



JOURNEYS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / WINTER 2018



Take the 14 State Challenge

Children's Forest
Network: Exploring
the Beautiful Unknown

Beneath the Bark:
The Destructive
Emerald Ash Borer

How to Bring Your
Best to A.T. Shelters



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JOURNEYS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / WINTER 2018

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M The Last Word

MY DEAR FRIENDS AND FELLOW hikers: When you read this column, I will have moved on to the next phase of my life. After more than 40 years of personal involvement with the Appalachian Trail, I retired from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) at the end of December.

For me, it has been a wonderful and often magical relationship with the A.T. I signed up with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club for my first work trip in 1974 to help reconstruct the Trail up to Weverton Cliffs in Maryland from the C&O Canal. I joined the organization that year, became a life member soon thereafter, and served over the next 25 years as an A.T. maintainer, chair of the Land Management and Conservation Committees, and on the Governing Council. I was privileged to serve on the ATC Board of Managers from 1981 to 85. In 1983, I was one of a very distinguished group of passionate A.T. supporters who founded the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association.

And I hiked the entire Trail in 1978 – one of about 100 who completed the Trail that year. I have so many happy memories of that journey and was reminded of my hike recently in a couple of unique ways. As part of the ATC Biennial in Maine this past summer, I did a group hike south on the A.T. from the Kennebec River to Pierce Pond. At the camp restaurant near the pond, I saw my name in the hiker register where I signed in 38 years ago. More recently, I listened to a digitized version of a 1982 CBS radio interview in which I answered Charles Kuralt's question about my feelings as I climbed Katahdin by saying: "It was the most rewarding and emotional moment of my life." My dear wife and life partner Rita suggested our wedding date ranked higher.

But this is not just about me. My four-plus years as the head of the ATC has been the greatest privilege and honor of my life. I called it my "dream job" when I was hired

and I still feel that way. Part of the reason is that our board, staff, partners, members, and donors and especially our 31 Trail clubs and 6,000-plus volunteers have worked together to address some very big and important challenges:

- The growing number of long distance, weekend, and day hikers that expect a high quality A.T. experience
- The historic opportunity to protect high-priority sections of the A.T. landscape through conservation strategies and key land purchase while also addressing threats to the Trail by proposed major residential and resort developments, natural gas pipelines, transmission line corridors, illegal timber cutting, and other activities along the Trail
- Creating an overall strategy with the the ATC's partners to reach youth and urban and diverse populations to give them the opportunity to join more than three million hikers already coming to the A.T. annually.

But the most important thing I take with me into the next phase of my life is the reality that I want to remain an active part of this wonderful Trail community that has given me joy, tears, challenges, rewards, and many lifelong friendships. Now I get to return to the wonderful world of being an A.T. volunteer.

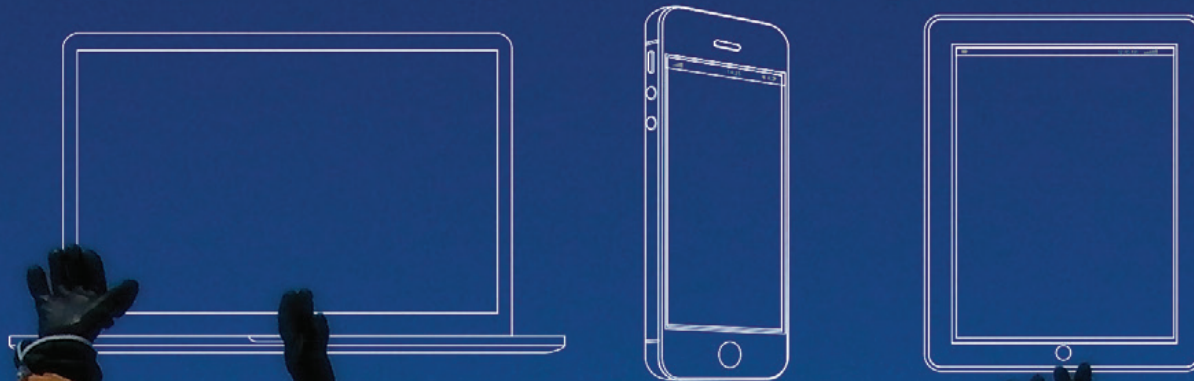
My final thought is this: I am delighted that my long-time friend and former colleague Suzanne Dixon is now your new president and CEO. She brings great passion, leadership skills, and a proven track record of success in helping protect a variety of national parks during her 18 years with the National Parks Conservation Association. I have no doubt she will take the ATC to a new level of accomplishment and, more importantly, make the Appalachian Trail experience better than ever. 🌲

Ronald J. Tipton / Retired President & CEO

Ron with his wife
Rita Molyneux



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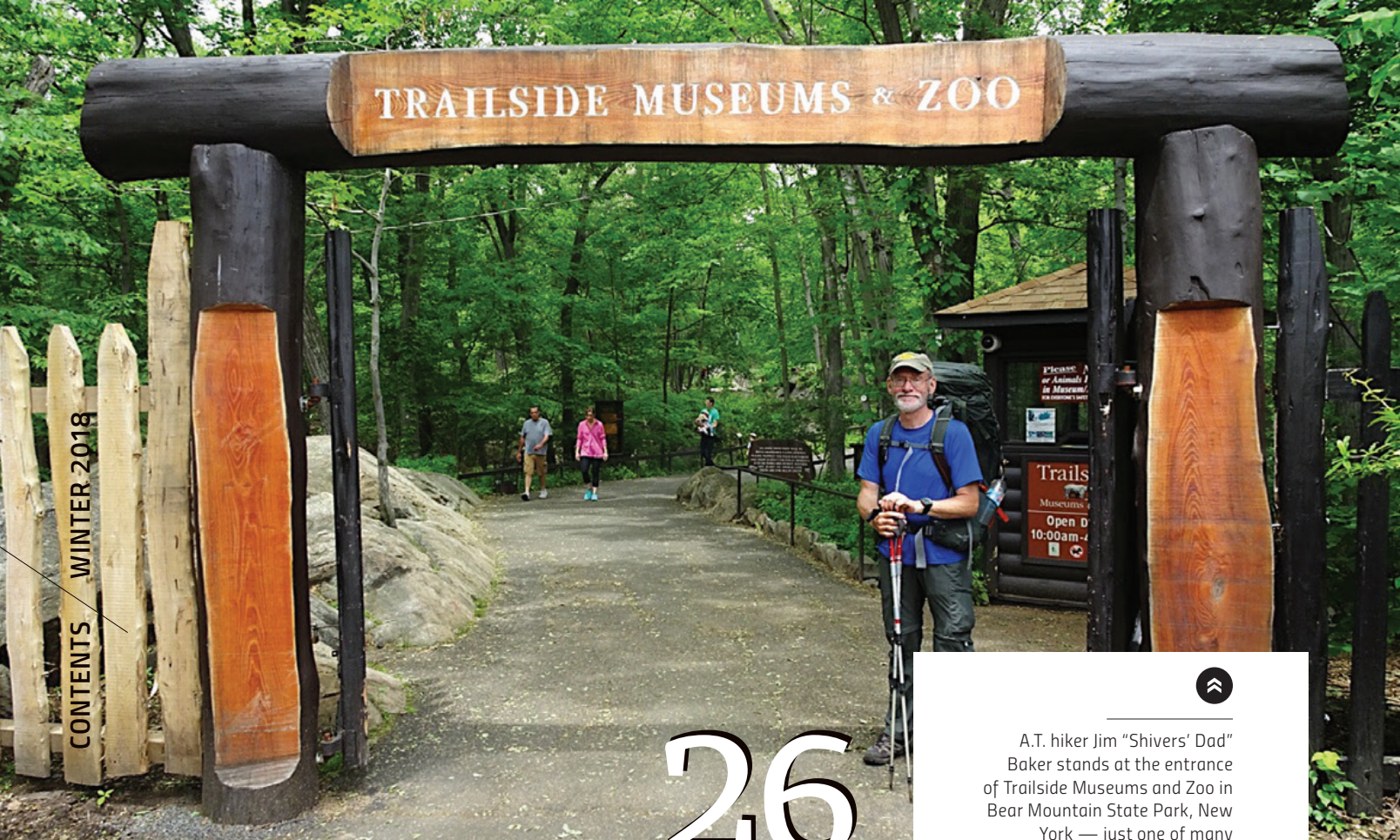


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Photo by Anne Baker

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my^Astory

Adventures from the People's Trail

myATstory.org



I SPENT MORE THAN 10 YEARS OF MY career in the Marine Corps overseas. My boys speak multiple languages and have lived all over. For most of their lives, they have been raised abroad. My goal in hiking the Trail was for them to experience the best of our own culture; a sense of true Americana. The fellow hikers we met on the Trail as well as the community of people around the Trail renewed my sense of the human spirit and helped deliver to my impressionable children a positively formative experience that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

Scott E. Pierce
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

I STARTED HIKING AS A SUBSTITUTE for running when I developed arthritis. [Then I] joined the Chester County Trail Club and started section hiking in 2005 at James River bridge heading north. I know I can climb a rock wall on my hands and knees. I can walk 12 hours in the freezing rain or in blistering heat. I can go without a comb or a mirror for two weeks at a time. I can sleep with strangers and wake up with friends. I can forget the fact that these new friends could be my grandchildren – and they can forget that too.

Leslie Spangler
WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA

“THE TRAIL ALWAYS PROVIDES.” WE heard these words over and over as we hiked, but it was in mid-August near the end of our thru-hike that those words took on a personal meaning for us. I got a text from my sister back in southwestern Pennsylvania that our mother had developed a life-threatening blood clot in her upper leg. My husband and I knew that we needed to head home, but how would we get to an airport or rental car company when we were in a very remote part of Maine? A great friend and ‘16 thru-hiker, Ted “Lucky Dog,” did some research since a cell signal for us was mostly non-existent. He encouraged us to hike the next day to MM 1956.2, ME 17, hitch a ride into Oquossoc and then try to get a ride to Farmington, Maine where we could rent a car and then drive to Pennsylvania. We did as he suggested, but about one mile before coming to ME 17, the A.T. crosses a dirt road and then it

goes right back into the woods. As we stepped out of the woods onto this dirt road, we had to stop because a car was approaching. A car? On a dirt road in remote Maine? The driver stopped in front of us, and a female passenger put the window down and asked if we needed a ride. I was overcome with emotion at both the question asked and the ongoing thoughts about my mom’s situation as I hiked that day. My husband explained our situation to the couple, and without hesitation they came up with this plan: come back to our cabin for the night (have dinner with us, take a hot shower), have breakfast tomorrow morning, and then we will drive you wherever you need to go to rent a car (turned out to be 75 miles away). That is exactly what happened, and we arrived in Pennsylvania the next day and spent a week there until we knew that my mom’s health situation was stable. Steve and Allyson, day-hikers out looking for a good place to start their next day’s hike, became our unforgettable “Trail angels.” I am forever grateful to them for their impeccable timing, understanding, hospitality, kindness, and generosity. The story does not end there, though. They gave us specific instructions to call them once we returned to Maine and they would pick us up at the rental car company and return us to the

dirt road at MM 1955.2 so we could resume our thru-hike. Thank you again, Steve and Allyson. You are and will always be one of our best stories from the A.T. Yes, “the Trail really does provide.”

Gail L. Stairs
TITUSVILLE, FLORIDA

CORRECTION: In the Fall 2017 feature “Summit Seekers,” a crucial partner of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in this program — the Student Conservation Association (SCA) — was not mentioned. The SCA is a vital part of the Summit Seekers program and a valued partner to the ATC. We apologize for this error and thank the SCA for their continued partnership.

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.



editor@appalachiantrail.org

Letters to the Editor

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

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f I’m done with finals!

Now all I have to stress about is hiking the Appalachian Trail in February. Which means it’s really time to get to work. — Aaron Richards

@ @jc.hikes

Summer on the Appalachian Trail is amazing; warm, vibrant, and green. Winter is a lot different. It’s cold and severe, almost sterile. The flora and fauna so abundant before has dwindled to fallen leaves and a few tracks in the snow. But along with that change comes a quiet peace and beauty. The contrast is staggering

f We are all winners

each time we step onto the Trail. — Kelley Spencer Sr.

f Seeing several people

I hiked with finish their journey on the Appalachian Trail is awesome! Just can’t wait til it’s me! Great job guys! — Robert Shutts Jr.

