

Sept
2025

THE POTOMAC APPALACHIAN



- VolunteerFest Registration Closes Sept. 27th
- Volunteer Award Nominations
- Remembering Marion Park
- Konnarock Crew Works Possums Rest
- Meet the Elderberries
- Subscribe to our YouTube Channel
- President's Logbook
- What's that Flower?
- A Delightful Stay at Dunlodge Cabin
- "What on Earth?"
- Keep Calm and Read On
- The Indian Pass

VolunteerFest Registration Closes September 27th

By Iva Gillet



VolunteerFest is the perfect opportunity for PATC volunteers to celebrate their achievements, cultivate skills in new volunteer areas, and connect with others.

This event is open to all PATC member volunteers and is scheduled for **Saturday, October 11th**, beginning at 7 A.M. and ending with an evening Volunteer Award Ceremony and BBQ, followed by a bonfire. And don't forget about Happy Hour at 4 P.M.

Numerous interactive learning activities in a variety of PATC skill areas will be offered in the beauty of the Appalachian Mountains

at [Caroline Furnace Camp](#) in Fort Valley, Virginia. Check [here](#) for our evolving activity list. Activities do not require advance sign up.

Advance registration is \$25 and includes Friday and Saturday night onsite lodging plus Saturday night BBQ. Attendees may arrive after 3 P.M. Friday and enjoy group bonfires both Friday and Saturday nights. Sunday includes one or more nearby group hikes as you leave campus.

Be sure to register for PATC's VolunteerFest by **September 27**

[Learn more and register today.](#)

Volunteer Award Nominations

By Jayne Mayne

We are accepting online award nominations until September 15. This is your opportunity to let our top volunteers know that they are appreciated.

Our in person Volunteer Award Ceremony will be at [VolunteerFest](#) October 11. Award recipients in attendance will be honored.

- There are six top awards. There is no limit to the number of nominations you may submit.
- Club Leaders may nominate one top volunteer for the Hawksbill Award and unlimited for the volunteer Service Awards.

Detailed descriptions and the link to submit online nominations are

at <https://www.patc.net/volunteer-awards>.

Email VPVolunteerism@patc.net with questions.

[Click here](#) to learn more about our volunteer awards.



President Jim Fetig with 2024 Myron Avery Award Winner Lee Congdon

Remembering Marion Park

By Rush Williamson

“Marion Park was one of those behind-the-scenes characters who was essential to the success of the Appalachian Trail project.” -Mills Kelly



Jean Stephenson and Marion Park on the AT

Looking back to the birth of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in the 1930s, we can attribute its creation and success to some key individuals. One of those people was Marion Park.

Marion Park joined the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) in 1933. She was one of Myron Avery's closest associates

within PATC and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Marion started off by helping edit the club newsletter and subsequently becoming Club Secretary.

She was a close collaborator of Jean Stephenson on several trail-related projects. Marion and Jean maintained a side trail to the AT from the Meadow Spring and Buck Hollow trails in Shenandoah National Park. Marion and Jean functioned as Myron's essential office staff, typing as many as 20 letters a day for him.

In 1941 she replaced the secretary of ATC, Harlean James, who she had assisted since 1937. Marion excelled as a devoted secretary for both organizations and served in those positions until 1955.

Marion kept records of all the ATC and cross-over PATC meetings, often going out in the field with Myron and taking notes as he measured and noted deficiencies. The accuracy of those notes endures and was essential to the organization's governance, guidebooks, and maps in its first three decades.



Marion Park with Myron Avery



Marion Park on the Floor, 1939

Marion was also very active out in the field and was one of the core people that went with Avery to scout out and plan the AT's route and develop various trail maintaining clubs.

Marion formed the Maine Appalachian Trail Club and served as treasurer from 1937-1957. She was a member of the group that accompanied Myron when he wheeled the trail up Katahdin and placed the sign on it.

Every organization needs a Marion Park at its quiet center to keep it grounded, organized,

and forward moving. Though you might not find Marion's name in many headlines, we remember her as a vibrant and driven PATC and ATC member and an essential stakeholder in the creation of one beloved trail.

Members, we invite you to join us at the Appalachian Trail Museum's *Hall of Fame Banquet* to honor Marion and other legends of the AT. The event will be held at the Bavarian

Inn in Shepherdstown, WV, on Saturday, November 23, from 11 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. Details and tickets are available on the Museum's [website](#).

