

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

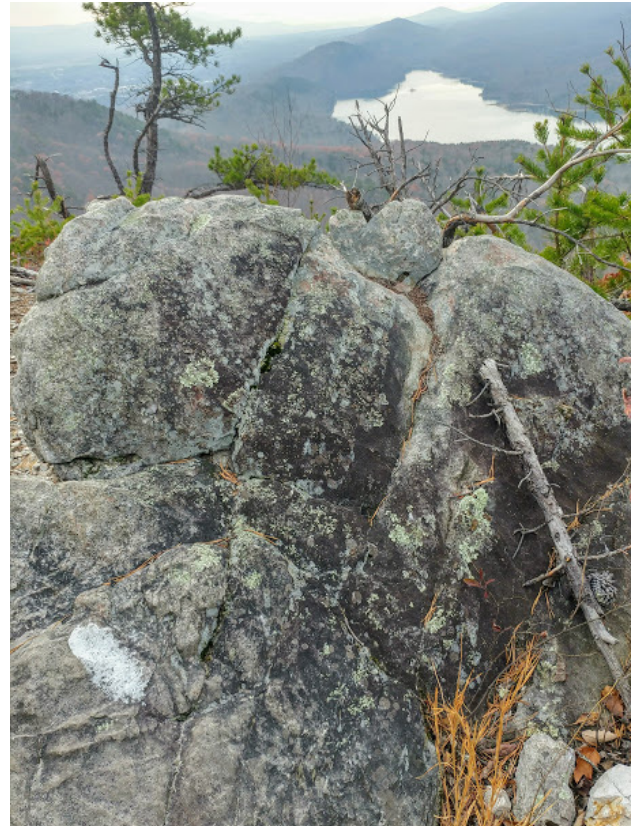
Winter 2020

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.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *JIM BEESON*

A BIG THANKS to everyone who devoted time, energy and money to support RATC accomplishments in 2019! We should be proud of these 2019 accomplishments, this year RATC:

- Member Diana Christopulos was awarded Cox Conserves Heroes Award resulting in \$60,000 donation to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Resurfaced McAfee Knob/VA 311 Trail-head Parking Lot - \$2,000
- Supported the "Virginia Triple Crown" Volunteer Ridgerunner Program – 52 Volunteers/1679 Volunteer Hours
- Contributed \$5000 toward purchase of Doc's Way property to protect McAfee Knob view shed
- Replaced roofs on Catawba, Wilson Creek, Jenny's Knob, Laurel Creek and Doc's Knob Shelters - \$2500
- Did emergency repairs to Fulhardt Knob Shelter - \$300
- Replaced fire rings for 5 Shelters - \$1000
- Repaired foot bridges at VA 620, VA 621 and VA 785 - \$1000
- Held weekly trail maintenance hikes totaling >5500 volunteer hours. Installed 350 steps, installed and cleaned water bars and tread way improvement on Dragon's Tooth, AT/McAfee Knob, Sinking Creek (Niday Shelter side) and Curry Gap.
- ATC Konnarock crew began War Spur relocation project.
- Offered 60+ recreational hikes covering a wide range of difficulty and distance
- Increased RATC membership to 650 members



- Received a \$3220 donations from Roanoke Valley Gives campaign and \$550 from Starr Hill Brewery's Cheers for Charity program
- Participated in VA 311 McAfee Knob parking lot improvements, including VDOT funded pedestrian bridge scheduled for 2024 and National Park Service infrastructure improvements

2020 opportunities and looking ahead:

- Active participation in ATC fundraiser to acquire 7 acres property on corner of VA 311 and Old Catawba Road and include it in overall trailhead/parking lot improvements, which includes VDOT funded pedestrian bridge over VA 311 (2024 completion)
- **Backpacker Magazine** subscription for all RATC members at no cost to RATC or RATC members (see page 19).
- Continued emphasis on AT trail maintenance with frequent work hikes and larger group of trail section maintainers.
- March 21, 2020 RATC Annual Meeting – Mountains-To-Sea Trail Representative will present information about North Carolina's Mountains-To-Sea Trail
- Mark Farrell, RATC Membership Coordinator and Josiah Leonard, RATC Hikemaster both notified me that they will be relocating in January 2020. Mark will be moving to San Diego to be closer to his grandson, and Josiah accepted a new position in Pensacola, FL. It is bittersweet and I congratulate them on pursuing exciting new opportunities, but disappointed to see them leave the area and RATC. Both have made significant contributions to the AT and RATC while RATC Board Members. They will be missed. If you are interested in the Hikemaster role or wish to recommend someone, please contact me.

