

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Summer 2023

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.

RATC member receives environmental scholarship

On June 14, 2023, Emma S. Land of Roanoke received the first environmental scholarship awarded by The Kiwanis Club of Roanoke. The \$5,000 award is aimed at area college students majoring in an environment-related field. Ms. Land is extremely hard-working and dedicated - she worked almost full time to fund her college education, attended college full-time, and volunteered extensively. Ms. Land, a Raleigh Court neighborhood resident, attended Patrick Henry High School in Roanoke and graduated this May from Roanoke College with a B.S. degree in Environmental Studies. The Kiwanis scholarship will help her pursue an M.S. in Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia beginning fall 2023.

In her own words, Ms. Land wrote,

"As a kid, I was a self-proclaimed 'tree-hugger' who wanted to save



the planet through my various inventions that would rid the world of pollution. As I have grown older, I have come back to that desire to save the world through environmental initiatives.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have grown up in the Roanoke Valley, and it felt like a no-brainer when I finally decided to pursue my outdoor hobbies and passion for nature into an actual career. I distinctly remember thinking to myself while in my first Environmental Science class at Roanoke College, "Wow, THIS is exactly where I'm supposed to be" and I have never looked back since. I

think that The Eagles said it best, it really was a 'peaceful, easy feeling'.

"Getting involved in the local outdoor community has only strengthened my desire to help protect the local environment even more- as I have learned so much about native plants, trees, wildlife, and trail maintenance. Not only has my curiosity bloomed, but my connections with other people have as well. I have met some of the most kind-hearted people while volunteering for local organizations- including The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. I have spent many years of my life giving back to the community through volunteering, and it has given me deeper connections with the people, and world around me. The generosity of the Roanoke Kiwanis Club has given me the opportunity to be able to focus on my graduate studies, without the worry of finances. I am excited to start a new chapter in Georgia, but I will deeply miss the community and mountains I have gotten to know throughout my life."

RATC ANNUAL CORNBOIL

July 29, 2023, 5pm - 7:30pm
Catawba Community Center
4965 Catawba Creek Rd. Catawba, VA

Corn, chicken, drinks, and dinnerware provided

*Bring and share your favorite dish, along with your cherished trail stories (no additional cost)
Opportunities to volunteer for this event available on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)*

President’s Report:

By Homer Witcher

One of the greatest gifts the Ap-
palachian Trail has given me over
the last 39 years is the joy of doing
trail work. Trail work provides me
with a sense of purpose and a
chance to help make the Appala-
chian Trail a better experience. It
is very rewarding to step back and
look at a project that has been
completed and to think, I helped
make that happen. I also enjoy the
banter that we often have on work
hikes. My son, step-son & adopted
son, Adam, enjoy joking about who
is the number one son. Depending
on which one has recently helped
on the most work hikes, the title
changes.

Children of all ages benefit from
being in the outdoors. Our chil-
dren and grandchildren were on
the trail before they could walk
and are now active members of
RATC. When they were young, we
gave them tasks that they could
handle (picking up trash and
moving branches off the trail). We
also did fun activities like picking
(and eating) berries, playing in
the creek, having a campfire and
roasting marshmallows. As they
got older, they graduated to doing
tread work, cutting briers, clear-
ing trail, moving privies, replacing

roofs, etc. The trail has provided
many opportunities for our family
to work together and give back to
the community. In order to sur-
vive, RATC needs for more young
people to get involved in maintain-
ing the Appalachian trail.

Summer highlights:

- The Craig Creek bridge had to be removed due to safety concerns. The RATC crews put in stepping stones so that when the water is not high, hikers can cross the creek without having to remove their shoes or get their feet wet.
- There has been a lot of bear activity on the Appalachian Trail this year. The Washington and Jefferson National forests implemented a new food stor- age order for the Appalachian Trail that states all food, animal attractants and refuse must be properly stored at all times. Their recommendation is to use commercially made bear resistant canisters.
- RATC Corn Boil is scheduled for July 29th at the Catawba Com- munity Center from 5:30 - 8 PM. There will be an RATC work hike scheduled for that date since the Konnarock schedule had to be altered at the last minute. Please join us on the

- work hike or just please bring a side dish and/or a dessert. Let’s get together and en- joy a meal and an evening of fellowship.
- Our archivist, Diana Christopu- los has been working diligent- ly to get the RATC historical material scanned. In May, 21 boxes of RATC historical ma- terial were turned over to the Virginia Tech library.
 - The Triple Crown visitor use management plan will be open for public comment in August 2023. There is a public meeting on August 15 from 5-7 PM at the Salem Civic Center.
 - In 2024, work will begin on the VA 311 pedestrian bridge.
 - RATC will have a booth at Go Fest which is October 13 - 15th.



Board Members and Officers		
President	Therese Witcher	president@ratc.org
Vice President	Homer Witcher	vicepresident@ratc.org
Secretary	Susan Terwilliger	secretary@ratc.org
Treasurer	Jimmy Whitney	treasurer@ratc.org
Membership Coordinator	Cathy Butler	membership@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Bennett Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Therese Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Trail Supervisor	Jim Webb	trailsupervisor@ratc.org
Hikemaster	Carol Rowlett	hikemaster@ratc.org
Newsletter Editor	Ron Bradbury	blazer@ratc.org
Conservation Supervisor	Tom McAvoy	conservationsupervisor@ratc.org
Land Management Supervisor	Joey Johnson	landmanagement@ratc.org
Counselor	Erin Byers	counselor1@ratc.org
Counselor	Brian Boggs	counselor2@ratc.org
Counselor	Brendle Wolfe	counselor3@ratc.org
Counselor	Adam Day	counselor4@ratc.org
McAfee Knob Task Force Liaison	Brian Boggs	mcafeetaskforce@ratc.org
Webmaster	Jill Pennington	webmaster@ratc.org
Roanoke College Liaison	Conner McBane	cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org
RATC Archivist	Diana Christopulos	
Social Events Coordinator	Pamela and Josh Wolsey	

From the Archives...

Editor’s Note:

Anyone who has hiked up to Tin-
ker Cliffs from Catawba Road has
hiked along a blue-blazed trail
known as The Andy Layne Trail.
While scanning approximately 60
years of Trail Blazers for donation
to the library at Virginia Tech, this
tongue-in-cheek article of advice
for trail maintainers from 1989
clamored for reprinting.



Andy Layne and
his dog at Tinker
Cliffs, c. 1989.

ANCIENT WISDOM FOR
RATC TRAIL
MAINTAINERS

Source: *Legendary RATC
maintainer Andy Layne in the
Fall 1989 RATC Blazer.*
Listen up!

Tips, conceptions,
misconceptions, and
miscarriages for becoming a
better trail worker (the
abridged version), by Andy
Layne

Work through pain and
injury, the benefits of
quitten smoking and trail work
cannot be overlooked. Lift
weights, such as pulaskis.

