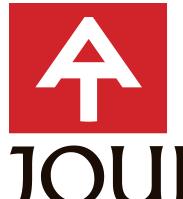




## Safeguarding the Health of a Busy A.T.

Social Nature: Technology and the Trail

A Songbird's Sanctuary



#### MISSION

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.

# JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPAI ACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / SUMMER 2016

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n A.T. hiker akes a break ear Unionville, New York – by this issue's Photo Essay photographer Max Mishkin ("Endless Story," page 36).

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# A.T. Clubs are the Work Force

*Journeys*, I have focused a great deal of attention on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Strategic Plan and its five major goals. The Strategic Plan will continue to be our guide for the future direction of the ATC in Trail and visitor use management; protection of the natural and cultural heritage along the A.T. and within the surrounding landscape; and the importance of connecting a broader segment of the public with the Trail experience.

Yet it is equally important that all of us acknowledge the central and critical role played by the 31 Trail maintaining clubs in protecting the A.T. hiking experience. In the 91 years since the ATC was founded in 1925, we have relied on those organizations as the primary volunteer work force for the Appalachian Trail. Our field program covers four regions from Georgia to Maine and includes more than 25 year-round employees and a number of seasonal staff. Their primary day-to-day responsibility is to coordinate, assist, and partner with club volunteers for maintenance of the footpath, Trail relocation and rehabilitation, boundary monitoring, shelter and campsite management, natural resource inventories, maintenance of open areas, investigation of reports of graffiti, vandalism or other inappropriate behavior, and unexpected management challenges.

I have been a member of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) for more than 40 years, and maintained a section of the A.T. for nearly two decades. The PATC is an outstanding, dedicated volunteer organization with more than 8,000 members. It oversees about 240 miles of the A.T. and more than 1,000 miles of other trails in Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia.

Without PATC's sizable work force and extensive expertise, the A.T. from

**IN MY RECENT COLUMNS FOR A.T.** Shenandoah National Park north to southern Pennsylvania would not continue to provide an enjoyable and sustainable hiking experience.

> We rely on other large Trail clubs as our partners, like the Appalachian Mountain Club, New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club, Carolina Mountain Club, and the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. Equally important are the many smaller membership clubs that have fewer miles of the Trail to manage but the same level of responsibility. I have wonderful memories of speaking last November at the 100th anniversary of the Blue Mountain Eagle Hiking and Climbing Club, a relatively small organization that does a wonderful job of maintaining about 65 miles of a very busy section of the Trail east of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

> These 31 clubs are the foundation for the future of the Appalachian Trail. In 2015, they committed more than 272,000 volunteer hours to the maintenance and protection of the A.T. We are seeing a growing number of thru-hikers, section hikers, weekenders, and day hikers on the Trail. The reality of this welcome surge of interest in the A.T. is that it requires new initiatives and management strategies and more resources to sustain the high quality experience that Trail hikers expect.

> The ATC depends on other partners beyond the 31 Trail clubs to help fulfill our overall responsibility for the Appalachian Trail through our cooperative management agreement with the National Park Service. However, those clubs are our closest and most valued partners, and we deeply appreciate what they do for the Trail, every day and every year.  $\bigstar$

Ronald J. Tipton / Executive Director · CEO



Follow Ron on Twitter at twitter.com Ron\_Tipton



## FAMILY HIKING DAY SEPT. 24, 2016

The Appalachian **Trail Conservancy** invites families of all ages and hiking abilities to get outside and experience the adventure of being active on the Appalachian Trail.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Held on National Public Lands Day, Family Hiking Day is an opportunity to introduce your children to America's premier footpath, and all of the benefits that come from being active and spending time outdoors.

To plan an A.T. hike for your family visit: appalachiantrail.org/FamilyHike

Some places along the A.T., like McAfee Knob in central Virginia, are particularly popular for the quintessential Appalachian nountain experience they offer. 🗖 Photo courtesy of the Konnarock Trail Crew

# 20

As hiker visitation increases on the A.T. – especially in well-loved areas – the ATC and its partners are using a systematic approach to ensure the health of our popular Trail.

#### **12** / FEARLESS HIKING

Tools, tips, and knowledge to help you have a tick-free trek on the Trail.

### **28** / SOCIAL NATURE

Technology, from a community standpoint, can be a powerful tool to bring millions of A.T. users together to learn about and protect what they love.

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In southwest Virginia, a historic 238-acre farmstead protects a one-mile section of the Trail and serves as a much-needed sanctuary for a dwindling species of songbird.

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Volunteers in Service to America have the opportunity to highlight the value of the A.T. as a resource in communities along the Trail.

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After the loss of their son, Steve and Kathi Cramer are finding some solace in experiencing the Trail for themselves and generously helping to protect it.

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Sudden trepidation almost stops one young hiker's adventure before it even starts.

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Jane Daily forgot to prepare for the single biggest challenge of her hike: leaving the Trail.

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### LETTERS



WHAT STARTED OUT AS A SIX-WEEK winter section hike ended up being a completion of the A.T. I had planned on hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2015, but ditched this plan after falling in love with the A.T. I made the remaining hike (from Partnership Shelter in Virginia) work with some obligations I had up in Canada. Being Canadian and not having anything close to something like the A.T. made me deeply appreciate that such a trail exists. Thanks to the volunteers; you are my heroes. I hiked the first third of the Trail with my husband "Windwalker" and the last two thirds alone. But you are never alone on the A.T. It was the experience of a lifetime. Clara Hughes CANMORE. ALBERTA CANADA

#### WHEN ONE IS GOING TO BE 99 IN

November, they think about the most memorable moments in life. It all began in the summer of 1954. My husband, George and I packed our station wagon with camping gear for a trip in the Pisgah National I packed a bit too light Forest in North Carolina. On our way, we and I was pregnant with stopped to visit a friend in Covington, Georgia. On her coffee table was a copy of a National Geographic. An article in the magazine was about the Appalachian Trail. Plans changed. We went to an Army/Navy surplus store and bought what we thought we needed [for our hike] of the A.T. — two A-frame Army rucksacks, two army canteens, and a pair of nurse's combat boots for me. (In the future I bought Swiss boots but none compared to those combat boots.)

Our first hike was a three-day trip starting at Newfound Gap. We never hiked the entire Trail, but there were many more trips. In 1955 (and for several more years), I took a group of senior Girl Scouts on backpacking trips. We hiked in North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, and Maine. In 1957, the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. asked me to train Scout leaders in the southeastern area. We started at the beginning — what was then Mount Ogelthorpe. Three climbs to Katahdin and backpacking trips on the Trail in New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia are experiences I'll never forget. My last climb was via Alum Cave trail, returning to Mount LeConte — in celebration of my 90<sup>th</sup> birthdav. When I think of the Trail experiences, I smell the odor of the Galax, see the flame azalea, hear the song of birds, and even taste a bit of sassafras tea. Those hikes on the A.T.

have made a difference in my life. Lenore Costello LAKE ALFRED, FLORIDA

#### I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I

enjoyed seeing and reading Allen Poole's article "Trail Magic" in the Winter issue. I am so glad to see this issue is coming to light with hopefully more broad discussions in the future. I too, have seen a profound change in this phenomenon over

#### Trail Baby!

My husband and I attempted the Trail in 2008 for our honeymoon. We made it 500 miles before I couldn't bear it any longer due to illness ... turns out a "Trail baby." We named him Katahdin and I cannot wait until he is old enough to hike the A.T. with me. Amanda Lemons-McOuinn

#### Trail Crew Volunteering

Well, I've always kind of dreamed about hiking the A.T., just to escape.

was reading a book and it mentioned the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. I looked it up and saw the volunteer tab. I clicked on that and that's where my Trail Crew experience started. I signed up and my first week of Trail Crew had me hooked! It's hard work; it's meeting awesome people; it's rewarding. Pat Pileski

#### National Trails Day

My son, who is 10, is my go to guy for all the crazy things I wanna do ... I just have to wait till he's old enough to do the crazy things we wanna do.. hike this Trail is one of them! I

saw a documentary on it so beautiful! Melissa Bush

#### Hiking Advice

I learned many years ago, one need not jump or go quickly. Youth provides much more capacity for the jump/ quick approach. In any case a fall (depending on degree of damage) impresses the benefit of caution. At 70, after years of day hiking and motorcycling, I frequently recall, then in my 50s, a Lake George, New York area quick-paced solo hike up and down a rocky mountain that gravity *rules* in either direction.

## 

my over 40 years on the A.T. I thought it was only me, some kind of old curmudgeon out of touch with the younger generation, who was disappointed to see abandoned food at road crossings and soda pop cans in a shelter spring. Didn't I come out here to avoid these kinds of trappings of modern society? Don't get me wrong, I love ice cream and beer breaks as much as any hiker, but there is a time and place for such things (Inn at Long Trail anyone?). I know there are many well-meaning hikers who want to "give back" to the Trail and its people, but abandoning food along the A.T. is not magic in my book ... it is litter and trash. 🛧

> Craig Roebuck OTTER CREEK, MAINE

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.

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A.T. Journeys is the official magazine of the A.T. and the membership magazine of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy — a national not-for-profit corporation with more than 43,000 members from all 50 U.S. states and more than 15 other countries. Our readers are adventurous, eco-friendly outdoor enthusiasts who understand the value in the protection and maintenance of the Trail and its surrounding communities.

Advertising revenues directly support the publication and production of the magazine and help meet the ATC's objectives. A.T. NORTH OF PA 850 BY JEFF MITCHELL

08

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#### SUMMER IS UPON US AND THE HIKING

season is in full swing. Living out in the field at the Blackburn Trail Center we know the Trail is abuzz about the growing numbers of hikers, the crowds at the southern end in Georgia, and the need for best behavior at Baxter State Park. A growing number of hikers have taken the "flip flop" message to heart, as we see both north and south bound thru-hikers at a steady pace. And more folks than ever are section and day hiking the Trail so the A.T.'s treadway is never without feet it seems.

If you've been keeping up with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) communications as well as popular blogs and forums, a big focus on the growing numbers of hikers has been how the ATC, National Park Service (NPS), and our other state and local partners are dealing with the boom. But I'd like to focus on the often unsung hero's of the Trail — our A.T. Maintaining Clubs. For all the pontificating at the top about how we can best protect the resource and the A.T. experience — it is our clubs' individual volunteer members who are, as always, making sure the Trail is open and ready for whatever comes its way.

It is not easy maintaining a mile or two or more of Trail. It requires dedication as well as brute strength and sweat. You need to be able to swing a weed whacker and carry loppers in your pack. If you're using power tools the job of just carrying the tools into the site can be a chore. If you are chainsawing blowdowns, you not only have the effort of the work itself, but you've also given up weekends for chainsaw certification training and recertification training. You have clothes permanently stained with white paint and the knees of your pants show the wear and tear of kneeling down to move rocks as you build water bars. You've had poison ivy and tick bites, sore joints, and crushed fin-



gers. And you've loved every minute of it. (Well, almost!)

