

PATH AWAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 59, No. 3

Autumn 2023

A PATH Summerfest to Remember

“Stones must be of sufficient size that they are not dislodged under the weight of heavily laden backpackers or swept away by high water or ice.”

--Appalachian Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance manual, P. 109

“If one person can carry it, it’s not big enough.”

--A trail (and ford) builders’ maxim

A few cuss words were probably uttered when the several dozen rock slabs that make up the new crossing of Phillippi Branch, just north of the Settlers’ Museum of Southwest Virginia, were being moved into place during June’s PATH Summerfest.

But they were undoubtedly justifiable. It’s safe to say we went far beyond just merely obeying those two rules above. We obeyed them IN SPADES! Or maybe PULASKIS.



Those rock slabs are three feet wide by 18 inches deep and six inches thick. They weigh about 300 pounds apiece, according to Konnarock Crew leader Jerry Kyle. It took six people to move each one using PATH rock-hauling cargo nets. Most of those moves involved trudging through the creek and then up a muddy bank.

When it came time to split a few of the slabs, the job involved a rock chisel and a small sledgehammer going tap ... tap ... tap – for a long time. The first one – before a rock drill arrived on scene – took 90 minutes. When the slab finally broke in two, there was a big cheer. (See Jerry scribing a stone at left.)

And that’s only a glimpse of what Summerfest ’23 looked like. “We had a great time!” organizer Ron Hudnell exclaimed afterward.

This year’s Summerfest operated out of the Settlers’ Museum pavilion, a good headquarters, and nearly everyone agreed it was a success. Besides the new creek crossing, we repaired nearby trail tread, replaced a damaged culvert on the museum property and repaired fences, along with other trail work. And it was appreciated.

“The culvert is a great improvement,” museum director David Slough said in an email afterward, “and the post and rail fences look so much better.”

A total of 28 PATH members worked on Summerfest ’23, and we also had four outside volunteers. One of those was Brett Phillippi, whose grandparents once owned the farm that is now the Settlers’ Museum. In all, workers put in 721 hours.



Here's the crew on Saturday with the finished crossing -- or half of it, anyway. There's another climb up the near side of the branch, where the photographer is standing.

Planning for the week was by Ron, Chris Bracknell and Ed Martin, while Bryan Thompson, Ed Martin, David Atkinson and Marcia Pencola led individual project teams. Alan Lawrence and Joe Levsen oversaw the kitchen, including the barbecue dinner Friday night.

Our ATC and Forest Service partners provided materials and assistance (including the backhoe and operator Evan Blevins). And Jenn Whiteis contributed photography, as well as a memorable comment on splitting creekside rocks using a big sledgehammer: "I could give up my Y membership if I could do this every day!" A lot of us probably felt like that.

President David Atkinson messaged afterwards: "A great big thank you to all the PATH volunteers who provided the muscle to get these projects completed on time! Be proud!"

For anyone who wasn't there the entire time, here is Ron Hudnell's timeline of the entire Summerfest. Some photos accompany this article, and a folder of all 80 photos can be seen at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1f2l8l324-w-0a1lLycMdrQ_T6MquoVQ-?usp=sharing.

Wednesday, June 14th – Moved tools and equipment from Sugar Grove; took Summerfest promo flyers around Marion, Atkins, and Rural Retreat; put up tents; super bad storm Wednesday night!

Thursday, June 15th – Waited (and waited) for materials and backhoe from Forest Service; shifted projects from Friday to Thursday; materials and equipment arrived late in the day; great meals by Alan Lawrence and Joe Levsen with Ann Ramsey and Marcia Cope assisting. Brett Phillippi (grandson of original farm owner) was with us. See picture at right.



More Thursday, June 15th – Some work began on the culvert project and removal of the wood bridge and (installation of) rock steps, as much as could be done; Marcia Pencola began work on repairing the fence around the Settler's Museum; Friday work on Chris Bracknell's section (water bars and check dams) was moved to Thursday.

Friday, June 16th – Work continued on the rock steps and the culvert, which was completed; Ed & Julia Ritterbusch worked on their section; Paul Haag and Karl Kunkel worked on their section; Steven Fishback and his father worked on the Chestnut privy; Lynn Wolf played and sang at breakfast; A new PATH shirt was discovered.

