

A JOURNEYS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

January – February 2013

INSIDE: Safe Haven in Rocky Fork | Hiwassee, Georgia | Creative Collaboration

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Volume 9, Number 1
January – February 2013

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

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The staff of *A.T. Journeys* welcomes editorial inquiries and comments.

E-mail: editor@appalachiantrail.org

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FROM THE EDITOR |

PRACTICAL MAGIC. WHEN I HEAR THE WORDS “MAGIC,” AND “ENCHANTMENT” to describe the Appalachian Trail, I think of another kind of magic that happens behind the scenes. Consider how closely the Trail skirts a densely-populated portion of the country; then consider any A.T. trailhead from Georgia to Maine a doorway to a peaceful, wooded path, strewn with pristine waterways, grassy balds, and high ridge lines, and it does indeed sound like illusion — but the magic is real.

A recent letter sent to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) headquarters especially punctuates this message. “In a way, it was like going back in time — leaving the modern and finding a much less complicated way of life alive in our country,” wrote ATC member Mary Holmes after completing her hike of the Trail. She continued with these poignant words: “The Trail is a miracle — first that it exists intact and that it weaves through the most developed part of the country. It should be an example in years to come of the value of conservation and inspire ever-greater conservation efforts.” The Trail is a model for success, due to the serious and pragmatic work of the ATC staff members, A.T. maintaining clubs, partner organizations, and thousands of passionate ATC members and volunteers who lend a hand to keep the Trail available for the gentle flow of foot traffic.

Often, it is a common denominator that inspires the collaborative teamwork, tenacity, and dedication required to preserve the A.T.'s remarkable character. This has been the case in the multi-decade effort, and final success, to permanently protect a 10,000-acre tract of land surrounding the A.T. on the North Carolina/Tennessee border called Rocky Fork (page 10). “Ultimately, we built a partnership of nearly 40 local, regional, and national organizations ... It will significantly improve the A.T. experience, allowing hikers to merge with, explore, and harmonize with the A.T. environment,” the ATC's deep south regional director, Morgan Sommerville, explains.

The ATC's distinctive management of its precious natural resource has even set an example on a global scale. In years past, representatives of the ATC have traveled abroad to explain the important balance of nature and community. Last year, the ATC's community program manager, Julie Judkins, was summoned to the mountains of Tajikistan in this capacity (page 20). “To most hikers and A.T. lovers, the Trail isn't thought of as an economic driver and tourist attraction, but its iconic appeal, cultural lure, and the fact that it is a backyard asset to its Trailside communities makes the A.T. an important part of these rural towns' livelihoods,” explains Julie. “There is a delicate balance between protecting the A.T. experience and spreading awareness to assure it is appreciated and protected for future generations to love and cherish.” Julie's message was one that, if resonated and followed internationally, would perfectly exemplify the Trail's overall impact on its grateful visitors, hikers, and surrounding communities. “I spoke of the power of partnerships and networking needed to accomplish a model for success — it could not have been done by one organization, one local community, one group of volunteers, one state or even the government itself,” she says. “The Trail's success lies in the hands of many working together to assure that the spirit of the experience remains true to its roots, and that the resource itself remains an asset for all — creating a good quality of life for all our communities.”

Wendy K. Probst | *Managing Editor*

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments, story suggestions, and photographs. Queries may be submitted via e-mail to editor@appalachiantrail.org.



From inset: ATC staff members on Katahdin in 2012, from left: New England regional director, Hawk Metheny, education and outreach coordinator, Angie Sheldon, and community program manager, Julie Judkins — photo by chair of the Trail to Every Classroom Advisory Council, Sharon VanHorn; The protected waters of Higgins Creek run through the Rocky Fork tract in Cherokee National Forest. Photo by Jerry Greer

On the Cover:

“As winter scenes go, very few top the beauty of fresh snow and ice clinging to trees at sunrise,” says cover photographer Scott Hotaling. “In many ways, I had been searching for this image for years; I could see it in my mind's eye but was yet to find it naturally. On this particular January morning, I was hiking through knee-deep snow along the Roan Highlands. Despite the pre-dawn hour, I could tell that conditions were perfect. The trees were white, the air calm, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky, just a low, pillowy fog separating me from the world below. By headlamp, I hiked off of the A.T. and into a dense hardwood forest below. As is so often the case, what I found was better than anything I had previously imagined. On that day, as well as so many others, I was reminded how amazing the natural world can be.”

“Raw Radiance” (page 32)

www.lightofthewild.com

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Raw Radiance

Scott Hotaling is particularly drawn to photographing the harsh but spectacular winter conditions that grace the Trail each year.

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SAFE HAVEN**

The safety of a vast 10,000-acre Appalachian Mountain haven known as Rocky Fork is a win for the environment, local Trail communities, and A.T. hikers.

Rocky Fork, named after the cool waters of the creek that runs down its center, lies within Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee and abuts Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina. – photo by Jerry Greer



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DEAR EDITOR: JERRY GREER'S lovely photo on the cover of the November-December issue on which he comments "you can hear the snowflakes as they land softly on the forest floor" reminds me of Robert Frost's poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. In Frost's poem he comments "the only other sound's the sweep of easy wind and downy flake." Jerry's photo and Frost's poem go very well together.

John Heyn

OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR ongoing work to protect the Trail. After passing every white blaze both ways this year, I can only begin to appreciate all the effort, all the blood, sweat, and tears that the ATC and uncountable numbers of volunteers have invested in the effort that made my hike possible. There is no way that I could ever "give back" as much as I've received. But for starters, I've become a life member. And as the years progress, I hope to be able to pay forward, in whatever way I can, to help assure that those who tread this path after me have the opportunity to experience the wonderment and joy that I have.

Pete "Seeks It" Wetzell
ELDERSBURG, MARYLAND

I ENJOYED THE ARTICLE ON BUENA Vista, Virginia ("Blue Ridge Harmony," November/December), but the author overlooked one thing. If you call the town "Bwayna Vista," as any good student of high school Spanish might do, then they'll know that you're an outlander. Virginians from that part of the world know the town as "Byoona Vista" (I grew up in Southwestern Virginia).

Hugh Downing
CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP, PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 2012, I completed my second annual five-night backpacking trip on the A.T. In 2011, I backpacked with my son (then 15) and a friend of mine from Springer Mountain to Unicoi Gap. It was my very first backpacking experience, although I did a lot of hiking and camping as a youth. I am now 48 years old. In 2012, I hiked with my



son and his friend, plus a law firm partner of mine from Unicoi Gap into North Carolina, ending just past Deep Gap. Great weather, camaraderie of people on the Trail, relatively comfortable shelters and privies, and beautiful, bucolic scenery everywhere. I met my first Trail-runner, "Razor," and a few former thru-hikers, [with whom I had] humorous and informative exchanges of backpacking stories. I am an Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) member, and I want to express my appreciation for all the ATC-affiliated people who maintain what has become an iconic American tradition — hiking or backpacking on the A.T., and general enjoyment of our national parks. In early summer 2013, I plan to do a six- to seven-night backpacking hike in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and hopefully two to three nights in the Shenandoah National Park in the late summer of 2013. Thank you for making my summer travels such a wonderful, peaceful, and rewarding experience.

Peter A. Quinter
MIAMI, FLORIDA

THE TRAIL WAS TOO BEAUTIFUL to rush through it in one season. So I took two years and found that I could not just hike the A.T., but "live" on it. I took more time going from place to place enjoying the company of other hikers and meeting local people who enjoy their nearby wild places. I was glad to rest in the towns

along the way. In a way, it was like going back in time — leaving the modern and finding a much less complicated way of life alive in our country. The Trail is a miracle — first that it exists intact and that it weaves through the most developed part of the country. It should be an example in years to come of the value of conservation and inspire ever-greater conservation efforts. Also, I was especially amazed at the fact that the Trail is maintained by the various Trail clubs who rely mostly on volunteers for maintenance. I have been a maintainer and I appreciated their work. I sent postcards to the clubs to praise them when I found the Trail in particularly good shape. For example, the Trail going [downhill].

I helped the maintainers as I hiked the Trail. I groomed as I went. I moved blow-downs, saplings, and/or trees if they could be moved by hand. So I groomed the entire Trail. If every hiker [helped], the maintainers could [focus more] on other things. Every time I met a group of maintainers working on the Trail, I thanked them on behalf of all hikers.

Mary M. Holmes
HOCKESSIN, DELAWARE

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

LOOKING THROUGH MY LATEST A.T. Journeys magazine. Love it guys. Great stories and awesome photos. We try to get out on the Trail as much as possible to ground ourselves. Thanks for all you do.

Martin "TheEdge" Hunley

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments. The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives. Not all letters received may be published. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Please send them to:
E-mail: editor@appalachiantrail.org

Letters to the Editor
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807



New official mileage for the A.T. = 2,185.9 miles!

You can check it out landmark to landmark, bi-directionally, in our two perennially best-selling books



Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion, 2013

The Appalachian Trail Data Book (35th edition) — all the high points extracted from the 11 official Appalachian Trail guides, in Maine-to-Georgia order, condensed into 96 pages. Essential for hike planning and the best buy in the Ultimate A.T. Store at \$6.25 for ATC members.



Appalachian Trail Data Book, 2013

The Appalachian Trail thru-Hikers' Companion (20th edition) — our longtime collaboration with the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association: all those landmark-to-landmark mileages in Georgia-to-Maine order (still bidirectional), plus details on all shelters and a full course of information on town services. Still only \$13.45 for ATC members.



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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Harpers Ferry Visitor Center Stays Open Year-Round

Got cabin fever? Come see our exhibits or shop in the ATC's Ultimate Trail Store, bring a young hiker to earn an A.T. Junior Ranger badge, or get tips about local day-hikes. Our friendly staff and volunteers are eager to answer your questions about the A.T. and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

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seven days a week; free parking**

For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/locations.

A.T. park manager, Pam Underhill, with her dogs Rocky and Cede, at her home in West Virginia.