You'll not be spected to
know nothin when you first
report so you'll be given
five minits to learn how, the
only scuse for not showin up
be for you to send somebody in
your place who is biggern
/ strongern you are, religion is
no scuse for being a slacker.
If you get a belly ache while
working and it last more than
two weeks, see your doctor (let
us get this in now. Don't try to
sno ball us, we just finished
four thick books on sno ball
jobs and they all made the best
cellar list), do not unload such
problems as knees ankles necks
backs hips hernias bursas any
thing fancied or fancy etc on
your comrades as they probly
have more of em than you do,
frequent gas pains and dirhea
are not legit scuse to leave
the job site, consistent
tiredness will not be tolrated
under no circumstance. There
will be absolutely no alcoholic
stuff brought on the job site

without a doctor's
subscription, anyone with a
noticable social disease will
be required to work at least
fifty feet from your nearest
competitors. You will
positively not listen to any
weather reports for three days
before any work hike, don't
gang up, some of the sorriest
work we get is done by gangs,
there will be no lip bendin
cept to ask supervisor what to
do, all politics talk, assorted
aches and pains talk, bitchin
and gripin talk corny jokes etc
will be done after quitten
time. Don't bring too much
food to the job as you won't-
have time to eat it no how.
All no count work will be done
over on your time, all lewd
jokers and questionable
behaviors will be sent
immediately to the front on
the raking that's where the
yellow jackets and snakes lie
in wait, don't dig in the
yellow jacket nests, they
don't know what you're doin
and you won't have time to
explain it to em, if you
persist in diggin there any way
you will be allowed only five
minits of trauma time per
nest, don't play with the
snakes theyre on the
endangered species list and
don't have no sinse of humor,
you wouldn't either if you had
to crawl around on yo bare
belly thro the bush.If you
feel you are gittin dis-
couraged, jittery, dispondent
the world is closin in on you,
if St. Albins Hosp give up on
you, come see us. We take
anything. If you merely feel
that the green tunnel is closin
in, just work your loppers
faster.

From the Archivist...

By Diana Christopulos, RATC Archivist

RATC Archives becoming part of Virginia Tech Permanent Collections

What was once buried in basements, attics, garages and barns is now becoming part of the Virginia Tech library's Special Collections. On May 23, Aaron Purcell, Director of Virginia Tech's Special Collections and University Archives, picked up the first 21 boxes of RATC's history. They include photo albums, newsletters and minutes dating from the club's founding in 1932 through 1999. RATC mem-

ber Alan Munshower is a digital archivist at VT, and he initiated the club's relationship with the university.

The archives document remarkable contributions by the RATC to the history of the Appalachian Trail including:

- In 1933, [convincing Myron Avery to move the Trail](#) west of the Blue Ridge to include Tinker Cliffs and a side trail to McAfee Knob.
- Creating the [official maps](#) of the AT from Daleville to the near Galax in 1933 and 1941.
- [Relocating the trail almost 170 miles](#) from near McAfee Knob

Aaron Purcell (right) receives first 21 boxes of RATC archives for Virginia Tech permanent collections.

Photo by Diana Christopulos



almost to Damascus in the late 1940s and 1950s,

- Playing a leading role in acquiring land for the AT and building new trails in the 1970s to 1990s.
- Managing over a dozen buildings on the McAfee Knob section in the 1980s and 1990s as they were acquired by the National Park Service.

Many former RATC leaders contributed to collection of the club's history, including Blanche Brower, Bill Gordge, Roger Holnback, Bob and Kris Peckman, Dick Clark, Bill Neilan and many more. Volunteers Pam Wolsey, Josh Wolsey, Bill Neilan, Mark McClain, Joey Johnson, Bennett Witcher and more helped organize the materials and place them in safe storage until VT could accept them.

RATC's board of directors approved a Deed of Gift to the university in late 2022. After being cataloged, the materials will be available to anyone wishing to research them, and some will be digitized.

More materials remain to be organized and turned over to VT. Lots of new stories to tell!

Shin-etsu Trail visitors hike McAfee Knob, encourage AT volunteers to hike in Japan

by Diana Christopulos

The Appalachian Trail is a model for hikers all over the world, and on May 18, RATC hosted Japanese visitors from the [Shin-etsu Trail](#). Hiroshi Kimura is a board member, and Yuki Satoh is a staff member who thru hiked the AT in 2018.

The Shin-etsu Trail is a 110-kilometer pathway west of Tokyo, considered to be Japan's premier long

trail. It connects villages, forests and peaks in 10 segments along the Sekida and Mt. Naeba ranges.

ATC and NPS staff joined RATC volunteers on the hike to McAfee Knob. The visitors were especially interested in trail maintenance and visitor use management. Their trip included visits to Springer Mountain, Asheville and Damascus Trail Days.

If you are interested in a future hike in Japan (which might include trail maintenance), contact Sarah Adams at sadams@appalachian-trail.org.

Left to right: Brian Wilson, Andrew Downs, Yuki Satoh, Kathryn Hernon-Powell, Hiroshi Kimura and Ryan Waggoner at Catawba Mountain Shelter. Photo copyright Kemper Fant.



Major project updates

by Diana Christopulos

Mountain Valley Pipeline gets special deal through Joe Manchin

As part of the debt ceiling negotiations in late May and early June, West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin demanded and got a deal with the Biden administration that included language requiring receipt of all federal permits for the Mountain Valley Pipeline within 21 days, denial of any judicial review, and transfer of any federal litigation to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals rather than the 4th Circuit in Richmond, which has overturned numerous federal permits for MVP. Both Virginia Senators (Kaine and Warner) supported an amendment to remove the MVP language from the debt ceiling bill, and most of Virginia's House delegation supported a similar amendment. Both amendments failed to pass. At

press time, environmental groups were considering legal options, including a potential constitutional case against the legislation. Despite a red-alert particle pollution day due to wildfires in Canada, hundreds of protesters showed up at the White House to [oppose the MVP legislation on June 8](#), receiving coverage in the Washington Post and other major media. Local landowners and environmentalists were present at the event, and it was [live-streamed](#). RATC has formally opposed the project since May 2016 due to its negative impacts on the Trail and surrounding communities.

National Park Service and partners to share draft Visitor Use Management plan for Virginia's Triple Crown on August 14 and 15.

RATC volunteers have been working with staff of the National Park

Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service and other partners since 2016 to develop an effective plan for dealing with increased visitation at Dragon's Tooth, McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs. Initial efforts in Roanoke were supplemented by a formal grant from the NPS in 2019, resulting in the new plan. It addresses trailheads/parking, camping, the trail and its vistas. The intention is to improve the visitor experience while protecting fragile resources.

The public will be able to view see an online presentation of the plan on August 14 and talk with those who wrote the plan at a live meeting in Salem on August 15.

