



Nantahala Hiking Club

Newsletter

nantalahahikingclub.org

November/December 2021

“Keep ever clear the trails that lead to mountaintops.”
— Rev. A. Rufus Morgan, Club Founder

President's Message

by Victor Treutel



The year is quickly coming to an end and we have one last celebration for our club on Saturday, December 4th at the Lodge at Cat Creek where we will not only celebrate the holidays but also our amazing volunteers. Each year we hand out awards, which I realize is *not* why any of us do what we do. Our reward is in the lives we change by ensuring access to our incredible mountaintops so people can look out at the landscape in wonder. We would all happily continue doing that with or without receiving a Forest Service hat or an Appalachian Trail Conservancy t-shirt. Consider these awards as momentos, markers of the time spent doing what we do, doing what we love. Please join us in celebrating our collective accomplishment, our fantastic organization and our wonderful members as we celebrate the holidays and hand out some silly socks and t-shirts.

At the event, I will be making a special dedication that I hope will become a tradition at all club events. The above picture is a sneak peak.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Pam & David Addleton, Franklin, NC

Cynthia Ann Aultman, McDonough, GA

Patrick Elam, Franklin, NC

Mark Holmberg, Andrews, NC

Karen & Sean Martin, Franklin, NC

Linda V. Queen, Clayton, GA

Jody Todd, Wesley Chapel, FL

Richard & Patty Traverse, Ave Maria, FL

Alan & Laura Zoellner, Merritt Island, FL



New Member Orientation

by Syndie Cassedy

With over 200 new members joining in the last three years, the NHC Board decided it was time to have more focus on welcoming new members. On October 5th, NHC held its first New Member Orientation at Outdoor 76 in downtown Franklin. Members enjoyed a beverage and some munchies after being welcomed by Membership Lead Volunteer Melissa Myers. All enjoyed a history lesson on the Nantahala Hiking Club shared by President Victor Treutel, along with some information on volunteer activities, including being a Hike Leader shared by Gail Lehman, being a Trail Ambassador shared by John Finnerty, and Community Outreach by Bill and Sharon Van Horn. Rob Gasbarro of Outdoor 76 spoke on the importance of proper gear on the trail.

If you have recently joined NHC you will receive a welcome call from one of our Board members and an invite to the next New Member Orientation which will be scheduled for March—close to training for Hike Leaders and Trail Ambassadors.

Hope to see you soon!



FATCC Update

As you may already know, Franklin was the first designated A.T. Trail Community and what is now called the Franklin A.T. Community Council (FATCC) was created as a result. Its purpose is to promote and protect the A.T. in Macon County by focusing on raising community and visitor awareness of the history, uses, value and need for conservation of the trail. The NHC's representative on the FATCC is Tim Litchford, who attended his first meeting on October 11th. Tim writes: "The Council has some great ideas and I am looking forward to getting started on several initiatives. At the meeting, Deena Bouknight suggested having a trail magic event, which we did on the morning of October 25th at Winding Stair Gap (see photo). The event was a success, with several section hikers and SOBO (southbound) thru hikers coming through that morning. It was great to talk with the hikers about where they started and where they were going. All commented on how welcoming and helpful the Franklin community is to all hikers and will pass on to others how wonderful it is as a thru hiker community."