Konnarock Crew Works Possums Rest

Jon Rindt



Clark Britt drilling into bolder to make steps

Possums Rest is a viewpoint on the AT just outside the SNP northern boundary. Continuing north on the AT from the viewpoint rockface, AT hikers are challenged by a series of irregular, rocky switchbacks. A project to make the descent/ascent of the rocky switchbacks safer and more negotiable was approved and funded by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

The ATC Konnarock Trail Crew was chosen to execute this project based on their trail construction and rock work experience. The Crew is managed by Jerry Kyle, ATC High Country Regional Manager for Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee. Jerry, Crew leaders Ruth Mosholder and Becky Richardson, surveyed the project in April and decided on June 22-29 as the Crew work week. As it turned out, that period

happened to

be the hottest week of the year at that time. An early start, lots of water, and cool down breaks were the order of the day. The only real break came on Friday when the Crew enjoyed a work site covered by a cloud the whole work day.

Even though the work site is basically a rock field, finding the proper rock to fit a specific need became a real challenge. And since the rock locations varied, setting up a high line to move the rocks was impracticable, so rocks had to be moved by a multiple person web basket one step at a time. The Crew was able to shape some of the rocks using pre-drilled holes and feathers and wedges to split the rock. A steep area was blocked by a large boulder that couldn't be moved so a series of steps needed to be drilled and shaped. This process took a lot of time due to hardness of the boulder.



Jerry Kyle, Konnarock Crew Program manager working on erosion control

A time-consuming chore involved making gravel to secure and stabilize each rock step after placement. Constant hammering/busting of rocks to create the gravel became the lead sound during the work day.

After six full work days, the project resulted in a significant improvement with many new rock steps and smoother/safer tread. A special thanks to the Konnarock Crew's effort on a hot and challenging week in PATC territory. It was the Crew's first work trip on PATC AT trails and we welcome them back in the future.



Helen Vettori hammering wedges to split a rock

Meet the Elderberries

By Eileen Bakke

Author Bio: *Eileen Bakke is an avid outdoorswoman, long-time PATC member, and PATC donor. She lives in Arlington, VA with her husband and enjoys exploring cabins and trails throughout the region.*



Elderberries Susan Yates, Eileen Bakke, Barbara Ryan, and Jenny Cromartie hiking the AT near the Janet Kohn Memorial Cabin, October 2024

I was introduced to PATC in 2011 by our youngest son Peter, an outdoor educator who was studying for his Masters at the University of Virginia. Through UVA's outdoor program, he learned about PATC's cabin rentals. He rented the Johnson Cabin, a primitive cabin near

Charlottesville, and invited my husband and me to camp and hike with him for the weekend

to celebrate my husband's birthday. He planned all the meals, hiking itineraries, and other activities.

After a gorgeous fall weekend of hiking, I was hooked on cabin camping and wanted to learn more about PATC. For Christmas I gave Peter and myself PATC memberships. Over the next six years, we rented numerous cabins and invited others to join us to celebrate Mother's Day, family birthdays, and summer solstices.

Fast forward to 2021. I had become a PATC lifetime member, captivated by the organization's mission to protect the AT, making the outdoors welcoming and accessible for everyone, as well as PATC's strong volunteer and community culture.

During those years, Peter moved to Seattle, and my husband could no longer hike due to poor health. During the COVID lockdown, I longed for the respite and refreshment offered by the PATC cabins and surrounding hikes. In 2022 I rented the Glass House Cabin and invited several friends from church who I knew shared my love of hiking and "roughing it." We spent a delightful weekend exploring the area and getting to know one another better.

We named ourselves the Elderberries, as we are mostly 70-something grandmothers who refuse to grow old. We plan a fall and spring "glamping" and hiking weekend each year and eagerly anticipate our time together. We have rented seven modern cabins in Virginia, and this fall we hope to broaden our horizons to a cabin in Maryland. While we are devoted to husbands, adult children, and grandchildren, there is something delicious about getting away with girlfriends to hike, tell stories, laugh, roast s'mores, and relax in God's beautiful creation.

We look forward to exploring new cabins and new hiking venues. Each cabin is well appointed and meticulously cared for. We enjoy reading about the history of each cabin, poring over hiking maps, learning about the local flora and fauna, and adding our reflections in the logbooks. We marvel that every need is anticipated and provided for, and we celebrate the many PATC volunteers who make our stays so carefree and enjoyable.



