

PATH WAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 58, No. 2

Summer 2022



The restored Konnarock School, once home of the ATC Konnarock Crew.

A Staple of Konnarock Gets Reborn

By Tom Dillon

It had been many years since ATC's Konnarock Crew worked out of the old school at Konnarock, Va., that had supplied its name. And the old school had suffered in the meantime, to the tune of \$2.5 million in repair costs. You only needed to see the buckled floors several years ago to know that.

But in one of the happy stories from southwest Virginia in recent years, that work is now being done. And the school was brought back to life on Mothers' Day weekend when it hosted the 48th Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally, a gathering of nature lovers and students and environmentalists from across the region. It was a weekend of workshops, hikes and seminars that was back at its original location for the first time in 35 years.

The weekend focused on wetland recovery, with an opening lecture by Tom Biebighauser, a wetland ecologist who has worked with the school, and an all-day workshop the next day. But more important was the fact that it took place at all, and that was thanks to the

tireless work over the past 14 years by the Blue Ridge Discovery Center, a nature center, camp and research organization that will make the school its home.

The Discovery Center was founded in 2008 by Aaron Floyd and other nature lovers from southwest Virginia, and it has run a herculean fund-raising drive during the last decade to get the money for restoration of the school – a former Lutheran girls school built in 1925-- and other amenities that will be needed. Money has come from the Appalachian Regional Commission, Virginia Main Street and others, including many individual and corporate donors.

And the center is attracting attention. It has worked with the Mount Rogers AT Club, whose members led a Whitetop Mountain hike during the weekend. It has worked with PATH and the ATC to improve habitat for golden-winged warblers along the AT. The species has declined in recent years, but shrubby areas like the Tilson Farmstead on PATH's AT section could help bring it back.

And the center is ready and willing to work with other AT clubs, Floyd said, as well as with the Conservancy itself. "There are more service-oriented things we could be doing," he said.

Floyd is a Grayson County native and a 2004 architecture graduate of Virginia Tech who worked in that field for 10 years, including a stretch at the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum in Tucson, Ariz. It was there that he realized what is possible with such centers, and he brought his ideas with him when he became the Discovery Center's executive director in 2014.

He envisions the Discovery Center becoming something like the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, near Townsend, Tenn., with research and residential programs "connecting people with nature," as Tremont puts it. The Blue Ridge Discovery Center is already offering a selection of summer camps and school programs covering ornithology, primitive skills, fly fishing and other subjects. This year's camp offerings start next month.

As for the naturalist rally, field trips this year covered bird study, mammals, fly casting, a hike to Mount Rogers, stream ecology, benefits of controlled burns, nature photography, high elevation plants and other subjects. One trip was to the site of the vanished lumber town of Fairwood, which was important in the early timber industry on Mount Rogers.

It was a rainy weekend, which dampened field trips and canceled evening astronomy sessions, but the naturalist rally still attracted more than 100 people, and it featured a good bit of reminiscing about the past. The girls' school dates from a time when Konnarock was a railroad and lumber town, and it helped many mountain people rise from poverty. "It really changed the lives of a lot of young ladies," Floyd told a gathering Friday evening.

There is much left to do to get the Discovery Center where its operators want it to be, noted board president Linda Hylander – a retired neuroscience professor at the University of North Carolina – during a tour of the campus Saturday afternoon. The tour included a visitors center under construction, a future biological field station (currently a carpentry shop), and more.

But both she and Floyd see abundant hope for the future. What's happening at the center is no less than "bringing the legacy of education back to life," Floyd said Friday evening.



Nancy Adamson

A night-time salamander hunt

2022 Calendar (so far)

June 17-21, 2022 **PATH Summerfest** **Stony Fork/Tilson Meadow**
We're planning to replace the often-overgrown railroad ties along the North Fork of the Holston River with a slightly elevated bog bridge in the same location. We'll be working jointly with the Konnarock Crew.

July 15-17, 2022 **July Work Weekend** **Stony Fork, Va.**
General trail maintenance, hopefully with a potluck Saturday night at the Stony Fork Campground. Trail boss Jim Houck is looking for leaders for this and other late season work weekends.