The following RATC volunteers have participated in developing the plan: Diana Christopulos, Bill Neilan, Michael Vaughn, Jim Webb, Homer and Therese Witcher.

Old Catawba Road

by E. Thomas Ewing

Hikers following the new access trail from the Catawba Sustainability Center to the Appalachian Trail on the route to McAfee knob might be surprised as they begin their hike along a stretch of old road pavement. This section of the “new” access trail is actually the “old” road that carried traffic over Catawba mountain before the construction of the new Route 311 (which is visible from the lower sections of the access trail). The short stretch of road with numerous switchbacks on the north side of the mountain was replaced in the early 1950s with the New Catawba Road (Route 311) from the ridge down into the valley. Old Catawba Road still exists on the southern side of the ridge, intersecting with Route 311 just below the parking area.

Articles and a photograph published in Roanoke newspapers in the summer of 1952 announced the completion of the new road. A photograph on the front page of the Roanoke World on June 23, 1952 included the caption: “Road with a View. High Upon Catawba Mountain is this section of the new road which was completed today with a final surfacing job.” On June 24, 1952, the Roanoke Times reprinted the article announcing that the seven mile strip of “New Catawba Road” had opened to motorists, thus straightening out most of the curves along the old road. On June 28, 1952, the Roanoke World-News praised the “elimination of the old toilsome, dangerous route across the mountain with its hairpin turns,” thus improving travel from Roanoke towards White Sulphur Springs and other destinations.

Tom Ewing teaches history at Virginia Tech and helps maintain a section of the Appalachian Trail south of Dragon’s Tooth.



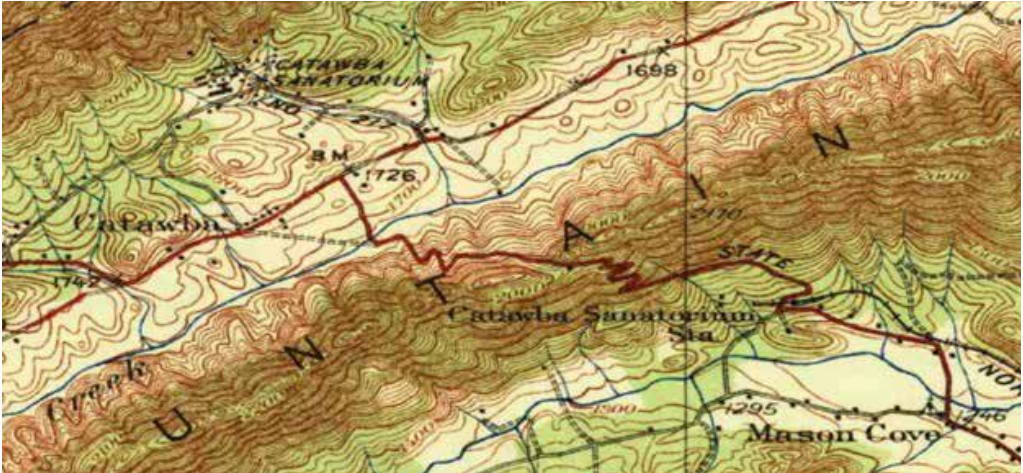
Catawba Access Trail, section along Old Catawba Road, view toward Appalachian Trail

Hikers on the access trail will surely appreciate all the hours of volunteer work devoted to providing this alternative path to McAfee Knob. Hikers should also be aware of a different kind of labor that is also part of this region’s history. The construction of the New Catawba Road, like many road projects in twentieth century Virginia, was completed mostly through the efforts of imprisoned men, under a system known as “convict labor.” Roanoke newspaper reports about the new route into Catawba valley included clear references to convict labor. On May 20, 1951, for example, the Roanoke Times mentioned “some 75 Negro convicts supervised by a dozen foreman and operators” were working on the new route 311.

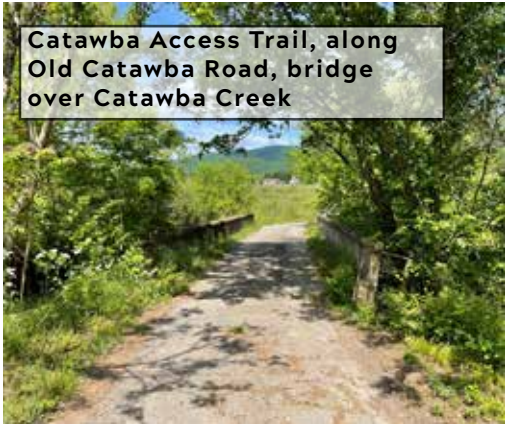
One year later, on June 24, 1952, the Roanoke Times article cited above reported that “convict labor has done all of the manual work.” Two months later, on August 25, 1952, the Roanoke World-News reported that 75 convicts, having completed the new Route 311, had been transferred to Pulaski County to work on Route 100.

Although we don’t know the names of men who worked to build these roads, we need to appreciate that their labor, often in difficult conditions, is part of the infrastructure that sustains our commercial, recreational, and daily activities in the present. The combination of the New Catawba Road (Route 311), built with convict labor to replace the old road, and the new access trail, built with volunteer labor along the route of the old road, provide a visible reminder of this complex history.

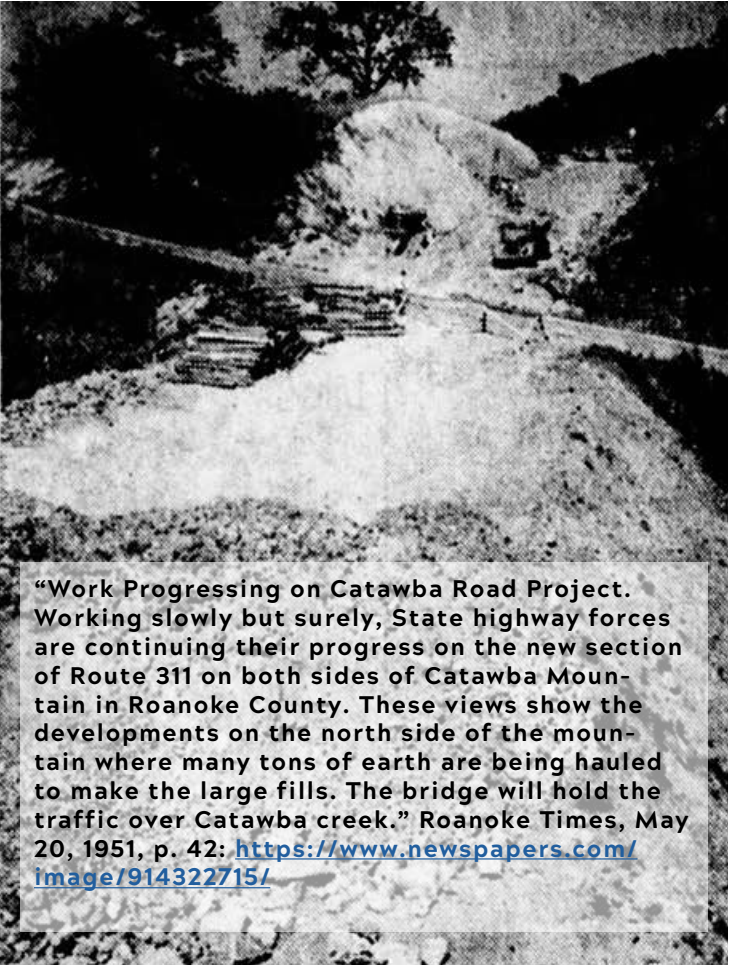
Contour map showing old route of highway and railroads (USGS, 1932) https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/img4/ht_icons/overlay/VA/VA_Salem_188559_1932_62500_geo.jpg