- It is never easy to talk about an increase in dues. However, **RATC annual dues** have not changed in over 20 years. In order to maintain a solid financial foundation and at the same time accomplish necessary AT trail/shelter maintenance and improvement, along with supporting ATC acquisition of valuable AT view shed properties the RATC Board is reviewing an increase in annual dues. Before any RATC dues increase is implemented a recommendation will be presented at March 21, 2020 annual meeting and submitted for membership vote.

See you on the trail!



Mark Farrell will be hard to replace. he has already accepted a spot on a Pacific Crest Trail maintenance crew.

TRAIL SUPERVISOR REPORT

MIKE VAUGHN

2019 was a busy year for maintenance on the trail. The ATC's Konnarock work crew worked for three weeks in the Mountain Lake wilderness area this summer on a major relocation project. They built approximately 1,100 feet of new trail. Club members worked with them on many of the days they were out there. In addition, the club had several work hikes out there and constructed another 400 feet of trail. This project will involve building 6,000 feet of new trail and will bypass a steep, eroded section on the current trail. It is scheduled to take three years to complete. The club will be scheduling several work hikes out there this Spring. In addition we will be working on the upper section of the trail to Dragon's Tooth.

Club members participating on the weekly club work hikes worked in many locations on our 120 mile section of trail over the past year. These included work hikes on Sinking Creek Mountain, Dragon's Tooth, and McAfee Knob. Workers installed 350 steps on the trail during the year, including over 150 on the trail up to McAfee Knob. Forty work hikes were performed during the the federal fiscal year that ended on September 30. Over 1,400 work hours were recorded on these work hikes. In addition, 58 trail maintainers reported over 2,300 hours of work on our section of trail. Trail maintainers perform such tasks as clipping, blazing,

and clearing blowdowns on their assigned section of trail. Sections range in length from two to seven miles.

Two vacant houses on NPS land will be demolished and removed in January. One house is located below the McAfee Knob fire road and the other is north of route 220 in Daleville. The park service acquired the land that the houses are on years ago. Removing the structures will start the process of returning these areas to their original appearance.

On another matter, please make note of any problems you see while out hiking on our section of trail. Text me at 540-992-1350 and let me know of any problems you encounter. These could include trees fallen across the trail, overgrown sections of trail, or vandalism or trash along the trail. Send pictures if you can.

One of the regular attendees at our weekly work hikes, Mark Farrell, is moving to San Diego to be closer to family. Mark is an extremely hard worker and has thrown himself into many trail related activities since his retirement from working as a teacher in Roanoke. In addition to his trail work, he is an active member of the McAfee Knob Task Force, and is the membership coordinator for the club. His good humor and positive attitude will be sorely missed. He has already applied to be a maintainer on the Pacific Crest Trail near San Diego.

2019 VOLUNTEER RIDGERUNNER REPORT

BRIAN BOGGS

Information compiled by Kathryn Herndon-Powell of the ATC Submitted by Brian Boggs, Ridgerunner and RATC Counselor

Volunteer Ridgerunners patrol McAfee Knob and Dragons Tooth to mitigate the impacts of heavy visitation. These dedicated citizens protect two of the A.T.'s most beloved landmarks through visitor education, monitoring and reporting, and removing impacts like trash, graffiti and fire rings.

Five Years of Progress

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club created the McAfee Knob Task Force in 2015 to address visitor use management challenges along the "Virginia Triple Crown" section of the Appalachian Trail. With support from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the National Park Service, the Task Force and its Volunteer Ridgerunners have made a huge difference over the past five years.

