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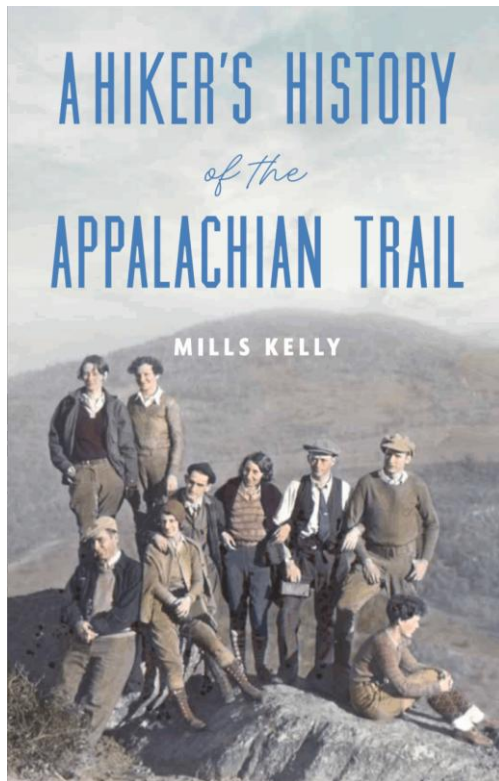
THE POTOMAC APPALACHIAN



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From the Ground Up: The AT's Overlooked History

By Meg Drennan



“I took my first hike in 1971 in Shenandoah as a Boy Scout. Our Scout Master had been a marine in WWII. He believed you developed self-reliance by getting out into the woods, backpacking, and walking on the trail,” recalls Mills Kelly.

Back then, they didn’t think much about the Appalachian Trail (AT). It was just the place where the troop hiked.

“Two years later, a neighbor came to our Scout meeting and gave a slide show of his thru-hike. I remember thinking, the trail is 2,000 miles long? It goes from Georgia to Maine? That’s how my fascination began at age 12.”

Since then, he’s hiked more than 800 miles of the AT over the years. As the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club’s (PATC) archivist, Kelly has explored many

more miles by sifting through the written narratives, photos, recipes and other artifacts left behind by hikers of yore.

An emeritus professor of history at George Mason University, Kelly is fascinated by the accounts from casual day hikers. But their stories are largely tucked away, stored in ledgers, boxes and archives by various clubs up and down the AT.

By contrast, he says, thru-hikers are celebrities of sorts. “They’ve published books. They’ve got YouTube videos, social media posts. But they are only one half of one percent of all the people who get on the trail each year.”

What about everyone else? “I’ve tried to impress on my students to beware of the preponderance of evidence fallacy. There may be a ton of evidence about one part of story, but not much about the other. The AT is a case study in this. It was really bugging me.”

So, he decided to write a book. In [A Hiker's History of the Appalachian Trail](#), Mills captures the experiences of those everyday AT hikers over the past century. To tell their stories, he dug through hundreds of trail shelter registers, hiker accounts, old photos and films, and newspaper and magazine articles.

“I was a Fulbright in Germany last year. When I wasn’t teaching, I spent my time reading those accounts. I have to give a big shoutout to the people at the AT museum in Pine Grove Furnace, PA. They’ve been scanning their ledgers and gave me a thumb drive filled with those scans.” As he read and absorbed those personal narratives, several themes emerged.

“In 1921, Benton MacKaye wanted people to go on the trail to get oxygen, peace, just after flu epidemic and the war. He thought the trail would be a place for people ‘to solve the problem of living.’ Turns out, he was right! People ventured onto the AT to touch the wild. They wanted to see a wild animal, sit by a stream and listen to the water rushing over stones, or see wildflowers. They wanted what the Japanese call komorebi, light filtering through the leaves.”

They still do. Every year, between 3 to 4 million people hit the trail.

“What doesn’t change over time is this desire to touch the wild. What does change is who you do it with. Until the early 1960s, you hiked in a group. You joined a club, scouts, a church group. There are lots of photos of 20, 30, even 40 people. At the end of hikes, they would square dance.”

Back then, socializing was a big part of hiking. “We assume from our lens of the 21st century that women’s participation in hiking was not the norm. That’s wrong. Women have been doing long distance, rigorous hiking from the beginning. Some hiking clubs even had a 50/50 men and women limit because there were too many women. It was an important social outlet. A place where you might meet your life partner.”

Group hiking, however, started to decline in the 1960s when Americans shifted to individual activities, like jogging and aerobics. Today, he notes, backpackers increasingly hike by themselves.

“It has a big impact on what happens on the trail. Hikers used to create, support, and maintain the trail as a group. When they are solo, they become consumers of the trail. Thru hikers are consumers. Almost none of them volunteer.” Other changes have been more welcome.

“Onion sandwiches used to be very popular for decades. Also, big slabs of raw bacon,” he laughs. “I enjoyed researching the evolution of the gear we carry. World War II spurred tremendous innovation in camping and hiking gear. The hammock tents, popular today, came from the Pacific campaign. These innovations led to much lighter, more durable gear that made the backcountry accessible to many more people.”