Elderberries Susan Yates, Eileen Bakke, Barbara Ryan, and Jenny Cromartie hiking the AT near the Janet Kohn Memorial Cabin, October 2024



Photo by Jenny Cromartie: Elderberries Jenny Cromartie, Barbara Ryan, Eileen Bakke, and Susan Yates in front of the Vining Cabin, May 2025

I want to encourage anyone who thinks their hiking and camping days are behind them to join PATC and experience the beauty and respite of their nearly 50 cabins in four states. There are cabins for almost every group's ability and size, from primitive to quite modern. There are cabins you can hike to and plenty more where you can drive right up to the front door.

You are never too old to have a new adventure! In the spirit of the Elderberries, keep moving, learning, and growing. We have "graduated" from tent camping and sleeping on the ground, but because of the great mission and work of PATC, we can still get out our hiking boots and backpacks, build an outdoor fire, and glory in the woods and trails so close to home and yet blissfully far from the traffic and noise of the District of Columbia area.

Subscribe to our YouTube Channel!

By Chris Irick

PATC has recently launched its very own [YouTube channel](#)! With the help of a few volunteers and staff, we've started to shoot and upload videos. Our goal is to build an online community by hosting member stories and their activities, showcasing club cabins, highlighting volunteer experiences and opportunities, interviewing hikers along the trails, and so much more.

We want our community to have a place to view experiences and passions in a video format that will inspire current and potential members to get more involved in PATC.

- **CHANNEL:** Visit our [PATC channel](#), SUBSCRIBE to the channel, and LIKE a video or two. Our goal is to build an online community of over 1,000 subscribers by the end of 2025!
- **INFORMATION:** If you have an idea for a video or would like more information, please reach out to Marketing@patc.net
- **VIDEO SHORTS:** If you would like to share a club experience at a PATC volunteer event, send in a succinct (less than 60 seconds) video from your phone to Marketing@patc.net

- **CONTENT VIDEOS:** If you are interested in helping us create video content and have any of the skills listed in the PATC YouTube Channel / Content Creators / [Help Wanted](#) section (bottom of the page), reach out to Marketing@patc.net.

We plan for regular uploads of videos in the weeks to come!

Check out some of our vidoes below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1noWya5tIRE>

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/TBwmZUeX7C8>

President's Logbook

By Jim Fetig



Enjoying the colors on Big Devil's Stairs in Shenandoah National Park

It's almost crunch time.

The time when crispy leaves litter the trails and crunchy steps mark the change in seasons. Think of breakfast hikes. Each footfall stirs the dry leaves in the same way a spoon searches a cereal bowl full of Rice Krispies. The familiar snap, crackle, and pop mark time and the passing miles. It's a glorious symphony of sound and color.

Always mind the dry leaves. I wish I had a dollar for every time I've stuck a hard landing after my sliding feet have launched me airborne. It's slick out there.

It's also crunch time for the club budget cycle. Now is when we are planning next year's budget.

First, the good news. Council directed that the club reduce its budget deficit. As of this writing, we are on track to meet expectations. Furthermore, the finance committee, led by treasurer Allison Kirsch, has added rigor to the budget development process.

The bad news is that financial modeling suggests a large deficit for next year. We will have to make the proverbial “hard choices” to bring it down to earth.

We have applied to the National Parks Foundation for a significant grant to support our centennial celebration. In so doing, we plan to feature our National Park Service partners, recruit and recognize volunteers, and use selected paid media to tell our story more broadly than ever. We really don’t want to be the best kept secret in the National Capitol Region any longer.

Of note, we’ve received several donations from non-members who appreciate our trail stewardship. There is a certain amount of self-satisfaction in volunteer work, but it is especially nice to know that members of the hiking public acknowledge our efforts.

As we slide into fall, several events are noteworthy. The Hoodlums will be doing trail maintenance demos at Dickey Ridge for Wilderness Day on September 6 and National Public Lands Day on September 27. In addition, the Hoodlums annual training workshop on September 20 – 21 is fully subscribed.

Volunteer service is the heart of PATC’s ethos and culture. More than a thousand of us regularly commit time and effort. We want to honor our volunteers’ efforts and offer an opportunity to network, meet the club’s leadership, and ask questions. Please join the celebration of our volunteers at VolunteerFest on October 11 at the Caroline Furnace retreat center.

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.

This month shows notable plants to be seen in fall, mostly Asters and Goldenrod flowers and a variety of berries.

Goldenrods (*Solidago*) are known for their sprays of multiple, small, flowers. Seven Goldenrod species grow on Old Rag.

