

THE BLAZE

SUMMER 2022
JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER



Newsletter of the Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club

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 other area trails.

MRATC RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES REPORT: Spring 2022



Wildflower walk on Mt. Rogers Trail Apr. 27th: L-R, front: Marywood Sparks, Carol Broderson, Felicia Mitchel, Randy Goodman. Back: Margie Coates, Anne Maio, Sharon Trumbley, Jim Warden

We've had several wonderful spring hikes with lots of wildflowers this year. Felicia Mitchell led us up the Mt Rogers Trail in April and there were acres of trout lilies and spring beauty.

A hike to the Pinnacle in Russell County was led by Sharon Trumbley, the highlight of which was acres of larkspur on the Grapevine Trail. The Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area between White



Rock Mountain and into Red Rock valley was covered with fields of Fringed Phacelia, and in places Blue-Eyed Mary joined the show. This one was in early May, led by Jim Warden, and we were also visited by an indigo bunting and a chestnut-sided warbler up close during lunch. Finally, Lissa Jackson led us on the AT from Low Gap in Shady Valley

to McQueen's Gap and the show was more early summery with flame azalea, Jack in the pulpits, and one lovely lady slipper.



TRAILS REPORT

In early April, with the help of a small group from Emory & Henry, we were able to move the pit privy cabin at Wise over a fresh new hole dug by Grayson Highland State Park staff. With changes to clean water laws that are slowly being implemented, it is possible that this may be the last new pit privy hole on our section. Only time will tell. Also on



Crew for Wise privy move in early April: The two on the ends were hikers passing by. Starting 2nd from left: Jim Harrison, Carter Hudson, Spenser Carter, Jeremiah Webb and Doug Levin.



privies, the ATC has taken the lead on our composting privies this year and to date have already emptied two of the “big three” (Thomas Knob and Old Orchard). The composting privy at Wise is the third. Their heightened involvement is directly related to the fact that the contents of the privies being emptied are from 2020, when the pandemic began. In an attempt to make the composting privies last longer before needing to be emptied, we will be switched over to hardwood shavings for use as duff (filler), rather than a leaf/shavings mix, as much as possible. ATC will spearhead this switch with support from the club. At the spring meeting the club’s Board agreed to fund an extension of the Ridgerunner season for an additional four weeks. This will keep Ridgerunner Jim Baum out there until after Labor Day, which is extremely valuable to us and to the trail. In mid-April, about a dozen club members participated in the inaugural session of a new trail maintenance skills program organized by the ATC. Kris English from the ATC led the training and reviewed various aspect of maintenance including drainage, water bars and sidehill. Everyone who attended learned something. This training will likely be repeated in the future.



Typical MRATC workday – repairing tread after uprooted tree damaged the trail – Dickey Gap. From left to right, Randy Goodman, Ron Bobko, Sharon Trumbley, Anne Maio, Jim Wilson, and Doug Levin.



On June 2. MRATC club members, ATC staff, MRNRA staff and college students helped build a much needed bog bridge south of the Wise Shelter. Club members who participated were Doug Levin, Carol Broderson, and Anne Maio. ATC members: Jerry Kyle, Conner McBane and Ridgerunner, Jim Baum. MRNRA staff: Evan Blevins, Brendan Blevins; and also: Christina McIntyre from Virginia Tech with three students from UT Chattanooga.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Early wildflower season is just about over. The spring ephemerals bloom during that brief period when it's warm enough and the trees haven't leafed out yet. We've had four outings and turned in reports on small mountain bittercress, American umbrella leaf, great indian plantain and mock orange. Thanks to Anne, Felicia, and new monitor Marywood Sparks for helping out. If you'd like to help monitor rare plants, email Carol at mtrogersatc@gmail.com and I'll arrange an outing at your convenience to learn the basics of monitoring.

MRATC club member Carol Broderson coordinates the Natural Resources Committee. Carol makes her way across the new bog bridge, which now helps to protect the St. John's Wort that grows in that area.



MRATC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The club currently has 197 members, including individual, family and PR memberships. We tend to remain at about 200, as some members don't rejoin and other of our older members die, but new memberships make up for these. New members sometimes find us online and join, or hike with us and then join. We also get new members at community events, such as Earth Day and Trail Days. If you need to renew or rejoin, or are new to the club, you may join online using Paypal or print off a membership page and mail it by going to our website, www.mratc.org

MRATC DUES CAN NOW BE PAID ONLINE

MRATC dues for annual-renewing members are due between January 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 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.

ATC SOUTHERN PARTNERSHIP MEETING

The ATC held the annual Southern Partnership meeting in Damascus LIVE (instead of on Zoom) this year, on April 22-24, beginning with hikes on our trail section for those attending. The SPM is always a good time for representatives from the 13 Southern AT clubs to talk to each other about trail concerns and updates. One feature of the SPM each year is to recognize a volunteer and an Agency Partner. MRATC nominated John Allison, who had just retired from the VA state park system and had spent the last few years as ranger in Grayson Highlands State Park. We appreciated John's attention to areas where hikers get confused and need more signage and his help in developing a sign order with the club and the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area to address these problems. He also helped us install the new kiosk content at Massie Gap.

