

PATH WAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 56, No. 2

Summer 2020



Appalachian State University

This is the design that was chosen for a new shelter at Davis Path. It was created by students in the architecture program at Appalachian State University, but disagreement remains both about the design and whether we need a new shelter at all.

Will a New Davis Path Shelter ever Happen?

You'll remember, if you've been in the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers for more than just a few years, the old shelter at Davis Path, a few miles north of Interstate 81 on the way to Tilson Gap and the northern part of our club's trail section. The old shelter was built in the 1980s and was reportedly the last shelter on the whole trail built from materials found just on site – except for the roof. Some older club members have fond memories of skinning the bark off trees to build that shelter. (See the Gordon Burgess construction photo on Page 2.)

The shelter served hikers for several decades, but it was torn down in 2008 because of its advancing age, misuse and trash, beetle damage to the wood and the possibility of trees falling on it. We intended to build a new shelter, and a competition took place among architecture



students at Appalachian State University to design one. The drawing on Page 1 of this newsletter is what the winning student came up with and what was approved by the U.S. Forest Service.

The wheels of bureaucracy turn slowly, however, and so far not much has been done. Along with that, there have been some complaints about the design, citing among other things the need to close in the sides to keep weather out. There is also concern that the location is too close to I-81. It's 1.6

miles to the nearest paved road, 2.3 to the Interstate.

Beyond that, this summer's Konnarock Crew planned to work on a trail relocation needed before rebuilding. But that has been put on hold by other trail issues – principally by the coronavirus, which canceled the whole Konnarock season, and also by that lawsuit over a gas pipeline crossing the trail farther north in Virginia. So it's a while yet before some sort of decision will have to be made about the shelter, or whether just to leave the area as a campsite. But if you have an opinion, or just want to know more, speak up.

2020 Calendar

Here is our original calendar for the rest of 2020, though whether any of this will happen is still up in the COVID-19 air. Please check with someone before heading to any of these events. SO FAR, NONE OF THESE HAVE BEEN CANCELED, BUT MANY ARE DOUBTFUL.

June 17-21

2020 Summerfest

Stony Fork, Va.

PATH'S annual extended work weekend. Base Camp at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va., with meals and a pot-luck meal Saturday evening.

July 17-19

July Volunteer Weekend

Stony Fork, Va.

Base Camp at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va., with a pot-luck meal Saturday evening.

August 14-16

August Volunteer Weekend

Stony Fork, Va.

Base Camp at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va., with a pot-luck meal Saturday evening.

September 18-20

September Volunteer Weekend

TBA

Base Camp probably at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va., with a pot-luck meal Saturday evening.

October 9-12

39th ALDHA Gathering

Abingdon, Va.

The annual gathering of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association. It's planned to take place at the SW Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Email Blaze@aldha.org.

October 16-18

October Volunteer Weekend

TBA

Base Camp probably at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va., with a pot-luck meal Saturday evening.

November 21

Annual Meeting

TBA.

Our annual meeting, scheduled somewhere in the PATH region in North Carolina or Virginia. Review of 2020 work. (Note: There has been some talk of rescheduling this meeting to take place during the work year. Stay tuned.)

Aug. 6-9, 2021

AT Vista

New Paltz, N.Y.

This is a four-day weekend event commemorating Benton MacKaye's 1921 article laying out the idea of an Appalachian Trail. It seems to be an effort to resume the discontinued Biennial ATC Conferences in a new form. More information later this year.

Recipe

Here's another recipe, this one for a treat around the campfire or in front on the TV set. This is from Betty Derouen by way of Paul Clayton. It's for ...

POPCORN CRACKER JACKS

Start with one small bag of popcorn, popped. Pour into a large roasting pan. Mix and boil:

- Two sticks of oleo (or other margarine)
- Two cups brown sugar
- One-half cup corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt

Boil for five minutes, remove from fire and add one-half teaspoon baking soda. Mix well and pour over popcorn. You may add one cup peanuts or chopped pecans.

Stir until syrup is mixed with popcorn. Place in 300-degree oven for one hour, stirring every 15 minutes.

Ms. Derouen adds, "Big and little kids will both love this treat."

