands to the west. My memory failed us at one of the turns on the route to the bridge, but we figured it out in short order, and it was a nice walk through the woods back to the river. The hike was just over nine miles and had about 4,500 feet of elevation change. It was so hot once back in town that we decided to stop for drinks at 7-Eleven and then for a swim at Blue Hole in Arcadia. Special thanks to Jason for forging ahead with this hike on such a hot day!

**Curry Creek Work Hike
July 15**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan,
Georgia Shaurette, Mark Farrell, Bruce Agnew

It was another hot, humid July day starting out. We hiked in on Salt Pond Road at Curry Gap on the BRP. At the AT crossing we hiked north via a series of switchbacks down the steep slope to Curry Creek. At Curry Creek we began dragging large rocks to make step stones across the creek. The work went fairly quickly and we then turned to our next task, putting in wood steps at several of the switchback turns. These turns had some steps in them but most had rotted away and erosion had created the need for more steps there also. Despite the hot weather we made good progress and managed to get in 9 steps by the end of the day.

War Spur Relocation Work Hike July 20

Bruce Agnew, Fred Meyer, Jim Webb, Paul Koehler, Caleb Fort

Five hearty souls braved the July heat and humidity to continue working on the Warspur relocation project in conjunction with the ATC Konnarock trail crew cutting side hill and adding a stone step or two. This is the first year of a three year relocation project designed to lessen the grade of a heavily eroded section of the AT below Lone Pine Peak.

Laurel Creek Shelter Reroofing Project July 21

Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Taylor & Nathan Peterson, Adam Day, Mark Farrell, Bill Neilan, Susan Terwilliger, Jim Webb, Kevin & Darin Witcher, Bennett Witcher, Laura Puckett, Fred Meyer, Caleb Fort, Jason Thompson, Austin Arey, Anne Pfeiffer, Brian Kelley, John Hvozdovic, Steve Marshall

Once again, we had a great turnout for a reroofing project. The new material needed to be carried in to the shelter a mile from a Forest Service road. With 21 volunteers, we were able to carry in all of the material for the new roof on the first trip. Once at the site, everyone set to work, removing the old shingle roof from the shelter and privy and carrying out the old shingles. With thunder storms threatening, the work was quickly completed by lunchtime. We headed out before the rains came, but were caught in a downpour while transferring the old shingles from the 4 wheeler trailer to the truck.

Mark Ferrell posted several pictures on the RATC facebook.

Curry Creek Work Hike July 22

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Caleb Fort

This was our second work hike on this steep section of trail. It has eight switchbacks and we were putting in wood steps at several locations. We split up into two groups and went to work. By the end of the day we had gotten in 15 more steps. We saw only two hikers. They were from Texas and were doing a southbound section hike. One more work hike should complete the improvements to this section of trail.



Hike Leaders

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>

Let Bob know if you have any suggestions for improving descriptions. Try to use the name and description when posting a hike on Meetup, or maybe suggest changes or new hikes.

Trash Cleanup at Green Hill Park Roanoke River Greenway July 25

Robert and Jeanine Bomber (Leaders), Bruce Agnew, Angela Butters, Jennifer Frye, Thomas Howard, Marina K., Jim Leonard, Tracy Pouzar, Margie Spillen, and Susan Terwilliger.

We met at the parking area of Green Hill Park which is located in Salem, VA. We picked up trash along the trail, from the riverbed, and baseball fields. There were multiple dirty diapers, inner tubes, and a large cast iron pan found. We collected approximately 75-100 pounds of trash. The weather was nice, the company was great, and the park and riverbed were cleaned, all of which made for a good day.

Spy Rock Trail Work Hike July 27

This workhike and a couple others will be payback to the Natural Bridge Trail Club for their assistance in completing our Sinking Creek relocation in 2018.

