

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Summer 2026

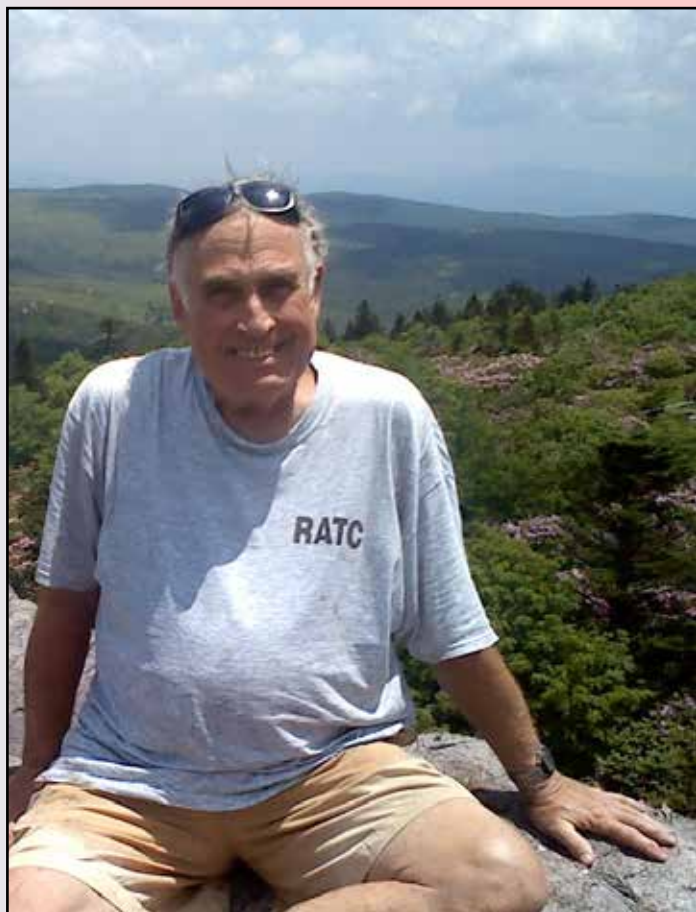


Loss of long-time RATC leader Dick Clark

November 28, 1938 - May 9, 2026

If you hiked with RATC between 1984 and the early 2000s, you probably hiked with Dick Clark. He was the Club's Hikemaster from 1984-94 and again from 1998-2000 when he transitioned to three years as RATC President (2000-2003).

Dick continued leading hikes, was a maintainer on the Tinker Mountain section near Angel's Gap and provided storage for RATC t-shirts and hats in his basement for many years. He donated his papers to the RATC collection, and they are now safely part of the Virginia Tech Permanent Archives.



Dick Clark at Mount Rogers National Recreation Area

In addition to hiking, he loved his wife Judy, cryptic crosswords (which he created), and banana slugs. He and Judy, a fine musician, hosted many holiday parties bringing together a cross section of musical and puzzles lovers with hikers and outdoors people. A memorial service and celebration of his life was held at St. John's Episcopal Church on May 27.

The following is Dick's obituary is taken from the Oakey's Funeral Home :

Richard Lee "Dick" Clark passed away peacefully on Saturday, May 9, 2026, at the age of 87.

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, he grew up in Roanoke and graduated from the University of Virginia with extended studies in mathematics. After a brief career in the defense industry, he returned to southwest Virginia where he taught mathematics at Franklin County High School and at Ferrum College.

A lifelong hiker who climbed Mount Whitney and trekked in the Pyrenees, he most loved hiking (and maintaining) the many trails in and around Roanoke. He served as Hikemaster of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club and was a former president of Windsor Lake Corporation.

In later years, he pursued his love of crossword puzzles, was a prize winner in the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament Competition (ACPT), and became a nationally recognized creator of cryptic puzzles, publishing regularly in GAMES magazine. His remarkable kindness and generosity made him a beloved teacher and friend.

He is survived by Judy, his wife of 58 years; his sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Beverly and Buster Lammay; nieces, Ann Lammay Phillips (Shawn) and Jane Lammay, all of Richmond; and cousins, Dr. Richard Hiers, Rebecca Hiers, and Peter Hiers.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, or to the Nature Conservancy.

Submitted by Diana Christopulos and Judy Clark

Memories of Dick Clark

Editor's Note:

I met Dick Clark in 1993 as I was beginning my teaching career at Franklin County High School and Dick was finishing his. From time to time, I found myself sharing a lunch table in our tiny teacher's lounge, using the short break to eat something from a brown bag before finishing the second half of the teaching day. He was a very well-respected math teacher, and Franklin County was lucky to have someone of his caliber working with their students. At his funeral, Dick's sister-in-law, Beverly Lammay, described Dicks love for math in her eulogy:

"Dick loved mathematics, and he said that 2025 was a perfect year because it was the square of 45. We will not get the square of 46 until 2116!"

Long time RATC member and current club Treasurer, Jimmy Whitney recounts this about Dick:

"I have some great memories of Dick Clark. I moved to Roanoke in summer of 1985 and joined RATC but didn't get involved initially. Dick called and asked if I could be a co-leader on a Sunday afternoon hike - Deer Trail to Route 311. If he had not made that initial call to me, I might have been on the sidelines and not gotten involved with the Club.

We did many long hikes together including Daleville to 311 in one day. Could never do that now. Ed Wallace, Mike Haynie and myself would go to Dick's house quarterly to put the hike schedule together to go in the Blazer. Several hours of calling people to lead & co-lead hikes and it was fun just being together doing that. Did that for close to 10 years I think.