Kelly's new book will be available for purchase on October 7th. Join Mills in person for a book launch at [Blacksburg Books](#) on October 9th. For more information or to pre-order the book, visit [millskelly.net](#). And be sure to check out his podcast, [The Green Tunnel](#).

President's Logbook

By Jim Fetig

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Elizabeth Barrett Browning asks a profound question in Sonnet 43.

That question could mean, "What have you done for me lately?" or, it could mean, "Let me tell you what keeps me coming

back." Sometimes, it is a mixture of both. Regardless, her words painted a portrait of profound gratitude.



Versions of this question kept coming up at the recent Hoodlums trail maintainers training workshop. The number one answer was to give back.

We have been given a truly amazing legacy for which we should give thanks. The ability to disconnect from the stress and strain of everyday life and plug into nature in a wide variety of ways and to repay nature for that privilege is a priceless benefit of PATC membership. It is food for our souls.

The workshop was literally our future under construction. It was attended by all kinds of people, including grizzled veterans and shiny new veteran trail maintainers-to-be. It was heartwarming to see knowledge passing hands from one to another like a hot dog vendor forking over the goods at a baseball game. In one case, a slathering of syrupy black mud substituted for watery ballpark ketchup.

There is a lot of love in the air. Next year's budget is close to being finished. We're working with Shenandoah National Park on a new management agreement for their six cabins. As of now, we still don't know if the stove and chimney repairs needed for three of the cabins

will occur before cold weather sets in. We also have agreed to maintain trails for our 17th National Park Service unit, Monocacy Battlefield.

The line up for Volunteer Fest has been set. The seminars include hike leader training, trail maintenance, battery powered tools, women's introduction to trail maintenance, trail patrol meeting, invasive plants, and more. The senior elected leadership will answer questions at a town hall style meeting on Saturday afternoon.

As I write this, it is the first day of autumn. What a time to reflect on the summer just past and the crisp colors, cooler air, and holidays ahead. When your knees, like mine, crackle like a noisy campfire, the opportunity to count the ways you love the outdoors and embrace nature is irreplaceable.

The Summer Heat Breaks, Hoodlums Near Record Turnout

By Tom Moran, Michael Gergely, and Tom Troutman



Photo by Marie Seymour; Caption: Marie's Neighbor Mountain Crew (from left) Andrew Warthan, Ken Ferebee, Gerard Weatherbee, Rich Lindahl, Ethan Glick

After heat caused cancellation of the July Hoodlums work trip, August was much more pleasant and a large turnout of 35 provided plenty of resources to tackle a wide array of projects.

Tom Troutman led a small crew to target some of the many blowdowns in the North District. Sawyer **Dan Hippe** cleared two major blockers on the Pole Bridge Link Trail (a critical

trail for the Sugarloaf Loop) and cleaned up two older ones that intruded onto the trail. **Erin Taylor** and Tom provided swamping services for Dan. Their next two stops were on the AT, the first providing navigation assistance to a family they had previously encountered on Pole Bridge Link Trail and that had been relying on park maps that didn't provide sufficient details. They made one last stop, which was just north of Rattlesnake Overlook on the AT. It

was a simple blowdown, but the hunt for another reported one was fruitless as the maintainer of the section had already cleared it. As the crew proceeded to the next section, the sky let loose with what someone called sun showers—more like downpours!

A large crew was sent south to assist Central District with some emergency trail repair at Thornton Gap. Heavy summer storms had caused runoff to cascade downhill where the AT crosses Route 211, scouring gravel from the trail and leaving a six- to eight-inch-deep channel significant enough that even thru-hikers were noticing. Because the Hoodlums



Photo by Marie Seymour; Caption: Ken Ferebee striking terror into the hearts of weeds

were already planning to be out, the National Park Service asked if they could step in to mitigate the situation until additional resources could be brought to bear on the trail section.

Led by **Mike Gergely**, the crew of **Ben Morris, Greg Foster, Jamie Benson, Kyle Brost, Mark Wrobel, Mike Kennedy, Richard Lee, Tricia Neves, and David Pierce** got to work. The Park Service left a few cut logs for emergency check dams, but the crew put Tricia's crosscut saw to use harvesting additional wood from the area for 11 new check dams.

Putting skills learned from the PATC's Certified Trail Maintainer course to work, the crew installed

a rolling grade dip at the top of the slope in order to divert the majority of the road runoff into a nearby drainage area before it hit the trail proper. In case the rolling grade dip wasn't enough, they also installed two more traditional "Harvey Bars" (combination water bar/check dam structures) further down the slope to divert any additional runoff. Finally, the crew recovered much of the gravel that washed downhill to refill the newly reinforced trail bed to eliminate the large, eroded channels.

Marie Seymour led a crew of four, including **Gerard Weatherby, Rich Lordahl, and Andrew Warthen** from Neighbor Mountain parking area to perform basic maintenance tasks on the area trails including weeding, clearing water bars, and sidehilling on a degraded section of trail. They also cleaned up litter around the parking area and trails. While Marie is a Certified Trail Maintainer and has extensive experience, this was the first time she was the sole leader of a crew, and she did very well.

The Hoodlums are a prime group for not just learning and developing trail maintaining skills, but also for leading crews and mentoring less experienced volunteers.