2019

- 52 volunteers completed 211 patrols, and 1,679 volunteer hours (including travel time to and from the trailheads).
- 23 new Volunteer Ridgerunners from two training days in 2019

- Overall 90% of the priority dates were covered (Friday, Saturday, Sunday and National Holidays)
- 76% of the priority dates were covered at the McAfee Knob area
- 53% of the priority dates were covered at the Dragons Tooth area
- Average number of visitors seen was 113 on McAfee Knob and 73 on Dragon's Tooth
- Average patrol length was 5 hours
- 468 gallons of trash was removed
- 56 illegal fire rings were removed

A Look Back

From May 2015 through September 2019 Volunteer Ridgerunners have:

- Contributed 6,078 volunteer hours
- Hiked 5,132 miles
- Counted 90,167 visitors
- Contacted 61,647 visitors
- Removed 2,237 gallons of trash
- Removed 245 fire rings

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.

HIKE MASTER REPORT

JOSIAH LEONARD



Happy New Year! The Hiking Division enjoyed a strong year as you will read below. We did not set any records for the number of hikes hosted or participation levels, but we did have the sort of strong year that is expected and befitting of a hiking club as illustrious as the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. I give full credit for a good year to the 25 club members who hosted hikes this year. Hike leaders are among the unsung heroes of our club. Their efforts may not be as tangible as trail maintainers, but they play a very important part in accomplishing our club's mission.

It is with a heavy heart that I announce that I will be leaving the Roanoke area and my post as hikemaster. I have accepted a new position in Pensacola, Florida, and I plan to move sometime in the month of February. It has been a true honor to serve the club in this capacity, and I am proud of the

accomplishments of the Hiking Division in this term. I encourage all club members to support our group hikes and to consider getting involved as hike leaders. I wish everyone well as I depart and Godspeed to the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. And as always, Happy Trails!

Now that 2019 is officially "in the books," I thought that it would be interesting to share some of the data from our year of hikes.

But first...let's not overlook our December hike leaders: Jeff Edwards and Nancy Reid led the RATC Section 8 (Lee Hollow to Sinking Creek) on December 5th, Maya Bohler led the Trough / Gauntlet Loop at Carvin's Cove on December 6th, Wilma Vargas led the Smith Mountain West hike on December 10th, David Wickersham led the Roanoke Valley Horse Trail hike on December 28th, and Dee Case ended our month and year yesterday by leading the RATC Section 1 hike (Black Horse Gap to Curry Gap). Thanks to all December hike leaders, especially scheduling hikes around the holidays!

Now on to the 2019 Review:
The RATC Hiking Division hosted 75 Hikes in 2019. This was a major increase from 2018 when we hosted 43 hikes and was similar to our numbers from 2016.

We had 25 different hike leaders lead or co-lead a hike this year, which was different from previous years in which the vast majority of hikes tended to be led by only a handful of hike leaders. Thanks to everyone who led a hike in 2019!

The three most frequent hike leaders were: Yours truly with 17 hikes, David Wickersham with 8 hikes, and Larry Austin also with 8 hikes.

We hosted 430 hikers (slots taken on hikes, not distinct individuals) this year, for a mean of 5.7 hikers per outing and a median of 5 hikers per outing. This is another strong improvement from 2018.

Our three most popular hikes were: The Trough / Gauntlet Loop led by Maya Bohler on December 6th with 15 participants, RATC Section 1 led by Dee Case just yesterday with 13 participants, and the House Mountains led by Wilma Vargas on September 19th with 12 participants. Interestingly, all three of our most popular hikes were led on weekdays. I will also give a mention to Larry Austin who had several hikes with 11 participants, which was his cap for most of his trips. To be clear, smaller groups are often preferable in terms of enjoyment, group management, and most importantly impacts on wilderness areas, so I am actually very happy that we do not have any trips with 15, 20, 25, or more hikers. Still, it is interesting and useful to see which hikes had the greatest interest.

We had three outings that combined hiking with other forms of recreation: David Wickersham hosted a bike and hike on May 7th that included a ride through Carvin's Cove and a hike to Tinker Cliffs, yours truly led a paddle-and-hike at Carvin's Cove on June 28th that combined kayaking and hiking, and David Horst hosted his "By Land and Sea" hike on August 21st that included

a boat ride across Smith Mountain Lake, a hike of Smith Mountain East, and post-hike swimming.