Dick Teaching math at Franklin County High School circa 1993-1994. Image taken from The Animo yearbook.

I would always schedule at least one 15-mile hike as I worked on completing the entire state of Virginia (which I did a few years ago). Dick affectionately referred to them as "Jimmy Whitney Death Marches". He was a great leader for the Club, trail maintainer for many years and a good friend."

In 1993 I was aware of Dick's interest in hiking and his involvement with the RATC and thought that it might be something I would like to be involved with someday. Like Dick, retirement has provided such an opportunity. It also occurred to me that as the President of the RATC for several years, Dick must have penned some thoughts about issues contemporary to his involvement with the Club. I did not take long to sort through our archives to find newsletters from Dick's tenure, along with a few photos.

Sharing his thoughts and words from that time might be a fitting tribute to him and his service to the club. The entry to the right is his President's message in the Summer 2001 Trail Blazer. It is just as relevant today as it was then.



Dick on Mt. Whitney in younger days.

Mike Scott
blazer@ratc.org

Dick Clark Summer 2001 Edition of the Trail Blazer

In response to the many phone calls, letters, and email that I get for information about local hiking opportunities, sooner or later I get around to McAfee Knob.

Any knowledgeable hikers who live in the Roanoke area, it is just about everybody's favorite mountain. That is certainly true in my case. Some friends of mine introduced the Knob (no clarification is necessary) to me when I was in high school back in the mid-fifties. It was love at first sight; and, although I've climbed it hundreds of times since then, I still get a rush of excitement when I step out onto those cliffs again.

What's not to like? With a seven-mile round trip of fairly easy walking (only the odd steep stretch here and there), it's well within the physical capabilities of a lot of people. And the view - which really hasn't changed that much in 45 years - is simply spectacular. You see the Catawba Valley and Tinker Cliffs in the foreground give way to the jumbled mountains of the Blue Ridge - as far as the Peaks of Otter on a clear day. Or walk to the end of the cliffs and watch as the Roanoke Valley unfolds beneath your feet. And there's something else to consider: McAfee Knob is a beautiful mountain. Its profile, which has always reminded me of a cresting wave, has a classic simplicity that is almost breathtaking.

As many of you know, however, McAfee fell on hard times in the late seventies. At that time, much of the surrounding land was privately owned and there were several cabins and vacation homes accessible by the fire road.

An architect drew up plans for a house that was to be cantilevered over the edge of the cliffs. And, from the perspective of the landowners, hikers were persona non grata. As a result, some of these landowners banded together and moved to block access to the trail. This forced RATC to relocate the Appalachian Trail off of Catawba Mountain and onto North Mountain - where it remained until 1987.

Over the intervening years, the National Park Service bought up the old trail corridor lands (going to condemnation in at least one case) with the goal of returning the trail to the Knob. RATC, working in parallel, rerouted part of the trail to remove it from the fire road and built the Catawba shelter. An expanded parking lot was constructed at the former site of Bunk Sweeney's Mountain Top Inn (EATS!) on Route 311.

Finally, in the spring of 1987, the Appalachian Trail ran over McAfee Knob once again - this time fully protected by what is, in effect, a linear National Park.

The current popularity of the Knob is difficult to exaggerate. On a crisp, blue day in October, the parking lot will be full to overflowing by midmorning. Open the current Appalachian Trail Conference brochure and there's a marvelous double page spread of McAfee. It's almost an icon. Rumor has it that it's the most photographed spot on the entire A.T.

True or not, the Knob is worthy of that distinction.

Dick Clark



Judy and Dick, who proudly displays support for a favorite team mascot, the UC, Santa Cruz, Banana Slugs.

The family suggests memorial contributions should be directed to:

[Appalachian Trail Conservancy \(ATC.ORG\)](http://AppalachianTrailConservancy(ATC.ORG))

[Blue Ridge Land Conservancy \(https://www.brlcva.org/#\)](http://BlueRidgeLandConservancy(https://www.brlcva.org/#))

[Nature Conservancy \(https://www.nature.org/en-us/\)](http://NatureConservancy(https://www.nature.org/en-us/))



Walking stick in hand on Mill Mountain.



Summer is in full swing!

Temperatures have been all over the place, but the corn is knee-high and the insects are flourishing. Our work as a club continues every day, thanks to you – our members. Without your ongoing support, much of what we accomplish simply wouldn't be possible. Thank you!

Our trails have been whipped into shape for the annual thru-hiker season, which is now mostly behind us. A huge thank-you goes to our dedicated trail maintainers, who work quietly year-round to keep our trails safe and welcoming. They remove fallen trees and branches, clear waterbars, eliminate tripping hazards like rocks and roots, pick up litter, and cut back vegetation to maintain the trail's standard three- to four-foot width. It's demanding work that requires countless hours of effort, and I am deeply grateful for everything they do.

Our trail work crews have also been busy tackling several major projects. The fine work crew led by Mike Vaughn and Jim Webb completed the Catawba tent pad loop on June 25 after an impressive 35 work trips. The project now provides 12 level, inviting campsites—including two double sites—for hikers using this heavily visited shelter. Improvements to the water trail, bear box access, and privy trail have also transformed the area. If you haven't visited recently, I encourage you to take a hike and see the results of this project, which has been years in the making.

President's Report

Work continues on the relocation of the Andy Layne Trail as Roanoke Cement completes construction of the new bridge crossing. Once the remaining trail work is finished, we look forward to celebrating this significant project with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony in the coming weeks.

