

September 2013 PATH Trail Reports

From: Steven Fishback

Subject: September Trail report Chestnut Ridge.

Tues Sept 17

Evan from USFS returned our newly sharpened crosscut saw after four hours of work. Evan also provided us with two sets of new crosscut handles.

On Monday, USFS service from Blacksburg cut down the huge oak tree 1/4 mile south of Walker's Gap. They emphasized it was a good decision that PATH passed on this type of work on to the USFS versus risking a volunteer worker accident.

Wed Sept 18 -

Keeping a super long story short. I dropped by newly opened Burkes Garden general store run by Amish lady. She was asking me about if we had a trail worker staying on Chestnut Knob shelter helping cut wood for hikers? She provided free food to Daniel James [forget last name, Rasmessur??] and he later paid it back after working it off in the community. Ran into hiker northbound at Walker Gap, he notified me hearing and reading about obnoxious homeless guy staying at Chestnut shelter. The lack of entries in the trail journal over the last week, my personal experience with numerous obnoxious, high, or nut cases homeless guys/gals on other parts of the trails, plus few other things I noticed in and around the shelter in addition to me wanting to get trail work done over the next three days sent me to the boiling point. Found Daniels stinky stuff in shelter but no Daniel. I neatly packed up his possessions and proceeded down to Walker gap. I ran into Daniel at Walker Gap. He was baffled as to the problem but I worked our a deal and offered to give him a ride wherever he needed to go but off the trail. He wanted to go to a Greyhound bus station to make it to Woodstock, GA [near Atlanta]. Beckley, WV was the closest on my GPS that showing a bus station; later I found out Wytheville had a bus station. Beckley was only a pickup point with no ticketing station. Drove to Charleston, WV. Station closed at 4pm but opened at 9pm. To kill 3.5 hours we ate and did laundry. After 9 hours, I got to know Daniel James very well. 7 Cokes, lots of bummed cigarettes, \$4 laundry, \$12 in tolls, \$15 in food, and a bus ticket later, I got him on a bus to Marietta, GA. I ran into at least two other sets of hiker over the next few days which were thankful I removed him from the trail as word was traveling up and down the trail about the annoying homeless guy who ate turtles, snakes and frogs [no kidding]. Next day I notified the Amish lady at the Burkes Garden general store I politely evidenced the Daniel and put him on a bus. To my surprise she said, good, thank goodness. Daniel James is a good young man not at a low point in his life but struggling. He realizes his mistakes in life. He continued to feed me BS which I called him on as we got to know each other. I was blessed to spend time with him on our little adventure. On my 3.5 hour drive back to Chestnut shelter it hit me; I left my cell phone at the shelter, didnt have my head lamp, only the clothes on my body and I was homeless myself for the next three days. I gave him our PATH card and only asked he write to give me/us an update on things.

Thurs Sept 19:

Due to rain and fog the whole time I did not strain or caulk anything. Minor work around the shelter. 10am until 5pm Drizzly rain all day. Dwight Levi assisted me with digging water drainage problems between meadow and the shelter. Most of the problems are from the ATV ruts that can't be repaired. Dwight did a good job with a passable walking lane and multiple drainage points. Its much improved with lots of work left to do. Spring on jeep trail near little pond is dry. Spring at Walker flowing.

Will Merritt and my father, David Fishback, assisted me with cutting tree posts, digging holes and putting 8 of 10 posts in the ground. It was very foggy and drizzly that day so we were able to space out the posts very nicely based on line of sight.

Fri Sept 20:

David Fishback and I finished planting the last two posts in the ground. We attached wooden white blazes on each side of the 10 posts. In the fog the white blazes show up nicely. We walked down to the big pond, trimming as we went. Cleaned out the spring at the big pond. Middle meadow could use one maybe two posts at most.

Sat Sept 21:

Assisted Tom Dillon with his four mile section between 601 and 670. We worked well as a team. We removed at least 8-10 felled trees across the trail before running out of fuel.

Steven Fishback.

From: Tom Dillon

Subject: September-21st Trail Report. VA-601 to VA-670.

Steven Fishback, Jenny Williams and I spent about five drizzly hours Saturday cutting downed trees off the 3.9 miles of trail from Va. 601 down to the South Holston River. We also removed an unauthorized campsite on the trail north of the old railroad right-of-way. There is still one more campsite in that area, but it appears to be in OK condition.

There turned out to be some eight to 10 downed trees on the section, more than we had expected. We had a chain saw (Steven), big bow saw and loppers, and we cut them all, but ran out of gas and had to finish the last one with the bow saw. That last one was a 16-to-18-inch tree at waist height across the railroad right-of-way. Its now on the ground and can be stepped over.

