

# TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Summer 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.*

## CALENDAR OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

**Corn Boil**  
**July 20, 6:00 PM**  
**Catawba Center**

### Workhikes

**Nearly Every Monday**  
**Please check Meetup for**  
**Places and times**

**Trail Supervisor - Mike Vaughn**  
**992-1350 – TrailSupervisor@ratc.org**

### **BOARD MEETINGS**

**Glenvar Public Library**  
**3917 Daugherty Rd, Salem 24153**  
**(New Time - All members are always welcome.)**

**Monday, August 5, 6:00 PM**

**Monday, September 9, 6:00 PM**

**Monday, October 7, 6:00 PM**

**Monday, November 4, 6:00 PM**

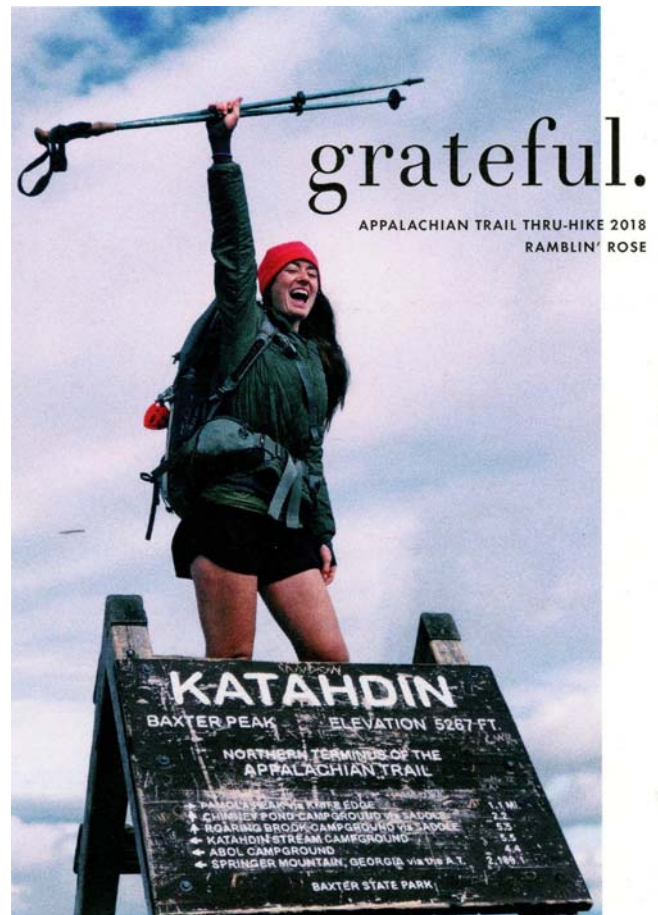
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THANK YOU FOR BEING PART  
OF MY 14-STATE, 2190.9-MILE  
JOURNEY.

WITH LOVE,  
RAMBLIN' ROSE

Roanoke ATC -  
Thank you so much for  
all you do to preserve, protect,  
and maintain the trail.  
The best trail magic there is!  
RP



## President's Report

### RATC President's Report – June 2019

Summer has arrived and “prime” AT hiking season is in full swing as hikers traverse our area on their way to Maine. An AT hike offers the chance to challenge yourself mentally and physically, while immersing yourself in the quiet, calming and natural beauty of the AT. It also offers a chance to experience firsthand the kind, generous and caring individuals that make up the AT community. Unfortunately, on May 11 this journey of a lifetime was shattered for two thru hikers who were attacked on the AT in Wythe County. Ron Sanchez was stabbed to death and another female thru hiker was attacked, but fortunately survived the attack. Ron was a 43 year old Army vet hiking the AT to help him cope with post traumatic stress disorder. The attacker, who had previously threatened hikers in Tennessee, was arrested in Virginia and has been charged with murder.

Violence of this nature is definitely the exception and not what most of the 2 – 3 million individuals who hike some portion of the AT each year experience. The last homicide to take place on the AT was in 2011. Hikers enjoy the serenity and beauty of the AT without violence and this is the way it must remain.

**Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ron Sanchez's family and to the other thru hiker who was attacked and is recovering from her injuries. The AT is a strong community and this strength will see us through this tragedy.**

### Highlights;

- Conducted RATC Partnership meeting with representatives from National Park Service, US Forest Service, VDOT, ATC, Botetourt Fire & Rescue and Roanoke County Fire & Rescue on April 16, 2019. Roanoke County Fire & Rescue agreed to let us place our trail maintenance storage shed on their Kessler Mill Road property. This will offer a more secure and convenient location for RATC tool storage. Thank you Roanoke Fire & Rescue!
- Received LL Bean AT Grants for two projects, i.e., \$550 generator replacement and \$736 bridge repairs. Thank you to Jim Webb and Mike Vaughn for these submittals.
- National Park Service (NPS) agreed to fund the \$190/month cost for VA 311 McAfee Knob parking lot as of May 2019.
- ATC agreed to fund via AT license plate proceeds the cost (\$2000) to repair VA 311 McAfee Knob parking lot.
- Bill Neilan agreed to accept Land Management Supervisor. This position monitors the AT corridor on NPS lands regarding possible encroachment issues. Primary work is done in the fall and winter when foliage is off.
- Provided RATC endorsement letters to Virginia Outdoor Foundation on behalf of ATC-arranged purchase of Doc's Way property and North Mountain property. RATC contributed \$5000 toward the purchase of a 237 acre property, i.e., Doc's Way. Both protect the AT view shed.
- Mike Vaughn, Trail Supervisor, adjusted trail maintenance schedule to include one work hike each week.
- Bruce Agnew agreed to resume once a month weekend work hikes.
- Josiah Leonard reported 16 hikes in April and May with several new hike leaders participating.
- VA 311 McAfee Knob Shuttle and VA Triple Crown meetings scheduled for June 20 and 21 respectively. VA 311 McAfee Knob pedestrian bridge planning continues with construction planned for 2023.
- RATC Corn Boil recognizing Konnarock Trail Crew contributions scheduled for July 20 at Catawba Center 6 – 8 PM.

