



[nantalahikingclub.org](http://nantalahikingclub.org)

3rd Quarter 2022

# Nantahala Hiking Club

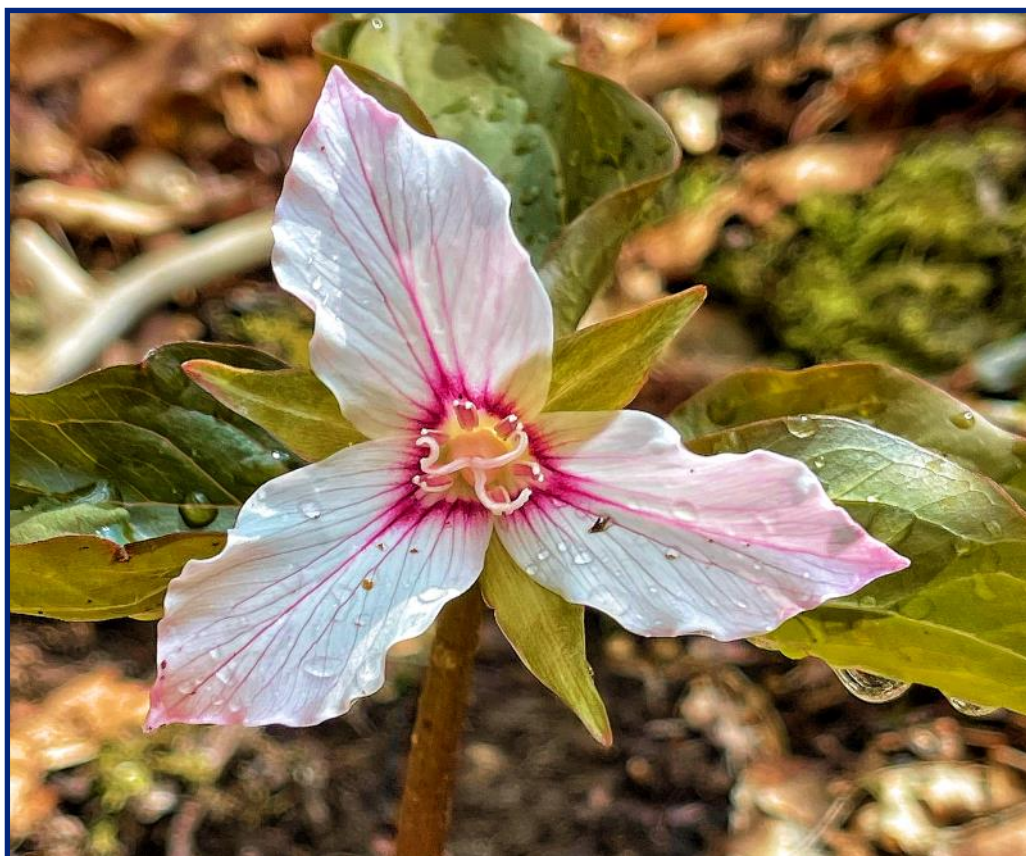
## Newsletter

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

This trail might well, instead of ‘Appalachian Trail,’ have been termed, ‘The Anonymous Trail,’ in recognition of the fact that many, many people...have labored on [it]. They have asked for no return nor recognition nor reward.

They have contributed to the project simply by reasons of the pleasure found in trail-making and in the realization that they were, perhaps, creating something which would be a distinct contribution to the American recreational system and the training of American people.

*Myron Avery—For the “reopening” of the Trail in 1951*



Painted Trillium, Photo submitted by David Addleton

# President's Message

by Victor Treutel

[president@nantahalahikingclub.org](mailto:president@nantahalahikingclub.org)

A year ago the club membership elected a new board of directors, including new and returning members. The year had some challenges, i.e. dealing with the pandemic and how to ensure our club operations continued while keeping our members safe, and we had to deal with a rash of bear-hiker interactions that were alarming. But mostly it was a year of great progress. Some of our accomplishments were renovating our clubhouse, implementing membership software, implementing time reporting software and holding three New Member Orientations, all while continuing to have the best maintained section of the Appalachian Trail. We hosted some great events, including the Holiday Party and Award Program in December and the Club Picnic in June. We had some wonderful programs, including a visit with Wayah the wolf. Sadly, we had to cancel some events because of COVID concerns, which hopefully are now behind us.

All in all, it was a great year! Our membership continued to grow and we had a flood of new volunteers who helped us to ensure we 'keep ever clear the open trails that lead to the mountaintops' - Rev. A. Rufus Morgan.

We have a great group ready to take over as board members, including a new trail manager. The new board's first task will be setting the club's direction, which we will do in August. I will be sharing the outcome of this planning session in the near future. The one thing I know for certain is that our club cannot be successful without volunteers, so I encourage everyone to get involved.

Thanks for a great year and I look forward to returning to lead the board of directors and club for one more year.

## Upcoming NHC Election

by Victor Treutel

[president@nantahalahikingclub.org](mailto:president@nantahalahikingclub.org)

At the June club picnic, the slate of nominees for the Board of Directors was presented to the membership. Those individuals are as follows:

### Officers

Victor Treutel\* - President

John Randall\* - Vice-President

Sandi Hawk - Secretary

Amber Hornbarger - Treasurer

Lynn Meyers - Membership Chair

Bill Mandler\* - RPC Representative

Continued on next page...



## Members-at-Large

Donna Sanders\*

Rory Cassedy\*

Tim Lindler

Karen Martin

Sharon Burns

Pam Addleton

Natasha Sebring

\*Returning members

These nominees will be voted on by those members in attendance at the club meeting on July 14th, which will be held at 6 pm at the Macon County Public Library.

Our Trail Manager, who also sits on the board, is selected by the maintainers and approved by the Board. Hygie Starr has been selected to take over for Rich Corporon.