Our longest hike was my hike from Va. 311 to US 220 on April 20th of 19.7 miles, while our shortest hike was Bob and Jeanine Bomber's trash pick-up hike on July 25th of 2.0 miles. Our mean hike was 8.75 miles in length, while our median length was 9.25 miles.

The farthest we traveled for a hike was 115 miles (as the crow flies) from downtown Roanoke with Chris Mean's hike to the Great Channels on March 16th. Matthew Burnett was our most abused shuttle driver as he covered roughly 278 miles on June 1st-2nd as we hiked three hikes in the Grayson Highlands, Northwest North Carolina, and Northeast Tennessee. Good thing he was driving a Prius!

Collectively, the hiking division covered a staggering 3,783.2 miles on our outings (all participants on a hike multiplied by the mileage for the hike), or roughly a through-hike and another half through-hike on the Appalachian Trail. A person who signed-up for every hike we offered would have covered over 656 miles this year.

We have a new 113-miler, Claire Weaver

What a great year! Thank you to everyone who made it possible and to everyone who will strive to make 2020 even better!

SHELTER SUPERVISORS

HOMER AND THERESE WITCHER



We would like to thank Jason Thompson for purchasing 8 new fire rings for the trail. With the assistance of Kevin and Bennett Witcher, we installed new fire rings at Rice Field (OCVT section), Bailey Gap, War Spur, Pine Swamp Branch, Wapiti and Jenny Knob shelters.

On November 24th, 13 volunteers braved the cold and snow to replace the roof at Doc's Knob shelter with a metal roof. On December 3rd, we received a report of vandalism at Fullhardt Knob shelter. With the assistance of Kevin Witcher and Josiah Leonard, within a week we were able to repair the boards on the front of the privy and shelter and also replace a section of the floor that had been burned.

RATC ANNUAL MEETING

March 21, 2020

**6pm at Unitarian Universalist
Church**

**2015 Grandin Rd SW,
Roanoke, VA 24015**

We will recognize RATC Volunteers, Elect 2020 - 2021 Board of Directors, vote on RATC dues, discuss fundraising for VA 311 McAfee Knob Property and have a presentation on Mountain to Sea Trail by Susan Levy «Kansas» who has thru hiked AT and Mountain to Sea Trail, plus give away swag from local outdoor outfitters.

BOARD MEETINGS

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

Next Board Meeting is February 3

All members are always welcome.

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

HIKE REPORTS

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 hikemaster@ratc.org.

MT. PLEASANT AND COLE MOUNTAIN LOOP OCTOBER 20

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Jenny Steding,
Nancy Wallace

This hike followed on the heels of the remnants of Tropical Storm Nestor, which brought drought relief to the area, but also hampered this hike. We pushed the meeting time back to allow more time for the storm to clear, but it was still a damp and foggy day in the woods. Nevertheless, we persisted and had a great day together! Special thanks to Nancy for being our driver.

We started the hike at Hog Camp Gap with a bit of light rain lingering. We made quick time to the Mt. Pleasant parking area, then did the Mt. Pleasant Loop (the Henry Lanum Trail) counter-clockwise. The rain slackened, though the wind still made it feel like rain with dripping leaves. We enjoyed each others' company and had a nice walk in the woods, but the views were non-existent at the top as the mountain was socked-in with fog. The forest, though, was quite pretty with its autumn colors.

We decided to hike back to the car for lunch and to switch-out gear following the first loop. After lunch, we did the Old Hotel and Cole Mountain Loop, also going counter-clockwise. The weather improved throughout the afternoon, even providing a couple of hints of sunshine through the

clouds. We stopped briefly at the old hotel site and at Cow Camp Gap Shelter where a couple of backpackers were regrouping after a very wet night. Unfortunately, after reaching the Appalachian Trail for what is normally a spectacular hike over the open ridge of Cole Mountain, the fog began to build, and by the time we reached the top of the ridge, we were back in a fog bank. Some days, the views just aren't meant to be, though I am still very happy to have hosted the hike as it was great catching-up with Jenny and Nancy.

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 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.

GLENWOOD/CHAIR ROCK RIDGE NOVEMBER 3

Larry Austin (Leader), Dawn Lamb, Jennifer Harvey-Frye, Lois Smith and Madeleine Taylor.

