

Charlottesville Chapter Potomac Appalachian Trail Club

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Scheduled hikes and trail maintenance: The schedule below lists planned activities. Weather and unexpected events may change our plans, with some decisions not made until the morning of the activity. Normal meeting place is the east end of the parking lot of Albemarle High School, Hydraulic Road, Charlottesville. Other meeting arrangements can be made in advance with the hike leader. The activity leader may leave at any time after 9 a.m. The leader may assess people's suitability to participate in events. Participants will sign a liability waiver. People carpool to the trailhead, and passengers are expected to offer \$5 towards driver's expenses. First-time hikers should contact the leader before joining the hike.

Notices:

Dues. If you belong only to the Charlottesville Chapter, it's time to send money; \$5 for e-mail delivery, \$12 for paper. Membership in the parent club costs more but gives you information about a larger outdoor organization, discounts at the PATC store, access to more cabins, and supports efforts to protect trails and land for hiking.

Hike Schedule. Hikes in this schedule have a greater chance of being changed due to snow or ice on roads in Shenandoah National Park.

Jan. 12: Blackrock from Furnace Mountain Trail; 9 miles; John Shannon. This roughly 9-mile hike starts with a steady uphill in the morning. Lunch will be near scenic Blackrock with a view of Shenandoah Valley, then return. **Directions:** I-64 west to Rockfish Gap (24 miles, exit on to 250W into Waynesboro, turn right on 340 to head north to Grottoes (about 15 miles), turn right at flashing light onto Route 663 (roughly east) and go about 3 miles until the pavement ends.

Jan. 19: Jarman Gap to Turk Mountain Trail; 9 miles; Lindsay Brown. This route proceeds north on the Appalachian Trail, with an overlook at Sawmill Run, and return. Some ups and downs, perhaps a token stream crossing. This section of trail is best known as part of the summer Sugar

Hollow circuit. **Directions:** West on I-64 to Rockfish Gap (24 miles) and north about 9 miles on Skyline Drive to Jarmans Gap parking on right.

Jan. 26: Looking for and clearing early winter storm damage. Andy Willgruber may want help clearing Little Calf Mountain, or we may make an early strike against the alien plant garlic mustard on the AT.

Feb. 2: Appalachian Trail; ~5 miles; James Groves. We'll start at Rockfish Gap and head south. **Directions:** Take I-64 west to Rockfish Gap.

Feb. 9: Hoover Camp; 8 or 9 miles; John Shannon. From Skyline Drive, we descend to Hoover Camp (normal lunch stop), gently climb to Milam Gap, then back to the start on the Appalachian Trail. A couple of stream crossings. **Directions:** 29N for 14 miles to Ruckersville, left on 33W for 15 miles to Swift Run Gap, about 10 miles north to Bootens Gap (just before MP 55), parking on right.

Feb. 16: Hawksbill/Crescent Rock/Betty's Rock; < 5 miles; Iva Gillet. Come get HIGH on the Park as we climb to its highest peak, Hawksbill, at 4050' with 360-degree views. If it's a clear day, we'll have spectacular views into the Valley of the town of Luray and points north toward Washington DC. After our 3 -mile circuit hike, we will proceed on an out-and-back hike to Crescent Rock and Betty's Rock for more views. This will be a great hike for newcomers, children, or those who

want amazing views without much distance. Dress warmly as it may be windy on top! **Directions:** Take Route 33 to Swift Run Gap entrance station. Go 19 miles north, past Big Meadows to Milepost 46.7 to start the hike from the Hawksbill parking lot.

Feb. 23: Trail maintenance. Same options as for January.

March 1: Crabtree Falls; 4 miles; James Groves. Up Crabtree Falls and down. Steep in places, where there are steps. Spectacular views of waterfalls especially if there has been rain. Longer versions of this hike, heading to The Priest are possible. **Note:** There is a per-car fee to use the parking lot. **Directions:** Go south on Route 29 to Route 56 south of Lovingston, then west (about 1 hour driving time).

March 8: Hazel River 8.6 miles; John Shannon. This circuit is in the central district of Shenandoah National Park and takes White Rocks, Hazel River, Hazel Mt and other trails. There are stream crossings so high water may force us to backtrack. **Directions:** Take 29N to Madison, then 231 to Sperryville, 211 to Thornton Gap, Skyline Drive south 2 miles to Meadow Spring parking.