The volunteers who maintain the treadway of the Trail are in many ways the spine of our organization. The body as a whole is made up of many parts — the ATC, NPS, and the U.S. Forest Service are key partners as are our local and state land managers. Our membership helps to support our combined efforts. And our constituents, the A.T. hikers for whom we do all this work are the heartbeat of our mission. But without that supporting spine — and without that clear, passable, and inviting treadway — the A.T. would not be the most popular long-distance hiking trail in the world.

As we continue to address the issues of expanded use and how to make the A.T. more relevant to a more diverse population, it is critical we also take the time to acknowledge and express appreciation for the efforts and commitment of the individual Trail maintainer. You'll see them out there on our Trail on any given day. They will be sweaty and smiling and enjoying work most of us wouldn't even do if they paid us. Stop and say thanks. And if you have the time, find out how maybe you could join their ranks. Help is always needed.

As Myron Avery said at an Appalachian Trail Conference meeting in Gatlinburg, Tennessee in 1937: "Those of us, who have physically worked on the [Appalachian] Trail, know that the Trail, as such, will never be completed." But the dedicated volunteers will keep on trying.

Sandra Marra / Chair

Carolina Mountain Club Trail crew member Shawn Riley saws through one of four trees that were blocking the A.T. just north of Spivey Gap in Yancey County, North Carolina.



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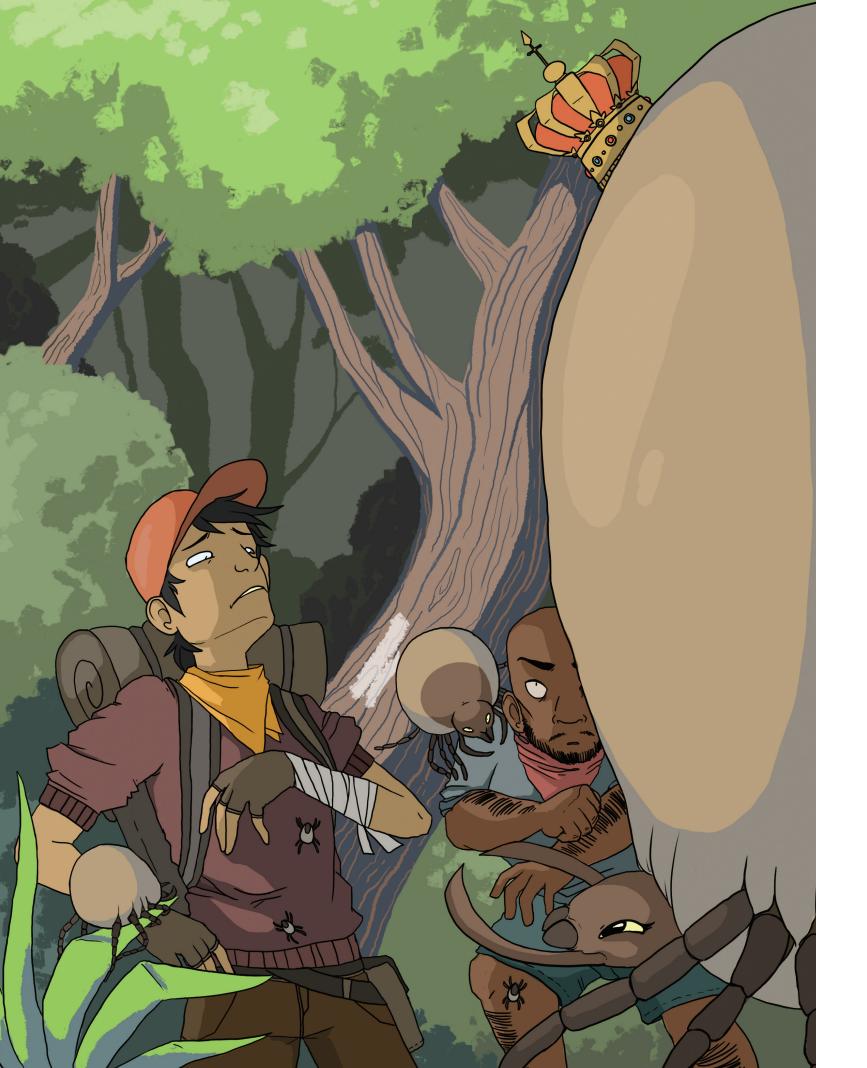
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# Fearless Hiking Preventing Tick-Borne Diseases on the Appalachian Trail

IN JULY OF 2013, WHILE HIKING SOUTH IN MAINE'S Hundred-Mile Wilderness, I met "Witch Doctor," a northbound thru-hiker who was just a few short miles from reaching his goal. He noticed a small button I had pinned to my shoulder strap that read "Lyme Warrior," and shared that he had contracted Lyme disease from a tick bite in Pennsylvania. Fortunately for him, he had promptly visited a doctor who reacted properly to a known deer tick bite accompanied by several classic symptoms (flu-like symptoms, including migrating joint pain, debilitating fatigue, fever, confusion, etc.) and had prescribed antibiotics. A multi-week course of doxycycline taken early in his infection had helped Witch Doctor recover and resume his hike. He was the first of several northbound hikers I met over the coming months who had contracted Lyme and/or other tick-borne infections. As for me, I never had to remove a single tick from my body nor my gear during my five months on the A.T. I'd like to share with you the tools, tips, and knowledge that helped me have a tick-free hike on the Trail. 🤊

# s 13

#### **BY LOGAN "UNITIC" MCCULLOCH**

➡ ILLUSTRATION BY MARISA VIANA

### MY STORY

Unfortunately for me, my experience with Lyme disease was quite different from Witch Doctor's. While on a backpacking trip in Mammoth Cave National Park in May of 2011, I awoke during my first morning in camp to find more than 20 very tiny deer tick nymphs (*Ixodes scapularis*) attached to my body from my waist down to my toes. But I was an experienced backpacker, and I thought I was very knowledgeable about ticks and tick-borne diseases (TBDs). I calmly took out my tick tweezers (extremely fine point tweezers) and carefully grasped each tiny poppy seed sized tick at the tip of its embedded mouth and gently and steadily pulled backwards until it released its grip. I found out months later that my removal technique was one of the few things I did right that day. After five months of confusing symptoms and declining health, I was finally accurately diagnosed and began what became a more than year-long struggle to recover from disseminated Lyme disease and another disease known as Bartonella. Here are some of the hard-earned lessons that came from my experience.

### TICK AVOIDANCE

Ticks require moisture to survive. Dryness is the mortal enemy of ticks. They seek out overgrown areas that are shady and humid. They love soggy leaf litter, decomposing wood, thick brush, and grass. Ticks hatch from masses of eggs into larva, molt into nymphs after their first blood meal, and then to adults after their second blood meal. The tiny nymphs usually stay clustered in large numbers within a small area. They crawl up on vegetation and wait to grab onto a passing animal. Where possible, avoid allowing your body or your gear to contact tick habitat. Walk in the center of the Trail, be vigilant when choosing rest stops and campsites, and when you are forced to pass through tick habitat, stop frequently and do tick checks. Do an even more thorough full body tick check at the end of each hiking day. Backpackers should carry a tick removal kit (fine-tipped tweezers and alcohol swabs or something to clean the bite area). Mirrors and/or cell phone cameras are essential tools to examine places you can't see (groin, armpits, hairline, your back, etc.).

QUICK TIP: At the end of an outing and after your tick check, if possible (or if you have access) put your clothing in a dryer for 20 to 30 minutes or longer on as high a heat setting as the fabric will allow. Prolonged exposure to dry heat will kill ticks. If you are driving home, change clothes and seal your hiking apparel and gear in plastic bags before storing in your car.

### TICK PROTECTION

The one tool I credit most with keeping me safe on day hikes to thru-hikes is my tick-protective clothing. On my 2013 hike, I wore protective clothing that utilizes a patented process developed by a company called InsectShield that bonds a chemical called permethrin to the fibers of fabric. Permethrin is extremely effective against many pests including ticks. A variety of other products are also registered with the EPA to safely repel ticks.

I wore treated socks, gaiters, zip-off pants, T-shirts, and a long-

sleeve shirt where needed. Many outdoor clothing retailers use fabric treated with InsectShield technology. If a tick gets on this fabric they will quickly crawl off. In addition to the pre-treated fabric (guaranteed for up to 70 washes), spray-on treatments are also an option (usually good for five to seven washes). I spray the exterior of my backpack, my hammock straps, my shoes and my sit-pad. Avoid allowing treated fabric to be overexposed to direct sunlight (UV radiation will degrade the treatment) and do not treat fabrics intended to be waterproof. A number of insect repellants are available to apply to exposed skin. Personally, I am not a fan of DEET, one of the best-known of these, which I have used sparingly from time to time. I find my protective clothing the safest and most effective defense against a variety of pests.

**QUICK TIP:** In addition to chemical protection, light-colored clothing is essential. The tick nymphs are so small that your best chance to spot these tiny black and brown specks is when they are crawling across light colored clothes. Tucking your pant legs into your socks and shirt into your pants is also a simple but effective strategy, since ticks crawl upward. This also helps keep ticks on the outside of your clothing where they may more easily be spotted.

### EARLY INTERVENTION

Understanding the early signs and symptoms of the most common TBDs is an essential piece of outdoor knowledge. I urge each hiker to carry a wallet-size tick ID card that lists the most common species, TBDs, and their associated symptoms. Early treatment is far more effective in every case, and particularly so with Lyme disease. The Borrellia bacteria that causes Lyme disease is far more effectively treated when it is still in the bloodstream. Once the spirochete (corkscrew shaped body) begins to drill itself into tissues including joints and organs, it is far more challenging to treat.

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY HAS PARTNERED WITH INSECTSHIELD, TICK RESEARCHER KARL FORD, AND LYME DISEASE SURVIVOR/AWARENESS ADVOCATE LOGAN MCCULLOCH TO BRING YOU A VIDEO HIGHLIGHTING EFFECTIVE TICK BITE PREVENTION: PREVENTING TICK-BORNE DISEASES ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL.



Watch the video at: appalachiantrail.org/health

Most infections are transmitted by the tiny tick nymphs, so many people may never see them, nor realize they have been bitten. They are most prevalent in the spring and early summer. Flu-like symptoms, such as joint pain, fever, headache, and fatigue (typically arising 3 to 30 days after a bite) are classic indicators. However, the deep fatigue and joint pains from Lyme disease can be far more severe than even that experienced by a thru-hiker. A "bull's eye" rash is often associated with Lyme disease, and considered the classic indicator, but not all people infected with Lyme disease see a rash at all, and even fewer get the "bull's eye" pattern. An expanding red rash is a hallmark of Lyme disease and warrants seeking immediate treatment.

**OUICK TIP:** Removing an embedded tick as auickly as possible reduces the risk of disease transmission. You may not actually know how long one has been on you. If you have symptoms and no evidence of a bite, you should still tell your doctor you have been in a tick-prone environment and to consider the potential for tick-borne illnesses.

### ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS

Just a few weeks after I began my hike, the Governor of Virginia signed the 2013 Lyme Disease Information Disclosure Act. This law mandated that any health care provider in Virginia who administered certain Lyme disease blood tests must provide a written disclosure statement declaring that current laboratory testing for Lyme disease can be problematic and standard laboratory tests often result in false negative and false positive results. A negative test result does not rule out Lyme disease. If a test is administered too early (less than two weeks after the bite), most people will not yet have produced enough antibodies to return a positive result. Taken too late (approximately six weeks or more after the bite), the infection may suppress the immune response sufficiently to produce a false negative result. Many of the tests for the other common TBDs may also be potentially inaccurate.

**QUICK TIP:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that Lyme disease (and many other TBDs) be primarily diagnosed via a clinical examination by a doctor well-versed in the characteristics of these infections. Diagnosis should be based on exposure, symptoms, history, and presentation.

Spending time on the A.T. is one of the joys of my life. Armed with accurate information, I feel confident in continuing to safely enjoy my time on the Trail. A

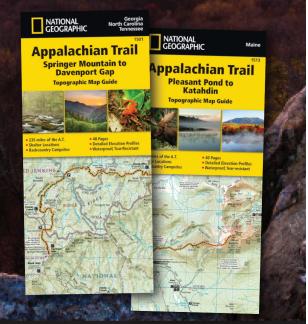
There are ongoing areas of disagreement in the medical community about diagnosis, transmission, and treatment of Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases. Prevention and awareness is the best course of action.

For more information on ticks and TBDs visit: **lymedisease.org** The National Park Service Northeast Public Health Consultant recommends the following website:

tickencounter.org/prevention/protect\_yourself

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# \* ATC DIRT \*



Sweat equity. Crew members from the Carolina Mountain Club make a tough job look easy and keep the footpath ready for whatever comes its way.

## NEW A.T. VISITOR CENTER OPENS IN MAINE

A newly-expanded, full-time **Appalachian Trail Visitor** Center opened on June 20 in Monson, Maine. It will help hikers prepare for the unique circumstances and environment in the last section of the Trail, which extends through the boundaries of **Baxter State Park.** 

The ATC has developed those guidelines to help preserve the special nature of the Trail and manage the increasing number of long-distance hikers entering Baxter. Strategically located in the last town northbound thru-hikers encounter before entering the park, the Visitor Center allows them to pre-register for the Baxter Long Distance Hiker Permit Cards and make plans for their stay in the park and their ascent of Katahdin.

The ATC is dedicated to increasing its presence on the A.T. in order to assist and educate hikers. The organization has developed a number of initiatives to minimize the impact of large groups on the A.T. in Baxter. "These are common-sense principles that most hikers know, but are particularly important to be reminded of, as we all strive to preserve the hiking experience for everyone and the unique alpine environment on Katahdin," says Ron Tipton, executive director and CEO of the ATC. "Working closely with partner groups such as the Friends of Baxter State Park, Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, and Baxter State Park staff, the ATC developed these smart-hiking guidelines to help preserve the Appalachian Trail experience for all who wish to hike the A.T."

In addition to educating hikers and providing information about local hiking opportunities, the Visitor Center has other benefits. For example, the center will support tourism in Piscataquis County and help Monson continue its critical role as an Appalachian Trail Community for all varieties of hikers and visitors interested in learning more about the A.T. According to the Bangor Daily News, the "fact that Monson is a favorite destination for Appalachian Trail hikers was another factor in [Monson Town Manager Lucas Butler's] decision to pursue a job in the community. 'The Appalachian Trail is the town's biggest asset,' said Butler. 'So I'm going to do what I can to help bring new business to the community.'"

For more information or to contact the center: monsonvisitorcenter@appalachiantrail.org or call 207.343.1729.



a downed tree off the Trail.

PHOTOS BY MIKE WILLIAMS

The center will be staffed seven days a week through October 16 by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC). At the center, hikers will learn about guidelines for hiking into Baxter and the permits northbounders now need for the final climb of Katahdin, the northern terminus of the A.T. northbound thruhikers were previously exempt from Baxter State Park permit rules, while other categories of hikers and campers were required to obtain permits and reservations for their stay in the park.

#### **«** TRAIL CLUBS

Left: Carolina Mountain Club (CMC) Trail crew member Shawn Riley works on removing one of four large trees that were blocking the A.T. just north of Spivey Gap in Yancey County, North Carolina in June. Inset: CMC crew member chief John Whitehouse rolls a heavy section of



#### At the Visitor Center, the ATC staff and volunteers will educate hikers on the following themes:

- Camping is allowed only in designated sites.
- The park's Birches campsite is for long-distance hikers only and fills on a first come, first serve basis. It costs \$10 and is available to each hiker for one night. Hikers must pay in cash.
- Camping at Katahdin Stream Campground or any other campground in Baxter requires a reservation prior to entering the park. Groups, whether hiking on the Trail or camping overnight, are limited to 12 individuals.
- Dogs are not allowed in the Park. Plan on climbing Katahdin by October 15.

#### Baxter State Park and Katahdin are special places and have their own regulations. So when you're there:

- Hike in groups of 12 or less, remembering that the solitude of the A.T. is one of the more special elements for others.
- Celebrate guietly in the park and on Katahdin, and save the alcohol for later.
- The consumption of alcohol in a public place in the State of Maine is prohibited, including anywhere in Baxter State Park.

#### \* TRAILHEAD \*

## Wildfires on the A.T.

This past spring, the A.T. was impacted by the second largest fire in Shenandoah National Park's history, which closed 17.5 miles of the footpath for nine days. Approximately 10,326 acres of Shenandoah's south district burned despite the valiant efforts of 354 firefighters from 33 states. The fire was also fought from the air with both fixed-winged aircraft and helicopters. Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) leadership and their ridgerunners were quick to offer their services to help disseminate accurate, current information to the many section and thru-hikers entering the park and played a critical role in that capacity. The National Park Service's Shenandoah Park staff did a fantastic job keeping the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and PATC up to speed with frequent regular communications — a job well done under some stressful and "hot" conditions. ¶ There were no major injuries associated with the firefighting effort, and with minor exceptions, the fire was kept within park boundaries. No structures were burned and normal park operations continued. A total of 45.66 miles of fire line were constructed to contain the fire. Final suppression costs are expected to be about \$4.2 million. ¶ Volunteer and professional resource managers are now observing how the forest will recover and what the fire's impact will be on forest ecology. Already new plant growth is being observed within the burned area. Fire ecologist, Melissa Forder explained that the ash will feed the soil and allow new plants to thrive. It also thins out the undergrowth, making a healthier environment for larger trees and allows acorns to regenerate. "We'll see new plants and animals that we haven't seen in this area in decades." Forder predicts new grasses, songbirds, and more black bears will frequent the area. ¶ In declaring the fire out, park superintendent, Jim Northup said, "We are enormously grateful to all of the fire professionals and cooperating departments who helped us manage this large, complex, rapidly evolving situation. In the end, this was an outstanding example of federal, state, local, and park neighbor cooperation and we are grateful to all."  $\P$  In addition to the Shenandoah wildfire, three other smaller wildfires caused temporary closure of the Trail in late April — two in North Carolina and one in Tennessee. All three were successfully contained and sections of the Trail reopened within a few days.

For information on Trail section closures of any kind visit: **appalachiantrail.org/trailupdates** 



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHENANDOAH BACKCOUNTRY RANGERS



**IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS** Hiking even just a portion of the A.T. is the adventure of a lifetime. Enjoy the adventure even more by being prepared.

#### appalachiantrail.org/hikingbasics



#### MORE THAN A FOOTPATH

Be a part of the A.T. community — join us on social media to get the latest news, photos, and events: **appalachiantrail.org/connect** And take a walk with the official ATC blog: **appalachiantrail.org/blog** 

PHOTO BY TREY TRAWICK

### BLACK BEAR AWARENESS

When a black bear bullies you, it doesn't want your lunch money, it wants your lunch. The high water mark of thru-hikers in Harpers Ferry is nigh. The stories from the first half their journey flood the hiker lounge. Black bears figure into many such stories. The vast majority of these tales place bears at a comfortable distance from their observers—extras in the background of a six-month long scene. This year, however, bears seem to be the protagonist in far too many story-tellers' yarn.

If you were to scrape the top layer of newsworthy bear activity on the A.T., you could easily find no fewer than 20 instances of problematic bear activity in the span of time it takes your coffee to cool. This activity has either led to cautions or closures of A.T. shelters, recommendations or requirements for bear resistant canisters, or simply raised the bar for hikers' awareness of how human actions affect bear behavior. Most salient to current hikers, perhaps, are the shelter and camp area closures and cautions due to problematic bear activity.

Bear in mind (pun intended) these are closures or cautions that affect only designated overnight spaces (and mostly within a park that is especially sensitive to bear activity). Other instances along the Trail abound wherein bears thwart hikers' best attempts to hang their food in bear bag systems, Ursacks, or exhibit behavior that are worrisome. Jaw popping, ground swatting with their front paws while blowing and snorting, lunging, and bluff charging toward you are all attempts to get hikers to leave, and to leave their food. These behaviors should never be rewarded with food that is left unattended or thrown at the bear. Should you encounter a black bear displaying this behavior:

Do not run from a bear in any situation.

- Stay together if you are in a group; you will appear larger and more intimidating.
- Remain calm and prepare your deterrent (rocks, sticks, trekking pole, bear spray, etc.)
- Let the bear know you will fight. Shout! Make yourself look as big as possible. Stamp your feet. Threaten the bear with deterrents. The more the bear persists, the more aggressive your response should be.
- If a bear that is behaving in an aggressive/threatening manner is intent on making contact, use your deterrents (if you have bear spray, make sure you know how to use it).
- Never throw anything edible at the bear; do not allow the bear access to your food.
- If a bear gets your food despite your best efforts, do not attempt to retrieve your food from the bear.
- Once the bear has moved away, retreat to a safe location. Stay alert in case the bear returns.
- Take your food/pack with you and notify your local Appalachian Trail Regional Office A

Current closures and warnings due to bear activity are posted at: appalachiantrail.org/updates



## KLEAN KANTEEN ON THE TRAIL AND OFF...

Klean Kanteen, which brought the first stainless-steel beverage bottle to market in 2004, has its products in 40 countries now, but these three are only available from the Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store®

All three sport an A.T. diamond, and the bottle features the topo lines from the map for one of the Trail's most iconic viewpoints.



Tumbler (#813, \$17 for members)



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Insulated tumbler with lid (#837, \$32 for members)

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# HOT SPOTS »

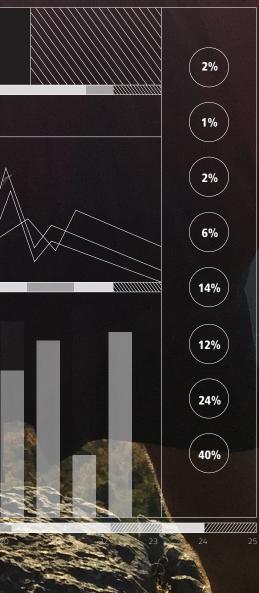
**BY TENNY WEBSTER** 

## **EVIDENCE-BASED** METHODS TO UPHOLD THE HEALTH OF A POPULAR TRAIL



· Th

Areas of the A.T. like Tinker Cliffs are visited by every type of hiker thru-hikers, section-hikers, and day-hikers take in the same awesome perspective. Photo by Melissa Emerson



**》** 

T. Journeys / 12 / Summer 201

or 91 years, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has been defending the A.T. from the garden variety threats that are familiar to most conservation organizations — the housing developments whose names often read like eulogies of the places they build over, pipelines snaking their way across the landscape, ridgetop communications facili-

ties, climate change and its downstream consequences, adjacent land owners unintentionally encroaching property boundaries, etc. These unfortunate pressures, often referred to as external threats, can at worst, affect the A.T. directly, and at best, create the visual equivalent of the New Jersey industrial complex on an adjacent ridge. These threats are as unbecoming of a National Scenic Trail as they are conspicuous.

However, emerging over decades in the shadows of these external threats to the character of the A.T. is a more nuanced, internal threat from the people who love the Trail most — those of us who find friendship, adventure, or respite on it.

It is easy to understand how a 2,190-mile-long park can lull people to think its capacity to accommodate people is limitless. Add to this impressive dimension, a user base that is itinerant — visitors constantly move about it. By virtue of proximity to population centers, big views, or tradition, discrete sections, and

destinations on the Trail receive an inordinate amount of visits. It's when you visit areas like Annapolis Rocks in Maryland, or McAfee Knob on a holiday weekend or consult a map of the entire A.T. — discovering that it is, in many places, little wider than a linguini noodle in the context of the Appalachians — that the deception of a limitless carrying capacity evaporates.

Conventional wisdom in the conservation world suggests that people must experience nature in order to cultivate a lifelong commitment to protect it. We talk of millions (not hundreds or thousands) of visitors a year on the A.T. This visitation is welcome, however, it requires a conservation ethos and style of management that not only honors collaboration and education, but values evidence-based decisions. This requires a systematic approach to making and recording observations of the Trail environment over time.

The A.T. near Springer Mountain can be a busy place from early spring through the summer. Photo by Niki DiGaetano

A new moldering privy was built on a popular camp area near Hawk Mountair in Georgia as part of the effort to address increased Trail usage and limit damaging sprawl along the A.T. 🗖 Photo by Roy Stallings

#### MIXED METHODOLOGIES FROM SOUTH TO NORTH

#### A.T. SOUTH

t is a common misconception for hikers that the Georgia Appalachians are a deliciously warm, sun-soaked, sunscreen fragrant, and tan-bodied, Shangri-La in March and April. Not only is this inaccurate, but often the weather swings unsympathetically toward winter in the early spring, just before high-hiking season. Regardless, this misconception remains irresistible for an increasing number of aspiring thru-hikers, college and scouting groups, section-hikers, day-hikers, and weekend warriors. This trend exacerbates the overall observed increase of A.T. hikers over the last decade. By 2015, it was clear that a more direct intervention was needed to educate potential hikers about the A.T. and where and when a hike is most optimal for both hikers and the Trail.

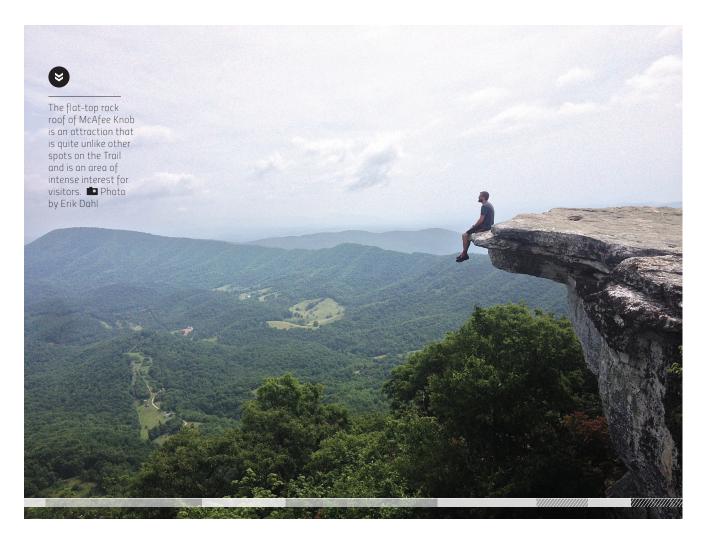
Emerging from its A Walk in the Woods chrysalis, the Protecting the Appalachian Trail Experience (PATHE) task force addresses substantial use with an evidence-based management model to guide conservation efforts on the entire A.T. Building new coalitions with Trail managers and favoring empirically informed research as foundational knowledge, we are better positioned as a conservation organization to create defensible strategies with our partners and spearhead effective avenues for hiker education. The southern terminus was the focus of one of these studies.

In the southern A.T., representatives from the U.S. Forest



By exploring the desired and current conditions on the Trail, Service, Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, and the ATC formed a PATHE members were able to identify and exploit the gap visitor use management group to explore ways to alleviate the between the two. And after discovering the dimensions of that social and biophysical impacts an increasing number of hikers gap, the group was able to agree on a strategy to shrink it. The have on the Trail. Done right, this required an assessment of the study included recomendations that would be adopted — from building new campsites to finding opportunities to educate the current and desired Trail conditions using a set of metrics that capture the health of the land, hikers' experience, and various hiking public about responsible hiking practices. As a direct result of the PATHE task force, a new low-impact campsite was land managers' directives. A graduate student at Duke University was enlisted to wrangle the long and convoluted data trail built, thru-hiker workshops were scheduled, additional ridgerun-

resolving and analyzing visitation numbers on the Georgia A.T. proper waste disposal (trash and excrement), soil compaction and vegetation damage associated with user-created campsites, and a tude, a review of management standards, and measurements of



ners and caretakers were hired, a new Facebook Community was launched, data collection by ridgerunners was streamlined, and the voluntary registration system is getting overhauled.

Building off the 2015 voluntary Thru-hiker Registration System, the 2017 iteration is still under construction. Using a more user-friendly platform, the Appalachian Trail Camping Availability Management Program (A.T. CAMP) will bring section and weekend-hikers, as well as, groups into the fold. Increased functionality will allow hikers to plan the beginning of their hike itinerary, incorporate Leave No Trace educational components, and update hiker counts per day at a given location instantaneously.

#### A.T. MIDDLE



he flat-top rock roof of McAfee Knob is an attraction on the A.T. that hikers will trip over each other to see for themselves. It's quite unlike other spots on the Trail and it's canonized in every type

of publication whose beat covers the A.T., burning an image of itself onto the retina of even the casual observer.

And while McAfee Knob is the archetype of hiking attractions on the A.T. for most people (easy to access, big views, and the kind of heart-tingling height you would expect in the mountains) it doesn't stand alone. Flanked to the south and north are two other very popular destinations — Dragon's Tooth and Tinker

Cliffs. This trifecta in Central Virginia — not unlike the destinations of Annapolis Rocks in Maryland, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and Bull's Bridge in New York — are touched by every type of hiker, too. Thru-hikers, section-hikers, and day-hikers take in the same awesome perspective.

This kind of visitation comes with consequences. Areas of intense interest, like McAfee Knob, experience the kind of cumulative impacts you might expect. Litter, vandalism, compacted soil, vegetation damage, and negative animal encounters are the "avoidable impacts" that have received scrutiny on a recent Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club ridgerunner interim report. The nuance of "avoidable" is a point by which the ATC (and others) try to tease apart and address. What are the dimensions of this impact? Who is responsible for it and when? How can we best position ourselves to mitigate it? Allaying the "avoidable" impacts is not achieved with threats of closure, social media rants, or ugly confrontations; it's done by collaboration within an intricate web of partners.

To give an idea of the coordination, cooperation, and collaboration that is required to ensure that all the visitors continue to have a great experience with no lasting impacts to the Trail environment, consider the recent orchestration between partners led by Virginia ATC regional director, Andrew Downs, to mobilize a unified effort to address overuse at McAfee Knob. At the table were representatives from the ATC, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC),



Roanoke Outside, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Livable Roanoke Valley, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, and state and local governments.

The strategies that coalitions like these develop are informed, importantly, by building into the management process a pattern IT'S WHEN YOU VISIT AREAS LIKE of evidence-based metrics. Observational data is key for managers to not only help direct their efforts, but allow them to assess ANNAPOLIS ROCKS IN MARYLAND. OR their progress over time and to pivot their strategy to protect the Trail environment if and where necessary. MCAFEE KNOB ON A HOLIDAY WEEKEND OR This approach need not begin with a full-scale research study to be enriching. The Regional Commission, for example, brought CONSULT A MAP OF THE ENTIRE A.T. to the table a figure on the volume of visitation to McAfee Knob — a surprising 4,500 hikers in October of 2015 alone. The McAfee DISCOVERING THAT IT IS, IN MANY PLACES, Knob Task Force, created by the RATC reported removing 20 il-LITTLE WIDER THAN A LINGUINI NOODLE IN legal fire rings, hauling 58 gallons of litter, and provided additional hiker counts within a more modest time period than the THE CONTEXT OF THE APPALACHIANS — Regional Commission. These data points were collected in two months by a cohort of 11 volunteer ridgerunners, who support THAT THE DECEPTION OF A LIMITLESS ATC ridgerunners. This type of data tells us volumes about which types of users to target our educational efforts on. CARRYING CAPACITY EVAPORATES. The data that is collected by these groups is used to help edu-

cate users, a hallmark of many of the strategies in which the ATC is involved. Over the same time period, the volunteer ridgerunners recorded the information above, they interfaced with more than 1,500 hikers. These interactions have the potential to not only benefit McAfee Knob, but any other natural areas in which







Abol Bridge (this page 💼 photo by Emily Chadwick,) and the summit of Katahdin (right 💼 photo by Max Mishkin) in Baxter State Park, Maine. The ATC is working in collaboration with the park to come to a sustainable solution for visitor use on the A.T n that area. Most notably, a new ATC visitor center in Monson, Maine was recently opened and is now the northernmost opportunity for the ATC to orient day-hikers, section-hikers, and northbound thru-hikers to plan the last leg of their journey

WE TALK OF MILLIONS (NOT HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS) OF VISITORS A YEAR ON THE A.T. THIS VISITATION IS WELCOME, HOWEVER, IT **REQUIRES A CONSERVATION ETHOS AND STYLE OF MANAGEMENT** THAT NOT ONLY HONORS COLLABORATION AND EDUCATION, BUT VALUES EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS.





these visitors hike. In addition to the focus of coalitions like this, the A.T. community and beyond. The tight visitor controls at McAfee Knob was chosen as a location for a "Hot Spot" — an Baxter State Park don't account for the growing popularity and area identified with high-use impacts. Designated by a partnerease of access of long-distance hiking on the A.T. True to form, the ATC is working in collaboration with Baxter State Park to come ship between the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and Subaru, a Hot Spot, receives special attention from a team of to a sustainable solution for visitor use on the A.T. in that area. Most notably, a new ATC Visitor Center in Monson, Maine opened Traveling Trainers who facilitate educational workshops for RATC volunteers and the public. in late June. The Monson visitor center is now the northernmost opportunity for the ATC to orient day-hikers and section-hikers entering the Hundred-Mile Wilderness and northbound thruhikers to plan the last leg of their journey. This touch-point for A.T. NORTH the latter group of hikers comes at a critical time when thruhe northern third of the Trail is the location of the hikers are heavily scrutinized for their adherence to the rules and first phase of some exciting research that will give regulations of Baxter State Park. Additionally, long-distance A.T. managers a baseline from which to compare hikers will be able to acquire a pre-registration permit at the new future impacts. Principle researcher, Dr. Jeff visitor center that Baxter State Park requires for its visitors enter-Marion, is leading a three-year study that will provide an assessment of A.T. treadway and overnight sites for the entire Trail based permit system should provide accurate hiker data.



ing the park via the A.T. In its trial period this year, this new on a small, but representative sample. His subsequent analysis What does conservation at the ATC look like in the year 2016? will illustrate to A.T. managers, visitor impacts and a sustainable A commitment to a cooperative management system with our carrying capacity. Ultimately, this research is poised to help manpartners and educational outreach is the ATC's long-standing agers to know the acceptable limits of numbers of hikers and its tradition. Add to this foundation, collaboration with researchers resource impact. It's an area of limited research and represents an to discover a science-based assessment of the health of the Trail important shift in emphasis toward managing the Appalachian environment as it is, an informed vision of what it should be, and Trail using strategies informed by research. smart strategies to get us there.  $\clubsuit$ 

The northern terminus of the A.T., within the jurisdiction of the Baxter State Park, has been the object of rapt attention from For more iinformation visit: appalachiantrail.org/effectivestewardship

# Social Nature

Technology and the Trail

## 

#### I WAS SITTING IN TRAFFIC ON I-270, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN

Washington, D.C. and Frederick, Maryland, when I heard the dreaded voice of something that causes me more anxiety than any human voice could have: the Google Maps app on my iPhone.

"There is a 37-minute slowdown due to an accident ahead. You are still on the fastest route," the female voice said, seemingly with a bit of hesitation as if she knew to tread lightly on my frazzled, end-of-day nerves.

I groaned in frustration because my already long workday commute was about to get a lot longer. Inching forward, I headed south for about 10 more minutes before the opportunity arose to exit the interstate. I figured I might as well grab some coffee and get some work accomplished while waiting for the traffic to dissipate, so I headed to a Dunkin' Donuts not too far off the exit ramp.

Inside and surrounded by very effective donut marketing, I caved and supplemented my coffee purchase with a glazed treat. As the sugar coma set in, I mindlessly pulled out my phone and tapped the Instagram icon, opening up my favorite social media platform to see what was going on in the world of those I chose to "follow," many of whom are Appalachian Trail hikers. As I scrolled through photos, the majority of the images I saw were in stark contrast to the gridlock traffic I was sitting in only moments before, and I found myself enamored by the mountain views, beautiful flora and fauna, and smiling hikers with huge backpacks. I had to stop and laugh when, coincidentally, I came across the image of a hiker eating some sort of pastry with a huge smile on her face, happy to enjoy a load of carbs before setting out for a long day on the Trail. If anyone in Dunkin' Donuts was watching me, I'm sure they thought I was crazy as I raised my own baked good to my phone screen, toasting her happiness.

Like most of you reading this, I'm a hiker. I haven't completed the whole Trail yet, but I am working on a section hike (albeit, slowly). Those of you doing the same — and probably the rest of you, too — know what I mean when I say I find myself thinking about the A.T. often. In fact, I find myself

**BY ANNE BAKER** 





wishing I was actually on the Trail more than I get to physically be there. And that's why I love moments like the "donut toast": Thanks to social media and its ability to disseminate inspiring visual content, I often find myself feeling like I'm part of that incredible community of A.T. hikers, even from behind my iPhone.

Something as aesthetically pleasing as the A.T. lends itself to wanderlust and for those who aren't always on the Trail, social media — and the Internet as a whole — is a great way to take in its beauty. "Pictures are increasingly used as a way to share stories, ideas, events, humor, documentation, inspiration, warnings — you name it," says Laurie Pot-



their favorite Appalachian Trail photos using #AT2016

This page and far right:

30

Instagram users share

»

teiger, information services manager for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). "With the ever-increasing quality of photos available through smart phones and the ease with which they can be shared, photographs have become more dominant."

But what happens when someone decides to venture into the planning side of a hike? Social media channels like Instagram are great for providing inspiration and a taste of Trail life, but logistical information can be lacking — and that's where the ATC has a big role to fill.

Although the ATC is certainly not the only source for information about the A.T., it is the official source. That's an important distinction, because when someone is seeking facts and figures about the Trail, it's vital for them to have a reliable and comprehensive place to turn. There is a wealth of information readily available to those who seek it — a quick Google search for "Appalachian Trail" provides one with close to 1.3 million results, for example — but as many of us recognize, just because it is on the Internet does not mean it is true.

Tenny Webster, the ATC's Trail information specialist, knows this all too well. He's one of several employees who handle inquiries about the A.T., and he hears daily from those who need answers

about a variety of things that relate to Trail life and more. He also has to deal with the rumor mill, and when one is dealing with something that spans 14 different states, inaccuracies can spread fast. "This year, most of the false information flying around the Internet related to hostel closures and Trail closures due to the wildfires in April," Webster said. "The latter was particularly unfortunate, because many hikers missed out on sections of the Trail that were not directly affected by fire suppression activities even though the ATC had up-to-date information on closures and shuttles."

The downside to social media is that it perpetuates gossip, with information being spread so quickly that it can be close to impossible to stay on top of it all. It is reminiscent of the age-old game of "telephone"; one person whispers a message to the next, and then so on until the end result turns out to be very different from the original.

So, it can be said that just as the ATC has a responsibility to provide accurate information, those who seek such information need to do their part, as well. There is a reason why the first principle of Leave No Trace is to plan ahead and prepare: well-educated and informed hikers are responsible ones, and that is something that is crucial to the overall health of the Trail and an authentic A.T. experience.

"I think having vast amounts of information at our fingertips is a really good thing, ultimately," Webster says. "However, it requires a certain level of information literacy to be able to locate and recognize relevant, current, and accurate information amidst the 'noise' of the Internet—that voluminous cache of irrelevant and inaccurate information." The challenge for the ATC, then, lies in its positioning: maintaining its status as the official source of information for the A.T. while also working with other major players in the game. It is something that requires an ever-changing strategy that relies on effective partnerships as well as the understanding of each party's strengths and weaknesses.

"[In the case of the ATC,] by the virtue of being 'official,' it's harder to allow multiple voices and changing content that so appeals to users and keeps bringing them back," Potteiger said. "We are also accountable to so many different stakeholders not only the end user, but to the ATC Board, the National Park Service and various agency partners, A.T. Communities, volunteers, members, and others." Such accountability is crucial from a management perspective, but when it comes to staying on top of online trends, which are almost always time sensitive, it can mean that it is difficult to communicate information quickly.

"With our mission and responsibilities so broad, it's a real challenge to keep up in the world of the web and social media," Potteiger continued. "Our website does include information for beginners about all facets of the A.T., and is without a doubt the most comprehensive. Other sites and platforms offer personal advice, in-depth gear recommendations, personal stories, and lots of opportunity for engagement."

One new initiative the ATC is trying this year is tapping into a team of A.T. experts, or prominent figures in the Trail community, and promoting pieces of wisdom and advice via Facebook. The group includes a presence from the ATC

— Potteiger and Webster — as well as Zach Davis, Jim Fetig, Ryan Linn, David Miller, Max Mishkin, and Josh Saint. From guidebook authors to ridgerunners and hostel operators to website owners, the coalition is a diverse group that devotes much of their time to the Trail and its users (search "Appalachian Trail: Expert Advice on Facebook to learn more). With the goal of reaching prospective and current hikers,



#### If we think of technology from a community standpoint, it sheds a bit of light on a powerful tool that can be used to bring millions of A.T. users together. And in an age where green spaces seem to be disappearing more and more frequently, that is a much-needed force.

information surrounding ATC policy changes and recommendations, as well as Trail updates, couple of weeks ago. I am eager to put the phone is prioritized.

number of followers in substantive dialogue on difficult subjects, like carrying bear canisters from Springer to Damascus and spreading out use on the southern third of the A.T.," says Webster, the mastermind behind the creation of the page. "Additionally, the hiking tips and other information provided by this group have doubtless helped scores of hikers."

As prime-time hiking season continues the group behind the Facebook page will turn its attention to a hot issue in the A.T. community: educating those entering Baxter State Park on how to best navigate its new and existing rules and regulations.

Technology, in relation to the Trail, can sometimes get a bad rap. And yes, at times it is discouraging to hear, see, or feel its impacts, whether it is someone forgetting to enjoy the view with his or her own eyes because he or she is too busy posting a picture to Instagram or someone who becomes so reliant on a mobile app that he or she fails to learn the crucial backcountry skill of navigation. But perhaps it is more productive

appalachiantrail.org/explore or get social and stay informed at: appalachiantrail.org/connect

 $\oplus$ 

Other helpful sources: appalachiantrials.com whiteblaze.net iat-sia.org

to think not so much about technology itself as the way we choose to use it.

"As has happened in every arena across the globe, information is being shared by anyone and everyone with an interest in sharing their opinions and experiences," Potteiger says. "People can get almost immediate answers, and generally, those in the A.T. community are genuinely eager to help others get started or plan and prepare their next hike, or even deal with

re-entry after a thru-hike."

If we think of technology from a community standpoint, it sheds a bit of light on a powerful tool that can be used to bring millions of A.T. users together. And in an age where green spaces seem to be disappearing more and more frequently, that is a much-needed force.

This weekend, I'm finally getting to head out on the Trail, and I will get to see in person some

of those views I was admiring on Instagram just a down and reconnect with the natural world that I "The group has successfully engaged a growing unfortunately do not get to experience as much as I would like. But I have to admit that I am hoping to run into a few long-distance hikers while I'm out on the Trail, and yes, I'll likely ask them if they are on Instagram so I can follow their journey. It may sound silly, but for me, it is a simple way to stay plugged in to the A.T. community, and I strongly believe our future depends on the kind of connectivity that, when used responsibly, technology can harness. igta

For official information about hiking the A.T. visit:

## Habitat Gain A SONGBIRD FINDS SANCTUARY ON A.T. LANDS

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS ARE ONE OF THE FASTEST DECLINING SONGBIRD SPECIES IN THE UNITED STATES.





33

Clockwise from left: Tilson Gap on Walker Mountain near the A.T. "quarter-way" point 🗖 Photo by Jim Houck; The Tilson farmstead in the 1930s; A golden-winged warbler finds safe refuge on the farmstead 🗖 Photo by Jay Martin

#### IT'S 1850. ANNA GROSECLOSE HAD A WINDFALL AND A PROBLEM.

Her husband of 21 years had died suddenly in late winter and left her with three young children, but also some cash, a fortune in farmland, and the staff to work the farm. Anna was a homemaker and knew nothing about business or managing a farm. She knew how to supervise children, not farm hands. She desperately needed someone to help and soon, before spring planting time. Surprisingly, her next door neighbor stepped up to help. A widower with children of his own, he was a wealthy and successful farmer in need of a wife and proposed they marry. He was educated and a skilled farmer, seemed a good man, but he was ambitious and Anna feared the marriage would leave nothing for her children to inherit. Anna found a solution and confidently married her neighbor one week shy of the customary year of mourning her dead husband. Like many modern celebrities and millionaires, she drafted a prenuptial agreement to protect her assets and family. Anna married her neighbor on February 7, 1850. Golden-winged warblers, and other song birds, danced across their land.

While Anna's second marriage thrived and a few generations followed to reside on the old farmstead and surrounding lands, the golden-winged warbler has not fared as well since the early 1900s. Golden-winged warblers are one of the fastest declining songbird species in the United States. Truly alarming is that this steep population decline is most prevalent within the

**BY CONNER MCBANE AND STEVE YONTS** 



Appalachian region at a 97.8 percent population loss since 1966. The species has been listed as a Tri-National Concern species, and are listed on the 2016 State of the Birds Watch List. This bird species has also been considered for the Endangered Species List by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for several years.

The primary reason for this devastating decline in population is habitat loss and land use change. The golden-winged warbler requires early-successional habitats, such as grasslands and old fields, for breeding and nesting. Early-successional habitats feature rapidly growing trees, shrubs, and grasses, which serve as cover and a food source for wildlife, but also must have been disturbed at one time to have this specific ecosystem structure. These habitats can be disturbed by grazing, burning, or mowing. If not disturbed, the habitats will quickly turn into forest through the process of succession.

Since the Industrial Revolution, farming in the Appalachian region has declined with many old farms growing to hardwood forests or swallowed up by human development. Old farm fields are becoming rare within the region. This means that to continue to have golden-winged warblers nesting at any location, the land must be properly maintained to remain an early-successional habitat.

The mix of grasses and shrubs today on Anna's old farm is what now makes her former land so special and so exciting. Today her farm is home to a mile of Appalachian Trail corridor in southwest Virginia. Cooperatively managed by the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers club, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), this 238-acre property situated on the Bland and Smyth County lines of Virginia was purchased in November 2009 to expand the Trail corridor and replace a sub-standard route on the north slope of Walker Mountain. Also known as the Tilson Tract, this land is an example of the rich history waiting to be discovered along every mile of the Trail.

The average thru-hiker probably passes through this area without much notice since the Appalachian Trail in southwest Virginia weaves through many pasturelands and old farmsteads. These particular landscapes are quite noisy during the summer months, and for good reason. As hikers trek through these highelevation open areas they are greeted with a flurry of bird songs. On a recent hike, Jay Martin, wildlife biologist for the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area of the U.S. Forest Service, detected the song that sounded like a "seee-bzzz, bzzz" — the sound of the golden-winged warbler. A healthy population of these birds nests on Anna's old farmstead. The progression from an active farm to a Trail corridor on Anna's land has created an ideal nesting ground and home for the warbler. Those who are committed to maintaining this area of Trail are now also committed to the expansion of this songbird species through significant conservation efforts.

The golden-winged warbler is remarkably beautiful, and certainly stands out amongst the foliage. It is named for its striking yellowish pattern on both its cap and wings. The male and female differ between the showiness of the pattern. The male warbler has a brighter cap with a black throat and black eye patch, whereas the female displays duller colors and more olive green tinted upper parts. An adult bird will grow up to 4.8 inches in length. Golden-winged warblers spend their summers in the Appalachian Region breeding and nesting. They make the long trek to their winter grounds in Central and South America. They are insectivorous birds that gather their food from twigs and leaves of native plants, and build nests on the ground.

Jay Martin has already begun planning habitat restoration and maintenance for the warblers at the Tilson Tract and is considering the possibilities of applying similar management practices elsewhere along the A.T., providing additional habitat. The Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers and the ATC have met with Martin several times to discuss the adaptive management plan for monitoring and managing for these song birds. The highest priority for the tract currently is the removal of shrubby non-native invasive plants, and the thinning out of hawthorne and briers to achieve the ideal ratio of grasses, shrubs, and trees for the goldenwinged warbler's nesting grounds. This year has been very exciting as plans have started to fall into place, and Jay has discovered three new nesting sites.

As wildlife biologists continue to learn more about healthy golden-winged warbler populations within the Appalachian region, they are discovering that Anna's old farmstead offers a critical linkage to other known populations in West Virginia and North Carolina. It was thought that there were very few active populations in Virginia until the recorded population within the A.T. corridor. Such linkages across broader geographic areas are critical to maintaining genetic diversity and the expansion of the species. Laura Belleville, ATC's senior director of conservation notes that, "the restoration and research work in this area is really exciting — an excellent example of understanding, protecting, and managing lands within a large landscape context."

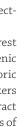
Thanks to the acquisition of Anna's farm by the U.S. Forest Service, the Trail will be relocated to make the most of this scenic area, meandering through field and forest to join the historic Plaster Bank Turnpike. The Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers club has also involved the local community. Portions of the tract have been returned to local agricultural use under the auspices of the Forest Service grazing and having programs. All expect that bird-watching tourism may increase in the area. Once the relocation is complete, the old A.T. will remain open as a blue blazed side trail so that community members can have the opportunity for a loop hike and other day uses. The A.T. is full of history and stories; one just has to take the time to ask the questions.  $\bigstar$ 



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PIEDMONT APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKERS CLUB



Clockwise from far left: The mill is all that remains of the once thriving agrarian community of Tilson Mill; The ATC's Southern Partnership Meeting members enjoy a tour of the **Tilson Farmstead** area; A.T. view of Rich Valley with Walker Mountain four miles in the distance; Hikers at the Trail's quarterway point on the Tilson property



To get involved with this special resource please contact: cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org.

For more information about ATC Landscape Protection visit: appalachiantrail.org/landprotection

### ENDLESS STORY

**EINDLESS STORY** Max Mishkin is a conservation photographer who uses photography to tell stories of places and people. "I consider conservation to be an ongoing story, deeply rooted in place and time; a story that we, as a society, need to tell," he explains. "By adding the human element to natural imagery, we can better understand our relationship with nature and the stakes of preserving it." Max documented his 2014 Appalachian Trail thru-hike through black and white images taken along the way. "Long distance hiking offers us the opportunity to engage with nature in more intimate and nuanced ways. In these images, I seek to capture the beauty of the subtle and spectacular moments of and nuanced ways. In these images, I seek to capture the beauty of the subtle and spectacular moments of a life on the Trail," he says. "I did not set out with a particular project in mind. I simply tried to document the moments that were special and memorable to me." More of Max's images from his hike — which he has gathered for a show simply entitled THRUHIKE — as well as his other work can be found at: www.mishkinphoto.com



Sunset – Flagstaff Lake<u>, Maine</u>





Wild pony and hikers – Grayson Highlands, Virginic





From top: Jay Prevatt did much of his VISTA work in Damascus, Virginia ("Trail Town USA"), which continues to be a town that's strongly supportive of the A.T.; During her time as a VISTA, Amanda takes a group on a guided hike with a thru-hiker to Saddleback Mountain in Maine

#### WITH EVAN WATSON / AMANDA GARDNER / JAY PREVATT

#### MORE THAN 40 MILLION AMERICANS

live in poverty, and the AmeriCorps program Volunteers in Service To America (VISTA) serves to fight and make a difference in rural areas across the United States. Often hailed as the Peace Corps of America, VISTA members commit to serve full-time on a specific project for a year with a nonprofit or agency. Their focus on building organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations to improve health services, foster economic development, and assist lowincome communities is a perfect fit for many rural Appalachian Trail Communities. As lands near the Trail become more valuable for agriculture or real estate, inappropriate development threatens the

Trail corridor and viewshed's greatest assets — scenic beauty, rural traditions, cultural authenticity, water quality — VISTA's have an opportunity to support local and regional economic stimulus through the promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities and sustainable tourism. Highlighting the value of the A.T. as a resource and asset to local citizens diminishes barriers to communities becoming outdoor recreation destinations and protected cultural gems.

With support from the Department of Interior, three "VISTAs" lived for a year in official A.T. Communities, and provided reflections on the highs and lows of their time supporting the people and places they immersed themselves in.

#### WHY ARE WE FOCUSING ON RURAL A.T. **COMMUNITIES?**

#### Evan Watson – Millinocket, Maine:

The A.T. Community program was created to encourage a mutually beneficial relationship between the Appalachian Trail and the rural communities it passes through. Far from a new idea, the role of A.T. Communities was first envisioned by Benton MacKaye before the Trail even existed. Today, the Trail is a point of local pride for these towns. The A.T. Community program helps these towns to more fully utilize the economic, social, and educational benefits of being adjacent to the Trail. By recognizing its broader relevancy, the Trail gains new, dedicated stakeholders in the communities most directly affected by it.

#### WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU SEEN IN THE COMMUNITY SINCE YOU BEGAN YOUR SERVICE?

#### nanda Gardner – Rangeley, Maine:

Some of the changes I have seen since I



Evan: In the last few years, Millinocket has seen huge growth in civic engagement on many levels. Once the wealthiest per capita town in Maine, the decline of the paper industry has forced the region into an identity crisis. Rural communities across the country continue to be disproportionately affected by changes in the way our country uses its natural resources. Seeing new leaders and unexpected partnerships emerge in Millinocket shows that the community is engaging these challenges and taking an active role in shaping its own future.



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From top: Baxter State Park Ranger Mike Winslow speaks with to fifth graders in Millinocket; Amanda attended events to bring locals and visitors together to celebrate all that is Rangeley



began my service as a VISTA included the introduction of two annual events to bring locals and visitors alike to celebrate all that is Rangeley. The inaugural Rangeley Regatta and Winterpahloozah were not only successful, but are great additions to the vast amount of reasons to visit throughout the year.

Local students and community members have also been able to participate in the creation and expansion of the Maine Youth Trail and Stewardship Coalition. We were able to bring high school students, college students, outdoor professionals, and volunteers from across Maine to build skills, connections, and create opportunities for more young people to steward Maine's trails.

#### Jay Prevatt – southwest Virginia:

Damascus, a.k.a. Trail Town USA, has been and continues to be a town that's enthusiastically supportive of the A.T. I've seen the town double down on its commitment to the hiking community over the past year by keeping the Trail at the center of its planning initiatives, including two grant cycles, the development of a master plan, and a brand update. The town has also



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Clockwise from above:

VISTAs partnered with local and national groups like the Natural Leaders Legacy Camp — as part of the Children & Nature Network, Natural Leaders participated in training and activities along the A.T.; A big success for Damascus was the Community Pathways Project, which has so far raised more than \$50,000 through the sale of custom-engraved bricks to be installed in the downtown sidewalks; A Hike and Harmonize event was hosted in Rangeley as part of the Happy Hiking Healthy Living series



begun to serve as a regional leader in ecotourism by participating in regional initiatives like the Appalachian Spring initiative, Rally SWVA and the Mount Rogers Regional Initiative.

It's been heartwarming to see increasing collaboration between the communities served by my project site (Damascus, Abingdon, and Marion, Virginia) this year as a result of these regional initiatives. Abingdon has recently co-sponsored initiatives like the Happy Hiking Healthy Living Campaign — a local, Trail-focused health and wellness initiative — and a screening of the A.T. documentary *The* Long Start to the Journey.

#### WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST SUCCESSES YOU'VE SEEN?

**Evan:** I have been most encouraged by witnessing the success of diverse partners coming together on creative projects. For example, a chance encounter with the local hospital's director of community wellness quickly became the funder for a Trail improvement project I had been working on. The challenge for me was to communicate my project vision and ask for help. Once that was done, I was consistently surprised by the range of partners who were willing to contribute.

Amanda: One of the greatest accomplishments of the year, with the help of the Americorps NCCC Moose Uno team, was

to come.

We were also able to bring the Happy Hiking, Healthy Living Campaign to our region. The Hike and Harmonize portion of the campaign took a yoga mat with you on a hike to highlight some of the many health and fitness aspects and benefits of outdoor recreation.

Jay: The biggest success for the town of Damascus was probably the Community Pathways Project, which has so far raised more than \$50,000 for the town, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club through the sale of custom-engraved bricks to be installed in the sidewalks of downtown Damascus (which the A.T. runs directly through). A big success for me, personally, was being honored as an emerging leader through the Trail Apprentice program at last year's Partnership for the National Trails System Conference.

#### WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF BEING A VISTA?

**Evan:** Becoming a part of the community where I serve has been a difficult but rewarding process. I grew up in a small town in Oregon and understand that definitions of hospitality, conservation, and recreation differ from place to place based on values and experience. Being open to different perspectives on these issues allows me to work with a wide range of community members. These relationships might not be immediately useful for the A.T. Community program, but they will help to build a broader base of support for it. And I just like making friends.

Amanda: The most challenging part about being a VISTA was managing where to put my energy and prioritizing the needs of the community. With so many opportunities to get involved in and potential to tap into, you realize how much this position could be beneficial in any and every community.

Jay: No one told me at the outset that an AmeriCorps year would be easy, and for

the development and construction of the Tim Baker Trail at the Rangeley Region Guides and Sportsmen's Association property. This trail will offer the public and community of Rangeley recreational and educational opportunities for generations good reason – isolation and poverty are cooked into the program and present very real challenges that a corps volunteer has to grapple with in order to be successful in the position. I learned quickly to self-motivate and be resourceful in planning and implementing projects.

#### WHAT IS ONE BIGGEST THING YOU ARE TAKING AWAY?

**Evan:** I have gained a huge appreciation for the power of grassroots organizing. My work as a VISTA has given me first-hand experience helping organizations use conservation as a tool for economic and community development. I couldn't have done this without the help of local stakeholders working through the difficult process of visioning, building consensus, and setting goals.

Amanda: I am so grateful to have been able to serve Rangeley, the ATC, and all of the other networks I was able to engage with. I have gained so much inspiration from all of the welcoming communities I have been so blessed to be a part of throughout this journey as a DOI/VISTA.

Jay: This position has left me with valuable perspective on how things get done at the local level by giving me the opportunity to work closely with nonprofits, civic groups, and various levels of local government, a perspective that should serve me well in the next step of my career. I've also become a much more conscientious hiker this year as a result of Leave No Trace training; I'll definitely be passing that knowledge along as I continue to section hike this summer.  $\wedge$ 



Thanks to all the community partners and program support that made A.T. Community VISTAs successful. Community programs and initiatives started by VISTAs continue to be resourceful as models for others in the network of 39 Communities hugging the Trail.

For more information about A.T. Communities visit: appalachiantrail.org/atcommunity For more information about the VISTA program visit:

www.doivista.org



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Journeys 46 Sum

A. T.



## By Sonja Carlborg

IN 2011, DANNY CRAMER, A.K.A. "Mile Hi," thru-hiked the A.T. in 146 days - 2,190 miles from Georgia to Maine. This

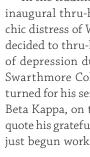
year, his parents, a.k.a. Kathi and Steve Cramer covered 6,746 miles in 32 days traveling from their home in Colorado to hike a section of the Trail in each state it passes through from Georgia to Maine. On May 11, both parties landed at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC)

headquarters and Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, five years apart. For Danny, the stop was a celebration; for his parents, a memorial.

To commemorate their son, who took his own life in 2014 after repeated struggles with depression, Kathi and Steve have launched the Danny Cramer Appalachian Trail Stewardship Memorial Fund. A seed pledge of \$50,000 will be used to mitigate the impact of increased Trail use issuing from the recent spate of movies and books

about hiking. In dedicating a plaque, now displayed in the Harpers Ferry Visitor Center, Steve said, "We believe that hike gave Danny a few more years to live, and we would like people involved with the Trail to know that they helped prolong his life a little bit; a treasure beyond value."

As Colorado residents, Steve and Kathi are outdoor people, a passion conveyed to their son. "We're runners, we golf and ski,





and we camped when we were younger," they explain. But it was Danny who caught the hiking bug, ultimately inspiring his parents' goal to "walk in some of the places he walked" across all 14 Trail states. To this end, one of Danny's fellow thru-hikers, Gingersnap, provided a "greatest hits" list of three- to six-mile day hikes. Springer Mountain, Fontana Dam, Max Patch, Mount Rogers, Delaware Gap, Mount Greylock, Norwich-Hanover, and many other sites provided "a glimpse of the wonderful experience the Trail was [for Danny]," the Cramers say. An email to friends describes their last hike: "Today's Trail experience was truly magical; the scenery absolutely gorgeous! We made it to within five miles of Katahdin's summit. We could go no further because the A.T. has not yet opened for the season...We feel a great sense of accomplishment at a beautiful place by a pond (a large lake by our standards) knowing that Danny would have enjoyed the serenity and peace."



at Springer Mountain — the couple took time off to connect to the places Danny experienced during his thru hike by taking day hikes in each of the 14 states the Trail passes through

took its toll.

"My guess is that a lot of people hike

In the tradition of Earl Shaffer, whose inaugural thru-hike walked off the psychic distress of World War II, Danny had decided to thru-hike after a serious bout of depression during his junior year at Swarthmore College. Afterward, he returned for his senior year to graduate Phi Beta Kappa, on time, and "on budget" to quote his grateful parents. Because he had just begun work as an ATC ridgerunner,

he attended his graduation wearing his ridgerunner uniform underneath his robe. He returned to Swarthmore for a teaching certificate in 2012, followed by a second season as a ridgerunner. He then joined the faculty of the New Jersey School of Conservation, where he taught middle and high school students one- to two-week custom curricula — mastering a menu of 50 topics ranging from rock climbing to history and maple sugaring, Danny received rave reviews from students and supervisors alike. He had just bested a field of more experienced candidates for a full-time teaching position at his alma mater, Denver Jewish Day School, when a final bout of depression

the Trail to buy some time, to discover themselves, or because they don't know what they want to do next, because they don't know where they fit in the world,' Kathi says. Her husband adds, "It's also an escape from the craziness of daily life. There aren't many places you can go for that ..." Kathi finishes his sentence, adding, "... that are socially acceptable."

Just before they set off on their 14-state section hikes of the Trail, the Cramers experienced their own brand of Trail magic, starting near their home in Colorado where they received a good omen. "When we stopped at a cafe/bar in Limon for lunch, a guy at the only other table of people was apparently talking about his trip along the southern part of the A.T. In Limon, Colorado. Too weird!" they explain. A more typical example occurred when they decided to head for Hot Springs, North Carolina from a nearby trailhead. Another pair of hikers offered directions, and then followed them down, signaling every twist and turn along a labyrinth of dirt roads. Arriving in Hot Springs, Kathi and Steve strolled around town, "hikers everywhere," before selecting a brewery for lunch. They'd just settled in when their "Trail angels" walked through the door. "So we got a chance to buy them lunch," the Cramers explain. "We'd probably still be at the trailhead if they hadn't helped us out."

Although the Cramers are not planning to thru-hike, Kathi says that they will definitely be doing more day-hiking. "The Trail was serene and beautiful You're in the woods [for long stretches] and then get breathtaking views." Steve confirms, "The Trail was far more beautiful than I ever could've expected. I knew we had a treasure in the A.T., but I didn't know how much until we did this. Research on PTSD indicates that right-left activity like the metronome of walking can help people get through difficult memories. I felt closer to Danny than at any time since he died, in a good way; love and grief, which is another form of love."

#### For more information about ATC Memoria Gifts and other types of giving visit appalachiantrail.org/waystogive

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#### TRAIL STORIES





years. I have always enjoyed being outdoors and in nature. Internally, I somehow knew that I wanted to hike the monstrous 2,190-mile-long Appalachian Trail way before I knew of its existence.

THIS IS THE HIKE I HAD PLANNED FOR

When I was 12, I was lying on the couch sick and Mom noticed me watching too much TV. To encourage me to do some-

thing more constructive, she suggested I watch an online National Geographic special about the Appalachian Trail. It was the first time I had ever heard of the Trail. As I was watching the documentary I said to myself, "I want to hike the Appalachian Trail. Solo." From that point on, I began my adventure. I researched, planned, talked to former Appalachian Trail thruhikers, and even hiked some sections of the Trail itself. But no matter how much I prepared for the hike, nothing could have prepared me for what was about to happen around the corner.



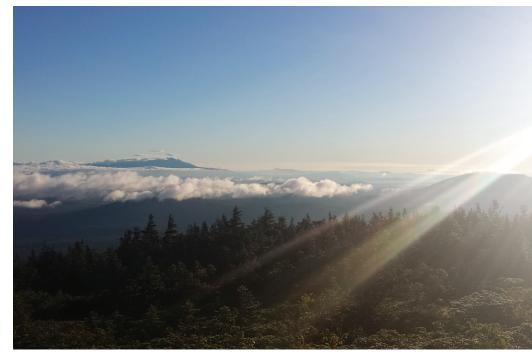
I was 18, had just graduated high school, been admitted to Warren Wilson College, deferred for a year, and was ready to begin my adventure on the Trail. On May 28, 2015, Mom, Dad, and I drove from our home in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia to Amicalola Falls State Park in Georgia. The drive was long — 10 hours too long. We checked into the state park and promptly crashed.

The next morning was day one. Dad and I started our hike up the eight-mile approach trail to the summit of Springer Mountain. On the summit, Mom was waiting for us — she had driven up the seven-mile dirt road to meet us. We talked for a bit, hugged goodbye and off I went.

The first shelter was only a couple of miles in. When I reached the shelter, it was already occupied with loads of hikers and locals. They were loud. I decided to not spend my first night at that shelter. I hiked a few paces back where I had noticed a camp spot. There, I set up my tent and sleeping gear. I was sitting on a log when the reality hit me. The reality was I would be hiking alone for the next five months and felt like I had no idea what I was doing.

Right there, the decision was made. I would guit the attempt at my thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. The feeling came over to me too fast; I had no time to react. I told myself, "I am not ready for this. I am not old enough. I don't know what I'm initial discussion was intense. My pardoing. I quit."

I quickly packed everything up and hiked back to the parking lot. On the way, I began calling my parents' cell phones. But there was no answer. By the time I had reached the parking lot, I had called both of them seven or eight times. As it turned out, my parents were out to dinner at the state park restaurant. They had left their phones in the room. They were celebrating their youngest child's departure on this amazing adventure. By this time I had called my parents about 17 times. Finally, I got through to my Dad on the room phone and I told him my situation. He sounded panicked and was not happy. My Mom sounded angry. After some heated discussion, it was decided that I would camp at the parking lot and they would come up in the morning.



excited, and somewhat upset. But I had made my decision. I wanted to quit and go home. I would become one of the three quarters of hikers who to quit that easily.

After about 30 minutes, we all needed a break. We went to the car. We opened the back hatch to sit down, and Dad asked me to make instant oatmeal for him. While I was heating up the water in my camp stove, Mom went on a short walk. She ran into a couple — Daniel and Paige — who were going on a week-long hike. She told them about my situation. They had frequently hiked this section of the Trail and had seen this happen before.

I was still set on quitting, so I packed Around nine the next morning, I saw my things into the car and as my Mom

my parents' car drive up. I was somewhat



Nico's view from White Cap Mountain in the 100-Mile Wilderness in Maine.

start but don't finish their thru-hike. The ents wanted to know why I would spend all of that time, money, and energy planning for this trip and quit before I even really began. There was no good explanation. I just wanted to quit. The truth was, I was just plain scared and I panicked. But my parents were not willing to let me and Dad were making their last ditch arguments for me to stay on the Trail for at least a few days, Daniel casually walked over with a bag full of garbage. He asked if we could take it down the mountain. We said yes. As he turned to leave, Daniel looked in my direction and said, "Nico, if you would like to hike with us to the North Carolina border you are welcome."

I watched him as he walked back to Paige and as they started down the Trail In that moment, just as quickly as I had decided to quit, the switch flipped back. I stood up and said, "That's it. I'm going!" I grabbed my pack, hugged my parents (again) and ran after Daniel and Page.

Over the next few days, I didn't see Daniel and Page much but I knew they were there, and that both motivated and comforted me. After about 10 days, at Dick's Creek Gap, close to the North Carolina border I came across a trailhead kiosk. Pinned to it was a piece of paper with my name on it. I pulled my pack off and grabbed the letter. It was from Daniel and Paige. "We enjoyed hiking with you and meeting you," they wrote. "Let us know how far you made it. Good luck." Thank you Daniel and Paige. I wouldn't have even started without out you. And yes, I made it. All 2,190 miles. A

#### THE SPRING HAS GONE BY IN A whirlwind of activities. We are experi-

encing a record number of visitors in our Harpers Ferry Visitor Center and a significant number of folks registering to start their thru-hike of the A.T. We just finished up our annual Leaders in Conservation gala in Washington, D.C. along with a meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Advisory Circle. These events were quickly followed by a meeting in Harpers Ferry of both our Stewardship Council and our Board of Directors.

This year's gala was, in part, a tribute to former board member, Arnie Wellwork in Arnie's memory and a large number of volunteers turned out in the rain to start rebuilding a section of Trail that is currently wood steps into rock steps with crib walls.

The gala also honored Senators John McCain and Michael Bennet for their sponsorship of legislation around the 21st Century Conservation Service Corp. This is currently an Executive Branch program the House and Senate are attempting to legislate and make permanent. Both houses of Congress currently have versions of the bill and we are hoping they can acquire more sponsors and have a vote before the end of the term in December.

As summer and fall approach, we have lots of activities going on from Georgia to Maine. Watch your regional newsletters, mailbox, and email for updates. Also, in the next few months we will start announcing ways you can be

 $(\geq)$ ATC Board secretary Betsy hompson with Congressman Jim Himes of Connecticut and Senator Michael Bennett of Colorado at the Leadership in Conservation



Â A.T. hiker Derek "Mr. Fabulous" Lugo speaks about his thru-hike at the

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man, who in his short tenure made a dramatic impact on the board and on the way I think about what we can accomplish. Arnie had a whole pocketful of what his friends and co-workers re-D.C. Gala ferred to as "Arnie-isms." Two of my favorites are: "If you don't ask — you don't get" and "You don't know what you don't know." Prior to the gala, the Connecticut chapter of Appalachian Mountain Club dedicated their Give a Day

better connected with the ATC online. There are some exciting changes coming to our website and new member center.

As always, thank you for your continued support. We couldn't do what we do without your contributions and dedication. 🔶

My very best; enjoy your summer, Royce W. Gibson / Senior Director of Membership & Development

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#### PUBLIC NOTICES

#### **HIKING PARTNERS**

Hiking partner wanted for section hikes in Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine; backpacking or slackpacking. I am 66. and have hiked 1.600 miles of the A.T. I would like to hike in August or September this year or anytime in 2017.Contact: Catherine (505) 369-8786 or cirwin0@gmail.com.

#### Hiking Partners wanted. Experienced female hiker (completed five-year section hike of A.T. summer 2015), age 65. is looking for male or female partner(s) to hike the Long Trail north of the A.T. (summer 2016 or 2017). Separate request for hiking partner(s) to hike the John Muir Trail summer 2017. Is anyone interested? Contact: ellen.atsectionhiker@gmail.com.

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

2012 thru-hiker who lives in Idaho interested in recruiting a fellow thru-hiker to assist in various tasks relating to a tiny/smaller home subdivision. I recently purchased a large parcel of land in the "area of city impact" and will have a unique opportunity to annex into nearby rural community. I am profoundly influenced by my thruhike experience, and would very much like to create a community of like-minded souls. Something old Benton MacKaye would appreciate: sustainable, green, creating employment, and enhancing the local community with new energy. I specifically want to reach out to fellow thru-hikers. Contact: Rich "Big Foot" Dombrowski (A.T. thru-hiker 2012) Richdombrowski@hotmail.com.

The Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association's 35th annual Gathering will be held this vear from October 7-9 in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Hikers, dreamers, and friends of the Trail are invited to come on out and reunite with those who shared their journey. This year's gathering will be dedicated to "Baltimore Jack" Tarlin. For more information visit: www.aldha.org.

#### On September 23, 2016, the Columbia Vallev A.T. Club will celebrate 25 years of maintaining our portion of the Appalachian **Trail.** Our celebration will take

place at the Holly Inn in Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania. All friends of the club and the Trail are cordially invited! Our event will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a reception featuring a cash bar and appetizers. Dinner orders will be taken around 7 p.m. Throughout the evening, we'll have highlights of our 25 years and reminiscences by some of our key leaders. To reserve your place(s) at our dinner: email cvatc25th@gmail.com or call (717) 649-5505; www.cvatclub.org.

#### The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is recruiting for several internship positions for this fall 2016 including: Market

Research, Public Relations, Social Media, Visitor Services, Development Database, Development Events, and Lands Steward. For position descriptions, more information, and to apply visit: appalachiantrail.org/jobs. A

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#### editor@appalachiantrail.org

Public Notices P.O. Box 807 Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807

#### IN 2014, I TOOK A YEAR OFF WORK

to hike the A.T. I did a flip-flop hike heading northbound out of Harpers Ferry before returning and hiking south to Georgia. While I made it to Georgia as planned, I skipped a section of my northbound hike after injuring my knee and taking some time off. I was just 270 miles short of completing the Trail. So last summer I got back on and knocked out the remaining miles.

Before getting on the Trail I had backpacked only once using gear I borrowed from a friend. But it instantly felt right, and it wasn't long after that I began to obsess about a thru-hike. (The fact I grew up hearing stories of Emma "Grandma Gatewood," a hometown hero from my birthplace of Gallia County, Ohio, certainly had its influence too). To be successful, though, I knew I had to

"As I See It" is a column from quest contributors representing the full range of ATC partners, members, and volunteers. To submit a column (700 words or under) for consideration:



#### journeys@appalachiantrail.org

or write to Editor/As | See It Appalachian Trail Conservancy P.O. Box 807 Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

plan carefully. Like others, I read every book I could find written about the A.T., conducted extensive online searches to find the right gear, talked with Appalachian Trail Conservancy staffers and volunteers, completed test hikes, organized and re-organized back-up gear, practiced hanging a bear bag, and pored over A.T. maps and guidebooks. But in all that time I failed to prepare for the single biggest challenge of my hike: leaving the Trail. After completing almost 1,900 miles that first season, I found the departure abrupt. Even before I reached Springer Mountain I was feeling a mix of emotions — happy to not be hiking every day, but sad to be leaving the Trail. I missed the routine of hiking and having everything I needed on my back. I missed the simple kindness of strangers and the authentic conversations among hikers. I missed knowing that at the end of the day I had achieved all I set out to do. And I missed the feeling that came from being a part of something so incredibly unique and purposeful, and being in a place where my life made sense.

At first I felt bad I didn't finish in a single season, but later I found it a unplanned miles. Ablessing. I had something to look forward to and a means to return. The following spring I attended Trail Days in Damascus, Virginia, spent a few days hiking in North Carolina, and provided some "Trail magic" to the 2015





Jane snaps a selfie in the White Mountains Presidential Range during the final section of her hike last summer

AS I SEE IT

class of thru-hikers. And in late June, I went back to complete the section I missed. It felt good to be back on the Trail, and the fact I was with a whole new class of thru-hikers didn't matter. The group welcomed me as though I had been with them from the start.

I am back to work now and slowly acclimating to life off-Trail. What helps most is staving connected. I have a month-long hike planned for mid-summer, and I'm considering a second end-to-end hike of the A.T., but this time in sections. My plan is simple, and that is to stay close to the Trail and the Trail community that I have grown to love.

Never a day goes by that I don't think about my hike. It is by far the craziest and most difficult thing I've ever done. The kindness of the Trail community can't be matched and the sense of belonging is nowhere stronger. The person who began her hike from Harpers Ferry on May 15, 2014, is not the same person who finished the following year. I am forever changed. And despite the struggles of leaving the Trail, I have no regrets. For those who plan to thru-hike the A.T. I have some advice. As you plan, think beyond the final summit. There are still a few more mountains to climb. Volunteer, plan the next big hike, support others with their hike, and share your story every chance you get. It will help you get through those last few

> Jane "Calamity" Dailey LIVES IN NEW ALBANY, INDIANA



## HELP PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE A.T. BECOME A VOLUNTEER WITH A TRAIL CLUB OR TRAIL CREW.

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JESSICA "CODE RED" ALLEY – FLAGSTAFF LAKE, MAINE 🗖 PHOTO BY PETER DONATI