

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Fall 2025

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

by Linda Mulheren



Obviously, I think what we do as a club and organization is pretty awesome. And I know that as a member of this organization, you must feel a sense of pride in supporting this mission. I would like to thank each and every person who, in

any way, contributes to our goal: keeping this path as accessible as possible through some of the best that nature has to offer. I was reflecting on the gratitude I feel toward everyone who shares a part of this mission, and I want to publicly acknowledge some really outstanding individuals and organizations.



Starting at the highest level are our land partners. This includes the US Forest Service and its employees, especially those in the Eastern Divide district, where much of our trail passes through, part of the greater Jefferson and George Washington National Forest.



Our other major land partner and overall manager of the Appalachian Trail is the National Park Service. That organization has dedicated a special office to oversight of the Appalachian Trail in particular, and that office is known as APPA or the Appalachian Trail Project Office. The employees of both of these govern-

ment agencies have faced not only budget cuts, but also loss of personnel in the last few years. For the last two decades or so, the funding for maintenance for our national park and forest lands has not been adequate, so the parks and the forests have suffered for it.

Our partner agencies have recently lost many employees whom we had been reliant on. I want to take a chance to publicly thank the employees, both those remaining and those gone, for the stressful times in which they have tried to accomplish all that they can for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.



The next group of folks that are so very important to what we do here in the Roanoke and New River Valley areas and elsewhere on the trail are the hard-working employees of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, our parent organization. There are four regional offices, and one is right here in our midst. Their role is generally that of trying to ease our task in working with the public, our land partners, the ATC, and the many challenges of nature itself.



In particular, huge shout-outs go to **Kathryn Herndon-Powell**, who is the Regional Director, the Virginias Regional Manager, Central Virginia for the ATC, Conner McBane, who is Senior Natural Resource and Land Stewardship manager, and assistants Virginia

Mooney and Suzanne Neal. There are many other folks at ATC who lend help with very particular needs to our club as well.

Brian Wilson, National Park Service Ranger, assigned to the AT, is a friendly, knowledgeable, and constant presence on the trail, especially in the Triple Crown area, and offers tremendous help on the ground with the public and bears! I can't imagine how we would do all he does without him.

Continued on page 2



And on the final rung of the ladder are the volunteers and members of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. First are members of the board who volunteer a tremendous number of hours helping to run the club.



Treasurer **Jimmy Whitney** goes way back with volunteering for the AT, having served as RATC president and on the ATC's Board of Managers. His knowledge and quick response make him the very best we could hope to have in the role of treasurer and a resource for me.



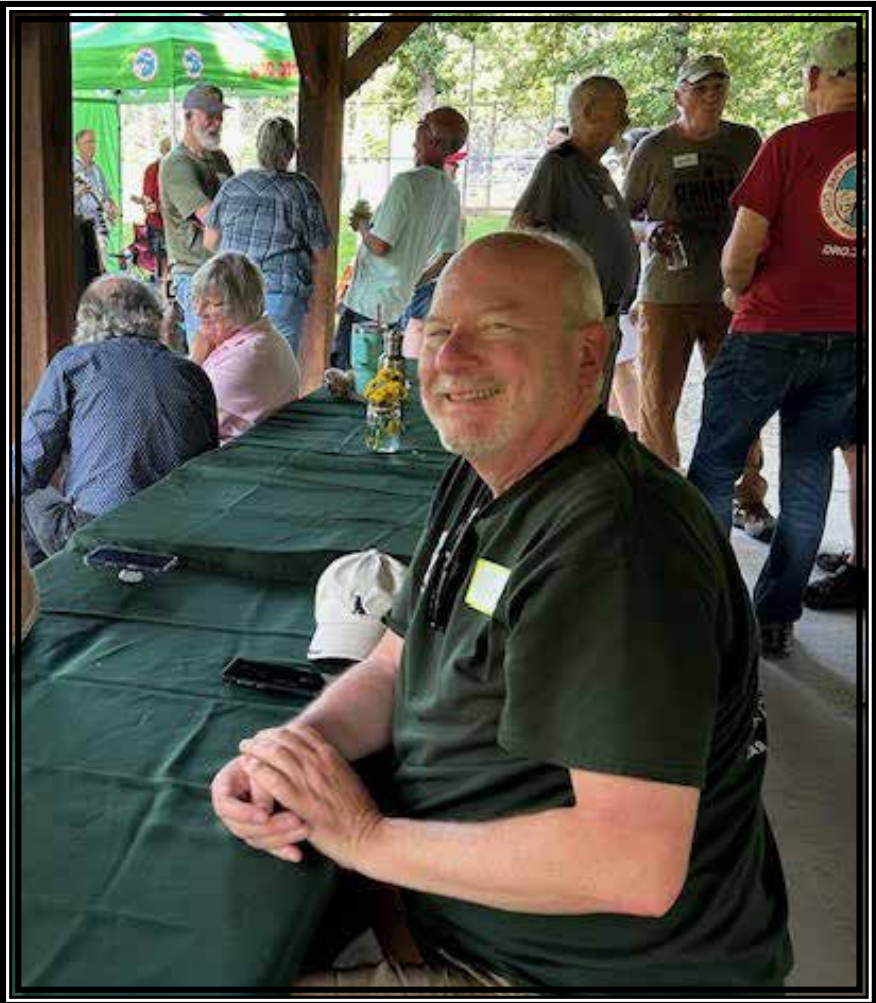
Susan Terwilliger has been with the club for over a decade and has been with the board as secretary for almost that long. She manages a tough piece of the AT, is always at any community event, has a wealth of knowledge, assists the membership chair, and I'm sure she does tons more that I'm not even aware of. I wish we could clone her!

Ron Bradbury and **Mike Scott** are currently working together to publish the newsletter as it transitions from Ron's tenure to Mike's. We're so fortunate to have this regular news source for all of our members and for the general public, as it's available on the website to anyone. After having been the newsletter editor for over 10 years with PATC, I know the effort and time that goes into making that happen. Kudos to them for their hard work in helping us communicate with everyone.