@ @andreslenscap

#graysonhighlands on my #appalachiantrail thru-hike was the first time I really experienced the indescribable feeling of calm and knowing that this is exactly where I needed to be in the universe

@ @johngunter94

Cold weather has me missing the #appalachiantrail. May have to prepare for a winter #hike



@WanderTheWild

Huge thanks to all the kind souls who help maintain trails every year! From people who volunteer for a summer to folks who pick up litter on day hikes, we are very grateful. You guys rock. And kudos to orgs like @PCTAssociation and @AT_Conservancy for organizing Trail crews! 🌱



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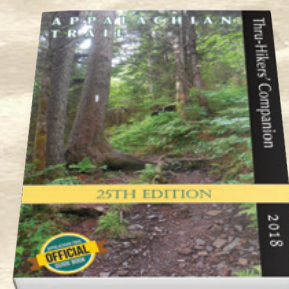
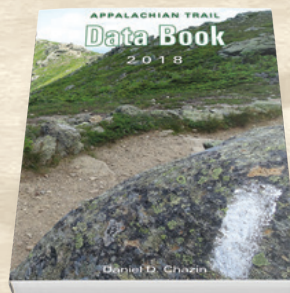
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An updated mileage signals the arrival of a new edition of the **Appalachian Trail Data Book**, presenting the steps between landmarks from Maine to Georgia. At the same time, the 25th edition of the **Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion** presents them from Georgia to Maine, along with town-services information, town maps, and all sorts of other details important to hikers, especially of the end-to-end variety.

For 33 years, the **Data Book** (item #141-18) has been edited by New Jersey volunteer Daniel D. Chazin, drawing on updates from other volunteers in the 31 Trail-maintaining clubs and staff members in ATC offices. **The Companion** (item #202-18) likewise draws on more than three dozen Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association volunteers, led since 2010 by Robert "Sly" Sylvester, and ATC field experts.



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I'M WRITING THIS COLUMN AS 2017

draws to a close. It is a time, I think, to look back to where we have been this past year and look forward to what lies ahead.

The farewell note you see in this issue, from our retiring president and CEO, Ron Tipton, touches on his lifetime commitment to the Trail as well as some of the accomplishments the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has achieved under his leadership. Of specific note is the A.T. Large Landscape Conservation initiative and our youth and diversity outreach efforts to ensure the A.T. remains relevant to future generations.

Looking back, we have made significant progress with these efforts. Our Large Landscape initiative is gaining traction as we define priorities and strengthen our coalition. Looking forward, I see more momentum to our efforts. Specifically, I'm thrilled to announce that the Volgenau Family Foundation has pledged up to \$3 million dollars over the next three years

to support land acquisition and program development for the Large Landscape initiative. Ron deserves significant credit for this ATC win.

Our efforts to support our Broader Relevancy strategic goal have also seen success in the past year. The Fall 2017 issue of *A.T. Journeys* highlighted the Summit Seekers project, a collaboration between Outdoor Afro, Latino Outdoors, Groundwork USA, the Student Conservation Association, and the ATC. Looking forward, in this issue, you'll learn about the Children's Forest Network project and our Next Generation Advisory Council program. These programs and projects highlight how we are working to build affinity groups and cohorts who will find their own ways to support and enjoy the A.T. now and in the future.

Moving from Ron's farewell, we now

say hello to our new president and CEO, Suzanne Dixon. You'll find a brief introduction to Suzanne in this issue. The process for finding Ron's replacement was kicked off in early May. We used the search firm, ThinkingAhead, to support the effort. After gathering information from a wide variety of stakeholders, we developed our search criteria. ThinkingAhead reached out to close to 300 individuals and conducted well over 40 initial interviews. Nine candidates were submitted to the Selection Committee, seven were invited for first round interviews and four were asked to return for in-person, second round interviews. Three of those four were selected as finalist candidates. We made an offer to Suzanne in mid-October and her first day of work was December 11.

Suzanne comes to us from the National Parks Conservation Association, where she has spent the last 18 years. Her most recent position was senior director of Regional Programs with a focus on programming in Texas and Florida. She is skilled in coalition and partnership building, community engagement, and brings demonstrated fund-raising expertise. In the coming year, you will have the opportunity to get to know Suzanne. We are very excited to have her in this leadership role as we move the ATC into its future.

As in hiking the Trail, going from one year to the next can be full of challenges and surprises. Even with the best laid plans, maps, and guides, we never can know for sure what lies beyond the next bend or over the distant summit. What we can do is make sure we prepare as best we can for all types of weather and terrain, reach out to others for ideas and support, and know that all any of us can do is just keep putting one foot in front of another. The ATC has and will continue, one step at a time, to protect, enhance and promote the Appalachian Trail. I hope you will continue along with us on this journey. 🌲

Sandra Marra / Chair



U.S. Forest Service and Greening Youth Foundation employees stand alongside young East Atlanta YMCA campers during the Children's Forest Network's first urban campout last October at the Lake Winfield Scott Recreation area in Blairsville, Georgia. 📷 Photo by Steve Bekkerus



BENEATH THE BARK



THE ATC AND PARTNERS WORK TO PROTECT ASH TREES FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE EMERALD ASH BORER

A silent and destructive killer is lurking in eastern forests, including along the Appalachian Trail corridor. Its damage threatens to significantly change the forest composition on many parts of the Trail — as well as approximately 60 percent of the continental U.S., where ash trees (trees in the *Fraxinus* genus) range.

The culprit is the emerald ash borer (EAB, *Agrilus planipennis*), an invasive exotic insect from Asia that made its way to the United States through infested solid wood packing material sometime around the middle 1990s in Michigan. EAB larvae kill ash trees by creating serpentine feeding galleries beneath the bark of the trees, disrupting the flow of nutrients and water. This effectively girdles and kills the tree. EAB infested ash trees lose most of their canopy within two years of infestation and die within three to four years.

According to U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis data, ash trees comprise three to five percent of the southeastern forest composition, including many parts of the Trail. That means the forest won't just look different in affected areas, but the ecosystem will be permanently altered as ash trees die. According to Dan Herms of the Ohio State University Department of Entomology, 282 species of arthropods interact with ash trees, 44 of which rely on ash trees exclusively. The loss of ash trees will most certainly have a negative impact on forest biodiversity.

"Some people ask, 'What's the problem? It's just one species gone,'" says Marian Orlousky, the Appalachian Trail Conser-

vancy's (ATC) northern resource management coordinator. According to the National Wildlife Federation, "Insects, particularly the larval caterpillars of moths and butterflies, are a primary means of moving energy from plants to animals. They act as critical links in many food webs, and as adults, provide the important service of pollination. When ash, a group of species that intimately supports so many other species, is lost, the entire system can collapse. While the physical gaps left in the environment will likely be replaced, the functional gaps may not. Invasive exotic plant species often invade disturbed habitats and replace natives as they are lost or removed. Because the novel invasive plants have not co-evolved with the native insects in a given ecosystem, they do not provide the same level of functional support, especially for those insects that are specialists." "With the loss of ash trees, the cascade effect on the associated ecosystems may never be fully realized," says Matt Drury, resource management coordinator for the ATC's Southern Region. "The world becomes a little less intriguing with the loss of each species."

Currently, the EAB is in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, not to mention nearly 20 additional states not along the A.T. corridor. That leaves just Vermont and Maine uninfested. But those numbers could change quickly, as the EAB can move up to 10 to 15 miles per year and there are disjunct occurrences from people moving firewood, according to Drury.

"The hardest hit areas along the Appalachian Trail corridor are areas at higher elevations, between 3,000 and 4,200 feet,

BY JESSICA PORTER

IDENTIFY DAMAGE INFESTATION



The adult emerald ash borer and larva stage

The EAB has four life stages, including pupa, larva, egg, and adult. An adult, is ½-inch long and ⅛-inch wide, smaller than a penny. Its body is shiny green with a red or purple abdomen. The whitish colored larva has distinctive bell-shaped segments. Adults are commonly found in late May to early September, and more frequently in June and July.



D-shaped entry holes, and “S” patterns found under the bark



Ash trees branches grow on opposite sides of a limb in the same spot, mirroring each other. They also have compound leaves, meaning one leaf has a bud at its stem base and multiple leaflets. The bark of a young ash tree is smooth, while the bark of an older tree has a rough, diamond pattern.

Infestation starts in the live crown portion of the tree, leaving dead branching, D-shaped holes in the bark, S-shaped patterns under the bark (caused by the larva), and blanding, when woodpecker slough bark leaving a buff colored appearance.

which are ideal sites for a white ash ecosystem,” explains Paul Merten, entomologist with the U.S. Forest Service Forest Health Protection program for the southern region. There’s little hope for ash tree survival in affected areas. A study in Michigan found trees with EAB infestation experienced a 99.7 percent mortality rate, according to Drury. Unlike many other trees infested with invasive pests — such as hemlocks infested with the hemlock woolly adelgid that can continue to survive for four to 10-plus years — the EAB kills ash trees much more quickly.

“Because of its history and how efficient of a killer it is, there is a possibility that there will be no more ash trees in 10 years,” says Josh Kelly, public lands biologist for MountainTrue, a North Carolina-based environmental organization that works to champion clean water, resilient forest, and healthy communities. The EAB also doesn’t discriminate when it comes to the ash trees it destroys, it kills all species in the *Fraxinus* genus as well as white fringe trees (*Chionanthus virginicus*). The only trees it doesn’t destroy are young ones smaller than the size of a pinky finger. Once they become more mature, they are subject to the EAB’s destructive path. The future may be grim for ash trees, but the ATC, U.S. Forest Service, and regional conservation groups such as MountainTrue are working to strategically protect as many trees as is plausible.

The EAB and other bark beetles are particularly challenging flying insects to control, according to Merten. “Bark beetles are troublesome to control [because] they are inherently cryptic,” Merten says. “Bark beetles live under the bark most of their lives so you don’t see them. Most of the mechanical or silvicultural methods we’ve tried to employ have not been very successful.”

EAB CONTROL TACTICS

Currently, there’s no way to stop EAB or save heavily infested trees. And unfortunately, due to financial and manpower restrictions, there’s no way to treat every tree to prevent infestation. “You can only treat a tree ahead of time and target treatments with 10 to 15 miles of a known occurrence. But the challenge is knowing where the known occurrence is,” Drury says. The best way to protect a tree is to treat it prior to infestations — once the EAB is detected, the treatments are less effective.

The ATC and other organizations are focusing on saving trees with historical, cultural, and ecological significance. MountainTrue is working with the ATC and Forest Service to save at least 1,000 trees across western North Carolina. One thousand trees may not sound significant, but it will help maintain the genetics of local ash trees when the EAB moves through the area. In 2016, the ATC and Mountain True treated more than 200 trees (over 3,800 diameter inches) along the A.T., using \$10,000 from the ATC’s North Carolina License Plate Grant Fund.

Treatment involves using systemic pesticides to treat uninfested trees. Using pesticides is never a preferred strategy; fortunately ash trees are wind pollinated, lessening chances of harm to the insect pollinators. To further minimize damage to pollinators, trees with flowering





Above: (from left) Matt Drury from ATC takes data as Ethan Brickwood, Khidhar McKenzie, and Joe Cordova from ATC's Conservation Leadership Corps measure and prepare to treat an ash tree against EAB on Bluff Mountain in Tennessee; Left: "Super volunteer," Dan Firth from Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club is measuring ash density for treatment near Spivey Gap, North Carolina

plants near the root collar aren't treated. The Forest Service is recommending the use of two chemical methods to protect trees. One is a soil injection of Imidacloprid that's commonly used to protect hemlocks from pests and the other is a stem injection of emamectin benzoate, an insecticide particularly effective against EAB.

Fortunately, in addition to the pesticide treatments mentioned previously, there are several biocontrol options that could potentially save ash trees – including several species of parasitic wasps that inject their eggs in the larvae or egg of the EAB. These species have been extensively studied under quarantine, and deemed to effectively control EAB without affecting other native species. This necessary quarantine process is extremely expensive and often takes seven to 10 years to locate suitable biocontrol species.