Jim Fetig led a crew onto the AT from Beahms Gap with a single objective—to rehabilitate a spring pipe at the adjacent spring. The pipe was a mere 1” in diameter and 12” in length, too small in diameter and too short to be properly secured. They dug out the catch basin and reinstalled the existing pipe as a temporary solution. They then cleared a tree crown across the trail before finishing up for the day. Jim’s crew included **Robert Kilby, Rosemary Seymour, David Johnson, and Brian Blackman**. Six days later, Jim and David returned and installed a 2” by 36” pipe, securely packed into a rock bed.

Tom Moran and **Joe Phillips** led two crews down Jeremys Run from the Elkwallow Picnic area, hunting for blowdowns. Joe’s crew included **Chris Viggiano, Molly Bolan, and Roger Fast**. Tom’s crew had first-timer **Akash Ajmera, SNP Ridgerunner Ray Stinson, Bruno Carlot,** and his daughter **Maddy**. While Chris, Molly, Roger and Akash had never used a crosscut saw before, Bruno, Joe, and Tom are all United States Forest Service certified crosscut sawyers, while Ray is a certified chain sawyer. The crews leapfrogged past each other as they worked downstream, clearing as they went. Twenty one blowdowns in all were removed from the trails before it was time to turn around, just shy of the sixth stream crossing.

Since 2024, the Hoodlums have been refurbishing two sheds designated by park leadership to be used to support SNP North District trail maintenance. While the bulk of the vermin eradication, construction and painting is completed, there remains a lot of effort still to furnish and fit out the insides with work platforms, storage units and other accessories to allow for a well-organized work and storage space. A crew **led by Wayne Limberg** and **assisted by Noel Freeman, Dave Nebhut, and Cindy Ardecki**, started this effort in earnest on the large shed.

Cindy, determined to prevent a recurrence of rodent and wasp infestation, applied copious quantities of sealing caulk throughout the structure. Dave focused on refinishing a work bench, while Noel installed hooks and made other exterior improvements. Wayne was observed cutting wood, but he was able to avoid more probing questions from reporters on the subject.

Biby Trail - Path to the Tuscarora

By Dan and Ellen Feer

The Cadillac Crew spent the August work trip helping Tuscarora Central District Manager, **Bill Greenan** continue improving the Biby Trail. For some of the Cadillac Crew, this was their second trip to this gem of a side trail to the Tuscarora, and for others, a new experience. The Biby trail is the only access to the Tuscarora for several miles. For those who were first timers to the trail and heard that it was only $\frac{3}{4}$

of a mile long, the hiker brain said, “oh, that’s not so bad.” It’s not long after the realization hits you that you have just entered a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long scree slope. It was the Crew’s job to make the journey down a little bit easier 100 yards at a time.

The Devils Nose crew had done excellent work before us, so we started where they stopped by de-rocking and improving the tread to the next bend in the trail where the elevation dropped by six feet or more and continued across a boulder field.

The crew took a few moments to enjoy the trail, with its moss-covered rocks, dappled sun and dense canopy while project manager **Robert Fina** dropped a few dead trees in the work area. After the all-clear, groups split up to tackle different jobs. Tread improvements always seem to require lots of mineral soil only found in a dirt mine started a few feet off the trail. Rockbars, picks, and shovels began to remove toe catchers and smooth the tread, and rocks suitable for steps were scouted and transportation arranged.

The team switched tasks throughout the day, learning new skills like how to use a grip hoist to move 1,000 pound rocks or lending a hand fitting rocks together. By late afternoon, hikers noticed significant improvement. The tread was smoother, the transition from soil tread to the boulder field was a perfectly fit tiled tread that any kitchen designer would envy, and a nine-step stairway curved gracefully back toward the trailhead.

We stayed a bit longer than usual because the weather was cooler, and on Sunday we planned to do some work for our new host, the Camp Rock Enon Scout Reservation. We got



Photo by Janet Arici- Pictured: Kate Walker, Caption: Starting the dirt mine



*Photo by Janet Arici – Pictured: Robert Fina, Neil Hopper, Ellen Feer,
Caption: Arranging for transport*

back to the reservation, cleaned up (**Peter Haupt** swam in the lake), laid out happy hour snacks, and prepared to be overwhelmed by a dinner of multiple entrees, sides, and several desserts.

The scout reservation has a trail that connects to the Tuscarora. We used string trimmers and loppers to clear the trail, a gas-powered hammer drill to set rocks up to be moved by the grip hoist into a stream bed to make a steppingstone crossing, and shovels and buckets to protect a bridge from

the encroaching creek. In a half day of work, we opened the trail and made it passable by off-road vehicles for emergencies.

By Sunday afternoon, **Janet Arici, Karen Brown, Kirsten Elowsky, Dan Feer, Ellen Feer, Robert Fina, Chris Glembocki, Erica Glembocki, Bill Greenan, Peter Haupt, Neil Hopper, Marty Martin, Don Oellerich, Steve Phillips, Ellen Shaw, Kate Walker, Dan Wooley, and Mark Wrobel** had done a huge amount of work that will last for years.

