

THE BLAZE

SPRING 2023
APRIL, MAY, JUNE

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.

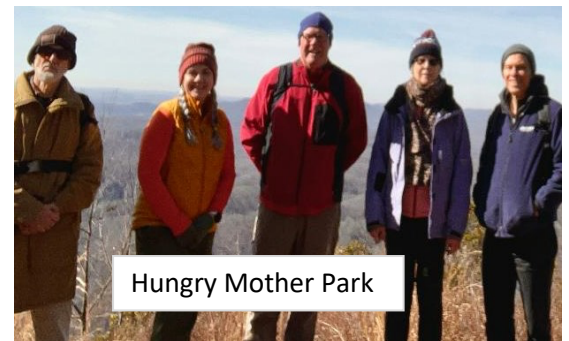


MRATC RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES REPORT: Winter 2022-2023

The MRATC has held several well-attended winter hikes. They include hikes on the AT near Watauga Lake from Shook Branch to the dam; in Steele Creek Park on the Lakeside, Lake Ridge and a few shorter trails; a New Year's day hike on the AT and Creeper trails into Taylor's Valley; a loop hike on the Iron Mt Trail and AT near Damascus; and one on the Bear Tree, Yancey and Straight Mtn trails. Each hike had 5-10 participants. Thank-you to hike leaders: Sharon Trumbley, Frank White, Felicia Mitchell, and Jim Warden. The Friday hikers have also been active. Of note, we are sorry for the loss of Randy Goodman, who recently died from Cancer. Randy hiked with the Friday hikers leading them to some new areas, joined other club recreational hikes, and participated in trailwork. The club is collecting money in his memory to be used on flower boxes for the Damascus Trail Center. Contributions can be sent to MRATC, PO Box 789, Damascus, VA 24236, with a notation that they are given in his memory. A club Social and Annual Meeting was held on the afternoon of Sunday February 26 at the Damascus Trail Center. It was attended by a dozen folks and good snacks and desserts were enjoyed by all. The slate of board members and coordinators was voted on and approved, and awards for MRATC volunteer hours were given out.



Iron Mountain and AT



Hungry Mother Park



Straight Mountain



New Year's Day – Taylor's Valley

TRAILS REPORT

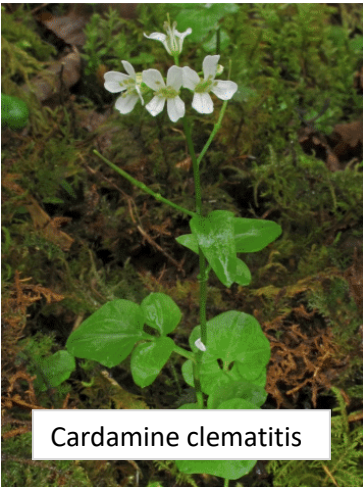
We come into 2023 with our fullest slate of section monitors in many years. These folks monitor and maintain sub-sections of our nearly 60 miles of trail and report any issues they find, including downed trees, erosion problems, and issues at our shelters or areas that are becoming overgrown, among other things. These reports are the life blood of our efforts and guide our group work projects, which normally begin in March. This year, the unseasonably warm February weather has allowed us to get a head start clearing some of the trees that inevitably fall on the trail over the winter months. These early efforts move us closer to our annual goal of having the Mount Rogers section in prime shape heading into the heart of the spring through-hiker season. Major projects on our section this year may include a new bridge just north of the Fox Creek trailhead on Rt. 603, and the replacement of the former bridge over Comers Falls.



the former bridge over Comers Falls.



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE



The Natural Resources Committee is kicking off the 2023 season with an introduction to rare plant monitoring on Thursday, May 11 at Elk Garden. We'll go over the basics of monitoring and look for early-blooming species. First up should be small mountain bitter cress (*Cardamine clematitis*). The bitter cresses are among the earliest spring bloomers. If you look in your garden or lawn, you'll likely see another tiny white flowering plant of the bitter cress family. In addition to our first rare plant outing, others will be announced in the MRATC weekly emails, and individual sessions are offered to anyone with an interest in learning about these plants. The Natural Resources Committee is participating in the Blue Ridge Discovery Center sponsored creation of a natural history guide to our area. We will report on the rare plants that we monitor. Contact Carol Broderson at mtrogersatc@gmail.com

MRATC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Mt Rogers Appalachian Trail Club has 200 members. These include individual, family and public relations memberships. More than half of the club is made up of lifetime members. These folks don't have to worry about renewing their membership every year but do need to keep us informed of email and/or address changes if they hope to continue receiving Sunday emails about what is happening that week and our quarterly newsletter, the Blaze. During the winter months we have had 6 new members and many folks have renewed their annual memberships. Annual memberships expire March 1 every year. So far two reminders have been sent out by email from our Membership Coordinator, Sharon Trumbley. Before the end of March folks who haven't renewed will be taken off the membership list and will no longer receive the Sunday email or the Blaze. So, we hope to hear from all of you who haven't renewed yet! Just a reminder that memberships are \$10 for 1 year for individuals, \$15 for families, and

a lifetime membership is \$100 per person. You can send a check and any updated information (address, email address, phone) to MRATC, PO Box 789, Damascus, VA 24236 or you can renew electronically by going to our website, mratc.org. Any questions can be addressed to our email mtrogersatc@gmail.com