The EAB does not kill ash trees across their native range in Asia. This is likely because, in its native range, EAB plays host to four species of parasitic wasps. To protect U.S. ash trees, the Forest Service is releasing the Asian wasps on the North Carolina and Tennessee border. The U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is raising the parasitoid wasps, which destroy the EAB by using their ovipositor to inject eggs into EAB's eggs or larva. The wasps use the EAB's eggs or larva as a host to rear their own offspring. "The idea is that it won't save the tree you release the organisms on, but it will increase populations to insert a new biocontrol organism into the ecosystem to moderate the EAB population so that ash trees survive," Merten says.

All of these efforts require significant manpower and financial investment. The ATC and MountainTrue are working with volunteers to survey and document infested trees and then determine which areas to invest in protection. And saving a tree isn't cheap, on average, it costs \$100 to protect a single tree for up to for five years. "It will require significant investment to save even 1,000 trees," Kelly says. "Just looking at the fundraising environment, we're not sure we can save enough. Some public and private investment to save these trees will be needed."

Though donating is an important component in saving the trees, there are non-financial ways Appalachian Trail supporters can work to protect ash trees as well. Most importantly, never move firewood. If you must bring firewood to a campsite, make sure it's kiln dried. The ATC, MountainTrue, and other regional environmental groups also are looking for volunteers to help identify and inventory areas of living and dead ash trees, as well as treat infested trees. Contact your local A.T. club, ATC regional office, or MountainTrue for information on volunteering.

A SAFETY HAZARD

Destruction of the ash trees presents another problem: safety. "The trees are prone to mid-stem failure. Within two years of dying, they often snap like a matchstick," Drury says. To avoid a potentially dangerous situation, it's important to be aware of your surroundings and never set up camp underneath a dead tree. "Familiarize yourself with what you should be looking for when you set up camp. Don't just trust that if there's a campsite, it's suitable for camping," Orlousky says. "The ATC is doing its best to inventory, document, and remove hazard trees." But with the rate of destruction. It's impossible to report or take down every dead tree.

Though the future of the forest composition as we know it may be impossible to fully conserve, many environmental, governmental, and conservation organizations are working together to preserve as many ash trees as is plausible. With their combined efforts, ash tree genetics may be preserved to regenerate the forest for generations to come. ▲

For more information about ash tree protection visit:
appalachiantrail.org/emeraldashborer

Jessica Porter is a freelance writer and editor who thru-hiked the AT in 2014. For more information visit: www.JessicaLynnePorter.com

TRAILHEAD

★ ATC DIRT ★



The ATC's Large Landscape Conservation Initiative was created to protect the unique and vastly varied natural environment, culture, and communities that surround the footpath and create the full A.T. experience.



PROTECT & PRESERVE



APPALACHIANTRAIL.ORG/LANDSCAPE



New ATC President & CEO **SUZANNE DIXON**

Suzanne Dixon, former senior director of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), has been selected

as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) new president and CEO. Beginning in mid-December, Dixon now leads the organization in its mission to maintain, protect, and celebrate the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. ¶ "Suzanne has the extraordinary talent and drive that is necessary to be the leading voice for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy," says Sandra Marra, chair of the ATC's board of directors. "Her success in protecting the values of the National Parks, along with her expertise in fundraising, advocacy, and programmatic growth, will be a great asset for the ATC and the greater Appalachian Trail community." ¶ For nearly 20 years, Dixon served key roles in NPCA advocating for the broader protection of the National Park System. She most recently served as senior director of regional operations with accomplishments including the designation of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park as a World Heritage Site. She also played a critical role in the designation of the Waco Mammoth National

Monument and the protection of Fort Davis National Historic Site. Dixon currently serves on the board of directors for the Waco Mammoth Foundation. ¶ "The Appalachian Trail is an American treasure, and I'm privileged to lead this team as we celebrate the recreational, economic, and cultural significance of the Trail," says Dixon. "I'm excited to be an ambassador and collaborator with communities up and down the A.T. as we move forward in protecting the Trail and its surrounding landscapes. By working directly with the public, we will strengthen our ability for families to enjoy this precious resource for generations to come." ¶ The ATC currently has more than 42,000 members, a network of more than 6,500 volunteers, and an operating budget of \$9.36 million. As a volunteer-based organization whose mission is to preserve and manage the Trail, the ATC is the only organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the world's most famous hiking trail. The ATC provides outdoor recreation and educational opportunities for an estimated 3 million A.T. visitors each year.



The ATC's new
president & CEO
Suzanne Dixon



SUPPORT RON TIPTON'S PASSION PROTECT OUR LARGE LANDSCAPES

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is seeking to raise \$625,000 for their A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative. This initiative is designed to leverage the commitment of those who hike the Trail, the public and private partners who manage the Trail, and surrounding communities to form an effective coalition to protect high-priority A.T. landscapes. ¶ "When Benton MacKaye developed the idea for the Appalachian Trail, his vision was far grander than just a footpath. He imagined the Trail would become a network of natural and cultural landscapes providing a barrier to the forces of Metropolitan development," explains retiring ATC president and CEO Ron Tipton. Ron is passionate about the ATC's Landscape Conservation Initiative, a concerted effort to protect valuable natural and cultural landscapes along the length of the A.T. They connect the Trail with surrounding geography, acreages, communities, and even political jurisdictions. These special landscapes go deeply into our shared experience and need our collective financial support to protect them. ¶ Communities within the more than 80 counties that feature the A.T. corridor as part of their neighborhood share an equally strong sense of place, whether it be serving hikers through local businesses or as part of a long-term commitment to protecting the landscape. Donations will support the A.T. Landscape Conservation Initiative and all the great programs of the ATC including, education, outreach, conservation, and overall protection of the Trail.

Find out more, take in some stunning views, and hear personal testimonials from Ron, ATC staff, and others at: appalachiantrail.org/landscape

MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE UPDATE

By Laura Belleville

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) is proposed to carry fracked natural gas for over 300 miles through the Virginia and West Virginia countryside, crossing over dozens of water sources, through protected areas and breaching the A.T. corridor. The pipeline would run parallel to the Trail for over 90 miles and carve ugly gashes in the landscape that could be seen from 20 miles away. ¶ On October 13, 2017, the Federal Energy Regula-



Wind Rock in Virginia is one of the many sites along the A.T. that may be impacted by the Mountain Valley Pipeline
 📷 Photo by Alison Moody

tory Commission (FERC) issued a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP). At the same time, the U.S. Forest Service issued a Draft Record of Decision. These decisions were despite clear and vocal concern expressed by state and federal elected officials on both sides of the aisle, despite unanimous resolutions by county and city entities, and despite the dissenting opinion of federal regulator Cheryl LaFleur, who said the need for these pipelines has not been proven ¶ But the pipeline cannot begin construction until necessary water quality permits are issued by the states, and final Section 106 review is complete. ¶ Section 106 requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) with a reasonable opportunity to comment. The ACHP is an independent federal agency that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of the nation's historic resources and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. ¶ The Appalachian National Scenic Trail has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as it meets the criteria being associated with events that have made a significant contribution

to the broad patterns of our history. The A.T. is significant in the areas of recreation and conservation and meets criteria for properties that have achieved exceptional significance within the past 50 years. Resources eligible for nomination are those that were constructed as part of the effort to develop the Trail and consist of the A.T. footpath, side trails, bridges (built for the Trail), vistas and viewpoints, and overnight use areas. ¶ The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the A.T. National Park Service office have been granted consulting party status to assist the federal government in understanding and addressing potential impacts to the Trail from the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline. While FERC would like to rush the Section 106 review process, this will not be possible given significant concerns identified by Section 106 consulting parties, including potential impacts to the Trail and a major archeological site on Peters Mountain that lie directly in the middle of the proposed pipeline right of way. ¶ In addition to the Section 106 review, Virginia needs to issue water permits required by the Clean Water Act. Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality and State Water Advisory Board could stop the pipelines based on serious water concerns. Similar regulatory agencies in New York recently won court cases that challenged their decision not to issue necessary permits for the Millennium and Constitution proposed pipelines. These pipelines are now stalled and may never be built. ¶ States have the right and obligation to enforce regulations under the Clean Water Act. At issue is whether FERC has the authority and technical capacity to make final determinations regarding water quality permits. The ATC does not believe that FERC can legitimately issue water permits based on our experience with FERC through the MVP review process. Numerous partners agree with the ATC on this. ¶ It's notable that MVP representatives have unabashedly acknowledged the steepness of their route and the extraordinary measures needed to build the pipeline. In their plans, they note that three steeply sloped places "would require up to 10 trailers daisy chained together to move one load of construction materials." A recent news article quoted an MVP official saying they may need helicopters to get into certain areas. ¶ More than 30 government and non-government agencies around the Roanoke, Virginia area have officially gone on record opposing the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Giles County, the cities of Roanoke and Salem and others have gone on record unanimously opposing the pipeline for the threat it poses to local water through run-off and sedimentation. FERC has also received a remarkably high number of requests for a rehearing on its decision to issue a certificate.

More than 30 government and non-government agencies around the Roanoke, Virginia area have officially gone on record opposing the Mountain Valley Pipeline for the threat it poses to local water.



Photo by Ben Benvie

BEAR CANISTERS AND BLACK BEAR AWARENESS

Due to an increasing number of serious human/bear interactions at many locations along the A.T., the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) continues to strongly recommend use of a bear canister by anyone staying overnight on the A.T. Please check the Trail Updates page on the ATC's website for current information about bear activity and bear canister requirements along the A.T. ¶ The ATC recommends the use of canisters approved by the partners of SierraWild, a joint U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management program to manage multiple wilderness areas in the Sierras (which have lots of black bears and human visitors). Use of a bear canister "is the single most effective thing you can do as a wilderness (or A.T.) visitor to protect bears," explains SierraWild.



For more information and updates visit:
appalachiantrail.org/mvp

For more information visit: appalachiantrail.org/bears and
sierrawild.gov/bears



THE ATC OPPOSES LEGISLATION TO ALLOW BIKES IN WILDERNESS AREAS

By Lynn Davis

Federal legislation to amend the Wilderness Act to allow mountain bikes and other forms of mechanized transport in designated wilderness areas is — at press time — before the U.S. House of Representatives. H.R. 1349 would overturn the original intent of the 1964 Wilderness Act, which protects and preserves primitive conditions. ¶ The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) joins with the Pacific Crest Trail Association, the Partnership for the National Trails System, several A.T. clubs, and more than 100 other conservation organizations in opposing H.R. 1349. Approximately 150 miles of the A.T. pass through 25 federally designated wilderness areas including wilderness in Shenandoah National Park. ¶ How the A.T. might be affected is, quite frankly, a big unknown. Could allowances for mountain bikes in wilderness areas supersede the vision and congressional intent to keep the A.T. solely a footpath? Could some sections of the A.T. be required to allow bikes? And if so, what kind of management challenges would that pose? If passed, court challenges are anticipated to sort out several questions. The ATC and other groups are firm in opposing this legislation rather than risk contrary court decisions. ¶ In addition, the ATC has registered grave concern that the possibility of allowing mountain bikes on the A.T. would directly impact the tremendous effort volunteer Trail maintainers have undertaken to sustain and improve the Trail. Moreover, bikes on the Trail would damage the overall A.T. nature and purpose as well as the overall A.T. experience. “The A.T. was envisioned



The A.T. in Shenandoah National Park is part of a federally designated wilderness area
 Photo by Ken Miller

as a retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern-day life, as a special and exceptionally scenic place that honors the simple art of walking and personal achievement,” says Morgan Sommerville, the ATC’s southern regional director. “Bikes on the A.T.’s narrow treadway would significantly diminish the experience hikers seek and jeopardize hiker safety. Imagine having to be alert for mountain bikes behind you or ahead. Then imagine dodging off the trail to accommodate bikes speeding by.” ¶ The ATC supports mountain biking on trails built and designated for mountain bikes. (The A.T. is not designed or built to accommodate them.) The ATC works with the International

Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), the long-established worldwide leader in mountain bike advocacy, in supporting the organization’s focus on Trail access, education, and experience.