*Jim Beeson*

## Member News

We are happy to welcome the following new members:

**Daniel Felvor**

**Brian Finkle**

**John Beale**

**Jennifer Deegan**

**Rob Clark**

**Jane Mehalso**

**Tamela Staton**

**Anna Karbassiyoon**

**Frank Ufkes**

**Lee & Roberta Hipp**

**Michelle Reynolds**

**Aaron Gehlhausen**

**Sara Haxby**

**Fatma Dandashi**

**Kelly Mulheren**

**Nikki Higgs**

**Eric Hanson**

**Jennifer Steding**

**Jason Thompson**

**Janet & Tim Jonas**

113-Mile Patch:

**Ken Myers**

Contributions in honor of Siegfried Kolmstetter:

**Thomas & Paula**

**Brownlee**

**Alana Cober**

**Robert Fetzer**

**Frank & Rosie Kesler**

**Ursula Kolmstetter**

**Stafford Query**

**Chris Volz**

Contributions in honor of Maurice Turner:

**Tom & Doris Berdeen**

Other Contributions:

**John Derrick**

**Annie Godfrey**

## Trail Supervisor's Report

Since March the Monday work crew has been working its way up the east side of Sinking Creek Mountain. That section of trail was steep and eroded. The trail is much improved now. We should complete this project in June. This summer we will be working at several locations along the Trail. Each project will take two to three work hikes. We will be rehabbing a section of trail near the War Spur shelter including a section of trail that has water running down it. We will also be replacing the deck and railings on the bridge across Trout Creek. In addition, we will be rehabbing the lower part of the Dragon's Tooth blue blaze trail. This work will include placing stepping stones across several creek crossings.

The ATC's Konnarock work crew will be working on our section for three weeks this summer. They are starting a major relocation project in the Mountain Lake wilderness area. Over the next three years they will be building 6,000 feet of new trail. This relocation will bypass a steep, very badly eroded section of trail. The Monday work crew will be working with the Konnarock crew on each of their weeks here.

In recent months, several new maintainers have signed up to maintain a section of the 120 miles of the AT that RATC maintains. A list of trail maintainers is available on our web site. Documents describing the duties of a trail maintainer have also been posted on our web site.

**Mike Vaughn**

## Hikemaster's Report

In the early morning hours of May 11th, a terrible tragedy unfolded on the Appalachian Trail in Wythe County. Without rehashing the vile deeds committed, the end result was that a hiker who had survived multiple tours of duty in combat zones was left slain, while another hiker very bravely and nearly miraculously feigned death, fled when the opportunity arose, and hobbled six miles to safety while bleeding from stab wounds. I think I speak for every member of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club and perhaps even the entire hiking community worldwide when I say that our hearts break for these victims. We feel angry that anyone would desecrate a place we hold sacred with such violence. We feel alarmed that suddenly a place we consider a refuge suddenly feels like far less of a safe harbor. But mostly, we just feel profoundly saddened by what happened.

So, how then do we respond to this incident? We could collectively vow that this will never happen again, but if we

are honest, we know that is not guaranteed or even likely. It has happened before. It happened in Pennsylvania in 1990. It happened in Shenandoah National Park in 1996. It happened in one of our club's very own shelters in 1981. And, unless society suddenly cures itself of all of its ills and woes, violence will likely strike our beloved trail and our unique, traveling community again in the future. The Appalachian Trail is not a bubble of safety or a utopia immune from violence. So, do we abandon the trail and wilderness as being too dangerous? For many of us, that simply is not an option -- the trail is too ingrained in us. So then, what is the solution? I say that we continue to hike, but to hike with increased awareness. We should be aware of our surroundings and aware of practical steps we can take to reduce our risks. And, while we continue to hike for our own recreation and renewal, we should also hike in part on behalf of those who can no longer hike at all. Hold Strong.

**Josiah Leonard**

## Hike Reports

### Thursday, March 28, 2019 RAPP Hike #4 - Bottom Creek Gorge

David Wickersham (leader) and Dave Socky

This was the fourth hike in the RAPP (Roanoke Area Parks and Preserves) Series, highlighting hiking opportunities in the Roanoke Valley and nearby areas. The weather could not have been more perfect. It was just a little chilly, with a slight breeze, bright blue skies and plenty of sunshine.



There was only one other vehicle in the parking lot when we arrived. It was a small bus owned by the city of Roanoke. We passed their group of about 12 people on the Knight Trail. As the day progressed we ran into a lot more hikers, many more than we would have anticipated on a weekday. There was also a crew at work cutting downed trees that were blocking the trail.

Our plan was to hike all trails in Bottom Creek Gorge Preserve. We hiked the Entrance Road Trail and took a left onto the Knight Trail. A short cut-off on the Knight trail takes you down for a close-up look at Bottom Creek, which is deeply entrenched and filled with huge boulders.

Where the southern end of the Knight trail T's into the Johnston trail we headed north on the Johnston Trail, then took a left on the Duval Trail. The southern end of the Duval Trail T's into the Johnston Trail. From there it is a short walk south to the Bent Mountain Falls overlook.

As anticipated, there was a lot more water in the falls than either of the Daves had seen in previous treks here (5+ years ago). After a short lunch break we headed directly for the parking lot via the Johnston and Entrance Road trails, mopping up sections of those two trails we had not hiked on the way in.

The miles hiked was 5.78. The elevation gained was 1320 feet. The elapsed time, including breaks, was three hours and 10 minutes. (Hike data provided by Dave Socky. Thanks Dave!)

### April 1, 2019, 8:00 am Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Mark Farrell, Bill Neilan, Jim Beeson, Terry Shipley, Dave Horst

It was a cool, sunny day when we started out. Perfect for trail work. The hike up the mountain was very pleasant. When we got to the work area, we split up into two groups, working about 75 yards from each other. The plan was to continue to install rock steps in this steep, eroded section. Just one backpacker passed us all day. He was very impressed with all of the new rock work that had been installed on the west side of the mountain in the past three years. It is good to see that the trail work is recognized by hikers. By the end of the day we had installed 18 rock steps. We were very pleased with this total.

