

PATH



WAYS

Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

June 2006

Coming Events....

Now is the time to be thinking of Summerfest. We have had great Summerfest projects in the past--Chatfield Shelter renewal, the boardwalk at Beaver Dam #2, and two years on Garden Mountain relocating the trail and doing rock work. This year is the year of the Shed. As you know we lost our storage area in Wytheville when the USFS sold the facility and moved to Blacksburg. We have equipment in many locations now. The USFS in Sugar Grove gave us access to a building near Konnarock. It has not been used for a while and needs some fixing up. This will be the project for the week--**June 13-18**. We need all the help that we can get. We will be able to use the pods at Konnarock as they will not be there that week. Bring a tent just in case!! Chef Jim Houck and his crew will again be making fabulous meals. Who can forget the beautiful Salmon Steaks we had last year. We guarantee every will have plenty to eat. We make pancakes and eggs as you want them. We guarantee to keep Attila's dump stew out of the kitchen. Jim will announce the cost soon. However, you will get a lot for the price. ATTILA is working up work to do. Contact him -bilboudman@aol.com--and Tell him that you are coming!!!

--John Hartpence

Summerfest 2006
Konnarock
June 13 - 18

The 9th Annual Dawg Days Event will be held the weekend of August 5th at Marcia Cope's country home in Bland County. This is a laid-back worktrip that is perfect for introducing youngsters to trail maintaining. For more information, call Marcia at 336-277-3726.

9th Annual Dawg Days Event
The Cope Manor
August 4 - 6

President Paul's Comments

Bring on the Summer. There is a lot of variety in projects this year for PATH members. Come on out. Don't let those gas prices keep you home. Find someone to car-pool with. The mountains and valley of Virginia are a lot cooler. We had a lot of new members this year so keep up the good work everyone.

SummerFest should be a blast, good food, conversation and maybe some work. The First Annual Davis Valley Winery/AT party on June 24th should be a fun time for the whole family. July brings us our annual Konnorock work crew deep into the Knot Maul/ Olystery section. Marcia will put together another Dawg Days event in early August. This is my rah-rah rant for the summer.

The AT Regional Partnership meeting held in April brought to focus that the AT wants to work on building stronger relationships with the communities and neighbors along the trail, something our club has also kept in our forefront. Continue to come out and lend a hand, support the communities along the way so we can continue to build upon all the hard work PATH has done over the years.

-- Paul Haag

A Note From John Jaskolka...

I have attached some Non-AT pictures but as most of our members are from NC it could interest them. I attended the Dedication of 3.6 miles of NC Mountain to Sea Trail and 210 foot bridge over the Catawba River in McDowell county near Marion NC on May 6. The bridge was flown in and put in place by helicopter prior to the event. The dedication was on time for the mountain to be in full bloom. Great trip and great to see the MST coming along.



John Jaskolka Photograph

Hope for the American Chestnut

By Tom Dillon

KONNAROCK, Va. - You'll hear a lot of talk about invasive species and the damage they're doing to our forests these days, but you'll likely never find an invasive species as deadly as *Cryphonectia parasitica*.

That invasive species changed the way of life in eastern America's mountain forests during the early 20th century. We're still fighting it.

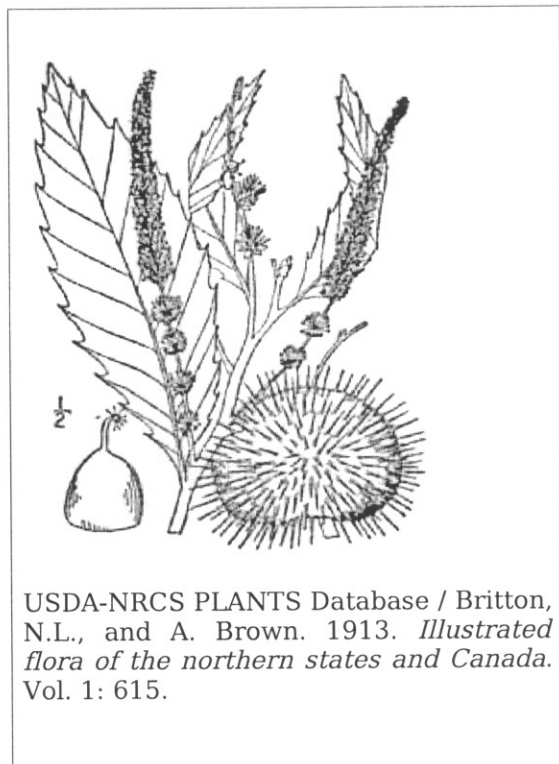
Cryphonectia parasitica was the blight that killed the chestnut trees. Between 1904 and 1950, the lethal Asian fungus was responsible for the destruction of some nine million acres of eastern mountain forests. It's estimated that four billion - yes, billion - trees died.