Catawba Access Trail, sign indicates where trail departs from Old Catawba Road



Catawba Access Trail, along Old Catawba Road, bridge over Catawba Creek



“Work Progressing on Catawba Road Project. Working slowly but surely, State highway forces are continuing their progress on the new section of Route 311 on both sides of Catawba Mountain in Roanoke County. These views show the developments on the north side of the mountain where many tons of earth are being hauled to make the large fills. The bridge will hold the traffic over Catawba creek.” Roanoke Times, May 20, 1951, p. 42: <https://www.newspapers.com/image/914322715/>



“Construction on Route 311. Route 311 is being straightened and widened on both sides of the mountain. Photograph shows work underway on the north side of the Mountain about a mile from Catawba.” <https://www.newspapers.com/image/914040145/>



“Road with a View. High Upon Catawba Mountain is this section of the new road which was completed today with a final surfacing job. The photo was taken looking southeast toward Hanging Rock.” Roanoke World News, June 23,1952, p. 1

Hikemaster Report
by Carol Rowlett, Hikemaster

Many thanks to our recent hike leaders: Dee Case, Larry Austin, Dave Gloudemans, Janice Metzger, Molly Armistead, and Carol Rowlett. These individuals led a total of 26 hikes over the past quarter.

Congratulations to our new hike leaders! Colleen Malley, Rick Lovegrove, Dave Gloudemans, and Carl Mitchell completed the RATC hike leader training facilitated by Carol Rowlett and Dee Case on 4/15/23. Dave has already started leading RATC hikes. All of these individuals should be great additions to our hike leading crew.

Hike reports

Hike: Chessie Nature Trail
April 1, 2023
Bob and Kris Peckman (leaders), Laurie and Leonard Adkins

We delayed the start of the hike in order to avoid forecast rain. The rain stopped just as we arrived, leaving the air freshly washed. Blue skies were moving in as we started to walk, yielding a magnificent day. This is such a scenic hike, along the Maury River with high cliffs on one side or another, and lots of green pastures.

We saw Virginia bluebells, Dutchman’s breeches, cut-leaved toothwort, bloodroot, spring-beauty, Carolina spring-beauty, one toadshade trillium just beginning to bloom, yellow violets, redbud, golden ragwort, blue phlox, and Leonard spotted a columbine just at the end of the trail (usually they are on many cliff-sides, but maybe it’s early for them). One brave turtle was crossing the path; otherwise, the fauna were of the human variety. We enjoyed reconnecting with Laurie and Leonard, who are back in our area after 14 years in Richmond.



Hike: RATC Hike #1 Curry Gap to Blackhorse Gap
Date: 6/15/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Bob Peckman, Kris Peckman, Bill Reich, Theresa Okane, Scott Walker, Steve Smith, Lynn Smith, James Mesler

For this 7-mile hike, we walked up Salt Pond Road and then went north on the AT to Blackhorse Gap. Although the route included several small stream crossings, most of these were dry. Kris Peckman helped identify many of the flowers along the way, and Scott Walker was excellent at identifying birds! We stopped along the way at Wilson Creek Shelter for snacks. The privy there had a significant amount of trash. Carol came back a few days later with supplies and cleaned up the privy.

Hike: Boblett’s Gap/Hammond Hollow
Date: 6/13/23
Participants: Janice Metzger lead, Lawrie, Lisa Farmer, Theresa, Lannie Kempnich, Linda Osborne, Steve Smith, Lynn Smith, Carol Rowlett, Madeleine Taylor, Theresa O’Kane

Hike: AT from VA Route 611 to VA Route 612
Date: 6/7/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Adele Shaffer, Michael DeMarco, Clive Hillyard

Hike: AT from VA Route 522 to VA Route 55
Date: 6/5/23

Participants: Dee Case (lead), Adele Shaffer, Michael DeMarco, Clive Hillyard, Carol Rowlett

Hike: Northern Shenandoah National Park
Date: 6/4/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Adele Shaffer, Michael DeMarco, Clive Hillyard, Carol Rowlett



Hike: RATC Hike #13 Dismal Falls
Date: 5/20/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Adele Shaffer, Lannie Kempnich, Schelley Fickey



Hike: AT from Burkes Garden VA Rt 623 to Route VA 615
Date: 5/14/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Pearl Gearhart, Felicia Etzkorn, Lannie Kempnich, Rusty Havens, Val Dymond, Clive Hillyard, Tom Behrmann

Hike: AT: Petites Gap to the James River
Date: 5/11/23
Participants: Dave Gloudemans (lead), Larry Austin, Rob Clark, Theresa O’Kane, Clive Hillyard

Hike: AT from Route 52 near Bland VA to VA Route 615
Date: 5/6/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Lannie Kempnich, Schelley Fickey

Hike: AT from the Blue Ridge Parkway near Punchbowl south to the James River
Date: 4/23/23
Participants: Dave Gloudemans (lead), Rob Clark

Hike: Sunset Field Circuit
Date: 4/27/23
Participants: Larry Austin (lead), Molly Armistead (lead), Randall Blevins, David Mueller, Carol Rowlett, Ana Anderson



Hike: Blackburn Trail Center to Snickers Gap
Date: 4/23/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), James Mesler, Clive Hilyard, Carol Rowlett, Jennifer Harvey Frye



Hike: RATC Hike #13 Dismal Falls
Date: 4/20/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Adele Shaffer, Lannie Kempnich, Schelley Fickey

Hike: Hinchee Trail
Date: 4/15/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Dave Grimm, Dave Gloudemans, Karen Trembly, Carl Mitchell, Dee Case, Jaitun Patel, Yusheng Fan, Jixiang Fan

This 5-mile hike followed the hike leader training held the same day. Along with enjoying the hike, we helped Jaitun, a grad student at Virginia Tech, test out the hike

communication software she was developing. As a bonus, we met up with Molly Armistead along the way, and she hiked with us for the rest of the way.