Our Shelter Supervisor literally grew up on the AT and is a legacy member thanks to his very hard-working parents. **Bennett Witcher** is smart, energetic, and eager to add his own touch to this part of our club. With 125 miles of trail, imagine trying to regularly visit all 16 shelters and maintain them. It's a huge task, and Bennett is doing a great job. Bennett has started having overnights at each shelter for whoever wants to come out. It's a fantastic

intro to backpacking with all of the knowledge of somebody who's well-equipped to lead, having walked the entire Appalachian Trail as a child. If you've always toyed with the idea of going out to the woods overnight, this is the perfect chance to do it.



Membership Director **John Kelly** is working hard to gather data about our membership so that we can make sure we are satisfying the needs of those who are part of our group. He's worked extensively with our website director to make joining RATC easier and more automated. Loss of members over time is an issue we're looking at trying to improve through online surveys and follow-up, thanks to John.

Hand-in-hand with John's effort is **Mark Wilhelm**, website guru. Mark has brought to us a wealth of technical skills at a time when we really need to upgrade some of our systems, and he is undertaking the update of our website to make it more user-friendly with today's technology and easier to navigate, while still retaining a wealth of information. Mark is also really enthusiastic and passionate about his trail maintenance, and it's wonderful to have somebody who's involved both out in the field and behind the computer screen.

Our current hike master is **Dee Case**. She and her mentor and predecessor, **Carol Rowlett**, comprise quite a force in leading hikes and training hike leaders. Would you be interested in hiking all of the nearly 125 AT miles maintained by RATC? With the 14 hikes led by this group, you can do just that! They have even been known to go well outside our club boundaries. Check out all their events on MeetUp.

Tom McAvoy, our conservation chair, is out in the field more than you can believe, looking at plants and bugs. It's way, way more complex than that, but that's how I think of him. He is the guy worried about invasive species, and he is renowned throughout the AT community for his knowledge. I know that he's a resource for many people outside of our club, and we're so fortunate to have him caring about our plants and bugs. The ATC has divided the trail into four groups (Regional Partnership Committees - RPCs), each consisting of two representatives from each club in that region, who facilitate communication between the club and the ATC. Tom is a representative of the RPC for the Virginias (VARO) for the ATC and the next leader of that group.

Kelly Mulheren is deeply involved in many aspects of the club. As Land Management Supervisor, he is the volunteer partner to ATCs' drive to update and continue the process of maintaining the boundary of the AT corridor. This is daunting, but important work. About 40 years ago, ATC was heavily involved in moving the trail off roads and into the forest, thereby preserving the mission of a wilderness experience. Handshake agreements established nearly a hundred years ago had eroded over time, and more and more of the trail moved onto roadways. So, lands were acquired and surveyed, and those boundaries need to be regularly monitored. This is a kind of adult scavenger hunt that Kelly manages, mostly in the winter. Not for the faint of heart are these work trips! Kelly also creates all of the signs for our club, maintains wilderness trail, and is a fantastic Chief of Staff of one (me!). Wonderful volunteer all around, if I do say so myself!



Our trail supervisor, as always, is one of the hardest-working members of our club. **Mike Vaughn** brings years of experience working hand-in-hand with Jim Webb, making sure all of our trails are maintained well and keeping the facilities updated. Not only that, he and Jim have been the folks behind the timekeeping for all of the trail maintainers of our club. We are on the verge of upgrading our timekeeping system to better align with the needs of our partners. Our hopes are that this will return more accurate, timely data, and be compatible with various agencies' needs to use our hours as monetary contributions towards the funds available for our work. In addition, this system should eliminate a good portion of the time spent entering the data. Mike also serves our club as the representative to the Virginias Regional Partnership Committee. If you meet Mike (or Jim) out on the trail, give them a pat on the back. They are the backbone of the club.

Adam Day, formerly a counselor to the board, is now our vice president. But he does not come with a lack of experience, as he has been working side-by-side with Bennett Witcher most of his life on all kinds of lovely jobs. (A lot of privy digging seemed to be in his history.) The Witchers have made sure that Adam has been schooled in all things trail and shelter maintenance throughout his life. At a recent conference hosted by ATC in Maryland, Adam, being identified as one of ATC’s emerging leaders, spent three days learning many of the ins and outs of what happens beyond trail building. Adam is capable and more than willing to step up at a moment’s notice to take care of many club-related issues. I look forward to Adam being involved in leadership in both RATC and ATC. Beyond the board, we have a number of outstanding volunteers.

Dave Grimm participates in many of the club’s work hikes. In addition, he helps maintain the section of trail on Sinking Creek Mountain. This remote section of the trail is difficult to maintain, with a great deal of brush growing along it. Dave has been up working on his section at least eight times since the beginning of the year, helping to keep it in good condition for hikers.

Greg Still also participates in many of the work hikes led by the Trail Supervisor. Greg has also stepped up this year to serve as a work crew leader. He has been leading work hikes in our southern section of the trail and has been successful in rehabbing areas there. Greg, as a certified chainsawyer, travelled to help out with hurricane Helene clean-up. He’s also a regular on boundary work trips.