You'll still see chestnut sprouts in our forests today, shrubs that in a few instances will reach the size of a small tree before the continuing blight gets them. But most people consider the chestnut virtually extinct, a part of the past.

That does not extend, however, to Dr. Fred Hebard, who runs the American Chestnut Foundation's research farm in Meadowview, Va., just west of Chilhowie, Va., and the PATH section of the Appalachian Trail. Hebard has been working for years on what he calls "backcrossing" - cross-breeding American chestnuts with blight-resistant oriental chestnuts to create a tree that will once again

rival what were called the redwoods of the East.

And though it may seem quixotic, he thinks it will eventually succeed, he told the 32nd annual Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally May 12-13 at the Konnarock Community Center here. Hebard was the featured speaker at this year's rally, a gathering of naturalists, teachers and outdoors types from around the Virginia and North Carolina mountains. He also led a field trip on Saturday, the second day of the event, to look for chestnut trees growing in the



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada*. Vol. 1: 615.

forest. And his energy was readily apparent, striding up and down the trails around this small western Virginia village. "It was all I could do to keep up," said one participant.

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Hebard may be tall and taciturn and soft-spoken, but he's also dedicated.

At the Friday night opening of the rally, he took his audience back to the opening stages of the blight, imported on trees from Asia and first found in New York City's Bronx Zoo in 1904. It reached southwest Virginia by 1930, and by 1950, almost all the large chestnuts were dead.

Hebard showed his audience the telltale signs of blight disease in a chestnut, a vertical splitting and orange hue on the bark. And he called the disease just one more invasive.

"Just as the American Indians were felled by smallpox, so the chestnut trees were felled by the blight," he said. But just as some Indians have survived, so have some chestnut trees. In that lies hope.

The American Chestnut Foundation's methodology works on conserving the gene pool of surviving American chestnut trees and developing blight-resistant lines adapted to local environments. Volunteers inventory survivors, he said, and these become "mother" trees.

"With the nuts produced from these crosses, volunteers have established breeding nurseries all across the eastern United States," the foundation says in its literature. That includes North Carolina as well as Virginia.

Hebard also sees hope in genetic research. Grants to forestry schools

at places like North Carolina State University or Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University may help, he said. But he stressed that the enemy is tenacious. It's still unknown whether the blight can mutate, he said.

The chestnut foundation works through state chapters, and it had hoped to have some test seedlings ready for members to plant this year - though they're not out yet. But you're still welcome to join the fight, he said. He sounded something like Winston Churchill, offering only blood, sweat and tears. But like Churchill, Hebard also offers a worthy goal: the restoration of the American chestnut tree. It's a good fight.

Information on the American Chestnut Foundation is available at (802) 447-0110 or at www.Acf.org. Meadowview Research Farm is off Interstate 81 between Chilhowie and Abingdon, Va., and visitors are welcome.

Six Years Ago...

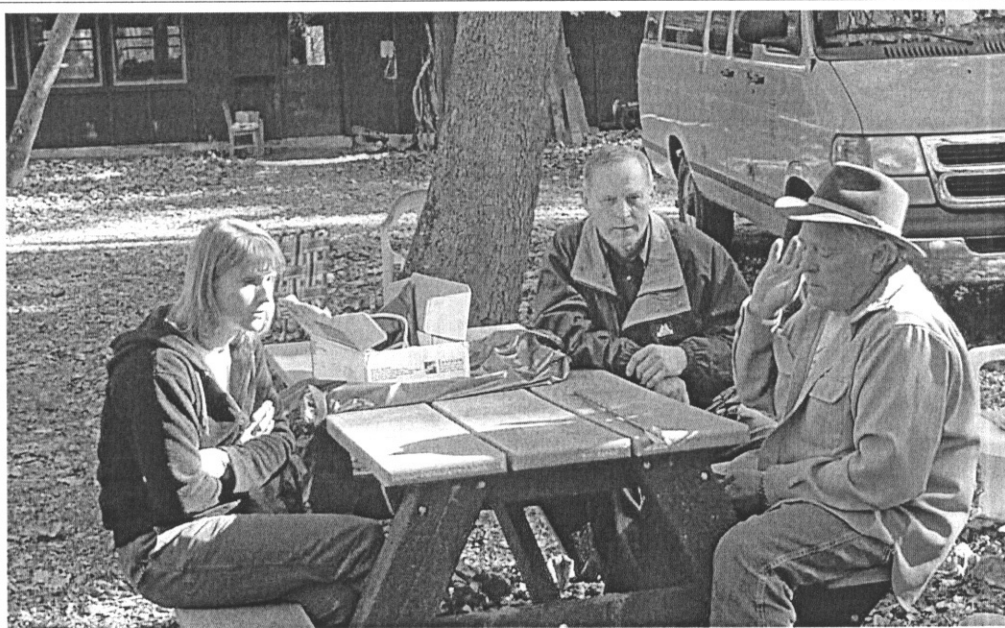
June Worktrip (June 14-18, 2000) at
Stony Fork - 33 workers, 1 new:

