

# TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Fall 2022

*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.*



## NEW: McAfee Knob shuttle from I-81 Exit 140 Park and Ride

By Diana Christopulos

We had a celebration on September 1, 2022: a ribbon cutting for a new McAfee Knob Shuttle Service. The event was well-attended by local governments and AT partners as well as RATC members Bill Neilan, Anne Kohinke, Brian Boggs and Diana Christopulos. Take a look at the beautiful new bus! Please give the shuttle a try and provide feedback to the provider, as we know this is a pilot program.

In the past decade, hiker traffic to McAfee has exceeded over 50,000 visitors per year, and the parking lot was never designed to handle so much visitation. Thankfully, Roanoke County has stepped up to provide a shuttle service from a local company, Ride Source, using a grant from a state agency. Details

including Frequently Asked Questions are available on the [county's website](#) [<here>](#).

Here are the basics:

>>The shuttle will run from September 2, 2022, through November 27, 2022 and then again from March 3, 2023, through November 26, 2023.

>>Available on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and holiday Mondays.

>>First shuttle will leave the I 81 Park and Ride near Exit 140 in Salem at 7 am.

>>Last shuttle will leave the McAfee Knob trailhead at 6:45 pm in September, 6:15 pm in October and 4:45 pm in November

>>Overnight parking is allowed at the Park and Ride.

>>Buses will run every 30 minutes.

>>Tickets must be purchased [online](#) and cost \$5 each way plus processing fee. <https://mcafee-shuttle.com/>

RATC has been an important partner in helping to establish this service. Our McAfee Knob Task Force has helped document the increase in hiker usage and strains on parking capacity. Our representatives have helped organize and participated in numerous Visitor Use Management planning sessions with the National Park Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, local governments and other partners. A shuttle feasibility study by the NPS was critical in securing funding for this project, and Roanoke County has really stepped up by playing the central role.

See you on the shuttle!





President’s report:  
A perfect storm *by Bill Neilan*

Every now and again a perfect storm occurs wherein multiple weather systems join together and create one big problem. Annual changes of membership on the Board of Directors of one or two members are routine, but this year fate has decided that we have a Perfect (Personnel) Storm with RATC’s President, Vice President, Trail Supervisor, and Treasurer all stepping down. These volunteer leadership roles all have duties which are instrumental in maintaining and superintending RATC’s 120 miles of trail. A variety reasons-- full-time work responsibilities, health issues and illnesses, and priorities of family--are prompting these four leaders to complete their terms of service in March, 2023 and to not consider reelection. Few of the thousands of hikers who enjoy the trail likely realize that an enormous amount of volunteer energy is applied each year to maintain the resource they enjoy, and thus how crucial it is for new volunteers to step up.

The RATC is a club of over 650 members. As a club we have always managed to pull together and solve the issues before us, and I expect that the current situation will be no different. We need a few members that are willing to invest some time and energy to move our club forward. The exiting board members have all dedicated their energies to making our club what it is today and each will work with their replacement to keep us as the best AT Club on the trail. All it takes is for YOU to decide that it’s the time for YOU to volunteer to help steer our club into the next year(s).

A good example of RATC togetherness and cohesion was the recent Corn Boil. <photos, right> After three years of Covid-19 we pulled off a very successful event this year. A handful of volunteers and more than forty members came together to thank the trail maintainers of the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) organization. There was plenty of good food and lots of good cheer. Every club activity and every event only happen because RATC members give of their time and energy to plan and implement them.

Now would be a good time for YOU to step up and offer your knowledge and enthusiasm so that we have a seamless transition into the next RATC year. Remember, a club is only as good as its members are willing to make it by volunteer participation. If you are looking for a tangible way to support the RATC and to give back to the AT, please consider being a club leader. Contact me via email and we can discuss all the details. ([president@ratc.org](mailto:president@ratc.org))

Let’s talk!