Jim Webb, long-time trail maintainer and supervisor, participates in all of our work hikes. In addition, he has recently taken on the post of lead sawyer for the club. Jim is always willing to assist all aspects of trail maintenance. Gosh. I’m writing a book! If I point out each and every person who goes beyond, I’d be spending days. Please thank **Diana Christopulos, Craig McNally, Brian Boggs, Erin Byers, Brendle Wolfe, Tom Martin, Pam and Josh Wolsey, Therese and Homer Witcher, Pete Irvine, Terry Shipley, Ryan Wagoner, Bill Dawson**, and countless others who make this club happen. Along with all those who regularly maintain their piece of the trail, show up regularly for work trips, and do the thousand other tasks to make the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club happen, THANK YOU. I know that I have not included everyone on

this list; that would be next to impossible. If you feel overlooked in my not mentioning you, please reach out to me. I apologize sincerely. If I don’t know your name and what you do to help, I should. Write me and make introductions, please! Lastly, thank you to our dues-paying members for your continued support of our mission. It takes a community to maintain this trail. Financial assistance is welcome and needed as much as trail maintenance. I outlined in my last article how we spend the dollars we receive, and so I want you to know how important your gifts are. We also work hard to receive funds from ATC, the Park and Forest services, the AT license plate fund, and any other grants and giveaways that we can find. Know that we are careful with our spending as we realize how precious those contributions are. But our goal is to keep this path as close to a wilderness experience as we can, while making it as accessible as we can. Thank you to everyone who contributes in any way, shape, or form to our awesome mission.



The Ongoing Saga of Dennis the Bear
Mike Scott, Editor in Training.

People of certain age will automatically associate the phrase “pic-a-nic baskets” with the affable Yogi bear, whose entire existence within Jellystone park was directed toward acquiring prepared food from unsuspecting tourists. Ranger Smith had his hands full trying to intervene in Yogi’s “pic-a-nic basket” capers. It was a weekly cartoon plot line which accurately describes a bear’s habituation to people, but without the real consequences of what such interactions are like outside the realm of animation. Our resident Yogi is called Dennis (as in Dennis the Menace) and it is not clear if his story will end in success or tragedy.

ATC Ridge runner, **Suzzanne Neal**, was kind enough to give a summary of Dennis’s antics on Catawba Mountain and McAfee Knob. Dennis showed up in the spring of 2024 as juvenile bear entering what might be described as his teenage years. His mother likely had pushed him away after two years of nurturing, leaving him on his own to fend for himself in one of the most heavily used sections of the AT.

Dennis likely discovered that even well-meaning people are a good source of food. Every small meal on the trail inevitably leaves a trace which a bear can efficiently sniff. If you eat a Pop Tart on McAfee Knob, the crumb trail is easily detected. That’s just an example of food inadvertently left. When one reads the Ridge runner reports of trash and refuse at campsites and shelters, it is apparent that not all the



Dennis on The Knob. Credit Bill Dawson.

hikers and visitors are particularly careful or thoughtful about removing their trash. Consequently, Dennis quickly learned that people are a source of ready and tasty food and became habituated to them, sought their provisions, and began to aggressively harass them. He stole Ridge runner Bill Dawson’s water bottle. (I suppose even bears don’t like the extra hike to the water source either.) Recognizable because of his distinctive ears, a purposeful campaign of unpleasant human interaction was undertaken by our local rangers and Ridge runners in hopes of

dissuading Dennis from further negative interactions with hikers. Alas, the lure of easy food was more influential than the scripted harassment. Because of his chronic boldness, it was decided that he needed to be euthanized.

That could have been the end of a tragic story had not a bigger tragedy intervened. Hurricane Helen inundated the area with rain. While not devastating to our local region, it was a big enough event to create flooding and destruction and diminish the use of the trail for a short period.

During that time, Dennis disappeared. Fall merged into a very cold January, and like all bears, Dennis took to a den to ride out the winter. Luckily, off the nuisance bear radar, he was able to escape his demise at that point.

Questions about him remained as the following spring brought people and bears to the trail. Dennis did show up, and was still bold around people, but seems to have tempered his direct confrontations in search of food and, for now, his changed behavior seems to have saved him. Perhaps, like his animated brother Yogi, he’s “smarter than your average bear”. Sure hope so.



When a Vision Becomes Reality
Mike Scott, Editor in Training

I recently acquired an online account for a newspaper archive which includes the various iterations of Roanoke’s newspaper. Like all digital content, it has keyword features which allows one to search for specific terms, and I spent a little time going down a rabbit hole of historical Appalachian Trail coverage within. There is a lot, and I found an interesting article published in July of 1984 by outdoor editor Bill Cochran which describes both local and national efforts in acquiring land on McAfee Knob to become the permanent trail route through the region. It also details a prescient vision of the potential economic impact of the acquisition.

I’m personally aware of this period because my first long AT section hike went through the region as these land issues were being resolved. I started at Rockfish Gap and headed south. I recall the trail crossing the valley just north of Roanoke and involved a fair amount of road walking in Botetourt County. The one memorable aspect of pavement pounding was being aggressively harassed by a large dog whose owner watched passively as his beast escorted me away from what he considered his personal territory. I had a big ole hickory walking stick I used to fend him off. It was unnerving, but a stop in Daleville offered an opportunity for calming Country Cooking buffet before heading under Interstate 81 and up Tinker Mountain for a nighttime of rest under Hay Rock. Unlike the current route, one headed further west, up Scorched Earth Gap and down and across the Catawba Valley and then back up North Mountain before heading south to route 311. It is a nice hike, but not one that planners hoped would become a major component of Roanoke’s outdoor offerings.



Credit Roanoke Times July 29, 1984

Bill Cochran quotes trail officials who clearly understood the value of McAfee Knob and its potential impact on tourism for the region:

“Trail Officials say that the Catawba route will provide one of the finest hiking experiences to be found along the famed footpath’s 2100 mile from Maine to Georgia”

Mike Dawson, a field representative for the Appalachian Trail conference correctly predicted

“We are expecting really high amount of use for this section”.

Because of this vision, the section of the trail adjacent to Roanoke now boasts the most photographed spot on the Appalachian Trail. On any given day the parking lot below the newly completed foot bridge across Rt. 311 is full and populated by cars whose license plates indicate travel from other states, both far and near. The weekly Ridge runner reports are replete with accounts of hikers from all parts of the country and globe who visit this region and choose to climb to McAfee Knob or complete the Triple Crown. Here’s a typical sample of the comments from a weekly Ridge runner report filed by **Bill Dawson** which gives a good idea of typical interactions on the way to McAfee’s Knob:

“Was surprised to see 48 cars at the t railhead at 5am
More surprised to see green glow sticks along the trail from trail head to summit. The glow sticks were placed along the trail by Cystic Fibrosis group of 25. I spoke with a couple of the group members, and they assured me that they would be picking them up on the way down. I had already picked several as had Theresa Witcher. 50 + hikers at summit for sunrise. Homer and Theresa W were out today and were celebrating their anniversary. Great to see them. A second group of 14 men from Columbus Ohio were a narcotics anonymous group celebrating their recoveries. Lots of college students on the trail today as well.”

