

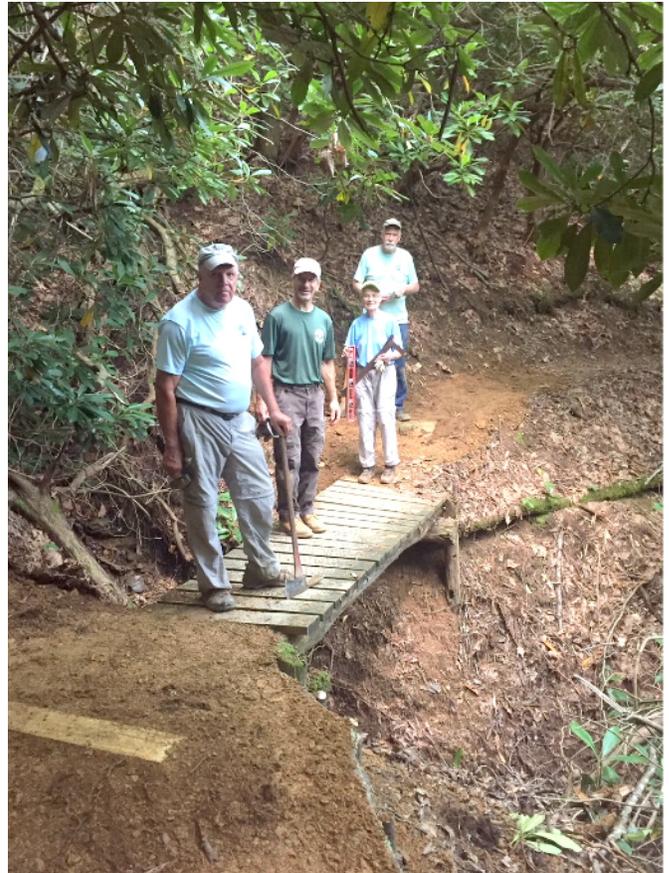


THE BLAZE

Newsletter of the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club | Fall 2019 | October, November, December

New Gully Bridge Coming Soon!

In August, a club work group installed new bridge supports and dug back the embankment to prepare for installation of a new bridge over the gully just south of Dickey Gap. (Photo shows the old gully bridge to be replaced.)



The MOUNT ROGERS APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB, a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy was organized February 29, 1960. The club has maintenance responsibilities for 59.4 miles of the APPALACHIAN TRAIL in the Jefferson National Forest, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Grayson Highlands State Park and additional trails in the area.

MRATC RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

We've had several fun hikes on Wednesdays and Saturdays during July and August, and some more planned for September, one to Roan Mountain (always popular) on September 25 and another to Brumley falls, new to most of us, on September 14. 3-6 folks hiked on the Crawfish Trail and AT, the Flat Top Tower Trail off the Blue Ridge Parkway, and on the Lewis Fork, Cliffside and Appalachian Trail (this last in wonderfully cool weather!). A really special find on the Crawfish trail was large patches of Chanterelle mushrooms (we picked, cooked and ate varying amounts) and many orange fringed orchids.

Here is the Friday hiker report from Judith Foster: Friday hikers enjoyed 6 straight weeks without rain, for which our hikers, some Fridays numbering up to 13, appreciated. A mixed group of men and women, some younger and some older in years, some from Kingsport, Jonesboro, and the Lynchburg area, hiked with us. Grayson Highlands, Whitetop, Iron Mt., PATH AT from Mt. Rogers south and Lewis Fork Wilderness trails determined our destinations. Come hike with us! Submitted by Sharon Trumbley

TRAILS REPORT

During the summer bear encounters slackened on our section of trail, but with an eye toward the fall, when the food supply wanes, two additional bear boxes were delivered to the Forest Service office at Sugar Grove. These will soon be placed at the Saunders and Lost Mountain shelters, giving us food storage boxes near each shelter we maintain. To facilitate the delivery at Lost Mountain the club cleared a forest road and widened a side trail to allow the Forest Service UTV to get as close as possible to the shelter, making the box carry as short as possible. Thanks to everyone involved.