Board Members and Officers		
President	Bill Neilan	<a href="mailto:president@ratc.org">president@ratc.org</a>
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Roanoke College Liaison	Conner McBane	<a href="mailto:cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org">cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org</a>
RATC Archivist	Diana Christopulos	
ATC President’s Leadership Circle	Diana Christopulos	



Corn Boil 2022



From the by-laws:  
Job description basics

President and Vice President

- President
- Preside over regular meetings of the Board and call special meetings when required.
  - Appoint Standing and Special Committees.
  - Be the principal representative for the Club in external affairs.
  - Coordinate and guide the Club functions.
  - Provide the tie-breaker vote on issues before the Board.

Vice-President

- Represent the President in all functions either in the absence or resignation of the President or when delegated by the President.

Treasurer

- Prepare the Club annual budget and monitor the agreement of expenditures with the budget.
- Alert the Board on significant budget expense problems with recommendations for corrections.
- Provide a monthly financial summary for the Board meeting.
- Respond to inquiries about Club activities and to membership inquiries.
- Maintain the Club paid-membership list with special attention to life and complimentary memberships.
- Prepare the corporation annual report for submittal to the State Corporation Commission.

Trail Supervisor

- Supervise the location and maintenance of that section of the Appalachian Trail assigned to the Club by the ATC and other related facilities.
- Provide each section of the Trail with a responsible monitor through a team of trail overseers.
- Maintain an inventory of trail maintenance tools.
- Report to the ATC and Jefferson National Forest on work party participation.
- Prepare an annual budget for Trail maintenance expenses.



Trail Supervisor's report  
by Mike Vaughn

I'd like to welcome the following new maintainers that have started since July 1. Here is a list of them and the sections they are working on:

- Dave Grimm: Sinking Creek Mountain (south end)
- Jim Mesler: Salt Pond Road to Wilson Creek
- Ken Bunning: Wilson Creek to Black Horse Gap
- Jeff Hoepfner: North Mountain

We now have nearly 120 maintainers on the 150 miles of trail that the club maintains. We are always looking for new maintainers. The trail maintainers do such tasks as clipping, blazing, and clearing ditches across the trail of debris. In addition, they report any major blowdowns across the trail. You can find out more about the duties of a trail maintainer on our web site.

Contact me if you are interested in being a trail maintainer. My cell number is 540-992-1350 and email is [mikeva999@yahoo.com](mailto:mikeva999@yahoo.com).

Each year we report the number of hours worked on the trail to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Park Service. The reporting period is tied to the federal fiscal year, from October to September. Club members put in 5,400 hours over the past year. These hours include work done on the 16 shelters on the section of trail maintained by the club. I'd like to thank all of trail workers for all of the hard work they put in over the past year. I regularly hear good comments from hikers about the condition of our trails.

This summer we completed a trail maintenance project on Kelly Knob. Some photos are included. We put in about 30 steps and step

stones on the project. The sections of trail we worked on are much improved. continued>>



Back in May two trainers from the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) came up from North Carolina and conducted a training session on the use of crosscut saws. Eight of our maintainers attended the course and are now certified to use a crosscut saw to clear blowdowns along the trail. Parts of the 120 miles of the AT that the club maintains goes through four different federally designated wilderness areas. The use of mechanized equipment, such as chainsaws, is not permitted in wilderness areas. Having certified crosscut sawyers is essential for clearing blowdowns in these backcountry areas.

On a separate note, after the training was completed, the SAWS people presented the club with three high-quality crosscut saws, along with some other related equipment, such as axes. This was a very generous gift from SAWS and it is much appreciated. Our sawyers will put the saws to good use. The SAWS organization is a wonderful group of people that does outstanding work in the national forests.



Before chainsaws, man-powered tools felled many a tree and cleared many a forest. Like plowing with a team of mules, the use of two-man crosscuts saws is a fading skill, often practiced as a hobby or part of a sport. Neither hobby nor sport, but necessity drives the occasional use of man-powered saws on the AT. Cross cut saws may be packed to and from blowdowns in multiple, easy(ish)-to-carry pieces. Different pattern of saw teeth facilitate different cuts which a sawyer might encounter.