Ridge runner **Ryan Wagoner** posted this:

“I met a cool group of old timers (80+)who all went to West Point together. They get together each year for some kind of outing. Three of them had to turn around earlier, but the rest were slowly making their way up. I came upon them all sitting down in various places along the trail on my way up. Fun to chat with them for a while. A handful of folks were up on McAfee Knob taking in the views. Some had questions so I was happy to share all my information with them. The heat and humidity appear to be back after such a nice stretch of cool days. I’m looking forward to the fall, for sure”.

These accounts underscore the section’s popularity and both the ATC and RATC significant investments in both paid and volunteer time assisting hikers and managing their impacts. Our club estimates 50,000 to 60,000 visitors a year.

Public projects are often pitched to communities with the hope that their impact will positively impact economic development. They don’t all work out. The foresight and optimism of 41 years ago seems to have been transformed into a remarkably successful endeavor. We are now left with maintaining and managing this important resource for future generations to enjoy. It is exactly what those folks in 1984 saw coming.

RATC BOARD MEMBERS

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- RATC Archivist** Diana Christopulos
archivist@ratc.org
- Social Events Coordinator** Jeanine and Robert Bomber

Membership Coordinator
John Kelley

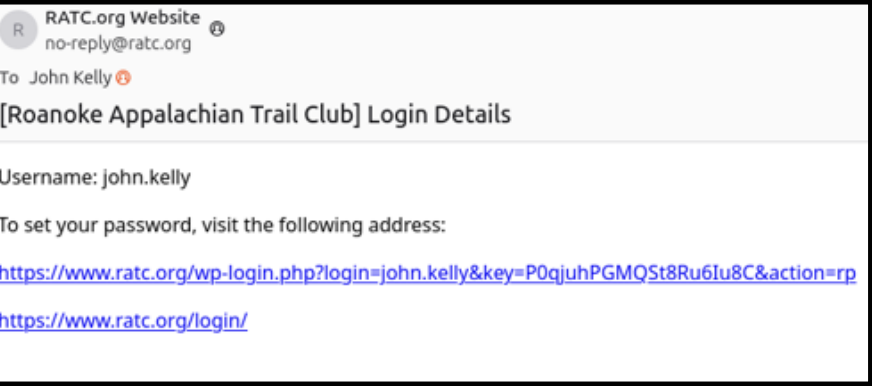
Now Live: RATC Member Portal

Great news, RATC friends. Our new Member Portal is officially live, giving you 24/7 access to your membership profile so you can keep your info current, manage renewals more easily, and stay connected with everything happening across the club.

Check Your Inbox To Get Started

- Look for two messages:
- An introductory note from **membership@ratc.org** explaining what to expect and the next steps.
 - An invitation from **no-reply@ratc.org** with your secure link to create a password and sign in.

If you do not see it, check your spam or promotions folder.



Once you set your password, you can always return to the portal anytime by visiting ratc.org and clicking Login in the upper right.

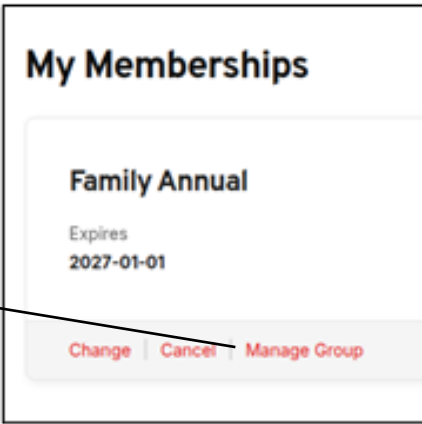
Update Your Profile

After you log in, click Edit Profile to:

- Update your contact info so you never miss a newsletter or event.
- Tell us about your interests such as group hikes, trail maintenance, Hiker Happy Hours, or reading the newsletter. Your selections help us tailor communications and opportunities that fit you.

Family Membership?

Click Manage Group to invite family members to create their own accounts so everyone stays in the loop.



What We Are Looking For In The RATC Community?

We want to better understand how you like to engage, whether that is getting your boots dirty on a maintenance crew, joining social hikes, attending meetups, or cheering from your email inbox.

Sharing your interests helps us plan the right mix of events, volunteer opportunities, and communications for the year ahead.

Prefer The Old Way?

No problem. If mailing a renewal or having us update your info manually works better for you, that option is still available.

Need Help?

If you have any issues or questions, contact **membership@ratc.org**. We are here to help and happy to get you set up.

Thanks for being a valued member of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. See you on the trail and in the portal

Matched Giving: Double Your Impact for the A.T.

As you plan your year-end giving, you can make your gift go twice as far for the Appalachian Trail. This season, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) will run two major matching campaigns, allowing eligible donations to be matched dollar-for-dollar for a limited time.

How the match works:

1. Make your gift to ATC during an active match window. (Use the "ATC Matching Gift Program" link below or the address in the P.S.)
2. Then email or call ATC's Assoc. Director of Annual Giving, Mary Hodges, to request that your gift be directed for use by our regional office.
3. ATC will apply the match and coordinate internally so your dollars support our region's priorities, at twice the impact.

Important: To qualify for the match and ensure local use, the donation must be made to ATC first, then you contact ATC to request regional designation.