Hike: Blackburn Trail Center to Keys Gap
Date: 4/22/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Lannie Kempnich, Carol Rowlett, Jennifer Harvey Frye



Hike: Keys Gap to Harpers Ferry
Date: 4/21/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Lannie Kempnich, Clive Hillyard, Carol Rowlett, Jennifer Harvey Frye



Hike: Lick Run Greenway
Date: 4/12/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Lannie Kempnich



Hike: Roanoke Mountain
Date: 4/3/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Christine Wickham, Lannie Kempnich, Christine Wickham



Hike: North Mountain
Date: 4/2/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Kelly Hill, Ana Anderson, Dave Gloudemans, Val Dymond, Susan Terwilliger, Dave Grimm, Steve Smith, Lynn Smith, Mark Farrell, Jessica Vehmeier, Richard Leonard, Terri McClure, Clive Hillyard, David Grimm



Hike: Mill Mountain
Date: 3/28/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Kathy DeCoster, Chuck C., Karen Trembly, Michael Phillips, Lannie, Kris Peckman, Bob Peckman, Christine Wickham

Hike: RATC Hike #6: Dragon's Tooth End to End
Date: 4/10/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Mangala Kumar, Ana Anderson, Clive Hillyard, Madeleine Taylor

Hike: Read Mountain Loop Hike
Date: 3/26/23
Participants: Kris Peckman (lead), Bob Peckman, Suzy Fay, Rusty Havens, Karen Trembly, Laurel Riddle, Steve Smith, Lynn Smith, Susan Terwilliger, Clive Hillyard. Mark Farrell, Adele Shaffer, Schelley Fickey

Hike: Smith Mountain Lake State Park
Date: 3/22/23
Participants: Dee Case (lead), Sharon Bachman



Hike: Carvins Cove to Tinker Cliffs
Date: 3/20/23
Participants: Carol Rowlett (lead), Tee Godsey, Dave Grimm, Dave Gloudemans, Madeleine Taylor, Richard Leonard, Mark Farrell
Hike: Spiderwort Extravaganza
Date: May 18, 2023
Distance: 8.5 miles

Leaders: Larry Austin and Molly Armistead
Participants: Rob Clark, Carol Rowlett, Theresa, Clive Hillyard

We met at the Peaks of Otter Visitors' Center and then shuttled the hikers to the Flat Top/Fallingwater Cascades parking area to begin the hike. After summiting the top of Flat Top we went to several overlooks there--one to the east and one to the west.

As we began our descent of Flat Top we started to see the Spiderwort. They were along the trail and on the hillsides nearly to the bottom of the mountain. We then stopped at one of the picnic tables along the stream running from Abbott Lake to have lunch. Following lunch we walked around the south side of Abbott Lake and then began our climb to the summit of Harkening Hill with a stop at the Johnson Farm which is always an interesting visit. From there we continued our ascent of Harkening Hill reaching the summit with a nice view to the west and north. Our descent from Harkening Hill proved to be the reason this hike was named Spiderwort Extravaganza as there were thousands of them lining the trail and flowing down the mountainside. It was quite a spectacular sight to behold. We ended the hike at the Visitors' Center with a good group of hikers.

Date: April 27, 2023
Hike: Sunset Field Circuit
Distance: 7.5 miles
Leaders: Larry Austin and Molly Armistead
Participants: Randy Blevins, David Mueller, Carol Rowlett and Ana Anderson

Beginning and ending at the Sunset Field Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway, we encountered numerous different wildflowers along the way. It was fun and interesting. We met a few north-bound thru-hikers as we walked the section of the AT between Sunset Field and the Cornelius Creek Shelter. We stopped for lunch at Overstreet Creek Falls where David showed us some larvae he discovered in the stream which indicated that the water was clean. Carol explained some of the geology of the boulders near the stream. An interesting lunch break for sure. We had a great, fun and interesting hike with a group of dedicated hikers.

Hike: AT Wicked Chicken to Dickey Gap
July 1 - 5, 2023
48 Miles
Hikers: Keli and Ron Bradbury

Availing ourselves of a shuttle by Rambunny, we parked our car at Dickey Gap and rode to Damascus for our start. Careful planning helped us minimize pack weight although neither pack was especially light. Breaking each day into manageable chunks, we essentially completed 16 three mile hikes over four and a half days. Highlights included summiting Mount Rogers (fun, but visually uninspiring) and transiting Grayson Highlands,

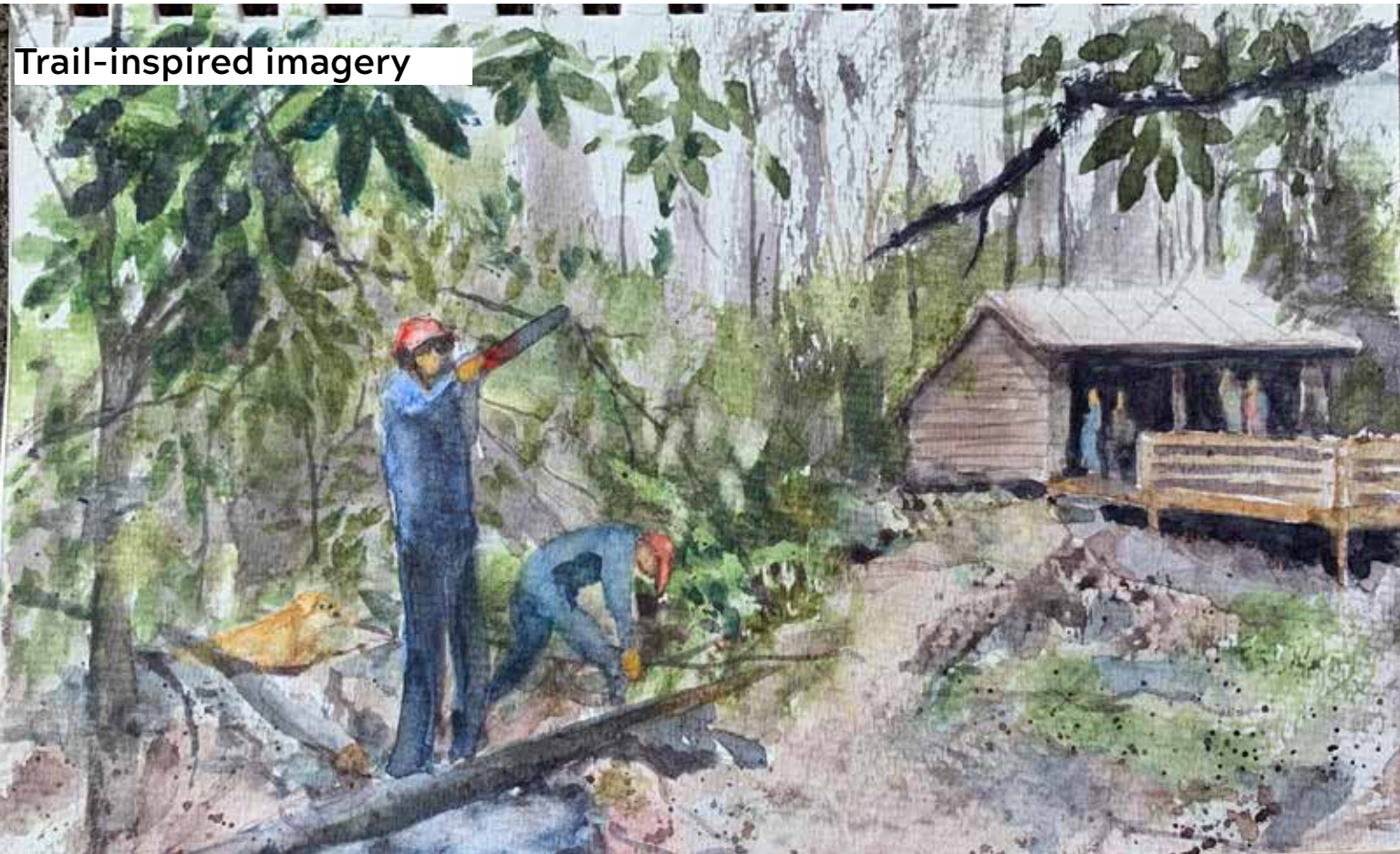
Date: May 7, 2023
Hike: Bearwallow Rim
Distance: 9 miles
Leader: Larry Austin
Participants: Ana Anderson, Chad, Clive Hillyard, David Gloudemans, Jen Schaffer and Paul Jones