I would like to thank this past year's board members who will not be returning. They played a vital role in the successes of our club:

Debi Gedling

Syndie Cassedy

Tim Litchford

David Lewis

Melissa Myers

Rich Corporon



April 6th hike in the Smokies



June 15th hike at Panthertown

# Welcome to New Members!

Drew Ball  
Asheville, NC

Ralph Collinson  
Young Harris, GA

Chris Gloin & Lila Guertin  
Franklin, NC

John Hinson  
Franklin, NC

Michael James  
Franklin, NC

Kelly Motter  
Blairsville, GA

Peter Rogers  
Cullowhee, NC

Susan Thompson  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Kathy Braatz  
Whittier, NC

David Culpepper  
Otto, NC

Brenda Haas  
Franklin, NC

Jenny & Dean Hodapp  
Franklin, NC

Kimberlie Martin  
Franklin, NC

Randy Poole  
Sapphire, NC

Pamela Simon  
Dillard, GA

Ryan & Kathy Weimann  
NC

Jan Brewer  
Franklin, NC

Jerry Denney  
Franklin, NC

Tereza Hall & Richard  
Grant  
Sapphire, NC

Elizabeth Holt  
NPB, NC

Andrew Moretz  
Franklin, NC

Joanne Roesner  
Scaly Mountain, NC

Mickey Sizemore  
Cullowhee, NC



NHC Club Picnic—June 2022

## Easy Way to Help the Club!

If you're not already an AmazonSmile member, simply sign up at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select your \*favorite\* charity, Nantahala Hiking Club, to start generating donations at no cost to you.

Or, open the app and find 'Settings' in the main menu. Tap on 'AmazonSmile' and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile on your phone.

If you run into any problems or just have questions, call Amber at 386-269-0360.



# Thoughts on Hiking Alone

by Debi Gedling

Back in March of this year, as the bubble of thru-hikers was making its way north on the A.T., there was concern about one particular hiker who was bothering people on the trail. No one knew who he was, what he was thinking, what he might do. Women, especially those hiking alone, seemed particularly and understandably concerned. This prompted NHC member and former hike leader Nancy Falkenstein to forward me her thoughts on A.T. Lone Hikers for the previous issue of our newsletter. Because I wanted to add my own thoughts, she gave her consent to wait until this issue to publish both of our thoughts together.

Nancy wrote as follows:

As a former hike leader and current NHC member, the recent disclosure of a person of interest on the AT perhaps harassing hikers has raised my ongoing concerns for lone hikers.

Whether it be male or female, it has long concerned me that hiking alone on the AT (or any other hikes) has inherent dangers. As most of us know, the cell service on the AT is spotty so calling for help is not always an option.

The possibility of having a medical event or injury is exacerbated by hiking alone. The possibility of encountering a dangerous animal or worse, a person, is also exacerbated when alone.

I do recognize the solace one has when alone is not to be discounted, but I urge hikers on the trail to consider seriously hiking with a buddy. An alternative is to have a 'check in' system. However, that is not always possible due to the reception issues or, worse, in case of a fall or injury, reaching the phone may not be an option.

The bottom line is to be very, very careful and consider having a buddy on the AT with you!

Who could disagree with what Nancy says? Certainly not me. But, as many of you know, more often than not I do hike alone with my 20-pound dog who presents very little threat to anyone or anything. Why take the risk?

Back in 1991, I was a runner. Not a trail runner—I ran solely on roads and I lived in an urban area. Running alone was no big deal. I was generally around other people and never ran after dark. However, one bright sunny morning I was running on our city's paved bike trail when I was attacked from behind and sexually assaulted. My world was forever changed but I did continue to run and I ran alone. The problem was that I pretty much freaked out if anyone was behind me—no matter how far away they were. I would feel compelled to keep checking on them to see if they were getting close and, if they get too close, I would have to go in a different direction, run up on someone's front porch, or take other steps to get away. This, along with other associated difficulties, went on for many years.

Continued on next page....

My husband and I moved to Franklin in 2017. By that time overuse injuries had put an end to my running and I was a gym rat. However, the first people I met here happened to be members of the NHC! Fay and Frank Panico informed me that I lived very close to the Bartram Trail and told me how to get to Wallace Branch. My first hike was an attempt at getting to William's Pulpit. I took Petey, our dog, and off we went. After I felt as though I had hiked at least five miles but finding no view, I came back only to learn that we had actually gone just over a mile! I then began regular hiking and am forever grateful to Fay, Frank, Sande Lolli, Jean Hunnicutt and Irene Brewi for showing me many of the magnificent hikes that Macon County, North Georgia and the Smokies have to offer. But I always preferred hiking alone (with Petey) to hiking with others. As I asked earlier, why take the risk?

For reasons I will never understand, I have no fear of people coming up behind me while hiking. For the first time in over 25 years, I was comfortable just being with myself. The anxiety was gone. What an incredible realization and feeling! I could now focus on things other than me and how I was feeling from moment to moment. I could truly experience where I was, decide where I wanted to go and how quickly or slowly I wanted to get there, spend time just listening to the birds, the breezes moving through the trees, all of the amazing water sounds, and staring with amazement at the infinite number of wildflowers and views. A whole new world was opening up to me. And it continues to do so.

I will never urge anyone to hike alone. It's a very personal decision. I do urge those who hike alone to take safety precautions because I do believe there are risks in hiking that are heightened if you are alone. I have found a good compromise way to hike that works for me if I'm with the right person or people: some of my friends want to feel like they are hiking alone without actually doing it so we hike together but at a distance from one another. This gives us some of the benefits of solitary hiking without the risks. And I do hike quite often with other people and enjoy it but I view these primarily as social and, sometimes, educational events which are quite different from my other hikes. My favorite hikes remain my solo adventures with Petey—the serenity, challenge, spiritual element and sense of control far outweigh, for me, any risks I may be taking.

For those interested in reading more on this subject, I suggest checking out the following:

[Solo Hiking Tips: How To Stay Safe On Any Trail As A Female Hiker](#)

[Solo Travel and Hiking with Dog](#)



The Author and Petey

# 2022 Thru-Hiker Chow Down

by Sharon Van Horn

NHC and the Lazy Hiker's sixth annual Thru-Hiker Chow Down was held on Saturday, April 2, 2022 in the Lazy Hiker Yard. It was a most perfect day for the event, which had not been held in two years due to the pandemic. The weather was sunny and breezy with temps in the mid 60's. Hikers kept coming, signing our Log Book and placing where they were from on our map.

We served the thru-hikers a chili dog meal with all the fixings, including cheese, onions, sauerkraut, mustard, ketchup and hot sauce. Alongside, they had chips, fresh fruit and veggies and homemade desserts. We encouraged them to come back for seconds too! Special thanks to the chili makers, fruit and veggie donors and all who made the desserts. Thanks again for all the prepacking so the hikers could take more for later!

It was so great to see our Trail Ambassadors at the Chow Down. They were meeting and greeting our thru-hikers. Many club members also came out to do the same. We even had Mary Bennett doing henna on the thru-hikers. Needless to say, all enjoyed the Lazy Hiker brews too!