### Wednesday, April 3, 2019 8:30 AM Wilson Mountain/Pine Ridge Circuit

Larry Austin (leader), Dave Horst, Jeff Edwards, Susan Terwilliger, Jerry Anderson and Angela Butters

This was a beautiful April day for hiking. Sunny with highs in mid-60's. Thanks to Dave for arranging carpool from Daleville to trailhead. We got started around 8:50 AM and finished up around 1:55 PM. This great group of hikers moved right along. We enjoyed some great views of the Solitude Valley from Wilson Mountain and views both east and west from Pine Ridge. We saw a number of early Spring wildflowers including Bloodroot, Rue Anemone, Hepatica, Trailing Arbutus, Toothwort, Heartleaf and assorted violets. It was a very enjoyable hike with good people and good conversations.

### Thursday, April 4, 2019 RAPP Hike #5 Wolf Creek Greenway to Stewart Knob Overlook

David Wickersham (leader) and Dave Socky

We decided to start the hike at milepost 0.0 of the Wolf Creek Greenway. The city sidewalks were out in force but gradually suburbia and the tread of asphalt and gravel gave way to a pleasant dirt path and woody surroundings. Unfortunately there wasn't much to see at

the farm where there used to be some exotic varieties of farm animals.

The greenway ended at a road. We walked a very short distance up the road and turned north onto the Stewart Knob Trail. (Actually, that is not the official name. Technically, this trail is the northern section of the unmaintained Roanoke Valley Horse Trail (North). The abandoned trail does go south as well but is rarely used and is hard to follow).

We only saw one other hiker on the Stewart Knob Trail. This trail is not officially maintained by the park service, or anyone else as far as I know and the frequent rains over the past year have taken their toll. There are deep ruts in many places and numerous downed trees. We could see homes to our right at first but we soon left them behind. The Blue Ridge Parkway was on our left but seldom in view. We noticed a faint path to our right as we neared the Stewart Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. There was a horseshoe nailed to a stake so it seemed obvious that the faint trail was part of the original route of the abandoned horse trail.

Weather conditions were perfect when we arrived at the overlook so there was a great view of downtown Roanoke in the distance. At this point we turned around and retraced our steps back to the car.

We hiked 6.7 miles in 2 hours and 52 minutes. Our elevation gain was 950 feet, (which was significantly more than we would have guessed). Stats provided by Dave Socky. Thanks Dave!

**Saturday, April 6, 2019**  
**Alligator Back and Bluff Mountain**  
**Laurel Springs, NC**

Chris Means (leader), Nick Hanson, Randy Traylor + Guest, Jennifer Frye, Bahaa Alamood + Guest, and Chasity Graham

I had the privilege to lead 7 friends from two Roanoke based hiking clubs Saturday on a 7ish miler to some historic views from the top of the ridgeline. The weather cooperated and the hike was great, as most are.. Be well peeps... and.... Get Your Outside On !!!

**Sunday, April 7, 2019**  
**Catawba Mountain reroofing project**

Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Taylor & Nathan Peterson, Dee Hobbs, Jayden Durham, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Pete Whiteis, Jim Webb, Lisa Walkiewicz, Matthew Burnett, Austin Arey, Bennett Witcher, Laura Puckett

Since Catawba Mountain shelter had a 35-year-old roof covered with moss, we decided it was time for a new

roof. April 7th found 15 able bodied workers at the shelter ready to tackle the job. Several crewmembers spent the night before at the shelter, so when the rest of the crew arrived, the old roof was already being removed. With so many project veterans, everyone quickly took on the tasks at hand; prepping the roof, bringing in the metal for the roof and tools, getting up and carrying out the old shingles, cleaning up the site, staining the interior of the shelter, etc. By lunch, the old roof was off, the asphalt shingles had all been taken to the truck at the fire road, inside the shelter had a fresh coat of stain, and half of the roof was completed. Thanks to the terrific work ethic of the crew, we were finished in 6 hours.

**Sunday April 7, 2019**  
**Glenwood Trail, Bearwallow Parking to**  
**Boblett's Gap**

Jill Pennington (leader), Randy Pennington, Robin Bagby, Bill Stegmayer, David Wickersham

It was a mostly cloudy day. We drove the Blue Ridge Parkway to drop off a pickup vehicle at Boblett's Gap, and somewhere between Curry Gap and Black Horse Gap we had to slow down to about 20 mph since "partly cloudy" was sitting on the roadway. Our hike leader has lived at the bottom of Bearwallow Gap for 7 years and experienced this phenomenon multiple times and yet she persists. She is either a foolish optimist or a very slow learner. Happily, there was no fog, so we were able to get lots of good views of the sun playing peek-a-boo across the Great Valley as we hiked.

This trail follows much of the rail bed for the old Pulaski Ironworks Company and we located one of the small gauge rails. There are also multiple old filled-in mine openings along the trail. David was very intrigued with those. And although he is happy to explore natural caves, he is not so eager to enter man-made ones; our hike leader was relieved at that news.

There were a large number of blow-downs on the trail that weren't there the last time our leader hiked the trail in late January. Someone has been at work on them, and only a couple proved tricky to surmount. As we walked along we saw signs of coyote scat, tufts of bear fur, and a large pile of turkey feathers and Mountain Fetterbush in bloom. When we reached our shuttle vehicle at Boblett's Gap, we were astounded to find an old-school stationary bike at the edge of the parking lot. The hike leader has notified Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway about it.

**April 8, 2019, 8:00 am**  
**Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.**

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



The forecast was for rain starting in the afternoon, so we planned on it being a short work day. We split up and began working on two sets of steps that we had started the previous week. By 1:00 we had installed 5 rock steps and had cleared some large rocks off the trail. We were able to get off the mountain before the front moved in. We didn't see any hikers at all today.

**Thursday, April 11, 2019**  
**Blue Ridge Sampler Hike**

Josiah "Stilts" Leonard (leader), Jenny "The Ant" Steding, and Nancy "Songbird" Wallace

The Blue Ridge Sampler is one of my signature hikes as it has a little bit of everything, and it did not disappoint! The weather was gorgeous for hiking as it started out cool and overcast, but broke into sun just as we finished our biggest climb of the day. With great company, it really was a perfect day in the woods.

We started with a moderate, steady climb of Chestnut Mountain, which was just starting to come alive with wildflowers and greening trees. After dropping to Fallingwater Creek, I mistakenly left the old logging road too soon and we ended up following the banks of the creek, but my mistake brought us into entire patches of blooming trilliums. Fallingwater Cascades were flowing very nicely, making for good pictures, and then we made the long ascent of the north slope of Flat Top. With pleasant conversation, especially Nancy's reports of her adventures as a recent through-hiker of the Florida Trail, the mileage passed quickly even as we climbed. The sun broke as we neared the summit of Flat Top making for ideal conditions, although the long-range views were blotted-out by lingering fog and humidity.

After a break at the Peaks of Otter Lodge, we climbed the steep, but short slope of Harkening Hill, stopped for a final food break, then followed the ridge as it crashed down toward an old forestry road. We eventually merged onto the Glenwood Horse Trail and followed the orange blazes back to my car. Though a dazzling day in the forest, time slipped away and we caused Nancy to miss Jeopardy! Still, not bad for a 17.1-mile day with a staggering 8,560 (approx.) feet of elevation change!

**Sunday, April 14**  
**Chessie Nature Trail**

Kris and Bob Peckman (leaders), Maya Bohler, Anna Karbassiyoon, Cynthia Munley, Jill Pennington, Madeleine Taylor, Denny Wilson

Forecast was for severe thunderstorms beginning as early as 12:00, but we dodged that bullet-the rain only came down heavy as we were driving away. From the beginning, the trail was lined with Virginia bluebells. The cloudy weather may have inhibited long views, but

close-ups of flowers were great and made photography easy. Besides the bluebells, we saw blue phlox, lots of Dutchman's breeches, toadshade and large-flowered trillium, columbine, star chickweed, perfoliate bellwort, rue anemone, and many others I haven't identified. Also some amazing mushrooms growing out of the side of a tree, and a stand of bamboo so tall and thick that Bob suggested we could invite the pandas.

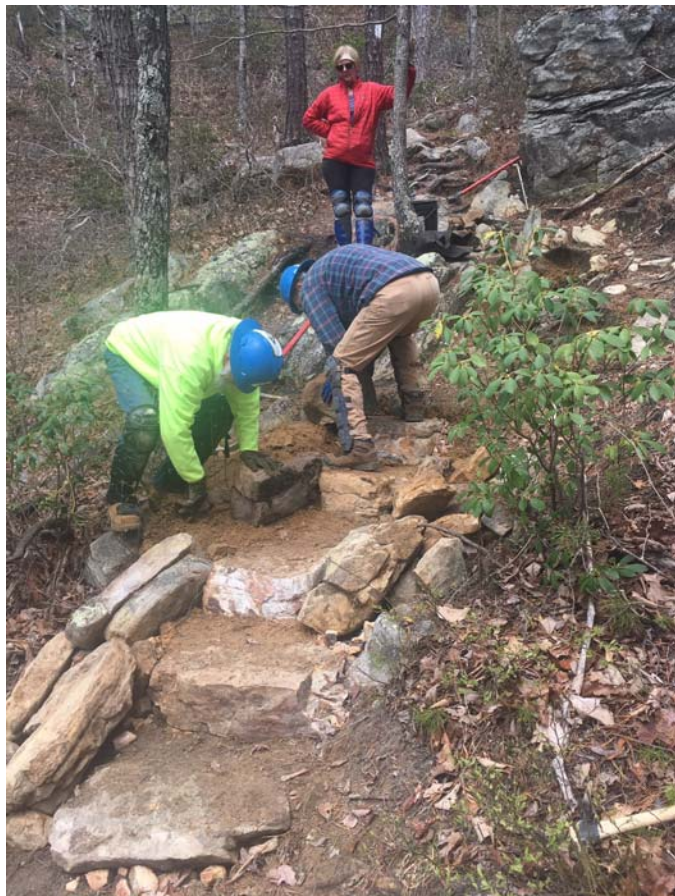


We were happy to welcome Denny and our long-time friend Anna to RATC. After the hike, some of us went into Lexington for gelato and had the opportunity to see some of Maya's pottery in a gallery there.

**Monday, April 15, 2019, 8:00 am**  
**Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers, Bill Neilan

It was a good day for a work hike, cool, but a fairly strong wind coming out of the north. After reaching the work site where we had left off last week we started to work. There was a large rock nearby that we hoped to split into four pieces to use as steps. Unfortunately, it didn't quite split as we wanted so we only got three steps out of it. We finished up the short section we were working on and moved around a rock outcrop, to our next work site. This was a steep, eroded section about 15 feet high. We added five steps there by the end of the day. This section will need about ten more steps to complete. In our four hikes so far on this side of the mountain we have added 41 rock steps. There are at least six other locations on the mountain that need steps, so we will need about 8 more work hikes to complete the project. Saw three thru-hikers during the day.



After a bit of a snafu, Matthew and I reunited at a partially flooded Lamberts Meadow Campsite for lunch, then finished the hike with a pleasant walk replete with spring views into the Greenfield section of Botetourt, several views of a muddy Carvin's Cove reservoir, Hay Rock, and Tinker Ridge. We crossed paths with Dave Youmans as he was out ridge-running near Angel's Gap. The weather began to darken and the wind picked-up as we neared Daleville, but the only rain we saw all day was during the drive to retrieve my car from VA-311. It was a great day and a strong 19.7 miles.