MOUNT ROGERS APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

MRATC Trail Work and Recreational Hikes:

Participants in trail work and group hikes are encouraged to be fully vaccinated against Covid 19.

Trail work for this quarter will be announced in the weekly email.

For more information or to participate, email mratcinfo@gmail.com

Rare Plant Monitoring Hikes: Rare plant hike notices will be in the Sunday MRATC email to members. If interested in helping out, a special hike will be scheduled at your convenience to go over the basics. Email Carol at mratcinfo@gmail.com for more information.

Friday Hikers hike every Friday, weather permitting, on a variety of trails.

If interested, email jaf@centurylink.com

For up-to-date information about trail work or hikes, check our website:

www.mratc.org/CurrentWeek'sInformation

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – SUMMER 2022 JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

JULY

- 9 **Saturday: Fun Hike** Leader Heidi Dixon-White. Details to be announced later.
- 10 **Sunday, Club picnic:** 4:00 p.m. at Backbone Rock picnic shelter near Damascus. There will be a walk in the area at 4:00 and dinner at 5:00. The club will provide barbeque, drinks and paper products/utensils. Members should bring a side dish or dessert to share. All welcome!
- 13 **Wednesday:** MRATC club meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Washington County Library in Abingdon and via ZOOM online. All welcome.
- 16 **Saturday:** MRATC will host a Trail Center pop-up event; community blaze painting in town.
- 20 **Wednesday: Fun Hike on the Brumley Mountain Trail.** Meet at Brumley trailhead parking lot (at the top of Hidden Valley Road) at 9:30 a.m. for a loop hike to Brumley mile 3.5, then down and across the dam, and return via the east side of the lake, about 6 miles. Will include the western view site, and hope for some flowers along the way. Bring lunch, poles and rain gear if necessary. Leader: Jim Warden.
Note: July 30 – August 3 and August 6 – 10 the Konnarock Crew will be working between Thomas Knob and Rhododendron Gap.

AUGUST

(Note: Grand Opening of Damascus Trail Center! The Trail Center is open Fridays through Mondays, May through July, with events on Saturdays run by partner organizations, including MRATC. The Grand Opening is scheduled for August 26th.)

- 10 **Wednesday:** Possible potluck for the Konnarock Crew at Base Camp in Sugar Grove. Club members will bring sides. Further details will be sent in weekly club emails.
- 17 **Wednesday: Fun Hike in Grayson Highlands State Park.** Meet at Massie Gap parking at 9:30 a.m. for a hike on the Cabin Creek Trail to nice creek and waterfall (about

3 miles RT), then on the AT up to Willburn Ridge (and possibly beyond) for views, for another 3-4 miles plus, depending on group. Leader: Sharon Trumbley.

19-21 Friday - Sunday. Probable Summer Naturalist Rally. Watch www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mnrn for registration and field trip information.

26 Friday: Grand Opening of the Damascus Trail Center. Details will be announced in Sunday club emails as they become available, or contact Emily Mayo at emayo@appalachiantrail.org

SEPT.

1 Wednesday - Deadline for Fall Newsletter

17 Saturday – Fun Hike from Cross Mountain to Nick Grindstaff’s Monument and back on the AT. 3.3 miles each way with the option to go 2.4 miles further out and back to Iron Mountain Shelter, if the group would like to, for a total of 9.2 miles. Meet at Cross Mountain parking lot in Shady Valley, TN at 9:30 a.m. Email mtrogersatc@gmail.com by 6:00 p.m. to evening before the hike to receive any changes in plans. Leader: Anne Maio.

24 Saturday – Public Lands Day - Spruce planting with the ATC is planned for Whitetop Mountain. Details will be sent in the Sunday club emails as the date gets closer. This date is also traditionally ATC Family Hiking Day. If an event is scheduled, club members will be notified in the Sunday email.

Other spring activities:



Trail Days, 2022, Hikers’ Parade

Club banner carried by members Marywood Sparks, Gerry Davis, and Chip Sparks.



A group of students from Emory & Henry visited Damascus and the Trail Center and rode the Creeper Trail on April 2nd.

REMEMBERING WILFORD CORBIN

Wil Corbin, a trail maintainer for the Nantahala Hiking Club, and later, when he moved to our area, an MRATC trail maintainer, died Monday, March 28th at the age of 94. He was the author of two books: *A World Apart*, telling the story of teaching in an Eskimo village in Alaska, and *The Boys of Battle Branch*, about growing up with his family near Franklin, NC. Those of us who knew him value his wisdom and gentleness and his skill with the two-bit axe and the crosscut saw. The club expects to put up a small display, including Wil’s axe, at the Trail Center as an inspiration to future trail maintainers.

Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club
P.O. Box 789
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Summer 2022/ July August September



www.mratc.org

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

General questions: mtrogersatc@gmail.com

Trails Committee: mraticinfo@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