Young Volunteers  
by Homer and Therese Witcher

We would like to give credit to our 2 grandson's, Darin and Ryan Witcher for their outstanding community service. Along with their father, Kevin, they have helped out on numerous trail projects over the years. On July 23rd, Homer was out walking on the trail south of Daleville and saw yet another abandoned campsite. He made a call to his son, Kevin, and within 24 hours, the site was cleaned up. We collected over 10 bags of trash and hauled out a shopping cart full of litter.

The cleanup crew consisted of Homer, Therese, Kevin, Darin and Ryan Witcher.







Shelter Supervisor’s report

by Homer and Therese Witcher  
*Lambert’s Meadow shelter re-roofing project*  
September 10, 2022

- Attending: Homer and Therese Witcher (leaders)
- Kimberly Murphy
- Tom Johns
- Jennifer Morse
- Mu Chon
- Scott Polack
- Adam Day
- Kathryn Plunkett
- Landon Alex Plunkett
- Jonathan McGlumph

- Carol Rowlett
- Skip Schroeder
- Jamous Bitrick
- Stasia Balica
- Judy Russell
- Joy Joseph
- Suzanne Neal
- Nathan Peterson
- Jim Webb

The threat of afternoon rain did not postpone this project, it only made everyone determined to finish early. At 7:30 AM, several of us headed up the mountain to start taking off the shingle roof. By the time the main group arrived, the shingle roof was off and was ready for the metal roof. While Nathan

and Adam worked on the roof, the rest of the crew carried shingles, constructed the new picnic table and cleaned up the site. Work was completed before the heavy rains arrived and everyone was off the mountain by 1 PM--another project completed due to having a great crew!

A special thanks to Nathan Peterson, Jerry Green and Rhonda Green for transporting all of the metal and lumber to the top of the mountain. Also, a special thanks to the eight Potomoc Appalachian Trail Club members who drove down from northern Virginia to assist with this project.

Hikemaster reports

by Jennifer Frye

Hike: Apple Orchard Cornelius Creek Loop  
June 17, 2022

Hikers: Fred Meyer (leader), Bob Peckman, Kris Peckman, Fran Nowick

It was a wonderful sunny day with a nice breeze. We met at Sunset Field overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. On the way to Apple Orchard Falls we encountered a big tree which had fallen cross the trail because of a recent storm. After visiting the falls, Fran slipped on a rock and as a result, he had trou-

ble bending his leg. His leg was bandaged to avoid bending his leg. Everyone made it out safely into their cars and returned home safely.

Murray Run, Shrine Hill and Fishburn Park  
August 12, 2022

Hikers: David Wickersham (leader), David Grimm, Matthew Ulmer

Hike: Fullhardt Knob  
Date: 8/17/22

Hikers: Carol Rowlett (leader), Maya Bohler, Hilary Williams, Ana Anderson, Delores Locke, Madeleine Taylor, Joseph Brabant

After meeting up on the Blue Ridge Parkway near Curry Gap, we hiked up Salt Pond Road. We went past the AT crossing and continued along Salt Pond Road to the gate on the other side of the mountain. We then took a short steep side trail up and joined the AT for the climb to Fullhardt Knob Shelter. We met one man camping at the shelter. He was doing the AT in bits and pieces in various states. We also met another day hiker who traveled through without stopping to chat much. These were the only people we met the whole hike! After having lunch at the shelter, we traveled down the AT to the crossing at Salt Pond Road and continued down the road to our cars. It was a beautiful day for a relatively gentle 7.9 mile hike with friends.

