



THE BLAZE

Newsletter of the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club | Spring 2020 | April, May, June
MRATC 60TH ANNIVERSARY



The MRATC 60th anniversary cake was cut by four of the five Steering Committee Coordinators:
L-R: Gerry Davis, RPC Representative, Doug Levin, Trails Coordinator, Carol Broderson, Natural Resources Coordinator, Sharon Trumbley, Club Recreational Activities Coordinator.

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

Winter 2020 activities started out with a well attended New Year's Day hike and potluck at Judith Foster's home. Since that time many Friday hikes have been cancelled due to bad weather. Saturday hikes have been attended by 5-8 regulars on the AT; Straight Mtn, Bear Tree and Yancey trails; the Barrens in Russell county with a pretty spectacular waterfall; the Rowland Creek area; and Rocky Fork State Park in Tn, where we hiked partially in the snow on hillsides and by lovely creeks. There are several planned hikes in March on the AT, Alleghany Access New River State Park, and in Grayson Highlands State Park. Hopefully Friday's weather will start cooperating also, so that late winter and early springtime hikes can be enjoyed by all.

Our Annual Meeting is to be held February 29 at St John's Lutheran church, where we will also celebrate the MRATC's 60th birthday. The supper is potluck, but the club will supply drinks, paper products, eating utensils, and cake.

SPRING 2020 MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR REPORT

The Mt Rogers Appalachian Trail club currently has 190 members. About one third of these are family memberships, although only 3 include children. During the past year we've had 26 new members:

Ashley and Steven Ahn

JoLynn Drew

Robert Hagen

Bob Hardee

Sara Haxby

Daniel Howe

Diane Johnson

Kecia and Randy Jones

Sheila Matteson

Lori B Pennington

Steven Rodgers

Judith Seay

Jeri Ward

Jenn Watson

Nancy and Kenneth Watson

Linda White

Ed Wright

Morris, Kimberly, Courtney, & Jeremiah Yule

Brian Zier

Kathleen Ziglar

Renewals for annual members are due on March 1. If you receive a membership form with your Blaze, it means you need to renew.

TRAILS REPORT

The winter months have been quiet though we're planning another bridge project for the beginning of our 2020 work season. A three log bridge a little south of the Saunders switchbacks will be replaced in March if all goes as planned. The existing structure has no handrails, is slick when it gets wet and dangerous when it gets icy. The style of the new bridge will be very similar to the one installed just south of Dickey Gap in November and will have posts and handrails only on the downhill side to allow hikers to continue to easily access the water source from the uphill side. We will install the new structure with help from a group of students visiting from TN-Chattanooga. Schedule updates will be posted soon via the weekly e-mail.

Regarding the Comers Falls bridge, we will meet with our agency partners very soon to discuss demolition of the existing bridge, which was condemned by the Forest Service in the fall. We are hopeful that the condemned bridge will be removed and that section of trail can be reopened in the not too distant future. Stay tuned for updates.

If anyone is interested in adopting a section to monitor this year, please send an e-mail to mratcinfo@gmail.com. We can never have too many sets of eyes monitoring the trail. If you prefer not to monitor a specific section but would like to report an issue you find on the trail please use the same address. The more detail you are able to provide the better and photos are helpful.

NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT

The Natural Resources Committee is kicking off the 2020 season with four wildflower explorations. On March 18 we'll look for the first signs of spring along the New River at Alleghany Access, a canoeing camp near Mouth of Wilson with 5 miles of riverside trail.

One month later, on April 15, expect one of the best spring wildflower shows at the New River State Park near Fries. Trillium and Dutchmen's breeches, along with many others, provide a spectacular show there.

On May 2, Jim Warden will lead us to a special spot on White Rock Mountain where we hope to see masses of fringed phacelia and blue eyed Mary.

On May 9 at the Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally, join MRATC's annual wildflower hike from Whitetop to Elk Garden. We'll survey many rare plants there.

On June 24, we'll explore rare plants on the AT, between Massie Gap and Scales.

Look for details on any of these hikes in the club news a week prior to the outing, and email Carol Broderson mtrogersatc@gmail.com for more information.

MRATC ANNUAL MEETING

Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club members celebrated our 60th anniversary as an AT maintaining club on February 29th at our Annual Meeting. The club was officially formed on February 29th, 1960, taking over AT maintenance from Rte. 16 to Damascus, formerly part of the Roanoke AT Club's responsibility, by agreement with the ATC. Since the club can only celebrate its birthday officially every four years on Leap Day, we remain a youthful club.