March 22: Elliott Knob; 10 miles; John Shannon. This hike is west of Staunton. Uphill most of the morning; downhill most of the afternoon. Scenic view from Elliott Knob and trails leading to it. No major stream crossings. **Directions:** After taking I-64 to I-81,

there are a few ways to get to Buffalo Gap. From there, continue on 42 about a mile past Buffalo Gap, turn right on 688 and go about 3.8 miles to trailhead, which is at the top of a rise after climbing out of a valley with a stream. About 55 miles each way.

News: Ursula Rayhrer, who joined this club in 1991, died in November 2007.

Past hike reports follow.

Sept. 15: Grooms Ridge/Wild Oak Trail, 9.6 miles

Reported by Marian Styles

Could the day have been more perfect for a hike? I think not. Last week's heat had skeddaddled and taken the humidity with it. We enjoyed sunshine and temperatures in the high 60s.

Another plus was that several folks we hadn't seen in awhile joined us. Signing up for leader Valerie Lopez's adventure were Natasha Schuh, John Shannon, Brian Muszynski & Beulah, Greg Fife, Jere Bidwell, Felicia Marston, Michael Seth and me.

This strenuous loop in George Washington Forest north of Churchville starts on Wild Oak Trail with a 4-mile climb. They don't call this area Grindstone Mountain for nothing!



George Washington National Forest from Grindstone Mt. area.

Some good viewpoints made the effort worthwhile, and we stopped at one of them for lunch. Valerie, who had fortified us before the hike with brownies, brought them out again. Along with John's lemon raspberry cake and our own lunches, we enjoyed quite a feast from our picturesque perch.

Despite having expended considerable effort up to this point, we weren't even quite halfway, so it was back to the trail and more uphill. We all made it, though, and were treated to some lovely views for our efforts.

Sept. 22: Clearing Little Calf Mountain

Reported by John Shannon

Everyone who showed up today had read the newsletter and knew that it was a clearing day. Fortunately for us, Gene Whitaker joined us instead of another work expedition he had expected. While Andy Willgruber and Gene picked up the mower and drove it up the hill, Marian Styles, Liz Young and I walked up Little Calf Mountain. The road to the top was in excellent condition, with no major clearing needed as is often the case. However, the last part had filled in and was a little too narrow for the truck but wide enough for the mower. Gene took the mower and flattened a large patch of briars we have attacked with hand tools in the past, then areas dominated by small sumac. The rest of us were watching Gene and cutting sumac and briars with hand tools and carrying cut material to a pile to make it easier for the mower. Another activity was disturbing some insects which buzzed around me until one tried out its stinger on me.



Everything must go: Gene Whittaker mows briars and sumac to open up a grassy area on Little Calf Mt.

Offerings for lunch included grapes, jerky, almonds, chocolate raspberry cake. Afterwards, Gene finished mowing another patch that had not been mowed for some time. Before long, some of us wanted to leave to miss football crowds and escape the heat. Gene wanted to keep mowing, if provided with more anti-oxidants. Finally, he also decided he'd had enough time in the sun.

Our productive day was due to Gene's determination and skill with the mower, being able to spend all our time on the top rather than the road to the top, and a mower that kept running almost all the time.

Oct. 6: Hazel Country

Reported by John Shannon

Today was the second joint hike for Charlottesville and Southern Shenandoah Valley Chapters of PATC organized by

Michael Seth. Our first concern was getting there, because SSVC meets a half-hour earlier than the Charlottesville group. Hike leader Michael Seth's confidence that there was no problem was well placed, because four vehicles arrived at the last turnoff within a minute of each other. One driver was confused about where the hike started, and it took a while to get everybody together. Parking at the start has changed since we last went there, and we had to cram cars into the small parking area. Seven people came from Charlottesville/Albemarle County, seven from the Harrisonburg area, and three from elsewhere in the Piedmont.

By the time we started, drizzle had stopped, but clouds remained and the humidity made a stiff climb more difficult. With so many people, there were just enough antioxidants for those who wanted them, after which some people took a shorter route back. For some time after lunch, we went downhill, ending up near the level of our starting elevation. We also crossed the Hazel River several times without difficulty, unlike some crossings we have made of this river--drought makes a difference. There was a pool in the river, which attracted the usual suspects--Marian Styles and John Brandt. Then we made another climb which was almost as hard as the first.

