

NOV  
2025



THE POTOMAC APPALACHIAN

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## VolunteerFest 2025 - Celebrate, Cultivate, Connect!

By Marian Styles and Amber Jones



It was a lot of work, and well worth it. The camaraderie among people knowledgeable about, and curious about, the outdoors at the 2025 PATC VolunteerFest led to valuable connections and heartfelt celebrations of each other's work.

More than a dozen educational sessions held on Saturday covered wide-ranging aspects of trail work, hiking, and cabin maintenance. Session leaders shared their expertise on subjects as varied as trail treadwork, battery-powered tools, mapping, and hike-leader dilemmas. VolunteerFest attendees learned about backpacking, GPS, and invasive plants, among many other subjects.

PATC officers answered questions during a Saturday afternoon town hall, followed by a rousing happy hour and barbeque dinner. Special honors were awarded to PATC's most dedicated volunteers, while additional volunteer hours were chalked up preparing for the weekend's activities, performing administrative and logistical functions, and leading the educational sessions.

One of the greatest benefits of the gathering, besides sharing skills, was the opportunity for a diverse cadre of volunteers--of many ages and walks of life--to get re-acquainted or to meet for the first time.

The weekend offered recreation as well. Early risers on Saturday joined a sunrise hike around the Caroline Furnace property, which is surrounded by George Washington National Forest. Two longer hikes took place on Sunday, in light rain—at Seven Bends State Park and Buzzards Rock. Evening campfires also drew attendees together (see next article).

VolunteerFest 2025 was a resounding success. PATC volunteers learned new skills, met new outdoor enthusiasts, and reconnected with others. Many thanks are due to co-chairs

Iva Gillet and Jayne Mayne and all their helpers for a year's worth of effort that made it an exceptional event.

Add your pictures [VolunteerFest](#) for all to enjoy on our website.

## **VolunteerFest 2025 – The Campfire Sessions**

By Tom Moran



Perhaps nothing characterized the camaraderie present at VolunteerFest more than the gatherings around the campfire. On Friday, following a spirited game of Appalachian Trail Trivia, attendees drifted toward the Kumbaya Fire Circle. It was a crisp evening, and people drew close, many sipping beverages of choice. A small miracle happened that evening: several people experienced a phenomenon in which their cups seemingly never ran dry despite heroic effort. Alas, even the hardiest had to plan ahead for the next day, and the fire was doused by Chuck Troutman and Tom Moran at midnight.

After the barbeque on Saturday, people again drifted to the firepit, where a substantial crowd filled the benches. Many conversations were overheard, including interesting snippets such as: “A bear ransacked my privy” and “I’m going to hike every trail in Maryland State Parks by next week.”

Someone uttered the word “guitar,” and the next thing you knew a guitar appeared, whereupon the group began an enthusiastic, if lyrically challenged, run at some of Americana’s finest. Tom Moran started off on guitar, passing it along to Amber Jones. Sarah DeGennaro provided harmony – and knew more lyrics than most of us.

The chorus reached another level when Chuck Troutman added his baritone to the mix, encouraging the entire crowd to join in. Not finding a good vocal space, Tom found a harmonica in the right key and the jam was on. When the group started to slow down, Charlie Gutberlet grabbed the guitar and tore into a cover of the traditional tune “Going Down the Road Feeling Bad,” proving that the entire neck of a guitar was meant to be used. Playing in the Grateful Dead style, Charlie lit it up while Tom did his best to bend the harp

**Pencil in  
October 3, 2026  
Our next “Fest”**

notes. Eventually, the fire was doused by the Toms – Troutman and Moran – at 1:16 a.m., bringing a satisfying conclusion to the evening.

## Ridgerunner Season in Review

By Jess LaPolla



*Dan Hippe and the 2025 season Ridgerunners*

Each year, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club's (PATC) Ridgerunners patrol nearly 2,800 miles on the club's 240-mile section of the Appalachian Trail (AT), spend nearly 200 nights at one of our 25 backcountry shelters, huts, and campgrounds, and encounter over 1,000 overnight campers.

The Ridgerunners work each summer with the public, trail community, and officials along the AT to enhance the public's enjoyment of the trail and to help protect it. PATC's section of the trail extends from the southern end of Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, through Maryland, to Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Pennsylvania.

PATC strives to operate the best Ridgerunner Program on the AT. The club works closely with its partners to fund, hire, train, and support a total of six Ridgerunners assigned to one of four segments of our AT section.

Dan Hippe, PATC's Ridgerunner Coordinator, oversees the hiring, training, and supervision of our Ridgerunners each year in conjunction with PATC's Trail Patrol. "Ridgerunners are super interesting people," said Dan at the beginning of the 2025 season. "This year's crew are all accomplished long trail hikers. They've also held lots of public facing jobs and showed through the interview process that they have the skills and passion for being

ambassadors of our club on and off the trail, including a substantial number of planned public events with youth at summer camps and the general public at various events that we were plugged into in 2025."

Over the course of the 2025 season, PATC Ridgerunners patrolled a total of **2,767 miles** and had **15,462 total encounters**. Encounters include interactions with day hikers, backpackers, thru-hikers, trail runners, and campers. Ridgerunners are responsible for collecting data during their patrols, educating the public about Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and trail etiquette, cleaning up trash, blowdowns, and illegal campsites, and providing emergency assistance when required.

With thousands of people recreating along the length of the AT, Ridgerunners are an essential piece in keeping the trail clean, safe, and open. They work with park staff and other agencies, volunteers on the trail working on their own projects, and even those who come on trail to deliver trail magic. Even trail magic needs to be regulated, according to Hippe. "Unattended trail magic endangers wildlife and leaves litter and spoilage in huts and food storage boxes."



*Dan and the Ridgerunners*

This season, Dan Hippe, with the help of PATC staff and volunteers, implemented the Jr. Ridgerunner program, designed to reward members of the public, of any age, for (1) assisting a PATC Ridgerunner in their official duties, or (2) participating in a LNT game or discussion led by a PATC Ridgerunner.