We started out from exit 150 at 7:00AM in order to meet NBTC member George Richards at the trail-head. He was to give us a ride up to a point about 1/4 mile from the AT. From there we hiked the remaining 1/2 mile to Spy Rock.

Once on site, we spent the rest of the morning helping members of the NBTC clear a view shed of trees. Several oak trees were blocking the view from near the top. Taking them down involved fighting our way thru the Mountain Laurel from tree to tree.

After a lunch break, we worked with the Konnarock crew doing whatever needed to be done. That usually means carrying heavy things to where they are needed. We filled the remainder of our time moving rock and log steps.

War Spur Relocation Work Hike July 29

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Caleb Fort



We were back out working on the relocation in the Mountain lake wilderness area in Giles County. This relocation will require building 6,000 feet of new trail. So far about 1,000 have been completed. When completed it will bypass a 3/4-mile long section of steep, eroded trail. Upon reaching the work site we spread out and began digging. We worked all day in a mountain laurel thicket so there were many root balls to pull out. The work went steadily and we completed another 125 feet of trail by the end of the day. We plan to work out there at least one more time this year.

When you make purchases through Amazon, you can support RATC by using **AmazonSmile**, the charitable wing of Amazon.com. It is a simple and automatic way for you to support the important volunteer work RATC does to support 120 AT miles and 16 AT shelters. RATC will receive up to 0.5 percent of the purchase price of eligible products on Amazon. It is easy to set up RATC as the recipient of the donation. Go to smile.amazon.com and choose Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) as the organization you want to support.

Explore Park Outer Loop Hike July 31

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Maya Bohler, Jennifer Harvey Frye, Dawn Lamb, Laura Legere, Ken Myers, and Julie Petruska

The hike started under spritzing rain and generally overcast skies. While temperatures were cooler on the final day of July than the preceding days, the humidity was extremely sticky. We had a strong group of hikers as we made our way through Explore Park, admiring many of the recent improvements as we walked. We made our way out to Palmer's Pond, then to the Turkey Scratch Loop before descending to the river. We looped through the historic village, then returned to the river, which we followed to Rutrough Point. One of the highlights of the day was seeing a large blue heron patrolling the river. After stopping for a water and snack break, we completed the loop above Back Creek, then made our way back to the parking area on the mountain biking trail and then the Foresters Trail. A few of us carpooled over to the Roanoke River Overlook intending to hike to Niagra Dam, but seeing that no water was flowing over the dam, the photogs in the group decided that they had seen enough. The quick hike came in at just under seven miles, which were completed in just under three hours.

Curry Creek Work Hike August 6

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Caleb Fort, Dave Horst, Fred Meyer

Today was our third work hike at this location. We have been adding wooden steps at the switchbacks on a steep section of trail south of Curry Creek. At the work site we split up into two groups. One group did sidehill digging in sections of the trail that had eroded away and the other put in steps. We gradually worked our way up the hillside fixing the problem areas. By the end of the day we had installed seven more steps and redug about 200 feet of trail. This finishes this project.



Want to Help on a Work Hike (No Experience Necessary)?

You too can be one of the cool kids. All the work hikes are listed on RATC's Meetup page. If you aren't a member of Meetup yet, go to [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and join for free. Then search Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club Meetup Group and join that group. Choose a work hike and hit the Attend button. (Make sure you cancel your rsvp if your plans change.) Wear old clothes, hiking boots and bring water, lunch and work gloves.

Vacinity of McAfee Parking Lot Work Hike August 12

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Georgia Shaurette, Mark Farrell, Susan Terwilliger, Caleb Fort, Dave Horst, Terry Shipley, Jim Beeson



Despite the hot weather, we had the largest group in months working on the trail. This was the first day of a long-planned rehab project of the trail up to McAfee Knob. With some 75,000 per year hiking this section the trail takes a beating. We started work right near the parking lot, replacing wood steps that had rotted away. Upon completing these we split up into two groups and began doing rehab work on the trail treadway itself, removing rocks and roots across the trail. In addition, we added a step here and there and cribbed in and leveled a short, difficult section of trail. As might be expected, several dozen hikers passed us during the day. Most were doing the day hike up to McAfee. By the end of the day we had installed 11 steps and had rehabbed about a half mile of trail. In coming weeks we will be working our way up the trail to the knob. This project will take about 15 work hikes to complete.