Board of Director News

by Victor Treutel, President

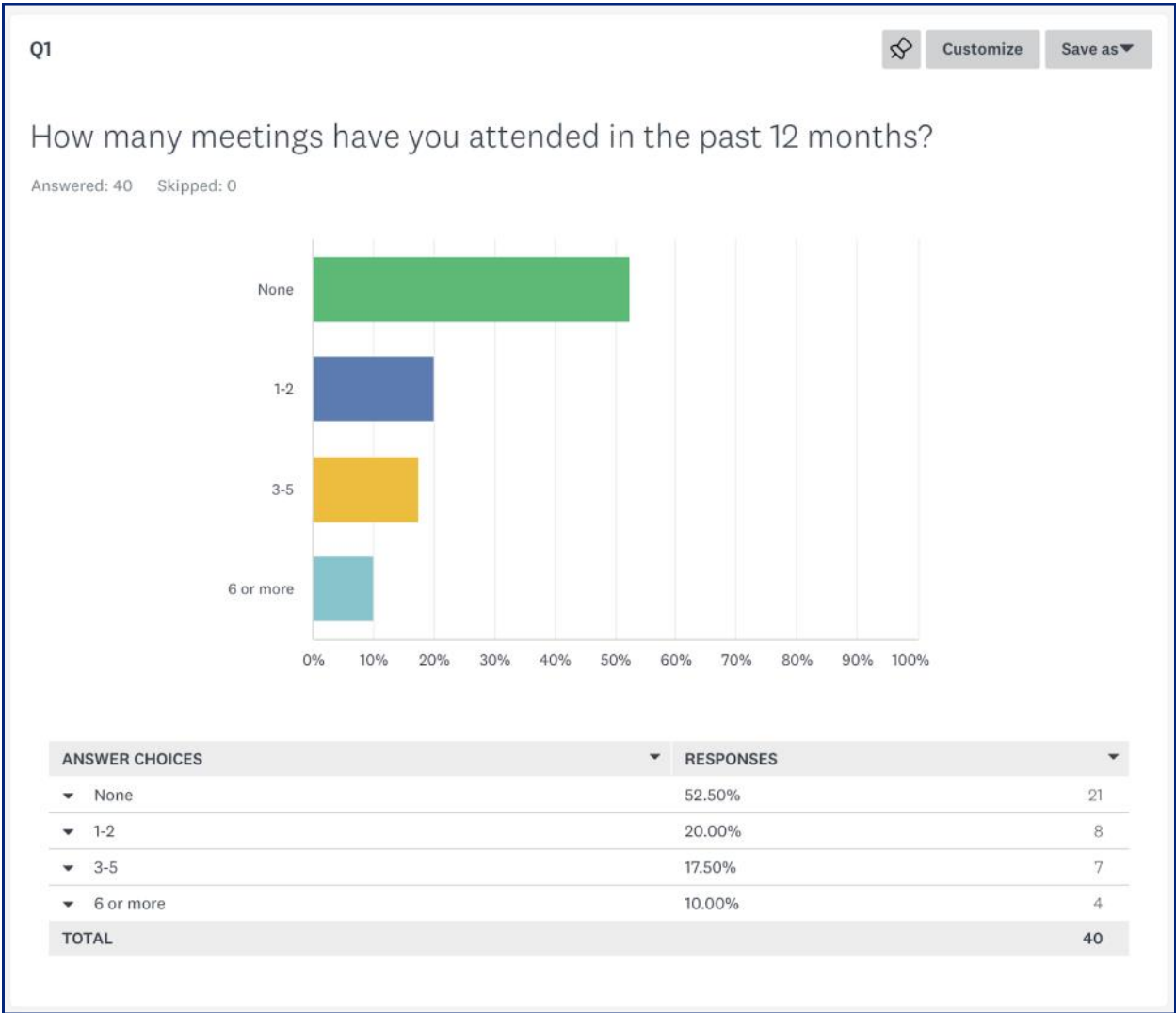
Upcoming Board of Directors Meetings:

November 11, 4pm, Franklin Chamber of Commerce, 98 Hyatt Road

December 2, 4pm, Franklin Chamber of Commerce, 98 Hyatt Road

The Nantahala Hiking Club has been blessed with an incredible influx of new members. As of today, we have a total of 356 members, a growth of over 135 in the past two years. This growth has made some of our old ways challenging. For example, we’ve used Microsoft Excel to track membership information. It was a highly manual process and getting our email addresses updated in MailChimp so we could send out communications was cumbersome. This past month, the Board approved an annual subscription to JoinIT, a membership software program. JoinIT provides a simple way for us to track membership information, send annual renewal notices, and it integrates to MailChimp for email communications, QuickBooks for accounting, SurveyMonkey for performing surveys, and offers online payment processing. This system will greatly reduce our time spent processing memberships. The cost of this software will be covered by the State License Plate Grant funds.

As I stated in my last report, we are planning a remodel/refresh of our clubhouse. We have completed our inspections and will be finalizing our plans in the coming days. The Board will be voting on the expenditure at the November 11th meeting. A few of the items we had planned have already been purchased through a grant by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. We hope to start work soon and will be looking for volunteers.