Saturday, June 17th – New rock step bridge and steps were completed while Clay and Anita Britt worked on their section; supplies moved back to Sugar Grove.

Considering the History of Hiking

“Ramble On: How Hiking Became One of the Most Popular Outdoor Activities in the World” by Jeffrey J. Doran. Second Edition, 2023. Printed by CreateSpace, an Amazon.com Company, Charleston, S.C. 277 pages, \$18.95 (trade paperback)

Reviewed by Karl Kunkel

Hikers of all levels — whether they be long-distance backpackers or Sunday afternoon day-hikers — have probably spent some quiet time along a trail, wondering about the history of this pursuit they have embraced.

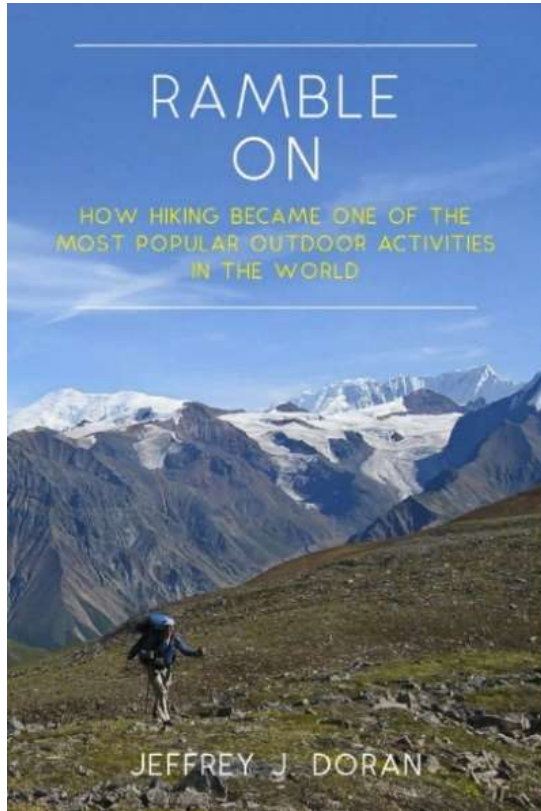
The author's heavily researched book offers a solid springboard for the curious. Thanks to his detailed history, a reader can branch out into any number of avenues.

He provides a detailed overview of the evolution of hiking, international trail systems, the evolution of hiking equipment and attire, and profiles of some pioneers who made all of today's world of hiking possible.

The depth of detail he provides is almost overwhelming. But readers needing even more detail can refer to the extensive bibliography, endnotes, and index information used in his research. This particular review copy devoted 30 pages to these sources.

Within these covers, the author touches on the possible origins of “tramping,” as this sport became known, the development of women's hiking attire — from long dresses to pants — and the increasing challenges of the risk of overuse of our natural resources.

The first hikers, loosely defined, were foragers and traders, exchanging goods with neighboring communities. But the concept broadened to include philosophical pursuits, as Henry David Thoreau embraced nature through simple living and his extensive exploration, by foot, of the mountains of western Massachusetts and the Northeast.



The Industrial Revolution is viewed as a catalyst for an interest in hiking, as people sought an escape from the stresses of a fast-paced environment of factories, noise, and pollution.

The Appalachian Trail gets ample attention. Influential people who molded the AT into what it is today are profiled. Earl Shaffer, the first person to thru-hike the AT, had used the trail and its natural surroundings as a therapeutic aid to help him heal from the negative psychological effects of World War II. Even today, the AT serves as a cushion for those dealing with the post-traumatic effects of military service.

The first woman to thru-hike the AT — Emma “Grandma” Gatewood — had hit the trail at age 67 with the barest of essentials as a means for healing herself from the devastating effects of an abusive 34-year marriage.

Another beneficiary of the hiking experience was former U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. His autobiography “Of Men and Mountains” included an account of his hiking in the Pacific Northwest to build up his physical stamina

following debilitating infantile paralysis. It was the mountains and his hiking that saved him. He later became the 14th person to join the AT’s 2,000-miler club.