This was a beautiful day for hiking. Kris Peckman had decided to join us for a few miles as she had a prior commitment that afternoon. Unfortunately, after about 1/4 mile, Kris fell and broke her left arm. We called Bob to see if he could come and get her. We got her back to the trail head parking and waited for Bob. Since they both had cars at the trail head, Dawn drove his car back and along with the help of Jennifer or Madeleine delivered his car to his house. After Bob picked up Kris to take her to the emergency room, we decided to do the hike.

We had some great views of mountains and valleys along the way. We had lunch at Bobblet's Gap along the Parkway where we could see the Peaks of Otter area. After lunch, we hiked the AT north to where we were off trail to get to a rock outcropping and more great views. We carefully descended the mountain back to the Horse Trail for the remaining 1.4 miles back to the parking lot. Everyone did really well and we finished at 3:30 which was good time since we completed almost 12 miles.

WORK HIKE NEAR MCAFEE KNOB NOVEMBER 5

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Georgia Shaurette, Tommy Yambrick, Jane Mehalso , Kevin Moore, Jim Beeson, Dave Horst, Angela Butters, Caleb Fort, John Hvozdovic

Today we continued our push up to McAfee Knob. We had a very good sized group. It was another cool, sunny day and a great day to be out working on the trail. Upon reaching the work site we again split up into two groups and got to work installing steps and removing rocks and roots from the trail. The backpackers and day hikers that passed by were very complimentary of the work that was getting done. By day's end we had installed 12 rock steps and rehabbed .25 miles of trail. This brings our total new steps installed to 112 on 11 work hikes upon McAfee Knob in the past three months. We still have about 10 more work hikes to do up there.



ROAMING ONION MOUNTAIN NOVEMBER 10

Larry Austin (Leader), Madeleine Taylor, Jeff Edwards, Dawn Lamb, Taylor Valencia, Kevin Moore, David Horst, Mary Beth Horst, Jennifer Harvey-Frye, Molly Armistead, and David Mueller.

It turned out to be a beautiful day for hiking. I welcomed three hikers I had not met - Molly Armistead, David Mueller and Taylor Valencia who just moved to Lexington from Stafford, VA, to take on a new job. We visited the remains of Camp Kewanee to the east of Sunset Field. Gus Welch, the quarterback at the Carlisle Indian School, who graduated in 1911, purchased this property in 1929 and operated a Summer camp for youth for nearly 30 years.

We then went down the old road which led to the camp and hit the Glenwood Horse Trail. Following the Horse Trail for about 1.5 miles, we veered off it and began an interesting, if not challenging, bushwhack to the summit of Onion Mountain and down the southeast side to some views from a rock outcropping. On the way back up that side of the mountain, we meet another hiker coming down with his canine friend. One rarely sees anyone in this area which means someone else knows about it.

After lunch on the summit, we headed down the same way we climbed up and went to the north side through a saddle in the mountain for another viewpoint. After returning to Sunset Field we socialized over some refreshments for a bit. All did really good for this different type of hike.

WORK HIKE NEAR MCAFEE KNOB NOVEMBER 11

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Mark Ferrell, Sue Terwilliger, Leah Clemens, Kevin Moore, Jim Beeson, Caleb Fort



It was a cool, sunny Veteran's Day when we headed back up Catawba Mountain. At the worksite, above the fire road we got to work adding rock steps. We had six new steps in by lunch.

After lunch we focused on removing rocks and roots from the trail. We also cleared several water bars. Everybody worked very hard and found the work very rewarding. Many day hikers and backpackers passed by in the afternoon. By the end of the day we reached the power line crossing, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the top of the mountain.

TAR JACKET RIDGE, MT. PLEASANT LOOP, AND COLE MOUNTAIN NOVEMBER 16

Angela Butters, Chris Gillespie, Doug Knighton, Josiah Leonard (Leader), Julie Petruska, Jenny Steding, Jason Thompson

This hike was a re-do from October as that hike was cold, damp, and foggy without any of the spectacular views. We met at the Daleville Park & Ride and had an uneventful drive to Hog Camp Gap. Thanks to Doug for being our other driver. The only hiccup of the day occurred when my car wouldn't re-start when we reached the trailhead, though we decided to deal with it after the hike.