Hike: McAfee Knob via Campbell Shelter  
Date: 8/23/22

Hikers: Carol Rowlett (leader), Jim Mesler, Dave Grimm, Madeleine Taylor, Sandy Arthur, Beth Macher, Matthew Ulmer, Delores Locke

After meeting up at the McAfee Knob parking lot, we did a long walk-and-talk hike up the fire road, going past the AT crossing and continuing along the fire road toward Campbell Shelter. We saw several deer with fawns along the way. Unfortunately, we zigged when we should have zagged and

missed the shelter! We made a brief pause along the trail for snacks and such, and then made the climb up to McAfee Knob. By stopping at the far edge of the Knob, we were able to have lunch away from the usual McAfee Knob crowds. Then we walked on to the regular lookout points, where we met a couple of ridgerunners. One was spending the day trailrunning, while the other was chatting up the visitors and looking after conditions. We then traveled down the AT to the fire road crossing, where our group split, with some people going down the fire road and some continuing along the AT down to

the parking lot. It was a beautiful day, with colorful mushrooms and startlingly white ghost pipe all along the trail.

Carvins Cove  
September 16 2022

Hikers: Janice Metzger and others

This is a 6.5 mile hike on Four gorges, Brushy mountain, Songbird, and Rattlin’ run trails. Rattlin’ run is rated as difficult and the others moderate, but we took a moderate pace (2-2.5 mph) and stopped for water breaks.





**Hike: Carvins Cove: Horsepen ~ Gauntlet ~ Trough ~ Horsepen**  
**October 12, 2023**

**Hikers: Jennifer Frye (Leader), Dawn Lamb, Peg Alderman, David Grimm, Ray Gaut, Delores Locke Liz Mize, Beth Macher, Gary Adams, Madeleine Taylor**

We met at the Orange Market at 8:30 and carpooled to the Timber-view parking lot. The hike started on Horsepen Trail. A pretty, flat trail which was a little over 1.2 miles where we intersected with the Gauntlet Trail.



Gauntlet is a somewhat strenuous trail about over 2 miles up to Brushy Mountain. We stopped a couple of time for everyone to

catch up and catch their breath. When we reached Brushy Mountain Trail we took a break, had a snack and took pictures. After the break, we hiked along the ridgeline of Brushy Mountain over a mile to Trough Trail. Once everyone was there we hiked down Trough over



a mile down to Horsepen and a short distance to our cars! It was a great day for a hike, the beautiful fall day!! Colors are beginning to show! It started out sunny, but became cloudy during the hike. The temperature was perfect! It was a good day!



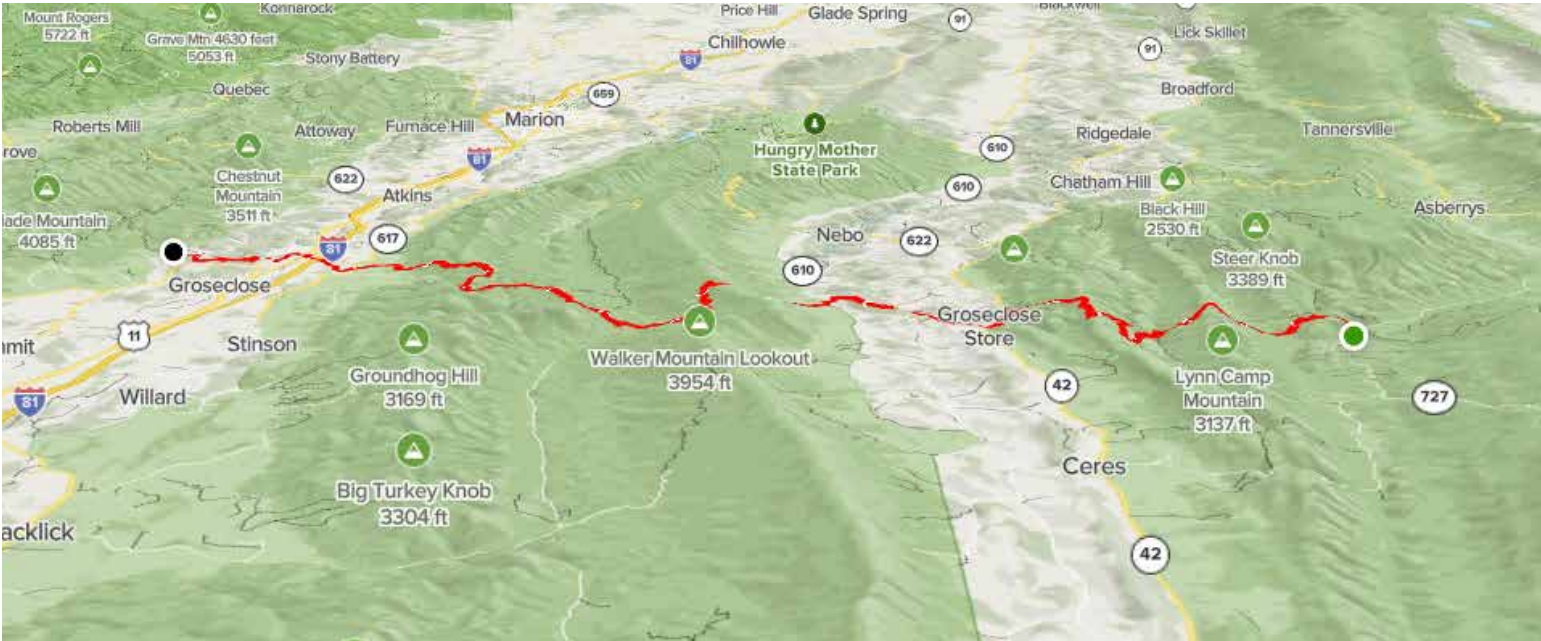
**Hike: AT - Route 625 (Near Ceres) to The Settlers Museum**  
**July 22-24**