Installed 10 inch Clemson Leveler
at beaver pond on Middle Fork and
filled abutment with rocks.

Put in 15 water bars south of Kegley
Property.

Installed waterbars north of VA 601.

Cut along trail on Chestnut Ridge
with Bob Normandy's bushhog.



Valerie Hurt, Walter Trogden and Bob Normandy rest at Konnarock after a hard day of trail work in October 2003 – Paul Clayton Photograph

What's Happening?

From Marta Clark...

"I have been shamefully inactive with PATH this year --

not that I have ever been a very hard-working contributor. But my excuse this year is that I'll be starting a SOBO (southbound) AT hike attempt on July 3rd, and I've been training and preparing.

Here's a link to my Trail Journal:

[_http://www.trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?id=120611_](http://www.trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?id=120611)

(<http://www.trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?id=120611>)

(Search under "Marta.")

Even if things go well, I probably won't make it into PATH territory until late October. I'm looking forward to reaching our excellently-maintained section, with the marvelous shelters. Please wish me luck on The Hike. I'll need it."



Trail Days Keeps Memories of Hiker Alive

by Karl Kunkel

DAMASCUS, Va. -- This small, mountain community near the Va.-N.C. border has become a special place in the hearts of AT thru-hikers. The trail runs right through downtown, and the town is a nice haven for hikers needing to recharge their batteries in this "trail town."

Mid-May's annual "Trail Days" fest is a special occasion for meeting fellow hikers and reconnecting with old trail pals. I happened to attend it this year for a short time, after wallowing around in the mud on our May work trip.

What struck me most was a touching meeting I had with a woman my age who had set up a table in town to sell music CDs. She had a small boombox set up to play the music, attracting listeners. I learned that the CD consisted of songs her son, Justin Miles Kenny (trail name "Packstock"), had recorded around campfires and during hiking trips. He had tragically died last year, in his mid-20s, in Pennsylvania during his 2005 thru-hike. He had been hit by a train one night.

His mother had journeyed from her home in Alabama to share these songs with thru-hikers and lovers of the AT. The AT had become a very important part of Justin's life, she said. I bought one

of the CDs, and I must say he was a fine singer and guitarist. While I was there, two hikers that had hiked with Justin came up to talk to her. A portion of the of the CD proceeds will be donated to the ATC, she said.

PATH Members Knew Missing Calif. Hiker

By Karl Kunkel

On May 11, a newspaper article from Idyllwild, Calif., revealed that two lost hikers survived three nights in the frigid San Jacinto Mountains because they stumbled upon the campsite of a man who vanished a year ago. They were able to scavenge food, clothes and matches from his backpack. The backpacker's owner was John Donovan, a retired Virginia social worker who had disappeared during a hike in May 2005.

Donovan, an experienced hiker, was last seen in the San Jacinto Wilderness on May 3, 2005, about two weeks after he retired from Central State Hospital in Petersburg, Va. The 60-year-old planned to hike the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, from Southern California to the Canadian border.

A friend of Donovan said he assumed Donovan got hurt and froze to death in a snowstorm that blew on the last night he was seen alive.

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PATH Members Knew...

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PATH member Clint Kawanishi, now living in Reno, Nev., with former PATH president Parthena Martin wrote the following regarding Mr. Donovan: "Parthena and I were well aware of the disappearance of John Donovan since our friend and recent visitor, Pat Doyle, was one of those that pushed to get a search party started last year. In fact, I sent an email to some in PATH. Pat Doyle had emailed us to see if we could help in some way. It was difficult for those on the East Coast to convince authorities that a search was necessary, especially since no one knew exactly where he disappeared. It was well over a month after a food drop was missed and after the effort started.

"Parthena and I both knew John Donovan since a bunch from the Old Dominion club members hiked the John Muir Trail. John was a hiker who went light and fast. Our feeling is that he just did not carry enough warm clothing to survive the kind of weather you often get during the winter on the PCT. We are glad that some trace of him has been found and that his things served to save two other lives."