NOVEMBER 2012 SAW THE RETIREMENT OF THE APPALACHIAN Trail's most ardent supporter from the National Park Service. Pam Underhill served as a federal employee for 37 years — 33 of those years with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Park Office. As A.T. park manager, Pam oversaw the effort to put the Appalachian Trail on public lands. Hundreds of land tracts were acquired to protect the A.T. footpath under Pam's leadership. Pam leaves us with a legacy of land conservation and a cooperative management system that will steward the lands acquired.

PAM HAD SEVERAL FACTORS FOR COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT *Here is a paraphrasing of them:*

Ensure Mutual Respect: Practice the Golden Rule. You must be a good partner in order to have good partners.

Instill a Sense of Ownership: People should feel that they are part of something great — something that makes the world a better place — something they expect to pass on to their children and grandchildren.

Communicate: Communication has to be ongoing and constant.

Nurture: Partnerships require investments of time, effort, and nurturing.

Recognize Limitations: Take the good with the bad. There are times when volunteers and partners might do work that is slower, of lower standard, or a slightly different direction than agency professionals. But there are times when they do more, do it better, or head in a better direction than the agency would on its own.

Use Each Other's Strengths: We've had repeated success in dealing with both external and internal threat issues by presenting a unified front using different tactics but with a shared, targeted goal.

Grow Personal Relationships: Partnerships are about relationships, and relationships are about people.

Remember the Resource: Get together with your partners out on the Trail. A common focus will result in decisions and actions with the best interest of the resource in mind.

Leverage: Leveraging combined federal, private, and other public resources can accomplish an exponential number of projects and programs that otherwise would be prohibitively expensive or bureaucratically complex.

Believe in Consensus Building: You have to believe you can make it work and that it's worth the extra time and effort it takes to achieve consensus.

Satisfaction and Fun: People need to derive a sense of satisfaction from their participation in the partnership. And people can take on a lot if they get to have fun at least part of the time.

In her retirement announcement Pam said, "I feel just plain lucky that I got to be part of this extraordinary era of protection for the Trail. The A.T. seems to have this uncanny ability to attract just the right people when it needs them. I like to think that I was one of a group of 'right' people who came along when land conservation was the name of the game — the A.T. needed its 'body' secured — and we got to do that. I'm grateful also to have found a place in the Appalachian Trail community ... the most wonderful people dwell in Appalachian Trail land — I've met some of my best friends there!"

No Pam, we were the lucky ones to have you as a partner and a friend. We wish you a happy retirement. We will miss you and promise to carry on your love of the A.T. in everything we do. ⚡


J. Robert Almand | Chair

Mark J. Wenger | Executive Director/CEO

"I feel just plain lucky that I got to be part of this extraordinary era of protection for the Trail." ~Pam Underhill

SAFE HAVEN

After decades of dedicated effort, the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork acquisition is complete and Tennessee has a stunning new state park.



ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2012, the Cherokee National Forest closed on the final phase of the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork acquisition, one of the most significant purchases for the Appalachian Trail in this century. One month later, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee announced to a delighted crowd of Unicoi County, Tennessee, residents the creation of Rocky Fork State Park, which will be at the entrance to this wonderful piece of new public property.

TEXT BY MORGAN SOMMERVILLE
PHOTOS BY JERRY GREER

The Rocky Fork property is located along the Tennessee-North Carolina border in Tennessee's Unicoi and Greene counties. Rocky Fork, named after the cool waters of the creek that runs down its center, lies within Cherokee National Forest and abuts Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, creating a vast unfragmented haven for wildlife and protecting water quality for neighboring communities. Rocky Fork's many resources provide a range of unique recreational opportunities — hiking the Appalachian Trail and numerous other trails; camping in a secluded mountain area; fishing more than 16 miles of pristine blue-ribbon trout streams; and hunting game animals, such as turkey, deer, and grouse.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Tennessee congressional delegation worked together for decades to acquire the Rocky Fork tract, most of which lies in the Appalachian Trail Community of Unicoi County, Tennessee. Several attempts at acquisition were unsuccessful, with USFS offers being out-bid at the last moment as the property changed hands several times.

With potential residential development of the tract loom-

ing, ATC's partner, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, secured a six-million-dollar Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund grant to reenergize the acquisition process. With convincing grant money and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) appropriations in hand (left over from previous USFS acquisition attempts), the Conservation Fund (TCF) rejoined the partnership to lead negotiations with the holding company that managed Rocky Fork. In December 2008, the holding company was convinced we brought a serious offer and a deal was struck, with TCF's acquiring the tract for interim protection. TCF then began the first of five phases of sales to the Cherokee forest.

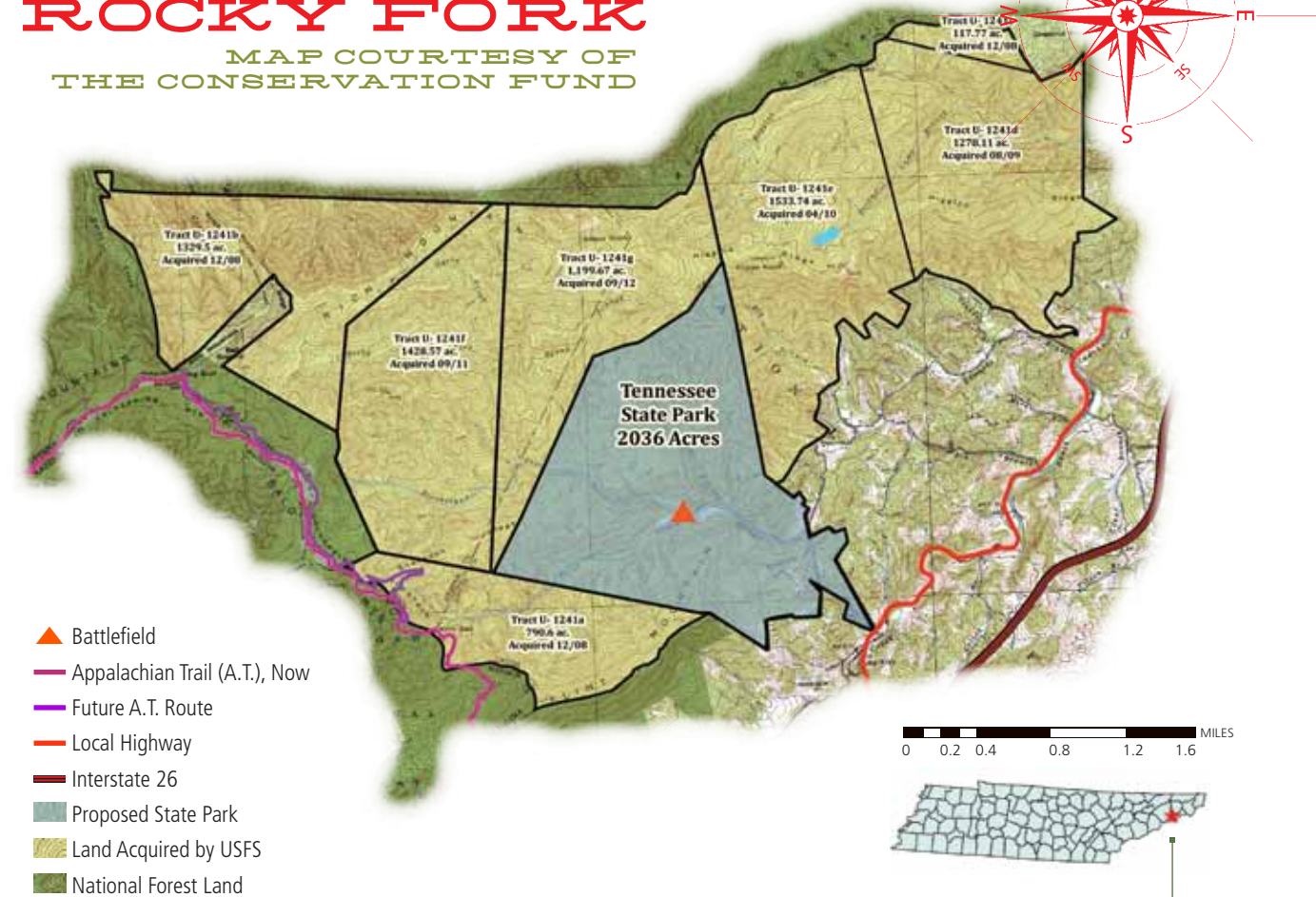
Diligent and persistent efforts by our partnership resulted in Rocky Fork's being selected as the number-one priority for USFS acquisition nationwide, a distinction that required leadership from Forest Supervisor Tom Speaks and support from the local community, many in both the Tennessee and North Carolina congressional delegations and within the USFS — all up the line from the district ranger, to the Cherokee supervisor, to the regional forester to the

ROCKY FORK'S MANY RESOURCES PROVIDE A RANGE OF UNIQUE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.



ROCKY FORK

MAP COURTESY OF THE CONSERVATION FUND



chief of the USFS. Ultimately, we built a partnership of nearly 40 local, regional and national organizations. Its advocacy led to four more LWCF appropriations to cover most of the 40-million-dollar acquisition. Although that was an exemplary team effort, special thanks go to A.T. hikers Senantor Alexander and Representative David Price of North Carolina (and their staffs), who, as leaders on the Senate and House appropriations committees, were strong advocates for the purchase of Rocky Fork. Special thanks also go to the private donors and foundations that contributed generously to this project, notably Fred and Alice Stanback, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (through Walmart's 2012 Acres for America program), the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Conservation Alliance.

About 1.5 miles of the A.T. crosses the southwest border of the property, and half the property can be seen from the Trail. Sixteen miles of pristine blue-ribbon trout streams, including the waters of Lower Higgins Creek and Rocky Fork Creek (previous page), harbor exceptional populations of native brook trout. Left: Autumn maples and poplar forest, Rocky Fork.

Creation of a specially designated area in Unicoi County, such as Rocky Fork State Park, was a long-envisioned outcome of the Rocky Fork acquisition by Unicoi County residents. While planning has just gotten underway for the park, Tennessee officials have suggested it will likely initially focus on trails, camping, and interpretation of the rich local history, including the battle between the "State of Franklin's" militia and raiding parties of Creek and Cherokee in 1789 — "the bloodiest of all fights in the Cherokee Wars," reported Colonel John Sevier. The Franklin militia, led by Sevier, killed at least 145 Creek and Cherokee, whose retreat and subsequent burial of their dead gave rise to the name Indian Grave Gap, bisected by the A.T. just east of Erwin.