We served about 60 thru-hikers plus gave leftovers to a few who came late. We had a total of 35 NHC volunteers who helped put the event together and also showed up to set up, serve and clean up. They racked a total of 94 volunteer hours! Whew! That's a lot. Again, special thanks to all who signed up and showed up. Really could not do it without you ALL!!

Leftovers we did not give away at the Chow Down were taken to the First Baptist Church breakfast for the thru-hikers the very next day. The church does a breakfast for the hikers for about six weeks. They pick up the hikers wherever they are staying and bring them to the church for the morning meal. They also take photos of each hiker, encourage them to write a note to their loved ones and send the note and photos to wherever the hiker calls home. NHC also donated \$300 to the church to help with breakfast expenses.

All in all, the sixth annual Thru-Hiker Chow Down was a great success. I look forward to next year and hope you will too. Be ready to sign up and help in any way you can. Don't hesitate to share any ideas you might have to make it even better. Again, I cannot thank you enough, but one more time: Thanks to all NHC members who supported our Chow Down!!





# NHC 2022 Chow Down







# Time Reporting Rollout

by Victor Treutel

[president@nantahalahikingclub.org](mailto:president@nantahalahikingclub.org)

One way our partners, the US Forest Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy, measure our contribution is by the number of hours our volunteers record. As a club, we are required to submit a report each year to our partners detailing not only how many hours we spent, but which tasks we spent them on. Compiling these reports is in itself time consuming and oftentimes impossible as not every volunteer records their time. The importance of our reporting is immense as our partners use our hours for budgeting, which eventually trickles down to our club and the monetary and people resources we receive.

Prior to 2018, volunteers recorded their hours on a paper form and then sent it to an individual who entered the hours in an Excel spreadsheet. Those hours were then forwarded to our partners and utilized for club awards. In 2018, the ATC asked us to be the “guinea pig” for a new time tracking system they were developing. Without getting into detail, it was a burden and most volunteers wouldn’t or couldn’t use it. Thus our report to the partners each year was inaccurate.

I knew this would be a major task to deal with during my first year as President. After a lot of work by the committee, we recommended that the Board of Directors purchase a software application called Better Impact. We have been working on implementing this solution and as of July 1 we will be turning off the old ATC system that some of you knew as Salesforce.

All hours that had been recorded in Salesforce have been imported into Better Impact, so if you are one of the few who entered your own hours you are on the new system. Hours for groups have been entered as well, i.e. trail maintainers. If you have additional hours to add, please go to the club’s website and click on **Volunteer**. There are four items on that page that are important:

- 1) Online Volunteer Application** - This steps a volunteer through the process of creating an account on Better Impact.
- 2) Volunteer Portal** - This is a link to allow volunteers to enter their hours in Better Impact.
- 3) Download the Mobile App** - Better Impact provides a mobile app for both Apple and Android that makes entering hours very convenient. You can download the app by clicking on this link.
- 4) Better Impact User Documentation** - This short manual will teach you about Better Impact, including how to create an application, how to enter hours, and how to view entered hours.

If you are active in our club, recording hours is important to us and our partners. Please take a few minutes to submit an application (create account) and enter your hours. Hopefully, you will see how simple this new system is and will begin or continue entering all of your volunteer hours.

If you have any questions, please send me an email at [president@nantahalahikingclub.org](mailto:president@nantahalahikingclub.org)



# The Importance of Reporting Your NHC Time

by Rory Cassedy

Wanted - Hard workers, experienced outdoor folks, educators, writers, accountants, public speakers, biologists, geologists. Earn up to \$30.00 per hour depending on experience, accepting applications to start immediately!

The current estimated national value of each volunteer hour is \$29.95. When we report our hours to the ATC and NFS they use our hours for budgeting and grant requests. For a nonprofit, such as our club, the hours contributed have a tremendous impact on budgeting and grant requests.

Our ATC Regional Manager, Sarah Adams, provided the following information on the importance of reporting volunteer hours:

"I was able to get in touch with ATC's volunteer relations department who provided some language on the importance of reporting volunteer hours. Here is what she shared:

From the Volunteer Services Agreement with the Forest Service, NHC agreed to:

'Report to ATC regularly, or at minimum annually, the total number of individual and volunteer hours contributed via this Volunteer Services Agreement. ATC will convey final annual report to the US Forest Service. To the extent possible, NHC will assist the US Forest Service in annual reporting by providing the information required by the US Forest Service's database of reord, VSReports.'

The language that appears on the form to report hours at the close of the fiscal year reads something like this:

'The reports tell the story of volunteers as the cenral legacy of the Trail, help the A.T. compete for funding to support volunteer efforts, and demonstrate the impact of the public investment of time and talent to federal agency partners through their annual reporting.'

If we don't have a full picture of the number of people and the number of hours contributed to keeping the Trail open and accessible, then we can't argue for our deferred maintenance funding from the National Park Service. More practically, knowledge about numbers of volunteers, attrition, certified sawyers, and the condition of facilities on the Trail all help ATC make the case to fund our efforts, be it free PPE, a CRM (customer relationship management) database, or tens of thousands of dollars to replace privies."

I sincerely hope that the membership is convinced of the importance of reporting volunteer hours. Better Impact, as explained in the previous article by Victor, is a time reporting tool that is easy to use. I hope you will agree and enter all of your hours.

## Upcoming NHC Programs

Our July program features Brent Martin of the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy, who will present on the history of the Bartram Trail and on the travels of naturalist and artist William Bartram through the southern Appalachians in the spring of 1775. He will also provide an overview of the trail today and current issues and projects.

In addition to being the Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy, Brent has, over the years, worked as Regional Director for The Wilderness Society, Associate Director of Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (now Mainspring) and Executive Director of Georgia Forestwatch. He is the recipient of the Southern Environmental Law Center's James S. Dockery Southern Environmental Leadership Award and lives in the Cowee Community with his wife (Angela), dog (Bella) and cat (George IV). In his spare time he writes and helps his wife, Angela, run their eco-tourism business, Alarka Expeditions. His most recent work is *George Masa's Wild Vision: A Japanese Immigrant Imagines Western North Carolina* (Hub City Press, 2022).

Please join us on July 14th for what is sure to be an interesting and informative presentation!

In August, we will hold the club's spaghetti dinner and the September program will be a presentation by Elaine Eisenbaum, Director of the Nikwasi Initiative.

