

A JOURNEYS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / FALL 2020

RECREATION AS A *Gateway*

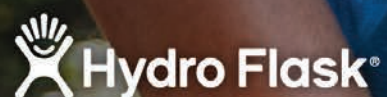


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THE MAGAZINE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY / FALL 2020

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“
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER
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WATER; WHERE IT COMES FROM, WHERE
IT GOES AND ALL THAT HAPPENS ALONG
THE WAY...TRAILS ARE LIKE THAT TOO.
AND WORKING WHERE THESE
TWO THINGS CONSTANTLY INTERSECT
IS A GREAT BOON FOR ME.

~Matt Stevens

”



Chloë de Camara

Chloë de Camara has spent most of her life in western North Carolina. Although she lived in Europe for a year during college, thru-hiked the A.T. in 2015, and lived inside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for approximately two years, North Carolina has always called her back. Growing up the youngest of five kids made finding solitude in the outdoors a welcomed respite. “I love meeting new people and learning how they connect to the outdoors,” she says. Chloë has been working with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) since 2015, managing ridgerunners, educating novice hikers on how to hike the A.T., and working with professional educators and students finding creative ways to incorporate public lands into standardized curriculum. Her current role as the ATC’s Trail education specialist suits her perfectly. (Beyond Hiking page 28)



Carmen Kraus

Carmen Kraus is a scientist and artist from Athens, Georgia, a city that has the distinction of being a two-hour drive from Springer Mountain. After completing dual bachelor’s degrees in ecology and science illustration and a master’s in plant genetics, she hoped to finally hit the Trail. The pandemic ruined her plans of a 2020 thru-hike (Postponing a Dream page 44), but that setback has only increased her determination to complete the Trail someday. A clip of her story was recently included in “Where We Walk,” from the podcast She Explores. “I didn’t have the A.T. experience I wanted or planned for this year, so sharing my story with ‘Where We Walk’ and *A.T. Journeys* was very powerful for me,” she says. “It has honestly made me feel more a part of the Trail community — a community I was so devastated to leave in March.” Carmen’s chosen luxury items for backpacking are a sketchbook and her favorite brush tip pens.



Keane Southard

Keane Southard is a composer and pianist from New England. He hiked the New England portion of the A.T. in 2016 and then composed a symphony inspired by the experience, which was commissioned by a consortium of orchestras around New England and has been performed four times to date. Keane received his B.M. in music composition and theory from Baldwin Wallace University, his M.M. in composition from the University of Colorado-Boulder, and is currently a Ph.D. student in composition at the Eastman School of Music (University of Rochester). “I was interested in writing this article because my experience hiking the A.T. was life changing, and I was able to keep that experience alive and share it with others in a unique way,” says Keane. (Parting Thought page 54) He would love to hike the rest of the A.T. one day and perhaps compose another symphony or two inspired by it.



Matt Stevens

Originally from central New York, Matt Stevens now lives in New Hampshire’s Connecticut River Valley where he serves as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) conservation resources manager for Vermont and New Hampshire. Matt came to the ATC after earning a Master’s degree in Resource Management in 2001. His first steps on the A.T. were at Vermont’s Clarendon Gorge while searching for Mill River brook trout in 1985. “It was unintentional,” he says. “I was looking for a way to get down to the water and this little trail with white blazes took me right where I wanted to be.” That experience eventually led to three seasons as a field staff member with the Green Mountain Club. “For as long as I can remember I have been captivated by flowing water; where it comes from, where it goes and all that happens along the way,” Matt says. “Trails are like that too. And working where these two things constantly intersect is a great boon for me.” (Indigenous: Eastern Brook Trout page 46)



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Join the ATC on an amazing virtual A.T. Ed-Venture Series, created for young people but engaging for all ages. Starting in Georgia and traveling all the way north to Maine, each session is led by environmental educators providing exciting content across diverse disciplines that connect curriculum and students to the Appalachian Trail. These interactive sessions will be hosted live via Zoom, and then published to YouTube for access at any time.

Every first and third Wednesday each month.

Each session will have two instructors, typically one formal educator and one community, Trail club, or agency partner. These interactive live sessions will include approximately 45 minutes of lesson time and then allow participants to ask questions to the teachers about the content or more personally about their career paths. Content varies based on the educator’s expertise, discipline, focus, and interest.



Sandi on the section of Trail she and her husband Chris Brunton have been maintaining together for 25 years.

RECREATION & RESPONSIBILITY

THE VERY FIRST TIME I REMEMBER SETTING FOOT on the Appalachian Trail was in the pitch dark on a cold night. I was a new recruit to the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, and they had a work weekend scheduled at the Blackburn Trail Center. It was that kind of perfect crisp, fall weather and the cabin was rustic but welcoming with a lovely wood burning stove and warm cooked meal at the end of the day (I believe we were prefabbing privy boxes). After dinner (and a couple glasses of wine) the leader of the crew announced: "Time for a walk to the view" — after which the regulars quickly doffed coats and boots and hats and started out the door and up the path toward the outbuilding, called the Carriage House. The original trail from Blackburn to the A.T. was a quarter mile or so straight up, around rocks and trees, and not the easiest route for a total novice. But the biggest challenge wasn't the trail up — it was the fact that Blackburn tradition dictated that the night hike to the view had to be done sans flashlights.

My memory has faded as to how much moonlight there was that first evening — but I know through my subsequent, early years there were many nights when you mostly relied on staying close to the person in front.

The reward was always worth it. The rock outcropping above Blackburn looks over the Shenandoah Valley and on clear days you can see well beyond the river to the Massanutten's and Signal Knob to the south. On those dark nights the sky was full of stars and the only ambient lights (in the early 1980s) was from the Charles Town, West Virginia racetrack. Folks used to joke we had to hurry up to the view in order to catch the first evening race.

My point in sharing this story is that while many people come to the Trail through hiking, my introduction to the Trail was as a working volunteer. And, even as I gained experience and fell in love with the idea of hiking and backpacking, I still spent (and spend) most of my time on the Trail working. I can hike to shelters such as Rod Hollow, Jim and Molly Denton, and David Lesser, and know I contributed to their construction and care. I can tell you which steps I helped build in sections from Front Royal, Virginia to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and quite a few spots in Pennsylvania. And I know that every blaze — both north and south — on the three-mile section I maintain with my husband was painted by my hand.

There are lots of stories about what brings people to the Trail and what keeps them coming back. The concept of recreation is as varied as the humans that undertake it. For some, it's all about the long hike, for others it's the day hikes to viewpoints and waterfalls, and for some, like me, it's the joy of seeing a physical job well done at the end of a day in the woods. But in every case the joy that we find in recreating on the Trail also comes with the responsibility to ensure that the resource we so love and enjoy is there for the next visitor and the next generation.

As you think about your favorite activity on the Trail, also take a minute to think how you can ensure its continued protection and preservation. And then go outside and have some fun!

Sandra Marra / President & CEO

AS PLANNING IS UNDERWAY TO HIKE, LEARN, AND PLAY AT A.T. VISTA 2021

WE STILL NEED YOU!

THE INAUGURAL A.T. VISTA 4-DAY WEEKEND EVENT AUGUST 6 – 9

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (SUNY) AT NEW PALTZ

As planning activities are underway for the A.T. Vista 2021 program, we still need you! As the committee gears up for the inaugural A.T. Vista program, we are seeking sponsorships, proposals for workshops, proposals for excursions, and additional volunteers to assist in various aspects of the event.

This 4-day (expanded weekend) event will be held at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz, on August 6-9, 2021. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Benton MacKaye's 1921 article, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference centennial, we will honor the creation of this monumental collaborative idea with activities including hiking, learning, and playing.

If you enjoyed previous Biennial programs, the new A.T. Vista will continue to provide an opportunity for people who cherish the Appalachian Trail to participate in hikes, workshops on topics of common interest, and excursions in the greater Hudson Valley region. These activities will allow you to connect with other kindred spirits.

If you are interested in making this a memorable and ongoing future event, email us at: atvistainfo@gmail.com to join the team!

Visit

ATVISTA.ORG

for more details as the program details unfold

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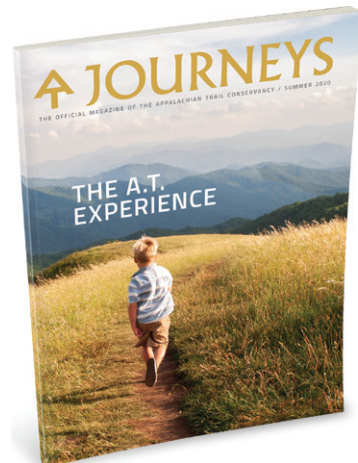
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IT'S GREAT THAT THE ATC IS TAKING a strong stand for racial justice. When I thru-hiked the A.T. in 1978, I took note of the paucity of people of color. While my memory is somewhat hazy of some 42 years ago, I remember seeing black and brown hikers only in the Bear Mountain State Park area in New York and within maybe one or two large church groups on the Trail for a day hike. Through issues of *A.T. Journeys*, I've also taken note of the increasing deliberate efforts of the ATC to reach out to communities of color to involve them in Trail activities, including Trail maintenance, history, and use. I greatly applaud these efforts of ATC staff and A.T. volunteers up and down the Trail. Keep it going. You have my support.

Robert Rosofsky
Milton, Massachusetts

SANDRA MARRA'S COMMENTS (President's Letter: "Shifting Perspectives and Realities" Summer 2020) show true insight into the long view of what the Trail should be. Let it be accepting to all, let us find mechanisms to make

it more accessible to those who cannot afford getting to it, and let it be appreciated as more than just a foot pathway.

Peter A. "Turtur" Farrell, PhD
Washington, North Carolina

THANK YOU FOR YOUR STAND for social justice, even on the Trail. Stick to your guns! Don't back down. There will always be people who think differently. However, social justice — anytime by anyone, whenever — is the will of our Creator. God is no respecter of only "certain" people. We are all of one created race and all deserve equal justice and the right to enjoy the great outdoors. I've done 500 miles of the A.T. and plan to finish the rest of it soon. I am 80 years old and have just completed 40 years on the Pacific Crest Trail. My hip is bothering me so I can't hike right now. I hope to get back soon. It's nice to meet people from all walks of life. To meet new faces in the small towns along the Trail shows me what a small world I live in. One never gets too old to broaden our horizons. Keep the good work up! The virus will be around for a while and shut some things down; but it will pass away eventually like everything else.

Merle Kauffman,
Fontana, California

PRESIDENT SANDRA MARRA'S letter in the Summer 2020 issue holds honest and relevant words. Anyone who hikes the A.T., whether day or distance hiking, can see the absence of racial and ethnic diversity along the Trail. Whenever I am on the Trail, I consider it a blessed experience, but I do not contemplate the privilege that has placed me there. Thanks to Sandra for raising our awareness and encouraging us to consider ways to introduce it to those for whom it is not so easily available.

Bunny Medeiros
Abingdon, Virginia

THE ATC HAS TAKEN THE CORRECT and noble action in regards of dealing

with COVID-19 and the Trail experience. Furthermore, the call to reflect on how what is happening in American society is not out of line and is the right thing to do. This is ingrained from Benton MacKaye, "the ultimate purpose? There are three things: 1) to walk, 2) to see, and 3) to see what you see."

Mark Dunn
Flowery Branch, Georgia

I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU for the digital version of *A.T. Journeys*. It's great that trees are being saved, as well as money (production, postage). This is probably the first time that I actually read *Journeys* right away, I usually set my mail down and don't get to it for a while.

Randolph Duke
Yonkers, New York

WHILE I UNDERSTAND AND respect your proposal to close the Appalachian Trail at this time I would ask you to use a more delicate approach to the problem. I would suggest a moratorium on overnight camping but encourage day use with respect to social distancing and other COVID safety measures: no use of any non-natural Trail fixtures on the Trail. [Being] outdoors is an important part of health that has never been more needed than at this time. I feel for those who have cut their thru-hike short but agree this is not the time, sadly, for a thru- or section hike.

Norman "Sink" Detweiler
Souderton, Pennsylvania

I JUST WANTED TO SEND YOU A quick note to thank you for being an incredible organization. I'm sure you've received some criticism this year and I want you to know that I support you through and through. Your stance has continued to be that thru-hikers should postpone their hikes until things with COVID are settled down. That is a difficult stance to take but you've stuck to it and I'm proud to be part of this community. You still aren't issuing tags or

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registering hikers, you're refraining from reposting photos of the people who chose to go against your requests and thru-hiking anyway. I know y'all know this is the right thing to do and you don't need me to tell you that, but I just wanted to tell you thank you. Thank you for protecting our Trail community, the Trail towns, and the Trail itself.

Melanie "Peanut" Harsha
Franklin, Tennessee

I ENJOYED READING THE TRAIL Stories article in the summer 2020 issue of *A.T. Journeys* ("The Visitor Experience"), especially the episode about the bear sleeping on the tent. But it was the last paragraph that reached in and squeezed my heart. The words: "we love the Trail. Like, LOVE it" choked me up because my wife's and my A.T. thru-hike dreams were shattered this year. This was the year we planned for, but postponed the trip because of COVID. We fully supported the ATC's request to stay off the Trail. Not sure when, or if we will do a thru-hike, but we hope to SOBO hike the 100-Mile Wilderness this year.

Tomas Dundzila
Eliot, Maine

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR fine work to help make the Great American Outdoors Act happen. Great job and kudos to all the good folks at ATC. It's about time! The large bipartisan support is exciting and reassuring. If parties will jettison their tribal and ideological battles and go back to old fashioned sausage making — fiery sometimes but always civil and respectful — we the American citizens can take a deep meditative relaxing breath and go back to feeling assured and calm. Enacting the Great American Outdoors Act can serve as a guiding light forward. Thanks for your excellent work.

Marc H. Wallenstein
Roswell, Georgia

IT'S A SAFE BET, THAT IF THERE had been no Appalachian Trail, my wife Rosemere and I would not still be here today and walking every day for our health. The A.T. took us from scouting to the Allentown Hiking Club, Katahdin via Springer Mountain, the Swiss Alps, and Kibo Hut (15,520 feet) on Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. I shudder when I think how different both our lives would have been if their had been no A.T. or I had not volunteered to be a hiking merit badge counselor.

Harold Croxton
Rushville, Illinois

CORRECTION:

Correction to the article, "Striking a Balance" (Summer 2020): Diana Christopulos was incorrectly listed as RATC president in 2015. Diana served as vice president in 2015, president in 2016, and task force lead while Roger Holnback, Chris Wilson and Mike Vaughn, who was integral in the formation of the McAfee Task Force, all served as president in 2015.