Each month we choose to be with each other to do things that benefit so many. It is hard work, yet so rewarding. Next month, we'll do it again. You're welcome to join us. Send us a note to ccrewpatc@gmail.com if you're interested. No experience needed, just sturdy shoes and curiosity.

Ski Fair

November 1, 2025 @ PATC
Headquarters

How about some outdoor winter adventures this year? Early winter 2025 was cold and snowy in the DC metro region and it made for some of the best local skiing in several years.



Dick Simmons, Ashley Smythe and Steve Jarvis taking a break, White Grass WVA. Photo by Anonymous.

The Ski Touring Section will kick off the cross-country ski season with the annual **Ski Fair** on November 1.

Learn about all aspects of cross-country skiing from gliding through snow covered forests on groomed trails to deep back country treks. Hear about upcoming trips for 2025-26, see presentations on past trips and talk to experienced skiers and trip leaders.

Close to the W&OD trail for easy bike access. Light refreshments will be served. Please join us!

Saturday November 1, 1-4 PM, PATC Headquarters.

More info: *patcskitouring.us*.

Think Snow!

2025 Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame Inductees Announced

By Jim Foster

GARDNERS, PA. – The fifteenth class of Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame honorees has been announced by the Appalachian Trail Museum’s Hall of Fame selection committee.

The 2025 Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame class honorees are Richard B. Anderson of Camden, Maine; the late Walter Greene of New York City, New York, the late Marion Park of Washington, DC, and Ronald Tipton of Rockville, Maryland.

Most everyone knows that the Appalachian Trail ends in the north at Mount Katahdin in Maine. In 1993, Richard B. Anderson, a biologist and then Commissioner of the Maine Department of Conservation, envisioned an extension of the A.T. across the US-Canadian border, providing opportunities for hikers to walk the Appalachian Range from Georgia to Cap Gaspé, Québec, where the range tumbles into the sea. In the decades since, the trail has grown to include sections in over a dozen countries, routed along the geological remnants of the Central Pangean Mountains, including the Appalachians in North America, Europe’s Caledonian Mountains, and the Atlas Mountains in Africa. As of 2023, the IAT links 6,000 miles of trail ringing the Atlantic Ocean.

Dick was guided by the work of Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery, Dave Startzell, Dave Field and many others throughout the development of the IAT. Dick has built relationships to sustain the IAT that emulate the vision and practice of the A.T. community.

Walter Greene was a Broadway actor living in New York City in the late 1920s. But he had a vacation home in tiny Willimantic, Maine. He learned of Benton MacKaye's dream of a trail along the Appalachians. More than anyone else, he was responsible for scouting and laying out the initial route of the A.T. from Katahdin south for 120 miles. After meeting Myron Avery by chance in 1930, he joined the famous Avery/Schairer/Philbrick/Jackson expedition in 1933 that blazed the Trail from Katahdin to the West Branch of the Pleasant River and then led the group from there to Blanchard. In 1935 Greene accomplished a great deal through interaction with the Civilian Conservation Corps crews who were building much of the new A.T. and also the critical cable bridge across the West Branch of the Penobscot River.

Greene is not well known today because he was hospitalized in 1936 with a serious illness. He never set foot on the A.T. again and passed away in 1941.

Picture a group of men in suits, just off work from their mostly government day jobs, sitting around a wood-paneled study, talking Trail. Sitting on the floor taking notes is Marion Park, who joined the Potomac A.T. Club in 1933 and helped edit its early newsletter and then in 1941 became Secretary of the Appalachian Trail Conference, serving in that position until 1955. In those days that meant keeping records of all the ATC (and cross-over PATC) meetings and often going out in the field with speed-hiker Myron Avery, taking notes as he measured and noted deficiencies at the same time. The accuracy of those notes endures and was essential to the organization's governance, guidebooks, and maps in its first three decades.

Every organization needs a Marion Park at its center to keep it grounded, documenting decisions and plans. In addition to all this, Marion and Jean Stephenson maintained a side trail to the A.T. from the Meadow Spring and Buck Hollow trails in Shenandoah National Park, and Marion was Treasurer of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club from 1937 to 1957.

Ronald Tipton has been deeply involved with the Appalachian Trail for nearly 50 years. He joined the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club in 1974 and maintained a section of the A.T. for more than 20 years. In the mid-1970's, as a staff member of the House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee, he worked with the House National Park Subcommittee to help draft and promote the 1978 amendments to the National Trails System Act. Soon afterward, during his A.T. thru-hike, Ron prepared a report highlighting high priority sections of the Trail corridor to be acquired and protected. He was then hired to be the National Parks Program Director for The Wilderness Society, working closely with Dave Startzell and other Trail advocates to secure a significant increase in annual appropriations for the A.T. land acquisition program. In 1983 Ron was one of the founding members of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA) and has been an active member ever since.

The capstone of Ron's professional career came in 2013 when he was recruited to become President & CEO of the ATC, and served in that capacity until he retired at the end of 2017. His accomplishments as the leader of ATC included creating a new initiative for preserving the larger landscape surrounding the Trail and significant increases in ATC's funding and staff.