It was drizzly or misty throughout the day, but we fortunately finished before the heavier rain in the late afternoon. One note: Wearing a hard hat is not only safer, it also keeps your head drier when its raining. Call me a convert.

Kudos also to the Virginia DOT. Highway 601 over Pugh Mountain had been in such terrible shape last month that it was hard to drive. I called the Marion office of VDOT about 10 days ago asking if they could do anything about it. By this past weekend, they had scraped it and added more gravel and the gullies had all disappeared. So thanks to them and all you Virginia taxpayers.

It was a good workday, though we did seem to rattle around the Sugar Grove work camp with only three people staying there.

Tom Dillon.

From: Marcia Hudson Cope

Subject: September-21st PATH club outing.

Of course, as you predicted, it rained yet again for a PATH event; still it was a wonderful weekend! Abby Duncan and her mother Gwen, both Girl Scouts, plus the rest of her family came Friday Night and Abby gave her presentation; we were all impressed. She hopes to schedule "**Great Kids; Great Out-Doors**" during our April Volunteer Weekend; that will depend on the Town of Wytheville... but she is requesting the third Saturday and all present pledged support!

We had a camp-fire that night [of course] and after I was in bed Zanna stayed up late talking with John Shaffner. The next morning as I was walking out the front door.... here came Katie up the ramp!!! I had no idea that John had stayed up with Zanna to greet Katie when she arrived from Western Carolina. Diana had gone to JMU to see Emily but Steve joined us and soon he, Barry, Betsy and John were on their way down to the VA-615 trail-heads.

And it rained and rained and rained... all day long until after everyone was off the trail. In the afternoon our second set of Girl Scouts, mother and daughter, joined us. Besides being a Girl Scout Leader, Becky is also a TTEC teacher;

yeswe had much to discuss! Grace and Lydia had met last year at SummerFest [2012] when she and the Girl Scouts [Becky, Lydia, and Courtney] climbed to Chestnut Ridge; they too had much to talk about with it being over a year since they had last seen each other. Grace took care that it wouldn't be that long again by joining Girl Scouts and Becky joined PATH... a family membership that includes Lydia and Tim.

With the rain having finally stopped, Barry and John built a great fire in the very soggy fire-ring while Steve went back to the ranch to feed. Upon his return, he reported that Sam Mabe's son Seth [from Michigan] was not coming and Sam just couldn't bear to leave him on the last evening of his visit; we understood! Meanwhile Betsy, en route to W-S, had departed to attend the second Pot-luck held at Stony Fork and also to share Abby's proposal with the group on the other side of Walker Mountain; and my daughters decided to serve the meal on the back porch ...they didn't believe the rain was over until they saw stars over the camp-fire!

Oh we were jam-packed onto that porch but it was wonderful fun! They embarrassed me with gifts... which should have been given later ...but the little girls were already getting tired. Later, around the camp-fire, we remembered that our dear friend Bill Medlin had died eleven years ago on this day; yes, I think of that every year as he died on my birthday. We all stayed up waaaay too late but we were having so much fun; I do wish you could have been there... truly Steve was in full 'Story-Teller' form and kept us entertained for hours!

On Sunday morning Barry drew Katie a map as she had gotten lost three times on the way up from Sylva, turning a four hour drive into closer to eight hours! He also drew a map of the Trail Boss Loop Trail for AGATE before he and John were off to take tools to the shed in Bland. I kept one pair of PATH loppers and Betsy still has the First-Aid Kit in her pack... but I will get these things to their rightful places in time. I might be an 'old-girl' now but I do plan to be around for awhile yet... hopefully for a long while yet!!!
Marcia

From: Kay Laffoon

Subject: September-21st. Trail Report. VA-601 to Partnership shelter.

We enjoyed our time together even though we were totally soaked after 5 hours in the downpour. All trees down and moved off the trail . We all felt empowered after clearing the trees! That big one was a hoot working on it. Abbey, the high school girl, loved the time out there and was a trooper ...no complaints and loved the work...we are ready for more !!!

Thanks to Sylvia and Janet for guiding us and working so hard to help us! No mishaps and tools are back in their rightful place and clean!

We all even did the Creeper trail on Sunday...big fun time!

Kay Laffoon.

From: Herb MacDonald

Subject: September-21st Trail Report. VA-615 to Jenkins shelter.

Chris Bracknell, Andrew Jones, David John and I met at 8:30 am at the 615 trail head. We hiked South in to the Jenkins Shelter (5 miles) in the fog and sporadic rain. We had the new one man cross cut saw recently purchased by the club with us and found at least a half a dozen old & recent blow downs to cut on the way in. It cuts really good in both directions, but it is still hard work, not quite as bad as a bow saw.