This review copy did not offer much biographical information on the author. But a web search described him as a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, now living in eastern Tennessee. He owns an online hiking trail guide business for hikers interested in exploring some of our western national parks, including Grand Teton National Park and Glacier National Park. HikingGlacier.com is a good place to start.

This history offers much food for thought for those interested in uncovering the many strands of a sport — and a passion — that are intricately woven into our culture.

Bits and Pieces

■ **THANKS, PAUL:** If you were at Summerfest in 2022, you remember the huge Friday storm that destroyed Konnarock’s tent and ripped up a bunch of grommets in PATH’S big white tarp. We’re happy to report that sailor (and sail restorer and PATH historian) **Paul Clayton** has recently repaired the tarp. Paul reported 15 hours work to timekeeper **Michele Nester**. His summary: “I installed gussets over 15 ripped-out grommets and replaced the grommets, and sistered a few grommets that looked weak but hadn’t ripped out yet.”

■ **SUGAR GROVE TELEPHONE:** If you're staying at Sugar Grove, remember there is no cell phone service there. Some people have been able to get out at the Mount Rogers NRA headquarters at the top of the mountain. The **EMERGENCY number for Sugar Grove is (276) 677-4055**. This number is for emergencies only and not friendly chatter. Limit calls to less than 10 minutes and do not take phone to your pod. The Trail Maintenance Coordinator may also receive calls notifying him of cancellations or changes in individual plans. The USFS and ATC have been gracious enough to provide this phone and internet access 365 days of the year.



■ **BEAR SIGNS:** What do you think about posting these signs at PATH shelters? This is one of several recently passed around by **Ron Hudnell** as a way to keep hikers aware of bear issues along our section of trail. And make no mistake, our ursine friends are becoming more frequent. Some campgrounds on both the trail and the Blue Ridge Parkway have been closed this year because of bear interactions, and it's only been a few weeks since a bear visited overnights at Knot Maul Shelter. The hiker said it "made for an uneasy sleep." No bears at Summerfest yet – though we may have missed one this year by only a day. Maybe we scared it away.

■ **GLADE MOUNTAIN ROAD:** We're still on hold in that controversy about **ACCESS TO GLADE MOUNTAIN** via Va. 86, which an adjacent landowner has been trying to close. PATH member

Bill Tanger says his **Friends of Glade Mountain** group has a conference call set with the judge on Aug. 23, "asking for a summary judgment in our favor." Assuming it goes to trial, Bill says, they have 10 retired VDOT workers and 20 others lined up to testify that they have either maintained or used the road for decades. "So we feel pretty well prepared," he said. In the meantime, the PATH board has approved and sent a \$250 grant to Friends of Glade Mountain to help with legal expenses.

■ **DEER HUNTING SEASONS:** Seasons in our part of Virginia this fall (Smyth, Wythe and Bland counties) are as follows: Archery, Oct. 1-Nov. 18 and Dec. 4-Jan. 7; Muzzleloader, Nov. 5-18 and Dec. 17-Jan. 7; Firearms, Nov. 19-Dec. 3. Please remember to wear blaze orange or another bright color (like our new yellow PATH t-shirts) when you're hiking or working in the woods during these times.

■ **THE PIPELINE:** As you've probably read, West Virginia Sen. **Joe Manchin's** much discussed and cussed Mountain Valley Pipeline, which would cross under the Appalachian Trail just north of our Bland County section, in Giles County, got a pass in the federal budget deliberations earlier this spring. It's not completely clear how that happened, but the sponsors got the approval to resume work in June. Several lawsuits are still pending. We'll see what happens.



■ **NEW PRIVY WORK SHIRT!** Lots of trail maintainers think that privy work is disgusting, but it's not necessarily so. Just ask any of those who have been doing it for a few years. We need more people willing to take on this vital duty, and for that reason, PATH has a NEW PRIVY SHIRT. It's special, and it's only to be awarded to people who do privy work, like changing over the bins at our moldering privies. (Please ask a Poop Pusher for details.) This shirt is a PATH prize, the prototype of which is here modeled by **Pete Whiteis**, and it's available from the same folks you contact to order the NEW YELLOW T-SHIRT. Here is the link where you can both see and order our shirts. Do it NOW!