August 5-8, 2022 **A.T. Vista** **New Paltz, N.Y.**
This is a weekend of hikes, workshops, excursions and entertainment planned to replace the late lamented ATC Biennials. It's at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. More info at www.atvista.org. They are seeking volunteers.



August 19-21, 2022 **August Work Weekend** **Stony Fork, Va.**
General trail maintenance, hopefully with a potluck Saturday night at the Stony Fork Campground. Trail boss Jim Houck is looking for leaders for this and other late season work weekends. He's planning to be out west.

September 16-18, 2022 **September Work Weekend** **TBA**
General trail maintenance, hopefully with a potluck Saturday night. Trail boss Jim Houck is looking for leaders for this and other late season work weekends. He's planning to be out west.

October 14-16, 2022 **October Work Weekend** **Sugar Grove, Va.**
General trail maintenance, hopefully with a potluck Saturday night at the Sugar Grove work center. Trail boss Jim Houck is looking for leaders for this and other late season work weekends.

November 19, 2022 **PATH Annual Meeting** **TBA**
The PATH Annual Meeting is usually held on the third Saturday of November somewhere in the club's Virginia and North Carolina membership area. Stay tuned. This happened last year by Zoom.

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 AUGUST 20, 2022. Web site: www.path-at.org. Or for info: PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com. Or see our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/

Tom Dillon, editor (tdillon27127@earthlink.net) or (336) 725-2760

New Group seeks Glade Mountain Access

By Bill Tanger

As some of you are aware, access to Forest Road 86 from Va. 686 was closed by a landowner who claims a 0.3-mile section was never a public road. This makes access to the AT in the area a real problem.

It also effectively cuts off 4,400 acres of the national forest from the public. That includes hikers, hunters, fishers, birders, campers, etc.

As a result, a group has been formed to try to re-open access to FR 86 from county road 686 (Nicks Creek Road). That group is Friends of Glade Mountain.

We have filed suit against the landowner as we claim the road is public by prescriptive easement. The road has been used by the public and maintained by VDOT for over 20 years, which qualifies under the code.

Friends is reaching out to trail users to join our coalition and to support a re-opening of Glade Mountain Road to the public. Your support will help convince Smyth County of the importance and value of access to the AT, the national forest and public hiking, hunting and camping lands.

If you agree with our goals please send your name, address and email information to Friends of Glade Mountain, 257 Dancing Tree Lane, Hollins Va. 24019.

We have no dues or obligations, but donations would always be wonderful.

Thanks for listening.

Bill Tanger is a PATH member and secretary of Friends of Glade Mountain. As of mid-April, only three PATH members besides him had joined his group. More are welcome. Info is available from Bill at riverdancer1943@gmail.com or at (540) 266-0237.

Hostels

Ron Hudnell has provided this list of hostels along our section of the Appalachian Trail. It's drawn from information put together by The Trek online newsletter, which has a list of hostels for the entire trail. Ron cautions, however, that this may not be complete, since hostels on the north side of Garden Mountain (Burke's Garden) "seem to be in constant flux." Always call ahead for information. Many of these have a limited season.

Troutdale Church Hostel

Address: 62 Sapphire Lane, Troutdale, VA 24378

Phone: 276-677-4092; 276-677-4278

Mile: 520.2, 2.6 miles east of trail crossing at Dickey Gap (VA 650)

Price Range: Donation-based

Notes: Hostel housed in a church with microwave and shower. Tenting available. No mail drops. No pets.

Long Neck Lair

Address: 7530 Lee Hwy, Rural Retreat, VA 24368

Phone: 276-698 2079

Mile: 545.7, 0.4 miles east of trail crossing at VA 683

Price Range: \$35 bunk, \$90 private room, \$25 tenting

Notes: AT bunkhouse on an alpaca farm. Can meet alpacas. Call ahead. Private and semi-private rooms available, breakfast included with stay.

