



# THE BLAZE

Newsletter of the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club | Fall 2021 | October, November, December

Explorer Scout Grayson Webb

Preparing for the large-scale drainage Eagle Scout project south of Wise Shelter



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 have had 3 recreational hikes between June and August, with 4-7 folks hiking. The largest was on the Mt Roger's trail to Elk Garden. Summer flowers were seen on all, and because all were in high locations (Whitetop, Mt Rogers, and Grayson Highlands) the temperature was about 10 degrees cooler than in Damascus and Abingdon. The Friday hikers have continued to hold hikes also. Both these groups have been fully vaccinated. It is up to the hike leader to decide if only vaccinated folks are welcome. The resurgence of Covid-19's Delta variant has made many of us increase our vigilance in trying to escape infection. We have had no club potlucks, although some of us have gotten together and celebrated Donna Barkley's finishing the AT with an outside supper and music.

## TRAILS REPORT

With the arrival of summer and a temporary return to relative normalcy the weekly work crews were closer to normal in size, allowing us to gradually repair trail issues identified before the Covid pandemic began. There will always be more to do, but substantial progress was made this quarter.

In June, an Eagle Scout project came to fruition on our section. A 100' perennially wet and eroded stretch of trail about 3/4 mile south of Wise shelter was improved dramatically by Grayson Webb, the Eagle Scout to be, and a group of 10 scouts and 3 adults. The project was split into 2 days with the crew making camp north of Wise Shelter. Everyone got plenty dirty but had a great time and a long term issue has been addressed in a way that should be sustainable. Thanks to everyone involved with the planning and execution of this large project!

In mid July, the poster and plexiglass on the kiosk near Massie Gap was finally replaced after a long delay related to approval of the final design, Covid, lack of ink, availability of a sheet of Lexan (plexi material) and a convenient date. At long last, partners including the club, Jim the Ridgerunner, the Forest Service and Grayson Highlands staff all participated in the installation. Visitors admired the new map and information immediately.



Kiosk update

Persons shown - Doug Levin, Ellen from the MRNRA, Gray Hauser and Jim Baum, our ATC Ridgerunner

## MRATC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Mt Rogers Appalachian Trail Club currently has 193 members. This is just slightly less than the 200 we had 3 months ago. We've had 3 new members (one has been on 2 of our recreational hikes) and 11 renewals, some of whom have become life members. Due to dropping many members who have not renewed we are still a little less than we were. There have been very few outreach possibilities due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

Reminders for annual members to renew will be emailed in early January. We have been discussing the need for members to be able to renew online and this is being explored.

A reminder: yearly memberships are \$10, or \$15 for families. Lifetime memberships are \$100. More than half of our members are Lifetime members.

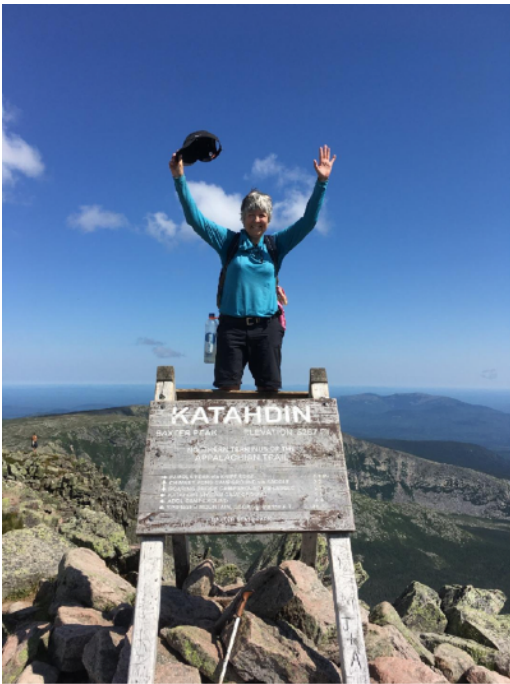


## MRATC COVID PROTOCOLS:

Currently, the ATC is not offering COVID guidelines to AT clubs for trail work and other club activities. It is up to the clubs. Those who joined MRATC's Zoom meeting in mid-August generally agreed that for the remainder of this year's regular group trail work season, until Thanksgiving, only vaccinated people should come out to do trail work in a group. Since people are asked to email [mratcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:mratcinfo@gmail.com) in order to join a trail work project, if Doug does not know someone's vaccination status, he can tell him/her about the club's requirement. People who are not comfortable doing trail work in a group, even with others who are vaccinated, should not join group trail work until the COVID situation improves. For club recreational hikes, it is up to the leader whether to require participants to be vaccinated. Since those who want to participate in a hike are asked to email [mtrogersatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtrogersatc@gmail.com), the leader can contact anyone whose vaccination status is unknown and explain any requirement. For activities such as festivals, community hikes, and group trail work projects with people from outside the club, club leaders will assess the COVID situation two or three weeks ahead and make a decision about whether the club will participate in the activity. We will review these protocols at our next club meeting (live or on Zoom), Nov. 10, then again at our winter meeting and make any adjustments we think we need to address the COVID situation at that time.