For both the Poop Pushers shirt and the yellow PATH shirt, it's <https://mommas-custom-tees-llc.square.site/product/PATHVolunteer/262>

■ **HELP WANTED:** This newsletter needs an assistant editor and heir apparent if it is to keep going into the indeterminate future. Please contact the editor if you're interested in the job, and we'll talk about things like how duties should be divided up, how many issues there should be and who should do what. Thanks!

2023 Calendar

August 18-19, 2023

August Work Weekend

Sugar Grove, Va.

In addition to work on individual sections, we will be repairing a bridge on Chris Bracknell's Section 15. ATC says this repair is critical and will be providing materials. We will be camping at Sugar Grove, hopefully with a potluck or meal out Saturday night. There will be a lot of late-season undergrowth to clear or weedeat on the trail.

August 18-20, 2023

Summer Naturalist Rally

Konnarock, Va.

The Mount Rogers Summer Naturalist Rally will take place out of the Blue Ridge Discovery Center. Field trips Saturday and Sunday, lodging and meals available. Topics include salamanders, wildflowers, geology, birding, snorkeling, cultural history, mammals, medicinal plants, natural history, more. Visit www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org. Or call (276) 388-3155.

September 15-16, 2023

September Work Weekend

Sugar Grove, Va.

In addition to work on individual sections, we will be cutting, drilling, and preparing materials to repair the Hunting Camp Creek bridge near Jenkins Shelter. Measurements were taken in June. The repair may be done in March 2024. We're hoping for a meal out or potluck Saturday night.

October 6-9, 2023

ALDHA Annual Gathering

Abingdon, Va.

The 41st Annual Gathering of the Appalachian Long-Distance Hikers Association will take place at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, 1 Partnership Circle, Abingdon, Va. 24210.

Saturday keynote speaker is Scott Benerofe (Aquaman), 2022 southbounder on the AT. Visit www.aldha.org/gathering.

October 18-20, 2023

Crosscut Saw Courses

Sugar Grove, Va.

Level A and B Crosscut Saw Courses have been scheduled out of the Sugar Grove volunteer work camp. For information and reservations, visit this Web address:

<https://wildernessskillsinstitute.org/sawsi/2023-crosscut-a-b-course-in-sugar-grove-virginia/>

October 20-21, 2023

October Work Weekend

Sugar Grove, Va.

In addition to work on individual sections, we will be cleaning, sharpening, marking, winterizing, and inventorying all tools and power equipment at the Sugar Grove and Bland tool sheds. We're hoping for a meal out or potluck Saturday night.

November 18, 2023

Annual Meeting

To Be Determined

We will have a Board meeting followed by the annual General Meeting, election of Board members and officers and a potluck lunch. Stay tuned to your phone and email for the location.

Milestones



■ We regret to report the passing of **Clint Kawanishi** in Reno, Nevada. Clint and wife Parthena Martin were long-time members of the club during the late 1900s, and Parthena is a former club president and ATC board member. Clint was about 88 years old. Chris Bracknell recalled sharing a tent with Clint and other PATH members on a hike of the John Muir Trail in California in 1989. Karen Worthington remembered backpacking trips that Clint used to organize and sent along

this picture from one of them. Left to right are Clint, Wayne Riley and the late Bill Medlin.

PATH Officers

President

David Atkinson, 10 Sunset Summit
Asheville, N.C. 28804
(252) 622-8040
1david.atkinson@gmail.com