St. Mary's Wilderness August 18

Mary Harshfield and Kris Peckman (leaders), Fred Meyer, Bob Peckman

Not a bad hike for a hot, humid summer day! The trail follows the St. Mary's River (small enough to call it a creek) upstream. We spotted some yellow false foxglove and a tiny toad trying to climb up a dry bank beside the trail. A copperhead crossed the trail right in front of us. Then came numerous creek crossings, which were fairly easy given the low rainfall this summer. There were lots of beautiful butterflies visiting the Joe Pyeweed blooms. We missed the spot where the Mine Bank trail turns to the right, and found ourselves quite quickly at the first swimming hole. Skipping that hole, we went on to the falls and put on our swim-suits. The water was incredibly refreshing! A family there was also enjoying the water, and 3 of them (including a young boy) jumped off the cliff with a loud smack as they hit the water. I remember David Jones jumping from that spot a few years ago. We ate our lunch and went back down the trail. Following the advice of another hiker to look for a leaning fallen tree, we found the turn to the Mine Bank Trail (there once was a sign but it is no longer there) and followed it up Mine Bank Creek.

After about 10 minutes of hiking, one trail goes straight ahead (this may be the Mine Bank Trail that leads to the Blue Ridge Parkway), but we took the trail that crosses the creek and ascends to the ruins of an old iron and manganese ore furnace. We took a snack break there and, though that trail continues on, we turned back to return to the parking lot. Many people were heading up to the falls, so we were glad we had gone to the falls earlier, to enjoy it without the big crowd.

If you receive this newsletter in the mail, but would rather help us save trees and money by reading the digital version posted on our website, please let the editor know: blazer@ratc.org

McAfee Parking - John's Creek Work Hike August 19

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan,
Georgia Shaurette, Mark Farrell, Angela Butters,
Dave Horst



Before

It was another good-sized work crew today. This was our second work on Catawba Mountain. Upon reaching the work site, about a half mile from the trailhead, we split into two groups. One group worked on a long set of stairs that needed some rehab work and additional steps. The other group headed up the trail, taking out rocks and roots and adding a few new steps. By the end of the day we had reached John's Spring shelter, about a mile from the trailhead and had installed seven new steps. It was an extremely hot day so we knocked off fairly early. We saw many hikers during the day, including a young couple from Germany. They said hiking up to McAfee Knob was on their list of things to do while visiting America.



During



After

Land and Sea August 21

David Horst (leader), Angela Butters, Josie Leonard, Nancy Wallace back from stints on the Florida Trail and PCT, Mary Harshfield, Nancy Reid, Randy and Jill Pennington, Bob Peckman, and Paul Winters.

With Josiah and Paul meeting at my house, we cruised over in my boat to Bridgewater Marina about 20 minutes away where we picked up the rest of the crew. Another 25-minute boat ride with a mini tour of the lake brought us to our disembarkment. We had an easy 15 minute bushwhack up to the forest road leading to the top of Smith Mountain East. About halfway along the top of the ridge, we stopped at an overlook to view the Roanoke River Basin. Also visible were Catawba Mt and the Peaks of Otter. Far in the distance we were able to view the Arctic Ocean to the north, the the Tetons in Wyoming and Nova Scotia.

Moving on westward, we entered the WMA where a sign was posted with the hunting schedule for every critter in the northern hemisphere including the spotted nose velvet bat. Always wonder what they would taste like! A mile or so later down a eroded and steep portion of trail brought us to an overlook directly over the dam. They were letting out water to generated electricity while we there. After a short lunch break, we hiked back up the steep portion to the top where there are communication towers. There rest of the hiking was mostly down hill with the easy bushwhack back to our boat.