A local example:

Longtime RATC member and McAfee Knob Task Force Liason, **Brian Boggs** used ATC's matching program to support the McAfee Knob Task Force and Ridge Runner program. By giving directly to ATC during the match and asking that his gift be used locally, he:

- * Ensured his dollars were restricted to local programs and could see the impact firsthand.
- * Doubled his impact through the match.
- * Honored two friends "in honor of" on his gift, which ATC acknowledged and shared with the honorees

Ready to participate?

Give through ATC's Matching Gift Program
Click Here:

<https://connect.clickandpledge.com/w/Form/e750810b-f9ac-4687-aeba-6ec896de645f?638761566802604400>

Then contact:

Mary Hodges, Associate Director of Annual Giving
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
mhodges@appalachiantrail.org
757-871-7172

Thank you for helping protect, steward, and inspire along our section of the Appalachian Trail, now with 2x the impact.

Upcoming Events

GoFest- October 17th-19

GO Fest is the city's celebration of our region's plentiful outdoor opportunities during one of the most beautiful times of the year. It's a great time for the RATC to recruit new members.

The RATC is hosting an information booth during this event and is seeking members to spend two hours or so to answer questions and provide information. Don't worry if you are a newbie, there will be someone to help!

Volunteer for our Booth

<https://www.meetup.com/roanoke-appalachian-trail-club/>

Event Particulars and Schedule

<https://roanokegofest.com/>

Holiday Potluck

December 13th 3:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Christ Luthern Church
2011 Brandon Ave SW, Roanoke, VA 24015

This annual event will feature the Habitual Hiker, Leonard Atkins as guest and speaker. Leonard has authored guide books and thoughts on hiking in Virginia, the AT and many others.

Members are encouraged to volunteer time for setup and takedown, and to bring a favorite dish for all to enjoy. Keep you eyes on the RATC's Meetup site for the event listing which provide an opportunity to manage both food and setup work.

[RATC meetup](#)

<https://www.meetup.com/roanoke-appalachian-trail-club/>

Trail Supervisors Report
By Mike Vaughn

I'd like to welcome the following new trail maintainers:

- * Mary Hughes Frye
- * Nick Lindsay
- * Christian Smith
- * Adam Stevens

Welcome aboard! I look forward to seeing you all out on the trail.

McAfee Fire Road Project

I'm excited to report that the Park Service has given final approval for the club to do phase two of the McAfee Fire Road Project. As many of you may recall, phase one of this project added approximately 40 drainage dips to the first 2.5 miles of the fire road. This project was completed in March 2022 and was a great improvement for that section of road. Club member **Pete Irvine** was the leader on this project. Shortly after that, we submitted a request to improve the remaining 1.5 miles of the fire road out to near Campbell shelter. Pete has again agreed to be the leader on this project. He will be sending out emails to club members asking for volunteers to help monitor the work site to deter hikers from hiking that section while the heavy equipment is in operation. The actual drainage work on the fire road will be done by a contractor. Work should be able to begin this Fall.

Daleville Pedestrian Crosswalk

I'm also excited to report that VDOT has begun preliminary planning work on constructing a pedestrian crosswalk at the AT crossing on route 220 in Daleville. The crosswalk will be lined and have buttons on each side of the road that the pedestrian can push. This will activate a light signal there that will notify drivers to stop. This will be a great safety improvement for hikers on this road, which has heavy vehicle usage. No date has been set yet for work to begin on this.

As I mentioned in my Spring report, there are several major projects ongoing or coming up on our section of trail. Here is an update on those projects:

War Spur Relocation: Completed June 17

Catawba Shelter:

Plans are to build 12 tent sites near the Catawba shelter. Work began on the 1/3-mile loop trail in April. The loop trail was completed on September 15. The club has had 12 work hikes out there so far. The ATC's Konnarock crew worked on the actual tent pads for three weeks this summer. Three of the tent pads are nearing completion. The club will be working on these tent pads and starting work on a couple more during the fall and winter. We hope to build a trail from the loop up to the privy also. Some of the tent pads will be available for use by hikers in the next couple of months. The overall project will take at least two years to complete.

Andy Layne Trail Relocation

Plans are to install a new bridge upstream from the current bridge crossing. In addition, a new parking lot will be constructed south of the current parking lot. Approximately one and half miles of new trail will have to be built for this relocation. Roanoke Cement Company is waiting for final approval from a government agency to build the bridge and parking lot. Once that is received an updated easement agreement between Roanoke Cement Company and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy will need to be signed. At that point the club can start building the new trail. Actual construction of the new trail section will probably start early next year

Craig Creek Bridge Replacement

The new bridge is still in the design phase. Once the bridge design is finalized, contractors will be asked to bid on the project. This process typically takes a month to complete. The contract is then awarded and materials can be ordered and construction can begin. Construction of the bridge is expected to occur next year.

Daleville Relocation:

Completed July 20.

In the past few years two apartment complexes have been built on land adjoining the trail corridor just south of Route 220 in Botetourt County. The trail was within 50 feet of the property line of the apartments in places. The work to complete the relocation of the trail is a remarkable story. On July 11, long-time maintainers Homer and Therese Witcher were notified that the work had been approved by the park Service. They quickly rounded up a group of family and friends to work on building the approximately a half-mile of new trail. They started work on July 12. The project was completed on July 20. The project took 113 man-hours with Homer contributing 35 of them. They even moved the kiosk down to the relocated section of trail and stained it. It is truly very inspiring to see such dedication to the trail from our club members. Much thanks to all involved for a job well done.



The Daleville relocation and newly placed kiosk.