We also experienced a washout at the base of the steps leading from the new 311 pedestrian bridge. Our Supervisor of Trails, Mark Wilhelm, stabilized the area with gravel but recognized that a more substantial solution was needed. Kathryn Herndon-Powell and her crew brought in rubble to help prevent further erosion. The area is currently safe and passable, though additional work may be necessary in the future.

Our Hours Tracking Committee has begun testing a new volunteer reporting system called Track It Forward, with plans for a full rollout on October 1. Stay tuned for more information as we continue testing and refining the system. I'm sure we'll make a few adjustments before the official launch!

Walkabout Outfitter is once again holding a fundraising raffle, with 100 percent of the proceeds benefiting our club. We are grateful to the folks at Walkabout for their continued generosity and support. Please help spread the word about the outstanding \$500 outdoor prize package, and stop by one of their stores to purchase raffle tickets.

I'd also like to recognize Dave and Rose Goodwin and their granddaughters. During a recent hike to the Audie Murphy Monument, they noticed litter and worn flags and asked if they could spruce up the site

before the Fourth of July. What a thoughtful act of stewardship. If you happen to see them, please thank them for their kindness and dedication.

I recently learned that approximately 80 members of the FBI National Academy completed a section hike through Virginia's Triple Crown. It's wonderful that our section of the Appalachian Trail continues to welcome visitors from across the country and around the world. Every member of our club helps make their experience memorable, and I appreciate the role each of you plays in that effort.

We are also seeing increased bear activity throughout our trail system. Remember, the forest is their home – we are simply visitors. Recently, a mother bear and her three cubs were active in the Triple Crown area. Likely because of previous encounters with people, these bears showed little fear when hikers were present. Frightened hikers abandoned their food, rewarding the bears, which later returned to raid trash left behind at a nearby campsite.

Unfortunately, our section of the trail has become well known for ongoing bear problems. Every hiker can help change that. Please store your food properly every night, use the provided bear storage systems whenever available, and pack out every piece of trash. You've probably heard the saying, "A fed bear is a dead bear." Sadly, it is often true. Bears that repeatedly obtain food from people frequently become nuisance animals and may ultimately have to be euthanized. Food and trash left behind don't just create problems for wildlife –they diminish the experience for everyone who visits these beautiful places.

If you see litter along the trail, please consider picking it up. Keeping our woods clean and wild is one of the greatest services we can provide for future hikers and for the wildlife that call these mountains home. For additional information, please see the ATC Bear Reminder included here.

Recently, Caitlin Miller, Information Services Manager with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, interviewed Kathryn Herndon-Powell and me for an upcoming ATC blog about how different trail clubs are addressing the growing challenge of bears obtaining food from hikers. We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of current food-storage options, including bear boxes, bear poles, cable systems, traditional bear hangs, and bear-resistant containers. It's an important conversation taking place throughout the Appalachian Trail community and could ultimately lead to some restrictions around food storage. Question for you:

Should our club acquire a few bear canisters for lending to our members? Let me know what you think.

Happy Trails
Linda
president@ratc.org

ATC Bear Reminder

Before heading out—and while on the Appalachian Trail—please remember these important bear safety practices:

- Educate yourself about bear safety and proper food storage before your trip.
- Exercise extra caution in areas with frequent bear activity.
- Store all food, trash, and scented items overnight in provided bear boxes or in an approved bear-resistant canister.
- Keep a clean campsite by picking up crumbs and cleaning spills immediately.
- Pack out all trash and food waste.
- Never leave food unattended, even for a quick trip to the privy or a nearby overlook.

National Park Service regulations require overnight hikers in Virginia's Triple Crown area to store food, trash, and scented items using one of the following methods:

- Official food storage devices (bear boxes, bear poles, or bear cables)
- An Intragency Grizzly Bear Committee (GBC)-approved bear-resistant container
- A properly constructed bear hang at least 12 feet above the ground and 6 feet from the tree trunk and branches

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy strongly recommends that all overnight hikers carry and use a bear-resistant canister, regardless of location or season. And remember: never sleep with your food or trash!



A bear's acute sense of smell lets them find trash wherever it is. (NPS photo)

Trail Supervisors Report

A Letter to Maintainers Summer 2026

Hello RATC Trail Maintainers. My name is Mark Wilhelm, and I am taking this opportunity to introduce myself as your new Trail Supervisor. I took over the role this past February, though you may already know me from my work over the last two years as the webmaster for RATC.org. Because the Trail Supervisor was missing a formal job description when I took over, it has been a learning experience. I am currently mapping out the core responsibilities of the role to ensure the workload remains manageable for anyone who assumes the role in the future.

As a heads-up regarding my availability: I work a standard full-time job during the week, so my club and trail work primarily happens on evenings and weekends. Despite that limitation, I will do my best to respond to weekday messages as soon as I'm off the clock. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with you all to keep our section of the AT looking great.

Safety

With the spring thru-hiker bubble behind us, the trail is a bit quieter, but the summer heat is officially here. Please remember that your safety and health should be your highest priority. The trail isn't going anywhere and no length of manicured dirt is worth heatstroke. Listen to your body, stay hydrated and avoid working alone, especially on hot days. Please continue to follow best

practices when using hand and power tools on the trail.

Communication

Over the last few months, several members have expressed a desire for more direct communication between maintainers. While modern chat apps (like Slack, WhatsApp, or Discord) are popular, they require everyone to download and learn another app. To keep things as simple as possible, I believe we should try out an email-based solution that works with the email inbox you already know how to use.