**Hikers: Keli and Ron Bradbury**

Shuttle Bubba met us at the Settlers Museum where we dropped our car in a large parking lot; the shuttle ride back to our starting point was long and on the expensive side, but Shuttle Bubba was prompt in his arrival, knowledgeable, and friendly. (Gas prices were quite high in July, at no fault of Bubba.)



About a mile into this southbound hike, the bridge over Lick Creek has been washed out since 2020. The low water level we encountered made this less of a risk and more of a hassle (boots off, sandals on) but a dry crossing was impossible. A rope across the creek was available as a handhold, but was not necessary when we crossed.



After the drive to the museum and the shuttle to the trail head, we didn't start hiking until 5PM, so our first campsite was only about 4 miles south at Lynn Camp Creek. Multiple flat, comfortable tent sites were available beside abundant water in a creek. Having seen two bears in this area on an earlier hike, we took care to hang our food overnight.

The second day on the trail was arduous; substantial elevation gains paired with very hot temperatures (90s) required frequent water breaks. Hiker comments in the hiking app "Farout" helped us find our second campsite at the intersection of the AT and the Crawfish Trail. A nearby creek was audible and not otherwise marked, but water was again ample. An evening storm brought wind, thunder and



lightning, but no rain. We enjoyed a second campsite to ourselves.

Our third and final day on the trail took us past the ruins of the Davis Path Shelter, which according to Whiteblaze.net was removed in 2008. Water sources were less abundant until closing in on the Interstate 81 and The Lee Highway. The views heading south into pastures were pretty nice, but the a mile or two on each side of I-81 was less inspirational. We met one northbound day hiker, an over-the-road truck trucker heading up I-81 who was taking her mandatory break from driving.

The overall length of this hike was about 22 miles. An approximate 3D rendering of the hike via All-Trails shows the trail transiting 4 sets of ridges and valleys.



**Hike: AT - Route 624 to Route 620  
August 27**

**Hikers: Keli Bradbury, Evan Jessie  
and Wyatt**

Although this hike passed Dragon's Tooth, we primarily set out to cover another chunk of the RATC's 120 miles section; these start and end points preempted any parking issues at the Dragon's Tooth lot. The first two miles of seven ascend steadily to Dragon's Tooth; lots of hikers shared the trail. Continuing southbound from there, the trail descended gradually back to the car—an awesome 5 mile descent.

Dragon Tooth's stunning views are well-known, but further along the trail atop Cove Mountain are several more very scenic spots.