Trail Maintaners

We still have a need for some additional maintainers. Please contact trailsupervisor@ratc.org if you are interested in becoming a trail maintainer. Training and equipment will be provided. We are also always looking for volunteers to serve as work crew leaders. Below are the sections that currently need a maintainer:

Miles	Section	Needed
2.9	Salt Pond Road to Wilson Creek	Need two maintainers
3.2	North Mountain, Turkey Tr. To CVT	Need one maintainer
1.7	Dragon's Tooth blue blaze Trail	Need one maintainer
2.5	McAfee Fire Road	Need one maintainer

Work Hikes

Submitted by Mike Vaughn
Trail Supervisor

July 1, 2025, 8:00 am

Catawba Mountain

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Stick
- * Sue Terwilliger
- * Jim Webb
- * Bo Carneal
- * John Paul Jones

Today we continued our work digging the new tent pad loop near Catawba shelter. It was forecast to be another hot day, so we got a fairly early start up the mountain, with a chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Since Bo is a newly minted “B” sawyer, both he and Greg stayed at the log pile and split logs for the border of the tent pads. Jim, Sue, and I continued digging new trail for the new tent pads near the shelter. John Paul Jones was driving in from Lynchburg and got there a little later. JP works as a medical examiner and had some interesting stories to tell. The work went well and we were back in the parking lot by 2:00. We have now split a total of 12 of the 12 foot long locust logs. This should give the Konnarock crew plenty of logs to work with on the tent pads.

July 14, 2025 8:00 am

Catawba Mountain

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Stick
- * Greg Still
- * Jim Webb
- * Bo Carneal
- * Mike Scott
- * John Hvozovic



Jim Web working on the Catawba Campsite Tent Loop Trail.

We had a fairly large group today. All were experienced trail workers. We focused on digging new trail on the tent pad loop. We spread out along the route and got to work. This was the first day that the Konnarock crew was here working on the tent pads. They will be here for three weeks this summer. The crew came by later to check out the trail. They seemed very enthusiastic to start work on the tent pads. Our work went well and we finished 170 feet of new trail. We have about 325 feet to go to finish the 1,500 foot loop. We were very happy with our progress, although we were all soaked with sweat from working in the heat and humidity. We were grateful that John had driven up the fire road so most of us were able to ride with him and avoid the two mile walk out.

July 21, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain

- * Mike Vaughn,
- * Greg Still
- * Jim Webb
- * Bo Carneal

There were just four of us heading out to the tent pad loop today. Unfortunately, I had some minor surgery a few days prior and was not able to do any trail work. It was overcast with temperatures in the 80s and very high humidity. The Konnarock crew had been there the previous week so we were able to check out their work. They had completed two tent pads and had started on another. We were impressed by the good work they had done. Around 12:30 a light rain began to fall. Rain was in the forecast for the afternoon so we headed out. We all were able to drive out in Greg’s truck. We should be able to complete the tent pad loop in three to four more work hikes.

August 4, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Stick
- * Jim Webb
- * Greg Stick
- * John Hzdovic

The weather was unseasonably cool when we headed up the fire road. We were all grateful for that. Upon getting to the work site, Jim did some chainsaw work and the rest of us began digging trail. With the fairly cool temperatures we made good progress. By the end of the day we had built about 115 feet of new trail. We have about 150 more feet to complete the tent pad loop trail. It should take us two more work hikes. We saw quite a few hikers on the fire road on our way out.



Greg Still on the Catawba Tent Pad Loop.



Greg Stick in the foreground on the Catawba Tent Pad Loop.



Bo Carneal in the foreground on the Catawba Tent Loop trail

**August 11, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain**

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Still
- * Jim Webb
- * Sue Terwilliger
- * Bo Carneal
- * Gary Moore
- * Dave Grimm

We had a fairly large group today. We hiked up to the work site, arriving around 9:00 am. Jim and Bo worked at the wood pile cutting logs and stakes for steps. The rest of us started digging trail and putting in steps. The work went well and by the end of the day we had dug about 70 feet of new trail and put in three log steps. This was our ninth work hike digging new trail at this location, so it was good to be doing something different, such as putting in steps. We have about 80 feet of trail to complete the tent pad loop trail.



Sue Terwilliger crushing stone on the Catawba Tent Pad loop.

**August 18, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain**

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Stick
- * Jim Webb
- * John Hvozdovic,
- * Bo Carneal

John drove the five of us up the fire road today, which was much appreciated. Jim stopped by the wood pile and cut some logs and stakes for steps. The rest of us began digging trail and putting in log steps. Ridgrunner Ryan Wagoner stopped by the work site in the afternoon. We didn't see many hikers on the fire road. By the end of the day we had dug about 55 feet of new trail and put in six log steps. We only have 25 feet of trail to complete the tent pad loop trail.



Jim Webb foreground on the Catawba Tent Pad loop



Mary Frye on the Catawba Tent Pad loop.

**September 10, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain**

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Still,
- * Jim Webb
- * Mary Huges Frye,
- * Kathryn Herndon-Powell

It was a cool 57 degrees when we headed up the trail from the parking lot. This was our 11th work hike at this location and the cooler weather was much appreciated. Jim started by clearing some hazard trees and then Greg and him went to cut logs and stakes for steps. The rest of us began digging trail and putting in log steps. It was Mary's first work hike with us and she learned quickly and was a great help. We finished the last few feet of the loop, except for the installation of a few steps. We also began work on finishing one of the tent pads. We will be focusing on the tent pads on future hikes. There is a huge amount of work still to do out there.

September 15, 2025, 8:00 am
Catawba Mountain

- * Mike Vaughn
- * Greg Still
- * Jim Webb,
- * Greg Stick,
- * Gary Moore
- * Dave Grimm
- * John Grant

We had a fairly large group of experienced trail workers today. We all piled into Greg’s truck and quickly got to the work site. We split up into three groups. Jim and Greg Stick stopped at the wood pile and cut logs and stakes for steps. Greg Still and Dave started work on the last steps on the tent pad loop. The rest of us worked on the first tent pad. By lunch we had the first tent pad nearly completed, so we moved on to the second tent pad. We made good progress there. We had installed 16 steps overall. At the end of the day we were all tired but satisfied with our progress. We should be able to start on the next tent pad on our next work hike.



Completed tent pad access steps at Catawba Mountain

Shelter Nights
Organized By Bennet Witcher
Shelter Supervisor

The Shelter Night event series invites RATC members and their friends and family for an overnight event at one of the 16 shelters which are maintained by the club. The inaugural event was held for the night of Saturday August 15th and Wilson Creek Shelter was the first location chosen. The images on the opposite page are from that event. Carpooling can be provided and so can spare gear. Here are the dates of the past and future Shelter Nights.