We spent the next hour or so swimming off of the boat in the cool, clean water of SML with some cold beverages. Another 25 minutes on the boat back to the marina and some of the participants were dropped off at the marina. The rest of us went by boat to Jakes for some good food and company. Wonderful day with some cool peeps!

Mount Rogers Loop August 24

Matthew Burnett (Leader), Jenny Steding, Aaron Bishop

We met fairly early in the morning and drove down to Mount Rogers. The day was overcast and cool with occasional bouts of mist but it was largely great weather for hiking.

Going up the mountain, we started on the Mount Rogers trail and followed it to the AT. On the way up we ran into one through-hiker heading south-bound on a flip flop hike but those trails were largely empty. At the top we veered off on the blue-blazed trail to see the summit. Discussions of the nature of that particular forest, Care Bears and vampire-like New Zealand tree stumps ensued as is often the case with hiking.

After stopping at the shelter for lunch we continued on the AT into the Grayson Highlands and turned onto the Crest Trail. Shortly after emerging into the field past the rhododendron path the fog set in again. It was about 20 minutes after this that we actually encountered our first ponies of the day. Before then there were threats of mutiny and hugs due to the absence of ponies but we found a small herd grazing near the trail. One in particular was determined to shake us down for food but we left them as-is and continued on.

We skipped over to the Pine Mountain Trail when it was near and walked to the edge of the mountain where we took the Cliffside Trail down. The rocky section was unpleasant as always but we got past that into the smoother grade. The trail back was largely uneventful as we crossed the road, crossed a pasture and entered onto the Fairwood Valley Trail which led back to the car.

Overall it was a good, relaxed trip in decent weather.

**North Mountain Trail
Stone Coal Gap to Dragon's Tooth
Parking Lot
August 25**

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Caleb Fort, Dawn Lamb, Jason Thompson, Chris Venable, and Nancy Wallace

After weeks of hot, hazy, and humid conditions, we had a rare summer reprieve of exceptional weather, and by luck we had this hike scheduled to take advantage. The mix of sun and clouds, perfect temperatures, and a gentle breeze was the kind of weather a hiker wants to bottle-up and save for the rest of the year!

We did this hike as a point-to-point so that we could hike the entire North Mountain Trail, which made for a great hike but also a fairly long drive to Stone Coal Gap. Thanks to Dawn, Jason, and Caleb for being our drivers. The hike started with a mild climb to gain the ridge, but then we began hiking over each and every knob of the ridge, some steeper than others. There were no grand view-points, though occasionally a power line crossing or rock outcrop would yield a partial view of the surrounding terrain. Still, the hike was delightful as much of the trail felt like walking through a garden, and we noticed a few black gum and sassafras tree leaves that were already changing colors. We enjoyed lunch at one of the many great, albeit water-less, campsites along the ridge.

We had one additional hiker join us on top of the ridge -- a hunting dog that had apparently become lost from its compatriots during the action. The dog followed us for several miles, sucking down as much water as we cared to give it. As we started to descend the ridge, the dog abruptly veered into the woods and apparently beat us to the Dragon's Tooth Parking Lot where its owner was waiting for it. We had a great hike of about 13.4 miles, and special congratulations to Dawn who decided to join the hike as a personal challenge and did great all the way!

**McAfee Knob Trail Work Hike
August 26**

Dave Horst, Terry Shipley, Caleb Fort, Angela Butters, Kyle Sawyer, Bruce Agnew, Georgia Shaurette & Jim Webb

A couple of years ago the club put up a fence near the fire road at McAfee's Knob. The purpose of the fence was to keep hikers on the trail and protect the area between the switchback. It has been a limited success. Most hikers have kept to the trail, but some still cut the trail to save time and steps. The fence was ugly and had to go, but it had to be replaced with some way to persuade hikers to stay on the trail.