The 2025 Hall of Fame Class will be honored at the Hall of Fame Banquet on Saturday, November 22, 2025 at the Bavarian Inn Resort in Shepherdstown, WV. The Induction will be one of a full schedule of events during the Hall of Fame Weekend.

About the Appalachian Trail Museum

The Appalachian Trail Museum serves the A.T. community by telling the stories of the founding, construction, preservation, maintenance, protection, and enjoyment of the Trail since its creation a century ago. The Museum opened on June 5, 2010, as a tribute to the thousands of men, women and families who have hiked and maintained the approximately 2,190-mile-long hiking trail that passes through fourteen states from Maine to Georgia. Located right on the A.T. within Pine Grove Furnace State Park near Gardners, Pennsylvania, the museum is eight miles south of I-81 between Carlisle, Gettysburg and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The Museum is a 501-C-3 not-for-profit organization. Additional information is available at www.appalachiantrail.museum.

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Old Rag Cabin

By Jess LaPolla

In the words of the great American poet, Taylor Swift, there are currently “Autumn leaves falling down like pieces into place/And I can picture it after all these days.”



If you can imagine this “All Too Well,” then Old Rag Cabin should definitely be on your list of places to stay this fall. Picture the most satisfying leaf-crunch underfoot while the trees turn gold and red and orange all around you and the steam from your morning coffee mingles with the cool mountain air.

Located in Madison County, Va., PATC volunteers were largely responsible for the construction of this iconic cabin.

This cabin is completely ADA compliant on the first floor, with a wheelchair-accessible bathroom and ramp leading up to the back door. There are two daybeds on the first floor, and an additional two double bunks on the second. The arrangement is perfect for small families or a group of your favorite hiking buddies.

Old Rag Cabin is a hiker’s dream. This modern log cabin provides unique access to the Old Rag trailhead, just a few hundred yards away, accessible by a private trail. If you’re a confident hiker, hiking [Old Rag Mountain](#) is a must if you’re staying here. This hike has a good bit of scrambling, so keep that in mind. Other fun and challenging hikes include [Nicholson Hollow Trail](#), which will take you through the Shenandoah Wilderness to PATC’s beautiful rustic [Corbin Cabin](#).

Cap off your stay with hiking to [White Oak Falls \(upper\)](#), a moderately challenging hike with great views of the fall foliage and cascading falls. [White Oak Falls \(lower\)](#) is a much easier version offering beautiful views of the lower falls, without taking you all the way to the top. The White Oak Trailhead can be accessed by taking a short walk down the Weakly Hollow Fire Road.

The Old Rag trailhead parking area is just a stone’s throw from the cabin, meaning there are multiple hiking opportunities within walking distance of the cabin. This also means that you may see a fair amount of traffic from other hikers. Consider booking this cabin during the week if you’re looking for a quieter stay.

Hikers who wish to summit Old Rag will need to obtain a day-use ticket in advance for visits March through November. Hikers must purchase tickets before arriving via www.recreation.gov because tickets will not be available at the Old Rag fee station.

* Please note that pets are prohibited and outdoor fires are expressly forbidden. Electronic code access enables members to make last minute reservations. [Learn more and book your stay today.](#)

"What on Earth?"

Article by Ray Barbehenn. Photos by Andy Wolfe, Ray Barbehenn, and David Cox.



Antlion larva pits



Antlion larva

Have you ever wondered what makes funnel-shaped pits in the soil, such as in the left photo? They look like tiny (two-inch-wide) bomb craters. They are typically in sandy or dusty soil, such as at the bases of rock outcrops or large trees, but they could be right next to your house. A group of these pits was found by Andy Wolfe in Michaux State Forest in southern Pennsylvania in May of 2021.

If you carefully excavate an inch below the bottom of a pit, what you find may surprise you! These pits were dug by antlion larvae. The antlion larva in the right photo (about a half inch long) was excavated from its pit by Ray in Duke Hollow (northern Virginia) on July 5. This is probably *Myrmeleon immaculatus*, a widespread species in the eastern U.S. Note the large jaws sticking out in front of its head and their sharp teeth. A tiny eye is at the base of each jaw. Its broad, flat head acts like a shovel to help dig out the pit. However, its legs are weak and only used to scoot backwards! (Its third pair of legs is tucked underneath its large abdomen.)

Why do antlion larvae make pits?

- A. Digging into the ground keeps them safe from predators.
- B. Their pits help them trap small insects.
- C. The pits are daytime resting places, since they feed at night.
- D. A and C.

The answer is near the bottom of the page!

Fun Facts and Musings

The reason that antlion larvae end up in dry, dusty areas is Mom. Her preference for these sites ensures that her larvae have suitable soil in which to dig their pits. They need loose, often sandy, soil. When one of her eggs hatches, the little larva soon begins digging a little crater. It pushes backwards into the soil, plowing in a circle, and flipping soil particles outwards with its closed jaws and head. It continues inward in a spiral, getting a little deeper as it goes around and around. You can [watch a video of this behavior here](#). If you look carefully at the soil texture in the pits in the left photo, you can see that the larvae have removed most of the larger sand grains. Medium-sized soil particles make the best pits—pits with steep walls that collapse easily.