The ATC's involvement in the Rocky Fork project stemmed



From above: Higgins Creek, Cherokee National Forest; View from Whitehouse Mountain in Rocky Fork.



from about 1.5 miles of the A.T. crossing the private property (17 percent of the A.T. footpath mileage still needing protection in 2008) and most of the tract being visible along about 50 miles of the A.T. between Big Butt and Unaka Mountain. Additionally, the “optimal location review” by the Carolina Mountain Club, the ATC, and the USFS for this area proposed an extensive improvement of the A.T.’s location on Cold Spring Mountain once this acquisition was complete. Construction of an about three-mile relocation is now underway by A.T. volunteers, through and adjacent to Rocky Fork. It will significantly improve the A.T. experience, allowing hikers to “merge with, explore, and harmonize with the A.T. environment.”

As an integral part of the ATC’s Appalachian Trail Community relationship with Unicoi County, the ATC is working with the state, Cherokee forest officials, and local volunteers to inventory, mark, and open the Rocky Fork State Park trail system and plan appropriate connections to the A.T. and national forest lands for loop trails. Rocky Fork is already blessed with a network of wooded roads that will likely form the basis of the park’s trail system and allow this system to get into use very soon. The ATC is committed to helping our partners make Rocky Fork a significant recreational asset for Unicoi County that attracts visitors from far and wide.

Morgan Sommerville is the ATC’s deep south regional director; Jerry Greer is a professional environmental photographer and long-time member of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.



Unicoi County, Tennessee is a designated Appalachian Trail Community.



HIKERS ON SOUTH KINSMAN SUMMIT, NEW HAMPSHIRE. BY MARIANNE PAGE

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I TRAILHEAD I

HAWKSBILL MOUNTAIN, SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK



New Damascus Branch Library

The Washington County, Virginia Public Library System opened a new branch library/visitor center in August 2012. Located near the Appalachian Trail and the Virginia Creeper Trail, the library's services to hikers have earned it the moniker, "the Friendliest Little Library on the Trail." The new library is also the official visitor center in the designated Trail Community of Damascus. Features in the new library include:

- ▶ Welcoming front porch
- ▶ Storage for backpacks
- ▶ Bike racks
- ▶ Comfortable seating areas
- ▶ Bistro tables and stools
- ▶ Hardwood floors

In addition to our collection of books, magazines, and reference materials, the Damascus library provides high-speed and wireless internet, computers and laptop stations, copier, fax and notary services, story time for children, family literacy programs, meeting space, a community room, a small study room, and on-line databases.

The new library is located at 310 Water Street, Damascus, Virginia, 24236. Contact the library directly at: (275) 475-3820.

Thundering Falls BOARDWALK REOPENS



Thundering Falls Boardwalk before and after repairs. Photo courtesy of the Green Mountain Club

THE GREEN MOUNTAIN CLUB COMPLETED EXTENSIVE WORK ON the Thundering Falls boardwalk on the Appalachian Trail in Killington, Vermont in early November of 2012. This prominent, wheelchair-accessible resource was extensively damaged by Tropical Storm Irene.

The Green Mountain Club's Long Trail Patrol special projects crew rebuilt the boardwalk with guidance and support from the U.S. Forest Service. Much of the boardwalk was washed away and destroyed when Irene caused the Ottauquechee River to overflow its banks. The Green Mountain Club's crew originally completed the boardwalk in 2008.

"I cannot say enough about the work that the Green Mountain Club has done to help the Green Mountain National Forest recover from Tropical Storm Irene," said Colleen Madrid, forest supervisor for the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests. In Vermont, the Forest Service manages both the Green Mountain National Forest and all the lands acquired by the National Park Service for the Appalachian Trail in the state of Vermont.

This section of the Appalachian Trail provides handicap-accessible recreation opportunities near remarkable waterfalls while eliminating a half mile-long roadwalk from the Trail that stretches from Georgia to Maine. "Thundering Falls is one of Vermont's greatest outdoor resources and it provides unique opportunities for anyone to enjoy the falls," said Will Wiquist, the Green Mountain Club's executive director. "This project was one of our great prides before Irene destroyed it."

Thundering Falls is the sixth tallest waterfall in Vermont. At high water, it is a magnificent cascade as Kent Brook tumbles 140 feet through a steep and narrow cataract before intersecting with the Ottauquechee River. Green Mountain Club volunteers from the club's Ottauquechee Section (i.e. local chapter) quickly reblazed the trail to realign the Appalachian Trail over the boardwalk. The 10,000-member club relies on more than 1,000 volunteers every year to help manage more than 500 miles of hiking trails in Vermont — including the Long Trail, Appalachian Trail, and a new trail in the Northeast Kingdom.

Nearby, the Green Mountain Club's Long Trail Patrol crew and its Appalachian Trail Conservancy-supported volunteer crew completed treadwork improvements to the A.T. between Kent Pond and Thundering Falls. The club also worked with the state of Vermont toward replacing the Irene-destroyed A.T. bridge near Kent Pond — a project done by a private contractor. Along with a new town trail near the A.T. corridor, it was a busy — and successful — year for the club in Killington.

Great Girl Scout HIKE A NATURAL SUCCESS

BY ANGIE SHELDON

IN CELEBRATION OF THEIR 100TH ANNIVERSARY, GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA set a goal of getting girls of all ages out hiking on the Appalachian Trail, covering the entire 2,000-plus-miles over the course of seven months. This ambitious initiative, known as the Great Girl Scout Hike, culminated on October 31, 2012. The success of the event was more than anyone could have imagined. From the kick-off hike on March 12 to the final hike to McAfee Knob at the end of October, more than 5,400 girls and 2,800 adults took part and hiked a portion of the Appalachian Trail. Some troops hiked a quarter of a mile, while some covered a whole state, and others completed the entire Trail; covering more than 17,000 miles total. Girl Scouts registered their planned hikes on-line and shared their stories and photos on the Great Girl Scout Hike's Facebook page.

The initiative, originated by Barbara Duerk and Jennifer Pfister of the Skyline Girl Scout Council in Roanoke, Virginia, sparked interest from scouts far and wide. Girls from 30 states and four countries were represented on the Trail during the hike. Many of the scouts who took part in the Great Girl Scout Hike had never been hiking before. Barbara, the visionary for the Great Girl Scout Hike, said that through this experience, "Girl Scouts, of all ages, learned leadership skills and built courage, confidence, and character by hiking the Appalachian Trail." For many girls, this was more than just a walk in the woods. It was a chance to explore nature, be with friends, and learn new skills. It was an opportunity to be a part of something bigger — knowing that fellow scouts were hiking in 14 different states, connecting the Trail in "bits and pieces" from Maine to Georgia, while celebrating a momentous anniversary.

As always, A.T. volunteers and A.T. maintaining clubs played a big part in the effort. Many clubs provided support for the Great Girl Scout Hike in a number of ways. They did everything from helping to lead hikes, to sharing information about the Trail maintenance and management that they're responsible for. They also helped troops plan their hiking itinerary and get prepared. Volunteers from Georgia to Maine visited with local troops to tell them about the Great Girl Scout Hike and see how they could help out.

Although the Great Girl Scout Hike came to an end in October, it was truly a beginning for many girls, encouraging them to get outside and be active. Barbara has plans to take this idea internationally, to Korea and India. And many of the scouts who participated in this year's special hike have already started planning their next adventure on the Appalachian Trail. As Barbara said on the final hike to McAfee Knob, "this is not the end. It's the beginning of a lifetime of hiking, getting outside, and appreciating our country's natural resources."

Learn more about the Great Girl Scout Hike at: www.gshike.org.



Clockwise from top: Richmond, Virginia Troop 222 in Shenandoah National Park; Girl Scout troop 439 at Bear Mountain, New York; Troop 30572 on the A.T. in Massachusetts.

Reduced Hours at Post Offices from Georgia to New Hampshire

The U.S. Postal Service is cutting hours in many rural post offices, and several along the A.T. will be affected. Those known to have reduced hours already in effect or with proposed cuts to be announced early in 2013 include: Suches, Georgia; Fontana Dam, North Carolina; Troutdale, Virginia; Sugar Grove, Virginia; Atkins, Virginia; Montebello, Virginia; Glenclyff, New Hampshire; and Warren, New Hampshire.

West Hartford, Vermont, which had to close its full-service post office after sustaining damage from the White River flood waters following a tropical storm, now has a privately managed post office. The Village Post Office in West Hartford is staffed by a contractor and provides scaled-back services. U.S. Postal Service (USPS) officials are looking for alternatives to closing small post offices. One option they proposed is creating "Village Post Offices" that would be operated by local businesses such as groceries, pharmacies, and other retailers. A statement from the USPS said that the "retail-replacement" locations for communities affected by the optimization "would offer popular postal products and services such as stamps and flat-rate packaging." Currently, posted hours of the West Hartford Village Store post office are the same as the store. There is also a post office seven miles east of West Hartford with regular operating hours. No post offices along the A.T. are expected to close in 2013 during the hiking season.

For more information, visit: appalachiantrail.org/updates and www.usps.com.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Begin Backcountry Permit Fee in 2013

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) will implement a backcountry permit fee system in early 2013. Permit fee revenues are intended to improve customer service, diminish backcountry damage at overnight sites and increase ranger patrols in the backcountry. Central to the improved customer service is a new online reservation/permit system to which users will have 24/7 access.

All GSMNP overnight backcountry users must currently get a permit before their trip. Starting in 2013, a permit fee of \$4 per person per night will be charged, capped at a maximum of \$20 for up to a seven-day permit. An Appalachian Trail seven-day thru-hike permit will also be \$20. Permits may be acquired up to 30 days in advance of entry, and will be available online, by telephone, and in-person at the GSMNP Backcountry Office at the Sugarlands Visitor Center near Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

► Once the new system is implemented, reservations and permits may be obtained online at: www.smokiespermits.nps.gov.

► For more information visit: www.nps.gov/grsm or call (865) 436-1207.