Early Goldenrod (*S. juncea*) and **Sharp-leaved Goldenrod** (*S. arguta*) have multiple, curved clusters of flowers branching at the top of the main stem with flowers only on one side of each stem. If you see such a Goldenrod in July or August, it is likely the Early

Goldenrod, as its name implies. Its basal leaves taper gradually to the stem and the edges have sharp teeth. Sharp-leaved Goldenrod basal leaves are egg-shaped, narrowing to a slender stem and the edges of the bottom leaves are sharply, double-toothed.

Two species have flower clusters growing from the leaf axils. *S. flexicaulis* is called **Zigzag** or **Broad-leaved Goldenrod**. The stem bends or zigzags from axil to axil, though what clearly distinguishes this species are the sharply-toothed, egg-shaped leaves—the only species where the leaves are wide up the stem. **Blue-stemmed** or **Wreath Goldenrod** (*S. caesia*) supposedly has a blue stem, but I find that unreliable. Long, narrow leaves separate the flower clusters growing from the axils. Instead of standing upright, it often leans over forming an arch.

Three species have straight clusters of flowers at the top of the plant with flowers all around the stem. **Erect Goldenrod** (*S. erecta*)

and **Silverrod** (*S. bicolor*) leaves are sessile (attach directly to the stem without a supporting stalk. Erect Goldenrod flowers are yellow; Silverrod, white with a yellow center. **Rand's Goldenrod** (*S. randii*) is uncommon. It only grows in crevices on open rock ledges like Old Rag. Its lower leaves have stems or taper to the stalk. The leaves become smaller up the stem.

White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricatus*) is topped by a flattish cluster of white flowers. The lower leaves are elongated heart shaped with coarse teeth. Up the stem, the leaves are smaller and the heart-shaped indentation at the petiole may not be there

The common and scientific names of **Heart-leaved Aster** (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*) derive from the shape of the leaves. The heart-shape is often elongated, and the indentation at the stalk may be flattened, especially upward on the stem. The leaves are less than three inches wide and are toothed. The ray florets are blue or light violet. It is also known as **Blue Wood Aster**.



Early Goldenrod

Calico Aster (*Is. lateriflorum*) has lots of small (less than ½ inch) flowers and small, narrow leaves. The bracts under the flowers are narrow and neither stiff nor spreading differentiating it from other Asters with small flowers. Flowers are white or purple-tinged, often with a purple disk in the center.



Heart leaved/Blue Wood Aster

The common and scientific names of **Wavy-leaved Aster** (*S. undulatum*) derive from the wavy margins of the leaves. From the widest point of the leaf, the two sides of the leaf pinch in and then widen. They may narrow partway or all the way to the center rib of the leaf but then widen again to clasp the plant stem. The leaves have few or no teeth. It has light blue-violet rays.

The last flower to bloom in our area is **Witch Hazel** (*Hamamelis virginiana*). Witch Hazel often grows as a thick, shrubby clump, though sometimes as a small tree. Witch Hazel's oval leaves have wavy, rounded teeth. The flowers appear as the leaves turn yellow and fall, so the flowers stand out on leafless branches. The flowers have four long, thin, yellow petals and often grow in bunches, so you see yellow

streamers in the wind. The fruit is a fuzzy, one-centimeter capsule with remnants of the four sepals remaining. It takes over a year to mature, so it remains on the bush with the new flowers. The capsule explodes to propel the seed away from the parent plant.

Here are some berries to look for on Old Rag:

Indian Cucumber-root (*Medeola virginiana*) has berries standing up on top of the plant. In late summer the berries turn black and the center of the upper whorl of leaves below them turns red.

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a small shrub growing on the rock outcrops with clusters of dangling black fruit.

Mountain Holly (*Ilex montana*) is deciduous (losing leaves in winter), unlike the evergreen English and American Holly species famous as Christmas decorations, so its small clusters of red fruits are distinctive.

A Delightful Stay at Dunlodge Cabin

By Jess LaPolla



Photo of Dunlodge by Trish Strat

Built by the Dunn brothers in 1940, Dunlodge is a gem in the PATC cabins system. Located within Charlottesville city limits, near the University of Virginia (UVA), this modern home is ideal for sports fans, American History enthusiasts, and those looking to experience the Charlottesville area. The university football stadium and John Paul Jones Arena are both within walking distance.