**Monday, April 22, 2019, 8:00 am  
Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mt.**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Eric Hanson, Susan Terwilliger

**Saturday, April 20, 2019  
McAfee Parking to US-220 Daleville Parking**

Josiah Leonard (Leader) and Matthew Burnett

After rains and tornadoes in the area Friday, we had perfect weather for a beautiful spring hike across Catawba and Tinker Mountains, visiting two of the "Triple Crown" sites and marquee RATC-section landmarks along the way.

The day started overcast and cool, yet the McAfee parking lot was already filling by 8:30 AM. There were a few temporary water sources flowing, and the new roof at Catawba Mountain Shelter was quite impressive, although it was odd not seeing layers of moss. Otherwise, it was an uneventful climb of McAfee's Knob. The views from the knob were exceptional, however. The fog and clouds had lifted, and the sun was glimmering over endless ridges of new-growth trees. The ridge walk toward Tinker Cliffs was a nice stroll, and the cliffs themselves offered another stunning touch of spring on top of its normal spectacular views back toward McAfee's.



If you look closely, these two photos are of the same place. Their work is amazing! .ed



It was a perfect, sunny Spring day, and a great day for a work hike. At the work site, we each got to work, either looking for rocks for steps, digging on the trail to place the steps, or breaking up rocks to use as fill material. We had put in five steps the previous week on the steep section we were working on and we hoped to finish this section today. By the end of the day we had installed ten more steps and did get to the top of the section. We were all very pleased with the result. A steep, rocky section, full of roots had been made much easier to get through. In our five work hikes so far on this side of the mountain we have added 51 rock steps.

**Saturday, April 28, 2019 8:00 AM**  
**Apple Orchard Mountain Circuit**

Larry Austin (leader), Lois Smith, Jill Pennington, Dave Horst, Josiah Leonard, Angela Butters, Maya Bohler, Nancy Wallace, Mangala & Amar Kumar, and Chelsha Reed

We began our hike at Sunset Field on the Blue Ridge Parkway under mostly sunny skies with warm temperatures. After hiking down to the former Camp Kewanee which was created by the great Native American Gus Welch, we got on the Glenwood Horse Trail and headed over 5 miles to Reed's Creek. Along the way were hundreds of blooming Trillium and other beautiful wildflowers. We had good views to the east and north including Terrapin Mountain. Some of us were fortunate to see a Scarlet Tanager, an incredibly beautiful bird. After pausing for lunch at Reed's Creek we headed up an old woods road over 2 miles to the Blue Ridge Parkway with a great overlook. In our climb from Reed's Creek we seemed to cross a couple of climate zones with the lower elevation revealing lots of plants, flowers and trees leaving out. The more elevation we gained the forest floor became more barren and the trees were still reluctant to reveal their glory. We got on the AT at the Upper Blue Ridge Parkway Crossing to head south over Apple Orchard Mountain. On the way we paused to check out The Guillotine and get some photos. The summit of Apple Orchard Mountain offered great views to the west. We then followed the AT down the mountain to Parkers Gap Road and back to Sunset Field to end the hike. We had a great group of hikers, good conversations and many attractions along the way.

**Monday, April 29, 2019, 8:00 am**  
**Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Dave Horst, Paulette Burdick, Anne Pfeiffer, Julie Petruska



Another spectacular before-and-after shot of a total transformation. .ed



It was another great sunny Spring day when we started out up the trail. At the work site there was plenty to do, so we split up into two groups and began installing rock steps on steep, eroded sections of trail. There was very little shade where we were working and it got warm later in the day. Many northbound thru-hikers came past during the day. They all seemed to be in good spirits. By the end of the day we had installed 18 rock steps. There is still much work to be done on the mountain, so we will be working up there for at least five more weeks.

**Sunday May 5, 2019  
Little Cove Mountain Loop**

Jill Pennington (leader), Randy Pennington, Fred Meyer, Ana Anderson, Carlos, Sadie, and Sophie

The hike started on a mostly cloudy day with a forecast for showers that the group refused to allow to dampen their enthusiasm for an afternoon in the woods. We started on Little Cove Mountain trail, where wild geranium was blooming in abundance, and quickly veered northwest on an unmarked spur to climb up the mountain and join the Glenwood Horse Trail. When we reached a small waterfall, we took a brief detour to see if the bleeding hearts the hike leader had seen a week before were still blooming, and we were able to spot them. Coming back up we realized there were bleeding heart blooming on a rock face right next to the trail. Randy spotted some rhododendron blooming far below on the creek bank.

We continued up the unmarked trail to the Glenwood with all 3 dogs encouraging us to go faster by showing us repeatedly how easy it was to run up the trail. A little after the 1 mile mark, the sky made good on its threats, and a light, steady, soaking rain began. It was warm with no wind, so half of the group opted to put on their rain gear while the other half opted to get wet. It continued to rain on us until the last mile and a half. The creek crossings at the end were a moot point by this time, since we were all wet anyway. On the way out the hike leader and sweep picked up two trash bags that had been left tied to a sapling by some campers.

**Monday, May 6, 2019, 8:00 am  
Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers, Bill Neilan

It was unusually cool, 58 degree, in morning when we started out up the trail. Since we were a small group we didn't think we could accomplish a whole lot, particularly since we were moving around 300-400 pound rocks to make steps. After we got to the work site we quickly got to work clearing the trail to receive the

steps and locating the rocks to put in as steps. Luckily, there were good rock candidates located fairly close to the work site. After putting each rock in a net we hopped it down the trail and put it in place. We also split up a large rock to make manageable steps. By the end of the day we had put in nine steps, which was an outstanding total for just four people. Hopefully, more people from the club will get involved in this, the primary function of the club, in the future.



**Tuesday, May 7, 2019  
RAPP Hike #6  
Bike/Hike Sawmill Branch to Tinker Cliffs**

David Wickersham (leader) and Terri McClure

The vast majority of Tinker Cliffs day-hikers make their approach via the popular Andy Layne Trail. To spice things up a bit this outing started on the other side of the mountain and began with a few miles of biking followed by a hike up the Sawmill Branch Trail.