Toward the end of our hike, we encountered multiple large piles of stones; we imagined they were once plucked from an open field by a farmer to enable cultivation. The trail passed a blue-blazed path to the Pickles Branch Shelter, but we did not visit the shelter.

Wyatt enjoyed a dip in Trout Creek just before we finished our hike; he loves a good creek or river frolic!



**From the Archives...**

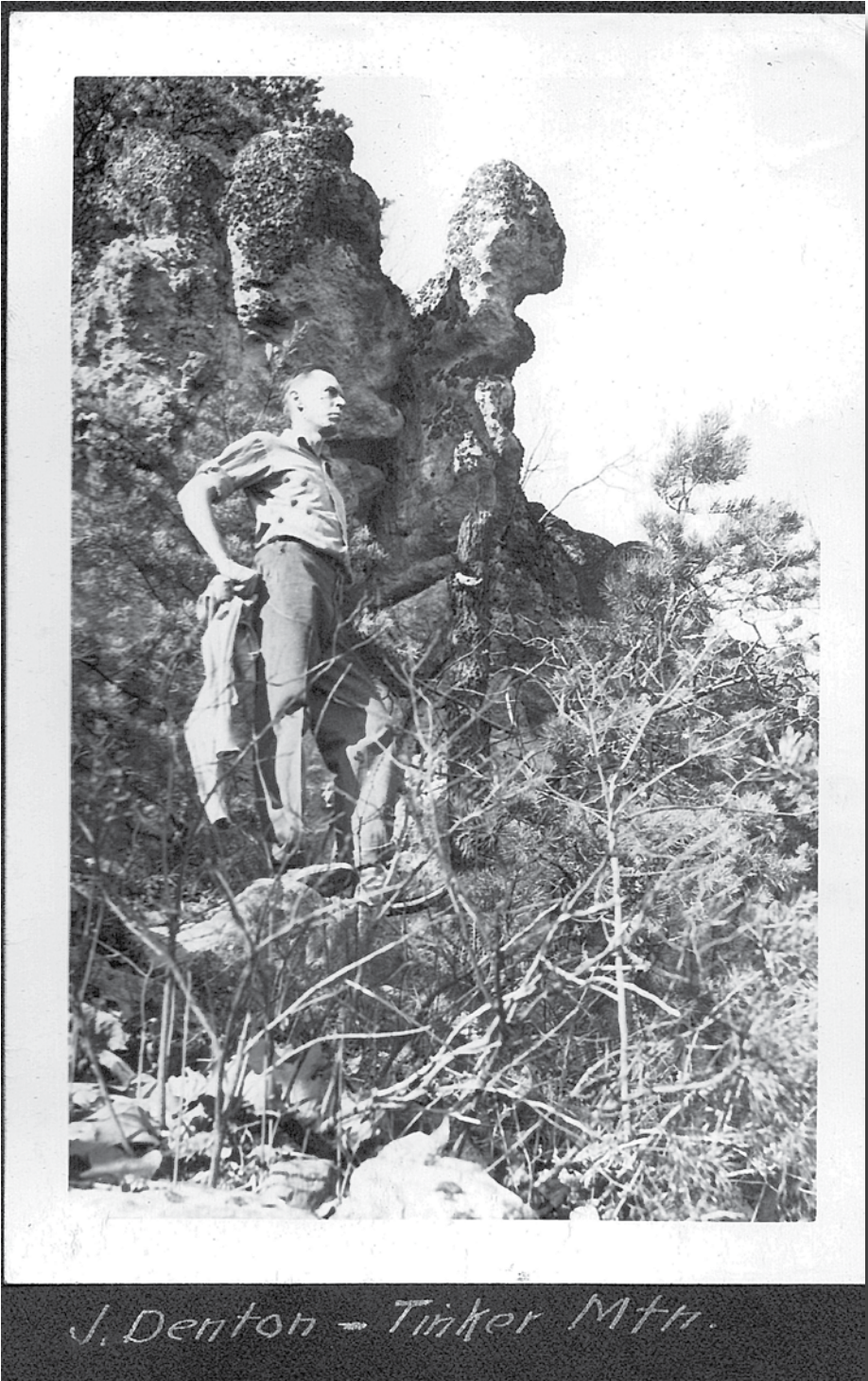
**How Scorched Earth Gap  
Got Its Name**