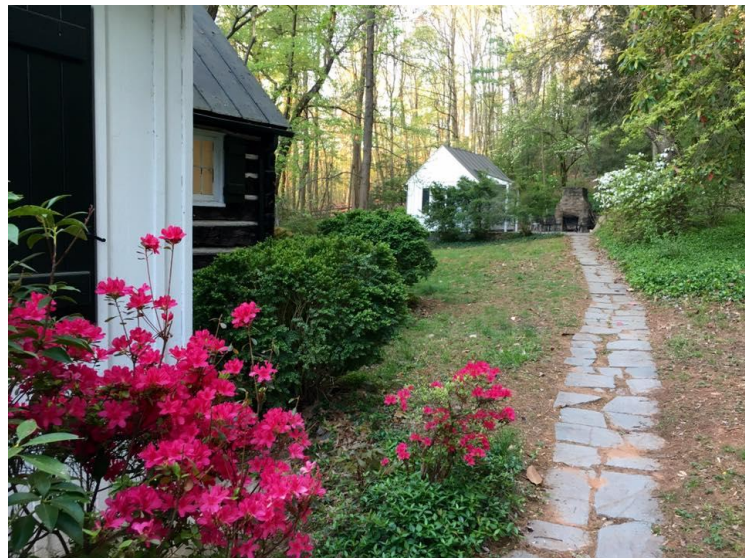
Surrounding the cabin are landscaped gardens, a large outdoor patio with a rock fireplace to enjoy on crisp evenings, a horse barn, and a series of walking trails, including a short connector trail linking the cabin to the UVA Observatory Hill Trail.

Located on a secluded wooded property, the cabin offers a quiet and remote experience despite its front country location.

The house is uniquely constructed, showcasing log siding, sloped roofs, step down rooms, rose bud flooring, indoor fireplaces, wood beam ceilings, a large sunroom, and a formal dining room. It brings a sense of enchantment and whimsy for anyone who stays here.

Complete with four bedrooms, 2.5 baths, an all-season sunroom, central heat and air, and a variety of other amenities, Dunlodge has all the comforts of home.

Dunlodge is also conveniently located near wineries, breweries, restaurants, and many historic sites. Visit [Monticello](#), Thomas



Jefferson's home, which, along with UVA, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The [Kluge Ruhe Aboriginal Art Museum](#) is the only museum in the country dedicated to Indigenous Australian art.

Dine in and enjoy creating a meal in the full kitchen, or dine out at one of the many restaurants in town. Start your morning with a cup of joe from [Shenandoah Joe Coffee Roasters](#), or enjoy a delicious meal at [ELTio](#).

This cabin is available to PATC members only. If you are interested in becoming a member to access our dozens of incredible cabins, click [here](#).

"What on Earth?"

Article and photos by Ray Barbehenn



Snowy Orchid



Spotted Coralroot Orchid

Orchids are renowned around the world for their beautiful flowers. There are over 25,000 species of them, mainly in tropical areas, but over 60 species grow in our area. However, many of our species are hard to find, and you might not realize that some of them are orchids! It also takes some luck to find them while they are in bloom.

A Showy Orchid (left photo) had a gorgeous nine-inch-tall flower spike on April 30. It was blooming in Duke Hollow (northern Virginia along the AT). If you were scouring the woods for morels, there was a good chance you would see this species. The Spotted Coralroot Orchid (right photo) was also blooming in the same area at this time. However, this was only the second one that I have ever seen.

It had no leaves – just foot-tall flower stalks! The lower flowers on their stalks were oldest (blooming first), while the top flower buds were just starting to open. Note the white lower petals that popped open on the flowers of both species. These petals are spotted on the Spotted Coralroot. The upper two petals and three sepals (the outer covers of the flower buds) form a hood-like structure in both species. Orchids have very complicated flowers, and some of the oddities of these plants are described below.

How do Coralroot Orchids grow flower stalks without having green leaves?

- A. They use stored energy (starch) from their roots.
- B. They parasitize fungi to get the needed nutrition.
- C. They parasitize tree roots to get the needed nutrition.
- D. They had leaves but they died back.

The answer is at the bottom of the page!

Fun Facts and Musings

Let's get past gawking at the beauty of the orchids' flowers, even if only briefly. Orchids are remarkably different from most other plants in several major ways, including the way their flowers work, the tiny size of their seeds, and their early growth.