► Additional information for long-distance hikers about obtaining permits will be posted as soon as it is available at: appalachiantrail.org/updates.



ILLUSTRATION BY KAYLEY LEFAIVER

in the path of HURRICANE SANDY

BY BOB PROUDMAN

IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE LATE OCTOBER "SUPER STORM," SANDY, many A.T. forests and parks from the White Mountain National Forest of New Hampshire to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park along the Tennessee/North Carolina border closed sections of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. A.T.-maintaining clubs and partnering federal and state agencies carefully monitored Hurricane Sandy and conditions on the Trail, and warnings and closures were posted daily on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Web site (appalachiantrail.org/updates). Initially, hikers were urged to get off of the A.T. or to postpone their trips.

Due to the storm's slow-moving, cyclonic, counter-clockwise action, the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England states had relatively mild temperatures with strong winds and flooding, while the south suffered extreme cold, with snow and ice spreading from Shenandoah National Park to northern Georgia. At high elevations in the Great Smoky Mountains, high winds drifted the snow five-feet deep.

One southbound thru-hiker, on the final stretch of his 2,000-mile A.T. journey, had to be rescued in the Smokies. He reportedly took eight hours to hike 1.25 miles south from Tricorner Knob Shelter where he became stranded in snow drifts (forecasters had predicted only five to six inches of snow; 22 inches were recorded at Newfound Gap). Fortunately, he reached 911 by cell phone and was patched into the National Park Service (NPS), which coordinated the rescue and dispatched two park rangers. Despite high winds, a Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter crew managed to pluck the hiker out of the woods in one of the park's most remote locations.

ATC staff and the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office held daily briefings during the run-up to and aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The NPS A.T. Chief Ranger coordinated the overall response, and participated in daily briefings with the northeast region of NPS where coastal parks received the brunt of Sandy's damage. ATC regional directors sent safety information on clearing wind-throws and trail-maintenance hazards, high stream crossings and storm conditions to A.T.-maintaining clubs. More detailed damage assessments began in early November with the Trail appearing to suffer mild effects overall compared to coastal areas.

All updates on park and forest closures and safety information included this warning that is always relevant in remote, mountain environments:

Whenever bad weather threatens, keep in mind that emergency response may be delayed or nonexistent due to heavily taxed resources and access issues. Cell and electronic communications may not be available. Hikers should always remember their obligations to potential rescuers, and stay safe and out of trouble. Even if you venture into an area of the A.T. that is open and appears to have received minimal damage, be prepared for the unexpected, and make sure someone back home knows of your plans.

Trail-maintaining clubs in areas affected by Sandy will be working to clean up and repair their sections of the A.T. so that it is in good hiking condition when the season starts back up into full swing in early spring. For updates on Trail maintenance visit: appalachiantrail.org/updates.

For information about the 31 A.T. clubs and how you might get involved in keeping the Appalachian Trail clear visit: appalachiantrail.org/get-involved/volunteer.

Bob Proudman is the ATC's director of conservation operations.

DISCOVER THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL: 2012 Fall Membership Drive

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMPLETION OF the Appalachian Trail, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) hosted its second annual membership drive — "Discover the Appalachian Trail" — across the USA. Our goal was to raise awareness for the Appalachian Trail and to gain the support of 750 new members to the ATC. Every dollar raised went directly to preserve and manage the A.T. — ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

Ten different venues across the country showcased the National Geographic film, *America's Wild Spaces: Appalachian Trail* in theaters. Each location also featured a unique set of guest speakers. Some speakers included Jeff Alt, 2,000-miler, teacher, motivational speaker, and award-winning author of *A Walk for Sunshine* and *A Hike for Mike*; Captains Sean Gobin and Mark Silvers, founders of Warrior Hike, 2012 thru-hikers, and U.S. Veterans; Bill O'Brien, 2,000-miler, former ATC Board Member, and longtime Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association member; Trevor "Zero Zero" Thomas, accomplished blind long-distance hiker, author, and motivational speaker; and Dennis "K1" Blanchard, long-distance hiker and author of *Three Hundred Zereos*.

All in all, the event was a huge success. People were able to gather together to watch an incredible film and hear some inspirational stories from phenomenal speakers. From this membership drive, we shattered our original goal of 750 new members to the ATC and recruited more than 1,700 new members to the organization. We also generated more than fifty-thousand dollars to directly support the Appalachian Trail.

Thanks to all of our volunteers and supporters of this drive, including our sponsors Salazon Chocolate Co., Walkabout Outfitter, EMO, Eastern Mountain Sports, and Tampa Bay Outfitters. And of course, special thanks to all the participants at this year's event.



The Esquire Theater in Cincinnati, Ohio was one of many across the U.S. that participated in showing *America's Wild Spaces: Appalachian Trail* during the successful 2012 membership drive.



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BRIDGING THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

A representative of the world-famous Appalachian Trail is summoned to the breathtaking landscape of Tajikistan to discuss the benefits a trail system has on local communities.

TAJIKISTAN. THE WORD ITSELF invites mystery and adventure, much like our favorite two words: Appalachian Trail. The Republic of Tajikistan is climbing its way out of recent struggles from a civil war, which ended in 1997. Given the mountainous terrain and regional complications in Central Asia, rebuilding their country after war is certainly a steeper hike and greater challenge than the mighty climb up Mount Katahdin.

Now, as the Tajik people untangle themselves from unrest, they are looking ahead at a view with more options for economic recovery. Tourism is a growing priority, and the country's high mountains, breathtaking scenery, and rich historical and cultural heritage form a perfect combination for adventure travel and long-distance hiking. With this in mind, a representative of the world-famous Appalachian Trail was summoned to discuss the benefits a trail system has on local communities, such as economic impact and natural resource protection.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JULIE JUDKINS



To most hikers and A.T. lovers, the Trail isn't thought of as an economic driver and tourist attraction, but its iconic appeal, cultural lure, and the fact that it is a backyard asset to its Trailside communities makes the A.T. an important part of these rural towns' livelihoods. There is a delicate balance between protecting the A.T. experience and spreading awareness to assure it is appreciated and protected for future generations to love and cherish. With the popularity of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) new A.T. Community program, outreach and the Trail's recognition are growing, and new partnerships are blooming, even internationally.

The State Department got wind of the ATC's efforts to achieve balance between economics and conservation, and supported my travel to Tajikistan for a week of cultural exchange. The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, the capital, arranged eight days of travel and speaking engagements venturing through the valleys, and Seven Lakes to the "little" Fann Mountains (15,000-foot peaks). The "big" mountains, the Pamirs, form the western borders of Afghanistan, China and Kyrgyzstan, and are one of the bigger tourist destinations for hikers with peaks reaching 24,000 feet.

My first formal introduction was with the department chair for Youth Affairs, Sports, and Tourism, who told me of Tajikistan's three pillars of tourism — their cultural heritage, including World Heritage Sites and the famous Silk Road, the beauty of its landscape,

Previous page: Lake Norak features a 984-foot earth-filled dam — to make it resistant to earthquakes. Clockwise from above: Hiking the path along the Seven Lakes in the Fann Mountains; Heading south from Dushanbe toward Norak; English students show off their beautiful landscape in Shahrison; The country's dramatic terrain; Julie discusses Leave No Trace principles from atop an ancient settlement; Dried fruits and nuts at the Green Bazaar in Dushanbe.





Clockwise from above: Mahmud was Julie's translator and guide; Passing locals on the trek between the Sixth and Seventh Lakes; A short side trip, with the students, outside of Shahrستان; Julie tells students about the A.T.



Julie Judkins is the ATC's community program manager.

... SUCCESS LIES IN THE HANDS OF MANY WORKING TOGETHER TO ASSURE THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE EXPERIENCE REMAINS TRUE TO ITS ROOTS ... CREATING A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR COMMUNITIES.

and most importantly, its hospitality. I was fortunate to experience all of these virtues first hand, and had the authentic experiences to gain better understanding of the poetic, Persian culture. Staying at a guest house with limited facilities may not be as intimate as a tent pitched in the Appalachians, but sipping tea with Tajik families on a tapchan (a platform, often outside, used for relaxing, eating and/or sleeping) lets you experience their culture in a way that no hotel ever could.


Yes, the three pillars were plainly evident, but I wasn't there just to sip tea, hike in the mountains, and visit historic sites like Sarazm, which took me 5,500 years back into history. With the help of a translator (navigator, scheduler, cultural teacher, and provider for any question asked) named Mahmud, I presented speeches and workshops about the A.T. to many different audiences and told the powerful story of volunteers who built, protect, and maintain it. The success of a simple footpath through the wilderness bringing together thousands of volunteers and millions of visitors was astounding to many. Volunteerism is a new concept for the former Soviet country, and many were interested in trails as a tourism strategy. Place-based education and service learning were two speaking points that were received enthusiastically as ways for students and community residents to improve infrastructure for new visitors.

In Shahrستان, a remote village near the Uzbekistan border, I was able to give a presentation of Leave No Trace principles. Standing on top of an ancient settlement and temple, the seven principles took on a different relevance, as I explained them to a group of English students who described the story and significance of the ancient site. Other stops included a workshop given to tour operators about their existing assets and trail system, discussing the need for

visitors' services, presentations to tourism faculty and university students about A.T. history and the importance of volunteerism to Trail management, and visits with local organizations and English-speaking groups.

The trip culminated with a National Tourism Conference, organized by the Tajik Association of Tourism Operators, celebrating World Tourism Day. I was asked to give a keynote address to a diverse audience of international participants including government officials, tour operators, NGO's (non-profit organizations), and several Ambassadors including the newly arrived U.S. Ambassador Susan Elliott. I spoke of the power of partnerships and networking needed to accomplish a model for success — it could not have been done by one organization, one local community, one group of volunteers, one state or even the government itself. The Trail's success lies in the hands of many working together to assure that the spirit of the experience remains true to its roots, and that the resource itself remains an asset for all — creating a good quality of life for all our communities.