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Recently a survey was sent to members about the club meetings. We were excited to receive 54 responses. The information was very valuable as the Board prepares to discuss ways to improve attendance. In summary, over half the individuals who responded have not attended a single club meeting in the past year, 20% attended 1 or 2, and 25% attended 3 or more. 35% of those who have not attended at all stated the reason was COVID and 40% stated the meetings are not held at a convenient time. Since the meetings have historically been held on Friday nights, the question was asked if Thursday would make respondents more or less likely to attend. 44% answered more likely, 30% answered they would attend either night, and 15% said less likely. There were responses to other questions requesting feedback on meeting content that were received. The Board is very appreciative of the feedback and will be discussing it at the November 11th meeting. Look for more surveys in the future.

C



Panorama taken from Standing Indian Mountain on 09/25/21 submitted by Bill McAllister

NHC Volunteers at The Naturalist 25k and 50k Trail Run

Every year, a good number of club members volunteer at this fabulous race, sponsored and organized by Outdoor 76 in Franklin. The race begins at Outdoor 76, is a road race for the several miles it takes to get to the Wallace Branch trailhead of the Bartram Trail, and then becomes an extremely challenging trail run up to Wayah Bald where it finishes for the 25k participants. The 50k folks run from Wayah Bald all the way back to Outdoor 76! The NHC members who volunteer are organized by Katharine Brown and provide support at Harrison Gap. We've developed something of a reputation for being, shall I say, energetic, loud, wearing ridiculous hats, and providing whatever the runners need at the time they arrive. It's a heck of a lot of fun! Think about joining us next year. The more the merrier!



Trail Manager's Report

by Rich Corporon

It's been a busy month of trail maintenance. The past few weeks we have been concentrating our efforts in the northern section. In addition to our usual trail clearing and water control work, we have been working on tread repair. There were several locations where erosion had made for a slightly treacherous passage. We have completed several smaller projects and should finish the biggest section the next time we go out. A lot of hard work is put into these projects by our volunteer maintainers. Finding, moving and cutting of log cribbing. Making stakes. Lots of rocks! Finding and moving rocks and making crush. Making crush is literally making small rocks out of bigger rocks. And then there's the digging and installation work. It always amazes me how much can be accomplished by a relatively small number of mostly "retired" people. Next time you are hiking and come across a nice stretch of cribbed trail or some log or rock stairs that just happen to be on the trail, think about it: the work was probably done by volunteers. Better yet, join us for trail maintenance! It's quite rewarding to work on these projects with such a great group of people.

Report From An NHC Maintainer—10/27/2021

by David Stearns

After meeting at the Clubhouse at 8:30am, making plans and gathering gear, 10 maintainers headed out to the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) area of the Appalachian Trail. We picked up Kelly, Mark and Hygie at the NOC and drove to the Billy Wayne Dills shortcut, some 2 miles from NOC. We split into two groups, with Bill M., Patrick, Gail, Jerry and Kelly working north on the AT back to the NOC. They cleared a half dozen or so blowdowns and brush cut the sides of the trail. Rich led Victor, David, Paul, Bill VH, Ed, Mark and Hygie south on the NOC from the shortcut a mile and a half or so to repair a pickup size hole in the trail from a large tree blowdown at the root ball. We started on this project last Wednesday but were unable to complete it due to the enormous size of the hole. We filled in the hole with dirt and rocks, some large and heavy. We used a come-a-long, pry bars, rakes, a sledge hammer and lots of muscle power to get the hole close to the remaining trail. We added scree (loose gravel) and dirt to even the trail out. We finished by lodging a five inch locust log, twelve feet long, against the bank for cribbing to keep the trail from eroding. Hygie trimmed the bark off the log with a hand planer to help keep the bugs out and make the log last longer. Ed supervised the project with some help from the peanut gallery. We finished about 5:15pm and headed back to the clubhouse. After cleaning the tools we said goodbye and headed home.



The Big Blowdown and Hole, submitted by Karen Martin

The photographs below were submitted by Paul Dyer and illustrate the difficult work performed by club maintainers in October between the Jump Off and NOC. As described on the previous page by David Stearns, a large tree trailside was uprooted, falling downhill and leaving a huge hole and washout of the trail.



Before beginning work on 10/27. Trail originally came through the middle of the picture. A temporary walk around created by the crew the week before is to the right.



Working to fill in the hole. Fallen tree is lower left.



Moving large rock from above the trail to fill in the hole.



Positioning rock after it was moved into the hole to support the new treadway.