Meeting at the Bearwallow Trail-head of the Glenwood Horse Trail off Pico Road near Buchanan, we shuttled everyone to the AT at Bearwallow Gap near the Parkway to begin our hike. After climbing the ridge to Little Cove Mountain we encountered scores of Pink Lady's Slippers along the ridge. The Rhododendron were also blooming there along with some Pinksters and other wildflowers. We took a break for lunch at the junction of the Buchanan Trail and Glenwood Horse Trail. Continuing on the Buchanan Trail we spotted a number of Yellow Lady's Slippers. The remainder of the hike was on the Glenwood Horse Trail back to the parking lot where we initially met. We made it back just in time as it began to rain quickly following a few post-hike refreshments. We had a fun time with a great group of hikers.

complete with wild ponies. The well-known app Farout (formerly Guthook) was essential in providing relatively current water information as well as viable stealth camping sites.



Trail-inspired imagery



Doc's Knob shelter work

by Matt and Colleen Gentry
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club members Matt "Sharpie" Gentry and Tim "Whippoorwill" Ligon of Blacksburg have been maintaining a section of the Appalachian trail

south of Pearisburg for more than a decade. During an April 2023 work trip they cut back more than a hundred of rhododendron branches over a four mile section of trail that comprise a portion of the infamous "green tunnel". In this sketch and photo the two are rendered clearing rhododendron from the area in front of Docs Knob shelter.

Matt and Tim are best friends since childhood and completed a three decade long section hike of the AT in 2015.

Yellow Lady Slippers, Sugar Run Mountain

Submitted by Bill Floyd



Garlic mustard pile number one and pull crew

Garlic Mustard pull

by Tom McAvoy
RATC Conservation Supervisor

On April 21, 2023, five volunteers led by Suzanne Lenhart attacked the pungent, invasive, and non-native Garlic Mustard (*Aliaria petiolata*) growing profusely in the riparian zone of Catawba Creek along the Andy Layne trail. About 70 bags were collected! At about 15 pounds per bag that's 1,000 pounds!!!

Garlic mustard is a threat to the biodiversity of many native ecosystems. This plant spreads its seeds in the wind and gains a foothold in fields and forests by emerging earlier in spring than many native plants. By the time native species are ready to grow, garlic mustard has blocked their sunlight and out-competed them for moisture and vital nutrients. Garlic mustard was brought from Europe in 1800s for herbal uses and erosion control. The best way to get rid of garlic mustard is manually pull it up. In March to early May, plants can be pulled before they set seed, after this time the action of yanking the plant from the ground will spread the seeds.

Garlic Mustard, approximately three feet tall. (Detail, right.)



After you have pulled the plants, bag them up and put them in a dumpster or if they haven't set mature seeds, just throw them away from the trail. If you see this weed along the trail pull it up if it hasn't set seeds yet.

The second of two piles of garlic mustard pulled--approximately 1000 pounds of this were pulled this day.