Our Ridgerunners had several opportunities to engage groups in Leave No Trace (LNT) focused discussions and games toward earning a Jr. Ridgerunner Recognition and additional opportunities to talk about the AT hiking experience and what Ridgerunners do.

PATC is proud to have such dedicated and passionate Ridgerunners, all of whom have their own interesting history and who come onto the trail for different reasons.



“After finishing my thru-hike, I just really wanted to give back to trail because it had a huge impact on my life. I really wanted to stay connected with the community and continue to be a part of it.” Ridgerunner Marissa Fulton talks about her experience thru-hiking the AT and becoming a Ridgerunner on the Shenandoah section of the trail this year.

“Prior to hiking the AT, I had just kind of lost myself a little bit. Part of the reason I wanted to do the AT when I did was just to get some of my confidence back and prove to myself I can do what I set out to do.” Marissa’s time on the AT allowed her the space to grow and realize she could live a non-traditional life. This life consisted of being on trail 5 days a week, hiking shelter to shelter through SNP from end to end, which would typically take around 2-3 weeks depending on changing

schedules.

Marissa had a standout first season. She completed her patrols with enthusiasm, *Marissa Fulton "Mosey"* participated in PATC outreach events, and even had to lend her skills to a medical emergency on trail when a hiker fell and dislocated their elbow near where Marissa was camping. Marissa stabilized the arm and helped law enforcement get the injured hiker to safety.

All of PATC’s Ridgerunners had a successful season, including Maryland Ridgerunner Josh Sheets.

Josh has thru-hiked a total of around 8,500 miles since his initial thru-hike on the AT back in 2011. Since then, he has completed the Colorado Trail, the Long Trail, the PCT, the Tahoe Rim Trail, the Arizona Trail, and the Benton MacKaye Trail.

After a career in healthcare that eventually led to burnout, Josh moved to the mountains of Virginia and began looking for outdoor opportunities. As a result of meeting Dan on a trail



*Josh Sheets "Soulslosher"*

maintenance outing last winter, Josh found himself accepting the role of a Maryland Ridgerunner this season.

“Getting paid to be outside and hiking and watching the sunset at Annapolis Rock; it just never really felt like work.” For anyone who enjoys spending time in nature, this sounds like the dream.

Josh pointed out that along with getting to experience the peace and beauty of the trail, he also had thousands of positive interactions with the public. Most folks he encountered were friendly, curious, and cared about the trail.

In addition to patrolling on trail, there is a caretaking component on the Maryland section of the AT. One week Josh would patrol while the other Maryland Ridgerunner, Dillon Utter, would act as the caretaker at Annapolis Rock, rotating the following week.

From seeing PATC’s work and from his time spent as a Ridgerunner, Josh noted the sheer amount of work and coordination that goes into keeping these trails viable and open to the public. “Just being able to have a trail exist like this is pretty remarkable. All of the all the volunteer hours and coordination efforts between agencies, and the years of work to get pieces of the trail off a road or to gain land rights is incredible.”

I think many of us as hikers and backpackers can relate to this. We love to recreate in beautiful places but are often unaware of the work that goes into creating and maintaining the trails. Clearing blowdowns, building water bars, managing invasive plant species, creating more accessibility on trails, and keeping them safe and open for the public are all a part of being a volunteer for PATC and other organizations whose mission is to care for outdoor spaces.

The Ridgerunners are an essential piece of this mission. They are on the front lines, interacting with thousands of people on the trail, some of whom are brand new to hiking or recreating outdoors. The impressions they make are lasting and important.

We are beyond grateful for our incredible team of Ridgerunners. The 2025 season Ridgerunners include Marissa Fulton, Josh Sheets, Dillon Utter, Ellie Strait, Rich Jacobus, and Ray Stinson. To read more about them and to learn more about our Ridgerunner program, [check out this article](#).

## Join us for our Annual Meeting



PATC members, please join us for our annual meeting, to be held virtually on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

Volunteer Awards were announced at this year's VolunteerFest, so we will enjoy a brief meeting together to recap a great year of volunteerism, community, and outdoor fun.

We also begin to look ahead to 2026 and what the next year will bring. Be sure to tune in for club highlights on cabins, trails, and all things PATC. The meeting will be held virtually over Zoom. Register for the event and we will send you a link to the meeting the week of.

For more info and to register for free, [click here](#).

## SNP Hoodlums Host Successful Trail Maintainers Workshop

By Tom Moran

The Shenandoah National Park North District Hoodlums were again pleased to host their annual trail maintainers workshop on the weekend of September 20. While the workshop is open to any club member, the 30 available slots fill up fast. The 2025 workshop was the second effort by the Hoodlums to teach standards and practices to trail maintainers in the form of PATC's Trail Maintainer Certification program. In order to earn the certification, a set of modules must be completed in the field, as well as follow-up online and first aid courses. This workshop was designed to enable attendees



*photo by Anonymous hiker: From left - Cecil Dallas, Robert Kilby, Marie Seymour, Steve Woofert, Cindy Ardecki, Noel Freeman and Venus Foshay*

to complete the field requirements with hands-on practice and presented a clear roadmap for attendees to complete the remaining requirements at their own pace. The four field modules are Trail Safety, Managing Impacts on Trails, Invasive Species, and Blazing.

Attendees arriving Friday were able to check in, pitch their tents, and socialize around the campfire during and after dinner. Having a chance to meet other PATC members from varied backgrounds and experience is all part of the fun of the weekend, and is what keeps some coming back annually. Saturday morning they convened for breakfast, a safety briefing, and divided into crews for the day's workshop activities. Before heading out, two attendees were able to experience firsthand a park service Ranger's abilities to extract keys from locked cars. The ranger displayed great skill and effectiveness!