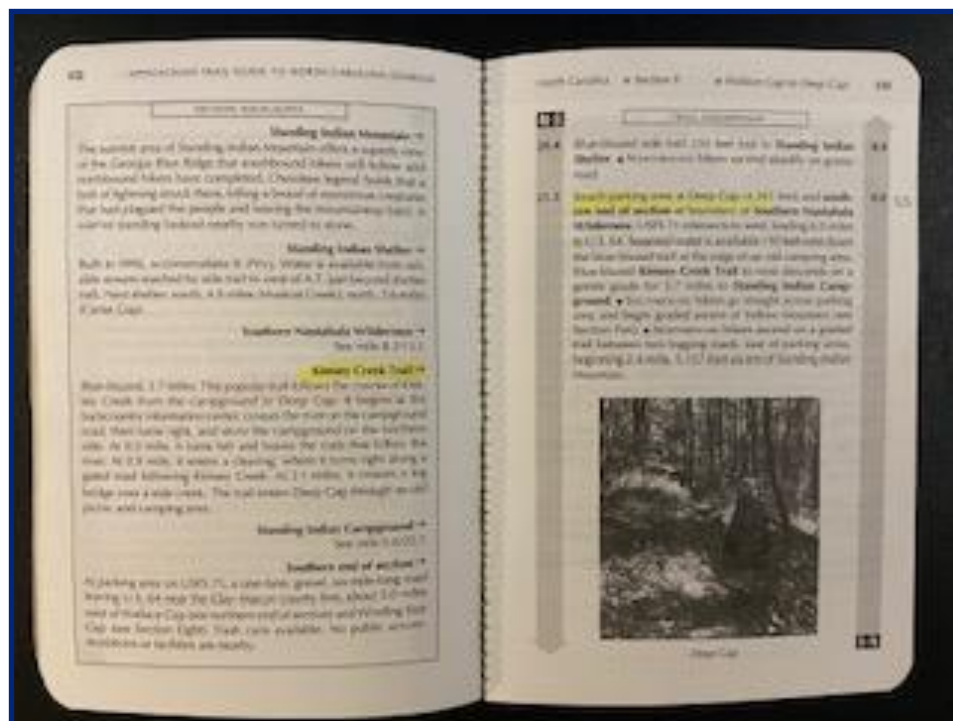
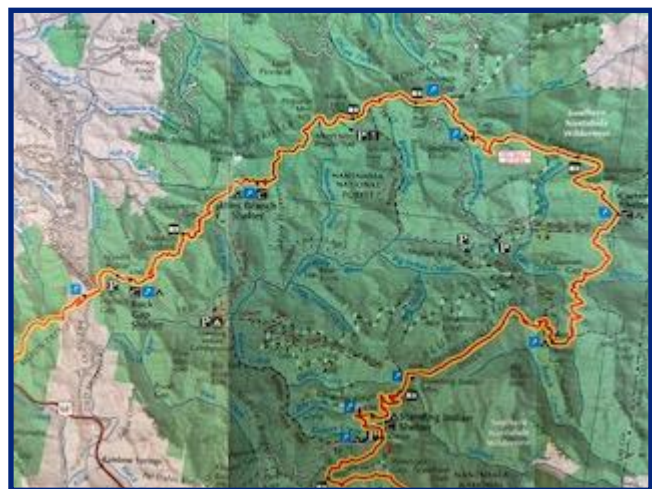


Photos submitted by Sallie Ellinwood from NHC hike on 04/24 to Hamilton Gardens



# Volunteer Needed: NHC Section Guidebook Editor

A volunteer is needed to update the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's official A.T. guidebook and map. The next updates will not be due until March 2028 (map) and April 2031 (book and maps). What is required is to make appropriate changes to the existing book and map based on changes that the club makes to our section. For example, adding that a new privy was constructed at Rock Gap shelter area and there are now eight tent pads instead of three. This is a great opportunity to get to know our section in detail and have the ability to showcase what a treasure we have. Long-time club members Don O'Neal and Bill Van Horn have been doing the editing for over 20 years and are available to answer any questions. Word documents of the current information will be provided to track changes. If interested, contact Bill Van Horn at 828-369-1983.



# Hiking Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

by Bill Mandler

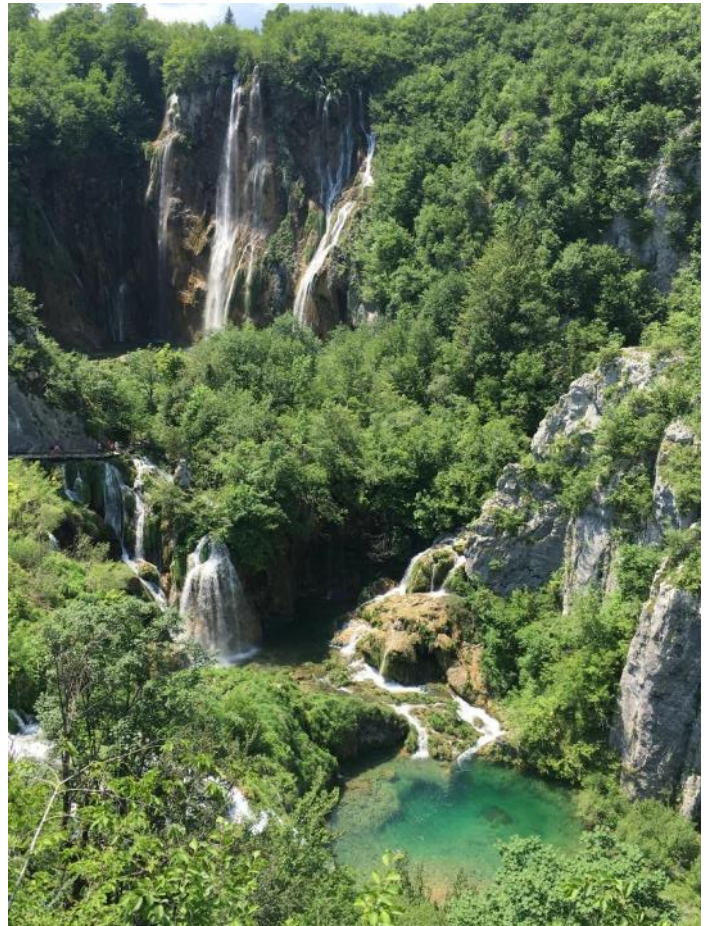
Suzanne and I recently had the opportunity to enjoy Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The main attraction is a chain of lakes that have been created by travertine (calcium carbonate) dams that have been formed over many thousands of years. The specific type of travertine comprising these barriers is a relatively porous form called “tufa”. From the Plitvice Lakes NP website, tufa is a product of calcium carbonate deposited at temperature conditions near to the ambient temperature, and often contains the remnants of microphytes and macrophytes, invertebrates and bacteria. Enough with the science lecture!