I have set up the RATC Trail Maintainers Group in Google Groups. This group will serve as a central hub for communication between maintainers, sawyers, and RATC leadership.

I will manually add all maintainers' personal email addresses to the group with their email frequency set to the highest frequency by default ("every email"). You can view the group and adjust your email settings here:

groups.google.com/a/ratc.org/g/maintainers

Using the Group

You can start a new conversation or ask a question simply by sending an email to:

maintainers@ratc.org

You'll receive email updates when people reply to any conversation in the group.

Changing email Frequency

You can customize the amount of emails you receive from the group in the group settings. You can choose between receiving every email, a daily digest, an abridged summary, or no emails at all (you can still view the messages online at the URL above). I have personally set my settings to an abridged summary, because I'll probably only have time to check my email once a day.

If you check your email more frequently throughout the day, then a daily digest or receiving every email separately might be a good choice for you.

Please use this group to coordinate work events, discuss maintenance issues, or report trail conditions. For example, if you find a major blowdown, you can start a new discussion in the group by emailing:

maintainers@ratc.org

Add photos, GPS coordinates, or directions with a description of the blowdown's size, complexity, and location. This allows our certified sawyers to become aware of an issue more quickly and coordinate a response, without having to route the request through me. Please keep all email group discussions constructive and semi-professional.

Mark Wilhelm
mark@ratc.org

Aerial Treatment for Spongy Moths

Spongy moths have been a periodic problem in our forests since the early 1980's. These invaders worked their way south from New England after being introduced from Europe as a possible silk producing insect. You may recall them by their previous name, the Gypsy Moth. If you have ever hiked through an infested area, it likely left quite an impression.

They will consume nearly any green item in their path and can denude huge swaths of forest. When one hikes through an active infestation the gentle rain of caterpillar "frass" can be heard and felt as it lands in hair and pelts the forest floor. An infestation in a drought year is particularly harmful as the capacity for the forest to recover is compromised.

On June 10th, [The US Forest Service](http://TheUSForestService) and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer services began spraying some areas in Virginia and Tennessee to mitigate an infestation. The spray is a pheromone specific to spongy moth reproductive behavior. It confuses the male moths and interrupts their reproductive cycle. This treatment is low risk to people, birds, insects and fish. It was applied in the 1,384 acres the area shown on the map below.

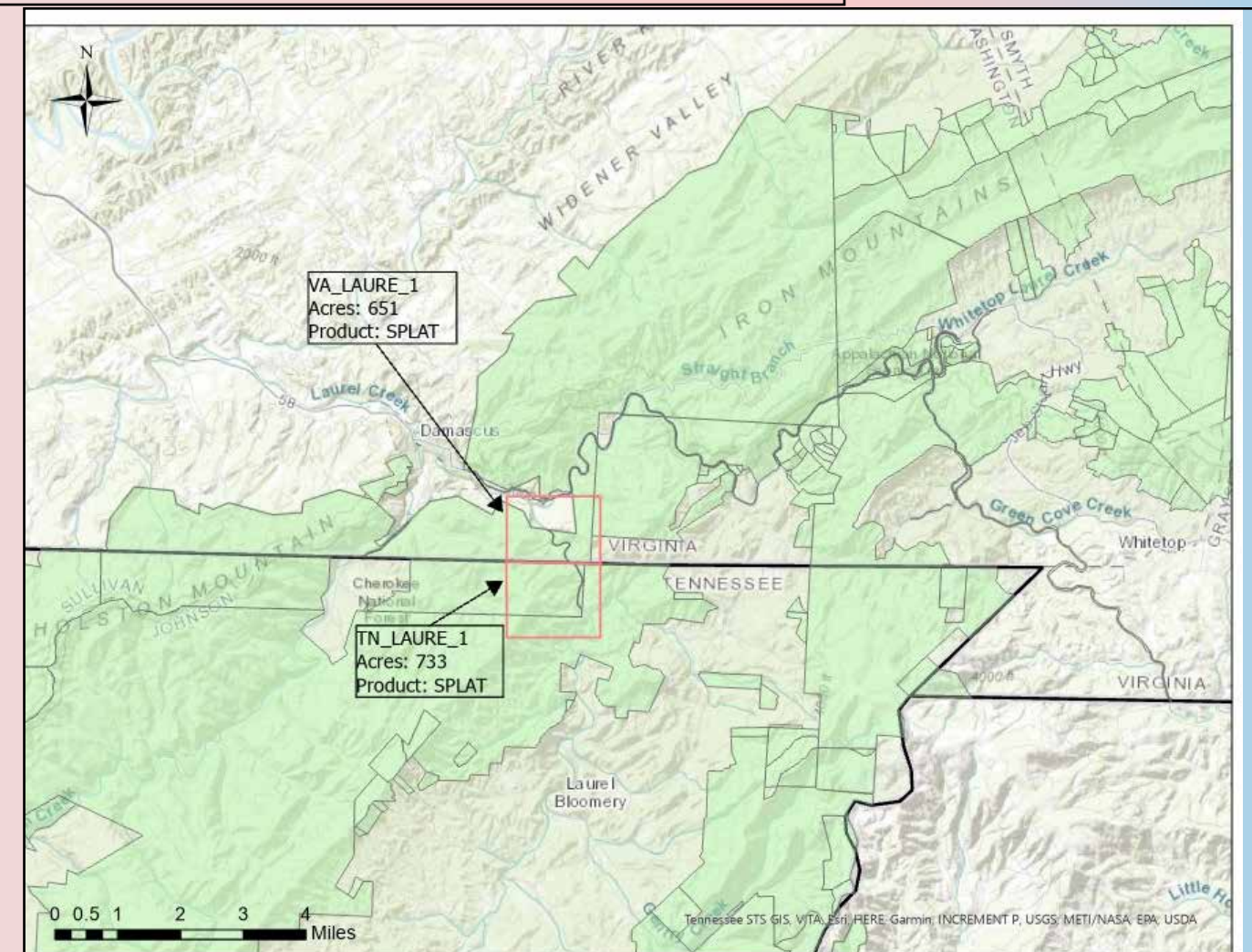
The intention is to prevent a known low level infestation from becoming a full blown forest stripping disaster. Anyone who has seen the outcome of full blown infestation would fully understand how voracious the spongy moth can be.