**Jim Fetig** and **Dave Nebhut** led a basic level crew down a section of the Elkwallow Trail, where they covered the four field modules of the course. The crew did some mud wallowing of their own, enlarging a drain field, and building a rolling grade dip in a particularly wet area of trail that had been degraded due to extreme rain in 2025. Their crew included **Mike Hritz, Edgar Howell, Anthony Senerchia, Gerard Weatherby,** and **Chris and Michelle Viggiano.**

**Wayne Limberg** and **Michael Gergely** led another basic crew over to the Traces Trail adjacent to the campground where they were able to complete the four modules. They also practiced a skill increasing in usage and popularity in SNP: making cuts on a crosscut saw, a first time handling this effective tool for nearly all. Their crew included **Julie and Tim Zimmerman, Ed Elam, Daniel Sieh, Ann Beale, and Julie Biegner.**

**Noel Freeman** and **Cindy Ardecki** led a more experienced crew down the Overall Run Trail to a very steep section of trail with a long staircase, in which some steps had been spaced too far from the next step. A heavily used trail due to its proximity to Overall Run Falls, the stairs endure a heavy load and occasionally need repairs. These steps really test the trail builder's/maintainer's abilities to ensure adherence to Sustainable, Effective, Traversable (SET principles). It required significant effort finding available rocks large enough to withstand the traffic and make solid steps meant the crew had to move rock and fill significant distances. This crew included **Cecil Dallas, Robert Kilby, Marie Seymour, Steve Woofter,** Cindy Ardecki, Noel Freeman and **Venus Foshay.**

**Justin Corddry** and **Tom Moran** led a crew of six down Overall Run/Tuscarora Trail from its start at the AT, ending at the Traces Spur trail where they finished by hiking out to the group campsite at Mathews Arm. Along the way they scraped and painted several blazes, cleaned out water bars and check dams, and replaced rotting wood in several of each. Each had the opportunity to use a swing blade to clear vegetation, and invasive

weeds were identified. The session was very hands-on as many trail structures were rehabilitated. They were joined by **Rose Moss, Marty Martin, Mike Durland, Zach Bedore, Erin Restel**, and Colin Wagner, a George Washington University graduate student working on his thesis.

After the physical effort Saturday, Sunday would bring a more relaxed pace of learning. Following coffee and a light breakfast, the group gathered under canopies for the first of two sessions. Clouds had settled in with a fine mist, yet did not delay the program. Noel Freeman, the tools manager for the SNP North District maintainers, directly addressed a recurrent issue. Maintainers had complained of not being able to start the club's gas-powered trimmers, which are sorely needed due to the sharp increase in vegetation over the past several years. The trimmers are a mix of two-stroke and four-stroke, which adds a layer of complexity to fuel and starting requirements. Noel walked through the differences between the two before demonstrating startup technique.

Tom Moran led the second session. It was a discussion of how and why crosscut saws have become an increasingly important tool for keeping trails clear of fallen trees. Powered



*photo by Ann Beale: Daniel Sieh's first s'more. That look says it all.*

tools are prohibited from being used in wilderness areas, of which large portions of SNP are defined. But while non-powered (i.e. crosscut) saws are required in these areas, they may be preferable even in areas where they are not required. The group was then led through an overview of the five steps to analyzing and executing cuts, which for bucking (as opposed to felling) is the OHLEC framework—**Objective, Hazards, Leans/binds, Escape paths, and Cut plan.**

The group then walked a short distance to a clearing in the woods where four blowdowns were conveniently available for illustration of how OHLEC could be applied. The attendees enjoyed the interactive session, each having the

opportunity to have input into the real-life scenarios. Experienced sawyer Jim Fetig provided vital additional insight into the analyses. Each then had an opportunity to make a cut with the club crosscut saw before the session concluded. By then, it was nearly time for the concluding brunch and the group returned to the dining area, having completed the workshop.

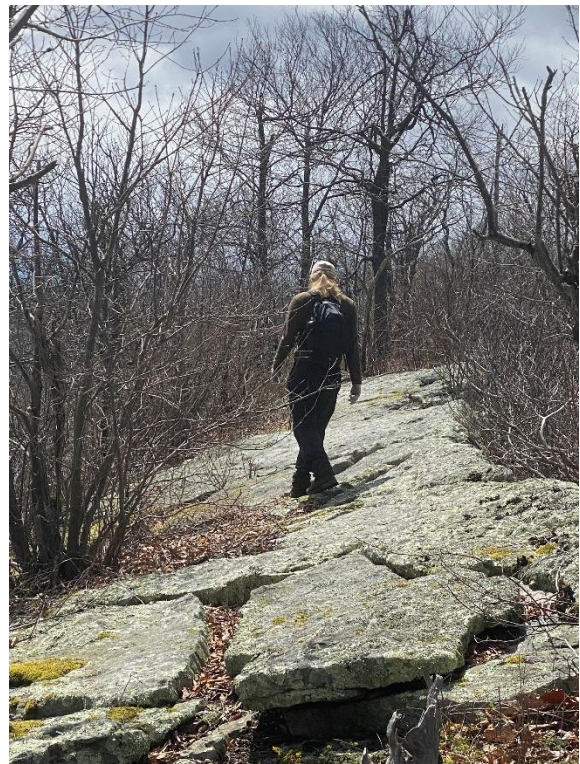
The weekend was a great success as a number of attendees completed their field requirements for being qualified for Certified Trail Maintainer recognition. All had the chance to practice new skills, as well as develop new relationships with fellow trail maintainers. Last but not least, their work had immediate positive impact – real improvements made to real trails, well beyond having just been a classroom exercise. Plans are already in the works for the 2026 workshop. Special thanks to Dave Nebhut, who planned and organized the weekend, and to **Joe Wood**, who prepared three great meals for what is a very large crew, all without the help of a formal kitchen or electric power.

## **Toughest Ridge In PA**

Article and photos by Rick Bascatow

### **Introduction**

After retiring and completing the Appalachian Trail, I was struck by the excellent maintenance performed by the PATC. When the COVID-19 pandemic brought my dream of hiking the John Muir Trail to a halt, I began looking for ways to contribute to trail upkeep. Although I found no opportunities on the Appalachian Trail, **Peter Brown**, District Trail Manager, recommended the Tuscarora Trail. After some travel and exploration, I discovered available sections on the mountain ridge stretching from Alice Trail to the PA 456 parking area. This ridge, located in southern Pennsylvania, is a prominent feature visible to the north while driving on US-70 near Hancock, Md. These are Tuscarora Trail sections 513019/513020. Peter also mentioned that another individual was interested in trail maintenance and suggested I contact him.