The complexity of orchid flowers makes one wonder how they ever manage to get pollinated. They are unlike the flowers of most plants, which produce an abundance of powdery pollen. The pollen of most flowers gets dusted on the insects or birds that visit them, and is then brushed onto other flowers when the pollinators visit them. So, where is the powdery pollen in orchids? There is none. Instead, orchid flowers put all of their pollen into a small number of tiny balloon-shaped packets. And, these packets are hidden under a covering that a pollinator must bump open to expose them. If all goes well for the orchid, a pollinator will get some of the sticky pollen packets glued to it before it leaves to visit

another orchid flower. Successful pollination only occurs if a pollen packet gets pulled off the pollinator by the even stickier surface on the female part of another orchid flower. The whole process seems as unlikely to work as an odd Rube Goldberg contraption. Orchid flowers may need to wait for weeks or months for pollination to occur, which probably explains why home-grown orchids often hold their blooms for so long.

Pollinated orchid flowers produce seed pods that contain the tiniest seeds of any plant – "dust seeds." In different orchid species, these can range anywhere from microscopic (0.05 mm) to the size of a pinhead (1.5 mm). A pod with microscopic dust seeds could easily release a million seeds! However, they are only able to form such an impressive number of lightweight seeds by leaving out any nutritional reserves for the baby plants! There is no mass of starch (the stored energy that we appreciate for our own nutrition from seeds like corn and rice).

Orchid dust seeds are blown far and wide by the wind, but they have a very small chance of survival. A one-in-a-million chance might not be far from the correct odds. Because an orchid seed contains no nutrition for it to grow, it must land where certain fungi are present that can rescue it. In other words, orchids produce seeds that are helpless to germinate and grow on their own; they need fungal rootlets ("mycelia") to share some of their sugar and other nutrients with them. Why would a fungus want to do that?

Such a cozy interaction may seem strange, but it is abundantly common in nature for fungi to associate with plants in this way; about 80 percent of plant species are engaged in these interactions! What is strange is that the orchid does not readily return the favor, as plants usually do. For two to four years, the orchid grows underground as a parasite of the fungus. The orchid spends this time accumulating starch in its root (similar to a ginger root). At this point, most soil-living orchids send up their first leaves and photosynthesize at least part of their own sugars.

They can eventually become self-sufficient, and finally share some of their sugars with the fungi. Perhaps 99% of orchid species grow up this way, though they might still get nutritional help from fungi, especially if they live in a shady area. The Coralroot Orchid is example of the 1% of orchid species that remain parasitic their entire lives. Their reddish stems and flowers may help attract pollinators, but this color also indicates that they lack chlorophyll (green pigments) for photosynthesis.

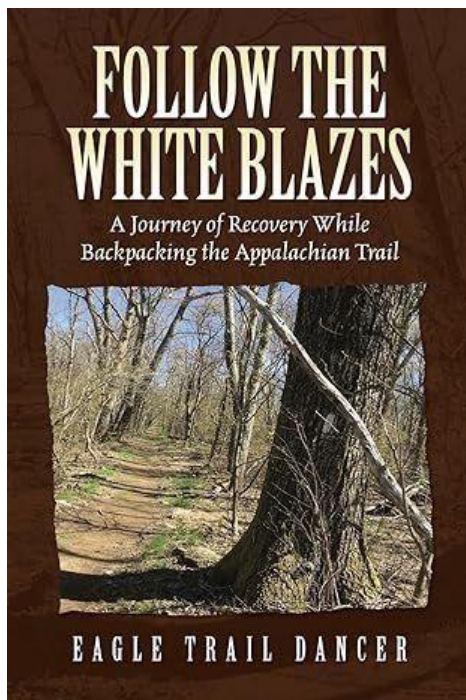
It is not surprising that many of our orchid species are rare and endangered. They have complex life cycles, difficulties getting pollinated, and more difficulties getting their seedlings established. Those that are doing relatively well, such as the Showy Orchid, are worth a walk in the woods.

Answer: A, B, or C! Here's why: Coralroot Orchids grow a stalk of flowers using the starch stored in their thick coral-colored root (Answer A). But, Coralroot Orchids have no leaves (ever), meaning that the starch in their root was made from the sugars that they absorbed from a fungus's rootlets (Answer B). However, the fungus got this sugar from a tree's roots. Therefore, the orchid's early nutrition ultimately came from parasitizing a tree's roots (Answer C). Yes – orchids are very beautiful, and very odd.

Send your photos and ideas for topics to Ray at rvb@umich.edu.