Spongy moth caterpillars munching on oak leaves. USDA Forest Service photo by Tom Coleman.



Adult spongy moths (*Lymantria dispar*). Photo from bugwood.org, USDA Aphis PPQ.



Conservation Work

Garlic Mustard Pull and Wildflower Identification

On April 17 six volunteers, Virginia Mooney of the ATC and myself went out to the AT at the old Rt. 100 and George Pearis cemetery area to pull garlic mustard and identify wildflowers. The trail going up to the cemetery is full of invasive non-natives such Oriental bittersweet, privet, garlic mustard, Japanese honeysuckle, autumn olive, and others.

There are also some rare and un-common native species such as Blue-Eyed Mary (Collinsia verna) and Wood Poppy (Stylophorum diphyllum) in this area. The presence of these invasive non-natives reduces the populations of our native species. We pulled enough garlic mustard to fill two 40-gallon plastic bags. I made some garlic mustard pesto; everyone sampled it and liked it! Garlic mustard was bought to this country from Europe as a condiment. A recipe is included on this page.

After pulling mustard we walked south on the AT across Rt. 100 and immediately entering the woods hundreds of blue-eyed Marys were growing. There were also several toadshades (Trillium sessile), jack in the pulpits, Solomon seal species, fire pinks, wood betony and many more species. This is a wonderful spring wildflower walk in April. Leaving the hollow for a drier habitat presents an entirely new community of wildflowers. The AT corridor is critical in protecting and safeguarding these unique habitats. After our walk we had a delicious lunch at the Happy Hog restaurant in Pearisburg.

Tom McAvoy
conservationsupervisor@RATC.org



Garlic mustard, Alliaria petiolata, flowering stage year 2.



Garlic mustard cluster in year 1 of growth.

Creative Commons
(<https://share.google/SWN-8PSG9mosvej1bf>)



Mustard pullers meeting on nice early spring ay.



Wood Poppy, Stylophorum diphyllum, also in competition with Mustard garlic.
[Wiki Media](#)

(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/da/Stylophorum_diphyllum01.jpg)



Blue Eyed Mary, (Collinsia verna) a native wildflower species that competes with the invasive garlic mustard for habitat. Toad shade trillium below.(Trillium sessile).



Garlic Mustard Pesto

There’s no better way to mitigate the impact of an invasive species than eating them. Our conservation supervisor, Tom McAvoy, made pesto from garlic mustard he removed from the trail. Turns out there are lots of variations of this recipe online. Here’s a summary of how to do it:

Garlic mustard is a biennial and has two growth phases. The tenderest phases are year one and early in the spring of year two as it stretches and flowers.

1. Cut tough stems off and save tender leaves.
2. Wash them to remove dirt or debris and small insects.
3. Chop the leaves up finely, a food processor works great for this.
4. Mix the stated ingredients with the chopped mustard garlic

Pesto freezes well, so you can take advantage of the copious amounts of garlic mustard in the early spring to keep a tasty supply of pesto ready for a quick pasta meal. I would add pecans to the list of nuts you can use for pesto. Kind of puts a southern US twist on a recipe from Genoa, Italy.

Ingredients

- 4 cups chopped, tender, young garlic mustard leaves
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese (or Romano or Asiago)
- 1/2 cup pine nuts (or walnuts, pepitas or pecans)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon preserved lemon (or 1 Tablespoon lemon juice)

Mike Scott
blazer@ratc.org

Bush Honeysuckle Removal

The AEM Corporation, a contracting company with the US Department of Education, held a conference recently in Roanoke. On June 6 approximately 40 volunteers from AEM came out to the trail. We met at Valley Cleaners next to the trail on Rt. 220 in Daleville. Our goal was to cut bush honeysuckle, a very invasive non-native species. The trail goes through a tunnel of bush honeysuckle for over 100 yards.

The bushes grow up to 15-20' tall. Bush honeysuckle was introduced and planted as a wildlife food in the mid-1900's. Bush honeysuckle produces an abundance of bright red fruit. However, the fruit is high in sugar but low in essential proteins and nutrients, reducing the health of fruit eating birds. The plumage brightness of male cardinals is also reduced by feeding on honeysuckle fruit making them appear less fit to females. Birds nesting in bush honeysuckle are also more susceptible to predation. Honeysuckle also displaces native plant species.



A busload of AEM Corporation volunteers ready to tackle Bush Honeysuckle.