NHC Participates in 25th Annual Pumpkinfest

By David Sapin, Event Manager

What a perfect day for the event! Everyone in Macon County and the surrounding areas really wanted a day of fun in the sun. The crowds were nearly double what they were for the 2019 event. The attendance figures were off the chart for an event in Franklin. The numbers of children dressed up for Halloween was great to see.

Thanks to the volunteers that manned the NHC booth, we assisted over 73 people who stopped by to get information on the Club and hiking in the area. Many people asked about dog hikes and wanted the Club to do those throughout the year. Below is a breakdown on the event.

73+ people visited our booth to talk to our volunteers.

22 visitors took membership applications and 2 paid their dues.

58 kids and adults tried their hand with the crosscut saw.

28 people asked about dog hikes.

A personal thanks to all Club members who showed up to work their shifts!



Dave & Nancy Sapin



Crosscut Saw Demo



Outside the NHC booth at Pumpkinfest

NHC Program News

*As you know, there will be an Awards Program and Holiday Party on December 4th beginning at 2:00pm at the Lodge at Cat Creek. You will recall that we postponed our summer picnic in August due to our COVID concerns. Thankfully, Laura Lauffer and her team will be ready to share their trivia game, developed for the picnic, at the Holiday Party. There will be some great prizes. Laura thanks all who contributed questions and thanks the Board for approving the budget to purchase some great camping and hiking gifts as awards!. And speaking of awards, we will be recognizing over two dozen members who have reached a variety of levels of service by contributing their time and talent through maintenance of the AT, leading hikes as a Hike Leader, working as a Trail Ambassador during hike season, staffing booths at festivals and/or acting in leadership positions. Although awards will be distributed to those in attendance on December 4th, don't worry if you are unable to attend. We will get the award to you!

***Surprise!** We will have a program on November 12th at 7:00pm at the library in time to get hikers ready with information and knowledge to be safe during hunting season. Titled "Armed Hikers", Jeff Johnson will be discussing safety for all forest users during hunting and training seasons. Jeff will also give tips on keeping your canine hiking partner safe, while sharing his own personal experiences and interactions with hunters, hikers and private land owners. Jeff was born in Montgomery, Alabama 65 years ago. He spent 25 years as a procurement forester and logger. He states: "I have always loved the outdoors and have spent years hunting and fishing with family and friends and a good portion of my life as a whitewater kayaker. The last 15 years of my life have been spent behind a brace of Llewellyn setters, grouse hunting along the ridges of the Nantahala Mountains. This is my passion!"

***REMINDER:** There will NOT be a General Meeting of the NHC during the months of January and February 2022. Programs will resume in March 2022. when we hope to have Brent Martin, Director of the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Society and owner of Alarka Expeditions.

*An announcement for 2022 programs will appear in the next newsletter. As always, if you know someone, have topic ideas or have a travel documentary you have created yourself and want to share, please contact Katharine Brown by email at kbtrailrunner@yahoo.com or by phone at 828-421-4178.

NHG Swag!

If you would like a customized t-shirt full of NHC logos....just go to sports Zone in the Big Lots Plaza in Franklin. They will customize a shirt for you at a GREAT price. At the December 4th Holiday Party we will be selling the last of our older club t-shirts for \$5 each. Check them out!

As if that is not enough....If anyone is in need of club patches or stickers, please contact Amber Hornbarger, our NHC Treasurer, at 388-269-0360 or treasurer@nantahalahikingclub.org.



Just imagine how impressive you'd be with a design like this on the back of a t-shirt!!!

NHC and 4th Graders Hike to Siler Bald

On October 14th, a group of NHC volunteers, led by Bill and Sharon Van Horn, helped over 40 fourth graders from East Franklin Elementary School, along with some of their parents and teachers, hike a loop from Wayah Crest to Siler Bald to Siler Shelter and back. As always, it was hard to keep some of the kids from running and it was just as difficult to get some of the kids to move at all! We heard all of the usual complaints about how the students couldn't go any further and were going to die because it was so hard but saw their complaints fade and turn into will power once they got close to the top of Siler Bald and realized how much they were accomplishing and how beautiful it is. Although a number of the kids had hiked before, many more had not and it gave all of us volunteers real pleasure to share the AT and the hiking we enjoy so much with others who had never experienced it. Thanks to Stephanie Braswell, the head physical education teacher at East Franklin, for inviting us to participate in this event every year!



Editor's Note: The newsletter editor regularly requests contributions from members and very rarely receives any. What follows, however, is a contribution from new member Alan Zoellner. Thanks so much, Alan! I hope that Alan's efforts encourage other members to submit articles/photographs about their observations, hikes, the AT, the club and other related experiences.

Do you see the flowers?

by Alan Zoellner

Growing up in Florida in the 1960's and 1970's, I had many hobbies but camping and hiking weren't on the list. Too hot, too buggy, too boring.

However, several decades later, when our son joined the Cub Scouts and later the Boy Scouts, I developed a greater appreciation of the outdoors while accompanying them on their weekend hikes and campouts. "Hey this is FUN and ENJOYABLE!"

So about ten years ago, when my older brother, who had been camping in North Georgia and North Carolina for several years, asked me to join him and our other brother for a camping and hiking trip, I quickly said YES.

Initially, my hiking goals were simple: being with my brothers, enjoying the solitude of the woods, the physical exertion, the sore muscles and the hearty breakfast of bacon and eggs and next morning.

At about the same time, I started hiking with a friend in Florida during the winter months. Frank was knowledgeable of Florida native flowers and, over time, his enthusiasm and knowledge started to grow on me. Instead of walking and hiking looking ahead, now I was moving my eyes along the trail—left, right, up and down looking for flowers. My purpose for hiking was expanding and so was my enjoyment.

So it was no surprise that when I returned to the Southern Appalachian Mountains for subsequent trips, I was hiking and also looking along the trail—left, right, up and down—for flowers. Questions or conclusions were then formed such as:

- Have I seen this flower before?
- What are its characteristics? {Color, plant height, etc.}
- Isn't it interesting that these flowers are growing only in an area of mostly rocks but they are thriving? Ok, a different environment than most of the other flowers....
- This small patch of ground receives a little direct sun in the late morning and only these flowers grow here. Interesting....
- This is odd: This small plant with only four or five leaves has a large beautiful red flower underneath the top leaves. The flower can only be seen by lifting up one of the top leaves. (See photo; I still haven't been able to identify this one.)

My botanical knowledge is rudimentary at best so I usually rely on Frank, my niece, or her boyfriend, to answer my questions. Of course, to improve one's skills, hikers must challenge themselves to identify plants and their flowers on their own. Now what I usually do is to take a picture of the flower and later try to identify it.

That can be challenging as most plant experts agree that of the 2,000 species of Appalachian flora perhaps 200 are native and wholly confined to the southern Appalachians. Every day at different elevations, rain or shine, there are flowers to be found and plants to be identified.

A quick Google search will return many sites dedicated to this subject, most with descriptions and photographs. Sometimes I can challenge a friend to help me identify the plant. Other times I can get a hit on a web search as I did with the gentian flower shown on the following page. And then there are some, like the red flowers displayed in another photo that follows that I still haven't been able to identify. Does anyone know what this plant is?

One thing usually leads to another so now when I'm looking for flowers I also notice more mushrooms, different types of rocks, caterpillars and other flora and fauna that I used to walk by. Now when I take a lunch break, I believe I look at the ground as much as looking at the distant views. I'm rarely disappointed.

Here is one of my favorite websites on this subject: <https://www.summitpost.org/wildflowers-of-the-southern-appalachians/239452>

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The three pictures below are flowers photographed this summer. From left to right, they are:

- (1) Closed Gentian, shown on slides 89 and 92 of the above website
- (2) Azure Bluet, Bluets or Quaker Ladies, *Houstonia caerulea* L., shown on slide 84
- (3) I can't identify this plant...yet. Let me know if you can.



Keep hiking and keep looking around for these little treasures during your hikes. Most importantly, keep supporting the Nantahala Hiking Club with your time, resources and donations. It's a great investment preserving our wonderful Southern Appalachian Mountains for us and for future generations.

ATTENTION: Hikers Needed!

If you like hiking, seeing old friends and making new ones, you would make a great Nantahala Trail Ambassador!

As most of you know, our thru hiker season (on the AT) begins in March and continues until the end of May. Our trail ambassadors hit the trail any time during that time frame. It can be a short day hike or as long a hike as you like.

Our goal is to meet and greet thru hikers and to help with information on the trail, weather, leave no trace and our club/community.

Find out everything you need to know (and more) at our training meeting in late February. The time and place will be announced before the new year.

You may contact me any time for information at 352-206-7625 or jfinnerty@habitatpasco.org.

John Finnerty