We met at the Carvins Cove Bennett Springs parking area. From there we headed northeast on our bikes on paved Carvins Cove Road, which shortly turned into the gravel surfaced Happy Valley Fire Road in Carvins Cove Reserve. After 3.6 miles of biking we changed

into our hiking boots, locked the bikes and hiked north on the Arrowhead Trail. At 0.3 miles we turned right onto the unsigned and rarely used Sawmill Branch Trail. Partway up this trail we encountered a cluster of a very unusual type of wildflower we had never seen before. I took a picture and later sent it to Kris Peckman who was able to identify it as Turkey Beard. Thanks Kris!



The Sawmill Branch Trail led us uphill for 1.0 mile to an intersection with the AT just north of Lamberts Meadow Campground. From there we headed south to Tinker Cliffs, encountering several through hikers and Triple Crown hikers along the way. At Tinker Cliffs, our turn around point, we stopped for lunch and enjoyed watching the hawks soaring on the updrafts.

We returned to our vehicles by retracing our steps. In all we biked 7.2 miles and hiked 6.6 miles. This outing was the sixth in the RAPP Series which highlights hiking opportunities in Roanoke Area Parks & Preserves.

### **Wednesday, May 8, 2019 Mount Pleasant Henry Lanum Loop hike**

Mary Harshfield and Nancy Reid (leaders), Maya Bohler, Rita Krasnow, Nancy Galvan, Christine Yates, Kathy Arrington, Bob and Kris Peckman, Nancy Brattain, Don Brooke

We managed to squeeze 10 of us into two cars for the drive to the trailhead where we met an 11th hiker, Don. On the way up the mountain we stopped several times to take photos of the large-flowered trilliums, Jack-in-the-pulpits, anemones, lousewort, bleeding hearts, and yes (!) pink ladyslippers. As we neared the summit, the 30% chance of rain turned into a light drizzle. Those who arrived at the overlook first were rewarded with a partial view of the valley below. By the time the stragglers arrived, we were fogged in. Some of us had slightly soggy sandwiches with the rain dripping into our containers as we ate. Thankfully, the rain stopped and we were all the more appreciative of the lush green forest with its picturesque giant boulders on the way back. Wildflowers were abundant on this side of the mountain as well. These included a pink azalea shrub, Canada mayflowers, may-apples (in bloom), and many more pink ladyslippers, some in full bloom and some

getting ready to emerge. What a lovely day for a hike with such a nice group of hikers!



### **Friday, May 10, 2019 Price and Patterson Mountains Middle Cut Loop**

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Jill Pennington, Julie Petruska, and Jenny Steding

The forecast was tricky as there was a threat of rain, and it did rain on the cars parked at Daleville as evidenced by the water in Julie's truck bed, but we ended up with a nice, albeit humid day for hiking on the front ridges of the Alleghanies.

The hike started with a steep climb out of the gate, then a tedious up-and-down section along the ridge of Price Mountain. We made good time, though, and had several limited views toward Fincastle. We were sure to stop for frequent water breaks as it was rather humid. We rode the roller coaster down the Kelly Trail, across Patterson Creek (which was flowing surprisingly low), and then up the steep Tucker Trail before stopping for lunch atop Patterson Mountain.

We had a pleasant stroll along Patterson Mountain following lunch, although the spring growth obscured much of the infrequently-used trail. I missed a switchback and got us temporarily off-trail, but we quickly found the trail and kind of wish we had not since we were right in time for a very steep section of completely eroded sidehill coupled with deep leaves. We stopped for another break before crossing Little Patterson Creek.



**Monday, May 13, 2019, 8:00 am**  
**Work Hike - East Side of Sinking Creek Mtn.**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Sandie Meyers, Bill Neilan, Mark Farrell, Jim Beeson, Susan Terwillinger

It was a fairly large group working on the trail today. We have been working on this same section of the mountain for the past eight weeks. Once we got to the work site we spit up and started looking for rocks to install as steps and breaking up rocks to serve as fill material around the rock steps. By lunchtime we had installed seven steps, completing work in that area. Three of us moved up the trail about a half-mile to work on a small stream that was flowing down the trail. The rest of us moved down the trail about a half-mile to install steps at a short, steep section of trail. After getting the stream back in a channel across the trail, the three of us hiked down and rejoined the group. They had made a good start installing steps. After about an hour we all finished up and started down the mountain. We installed 12 steps during the course of the day, and a total of 90 rock steps in our eight workhikes there. Many appreciative northbound thru-hikers passed by during the day.

We are finished for now on the east side of Sinking Creek Mountain. There is still much work to be done further up the mountain but there are other, more pressing, problem areas in our section of trail that we need to work on.

**Thursday, May 16, 2019 9:00 AM**  
**Read Mountain Preserve**

Jeanine Bomber (leader), Robert Bomber (assistant), Steve Marshall, and Joanne Spetzler.

We met at the parking area of the Read Mountain Preserve Trail which is located in Roanoke County. As we progressed along the approximately 4.1-mile Buzzard Rock loop trail, we took time to enjoy the snacks Steve so generously provided and Joanne shared her impressive skill of identifying birds by their songs. The weather could not have been better for this hike as the humidity was low and there was only a slight haze which allowed for great views of the Roanoke Valley. This was a nice hike, with good weather, and great company.

**Friday, May 17, 2019**  
**RAPP Hike #7 Shrine Hill/Woodlawn/Fishburn Parks - Behind the Scenes Grand Tour**

David Wickersham (leader), Joanne Spetzler (assistant), Christine Yates and Louise Chagnon (guest)

This hike was billed as a "grand tour" of the trails of three closely situated Roanoke city parks. An overnight change in the weather forecast cut the number of attendees in half but we had a crew of four to brave the rain, which started just as we set out from the trailhead. Due to the rain we skipped some planned side trails and much of the tour commentary. Fortunately the rain was never very heavy and we had an enjoyable hike in spite of the weather. The length of our abbreviated hike was 4.4 miles. We did the Murray Run Greenway, beginning to end, a double lollipop loop around the Hillside and Streamside Trails in Fishburn Park, then returned to the Murray Run Trailhead.