The AEM team worked hard for about three hours in upper 80° temperatures and cut and hauled off over 100 bushes! The trail was noticeably more open and the sky could be seen above the trail! In a few months the stumps will re-sprout, and we will treat the regrowth with a systemic herbicide which will kill the honeysuckle.

*Tom McAvor
conservationsupervisor@ratc.org*



The tunnel of Bush Honeysuckle getting cut and chopped.



A much clearer trail with the Bush Honeysuckle removed.

Work Hikes

April 24, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Greg Still, Jim Webb, Dave Grimm, Gary Moore, Eric Boice

It promised to be a good day, weather wise, as we headed up the fire road. We have been working on the tent pad project for nearly a year and are very familiar with the route up to the work site. At the work site we split up and continued work on the last two tent pads. The work went well and we were able to finish it by the end of the day. Unfortunately, we ran into bedrock and large roots on the last tent pad. We will need to bring in a wheelbarrow next work hike to bring in dirt to fill in the tent pad. We are looking forward to completing this lengthy project.

April 30, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Gary Moore

There were just three of us on the work hike today. The previous week we had encountered bedrock under the last tent pad we had to complete for this project so we brought in a wheel barrel to bring dirt in from a nearby location. Jim also cut two additional crib logs to add a second layer of logs at the site. We brought these down to the tent pad site. We spent most of the day bringing in dirt. By the end of the day we had brought in 20 loads. We still need to bring over a lot more dirt to create the pad. Hopefully we can complete it with one more work hike.

May 5, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Gary Moore, Dave Grimm, Susan Terwilliger

It was a beautiful, sunny day heading up the fire road today. At the work site, we split up, with Jim and Dave putting in tent pad posts using the auger and the rest of us continuing work on the last tent pad. As mentioned in the previous report, we had encountered bedrock under the tent pad, so we had to wheel barrel in dirt in from a nearby location. An old backpacking partner, Coach, joined us for a couple of hours too. His work was much appreciated. We worked steadily and had brought in an additional 24 loads by the end of the day. Jim and Dave were able to get all 12 tent pad posts in also. They look great! Our sign maker, **Kelly Mulheren**, did an outstanding job on them.

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Jim Webb and Dave Grimm using the auger.



Tent pad 2 showing the cribbing, steps and signage typical of each pad.



Each tent pad gets a custom sign courtesy of our sign maker, Kelly Mulheren.



Work crew at the end of the day.

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May 12, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Gary Moore, Dave Grimm, Greg Stick, Herve Marand

It was a fairly good-size group today so we were able to split up at the work site. One group of three started work on installing fire rings at two of the tent pad sites. The other group continued work on the last tent pad site, site two. At the tent site we finished installing the crib logs and continued bringing over wheel barrels full of dirt to fill up the tent pad site. We put a total of 58 wheel barrow loads of dirt in the tent pad over the course of three work hikes. By the end of the day, we were able to get the fire rings installed as well as complete the last tent pad site. We felt very pleased by this. Over the next couple of weeks, we will put the finishing touches on this yearlong project.

May 20, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Dave Grimm, Greg Stick, Herve Marand

Today we worked on the trail from the tent pad loop down to the stream. This will be a steep trail, about 100 yards long. Jim and Greg cut logs for steps and stakes while the rest of us dug trail. There were a great number of rocks and roots to deal with while digging. Despite this, the work went well. Greg and Jim joined us after lunch and we continued digging. We stopped work at 1:00 due to the 90 degree heat. We completed about 100 feet of trail. We saw quite a few backpackers today. The northbound thru hikers are coming through in increasing numbers.

June 8, 2026, 8:30 am Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Dave Grimm, Sue Terwilliger

Today we continued work on the trail from the tent pad loop down to the stream. Upon arrival Jim cut logs for steps and stakes and we got to work on the trail. By the end of the day we had completed digging the new trail and had installed 12 steps. We were pleased with our progress with so few people. The water trail needs about five steps to complete. We the have a few other tasks to complete, and our part of the project will be finished. This should take two more work hikes. A good number of thru hikers passed by today.

June 15, 2026, 8:30 am, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Dave Grimm, Mike Cote

It was an unusually cool morning for this time of year. The four of us split up at the work site with Mike and me installing steps and Jim and Dave cutting logs. A few of the tent pads were being used by backpackers. The work went well. By the end of the day, we had completed the trail down to the stream. We had also built a pad for a bear box. On the way out we passed a good number of hikers going back and forth to the knob. We have just a few more steps to install on the tent pad loop. We should be able to complete this yearlong project next week.

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Digging the long steep trail to the Catawba water source.



Catawba tent pad water source trail showing step construction and newly installed signs.

**Save the Date
RATC Annual Corn
Boil**

**Sunday, August 1st from
5:00pm to 7:00pm**

**Catawba Center
4965 Catawba Creek Rd
Catawba, VA 24070**

Corn, chicken, drinks, and dinnerware provided. Bring and share your favorite dish, along with your cherished trail stories. Opportunities to volunteer for this event available [on meetup.com](#).



June 25, 2026, Catawba Mountain

Mike Vaughn, Jim Webb, Herve Marand, Mike Cote

Today was our last day on this project. Over the last year we have put in over 30 work hikes and just over 1,000 hours on this project. All 12 tent pads are in good shape. We have received positive comments from users about the pads. Our goal today was to install some steps at different locations on the tent pad loop. The work went well and by the end of the day we had installed ten steps. We then had to haul all of our tools and wheelbarrow to the car. The day had gotten warm and this was definitely the hardest task. We were all very pleased that the lengthy project is now completed.