Antlion larvae are ambush predators: They lie in wait for prey to step into their pits and slide down their little scree slopes! Antlions can feel the subtle vibrations in the soil made by their prey as they walk on or near their pits. Some antlion species are capable of sensing vibrations from as far away as two to four inches! The contrast between the normal, uneventful life of an antlion and the moment it springs into action could not be more dramatic. As you can see in the video, an excited antlion larva does not wait for the prey to slip to the bottom of the pit. Instead, it flings little scoops of soil all over the prey as it struggles to escape. This makes the pit wall collapse under the prey and decreases its ability to get any traction. (It is one step forward and two steps backward on this scree slope.)

All the work required to make and maintain a pit usually pays off. It allows antlion larvae to catch a wide variety of prey, including species that are fast-moving (on flat ground) and relatively large. Roughly 75% of their prey includes a variety of walking insects (not just ants), and the remainder includes spiders, millipedes, and even earthworms!

The jaws of antlion larvae are highly unusual, functioning not only to grasp prey but also to inject venom. Venom flows through a unique channel in the antlion's jaws. The venom

paralyzes the prey, allowing the antlion to avoid a costly struggle. In addition, the venom also contains powerful digestive enzymes. The enzymes break down the contents of the prey's body into a thick liquid. The antlion then sucks out its predigested food through the channel in its jaws. Thus, antlions actually have a liquid diet!

Antlion larvae are "sit-and-wait" predators. Not surprisingly, if they sit and wait without capturing much food, they can take one to two years to develop! They need to reach a minimum body size before they metamorphose to a pupa. Presumably, it is better to wait and grow up than to rush to become an incompetent adult.

Adult antlions are even more difficult to find than their larvae. In contrast to their larvae, adults are mainly nocturnal. The bottom photo shows an adult Eastern Spotted-wing Antlion (*Dendroleon obsoletus*). It was found by David Cox near SNP on August 28, 2024. He attracted it to a light at night. It was among the MANY nocturnal insects that landed on a sheet that was hung under the light. This insect was about 1.5 inches long, with a two-inch wingspan.

Notice that its wings are nearly transparent and are spotted, camouflaging it during the day when it would be asleep. These insects resemble large, drab damselflies, but they hold their wings flat to their sides instead of vertically over their bodies. In addition, notice their long curved antennae. (The left one is broken.) By contrast, the antennae of damselflies are very short and hair-like.

Adult antlions mainly feed on pollen and nectar. Thus, they are nocturnal pollinators, just like most moths. And, like most moths, they live for about a month – not nearly as long as their larvae, but similar to most adult insects.

Answer: B!

It is highly unusual for an animal to construct a pit trap. Less than 1% of all animal species build traps, and most of these species, such as spiders, build their traps with silk. When antlion larvae are out of their pits, they are more vulnerable to predators, such as lizards and birds. However, the main purpose of their pits is to catch prey, rather than to avoid predators.

Antlion larvae are kept in elementary school classrooms by some science-minded teachers. However, you don't have to fret if your teachers never gave you the opportunity to observe these insects. Just put a small insect into the next antlion pit that you come across! Can't find a bug when you need one? A small twig and a delicate wiggle can be a ready substitute for a struggling ant.



Adult antlion

Thanks to Andy Wolfe for suggesting this topic. Send your photos and ideas for topics to Ray at rvb@umich.edu.

What's that Flower?

By Richard Stromberg

The Old Rag loop hike is described on pages 54-57 of PATC's "Circuit Hikes in Shenandoah National Park" and pages 252-255 of "Appalachian Trail Guide to Shenandoah National Park." In addition to the challenging rock scrambles and spectacular views, Old Rag offers interesting flowers, some of them found only in rocky places like Old Rag.



Rock harlequin

This month shows notable plants to be seen in spring.

Rock Harlequin (*Corydalis sempervirens*) plants are up to 30 inches tall. The half-inch, tubular flowers are pink with a yellow tip. They are grouped into dangling clusters.

Mountain Sandwort (*Minuartia groenlandica*) is a northern species as its species name *groenlandica* (of Greenland) indicates. It is rare in the PATC area, found only on top of Old Rag Mountain where several clumps of it grow in crevices and sandy pavements. It forms mats of leaves that look like little clumps of grass, but, if you look closely, you will see that the individual leaves are fleshy. Flower stems with up to five flowers extend above the leaves. The half-inch flowers have five white petals.

Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*) has a large, branching pyramid of white flowers atop three-to-seven-foot plants. Individual flowers are very small, petals only one millimeter, but since there are so many flowers, the inflorescence is impressive. The fuzzy nature of



Goatsbeard

the inflorescence gives the impression of a goat's beard. The plant has only a few leaves. They are divided, often twice.