Much of our other summer activity was bridge related. The Comers Creek bridge has developed a structural crack through one of the main supporting beams. We expect the section of trail including the bridge to be closed by the Forest Service in the very near future and have been working with the ATC and the Forest Service to prepare signage for placement once that closure is finalized. Once that's done, plans for demolition will be considered as well as replacement of the bridge. We anticipate it will take several years for the latter to occur. Stay tuned for more information about this expected reroute.

On a more positive bridge note, preparations have continued to replace the bog bridge just south of Dickey Gap. Over two days Ron Bobko and Doug Levin pre-constructed the bridge decking and prepared the posts and rails at the Sugar Grove work center. In mid August a club work group installed new bridge supports and prepared the site for installation of the new bridge. We expect to carry in and assemble the new bridge in early November, with the help of a substantial group.

NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT

Rare plant season is winding down, but there is one more outing on Sept. 7. We'll be looking for fall bloomers like Roan Mountain rattlesnakeroot (*Prenanthes roanensis*) and the plants that we have not yet found, like low cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*). Distinguishing between the rare grasses and the rare sphagnum mosses is extremely difficult.

On a recent outing, we monitored the long stalk holly (*Ilex collina*), our rare deciduous holly that we have only spotted in one place along the trail.

Recently, despite all our efforts to prevent it, VDOT mowed the area of rare plants behind the parking at Elk Garden, but the ATC is working with the Forest Service on signs that will prevent this in the future. Plans to move and expand the parking lot are on hold.

See photo of Roan Rattlesnake Root on page 4.

If you'd like to join our search for rare plants, contact Carol Broderson mtrogersatc@gmail.com

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – FALL 2019
October – November - December

Updates on **trail work** locations and **recreational hike** plans are sent out by email to club members and friends a few days prior to these activities. If you don't get club email, please contact listed hike leader via mtrogersatc@gmail.com to check on last minute plans, or contact Doug Levin, Trails Coordinator, at mratcinfo@gmail.com or 276-698-2805 for information on trail work or to report trail work needs! **Trail work hikes will generally meet at 9:00 AM, with location sent out in weekly email.** Updates are also posted on www.mratc.org/Current Weeks information and on our Facebook page: Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club.

HIKERS, PLEASE LET HIKE LEADER KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY HIKE by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com. This helps with planning, and also lets participant know if any changes have been made in the hike. **Please remember to wear blaze orange during hunting season!**

MRATC FRIDAY HIKERS - A moderately paced hiking group.

Hikes are announced midweek. Contact Judith Foster at jaf@centurylink.net or 276-623-2408 to join a hike.

October

5 Saturday. 7.5 mile hike on Mt. Rogers Trail to upper Lewis Fork to Cliffside. Cars at both ends. Meet at caboose in Damascus at 8:15 or at the split rail fence (Lewis Fork crossing) on 603 at 9 a.m. to carpool to Mt. Rogers Trail to start. Some muddy sections. Rain could postpone. Check with leader before 8 a.m. (276-475-5114) if doubt. Leader: Anne Maio.

9 Wednesday. Work hike.

16 Wednesday. Work Hike.

19 Saturday. Hike to the Channels via Raven Rd and the Brumley Mt trail, from Rt 80 on the Washington/Russell Co line, about 7 miles RT, up hill going, down hill coming back, moderate difficulty. Bring water, food, rain gear if needed and wear some blaze orange. Meet 9:00 Lowes exit 19, or 9:15 Meadowview town Sq. Let the leader, Maria Salgado, know you are coming by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

23 Wednesday. Work Hike.

26 Saturday. Hike the Iron Mt Trail from Skulls Gap to Beartree. We will begin at the view area on Rd 600, take the Skulls Gap Trail to Iron Mt Trail and finish on Beartree Gap Trail, about 8 miles total, moderate difficulty. Cars at both ends. Meet at the caboose in Damascus 8:30 AM. Bring water, snacks, and rain gear if weather threatens. Also, wearing blaze orange is a good idea, since it will be hunting season. Please let hike leader, Jim Warden, know you intend to join the hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

30 Wednesday. Work Hike.

November

2 Saturday. 6-7 mile hike on AT from Low Gap in Shady Valley north to McQueen's Knob, site of an old shelter, or McQueen's Gap, where TN Rt 69 goes through. Good views from many spots. Leader Sharon Trumbley. Dress for weather and let leader know if hope to come by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com. Blaze orange!