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

P.O. Box 807

Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807

Trail Talk

@Sauceylasagna

The A.T. to me, is a trail where people all over the East Coast can hike together! Talk about social distancing, so fun to think while I'm at my local stretch in New York, someone is at theirs in Georgia, and someone else at theirs in Maine...But in a way, we're all walking together.

[Sandra Marra's letter in the summer issue is] a powerful and timely statement, albeit one that is long overdue among the hiking community. Thank you for showing leadership and conviction even when it isn't popular, even when the potential backlash exposes the very thing the ATC is attempting to confront. I stand and move forward in solidarity, not just as a hiker but as one who must leverage his privilege for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us.

~Matthew Foster

@Katiemorris18

Thank you for explicitly taking a stand. The outdoor community needs to do more to demonstrate a commitment to ending systemic racism.

@Jwearly

Those white blazes are amazing. Sometimes you scream at them because they just keep coming with no end in sight, but when you lose sight of them...wait...did I make a wrong turn? Then overjoyed to see another. Thank you for your tireless work!

#RecreateResponsibly to Protect Yourself, Others, and the Outdoors

During this public health crisis, spending time in outdoor spaces has become even more important for many Americans. Yet these unusual circumstances mean that all of us, from seasoned outdoor enthusiasts to families heading out to their local park for the first time, could use a little guidance about how to stay safe.

The Recreate Responsibly guidelines offer a starting point for getting outside to keep yourself healthy and to maintain access to our parks, trails, and beaches.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it is closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a Plan B.

PLAN AHEAD

Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack lunch and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.

PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Keep your group size small. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.

PLAY IT SAFE

Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury. Search and rescue operations and health care resources are both strained.

EXPLORE LOCALLY

Limit long-distance travel and make use of local parks, trails and public spaces. Be mindful of your impact on the communities your visit.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Respect public lands and waters, as well as Native and local communities. Take all your garbage with you.

BUILD AN INCLUSIVE OUTDOORS
Be an active part of making the outdoors safe and welcoming for all identities and abilities.

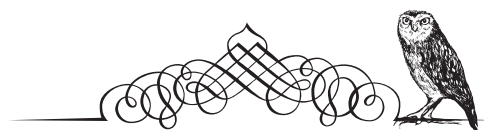
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BEAR RESISTANT CONTAINERS AND BLACK BEAR AWARENESS

Due to an increasing number of serious human/bear interactions at many locations along the A.T., the Appalachian Trail Conservancy continues to strongly recommend use of a bear canister by everyone staying overnight on the A.T.



appalachiantrail.org/bears



RECREATION AS A GATEWAY

BY SARAH JONES DECKER



THERE ARE COUNTLESS STORIES

that could fill these pages of how and why we recreate on the Appalachian Trail and the opportunities it can bring us. My story is just one of many connections to the Trail that is less about hiking and more about the A.T. doing what it does best: connecting people from all over the world to nature and allowing its visitors to reap its long list of mental, physical, and creative benefits. Beyond the fabled “walk in the woods,” the Trail has changed people’s lives long after they leave it. Being on the A.T. can be the spark that can ignite a lifetime love affair with the outdoors and become a gateway to endless opportunities.

My relationship with the Trail began at an early age and has only grown over time. As a high school student in Virginia, I used to hike the A.T. from Snickers Gap up to the rocky outcropping at Bears Den to watch the sun set. When I was 16, I hiked the White Mountains in New Hampshire with my 71-year-old grandpa, Clint Jones, and I was hooked. He had hiked with his family, my young dad included, up and over those rocky peaks for decades. Ten years after we summited Mount Washington together, in 2008, I thru-hiked to Maine and ten years after that, in 2018, I re-hiked the Trail again in sections for my book documenting all of the A.T. shelters. My Grandpa introduced me to the Trail and it changed not only how I recreated outside, but it also shaped my creative work over the last decade. Feeling connected to the Trail, for me, is a core part of my life and has manifested so many opportunities beyond recreation.

For people of all ages, experience, and backgrounds, the A.T. represents a place to enjoy the outdoors and recreate, but it is and can do so much more for its visitors. The broad and infinitely engaging activity of recreation encompasses volunteerism, stewardship, advocacy, creativity, and history. These experiences can lead to a more lasting and deeper impact for many who take those first steps. Recreation is just the beginning of the greater relationship to the Trail.

When we talk about recreating on the A.T., how do we go beyond the instinctual “walk in the woods”? The Trail is not just an opportunity to get boots on a path, but a place to be inspired and a chance to give back. This love of the Trail has helped thousands of people to experience its benefits — and each year, many of those people volunteer and work to preserve and protect it.

The author’s husband Morgan Decker with their daughter Josephine at Lover’s Leap along the Trail in Hot Springs, North Carolina – By Sarah Jones Decker



BEING ON THE A.T. CAN BE THE SPARK THAT CAN IGNITE A LIFETIME LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE OUTDOORS AND BECOME A GATEWAY TO ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES.



*Shadows of section hikers
on the A.T. at Harriman-
Bear Mountain State Park,
overlooking the Hudson
River – New York – By
Raymond Salani III*

KEEPERS OF THE TRAIL

Thousands have dedicated their adult lives and countless hours to the Trail's maintenance, conservation, and preservation over the years. More than 200,000 volunteer hours are typically recorded each year and more than 6,000 people of all ages and backgrounds are essential to keeping the A.T. vision alive by building, repairing, restoring, clearing and reshaping the Trail. The keepers of the Trail take on many names: boundary monitor, caretaker, “croo,” club member, grant writer, educator, Leave No Trace educator, overseer, ranger, sawyer, section maintainer, shelter adopter, shelter maintainer, Trail crew, Trail club volunteer, Trail maintainer, Trail ambassador, youth leader, and more. The Trail was built and continues to be maintained by ordinary people. These workers and volunteers are the heart and soul of our beloved footpath.

The success and longevity of the A.T. relies on the shared love and commitment of these dedicated people who work to preserve it. For the Finneys in Pennsylvania, maintaining two shelters has become a family affair. George, Curt, and Tawnya Finney and their family have been caretakers for the Tumbling Run shelters in Pennsylvania since 1991. George and Curt

joined the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and Potomac A.T. Club (PATC) in 1989 and jumped at the opportunity to take care of the Trail so close to home. They maintain one of the few double shelter sites on the A.T. Popular in the southern part of the Pennsylvania — one shelter is “designated” for snoring hikers and the other non-snoring. George, Curt’s father, usually heads out every morning during peak season to make sure that the privy is stocked with toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and is clean. His son and daughter in law, Curt and Tawnya Finney, also live nearby and visit the Trail and shelters almost every day. “We’re in our 50s and are some of the youngest members of the north chapter of the PATC,” says Curt. “The level of dedication and stamina of many of our senior volunteers always amazes us. Many of the volunteers are in their upper 60s, 70s, and even 80s (including George who is 84).”

A LARGER CAUSE

Beyond on-the-ground maintenance, there are many people who are motivated to protect this special realm through landscape conservation and continue to advocate for the Trail’s protection on a larger scale. The A.T. continues to enhance the A.T. hiking experience and protect thousands of acres of high-priority land. The calling to protect the surrounding flora, fauna, air, and water is made possible by countless people who love and advocate for the Trail. Anne Sentz, ATC’s Landscape Partnership manager, initially came to the Trail as a way to destress from grad school, which turned into a thru-hike and then a career. “The Trail saved my life in so many ways, and it continues to give me a sense of purpose now,” she says. “Ironically, I connect on a deeper level to the A.T. because of its natural values and its potential as a climate corridor in the eastern U.S. Recreation is almost an afterthought for me now.”

The Trail can also become part of a larger calling. Unlike many hikers who are understandably busy looking at their feet to avoid tripping, Jon Taylor spends his time on the Trail counting. Taylor, a member of the American Chestnut Foundation, is part of the A.T. MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project. For this huge undertaking, volunteers select a section of the A.T. they would like to hike and then count American chestnuts along that section. Taylor, a professional woodworker, who, naturally, has the Trail name “Chestnut,” started small section hikes for the project and eventually completed his thru-hike in 2019, documenting all the chestnuts he saw along the way. He says the counts of American chestnuts along the entire Trail corridor are extrapolated to the original range of the tree to give a rough estimate of the number of survivors from the blight that wiped out the once flourishing East Coast giants, with the possibility of collecting genetic material for the future breeding programs. Getting involved with the A.T. MEGA-Transect project has been extremely rewarding for me,” says Taylor. “Over the years I’ve found myself increasingly distant from the natural world. Being out on the Trail has strengthened that connection and all the while contributed a small part to the worthy effort to restore the American chestnut.”

INSPIRED CREATIVITY

For some, the Trail’s inspiration can evolve in the form of a business or lifestyle when they are not hiking it. I know many people who have gone on to hike other long-distance trails, even become “Triple Crowners,” and build careers and businesses that support the Trail in addition to supporting themselves and their families. From shuttle drivers and hostel owners to gear designers, podcasters and outdoor bloggers, this connection comes in many forms.

Wayne Crosby, owner of Bluff Mountain Outfitters in Hot Springs, started his A.T. adventure in 1987. When he arrived in the little Trail town in North Carolina, he fell in love with the area and never left. He has been running his gear shop, raising his family, and supporting hikers on the Trail since ’98, and it has become a Hot Springs (and Trail) institution. Beyond providing gear, shuttles, and experienced knowledge to help hikers on their way, Crosby was part of the broader fight to save one of the areas highest peaks, Bluff Mountain. The A.T. crosses right

THE CALLING TO PROTECT THE
SURROUNDING FLORA, FAUNA,
AIR, AND WATER IS MADE POSSIBLE
BY COUNTLESS PEOPLE WHO LOVE
AND ADVOCATE FOR THE TRAIL.



*Curt, Tawnya, and George
Finney are the caretakers of
the Tumbling Run shelters
in Pennsylvania – By Sarah
Jones Decker*



THE A.T. IS ONE OF THE GREATEST CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SUCCESS STORIES IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

community even beyond the great state of Maine. This extended Trail family has shuttled, fed (with mail drops and the famous Shaw’s breakfast), outfitted, encouraged, and supported thousands of hikers each year on their journeys. Poet even carried the current iconic Katahdin sign up to the A.T.’s northern terminus, replacing the weathered one, which he carried back down the mountain on his back so that it could be placed in the A.T. Museum in Pennsylvania for future viewing. This September, their eight-year-old daughter, Julia, hiked to the Katahdin and had her photo taken with the famous sign. Growing up in a Trail family, her connection to the A.T. started before she even took her first steps and the possibilities are endless.

The Trail can also be inspirational to artists, writers and historians. Evans Prater is one such creative who thru-hiked the A.T. in 2014, after traveling and exploring as a nomad for years. Being on the Trail changed his whole life’s trajectory. “That experience by far had the most profound, paradigm-shifting effect on me of all my adventures,” he says. After the Trail, he

over its wooded summit before heading down into town and in 1997 a coalition of groups came together to save it from a massive timber project.

Kim and Jarrod Hester, known to many on the Trail as “Hippie Chick” and “Poet,” thru-hiked in 2008 and the Trail became a part of their lives forever after. Leaving their teaching jobs in Florida, they took a leap of faith in 2015 when they purchased one of the longest running hostels on the Trail, Shaw’s Lodging in Monson, Maine, which has housed hikers for over four decades. Together with Kim’s parents, Jaime and Paul Renaud, who own the A.T. Lodge in Millinocket, they are the bookends of the famous Hundred Mile Wilderness and an integral part of the greater Trail

*Tara Roberts Zabriskie
shooting on the Trail
at Blackstack Cliffs in
Tennessee for her upcoming
video project, “The A.T. is for
Everyone” – By Sarah
Jones Decker*



wanted to share his messages of sustainability, preservation, protection, and conservation with the world too and in turn, created a successful business. In 2015, he created his graphics-based sustainable apparel company, Mount Inspiration, with the goal of using only organic and recycled products to spread messages of light, love, hope, and positivity — all with a focus on the great outdoors. Mount Inspiration’s apparel leans on this positivity for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers by using soy-based inks and cleaners for their printing process, and utilizes fair-trade, living-wage-certified organic and recycled materials in every product they make. His company continues to give back and they donate a portion of their sales to environmental non-profits with the approach of creating designs that speak to “appreciating the healing and transformative powers of time spent in nature, and respecting and protecting the natural world so all can experience its power.” The company has two retail stores in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, and has its products in over 200 retailers in the U.S., Canada, and the British Virgin Islands.

While taking a semester off from college, Tara Roberts Zabriskie thru-hiked southbound in 2003. Her Trail name became “Morning Moose” after a few early rises in Maine startled some still sleepy hikers who mistook the sound of her walking through the campsite for a moose. Today, her media business, “Moosey Productions,” comes from her Trail moniker and her hike continues to influence Tara on her creative career path. Tara has been filming documentaries, sports, and small business promos for over a decade and has also made a living working freelance video jobs for sailing, cycling, and other events. Inspired by her A.T. hike and wanting to do something to give back to the Trail, she made her first film, *Leave No Trace on the Appalachian Trail*. It was her first of many collaborations with the ATC, it won Best Student Film in the 2005 American Conservation Film Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and it was used to educate hikers who visited the ATC Visitor Center in Harpers Ferry. She has also created many videos, including the “Don’t Be That Guy” series focusing on Leave No Trace ethics, informative videos on proper food storage and the A.T.’s relationship with its hungry black bear population. Her next big video project, “The A.T. is for Everyone,” addresses diversity and inclusion on the Trail.

A LOVE OF HISTORY

Mills Kelly, a history professor at George Mason University and PATC member, has dedicated countless hours to researching the many histories of the Trail, involving students in the Department of History and Art History and the greater community for his digital public history project, appalachiantrailhistories.org. Kelly, who continues to section hike the Trail and maintains the Manassas Gap Shelter in Virginia, has visited almost every Trail club archive on the East Coast. His research has brought him to the kitchen tables of some of the great Trail icons to lesser known folks who have oral stories to pass on and be recorded.