*My grandson, Austin, forging ahead carrying my gear*

### **Forming Our Team**

I reached out to **Jim Dwyer** and we met for the first time in September 2020 at the Alice Trail parking lot. Together, we hiked the sections and agreed to sign up and work as a team to maintain both. We had heard of the challenges these sections presented: steep access trails, briars, rocks, and snakes. Our initial assessment revealed that the most pressing issue was the overgrowth of weeds and briars, which would require gas-powered cutters to

keep the trail clear. We also encountered blowdowns, many of which we removed by hand or with a folding saw. However, some larger trees required a chainsaw for removal. That spring, we walked the trail equipped with weed cutters, fuel, and other tools. A month later, Jim modified an old pack frame to carry my chainsaw, while I carried fuel and other equipment. By the summer, our efforts had noticeably improved the trail's condition.



*Lunch on the ridge*

### **Challenges and Teamwork**

Climbing up to the trail is already challenging in cool weather and carrying a weed cutter with fuel for 14 miles makes it even more exhausting—especially on hot summer days. To help with the workload, Jim recruited his friend **Steve Sharpe**, who, like Jim, is a retired member of the US Coast Guard. Jim spends his summers hiking in Alaska and the Western United States, while Steve is an avid

long-distance runner who recently completed the Boston Marathon with an impressive time. This sometimes leaves me as the one who needs assistance carrying tools or to take a break on the second day of our work trips.

### **Innovations and Efficiency**

Jim has been instrumental in developing strategies to improve our efficiency. He created maps to monitor our progress and plan our work. Along with repurposing his old frame pack, he designed holsters for our folding saws.

Typically, we would maintain both sections over two days. We would spot two cars and hike up Alice Trail, maintain from Alice Trail to the top of the Yellow Trail, then cache our equipment there (to avoid carrying it up and down the hill unnecessarily). We would hike down to the road and drive to stay at either Reese Hollow Shelter or Little Cove Cabin for the night. On day two we would reposition cars, hike up Yellow Trail to our gear, and finish the rest of the trail to the south. They were two long days yet were made easier by eliminating some climbing with equipment.

### **Reflections and the Future**

I have genuinely enjoyed this work, and together we have maintained these two sections since 2020. However, at age 76, it is becoming more difficult for me to keep up with the

demands of trail maintenance. Jim and I agree that 2025 will be our final year. I encourage anyone who reads this, or knows someone who might be interested, to consider taking on the responsibility of maintaining these trail sections.

With his Coast Guard navigation knowledge, Jim provided this map of our sections. He would always know how far we had to go (which was always way too far!)

## **Vibrant Views at Vining Cabin**

By Jess LaPolla

Nestled along PATC's Vining Tract, the Vining Cabin offers a rustic feel with modern amenities. Located just outside of Stanardsville, Va., this is the perfect cabin for casual nature lovers and dedicated hikers alike.



Consisting of an original, 100-year-old chestnut structure and an attached stone addition, Vining Cabin offers two single beds and two fold-out double futons, providing sleeping arrangements for six. Access the cabin by a 0.3-mile hike-in from the parking area. This is the perfect mini adventure if you have young kids.

The whole family can also enjoy hiking around and exploring the [Vining Tract](#), a trail owned and maintained by PATC.

For sweeping views of the surrounding mountains, hike to the top of [Hilltop Peak](#). This short hike packs a punch, so be prepared for some quick elevation gain. The rocky summit is fun to scramble around on while looking out over the Shenandoah Valley.

For a scenic fall drive, pull off at [Swift Run Overlook](#) and [Bacon Hollow](#). The view from Bacon Hollow Overlook stretches out over a broad hollow that descends to the Piedmont in the distance.

Piedmont is the central region of Virginia between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Coastal Plains. Literally meaning foothills, the Piedmont region is known for its rolling hills and rural character (NPS).

Visit the nearby Shenandoah National Park for more beautiful, wooded trails and epic views.

In the small town of Stanardsville you will find everything you need to make your stay even more comfortable, including grocery stores, cafes, shops, and restaurants.

For more info and to book your stay at Vining, [click here](#).

\*Please note that visitors are discouraged from visiting National Parks during the government shutdown. If you already have a trip planned, please make sure you practice [Leave No Trace](#) and are self-sufficient.

National parks remain as accessible as possible during the federal government shutdown. However, some services may be limited or unavailable. For more information, please visit: [doi.gov/shutdown](https://doi.gov/shutdown)

## Nine New PATC Crosscut Sawyers Certified in September

By Paul Boisen and Doug Dembling



Paul Boisen instructing in foreground (yellow shirt). L to R behind him: Newly certified sawyers: Josh Wolny (keeping an eye on a hornet's nest), Darob Malek-Madani, Don Looney, Leo Juska, Lisa Frehill, Allison Kirsch, Natalie Howe, Mitch Baer, and Martin Mühleisen

*“PATC at its best. Passing on field knowledge to a new crew of sawyers and doing it in a way that builds camaraderie and team spirit!”*

That's how **Martin Mühleisen** described the crosscut saw and axe

training and certification course held by the DC Rock Creek Park District September 20-21,

2025. This training was held to increase the skills and abilities of district trail maintainers. PATC maintainers routinely clear tree blowdown from the park's 30+ miles of trails.

Martin was one of nine participants in the two-day training. The first day's classroom session was held at the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church. The training used the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) "Developing Thinking Sawyers" curriculum for crosscut sawyer certification.

This was followed by a day of field testing and evaluation on the Glover Archbold Trail in Rock Creek Park. Past storms had felled numerous trees in the area providing ample opportunities for practicing sawing and axe skills and then having those skills evaluated.

**Paul Boisen**, PATC C Level Sawyer, assisted by **Doug Dembling**, PATC B Level Sawyer, trained and evaluated the participants. Prior to the training the participants reviewed four pre-work modules. The classroom session covered the mandatory modules on saw operations, crosscut basics, limbing/bucking, axe use and maintenance, and hung-up trees.