Notably, IMBA is not pushing H.R. 1349 and, instead, submitted written testimony calling for a collaborative approach in identifying new areas for mountain biking. “Public lands are being threatened at an unprecedented level right now, and it’s imperative that public land users come together to protect these cherished places and offer our voices in this critical dialogue,” says Dave Weins, IMBA’s executive director. ¶ What’s ahead? The ATC and A.T. clubs will continue to work with conservation groups across the country in appealing to House members to scuttle legislation that is unnecessary and attempts to undermine the venerated principles of wilderness. Should the legislation pass in the House, focus will move to educating Senate members on the potentially devastating consequences.

To register your concerns about this legislation visit:

appalachiantrail.org.



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VOLGENAU FOUNDATION GRANT A WIN FOR A.T. LANDSCAPE PROTECTION



The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) landscape conservation program was given a significant boost with the announcement that the Volgenau Foundation has awarded the ATC its largest ever foundation grant. The Virginia-based Foundation has pledged \$3 million to the ATC over the next three years to support the A.T. Landscape Partnership campaign. Half of the grant will cover campaign expenses, and the other \$1.5 million will help to fund land purchases along the A.T. in our Priority Focus Areas. ¶ "This is by far the largest funding commitment from one donor in the ATC's history," says retiring president and CEO, Ron Tipton. "A successful program to advance conservation of this national treasure for future generations requires both targeted land acquisition and a sustainable campaign. The Volgenau Foundation grant just moved us one giant step closer to achieving our goals." ¶ The ATC, in partnership with the National Park Service, has launched a comprehensive strategic Landscape Conservation Initiative to permanently protect highly valued areas within the A.T. landscape. The Appalachian Trail and its surrounding lands are widely regarded as the most critically important ecological and cultural landscape in the eastern United States. The A.T. corridor connects rural communities, pristine watersheds, working farms and forests, squeezes through rapidly developing regions, and provides the foundation for world-class outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities. ¶ The Volgenau Foundation grant will provide financial support and leverage for major land protection projects in partnership with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, state and local agencies, and key private conservation partners. The ATC and its coalition of partners have identified 10 Priority Focus Areas within the A.T. Landscape. Each of these focus areas feature a diversity of conservation value, as well as threats to the integrity of these landscapes, and opportunities and partnerships to protect these special places. ¶ The grant will also support the ATC's leadership and staffing to organize and coordinate the work of the A.T. Landscape Partnership. This campaign is designed to leverage the commitment of those who hike the Trail, the public and private partners who manage the Trail, and surrounding communities and key conservation partners working together to protect high-priority ecosystems, watersheds, and scenic vistas throughout the A.T. landscape.



View from the Pinnacle on the A.T. in Pennsylvania – part of 10 Priority Focus Areas within the A.T. Landscape. Photo by Raymond Salini III

BAXTER STATE PARK DIRECTOR RETIRES

Baxter State Park Director Jensen Bissell retired at the end of 2017 after 30 years working for park administration and 12 years as park director. The park is managed by the Baxter State Park Authority, a three-person team consisting of the attorney general of the State of Maine, the director of the Maine Forest Service and the commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Authority operates Baxter State Park through the park director and administrative staff, which consists of a chief ranger, park naturalist, business manager and resource manager. In addition, the park currently employs 22 year-round and 39 seasonal employees. ¶ Bissell started working at Baxter State Park in 1987 as resource manager for the park's 29,537-acre Scientific Forest Management Area. In 2005, he was selected by the Baxter State Park Authority to become park director. During his tenure, Bissell improved plans to sustainably maintain the park's infrastructure, including roads, bridges, culverts, campgrounds and 215 miles of trails. ¶ "Baxter State Park has thrived under his leadership," said Aaron Megquier, executive director of the nonprofit organization Friends of Baxter State Park. "He's done an exceptional job of stewarding the park and staying true to its forever wild mission." The park was pieced together, parcel by parcel, by former Maine Governor Percival Baxter between 1931 and 1962, and gifted to the State of Maine with the condition that it be kept forever wild. Conserving some of the most mountainous terrain in the state, including the state's tallest mountain, Katahdin, the park now totals more than 209,644 acres. ¶ In his retirement, among other things, Bissell plans to explore Maine's 281 miles of Appalachian Trail, as well as trails along the Bold Coast in eastern Maine and the Mahoosuc in western Maine. ⬆

Information courtesy *The Bangor Daily News*



THE
Beautiful
UNKNOWN



When awe and amazement drive you, there's no telling where you might find yourself. But wherever it is, you can bet it's satisfying, and almost certainly it's inspiring.

I have always had an infectious sense of wonder and a passion for sharing my new findings. As the partnership coordinator for the Children's Forest Network of the Georgia Mountains, I have spent the past 18 months connecting land managers, communities and non-profits to a wide-range of innovative programs that help stimulate an interest in the outdoors for

young people across north Georgia. I joined an impressive crew of partners who were successfully engaging kids through a variety of individual efforts in partnership with the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. The Children's Forest Network (CFN) brought them all together with a particular focus on addressing cultural and financial obstacles that prevent under-represented youth from becoming engaged in outdoor experiences — by providing opportunities to explore the forests in their backyards, empowering teachers to connect with the outdoors and lead their students into the forest for meaningful, place-based

learning experiences, and helping ensure the long-term health of our national forests by fostering an ethic of stewardship among young people.

I didn't necessarily grow up with a love of nature, and never planned on a career of inspiring others to love it. Armed with a degree in economics, I took a chance by responding to an offer through the Greening Youth Foundation, an Atlanta-based non-profit that focuses on promoting diversity and inclusion on public lands. As I began to work with the kids, and learn from the people in the U.S. Forest Service and all the volunteers and partners, my fear of the unknown began to go away. Today, I'm not only coordinating north Georgia's Children's Forest Network, but I also serve as the Atlanta representative and secretary on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Next Generation Advisory Council (NextGen). The ATC and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) are key partners in the Children's Forest effort.

My drive to promote inclusion of underrepresented youth in the outdoors has allowed me to successfully secure grants and invite groups to the CFN's first urban campout. I have had the pleasure of attending multiple career fairs and sit on Georgia State University's Career Panel, and discuss my daily routine as partnership coordinator to encourage upcoming graduates. With the help of my fellow U.S. Forest Service coordinator Mitzi Deaton, I have been able to travel to more than 20 schools in Georgia and educate children about public lands, National Forests, and the A.T., including macroinvertebrates, watersheds, animals, Leave No Trace Principles, and share Smokey Bear's wildfire prevention mes-

BY MICHELA WILLIAMS



Clockwise from above: Michela Williams plays a game called "Oh Deer" with a group of 5th graders at West Fannin Elementary. This game teaches children about population control and predators. Photos by Susie Stevens; Campers at the October campout sing along to one of Natti Lovejoys' favorite Bob Marley songs; East Atlanta YMCA Youth enjoy the Children's Forests campout at Lake Winfield Scott Recreation area in Blairsville, Georgia. Photos by Steve Bekkerus



sages. I have also been featured in Georgia's Environmental Education Alliance's spring web blog under the "Fresh Faces, Fresh Ideas" column. My hope is to continue to teach environmental education and foster stewardship to youth who may have less access and opportunity to the great outdoors. The best part about my job is watching little faces light up with curiosity. I love how one question turns into 15, and they want to learn even more. "After only a couple of years of working together, public and private partners in the Children's Forest Network are achieving collective impact by placing a priority on equity, and seeking access for underrepresented youth to the outdoors," says the ATC's director of education and outreach Julie Judkins. "Social injustices affect those in urban and rural settings alike, including the opportunity to play, work, and be in the outdoors, and this partnership strives to remove barriers to those experiences. By hosting multiple facets and diverse program components outdoors, we hope to close the opportunity gap."

The CFN bloomed in response to a growing disconnect with the natural world, especially among young people. Despite having 875,000 acres of national forest lands in Georgia within two hours of major metropolitan areas, many north Georgia youth have little awareness of these places that offer so many health and quality-of-life benefits. Urban and rural youth alike often lack opportunities to participate in life-changing experiences in the outdoors. This network supports and enhances the existing efforts of partners with a focus on inclusion of those within the opportunity gap. Existing partners include the Greening Youth Foundation, the ATC, GATC, Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Cabela's, and the U.S. Forest Service. Since its inception in 2015, the CFN has reached more than 15,000 young people through a range of programs. Throughout 2017, 680 young people experienced guided Appalachian Trail hikes and 447 young people participated in over-



Clockwise from above: Campers play instruments they made along to the tunes of the Blairsville band Natti Lovejoys; Panola State Park archery instructor, Brian Lanier, teaches one of the YMCA counselors to focus her aim at the campout. Photos by Steve Bekkerus; Students look for insects and other small organisms in order to understand what inhabits a tree during a University of Georgia Education Center Field Day last Spring; Opposite page: volunteers from the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center of the University of Georgia teach students the seven Leave No Trace Principles at the spring Field Day. Photos by Michela Williams

night treks in the national forests. More than 10,000 students have been reached with conservation education programs, including 5,542 fourth graders with information about the Every Kid in a Park (EKIP) program. EKIP is an initiative put in place to provide fourth graders free passes to all national parks and forests.

FOREST FOR EVERY CLASSROOM

The ATC helped support and develop a custom Forest for Every Classroom (FFEC) curriculum for urban educators. Building off a successful training last March, another teacher training is scheduled for March of 2018. FFEC trains educators in place-based service learning to support curricula development that fosters appreciation for public lands, and encourages regular, sustained, meaningful interactions with nature, the A.T., and national forests. The training is hosted at Amicalola Falls State Park and the Len Foote Hike Inn and provides about 30 teachers from diverse schools, grades, and subjects the opportunity to connect with about 10 organizational and agency partners in a two-day workshop. This variety amongst teach-

ers allows them to compare current educational practices and discuss solutions to common issues they may have while in the classroom. Partners attended this conference to introduce themselves and the resources they can offer educators. Teachers

enjoyed learning from both the partners and amongst themselves about the accessible natural environment near their schools. The teachers completed a survey and were asked, “What is the one thing that you learned from this workshop that you will take back with you and put into practice immediately?” One teacher’s response was, “Stop dreaming about taking kids on super adventures and start taking kids into the school yard to learn, appreciate, and observe their local environment!” After the conference, teachers were encouraged to create a lesson plan and submit it to the FFEC steering committee in order to win a free trip to the Len Foote Hike-Inn with their students, thanks to the support of the GATC. The classes that were awarded this trip were from Smoke Rise Elementary and Cedar Shoals Elementary. With both schools having populations of 57.7 percent African American and more than 20 percent Hispanic, our mission to encourage the inclusion of underrepresented youth was definitely achieved. “This type of dynamic coordination is a shining example of how NextGen leaders are integrating and bridging traditional A.T. partners with new organizations and people, and making connections from urban centers to A.T. Communities,” says Judkins. “The ATC is thrilled to be a partner in the CFN and grateful to have someone like Michela at the helm.”

URBAN CAMPOUT

This past October, students from the East Atlanta YMCA participated in a campout in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. This campout was held at the Lake Winfield Scott Recreation area in Blairsville and the age range for the campers was 11 to 16. Partners from the network attended to offer assistance with cooking, facilitating, and sharing their own stories about how they fell in love with the outdoors. As new campers, the students learned how to put up a tent with the help of GATC and received their very own sleeping bag to take home thanks to an Outdoor Funding grant provided by Cabela’s. This campout offered a variety of activities such as archery, educational hiking, crafts, educational games, and a lesson in animal furs. Campers also had the pleasure of learning how to build a fire from Environmentalist Forest Hilyer and playing music with the Blairsville-based reggae band Natti Lovejoys. The Cabela’s grant funded food, transportation, and gear for the campers and also supported the chaperons who attended. The attendance of the YMCA chaperons was essential because these students had never been tent camping. Seeing an adult from a similar background step out of their comfort zone to try something new really calmed the students’ fear of the unknown. Campers began to be more open to the environmental activities and sleeping in a tent. A survey was sent home with the campers asking basic questions about camping and their exposure to the outdoors. They were asked “if there was one thing you could change about this campout what would it be?” One student’s answer was “if there was anything to change it would be the amount of days we stayed there.” This campout, and other programs CFN offers, allows youth to truly connect with nature and build a bond with the outdoors that they want to share with their families. Transportation funding through CFN has created opportunities for urban youth to participate in all of these activities.