- August 16, 2025-Wilson Creek Shelter
- August 30, 2025- Jenny’s Knob Shelter
- September 13, 2025-Fullhardt Knob Shelter
- September 27, 2025 Wapiti Shelter
- October 11th, 2025 Lamberts Meadow

[RATC meetup](#)

<https://www.meetup.com/roanoke-appalachian-trail-club/>

Check the RATC meetup site for schedules and changes



Wilso Creek Shelter Night with hikers and RATC members.



Wilson Creek Shelter Nights with the Witcher family and friends plus a couple of hikers who were happy to have a hot dog or two and a few other treats.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST
Diana Christopulos, RATC Archivist

Selections from the RATC archives

The RATC has been around since **1932**, and every new decade brings new challenges and opportunities. Here's a glance at what was happening in the Fall 93, 75, 50, and 25 years ago. As always, the club had three major functions: hiking, socializing, and building and maintaining the Appalachian Trail.

1932 On October 24, 1932, Donald S. Gates (circled in photo here), a business professor at Roanoke College, called a meeting at the Roanoke Y.M.C.A. at which he explained the purposes of the Appalachian Trail and suggested that a local group be formed. Gates had attended the 1931 Appalachian Trail Conference in the Smokies and established correspondence with Myron Avery. He formed an outings club at Roanoke College and reached out to hikers at Hollins College and the Nomads, a coed group of local postal workers and their friends. These became the RATC founders. Many attended a joint meeting with the Potomac and Natural Bridge Clubs at the Hotel Mons near Peaks of Otter the following weekend, where they learned about clearing and marking trail. On Sunday, November 13, 1932, Professor and Mrs. Gates invited a group to supper at their home in Salem. After hiking in the Carvins Cove area and sharing dinner, they founded the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club, and Gates was named President.



1950 Tom Campbell (pictured here as winner of 1950 RATC Halloween costume contest) was President and Annette Warren was Bulletin (Blazer) editor. Woody Williams began the year as Trail Supervisor but was called up to active duty in the Army (Korean War) and was replaced by Jimmy Denton. Plans included building a campsite at Wilson Creek (no shelter yet), an exploratory hike to Peters Mountain as part of the ongoing 145-mile relocation away from the Blue Ridge Parkway, an overnight hiking trip to the Pinnacles of Dan (part of the original 1933 AT), and the annual Halloween party.



1975 Charles Musgrove was President, Zetta Campbell was Blazer editor (her artwork pictured here), and Bill Gordge was Hikemaster. We had \$92 in our treasury. Zetta Campbell was leading hikes to Lambert's Meadow and North Mountain while Bill Gordge reviewed the impacts of logging on Walker Mountain and led a maintenance hike on Dragons Tooth. RATC was a member of the Virginia Trails Association, and the board sent a letter to the governor of Virginia asking that the AT be made "a permanent reality." The board also wrote a letter endorsing efforts of the Huntsville Chapter of the Alabama Conservancy to preserve its forests.



Art work by Zetta Campbell.

2000 Dick Clark was RATC President, Charles Parry was Trail Supervisor, Kris Peckman collected and edited the hike reports, and Jimmy Whitney was on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy Board of Managers. The five work hikes in October were all on Sundays - one each on the Tinker Creek Bridge and the Catawba Shelter; the other three on the Andy Layne Trail (October 2000 relocation work hike pictured here). During the past year, 133 RATC volunteers had labored for 3,350 hours on NPS and USFS lands.



Andy Layne Trail Construction

RATC ANNUAL CORN BOIL AND POTLUCK AUGUST 9TH, 2025

WHISPERING PINES PARK, SALEM VA



Greetings from the Sign Makers.
Kelly and Linda Mulheren

Our year-round work continues. The last few months have been busy with sign making of all sorts. Directional advice takes many forms based on the audience. What works for one person doesn't necessarily work for all.

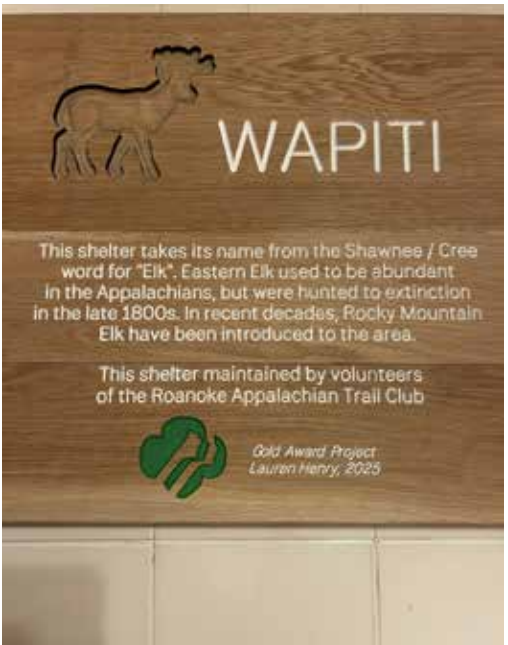
An example of this is that we recently heard from two south-bound hikers that they were getting lost as they came down Sinking Creek mountain and were approaching the Keffer Oak. When Kelly went out to see the problem it was apparent that we lacked good directional information for south-bounders and overgrowth of vegetation was obscuring what directional info was there. New signs with better directions are now up and the vegetation has been hacked back. But we were lucky to hear from these two hikers. As sign makers we don't regularly patrol all of the many miles of RATC's Appalachian Trail and side trails. We need your help! Even while out hiking, you can be a valuable resource for us. Just take pictures and note locations if signage is lacking or needs upgrading.

Here's an example of two signs needing replacement:



These are typical of signs which need replacments.