“One of the great joys of the research I’ve done over the past four years has been having the opportunity to sit and talk with people who were part of the Trail’s earliest history,” says Kelly. “The oldest of them all, Dorothy Shiflett, is now 103, and her father, Shirley Cole, helped lay out the route of the Trail in southwestern Virginia in 1930. She remembers doing Trail work with him when she was a little girl.” Kelly has also overseen the creation of an extensive historical database and over 25 student-created exhibits, ranging from topics like Hiker Fashion, Invasive Plants and Convenient Hardships: Stereotypes on the Mountain, drawing on the research they have done in his courses on the history of the Trail. He is currently working on a book about the “Lost Appalachian Trail,” that researches the major reroute of hundreds of miles in Virginia in the 1950s that eventually took the Trail over the famous McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs.

The A.T. is one of the greatest conservation and recreation success stories in American history. It is a collective and coordinated feat of planning, preserving, and maintaining. It combines recreation, conservation, volunteerism, and an extensive Trail community that encompasses all ages and backgrounds. Whether you spend an hour or months on the Trail or if you visit it every few years or every day, we all have different reasons to be out among the blazes and to reap in its endless benefits and opportunities. May the next 100 years be a testament to the ultimate human-powered experience; a gateway to recreation and beyond.



Mills Kelly at Manassas Gap shelter in Virginia with George Mason University student, Brenda Ibarra, on her first ever visit to the Trail

TRAILHEAD

ATC DIRT / HIGHLIGHTS / EVENTS / UPDATES



Height of Land, Maine

The A.T. passes by this popular roadside viewpoint as it crosses the Rangeley Lake National Scenic Byway. — By Marian Orlousky



GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS RECEIVED ITS GREATEST BOOST IN DECADES THIS AUGUST WHEN PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNED THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT INTO LAW. This historic Act will provide billions of dollars for public lands projects ranging from landscape preservation to infrastructure improvements. ¶ “This is a great day for our national parks, forests, and public lands, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy sends its thanks for the overwhelming support the Great American Outdoors Act received from Congress, the President, and outdoor enthusiasts around the nation,” said Sandra Marra, president & CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). “The Act will help ensure irreplaceable national treasures like the Appalachian Trail are protected and have the funding they need to enhance safety and accessibility for future generations to enjoy and benefit from.” ¶ The Great American Outdoors Act provides full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and creates a Restoration Fund to address the deferred maintenance needs of federal public lands. Funding LWCF at its fully authorized level — \$900 million a year — will double what was available in 2019 for states, municipalities, and the federal government to conserve land for recreation and wildlife habitats. The A.T. as we know it would not exist without the support of the LWCF, which has helped protect such varied locations as Blood Mountain in Georgia, the Roan Highlands of Tennessee and North Carolina, the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania, and community forests throughout New Hampshire and Vermont. ¶ The Restoration Fund will make available \$9.5 billion over five years, with \$6 billion slated for National Park System units, about \$1.4 billion slated for National Forest System units and \$475 million for National Wildlife Refuges. The A.T. intersects six other park system units, eight national forests, and three wildlife refuges. Across all its public lands, the United States has a deferred maintenance backlog of \$20 billion, and the A.T. alone has at least \$24 million in needed maintenance projects. ¶ The support provided by the Great American Outdoors Act will greatly assist the ATC and the Trail’s renowned volunteer force in keeping the footpath and its surrounding landscapes conserved, maintained, and ready to welcome and inspire a new generation of visitors.



ENJOY THE VIEW

SINCE THE A.T. TRAVERSES SO MANY REGIONS, THE VIEWS ALONG ITS 2,193 MILES VARY SIGNIFICANTLY, SOMETIMES EVEN WITHIN A FEW MILES. From craggy mountains in North Georgia, to rolling farmlands in Pennsylvania, to the rugged Saddleback Range in Maine, the Trail provides visitors with a diversity of views to admire, each tied to the environments surrounding the footpath. And while each view may differ in scope and composition, all of them are important to preserving the irreplaceable A.T. experience, and all of them inspire us for a wide variety of reasons. ¶ Yet as inspiring as A.T. views are, it is easy for us to take them for granted. Most of these views have survived for centuries, after all, so many of us don’t stop to consider what it takes to protect them well into the future. Steady population growth in the eastern United States and intensifying land use near the Trail — including increasingly larger scale infrastructure development — are two factors (of many) that could permanently impact the quality of A.T. views. ¶ To better address these looming threats, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the National Park Service (NPS) are taking a vital first step to en-

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UPDATE

COWPASTURE
SUPREME
COURT
DECISION

In June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court released its decision in the case of United States Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation Association, overturning the ruling made by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2019. This first-ever decision on the National Trails System Act is understood to keep in place the Cooperative Management System that tens of thousands of Appalachian Trail volunteers, professionals, and agency partners have collaborated under for decades. ¶ “What will not change, no matter how this decision impacts pipeline permitting rights, is the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s [ATC] dedication to protecting, managing, and advocating for the A.T. in coordination with our federal, state, and regional partners,” says the ATC’s president and CEO Sandra Marra. “It is through this Cooperative Management System that we ensure the Trail has the resources and expertise required to protect the A.T. forever and for all to enjoy.”



A.T. in Autumn near Delaware Water Gap and Buttermilk Falls – New Jersey
– By Raymond Salani III

Hunting Season Safety

Hunting regulations vary widely along the Appalachian Trail. Although the A.T. is a unit of the National Park System, it traverses a patchwork quilt of public lands managed for many different purposes. Hunting is permitted within close proximity of some parts of the A.T. in every Trail state. Many segments of the A.T. in Pennsylvania, and a few other areas, are game lands managed primarily for hunting. Hikers are advised to wear fluorescent orange visible from 360 degrees and take other precautions. Both hikers and hunters are advised to “know before you go.”

For more information and to see ATC’s “2020-2021 Hunting Season Guide by State” visit: appalachiantrail.org/hunting

ENJOY THE VIEW

Continued from page 21



sure that we identify and accurately describe the scenic beauty along the A.T. by taking inventory of the current state of the Trail’s irreplaceable views. ¶ Known as the “Enjoy the View” initiative, the ATC and NPS will be collecting data and taking in-depth photographs of over 1,400 viewpoints along the entire A.T. The initiative began in 2019 with an assessment of 70 scenic views at four very different sites along the Trail: Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina, the Virginia “Triple Crown,” South Mountain in Pennsylvania and the Saddleback Range in Maine.¶ The data collected from this program will be invaluable in helping the ATC and its partners determine the funding and effort needed to protect and conserve many of the Trail’s most iconic views. Having photographs of both pristine views and significantly impacted landscapes will provide some of the clearest examples possible of what could happen to these views if we are not proactive in advocating for their conservation — and will help educate the public and policymakers about how important (and fragile) A.T. scenic resources truly are.

Help us protect the irreplaceable A.T. views so that they can inspire generations to come.

Learn more at:
appalachiantrail.org/enjoy-the-view

Annual Membership Meeting

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) hosted its 2020 Annual Membership Meeting on September 12, 2020. During the meeting, updates were shared by the ATC’s president and CEO, Sandra Marra, chairman of the ATC Board, Colin Beasley, and ATC Board treasurer, Jim LaTorre.

THE MEETING INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- Jim LaTorre shared the key results of ATC’s 2019 finances and 2020 mid-year financial highlights.
- Sandra Marra shared the ATC’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. The objective of this plan is to strengthen the foundation of ATC, with a value on connection, as well as a focus on the upcoming 2025 centenary for the ATC.
- A Q&A session, hosted by Sandra, Colin, and Jim, covered the topics of the ATC’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work, the organization’s responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the value of ATC’s membership, among other topics.
- Additionally, the results of the 2020 Board of Directors election were announced. With over 1,600 votes cast, there was a 93.5 percent approval of the nomination slate. Five returning directors have been reelected to the board for the 2020-2023 term — Colin Beasley, Robert Hutchinson, Daniel Howe, Colleen Peterson, and Nathan Rogers. Two new directors were elected to the board for the 2020-2023 term — Rajinder Singh and Eboni Preston. We are very excited given the expertise and knowledge these new members will bring to our leadership.

We are incredibly grateful for our over 30,000 members who care deeply for the Appalachian Trail. The ATC relies on your generous support, and we could not advance our work and mission without it. Thank you to all who joined us virtually for the meeting. If you missed the meeting, you can view the full recording on our YouTube page: youtube.com/atconservancy

Questions can be submitted to: election@appalachiantrail.org



WHY WE Volunteer

BY LEANNA JOYNER

THE WORD “RECREATION” HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE LATIN WORD MEANING “TO CREATE, TO BRING FORTH,” WHICH IS A FITTING WAY TO THINK ABOUT ALL THE WAYS VOLUNTEERS REFUEL THEMSELVES WHILE BENEFITING SOMETHING BIGGER. THAT THEY CHOOSE TO SPEND THEIR TIME IN THIS WAY IS NOT INSIGNIFICANT.

“Recreation and leisure are about recharging your batteries. Sometimes doing something useful and productive can be more battery-charging than watching TV,” says Roanoke A.T. Club volunteer Kathryn Herndon-Powell, who also works as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) education and outreach coordinator.

A.T. visionary Benton MacKaye thought that the undeveloped power of people — if applied — could do great things, and he felt that it would be all the more meaningful if it were done of one’s own volition, which he described as leisure.

“One hundred percent leisure,” responded 2019 Konnarock volunteer Deborah Carter McCoy when asked if she considered finding, hauling, cutting, and stabilizing rock for stone steps was leisure. “The reason I say that is I enjoy being outside. I enjoy gardening; granted, it’s not gardening. I enjoy being close to the Earth. My Konnarock work was an interesting way to be in nature, and close to the Earth in a way I’ve never experienced before. It was relaxing. You could see your progress. You were physically moving and working, but it didn’t feel like work,” she says. “I have an office job as a writer and editor and my profession is how I frame ‘work,’ so for me to do something completely different was fun. I was away from my desk. I didn’t have to look at the computer screen. I was able to shut my brain off in much the same way as when I am on vacation.”



Emily Zimmermann with her father Mike at the site of the Little Bigelow Lean-to Privy re-build project in 2019 – By Mike Zimmermann

Roanoke A.T. Club volunteer Josie DeMarce says that her experience as a Trail maintainer and a volunteer ridgerunner are rewarding for her because she gets to do something productive while getting exercise. “It takes effort, work, and planning, but so does hiking and backpacking,” says DeMarce. “It’s just about carrying more stuff and heavier stuff, and getting dirtier. It’s what I like to do in my down time. Working as a clinical psychologist, it’s easy to get out of balance only using mental energy and not physical energy, so it balances me out and makes me feel better overall.”

DeMarce says that as much as she values the personal renewal, volunteering also gives her the chance to connect more deeply with people. She describes how doing Trail work with one or two people offers the opportunity to really get to know a person on a more profound level than most common interactions with people.

That dedicated time with people is probably why Mike Zimmermann characterizes his volunteer work alongside his wife, adult daughter, and adult son as a “family reunion.” “From the beginning it’s been a family affair,” says Zimmermann who, along with his family, first maintained the Bemis Stream Side Trail in Maine and since maintains a section near Rangeley for the Maine A.T. Club. They started maintaining as a family when their daughter, Emily, was 20 and their son, Rob, was 22. Be-

cause of the distance from their home, a six-hour drive, they would camp out for the weekend to work a few consecutive days several times a year.

After Emily’s completion of her A.T. thru-hike in 2010, she also adopted a section in Maine at Sabbath Day Pond. Now the family works together on Mike’s assigned section and Emily’s assigned section, which respectively offer opportunities to refresh the spirit as they absorb the views and inspiration from the Height of Land, and soak in the magical sounds of the loons on the pond after a full day of

hard work. “My wife, Barbara, says ‘volunteering is what you do to help make the world a better place,’” explains Zimmermann in describing the family’s strong sense of commitment to the hard work of volunteering on the A.T. “Our work makes it better for hikers so they don’t have to crawl through blowdowns, walk through mudholes, or get their shoulders wet through too much encroaching brush.” For their effort, he says, they’re rewarded with the natural things you come across in the woods and the heartfelt and sincere gratitude of hikers who affirm their work in the moment.

“There’s nothing better than doing something you feel good about that other people appreciate,” echoes Carter McCoy, the Konnarock volunteer. The ability to make a difference, and to see the difference, is important to these volunteers, but that’s not all. Each volunteer also talked about how what they learned along the way enriched their experience. DeMarce described the training in Leave No Trace that deepened her understanding and the ways in which she can convey to visitors the “why” behind any number of recreation-based decisions, from proper food storage to campfire site selection. Carter McCoy learned trail building skills that deepened her appreciation of trails as a lifelong hiker, and Zimmermann sparked, then fulfilled, his curiosity about the original location of the A.T. in Maine. It was through the experience of volunteerism that they cultivated their varied and unique passions.

Volunteers are creating their own experience. It is the unique experience that they choose to return to, often over great distances, because it’s meaningful to them to see the accomplishment of the toil, renew their mind and body, receive the gratitude of others, learn new things, spend quality time with good people, or simply to set aside time in nature to do something good for this cause. To find one’s purpose in volunteering, these volunteers recommend: trusting that to start, you don’t need anything but to be enthusiastic and try because there is something for everyone, if you choose to step into the invitation.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



From left: The ATC’s Konnarock Trail Crew team that built the steps (pictured here) at Battery Cliffs – Courtesy ATC; Volunteers remove invasive species along Fontana Dam – By Leanna Joyner

WHAT’S YOUR PLEASURE? THERE IS A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE

IF YOU LIKE...

Exploration and Discovery / Corridor Boundary Maintenance

Helping New People Enjoy the Trail / Volunteering at a Visitor Center

Communing with Nature / Rare Plant Monitoring

Gardening / Invasive Species Plant Control

Tidying Up / Litter Clean-ups

Walking in Nature / Trail Maintenance

Connecting with the Hiking Community / Volunteer Ridgerunner or Trail Ambassador

Outdoor Photography / ATC Photographer

Woodworking / Sign-making

Working out with Friends / Trail Crew

To learn more about volunteering on the A.T. visit: appalachiantrail.org/volunteer



Beyond HIKING

THERE IS FAR MORE
THAN ONE WAY TO
ENJOY THE TRAIL

LAST SPRING, I WAS SCOUTING A ROUTE FOR a backpacking course in Grayson Highlands with my colleague, Kathryn. Kathryn and I are opposites when it comes to hiking styles. She packs heavy, I pack a little lighter, she takes note of her surroundings, I usually keep my head down and get lost in my thoughts. We had made it through most of the day without much excitement — that was until I heard a sudden gasp from Kathryn. I instinctively looked up expecting some sort of wildlife but didn't see anything. I tracked her eyes toward the ground to realized that she was over-the-moon excited about a painted trillium flower. Her first trillium of the season, she declared. I didn't even know trilliums were out, and, honestly, had never paid much attention to when they started appearing on the Appalachian Trail.