**Sunday, May 19, 2019**  
**Wilson Creek Shelter reroofing project**

Homer & Therese Witcher (leaders), Taylor & Nathan Peterson, Adam Day, Mark Farrell, Bill Neilan, Susan Terwilliger, Jim Webb, Robert & Jeanine Bomber, Kevin Witcher, Jayden Durham, Dee Hobbs, Theresa McDaniel, Chelsha Reed, Bennett Witcher, Laura Puckett



Once again, we had a great turnout for a reroofing project. The new material needed to be carried in to the shelter via a 15 minute flagged bushwack. With 18 volunteers, we were able to carry in all of the new metal 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 the old roof off, it was discovered that there was some rotted wood that needed to be replaced. While Homer & Nathan went to get some plywood, the roofing proceeded. With our experienced roofers and excellent support crew, we had the project completed by 2 pm.



**Wednesday, May 22, 2019**

**Beauty and the Beast**

**Apple Orchard Falls/Cornelius Creek Extended**

Larry Austin (leader), Susan Terwilliger, Jeff Edwards, Kris Peckman, Paul Winter, Angela Butters and Lois Smith

This day presented us with perfect weather--sunny with highs in the low 70's. Apple Orchard Falls was beautiful as usual with the Rhododendron blooming above the Falls. We saw Rhododendron on each trail but not all blooming as well. We saw many other wildflowers along the way as well. Overstreet Falls served as our lunch spot although it was not quite halfway. We stopped briefly at the Cornelius Creek Shelter for bathroom breaks and to look at the shelter site. Our next stop was at Black Rock Overlook on the AT. It offered some great views to the West. Our final leg of this spectacular hike was on the Cornelius Creek Trail. Cornelius Creek is quite a beautiful stream offering many small cascades and pools of water. This was a great hike with a group of fine hikers.

**Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 8:00 am**  
**Work Hike - Near War Spur Shelter**

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

Today we headed down to a remote section of trail near the War Spur Shelter in the Mountain Lake Wilderness Area. For at least the past two years water had been running down a section of trail from a small spring that had appeared in the middle of the trail. We had decided to build a "turnpike" through this section to allow hikers to keep their feet dry. A turnpike is a raised section of trail. After arriving at the work site we began collecting large rocks to form the wall of the turnpike. After getting these in place, we filled in the space behind the large rocks with smaller rocks that we broke up. This raised the trail about eight inches, getting it out of the mud. By the end of the day we had 22 feet of turnpike built.

**Saturday, June 1, 2019**  
**Mount Rogers / Wilburn Ridge Loop**

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Matthew Burnett, Cara Leinhardt Gruey, Julie Petruska, Jason Thompson, Chris Venable, and Lin Yang

Our third annual trip Mt. Rogers trip went exceptionally well thanks to a great group and perfect weather. I was especially happy that our trip hit the peak of the heath bloom perfectly this year, adding spectacular pink, purple, and white colors to the already superb scenery.

The hike started with a pleasant stroll from Massie Gap to the Appalachian Trail where we encountered our first of many ponies for the day. We also encountered a high number of fellow hikers of all varieties -- day hikers, weekend campers, and through-hikers -- taking advantage of the ideal conditions. The only complaint was that we were stopping for so many views that it was hard getting into a hiking rhythm. We stopped for lunch just beyond Thomas Knob Shelter where an aggressive pony tried to prevent Cara from leaving by biting her arm! Hiking presents all sorts of hazards...

After lunch, five of us darted up to the summit of Mt. Rogers, then we regrouped and headed toward the Scales. This section was especially beautiful as the mountain appeared pink rather than green from all of the rhododendron blooms. We made good time to the Scales as our group got mixed in with a group of horseback riders. We took a break at the Scales, then finished the trip with a nice jaunt through the woods, past Wise Shelter, and finally back to Massie Gap. And, unlike last year, the beautiful weather remained with us all the way -- no lightning or downpours. Special thanks to Matthew and Julie for being our drivers.

**Sunday, June 2, 2019**  
**Double Feature Hike**  
**Three Top and Stone Mountains**

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Matthew Burnett, Jason Thompson, and Lin Yang

After parting with the day hikers from the Mt. Rogers trip, the four of us made our way up the broad slopes of Whitetop Mountain, Virginia's second highest mountain. In fact, the four of us visited the three highest mountains in Virginia in a single day. We found a campsite with an exceptional view and spring, and some of us hiked to Buzzard Rock to catch the sunset. It was the capstone to a perfect day in the Virginia highlands.

The next morning, our event "officially" started with an at times confusing drive from Whitetop into North Carolina. Matthew braved a couple of steep roads in his Prius on the way to the Three Top Mountain Game Lands, and the joke in the car was that the car had climbed most of the mountain for us. That stopped being funny as we climbed about 1,500 feet in 1.7 miles to the spectacular vista at Huckleberry Rock, but the view from the craggy peak was worth the effort. We then followed an informal and somewhat overgrown path to the summit passing over and around impressive cliffs as we went. The views were amazing, as was the fast pace back to the car down the steep slope.

Matthew fired up his Prius again, and we made the drive to the Pond Mountain Game Lands. In stark contrast to the gnarled peaks of Three Top, our second hike of the day was through mountaintop pastures and Christmas tree forests. We crested Stone Mountain near what was a beautiful home before it was abandoned and defaced, then descended steeply to the point where Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee all meet. We intended to also visit Pond Mountain, but decided to call the trip short as it was late and we still had a long drive home. Notably, the only rain we encountered all weekend was in the half block from the car to the restaurant in Marion. Thanks again to Matthew for being our driver.

**Monday, June 3, 2019, 8:00 am  
Work Hike - Near War Spur Shelter**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan. Mark Farrell, Bruce Agnew, Sandie Meyers, Fred Meyer



We headed back down to do some work on the treadway near the War Spur Shelter in the Mountain Lake Wilderness Area. This time we were fixing a washed out section of trail along the creek there. We were also replacing two trail mileage signs. At the work site we split up and began gathering large rocks to make a crib wall. There were plenty of rocks along the creek so the work went quickly. After we finished building the wall we added a lot of smaller rocks behind it to build back up the trail treadway. The last step was to add gravel to ensure a smooth trail. It was very pleasant working by the trail. We also were able to blaze about a mile and half of trail and did some clipping along the trail. We had lunch at the shelter and got a chance to talk to some northbound thru hikers. They seemed to be enjoying themselves out on the trail.