Whorled Loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*) grows up to three feet tall with a series of whorled leaves spaced up the stem. The whorls usually contain four leaves (hence the species name). The leaves have no stem or a very short one. The solitary flowers grow on one-to-two-inch stems from the axils of the upper leaf whorls. They have five yellow petals with red spots at the bottom. Stamens and pistil protruding from the middle of the flower

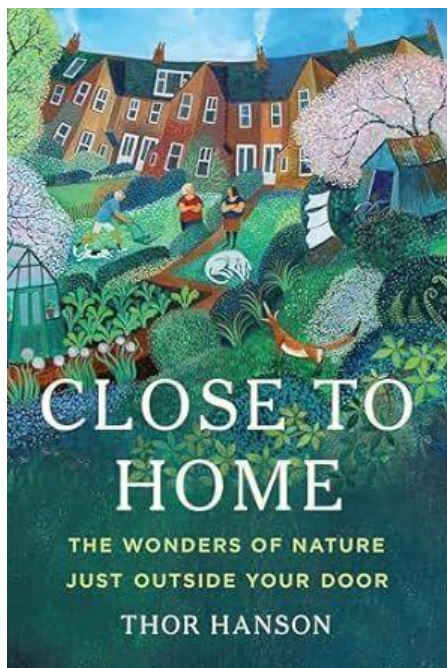
Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) is a small tree with compound leaves with 9 to 31 leaflets. It has velvety hairs on its branches. It has a pyramid of small green flowers at the top of the plant.

Tall Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum pubescens*) can reach eight feet tall. The leaves are divided into three leaflets and lower leaves may be divided twice into threes. The leaflets have lobes. Flowers are at the top of the plant. The flower head is a ball of white spikes. It grows in wet places.

Roundleaf Fameflower (*Phemeranthus teretifolius*) has a ring of leaves at the base of the plant. The leaves are about two inches long and round in cross section. A foot-long stem has two to four flowers forking from the top. Each half-inch flower has five pink petals.

Keep Calm and Read On: Think Small

By Wayne Limberg



Thor Hanson throws readers a curve at the start of "Close to Home" when he suggests they close the book and go sit under a tree. Hanson is an award-winning conservation biologist and Guggenheim fellow whose previous books include "Buzz," "Feathers," and "The Triumph of Seeds." All are serious but readable scientific studies. "Close to Home" takes a different tactic. It is at once a shout out to "citizen naturalists" and a call to action.

Hanson got the idea for "Close to Home" one morning as he walked from his house to his "office shack" on San Juan Island in Washington and heard a hermit thrush singing in the underbrush, the same bird that grabbed the attention of such poets as T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman.

His first reaction was to make a mental note to investigate the bird when he finished his work that day when it suddenly hit him that this was his work. He had traveled the world studying such creatures as Ugandan gorillas but had not really paid attention to the marvels at his doorstep. Over the next decade he worked to remedy that. The result was "Close to Home."

Hanson divides "Close to Home" into three major sections. The first is "Seeing." Hanson argues that the demands of modern civilization have forced humans to neglect many of the skills developed over millennia of evolution. When it comes to nature, most humans are rank amateurs when compared to the likes of the San hunters of Namibia and Botswana who can identify over 220 animals and 150 edible plants. Hanson holds that it is time to relearn old skills of observation. The good news is that the best classroom is just outside our back doors. Thoreau seldom ventured far from Walden Pond. After returning from his cruise on the "Beagle," Darwin continued his studies in his garden. The key is to "think small" and take the time to see, listen and smell. A good way to start is to crawl across your lawn. Or simply sit on the deck or patio and look and listen.

Hanson guarantees this will be transformative for individuals and society. When Covid forced people to stay at home, they began to seek relief in nature. The more they experienced the natural world, the more they wanted to learn—and share. The numbers of "backyard naturalists" grew. With that growth, came an unexpected expansion of a swath of research data bases as these new "citizen scientists" went online and reported their findings. The Great Sunflower Project, which tracks bees, for example, was deluged by reports. This has had a revolutionary impact on biological research. Scientists no longer have to necessarily spend time on the ground compiling data. It is available online. Researchers in many fields report a backlog of reports and data.

In "Exploring," the second section of "Close to Home," Hanson makes the case for applying the newly learned ability to "get small" to examining nature at all levels. Hanson notes that one of the most surprising aspects of "backyard biology" is not the number of small things living alongside us but the number that have gone unnoticed even by trained scientists.

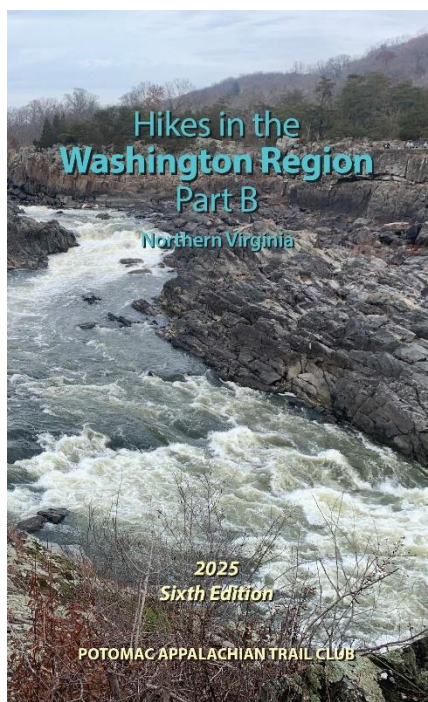
Compilation of community data collections based on reporting from "citizen scientists" has led to the recognition of thousands of new critters and what one of the scientists Hanson interviewed for the book called "the democratization of science." To sustain and expand this, we have to approach nature with an open mind in order to discover new species and their habits. He explains how this can be done in four chapters, which amount to a how-to guide as well as a survey of cutting edge academic work.