This map, from the Plitvice Lakes NP website (<https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/en/>), provides an overview of the park with the red lines showing the main hiking trails. Our hike started with a tram ride to the upper lakes, 5 km of walking along the lakes, a boat ride the length of the largest lake, another 4 km of walking along the lower lakes and a tram ride back to where we started. This took us about 4 hours including a stop for lunch at the park café’.

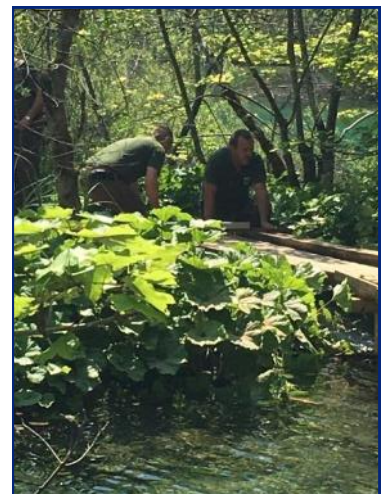
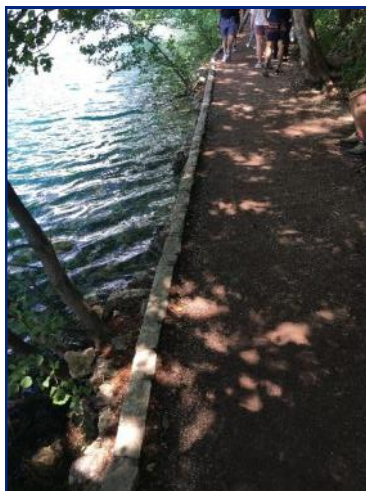


The naturally occurring dams provide numerous cascades and waterfalls throughout the hike, including the highest waterfalls in Croatia. The water is exceptionally clear with an aqua tinge that is beautiful to see. As with most photos of natural wonders I take, they don't do justice to the real thing. Especially using an iPhone.





The main trail system's predominant feature is an extensive network of wooden boardwalks comprised of sawn chestnut boards to navigate wet areas. Other sections were crushed stone/dirt with limestone block cribbing. Overall, the trail was well maintained, although there were a few low hanging limbs that got my chainsaw trigger finger itching! We actually ran into a trail maintenance crew repairing a section of boardwalk.





Although we were past the spring wildflower season we still managed to find a few.



After we left the park, it was another 3 km walk back to where we were staying. This path included street lamps! Definitely not the AT.



The hike we took was not a wilderness hike by any means. Although there are more remote trails in the park, the main trail system is geared towards tourists and showcases the most dramatic aspects of the park while being accessible to as many people as possible. We went mid-week and before the height of the tourist season. There were plenty of people and tour groups but it wasn't overly crowded. If you should decide to go, I would definitely avoid weekends and the mid-June to mid-August time period. As with some of the more popular U.S. national parks, a timed entry



system is used and advance purchase of tickets is advised. If you happen to be in that region of Europe, it is well worth the visit.



## News Release

The annual Trail Skills Workshop (TSW), will be held at Lake Winfield Scott (Suches, GA) September 24-25, 2022. This training event is focused on teaching the most current trail construction and maintenance methods for Eastern landscapes. It is applicable for all skill levels. Expert instructors are provided from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the United States Forest Service (FS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

This year's offering includes courses on rock construction, log cribbing, and sawyering in addition to introductory and advanced trail maintenance. The courses are offered so participants can attend different classes each day, or dig in on one track for in-depth knowledge.

For more information and to preregister scan the QR Codes, or contact [tsw@georgia-atclub.org](mailto:tsw@georgia-atclub.org).



Preregister



Brochure

# **Trail Manager's Report**

**by Rich Corporon**

It's been a busy time for our maintainers. The AT endured a large number of thru-hikers this spring. Judging by the privies, they were all eating plenty of food. Seemed like most of the hikers we talked to were pleased with the condition of the trail. Trail reports from the Trail Ambassadors and other club members helped us focus our efforts.

Our preparations for thru-hiker season began in November. 10 privies to be cleaned and switched. Tread repair needed. Blazing scheduled. Fifty-nine miles of AT takes us a good 3 months to get through just keeping the trail clear and existing water control functioning. That doesn't include our forty miles of connecting trails. That brings us to February when many hikers choose to begin their journey. Then we do our best to address blowdowns that are reported and keep the AT clear for the SOBO's in the fall. Brushing season starts early in the Nantahala and continues through October.

This summer and fall we will be building a new privy at Wesser shelter and replacing the shelter at Rock Gap. Sarah from ATC has been working with the USFS for a helicopter drop of the materials for Wesser privy as well as the purchasing of the D-logs and other materials for the shelter. We should have plenty to do this year.

Konnarock is returning in July for another 6 days of work continuing the rehab of Albert Mountain. They do wonderful things. Very heavy things, but wonderful. Many of our maintainers will be joining them for 1 or more days of work.

If you are hiking past a shelter, please stop and fill the leaf buckets at the privy. It is a tremendous help for composting.

On Wednesday, our maintainers held the official vote for the new Trail Manager. I am pleased to report that Hygie Starr was unanimously elected. We are excited to have Hygie at the helm leading our maintainers to keep the trails to the mountaintops clear.

## **Summit Charter School Annual Water Testing**

For over 10 years, eighth grade students from the Summit Charter School in Cashiers have sampled water on our section of the A.T. A volunteer or two are needed to accompany the approximately fifteen students as they hike short sections of our trail and stop to test the water. On September 15, they will test water at Winding Stair Gap and Betty's Creek Gap. On September 16, they will hike from Wallace Gap to Winding Stair Gap. Volunteers are asked to explain about the NHC and what we do to maintain the trail and support its hikers. If interested, please contact Bill Van Horn at 828-369-1983.