New Board members elected this year at the Annual Meeting are: Janet Gibbons, Marcia Pruner, Ron Bobko, Robert Hagen, and Gloria Surber, who was elected Treasurer, replacing Kathy Walker, who has been Treasurer for several terms. Edie Bobko, who was already on the Board, was elected Secretary, replacing Mary Davis, who will continue on the Board and also continue posting club information on Facebook and serving as Youth Group Coordinator.

Members attending the Annual Meeting voted to revise the club's 2020 bylaws by changing the wording of club officers, President and Vice President, to the names of the Steering Committee Coordinators (Trails, Natural Resources, Outreach, Club Recreational Activities, and RPC Representative). That is the leadership structure the club has been trying out for the past two years. The Board evaluated the trial and determined it works well to cover the many different responsibilities of our club.

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – SPRING 2020 April-May-June

Work days are listed, but time and meeting location will be sent out to club members in weekly email. If not on email list for updates, contact Trail Supervisor, Doug Levin, at mratcinfo@gmail.com, or 276 698 2805.

Updates on recreational hikes and on locations for work hikes are posted under "Current Week's Information" on the club's website: www.mratc.org and also on Facebook (Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club).

HIKERS, PLEASE LET THE HIKE LEADER KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY HIKE by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

MRATC FRIDAY HIKERS: A moderately paced hiking group.

Hikes are announced mid week. Contact Judith Foster at 276 623 2408, jaf@centurylink.net, or mtrogersatc@gmail.com if you would like to join a hike. All are welcome.

April

1 Wednesday. Hike on the Sugar Hill Loop Trail and the trail with a view of Bluebell Island in the St Paul, Va area, to see some early wildflowers and views of the town and Clinch River. About 5 miles or so, easy and moderate difficulty. Leader: Sharon Trumbley. Let her know if you plan to hike or have questions by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com. Meet at Food Country Rt 19 in Abingdon at 8:30 AM.

4 Saturday. Trail work.

8 Wednesday. Hike at the Pinnacle in Russell County and see a plethora of spring wildflowers. Follow the Big Cedar Creek Trail with waterfall, Grapevine, Pinnacle view, and the Copper Ridge Trail (if we are still energetic) for about 5 miles of moderate hiking. Leader: Marcia Pruner. Let her know if you plan to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com. Meet at Food Country Rt 19 in Abingdon at 8:30 AM.

Club meeting at 7 p.m. Updates on spring trail work plans and events.

Location change: this meeting will be held at the Damascus Library rather than the Abingdon Library.

11 Saturday. Trail work.

15 Wednesday. Spring wildflower walk on the New River Trail near Fries, Va. Expect to see masses of trillium, Dutchman's breeches, and one of the best early spring wildflower shows. We'll meet at the trail parking at 10. Contact leader, Carol Broderson, to be included and get details, at mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

18 Saturday. Earth Day festival in Abingdon, 9-1. The club will have a booth.

Also: Hike south on the AT from Elk Garden trailhead to Whitetop Mtn and out to Buzzard Rock, and back about 7.2 miles round trip. Bring water, lunch/snacks, as well as rain gear. This hike has views and early wildflowers. Meet at 9 at Lowes parking lot near garden center at exit 19 to carpool, or 10 at Elk Garden. Leader: Felicia Mitchell. Let her know if you plan to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

22 Wednesday. (Note: April 19-25 is National Volunteer Week.) Trail work.

25 Saturday. VA Creeper Trail Festival in Abingdon, all day. Several club members needed to staff the ATC/MRATC booth and activity.