**Tuesday, June 4, 2019  
Sinking Creek Mountain**

Nancy Reid (leader) Jim Webb, Chase Davidson, David Anderson

We met at Caldwell Fields Group Campsite at 8:00 AM. We were happy to have sunshine and a cooler day than many that had preceded it.



We carpooled up to the end of Lee Road, leaving one vehicle at the Sarver Trailhead, then took an informal trail up to the AT. That is one steep trail- especially when carrying hand tools, a gas can and a brushcutter! South of the Continental Divide sign, we began to clear vegetation and dead branches from the trail until we came to the Sarver Shelter Trail. From there we hiked back to our vehicle at the trailhead via the Sarver Trail. We made a great crew of congenial hard-workers, and enjoyed the beautiful trail.

**Tuesday, June 4, 2019  
RAPP Hike #8 - Stiles Falls**

David Wickersham (leader)

Only one person signed up and unfortunately she had to cancel. Undaunted, I decided to go it alone. The weather was cool and sunny. The preceding week had been blistering hot and the days following are supposed to be riddled with thunderstorms so this was a chance not to be missed.

The last time I was here the water was so deep and swift it would have been foolish to try to cross the creek without companions and a safety line. This time the creek was at a happy medium -- dry enough to cross without getting wet but wet enough that there was plenty of water to create a beautiful cascade at the falls. The stats for the hike were: distance 3.6 mi., elevation gain 520 ft. and duration 2 hrs.

**Sunday, June 16, 2019  
North Mountain and Pete's Cave Hike**

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Dee Case, Donna Mollina, and Jason Thompson

Our trip started with a drive through bucolic Botetourt and Alleghany Counties en route to North Mountain. Of course, there was great confusion as no one seemed quite sure of which North Mountain we were visiting -- a frequent problem in Virginia with its plethora of North Mountains. Once that was straightened-out, we arrived in the Longdale Furnace area and began the hike.

There has been some logging in the Longdale Furnace area, so the trail that used to be a very deep woods walk is now initially mostly open with views toward Anthony Knob. After the logging area, we entered the broad, steep hollows running parallel to North Mountain where we had an unusual bear sighting during a group hike. Usually, group hikes are far too noisy to see any bears. We then began the long, steady climb along a stream, through a small gap, and then up an ascending ridge to North Mountain proper. We stopped for lunch at Pete's Cave with its view overlooking I-64 west of Lexington and the Rich Hole area.

Following lunch, Dee decided to head back toward the car while Donna, Jason, and I charged ahead toward the cliffs of North Mountain. It was a pleasant, albeit quite overgrown route, and we were reminded that "tick" is indeed a four-letter word. There were pleasant views along the way, and we arrived at the commanding views to the east of the House Mountains, Green Hill, the Short Hills, and across the Great Valley to the Blue Ridge. It leads me to the conclusion that the cliffs are one very overlooked overlook. We met Dee at a trail junction after my cell phone didn't receive her call or texts asking which direction to go, and we were able to finish the pleasant afternoon hike together. We had great company and overcast, breezy conditions, which made for a perfect day in the woods.

**Monday, June 17, 2019, 8:00 am  
Work Hike - Dragon's Tooth Blue Blazed Trail**

Mike Vaughn (Leader), Jim Webb, Bill Neilan

Today we worked at the lower part of the Dragon's Tooth Trail. We plan on doing about four work hikes there this summer putting in step stones at creek crossings and improving the treadway. After a short hike up to the second creek crossing we got to work picking out rocks to move. Since there were just three of us we were not able to move rocks that were as large as we wanted to use. However, after a few hours work we were able to get six step stones in place. Hopefully these will stand up to the rushing water after a heavy rainfall. After installing the step stones we moved about a 100 yards up the trail and put a waterbar and ditch across the trail at a location where a small spring has been coming across the trail. This should clear up a muddy section of trail. Since it was a warm, humid day we enjoyed doing work around the cool mountain stream.

**Friday June 21, 2019  
Balcony Falls-Gunter Ridge Hike**

Fred Meyer & Bob Peckman (leaders), Kris Peckman, Dawn Lamb, Madeleine Taylor, David Wickersham, Maya Bohler, and Ken Myers

We used 2 cars, leaving one at the Hellgate Trail Head and the other at the Balcony Falls Trail Head. This was a strenuous hike of about 13 miles by and for mere mortals. It was a wonderfully cool and sunny day. Segments of 5 trails comprised this hike which started around 750 ft. and climbed gradually and relentlessly to 2600 with some nice views of the James River. After we passed the entrance to the James River Face Wilderness, we met 2 turtles. At the summit we crossed the AT and continued on the Sulphur Springs trail. When we realized that what looked like a connection to the AT was not, we went back to the summit crossing and turned south on the AT. The Sulphur Springs/AT crossing described in the guide books is about 2½ miles from the summit. The first half mile of our diversion had very nice views of the James. On the AT we reached the Gunter Ridge Trail to the right in about 1/2 mile and passed the Belfast Trail in another half mile. The Gunter Ridge Trail is also a very steady, even grade, with more James-River views and wildflowers down to the Glenwood Horse Trail. The Glenwood was nice shady flat walking until we reached the road and the Hellgate Trailhead not far to the right.

We paced this hike slow so that, even though it was long, we were all in good shape at the end.



## 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 of \$0.10/one-way mile. We carpool 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 Josiah Leonard, [hikemaster@ratc.org](mailto: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		
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024, or use PayPal at <a href="http://ratc.org">ratc.org</a> .	Donation	\$ _____
	Amount Enclosed	\$ _____

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The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is an affiliate of  
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