Before hiking down the final leg of trail, Michael Seth and a few others walked a short extra distance so that he could complete walking all trails in the central district of SNP.

The last trail segment was so overgrown that some people thought it was not trail. Eric Christenson and I removed some small trees that were in the way.

This long day exposed everyone to some trail they had not hiked before. Wildlife sightings included a tiny snake and an owl.

Oct. 13: South Fork Moormans River

Reported by John Shannon

On a fine fall day, Lindsay Brown led a shorter version of the classic Sugar Hollow Reservoir hike. Often the crossing of the Moormans River by the reservoir is tricky, but today it was completely dry, something I do not recall seeing before. Further up the river, there was a little water, some of it flowing, and at one crossing enough water for someone to get a wet foot. Blue Hole had water, but no swimmers.

On Turk Branch Trail, there was some extensive tread work, the most dramatic being places where there was a passage cut through the banks that enclose the trail.

Lindsay said that when he had explored the trail earlier, he saw people with a small machine digging away.

We ate lunch at a parking area by Skyline Drive. Some would say that we negated the morning's exercise by eating chocolate chip cookies and chocolate raspberry cake; others would say we neutralized free radicals generated by our exertion.

Our descent was faster than our ascent, and returned us to Charlottesville after the first round of football traffic ended. People in the group included Fleming Straughan returning after a long absence, Peter Callan, Kelly Darby and Bella, Charles Staples, Eric Christenson, Eric Bredo and Sue Tansey.

Oct. 20: Big Schloss

Reported by John Shannon

Jere Bidwell chose a hike he last led five years ago. Four of us arrived at the trailhead over a hundred miles away in a little over two hours to meet Michael Seth and Liz Young. The parking lot in this remote area was full. The ground on the trail did not look parched as it has in recent times, due to a bit of rain the night before.

After 1100 feet of climbing in 1.5 miles of trail, we reached a ridge and headed south to Big Schloss. Like the previous time we came here, a breeze kept us cool. From the ridge trail and the top of Big Schloss, we had clear views of the valleys on either side. This proved to be one of the best weekends for leaf peeping, with some brilliant yellows and reds, and still numerous green trees.

As promised, Jere found a spot in the sun below the summit of Big Schloss where we were out of the wind. We stoked up on antioxidants to protect ourselves against the rigors of the remaining miles of travel.

After picking up some trekking poles Eileen Seaman had left behind at a trail junction, we found another rocky overlook. Gene Whitaker led the way to the top where the views were not as spectacular as hoped, but still worthy of several more megapixels. A gust of wind whipped my hat off onto a tree in a gap between two rocks. Gene eased down one of the rocks to retrieve the hat which I thought was not worth trying rescue. A few minutes later Gene did another John Brandt-like feat of walking up a log.

By now the leader was making suggestions that we needed to keep moving, unless we planned on moonlight hiking. Nevertheless, we stopped at another overlook as a break from a brisk pace.

Along this leg of the trail, we saw a number of people camping.

The last leg of the hike was downhill on the rocky Little Stony Creek Trail, which at times, like our previous trip here, is a stream itself. The trail is rocky because of erosion caused by a lack of waterbars. Again, I used several megapixels trying to record brilliant fall colors. At the end, Michael studied a book which said that our hike was 11.6 miles.

With dusk approaching, Liz Young headed home, while the rest of us went looking for a place to eat. One restaurant chain was ruled out because of a lack of beer. A restaurant Jere knew of in Edinburg had a long wait, so on to Mt. Jackson, where we stopped at Denny's. This was an excellent choice by the leader because everyone else in the group could use the specially priced senior citizens menu, and there was beer. It was a long day, and we were surprised to find the parking lot at Albemarle High full on our return.



From Big Schloss.
Photo by Gene Whitaker

Nov. 10: Planned hike to Hawksbill/The Last Ride

Reported by Iva Gillet

We gathered on a cloudy morning, damp from the rain from the preceding day. Joining me this Saturday were Leon Gorman and Bailey, Eric Christensen, Marian Styles, Lee Buttles, with Crystal Lantz joining us at Swift Run Gap. We all piled into my minivan looking forward to the views from Hawksbill. Arriving at Swift Run Gap, there was a change of plans in the form of a lovely dusting of snow--up to five inches to the north which had closed the Drive in that direction--the direction of our travel. