JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

September — October 2011

INSIDE: Shelter in the Smokies | Nature's Rediscovery | Delaware Water Gap

On the Cover: Jake and Jill Gimer, and their daughter Aleah, enjoy the simplicity of the natural world together during a Kids In the Valley, Adventuring (KIVA) club overnight A.T. hike near Hog Camp Gap. The theme of the trip was Leave No Trace. Jon Beard, who captured this enchanting moment, is the official photographer for KIVA — a free, monthly, family nature club with the simple motto: Play, Learn, Volunteer. (page 10)

"I was fortunate enough to grow up playing in the woods and on the river, and I think it's very important for today's kids to have those same learning opportunities," says Jon. "Working with KIVA allows me to make a difference by spreading their message of getting out into nature, as well as giving me access to amazing photographic opportunities as the kids experience nature first hand."

www.kidsadventuring.org

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A.T. JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY

Volume 7, Number 5
September — October 2011

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.

The staff of *A.T. Journeys* welcomes editorial inquiries and comments.
E-mail: **editor@appalachiantrail.org**

Advertising
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APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY®

Membership

For membership questions or to become a member, call (304) 535-6331, ext. 119, or e-mail **membership@appalachiantrail.org.**

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OPEN INVITATION. ONE OF THE FIRST BOOKS I EVER HAD THE DESIRE TO read from cover to cover was *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. Thirty-one years later, it still has a prominent place on the bookshelf in my office — a children's book with an adult soul. I often consider the A.T. — along with so many other wild and wonderful parks, waterways, and woodlands — to be a place "where the sidewalk ends." After reading hundreds of stories from people of all ages and walks of life who have enjoyed the simple, natural pleasures of a very long footpath along the eastern U.S., I feel that the opening poem of the book, aptly named "Invitation," sums up the welcoming spirit of the Trail:

If you are a dreamer, come in,
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hoper, a prayer, a magic bean buyer...
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in!

Enjoyment of the simplicity of the natural world, both as children and adults, never changes. Lured by tea parties (complete with homemade scones) and Hoodie-Hoo Day (where parents and children traipse down wooded paths calling "hoodie-hoo" in an effort to scare away winter), the families who take part in the Kids In the Valley, Adventuring club end up sharing the benefit's that outdoor recreation consistently offers (page 10). The result is not only a child's discovery, but often an adult's rediscovery of the marvels of exploring, learning, and yes, playing in the outdoors. "I learned lessons while I walked with them, stood amazed with them, watching the wonder of the world through their eyes," says the club's co-founder Chip Donahue of some of his first outdoor treks with his children. "We live five minutes from the Appalachian Trail, but I had never stepped on it before we started our club." Now the club visits the Trail regularly during various, conservation and volunteer-themed excursions.

Finnan and Carson on the A.T. in Virginia.
BY JON BEARD

Nature photographer John Slonina, whose lens is often focused on the A.T.'s peaceful beauty and frolicking wildlife (page 28), says that the thing he enjoys the most is being outside with his two young sons. Parents, siblings, cousins, and friends can all be natural stewards, who serve to awaken, or reawaken a devotion, admiration, and respect for the natural world. Together, we can discover those places where the sidewalk ends — like grassy balds in the southern Appalachians, where prehistoric tapirs may have once roamed (page 24), or the dense woodlands of the Smokies, where inviting, sturdy shelters serve as restful refuge from the elements (page 18). As I reread the namesake poem in Shel Silverstein's book today, I envision the Trail in its purest state, with the wide-open eyes of a curious child:

There is a place where the sidewalk ends
And before the street begins...
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight
To cool in the peppermint wind.
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And we'll go where the chalk white arrows go,
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know
The place where the sidewalk ends.

Wendy K. Probst | *Managing Editor*

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

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Smoky Mountains Hiking Club members at lean-to on Silers Bald, 1931 (Albert "Dutch" Roth Digital Photograph Collection, University of Tennessee Libraries)

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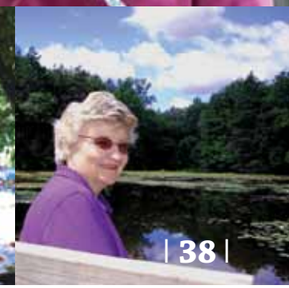

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departments

"FROM TRAIL TO TABLE" (*A.T. Journeys* July/August) answered some questions for us. We crossed the Cumberland Valley on our latest section hike and I joked about it and called it the "crop walk," but I loved every mile. I wondered how all that Trail access had been acquired. I'm pleased to learn that Trail access was done in a way that supports local agriculture. Sometimes it's hard to wrap our hiker minds around all that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and National Park Service do to make our hikes possible. Thanks!

Mark and Betty Gatewood
MOUNT SIDNEY, VIRGINIA

I AM A MEMBER OF THE Appalachian Trail Conservancy and have been for a long time. I look forward to receiving your magazine and read it cover-to-cover. Great stories. Magnificent photography. You do wonderful work and I'm pleased to support your efforts with some of my limited resources. I shall look up your Facebook page and follow you there.

William Walls
WILLOW SPRING, NORTH CAROLINA

WE ARE SO PROUD TO BE AN officially designated A.T. Community; so we were a bit taken aback by the picture and description on page 8 of the July/August 2011 issue. We are located in Union County, not Unicoi County. Not a big deal as most [may] never know it, but just to set the record straight. Thanks for a great magazine. I read it from cover to cover when it arrives.

Bill Honaker
BLAIRSVILLE, GEORGIA

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

JUST FINISHED READING MY July/August copy of *A.T. Journeys*. To say it was awesome would be an understatement. You folks impress me every time.

Mike Yeatts

CORRECTIONS

The caption for the photo in the July/August Overlook column incorrectly noted that Lake Nottely is located in Unicoi County, when the lake is, in fact, located in Union County, Georgia which, along with Unicoi County, is also an official designated A.T. Community.

In the July/August article: "A Stewardship Story," the name of the company Echo, Inc. was misspelled. The corrected sentence should have read: "Four years of funding totaling $90,000 from the NRCS was secured through the Farm Bill and helped cover timber harvest costs and pay for subsequent invasive plant control in the stand — funded by Echo, Inc. — as well as the other agricultural efforts under the EQIP grant.

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

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

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

The Appalachian Trail Community designation program is an important step in developing awareness, appreciation, and concrete support for the A.T. and its surrounding lands to Trailside communities for the future.

IN 2010 THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) CELEBRATED significant additions to the Appalachian Trail "greenway" in New Hampshire and in Tennessee through land acquisitions by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Funding for these projects came in part through ATC's successful efforts in 2009 to help secure nearly 10 million dollars in congressionally appropriated Land and Water Conservation Fund money.

In New Hampshire, the NPS acquired 4,777 acres in Success Township in the town of Berlin — gateway to the rugged Mahoosucs section of the A.T. as it passes from New Hampshire into Maine. The acquisition included the peaks of Bald Cap and North Bald Cap, a prominent vista known as the Overlook, and several side trails. In Tennessee, the USFS acquired another 1,428 acres from the Conservation Fund, in the third phase of this project, affecting the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork tract in east Tennessee, which includes 16 miles of "blue ribbon" trout streams, and habitat for a variety of rare, threatened, or endangered species. It will also serve as home to a new, improved route for about three miles of the A.T. ATC was also successful in securing additional appropriations in 2010 for acquisition of the White Rocks property in Pennsylvania and another land-acquisition phase at Rocky Fork in Tennessee.

As important as land acquisition continues to be to the A.T. experience, the stewardship responsibilities for these lands continues in perpetuity. ATC and its club affiliates, as well as our agency partners, are responsible for the on-going monitoring and care of those lands and the natural and cultural resources they encompass. In 2010, significant new investments were made in our boundary maintenance and — monitoring program with the addition of several full- and part-time staff and interns.

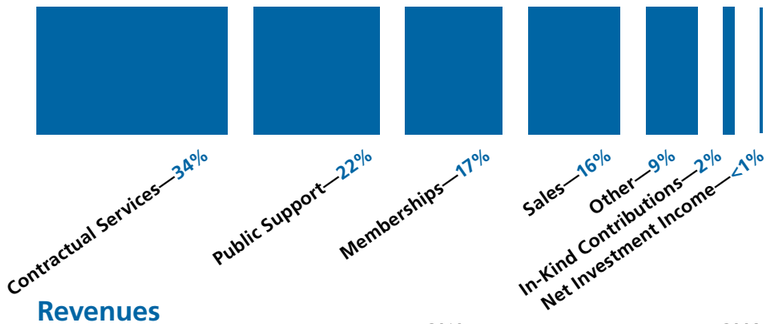
ATC continued to support a number of on-going natural-resource monitoring programs related to water and air quality, natural-heritage sites, alpine birds, and other wildlife. Special emphasis was also directed toward exotic and invasive species, which pose a significant threat to a number of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species along the A.T. Working with the Southern Appalachian Cooperative Weed Management Partnership, 12 inventory and control workshops were hosted during the year, where more than 180 volunteers received training. ATC also continued its open-areas maintenance program, in which mowing, grazing, and controlled-burn strategies are employed to manage diverse ecological habitats along the A.T.

ATC also continued to make long-term investments in cultivating the next generation of A.T. volunteers through the Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) program, jointly sponsored with the National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office. To date, this professional development program aimed at elementary, middle, and high-school teachers has provided training in place-based education to more than 230 teachers who in turn have engaged more than 15,000 students from all 14 Trail states. Additionally, in early 2010, ATC officially launched its Appalachian Trail Community designation program — celebrating the designations of Franklin, North Carolina; Hot Springs, North Carolina; Unicoi County, Tennessee, and Great Barrington, Massachusetts — which is an important step in developing awareness, appreciation, and concrete support for the A.T. and its surrounding lands to Trailside communities for the future.

During 2010, ATC continued its recovery from the recession of 2008 and 2009, ending the year with a modest operating fund surplus. In addition to rigorous financial oversight, our success for the year was due in no small part to our first-ever "gala" awards event, staged in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., with essential support provided by UPS. The gala saluted our partners in the TTEC program and introduced ATC to a larger group of corporate partners. Throughout the year, as in the past, we also benefited from the generous support of our members as well as our corporate and foundation partners. To all of them, and to all of the thousands of volunteers who support the Trail project, we express our deepest thanks.