We met two older men section hikers going North, who said the PATH section was really a pleasure hiking, compared to some they had hiked. There was also a group of men training dogs to hunt bears. They went into the area on the low water trail and according to the hikers were running bears near the shelter, we saw five of the dogs with radio collars.

When we arrived at the shelter the rain was more persistent. We switched the privy seat to the other end of the foundation and replaced the Philips head screws with Hex head lag bolts. I also mounted the new LNT sign on the front of the shelter. Chris carried out the broken garden fork used at the privy to put a new metal shaft and handle on it, to bring it back at another time. There was no mention of bear encounters in the log for the last two months. There were two new logs, the one I brought in in July from PATH and another someone else dropped off.

Andrew and David lopped in a steady rain from the shelter to the top of the ridge. We all slogged out in a down pour, but no lightening. This gave me a chance to see that the trail in heavy rain, for the most part it was draining well. There were only a few places with deep trail puddles.

By the time we all were done we had put in a hard 6 hours (not including 2 hours of travel time) and were soaked to the skin. We did accomplish many tasks on wet day, thanks to Andrew, David and Chris.

Chris and I went to the Bland tool shed and hung a wet rock net, returned tools and cleaned and oiled the new saw. I left the new one man saw at Bland (also the 2 Forest Service log carriers) at Bland. I returned a String Trimmer, harness, gas bottle and the new two man cross cut saw to the Sugar Grove Tool shed.
Herb.

From: Barry Hester

Subject: September-21st Trail Report. VA-615 north & return via Trail Boss Trail.

We got a lot accomplished Saturday, even though it rained all day.

We lopped the rhododendron near RT. 615, and cut a few small blow downs with the bow saw.

Hiked up A.T. & back down the Tail Boss. Everything looks good. Also met some South Bounders, they said the trail was in great shape to U.S. 52.

Names from my work crew, Sept. 21, 2013,

Barry Hester

Andrew Jones

Margaret Wainwright

Dan Tito

Betsy Truscott

Steve Yonts & Mr. Dalton

John Shaffner

Also two non members, which I'm sending you the release form through the mail.

Their Names are,

Ken Jahns & Haley Jahns

Thanks,

Barry Hester (ZORCOFF)

From: Walt Davis

Subject: Sept-21st Trail Report. I-81 to VA-617. & Pot-Luck dinner report.

On Saturday I trimmed from VA-617 to Davis Path Cemetery and the puncheons with a sling blade while Charlene

lopped and pruned (5 hours). On Monday I trimmed from I-81 to the puncheons with a sling blade while Charlene lopped and pruned (3 hours). We also picked up trash at the I-81 and 617 trail heads, although there was very little. The Emrey's had cleaned both trail heads last month.

The Stony Fork potluck was attended by the following 10 PATH members: Martha & David Emrey, Margaret Wainwright, David John, Betsy Truscott, David Faucette, Sylvia Swain, Janet Gibbons, Charlene and me. There was an abundance of delicious food. Because of rain the food was set up inside the cabin and we ate on the porch. Unfortunately, it was too wet for a campfire.

Walt.

From: Martha Emrey

Subject: September-21st Trail Report.

David and I hiked south from Rte 11, Groseclose, lopping and hedge shearing across RR tracks and bridge. Boardwalk b4 tracks grown over. Really a weed eating job, but since trail was closed over, we trimmed one side with shears. Glad we did. After checking trailheads N of I-81, we came across 2 sections hikers, a couple from PA, completing at our stile on Rte 617 their 24 year section hike. They came through that section after we trimmed. Celebrated with them and took their finish photo. ***They told us there are 2 holes in the middle of the trail, just a little south of the RR tracks/bridge . . . yellow jacket nests.***

Picked up a little trash @ 622 and a couple of pieces @ 16 trailheads. Met a father/son southbound team crossing 16. Stopped in Visitor's Center; they gave us a flyer for their 9/28 celebration, and we see PATH is leading a 2 mile hike. Good exposure. Kudos Chris Bracknell for doing PR and leading hikes.

Visited with Jonan Repass. Then good potluck with lots of excellent food and conversation. A good, though wet, weekend.

Martha (and David) Emrey

From: Mark Stanley

Subject: September trail report. Poor Valley to Pond on Chestnut Ridge.

I lopped today on my section from Poor Valley (222) to the pond. Lots of growth this summer but all clear now. Exhausted...

Mark.

From: Sylvia Swain

Subject: Trail Report Sept-28, 2013. VA-622 north.

Janet & I left the Celebrate Public Lands program about 1 pm and worked on my section of trail for about 4 hrs.

We used swing blades and loppers to cut back on the sides of the trail.

Sylvia