FIELD DAYS

A series of environmental field days were attended by 4,000 students, primarily from Title I schools with an event dedicated to urban students. These field days are hosted by the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center of the University of Georgia and provide education for students in the third-to-fifth grades. This event is held annually in the A.T. Community of Blairsville, Georgia and brings in volunteers and staff from partner organizations, agencies, and clubs to lead sessions. Students rotate into various outdoor classes taught by professionals from organizations such as Natural Resource Conservation and GATC volunteers. Some of the classes included Leave No Trace, fire prevention, tree identification, stream macroinvertebrates, and more. In the past, these field days have served students from Hall, Fannin, Towns, and Union counties in Georgia and Cherokee and



Clay counties in North Carolina. These field days not only allow students to learn in a natural setting but they also expose students to natural resources they were unaware of before. As word of the field days continues to spread, the number of students attending continues to increase.

“It’s an honor to work closely with Michela and others and see the work we do through her eyes,” says U.S. Forest Service staff officer for Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, Judy Toppins. “[They have] a strong sense of social justice, and we share the belief that helping bridge a connection to the outdoors for these young people is about more than just providing opportunities where there weren’t many ... it’s about equality. There are profound physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual benefits to time spent in the outdoors, and every child deserves that experience. Every child has a right to it. Michela makes powerful connections with these kids and relates to their fears and challenges. She is an absolute force of nature, and I believe that together with our many partners, she is changing lives.”

The CFN continues to communicate with new partners and discuss ways to close the opportunity gap for access, recreation, and employment in the outdoors to youth in north Georgia. And for me, it’s a shared experience with the kids ... becoming attuned to and fascinated by nature. 🌲

Michela Williams works as a Greening Youth intern for the U.S. Forest Service in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests and is an ATC NextGen Council member.



14 STATES

ENDLESS WAYS TO HIKE



I WAS

chatting with a few friends the other night when our conversation shifted to my time on the Appalachian Trail this year. The questions I heard ranged from typical to downright silly, and almost without thinking, I gave well-rehearsed, hasty replies to those I had been asked over and over: “Yes, I actually went to the bathroom in the woods every day,” “I lived primarily off of protein bars and Ramen,” and, my favorite, “No, I didn’t carry bear spray — and let me tell you about the guy who got his Trail name after accidentally using his inside a hostel, causing an ill-timed evacuation.”

But then I was asked one question I hadn’t heard before: “Do you believe the A.T. is a single trail?” I hesitated. The obvious answer was, “Yes, of course. That’s the whole point,” but then my mind began racing back to those moments on the Trail when I would cross a state line. Each time I left one state behind and entered another, I was left in suspense; I was heading away from something familiar to step into the unknown. Those who have experienced the different regions of the Trail know what I mean: Maryland, for example, certainly doesn’t feel like Maine.

As the A.T. winds its way through the Appalachian Mountains, it traverses 14 states. Every state is unique, and the insightful hiker will notice things like landscape, terrain, and land management practices contribute to a diverse user experience. So yes, while the A.T. is continuous, there are often times when the footpath seems to change before your eyes. That’s part of the beauty of the Trail — it always keeps hikers guessing.

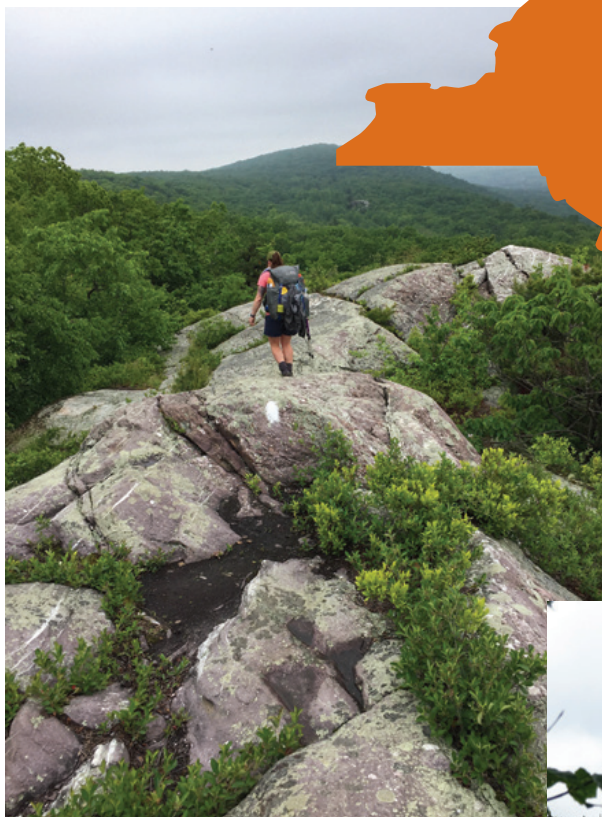
The 14 State Challenge embraces the diversity of the Trail while also putting more control into the hands (and feet) of the hiker. At its most basic level, the challenge encourages participants to experience some of the A.T.’s most accessible places in small, manageable ways. Yet, it is about more than touching at least one white blaze in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. It allows people to harness their energy and put it toward the goal of experiencing what the Trail has to offer, while also reveling that the experience will be different every time. It is the answer for those who cannot, or do not want to, commit to a thru-hike or a 2,000-mile-long journey. The A.T. is a single footpath, sure. But that doesn’t mean users have to experience it that way.

The 14 State Challenge embraces the diversity of the Trail while also putting more control into the hands (and feet) of the hiker. At its most basic level, the challenge encourages participants to experience some of the A.T.’s most accessible places in small, manageable ways.



A.T. Connecticut

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANNE BAKER



fun for them, and they had seen some unforgettable and beautiful sights — and there were always stories about some of the people they had met. They had created some wonderful memories for themselves, and there was also a sense of accomplishment.” Hikers had already created the 14 State Challenge — but it was time to officially give the concept its name so the A.T. community could rally behind the idea.

The “Why” Behind the Pursuit

Washington, D.C. resident Uma Hiremagalur can often be found with her camera, hiking parts of the A.T. and other trails in the area on weekends. She recently purchased a car, and one of the things that excites her most about her purchase is that it enables her to drive to trailheads along the A.T. for more exploring. “I have always felt at peace being outdoors,” she said. “When I moved to D.C. from Colo-



Clockwise from above:
Massachusetts —
near the summit
of Mount Greylock;
New Hampshire —
northbound after
summitting Mount
Washington; New York
— near the New Jersey/
New York state line

rado, I was pleasantly surprised at the proximity to trails and mountains.” Hiremagalur was at the ATC’s Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry in December for the annual holiday party when she found out about the 14 State Challenge. She realized it fit in with her goals

14 State Origins

Laurie Potteiger, information services manager at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), says the 14 State Challenge was inspired by those who stopped by the ATC’s Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. On one hand, many visitors were in awe of those who had hiked all 2,000-plus miles of the Trail, but mixed in with that awe was a bit of yearning for their own A.T. adventure. On the other hand, Potteiger noticed some visitors would come by and share stories about hiking parts of the A.T. in different regions or even all 14 states. “Often they would come in after they had completed it, and they would just be beaming,” she said. “It was clear the journey was a great deal of

of hiking parts of the A.T., taking pictures, and visiting the small towns along the way that make the Trail community so special. “Laurie [Potteiger] gave me a 14 State Challenge Patch, talked to me about it, and I was hooked,” Hiremagalur says, explaining that although she has already hiked on the A.T. in several states, she is beginning the challenge anew. “I started right there in Harpers Ferry, and I got one state down — 13 more to go! I’m already planning all the places along my A.T. map that I want to see.”

As she tackles the 14 State Challenge, Hiremagalur hopes to inspire friends and family members to share her journey. She believes it is a great way to talk and walk, enjoy nature,



Clockwise from above:
Jim Baker in the tunnel
under PA 944 near
Carlisle, Pennsylvania; On
the Pochuck Boardwalk
near Glenwood, New
Jersey; Uma Hiremagalur
in West Virginia with her
14 State Patch; Crossing
the Iron Bridge and the
Housatonic River near
Falls Village, Connecticut



destress, and rejuvenate the body — overall, enriching people's lives. "I like having a goal — to share my experience and motivate people to get up, get outdoors, and breathe," she says. "To me, the 14 State Challenge is an amazing way to keep my life and routine and have a great adventure to be excited about."

Ready to Commit?

Because there is only one rule in the 14 State Challenge — that you have to experience a portion of the A.T. in every state it traverses — there are numerous ways you can tackle the challenge. The ATC's website has plenty of information on getting started, and it lists hikes by state and also provides helpful info about each hike. The hikes are suggested destinations though, so if you want to plan a hike around a vacation or work trip, there are many different ways you can do that as well.

The ATC has created what it calls an "aspirational" patch in honor of the 14 State Challenge, and if you're aspiring to complete the challenge and haven't made it to all 14 states yet, you can still grab one to display on your pack. (Don't



worry — it doesn't weigh much!) Hiremagalur plans to take a photo with her patch every time she checks a state off her list. It makes a fun photo prop, but it is also a reminder of an adventure that is tailor-made, by you and for you. And that is something to be proud of.

For more information and to start the 14 State Challenge visit: appalachiantrail.org/14StateChallenge. If you're a social media user and you enjoy sharing your time on the A.T. with your followers, be sure to use the hashtags **#AT14challenge** or **#14StateChallenge** to connect with other 14 State Challenge participants



Vermont — view from the fire tower on Stratton Mountain



Ready to tackle one (or 14) states?

Here are our top resources to get you started.

- **Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers' Companion:** Don't let the title deceive you. This book is most definitely not just for thru-hikers. The ATC and the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association produce this official guide that features elevation profiles, points of interest, Trail town maps, and more. It's the perfect "all-in-one" resource.
- **Best Hikes of the Appalachian Trail: South:** This guide features 45 day hikes in the Trail's southern region (Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) and includes Trailhead coordinates, maps, Trail "ratings," and more.
- **Best Hikes of the Appalachian Trail: Mid-Atlantic:** This guide features 45 day hikes in the mid-Atlantic region of the Trail (West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York). Trailhead coordinates, maps, Trail "ratings," and more are also included.
- **Best Hikes of the Appalachian Trail: New England:** This guide features 45 day hikes in the Trail's northernmost states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine) and includes Trailhead coordinates, maps, Trail "ratings," and more. ↗

All books are available at the Ultimate A.T. Store at: atctrailstore.org



Join Anne on a winter hike in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia at: w

Anne Baker hiked more than 1,300 miles of the Appalachian Trail in 2017 alongside her father (they go by "Shivers and "Shivers' Dad") during a flip-flop thru-hike attempt. Because she can't imagine not having more of the Trail to look forward to, she plans on finishing the rest of the A.T. as a section hike. Anne lives in Martinsburg, West Virginia and has the best support team in the world: her fiancé, Ben, who proposed to her on Katahdin, and their two dogs, Bella and Odin. Connect with Anne at: annewritesfor.me



CREATE YOUR LEGACY WITH THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Planned Giving is an easy and flexible way to meet your philanthropic goals while protecting the Trail you love. Whatever your stage in life, your financial circumstances and your charitable goals, let us show you how to make a gift that benefits you and your loved ones as well as the Appalachian Trail.

Contact: Marie E. Uehling
Director of Individual and Planned Giving
Email: muehling@appalachiantrail.org
Phone: 304.885.0462
Visit: appalachiantrail.org/legacy







BRING YOUR BEST WHEN YOU REST

BY LAURALEE BLISS

HOW many of us have backpacked on a rainy day? Gear and clothing get soaked. Chills set in. Spirits are in need of a boost. The weather drives you to finish the day in a nice dry location like one of the many Trailside shelters that offer a refuge from the storm.

Shelters (or huts or lean-tos as they are also called) have long been part of the Appalachian Trail, providing a place of rest and an atmosphere to interact with fellow hikers. From the simple log and dirt floors of old to today's three- and four-sided structures, some with multiple levels, fireplaces, porches, and bunks, shelters offer a place to relax after a day's wander. Although their most essential function is to concentrate impacts, many shelter locations offer other conveniences to the hiker such as water sources, picnic tables, privies, camping areas, firepits, and sometimes food storage. Shelter registers allow hikers to jot down thoughts about their adventure and stay in touch with others.