# MAINTENANCE 101

## How to clean rolling grade dips and “Thank You, Ma’ams”

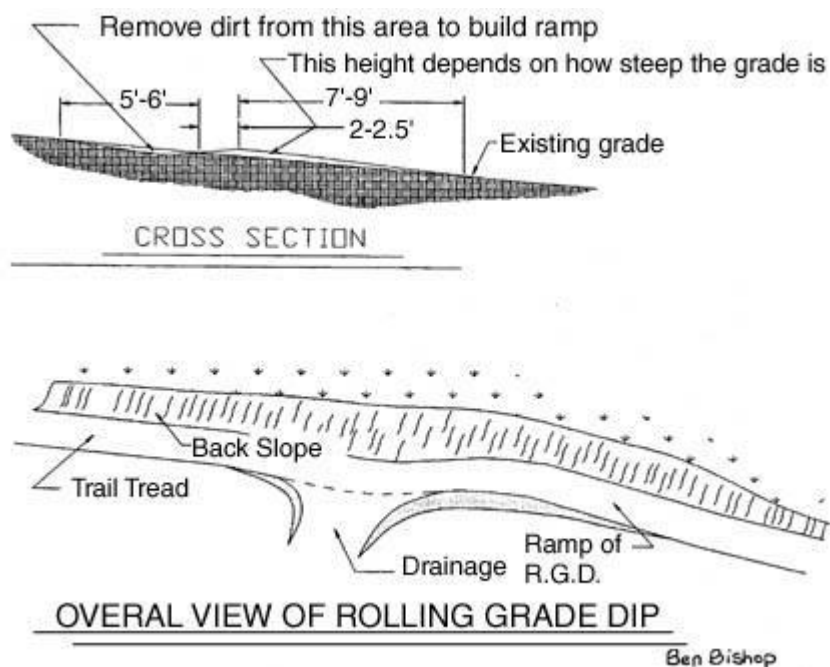
by Bill Van Horn

The Nantahala Hiking Club maintains roughly sixty miles of the Appalachian Trail and thirty miles of side trails. A lot of maintenance time is spent diverting surface water off the trail. Running water erodes tread and support structures. Standing water often results in soft, boggy tread or failure of the tread and support structures.

The idea of a rolling grade dip (also known as Cowetta Dip) is to use a reversal in grade to keep water moving across the trail. A grade reversal is preferred to a waterbar if the terrain supports it. A trail with a grade reversal and out sloped tread encourages water to continue to sheet flow across the trail—not down it. Grade reversals, if appropriately constructed, are the most unobtrusive drainage feature. The trail user’s experience is enhanced by providing an up and down motion. To clean rolling grade dips, rake any accumulated organic or loose mineral soil from the low point (bottom of the ramp). Also, make sure the drainage channel where the water leaves the trail is clear of any accumulated organic material.

“Thank you, Ma’ams” (or bleeders, kick-outs or diversion dips) are graded depressions angled to drain water sideways off the trail. These can be cleaned by removing organic material that has accumulated on the trail’s edge and reestablishing the shallow dig in the trail that forces the water off of the trail. As you walk the trail you can notice where organic material has been deposited on the edge of the trail where water has run over the edge. This is an obvious location to build a “Thank you, Ma’am” to support what Mother Nature is trying to do.

In the next newsletter: Discussion of the all-important blaze.



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## Union School Project

We had another great day with the Union School students, who replaced 8 water bars on the A.T. just south of the Rock Gap parking area. This is the fourth work trip this year. We saw several hikers and all were very appreciative of their work.





# University of Louisville Students Volunteer With NHC

Seven students from the University of Louisville joined members of the Nantahala Hiking Club to volunteer on the A.T. On May 10 they began their journey, hiking with Trail Ambassadors and observing what Trail Ambassadors do. Tim Lindler shared a brief history of Dr. Rufus Morgan and the purpose of the NHC. Rory Cassedy then shared the Leave No Trace protocol. It was a beautiful day in the Carolina mountains for a hike, so our visitors continued their day with a hike to Rufus Morgan Falls.

The following day, the team from UOL joined the NHC maintenance team to restore over one hundred feet of the A.T. Our Trail Manager, Rich Corporon, commented that “there was no way we would have completed the work without the help of the students and staff”. What a great group! We hope to see many of them on the A.T. again one of these days.



## Trail Ambassador Report

by Rory Cassedy

A Trail Ambassador (TA) get-together will take place on a weekend in October. This will count as the TA Orientation that is required every 2 years. In addition, I'm working with the Macon County Emergency staff to schedule a First Aid Class on a Saturday. Although first aid is not required for TA's, it is good knowledge to have. I strongly recommend a Wilderness First Aid Class since the content is applicable to situations we encounter on the A.T. A two-day class is offered at NOC and others can be found through an on-line search.

I appreciate the members who have reached out to me wanting to become TA's or to start doing TA hikes and trail magic again. If you're interested in becoming a Trail Ambassador, please contact me at [rcassedy01@gmail.com](mailto:rcassedy01@gmail.com).

# **Maintaining the Appalachian Trail and the RPC/SCM Meetings**

**by Bill Mandler, NHC Regional Partnership Committee Representative and  
Committee Vice-Chair**

The Regional Partnership Committee (RPC) and Southern Partnership Meeting (SPM) was recently held in Damascus, VA, also known as Trail Town, USA. The Appalachian Trail (AT) goes through this small town, also home to the Virginia Creeper Trail – a nationally recognized rail-trail. To understand the purpose of this meeting, an understanding of how the trail is maintained is necessary.

The AT is managed under a unique Cooperative Management Agreement. The primary entity that manages the trail under this arrangement is the non-profit organization, The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org). It provides the central focus of trail management and works with the National Park Service (the AT is actually a national park), the U.S. Forest Service, and many other state and local agencies (agency partners) that have impact on the trail as well as the maintaining clubs. Its authority is federally mandated by Congress and it receives funding from the National Park Service as well as from donations and grants. For the section of trail NHC is responsible for maintaining, the U.S. Forest Service is our main agency partner as the land the trail goes through is in the Nantahala National Forest.

The NHC is one of 31 maintaining clubs that provide the “boots on the ground” to keep the trail open throughout its almost 2,200 mile length. The clubs are grouped into four regions by the ATC and has staff dedicated to each: New England Regional Office (NERO), Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO), Virginia Area Regional Office (VARO), the Southern Regional Office (SORO). The SORO is based in Asheville.

Five maintaining clubs are grouped under SORO: Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, Nantahala Hiking Club, Carolina Mountain Club, Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, and Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoeing Club. These clubs are responsible for maintaining the trail from the start at Springer Mountain in Georgia to the Virginia state line.

The RPC representative serves as a communication link between the maintaining clubs and the ATC and agency partners. Each club has one voting RPC rep. I am the NHC RPC rep and current vice-chair of the committee. The RPC representative is ideally a six-year stint as the rep rotates among being representative, vice-chair, and chair every two years. It will be NHC’s turn to nominate a chairperson next year, presumably me, to be voted on by the other clubs. And we’ll be looking to find my replacement by 2025.