Diana Christopulos, RATC Archivist  
Archives: 1950s

Hikers using side trails to access Tinker Cliffs and Dragon's Tooth encounter places with interesting names - Scorched Earth Gap and Lost Spectacles Gap. Both received their names in the 1950s

from two legendary RATC members, Thomas Campbell and Jimmy Denton. On June 8, 1990, after Campbell had passed away, Denton wrote to the RATC telling the story of the names. He was apparently sharing the information for use in the next edition of the AT Guidebook for Central Virginia.

It goes like this:



*I am about the only person who knows [the story of] the names "Scorched Earth Gap" and "Lost Spectacles Gap."*

*First both of these names took place before 1958 when we 2 left the area [Jim and Molly Denton].*

*Give Thomas Campbell credit for "Scorched Earth Gap." On a Sunday hike we took an unscheduled side trip to climb Julis Knob. After looking over the Mtn. I decided to get off the fastest way possible. I bushwhacked using an occasional leap. One lady on the trip decided to keep up with me and started trying to keep up. I got to the Gap in good order but about 10 minutes later - here she comes, all scratched up and cussing me for trying to leave her. Tom Campbell was standing there and hearing all of it. Tom named the Gap "Scorched Earth Gap."*

*The "Lost Spectacles Gap" was named by me. Tom and I were maintaining trail. When we were in the Gap between Rawie's Rest and Dragon Tooth, Tom suddenly notices that his spectacles were gone from his brow. We hunted for about an hour but could not find the glasses. I gave the Gap "Lost Spectacles Gap." The trail in those days climbed Cove Mtn. directly up the Mtn. from the Gap. The AT did its climb and then turned left to Dragon Tooth, then descended to Miller Cove.*