Vice President

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

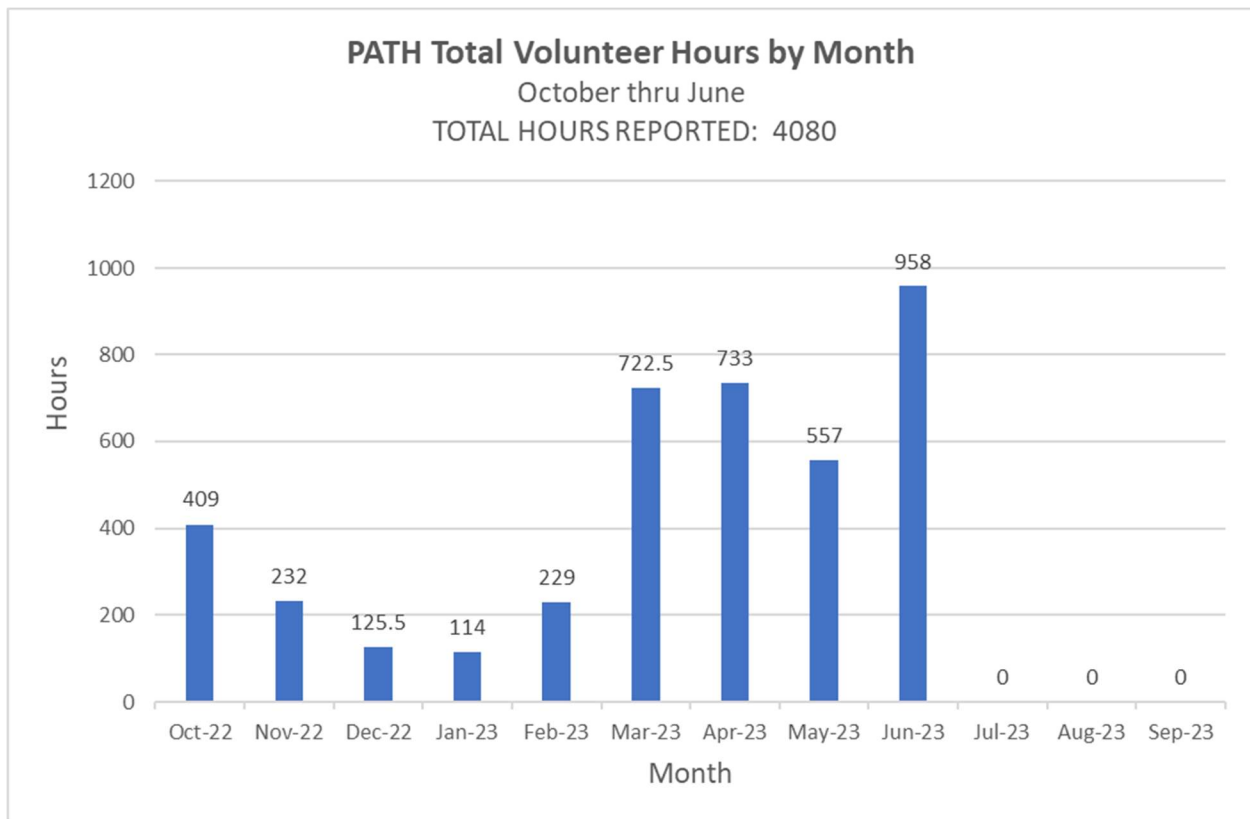
Secretary

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

By the Numbers: PATH Hours This Year



How are we doing so far this year? Here is PATH timekeeper Michele Nester's graphical commentary on what we've been doing so far this year, thru Summerfest. (July had not been entered at press time.) As expected, by far most of the hours accumulated during Summerfest in June. See the story on Page 1. It was a good time with a good project and a lot of work put in by a lot of PATH members. As President David Atkinson said, "Be proud!"

And here are a few more pictures from Summerfest. At top, six stalwart PATH workers are carrying one of those 300-pound stone slabs across Phillippi Branch on the way to creating the crossing. Counterclockwise from left front are Ron Hudnell, Junior Miller, Clay Britt, Brett Phillippi, Pete Whiteis and Ed Martin. They're each hauling 50 pounds apiece, remember. The photo is by Jerry Kyle of ATC. ... And below is another crew with the newly installed museum culvert. From left are Joe Levsen, David Atkinson, Alan Lawrence and Tom Dillon. The photo is by Ron Hudnell, who shared photo duties with Jenn Whiteis, Jerry Kyle and Clay Britt.



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. HOLIDAY DEADLINE November 20, 2023. 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

Want to Join?



We are working on the Trail in 2023, despite coronavirus, monkey pox or whatever illness you want to name. 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