Keep Calm and Read On

By Wayne Limberg



At first glance, "Follow the White Blazes," this month's book selection seemed to be yet another personal account of someone's completion of the Appalachian Trail (AT). But on opening the book, I realized that this was something different, even special. Yes, it was the story of one man's hike—PATC member Eagle Trail Dancer—of the AT. In this case it was a section hike. But it ran from 1988 to 2023, making it one of the longest on record. Following the white blazes, however, was a metaphor for an even more impressive journey: the author's battle with alcoholism. While the white blazes kept Eagle Trail Dancer on the AT, Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 steps kept him sober.

A bit of background: Eagle Trail Dancer is the author's trail name. He uses it as pen name in keeping with AA's public relations policy, which requires members to maintain their anonymity when it comes to the media. Eagle Trail Dancer does not claim to represent or speak for AA. Nor does he claim to be a therapist or doctor. "Follow the White Blazes" is a personal story. He had two reasons for writing it: give hope to anyone struggling with alcoholism, and shed light on the joys and challenges of backpacking and how it helped him maintain four decades of sobriety.

Eagle Trail Dancer's alcoholism seemed pre-destined. His father returned from WWII with what is now diagnosed as PTSD and turned to alcohol. When he was sober, he was kind and generous. When he drank, he was cruel and abusive to his family. Eventually, Eagle Trail Dancer's mother also turned to drink. Both parents died as a result of alcoholism.

Eagle Trail Dancer spent most of his childhood trying to avoid his father's wrath and in turn developed PTSD himself. He began drinking in his teens, beginning a downward spiral. By his early 20s, he was an alcoholic, experiencing blackouts, trouble with the law, and serious depression. One night in 1975, he hit bottom and went down on his knees and prayed—and then called AA, which put him in touch with two sponsors who started him on his road to recovery. He had a rocky start. He was not convinced he needed AA, believing that he could handle his drinking problems on his own. He failed and turned in earnest to AA.

The passages on alcoholism and AA are some of the best and most revealing in "Follow the White Blazes." Alcohol remains the most abused substance in America. Eagle Trail Dancer provides valuable insights into the disease and to AA's approach to combatting it. While he points to genetic and environmental reasons for his drinking problems, at no time does he play the victim. With the help of AA and a belief in "a higher power," he takes responsibility for his actions and his efforts to find a cure.

One of those cures was the AT. As a child Eagle Trail Dancer took refuge during the summers on his grandparents' Pennsylvania farm. The first chapter in "Follow the White Blazes" is an account of those times titled "A Spark of Mountain Fever." That spark never died. October 1988 found Eagle Trail Dancer at the AT crossing of Route 522 outside Front Royal starting a hike in Shenandoah National Park (SNP). It would turn out to be a trial-and-error learning experience in terms of gear, weather, food, and water. In the beginning, he never intended to section hike the entire trail but after a few longer backpacking trips, he realized it was possible. His first excursions were in Virginia and Maryland.

He soon developed a routine where he hiked once or twice a year with some trips heading north and some south. He learned about shuttle services and found some hiking partners, but for the most part preferred being on the trail alone or "independently together" when walking with a friend. With 35 years on the trail, Eagle Trail Dancer saw a lot of changes. Never an ultra-lite hiker, his pack dropped a good 20 pounds over the years. Half his time on the trail was pre-cellphone. His advice on food, first aid, safety and training are on target as are as his notes on the history of the AT.

Eagle Trail Dancer discloses that he never liked writing in school because of his learning disabilities. Like his sobriety and completion of the AT, his book is striking testimony to his ability to overcome challenges. His writing style is straightforward and anecdotal. He also salts his prose with poems at times. Some maps, additional photos, and an index would have been useful additions. Gear, first aid, and food lists might have been included in appendices rather than in the text itself. Still, "Follow the White Blazes" is a good

introduction to anyone considering section hiking the AT. Eagle Trail Dancer gives shout outs to PATC and other trail clubs; it would have been good to hear more about his trail maintenance work with PATC though this may have presented problems in terms of anonymity.

Do you have a good read? If so, send it wplimberg@aol.com. In the meantime, keep reading. See you on the trail.

The Indian Pass

Article by Dave Kirkwood, Photos courtesy of Jerry Gnann and Wanda Knapik



The Indian Pass, elevation of 2,874 feet, is a rocky gap in the mass of mountain peaks over 4,000 feet known as the High Peaks Wilderness in the northeastern portion of New York's Adirondack Park. The pass was likely part of a series of trails used by indigenous people of various tribes, including the Iroquois and Algonquians. The name itself suggests its historical significance to native populations but it also provided important access for early European explorers.