Mike Vaughn completing stair work on the last Catawba shelter tent pad showing stair work and cribbing with large locust logs. Each of the large, durable, logs was split and carried to the tent site.

As hikers begin to use these flat and spacious pads, the areas around Catawba Shelter that have been impacted by years of heavy use should recover some of their natural cover and diversity. The entire shelter area has been transformed with well constructed trails, signs and improved spaces for comfortable camping.

National Trail Days



National Trails Day is celebrated the first Saturday in June. This year it was on June 6th and the RATC had representatives and refreshments conspicuously placed on the ascent to McAfee Knob. The event is organized by the American Hiking Society and seeks to raise awareness of trails and promoting outdoor activities and an ethic of leaving things better than you found it. The RATC was represented by **Jeanine and Bob Bomber, Tom Martin, Linda Mulheren and Mark Wilhelm.**



American Hiking Society
(<https://americanhiking.org/>)

National Trails Day
(<https://americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/>)

RATC Sponsored Hikes



Exploration of new trail constructed on Mill Mountain on April 6th, 2026

RATC MEETUP

The RATC offers hikes in the region almost every week of the year. Some are along sections of the trail maintained by the club and can be long and strenuous. Other hikes are offered among the numerous trails within the region including Carvins Cove, Roanoke City and Roanoke County. They occasionally venture out to regions beyond the club's responsibility too.

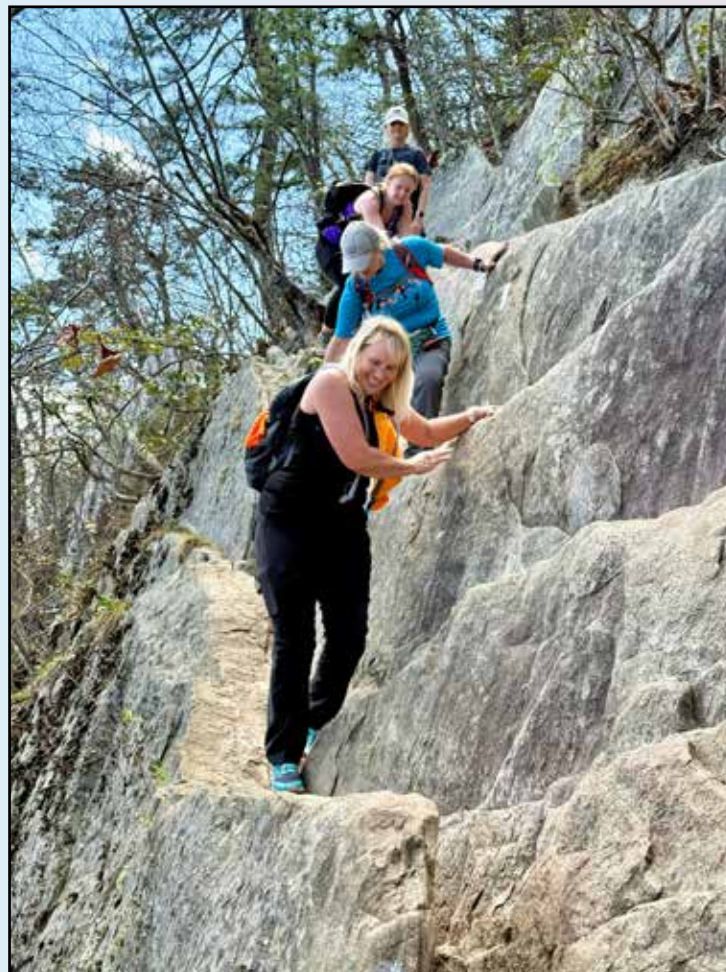
<https://www.meetup.com/roanoke-appalachian-trail-club/>

All 14 Sections of Maintained Trail

<https://www.ratc.org/at-hiking/ratcs-14-at-hikes/>



Roanoke River to Glade Creek on April 20th, 2026.



April 11th, 2026. A.T. Hike Number 6, which is in Miller Cove from Trout Creek to the Dragons Tooth Parking Lot. The challenging descent from Dragons Tooth is on the left and an early spring black snake is seeking warmth on the sunny side of a tree on the right.



Continued on page 20



Fullhardts Knob Loop hike on April 26th, 2026. Spring is popping and a North American orchid, the Pink Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), makes a brief and showy appearance, a Rhododendron (*Rhododendron carolinianum*), blooms along the trail as well.



RATC Hike Number 13, Ribble Trail to Kimberling Creek. This is a very scenic trail and includes a nice waterfall at Dismal Falls. The AT crosses the creek on the foot bridge pictured above. The bright green colors of early spring are evident and the full canopy of the forest is not quite formed.



Roanoke Mountain on **May 4th**. This used to be a popular loop for cars right off the Blue Ridge Parkway. It has been closed to automotive traffic for several years now, but is a nice hike from the Parkway and provides several overlooks of the city and landscape surrounding Roanoke. It can be done as loop as the road curves around a secluded mountain forest and back to the Parkway.



The images below were taken on the Tinker Creek Trail on **May 18th**. The oddly shaped tree is frequently photographed before crossing a ridge down to Roanoke's water source, Carvins Cove. Our hikers are standing on land that would normally be underwater, but drought conditions in the area have dropped water levels significantly.



McAfee Knob on **May 13th** on a beautiful day with a large contingent of RATC hikers and guests making the summit. Looks like at least some of the party made their way back on the fireroad where ancient rock formations stand guard.