PATH member Vanya Locke, having read Clint's comments, responded to him with the following statement: "I was sorry to hear about the hiker that has been lost for over a year. I'm sure it was most distressing to you,

since you knew him. I wonder if his remains will ever be found. I think about the pack and things he left. In my heart I feel like he became the ultimate 'trail angel' in his strange way. I suppose only a hiker would understand that."

Skyline Campground Lincoln National Forest

Forest Road 117

Ruidoso, NM

505-434-7200

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/lincoln/recreation/d1-camping.shtml>

Seventeen tent sites cluster around a central parking area at this primitive campground in southern New Mexico. There is no water but there are picnic tables and pit toilets. Skyline is at an elevation of over 9,000 feet, up a rutted and steep gravel road, and the views are nothing short of spectacular. The road continues onward from the campground to Monjeau Lookout Tower at 11,000 feet. The campground is open May 1 through November 1 (snow conditions allowing) and there is no fee.

We passed through a lot of authentic western history on the way to Ruidoso, but the town itself has little to recommend it. It's a tourist trap. It does have a grocery store, though.

Just at sunset we drove to the top of the mountain. There we saw two bear and several deer in the fading

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Skyline Campground...

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light. Marie was all for packing up and leaving "Bear Mountain" immediately but we ended up having a quiet and restful night.

Skyline Campground is an opportunity to experience the southern New Mexico high country at its best.

- Paul Clayton

Embracing the Slow Food Movement

by Karl Kunkel

GREENSBORO, N.C. -- In this age of global warming and expensive fuel, do we really need to be shipping tomatoes here from thousands of miles away when we could be supporting North Carolina and Virginia farmers or growing it ourselves? That was the questioning posed during the May Sierra Club meeting in Greensboro. The guest speaker was Charlie Headington, a professor at UNC-Greensboro, who has become a very engaging proponent of this movement.

"Slow Food" is a rapidly growing movement that advocates people buy their foods locally and help promote sustainability of our planet. If we can eat fruits and vegetables grown nearby, preferably without chemicals and pesticides, we can live healthier lives. Headington encouraged the

attendees to get out of the fast lane and slow down and enjoy meals with friends and family members, rather than gobbling down meals at fast-food joints or in front of TVs and then bolting out the door.

Up until that meeting, I did not really grasp the full meaning of this movement. In April, I had been a volunteer at an Earth Day-type event in which I learned enough from the local chapter of the Slow Food movement to check it out further. The Slow Food movement began in Rome, Italy, not so many years ago, when a McDonald's restaurant, that famous American invention, opened at a famous plaza in Rome. The local denizens were outraged and were determined not to let fast food take over their famous Italian traditions of eating, conversing and enjoying life at a sane pace. So, they started this "Slow Food" movement, adopting the image of a snail as a logo, and encouraging citizens to buy food locally, support local farmers and to slow down and enjoy life with family members and friends at a real dinner table, not at TV trays.

The movement now has 1,200 chapters around the world with 100,000 members - and is growing. I have no doubt that many people are doing some real reflecting right now on their eating and exercise habits and are aware of the not-so-positive effects of

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Slow Food...

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"globalization," as factories in our backyards shut their doors. As Headington said in his speech, "Globalization is a dead-end. Localization is the way. Revolution starts with the first bite." "The present-day food system has a heavy footprint and is unsustainable," he said. "Have you forgotten what good food (without pesticides, antibiotics, herbicides and grown under abnormal conditions) tastes like? We want to celebrate regional foods and traditions and enjoy the pleasures of taste and the rituals of slow, family meals." Headington continued: "Since WW II, we have shifted our focus to TV, TV dinners, living our lives by the clock. Slow Food is to be philosophical and to sow the seeds against the mechanical forces that rule us."

He and his wife are not totally organic. Cost is part of the reason. But he did suggest starting somewhere. Maybe take one food group, like dairy, and going with organic on that and seeing what differences there are. Then take it a step further as you can. "Organic eggs and milk without growth hormones aren't that much more expensive," he said. "You'll be healthier without the pesticides and antibiotics." One audience member commented that Portland, Oregon, has a wonderfully huge farmer's market, where organic produce, because of the

abundance, doesn't cost any more than "regular" produce. So, pass the slow food.

Proof That at Least Some of Us Work Sometimes...

Barbara Council has provided documentary proof that at least some PATH members actually work on worktrips. Tom Dillon, Grace Mauney and Chris Bracknell apply black stuff to the Partnership Shelter in this photograph...





Worktrip – Early 1985

Gordon Burgess Archives

**Piedmont
Appalachian
Trail
Hikers, Inc.**

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