Kathryn's excitement for a plant no taller than 12 inches gave me pause. It made me think about how she probably isn't the only botany lover who hikes on the A.T., especially during peak wildflower season. Then it made me think about how others experience the A.T. in a wide variety of ways. In fact, my own connection to the A.T. has evolved over time. While plant identification was never one of my interests, I experienced the Trail through other unique avenues; driving, reading and writing, and volunteering, to name a few.

I was raised in Boone, North Carolina, which is surrounded by ample hiking trails, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and not too far from the A.T. Even with this abundant access to the outdoors, my family didn't hike or camp. We danced, played music, played organized sports, but we didn't hike. I remember the occasional daytrip to iconic places like Grandfather Mountain, where the closest we got to hiking was when my brothers would torment me on the "swinging bridge" back when it literally swayed in the wind.

None of these day trips made me want to be a long-distance hiker, but they con-

nected me to the outdoors. By the time I was a teenager, and had my driver's license, I found a new way to connect with the outdoors—my 1995 white Nissan Altima with only one resolute hubcap. I would specifically drive my beloved beater to the Blue Ridge Parkway, find a pull-off area, sit on the hood, and simply breathe while staring at the mountains. My car beneath me gave me a sense of safety and security, but I was enveloped by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the outdoors. It was liberating.

During my freshman year of college, my darling Nissan Altima died, and with it my access to the outdoors. I had to get creative to access the outdoors. For me that meant reading, writing, and researching. When it came time to write my senior thesis, I decided that I wanted to write about a culture of transformative experiences, highlighting thru-hikers of the Appalachian Trail as my focal point. I read Jennifer Pharr Davis' book, *Becoming Odysseus*, as part of my research. This was my first true glimmer into the long-distance hiking experience, and I became enthralled with the A.T. that she depicted. Pharr Davis had a particular way of writing that I related with and gave me the confidence to envision myself in a similar experience.

Towards the end of college, I saved up enough money to buy a car again, which returned to me that liberating sense of connection with the outdoors. I decided that I would thru-hike the A.T. the following year. After a quick search on Google, I realized that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) had a regional office nearby, and I wrote them to ask if I could volunteer. After I began volunteering a couple days a week, I quickly learned that there are thousands of people who volunteer hundreds of thousands of hours annually to preserve, protect, and advocate for the A.T.

My time as a volunteer eventually evolved into a seasonal role, which included volunteer coordination for Trail maintainers in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. What stood out to me about most of the volunteers was that they had never thru-hiked or did any long-distance hiking on the A.T. Not even a section. Yet they still chose to experience the A.T. by building a single step, water bar, or turnpike in the woods with a group of strangers. It didn't go over my head that these volunteers always left with a sense of pride and kinship that is hard to match.


While I have never been the strongest at Trail maintenance, or particularly interested in botany, or had a natural knack for tree identification, I appreciate that there are so many different ways to experience the A.T. beyond the way I have experienced it. I continue to be in awe of people who see the same Trail through unconventional ways. The A.T. tends to be over-simplified as a long-distance footpath, but it's so much more. It's a hillside blanketed with trillium for hikers to admire, it's a dark sky that allows visitors to experience a shooting star, or it's a perfect vista primed to be photographed or painted. It's beyond a hiking trail. It's ours to preserve, protect, and enjoy in whatever fashion we choose.

BY CHLOË DE CAMARA

TEXT BY ALIVIA ACOSTA
PHOTOS BY JULIAN DIAMOND

DESTINATION... *the great outdoors*

EXPANDING ACCESS / OUTDOOR RECREATION

 **TRAIN TICKET**
TRANSIT TO TRAILS ACT
& TRAINS 2 TRAILS

WHEN STARING UP AT THE CONSTELLATIONS ON THE CEILING OF GRAND CENTRAL STATION IN NEW YORK CITY, IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME AS A YOUNG PERSON BORN AND RAISED IN YONKERS, NEW YORK, TO IMAGINE THAT WITHIN TWO HOURS I COULD BE ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL. It is, however, possible. In 1991, a small wooden platform was placed on the Metro North's Harlem line just a few steps from where the A.T. crosses the railroad tracks, offering service on weekdays and holidays. The "Appalachian Trail Station" became — and remains — the only location other than Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to offer direct train access to the A.T. My first experience with this station came in 2017, when, as a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) Next Generation Advisory Council (NextGen), I worked with the Harlem Valley Appalachian Trail Community, National Parks Conservation Association, and Groundwork Hudson Valley to bring a group of high school students from Yonkers, New York to the A.T. via the Metro North as a part of the Trains 2 Trails program.

While the A.T. might seem like an open and accessible resource to many of us, there are real barriers preventing access for many — including unaffordable costs, lack of leisure time, lack of education and information, and fear of the unknown. The Trains 2 Trails program sought to address many of these barriers. The cost of a train ticket itself, for example, can prevent many people in New York City from accessing the Trail.

During the train ride to the Trail, I shared the seven Leave No Trace Principles and hiking tips with the students. Once in the Harlem Valley of upstate New York, they were able to spend the day adventuring on the A.T. over the Great Swamp, as they learned and practiced volunteer conservation stewardship first-hand. An afternoon panel of various conservation professionals also exposed them to the potential of a career in conservation. Ultimately, the students were able to use something that is a part of their daily lives — public transportation — to get to a place that was new to them: the great outdoors. With the support and encouragement of A.T. Community members and volunteers who welcomed the students, they were exposed to previously unknown possibilities for recreation, employment, and friendship. Many of these young people now feel comfortable enough to get back to the Trail



without chaperones by using the same means of transportation that got them there on their first trip — and to their first A.T. experience.

The importance of experiences like those provided via Trains 2 Trails and of promoting the ability of those who may not independently be able to journey to public trust resources like the Appalachian Trail is why ATC strongly supports, and will advocate for passage of, legislation like the Transit to Trails Act (S. 2467 in the U.S. Senate and H.R. 4273 in the U.S. House). This legislation would create a grant program and authorize federal funding to increase education about access to public lands and waters as well as to develop connectors and routes to public lands and waters from communities with little access to such amenities. For resources like the A.T. to serve the public, people must not only know how to get to them but be able to do so with relative ease. The ceiling of Grand Central Station — however grand it is — shouldn't be the only place where urban dwellers such as myself get to see the "night sky." It should just be what we pass under as a step that leads us to experience the actual night sky in a vast natural outdoor setting.

Access to natural spaces like the Trail is key. For many, accessibility is not always as easy as simply boarding a train. Not knowing how to get to the Trail or not having the resources to get you to the Trail — assuming that you even know the Trail exists in the first place — are only a few potential

*From left: A.T. Pawling
Boardwalk over the Great
Swamp; The A.T. Metro
North train stop*

initial barriers. I know this to be true because as a young person from Yonkers, I was unaware of the Trail's proximity, and knew very little about it at all. Before becoming a member of the ATC's NextGen Council, the ceiling of Grand Central was the only version of a night sky I'd seen. Due to my experiences with ATC, and on the Trail, however, I now know that the true dark night sky is far more brilliant than I could have imagined. I also know that incredible views are just a train ride away.

**Check train schedules in advance and continue to monitor for updates due to COVID-19*

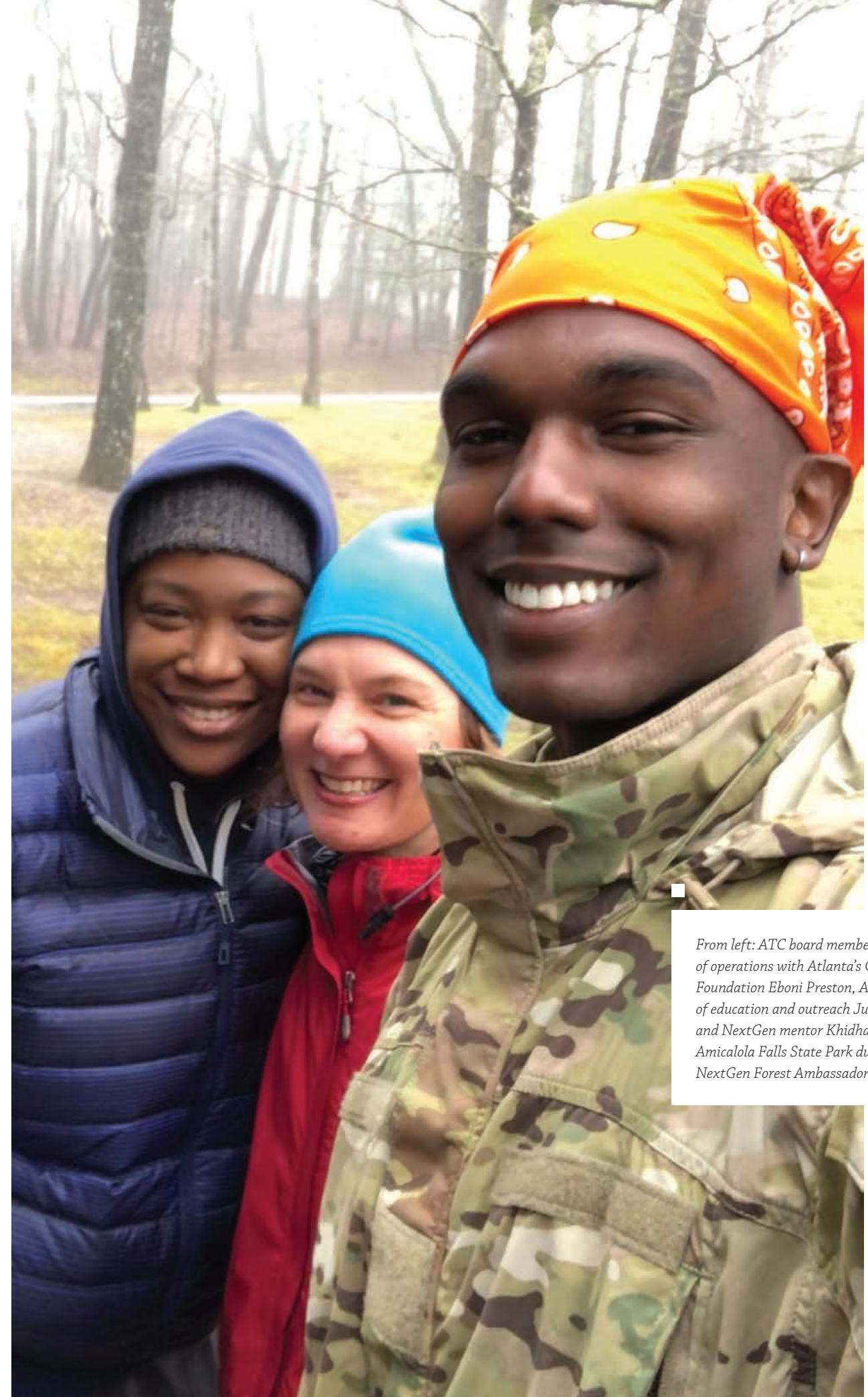
THE FUTURE OF *Conservation*

■ NEXT GENERATION FOREST AMBASSADORS ■

THE PHRASE “LOVE YOU” DOESN’T EXIST IN THE CHEROKEE LANGUAGE. IT MUST BE CLAIMED WITH THE PRONOUN, GEGAYYOUAH, OR I LOVE YOU, TO COMMUNICATE ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING. GIL JACKSON, OF THE EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE, TAUGHT NEXTGEN FOREST AMBASSADORS WORDS IN HIS FIRST LANGUAGE OF CHEROKEE, ALONG WITH OTHER LEGENDS CONNECTED TO LANDS THAT WE NOW CALL OUR NATIONAL FORESTS AND THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) co-hosts NextGen Summits that strengthen community connection to the landscape and create conservation networks to expand employment and stewardship opportunities for young people. The Next Generation Forest Ambassador program is a four-day/three-night youth summit hosted by the Georgia Mountains Children’s Forest Network, a coalition of partners hosting programs to connect young people to the outdoors in Georgia. Approximately 25 teenage ambassadors come together annually to learn about public lands, leadership, careers, and how to be “change leaders” as stewards in their communities. Paired one to one with mentors in conservation careers and influencers, ambassadors complete stewardship projects and are awarded small stipends for successful completion.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 NextGen Summit was moved to a virtual format. Ambassadors attended four virtual sessions together that covered core themes such as outdoor access, Leave No Trace principles, and how to best serve their communities by being an ambassador. Each ambassador also attended at least two Ambassador’s Choice sessions. The menu of sessions led by area experts included Gil’s Cherokee language and legends session; Jason Ward, famous naturalist and host of his own bird show, who let participants know anyone can be a birder; Forest Hilyer, who guided participants on a virtual nature hike; ethnobotanist Marc Williams, who identified trees with ambassadors; and an Artdoors session supported ephemeral art inspired by the Organic Artist. Each ambassador was provided with a toolbox of resources, day packs, and books for success while working towards completing their stewardship project.



BY JULIE JUDKINS AND CHLOË DE CAMARA

From left: ATC board member and director of operations with Atlanta’s Greening Youth Foundation Eboni Preston, ATC’s director of education and outreach Julie Judkins, and NextGen mentor Khidhar McKenzie at Amicalola Falls State Park during the 2019 NextGen Forest Ambassadors Summit

Ambassadors led over 250 hours of stewardship projects in their communities. These teens oversaw projects that included environmental outreach and education across four social media platforms, two podcasts, six trash pick-up events, a scavenger hunt, informational flyers and identification guides, support of local organizations, an online fundraiser for three nonprofits, and creation of original art and music. One even created a Twitter bot — a search engine to respond to tweets in real time to help people locate public lands near them.

The experience allows for connection, albeit virtual, among mentors, alumni, partner organizations, instructors, and of course the participants. Collaboration is integral to the success of each summit. By bringing individuals and organizations together with different experiences and skills, we are leveraging ATC resources, building social networks, and bridging opportunity gaps in communities for young people.

NEXTGEN FOREST AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD AVERY Adams first set foot on the Appalachian Trail in 2019 after he was selected to be a member of Next Generation Forest Ambassador Youth Summit. During the four-day summit, Avery was introduced to outdoor stewardship and received hands-on training to help him connect and inspire others. He got to camp, have fun hiking, and found ways to connect other young people to public lands. After the summit, Avery and his fellow participants were asked to complete a 20-hour stewardship project that highlighted their unique experiences and perspectives. Avery was even invited by the U.S. Forest Service to introduce a film at a screening during the Wild and Scenic Film Festival later that year.