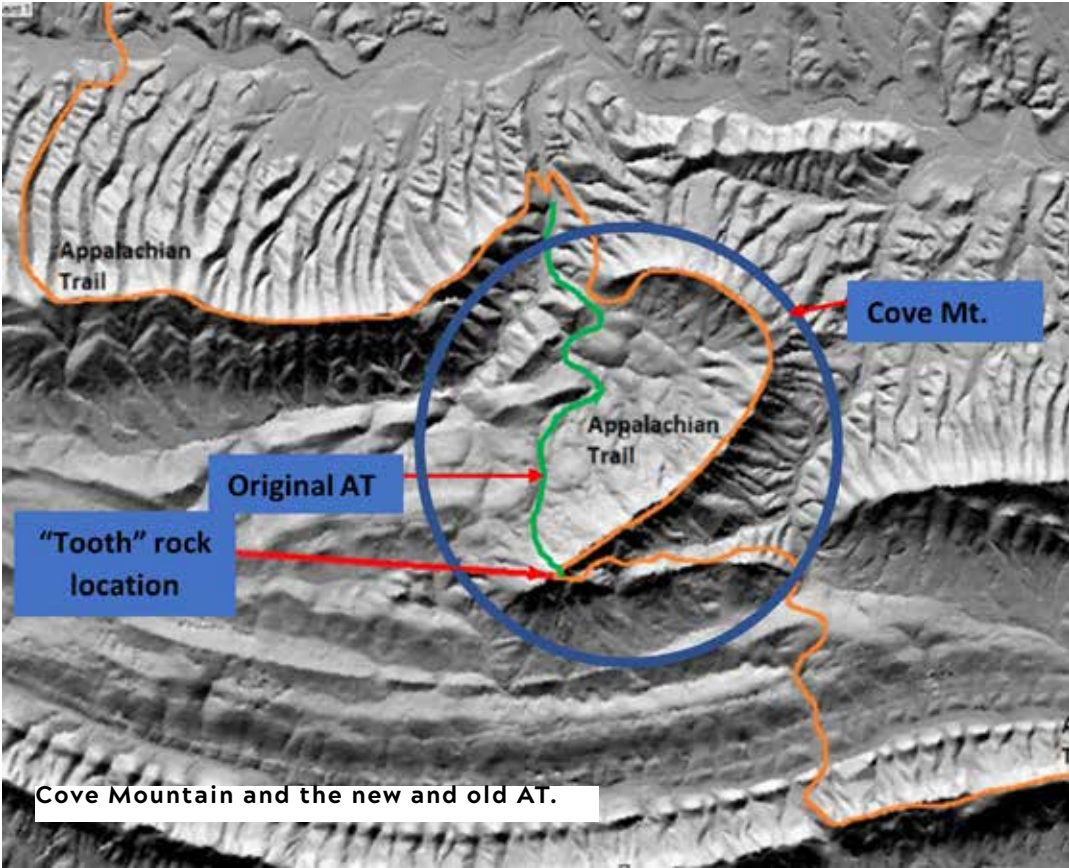
Cove Mountain

by Tom McAvoy
RATC Conservation Supervisor

Cove Mountain lays along the border of Craig and Roanoke Counties. Dragon’s Tooth is at the southern end of the mountain at approximately 3,000’ then extends 3.5 miles north and west to Hemlock Point at 2,400’. The rocks we walk over while walking the Appalachian Trail on Cove Mountain were formed during the Ordovician and Silurian periods, approximately 420 to 485 million years ago. Mollusks, arthropods, and the first land plants were evolving in this period. During these 65 million years the level of the warm shallow seas changed dramatically, by as much as 450 feet. Earth was in a greenhouse phase with high air temperatures caused by high levels of CO2 (~4500 ppm).

Looking at a topographic map and the digital map below, Cove Mountain resembles the number ‘2’. This unique mountain was formed by a pair of anticline (convex) -syncline (concave) folds. These rocks are extremely hard and are the most chemically resistant rocks in Appalachia. These sandstone rocks contain up to 95% quartz. The Dragon’s Tooth occurs at the ‘hinge’ of the base of the ‘2’ where the two folds meet. A detailed description of the geology of Cove Mountain can be found in three parts: [1](#), [2](#), and [3](#). Directly to the west of Cove Mountain and encircled by the ‘2’ is Miller’s Cove. Originally the AT went through Miller’s Cove up Pickles Branch then straight up the mountain to Dragon’s Tooth. About 0.25 miles from Trout Creek north are the concrete and steel foundations of an old shelter.

Miller’s Cove was once farmed. Topographic maps from the 70’s and 80’s show much of the cove was open and not forested. Numerous rock piles and walls can



be seen in the cove likely made by farmers clearing the fields.

Today Cove Mountain supports several unique plant species. American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) grows at several locations along the trail in the north-east bend of the ‘2’ and at least one chestnut tree grows along the slope below the ridge about halfway down to Pickles Creek. A number of these trees are producing chestnut seeds. A good way to spot the fruit producing trees is to look for the spiny burs on the ground along the trail and in the tree. The chestnut trees are often found in clumps with many dead

branches and stems caused by the chestnut blight. But many stems continue to grow from the roots.

There are many clumps of the beautiful pink lady slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) scattered along the ridge. An uncommon hemlock species, the Carolina hemlock (*Tsuga caroliniana*) also grows near the tooth and for about a half mile south. It also grows along the creek near the blue blaze and Boy Scout trail. This species is only found in Virginia south of the James River and in North Carolina. Also growing along this creek and in Miller’s Cove is a small rare parasitic tree, the pirate bush

Pink lady slippers along Cove Mountain



Concrete and steel foundation of a shelter on the old AT.



Brush Mt., Sinking Creek Mt., and Craigs Creek Valley from Hemlock Point along Cove Mt.

(*Buckleya distichophylla*). This species grows only in the mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia, which has the largest populations. Its roots tap into other tree roots to obtain nutrients, ‘stealing’ food hence the name pirate. Not only is the AT an internationally enjoyed resource for people, but it also provides critical habitat for protecting multiple plant and animal species when properly maintaining and protected.



Along the mid-point of Cove Mt. is the 700-mile point from the southern terminus of the AT and is often marked by thru-hikers.

Bears with us...

USDA Forest Service Order Number 80-00-00-23-02R was recently signed and made active “To reduce or minimizing (sic) adverse interactions between humans and animals...” In short, the new order strongly promotes the use of “commercially made bear resistant” canisters within all National Forests and within 1000 feet of the Appalachian Trail.

According to a representative at the ATC, “(our) hope is to provide a food storage paradigm shift from user created food hangs (which have proven quite unreliable) to bear canisters which are bear resistant and rodent proof, in order to help assure hiker safety and prevent destroying bears...user-created food hangs are not prohibited but Leave No Trace food hang specifications are clearly described, which technically must be followed if hanging food. Also, sleeping with food in a shelter or elsewhere is not listed as acceptable, and thus is prohibited.”

Trail Supervisor's Report

by Jim Webb

Date: 5/22/23
Location: Route 621 Craig Creek
Attending: Bill Neilan, Mike Vaughn, Mike Phillips, Brian Lane, Ray Gant, Greg Stick, Susan Terwilliger, John Hvozdovic, & Jim Webb

The condemnation and removal of the bridge over Craig Creek by the U.S. Forest service back in April left thru hikers with no way to cross the creek. If the water was low, thru hikers could wade through. If the water was too high, hikers would be forced on a 4-mile road walk down to Route 620 to the trail.

This led to the decision to use some of the large rocks to build some steppingstones across the creek. These steps are only meant to be used when the water level is low.



Date: 6/5/23
Location: VA-621 Craig Creek
Attending; Terry Shipley, Dave Grimm, Greg Stick, Susan Terwilliger and Jim Webb

The Brush Mountain area was designated wilderness in 2009. At that time, several bridges ranging in size from 14 ft. to 60 ft. long were in the designated area. As these bridges age they become more dangerous to hikers. The US forest Service removed the largest bridge back in April after it was inspected and found to be unsafe.

The Forest Service and ATC would like to see the remaining bridges removed on a timely basis. As you can see in the picture, most of the time, there is no water to cross over. So out they come! At the end of the day, we had removed 2 short bridges.



Date: 6/13/2023
Location: Dragon's Tooth trail
Attending: Dave Grimm, Jim Mesler, Greg Stick, Ron Butler and Jim Webb

A beautiful day for a little trail maintenance on the Dragon's Tooth trail. The trail just past the 3rd creek crossing had suffered a bit of erosion and needed some rock steps to define the trail. We also worked on redirecting a small spring that managed to run down the trail from it's emergence under another step.



Date: 6/19/23
Location: Mountain Lake Relocation
Attending: Dave Grimm, Greg Stick, Laurie Adkins, Susan Terwilliger and Jim Webb

Konnarock scheduled both crews 1 and 2 for 2 weeks on the trail relocation at Mountain Lake wilderness. The relocation will be a 6000' sustainable trail that replaces a

highly eroded section of trail that goes straight up the hillside.