This is a newsletter for the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers, a trail work club that maintains approximately 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Southwest Virginia. This newsletter comes out four times a year, as long as we have enough material and contributions. It is sent by email to the PATH List and others, or by U.S. Mail to members who don't have email. Feel free to print and post in your local outdoor store. FALL DEADLINE AUG. 20, 2020. Web site:

www.path-at.org. Or for info: PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com. Or see our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/

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Blue Ridge Discovery Center

Critters of the Appalachians

There's always something new to look for in the streams and woods crossed by our section of the Appalachian Trail, but we'll lay pretty good odds you haven't come across the hellbender, a giant salamander that could be just downstream from you. They're not dangerous, but they are pretty darned impressive.

Our neighboring Buller Fish Hatchery on the South Holston River has been known to raise them, and here is a good description put out by the Blue Ridge Discovery Center. For the record, the center did this on a contract from the Tumbling Creek Cider Company as a way to promote the company's Hellbender Hopped Hard Cider. Haven't tried the cider, but the words are pretty good.

"Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis - eastern hellbender, snot otter, mud dog, gampus, Allegheny alligator; all names for this large cryptic salamander found in cool, clear streams and rivers. It can be docile, but is nearly pure muscle with tough claws to grip slippery rocks, strong jaws to clamp down on its preferred prey of crayfish, and a keeled tail to propel it through rushing waters. Hellbenders are black or brown with darker spots along their backs, a camouflage in their clear stream habitats. They are found during the day under large rocks, with adults coming out at night to hunt. As the largest amphibian in North America, this ancient giant is resilient, surviving the rise and fall of dinosaurs, ice ages, and the dawn of humans. It shares a common ancestor with the Asian giant salamanders dating back over 130 million years. Its legend as a feared creature of the underworld stems from Appalachian folklore, but more accurately, this unique species is a charismatic icon and bellwether of our cherished cold-water ecosystems. Hellbenders were once found from the Mississippi River to New York State, though

most are now restricted to the Appalachian region. Hellbenders remind us of the importance of clean waters and wooded mountainsides in preserving our natural heritage.”

Bits and Pieces

■ PATH’s board voted earlier this spring to donate \$5,000 to a project for improving parking and access at **McAfee Knob**, near Roanoke, one of the iconic spots on the AT in Virginia. The work, which is to include restrooms and an access bridge at a vastly overused area -- some 45,000 visitors a year -- is a \$200,000 project of ATC and the Roanoke AT Club. Our money comes from a \$56,000 bequest (since increased by investment) from the late PATH leader **Gordon Burgess**. Historian **Paul Clayton** wrote in support of our grant: “This is an initiative of the Roanoke Club, with which PATH has ties going back to our founding. The Roanoke club ceded to us the initial mileage that got us in business, and members provided guidance in the ins and outs of forming a club and getting recognition from the ATC. So personally I would love to see us help RATC. What would Gordon want? Well, nobody can know at this point, but I don't think he would have left the money to the club if he didn't trust that the future leadership would make good use of it.” Donate at www.appalachiantrail.org/mcafee. Or write ATC stipulating the donation is for the McAfee Knob project.



■ As is clear from this picture, no one is going to be crossing the **Lick Creek footbridge** north of Va. 42 anytime soon. The bridge was so badly damaged by high water during the winter that Forest Service crews took the rest of it down in March and April. Our picture shows what was left of the bridge part way through the demolition. For the time being, hikers will have to ford the creek, and warnings have been posted both north and south. It's not a bad ford except in high water; then, this is a place to avoid. What with the cancellation of Konnarock this summer, nothing is likely to be done in the near future. But perhaps it's a good project for next year?

■ **More bad bridge news from the ATC:** “Just before Christmas last year, a freight train derailed while crossing the Potomac River into Harpers Ferry. There were thankfully no injuries, but the footbridge carrying the AT into Maryland was completely

destroyed. As National Park Service and CSX officials continue to investigate the full extent of the damage and the best options for footbridge repair, ATC staff continues to advise and offer assistance to ensure all sections of the AT are reconnected as soon as possible.” In December, ATC advised hikers to line up shuttles and not walk on the narrow U.S. 340 bridge to cross the Potomac. But the ATC page on transportation options is not particularly helpful. A picture is on the next page.