Avery described the whole experience as “life-changing” and said it was the happiest he’s

ever been. “I was expecting a bunch of weird strangers who have a weird taste in the outdoors,” he says. “[But] when I got there, I realized that these people are just like me in that they don’t go outdoors much either.” Avery discussed how he woke up every day excited about what he would learn next. After the summit concluded, he thoughtfully described how NextGen had made him realize how much more there was to life.

Due to COVID-19, Avery hasn’t been able to get out to the woods as much as he would like but has every intention of getting back to public lands as soon as he can. Even amid a global pandemic, Avery stepped up and came back to help with the 2020 virtual NextGen Forest Ambassadors to serve as an “alumni ambassador” motivating this year’s cohorts through unprecedented circumstances.

With Avery’s natural charisma and creativity, it’s hard to imagine his future without a tie to public lands. “When I get older, I want to be a fireman...I want to balance that and be employed with the U.S. Forest Service, or [a] non-profit, specifically connecting people with the outdoors,” he says. And he encourages novice users of public lands to not be timid when it comes to these new areas of interest and opportunities. “Going to work and school is not all this world has to offer,” says Avery. “There are thousands and thousands of acres of land that can change a person. It did for me.”



NextGen Forest ambassadors Eli Rogers (left) and Avery Adams (right) on a hike to the Len Foote Hike Inn as part of the 2019 NextGen Forest Ambassadors Summit

NOTES FROM A NEXTGEN MENTOR

BY KHIDHAR MCKENZIE

EVERY YEAR, I GET MORE AND MORE INSPIRED by the next generation of leaders and I know that the world is in good hands. In 2017 I was a part of an internship program through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) called the Conservation Leadership Corps. The program did more than just reintroduce me to the beauty of the outdoors. It showed me how critical conservation and sustainability are in a constantly changing world.

I was somewhat reluctant when I agreed to be a mentor

for the I group of teen NextGen Forest Ambassadors in 2019. Two items at the top of my recipe for success: my love of nature combined with some amateur comedy skills. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed being with the group. The four days we all spent together was a masterful mix of creativity, education, and innovation. Everything was paced accordingly so no one felt rushed into an unknown territory. Time was dedicated to eating, learning, socializing, sharing, and eating. Eating was very important. One thing that gave me unexpected joy was witnessing how dedicated and knowledgeable the ambassadors were — leading me to many “I can’t believe I didn’t think of that” moments.

While the weekend was still going on, I was already thinking of ways to clear my schedule for the program in 2020. When I was asked to come back, it was a no brainer. With the COVID-19 pandemic happening, worries of how the program would work crossed my mind. Luckily it was in the hands of some of the most smart and caring people in conservation. The time of the virtual program was extended from four days to a couple of months so everyone would have enough time to adjust to it and this strange new world. This actually gave the ambassadors more time to simmer on ideas for their stewardship projects.

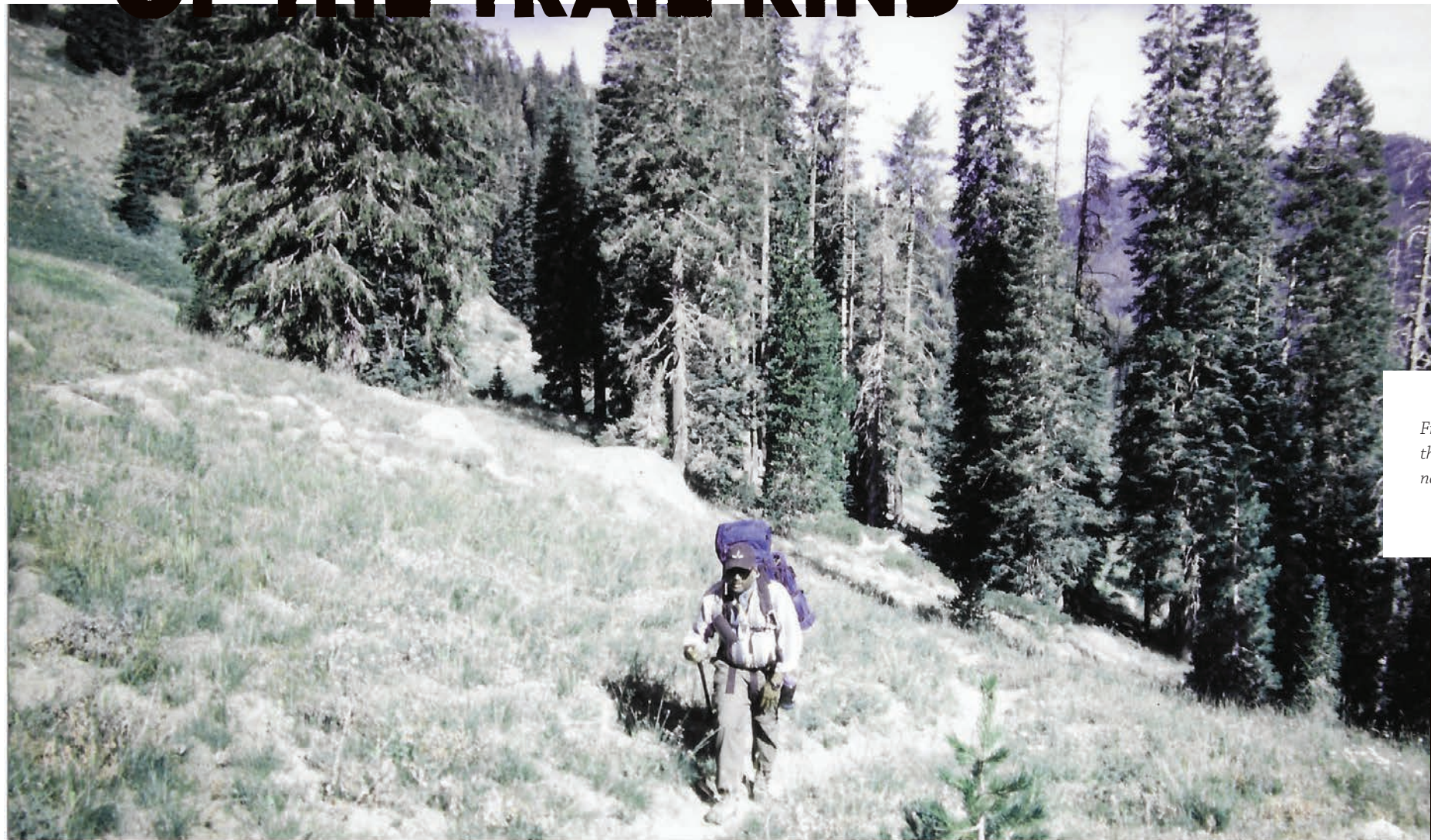
Being a mentor meant being available to discuss concerns about classes, meetings, and assisting with brainstorming stewardship projects. One important aspect was how to recreate and respect the outdoors. Every year the program covers Leave No Trace principles. These principles provide a guide on how to take care of the environment as it relates to whatever outdoor activity you may be doing. This is usually taught with help from a brilliant mind (in this case me). After those principles are reviewed, all the other cool classes come into play like ArtDoors Nature Art, Tree ID, Bird Walk, Nature Walk, and Hunting for Treasures. My challenge to others is to find a connection with the outdoors and people who care about it just as much.



Khidhar teaching Leave No Trace principles at Amicalola Falls State Park

FRED TUTMAN ■
TYSHA ROBINSON ■
EBONI PRESTON ■

First encounters OF THE TRAIL KIND



*Fred Tutman hiking in
the Trinity Alps in
northern California*

BY FRED TUTMAN

PASSION FOR PROTECTION

My initial connections to the Appalachian Trail came about purely by fortunate accident. In the 1980s and 1990s, I spent lots of time backpacking and hiking as my primary reason for working — literally, in order to be able to afford to go hiking and

exploring in as many spaces and places I could. In the process, I became very familiar with parts of the Appalachian Trail and I guided several hikes on sections familiar to me.

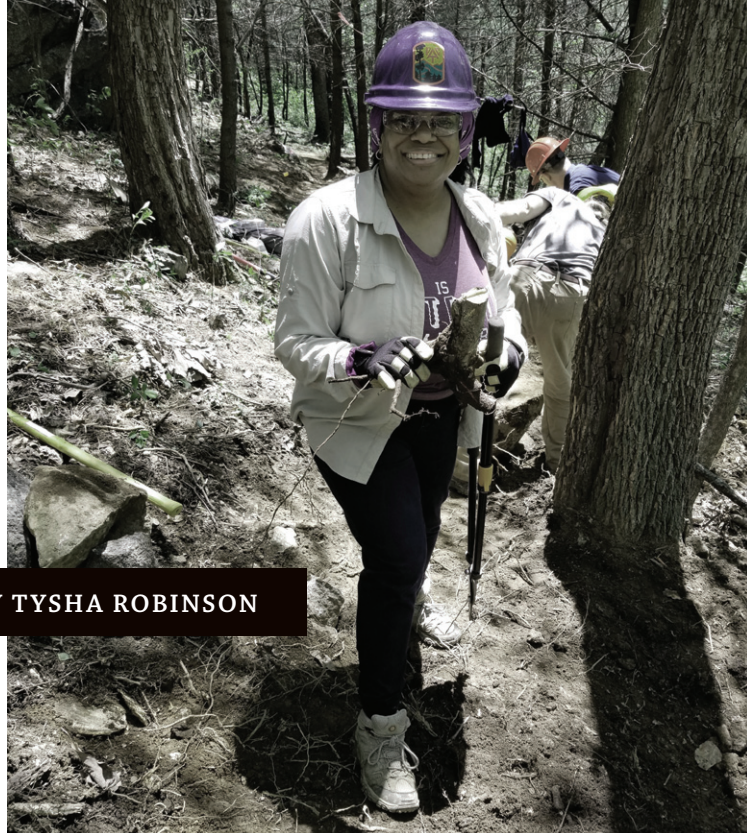
On one occasion, I guided a backpacking excursion of about six people, all of whom were relatively new to it. I put a lot of energy into preparing them, coaching them, and helping them select and pack their gear. Ultimately, they showed up at the trailhead with too much gear and not enough water. I ended up putting their surplus in my pack — which of course added to my weight burden — and I gave them most of my water. The Trail section was strenuous and we found ourselves in an area with significant blowdown from earlier storms. When we went off Trail to get around those sections, my two novice hikers got separated from the group and I circled back to try and scoop them up. Somehow, I missed them and then I found myself off Trail in an isolated and unfamiliar place, with too much gear in my pack, out of water, and no clear sense of where the rest of my group was.

I was severely dehydrated — literally sprawled on the Trail with my mind playing tricks on me and fading. In my semi-delusional state of mind, I recall thinking that I would die like a Japanese Samurai — and began arranging my body on the Trail (with dignity!). Soon, an A.T. ridgerunner found me, got me on my feet, gave me water, and helped me limp down the Trail to a Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) cabin where I spent two days drinking all the water I could get into my system and getting back on my feet.

I learned on that occasion that this cheerful and helpful PATC volunteer was part of something bigger, and that intrigued me. So, I joined the PATC because I felt I wanted to be a part of a cause that not only protected and appreciated the Trail, but that had people on it who helped make the Trail safe for others. Over the years, I built many warm friendships on the A.T. among people who shared my love of undeveloped places and the desire to see things over the next hill. And over those years, I have also been thrilled to see a growing number of people of color also exploring and experiencing the Trail, which makes me feel less like a novelty. I am delighted to share the Trail with as many people from as many different walks of life as possible. It is hugely important to the future of the A.T. that the experience of seeing people of color on the Trail becomes something normal — instead of a novelty.

Eventually, I founded a non-profit organization called Patuxent Riverkeeper that protects one of Maryland's most culturally and politically significant rivers. My aim has been to pursue justice for both people and the planet. And to also encourage others to experience mother nature and forge a personal compact to protect her. Our watershed organization eventually founded a water trail maintenance crew modeled after the Trail maintenance culture that exists at PATC.

Overall, my experiences on the A.T. have been a test of my personal best. I have been a lifelong tourist of outdoor experiences. Hiking, backpacking, bouldering, kayaking, and in various other outdoor pursuits, I have sought a personal relationship with the great outdoors that ties to my own sense of spirituality in the woods and in the wild. I don't mean this in a religious sense, but more of a personal spiritual sense of awe at things more durable and infinite than myself. Each "transaction" with the Appalachian Trail has taught me something new, deep, and personal about myself and my own connection to the earth. I LOVE the romantic idea of a "people's trail," where anyone can walk from one end to the next without trespassing and without paying a fee. Truly a fundamental right and privilege. I also love the democracy and grassroots values implied by a Trail protection movement that relies on volunteer elbow grease and passion.



BY TYSHA ROBINSON

NATURE VS MAN

tremendously changed. It's amazing how the outdoors changes you to appreciate what nature has to offer, great views, peacefulness, and admiration for God's handiwork.

In January of 2012, I moved to Virginia from Atlanta, Georgia for a job and to start my new life with my husband. During the time of our marriage, an opportunity to go on a hike with our church to Mount Aetna in Hagerstown, Maryland arose and we decided to try it out. Little did we know that neither one of us were in any kind of shape to handle that hike, but we did it and enjoyed a beautiful view that countered the torture of struggling up the mountain. After that hike, we both decided to hike more often and just build up our stamina to handle the inclines. (Side note: I am still not fully able to handle the inclines.) One of our favorite hikes was to Great Falls, Virginia. Every weekend we made it a point to go for a hike at different locations on the Appalachian Trail.

Well, on a sad note at that time for me, in 2014, my husband and I separated. But I still wanted to hike, so I ended up joining the D.C. Metropolitan Hiking Club on Meetup.com. The group was very welcoming and my first hike with them was to Great Falls. At that point I realized that being outdoors and meeting new people motivated me more to move on and to just enjoy life. I ended up hiking every weekend for over a year. I have made some wonderful friends who are like family to this day — which brings me to another chapter of my nature adventures. Little did I know that the trails I hiked, with their perfect steps, nice sidehilling, and nice

Tysha Robinson on a PATC maintenance trip at Mutton Hollow in Virginia

water bars were not all just part of nature — people were involved who had the proper tools and skills to create and maintain these trails.