An RPC meeting for each of the regions is held twice a year, usually March and November. These meetings provide an opportunity to hear from the agency partners (ATC, NPS, USFS, etc.) about issues regarding the trail and provide a forum for the maintaining clubs to share best practices and to offer feedback to the agency partners regarding what we are seeing from our vantage point.

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In addition, a Strategic Partnership Meeting (SPM) is held in conjunction with the RPC meeting in March. The SPM combines representatives from SORO and VARO to provide a broader view of issues affecting the trail. This year, the meeting was moved to April in hopes of warmer weather that would allow gatherings to be held outside due to lingering COVID concerns. This was the first in-person meeting since Fall 2019 and the weather cooperated!

The meeting started out with a Partnership Hike on Friday afternoon on a portion of the AT north of Damascus. This gave a chance to socialize with other club members and representatives from the ATC, Park Service, and Forest Service outside of the constraints of the meeting. The SPM portion of the meeting took place on Saturday morning with updates provided by the ATC, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (National Park Service) office, the regional Forest Service office, and the ATC Stewardship Council. This was followed by a discussion on Local Management Plans, which defines the responsibilities of each club and agency partners for each section of the trail.

After lunch, the RPC meetings commenced with SORO and VARO clubs meeting separately. We heard an update from an ATC SORO representative and had discussions about the future of the Co-operative Management Agreement, trail condition mapping, and how clubs deal with maintaining remote sections of the trail.

The following morning, the meeting concluded with an ATC presentation on the ongoing work to preserve the natural resources of the trail in our region followed by discussions on various topics that included volunteer recruitment, volunteer time reporting, the state of the ATC SORO/Club partnership, and leadership development.

These meetings help to develop relationships between clubs and the various agencies involved with keeping the trail open and serve as a valuable communication link to learn about initiatives that affect the clubs and allow feedback and sharing of best practices.

## **Easter on the Trail, April 16, 2022**

**What a perfect time to participate in Easter on the Trail! Eager hikers were out in droves and our members, many who are new to the club, were eager to head out on our trails with some 'trail magic' and meet the thru hikers and experience what 'trail magic' actually is – both to us members but definitely to the hikers!**

**The threat of rain did not hinder anyone from coming out to the clubhouse on that Saturday morning to help fill small quart bags with fruit, veggies, nuts, candy and the best part – COLORED HARD BOILED EGGS with packets of salt and pepper too. Some members who could not participate in the actual hiking were kind to drop off supplies for us to use.**

**Organized chaos soon turned into bags filled, members ready to head out to their designated trails and enjoy themselves. From the emails that came to me with their information of the day, everyone had an amazing time. Hikers from just about every state, many foreign countries, young, old, experienced, tired, weary, sore feet and bodies – we saw it all. But what we also saw was the twinkle in the eyes and the smiles on their faces when we asked 'hi, are you a thru hiker?'**

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**Would you like some 'trail magic'? Most dropped their gear, said YES, sat down and enjoyed the goodies we had brought. A perfect time to learn a bit more about each hiker and to also tell them about the Nantahala Hiking Club and who we were and why we are out on the trails. Many stated that the area they had been on was the best kept trails they had experienced and were grateful for the maintainers who kept them that way but also thanking us for coming out to meet them. Some stated that they plan to give back to their communities as they appreciated what our club does.**

**Approximately 20 club members participated on April 16<sup>th</sup>, Most were new to the club with a few of us 'oldies' who also participated. I will be tallying up the volunteer hours to report for each member but I am sure it will be at least 100.**

**My sincere thanks to my husband, Tom, who goes along with whatever I decide to do, to Bill and Sharon Van Horn for being a backbone for Tom and me as we navigated thru the morning. Bill was instrumental in making sure members were given an area on the trail that was conducive to their experience and wishes. Also thanks for Sandy Shaw and Ned Kraft, those 2 always set up at Winding Stair Gap and treat all the hikers who stop there with smiles. They have been at that site for quite a few years and they always give such detailed reports of the hikers they meet and what they experience. This year, Sandi Hawk, a new member joined them.**





# Our Natural Resources

By Victor Treutel

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Sometimes I think about how cool it would have been to see these mountains two or three hundred years ago, when great herds of bison and elk roamed the valleys, or when wolves roamed their mountain namesake - Wayah Bald (Wayah means wolf in Cherokee). Back when the trees were 500 year-old goliaths, like the massive American Chestnut that dropped so many nuts the wild animals could feed themselves until they practically burst, or when the Eastern Hemlocks towered over the forest canopy, the tallest recorded at 174 feet. The trees in our forests today are babies, practically all under 70 years old.



*Photo (left) of an American Chestnut tree, (right) Eastern Hemlock with people for scale.*

Imagine the Cherokee, living in small villages along the Little Tennessee River. Their houses surrounded the Council House, a massive structure that sat atop an earthen mound in the center of each village. There were dozens of Cherokee towns near Franklin, including Nikwasi, Watauga and Cowee. There is archaeological evidence that shows their existence here went back twelve centuries. Imagine that, twelve thousand years of subsistence living, taking only what they needed to feed their families.

But recent history hasn't been good for these mountains. When the European settlers arrived, things began to change drastically. They harvested animals for their furs and shipped them back east, oftentimes leaving the carcass to rot. They killed off the bison, elk and wolves and killed countless bears and beavers, deer and wild turkeys. They took so many animals that the



Cherokee hunters came home empty handed and their families went hungry. This failure devastated the Cherokee, putting a wrench into their sophisticated societal structure.

The settlers also harvested trees to build houses and barns, which eventually led to a massive logging industry that stripped the mountainsides bare, making them appear like a Florida grocery store before a hurricane. By 1950, two-thirds of the once great Smoky Mountain forests had been harvested.

Yet history wasn't always deliberate and for profit; there were other things that caused irreparable harm to the forests. In the early 1900's a blight arrived from Asia that attacked the American Chestnut trees that once ranged throughout the Appalachian Mountains and Ohio Valley. At one time, they made up twenty-five percent of the forest in the Smokies. Its wood was considered one of the finest hardwoods in all the world, and many animals relied on its nuts. It is believed that we lost three billion trees. That's right— with a B. Billions. Today the American Chestnut is considered extinct. You might find a scrawny sapling growing in the forest with its distinctive saw-tooth leaves. They grow from the ancient roots buried deep underground, but those roots are still infected with blight and the sapling won't survive.