Relax Inn

Address: 7253 Lee Highway, Rural Retreat, VA 24368

Phone: 276-783-5811; 276-783-1855

Mile: 545.7, just west of trail crossing at VA 683, US 11

Price Range: \$50 room, extra \$5 for each additional person

Notes: Will hold mail for up to 1 month. Government-issued ID required for check-in.

Quarter Way Inn

Address: 4083 Old Rich Valley Rd, Ceres VA, 24318

Phone: 276-522-4603

Mile: 555.8, 0.3 miles west of trail crossing at VA 610

Price Range: \$33 bunk, \$18 tenting

Notes: \$12 breakfast. Stay includes shower, laundry, loaner clothes, towel, and coffee. Resupply, shuttle to store, and slackpacking available.

Bear Garden Hiker Hostel

Address: 306 West Blue Grass Trail, Ceres, Virginia 24318

Phone: 248-249-1951

Mile: 558.2, 100 yards east of trail crossing at VA 42

Price Range: \$20 bunk, \$100 small house (can sleep up to 6)

Notes: Stay includes cold breakfast, shower, WiFi, microwave, fridge, and privy. \$5 laundry.

Appalachian Dreamer Hiker Hostel

Address: 502 Dotson Ridge Rd (Hwy 619), Ceres, VA 24318

Phone: 276-970-2834

Mile: 558.2, 2.8 miles west of trail crossing at VA 42

Price Range: \$25 donation requested

Notes: Reservation required, call in advance. 2 night max stay. Donation-based hostel on a working farm with farm animals! No drugs/alcohol. No hikers under 18 (unless with parent). Photo ID required for stay. Breakfast and laundry included with stay.

Mountain Garden Hostel

Address: 1404 Banks Ridge Rd, Tazewell, VA 24651

Phone: 423-762-2853; 603-455-5160

Mile: 576, 5.2 miles west of trail crossing at VA 623

Pricing: \$15-\$30 tenting and bunks, \$50 private room

Notes: Hard to find; call for shuttle: \$3 one-way/\$5-\$7.50 round-trip. Kitchen use and fuel available.

Lickskillet Hostel

Address: 35 Price Ridge Road, Bland, VA 24315

Phone: 276-779-5447

Mile: 604.9, 0.6 miles east of trail crossing at Lickskillet Hollow

Price Range: Donation-based

Notes: Church-owned hostel, shuttle runs to Bland. Mail drops available for guests.

Weary Feet Hostel

Address: 13152 E Bluegrass Trail, Bland, VA 24315

Phone: 276-617-8434 (call/text), 276-688-0364 (call only)

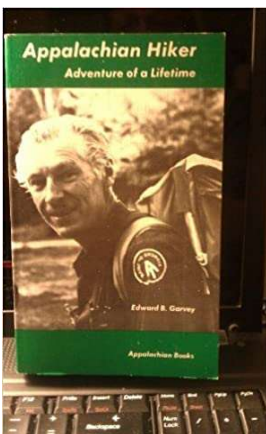
Mile: 610.2, 0.5 miles east of trail crossing at VA 606

Price Range: \$15 outdoor bunkhouse, \$25 indoor bunkhouse, \$10 tenting

Notes: Shower included with stay. Laundry \$5. Laundry and shower \$8 for non-guests. Dinner available for \$12, breakfast for \$8.

PATH's Past: Remembering Killinger Creek

Today's PATHers have mostly never heard of the Killinger Creek Shelter. But it existed, way back. Here is a PATH historical moment from Paul Clayton.



This shelter was located at the south side of the crossing of Forest Service Road 86. It was built in 1961 by the Forest Service to accommodate six. It had wooden walls and floor and a shake roof. There were no bunks. A November 1967 ATC Shelter Report reveals the usual axe, fire rake and broom, fireplace with grate, latrine and refuse pit. The piped spring, referred to in a least one document as a “fountain,” had been removed the previous summer as it did not meet State of Virginia standards for purity, leaving a stream 300 feet to the north as the water source.