Participants were trained to "buck" fallen trees off of trails. The techniques taught in the course are motivated by safety and utilize the Objectives/Hazards/Leans & Binds/Escape paths/Cut plan (OHLEC) process:

- Determining the **objective(s)** in bucking the downed tree;
- Understanding the **hazards** that may be present in the work area (Look up, Look Down, Look All Around);
- Detecting and understanding the **leans and binds**, the tension and compression in fallen trees;
- Determining the best **escape** path(s) to use if the sawyer needs to move away quickly from the cutting area;
- Determining the **cut plan** - figuring out the different angles and deciding the best sequences of cuts to clear the blowdown. This includes predicting where cut pieces will move upon separation, and maintaining clear communication between team members.

In addition to crosscut saw certification, sawyers can get USFS chainsaw certification. Each type of tool brings its own challenges.

Crosscut sawyers carry a lighter load of tools and have the advantage of hearing both their crewmates' voices and the creak of the wood as they work, but each cut takes more time

than a chainsaw. Crosscut sawyers, therefore, tend to make fewer cuts and then have larger pieces of wood to move off the trail.

Chain sawyers can make multiple cuts quickly to reduce a fallen tree into small pieces, but they have to carry heavier equipment on the trail.

Levels of certification for both chainsaw and crosscut saw are A (apprentice, developing skills), B (crew leader, skilled with tools and communication), and C (coach, demonstrated ability to train and certify As and Bs).

The Rock Creek Park training has a back story with PATC's North River (NR) District.

The NR district contains the USFS Ramsey's Draft Wilderness, in which chainsaws may not be used. For this reason, NR has been holding training and certification events to support a local cadre of crosscut sawyers on the Shenandoah Mountain Crew. Initially this training depended on C sawyers from the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS).

In order to strengthen PATC's training program, NR Co-District Manager **Lynn Cameron** recruited Paul Boisen, one of the local C Level Sawyers, to certify PATC sawyers. Since then Paul has certified 31 sawyers at PATC, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Carolina Mountain Club, USFS and SAWS events in Virginia and North Carolina, before coming to the D.C. area to carry out the Rock Creek Park certification event.

Congratulations to the newly certified sawyers - six A-bucking sawyers and three B-bucking sawyers: **Allison Kirsch, Darob Malek-Madani, Don Looney, Leo Juska, Lisa Frehill, Martin Mühleisen, Mitch Baer, Natalie Howe, and Josh Wolny!**

As Darob remarked, *"I had a great experience and learned a lot. I can't wait to get back on the trail and use some new skills and I now have some big new ideas for my tool list for Santa."*

## What's that Flower: AT on the C&O Canal Towpath near Harpers Ferry in Spring

Article and photos by Richard Stromberg

The AT section east of Harpers Ferry (heading north on the AT) has unique vegetation for the AT because of its low elevation (220 feet above sea level) and because it is close to the Potomac River on one side and



Kenilworth Ivy

closer to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal on the other. To see some of the plants better, go into some of the openings towards the river. Here are some of the plants to look for.

Before you climb the stairs to get to take the AT on the bridge beside the railroad tracks, look at the cracks in the stone wall when you walk under the railroad tracks. One plant growing there is a small, native fern, **Purple Cliffbrake** (*Pellaea atropurpurea*).

The main stem is purple. The pinnae (leaflets) are widespread and are not divided and do not have any lobes or teeth. Also growing in the cracks is **Kenilworth Ivy** (*Cymbalaria muralis*). It is not native, but is rare, so no danger of invasion. The light green leaves have three or five points. The flowers are about a quarter inch. They have five irregularly arranged blue or lilac petals with yellow in the middle.

Leaving the metal stairs down from the bridge over the Potomac, turn right to follow the AT along the Canal towpath.

The towpath runs close to the canal. The river is several yards on the other side of the towpath, mostly obscured by vegetation, but several openings let you see the river and flowers close to the river. Look for the flowers listed below. All are native unless otherwise noted.

**Bladdernut** (*Staphylea trifolia*) is a small tree with three-part leaves, the stem of the two side leaflets are much shorter than the stem of the end leaflet. Panicles of small white flowers droop in April.

**Miami Mist** (*Phacelia purshii*) grows up to 18 inches tall. It has half-inch flowers, cream-colored in the center surrounded by purple/blue. The “mist” refers to fringe on the petals.



Pawpaw

**Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*) is a small tree with large leaves, some over a foot long. They are entire (no teeth or lobes) tapering to the stem. They alternate along the stem but tend to cluster at the end of

branches. Flowers hang down from axils. They have three large outer petals and three smaller inner petals surrounding a mass of stigmas and the pistil in the center. They start out green and turn dark purple.

**Starry False Solomon's-seal** (*Maianthemum stellata*) has a single erect or arching stem with several ovate leaves alternating along the stem. Its flower cluster at the end of the plant is unbranched, and the individual flowers a quarter of an inch across. The False Solomon's-seal (*M. racemosum*) looks similar, but the flower cluster is branched and the individual flowers are smaller.

**Hairy Beardtongue** (*Penstemon hirsutus*) has white hair on the stems that can grow three feet tall. It has spikes of one-inch, tubular flowers atop the plant. The flower tube is narrow at the stem end and then abruptly widens, ending in two-part upper lips and three-part lower lips that flare from the tubes. The tubes are purplish, with no lines inside and the flaring lobes are white. It has four stamens under the upper lip. The fifth stamen is sterile and rests on the bottom of the tube and is hairy yellow.