The Chessie Nature Trail runs from Lexington to Buena Vista along an old railroad line that paralleled the Maury River. Before the railroad became the method of moving goods, the river was used for such transport, and there are remnants of canal structures along its course. This hike took place on May 3rd, 2026.



Laurel Canyon Trail is a relatively new trail within the Carvins Cove Natural Preserve. It connects to other trails within the preserve and is used by both bikers and hikers. This hike took place on May 3rd, 2026



Fundraiser

You can support the RATC and possibly win some valuable outdoor equipment by participating in a raffle sponsored by Wakabout Outfitter's Roanoke store in the downtown market area. The proceeds from the ticket purchases will go directly to the RATC. The specifics of this fundraising opportunity are listed below, and, in previous years it has been a valuable way to raise money for our club.

When

July 9th through July 26th

What

Single tickes for a chance are \$5.00, but you can get 6 tickets for \$25.00

Where

Walkabout Outfitter store in Roanoke's Downtown Market area. One ticket will be drawn at the end of the raffle to win the prize package valued at \$500.00!

Prize Package

- One Cotopaxi Luzon 24L pack
- One Rumpl Original Puffy blanket
- One pair of Topo Athletic shoes
- One pair of Feetures socks
- One Walkabout-branded, Miir travel tumbler
- One \$35.00 Walkabout Outfitter gift certificate



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Sign Makers: Linda and Kelly Mulheren
signs@ratc.org

RATC TRAIL MAINTAINERS AND SECTIONS

#	Section	Maintainers
1	VA 611 to Va 608	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
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	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 Lisa Garcia Kurt Stephenson Ryan Wagoner
12A	Lone Pine Mountain to War Spur Trail	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, Greg Evanylo
15	Rocky Gap to field north of route 42	Brian Kelly (sawyer) David Engel
16	Field North of route 42 to Route 630	Shane Smith
17	VA 630 to Sarver Shelter Trail	Chase Davidson , Russ Estes, Paul Goodwin David Anderson
18	Sarver Shelter Trail to N. end of Ridgeline	Chase Davidson (sawyer), Kathryn Herndon-Powel,Susan Herndon-Powell, David Grim, Russ Estes, Paul Goodwin
19	N. end of Ridgeline to VA 621	Eric Hanson, Molly Brunner, Josie Demarce
20	Va 621 to Audie Murphy Monument	Erik Leedom

Jeffery Scott Hooppner

March 12, 1952- June 17 2026



Jeffery Scott Hooppner passed away on Wednesday, June 17th, 2026. Jeff was member of the RATC and also volunteered as a trail maintainer. Our current maintainer's list shows that he most recently worked on our trail list-ed as number 42, North Mountain Trail from Deer Trail to Grouse Trail. It's not as busy as the regular AT corridor, and I suspect it was a place of solitude and nature for him. His work in this regard is greatly appreciated and he will be missed by RATC hiking partners. His full obituary is linked below:

[Jeffery Scott Hooppner Obituary](https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/roanoke/name/jeffery-hooppner-obituary?id=61849229)
(<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/roanoke/name/jeffery-hooppner-obituary?id=61849229>)



The long ridge of North Mountain as seen from Tinker Cliffs. Jeff maintained trail in this area.

#	Section	Maintainers
46	Catawba Valley Trail (CVT)	Johnathan Harris Michelle Cook Sean Cook
47	Ribble Trail	Bill & Leslie Kay Floyd
48	Boy Scout Trail	Donna Logan
49	McAfee Fire Road, Rte 311 to AT crossing	Peter Irvine (sawyer) Kailee Sesler Sarah Ward
50	McAfee Fire Road, AT crossing to Campbell shelter	Dario Izquierdo Gary Moore

#	Section	Maintainers
21	Audie Murphy Monument 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 (sawyer)
24	Dragons Tooth to VA 624	David Poteet Sarah Allison
25	VA 624 to VA 785 Tree line	Bo Carneal Sarah Wade
26	VA 785 Tree line to VA 311	Bo Carneal Becky Carneal
27	VA 311 to Fire Road	Jim Webb (sawyer) Greg Stick Erik West
28	Fire Road to Campbell Shelter	Jim Webb (sawyer) Greg Stick
29	Campbell Shelter to Brick- eys 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 and 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	Greg Lester Andrew Bowman
38	Wilson Creek to Black Horse Gap	Theresa McDaniel, Andrew Bowman Mary Frye
39	Andy Layne Trail	Daniel Howell, Randy Fuller
40	Dragon's Tooth Trail	Donna Logan, Brad Clay
41	War Spur Trail	Anja Whittington, Jay Raymond
42	North Mtn Trail, Route 311 to Grouse Tr.	Jeff Hooppner Alex Reis
43	North Mtn Trail, Deer Tr. To Grouse Trail	Hugh Craft Joe Brabant
44	North Mtn Trail, Grouse Tr. To TurkeyTrail	Bob Patten
45	North Mtn Trail, Turkey Tr. To CVT	VACANT

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)	Individual	\$20	
	Lifetime Ind Member	\$250	
Address	Family	\$25.00	
City	State	Zip	
Phone	Lifetime Family	\$300	
Email	Donation	\$	
	Total Amount Enclosed	\$	

Renewal dues are payable on the anniversary of initial membership. Make checks to "RATC" or use PayPal at [ratc.org](https://www.ratc.org)

<https://www.ratc.org/membership-levels/>

Mail checks to: RATC, PO BOX 12282, Roanoke VA 24024-2282

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.