Appalachian Trail Conservancy



■ **Wherever someone dies on the highway**, you can often expect a small memorial to arise, put up by friends or family and calling attention to the event. Now such a memorial has arisen on our section of the Appalachian Trail where Ronald “Stronghold” Sanchez, an Oklahoma veteran, was murdered and another hiker was injured last year. It’s a nice touch, but is apparently having unintended consequences, president and trail boss Jim Houck reported recently. “There are glass items that will become broken glass, (and) two small American

flags on the ground,” Jim said in an email. There is trash around, and a nearby tree is considered a hazard tree. He has suggested removing it after this year’s through-hiker season.

■ Because of the coronavirus, the rest of our year is really unclear. But we still hope to be able to work out of **Stony Fork Campground** off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va. So here is information about how to reserve the cabin there for PATH work weekends during the summer and fall: Go the Web site at www.recreation.gov and enter “Stony Fork Cabin” in the search line. Click availability, and you’ll be able to put in your preferred dates. Costs are \$65 per night or \$410 weekly. You can also call (800) 628-7202.

■ **ATC says it wants to hear about our experiences.** It has opened a survey for all levels of volunteers in order “to help refine and improve ways we support you.” The survey could take up to 30 minutes to complete. As a thank you, each volunteer is entered in a raffle to win one of

several daypacks, “perfect for a day on the trail.” ATC hopes “you’ll take the survey and share it will fellow volunteers.” It’s at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AllVolsAT>.

■ For kids and grandkids: Registrations for the **Blue Ridge Discovery Center 2020 Summer Camps** are open. Offerings include six day camps for ages six to 10 and six sleepaway camps for ages 11 to 17. The camps operate out of the former Lutheran Girls School in Konnarock, Va., once the home of the Konnarock AT Crew and now the home of the Nature Center. Camps are in June, July and August. Visit www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org.

■ Another thing that was knocked out by the coronavirus this spring was a two-day **wilderness first aid class** that was planned at Sugar Grove. For anyone interested or needing to renew a certification, Landmark Learning is now planning to offer an online version of that class, cost \$35 which PATH will pay for members. We’d like to get a lot of PATH members signed up for this course. Contact Jim Houck for more information.

■ To send information to all members via the PATH List, send your email messages to path-list@path-at.org. To subscribe to the PATH List, see the directions on the Web pages. Subscribing to the list will increase the amount of email you receive, but it’s a quick way to get informed and involved about PATH work. **It will pay you to sign up for the PATH List.**

Milestones

We are sorry to report the passing of **Geoffrey Wainwright**, husband of Margaret Wainwright, on March 17 in Chapel Hill, N.C. Margaret was a very active volunteer several years back, until her husband’s illness cut down on her availability. Condolences can be sent to mhwain3@gmail.com or by U.S. Mail at 2 Carolina Meadows Apt 107, Chapel Hill, NC27517.

We have also been notified of the passing of **Danny Shields**, 66, of Rose Hill, N.C. He was a former Navy man who worked with state prisons and was also a longtime Boy Scout leader and trail volunteer. Condolences to daughter Dana Shields West at 2551 Anderson Road, Willard, NC 28478 or daughter Aimee Shields McKay at 745 N. Williams Rd., Kenansville, NC 28349. Online at www.quinnmcgowen.com/notices/Daniel-Shields.

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Want to Join?

We will work on the Appalachian Trail in 2020, despite coronavirus. If you'd like to join us, here's how: You may join PATH (or renew) at our Web site, www.path-at.org, with PayPal, or print and mail this form with check or money order. You can also attend work weekends/meetings and join or renew there. Please don't mail cash!

Name (s) _____

Address _____

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Annual membership dues are \$20 for an individual _____, \$25 for a family _____ or \$15 for a student_____. Donations are also

accepted. Donation total _____

Send payment to PATH Treasurer, P.O. Box 4423, Greensboro, North Carolina 27404. Total amount enclosed _____

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