We started with a warm-up hike to the top of Tar Jacket Ridge and back. There were nice views of Mt. Pleasant and Cole Mountain, and it was a good overview of the entire hike. After retreating back to the gap, we next did the Mt. Pleasant Loop. We did the loop clockwise to allow more time for morning mist to burn off, and it was a moderate climb to Pompey Mountain and then Mt. Pleasant itself. This time, the views were gorgeous from the dual-peaked, craggy summit. We had an early lunch at the east summit, then explored the west summit on our way out.

The final leg of our journey was an out-and-back to the open meadow ridge of Cole Mountain. The views were spectacular from that ridge, also, and it is difficult to

think of any hike in Virginia with so many great views except for perhaps Mt. Rogers. We took a leisurely stroll over the summit, then retraced our steps back to the gap and parking area. Luckily, my car fired right back up without having to jump the battery, and a stop at Advance Auto in Buena Vista revealed that one of the terminals was very loose -- perhaps as a result of the rough road up to the gap. Thanks to everyone for a great, 10-mile hike on a beautiful day.

THREE RIDGES LOOP FROM THE TYE RIVER NOVEMBER 17

Josiah Leonard (Leader), Meagan LoBuglio, Wilma Vargas

This trip was very exciting -- almost too exciting! After an uneventful drive on 81 and a stop at McDonald's, we began the drive over the Blue Ridge on Rt. 56. Unbeknownst to us, the area had experienced freezing fog and ice on that frigid morning (this was the same morning as a terrible ice-related bus crash at nearby Afton Gap). At first, it was just pretty seeing glaze in the trees, but then my car was sliding in the curves on black ice! Rt. 56 can be a harrowing road even with ideal conditions, but it became outright terrifying in those conditions. I took it slow, though, and we made it to the Appalachian Trail crossing at the Tye River even if our nerves may not have!

The hike started by crossing the river on a suspension bridge then a steady climb to the Mau-Har Trail, which is three very hard

miles of hiking. The trail climbs steeply over a ridge, drops steeply to Campbell Creek, and then weaves through rough terrain along the creek until climbing steeply to Maupin Field Shelter. We enjoyed several waterfalls, some of the trees had a heavy glaze of ice, and we even had a few snow flurries. We had lunch at the shelter with a group of campers from New Jersey, though the steady cold wind coming up the hollow chilled our bones despite their campfire.

After lunch, we continued to climb, this time on the AT approaching Three Ridges. The north approach to the mountain is certainly easier than the south slope, but it was still tiring, especially after having climbed all morning. We reached the main viewpoint about ten minutes before a very thick fog bank swept in and obscured the view. We had a couple of other nice views on the south slope as we descended steeply.

After seeing a bear run straight up a steep hillside shortly after Harper Creek Shelter, we completed the loop. We hiked much of the final 1.7 miles in the dark with headlamps and cell phone flashlights, but we made it back to the parking lot without any big spills. Daring fate but realizing that the alternate route would be extremely long, we drove back up the Blue Ridge on Rt. 56, but by then the ice had melted and the road had been salted. We celebrated our very long day by stopping at Foot of the Mountain Cafe near Arcadia for a sumptuous dinner.

Special congratulations to Meagan for completing this hard route, especially on her very first RATC group hike! We only covered about 12.7 miles, but the elevation change was staggering!

WORK HIKE NEAR MCAFEE KNOB NOVEMBER 25

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Georgia Shaurette, Kevin Moore, Chuck Coole, Caleb Fort, Mark Farrell

Today we were working on a section of trail just below the old fire road near the top of the mountain. Parts of this section were in pretty rough shape. The hike in to the work site is longer each week as we work our way up to the knob. We split up into two groups and started looking for rocks to put in as steps. Suitable rocks were hard to find nearby and we had to carry some as far as 100 yards. There were only a handful of hikers today passing by. By the end of the day we had installed 9 rock steps. This brings our total of new steps installed to 142 on 15 work hikes up on McAfee Knob in the past four months. We have put in over 800 hours on this project so far.