*Virginia Bluebells*

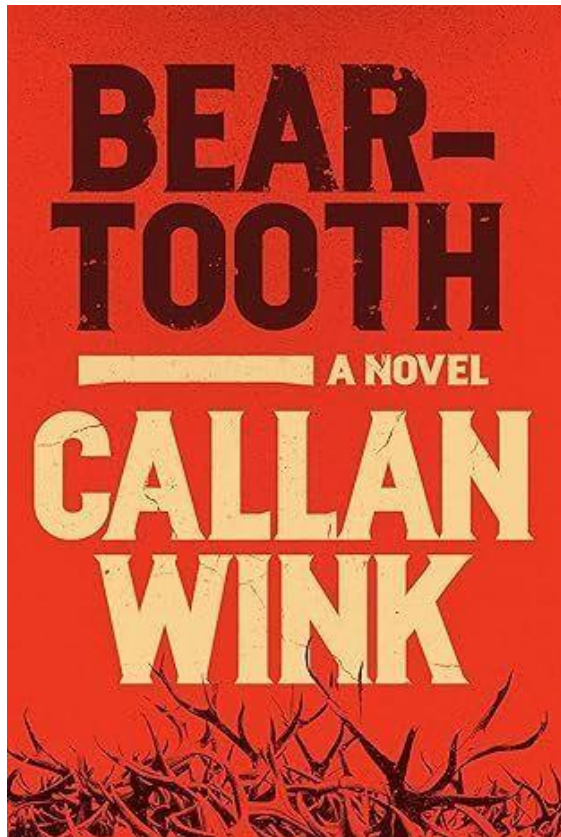
**Virginia Bluebells** (*Mertensia virginica*) grow in masses on riversides like the Shenandoah River. The elliptical leaves can be eight inches long and two inches wide. The inch-long flowers are shaped like a funnel. They start out pink and turn blue as they open. Some may remain pink and some are white.

**Jetbead** (*Rhodotypos scandens*) is an invasive alien

shrub. It has opposite leaves. The showy flowers grow at the end of branches. They are up to two inches in diameter and have four white petals.

## **Keep Calm and Read On: The Other Yellowstone**

By Wayne Limberg



Yellowstone has been front and center of late, be it the multi-season TV series that leans heavily on the likes of “Dallas” and “Dynasty” or its prequels “1883” and “1923” that, despite Sam Elliot's mustache and Harrison Ford's and Helen Mirren's best efforts, leave audiences yearning for an adaptation of Ivan Doig's masterful English Creek trilogy—actually, anything by Doig. The latest and best addition to the Yellowstone saga is “Beartooth” by Callan Wink, which takes a different tack, focusing on the marginal souls who struggle to survive outside the glitz and glamour.

Wink is a National Endowment of the Arts fellow and former Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. His stories and essays have appeared in “The New Yorker,” “Playboy” and “Men's Journal.” When it comes to Yellowstone and its environs and people, he knows of what he

speaks: He lives in Livingston, Montana and divides his time between writing and working as a fly-fishing guide on the Yellowstone River.

“Beartooth” opens with two 20-something brothers—Thad and Hazen—harvesting organs off a bear they had just killed to sell on the illegal market. A year apart in age, the two could pass for twins but it soon becomes clear they are very different. Thad is quiet and earnest and always wondering if he is living up to the standards of his recently departed father. Hazen seems to be a throwback to the mountain men but it soon becomes clear he may be on the spectrum. The two live off the grid in a log cabin in sight of the Abasaroka-Beartooth Mountains on the edge of Yellowstone National Park. Wink uses the cabin as something of a metaphor. The brothers inherited it from their father who had meticulously cared for it but now its logs are peeling and its roof leaking. It stands in sharp contrast to the McMansions that millionaires are building on neighboring ranchettes.

Thad and Hazen get by on odd jobs, cutting and selling wood, illegal harvesting of animal organs and antlers and hunting. They managed until their father took ill; when he died, they faced a pile of medical bills. At least Thad did. Things got so bad that Thad cut down their mailbox, but that did not stop the county and bank putting liens on the cabin and land. Eviction and homelessness loomed. In the midst of this, their mother, who had

abandoned them years earlier, reappears. Her father had named her Sacajawea after the young Shoshone woman who guided Lewis and Clark. She apparently had been traveling the country for years in her old van. Why she has decided to return is unclear. While Thad cannot forgive her for abandoning them and wants her to leave, the cabin was built by her father and she moves in. Hazen is intrigued.

As Sacajawea arrives, a local, a kilt-wearing Scot approaches Thad and Hazen with a business proposition that could solve their financial problems but also get them jailed: rustling antlers in Yellowstone NP for sale on the Asian market. The Scot has a dicey reputation, including accusations of murder. He is accompanied by a mute young woman who he claims is his daughter. Again, Hazen is intrigued, both by her and the proposed deal. Thad resists but finally agrees to the deal and "Beartooth" is off and running as a crime heist thriller complete with narrow escapes, police investigations and building tensions. It soon becomes clear, however, that "Beartooth" is more than that as the narrative shifts to much deeper themes. As the book progresses, there is a sense that Sacajawea may be guiding her two sons much as her namesake guided Lewis and Clark. At one point, Wink wonders if Sacajawea's life would have been different if her parents had only named her Melanie as her mother wanted. In revealing Sacajawea's backstory and why she left her family, Wink shines a light on the plight of Indian women trying to survive in a White male world.

Wink's writing is taut, bordering on minimalist. In some cases what is unsaid is as important as what is said. The Scot's relations with his daughter are a prime example of how he often lets readers fill in details and come to their own conclusions based on sparse dialogue and descriptions. Like the fly-fisherman he is, Wink doles out clues judiciously, leaving readers to bite on solutions only to find that their assumptions were wrong. Thad's money problems and the fate of the cabin are examples. Their resolution may not be what readers expected but it is satisfying and splendidly ironic given the start of the book and the caper in Yellowstone. A source of trouble can also be a source of salvation.

Even when reader assumptions are borne out, loose ends remain. And Wink does not tie them all up. Much is resolved one way or another but much is also left hanging. And that may be a good thing. "Beartooth" is Wink's second book. With luck, he might tie some of them up in future works.

Do you have a good read? If so, share it at [wplimberg@aol.com](mailto:wplimberg@aol.com). The holidays are nearing. Meanwhile, keep reading. See you on the trail.