This chapter starts off a little shaky because those same friends who are like family were involved with trail maintenance for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC). I say shaky because even though I enjoy the outdoors, and find them very rewarding, I do not like to get extra dirty. Yes, very funny, but true. For over two years, my hiking buddies tried to persuade me to come on a trail maintenance trip. I finally joined the PATC “Cadillac Crew” in July 2017 to work on one of the trails at Antietam Battlefield. (Side note: Because there was a shower involved, I accepted the invitation.) After the Antietam Battlefield trip, I attended an August trip to Mutton Hollow, to build a new trail to connect several outbuildings on the property, which was the trip that inspired me to join the PATC. I wanted to be part of an organization that maintains the A.T. and other trails in the D.C. metropolitan area.

It has truly been a rewarding adventure. I have learned names of tools like lopper, McLeod, Pulaski, and pickaxe and the techniques like sidehilling, searching for the perfect rocks to build steps and, of course, lopping — my favorite. My titles on the Cadillac Crew include: “the Lopper Queen,” “Dr. Lopper,” and one of the photographers.

My encouragement for others: just get out there on the A.T. and breathe the fresh air and enjoy the breathtaking views of the overlooks, because it is so worth it.

HARMONIOUS COMMUNITY

BY EBONI PRESTON

outside of the classroom, anxiety, fear, and isolation were the only familiar feelings. What I didn't know was that it would be the moment that would shape my career and most treasured adventures.

In 2015, I moved back to Georgia after years of education, exploration, and pursuit, and oddly enough I found myself on a trail. My work with the Greening Youth Foundation led me to programs and partnerships with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and I had the opportunity to take dozens of kids who looked just like me to the A.T. In my evolution as a hiker, steward, and outdoor enthusiast, the hesitation and fear I felt years prior were replaced by empowerment, joy, and thrill. This time, I was a leader of the group, and the people around me were a part of a familiar community.

I found myself laughing throughout that A.T. hike because these kids had the

same feelings and looks of curiosity that I did years prior. They wanted to feel everything without actually touching it. They wanted to experience life on the edge as long as danger wasn't too close. They were eager to hear the sounds of nature as long as it stayed at a distance. They wanted to know how their dreams and experiences fit into this beautifully crafted landscape. It was in these moments that I found a new purpose.

My first journey on the Appalachian Trail gave me vision, opportunity, and replenishment — and fortunately for me, that feeling never went away. With each step I took I understood more and more why my job mattered, my presence mattered, and most importantly, why my resilience mattered. My identity over the years has evolved, and in this

evolution came healing. The proximity of my work to nature has made all the difference in my willingness to dream, take risks, and share my stewardship. As I look back on that day with my students, I am humbled. They taught me that the beauty and most complex part of nature is the people, community, and support. And in the most harmonious way, they mean as much as the dirt, rocks, and views. They're all a part of the journey.



Eboni Preston (fourth from front left) with Greening Youth Foundation staff and Urban Youth Corps members at the Urban Conservation Training Institute in Atlanta, Georgia

BY ELIANE COATES

Healing ON THE TRAIL

IT WAS THE SUMMER OF 2015 AND I WAS LIVING IN HARPERS FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA WORKING AS THE VISITOR SERVICE INTERN AT THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC). It was a summer filled with magic as I met thru-hikers and assisted them as they came through town, each on their own incredible journey. It didn't take long before I became totally wrapped up in Trail culture. I was around hikers all day while at my internship, and then helped help them out with errands in my free time after the workday as well. The idea of doing my own thru-hike did cross my mind but seemed like a distant dream.

As this special summer came to a close, my life as I had known it came to what felt like a spinning halt. Within about a month, I found out that both of my parents were sick with cancer. My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer and my father with pancreatic cancer. I did not know what had hit me. Before I had even absorbed this new reality, my dad passed away in October 2015 and I put my life on pause to be with my mom as her primary caregiver.

Those were the longest fall and winter months that I can remember, or not — because I was experiencing the shock that can often accompany grief. But during the sadness of the long winter, the glimmer of an idea started to take root. I realized that the time for my own thru-hike had come. To me, it seemed like the best way to get out and begin to process the loss of my dad. I decided I would embark on my thru-hike in March of 2016. I was 22 years old.

I spent a total of six months and ten days on the Trail from Springer to Katahdin. There were great days of exhilarating happiness, and more challenging days where I trekked through many feelings of anger and sadness. There were some days that were very physically and mentally challenging. I found, however, that having recently experienced grief the mental challenges of the Trail were more manageable because I had just faced my worst



From top: Eliane and other A.T. hikers gather to stay warm during a spring snow in Georgia; Eliane (left) and her Trail sister "Shotgun" get ready to enter the White Mountains

ABOUT THE UMBRELLA PROJECT, INC.

My son, Liam, was 17, and my daughter, Eliane, was 22 when my husband passed away in October 2015 — six weeks after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I was desperate to find some grief or loss programs for them and searched not just the Mid-Atlantic region where we live, but any programs for young adults nationwide. Other than an Outward Bound program for grieving teens that Liam still qualified for and took (it was only for 12 to 17-year-olds), I could find no support groups, activities, or programs specifically for grieving young adults.

The following year, Eliane achieved her dream and thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail. It was a life-altering and profoundly healing experience for her. Her A.T. journey was the inspiration for the non-profit organization we founded in 2019. Called the Umbrella Project, its mission is to provide grieving young adults a supported wilderness hiking experience that promotes personal growth, self-reliance, and therapeutic recreational activity to help in their healing process.

We hope to fill the void in grief programs for young adults in the 18- to 25-year-old age range who have suffered the recent loss of a parent, caregiver, or sibling. This is a critical age group that is often experiencing challenging life transitions.

Hiking on the A.T. (we hope to expand to other locations in the future) with trained, experienced leaders, young adults will participate in a powerful outdoors experience that will teach them the coping skills, self-awareness, and self-reliance that are an essential part of the healing process.

Patricia Weil Coates
For more information visit:
umbrellaprojecthike.org

continued on page 51

poet

Ted Mathys

■ tedmathys.com



The poem "Appalachian Trail" previously appeared in *Null Set*, Coffee House Press, 2015
– Photo by Virginia Harold

Appalachian Trail

I am in the
main on the

mend I am in
Maine on the

wagon on
Katahdin in

an animal
skin I am a

pencilmaker
breaking

a stolen mirror
metaphor over

the peak to
make Maine

lakes glint in
sun I broke

like a main
clause over

the forest of the
page and paused

to drink from a
literal canteen

Katahdin via Instagram compilation / 2017



digital collage artist

William Van Beckum

■ williamvanbeckum.com

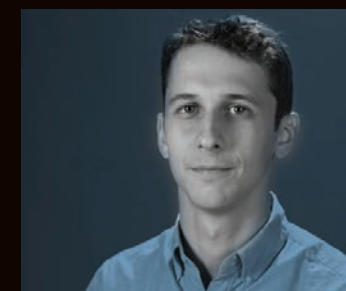


Photo by Samara Pearlstein

THIS WORK EXAMINES THE VISUAL CULTURE OF LANDSCAPE imagery and tourism. By referencing and deconstructing the origins of the American landscape tradition, I create images from a perspective that is both critical and celebratory of the consumptive nature of humans photographic relationship to nature. ¶ While teaching photography in New Mexico, I noticed how many of my students simply wished to learn photography in order to capture Ansel Adams-esque images of beautiful scenery. In an age where the effects of climate change are beginning to become painfully evident, I wondered what drove people to overlook ecological trauma and focus purely on scenery. ¶ This image of Katahdin is made up of many images borrowed from hikers' Instagram posts and digitally combined. The work references the picturesque qualities of historic landscape artwork, but also contains alterations and disruptions, which challenge the notion that the landscape should be interacted with on a purely visual level. This image asks viewers to analyze their relationship with nature and consider what they might do to protect the landscape beyond visual study and landscape tourism.



Postponing a Dream

Text and photo by Carmen Kraus

*Foggy view from
Blood Mountain*

I STUMBLED ON THE ROCKY Trail down from Blood Mountain, catching myself on my trekking poles. I could barely see. Rolling clouds of fog obscured the landscape, turning what I assume were stunning vistas into dense white walls. My eyes were clouded as well, but with brimming tears. I knew in my gut that I would have to leave the Appalachian Trail.

I dreamed of the A.T. for 10 years. I had hiked the A.T. Approach Trail in 2010 on a weekend trip with my parents. I vividly remember standing atop Springer Mountain and seeing the Trail continuing before us, twisting and turning and tempting me onward. That moment planted a seed

in my soul, and I knew one day I would follow that enticing Trail along its entire length.

I cherished that seed, my dream to thru-hike the A.T., over many years. A few times it withered and almost died as the path of my life shifted course, but I nourished it and kept it strong. In 2019, almost suddenly, all the pieces aligned: I was graduating college, I was contemplating a career shift, and I had decent savings. With delight and some trepidation, I began planning my 2020 A.T. thru-hike attempt.

My mind swirled with emotions as my parents said goodbye to me at Amicalola Falls on March 14. Joy, for an adventure long planned. Nervousness, for my lack of prior backpacking experience, especially solo. And gratitude, for a chance to bring that seed of my dream to the forest where it belonged.

And it was everything that I hoped for and more. I woke every morning in thick banks of cloud, but the mist made the Trail seem magical. All my gear got damp, but I stayed mostly dry.

My knee flared with pain on the second day, but I was all the more grateful for it when it felt better. And everyone I met was wonderful.

COVID-19 was a topic of conversation among hikers, but we didn't think it would get so bad. Perhaps that was shortsighted after seeing the examples of outbreaks in other countries. We were already starting to worry about resupplying in towns, and of spreading the virus. The group I camped with decided if any of us got sick, we'd all get off the Trail, since we'd been in such close contact. On my fourth day out, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy released an announcement asking all thru-hikers to consider postponing their hikes. At first, denial. This was just an overcautious announcement. But the more I thought, and the more I learned from my sporadic one bar of cell service, the more I finally came to feel the gravity of the situation. The pandemic had worsened so much in the four days I'd been cut off from the news. My hometown was under voluntary "shelter in place" orders

(which switched to mandatory). Almost all restaurants were takeout only.

I read the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's email, asking us to get off the Trail, to fellow thru-hikers as I ate my lunch on top of Blood Mountain. I finally realized that even if I were careful, I would still be putting people at risk. All the hikers, Trail communities, and Trail angels that make the trek so meaningful. To love and respect the Trail, I would have to leave.

I scrambled down Blood Mountain as my tears mixed with the falling rain. I dashed them away with the back of my hand before chiding myself for touching my face. These next couple of miles would be the last I would walk on the Trail, for who knows how long. Weeks, months? Even a year? I didn't know. I don't know. The future was clouded, like all the views from the mountain. I looked down to find my footing and saw one of my tears fall to splash in the dirt. I remember being glad that one piece of me would stay on the Trail.

Down at Neels Gap, my nascent "tra-

mily" decided to get off and officially suspend our hikes. I allowed myself to grieve that this adventure was postponed. In honest truth, I turned into a soggy puddle. The five days I spent on the Trail were some of the happiest in my life, and I am grateful I have those memories to cherish until I feel it's prudent to resume my thru-hike again. Someday, I'll see you in Maine.

Carmen's story is an excerpt from the first episode of the "Where We Walk" podcast - a special six-part podcast series developed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in collaboration with the "She Explores" podcast and made possible with a grant from REI Co-op. This groundbreaking miniseries explores the women who have helped make the Trail what it is today, as well as those who are shaping its future.

Learn more and listen to the podcast at: appalachiantrail.org/where-we-walk

Learn more about Carmen at: carmenkraus.weebly.com

Podcast Episodes

Listen now
appalachiantrail.org/where-we-walk

WHERE WE WALK

A SHE EXPLORES MINISERIES



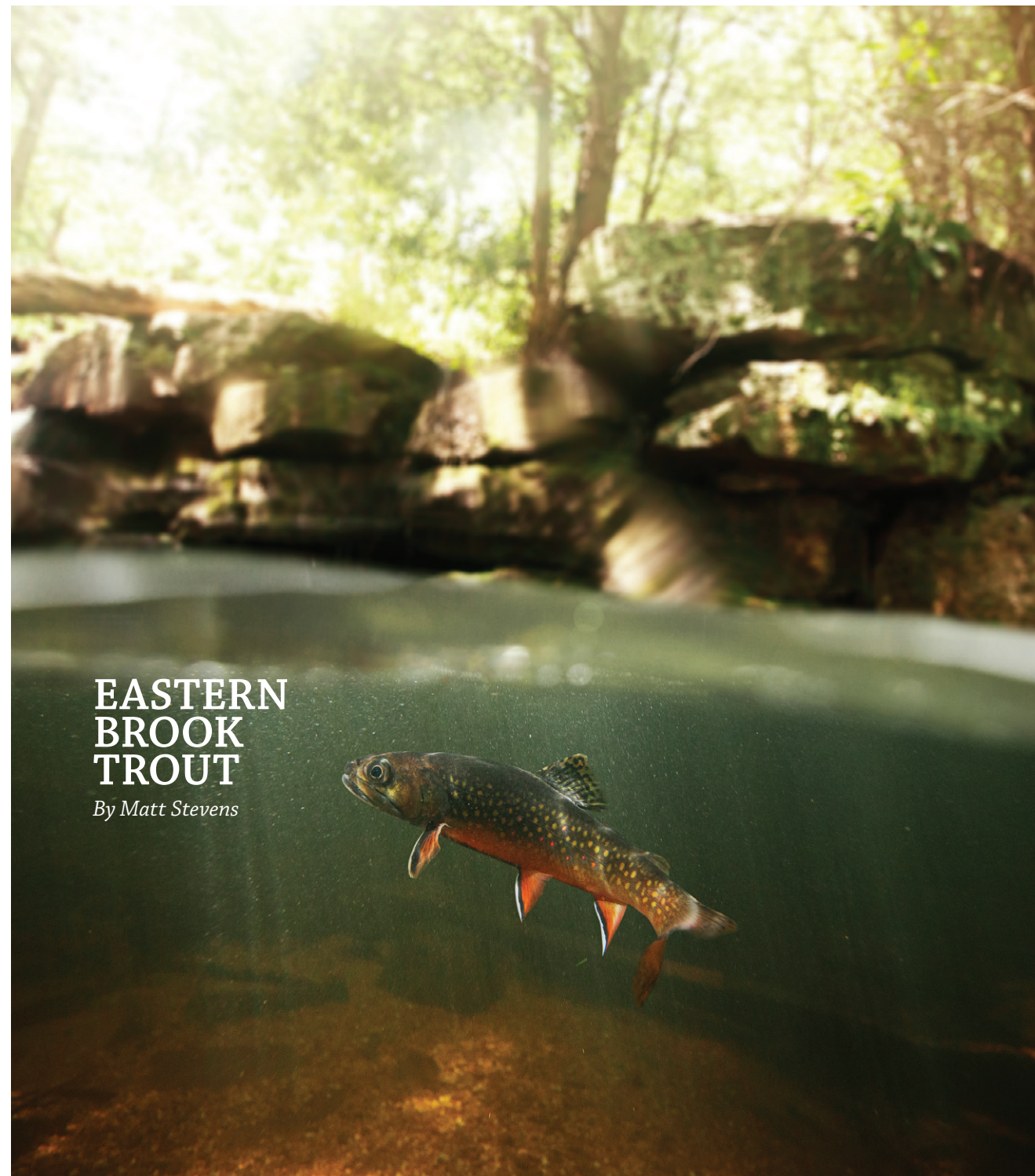
New episodes airing every Monday

This six-part podcast miniseries explores the women who have helped make the Trail what it is today, as well as those who are shaping its future. Developed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in collaboration with the She Explores Podcast and made possible with a grant from REI Co-op.