29 Wednesday. Trail work.

May

2 Saturday. Wildflower/Rare Plant walk in the Clinch Mtn Wildlife Management Area. We will park at the Whiterock trail head, hike up to the saddle, and proceed to the Panther Lick area, where Fringed Phacelia and Blue Eyed Mary covered the hillsides one year ago at this time. Great views as well. About 7 miles if taken as a loop hike, or we could spot a car at Panther Lick to make it about 5 miles. Meet at Meadowview town square 9:00 AM. Bring water, snacks, and rain gear if weather threatens. Please let hike leader, Jim Warden, know if you plan to join by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

6 Wednesday. Trail work.

8-10 Friday eve. – Sunday: Naturalist Rally (www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mrn for field trip list and information)

9 Saturday. Join us for a Rare Plant Survey hike, from Whitetop Mtn on the AT down to Elk Garden, as part of the Mt Roger's Naturalist Rally. If going to the rally, meeting time 8:00 AM there. If not, can join us at the Whitetop parking near the AT at 8:45. Let leader, Carol Broderson, know if you plan to participate, by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

13 Wednesday. Trail work.

15-17 Friday – Sunday: Damascus Appalachian Trail Days. The club will have a booth, sign up hikers for the Hardcore project, and march in the parade. (www.traildays.us for Trail Days schedule of events)

17-18 Sunday – Monday: Hardcore work project on Wilburn Ridge, Grayson Highlands. Club members will help serve food and transport hikers.

23 Saturday. Hike on AT from Fox Creek to Pine Mtn, about 3.5 miles, and on to Scales, at 5 miles, if group desires, for a total of 7 – 10 miles, moderate, with section to Pine Mtn all up hill. Lovely forest hike with great views from Scales (a bald area). Meet 8:30 at Lowes parking or 9:15 at Fox Creek. Hike leader: Maria Salgado. Let her know if planning to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

27 Wednesday. Trail work.

30 Saturday. Hike on the AT from Elk Garden north to Brier Ridge and back on the Va Highlands Horse Trail, about 6 miles of moderate to strenuous hiking. Meet at Lowes exit 19 at 8:30 AM or Elk Garden at 9:15 AM. Let leader, Sharon Trumbley, know if you plan to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com. Don't forget water, food, sunscreen, and rain gear if weather threatens.

June

1 Deadline for Summer newsletter.

3 Wednesday. Trail work.

3-7 Wednesday – Sunday: Konnarock Crew will be working on the AT in Grayson Highlands. Club members needed to be campsite guards during the day.

7 Sunday. Potluck for Konnarock Crew at Base Camp, Flatridge Rd., Sugar Grove. 5:30 setup; dinner at 6. Bring a dish or dessert to share and serving utensils.

6 Saturday. National Trails Day.

10 Wednesday. Trail work with Sierra Club volunteers, who will be here with Lissa and Ted Jackson, club members. More details in weekly email.

13 Saturday. Trail work.

17 Wednesday. Hike from Massie Gap to Brier Ridge via the VA Highlands Horse Trail (VHHT) and the Cabin Ridge Trail, returning on the VHHT. About 7.5 miles with views near Brier Ridge. Meet at the caboose in Damascus at 8:30 AM to carpool, or at Massie Gap at 9:30. Leader: Anne Maio. Let her know if you plan to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

20 Saturday. Trail work.

24 Wednesday. Summer Rare Plant survey led by Carol Broderson. Details will be sent in weekly email. Email questions or plans to join hike at mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

27 Saturday. Trail work.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Regional Partnership Committee (RPC): The (spring 2020) Southern Partnership Committee meeting will be held at Hungry Mother State Park on 13-15 March. This is an opportunity for additional club members to attend this meeting and get a (big picture) view of the complexities involved in maintaining and protecting The Appalachian Trail. Issues likely to be discussed: 1. Safety on the trail including check in and check out procedures for members doing trail maintenance. 2. Sawyer training and general safety and training for volunteers during trail work-days. 3. Management of large visitor numbers in popular areas such as the Virginia highlands. 4. Safe food storage on the trail. RPC representative: Gerald Davis

UPCOMING AT EVENTS

The **AT Vista** conference, originally scheduled for 2020, has been rescheduled for August 6-9, 2021 and will be held at the State University of NY at New Paltz.

2021 also marks the 100th anniversary of the Appalachian Trail, counting from the date of Benton McKaye's 1921 article urging the establishment of an Appalachian Trail.

NEW BOOK: AT SHELTERS

The Appalachian Trail Backcountry Shelters, Lean-tos, and Huts, by Sarah Jones Decker

Photos and information about all AT shelters, including, of course, MRATC's!

You can preorder a signed copy on Sarah Decker's website www.sarahjonesdecker.com or a regular copy from Amazon, Target, Barnes & Noble (and soon, the ATC). The book will be available for shipping in April.



Wallberg Construction of Abingdon began work on the new Trail Center in Damascus with an official groundbreaking on February 4th. The projected completion date is early summer.

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