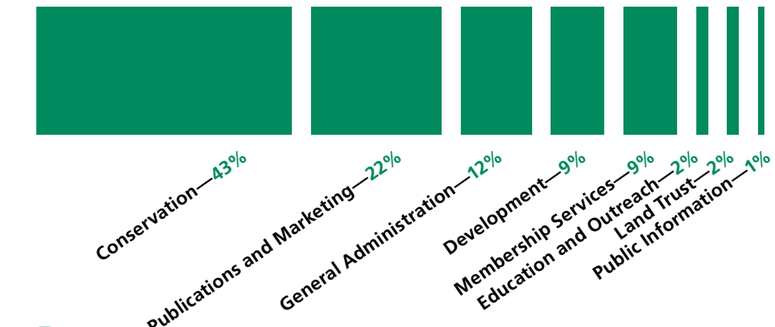
J. Robert Almand | *Chair*
David N. Startzell | *Executive Director*

Comparison of General Fund Revenue and Expense for 2010 and 2009 ended December 31 of each year



Revenues

	2010	2009
Public Support	1,342,372	1,417,180
In-Kind Contributions	101,618	175,218
Memberships	1,066,234	1,056,533
Contractual Services	2,084,950	1,543,817
Sales	964,390	960,889
Net Investment Income	6,514	8,303
Other	532,873	302,562
Total Revenues	**6,098,951**	**5,464,502**



Expenses

	2010	2009
Conservation	2,537,929	2,130,597
Land Trust	114,696	69,355
Membership Services	508,482	328,919
Public Information	61,488	32,045
Education and Outreach	103,137	129,236
Publications and Marketing	1,282,273	1,456,720
Development	547,419	409,317
General Administration	678,990	640,910
Total Expenses	**5,834,414**	**5,197,099**
Increase in Net Assets	**264,537**	**267,403**

Trail maintenance — as well as facility construction and maintenance — has always been central to the work of ATC and its 31 affiliated Trail-maintaining clubs; and 2010 was no exception. More than 6,120 volunteers reported contributions of nearly 214,000 hours during the year. Their remarkable efforts included contributions from both club-affiliated and independent volunteers who populated one or more of ATC's seasonal Trail Crew programs.

For the complete 2010 Annual Report visit:
appalachiantrail.org/annualreport

play, learn, volunteer

REDISCOVERING THE NATURAL WORLD

BY CHIP AND ASHLEY DONAHUE / PHOTOS BY JON BEARD

A note, written in our then seven-year-old daughter's handwriting, sits on our desk at home: "When can we go outside?" The note, scribbled on an old envelope, was sneaked into our home office and placed on the desk while I was busily working on a paper for my master's degree. Now, nearly four years later, it still sits there as a reminder of why we needed to make some changes around the Donahue house. The kids had noticed that their usually playful and energetic dad was sitting at the computer a lot more and spending a lot less time playing with them. Shortly after this note appeared, a family meeting was called where we discussed setting aside some time each week to get the family out to the local parks. My wife, Ashley, started coming home earlier from work to gather stuff for picnics and I started keeping "business hours" instead of working on my classes every night.

We live in the Roanoke Valley, an amazing place, filled with natural wonder. Unfortunately, I had explored very little of it as a kid; though I didn't tell Ashley this when we first started dating. I found out she was a more of a "free-range child" growing up. I really enjoyed spending time with her, so I faked being an outdoor person, as well. Our first hike together, walking to a waterfall in the Jefferson National Forest, ended up calling my bluff. We were walking along, hand in hand, enjoying the view. I was amazed by the beauty of the trees and the ground cover. I found myself captivated by my partner and continuing to fall in love. However, "Nature Man" was quickly revealed to be a complete wuss, when all of the sudden a small green snake popped out from under a rock and "attacked" me. When Ashley tells the story, she always makes sure to point out that suddenly her brave new boyfriend was crying and screaming while climbing up onto her back.

Fast forward a few years and there we were with kids, and I wasn't quite sure where to start. I knew I wanted to share with them the same wonder that I had felt on those

From left: The KIVA club wakes up during an overnight camping trip just off the A.T. near Hog Camp Gap; "Legs" — one of a few A.T. hikers who were passing by and invited to join the KIVA group — enjoys a chat with Larkin (a.k.a. "Foxey"). "Legs" traded stories for dinner and breakfast during their overnight trip.

Below: The Braby Family joins KIVA on the A.T. for Hoodie-Hoo Day — the day to scare away winter by walking through the woods and calling "Hoodie-Hoo!"; Right: The Donahue's youngest son, Finnan (left) with fellow nature observer Carson during the trip near Hog Camp Gap.

first hikes with Ashley, but I wanted to keep them from the fear that I had experienced. I learned lessons while I walked with them, and stood amazed with them, watching the wonder of the world through their eyes. We live five minutes from the Appalachian Trail, but I had never stepped on it before we started our club. While shopping at our local bookstore with hopes of finding maps and field guides, a friend who worked there mentioned that she had just read Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.* Ashley and I decided to take it home to get some ideas for how we could include more family time in the great outdoors. Around the same time, we had started inviting family and friends along with us to local parks and on short hikes. Our, then, five-year-old son asked a question of us while on one such hike. He wanted to know if we could invite everyone along next time. This little guy was having so much fun; he wanted to make sure that everyone else was able to have these adventures. And he meant everyone.

That night I stayed up very late, setting up a plan for a free, family nature club that would meet monthly at local parks. Ashley and I agreed, we would call it Kids In the Valley, Adventuring, or KIVA for short. We created a schedule for one year, picking our favorite parks and planning a theme for an event at each of these special places, paying special attention to non-playground parks. After sending notices to our local newspapers, we hosted our first event and were very surprised when more than 20 people arrived at the first meeting, in January, with four inches of snow on the ground. This quickly set the standard that KIVA meetings would be held in just about any kind of weather.

While reading *Last Child in the Woods*, Ashley and I started to see that the idea of a family nature club would help parents overcome the hurdles that Richard Louv points to as reasons why families are getting out together less and less. These reasons seemed to be exactly what had been keeping us inside; our busy family schedule, the fear of the unknown, and a loss of natural stewards. The life of parents so easily becomes: wake up, get ready, school, work, pick-up, homework, housework, a story, and then to bed. Where does one find the time for a "green hour"? *Last Child in the Woods* mentions that our fears keep us from getting outside together — for me, a fear of snakes and other things jumping out at me. Lastly, Louv writes about a loss of "natural stewards," those who guide us to actually see and learn from the natural world once we finally get outside. Every parent or grandparent can take on the task of being a natural steward, even with basic knowledge of the natural world. A child's first discovery of an ant or grasshopper can spark their lifelong love of nature. As Rachel Carson wrote, "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

Ashley and I decided early on to keep KIVA events simple; our theme: play, learn, volunteer. At each event, families are encouraged to play and explore together. We often invite a local, community service group to share their work with us and then we discuss ways for the families to further connect with local efforts such as park clean-ups and other volunteer opportunities. It has been incredible to watch as young kids start to realize that they can make big changes happen by just teaming up with their friends to tackle a task such as collecting trash from a park.

Another early decision was generously made for us by our good friend, Jon Beard. He offered to set up a Web site as well as come along on our events to photograph the families. We now have a gallery of thousands of wonderful photographs from KIVA events on our site. The gallery serves as a beautiful brochure for the parks we have visited, and is an invaluable tool to encourage new families to join our group. Looking back on these photos reminds us of the adventures we've had and constantly gives us inspiration to continue hosting events.

Not long after starting KIVA, Ashley and I were able to connect with the Children and Nature Network and through working with some wonderful people we were able to help share what we're learning along the way. We worked with a small group of folks for a few months to create a toolkit for families who were interested in starting their own nature club for families. This resource is now available, in Spanish and English, on-line at the Children and Nature Network Web site.

David Sobel wrote, in *Beyond Ecophobia*, that we must allow children to experience and love the earth, before we start talking to them about how the earth needs to be saved. This consideration has provided guidance for our KIVA events. We encourage the families to enjoy the park or the hike and then we present ways that they can get involved in keeping it clean. We always pack a plastic bag with us to collect trash along the way. Additionally, several times each year, we have a special KIVA event focused on teaming up with our local Clean Valley Council to participate in a park or waterway clean up. These organized park cleanups have allowed us to encourage family volunteering, while still encouraging families to enjoy the natural world around us. As an added bonus, the children begin to see themselves as protectors of those particular parks that they have been exploring all year long.

A personal benefit in hosting a nature club has been the opportunity for our family to work as a team outside of the home. For KIVA events, we brainstorm together, we work around each other's schedules, and we use each other as sounding boards. Every December, the five Donahues take a hike to remember that it is our family's enjoyment of the world around us that gave us the idea to start our nature club. During this "annual board meeting," we all vote whether to continue hosting KIVA for another year or not. Every vote counts and everyone knows their voice is heard.

Ashley and I are so thankful for our experiences these last few years. We have seen our family grow from a couple of novice explorers into five nature ambassadors. Each of our children has found a special talent that they bring to our meetings, which gives Ashley and myself more time to interact with hesitant attendees. Our oldest is a natural hostess, our middle is the trailblazer, and our youngest spots everything interesting on the trail. We always have a trial run of an upcoming event on our own before we invite others along. This helps us to prepare the parents before our events through KIVA e-mails. We rate the hikes and provide a checklist for families to help them get ready for hiking with us, or if they decide to try it on their own. Hearing from families that they enjoyed one of our local parks because we recommended it really makes all the planning time well spent.

Nearly four years into hosting KIVA, Ashley and I have learned so much about the natural world. We have gathered nearly every nature guide we can find and constantly look forward to discovering new things along with our kids. I no longer jump at snakes and somehow we find ourselves becoming natural leaders. However, I am still finding that I have so much more to learn. I was honored to be asked to participate in the Appalachian Trails Conservancy's (ATC) exceptional "Trail to Every Classroom" program last year. During the year-long program, I was introduced to Leave No Trace ethics and the importance of the local A.T. maintenance clubs. These phenomenal people keep the Trail clear and vibrant, just waiting for the next traveler to come along. Heroes such as these continue to be an inspiration to us as a family.

This year, the ATC is encouraging families to get out together on September 24 for Family Hiking Day. KIVA will be teaming up with the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club in a day of hikes for families. We look forward to connecting with the A.T. maintainers who work constantly to keep our local section of the Trail looking wonderful.

We must allow children to experience and love the earth, before we start talking to them about how the earth needs to be saved.

Beyond Ecophobia, *by David Sobel*

Chip and Ashley Donahue are the co-founders of KIVA. For more information visit: **www.kidsadventuring.org and appalachiantrail.org/familyhike**

TRAILHEAD

NEWLY ELECTED *ATC Board of Directors*

This past July, at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Biennial Conference, ATC announced its new Board of Directors. New to the board are Lenny Bernstein, Richard Daileader, Arthur Foley, Mary Higley, Terry Lierman, and Mike Marziale. Re-elected members include Robert Almand, Kara Ball, Marcia Fairweather, Brian Fitzgerald, Sandi Marra, Charles Maynard, William Plouffe, Betsy Thompson and Clark Wright Jr. The Board of Directors is made up of 15 elected volunteers who are elected to serve two-year terms. Each of the 15 Board Members brings their own unique set of skills and life experiences to the ATC. Working as a unit, they are key to the success of the ATC.

For more information about ATC's board members visit:
appalachiantrail.org/leadership

New "NATIONAL PARTNER" *Awards*

AT THE RECENT 38TH BIENNIAL MEMBERSHIP CONFERENCE AT EMORY & Henry College in southwest Virginia, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Board of Managers honored two long-time agency partners with a new category of award: the National Partner award. For many years, ATC has recognized outstanding volunteers and even a number of public-agency partners by conferring honorary memberships — ATC's highest honor — at its biennial meetings. However, due to a change in the ATC by-laws in the 1990s, that honor is now limited to individuals who have performed significant service "independent of paid duties." Nonetheless, the 2011 Honorary Membership Committee — an ad hoc committee appointed by Bob Almand, chair of the ATC Board of Directors — sought to recognize two agency partners for their extraordinary contributions to the Appalachian Trail project spanning more than three decades and thus chose to create a new category of award.

In most other respects, the National Partner award is similar to the Honorary Member award: It is intended to recognize service "of considerable duration, demonstrating a long-term commitment to the Trail and Conservancy" that has had an "inspirational or exemplary effect" on the Trail project of Trail-wide significance.

This year's recipients of the first National Partner award were Donald T. King, chief realty officer for the National Park Service (NPS) National Trail Land Resources Program Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Pamela Underhill, manager of the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office in Harpers Ferry.

Don King has spent more than 40 years with the National Park Service including the past 32 years supporting and then managing the NPS land acquisition program for the A.T. During that time, King has been involved, directly or indirectly, in the acquisition of lands and interests in lands bordering the Trail in 11 states. Those acquisitions have affected more than 2,500 parcels of land, more than 117,000 acres, and have extended federal ownership along 620 miles of the Trail.

Pam Underhill has devoted the past 32 years to the defense of the A.T., the care of its associated natural and cultural resources, and the principles of cooperative management and volunteer-based stewardship. Her duties have included stints as an administrative assistant, a project coordinator, and an environmental-protection specialist. In 1995, she was selected to serve as the park manager (superintendent) for the Appalachian Trail Park Office — a position she has held ever since. She also has been a strong advocate for a number of newer outreach programs, including the Trail to Every Classroom program and the Appalachian Trail Community designation program.

ATC and Agency Partners Honor OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

DURING THE RECENT APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) Biennial Conference in Emory, Virginia, (ATC) bestowed its highest honor — Honorary Membership — upon two outstanding volunteers, while the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service recognized individuals who have volunteered along the Appalachian Trail for 25 and 50 years.

Ronald S. Rosen and Arthur P. Foley joined the ranks of 52 other individuals to receive Honorary Member distinction during the 86-year history of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

Ronald S. Rosen, who currently serves as chair of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NY-NJTC) A.T. Coordinating Committee and as the NY-NJTC delegate to the Mid-Atlantic A.T. Regional Partnership Committee, has been active in Trail-management issues since the mid-1970s. In 1981, he helped form, and then chaired, the Dutchess County (New York) Appalachian Trail Management Committee — a position that he would hold for the next 23 years — during a challenging period in which the A.T. land-acquisition program in New York was in full swing and both ATC and local maintaining clubs were developing land-management programs and policies. In 1990, the committee was expanded to include the Putnam as well as Dutchess County portions of the A.T. in New York and Rosen also played a key role in developing one of the first A.T. local management plans. He also was involved in helping to resolve some controversial issues related to alleged nuclear contamination at Nuclear Lake following the purchase of that property by the National Park Service. Nuclear Lake now is one of the scenic and recreational highlights along the Trail in New York.

Arthur Foley also has been involved in A.T. and ATC affairs since the mid-1970s. As a member of the Kanawha Trail Club in the 70s, he helped flag and then relocate a section of the A.T. to the north end of Peters Mountain, away for a cluster of power line towers, and later assisted with a relocation of the A.T. on the Celanese property near Pearisburg, Virginia. He then became a Trail overseer with the Potomac A.T. Club and was involved in reblazing a section of the A.T. from Loudoun Heights in northern Virginia to Harpers Ferry, home of ATC headquarters and visitor center. Foley later served a total of six terms on the ATC Board of Managers as ATC treasurer, between 1981 and 1987 and again between 1993 and 1999. For the past several years, he has chaired the ATC Audit Committee and, at the biennial meeting in Emory, he was re-elected to serve, again as treasurer, for the 2011 to 2013 term on the ATC Board of Directors. Both Foley and Rosen received framed Honorary Member certificates and an engraved Jefferson cup.

Other long-time A.T. volunteers were recognized at the 38th biennial meeting by the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service.

Eight volunteers received Gold Service Awards from those agencies recognizing 50 years of active volunteer service to the A.T. Those honorees included Bruce Cunningham , Margaret Drummond, Mary Edson, June Engle, Thurston Griggs, Blair Keller, Gilda Keller, and David Thomas. Another 58 volunteers received Silver Service Awards recognizing 25 years of service to the Appalachian Trail. Both 50- and 25-year volunteers received special plaques and 50-year volunteers also received recognition letters signed by the director of the National Park Service and the chief of the USDA Forest Service.

The complete list of honorees is available at:
appalachiantrail.org/serviceawards

Hunting Season Safety

Hunting regulations vary widely along the Appalachian Trail. Although the A.T. is a unit of the National Park system, it traverses many different types of public lands. Hunting is permitted along approximately 1,250 miles of the A.T. Both hikers and hunters are advised to "know before you go."

- Know local hunting seasons
- Wear blaze-orange
- Use extra caution near roads and in valleys.
- Avoid deer firearm season from October through January by hiking in one of these national parks: C & O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland: Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia: Shenandoah National Park, Virginia: Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina

For more information and to see ATC's 2011-2012 Hunting Season Guide by State visit: **appalachiantrail.org/hunting**

Hikers enjoy the new, accessible section of Bear Mountain during its opening celebration.

TEXT COURTESY THE NEW YORK – NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE / PHOTO BY JEREMY APGAR

Bear Mountain Now Accessible

TWO-HUNDRED PEOPLE GATHERED ON THE SUMMIT OF BEAR Mountain June 4, National Trails Day, to celebrate the opening of a new 1.3-mile Appalachian Trail loop that includes a 0.4-mile section of accessible trail. The new ADA trail section extends from the parking area near Perkins Tower to a viewpoint over the Hudson Valley that, on a clear day, takes in the Catskill Mountains. It is the first such viewpoint from the A.T. on Bear Mountain. The trail was built by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NY-NJTC) in accordance with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The trail is part of a multi-year project to improve and rehabilitate the trail network at Bear Mountain. Project partners include the NY-NJTC, the Palisades Parks Conservancy, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the National Park Service.

The trail was enthusiastically welcomed by trail lovers of all levels of ability. Matthew Castelluccio, Adaptive Sports Coordinator and Patient Mentor at Helen Hayes Rehabilitation Hospital in Rockland County, commented: "I was very impressed with the design and layout of the trail. It provided a challenge that was not too difficult to be discouraging. For the first time in eight years since my motorcycle accident, I was able to enjoy hiking with my friends."

JoAnn and Paul Dolan wrote after the opening: "In our over 30 years of involvement in the Trail Conference and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, we have never been more proud to be associated with these two fine groups. We both also have a deep appreciation for landscape and trail design, and as parents of a child with a disability we have a personal interest in seeing more accessible trails." Praising Peter Jensen's trail design and Eddie Walsh's execution, they continued: "Your work has extraordinary design elements, a Japanese garden like balance and artistry, spectacular use of rock and wild landscape, and a great sensitivity to the user. The trail is a wonderful experience for all — a quiet, healing place that will become one of the A.T.'s great treasures."

See the upcoming November/December issue of A.T. Journeys for a full feature about accessible sections of the A.T.

give me

BY PHILIP ROYER

SHELTER

WHEN A BACKPACKER WHO IS TRAVERSING THE 70 MILES OF APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK APPROACHES A TRAIL SHELTER AT THE END OF THE DAY'S HIKE, HE OR SHE IS FAR LESS INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF THAT STRUCTURE THAN IN THE NUMBER OF EMPTY BUNKS OR WHERE TO GET WATER AND COOK DINNER. THE STONE WALLS, METAL ROOF, AND WOODEN BUNKS ARE ONLY A BRIEF INTERRUPTION OF THE HIGH COUNTRY LANDSCAPE, PROVIDING REFUGE AND, IN SOME CASES, SURVIVAL FOR BACKCOUNTRY USERS. THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE. BUT CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT HOW TODAY'S SHELTERS CAME TO BE.

In the southwest portion of the future park, hunters and herders had established camps at the balds along the Tennessee state line. Archaeologists have confirmed that several of those sites had been used since prehistoric times due to dependable water and a bit of flat ground. The Spence Cabin and the Hall Cabin once stood near the present Spence Field and Derrick Knob A.T. shelter sites and served hikers when herders no longer grazed livestock there. Atop Mount LeConte on lumber company property, Paul Adams built a crude hiker shelter in 1925 for the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association. This was the start of LeConte Lodge, which still serves overnight guests five miles from the Trail. These scattered shelters were inconsistent in construction, but they served for a time.

National Park Service Master Plans that emerged after park establishment in 1934 provided a systematic approach to the construction of all types of improvements, including trails and backcountry shelters. In accordance with those plans, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built many miles of trail, including portions of the A.T. The park and hiking clubs recognized the necessity of shelters on the A.T. Curiously, the 1940 Master Plan anticipated building shelters along other trails not for overnight camping, but as refuge from rain for unprepared hikers. Between 1938 and 1940 the CCC constructed eight Adirondack-style shelters along the A.T. Those wooden shelters served hikers until the 1970s, but as backcountry use levels increased, the park planned a major expansion of its shelters.

> The 1940 Master Plan anticipated building shelters, not for overnight camping, but as refuge from rain for unprepared hikers.

Between 1959 and 1964, the Accelerated Public Works (APW) program funded construction of 17 new, stone shelters in the park; 14 of those were on the A.T. In some cases, the new shelter co-existed with its neighboring CCC shelter for years. Teams of park employees adopted a prototypical park design with three stone walls, integral fireplace and chimney, and an open front. A 22-foot by 18-foot roofed area accommodated 12 people, in two levels of wood-framed bunks with hardware cloth supports for each berth. Log beams, cut on site, spanned the width of the shelter. Aluminum siding was specified for the roof. The stone walls and metal roofing were deviations from the mostly wooden CCC shelter designs, likely from experience with destruction of CCC shelters by fire. For a brief time, there were 18 A.T. shelters in the park, but all of the CCC shelters either burned or were demolished by the mid-1970s. When the stone shelter at False Gap was destroyed, it was not replaced, leaving 13 shelters along the A.T.

Besides re-roofing, only a couple of major changes were made to the stone shelters. To guard against bears, at least one of the CCC era shelters sites had been surrounded by barbed wire fencing with a stile for hikers to climb over. In similar fashion, the open side of the shelters was enclosed with gated chain link fencing beginning in 1968.

Previous pages: Indian Gap CCC Shelter, 1955. Photo courtesy Thompson Brothers Digital Photograph Collection, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville; SMHC crew lift a new beam into place at Derrick Knob in 2007.
PHOTO BY TERRY ELMORE

This addition initially pleased shelter users, but negative comments about the fence's "zoo" effect produced humorous signs such as "Don't Feed Humans."

When the 1974 "Wilderness Recommendation for the Smokies" was sent to Congress, it contained a proposal to eliminate all shelters. Public comment was solicited; the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club (SMHC) stated that it favored retaining the shelters. The Wilderness Recommendation ultimately failed, and the resulting General Management Plan (GMP) of 1982 contained a decision to retain some shelters, mainly along the A.T., and remove several shelters elsewhere in the park. This decision was based on supporting material in the Environmental Impact Statement. In short, research demonstrated that a shelter was good at confining user impact to a small area, especially in fragile high elevation zones. Implementation of the 1982 GMP eventually reduced the total number of park shelters from 18 to 16, including the 13 A.T. shelters.

> The open side of the shelters was enclosed with gated chain-link fencing in 1968, initially [pleasing] shelter users, but comments about the fence's "zoo" effect produced humorous signs such as "Don't Feed Humans."

In 1998, with encouragement from the park, SMHC undertook a project that began as replacement of the leaky roof on Davenport Gap Shelter. Previously, club volunteers had maintained the A.T. in the park, but the majority of maintenance on the 13 shelters had been by the National Park Service. I was not a club member at that time, but a friend in the club who was familiar with my love of hiking and backpacking asked me to apply my architectural skills to the project. Since my first hikes in the Smokies, I had used the shelters, and sometimes I grumbled about the dark, cramped space within the bear fence and the lack of benches, but I assumed that the shelters would never change. During our trip to Davenport Gap to measure for the new roof, we discovered that the roof support beams were rotten, a characteristic of all the APW era shelters due to the constant presence of moisture in the wall below the stone chimney. Some users consider the integral shelter fireplace to be an asset, but anyone attempting to keep the structure dry considers the chimney to be a curse.

Roof replacement became an opportunity to address some of the other problems. Several proposals were submitted to the park for approval, and the eventual design included a clerestory window, new benches along the edge of the bunks, and a covered front porch and side-tack storage area (a portion of the A.T. where horse use is permitted). Removal of the chain link fencing on the front of this shelter was considered but was not approved because of the lack of a cable hoist system, a feature being added at many park shelters and campsites at that time. Funding for the project was scarce, so donors were sought. A metal roofing company donated metal shakes and installation labor. Materials were hauled one mile to the shelter by horses and hikers. New yellow locust roof beams were cut on site. The work progressed, weekend after weekend throughout the spring. Upon completion, hiker feedback was positive for the "Smokies Sheraton," a favorable comparison to the "Fontana Hilton," its counterpart on the south end of the park.

Successful completion of the Davenport Gap project encouraged all parties to tackle the heavily used Icewater Spring Shelter in 1999, with financial support from the Friends of the Smokies and Richard Haiman National Parks Foundation. Severe erosion in front of the shelter had lowered the grade more than a foot below the floor level. Instead of working during the spring thru-hiker season, construction started on National Trails Day in June. A helicopter airlift was required to move materials to the site three miles north of Newfound Gap. In one long weekend, 20 plus volunteers managed to move an enormous amount of fill dirt, demolish the chain link fence and old roof, complete the new roof framing, and install the majority of the new, corrugated metal roofing. Volunteers then spent several more weekends finishing the project. An expanded porch area provided much needed room for covered benches and shelves. It is noteworthy that Icewater Spring was the first shelter where the park determined that the bear fence would not be replaced, a result of extensive park research into bear behavior and shelter user patterns.

The location of Pecks Corner Shelter, far from any trailhead, dictated a volunteer crew that would remain on site until completion, and in 2000 the shelter's rotten roof beams made it the highest priority. This was the first project to utilize treated utility poles for the new roof beams. The complete renovation, including a large amount of earth fill in front of the shelter, was completed in one week, a strategy favored on all future projects.

Drainage problems plagued Birch Spring Gap shelter, and the SMHC considered replacing it with a new shelter in a better location. However, in the autumn of 2000 the park and SMHC decided to test a concept that was new to the Smokies: a campsite with designated tent pads. Volunteers built trails along the contours on sloping hillsides surrounding the spring, and tent pads were constructed atop log retaining walls. The 1962 stone shelter was demolished. Birch Spring Gap remains the only campsite of its type in the park.

The 2001 renovation of Silers Bald Shelter was similar to Pecks Corner, but was the first project with a professional carpenter foreman in charge of the crew. A 2002 project strayed from the A.T. to the popular shelter on Mount LeConte. Private donors began to approach the SMHC with offers of assistance. In 2003 the Mollies Ridge Shelter required a unique design with the porch addition on the side of the shelter and corrugated polycarbonate skylights over the bunks in lieu of the front clerestory window design of earlier renovations. The following year was a severe test for the crew in nearly constant rain at the park's most remote shelter, Tricorner Knob. Hope for dryer weather was a major factor in moving the 2005 Spence Field renovation from June to September, followed closely by Kephart Prong more than three miles from the A.T. later that fall. The stalwart crew became accustomed to the weeklong transformations as Cosby Knob, Derrick Knob, Double Springs Gap, Mount Collins, and Russell Field shelters rolled by each year through 2010. Logistics of the airlift and weather became the biggest project variables. The Mount Collins project undoubtedly had the poorest weather of any project, severely impacting the time required for airlifts and efforts of the construction crew. Of all the shelters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, only Laurel Gap Shelter, six miles from the A.T. in North Carolina, remains untouched and is scheduled for renovation in September 2011.

Above: Delivery of a toolbox by helicopter at Double Springs Gap in 2008; Left: Mount Collins Shelter before and after renovation in 2010.
PHOTO BY PHILIP ROYER AND WAYNE WILLIAMS

When viewed through the lens of history, the efforts of the SMHC from 1998 to the present have the same goal as earlier shelter crews: To protect park resources and to improve the backcountry user's experience. Pride in a job well done, creative problem solving under challenging conditions and team spirit are evident throughout the years. Undoubtedly, memories of hearty crew meals, campfires and laughter are dear to those who have labored to provide shelter in the Smokies.

PRESERVING TRADITION

on Big Yellow Mountain

STORY BY JACK IGELMAN / ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX HEDWORTH

TWENTY YEARS AGO A STUDENT HANDED PETER WEIGL, A BIOLOGY FACULTY member at Wake Forest University, a peculiar tooth he dug from a wetlands in western North Carolina. It was black, an inch long, and looked as if it had been buried for ages. Although Weigl's interests generally include things living, he wasn't unfamiliar with paleontology, having spent time on digs in Africa. So after some detective work, he identified the specimen as a back tooth of a tapir — an herbivore that once roamed North America until its extinction more than 10,000 years ago. While the discovery wasn't ground breaking — other past mega herbivore remains have been unearthed in the region — the fossilized tooth has helped unravel a fundamental mystery of the origin of some of the most precious places in the southern Appalachians.

One of those places is the grassy dome that spans the top of Big Yellow Mountain in the Roan Highlands — its apex, just a mile from the Appalachian Trail in the heart of one of the footpath's most adored sections. On a recent visit, I shared the top of the mountain's broad ridge with a few dozen head of cattle who were, naturally, more captivated with blades of grass than they were the view. For a lover of solitude and stunning places in their natural state, it may be a liability that the ravenous herd of bovine are here. Yet what may surprise those who view the cows with suspicion is that they may be continuing a practice unleashed by Mother Nature thousands of years ago.

Were the treeless domes created by the hands of man, or an ecological anomaly; natural islands of grass among lush forest?

Big Yellow is among dozens of grassy balds — treeless mountain tops — that adorn the high ridges of the southern Appalachians. Many are within the A.T. corridor and, because of their high elevations, are a major feature of the landscape. Yet the precise beginnings of Big Yellow's 5,440 foot grassy dome and other balds are as uncertain as the inventor of the internet. Were the treeless domes created by the hands of man, or an ecological anomaly, natural islands of grass among lush

Left: Prehistoric tapirs may have once grazed upon the grassy balds adjacent to the A.T.

forest? Weigl's 10,000-year-old tapir chopper may have helped solve the riddle of their genesis and has helped shape the future of some of the southern Appalachian's most magnificent, and endangered places.

"The amount of scientific inquiry has really guided our work," says conservationist Jay Leutze, a trustee of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) who lives within a short hike of Big Yellow's knob. "It has made us realize the importance of using the landscape right. The stakes are enormously high." Leutze lives in a cabin his family built as a second home four decades ago after family friends lost their bearings on an A.T. day hike and stumbled on a lot for sale. "When I was a kid, I was very aware that I could walk to Maine or Georgia from my backyard on a trail," says Leutze, who is now an expert on high elevation conservation projects. In the mid 1970s he recalls his parents hosting gatherings in the cabin's rustic living room to discuss the protection of some of the unique places in the Roan Highlands, including Big Yellow. Later, as a teen, he recalls the view from the cabin's porch as the 5,000-plus foot curvy knob of Little Sugar Mountain in North Carolina was transformed into a white shoe box — the construction of the ten-story 320-unit Sugar Top Resort in 1982. "I watched those cranes go up," says Leutze who was inspired to join several conservation organizations and commenced a letter writing campaign. "I think many conservationists were born in the shadow of that building. It really galvanized public opinion for what was at stake."

Land managers have reintroduced animals to maintain grasslands, such as horses in the highlands of Virginia, and goats on Roan Mountain.

Because of the scenic and recreational value, the numerous high balds of the Roan Highlands have been on the radar of conservationists for decades. It's easy to see why. From the grassy ridge of Big Yellow, an all-star line up of North Carolina's famous peaks are in view: the profile of Grandfather Mountain; Mount Mitchell; and Linville Gorge's beacons, Table Rock and Hawksbill. In the 1950s, the Roan Mountain Protection Committee of the Appalachian Trail Conference (now Appalachian Trail Conservancy) began an effort to relocate several dozen miles of the Appalachian Trail in order to string together the area's famous mountian tops. That coincided with an explosion of appreciation for the area — though not just from conservationists, hikers, and nature lovers. As early as 1951 there was a proposal to build a ski slope and tow on Roan Mountain. It never transpired, but over the following decades development pressure in the Roan snowballed.

Just ask Ted Hoilman. The livestock on Big Yellow Mountain are his and he's continuing a family tradition. Hoilman is one of eleven siblings and his family has been grazing cattle on the mountain top for generations under an arrangement with the landowner. A practice that came perilously close to vanishing in the mid 1970s as the property was slated to be sold to a developer. When Hoilman realized that his grazing rights to the grassy bald were in jeopardy, he reached out to conservationists. Ultimately, the deal with the developer fell through, and the Nature Conservancy (TNC) snatched it up. Presently, the grassy bald where Hoilman's cattle roam is managed jointly by SAHC and TNC as the Big Yellow Mountain Preserve. "At first I didn't know what they were about, but I wanted the land to stay as it is. It's the most beautiful place I've ever been," says Hoilman, whose knowledge of the landscape has helped shape how it's managed and has been instrumental in helping conserve other key tracts of land. Recently, for example, he contacted conservation groups about a 63 acre tract of land for sale in Roaring Creek, the community along the watershed below Big Yellow Mountain. Since the acreage is surrounded by national forest; is a corridor of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail; and has a healthy population of native brook trout, it was an ideal tract to conserve. In this case, the sellers favored dealing with a conservation group. That enables the former owners to continue to have access to the area — for grazing, hunting, fishing, and picnics — whereas a transaction to a developer can potentially close them out of the landscape.

"There's a suspicion here of outsiders with new ideas of what you should do with your land," says Leutze. "There's a history of taking advantage of people in Appalachia. We've become better at the human element of what the land means to people. Our lesson is that we found that we share many of the same concerns of what you lose when land use changes so radically." Leutze describes his strategy as an old- fashioned, on-the-ground approach, going from community to community and gradually building relationships. And while conservationists are focused on the ecological importance of the area, the strategy involves paying close attention to the cultural and economic landscape too.

Responding to the pressure of changing land use patters in the 1980s, managers and conservationists began to study and sketch out conservation priorities in the Roan Highlands. They learned that rare animal and plant species, assumed to be exclusive to the higher elevations, may have a broader habitat, suggesting that the Roan ecosystem was more extensive than originally imagined. It became obvious that they needed to expand the scope of the traditional boundaries of the Roan Highlands. Conservationists now refer to it as the Greater Roan Highlands Landscape (GRHL). The project area encompasses a mosaic of private and public land holdings that includes one of the richest collections of biodiversity on the planet, of which Big Yellow's bald is a vital component. In all, beginning with the purchase of Big Yellow in 1975, more than 20,000 acres within the 65,000 acre GRHL have been permanently protected through conservation easements or within the public domain — while at the same time preserving the livelihoods of its residents.

Yet not only does it make economic sense to allow Hoilman's cattle to graze on Big Yellow, it may have scientific rationale too. As a specialist of the history of vegetation and its link to climate, Wiegl turned his attention to treeless mountain tops in the 1960s while a graduate student at Duke. "I was concerned as the balds grew over," says Weigl, who has observed a steady backsliding in their condition due to the invasion of battalions of weeds and forests. Their unabated advance, he explains, threatens the grassy bald's hallmark of biodiversity. If balds close over, plant species that don't tolerate closed forest would die off. And so would the animals that depend on them — not to mention the high value of the scenic aesthetic that would vanish.

The commonly held belief was that the grassy balds in the southern Appalachians — of which there are roughly 90 — are artifacts: created by the hands of man. Many who hold that view contend the balds aren't natural and are therefore worthy of only limited efforts to conserve. Weigl's not so sure. "There is an indication that many of the peaks lost their forest in the coldest times and became grasslands," And that's why his ancient tapir tooth matters. The tooth was an epiphany; a summons to more accurately shed light on the ecological narrative of balds. "It hit me that maybe in the past they were kept open by groups of animals," says Weigl. Of course, most balds in the South have been altered by man, yet some may have been open for thousands of years. While glaciers didn't reach the southern mountains, during one of the last two ice ages, trees were driven down slope by the cooling climate. The tooth was a clue to Weigl that a connection may exist between the extinct leviathans of another age and grassy balds. More significantly, a discovery of roughly twenty species of giant grazers at an excavation site in Saltville, Virginia (within 200 miles of all the grass balds) is persuasive evidence that these heavy duty mammals with a tolerance for cold, colossal appetites, and a broad range of mobility — such as mastodons, muskox, wholly mammoths, giant sloths, caribou, and others — may have kept the forest from encroaching on high elevation grassy tops as the climate warmed.

"When I first mentioned the idea I was laughed out of the room. Yet nothing made sense to me [pertaining to balds being] cleared by people," says Wiegl who has since published several papers on his giant herbivore hypothesis with former student and Francis Marion University biology faculty, Travis Knowles. Weigl adds that virtually no evidence supports the possibility that balds are the result of agriculture or human habitat and custom. On the contrary: in addition to a growing body of research on the effects of animals on grasslands, he has studied mountain ranges with similar climate and vegetation characteristics — in Oregon and Poland — that support his theory

Leutze says that when Big Yellow was acquired land managers scratched their heads, unsure of what exactly do with the bald on Yellow Mountain. While it's far too late to bring back the giant sloth or wooly mammoth (the goliaths of a bygone era) their shoes may have been filled by other grazers such as elk and bison that flourished until their own demise in the region that coincided with the European settlement. On Yellow Mountain, Hoilman's herd has been doing the work since.

In fact, land managers have reintroduced animals to maintain grasslands, such as elk in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, horses in the highlands of Virginia, and goats on Roan Mountain. Yet species restoration can be a tricky and costly endeavor. The truth is: allowing people to graze animals may be the most sensible alternative to keep the balds from being swallowed up by hawthorn trees, blackberry, and other small shrubs. And, of course, wild flora and fauna that depend on the open grasslands stand to benefit if their habitat is maintained and improved.

Hikers on Little Yellow Mountain, which sits just two miles from the A.T. alongside Big Yellow Mountain in the Roan Highlands. The grassy balds on these peaks harbor unique species requiring a cool climate and lots of sunlight. The origin of the balds is unclear, but they may be remnants from the last ice age. PHOTO COURTESY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The arrangement on Big Yellow Mountain and in the Roan Highlands demonstrates a functional partnership between conservation organizations, scientists, government, and private land users in preserving some of the Appalachian's most unique and threatened spaces. The collaboration may be an illustration of an enlightened method for the protection of vital ecosystems, view-sheds, and green space. In light of public budget woes and a frail economy, it's easy to see how a powerful, single interest for land use could dominate. In fact, one possible future for some of the East's most beautiful spaces may be defined not so much by who owns them, such as a public park or a gated community, but rather by the people who use them. Hikers. Nature lovers. Scientists. Educators. Or Hoilman and his cattle. Hoilman told me that one day he hopes to see elk reintroduced to the Roan Highlands. I suspect that some who prefer Big Yellow's grassy bald be in a wild condition would prefer that too. But for the moment, they'll have to settle for a herd of cattle.

Jack Igelman lives in Asheville, North Carolina. Read his blog about resource topics in the southern Appalachians, Homage to Appalachia: **homagetoappalachia.wordpress.com**

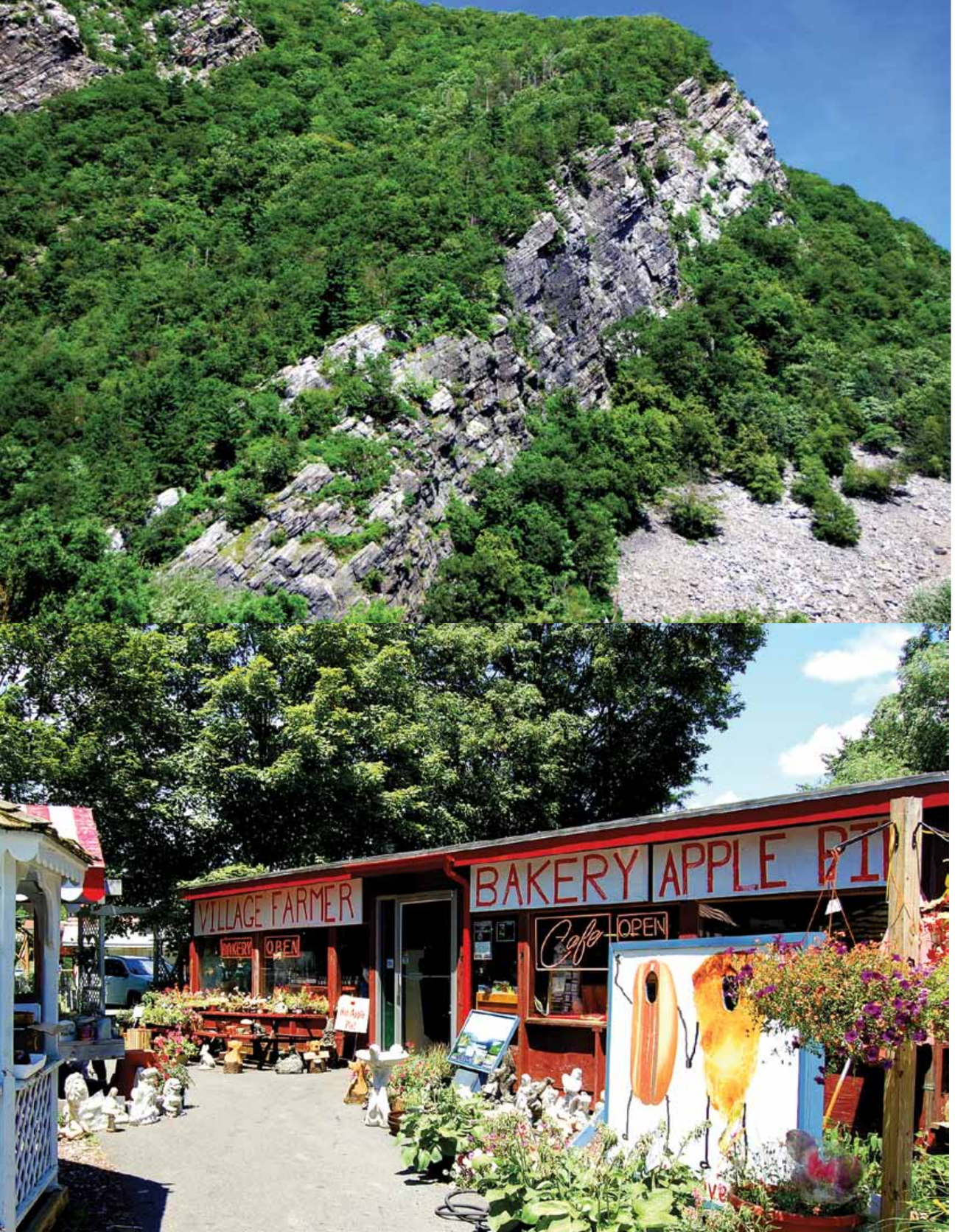
Northern Color

John Slonina is a professional, full time nature photographer and photo tour leader who has been photographing nature for more than 25 years. He uses photography as a way to teach people about natural history — his mission is to promote knowledge of North America and its ecosystems. "Understanding the natural world not only increases your appreciation of nature but also helps you become a better nature photographer," says John. He hopes his photography will inspire others to enjoy and protect nature. John lives in Grafton, Massachusetts with his wife, Vicki, and two children, George and Henry. He loves photographing, kayaking and, most of all, exploring wild areas with his two sons.

Katahdin Sunrise; Sandy Stream Pond, Baxter State Park, Maine
www.sphotography.com

Moose Kiss; Baxter State Park, Maine

View of Mount LaFayette from Sugar Hill; White Mountains, New Hampshire



Cozy Respite

DELAWARE WATER GAP, PENNSYLVANIA

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS A. COUROGEN

The town of Delaware Water Gap has a long, rich history as a resort destination. In the late 1800s and early parts of last century, there were enough hotel rooms for the little burg along the Delaware River to grow to six times its off-season population of about 400 residents. Its popularity stemmed, in large part, from its proximity to the railroad, which made it a convenient six-hour trip from New York City to the Pocono woodlands of the Pennsylvania's Delaware Water Gap.

There were a handful of grand hotels in Delaware Water Gap's heyday. One even advertised "running mountain spring water in rooms." Resorts boasted "commanding views for 30 miles in every direction of the grandest scenery east of the Rockies." One hotel had its own dairy herd to provide milk.

The hotels, for the most part, are gone. Interstate highways and automobiles freed travelers from the limitations of the rails. But the natural splendor remains, thanks to the unique geographical formation for which the town is named. Delaware Water Gap's tradition of hospitality also continues — both to the cars and buses that bring more than five- million tourists to the area each year, and to the few thousand foot-borne trekkers who walk into town on the Appalachian Trail.

It's still a small village — 700 residents, give or take. It's a town so small there is not even a laundromat.

"The town sewer system couldn't handle a laundry," says Reverend Karen Nickels, who until this past April when she retired was pastor at the Church of the Mountain, a Presbyterian congregation that plays a large role in the town's well-deserved reputation as an Appalachian Trail town. There is no supermarket, either; hikers who have serious resupply needs, or an urge for clean clothes, can get a shuttle into nearby Stroudsburg for that stuff. That hardly matters to the hikers who inundate the town each summer. They revel in what the town does offer, rather than complain about the few services it might lack. "I love this town," says Jackie "Goldie" Hurd, a thru-hiker from Akron, Ohio, as he heads down Delaware Water Gap's Main Street while enjoying a "zero day" in late June. "It's very soothing."

It's that R&R that is the town's biggest attraction to hikers. In the old days, that meant soaking feet battered by Pennsylvania's infamous rocks in a bucket of Epsom salts at the Church of the Mountain's hiker hostel before moving on to New Jersey. Modern hiking shoes are easier on the feet. The hostel no longer keeps those buckets on hand. But it still is a popular place to spend a day tending to mail drops and bounce boxes, replacing worn out gear at the only on-the-Trail outfitters between Harpers Ferry and Kent, Connecticut, and eating apple pie.

"It's a good little Trail town," says Rachele Cooper, who, along with her husband, Chuck, runs Edge of the Woods Outfitters in Delaware Water Gap. "We have the hostel, the bakery. We're here. There's the post office. And there are a couple of places to grab a beer if you are so inclined. There is stuff to do if you take a zero day, like tubing in the river. We're a pretty hiker-friendly town." Cooper's shop does not rely just

From top: Geological pressure, millions of years ago, forced quartzite rock, seen here on Mount Tammany on the New Jersey side, to bend upwards, creating the distinctive rock patterns that allowed the Delaware River to slowly cut the path that resulted in the Delaware Water Gap; The Village Farmer has long been a popular "refueling" stop for A.T. hikers.

Boston natives Michael "YNot" Myers and his wife, Bonnie "Balance" Michaels arrive at the Church of the Mountain Hikers Center after a long day traversing the Pennsylvania rocks on the A.T.

on Appalachian Trail hikers. The town is in the middle of the 67,000-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Bicycle rentals are a big part of Edge of the Woods' business. Cooper also offers guided day hikes on local trails. A lot of hikers, though, do rely on the shop — especially to replace shoes and socks destroyed by 150 miles of boot-eating rocks. A second outfitter, the Pack Shack, located a few blocks further north on Broad Street, has shifted its emphasis from walking to paddling, specializing in canoe trips. But the shop still repairs Leki poles and offers hiker shuttles.

Of course, not all hikers need the services of an outfitter. All hikers do, however, like to eat. And good food is something Delaware Water Gap is known for along the Trail — especially the apple pies from Village Farmer, a bakery-cafe-farmers market located on Broad Street, just around the corner from Edge of the Woods. On a typical, late June day, you will find Ginger Turiello there, up to her elbows in apples and cinnamon. Turiello, who bakes the signature pies served at the Village Farmer, turns out almost 100 regular size pies on a day like this, when the tourists are starting to arrive for long Fourth of July stays and the thru-hiker wave is near its crest on the A.T.

Located about a half mile northwest from where the A.T. crosses town, the Village Farmer sees a steady stream of hikers at the height of the season. Many stop more than once while they are in town, filling up on the house hot dog and apple pie special (most add a second hot dog and a scoop of ice cream on their pie, owner Susan Cooper — Rachele's mother-in-law — says), then they do the same before heading out of town in the morning. "My son came up with a special breakfast sandwich. It's raisin bread French toast with two jumbo eggs, sausage, and a drizzle of honey," Cooper says. "The hikers have adopted it as their own." The folks at Village Farmer have been known to open early if they see a hiker standing outside who looks to be in a hurry "We get quite a few hikers. We love them," says Cooper. "It's fun to see how far they have come. They come from around the world and end up here."

The Village Farmer is not the only popular eatery with A.T. hikers. The Water Gap Diner next door, with a full menu and hiker-friendly hours (they open at 5 a.m. for breakfast), serves good food, and lots of it. Dough Boy's Pizza, on the same block as Village Farmer and the diner, is also popular with the hiker crowd. So is Zoe's Ice Cream Emporium, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor in the historic Castle Inn, which sits right beside the Trail at the other end of town. Finer dining establishments such as Antelao, the Sycamore Inn or the legendary Deer Head Inn, which claims the honor of being the nation's oldest continuously running jazz club, also are hospitable to hikers.

"All the restaurants in town welcome hikers, though most would prefer they shower first. The diner's not as picky. It does not mind if hikers come in straight off the Trail," Reverend Nickels says. Hot, free showers are available at the Church of the Mountain's Hikers Center, the oldest, continuously running hostel on the Trail. Church members even supply towels and toiletries. Matt's Place, a three-sided log shelter in back of the church handles overflow when the hostel is full. Some hikers are also lucky enough to come through town on the nights the church holds its infamous hiker dinners. What began with a student pastor roasting wienies for the hikers has grown into true feasts, with church members contributing covered dishes to compliment the hot dogs. "No one leaves hungry," says church member Larry Beck, whose duties include preparing the homemade ice cream served for dessert. "This is a natural since we are right on the Trail," Beck says. "It is a perfect mission...to welcome strangers." The thru-hiker "Goldie," who is enjoying his short break, appears to thoroughly like this town-wide sentiment: "Everybody is real hiker friendly," he says. "It's a good place to kick off the boots and relax a day or two."

a woman WITH A MISSION

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS A. COUROGEN

For more than 20 years, the recently retired Reverend Nickels (above) assisted A.T. hikers as part of her job description: "… a mission to foot-weary hikers; to people who put on a pack and walk 2,000 miles," as she puts it.

THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING ON THIS late June night in Delaware Water Gap. Nearly everyone feels it, though few talk about it. It's sort of the 800-pound gorilla that is not in the room, as members of the Church of the Mountain prepare to feed a horde of hungry Appalachian Tail hikers. For the first time in more than 20 years, Reverend Karen Nickels is not on hand this summer to greet hikers at the Appalachian Trail's oldest hostel.

Nickels, who came to the Church of the Mountain in 1988 knowing her job description called for her to lead the church's hiker mission, retired this past April. Presbyterian doctrine calls for Nickels to stay away from the church, at least for a while to allow the new minister a chance to get established. So when the congregation gathers for one of its "wienie roasts on steroids," a regular occurrence in hiker season, Nickels is not there on the porch of the church's fellowship hall. The large, covered porch was Nickels' idea. It was built specifically to accommodate the church's hiker feeds. For years they were held in the driveway next to the church, near the entrance to the basement hiker hostel.

On this night, in the peak of the thru-hiker wave, 27 hikers from at least seven states gather to feast, along with almost that many of the church's members, who bring covered dishes and home-baked desserts. "We're in a transition period," says church member Larry Beck, checking the progress of his homemade strawberry ice cream. "To not have [Nickels] present is a big void," says Jim Dellaria, who came back to the church when he moved his event promotion business home from California. A.T. mythology says that Nickels founded the hostel, but the truth is, the church's outreach to hikers was well established when she arrived. "Part of the job description was working with hikers. That was in the mix from the beginning," Nickels says.

The church's Hiker Center opened in 1976. Back then it shared space in the town library. "It started under Reverend Bill Cohea," says Beck. "But then it really took off under Reverend Nickels." The hostel soon took over the whole basement; and a bunk room was added. When that proved not big enough, a three-sided log shelter was erected to handle overflow. If that is full, like it is this night, hikers are welcome to pitch tents in the grass out back. Hot showers, with fresh, clean, towels — church members launder them by the basket — are a big attraction. The place is cleaned every day. Stays are free. Hikers are limited to two nights because Nickels determined a third night makes it psychologically tough for them to get back on the Trail. Longer stays are allowed if a hiker needs time to recover from injuries or illness.

The hostel is open year round, as Lisa "Peru" Karst discovered when she arrived in Delaware Water Gap on a chilly November 2010 night, trying to patch together a broken thru-hike. Karst came in late on a bus from New York City, looking to fill a gap in her hike created when she got a ride ahead in hopes of climbing Mount Katahdin before the winter weather set in. The waitress at the town diner called Nickels, who came to the church to open the hostel's doors, then hung out for an hour talking with Karst about the challenges of being a woman on the Trail. "She was very warm, and she connected with hikers very well. She just connected well with people," Karst recalls. "She is one of those folks that everyone on the Trail has nice things to say about."

"You could look in her eyes and see she had real compassion for hikers. She really cared," says Nicholas "Medic" Mullins, a Pennsylvania hiker whom Nickels once helped when his hiking companion developed a staph infection and had to be hospitalized. "A lot of people are on the Trail searching for something," Beck says. "Reverand Nickels spent a lot of time here. People would open up; tell her what was going on in their lives." "They all have their stories. That's why they are out here," Nickels says. The ministry to the hikers is a natural fit for the small church. "We decided to have a mission to foot-weary hikers, to people who put on a pack and walk 2,000 miles," says Nickels. "They need us. By the time they are here, they've worked out the physical problems. The challenge now is psychological."

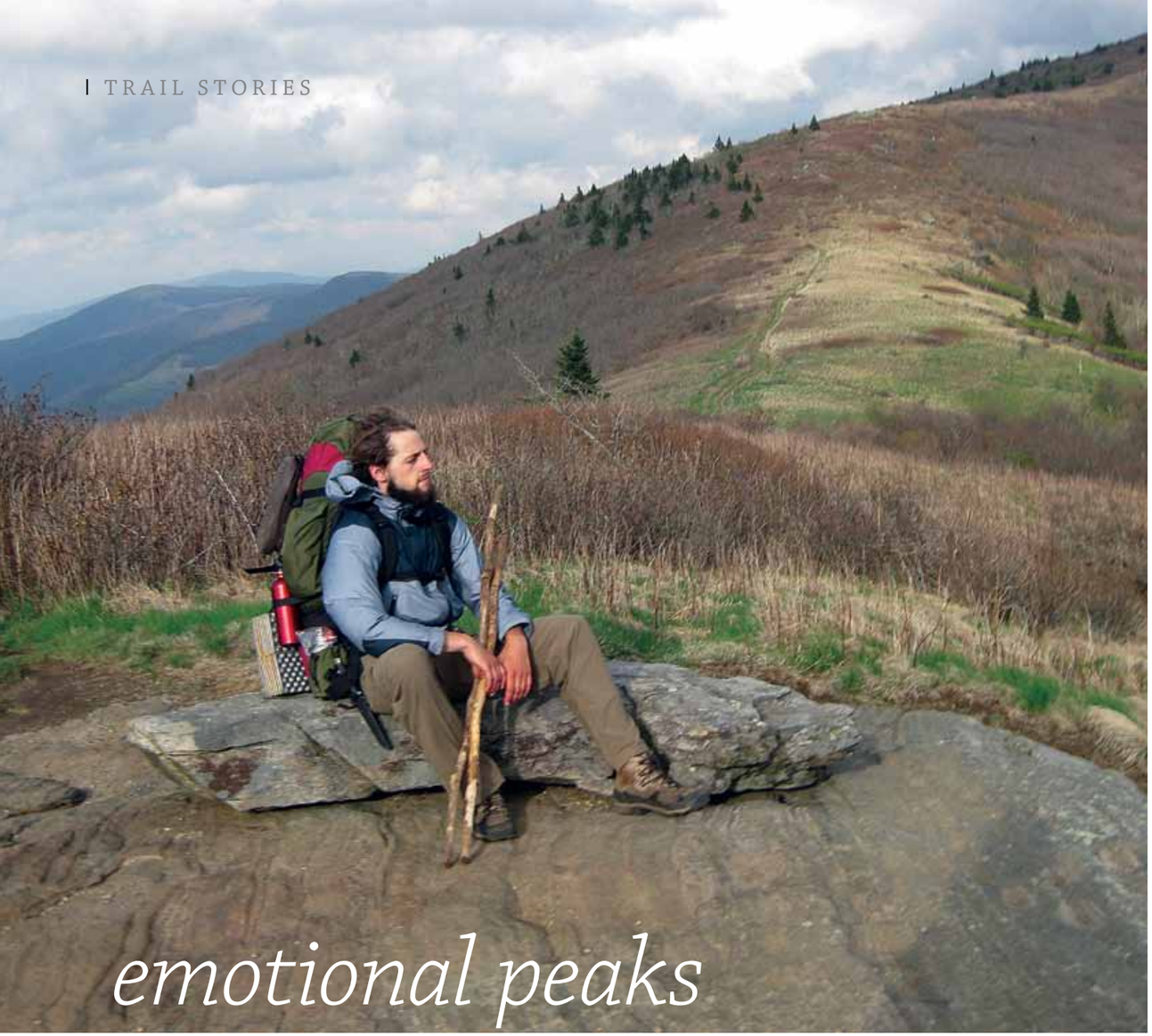
Nickels even took up hiking to gain insight. Until a hip replacement in July 2010, hikers were as likely to find her on top of Mount Minsi as they would in the church. "I have a zillion stories," Nickels likes to say. Perhaps her favorite is the one about the time Earl Shaffer came to town. Shaffer was 79 in 1988, when he decided to take a 2,000-plus-mile walk in honor of the 50th anniversary of his first thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. The hoopla around Shaffer's effort was overwhelming, especially for a guy like Shaffer, the Trail's legendary first thru-hiker, who thrived on the solitude of the woods. "Reporters were driving him crazy," says Nickels. "So his brother called to ask about having a press conference at the church. They were hoping if he accommodated the press, they would leave him alone." It didn't work. Shaffer left after the press conference and was hardly across the Delaware River when the reporters caught up with him again. Shaffer's problem was that he was too kind, Nickels says. "He was basically a shy man. He couldn't tell reporters, much less fellow hikers, [to get out of his] space. Earl was a neat man. He had wonderful stories, and he told them in an understated way," says Nickels. He was also the Trail's original "ultra-lite hiker," Nickels says. "When Earl came through, he wasn't even carrying a stove. He just had a canvas rucksack and an old wool blanket. He would just hike until he was tired, then he would roll up in his blanket."

She is one of those folks that everyone on the Trail has nice things to say about.

A lot changed in the 23 years Nickels spent in the pulpit of the red brick church that sits atop 45 feet of very steep stairs aside Main Street. "The equipment is better and lighter. With smart wool socks and lighter hiking boots, you don't see the damage, the 'hamburger feet,' we used to," says Nickels. "We used to have lots of buckets with Epsom salts for them to soak their feet in."

An interim minister is holding down the fort while the congregation searches for Nickels' successor. That successor will have big hiking boots to fill. "Reverend Nickels was a big part of everything to do with this church community," says Dellaria. "She was a strong force." Nickels didn't just use the hiker mission to help those walking from Georgia to Maine. She also used it to give her congregation, something to rally around. The hiker mission instilled a sense of purpose in the church. "It's what we are called to do," Beck says. "We're called to service. It's natural since we are right on the Trail."

Clockwise from top: The Church of the Mountain sits just off the Trail in Delaware Water Gap; Andy Szoke works the grill and helps Paul Beaty fill the buns during one of the church's famous hiker feeds; The church's fellowship hall, with a large, covered porch, was Nickels' idea, built specifically to accommodate the large hiker feeds.



emotional peaks

BY PAUL FRATER

NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR the transformation that the Appalachian Trail effectuates on its long-term hikers. Before starting my hike I had read some books, some articles, and researched the internet for some popular spots along the Trail. These are the tangible objects of the Appalachians that everyone uses to iconify the A.T., but it is in the power of the intangible, what is unseen and what is created and interpreted by each individual hiker, that the Appalachian Trail really holds its jurisdiction. Dubiety probably exists as to whether anyone realizes this before starting a hike, but I can assure you that those who reach a threshold of footsteps along that path would consent to the affection, the joy, the love, the anger, the frustration, the elation and the depression, the passion, drive, and desire to not stop, to never stop, being an Appalachian Trail hiker.

I tend to bracket myself in the lower tier of emotional susceptibility to most things in life; at least I did before hiking through the Blue Ridge. However, I will always recall what I believe is the first time I felt true, raw, uninhibited emotion. It happened on the third day in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. I spent all day walking through drizzled clouds in which moisture condenses onto every single item of gear, every footstep taken, every thought, and any and every inkling of joy that could potentially be slightly kindled in the mind. The culmination of every breath breathed and every forward movement had brought me to this literal, physical high point on the Trail named Clingmans Dome. There is a tower at the top of Clingmans Dome that apparently affords a spectacular view of the surrounding landscape. I would not know. I went there as a child by car and as an adult by foot, and both trips rewarded me with the same gray appearance that seems to blanket all of the Smoky Mountains most of the time. Of what I ever did to Clingmans Dome and the Smokies I remain unaware, but that hill must have hated us to torment us in such a way. Did it not know that I had walked 270 miles to get there, endured intense heat and immense cold, felt bruised, broken, stiff, sore, and bedraggled? And the best it could do was the same dreary fog scene that I grew up with along the shores of Lake Michigan? I was so vehemently irate at this point that I stood along the road that meets there and waited for a car to take me into Gatlinburg. In any case, if you have not picked up on how I felt on that miserable day … I hated it, and it stays with me as an exemplary example of what hiking the Trail can do to one's emotions.