Well, the fence is now gone. Replaced with a short sustainable set of steps that shorten the trail and should keep trail cutting to a minimum. Pressure treated logs spaced to follow the contour of the hill and interspaced with gravel were installed by our crew. Large rocks will line the trail and help hikers stay on it and dissuade cutting.

Another hike is needed to finish this short trail.

**War Spur Relocation Work Hike
August 31**

Bruce Agnew, Jim Webb, Caleb Fort, Andrew Field

We spent the day at the Warspur relocation project cutting side hill and removing an excessive number of rocks. A come along was used to help remove the roots of the mountain laurel encountered. The weather as one would expect for August was warm and humid. On this work trip progress was measured in feet instead of the usual yards. For each sizable rock pried out of the trail alignment, material had to be found to fill the hole.

Black Ridge Trail August 31

Matthew Burnett (Leader), Kay Seib, Aaron Bishop, Lilly Bishop, Cole Bishop

We met and traveled to the Blue Ridge Parkway visitor center outside of Floyd. The weather was almost perfect for a hike: clear and warm. The trip itself was a loop starting and ending at the visitors center but in reverse direction of what is shown on the National Park Service website.

We crossed the road and joined the Rock Castle Gorge trail at the overlook and headed uphill. Near

the top the Black Ridge Trail split off to the right and we began a long, gradual downhill walk only interrupted by a snake.

At the bottom of the trail we started back up again and indeed did spot the rock monster: a large rock with a horizontal split on the front of it. Years ago someone added rocks to make the eyes, nose and teeth of the monster. I was quite pleased that it is still there as it is a nice little bit of levity on the hike.

It was the first hike for Lilly and Cole (14 and 12 respectively) and they did well with it. It was a nice, short hike where we got to see some cows, a snake and a rock monster. The hike could have had fewer snakes but it was a pleasant short hike.

AT to McAfee, Near John's Spring Shelter Work Hike September 2

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Georgia Shaurette, Mark Farrell, Sue Terwilliger, Dave Horst, Caleb Fort, Bruce Agnew, and Julie Petruska

With 10 workers, we had another great turnout on a hot day. This was our fourth work hike on the trail up to McAfee Knob. We are working on the improving this section of trail, cutting out roots, pulling out rocks, and putting in steps where needed. Today we worked on a long set of stairs about 200 yards north of John's Spring shelter. These steps have been walked on by many thousands of hikers and were showing much wear and tear. We split into two groups and got to work adding steps and cribbing and smoothing out the trail. Despite the hot weather the work went well and we had 12 stone steps installed by the end of the day. So far on our four hikes, we have added 42 stone or wood steps to this section of trail. We saw surprisingly few hikers today, perhaps because all of the schools and colleges are back in session.



Apple Orchard Falls Extended Loop Hike September 7

Josiah Leonard (Leader) & Jason Thompson

For this hike, we sought opinions from the RATC Facebook group participants as to where we should go, and Jenny Wilson suggested this hike, or at least the basic location. Thanks to everyone who made suggestions and to Ms. Wilson for providing the selected hike! Unfortunately, despite the grass roots suggestions, we did not have very many participants.

Since we only had Jason and me on the hike, I decided to make a few “tweaks” to the route. We parked along North Creek and followed the normal route to Apple Orchard Falls, which were barely running in the midst of the drought-nearing conditions. From there, it was a steep climb to the Parkway at Sunset Field. That was when the real adventure began. We hiked past the old Camp Kewanee through heavy overgrowth, then scaled Onion Mountain. We followed what appeared to be a bear trail based on the amount of scat down the ridge to some rock outcrops for lunch.