I had read about the present trail: "The Indian Pass hike in the Adirondack Park is a challenging but rewarding trek, known for its historical significance and rugged terrain. The hike, near Lake Placid, involves navigating past historical sites, under the cliffs of Wallface Mountain, and through boulder fields." I had hoped to experience the route myself, but over the last few years, every time friends came to visit Saranac Lake, which is a short drive

from the High Peaks, the emphasis was always on paddling and biking, allowing no time to hike the pass.

Fortunately, in June, just a couple of days after arriving at our home in the Adirondacks for the summer, I saw Indian Pass listed in Adirondack Mountain Club's (ADK, though the same acronym seems to apply to everything up here) offerings and immediately signed up to join the hike. It turned out to be one of the most arduous, yet extremely gratifying hikes I have done in quite some time.

The mid-June day was unseasonably warm and humid for the area, with highs in the nineties. The hike leader was Wanda Knapik with four other hikers; another Dave, Kari, and Jerry. The out and back hike totaled close to thirteen miles with 1,530 feet of elevation gain and took us ten hours...that's right, ten hours! A "New York minute" is very short; an "Adirondack mile" is very long!) We began our trek at the parking area of Loj Lodge, an iconic jumping off point for High Peak baggers, operated by the ADK.

The hike started out innocently enough, with a stroll around peaceful Heart Lake. But soon after leaving civilization and entering the wilderness the trail turned into a muddy, sometimes stream-like, meander through dense forest. In a couple miles we began climbing while paralleling the beautifully cascading Indian Pass Brook, which the trail criss crossed several times on rather difficult stream crossings. Though marked sporadically with the standard Adirondack, metal disk trail blazes, the path was occasionally hard to follow, disappearing into brief, but tough, bushwhacks. As the angle of ascent increased, we entered a section of hand over foot boulder scrambling that seemed to go on for miles. It was great!

The heat and exertion of the difficult climbing was exhausting until we received a reprieve. The house-sized boulders we negotiated at the top of the pass concealed cave-like crevices containing ice and snow, a remnant left behind by the brutal northern winters. It turns out this is one of the only places in the park to harbor ice year-round. It was like walking into a refrigerator, and all of us tried to linger as long as possible to enjoy the cooling air currents. But we had yet to reach our turning point at Summit Rock. At an elevation of 2,880 feet it seemed misnamed. The notoriety of the "rock" became evident as we emerged from the trees to a magnificent view of High Peak's Wallface Mountain's namesake cliffs, towering 800 feet into the sky directly above us.

After a much-appreciated lunch break at this breathtaking spot we began retracing our steps back through the pass. We stopped, below the boulder field, at a place known as Scott's Clearing, where a massive stone wall traverses Indian Pass Creek. The long-abandoned structure dates to the 19th century logging days when it acted as a dam to

contain the waters of the creek, controlling the flow to facilitate floating the timber to market. We cooled off briefly in the creek before continuing the remaining four-mile descent.

The afternoon's increasing heat was compounded by the deerflies that constantly buzzed around our heads, no doubt attracted by the ever-escalating flow of sweat. So, a side trip to Rocky Falls, an area of the creek with a lean-to overlooking beautiful cascades, was extremely welcome. We enjoyed a much needed, core temperature-lowering, extended swim in the extremely cold waters of the large pool at the bottom of the falls. After our refreshing dip the remaining two miles back to the parking lot were less arduous, though we were all still glad when we reached our cars.

We are privileged here in the North Country (Adirondacks) to have such a myriad of world-class hiking opportunities, virtually at our doorstep. Whether one is looking for a major trekking adventure or a simple stroll, the trails to dramatic scenery are abundant. If this sounds like the type of outdoor experience you would enjoy check, out the [Adirondack Mountain Club](#) for help planning a visit.

Help Wanted for September

Corridor Monitors

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

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

Ashby Gap North, VA South 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]

Bearfence Hut ~ PATC map 10 [SNP]

SNP North District Blue blazed ~ Map 9

Tom Moran, 703/715-0050, twmoran19@gmail.com

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

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)

Dickey Ridge* from MP 2.1 to Snead Farm Road (2.6mi)

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

Pam Heinrich, 540/290-5595, pamheinrich13@gmail.com

Mark Perschel, 434/987-0266, 202-401-8264, markperschel@juno.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)

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 E

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, slynncameron@gmail.com

Bear Draft ~ FR 535 to Wild Oak Trail sec C (#716)(1.5mi)

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)