Do not mistake the feelings caused by the Trail as all negative, though. The example described above exists merely as the primary in a sequence of passionate instances that shaped who I am today. I recall an immense feeling of joy as I sat in Davenport Gap at the eastern edge of the park and dipped a Snickers bar into a jar of Nutella for celebration. The emotional highs certainly do not always correspond to the elevational highs. One of my greatest moments on the Appalachian Trail came at a small bald, about 30 miles east of the Smokies, called Max Patch. This summit probably trembles at the physique of the higher mountains to the west, but what it may lack in height it makes up for in unequalled spirit. I reached the top of Max Patch to find a perfect little tent village situated with a superlative view for miles in every direction. Children ran and laughed and flew kites. Former hikers had come during that week to camp there and divvy out "Trail magic" in the woods below the bald. We gorged ourselves on incredible food and drink. As if that was not enough to satisfy, Max Patch then gave us the most sublime sunset ever viewed by these eyes, and I awoke the next morning to the sound of bobwhite quail calling in the bushes with their high-pitched "so-soweet" adding the final sensory stimulus to this 12-hour euphoria. I have never believed in a realistic utopian society, but if one were ever to exist it would do so on Max Patch. I fell so deeply in love with that place that I do not think the memories of it will ever come close to being matched.

I have never believed in a realistic utopian society, but if one were ever to exist it would do so on Max Patch.

From far left: An introspective moment for Paul "Tallgrass" Frater on Grassy Ridge Bald, North Carolina.

BY MARTHA FRATER; MAX PATCH SUNSET, BY PAUL FRATER

Many more events contributed to this emotional roller coaster centered in the Appalachians. A few that readily come to mind are: crossing Interstate 77 in southwest Virginia and standing jaw-dropped and stupefied by vehicles speeding past underneath the overpass at 70 mph; crying like summer showers upon hearing my wife's voice over the phone at Trail Angel Mary's house in Duncannon, Pennsylvania; and then feeling so high while crossing the Susquehanna River just after shedding a stream of tears in Duncannon.

As I recall memories, pore over pictures, and read from my journal now at my home in Wisconsin, these emotions occasionally come rushing back and overwhelm me. If you have ever hiked a good stretch of the Appalachian Trail, or probably any trail for that matter, then you understand every bit of what I mean. If you have not, I encourage you to get out there and experience this for yourself. At one time I was physically a full-time hiker, but I will always have that emotional connection to the journey, the Blue Ridge, and the Trail. I will always be an Appalachian Trail hiker.

IT WAS GREAT TO MEET SO MANY OF OUR MEMBERS IN EMORY, Virginia at our biennial meeting. I hope you had a spectacular time. Thanks again to all the hard working volunteers who made Virginia Journeys 2011 an awesome success.

Congratulations to our newest Honorary Life Members — Arthur Foley and Ronald S. Rosen, and to the many men and women who were honored for their volunteer service of 50 and 25 years.

Bob Almand and Dave Startzell gave an overview of our 2010 Annual Report in the beginning of this issue. Please take a few minutes to look over the entire report at appalachiantrail.org/annualreport. In every issue of this magazine we highlight the members and partners who contribute to the overall success of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). In the annual report we salute everyone again. Thank you!

PHOTO BY JOHN CAMMEROTA

In October, members of ATC's Board of Directors and ATC staff will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the publication of Benton MacKaye's article proposing an Appalachian Trail at Hudson Farm, where he wrote it.

In the opening paragraphs of MacKaye's treatise, he states: "The problem of living is at bottom an economic one. And this alone is bad enough, even in a period of so-called 'normalcy.' But living has been considerably complicated of late in various ways — by war, by questions of personal liberty, and by 'menaces' of one kind or another. There have been created bitter antagonisms. We are undergoing also the bad combination of high prices and unemployment. This situation is worldwide ..."

His words could just as easily have been written yesterday. He goes on to propose, not only the Appalachian Trail, but a series of communities along the Trail that would support those who sought the rest, restoration, and health the mountains provided to visitors.

With your help, ATC continues to build on MacKaye's vision through our Appalachian Trail Community designation program. More and more communities, large and small, are seeking to embrace the Appalachian Trail as a vital part of their future for tourism and economic development. These same communities will, in the years to come, return to the Trail as volunteers and members to sustain it.

More and more communities, large and small, are seeking to embrace the Appalachian Trail as a vital part of their future for tourism and economic development.

Thank you for your support,
Royce W. Gibson | *Director of Membership & Development*

MAY — JUNE 2011

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Membership dues and additional donations are tax-deductible as a charitable contribution. ATC is a Section 501(c)(3) educational organization.

To make a contribution or renew your membership, call (304) 535-6331 ext 119, or visit: **appalachiantrail.org/donate**

Hiking Partners

Senior hiker would like a **partner or partners with car to do short hikes** (8-10 miles per day) on the A.T. in Pennsylvania or possibly northern Virginia or southern Vermont; to shuttle cars and stay off-Trail every couple of nights. Backpack a day or two at a time as required. Contact: Howard "HO JO" Johnson (703) 765-3677, (cell) (571) 277-0373, or hjohnson@bradleyparker.com.

For Sale

ULA Catalyst men's back pack; Mont-Bell, 20 degree, large sleeping bag; Georgia through Connecticut guide books. **All items have never been used.** Contact: (740) 601-3254.

A **new food co-op** has fantastic tasting foods. Great long-term storage containers, and individual packaging, perfect for camping. Just add water, heat, and enjoy! Visit: 5792.freefood2go.com or contact: Richard and Kimberly Sanders richardandkimberly@me.com or (800) 970-2890.

Lost and Found

Lost on July 7: **woman's silver bracelet on the A.T. in New York;** likely near the beginning of New York A.T. Section 10 going south to north (e.g.; from Tiorati Circle/Arden Valley Road). The bracelet is a simple cuff-type, with engraved edges on both sides. Inside the bracelet is my name (Cynthia) and my husband's name (Carl), but these could be very faded. Very strong sentimental value. If found, please contact: Cynthia at cynopderbeck@hotmail.com.

For Your Information

Trails End Festival. All trails will again lead to Millinocket, Maine and the **2011 Trails End Festival** held on September 16, 17, and 18. People in the Katahdin Region and from all over will celebrate with food, activities and fun for the whole family. Join us for three days of free music in downtown Millinocket. For more information visit: www.trailsendfestival.org.

Hosted by the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, **the 30th anniversary Gathering** will be Columbus Day weekend, Oct. 7-9, 2011, at the College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, Massachusetts. Members get together each fall for the Gathering, where folks share their experiences through workshops and slides. For more information and details visit: www.aldha.org.

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length. Please send them to:

editor@appalachiantrail.org

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

ON THE APRIL MORNING IN 2010, WHEN MY 10-YEAR-OLD SON SCOOTER AND I SET OUT to hike the entire Appalachian Trail, we were convinced it was all about the numbers. On day one, it was 51 degrees; we hiked 9.5 miles, taking breaks at miles 2, 4.5, and 7. In fact, we believed that counting was the obsession of everyone attempting a thru-hike. How many miles did you hike today? How many days have you been out? How many pounds are you carrying? Liters of water? One day I even counted the number of times I stubbed my toe (it was 43). The list of potential numerical items of interest was infinite. Scooter and I developed a routine to celebrate and record our progress along the Trail. Every 100 miles, we would track down the nearest writing surface — a piece of cardboard ripped from one of our resupply boxes, the inside of a Poptart container, the palm of my hand — and on it write our latest 100-mile milestone. Engaging the nearest willing person into service, we would pose for a picture, then post it on Facebook for our family and friends back home.

To me, the Trail is a giant, but cozy, neighborhood stretching the length of the Eastern Seaboard.

Yet as I recently glanced through an old November-December 2010 edition of A.T. Journeys, I was surprised and delighted that what jumped out at me from the pages was not numerals, but familiar faces. There was a picture of "Trinket," with whom we shared hot dogs and homeschooling conversation over a fire just outside of Shenandoah National Park. Then there was "Buck" (U.S. Army Officer Steve Owens) and his two charming children, whom we met after a violent thunderstorm in the Smokies. We chatted for over an hour, comparing quirky hiking-with-kids accounts and listening with fascination to Buck's description of the mountains in Afghanistan. It was with much reluctance that Scooter and I pulled ourselves away to continue on to Fontana Dam. We had found kindred spirits.

The obsession I had had with numbers during our hike faded as I recalled other faces, other people we had encountered on the Trail. After a nasty tumble down a slick section of rocks just north of Garfield Ridge Shelter, I was attended to by "Eureka," a sweet, gutsy gentleman thru-hiker whom we had not seen since Virginia. Although I declined his kind offer to carry my pack back to the shelter, I realized it was his compassion and willingness to assist a fellow hiker in need that truly reflects what makes the Trail unique.

To me, the Trail is a giant, but cozy, neighborhood stretching the length of the Eastern Seaboard complete with characters similar to those found in any community back home - like the section-hiking family from North Carolina who, instead of lending us a cup of sugar, allowed us to borrow their brand new Lexus for an early morning resupply. "Just leave the keys under the seat and lock it up when you're done — we have another set," they cheerfully called as they hiked on up the Trail and we headed into town. And while this was an extraordinary case of A.T.-neighborly-ness, it was no exception. I could easily catalogue daily, smaller kindnesses that Scooter and I received from the many people we met along the way: "Captain Slick," who appointed Scooter his personal *consigliere* (from *The Godfather*), consulting him on matters of weather, gear, and foodstuffs; "Pastor Dave," who set up a table with donuts and other snacks on a 100-Mile Wilderness Trail crossing; and "Uncas," who brewed me a hot cup of coffee on a particularly bone-chilling lunch break. And we could never forget "Etchasketch"; we hiked together off and on from Pennsylvania to Georgia, until it seemed as if I had acquired another son and Scooter a brother. We will probably never again see many of these Trail neighbors with whom we shared our epic journey. But while the memory of the weight of our packs or the number of miles we counted to Katahdin will fade, we will never forget the relationships we discovered on the A.T. For this reason, I would happily return to that neighborhood should future time and circumstance ever allow it.

Cheryl and Scooter during their 2010 thru-hike.

Cheryl "4:13" Borek and her son Scooter,
LIVE IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA.

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

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BARREN CHAIRBACK RANGE, MAINE
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