After lunch, we scaled straight down the mountain rather than returning all the way to the summit. The route was steep and jungle-like in its vegetation at the top, then gave way to entire fields of stinging nettles. After finally reaching the forest road, we climbed back to the Parkway, took a short break at Cornelius Creek Shelter, followed the Appalachian Trail south, then scaled down Buzzard Ridge back to the parking area on long-abandoned trails and logging roads. On the drive back, we stopped to clean debris and chiggers off of us by jumping in Blue Hole then had dinner at Foot of the Mountain. Despite our scrapes, cuts, and stings, it was a great day in the woods!

McAfee Knob Trail Work Hike September 9

Dave Horst, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Caleb Fort, Adam Casavant, Georgia Shaurette & Jim Webb

The busiest part of the RATC section requires the most attention. So, once again and for the next couple of weeks, we will be repairing some sections of the trail that have suffered the most from the elevated traffic.

With eight workers, we are able to split into two groups and keep everyone busy. The section chosen for rehab this week was about 300 yards trail south of the Catawba shelter. Elevated traffic had eroded the trail to the point that protruding rocks were causing trip hazards to hikers. With plenty of large stepping stones in the area, we were able to make these areas more walkable.

With a little time left in the day, we headed trail south to a location where erosion and traffic had let a rock step fall out of place leaving a very large step. We were able to place two large stones with accompanying cribbing to make the hiking less stressful.

**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**

Iron Mine Hollow/Hammond Hollow Circuit September 11

Larry Austin (leader), Lois Smith, Bob & Kris Peckman, Josiah Leonard, Angela Butters, Maya Bohler, Dave Horst, Wilma Vargas, Madeleine Taylor and Jennifer Frye.

It was a very hot day for this hike. As we descended the Spec Mine Trail at the beginning of the hike it became obvious it was going to be challenging to hike in the heat. The road walk was however more pleasant for some reason. Maybe our bodies were adjusting to the heat. The climb up the Hammond Hollow Trail created a little more heat but all made it fine. We stopped for lunch at the AT. Following lunch, the walk along the AT back to our starting point was nice with some good views along the way. We found a few wildflowers near the impressive stone wall that was built to support the Parkway back in the 1930's. At the end, we enjoyed some much deserved cold beverages and snacks. We meet a southbound thru-hiker at the end and gave him some treats as well. This was a fun group of hikers to be with and all did really well.

Andy Layne Trailhead to McAfee Parking September 14

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Angela Butters, Jason Thompson

After weeks of hot, sunny conditions, the weather decided to take a different tack on the day of this hike. The skies were grey and dreary, fog shrouded the ridges like a damp cloak, and it was almost too cool for short sleeves. We originally planned to do this hike starting at the McAfee's Parking area, but decided to add some extra elevation challenge and perhaps give the fog a chance to burn-off at McAfee Knob by instead starting at the Andy Layne Trailhead.

The climb to Scorched Earth Gap proved to be as challenging as ever, though luckily the ground was surprisingly not muddy after the rain and fog. We met three hikers at the gap who had started in the four o'clock hour at Va. 311 to see the sunrise at McAfee's Knob, but instead only saw a fog bank. The same fate awaited us at Tinker Cliffs as we could barely even see as far as the trees at the base of the cliffs. The same was true of the rock outcrop views south of Brickey Gap, though we did have a nice, quiet walk along the ridge.

We stopped for lunch at the Campbell Shelter then explored Devil's Kitchen after making the steep climb up the ridge. Not surprisingly, the views were also obscured at McAfee Knob as well. In fact, the fog only seemed to be thickening. The three of us continued to the parking lot via the Appalachian Trail and the fire road and were surprised that there were still endless groups of hikers despite the gloomy conditions. As insult to injury, it appeared that the fog had lifted at Tinker Cliffs when we returned to the parking lot.

This hike came in at just under 12 miles. While a hiker could be bitter at not getting a single view in a section that is world-famous for its views, this hike was a good reminder to seek beauty from less obvious sources -- the green growth lining the forest floor, the eerie stillness of the fog, deer fading into the mist, rock outcrops shaped by the elements, and the like.