Because of its proximity to the road, Killinger Creek Shelter was subject to misuse. As early as 1968 there were reports of serious vandalism and the club was proposing that it be moved. It was to be many years, though, before this happened. When a family set up housekeeping there, the Forest Service agreed that the time had come to go forward with the planned Glade Mountain Shelter. After Glade Mountain, today's Chatfield Shelter, was completed (apparently using materials from Killinger Creek – ed.), the remnants of the old shelter were burned. The original location is still apparent at the FS 86 crossing.

For all the problems, Killinger Creek Shelter left a lot of good memories. It also gained a place in AT history for its role in Ed Garvey's book "Appalachian Hiker." When Garvey arrived at Killinger Creek Shelter during his 1970 through-hike, he was dismayed to find six or seven cars parked nearby and a huge crowd of people at the shelter. It turned out to be a big group of truck drivers and their families from Marion having a picnic. Garvey was immediately welcomed into the group and fed. Shortly after dark, the families cleaned up the area and departed.

It appears that on occasion during the 1960s, PATH crews used to meet at Killinger Creek Shelter for Saturday afternoon picnics. Some club members would stay at the shelter preparing a meal to feed the crews as they came off the trail. From the volume of correspondence dealing in one way or another with Killinger Creek Shelter, it is apparent that this now-forgotten shelter was once an important part of PATH.

Bits and Pieces

■ **Remembering Walt:** Ann Ramsey, Charles Davis and wife Kristin, and Susan Kopynec and husband Bo sent a contribution to PATH recently with this note: “Please accept this contribution to PATH in memory of our beloved father/father-in-law, **Walter Rubin Davis**. Dad had a deep love of service to others and worked for years in many roles to support PATH, doing work with other who became dear friends, which meant a great deal to him and brought him much joy.”

Many thanks to others who have donated in memory of Walt. He, as well as his widow **Charlene**, were rock-solid supporters of PATH for a long time. Condolences can be sent to Charlene at 213 Brompton Court, Burlington, N.C. 27215.



■ **From the March worktrip:** PATH leaders and Forest Service officials walked the route and then approved going ahead with a **proposed trail relocation** just north of Walker Gap, eliminating a PUD (pointless up-and-down) in the first mile of the existing Appalachian Trail. The National Environmental Policy Act review should be complete and work should be able to begin in three years. Some GIS work was done on the relocation.

■ **Ed Martin** reported in April that the safety rope they put up for the **Lick Creek ford**, where a damaged bridge was removed, “has had the hardware for the pulley system, carabiners and locking shackles, stolen again! For the third time!” The water did not register on the gauge but was 10 inches deep in the middle of the ford. He and four others made the trip, also sawing out blowdowns. They were planning to put up another rope in May.

■ President **Betsy Truscott** reports that PATH was proudly represented at Damascus Trail Days, the second weekend in May, by her and **Trudy Whitney**, thru hiker 1990. They each spent 4 hours on the road and 15 hours at the booth.

■ Sorry we don't have a picture of PATH's wonderful **new yellow t-shirt**, but you can both see and order it, short or long sleeve or hoodie, at this link. Thanks to **Rich Freeman, Ron Hudnell** and **Ed Martin** for putting this project together. Here's the link:

<https://mommas-custom-tees-llc.square.site/product/PATHVolunteer/262>

PATH Officers

President

Betsy Truscott, 5021 Stockdale Place
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104
(335) 602-6903
btrus@infionline.net

Vice President

Chris Bracknell, 1137 Gleaves Road,
Ivanhoe, Va. 24350
(276) 621-5528
wbracknell@juno.com

Secretary

Hunt McKinnon, 2201 Sir Walter Court,
Greenville, N.C. 27858 (252) 916-3220
Mckinnonw@ecu.edu

Treasurer

David Faucette, 1105 Hunting Ridge Road,
Raleigh, N.C. 27615 (919) 848-3811
dfaucette1948@gmail.com

Want to Join?



We are working on the Trail in 2022, 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 _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

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 _____

Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers
P.O. Box 4423
Greensboro, N.C. 27404
Address correction requested