Something similar happened to the Eastern Hemlock. These massive evergreens towered over all the others, sometimes fifty feet above the canopy. In the early 1900's, the hemlocks made up thirty to forty percent of the forest. The hemlock was referred to as "the redwood of the east" and its shade helped to cool the forest.

In the mid-1900s, the hemlock wooly adelgid arrived from Asia, an aphid-like insect that covers itself with a white-waxy looking wool which provides a protective coating.



*Photo of Hemlock Wooly Adelgid*

Luckily, we learned from the chestnut and some of the hemlocks have been saved. A few towering monsters still stand, but virtually every tree that wasn't treated has now fallen and fallen hard. A hike along the Appalachian Trail on Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park reveals the devastation as massive, decaying hemlocks litter the forest floor, their roots upturned like tombstones. It's a sad hike.

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*Recent photos from Clingman's Dome showing the clutter of fallen hemlocks.*

Today we find ourselves in the midst of another forest changing infestation: the emerald ash borer. Brought to the U.S. courtesy of the international shipping industry, the bug first appeared in Detroit in 2000. The female deposits her larvae under the bark of an ash tree, where it proceeds to eat away at the tree for years, until the bark falls off and the tree dies. Originally, the botanists believed it would take 100 years for the bug to get to the Smokies, but some unknowing campers brought some infested firewood with them from Michigan. And bam, our ash trees are now being consumed. The NHC has been working with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in treating as many trees as possible along the A.T. to prevent their total loss. So there's hope.

With the above in mind, imagine what the Smokies once looked like hundreds of years ago. Now imagine what they'd look like if we hadn't made a stand. If we hadn't treated the hemlocks and the ash, if we hadn't slowed logging, if we hadn't stopped the slaughter of animals solely for hides. Imagine also if the Appalachian Trail hadn't been envisioned, created and protected. One last use of your imagination: imagine what the Smokies could look like in the year 2120 if we don't continue to fight.

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Our club founder, Rev. A. Rufus Morgan, was a botanist and visionary. He so desired for people to be able to hike to the top of a mountain and look out at God's creation that he started carrying a crosscut saw with him when he hiked. As he grew older, he lost his vision and hearing, but he knew these mountains so well that he could still "see" the plants and identify them. Our club still works to protect these mountains, to ensure invasive species are eradicated and that rare species are protected. I encourage you all to educate yourself beyond what is visible, come hike with us, do some trail maintenance, learn about the forest, learn the history. The good, the bad and the ugly.

We cannot change the past but, rather, learn from it. Let's work together to ensure that a hundred years from now our descendants don't sadly say, "I wish I could have seen these mountains a hundred years ago", but instead say, "I'm so glad my ancestors had the vision to protect these mountains."

## Cool stuff that got submitted.....

The Mt. Cube Sugar Farm is a small maple syrup farm located in New Hampshire. Until the A.T. was rerouted to its current location, the trail went right by the farm. The farm is owned by former governor Meldrim Thompson and is run by his sons, Peter and Simon. At the present time, the farm and its house are located 2 miles from the trail but many hikers make the trek and they can stay for free in the sugar house or tent on the property. Peter and Simon provide trail magic just as their father used to.

NHC member Sam Ferguson stayed there in 2019, had pizza and watermelon from the refrigerator in the sugar refinery and got a ride back to the trail the next morning. He submitted this photograph of the son, Peter, on the far left side along with Grandma Gatewood, who stayed there on at least one of her thru hikes in the 1950's.

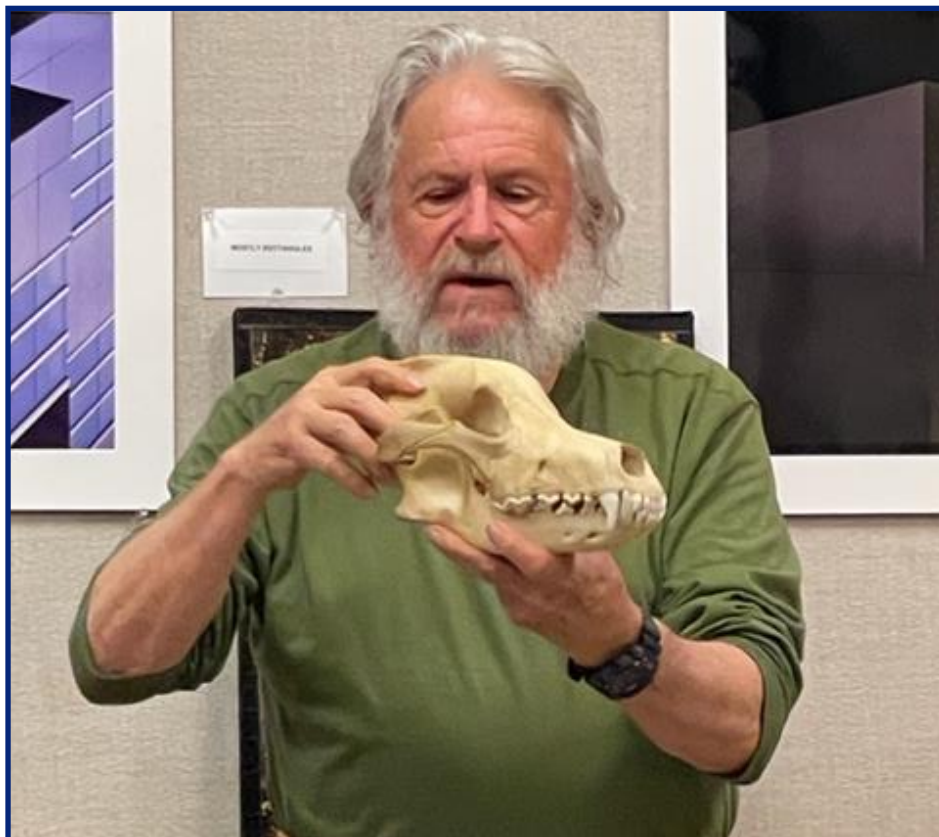


# NHC LOVES WAYAH!!!

Our program on April 14th was entitled "Wolf Tales" and featured Rob Gudger and Wayah, a female grey wolf. Everyone who attended, NHC members and members of the larger community, enjoyed the program tremendously and absolutely fell in love with Wayah. Over 30 photos were submitted following the program, some of which are printed below. Thanks to all!













**That's all, folks.....for now.  
See you in October and have a wonderful  
summer!**