**You can buy RATC gear
at Outdoor Trails in
Daleville,
next to Mill Mountain Coffee
in the
Kroger shopping center.**

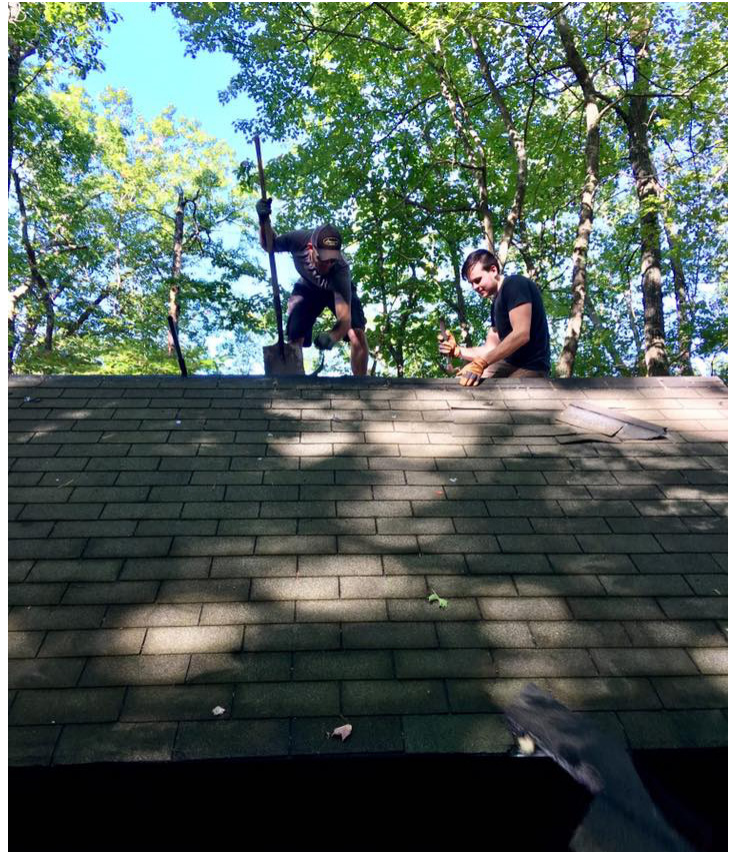
Jenny Knob Shelter Reroofing Project September 15

Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Bennett Witcher, Taylor & Nathan Peterson, Jim Webb, Mark Farrell, Caleb Fort, Jason Thompson, Bob & Kris Peckman, Adam Day, Bill Neilan, Rachel VanWormer, Paul Walko



On September 15 th , we reroofed our fourth shelter this year. Even with a 1.2 mile hike, mostly uphill, we completed the reroofing project in less than five Mchours. Since this wasn't the first rodeo for most of the crew, everyone hopped to the tasks of getting the asphalt shingles off the old shelter and privy and carrying out all of the old shingles. Paul received on the job training from Adam and Nathan on the roof and the new metal roof was quickly installed.

We had a slight challenge since there was a vent pipe in the privy that came up through the roof. The pipe was cut and plans were made to come back and fix it to vent out the back of the privy. We could not ask for a greater bunch of people to work with and always look forward to these projects.



McAfee Trail Work Hike September 16

Caleb Fort, Kevin Moore, Mark Farrell, Angela Butters, Dave Horst, Georgia Shaurette & Jim Webb

The weather had finally started to turn cooler this week, as we headed up the fire road to the worksite. This week required a bushwhack down from the fire road to the Appalachian Trail worksite. Once on site, we split into two groups. One to prepare the eroded area for the steps and the other group to find the steps among the many rocks in the area.

Of the many rocks in the area, One stood out as being able to supply most of the pieces we would need. We split this into four large steps with enough left over to add three large pieces of cribbing.

The accompanying pictures shows the area before and after building the steps.

Also, the rumor of certain people singing as they were splitting the rocks is untrue. That was not singing as I understand it.