### **President's Logbook**

By Jim Fetig



*PATC Members at VolunteerFest*

Everyone's heard of Occam's Razor: The simplest and most obvious answer is usually the correct one. Writer A. O. Scott coined a corollary he called Occam's Chainsaw: Whoever makes the most noise and debris gets the attention. No matter why, we've been converting gasoline to noise and generating a lot of sawdust lately.

VolunteerFest, primarily organized and managed by Jayne Mayne and Iva Gillett, by all accounts, was enjoyed by those who participated. The event's purpose was to celebrate our tradition of volunteer service and stewardship. It brought together people who normally don't see one another no matter where they volunteer across our entire 45,000 square mile footprint.

The constitutionally required November annual meeting will take place virtually on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 7pm EST. All members are welcome to join. Our annual awards ceremony was at VolunteerFest, so please join us for a short and sweet meeting highlighting PATC's work from the last year, the president's state of the club message, and the treasurer's report. For more info and to register, [click here](#).

Our club is strong and vibrant. However, we are living in "interesting" times with a range of questions that cannot be answered now. For example, how will changes to the federal workforce affect membership and cabin rentals? What will happen to public lands? Depending on what does or does not happen to public lands, how will PATC's mission be affected? There are many more questions than these.

A member at the VolunteerFest town hall meeting asked for my vision for the club. If anyone expected me to say something like growing the membership by a large percentage or the number of cabins, they aren't looking at the same data as me.

My vision is to strengthen the club to weather any storm that may come our way. To that end, we've continued to improve our business processes and we have added rigor to the budgeting process. In keeping with council's directive, we have reduced the deficit well within the amount the quasi endowment is expected to cover.

In that same vein, the endowment committee has managed our invested funds conservatively and well. The quasi-endowment's value has exceeded \$6 million for the first time ever. It is a bulwark standing against unforeseen costs and provides money for land and cabin acquisition when appropriate. It is an asset that most nonprofits like ours do not have.

We are starting to see some trends. More newly retired civil servants are attending our monthly new member meetings. Most of them want to volunteer, suggesting that their public service ethos is alive and well. On the back side, we are losing about as many members as we attract. Most of the folks not renewing their memberships joined solely to rent a members-only cabin.

We are working hard to address our liability issues. I've used the metaphor about running the club out of a "cigar box" before. We have determined that we must increase our liability insurance coverage and take other steps to financially protect our leaders at all levels. We have grown beyond the ability of flying under the radar.

We also are planning some cost-effective brand projection in conjunction with two national park fee free days next year – Show Your Love Day and National Trails Day. The heart of the effort will be underwriting on WAMU radio and targeted ads on Instagram and Facebook. Success will be measured by new members gained and donations received.

The Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group has asked to sign a partnership MOU with the club establishing a nonlegal and nonfinancial relationship. Their legal and financial affiliation was dissolved several years ago due to liability insurance issues.

When the government shut down, although parks remained open, volunteering was initially not allowed. That changed quickly but with some limitations. Hats off to our dedicated volunteers who continue to help keep the parks and trails accessible. You are the heartbeat of this organization.

### **Help Wanted during October**

Wood Sign Maker- contact John Hedrick at C 703-403-1479,

[jhedrick@erols.com](mailto:jhedrick@erols.com)

Shelter Volunteer

Henry Horn ~ 301/498-8254, [shelters@patc.net](mailto:shelters@patc.net)

Rocky Run Shelter [Original] ~ PATC Map 5-5

Paul Gerhard Shelter ~ PATC map F

District Manager

Co- District Manager ~ Tuscarora Central [Map L]

Bill Greenan, [wpgreenan@yahoo.com](mailto:wpgreenan@yahoo.com)

SNP North District Blue blazed ~ Map 9

Tom Moran, (703) 715-0050, [twmoran19@gmail.com](mailto:twmoran19@gmail.com)

Beahms Gap Loop ~ AT to Skyline Drive (Beahms Gap Parking) (.1mi)

Dickey Ridge Trail ~ MP 2.1 to Snead Farm Road (2.6mi)

Dickey Ridge Trail ~ Low Gap to AT (2.2 mi)

Fork Mountain Trail ~ Co ~ Piney Ridge Trail to Hull School Trail (1.1 mi)

Jeremys Run Trail (middle) ~ Co ~ 8th Ford of Jeremys Run to junction Knob Mt. & Neighbor Mt. Trail (2.7mi)

Pass Mountain (lower) ~ Co~ "break point" to US 211(1.32 mi)

Piney Branch Trail (upper) ~Co~ AT to Power line (2.2mi) (bottom needs help)

Piney Branch (middle) ~ Power line to Hull School Trail (2.2mi)

Piney Ridge (upper) ~ Co ~ Service Rd. by Range View Cabin to Fork Mountain Trail (2mi)

Sugarloaf Trail ~ Co ~ AT (Hogback Mt.) to Pole Bridge Link Trail (1.4 mi)

Tuscarora /Overall Run from Thompson Hollow/Overall Run Jct. to Mathews Arm Trail (2.3mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ SNP Boundary to Thompson Hollow Trail (1.5 mi)

SNP Central District Blue blazed [north] ~ Map 10

Patrick Wilson ~ [pwilson@hsc.edu](mailto:pwilson@hsc.edu)

Eugene "Buz" Groshong ~ 540-522-6749, [buzgroshong@verizon.net](mailto:buzgroshong@verizon.net)

Josh Fuchs (703) 346-4842, [jrfuchs48@gmail.com](mailto:jrfuchs48@gmail.com)

Corbin Cabin Cutoff from AT to Nicholson Hollow Trail at Corbin Cabin (1.4mi)

SNP Central District Blue blazed [south] ~ Map 10

John Hedrick ~ 540/987-8659, [jhedrick@erols.com](mailto:jhedrick@erols.com)

Rock Spring Parking/Cabin/Hut ~ Rock Spring Parking to AT/AT to Rock Spring Cabin & Hut (.2mi)

Rock Spring Cabin/Hut Spring Trail ~ Rock Spring Cabin & Hut to spring (.1mi)