WORK HIKE NEAR MCAFEE KNOB DECEMBER 2

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Tommy Hambrick, Sue Terwilliger, Mark Farrell, Jim Beeson, Dave Horst

Today was the 16th work hike up on McAfee Knob. We began the project back on August 12. The temperature that day got up to the low 40s. Starting out on the trail today it was 32 degrees. Overnight a light layer of snow had been added to the upper sections of the mountain. As with the other work hikes on McAfee we split up into two groups and began installing steps and pulling out rock and root obstructions on the trail. By mid-morning it began to snow again and the wind picked up. By noon the wind was blowing about 25 miles per hour and the snow was blowing sideways where we were working. We decided to make it an early day. Despite the severe weather we added eight stone steps and rehabbed about 300 yards of trail. We saw just three hikers during the day.



CARVINS COVE TROUGH/GAUNTLET LOOP DECEMBER 6

Maya Bohler, (leader), Mary Harshfield (co-leader) AA Reid, Rita Krasnow, Jennifer Frye, Kevin Moore, Diane Moch, Jeff Dean, Angela Butters, Madeleine Taylor

A group of 15 showed up for this hike on a cloudy day, including Cody, an Australian Shephard dog. Cody was the best behaved dog I ever met which was no surprise when we learned that his owner Jeff used to be a dog trainer. We also had two people from Lynchburg join us. Some of the group met us at the Orange Market, and several at the Timberview parking area. In the future, I will ask everybody to meet us at the Orange Market so as not to take up a lot of parking space at the trailhead with extra cars.

We climbed up to Brushy Mountain, a moderate climb of less than an hour. Then we followed the Brushy Mountain Road along the ridge. At the place called "Barbeque Grill" we stopped for a break and a snack.



After another short distance on the ridge we intersected with the Gauntlet trail that took us down to Carvins Cove Lake.

At the lake we took a little detour and followed the Lakeside trail for a short distance until we found a pleasant lunch spot on the shore. As we started to head back towards the parking area along the Horse Pen trail it started to sprinkle. Everybody speeded up their pace, and we made it back to the cars before any serious rain.

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



Plenty of food at the December Pot Luck

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



This photo of the RATC McAfee Knob workcrew on December 16 received over 50,000 views on Facebook, 865 reactions, 186 comments and 114 shares. If you too would like to be a celebrity, go on Meetup.com and take part in a RATC work hike.

WORK HIKE AT MCAFEE KNOB DECEMBER 16

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Caleb Fort, Bruce Agnew, Mark Farrell, Jim Beeson, Dave Horst

Today we were going to work on the last stretch of trail up to the Knob. The weather was seasonal for this time of year. The cool temperatures are great to work in. As usual we split up into two groups and began adding steps and clearing rock bars and

obstructions on the trail. Just a few hikers passed by during the day. At lunch we all went up on the Knob to get a group photo. Luckily a passing hiker was able to take a photo of all of us. By the end of the day we had installed 10 rock steps and a rock water bar.

We will spend a couple more work hikes working on a few spots on the trail below the fire road. We bypassed these because we needed to bring in materials in to fix these trail sections. Not with standing that, we were all elated to reach the top of mountain today.

WORK HIKE AT MCAFEE KNOB DECEMBER 30

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Bill Neilan, Ron Bradbury, Chuck C, Mark Farrell, Jim Beeson, Paula Radulski, Tommy Yambrick

Today we fixed several areas just north of route 311 that we bypassed when working on this section of trail earlier this year. With a fairly large group we were able to split up into two work groups. We were able to work on four separate sections of the trail. By the end of the day we had installed 10 rock steps and six wood steps. This ends our trail improvement project on McAfee Knob. We will go back there later this year for a couple more work hikes to correct a few minor problem areas.

This was our last work of the year. In 44 work hikes we installed a total of 355 steps, including 176 on the trail up to McAfee Knob.



HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THE ROANOKE APPALA- CHIAN TRAIL CLUB (RATC)?