See the amazing video of the carrying and placing of the perfect step, posted by Mark Farrell on September 16 on the RATC Facebook page.



RATC's Holiday Extravaganza Potluck

Saturday, December 14th, 2019
6-8pm

Unitarian Universalist Church
2015 Grandin Rd SW, Roanoke, VA
24015.

Jazzman Dr. Bob Peckman will be presenting his Grand Canyon excursion. Brian Boggs will also be instructing interested parties in the fine art of meringue dancing.

Douthat State Park September 22

Larry Austin (Leader), Bob Peckman, Kris Peckman,, Lois Smith, Wilma Vargas, Laura Zanotti, Dawn Lamb, Dee Case and Maya Bohler

It was another hot day to hike at Douthat. The temperature was quite nice when we started but soon heated up. We followed the Stony Run Trail on a steady climb to the Tuscarora Overlook Trail. Tuscarora Overlook Trail was a bit overgrown as are other trails in the park. However, volunteers have started to work on these trails to improve their condition.

The Overlook provided a great photo opt and we all took advantage of it. The historic cabin was built there by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's in addition to building over 40 miles off trails, a dam and spillway, 25 cabins, two small lodges, an information center, a superintendent's residence, a swimming beach, picnic areas and maintenance buildings.

We connected with the Blue Suck Falls Trails which took us by Blue Suck Falls with really no water due to the very dry conditions. From there we hit the Locust Gap Trail and followed it back to the Stony Run Trail and then back to our starting point. It was a great hike with lots of good conversations among the great group of hikers who came for this hike. Total, 9.5 miles.

During September, Starr Hill Pilot Brewery contributed \$1.00 to the RATC for every pint of The LOVE WHEAT beer purchased as part of their Cheers for Charity program and it added up to \$537. We are honored to be selected and would hope to be selected again in the future, so please stop by and thank them.

McAfee Trail Work Hike September 23

Bill Neilan, Caleb Fort, Angelia Butters, Mark Farrell & Jim Webb

Another week, another trip up the McAfee's Knob trail. At this point there are no more large projects to work on down here below the fire road. All the worksites now require only one or two steps, but there are many of them.



War Spur Relocation Work Hike September 30



Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sue Terwilliger,
Adam Casavant, Caleb Fort

Today we were back out working on the relocation in the Mountain lake wilderness area. This relocation will require building 6,000 feet of new trail. It was still a very warm day as we got to the work site. We got to work digging the new trail in a dense mountain laurel thicket. Adam in particular, worked extremely hard. He is scheduled to start a new job in a couple of weeks with the Forest Service in far southwest Virginia. He should do well with them. By the end of the day we had installed five stone steps and about a 100 feet of new trail in difficult terrain. We will be working out there at least one more time this year. So far about 1,300 feet of new trail has been completed.

RATC's partnership continues to protect and improve the critical views from McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs while expanding the A.T. corridor and ensuring the hiking experience for all.

This fall, the Virginia Outdoor Foundation announced a \$700,000 grant to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to purchase lands very visible from McAfee Knob that expand the narrow trail corridor, turn many of the visual impacts back into forest and

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		
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024, or use PayPal at ratc.org.	Donation	\$ _____
	Amount Enclosed	\$ _____

Please Note: To save costs, the Blazer is provided electronically to all members: we send you an email with a link to the new Blazer on the RATC.org website. You can receive the Blazer by mail by emailing treasurer@ratc.org or phoning her at 540-521-5435.

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROANOKE, VA
PERMIT 509

RATC's Holiday Extravaganza Potluck

Saturday, December 14th, 2019 6-8pm
Unitarian Universalist Church
2015 Grandin Rd SW, Roanoke, VA 24015.

Jazzman Dr. Bob Peckman will be presenting his Grand Canyon excursion.

Brian Boggs will also be instructing interested parties in the fine art of meringue dancing.