



THE BLAZE

Newsletter of the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club | Winter 2022 | January, February, March

The Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association held an annual “Gathering” conference in Abingdon on Columbus Day weekend. Traditionally, ALDHA offers an optional trail work project to members attending the conference. This year, one group of ALDHA members performed AT boundary monitoring near Damascus, while another group re-stained over the abundant graffiti on Straight Branch Shelter, a former AT shelter on the Iron Mountain Trail. (Next: new roof?) 5 ALDHA members flanked by club members Anne Maio and Heidi Dixon-White)

Restained Straight Branch 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

During the late summer and early fall the club has celebrated one member's 90th birthday and had 2 recreational hikes.

A dozen of us celebrated George Kilgore's 90th birthday on a lovely September day at the picnic area at Clear Creek Golf Course. George is a long-time board member and was our trail supervisor for many years.

4 of us hiked on the AT in Shady Valley, led by Sharon Trumbley, in early October and saw beautiful foliage and lots of the flower, bottle gentian. In November, 5 of us were lead by Heidi Dixon-White on a cold, but lovely hike on the Feathercamp, Iron Mtn, and Beech Grove trails. We saw our first snow on the trail on a high section of the Iron Mtn trail. A hike is planned for early December on the AT and a small part of the Creeper trail up to Saunder's shelter, to be lead by Frank White. We are trying to decide how to safely hike and carry-on club activities in the continuing days of Covid, with most of us being vaccinated.

TRAILS REPORT

Fall has been a time of partnerships. On Columbus Day a group of ALDHA volunteers assisted with two projects. The first was a re-staining of the Straight Branch Shelter, which while not on the AT was a high priority on the Forest Service to-do list and required a good sized group. Anne Maio planned and led that effort. Meanwhile in Damascus, another group from ALDHA helped Doug Levin monitor, clear and reblaze a portion of the corridor boundary near Damascus. For those unfamiliar, the boundary marks the border between the land buffering the AT and adjacent land. Where the other (non AT) side of the boundary is private land, monitors look for encroachment or unwanted activity on the AT side of the boundary line. This could include dumping, or structures.

In other recent partnership activity a group of E&H students, spear-headed by senior Carter Hudson have coordinated with Doug to address sidehill needs in the vicinity of Dickey Gap. Carter completed his AT through hike in July and has been looking to give back for the trail. A group of 4-6 students have made substantial progress supplementing our regular club activity, which has also focused on significant tread repair. If all goes as planned a larger group from E&H will help complete a relocation project, a bit north of Wise shelter, in the spring of 2022.

VOLUNTEER TRAIL MAINTENANCE HOURS

AT-wide Volunteer Numbers and Hours for Federal Fiscal Year 2021: There are a total of **3,758** volunteers reported for the period October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021. They collectively contributed **142,649 hours** to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, with an estimated value of \$4,071,202

There were a grand total of 2788 hours of volunteer time contributed by 40 MRATC Club members and 32 guest volunteers. We maintained a total of 815 miles of the AT; 780.5 in the Jefferson National Forest and 34.5 in Grayson Highlands State Park.

1,583.25 Hours - Trail & Facility Maintenance
181.5 Hours – Natural Resources Management
72.5 Hours – Outreach / Education / Interpretation Work
331.5 Hours – Club administration & management
619.25 Hours – Travel to Volunteer activity

Each year we recognize Volunteers that contribute their time to our effort and achieve ATC & USFS Volunteer Hour Mile stones. This past season the following individuals hit some of those mile stones.

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Brian Allgood –	USFS Patch –	51.5 HR
Gerald Davis –	USFS 700 HR Bar –	722 HR
Steve Ferris –	ATC PIN –	9 HR
Drew Gallacher -	USFS Patch	69 HR
Mary Gale -	ATC Pin	13.25 HR
Kim Harmon	USFS Patch	54.25 HR
Felicia Mitchell	ATC Patch & USFS 100 HR Bar	112.75 HR
Marcia Pruner	ATC Cap & USFS 4&500 HR Bar	501.25 HR
Dianne Seger	ATC Pin	13 HR
Gloria Surber	USFS Patch	67.5 HR
Jim Warden	USFS 8&900 HR Bar	906.75 HR
Frank White	ATC Pin & USFS Patch	66.25 HR
Heidi White	ATC Pin & USFS Patch	50.25 HR

Individuals who contributed significant time this season and are beyond current award levels:

Ron Bobko	228	1409 HR
Carol Broderson	131.25	1624 HR
Doug Levin	322	2666.5 HR
Anne Maio	369.75	11,493.75 HR
Sharon Trumbley	215	1817.25 HR

Congratulations to all our 2020-2021 Season achievers!!

MRATC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There are 194 club members, including 25 PR members as of today. The majority of our members are Life members, 117 by a rough count. This leaves 52 members to renew annually and hopefully some new members too.

Annual memberships are up for renewal between now and the first of March. In late December I hope to send an email reminder to all those who need to renew. The yearly dues are \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family, and \$100 for a Lifetime membership. These can be paid by sending a check and either just printing off the reminder form or sending me a note letting me know of any changes in your information (address, phone number, email address) to MRATC, PO Box 789, Damascus, Va, 24236.

This year we also are able to accept online renewals and new memberships using PayPal or your credit card. The link for this is on our web page, mratc.org, under “Membership - Join or Renew.” See the article about this below.

MRATC DUES CAN NOW BE PAID ONLINE

MRATC dues for annual-renewing members are due between Jan. 1 and March 1 each year. Now there is an option to pay online rather than sending in a check to the club’s PO Box.