Shelter life, however, can quickly turn from a place of peace to one of distress. Case in point. I trudged in solid rain all day on the A.T. in southern Virginia on a section hike one summer week. My original camping destination quickly changed to the safety of a shelter that would provide a place to stay without having to set up a tent in the rain. After 18 miles, I arrived at the shelter. Ziploc bags of food greeted me from the small built-in area reserved for the shelter register. Garbage and remnants of burned trash lay strewn about the firepit. Soon after, two





Top: Brook Shelter, White Mountains, New Hampshire 📷 Photo by Erin Donovan; Below: Deep Gap Shelter, Georgia 📷 Photo by Laurie Potteiger

BE PREPARED FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

Shelters are generally first-come, first-serve to anyone backpacking the A.T., with no preference as to how long a hiker is out or how far one is hiking. Carrying a tent or hammock set-up is a necessity; you never know when a shelter might be full. A notable exception is the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP), which has special regulations for shelter use, with different options for long-distance hikers meeting specific criteria (refer to smokiespermits.nps.gov). Advance permits are required of all overnight hikers in the GSMNP, but can only be made about a month in advance. Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and Pennsylvania Game lands have some unique regulations, but do not require any actions in advance. Baxter State Park in Maine also has unique regulations (baxterstatepark.org). North-bound long-distance hikers are strongly encouraged to stop in the Monson Visitor Center (at the beginning of the "100 Mile Wilderness") to make a plan for their stay in the park, which sometimes includes a stay at a lean-to. Section-hikers and others visiting the park for short stints are advised to make their reservations as far in an advance as possible.

If you are planning to arrive at a shelter after "hiker midnight" (usually considered to be after 9 PM), plan to tent. Hikers having to move around in a shelter to accommodate latecomers deprives everyone of needed sleep. If you know you are an early riser (before 6 AM) consider tenting also. Groups should also plan to tent rather than taking over an entire shelter.

hikers came in. One hiker proceeded to string up a hammock that took over half the shelter. I didn't make a big deal out of it as there were only three of us — until well after 10 PM as I lay snug in my sleeping bag when three soaking wet hikers came stomping in, looking for room. The hammocker stayed put, forcing the latecomers to set up right beside me. The hikers talked quite loudly while shining bright beams of white light across my face. I slept little with the hiker snoring beside me. The next morning, I noticed the hikers had left their food bags on the shelter floor. I wondered how many of those bags had holes in them from the mice. Exhausted by it all, I gathered my gear and left. Not a restful experience.

Fortunately, most experiences in shelters are not like this — and humanity is at its best with hikers understanding that courtesy and respect are key to everyone's experience. And that kindred graciousness for fellow A.T. trekkers shines through, a good rest is had, and possibly some new friends are made.

HOW

can we bring our best to the shelters so they serve as friendly places to relax?



BE FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL TO OTHER HIKERS

When you arrive at the shelter, keep your gear contained in a small area. Putting up a tent inside a shelter means you're taking up extra space someone else could use, and putting up a privacy shield that creates a weird vibe in a communal space. Even if you think you may be the only one in residence, chances are you won't. On stormy nights, be prepared for a packed house. I've seen hikers work together on a rainy evening to make room for all, allowing for great kinship and a new hiker family. Having a headlamp that has a night feature (red in color) rather than a simple white beam that blinds your neighbor will make for more pleasant surroundings. If you know you snore, chances are you will have lots of unhappy folks in the AM if you stay in the shelter. Have mercy and set up your tent. Earplugs are a good idea for shelter dwellers. Cook and eat away from the shelter. Some stoves sound like jet engines when fired up (and can wake the dead), and even a small crumb of spilled food can be a meal for a mouse and keep him coming back for more. Take great care with alcohol stoves as flare-ups can damage wooden shelter floors and picnic tables.

Refrain from making calls on your cell phone in the shelter area and move a good distance away to make your call. If you hike with a dog, the most considerate thing is to tent, especially if your dog is muddy, very active, or is prone to barking, but at least ask first if your dog is welcome in the shelter. Always keep your pooch on a leash. Some hikers are allergic,

fearful, or don't want dogs near their gear or food. Refrain from smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or cannabis in a shelter. It's just common courtesy, whether the substances are legal are not. Use shelter logs for your Trail reflections and not the shelter walls or inside the privy (it is illegal to deface shelter walls). Use the broom to sweep out the shelter when you leave in the AM to ready it for future occupants.

DISCOURAGE UNWANTED VISITORS (BEARS & MICE)

The mouse hangers and hooks in shelters are for packs and gear. If storing your pack in a shelter, make sure zippers are open and all food and toilet paper is removed. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) recommends bear-resistant food canisters as the best way to protect your food and "smellables" from bears and all other critters, as well as protecting bears from the consequences of becoming habituated to hiker food (meaning the bear must be relocated or euthanized). Otherwise, hang all food away from the shelter either by bear bagging (using the "PCT" method, recommended by the ATC) or by devices provided in the shelter area such as cables, poles, or bear boxes. Do not leave behind excess food as it attracts animals and makes more work for Trail volunteers. Use the picnic table to eat your food. Carry out all food and trash. And don't burn trash (any fragments left attract wildlife) or garbage in the firepit.

Chestnut Knob Shelter,
Virginia 📷 Photo by
Kaleigh Toole

KEEP IT CLEAN: HYGIENE AROUND THE SHELTER

Help keep the area in the immediate vicinity of the shelter clean by brushing your teeth, urinating, and washing up at least 100 feet away, and 200 feet from a water source. Most shelters have privies; use them. Only toilet paper should go down the privy hole, all other hygiene products should

be packed out in a sealable bag. When you can get some distance from the privy, shelter and water source, wash up with a bit of biodegradable soap and water to reduce the chance of spreading highly contagious stomach bug or norovirus. Following these and other Leave No Trace Principles will make life better for the environment, you, and your fellow trekkers. 🌱

BY BRINGING YOUR BEST TO SHELTER AREAS IN KEEPING FOOD AND GEAR SAFE AND REMEMBERING YOUR FELLOW HIKERS, SHELTERS CAN BE PLACES OF REST AND FELLOWSHIP FOR ALL.

For more information and tips visit: appalachiantrail.org/shelters
Leave No Trace etiquette: Int.org and appalachiantrail.org/Int. Learn more about the ATC's A.T. Camp program at: atcamp.org

Lauralee Bliss is an A.T. 4,000-miler both north and south, worked as a ridgerunner for Shenandoah National Park, and is a speaker and the author of *Mountains, Madness, and Miracles – 4,000 Miles along the Appalachian Trail*. Visit: blissfulhiking.com



MOMENTUM & FLOW

LESSONS IN LIFE "POST TRAIL"

By Shalin Desai



KATAHDIN

BAYTER PLAK - ELEVATION 5267 FT

NORTHERN TERMINUS OF THE
APPALACHIAN TRAIL

A MOUNTAIN FOOTPATH EXTENDING OVER
2000 MILES TO SPRINGER MTN. GEORGIA

- ← THOREAU SPRING
- ← KATAHDIN STREAM CAMPGROUND
- ← PENOBSCOT WEST BRANCH AT ABOL BRIDGE
- ← MAINE-NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE LINE
- ← MT. WASHINGTON, N. H.
- ← SPRINGER MTN., GEORGIA

BAYTER STATE PARK



A

few months before I headed to Springer Mountain, a friend suggested I reach out to former thru-hikers to help prepare for my own journey. It seemed like a great idea: the web offered a lot of advice but I found it difficult to wade through all the information. Luckily, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) keeps an online directory of thru-hiker alumni organized into groups with shared interests and identities. As a queer, South Asian male, I tapped into the LGBT and South Asian directories and copied *all* of the email addresses into a single email. I sent out a list of 15 questions to approximately 30 people and expected almost no one to respond. I assumed they were too far from the Trail either in terms of time or distance; but, the next morning, I woke up to about 20 responses containing advice on gear, resupply, budgeting, and a whole host of other Trail topics. Over the span of a week *everyone* replied. It was my first insight into the singularity and generosity of the thru-hiking community and A.T. community in general.

One of the emails that stood out came from Neal Hanlin. Neal, or “O.G.,” was a LGBT hiker from South Carolina who signed up as a mentor to prospective hikers. Over the course of four weeks, he patiently fielded all of my follow-up questions until I felt fully prepared and confident. Fast-forward two years, Neal and I completed our Triple Crowns in the same year. Neal thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2009, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in 2014, and the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) in 2017. I thru-hiked these same trails in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Over the course of our treks, our relationship transformed. We were mentor-mentees and, now, we are trail brothers. This year, when we both hiked the CDT, we spoke every week helping each other plan routes, determine resupply, compile gear lists, or simply to check in with each other. Now, we are both on another type of journey: figuring out what to do post-Trail. To bring it full circle, I’ve decided to ask Neal a new set of questions about life *after* the Trail, a situation so many long-distance hikers find



**I LEARNED FROM THRU-HIKING:
FIRST, WORRYING IS A WASTE
OF PRECIOUS ENERGY AND
SECOND, A SENSE OF URGENCY
CAN EITHER LEAD TO ANXIETY
OR CLARITY.**



Left: Shalin on Katahdin at the completion of his A.T. thru-hike; Above: Neal in Baxter State Park in Maine

SD: It's been six years since you thru-hiked the A.T., what have you been up to since?

NH Before I hiked the A.T., I was following my degree in transportation logistics. I was getting promoted and networking with the right people in the industry. However, while I was advancing, I didn't feel remotely fulfilled. I knew I had to find something else that would make me less complacent and challenge me. Hiking the A.T. changed my perspective completely. After I completed my thru-hike, I caught the hiking bug and focused all my time and energy on completing the Triple Crown. Between trails, I worked several jobs — some in the transportation logistics industry and even a part time job at REI, which helped me squirrel away just enough money to achieve my hiking goals. Now, I am focusing on getting back to work and finding a long-term career or perhaps going back to school.

SD: But, career is one thing and location is another; you also changed location — from East Coast to the West Coast?

NH That's right! Before hiking the A.T., I lived in South Carolina but it never felt like home. I stayed there because it was convenient and close to my family. It wasn't until college that I became a nomad. I studied abroad in Spain and heard about the Camino de Santiago through Paulo Coelho's book, *The Pilgrimage*. I wanted to walk the Camino but I didn't have enough time. So, when I came back to the United States, I heard about the Appalachian Trail and decided, since I didn't hike the Camino, the A.T. would be a great substitute. Of course, it wasn't the only goal I had. I still felt pressure to follow a more conventional path — buy a home, settle into a career, find a husband, etc. But, the more I thought about it, the more I realized it wasn't what I wanted. I just wanted to hike.

After I finished hiking the PCT, I had an opportunity to move in with a cousin in Portland. People told me the city would be a good fit. I'm a bit weird and I like the progressive, socially-conscious nature of the city. Yet, I don't feel comfortable here. I still have nomadic tendencies. The moral of the story is that staying put is still strange to me.

SD: When you started you're A.T. thru-hike, did you have a plan for what you were going to do post-Trail? Or, did you plan to wing it?

NH I had no post-Trail plans. As I approached Katahdin, I got more and more nervous. I knew I had to make two transitions. First, I had to become financially independent. I hiked the A.T. on a tight budget and received some help from my parents. Afterward, I was on my own and didn't have much saved to make a quick transition to financial independence. I also had to find a job that would help pay for subsequent hikes but that wouldn't lead to post-trail depression. Those jobs can take time to find. But, I also knew I had a few things in my favor. I come from a logistics background so planning comes easy to me and I am highly adaptable to changing circumstances. Also, completing a feat like a thru-hike gives you an enormous amount of confidence. Lastly, I used to be a competitive swimmer and I was taught to visualize challenges rather than fear them. So, while I didn't have a plan, I felt like I had the right tools to map out a post-Trail life.

SD: Now that you don't have any thru-hikes on the horizon, do you feel slightly nervous?

NH Of course! But, that nervousness is more about lapsing back into a job I am good at but don't find fulfilling. Two things I learned from thru-hiking: first, worrying is a waste of precious energy and second, a sense of urgency can either lead to anxiety or clarity. In my case, it's led to clarity. I can't sit back and enjoy that post-Trail glow. I feel a pressure to act and act soon.

SD: Agreed. Apart from learning to be adaptable, what other transferable skills did you glean from your thru-hikes?