As I flew out of Dushanbe and looked down at snow covered peaks and glaciers illuminated by the full moon, I held my hand over my heart in a much practiced salute of respect for the Tajik people who treated me as family during my brief visit. This simple gesture speaks volumes about their culture, their values, and the respect needed for a mountainous landscape where severe earthquakes, landslides, and avalanches are commonplace. If you are interested in an adventure of a lifetime, let me know as I've many new friends and contacts to share with you. ▲



CREATIVE COLLABORATION

THE A.T. EXISTS BECAUSE OF ITS VOLUNTEERS, WHO SO OFTEN, LIKE THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF THE **LEARN** PROGRAM, COME DIRECTLY FROM LOCAL COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING THE TRAIL.

WITH MORE THAN 1,300 miles of exterior corridor, the Appalachian Trail has more boundary than any other National Park. In Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, the narrow Appalachian Trail corridor winds through farms and around residential and industrial developments as it crosses the Cumberland Valley. It is imperative that the boundary through the Cumberland Valley is well-maintained and visible to all of the A.T.'s neighbors because of the high concentration of development in the area. The corridor is thin. "In order to preserve the Trail, we must make sure that the land it crosses is conserved," explains the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) land protection associate, Alison Scheiderer. "Keeping our surveyed boundaries clearly marked and well-maintained is how we do this." Maintaining these boundaries, however, is hard work. Much of this work depends on dedicated volunteers; and ingenious community collaboration like that of the LEARN program.

LEARN — Linking Education and Real Needs — is a full-day alternative education program at Mechanicsburg area Senior High School in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. The program is designed to work with students, from eighth to eleventh grade, who have behavioral and/or attendance concerns, with the goal of remediating these issues so that students are able to return to the regular classroom and find success. "In addition to academics, we involve students in community service projects," explains Ben Shea, a teacher at Mechanicsburg High who spearheaded the program. "We currently work at a local food bank three mornings per week and on the A.T. boundary one afternoon per week. The objective of these projects is for students to develop a positive work ethic, establish and maintain workplace relationships, and to serve our community."

THE BEGINNING

In the fall of 2009, after working with a local food bank for a number of years, Ben explains that he and others wanted to expand the students' experience. "I wanted to add a service that would be unique and to provide the students with an opportunity they might not otherwise know existed," says



other necessary adjustments for them to get out on the boundary. Jeff Costello, a fellow teacher in the program, is willing to step in when needed so that they can get out on the Trail, and Maria Malinoski-Shuff, classroom support staff, loves to lace up her hiking boots, rain or shine, each week to work with kids along the boundary. “Maria does a terrific job and deserves a ton of credit,” says Ben. “It’s not often that you find staff members who are willing to muck around in the woods.”

HANDS-ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The LEARN program’s work on the boundary includes tackling invasive species that are a threat to the corridor and, so far, they have cleared approximately four to five acres of such species from the land. Clearing invasive species is difficult work but it provides a source of accomplishment for the staff and students; and they can literally look back upon the work we have done over weeks and years. LEARN students are also learning about the various plants and animals, how to work with maps and do compass readings, and how to work hard in a group setting. To make things even more dynamic, a phenology study was added to the program in 2012.

Marian Orlousky, northern resource management coordinator for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, teamed up with the National Park Service (NPS), and National Phenology Network (NPN) to establish a Phenology Web site. “The ATC and NPS has partnered with the USA-NPN to monitor phenology along the entire Trail,” explains Marian. The USA-NPN has a program called “Nature’s Notebook,” which makes it very easy for citizen-scientists to join an organization, learn about monitoring protocols, upload the data that they have collected, and compare their findings to those of other volunteers around the country. Students in the LEARN program collect the information and enter it in the national Web site, and have incorporated phenology into their Science curriculum in the classroom. “Marian has spent the time to teach us what to look for and how to enter the information on the site,” says Ben. Marian also gave Ben’s class a presentation on the overall program. “It adds a new, exciting dimension to our boundary work,” he says. Marian is also invigorated by this collaborative effort. “This partnership benefits both the A.T. and the students,” she says. “They have the opportunity to learn about ecology and climate change through first-hand experience, and at the same time they are contributing an impressive amount of data to the A.T. Phenology Program; data that the ATC and NPS would never have the capacity to collect on their own.”

THE STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE

The LEARN students report that their “work experience” on the boundary has been positive. “We have heard from previous students, and many ask if we are still working on boundary, and about ‘Ms. Gini,’” says Ben. “Most of them

Ben. “Specifically, I was looking for something to get us outdoors and be involved with nature.” So Ben paid a visit to the ATC’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in Boiling Springs and inquired about volunteer opportunities. His goal was to get the LEARN program involved, on a long-term basis, with a project over which they could take ownership. The ATC put him in contact with Gini Maus, the corridor monitor coordinator for the Cumberland Valley A.T. Club (CVATC). Each of the 24 Trail clubs with corridor monitoring and maintenance responsibilities have a point person for the boundary program and Gini holds this role for CVATC, which monitors and maintains 38 miles of exterior corridor boundary across the Cumberland Valley. A partnership was forged and boundary work for the students of the LEARN program began when Gini provided a section of boundary where the students would do maintenance work.

The LEARN students monitor the boundary between Route 74 and Lisburn Road, a one-mile stretch of Trail with two miles of boundary. When Gini needs assistance on other sections, they provide that help as well. “Not only is Gini terrific to work with on the boundary, but she has been willing to be a positive influence with our students,” says Ben. “The first year, several members of our group were having difficulties and I was truly worried that we had lost our opportunity. Gini called me later that week and said something I will never forget, and I had a realization that we were working with a special person. She said: ‘You know what, the boundary will always be here, but the kids need our help now.’”

Administrators in the Mechanicsburg Area School District have been very supportive of the program. Paul Bigham, director of student services, along with high school principal Dave Harris, make sure the students are equipped properly. Both are a source of continued encouragement for the program’s boundary work. Assistant principal, Jeremy Freeland, is the direct supervisor of the LEARN program and works with the group regularly to ensure they have transportation to the A.T. He also enables them to make changes in scheduling and any

“The consistency and enthusiasm of Ben, Maria, and the students is contagious. I encourage all clubs to reach out to their local high schools for programs like this. It is definitely a win-win arrangement.”



recall good memories and talk with me about it. I encourage them to join the CVATC.” When Ben asked current students in the program whether or not they should keep working on the boundary, every one of them agreed that they should. “Keep it; there is something about being in the woods that is calming and peaceful,” said one student. Another said, “...it gives us a chance to do something that is different.” For Ben, one particular student’s story is exemplary of the effect the program has had and continues to have on so many others. “This student, I will refer to him as ‘Frank’, really struggled in the classroom both academically and behaviorally. Frank entered the program during the winter, so we were not working on the A.T. during this time. When spring arrived, it was time to hit the boundary. Frank really took to this work. He became a group leader and eventually a classroom leader,” says Ben. He continues, “He started earning passing grades and his behavior showed dramatic improvement. The staff realized Frank was good at working with his hands. He loved the work and often expressed a positive attitude in the classroom. Due to the experience, Frank enrolled at Cumberland-Perry Vo-tech and is finding success there. When I run into him in the hallways, he still asks if we are working on the Trail and how much area have we cleared since he last worked.”

Gini Maus echoes Ben’s enthusiasm and sentiment about the program, and is impressed by the cooperation it takes to

Previous page: Gini Maus and LEARN student, Mike, clear and mark the corridor; From far left: Mike clears a Trail marker; Gini teaches LEARN student, Zach, to use a compass; students with “Mrs. Maria” on the corridor.

make it a success. “To have a program such as this work well, the teaching staff and school administration must be totally dedicated to it,” she says. “Ben and Maria religiously met the boundary program’s goals and objectives as we discussed them three years ago.” The Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School’s LEARN program has contributed more than 850 hours of volunteer time in the past three years. “The students are wonderful young people, very smart and anxious to do well,” continues Gini. “The consistency and enthusiasm of Ben, Maria, and the students is contagious. I can only encourage all clubs to reach out to their local high schools for programs like this. It is definitely a win-win arrangement.”

The Appalachian Trail exists because of its volunteers, who so often, like the students and teachers of the LEARN program, come directly from local communities surrounding the Trail. “Gini’s partnership with Mechanicsburg High not only gets young people involved, it gets them involved in a place that they are essential,” says the ATC’s Alison Scheiderer. “The tough work of hacking through overgrown boundary lines can’t be done by a solo volunteer. The students’ group effort, and youthful energy, is needed.” ▲

Written in collaboration by Ben Shea, Alison Scheiderer, Marian Orlousky, and Gini Maus.
For information about the ATC’s boundary Program visit: appalachiantrail.org/boundary
For information about the National Phenology Network visit: www.usanpn.org

AN AWESOME CONSERVATION STORY

In November of 2012, Pam Underhill retired from her National Park Service position as Park Manager of the Appalachian Trail Park Office after 33 years of devoted service and partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). During her tenure, Pam oversaw the effort to put the A.T. on public lands.

Pam addresses the crowd (including President Clinton to her right) at an Earth Day gathering in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Pam doing early land acquisition planning at the A.T. Park Office.

Pam signs the C&O Canal Memorandum of Understanding renewal in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.



Pam celebrates the National Park Service's 50th anniversary.



Pam on the A.T. at Saddleback Mountain.



Pam at the Catawba Mountain A.T. shelter.



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is the last week of November as I compose this note — this Friday, November 30, will be my last day working for the National Park Service in the Appalachian Trail Park Office. Bittersweet hardly does justice to the emotions coursing through me.

It has been my pride and privilege to work for the National Park Service on the Appalachian Trail for the last 33 years. I have to say that I feel just plain lucky that I got to be part of this extraordinary era of protection for the Trail. The A.T. seems to have the uncanny ability to attract just the right people when it needs them. I like to think that I was one of a group of “right” people who came along when land conservation was the name of the game — the A.T. needed its “body” secured — and we got to be part of that effort. There were some giants in that group. People like Dave Richie (NPS), Chuck Rinaldi (NPS), Dave Sherman (NPS/U.S. Forest Service), Karen Wade (NPS), and Steve Golden (NPS), and let us not forget Dave Startzell (ATC), the wizard who worked Capitol Hill tirelessly year after year to get the funding. Author and A.T. advocate Jay Leutze says it perfectly when he notes that “we toil in the shadows of giants” (“Grace Under Pressure,” A.T. Journeys November/December). Lucky me that I got to work in those shadows.