Volunteer: RATC is an all volunteer organization that maintains over 120 miles and 16 shelters on the Appalachian Trail. We are always seeking individuals to assist with trail/shelter maintenance, lead hikes, ridgerunner duties and perform other leadership roles. All club functions are posted on Meet up - www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Appalachian-Trail-Club

License Plates: Order a Virginia Appalachian Trail Conservancy license plate to support AT activities in Virginia. \$15 of the license plate fees goes directly to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which distributes these funds to Virginia AT Clubs, including RATC. Several significant RATC trail maintenance projects in 2019 were funded from these proceeds. Order yours through Virginia DMV - www.dmv.virginia.gov

Online: Visit ratc.org to join – www.ratc.org/membership or to make an online contribution – www.ratc.org/donation RATC is a 501(c) (3) organization and donations are tax-deductible.

Shop: RATC t-shirts, hats and other merchandise are available at RATC store - www.ratc.org/store or at Outdoor Trails in Daleville, VA

Amazon: Give through Amazon Smile, Amazon's way of supporting nonprofit organizations when you purchase online. The Amazon Smile website works the same way Amazon.com works, has the same products and uses your same passwords. The only difference is that Amazon donates 0.5% of your purchase directly to the non-profit of your choice (Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club) if you enter through the Amazon Smile portal – www.smile.amazon.com

APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER AND APP

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy started publishing “The Register” newsletter and blog again for A.T. volunteers. The Register serves as a platform for sharing A.T. management information, reminders for A.T. maintainers, a support mechanism for sharing information between volunteers, and a notification system for upcoming volunteer training events. In the current issue of the newsletter (www.shorturl.at/qrs38), A.T. volunteers will find an opportunity to get the A.T. Guthook Guide smartphone app for free when they sign up **before February 14**. The Guthook guide is like having a map, a streamlined guidebook, and a place to find crowd-sourced information on the Trail. ATC Regional Director Morgan Somerville says of the app, “it’s an asset that volunteers

will find useful.” People with interest in getting the bi-monthly The Register newsletter sent to their inbox in the future can use the subscribe button in the upper left corner of the current issue.

“If you are like me, you already have this app on your phone. Once you load the app and download the maps for our section on your phone, you can use it anywhere you get a GPS signal, even while operating in Airplane mode. I found it invaluable when hiking our section in 2016, even though I always often carry a paper map as well. It enables you to see exactly where you are,” wrote Diana Christopolus

FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO BACKPACKER FOR ALL RATC MEMBERS

We are pleased to announce that RATC members will receive an annual subscription to Backpacker Magazine in 2020 at no additional cost to RATC or RATC members. Backpacker is a bi-monthly magazine of wilderness travel, offering practical, “you can do it, here’s how” advice to help you enjoy every trip. Filled with the best places, gear, and information for all kinds of hiking and camping excursions, each issue delivers trip planners and stunning color photography.

Receipt of Backpacker Magazine will be activated when you renew your 2020 RATC membership, i.e., May renewal will activate Backpacker Magazine beginning in May 2020. RATC Lifetime members will begin receiving Backpacker Magazine immediately. If you are unsure about your RATC



renewal date please contact RATC Treasurer, Terri McClure – treasurer@ratc.org or RATC Membership Coordinator, Steve Urbaniak – membership@ratc.org

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Regional Partnership Committee Alternate,

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201-787-3139, vicepresident@ratc.org

Roanoke College Liaison, Conner McBane

540-525-6812, cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ron Bradbury

Todd and Marry Chisolm

Leah Clemens

Catherine Cotrupi

Robert Eng

Genesis Garcia

Amanda Givens

David and Teresa Gorman

Erik and Barbara Gray

David Guzman

Joshua Kloehn

Doug Knighton

Timothy Lewis

Caroline Little

Stephen McGuire

William McKewon

Mary Nickolich

Paula Radulski

William and Jenn Savage

Holly Slivers

Michael Stamper

Bob Strickland

Andrew Szabo

Tunnel Vision

Sunny Wasiela

OTHER IMPORTANT CONTACTS

SW & Central VA ATC Regional Director,

Andrew Downs, 540-904-4354

adowns@appalachiantrail.org

The Mid-week Crew, Bill Gordge

540-774-3016, bgordge@cox.net

Roanoke Valley Greenways Liaison, Diana

Christopulos

540-387-0930, dianak16@earthlink.net

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

RATC membership includes an annual subscription to Backpacker Magazine, at no cost to you. RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible minus \$6 for Backpacker Magazine.