NH One thing that all thru-hikers do but don't realize is a transferrable skill is simplification. On Trail, we are constantly evaluating our needs and changing up our gear and resupply accordingly. Not only that, we are also trying to carry as little as possible at all times. The Trail is a master class in keeping things simple. While that can lead to a more physically comfortable hike, we don't realize that it has emotional and mental benefits as



Neal on the PCT in Kings Canyon National Park, California

well. We learn to have less emotional baggage. We have less clutter in our houses. We get rid of things we don't need or that weigh us down. Thru-hikers are also excellent at developing routines and staying disciplined. I call it a "flow state." Things can become repetitive on Trail but that repetition and discipline helps us achieve our goals.

SD: Apart from developing skills and gaining insight, the Trail changes people in subtle or big ways. Returning can sometimes be difficult. What did you find difficult to adjust to post-Trail? What was easy to pick back up again?

NH What I found easiest to come back to was taking a glass, putting it under a faucet, and filling it with potable water. Readily available hydration is something I took for granted for a long time but, now, I find it marvelous.

SD: Let's talk about money. Finances are something thru-hikers have a difficult time managing after the Trail but you've done well. What is some advice you have for thru-hikers about financial health?

NH First, don't thru-hike if you can't afford it. I know people who hiked the Trail with partial funds or planned to wing it if they ran out of money. I don't recommend doing either. It's not comfortable. It's not responsible. I hiked the A.T. on a tight budget and not being able to indulge in everything in town can be both physically and mentally uncomfortable. Second, make sure you have savings to cushion your return from the Trail. I recommend a few thousand dollars. It makes the job search and living situation so much better. Also, the job search can take an indefinite amount of time. Don't put *all* of your savings into a thru-hike. Lastly, make a budget. You don't want to worry about money on the Trail, at least not all of the time. Plan for indulgences. You will have cravings – a good meal, a warm room, a nice bed. Indulging is good for your health and can reduce some of the anxiety you will certainly feel while hiking. Physical comforts can translate to mental comfort.

SD: I totally agree. But, what are some things you had to give up post-Trail?

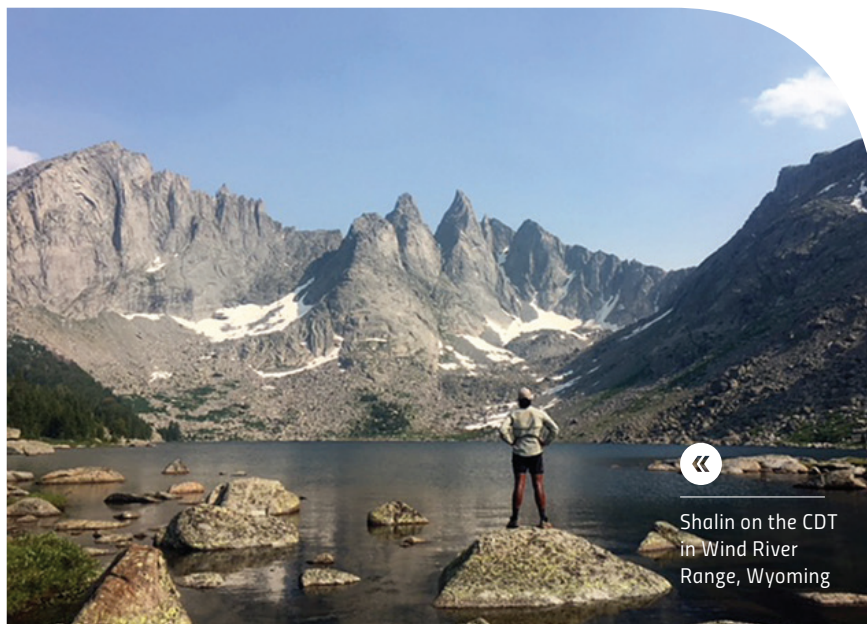
NH Here's one thing: I can't eat what I want in large quantities anymore. Unfortunately, I wasn't blessed with a high metabolism. You have to continue finding a way to stay active. Also, when you're thru-hiking, you're focused on reaching the end. But, once that goal disappears you have to find a new one. Finding a long-term career is definitely one goal but, now, I am focusing on getting back into competitive swimming and hopefully qualifying for the Gay Games in 2022 in Hong Kong.

SD: Every thru-hiker builds a relationship when they're hiking the Trail and, when you finish, re-defining that relationship can be difficult. Do you miss the A.T.? Do you hike now? Do you plan to return or reconnect to the Trail?

NH Yes, yes, and yes! I miss the Trail community as much as I miss the hiking aspect. Even though I'm a landscape guy — I find serenity in the beauty of the Trail



ON TRAIL, WE ARE CONSTANTLY EVALUATING OUR NEEDS AND CHANGING UP OUR GEAR AND RESUPPLY ACCORDINGLY... THE TRAIL IS A MASTER CLASS IN KEEPING THINGS SIMPLE.



Shalin on the CDT in Wind River Range, Wyoming

— I still miss the community aspect more. I reconnect [by helping others who are on hikes]. Since I'm in Portland now, I go to Cascade Locks, which is on the Pacific Crest Trail next to the border of Oregon and Washington, and offer rides to thru-hikers, provide a place to stay, or take them to REI so they can grab gear. Or, if I'm on vacation or visiting family in South Carolina, we often take trips to do similar "Trail magic" on the weekends. Also, working at REI, part of the value I provide is the experience of hiking three long trails and helping potential thru-hikers stay light and as comfortable as possible.

I also attend an annual hiker reunion. My friend "Moonwalker" (Marit Gay) who I met while thru-hiking the A.T. in North Carolina, came up with the idea of bringing the '09 thru-hikers together to hang out for a weekend, cook meals together, go off on day hikes, and reminisce about our thru-hiking days. Our first reunion was in the Shenandoahs in 2011 when we rented a cabin in the park. We've been getting together every year since.

SD: I can attest to how great these reunions are since I joined you in 2015.

Yes; there's value in getting together with like-minded people. You experience a bit of culture shock when you return from the Trail. Your friends and family can't really understand what you've been through. They don't have a context for how you've changed and have a difficult time communicating with you and vice versa. Being able to reach out to people who can grasp what you've gone through can be helpful. That level of empathy only exists if you stay involved in the thru-hiker community and can help stave off the sense of loss you experience when you leave the Trail. ⚡

Shalin Desai lives in Massachusetts and serves as a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Board of Directors.

To prepare for a long-distance hike or find out more information from other hikers visit: appalachiantrail.org/adviceandprep



Dawn in the Presidential
Range of the White
Mountains; Inset: Self
photo of Erin at work



GRAND LANDSCAPE

Since 1998, Erin Paul Donovan has been creating unique and inspirational images that showcase New England's landscape. He approaches photography from a realist's point of view and is passionate about creating awareness for land conservation and historic preservation.

"As a photographer, I love the variety of photo subjects along the New Hampshire portion of the A.T.," says Erin. "The peaceful forest scenes, the inspiring waterfalls, and the grand landscape of the Presidential Range, the subject matter is endless. It is an outdoor photographer's paradise. And the history attached to the A.T. is just as amazing as the scenery." On a personal level, Erin enjoys meeting other hikers on the Trail in New Hampshire. "Everyone on the A.T. has a unique story. And because I am a local to the White Mountains, I also get to see all the hard work that goes into maintaining the New Hampshire A.T. corridor," he says. "The creation and the upkeep of the Trail is an impressive accomplishment that inspires me. But what I love most about it is that it brings people from all ages and backgrounds together to enjoy nature." Some of Erin's work is highlighted in the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's coffee table book: *The Appalachian Trail: Celebrating America's Hiking Trail*. In his free time from operating his company, ScenicNH Photography, he explores the White Mountain National Forest.

scenicnh.com



Twilight on Mount Pierce in
the White Mountains







Mount Jackson – White Mountains

STEWART VERDERY



Time and Talent

By Beth Griffin

“TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE” IS A phrase that is often used in churches, charities, and non-profit organizations such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to promote sacrificial giving and acts of service. As an organization of over 6,000 volunteers, 42,000-plus members and donors, and thousands of men and women who came before and upon whose work we continue to build, the ATC truly embodies the ideals of these three simple words.

We have the opportunity to profile just a few of the people whose work combines all the ideals of the words: time, talent, and treasure. Beyond financial

support, board, committee, and club service are among the more obvious ways volunteers connect to the ATC. And then there are the unique talents that Stewart Verdery brings our organization.

Stewart is a native Virginian and a graduate of Woodberry Forest, Williams College, and the University of Virginia Law School — all schools from which he was able to enjoy frequent day hikes on the A.T. Since college, his work in law, government, and advocacy — and as a husband and father of three — have largely limited time on the A.T., though the idea of an unplugged month on the Trail still serves as a calming ideal in the midst of his busy days. Stewart’s career has included serving as legal counsel to three U.S. Senators: John Warner, Orrin Hatch, and Don Nickles, and then serving as assistant secretary for Border and Transportation Security Policy and Planning in the Department of Homeland Security. In 2006, he founded Monument Policy Group, a bi-partisan public policy advocacy firm, headquartered in Washington, D.C. At Monument, Stewart has served as a senior advisor to leaders of some of the world’s best-known corporate brands.

For the past decade, Stewart and Monument Policy Group have provided pro-bono assistance to the ATC in its policy advocacy work with Congress and federal agencies. The ATC is proud to have a long history of support from both sides of the aisle, and Stewart’s expertise, reputation, and guidance have helped us continue to navigate successfully in a political climate that is increasingly polarized.

More recently, Stewart has served as the chair of the ATC’s President’s Advisory Circle, which provides strategic advice to ATC leadership and supports the ATC’s fundraising team. Through this work, Stewart has helped us secure significant contributions for the ATC’s work. We are grateful to Stewart and Monument Policy Group for an extraordinary commitment of time, sharing of uncommon talents, and generosity of treasure. 🌲



From top: Stewart at Mount Blanc in France; With his wife, Jenny at Crabtree Falls in Virginia



Beth Griffin is the ATC’s associate director of Individual and Planned Giving.

Save
the
Date

Sunday
8.12.2018

The **ATC Annual Membership Meeting** will be held at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) Shepherdstown, WV

More details to follow.
We hope to see you there.



Capture your Trail experience
with a great video?



A.T. Journeys is looking for short video clips of your hiking experience on the Trail to highlight in our new dynamic digital edition of the magazine.

Videos should be no longer than 5 minutes and sent via a linked/embedded format (e.g.; YouTube, Vimeo) or MP4 via file sharing. Don't forget to send those high res photos (1MB or larger) too!

For more information contact:
editor@appalachiantrail.org



REGISTER

Aspiring A.T. thru-hikers can now register their 2018 hikes online. Registrants will be able to see the numbers of hikers registered to start on each day, then plan accordingly to start on an uncrowded day or location to limit their ecological and social impacts on the Trail.

2018 THRU-HIKER REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

TO REGISTER A HIKE VISIT:
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The Reluctant Hiker

A determined woman's grasp on the gravity of the Trail

By *Lena Edwards*



MY FEET WERE LEADEN STUBS THAT dragged my aching carcass one quaking step at a time down the paved half-mile trail that leads from the summit of Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park back to the parking lot. I never felt so tired in my life; and if I looked like I felt, I must have appeared to those around me as Death himself. I remember a chipper, non-perspiring tourist standing somewhere near the visitor center caught my attention. With a sympathetic grin he asked, “Did you just come from the top?” While I may have felt nearly dead, my pride was anything but. “No.” I gasped, “I just came from Siler’s Bald.”

Siler’s Bald is about 5.25 miles down

the Appalachian Trail from Clingmans Dome, roughly ten and a half miles as an in-and-out hike. It is also my least-favorite type of in-and-out hike because all the elevation loss occurs during the first half of it. On the return, hikers must summit Mount Buckley before beginning the ascent to Clingmans Dome. Mount Buckley is where I finally broke down. Steve, my loving husband of just nine months at the time and the reason I found myself in this predicament, decided he could no longer walk at such a slow pace and told me he’d meet me back at the car.