In other news we have two new, amazing signs at the Wapiti shelter thanks to Girl Scout **Lauren Henry**, as part of her Gold Award Girl Scout project. She is Therese and Homer Witcher's niece. Lauren researched the shelter history, and Leave No Trace Principles and designed two signs to be placed inside the shelter. She finished the signs with sanding and paint, and hung them at the shelter in August, with the help of the Witchers and her father. Well done Lauren!



Here are some examples of signs we have installed in recent months: McAfee Knob Trail



Continued on Page 24-25, Center

RATC TRAIL MAINTAINERS AND SECTIONS

#	Section	Maintaners
1	VA 606 to Ribble Trail (4.3)	Walter Shroyer, Mickey Pellillo
2	VA 608 to VA 606	Matthew Barnett Todd Coake (sawyer)
3	VA 606 to Ribble Trail	Mike & Jennie Reilly,Denise & Bill Hendon Stephanie & Jack Buffet
4	Ribble Trail to Big Horse Gap	Bill & Leslie Kay Floyd
5	Big Horse Gap to Doc's Knob Shelter	Craig McNally Mark Allamong (sawyer)
6	Doc's Knob Shelter to Power Line	Matt Gentry Tim Ligon (sawyer)
7	Power Line to Wilburn Overlook	Greg Still(sawyer), Craig McNally
8	Wilburn Overlook to Cross Road	Julie Petruska, Sue Terwilliger, Craig McNally
9	Cross Road to US 460(1.7)	Adam Stevens
10	Pine Swamp to Bailey Gap	Dave & Lori Jones (sawyer)
11	Bailey Gap to VA 613	Pete Schitthenner, Eric West, Adam Stevens
12	VA 613 to Lone Pine Mountain	Greg Hardwicke, Fred Meyer Lisa Garcia, Kurt Stephenson Ryan Wagoner (sawyer)
12A	War Spur Trail to Johns Creek Road	Eric West
13	War Spur Trail to Johns Creek Road	Kelly and Linda Mulheren Molly and Fred Jones
14	Johns Creek Road to Rocky Gap	Terry Shipley and Greg Evanylo
15	Rocky Gap to field north of route 42	Brian Kelley(sawyer) and Shane Smith
16	Field northr of oute 42 to Route 630	Shane Smith
17	VA 630 to Sarver Shelter Trail	Chase Davidson David Anderson, Amanda Yoder
18	Sarver Shelter Trail to N. end of Ridgeline	Chase Davidson (sawyer),Kathryn Herndon-Powell Susan Herndon-Powell (sawyer) Dave Grimm
19	N. end of Ridgeline to VA 621	Eric Hanson, Molly Brunner, Josie Demarce
20	Va 621 to Audie Murphy Monument	Erik Leedom
	North Mtn Trail, Turkey Tr. To CVT	Need Maintainer

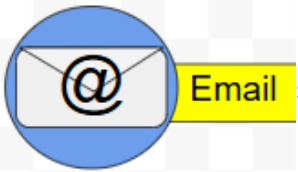
War Spur Trail Relocation



Linda Mulheren with new signs at the War Spur Relocation.



When out on the trail please consider these points as relates to signage. Let us know by sending an e-mail to **signs@ratc.org** if you have suggestions. Kelly and Linda Mulheren, RATC Sign Maker



Email signs@ratc.org

#	Section	Maintaners
	Boy Scout Trail	Donna Logan
	John's Creek Mountain Trail	Hugh Craft Joe Brabant, Jan-Erik Zeller (section sawyer)
	McAfee Fire Rt 311 At Crossing	Peter Irvine(sawyer) Kailee Sesler
	McAfee Fire Rd, At crossing to Campbell Shelter	Daniel Izquierdo, Garry Moore

#	Section	Maintaners
21	Audie Murphy Monu-ment to VA 620	Lee Hipp Will Mackinnon
22	VA 620 to Ridgeline	Hugh Craft Joe Brabant, Jan-Erik Zeller (section sawyer)
23	Ridgeline to Dragons Tooth	Tom McAvoy, Charles Hudson John Grant, Jan-Erik Zeller (section sawyer)
24	Dragons Tooth to VA 624	David Poteet
25	VA 624 to VA 785 Tree line	Bo Carneal, Becky Carneal
26	VA785 Tree line to VA 311	Bo Carneal, Becky Carneal
27	VA 311 to Fire Road	Jim Webb (sawyer), Greg Stick
28	Fire Road to Campbell Shelter	Jim Webb (sawyer), Greg Stick
29	Campbell Shelter to Brickeys Gap	Bill Gunn, Nick Lindsay, Christian Smith
30	Brickeys Gap to Ditch Trail	Kevin Witcher
31	Ditch Trail to Angels Gap	Bryon Lane
32	Angels Gap to Power Line	Mike Vaughn Jeff Armstrong
33	Power Line to US 220	Ron and Cathy Butler,Nancy and Leonard Galvan Robert & Jeanie Bomber
34	US 220 to VA 652	Homer &Therese Witcher
35	Va 652 to Fullhardt Knob Shelter	Dave Horst (sawyer)
36	Fullhardt Shelter to Salt Pond Road	John Garris, Mark Wilhelm
37	Salt Pond Road To Wilson Creek	Jim Mesler(need another maintainer)
38	Wilson Creek to Black Horse Gap	Theresa McDaniel, Mary Frye
	Andy Layne Trail	Daniel Howell, Randy Fuller
	Dragon's Tooth Trail	Donna Logan, Brad Shearer
	North Mtn Trail, Deer Tr. To Grouse Trail	Jeff Hoepfner Alexis Reis
	North Mtn Trail, Grouse Tr. To Deer Trail	Hugh Craft, Joe Brabant
	North Mtn Trail, Grouse Tr. To TurkeyTrail	Bob Patten
	Catawba Valley Trail (CVT)	Jonathan Harris, Michelle Cook, Sean Cook
	Ribble Trail	Bill & Leslie Kay Floyd
	War Spur Trail	Anja Whittington, Jay Raymond

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