I am grateful to the National Park Service and the American people for the chance to be part of such an awesome conservation story — a story that happily continues and that will continue to

amaze. There will be ongoing opportunities for additional conservation along the A.T., and I hope future managers will not pass them up. There will be ongoing challenges for the A.T., too — whether it’s adjacent development, energy or communication infrastructure, or those who would push to use the Trail inappropriately. The need for vigilance and adherence to our management philosophy and principles will be constant. I am confident that the men and women who comprise the A.T.’s unique, volunteer-based cooperative management system are up to the task.

I know the A.T. will continue to attract wonderful people and the people it needs when it needs them, whether in the time-honored role of a volunteer, a hard-working dedicated agency partner, or a simple advocate. I leave with the utmost confidence in the absolutely fabulous staff in place at the A.T. Park Office in Harpers Ferry. I have no doubt they will continue to serve the Trail and the Trail community well. I am grateful to have found a place in that Trail community... the most wonderful people dwell in Appalachian Trail land. I know I’ve found some of my best friends there and I don’t intend to wander very far. My path is going to take me fading happily into my own parade, spending more time with my kids and grand-kids, and of course my little canine pal, Zoe.

Take good care, my friends... of yourselves, each other, and the Appalachian Trail. The American people owe you a debt of gratitude, and I’ll be looking for you out there on the Trail. ~ Pamela Underhill

IN LATE 2012, PAM WAS HONORED

with the Stephen T. Mather conservation award from the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). First presented in 1984, NPCA’s Stephen T. Mather Award is named after the first director of the National Park Service and given to individuals who have shown steadfast leadership and persistent dedication to our national parks.

Pam was recognized for her leadership in managing one of the National Park Service’s most unique resources: a footpath that stretches more than 2,000 miles through 14 states.

“Pam has fought tirelessly to preserve the integrity of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor, and deserves great credit for her leadership to protect the nearly 2,200 miles of the Trail,” said Joy Oakes, NPCA’s Mid-Atlantic senior regional director. “After more than 33 years working to protect and enhance the trail, including nearly 20 years as superintendent, Pam has been a forceful and fearless voice for preservation of the natural and cultural resources surrounding the Trail.” As the Appalachian Trail’s superintendent, Ms. Underhill has coordinated one of the most extensive partnership programs in the park system that includes federal agencies, state and local governments, and private entities.

During her time at the park, she has successfully implemented sound management policies, specifically playing critical roles in: managing a National Park System unit that stretches from Maine to Georgia through the jurisdictions of 55 members of the Congress, 14 governors, 87 counties, and hundreds of neighboring communities; developing and maintaining relationships with key public and private partners; protecting the Trail from incompatible threats, including transmission lines, wind mill proposals, gravel mines, adjacent development, and many others. ▲

TEXT COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Pam has fought tirelessly to PRESERVE the INTEGRITY of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor



RAW RADIANCE

"Some of my fondest memories are of family hikes along the Appalachian Trail, mostly in the North Carolina and Georgia sections," says photographer Scott Hotaling, who grew up in the southern Appalachian Mountain region. "I've always had a deep connection to the mountain landscape. As I've grown older and developed the artistic side of my Trail connection, I've become particularly drawn to photographing the harsh but spectacular winter conditions that grace it each year." If you happen upon a tired photographer braving the icy wind of the Roan Highlands in winter or a July rainstorm in the Smokies, feel free to stop and say hello to Scott. "The landscape may be beautiful, but the people are truly what make the Appalachian Trail so special," he explains. "The Appalachian landscape started my photographic passion many years ago and the end is nowhere in sight."

www.lightofthewild.com

Max Patch, North Carolina – winter afternoon with sun breaking through



Max Patch, North Carolina – winter road cut in early morning light (100 yards from the Trail)



ELEVATED OUTLOOK



Hikers are an integrated and much welcomed symbol of spring in this picturesque north Georgia Appalachian Trail Community.

HIAWASSEE / TOWNS COUNTY, GEORGIA

Peaks 4,000 feet and higher crown the landscape of Towns County, with its gem, Brasstown Bald, rising to its full height of 4,784 feet. From there, the highest point in Georgia, the rest of the state's mountains, and those of nearby North Carolina, roll out in every direction until they touch the horizon.

It is from this high point where everything seems to start. The history of Towns County extends back to ancients who carved messages 3,600 years ago into the large soapstone boulders of Track Rock near the base of Brasstown Bald, and to Cherokee inhabitants who walked the well-trodden path through Unicoi Gap where GA Route 75/17 now traverses this mountainous terrain.

Ringed by ridges, the centerpiece of this county is 7,000-acre Chatuge Lake, with its water reflecting back some of the 57,500 acres of forests that comprise 60 percent of the county's territory. Rich with natural resources of public lands and deep water, the town of Hiawassee is a destination for recreation-bound visitors hoping to fish, kayak, water ski, swim, and drink in the majesty of the views while relaxing by the lakeshore at sunset.

From mid-February through the end of April, a number of Hiawassee's visitors are Appalachian Trail hikers who have walked the 67.5 miles from Springer Mountain on their route north toward Maine. According to David Shroder of the Hiawassee Budget Inn and Gary Poteat, proprietor of the Blueberry Patch Hostel, between late February and the end of April



last year, an estimated 1,350 hikers, roughly 50 percent of hikers who start from Springer, stayed overnight in Hiawassee.

Despite the noticeable influence this crowd must have on the community of 900 year-round residents, Candace Lee, with the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, said they are part of the fabric of the town. "We assume they're coming because they're part of our [community every] year," said Candace. "They don't look out of place. You see them at the post office or the grocery store and just know 'oh, there's a hiker.'"

TEXT BY LEANNA JOYNER





"I LOVE HIKERS MORE THAN ANYTHING ON THE FACE OF THIS EARTH. EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN STORY, THEIR OWN MOTIVATION FOR BEING OUT THERE. ..."

~Town volunteer and owner of the Buckhead House, Pam Fagan



As a resupply destination, hikers come in to Hiwassee to pick up mail, purchase food, wash clothes, dine at restaurants, fine-tune gear choices, and enjoy a well-deserved rest before continuing their journey. They're welcomed throughout town, and especially upon arrival at the Dicks Creek Gap trailhead by shuttles operated seasonally by the Budget Inn and the hostel, helping them overcome the most challenging part of resupply efforts — getting a ride to town.

More than ever before, hikers are an integrated symbol of spring in this north Georgia town, and are welcomed by volunteers who stock town maps that help them find what they need. "That group of volunteers gets so excited when they know hikers are coming to town; they love it," said Candace. One of those volunteers is Pam Fagan. "I love hikers more than anything on the face of this earth. Everyone has their own story, their own motivation for being out there. When they come through here they become like family," said Pam who owns Buckhead House, an outdoor outfitter located beside the post office. She originally opened

Buckhead House as a fly-fishing shop in 1998, but realized a greater connection to hikers and their need for specific gear and shoes. She has tailored much of her merchandise to the crew she readily identifies as family.

Candace, Gary, and David all echo the sense of caring and small town charm that they witness regularly throughout Towns County. "People care about each other. It's a close-knit mountain community, and a beautiful place to live," said Gary who opened his hostel here 20 years ago, after his A.T. thru-hike in 1991. Gary goes on to tout the lake, mountains, and near-perfect weather that allows his family to produce about 1,000 gallons of "pick your own" blueberries for guests each August. Other agritourism thriving in north Georgia with its cold, short winters and cooler summers are alpaca farms, Cane Creek Vine-

From top: Buckhead House owner, Pam Fagan; The A.T. Community sign at Town Square; A visitor at the A.T. Trailhead at Dicks Creek Gap — photos by Leanna Joyner.



yards, Hightower Creek Vineyards, and the Hamilton Rhododendron Gardens. The gardens are a rich botanical experience for the senses from April through May when more than 3,000 rhododendrons, dogwoods, azaleas, and native wildflowers are in bloom.

From spring to autumn, there is an abundance of events in addition to lake activities and hiking Towns County's

Cupid Falls Trail, Miller Trek, and the Wagon Train Trail. Special events include, the Independence Day boat parade and fireworks, Georgia's official state fiddler's convention, and programs like Tell it on the Mountain Storyteller's Retreat at Brasstown Resort. Regularly scheduled events in the nearby town of Young Harris feature theater and music performances, fine art on display at the Campus Gate Gallery, and evening presentations at the Rollins Planetarium at Young Harris College.

Throughout the summer, Hiwassee hosts Summer Concerts on the Square on Saturdays when music and picnics draw this community of residents and seasonal visitors together. Where they gather, the Appalachian Trail Community sign serves as a reminder that the Appalachian Trail and its hikers are an interwoven and important part of this

town. "We've had people who come into our town and just want to stand in front of the A.T. Community sign and have their picture taken. It's like traveling around the world to stand in front of a sign for Austria; they do that with the [A.T. Community] sign now. It finally makes the Trail as important [in our town] as it should be, because it is," said Candace. ⬆

success REVISITED

BY MICAH GOLDFUS



Micah in Shenandoah National Park

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE BEFORE their Appalachian Trail thru-hike, I heard an array of statistics about the unlikelihood of finishing the whole Trail. Maybe you've heard some of these figures too, or numbers similar to them. I'm not even sure if they are accurate. Only 15 percent of those who start their hike finish it — or is it only 10 percent? Fifteen percent drop out in the first 35 miles, and a big chunk of those in the first few miles. Less than half of those who drop out do so for reasons other than physical injury — the hike just becomes too much for them.

On the day I started my thru-hike, I wasn't concerned about these numbers, despite most hikers within 25 miles of Springer Mountain nervously discussing them on a regular basis. I was 22, fresh out of college, still unemployed, in good shape, and had no thoughts about my future beyond Katahdin. Thru-hiking the A.T. was a dream since childhood, and I was cocky enough to tell everyone I knew about my intentions. I looked the high odds of failure in the face and thought, "well of course that's not going to be me." Thousands of people every year start a thru-hike and don't finish it, but I never gave a second of thought to them or their dreams and plans on that cold March morning.