Donna Barkley finished her section hike of the AT in July. Congratulations, Donna!

Largest blowdown on our trail section this year was cut and removed by Doug Levin, Gray Hauser, and Gerry Davis. Gray is shown chainsawing in the photo



Trail tread improvement project: A group of seven did sidehill work between Lost Mtn. Shelter and Rte. 859. Photo shows Sharon Trumbley, Doug Levin, Frank White, Jim Warden, Heidi Dixon White, Emily Mayo.

## ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – FALL 2021

October – November - December

**Due to the significant increase in local numbers of Covid infections and the close proximity to others that is sometimes necessary, MRATC group trail work will be limited to those who are vaccinated for the remainder of the current season.** Trail work will be announced in the weekly email on Sunday. If interested and not on our list, notify Doug at [mratcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:mratcinfo@gmail.com).

Recreational hikes not listed here will also be announced in the weekly email, on our website (mratc.org), and on our facebook page. **Hikers, please let the hike leader know if you hope to participate in any hike by emailing [mtrogersatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtrogersatc@gmail.com). It is strongly recommended that all hike participants be fully immunized against the Covid-19 virus.**

MRATC FRIDAY HIKERS – Moderate hikes for Covid vaccinated MRATC members weather permitting. No dogs please. Call 276-623-2408 if interested.

### October

**6 Wednesday.** Hike to see fall leaves, either in Mt Rogers High Country or possibly Roan Mtn. Details will be announced in weekly email. Leader is Sharon Trumbley, who requests that all hikers be fully immunized against Covid.

**9 – 11 – Saturday – Monday.** ALDHA will hold The Gathering at the Higher Ed. Center in Abingdon. MRATC may provide trail work projects for interested participants on Mon. Oct. 11.

**23 – Saturday.** The VA RPC (Regional Partnership Committee) will meet at the Trail Center. Club members are invited to join the meetings. Registration info. and an agenda will be sent out in the weekly email in early October. There is a possibility of a group RPC hike in our area on Fri., Oct. 22, with club members as leaders.

### November

**3 Wednesday.** Hike to be lead by Frank White. Details will be announced in weekly email.

**5-6 – Friday – Saturday.** AT Community Summit at the Trail Center. Meetings on Friday; recreational activities on Saturday. Club members are invited to attend. For more information, visit [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeBerGKC\\_ugyqmcvuuouZH17SF99nixY-4oZ6z5dTZr9E9xDQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeBerGKC_ugyqmcvuuouZH17SF99nixY-4oZ6z5dTZr9E9xDQ/viewform)

**10 - Wednesday.** Fall club meeting 10:30 A.M. plus the annual meeting with our Agency Partners at 1:00 PM. We hope to meet live at the FS Work Center in Sugar Grove and provide an online option on Zoom. Information will be sent in the Sunday Club email in early November. Those who don't receive the email can ask one of the Board members in the list sent out with the March newsletter.

**13 Saturday.** Hike to be lead by Heidi Dixon-White. Details will be announced in weekly email.

### December

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

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Due to Covid, most of our rare plant monitoring and phenology observations have been done individually or in small groups. Late summer bloomers are in the spotlight now, St. Johnswort, Roan Mountain rattlesnake root, and the elusive long stalk holly. Our mountains host several species of deciduous holly. These look nothing like the thorny leaved evergreen. We'll be going out in September to look for the rare, long stalk version. To receive special notice of rare plant monitoring outings, email Carol [mtrogersatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtrogersatc@gmail.com)



### NEW ATC POSITION:

Jerry Kyle, long-time Konnarock Crew Leader, will be starting a new position as ATC Regional Mgr. for MRATC, TEHCC and PATH in the late fall. Since the Virginia Regional Office covers a lot of trail miles, Regional Manager positions have been set up to provide better contact with the trail clubs. TEHCC was moved from under the Southern Regional Office to join MRATC and PATH. We'll be looking for opportunities for more cooperation with the club to our north and the club to our south.

### IN MEMORIAM:

We learned this summer that **Terry Kammer**, a longtime member of the club, passed away from cancer in April 2021. Terry is best remembered for his dedication to trail work and his willingness to stay at Thomas Knob Shelter for a week with all our equipment while we were re-siding the shelter in 2011. He was also a willing Konnarock volunteer and helped repair Base Camp facilities during several spring camp cleanups. A tool cabinet will be installed in the Trail Center workshop building with a donation from Terry's family.

### BIRTHDAY MILESTONE:

Long-time Board member and former Trail Supervisor George Kilgore is turning 90 in late September. Way to go, George! Best wishes for a great birthday – and many more!



A few group hikes were held as the COVID situation improved and before it declined. Shown are Randy Goodman, Maria Salgado, Sharon Trumbley, Frank White, Heidi Dixon White and Jim Warden (the hike leader for the mid-July hike on the Mt. Rogers Trail)

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[www.mratc.org](http://www.mratc.org)

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General questions: [mtrogersatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtrogersatc@gmail.com)

Trails Committee: [mratcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:mratcinfo@gmail.com)

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