MOUNT ROGERS APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE – SPRING 2023 APRIL, MAY, JUNE

Updates on trail work locations and recreational hike plans are sent out by Sunday email to club members. If you don't get club email, please contact listed hike leader to check on last minute plans – or contact Trail Supervisor, Doug Levin, at mratcinfo@gmail.com or 276-274-3507 for information on trail work or to report trail work needs! Updates are also posted on www.mratc.org/Current Week's Information and on our Facebook page: Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club.

To participate in any Recreational (fun) hike or Rare Plant/Wildflower hike, email mtrogersatc@gmail.com by the day before the hike, so that you will be notified of any last minute changes or cancellations.

MRATC FRIDAY HIKERS - A moderately paced hiking group. Contact Judith Foster at judithanfoster@gmail.com for information.

APRIL

Reminder: to participate in any hike, please notify hike leader by the day before at the latest:
Work Hike: mratcinfo@gmail.com
Fun/Rare Plant Hike: mtrogersatc@gmail.com
Friday Hike: judithanfoster@gmail.com

- 1 **Saturday: Trail work.**
- 2 **Sunday: Hike** on the Creeper Trail between Watauga and Alvarado to see spring wildflowers. Meet at Watauga parking at 9:30 AM and hike to Alvarado, about 4 easy miles. Car(s) will be placed at Alvarado beforehand. Possible lunch at winery. Let hike leader, Sharon Trumbley, know if you plan to hike so plans for cars needed at Alvarado can be made, by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com
- 8 **Saturday: Trail work.**
- 12-15 **Subaru Leave No Trace Trainers** coming to Damascus for community projects. Club members are asked to attend meetings and help.
- 12 **Wednesday:** Training with Leave No Trace Trainers at Damascus Trail Center. Club members are encouraged to attend. Hours: 8:30-9:30 Coffee hour, 10:00-12:00 training.
- 12 **Wednesday:** Club meeting at 7:00 PM at Trail Center and also on Zoom. All welcome!
- 14 **Friday:** 10:30-12:00 MRATC will work on invasive plant project with Holston High School in Damascus after their Leave No Trace training. Club members needed to help.
- 15 **Saturday:** Estimated time 8:00–12:00. Leave No Trace Community project. Current plan is for MRATC members to pick up litter and clean up fire rings between AT and Creeper Trail between Straight Branch and Taylors Valley. The Creeper Trail Conservancy will have other volunteers working in other areas. More details in Sunday emails.
- 20 **Thursday: Hike** to the Cascades and Barney's Wall in Pembroke Va. Meet at the Cascades parking lot at 10:00 (\$3 exact change parking fee) and hike a very scenic lower trail along little Stoney Creek up to the Cascades Falls (66 feet high and arguably one of the prettiest in Va.). We will then leave the falls and hike up to Barney's wall for a great view from a cliff of the New River Valley. Return to the parking lot via an upper trail along a fire road. Approximately 8 mile hike with a reported 1600 foot elevation gain, but a very moderate hike. Leader, Steve Ferris. Let him know you plan to come and get help with directions by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com
- 22 **Saturday: Earth Day in Abingdon, 9 - 1.** Fields Penn House/Abingdon Visitor Center. Club members needed to set up, staff booth, and pack up after the event. There might also be a concurrent Earth Day activity in Damascus that would need club staffing that day. Details in Sunday email.
- 26 **Wednesday: Trail Work**

29 **Saturday:** About 35 Boy Scout Leaders will come to Damascus for small group workshops about backpacking, gear, and things to watch out for while hiking in order to prepare for leading Scout trips. Some MRATC members will be needed to help.

MAY **Reminder: Email if you plan to participate in any activities!**

1 **Monday: Hike** from Elk Garden on the Horse Trail north to Briar Ridge (and possibly a little more) for great views, and back on the AT, about 5-6 miles and possibly more, moderate hiking. Meet at Elk Garden at 9:30 AM. Bring water, lunch, rain gear if needed, and poles if you use them. Let leader, Mike Pivrotto, know if you plan to hike or have questions by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com

3 **Wednesday: Trail work**

4-8 **Thursday-Monday:** Konnarock Crew working on our section near Pine Mountain.

6 **Saturday: Hike** from White Rock area to Panther Lick in the Clinch Mt WMA for an incredible show of wildflowers including fringed phacelia and blue-eyed Mary, along with fine vistas, about 5 miles with moderate conditions. Details TBD, but tentatively plan to meet at Hayter's Gap Public Library at 9:30 AM. Bring poles, lunch, and rain gear if rain is predicted. Leader Jim Warden. Email mtrogersatc@gmail.com if interested.