Exactly four months and 1,600 miles later, a torn rotator cuff forced me into the "90 percent" category. So when the hike ended, did my dream go with it? Of course not. I ached to finish what I started. I was determined, but also overwhelmed with the emotional weight of "coming up short" — angry for the mistake I made that caused my injury, ashamed that I let myself and others down, and jealous when my friends who

completed their thru-hike talked about their accomplishments. To make things worse, I knew I should be more grateful for my experiences and time on the Trail. I was frustrated by my own negativity. I had so many great memories from those four months, but they somehow felt incomplete. And I thought quite a bit about all the people I met along the A.T. who also didn't finish their thru-hike. How were they feeling? What did the hike mean for them?

I spent the next four years finishing the rest of A.T., each summer completing 150 miles over two weeks, and year by year those feelings of disappointment were replaced. I was anxious as I prepared for my first summer back on the Trail, but I quickly learned that once you have the gift of (and passion for) long-distance hiking, it never truly goes away. I remember the joy I felt when reaching towns or monuments that I heard about from my friends who completed the whole Trail. Each year I met new people on my hike, some of whom have become genuine friends, and I was constantly reminded how friendly and generous people along the A.T. can be. I was even able to give south-bounders advice about what they will experience over the next few months. After that first year back, I was no longer embarrassed to tell people that I didn't finish my thru-hike: I was thrilled to tell them about my upcoming hiking trip.

This change in perspective wasn't just because of the miles; I was changing too. I found new meanings to taking long periods of time in the woods. Long

distance hiking is fun when you have nothing better to do, but it's life-affirming when it's a vacation from all that comes with being an active and busy member of society. I started looking forward to my annual hike not because it would help me complete a goal or prove something to myself, but because hiking was something I genuinely loved to do. I started the A.T. unemployed, untethered, and unaware of the world. I finished it as someone who was on a great career path, in the middle of working on a graduate degree, and engaged. I guess I could say I grew up as I hiked on the A.T.

As I climbed Katahdin, it didn't matter that I didn't finish my thru-hike. Being on that mountain made me happy not only because I completed a life-time goal — I was reminded how lucky I am that I had the time and support to complete that goal. And now, every summer when I see thru-hikers in Trail towns or read the thru-hiker statistics, I think about how amazing it will be for that 10 to 15 percent who make it all the way. But I spend even more time imagining those who won't finish their thru-hike this year. I know that they're going to feel pretty rotten at first, but I hope they find relief in knowing that their dream is still there, waiting for them whenever they want to return. However, that dream may look a little different when they come back to it. ⬆

old growth SYMBIOSIS

A natural and no-nonsense indicator of forest health.

BY LEANNA JOYNER



Lungwort, *Lobaria pulmonaria*

FOR LICHEN IT'S NOT A SENTIMENT, IT'S A matter of survival. Neither the fungus nor the algae could survive without the other, and when they bond to form lichen, their symbiosis allows each to flourish.

Like a small ecosystem itself, the Lungwort lichen (*Lobaria pulmonaria*), is comprised of a sac fungus, green algae (chlorophyte), and blue-green algae. While most lichen are comprised of only two kingdoms, *Fungi* and *Plantae* (green algae), Lungwort has the addition of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae), classified in the domain Bacteria. Working together, the fungus shelters the algae and keeps it moist, and the algae performs the function photosynthesis to convert the sun's energy into food for them both.

Resembling a leaf, this foliose lichen often grows on broad-leaved trees like oaks, beech, and maple. The topside tends to be bright green, lobed, and textured with ridges, while the underside, with its pockets of cyanobacteria, is generally

darker. If it's exposed to prolonged dry conditions, the bright green top may fade to a dull green or brown, and the usually leathery surface will feel brittle.

Lungwort's historic medicinal purposes included relief from respiratory and breathing issues, and it was named accordingly. It has been used to make "cough tea," as an alternative to hops in early 17th and 18th century beer brewing, and was documented as a leaven for bread by Horace Kephart in his 1919 book *Camping and Woodcraft*.

Lungwort is a slow growing lichen, that prefers to grow in shaded, moist conditions. It reproduces by soredia, portions of the lichen, falling off and landing in a suitable place for a new lung lichen to form. Its presence is generally indicative of healthy, older forests, and good air quality. Since this particular lichen is very sensitive to pollution, its presence is an assurance of an overall healthy ecosystem.

It symbolizes and supports healthy forests because the cyanobacteria fix atmospheric nitrogen, and dead, decaying lungwort on the forest floor fixes nitrogen in the soil, supporting other plant life. It supports wildlife, too. According to the USDA Forest Service, deer, moose, and insects eat lungwort, while other animals like chipmunks and birds use it and other lichen for nesting materials.

It takes a focused eye to spot lungwort in a healthy, vibrant, mixed hardwood forest wearing its full summer green. To be on the lookout for lungwort, Josh Kelly, field biologist with Western North Carolina Alliance, suggests hikers notice the diversity of tree size and ages since that variety is characteristic of old growth forests, the right type environment for lungwort. Then, he says, identify older trees by their form, shape and bark.

"If the limbs are very large in diameter compared to the trunk, if the tree has had to change its direction of growth several times to get sunlight, and if the bark has deep furrows and high ridges, these are good characteristics of older trees," says Kelly. As Appalachian Trail hikers observe these qualities of old trees and forests they're likely to spy this leaf-like lichen that will continue to be nurtured in aging forests along the A.T. and its protected corridor into the future. ♡

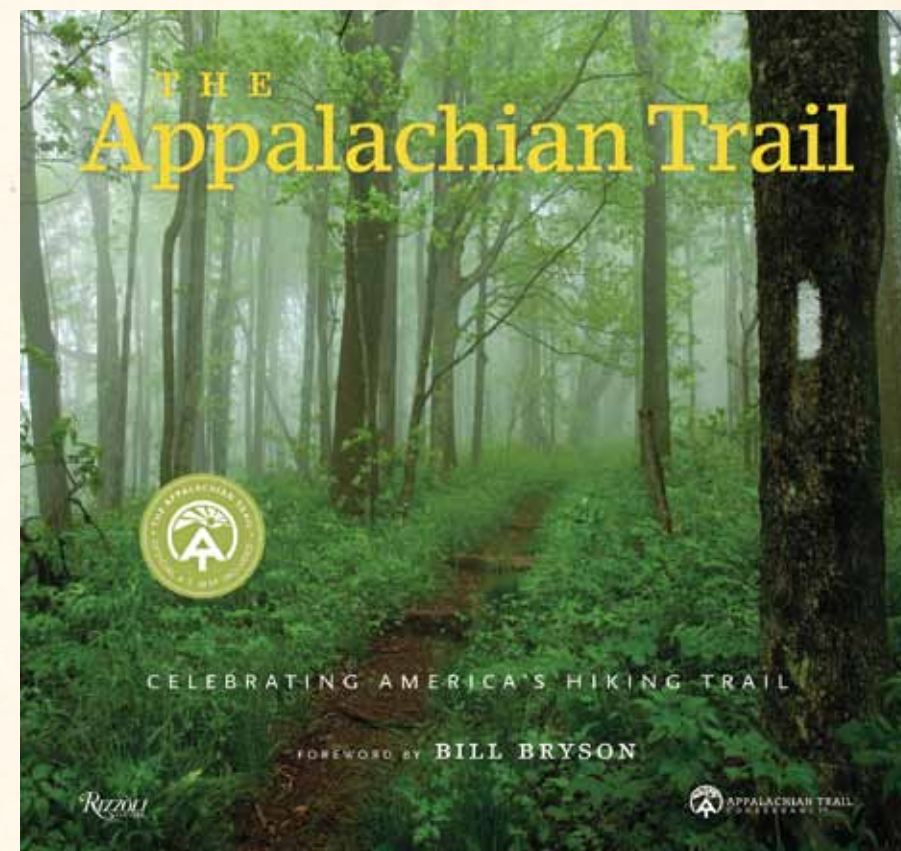


THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL:

Celebrating America's Hiking Trail is a heavy brick of a book for a reason: it is actually several books. It is simultaneously a photographic candy store of the Appalachian Trail, an entertaining history of the A.T., and a call to action to protect the Trail and its surrounding countryside. The book begs to be read several times. First, "read" the photos, including the whimsical endpapers taken from Sarah Jones' collage of A.T. logos along the Trail. The photography alone is enough to start many love affairs with the Appalachian Trail. Many of the photographs have not been published before and include archival shots as well as photos of important historical artifacts. My favorite is the USGS topographical map annotated by Myron Avery as he scouted the path of the A.T.

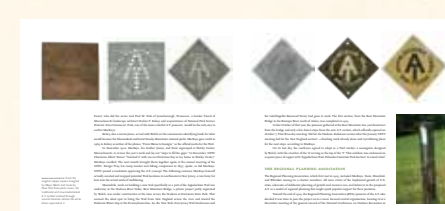
Second, read the text one chapter at a time, starting with the engaging "Foreword" by Bill Bryson. Although sometimes disparaged by A.T. thru-hikers, Bryson, through his book, *A Walk in the Woods*, is immensely responsible for raising the public consciousness of the Trail. He clearly loves the A.T. and he cogently articulates well known as well as more subtle values of the Trail.

Then move on to the main body of the book. The author, Brian King, has written a concise, often-witty history of the A.T. organized into six historical eras. His subtle humor is evident, for example, when he notes that the cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy required using established procedures to remove structures along the Trail, "rather than, say, giving the local fire department a training spot and a



pack of matches." The story is comprehensive yet concise and manages to dispel a number of myths about the development of the A.T. — for instance that the Trail was built almost exclusively by volunteers. Juicy tidbits are also revealed — the fact that the singer James Taylor readily gave an easement for the A.T. as opposed to an unnamed "broadcast psychologist in New York" who fought against the Appalachian Trail Conservancy tooth and nail.

Finally, read the text (especially Chapter seven, the text boxes, and the Epilogue) for suggestions about what you, the reader, can do to help the Trail. While the book is not at all "preachy," it is clear that future generations of political activists and volunteers need to rally to protect, preserve, and promote the Appalachian Trail. A simple



way to support the Trail is by buying the book directly from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy because a percentage of the profits will go to support the A.T.