INDIGENOUS

HABITAT / ECOSYSTEM / CONSERVATION



EASTERN BROOK TROUT

By Matt Stevens

SALVELINUS FONTINALIS.

The name rolls off the tongue like cool water slides through mossy cobbles in a shaded mountain stream. And fitting that it should; it translates to little salmon of the fount, or spring. Eastern brook trout is a member of the salmonid family and shares many physical characteristics, but it is neither a salmon nor a trout. Fish in the *Salvelinus* genus are collectively called char and, along with the brook trout, include bull trout, lake trout, dolly varden, and Arctic char. Depending on who — or rather where — you ask, you'll hear this native eastern fish called brook trout, brookie, squaretail, speckled trout, speck, coaster, salter, and other colorful names.

Since the retreat of the continental ice sheets in

North America, brook trout have inhabited streams, rivers and lakes from the southern Appalachian mountains north through the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay, east to Labrador and south along the coast to the mid-Atlantic states. Brook trout thrive best in cool, clear, oxygen-rich water with access to ample invertebrate life and spawning substrate. Young brook trout feed exclusively on plankton, insects, and other invertebrates; their growth and survival are dependent upon the relative abundance available to them. Fish in the most productive waters can grow to twelve inches or more at which point they become predatory and shift their diet to include smaller fish, crustaceans, and the occasional hapless rodent. Attaining predatory status is not easy, though. In most of its range south of northern New York and New England, a brook trout that lives through four years will have beaten the odds. A fish of ten or twelve inches could be considered a rare specimen. In the larger, more remote waters of Maine and eastern Canada, however, it is possible for brook trout to live as long as eight years and grow to eighteen or more inches.

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These fish are more frequently measured by weight than length. The largest brook trout ever captured came from Ontario's Nipigon River and weighed 14.5 pounds and measured more than 30 inches in length. That was in 1916 and, while many river and lake systems still support healthy populations of fast-growing fish, most populations throughout the Appala-

chians are relegated to areas high above the valleys in small headwater streams where survival is a bit more tenuous.

Over the course of the last three centuries native brook trout have been extirpated from most of their historic range - estimates vary from 50 to 95 percent, the primary culprits being large-scale removal of forest cover and later the intentional addition of non-native fish species meant to quench an increasing thirst for recreational fishing opportunities. Land clearing that began as agriculture blossomed and later moved toward industrial timber extraction directly impacted once vital brook trout habitats. Deforestation eliminates the shade that keeps water cool in summer and leads to erosion and sediment-laden runoff that buries spawning habitat. Timber operations also used streams and rivers to transport logs to distribution centers, often straightening sinuous rivers and scouring the beds. Just as human settlement moved up the major river valleys, brook trout were isolated further up their home watersheds where the water is smaller and less productive. Even before fishing became a popular recreational pastime, the once-ubiquitous brook trout was a common component of

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many people's diet. So, the dramatic disappearance of this important food and sport fish did not go unnoticed and the alarm cries went up. The introduction of fish husbandry to the U.S. in the middle 19th Century appeared to be a dream solution, and it was... until it wasn't. Proponents of stocking hatchery-raised fish discovered that brown trout from Europe and rainbow trout from the western U.S. could survive in the compromised waters where brook trout could not. Throughout the 20th Century and even today, state fish and game departments made their living by stocking millions of non-native trout throughout the east where brook trout might once have lived and even some places where they had not.

There's one thing for sure about forests in the eastern U.S.: they want to be forests. Given the opportunity, they will regenerate. As forests so

asserted themselves through the 20th Century, they regained their ability to regulate the temperature, flow, and sediment and nutrient inputs of watercourses. Many rivers and lakes in the east have recovered to a point where they can once again support brook trout populations. That is, except for the stiff competition from non-native trout still being stocked in them. Fisheries biologists have understood this dilemma for a long time, which is why state hatcheries have also been rearing and releasing brook trout alongside the browns and rainbows for years. Therein lies a large part of the current conundrum. Invariably, a modern hatchery-raised brook trout is a genetic amalgam of at least two different, likely geographically distinct strains and often selectively bred to satisfy the demands of a specific fishery. In other words, a brook trout stocked in the lower portion of a West Virginia river might bear greater genetic resemblance to an upstate New York fish than to the native population just a few miles upstream. Further, each successive generation (outside of natural reproduction) is further from the native source. Perhaps an obvious question is, so what?

It's a reasonable question. To be sure, it's not necessarily about genetic purity, it's about survivorship. The native fish have evolved to survive the conditions of their natal waters. Hatchery-raised fish often don't have what it takes to survive beyond the season in which they are stocked, which may be okay for a put-and-take fishery, but it does nothing for the long-term viability of the species. Even so, some stocked trout — often called hold-overs — do survive the first winter and in some situations, fish stocked in spring live through to the autumn and may even successfully spawn. Survival rates, already low among the native fish, are even lower for the hatchery stock. Progeny of hatchery fish that do survive might legitimately be considered wild fish and with successive generations might establish a viable population. This is still distinct from being native and fisheries professionals and enthusiasts alike still don't agree whether that matters. There is, however, growing consensus that fisheries programs should continue to shift from the put-and-take trade toward habitat reclamation and biodiversity protection.

In the Appalachian region of the U.S., the healthiest populations of native, wild brook trout inhabit the wild waters of Maine. In recent years, the

Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has eliminated stocking programs in watersheds known to contain native or wild brook trout and focused management efforts on protecting and enhancing habitat to promote survival. Similar programs have begun to take hold in other states where isolated native or otherwise wild populations persist. In New England, a large part of brook trout habitat restoration involves re-connecting waterways that have been truncated or otherwise impeded by dams and roads. One such location is at Henderson Brook where the Appalachian Trail crosses the Katahdin Ironworks Road near Gulf Hagas in Maine. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is currently working with partners on a project to repair a dilapidated culvert that impedes migrating brook trout and Atlantic salmon in the West Branch Pleasant River system. Henderson Brook is the last of many such culverts in the area to be repaired and when finished will re-open nearly three miles of important spawning habitat. It seems like a very small part of a vast system, but if it helps protect this indigenous jewel, it's not too small.

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INSPIRED LEADERSHIP



AMBREEN TARIQ

As the founder of @BrownPeopleCamping — a social media platform dedicated to promoting greater diversity in our public lands through storytelling and the power of visual representation — Ambreen Tariq utilizes storytelling to share how her life experiences as a Muslim, and a South-Asian American immigrant female have shaped her love for the outdoors.

In her day job, Ambreen is a non-practicing attorney who works for the federal government in Washington, D.C. As an Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Board member, she hopes to promote more diversity on the Trail. Through @BrownPeopleCamping, she has collaborated with various non-profit organizations and partners in the private sector to promote diversity in the outdoors. Her writing has been published in *Outside* magazine, and she has been profiled by the *The New York Times*, *SELF* magazine, *CNN*, *Health*, and *Elite Daily* among others. She is a brand ambassador for Merrell and formerly for Airstream and REI, and was celebrated as a BIPOC Outdoor Influencer by Matador Network. She is also the co-founder of Outdoor Muslims and sits on the advisory council for the Sierra Club.

Ambreen is featured in the book *She Explores – Stories of Life-Changing Adventures on the Road and in the Wild* and profiled in *Falcon Guide's Women Who Hike* — a book that inspired the new ATC podcast of the same name. She has an especially deep devotion to youth education and has recently written her first book for children: *Fatima's Great Outdoors*, about an immigrant family that embarks on their first camping trip in the Midwest.

"My goal is to promote more passionately for everyone to experience and enjoy the outdoors in their own authentic ways," Ambreen says. "I strive to achieve these goals in order to help grow our community of people who, having developed personal connections to the environment, will feel invested in protecting it and advocating for its future wellbeing."



R. MICHAEL LEONARD

Mike Leonard's first encounter with the Appalachian Trail happened when he was 16 years old during a camping trip with his older brother near Newfound Gap on the Tennessee/North Carolina border. "I saw the sign that gave the distance to Katahdin and it just fascinated me," he says. "I told my brother I would like to hike at least part of that one day." Sure enough, his first big adventure was later that year when he hiked with a couple of friends on the A.T. across the Smokies. "That trip had such a huge impact on me. We hiked up on Fontana Dam from Shuckstack and it struck me that working hard to get to that view added something that I had never experienced or could experience being in a car," he says. "That hike was informative. Things that are hard to do are more rewarding than things that are easy to do. It became a mantra for me and changed the way I approached school and changed all kinds of things in my life. Doing it the hard way is the best."

Mike is a partner at Womble, Carlyle, Sandridge & Rice in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he specializes in multi-jurisdictional litigation. He has logged many pro bono hours assisting conservation organizations with large land acquisition projects and the use of conservation easements, including trail corridor projects along the Appalachian Trail. He received his J.D. from University of North Carolina School of Law and he is the former chair of The Conservation Fund's (TCF) Board of Directors. As a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's President's Leader Circle, Mike brings an intense devotion to land conservation along the Trail. "I'm just proud to have some kind of role at [the] ATC," he says.

"Land conservation is incremental. If you work at something year in and out, then what you can achieve over a 20 to 25-year period is astounding," Mike says. "What non-profits like the ATC and TCF do is they keep going back. I've been working on land conservation since Jimmy Carter was President. In the land conservation arena, I can't think of one administration where we have not achieved something. You just keep going back and [keep everyone focused]. They come and go. We don't. We are always there."

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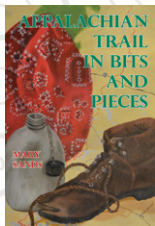
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HEALING ON THE TRAIL

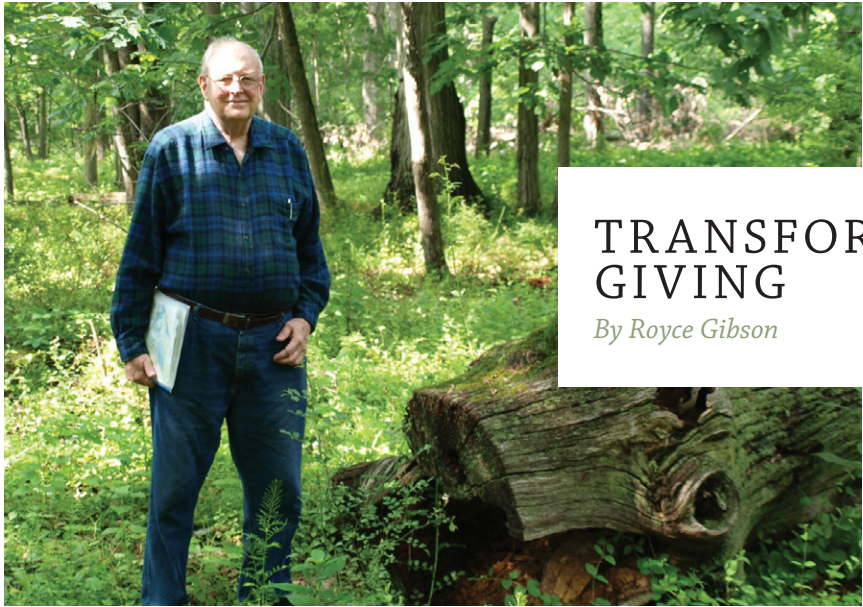
nightmare — losing a parent. I felt at the time that after what I had just gone through, I was strong and could accomplish anything I put my mind to.

For instance, during the month of May, I trekked through the state of Virginia. As thru-hikers know, Virginia has the longest stretch of the A.T. It rained a lot and was very hot. The thought of nearing Harpers Ferry, my family, and friends helped me persevere. I also found that hiking through the rain helped me feel a close connection with my dad, as he had always had a special connection with umbrellas and rainy days. My dad was an artist and had created "the Umbrella Project" — art happenings that were about people coming together, under and using umbrellas to create and make memories. When I was packing for my thru-hike, my mentor from my ATC internship, Laurie Potteiger, was so thoughtful and gifted me a small lightweight umbrella to carry with me on my journey in honor of my dad.

The umbrella was special and symbolic to me. It was especially on rainy days, and in other many little moments on the Trail, that I was able to feel my dad's presence guiding me closer to my goal of reaching Katahdin. Just like my dad's Umbrella Project, the Trail to me is essentially a beautiful journey where people from different backgrounds come together and share stories, while creating the memory of a lifetime. And I found that when I pushed through the challenging times, the Trail rewarded me with beautiful views, stunning campsites, and lifelong friends.

I connected with many amazing people who also shared stories of grief and loss with me. The camaraderie that I experienced on the Trail helped me get through many of my toughest moments. And I realized that many others were also out on the Trail working through various life obstacles — I certainly wasn't the only one.

Now that I am five years out from my loss and studying to be a mental health counselor, I do believe that the healing properties of a long-distance hike on the Appalachian Trail (or other long trail) are like no other. In my opinion, the peace that nature brings does not compare to anything else. I also developed a whole new level of strength and resilience while on the A.T. that I had not known was within me. Without being able to get out and hike the Appalachian Trail, my grief journey would have been much more challenging. I am forever grateful for the healing powers of this magical trail.