6 Wednesday. Work Hike.

13 Wednesday. Meeting with our Agency Partners at Sugar Grove Forest Service Work Center on Flatridge Rd. (Rte 601) (Second driveway brings you closest to the Work Center classroom). The club's business meeting will start at 10:30 AM. Bring a sack lunch and we will break to eat at about 12:30. Desserts and snacks to share are welcome. Beverages provided. The Partnership portion of the meeting will start at 1:00 PM.

23 Saturday. Work Hike.

27 Wednesday. Meet at Dickey Gap parking at 9:30 for a 6 mile loop hike. If you are interested, contact leader, Carol Broderson, at mtrogersatc@gmail.com in case of weather changes. Wear blaze orange.

30 Saturday. Work Hike.

December

Trail work in December, January, and February will be scheduled as needed and when weather permits.

4 Wednesday. Hike on Mendota Trail: Walk a Bristol, Va RR bed 6 miles in/out on the Mendota Trail. This new trail opened in August. Meet at VHCC parking lot 8:30 AM. Bring layers for possible cold weather and rain gear if needed. Leader: Marcia Pruner.

14 Saturday. Explore the Iron Mt Trail going east from Skulls Gap IMT parking to Cherry Tree Shelter, then down the Flat Top trail to parking on Rd 603, about 6 miles, with ups and downs, and maybe some snow! Cars at both ends. Meet Lowes exit 19 9:00 or at the trailhead at 9:30. Please dress warmly, bring water and food, and extra layers, also wear some blaze orange! Let leader, Sharon Trumbley, know if you plan to come, at mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

January

1 Wednesday: New Year's Hike and Potluck. Meet at Lowe's 10 AM for a short hike, about 4 miles from Straight Branch parking, Beech Grove trail, AT, Iron Mt loop. Return to Judith Foster's home 25386 Cornelius Dr, Abingdon, VA 24211 for the potluck, with music by Kychyn Sync. If you want to skip the hike you may go on to Judith's after 10 AM. Someone will be there to greet. Lunch is usually around 2 PM.



Roan Rattlesnake Root

Remember that if you order merchandise online from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), you can order using "Amazon Smile" and a penny for every dollar will come back to the club! Please use the following link:

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/54-1716495>

Hawthorn Removal Project

For MRATC's contribution to field trips for the Summer Naturalist Rally August 17th, we offered a work project to continue hawthorn removal in the pasture north of Elk Garden that we started last summer. The Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area wants to preserve open areas, such as pastures, and hawthorn spreads easily and closes them in. It also threatens the rare Gray's Lilies that grow along the borders of the pasture. The lilies are also threatened by the grazing cows and by deer. We uncovered several lilies as we worked. In cutting back the hawthorn, we tried to leave branches near the lilies to obstruct animal browsing, in hopes that the lilies will spread. Pictured are club members Doug Levin (with loppers), Jim Warden (with handsaw) and Sharon Trumbley and Anne Maio.



Trail rehab project at Rte. 859, south of Lost Mtn. Shelter with participants Anne Maio, Sharon Trumbley, Doug Levin, Marcia Pruner

ATTENTION: FITNESS WALKERS

A new app, "Walk the Distance" tracks walking distance (daily steps) using a virtual walk on the AT.

Sample it using the link below.

There is a small fee of \$2.99 to purchase the entire app for the whole AT.

Information about several of MRATC's trail shelters is included in the app.

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/walk-the-distance/id634548793>

Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club

P.O. Box 789

Damascus, VA 24236

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www.mratc.org

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General questions: mtrogersatc@gmail.com

Trails Committee: mratcinfo@gmail.com

Treasurer: mratctreasurer@gmail.com

MRATC information is now available via Twitter (www.twitter.com/@Mt_roversATC) and Instagram: (www.instagram.com/mountrogersATClub). Look for us under Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club