Good progress was made on a rain shortened day in difficult terrain of large rocks, roots and underbrush.

Date: 7/5/23
Location: Trail south of Black Horse Gap

Attending: Mark Farrel, Susan Terwilliger & Jim Webb

Between a reduced crew and elevated temperatures, I did not expect to complete the trail widening & clearing that I had planned. That said, we did get to a significant portion of the trail. This section of trail doesn't have a lot of structure on it and has not received a lot of attention since first built.



Date: 7/10/23
Location: 1 mile south of Rocky Gap

Attending: Linda & Kelly Mulheren, Mike Vaughn, Greg Evanylo, Bill Floyd, Dave Grimm, Greg Stick & Jim Webb

On one of the most perfect July days in recent memory, we arrived at Rocky Gap to start our hike to the work site. Our target was some steep eroded side hill trail.

Once on site, we spread out and started digging. A few places needed cribbing to maintain a decent trail width. A nearby dead Black Locust tree provided enough material for the cribbing and log steps. At the end of the day, we had widened 330 feet of trail, and added 20 feet of log cribbing and 8 log steps.



SAWS monitoring hike
Submitted by Pete Irvine

Lauren King, Wilderness Specialist with Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), led a monitoring hike on Lipes Branch Trail (FT-146) in Barbours Creek Wilderness on Saturday, April 8. This 5,382-acre federal Wilderness is part of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, located north of New Castle in Craig County. She was joined by (L-R) David Grimm, Mike “Doc” Faw, and John Grant.

They documented the condition of the ~2.3-mi official trail, mapped ~300’ of user-developed trails (UDTs), encountered 16 blow-downs, and removed all visible trash. SAWS is a friend and partner of RATC, focused on assisting public land managers stewarding protected public lands in the southeast. (www.wildernessstewards.org).

A sign

by Jonathan Harris

Earning the RATC 113 mile patch - for hiking the entire section of the AT maintained by the Club - was a milestone in a number of ways for me. I was hiking along on the AT on a pretty normal, unremarkable part of the trail, relatively flat actually, and soon saw that the trail was about to cross a gravel road in the middle of the forest. Such crossings are fairly common given the various service roads in National Forests. I walked up on the back side of a sign where the trail crossed that road. I reached the road and turned around to see what the sign said: “This section of the trail maintained by the Roanoke ATC.” I suddenly realized that I had hiked all the 113 miles overseen by Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.

When I first got interested in hiking the AT, I had made it a goal to hike the entire section maintained by the Roanoke Club. It took me a couple years, since I did it on the weekends and days off, and had to get a friend

to drive out with me, leave my car at one end of the trail, and then drop me off at the other end so I could walk back to my car for a long day hike. Soon I set my sights beyond Roanoke and as I got further and further out my friend was not up for the drive anymore so I started looking up shuttle drivers to help me. I started doing overnight trips, and then two-night trips, and before I knew it I was traversing most of the AT in Virginia. Then last year I finished section hiking the entire southern half of the AT.

But I will always cherish that moment and the sense of accomplishment I had when I first stumbled across that sign, and realized I had walked that whole RATC section. I’ve never been much of a “patch collector” but I was eager to present the dates of when I did each part of the Roanoke Club section and receive a “113 mile” patch. No no matter how much of the AT I hike or even when I hike all of it, I’ll always remember when I reached that sign, which launched me on my new passion and journey.





Linda Mulheren, Konnarock Crew Leader Miriam Zouhri and Assistant Crew Leader Virginia Mooney

Konnarock Trail Crew Returns to the War Spur A.T. Relocation Project

An A.T. relocation project many years in the making is progressing well this summer, with the help of ATC's Konnarock Trail Crew. Seven RATC volunteers headed to Mountain Lake Wilderness on June 9, and several returned on other dates, to work alongside the crew on the War Spur relocation project. The crew will return for two more weeks, 7/22-26 & 7/30-8/3.

The War Spur relocation was originally flagged and proposed by legendary RATC Trail Supervisor Charles Parry, perhaps 15-20 years ago. The project will eliminate a half-mile stretch of steep tread that dives straight down from Lone Pine Peak to the A.T.'s junction with the War Branch Trail. The existing trail is heavily eroded and can be a treacherous descent, particularly going downhill in wet conditions. The relocation will be one

by Kathryn Herndon-Powell

big, mile-long switchback of side hill tread at a gentler, sustainable grade. When complete, the A.T. will be 0.5 miles longer!

The Konnarock Trail Crew broke ground on this ambitious project in 2019, but progress was halted in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Last year, a SAWS crew was contracted to build more trail.



Suzanne Neal, Michael Phillips, Kathryn Herndon-Powell, Jim Webb, Linda Mulheren, Laurie Adkins, and Bill Floyd

This year, Konnarock is back to its pre-pandemic capacity and we're happy to welcome them back! Konnarock crews are made up of volunteers from all over the country – sometimes the world – and led by skilled ATC staff crew leaders.

On June 9, I was joined by Suzanne Neal, Michael Phillips, Jim Webb, Linda Mulheren, Laurie Adkins,

and Bill Floyd. After the 2.5-mile hike in to find the crew, we split up into two groups for the day to tackle tasks like clearing the route of brush, digging side hill tread, and unearthing all sorts of interesting rocks. Some sections of the route traverse jumbled rock fields that are like a giant jigsaw puzzle – pull the rocks out, then figure out how to put them back so they're a level and steady walking surface.



The Konnarock volunteers and crew leaders were in high spirits, the weather was only a touch too warm, and we all had a great day.

That was the first full workday of the crew's first week. They are now well around the switchback corner (so we're past the halfway point!) and will return 7/22-26 & 7/30-8/3.

Volunteers interested in working with the crew can contact me or Jim Webb to coordinate with the crew leaders, or check the details noted in the sidebar (right).

From the Appalachian Trail Conservancy...

Join the Konnarock Trail Crew

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy provides the tools, training and meals during these 5-day projects. No prior experience necessary. **The following sessions are at less than half capacity and are in need of more volunteers.** Please consider signing-up or sharing this with someone you know today.

War Spur - Trail Relocation: Help move the existing Appalachian Trail away from a steep and eroded section by joining this project to build a one-mile stretch of new, sustainable trail. [Friday, July 21 - Wednesday, July 26](#) OR [Saturday, July 29 - Thursday, August 3:](#)

Volunteer training videos

In an effort to recruit more volunteers for the Appalachian Trail the Appalachian Trail Conservancy launched a series of training videos to orient volunteers to essential trail maintenance.

Each video is less than 5 minutes and covers important aspects that address safety, managing water, keeping hikers on the centerline, blazing, facilities inspection, privy maintenance, and trail condition assessment.

[Check out this awesome resource on YouTube.](#)



Volunteer Training Videos 2023

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

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024
RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via treasurer@ratc.org or by calling 540-521-5435