The final section of "Close to Home" deals with restoring the natural world at our doorsteps. How "backyard naturalist" might "lay out the welcome mat" to attract and maintain new species to their yards and parks, be it by planting milkweed to attract monarch butterflies, turning off deck lights, or building birdhouses. In this section, Hanson's refreshing optimism comes into full play. In this section he underscores his belief in Nature's resilience. The book hit the shelves in early 2025. It would be good to know if that optimism has diminished as research budgets and other nature-oriented programs have been cut.

"Close to Home" could easily be read over a weekend but that would defeat Hanson's intentions. He wrote the book as a companion, not to be read and shelved. Hanson writing has a conversational style infused with a self-deprecating sense of humor. He clearly enjoyed writing the book, packing it with quotes from sources ranging from Cervantes to Nietzsche. He cleverly intertwines serious interviews with world-class scientists and homespun observations.

Hanson includes 20 pages of endnotes, which are not only a sign of serious research but a good read in themselves. He also includes a 20-page bibliography and a useful appendix on citizen science resources available online. Early in the book, Hanson recommends an additional resource for exploring the natural: children. They are curious and untainted by conventional wisdom--and closer to the ground. If you don't have one, borrow one.

As the holidays near, do you have a good suggestion for a gift book? Kids' and young adult books are especially welcome. If so, send them along to wplimberg@aol.com. See you on the trail.



Hikes in the Washington Region Part B: Northern Virginia

Sixth Edition, 2025

By Alan Kahan

Just Published!

Written and edited by Larry Broadwell and William Needham

This new edition provides 26twenty-six samples of the rich byways for walkers in northern Virginia, all within easy driving distance of Washington, DC. It is part of a trilogy on DC area hiking. Part A covers counties in Maryland that lie

northwest of the capital. Part C covers the capital itself, as well as Maryland counties on and near the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. Like its companion guides, Part B offers a variety of hiking experiences. Some are short, pleasant walks. Others are longer, entail strenuous climbs, and/or cross rough terrain.

All three DC area guidebooks are meant to be taken on hikes. Despite their pocket size, maps clearly show streams, elevations, key landmarks, and trail configurations. Turn-by-turn directions in the text make it easy to drive to the trailhead and to follow the route highlighted on the map.

In all three guidebooks, most routes are grouped by their stream valleys or physiographic zones, as defined by their geology and topography. Each hike description starts with key data: name of the park, its contact information, map reference, hike distance, total ascent, and trailhead coordinates. An overview of the route, travel directions, and a detailed description of the hike follow. Individual hike descriptions include notes on landmarks and cumulative mileage distances from the starting point to notable points along the trail.

Last published in 2015, most of the routes in this edition are different in material aspects from those in the previous fifth edition. Some hikes are entirely new. The guidebook also offers hikers opportunities for longer treks to explore beyond the routes it describes. Experienced hikers will want this edition in order to experience some new hikes in northern Virginia as well as to have the latest updates for old favorites. And for those hikers new to our area, this guidebook and its two companions are a great introduction to many wonderful ways to enjoy the outdoors not too far from home.

Help Wanted

Corridor Monitors

Tom Lupp 301/663-6644, tlupp@verizon.net

Duke Hollow ~ VA North Trail District [PATC map 8]

Shelter Volunteer

Henry Horn ~ 301/498-8254, shelters@patc.net

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

Paul Gerhard Shelter ~ PATC map F

Pinefield Hut ~ PATC map 11 [SNP]

SNP North District Blue blazed ~ Map 9

Tom Moran, (703) 715-0050, 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 ~ Mathews Arm Trail to AT (1.7 mi)

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

SNP Central District Blue blazed [north] ~ Map 10

Patrick Wilson ~ pwilson@hsc.edu

Eugene "Buz" Groshong ~ 540-522-6749, buzgroshong@verizon.net

Josh Fuchs (703) 346-4842, jrfuchs48@gmail.com

Nicholson Hollow Trail [middle] ~ Indian Run Trail to upper Hughes River crossing (1.8mi)

SNP Central District Blue blazed [south] ~ Map 10

John Hedrick ~ 540/987-8659, 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 & 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

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

Dave Trone ~ 717-778-1308, traildavidt@gmail.com

Pete Brown 410-207-2921, 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)

Tuscarora Central ~ Map L

Bill Greenan ~ 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 ~ 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)

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)

Massanutten South ~ Map H

Paul Boisen, (540) 246-5662, 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 F

Mike Allen ~ 540-333-3994, 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, slynnccameron@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

Cabin John Trail ~ Seven Locks Rd to Tuckerman Lane

Prince William Forest Park

Dennis Calhoun, 703-583-4386, dennis_calhoun@comcast.net

Carl Nicholson, 703-314-6365, 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

PHT ~ Roosevelt Island parking lot to Spout Run (.1mi)

Maryland National Battlefield Parks – Antietam & Monocacy

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

shastalepore@msn.com

Antietam NBP

Final Attack Trail ~ Burnside Bridge to Snavely 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]