Certainly any hiker, especially those who have already hiked the A.T. or are contemplating a hike, will enjoy this book. More importantly, they should read it in order to fully appreciate the effort and commitment that went into creating the Trail so hikers could, in Benton MacKaye's words, "walk ... see, and ... see what you see," from Maine to Georgia. ♡

Reviewed by Judith McGuire, and avid ATC volunteer, A.T. Journeys contributor, and A.T. thru-hiker. *The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail*, by Brian King of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, is a 332-page book, copublished with Rizzoli International, and recently featured in *Parade* magazine. Purchase it at the Ultimate A.T. Store and a portion of your payment will be donated directly to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. To order visit: atctrailstore.org or call toll free (888) 287-8673

A.T. HIKER NEAR ALBERT MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA. PHOTO BY JEFF EWING



... that's the great thing about the Trail and the work we do — it means something different to everyone.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! THANKS TO EVERYONE for making 2012 a remarkable year for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). We welcomed a new executive director, celebrated the 75th anniversary of the completion of the Trail, and had another record breaking year for volunteer hours, to name a few. We also welcomed more than 5,000 new members to the ATC.

One of my favorite parts of my job is calling our supporters to thank them for their gifts. I get to hear the wide array of reasons why you support the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. And that's the great thing about the Trail and the work we do — it means something different to everyone, as it should. Whether it's the group of ladies in North Carolina who started hiking in 1998 and have now made it to the halfway point, or the man in Florida who hikes 100 miles a year with his brother, the widow who gives in memory of her husband, the professional gambler who had a good year (true story), or the guy in New York who just hopes to be able to hike the Trail one day — they are all giving back and ensuring the Trail is there for the next person and generation.

Whatever your reason for giving, thank you very much! Your generosity is both greatly appreciated and stewarded with care.

I hope you are able to enjoy the Appalachian Trail in some way in 2013. ⬆

Have a happy, safe and prosperous New Year,
Royce W. Gibson | *Director of Membership & Development*



SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2012

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Clifford Andrew by Peter Bergstrom, Kenneth & Jeanne Brady, Richard Dickenson, Donald & Marilyn Fisher, Mr. & Mrs. William Hargrave, Valerie Horky, James & Barbara Jackson, Nancy James, Gregory Krauss, Mary Lou & David Lambert, Galdys Pope, Julie Upchurch, Donna Porricelli, Donna Porter, Pinquard & Loretta Seal, Ellen Smoot, Jason Spicknall

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Matthew Morde by Harry Edenborn
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Darrol & Georgia Nickels by Richard Nickels
Doug Riddle by Northbrook United Methodist Church

In Memory Of
Don Andersen by Ned Sohl
Charles Bauman by Ronald Scheetz
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Louise Bolen by Marlene Clancy
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Elizabeth Johnston by Kathy Heffernan
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Membership dues and additional donations are tax-deductible as a charitable contribution. The ATC is a Section 501(c)(3) educational organization. To make a contribution or renew your membership, call (304) 535-6331 ext 119, or visit: appalachiantrail.org/donate

BECOME A TRAIL GUARDIAN

Become a monthly donor in our **Trail Guardian Society** and join an elite group of members who provide dependable support to all the ATC's programs, volunteers, and maintenance.

For as little as \$5 a month your donation:

- ▶ Keeps your membership current
- ▶ Helps the ATC reduce the amount spent on postage and paper
- ▶ Puts more of your gift dollars to work on the Trail

Many monthly donors use this as a manageable way to fulfill their yearly giving goal in our Annual Giving Societies instead of making one large donation at the end of the year.

With your contribution, you will receive:

- ▶ Subscription to *A.T. Journeys*: The Magazine of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- ▶ Up to 10% Discount at the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store
- ▶ ATC decal and patch
- ▶ ATC Member card
- ▶ FREE Trail Guardian Water Bottle



To become a Trail Guardian visit:
www.appalachiantrail.org/donate/monthly-giving
 Or call: (304) 535-6331 x120

Hiking Partners

Fit **66-year-old male looking for hiking partner** for: May 2013 north from Duncannon - 10 days? July 2013 north from Gorham - 10 days? 10 to 15 mile/day depending on slacking or packing. Contact: "Stoneface" at apstarck@yahoo.com.

For Sale

Osprey Aether 60 backpack, 3 LB 15oz, lightly used: \$225...will sell for \$180; Raincover, new: \$30; Eureka Spitfire tent, like new: \$130; Titanium Evernew 900ml. pot, like new: \$50 (add MRI titanium spork for \$5); MSR Titanium cup, 0.4L, like new: \$35; MSR PocketRocket stove, very little use: \$25; Stearns camp water bag, 2 gallons, new: \$5; Big Agnes down sleeping bag, "Crystal," Regular, 30-degree, lightly used: \$140; Wiley X glasses, sun and clear interchangeable, new: \$50. Contact: jcmjweiss@gmail.com.

Men's size 9, Vasque Leather Hiking Boots, Vibram Soles, Italian made, new laces and socks, used very little. Asking \$100 or best offer. Contact: Peter (443) 871-8634 or Peter@atlanticwoodworks.com.

Help Wanted

Be part of an exciting, well established expanding

hiker service in the Katahdin region. Looking for a couple who would like to live in Maine for the 2013 hiker season. Prefer experience with long-distance hiking, knowledge of the A.T. and backpacking gear. Must have a clean driving record and be willing to work long hours if needed. Salary plus housing. Contact the A.T. Lodge for more info at: (207) 723-4321. References will be required.

For Your Information

Mark your calendars for March 15-17, 2013 and plan to join us for our **Appalachian Trail Conservancy Southern Partnership Meeting**. This is always a great opportunity to tell the rest of us what you've been doing, to deal with current Appalachian Trail Conservancy issues and policies, and to make plans for how we can work together to accomplish our shared goals. The meeting will be at Kanuga Conference Center in Hendersonville, North Carolina. We will plan a Partnership Hike on Friday, followed by dinner together and a get-acquainted meeting in the evening, a general partnership meeting Saturday morning, split up for Regional Partnership Committee meetings in the afternoon,

and a Saturday evening event. Sunday morning, those involved in Konnarock planning will meet to lay out the future. This is an effective way to further our common goals and friendships, and we hope you can be there. For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/events.

Cake Baking Contest: Saturday, March 2, at the ATC Visitor Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. In honor of the ATC's 88th birthday, **bake a delicious A.T.- themed cake** and enter it for the chance to win prizes! The top three cakes will be displayed and served to visitors on Saturday. For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/events.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is currently **searching for interns during our 2013 summer program**. For more information or to apply visit: appalachiantrail.org/jobs. ↗

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length. Please send them to: editor@appalachiantrail.org
 Public Notices
 P.O. Box 807
 Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807



"I BEQUEATH MYSELF TO THE DIRT TO GROW FROM THE GRASS I LOVE. IF YOU WANT ME AGAIN LOOK FOR ME UNDER YOUR BOOT-SOLES"

Walt Whitman ~*A Song of Myself*

ON APRIL 1, 2003, I STOOD ON SPRINGER Mountain, Georgia, my eyes gazing north toward Katahdin. The morning was frigid, and I, at age 53, was to begin my hike of the Appalachian Trail. Approaching the first white blaze, the Trail marker atop of Springer Mountain, I saw two young hikers writing their first Trail journal entries. I could see their heartfelt efforts, telling of aspirations for the upcoming adventure they were about to depart on. Trail journals line the entire Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. They are found in every shelter, every Trail town restaurant, and every hiker outfitter store. These journals traditionally have been a form of hiker communication; letting hikers behind you know when you have passed, what you have seen, and what you are feeling. These journal entries are usually creative, often illustrated, and fun to read. They become part of the history of the Appalachian Trail.

During my career as a dentist, I took notes and made patient chart entries on a daily basis. I dreaded the thought of Trail journals but I also wanted to participate in the tradition. I was trying to think of a rational compromise while waiting for the young hikers to finish expressing themselves and it came to me. While standing there in the brisk mountain air of Georgia, I struck upon an idea that I would carry out for the whole length of the Trail. Throughout my life I have been a fan of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. I especially like his poem "Song of the Open Road," which begins, "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road." I decided right then and there to use this line as my journal entry. I used this single entry in every

journal I wrote in over the next 2,000-plus miles. On July 4, 2003, I stood on Bear Mountain in New York overlooking the Hudson River. I had hiked 1,394 miles since leaving Springer Mountain. It had been a very wet and long hike to this point. One of the more interesting sections on the A.T. is the walk through the Bear Mountain State Park Zoo. This zoo is located at the base of Bear Mountain and the A.T. hiker can enjoy a change of pace by following the white blaze through the zoo, passing the bears, the wild cats, and the monkeys. A favorite of all hikers is buying an ice cream sandwich from one of the zoo vendors. The Trail eventually exits the zoo and the hiker begins a scenic crossing of the Hudson River.

I was one of the first visitors that morning and I could not help but reflect on the ultimate freedom I felt while hiking the Appalachian Mountains. During my walk through the zoo, I looked up and unexpectedly found myself standing before a wonderful statue of Walt Whitman, entitled, *Song of the Open Road*. I was stunned. I had a lump in my throat and mist in my eyes. As I carefully read the very weathered inscription on the statue, I could make out the very words that carried me along on the Appalachian Trail: "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road."

When I arrived at the Ranger Station in Baxter Park on September 11, 2003, about to climb Katahdin, I made my final journal entry: "Afoot and light-hearted ..."

Edward "Walkabout" Herod
 LIVES IN GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA.

"As I See It" is a monthly column from guest contributors representing the full range of ATC partners, members, and volunteers. To submit a column for consideration, please email journeys@appalachiantrail.org or write to Editor/As I See It, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.



Do you want your photography published in A.T. Journeys?

Send photos (2MB or larger) of hikers, shelters, campsites, and scenic shots from Maine to Georgia to: editor@appalachiantrail.org.

SADDLEBACK MOUNTAIN, MAINE, BY JOHN CAMMEROTA



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