SNP South District Appalachian Trail ~ Map 11

Mark Perschel, 434-987-0266, 202-401-8264, [markperschel@juno.com](mailto:markperschel@juno.com) & [Dbowenflyr@yahoo.com](mailto:Dbowenflyr@yahoo.com)

AT ~ Co ~ Loft Mtn Camp Store trail to Loft Mountain Amphitheater trail (1.3)

SNP South District Blue blazed ~ Map 11

James Surdukoski ~ 434-459-1122, [buslsurdukowski@gmail.com](mailto:buslsurdukowski@gmail.com)

Brown Mountain - Brown Mountain Summit to Big Run Portal Trail (3.5 mi)

Gap Run Trail - Junction of Rocky Mount Summit Trail to bottom of Gap Run (1.50mi)

Pennsylvania Tuscarora ~ Maps J & K

Chris Firme ~ 717-794-2855, [bncfirme@innernet.net](mailto:bncfirme@innernet.net)

Dave Trone ~ 717-778-1308, [traildavidt@gmail.com](mailto:traildavidt@gmail.com)

Pete Brown 410-207-2921, [trailpete@gmail.com](mailto:trailpete@gmail.com)

PA Tuscarora [J] ~ Fowler Hollow shelter to Hemlock Rd (2.2mi)

PA Tuscarora [J] ~ Mountain Rd. to Jct. PA 641 (6.2mi)

PA Tuscarora [K] ~ Alice Trail to Yellow Blazed Trail (4.2mi)

PA Tuscarora [K] ~ Yellow Blazed Trail to PA 456 (6.7mi)

#### Tuscarora Central ~ Map L

Bill Greenan ~ [wpgreenan@yahoo.com](mailto:wpgreenan@yahoo.com)

Co-District Manager needed!

Tuscarora Trail ~ Burnt Mill Bridge to Lutkins Passage (3.2mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Meadow Branch to Eagles Nest Parking (2.2mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Eagles Nest Mt. Parking Lot to Meadow Branch Trail (3mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Larrick Overlook to Lucas Woods Trail (2mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Sleepy Creek Registration to Hampshire Grade Road (5.6mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Hampshire Grade Road to High Rock (2.7mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Co ~ Lucas Woods Trail to Powerline (3.5mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Sleepy Creek WMA Border to VA 671 (Shockeysville Road) (4.1mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ US 50 (Back Creek) to Gore Access Trail (1.3mi)

Tuscarora Trail ~ Co ~ Powerline to Dry Gap (3.5mi)

Devils Nose Connector Trail ~ Devils Nose Parking Area to Tuscarora Trail (.5mi)

Spruce Pine Hollow Trail ~ Tuscarora Trail to Spruce Pine Hollow Park Trailhead (.10mi)

#### Massanutten South ~ Map H

Paul Boisen, (540) 246-5662, [paulboisen@hotmail.com](mailto:paulboisen@hotmail.com)

Massanutten South Trail ~ Pitt Spring to Morgan Run Trail (1.4 m FR 65) (3.3mi)

Roaring Run Trail ~ Catherine Furnace to TV Tower Road (3.8mi)

Pitt Spring Lookout Trail ~ Massanutten South Trail to lookout point (.27mi)

### Great North Mountain ~ Map E

Mike Allen ~ 540-333-3994, [michaelallen0056@gmail.com](mailto:michaelallen0056@gmail.com)

North Mt. Trail ~ Stack Rock Trail to VA 720 (4.3mi)

Stack Rock Trail ~ Forest Rd 252 to North Mt. Trail (1.5mi)

Long Mountain Trail ~ Trout Pond Trail to FR 1621 (4.4mi)

Big Schloss Trail ~ 2.3 Mile Marker of Mill Mt. Trail to Big Schloss View (.3mi)

Mill Mt. Trail ~ Wolf Gap to Big Schloss Cutoff Trail (2.8mi)

Gerhard Shelter Trail ~ Tuscarora Trail to Vances Cove (1.5mi)

### North River Map-National Geographic Trails Illustrated #791

Lynn & Malcolm Cameron, (540) 234-6273, [slynncameron@gmail.com](mailto:slynncameron@gmail.com)

Braley Pond Loop ~ 491, 496, 654 from Braley Pond Parking to Braley Pond Parking (3.6 mi)

### MD Montgomery County Parks ~ Map D

Lynn Gallagher ~ (301) 320-4862, or [lynn.t.gallagher@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.t.gallagher@gmail.com)

Cabin John Trail ~ Seven Locks Rd to Tuckerman Lane

### Prince William Forest Park

Dennis Calhoun, 703-583-4386, [dennis\\_calhoun@comcast.net](mailto:dennis_calhoun@comcast.net)

Carl Nicholson, 703-314-6365, [cwnicholson@gmail.com](mailto:cwnicholson@gmail.com)

South Valley from Scenic Drive [3rd Intersection] to North Orenda Road (1.1 mi)

### Potomac Heritage Trail; GWMP & Great Falls Park ~ Map D

Pete Neal ~ Roosevelt Island to Pimmit Run & Great Falls Park

(703) 536-4962, (202) 841-7220, [peteneal77@gmail.com](mailto:peteneal77@gmail.com)

PHT ~ Roosevelt Island parking lot to Spout Run (.7mi)

Maryland National Battlefield Parks – Antietam & Monocacy

Mary Ann Lepore ~ H 814-942-0670, C 814-327-8526

[shastalepore@msn.com](mailto:shastalepore@msn.com)

Antietam NBP

Final Attack Trail ~ Burnside Bridge to Snavelly Ford Trail (1.74mi)

Monocacy NBP

Junction Trail (1.mi) plus Best Farm Trail (1.5mi)[one maintainer for both trails]

Worthington Farm Trail ~ Worthington House to through [including] Ford Loop (1.6mi)

Brooks Hill Trail ~ Worthington House to High Water Bypass Trail (1.9mi)

Thomas Farm Trail ~ Thomas Barn to though [including] Middle Ford Loop Trail (1.9mi)

Gambrill Mill Trail (.5mi) plus Dam Ruins Trail (.3mi) [one maintainer for both trails]