Click this link: <http://mratc.pbworks.com/w/page/130409625/Membership> **or** go to the club’s website: www.mratc.org and click “Membership – Join or Renew” in the Sidebar List on the right.

If any of your information has changed, fill in the online Member Information Form.

Then click the blue oval, “Membership Dues,” at the bottom of the Membership page and fill in the appropriate payment choice and information. Paypal handles all payments securely whether paid with a Paypal or a credit card account.

We are also working on making dues payments possible on Facebook.

Those who would rather send a check to the PO Box can still do that, of course: MRATC, PO Box 789, Damascus, VA 24236.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Despite Covid restrictions, we've done plenty rare plant monitoring this season, either individually or in small groups. We've turned in 25 reports. Gray's lily, small mountain bittercress, American umbrellaleaf, beaked dodder, great Indian plantain, Roan Mountain rattlesnake root, Blue Ridge St. Johnswort, and long stalk holly occupied most of our efforts. Fringed phacelia and shrubby five fingers occupy many acres of the land around Whitetop Mountain and aptly fit the description, "rare, but locally plentiful." We need professional help next season to help identify the rare grasses and mosses which have never been consistently monitored since they were first described decades ago. The highly technical keys to differentiate them sometimes require lab work.

Thanks to Felicia Mitchell for keeping track of the shifting fortunes of great Indian plantain in the Elk Garden parking area, that was once again mowed in 2021, despite the new signs. Connor tracked down the reason for this mistake, and we hope, once again, that the mowing problem is solved. And thanks to Jennie Hauser, who has adopted American umbrellaleaf and joined our monitoring efforts.

We also turned in 21 phenology reports on trees and plants in Damascus and at Elk Garden and Massie Gap.

A last note. Doug reported on his visit with Connor and Josh to the bog the AT traverses just south of the intersection with the Scales Trail and the plans to relocate the trail away from the bog and the rare plants there. The trail will then be aligned with the section of the AT on the other side of the Scales Trail. Hopefully, that will happen in 2022. We need help monitoring rare plants. Email mtrogersatc@gmail.com if you're interested.

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – WINTER 2022 January-February-March

Trail work: There will be no regularly scheduled trail work during January and February. During the winter months please report any trail issues to mraticinfo@gmail.com. Trail work for March will be announced in the Sunday email and via our Facebook page.

We Strongly encourage all participants in work and group hikes to be fully vaccinated against Covid!_

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

January

1 Saturday. Fun Hike to celebrate the New Year! Meet at Elk Garden AT parking lot at 9:30 AM to hike north via the AT and horse trail to Brier Ridge and back, about 6 miles. Dress for possibly wet, cold, windy weather. Bring lunch, water. If slick roads or poor trail conditions are suspected, this hike will be postponed. Email mtrogersatc@gmail.com. by 6 PM Dec. 31st to receive notice of any hike plan changes. Leader: Anne Maio.

12 Wednesday. MRATC Quarterly Meeting via ZOOM at 7:00 PM to approve the slate for the election at Annual Meeting, and any other pressing business.

15 Saturday. Fun Hike. Winter hike on Iron Mt Trail from Damascus south, in and out for 4-6 miles total, depending on weather and hikers. Meet at caboose at 9:30 AM. Warm clothes in layers, fluids and lunch, poles if snow on the ground. Participants need to be fully vaccinated against Covid. Let hike leader, Sharon Trumbley, know you are participating by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

February

12 Saturday. Fun Hike. Hike on the Straight Mtn trail to Beartree lake, then up the Yancy and back on the Beartree trail, about 6 miles. Meet at fisherman's parking lot at Beartree Lake at 9:30 AM. Bring water, lunch, rain or snow gear. Also, poles may be useful. Participants need to be fully vaccinated against Covid. Let hike leader, Jim Warden, know if you plan to come by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

26 Saturday. MRATC Annual Meeting via ZOOM at 7:00 PM. with election, review of past year's activities and plans for 2022. We hope to have a club social event in the spring or summer in better weather and hopefully, when COVID has diminished further. We will distribute volunteer hours awards at that time.

March

1 Deadline for Spring newsletter.

2 Wednesday. Fun Hike. Explore the New River Canoe State Park, a little known gem with 5 miles of river bottomland and cliff top walking. We'll meet in Mouth of Wilson at 10. Bring a picnic lunch and cold weather and rain gear. To be included and get more details email hike leader, Carol Broderson, via mtrogersatc@gmail.com.

Fri – Sun. March 11 – 13: Southern Partnership Meeting. Club members welcome. Location and further information will be sent out in a Sunday email in early March.

19 Saturday. Fun Hike. Look for early spring flowers and enjoy views from the ridge on a hike up from Backbone Rock to the AT and down to Damascus, about 7-8 miles total, with cars at both ends. Meet at caboose at 9:00 AM. Hike leader is Maria Salgado. Let her know if you plan to hike by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com.



The Damascus Trail Center has partnered with the Washington County Master Gardeners and Virginia Master Naturalist to develop 4 native gardens. On Saturday, September 25th the team planted the second native garden. This garden features spring blooms, beautiful fall color, nectar, seeds for birds, and host plants for butterflies. If MRATC members are interested in planting the remaining gardens please contact Emily Mayo emayo@appalachiantrail.org.



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P.O. Box 789
Damascus, VA 24236

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www.mratc.org

MRATC, P.O. Box 789, Damascus, VA 24236 www.mratc.org

General questions: mtrogersatc@gmail.com

Trails Committee: mratcinfo@gmail.com

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