When I finally arrived back where we parked, I climbed in and silently buckled my seatbelt. Steve just sat there and stared at me. I’m not entirely sure what was going through his mind in that moment. Perhaps he felt frustration at my incredibly slow pace or humor at my disheveled appearance. I think, however, that he probably felt fear: fear that I wouldn’t want to hike anymore. Hiking was a hobby that I adopted only after dating (and eventually marrying) Steve. I quickly confirmed the worst as I hung my head, burst into tears, and cried out, “Baby, don’t ever do that to me again!” “What do you mean?” he replied. “I don’t want to hike if it’s going to be like this,” I said. “I feel terrible. I hate this. Nothing about today was fun.” “You didn’t enjoy any of it?” he asked, “what about the hike down? That was fun, wasn’t it?” To tell the truth, the hike down was nice, but I was too worn-out to concede anything. I cried out all my frustrations and then promptly fell asleep.

Hiking was not discussed any further until one evening, two months later, when I announced to Steve that I was ready to get back on the Trail. “Really?!” Steve responded, doing a poor job of hiding his excitement. “You really want to go hiking?” Yes, I assured him, I really wanted to go hiking. I did not, however, want to do anything that would require an elevation gain during the second half of the hike. He readily agreed and set to work devising the perfect plan for a perfect day. The following weekend we hiked a nine-mile loop in Elkmont that was absolutely delightful; and a month after that, in late October, I completed my longest and toughest hike yet from the Low Gap trailhead in the Cosby Campground area, along the A.T., and finally to



Lena and Steve with their daughter Trillium, and infant son Silas at Max Patch this past September

the Mount Cammerer fire tower (I can share these details with 100 percent accuracy thanks to Steve's Jeffersonian habit of documenting all his hikes in a spreadsheet). The trek up to Mount Cammerer was the catalyst hike that really made me fall in love with hiking. In the following year, we logged 385.6 miles before a bad bout of plantar fasciitis in my right foot slowed me up. Just as soon as I recovered from that, we found out we were expecting our first child.

A quick Google search reveals scores of women who tout the many advantages of hiking while pregnant, assuring the reader that not only is it wonderful exercise (which it is); it is completely possible and very safe right up until one's due date. One page blithely states, "But some women have that adventurous spirit that you can't keep down, even with a bun in



From top: Trillium follows along at Gregory Bald in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; Lena on the A.T. at Spence Field in the Smokies in 2012

the oven." My spirit was willing; but boy, my flesh was weak. Eight weeks of morning sickness, followed by doctor's orders to stay off the Trail, kept me from hiking a single mile for nearly seven months. I'm sure Steve had all but given up on me. My first hike post-partum was a mere two and a half miles along the very flat, very even, Gatlinburg Trail (I logged over 15 miles in a hike down Sugarland Mountain from Newfound Gap at my peak). Needless to say, I was very aware of how far I'd fallen, fitness-wise, in the intervening seven months.

Fortunately, our daughter was born in the dead of winter; and by the time I was recovered enough to begin hiking again in earnest, spring was upon us. The promise of mountain wildflowers in full bloom was just the enticement Steve needed to lure me back onto the Trail, and we hiked every weekend from March to May. A wiser man, he initially kept the mileage low and slowly increased it over time.

Before our daughter or I knew what happened, we were consistently logging around seven miles each hike; and on July 26, almost exactly three years later to the day, we returned to Clingmans Dome and hiked south on the A.T. to the Double Springs Shelter. I still feel a not-so-small pang of pride when I remember how easily I hiked back up Mount Buckley. This time, the hike back to the car was not the death march I remembered. This time, I didn't slog my way down the paved Clingmans Dome Trail, a shell of my former self. This time I swaggered — with both my hiking poles cradled in my right arm, a conquering hero of the worst mountain I ever climbed.

A little over three years after my triumphant return to Mount Buckley, our mileage has significantly decreased. Our now-preschool-aged daughter is officially graduated from the backpack carrier. We're doing well to log three miles in a single hike, and we stick to trails that

offer wider paths and safer water crossings. Her little legs are eager in the beginning but tire out quickly, and her interest in the hike lasts about as long as her legs do. These days, I am not the one complaining when I get tired, my daughter is. I have joined the ranks of my husband as an encourager. Just as he used to encourage me, I am now encouraging our little reluctant hiker 2.0.

Why do we keep hiking? What draws us away from our comfortable home, with all its amenities of modern life, into muggy air, biting flies, mosquitoes, rocky terrain, and blistered feet? Why would we drag our daughter (and now infant son) into the wilderness again, and again? I could expound upon topics ranging from spiritual renewal to physical fitness, but I won't. Those are good and honorable reasons for hiking, but I don't believe they are why our family hikes. To tell the truth, it just feels good. It feels good to watch our daughter revel in conquering her own "Buckley" — be it a particularly steep hill or rock-hopping her first stream crossing. It feels good to watch her confidence grow. It feels good to see the Trail through the fresh eyes of our infant son, to notice how the sun shining on a hot day makes the leaves above look like glittering emerald jewels. It feels good to share a beautiful vista, a rollicking waterfall, or a peaceful forest with each other. It feels good to share the Trail with our kids and fall in love with hiking all over again. 🌱



AS THE TEMPERATURES TURN colder and the days get shorter, the bright spots in our work at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) come from the countless individuals, companies, and organizations who dig a little deeper each year to help protect the A.T. experience. For thousands of people every season who enjoy the “people’s trail,” our donors play a special role. Whether it’s through a gift to the ATC in the form of an annual membership, a major gift from an individual, or a large corporate contribution, each person and business helps to create something much bigger than themselves. By protecting the mission of the ATC, these special contributors are helping to ensure the protection of the iconic Appalachian Trail for generations to come.


So, as New Year’s resolutions are in full swing, I ask you: What will you be known for when you leave this earth? The most influential people are often noted as the ones who leave behind impactful legacies that live on in the hearts of the people and places they touch with their gifts. As we pass on, physically, we may no longer be part of our communities or the greater society, but our principles, our achievements, our philosophies, and our support of organizations will and can live on—from generation to generation.

So, in 2018, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy has made a special commitment to expand our Planned Giving program. We aim to provide more opportunities for our members and supporters to easily incorporate the ATC into their existing or to-be-created legacy and

Creating a Lasting Legacy



Tiffany Lawrence and Chris Blosser, director of corporate & foundation relations, accept a recent donation from corporate partner, Northwest Federal Credit Union on behalf of the ATC, from Northwest Federal Credit Union’s “70 Acts of WE” Campaign

estate planning. With the use of simple documents and access to Planned Giving experts, individuals may wish to think of the ATC in a bigger way. Our Membership and Development team is standing by to help answer questions and assist in this capacity. Bryce, a recent Planned Giving donor, completed a thru-hike in 1996 after his college graduation. This past year, in 2017, after the start of a successful career, he chose to make a gift that will live beyond his lifetime. He chose to include the ATC in his estate plan. We celebrate Bryce and the many others who have chosen to make this commitment. Our organizational endowment, created by these donations, will help to safeguard the future of our organization. To learn more visit: appalachiantrail.org/plannedgiving. 

Tiffany Lawrence / Vice President of Membership & Development

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HIKING PARTNERS

Trying to locate Ohio section

hikers whom I met October 7 in PA (Rtes. 325 to 443 hike NB) for future (spring) PA section hikes. This is Mike from Maine. Your group of 7 included Brian and Eric who I hiked and had lunch with. You may remember my arm injury and the snake eating the mouse. I can help with shuttling and expenses. If you guys are out there you can contact me at: mgloveless@gmail.com.

Looking for **hiking partner for A.T., PCT, CDT, or Camino or other long trail** for leisure thru-hike. Contact Michelle at: m.michelle7654@gmail.com.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Summer **2018 Caretakers Needed for Blackburn Trail Center**. Owned and operated by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, the Blackburn Trail Center is located on the A.T. 12 miles south of Harpers Ferry. Blackburn is a premier stop for A.T. thru-hikers and day hikers alike. It is also used for Trail club meetings, crew work trips, training workshops, and large group rentals. The caretaker's duties will include: maintaining the Trail Center, Hiker's Hostel, and campground. Should have experience in offering comfort and company to weary A.T. hikers. Flexibility and ability to get along with wide variety of people a must! Prefer couple

with knowledge of the A.T. and hiker's needs. Stipend offered along with a fabulous summer experience. Dates runs from April 1 through October 31 though there is possibility of growing into full-time position. If interested, send a letter of application, resume, and professional/personal references to: Chris Brunton, P.O. Box 169 Harpers Ferry WV 25425 or email: trailbossbtc@msn.com. If you have questions call Chris at: (703) 967-2226.

The ATC is seeking volunteers to help answer Trail information calls at our headquarters office in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. If you are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about hiking and backpacking along the A.T., especially in Maryland, Northern Virginia, and Harpers Ferry, we are interested in your help. We are looking for dedicated volunteers to help answer Trail information phone calls (and provide other administrative support) on weekdays. If you are

interested contact Jeff Metzger at: jmetzger@appalachiantrail.org.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy **(ATC) is recruiting for several internship positions for the spring of 2018** including: Public Relations, Social Media, Development Database, Development Events, and Lands Steward. Interns work on a wide variety of projects and tasks including everything from membership and development to conservation. An internship at the ATC is an excellent way to gain a hands-on, work-learn experience in a specific area of interest or field of study. For more information and to apply visit: appalachiantrail.org/internships. 

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length.



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Public Notices

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PAY IT FORWARD

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP TO THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY. MEMEBERS RECEIVE: AN OVERSIZED A.T. MAP, FOUR ISSUES OF A.T. JOURNEYS, DISCOUNTS TO THE ULTIMATE APPALACHIAN TRAIL STORE AND OTHER RETAILERS, VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND INVITATIONS TO SPECIAL EVENTS.

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From left to right:
Songbird, Three Ties,
Steel foot, Blossom, and
Wooly Bear on the Trail
in Pennsylvania

THE SUN IS JUST BEGINNING TO sneak out behind a voluminous white cloud as we crest the hill. As our eyes look ahead gasps of wonder escape our mouths. The Trail crosses over a lush green field, which is welcome relief to our tired legs but the beauty of this scene fills us with awe. Naturally, our breathing slows, our steps are lighter and our souls lift and soar. This is what I call “nature therapy.”

As a mom of seven children, it's no wonder I need therapy of any kind. Currently, I still have five children at home. These five fill my days with strengths and struggles. Four out of

the five have special needs that challenge them and myself. Most of the things that I take for granted are very difficult for them. My daughter, (autistic, partial deafness, semi-verbal), struggles with flexibility in her joints but she hikes the Trail and over the rocks and roots like a pro. Yes, she's fallen down quite a bit, but she gets right back up and continues to push forward bellowing out a song as she goes. That's why her Trail name is “Songbird.” Although she goes to therapy each week, I believe this is one of the best therapies she can have because when we finally reach our car, not only has she worked her joints, but she's worked her confidence muscle and the pride she feels at having completed another section shines on her face. My son, (autistic, intellectual disability, reactive attachment disorder, ADHD), looks forward to hiking each week. He's actually a great map reader and direction discerner, areas where I struggle. He always finds treasures as he goes... hickory nuts are a favorite. His Trail name is “Wooly Bear” because he loves the caterpillars with that name that he finds all over the Trail. My youngest son, (autistic, ADD, ADHD,

semi-verbal) loves jumping off rocks, walking on the dead trees, throwing rocks into the creeks we pass, finding walking sticks, and just spreading his joy and zest for life as he hikes. He's become rather famous on our hikes. His Trail name is “Three Ties” because he has an infatuation with ties. He often has three or four clip-on ties attached to his shirt collar or to his sleeves. He finishes his sensational look with my cheetah headband like a sweat band on his head. When we meet up with someone again as we are hiking, they always remember him and call out to him. He loves that. My other daughter has medical conditions but that doesn't stop her. She's almost always in the front, singing, laughing, and discovering. Her Trail name is “Blossom” and it fits her beautifully. My last son's Trail name is “Steel foot.” He's chosen this because he loves to crunch the dead branches with his strong feet. He can be found climbing the huge boulders, telling jokes, collecting treasures, and dancing his way down the A.T.

The Trail provides therapy to our bodies, our souls, and our minds. We sure sleep well those nights after we hiked. It's also providing so many wonderful memories. My parents, experienced section hikers themselves, began hiking with us. Oh the conversations, laughter, and agony we've shared together. Our goal is to complete the whole A.T. It may take us a while, but we are enjoying each step of the way. After all, this nature therapy is the best prescription we have found for all of us. . 📌

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



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MOUNT LAFAYETTE – WHITE MOUNTAINS, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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