*You may want to use this.*

*Jim  
James W. Denton  
315 Jamestown Rd.  
Front Royal, Va 22630*



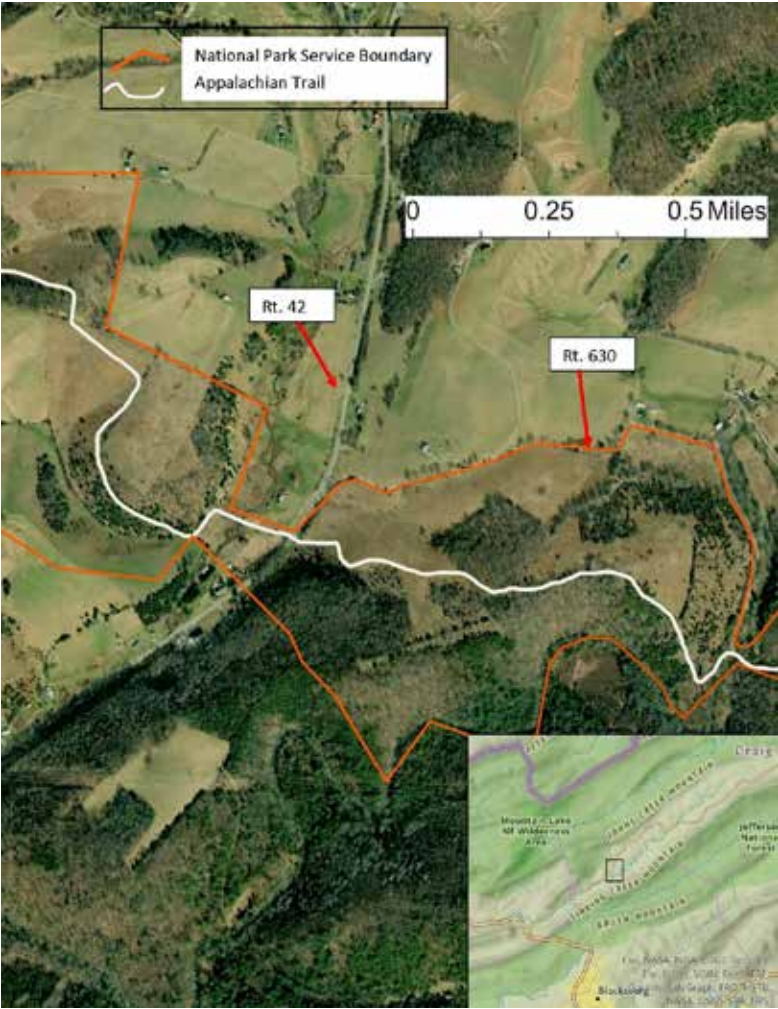


# Conservation Supervisor’s Report

by Tom McAvoy

In Craig county between north and south of Route 42 and Rt 630 the National Park Service owns approximately 180 acres that the AT traverses. Over half of this land is open fields. The remainder is oak/hickory hardwood forests. The open fields are early-succes-sional habitat and forest provide

unique and diverse habitats for the local flora and fauna. However, this property has become invad-ed by many non-native invasive species, tree-of-heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, Autumn olive, *Elaeg-nus umbellate*, bush honeysuckle, Lonicera maackii, Japanese bar-berly, *Berberis thunbergii*, spotted knapweed, *Centaurea stoebe*, and more.



This past July Conner Mc-Bane with the ATC contracted with a company in Charlottesville to treat these inva-sive species. The herbicide Triclopyr was used. This herbicide kills broadleaf plant species. It affects actively growing plants by mimicking, auxin, a plant growth hor-mone. Plants rapidly take in Triclopyr through leaves and roots. It causes un-

controlled plant growth and plant death. After absorbing the herbi-cide, plants die within weeks. This herbicide has not been found to cause cancer, is not absorbed well through the skin, and may only cause skin irritation. However the salt from Triclopyr can cause sever eye damage. Triclopyr is not toxic to bees, birds, and fish and breaks down in soil in 8-46 days. If these species are left uncontrolled these invasive species can quickly dom-inate these open areas and se-verely reduce the beneficial native species.

One of the largest known popula-tions of American barberry (*Ber-beris canadensis*) is present in this area. There are also large popula-tions of mountain mint (*Pycnan-themum* species;) this species is very attractive to pollinators and nectar feeders like Tiger swallow-tails (*Papilio glaucus*), silver spot-ted skippers (*Epargyreus clarus*), and hummingbird hawk-moths (*Macroglossum stellatarum*).

Several species of bumble bees including the black and gold bum-bly bee (*Bombus auricomus*) and the common eastern bumble bee,



(*Bombus impatiens*) were feeding on the moun-tain mint while we were working in this area. The hummingbird hawk-moth is a clear winged moth (no colorful scales on its wings) that looks and behaves like a hummingbird. There are also large populations of common milkweed (*Ascepias syriaca*). This species is critical as a food source for larvae of the endangered monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).The high diversity of plants in this area also provides nectar for the mon-arch butterfly and many other nectar dependent species.

Preserving areas like this are critical to providing food and shelter for our native species. The vast majority of the open land in the Appalachians are over grazed pastures and hay fields that are cut several times a year. These areas are great for livestock but provide very little food and shelter for native species and have very low densities and flora and fauna. These ‘old fields’ habitats that Conner McBane and the ATC are preserving provide an essential oasis for our native species. The AT is not only a world class hiking trail but also provides and preserves critical habitat for native and threatened species.



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 RATC
  - 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	
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15	
	Family # of years	x \$20	
City	State	Zip	Individual life membership x \$250
			Family life membership x \$300
Phone		Donation	\$
Email		Total Amount Enclosed	\$

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to “RATC” or use PayPal at [ratc.org](http://ratc.org)

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:  
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024  
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