10 **Wednesday: Trail Work**

11 **Thursday: Introduction** to rare plant monitoring from Elk Garden to Whitetop. Meet at Elk Garden at 9 A.M. Bring rain gear and a picnic lunch. Be prepared for a 5-mile hike that will take most of the day, since we'll be stopping to study plants. Be sure to email Carol at mtrogersatc@gmail.com to be included and hear of changes.

12-14 **Friday PM, Saturday, Sunday: Spring Naturalist Rally** at Blue Ridge Discovery Center. See: blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mrn for a complete list of activities.

17 **Wednesday: Trail work.**

19-20 **Friday & Saturday:** Damascus Appalachian Trail Days. The club will have a booth at the Damascus Trail Center and we will need folks to staff our booth both days. We may also march in the parade at 2 p.m. Saturday. Come join us! Check Trail Days website (www.traildays.us) for schedule of activities. We need lots of club members to help!

24 **Wednesday: Hike on Mt Roger's trail.** Moderate challenge. Meet at 9:30 at the trailhead parking Va Hwy 603 (not far past Grindstone Campground if you are coming from Whitetop Rd area) to cross street and walk up Mt. Rogers Trail toward the intersection with AT, out-and-back round trip of about six miles or so, depending on pauses to see wildflowers. Bring lunch and rain gear, poles if you use them. Some of the hike is in the Lewis Fork wilderness, so group size is limited to 10, and we will plan to split into 2 groups if more than ten hikers come. Contact hike leader Felicia Mitchell for more information or to participate in the hike at mtrogersatc@gmail.com

JUNE **Reminder: email if you plan to participate in any activities!**

3 **Saturday: National Trails Day.** Heidi Dixon will lead a community friendly hike, details to be announced in Sunday emails and community locations. Email: mtrogersatc@gmail.com if interested.

7 **Wednesday: Trail work.**

10 **Saturday: National Get Outdoors Day.** Hike from Fox Creek on the AT South to Pine Mountain to enjoy incredible views and back with the possibility of a side hike, about 7 miles, moderate difficulty due to elevation gain and footing in places. Meet at Fox Creek parking at 9:30 AM. Bring lots of water, lunch, hiking poles if you use them, and rain gear depending on forecast. Let leader, Mike Pivrotto, know if you plan to participate by emailing mtrogersatc@gmail.com

14 **Wednesday: Trail work.**

17 **Saturday: Hike** Shady Valley, Tn. Hike on the AT from Cross Mtn. to Low Gap, 6.5 miles, ups and downs. Meet at 9 AM at the AT Crossing of Route 421 (Low Gap) to carpool to start of hike at Cross Mtn. (Route 91). Bring water, lunch. Leader: Anne Maio. Contact leader at mtrogersatc@gmail.com by the evening before to be notified of any changes in plans.

24 **Saturday: Trail work.**

OPPORTUNITY TO BID ON ELEGANT CROSS-STITCH OF TRAIL WILDFLOWERS



Kathy White Walker, who served as the club's treasurer for several years, has cross-stitched twelve wildflowers commonly seen on the Appalachian Trail and has donated them to the club for an auction in memory of Stacey Levin. Stacey was a club member, trail worker, section monitor, rare plant monitor and the wife of our Trails Coordinator, Doug Levin. The club has decided to offer Kathy's cross-

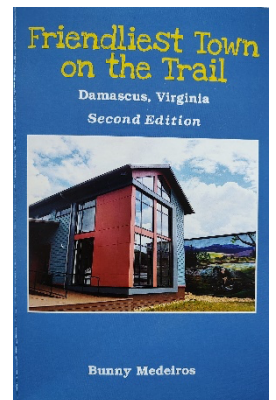


stitched and framed wildflowers in a silent auction. Doug has also donated a cross-stitch that Stacey did of a dragon. The twelve wildflowers and Stacey's dragon are on display at the Trail Center. Stop by and pick out one you'd like to bid on! Damascus Trail Center, 209 W. Laurel Ave., Thu-Mon, 10 – 5. 276-323-3046.



MRATC CLUB MEMBER ANNOUNCES 2ND PRINTING OF BOOK

An updated 2nd edition of Bunny Medeiros's book, *Friendliest Town on the Trail*, is now available at all Damascus outfitters, Discover Damascus, and Briar Patch Antiques.



"Dedicated to the hard-working volunteers who maintain all our trails, keeping them safe for us to travel and enjoy."



Ed Wright has been named as new area ranger for the Mount Rogers National Recreation area. Wright has served as the recreation program manager for MRNA since 2019.

MRATC VOLUNTEERS WILL DO WHATEVER IS NEEDED!

When a supply of wood shavings for a composting privy at Old Orchard Shelter was needed, hard-working volunteers Sharon Trumbley and Jim Warden delivered!



Mount Rogers Appalachian Trail Club
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: 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