TRANSFORMATIONAL GIVING

By Royce Gibson

Bill Farkas near his home in Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania – photo by historian and author Peter Osborne

LEAVING A LEGACY

For nearly 100 years, the work of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has been made possible through the generous support of people like you: committed volunteers, friends, and supporters. Just as the Appalachian Trail is one of the most biodiverse units of the National Park Service, all of you have your own personal stories and reasons for why you choose to become involved with the ATC. One thing that unites us all though are the ways we draw inspiration from the Trail and from one another.

We are honored when we get to hear your stories and to work with you personally to help you create a legacy at the ATC.

If you are interested in learning more about giving to the ATC through the ease and flexibility of estate planning or if you have already left an estate gift to the ATC, we encourage you to contact Lisa Zaid, Director of Development at: LZaid@appalachiantrail.org or 805.844.2327. The ATC recognizes and honors all individuals who provide support through their wills, trusts, life income gifts, retirement plans, life insurance designations, and other planned gifts.

As always, however you choose to support the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, you are making a difference and we thank you for that.

Lisa Zaid / Director of Development

In Appreciation of William W. “Bill” Farkas 1938 — 2020 ~

As a former director of development at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), I am often amazed by the sheer number of individuals who have been involved with ATC's work for years, even decades. Bill Farkas was one of those individuals. For over 30 years, he was a longtime donor, Life Member, Horizon Society Member, open space enthusiast, and generally great friend to the ATC. I had the honor of getting to know him personally and was very saddened by his passing earlier this year.

Having worked at the ATC for over a decade, I had the pleasure of meeting and spending time with many volunteers and donors. Every donor has their own story about why they give. A few years ago, I shared some of Bill's story in *A.T. Journeys*. He was so excited to be profiled and I had a unique experience in writing the article.

In the profile, we learned that Bill spent his entire career as an accountant for U.S. Steel after a stint in the Army. One of his professional relocations was to Hudson, New York where new friends invited him to the Berkshires and he fell in love with Monument Mountain in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. When asked what the Berkshires meant to him, Bill explained that “the landscape is just magical.” He loved the cultural diversity of the Berkshires from

the classical music of Tanglewood (summer home of the Boston Symphony) and the folk music of Arlo Guthrie (a well-known and beloved Stockbridge resident) to the art of Norman Rockwell.

While Bill had never hiked on the A.T. (I offered to take him, but his age and health kept him from being able to do so at that point), he said he was happy just knowing the Trail was there. He also said he wished he had the resources to protect all of the A.T., and that we should: “all realize what a treasure you have...you have to actively protect it both personally and financially.” Bill hoped his story would inspire others to give.

As a member of the ATC's Horizon Society, I had the honor of helping Bill with his estate plans. At the time, we never could have imagined that the gift Bill left to us — \$2.8 million — would become the single largest gift from an individual to the ATC in our nearly 100-year-history. This transformative gift will have a far-reaching impact on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Appalachian Trail. Knowing Bill, I am sure he would want his record broken as he cherished the Appalachian Trail so much. Beyond his gift though, we remain even more grateful for his 30-plus years of friendship. We are all going to miss him very much.

IN HONOR OF

Holly Amato by Natalie Chazal
Ambo by Stephanie Yurcisin
Clifford Andrew “Doc Bear” by Dorothea Beckering,
David Buchholz, Daniel & Kathleen Crowley,
Susan & Fred Eckert, Thomas & Sheila Eckhart,
Judith Jeweler, Scott Latchaw, Kathleen
Linville, Jo Mercer, Linda Payne, Frank
Principe, Jane Riley, Douglas Simon, Mark
Smith, Joseph Steiner, Jim Tatem, Richard
Templeton, Katherine Truter
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Mark Coleman by Weston Coleman
Duncan Crawford by Lori Crawford
Art Dwight by Shelby Byrd
Robert Field by Thomas Fisher
Ken Filar by Samantha Filar
Aura Fontaine by Patty MacRae
Steve Forestieri by Jennifer Weitzner
Maurice Forrester by David & Jane Wilson
John Gillum by Anna Crowther
Gavin by Harvey Greenberg
Brave & Gringo by Carla Gordon
Mark Hardin by Barbara Brown
Matthew Heaton by Alex Wilson
Mary Higley by Arthur & Denise Foley, Brad James
Raymond Hodges by Jennifer Weitzner
Rob Hutchinson by Samantha Kaplan
Thomas Keenan by Sarah Mlynarczyk
Cindy Kirchner by Peter Kirchner
Tim Leszewski by Tricia Sauer
Karen Lutz by Arthur & Denise Foley
John Matticks by Craig Matticks
Dean McCoy by Samantha Jackson
Charles Warren McFarland by
Jeannie Keen, Josh Whitlow
Terry Meade by Nicole Donofrio
Bruce Melosh by Laura Melosh
Bill Moesker by Sandra Snyder
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Alan Nye by Hardy Winburn
Scott Ogden by Kathleen Ogden
Glen Peck by Katherine Piedra
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Gray Pruitt by Brude Stoeve
Clifton Reeder by Anna Reeder
Betty Reppert by Mike Reppert
Sue Rexford by Jennifer Weitzner
Mark Rhoads by Kevin Lucas
Paul & Ruth by Charlie & Amelia Finch
Duncan Sharrits by Blake Sharrits
Stephen Sloss by Daniel Sloss
Ben Stiles by Mary Seymour
Greg, Alex & Sam Stutz by
Jane Pytlewski, Joan Goodhew
James Thomas by Robert Paul
Betsy Thompson by Sarah Best
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Kathy Winters by Anne-Marie Jones
Thomas Worden by Jennifer Weitzner

IN MEMORY OF

Greg Alfus by Sharon & Tim Alfus
Joseph Anthony by Mike Damm
William Arnold by Lois Herr
Darrell Atwater by Jeffery Atwater
Elna Bachman by Vance Bachman
John Barge by Lynn Adams, Jim Barge,
Ashley Barrineau, Kimberly Beachum,
Peggy Beachum, Caitlyn Brice, Diane Briggs,
Russell Cork, Robin Cowherd, Kari
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Chris Deffler by Margaret Deffler, Lillian Wolff
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Charlean Eanes Fisher by Thomas Fisher
Kyle Forrey by Barbara Thomas
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Thomas Coleman Fox by Craig Thompson
Benjamin Harrison Frankel by Rosalyn Doggett
Harvey James “Jim” Frasier by Ruth & Al Puffer
Seth Gilgor by Susan Bahrt
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A.T. Barren Mountain – Chairback Range, Maine – By John Cammerota

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Daniel Deason, Dawn Jorgensen
Dorothy Heidecker by Sharon Starcher
Duncan Hobby by The Arriola Family, Barbara Beane,
Elizabeth Bokman, Karen Brown, Peggy Cecil,
Earl & Marjorie Cole, Christine DiTaranti,
Andrea Everton, Toni Greenfield, Lisa Hamby,
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Jennifer Youssi by Mike Flora



Keane on the A.T. in the White Mountains

GROWING UP IN MASSACHUSETTS, I LEARNED ABOUT the Appalachian Trail during many family trips to Vermont and New Hampshire. I was fascinated by the idea of a path stretching over 2,000 miles and I dreamed of hiking it one day. Years later, after I started to compose music, my dream to hike became intermingled with the idea of composing a piece inspired by that hike. Armed with my hiking gear plus a small digital audio recorder and notebook of staff paper, I set off in the summer of 2016 with the Trail name “Mozart.” My plan was to hike the New England portion of the Trail and then compose an “Appalachian Trail Symphony.”

The symphony is divided into five movements — one for each state I hiked through — and each is roughly proportional to the length of Trail in each state: Connecticut’s 51 miles turns into two minutes of music while Maine’s 282 miles becomes about ten minutes. The symphony essentially compresses my two-month hike into a half hour of music. My hope is to transport listeners to the sites, sounds, and terrain as they move along with me on my journey.

The piece begins with the sound of my footsteps followed by a clarinet playing a theme based on my first name (using a system I created to assign a musical pitch for each letter of the alphabet), which represents how excited, nervous, tentative, and independent I felt beginning the hike. Then a tapestry of birds and other forest sounds gradually build up as I become aware of nature and leave the din of civilization. The music builds more as the elevation also increases until we reach Bear Mountain, the highest peak in Connecticut.

I was barely in Massachusetts when the mosquitoes and flies started to make their irritating presence known, but they soon fade away after passing over the noisy Massachusetts Turnpike before we hear an extended birdsong and then ascend Mount Greylock where we are treated to a fantastic vista overlooking five states.

Entering Vermont, we hear the “Vermont theme” (using my pitch-letter system) in the bell-like tones of glockenspiel and vibraphone. While I composed it on the Trail, months later I realized how similar this melody is to the opening phrase of the gospel hymn “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.” The words of the hymn also fit perfectly with my experience, so I decided to weave it throughout this movement too. The Trail passes through the mountain town of Shrewsbury, which happens to be where my grandfather was born in 1921. My grandfather is who I get my musical abilities from, so in this movement I decided to use a hymn-like chorale exercise that he once wrote to reflect how much I was thinking of him on the Trail. We soon come to Killington Peak where these three melodies are all combined in a majestic culmination of the Green Mountains. After a long descent, we reach the end of Vermont where, after 27 straight days of hiking, I took a much-needed 10-day break.

Back on the Trail, New Hampshire and the White Mountains were the steepest and most challenging section of the hike, so this movement is the most dissonant and is filled with ups, downs, and sharp contrasts. After scaling several peaks and traversing the breathtaking Franconia Ridge, we come to Mount Washington, the highest point on my entire hike. While Mount Washington can be noisy from tourists and a little dangerous, I experienced some blissful solitary moments gazing over all of New England. The music reflects this by suddenly changing from loud and almost violent to soft and tranquil and back again.

The southern part of Maine was difficult and slow, but beautiful with so many remote ponds. About halfway through the state, we finally come to easier terrain and the tempo picks up considerably. During the 100-Mile Wilderness, I was filled with pride to be able to see Katahdin gradually grow larger on the horizon. My day on Katahdin was overcast and I hiked through clouds, but it didn’t subtract from my elation of having completed the journey and my gratitude for the beautiful experience I’d had. The final movement ends with the most majestic music of the entire symphony, including the theme based on my name from the beginning of the symphony which, like me, has been transformed.

While the richness of my experience on the Trail cannot be completely conveyed in a half-hour-long piece of music and a page of words, I hope that this symphony reflects the beauty of the Trail and our country’s wilderness along with some of the immense significance this journey has had on me personally. My hope is that this piece inspires people to enjoy and protect our natural environment, including and especially the Appalachian Trail.

—Keane Southard

You can listen to Keane Southard’s “Appalachian Trail Symphony” and watch a slideshow of photos of his journey on YouTube

For more about Keane visit: keanesouthard.instantenore.com

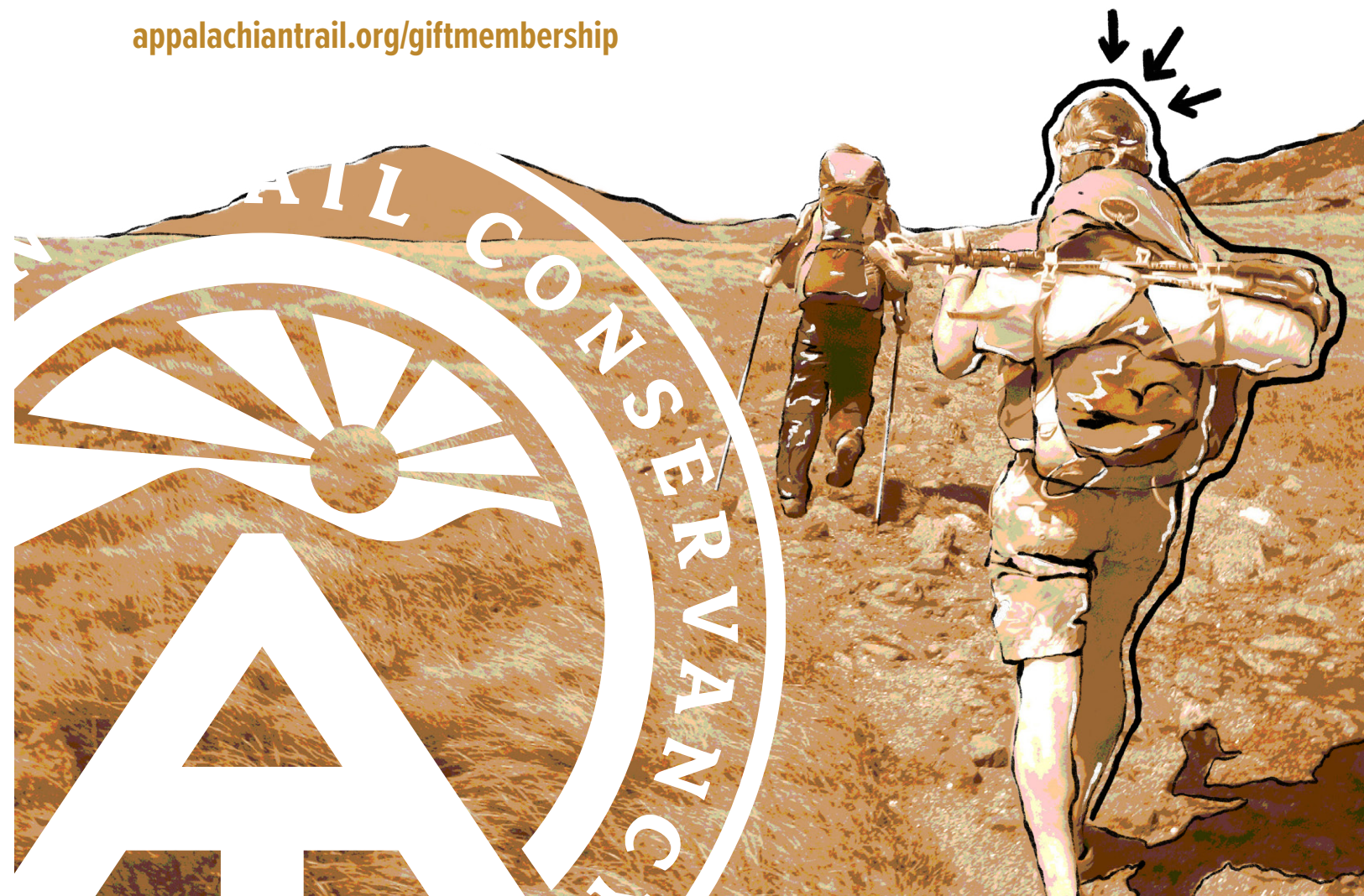
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A.T. north of Killington, Vermont – By Raymond Salani III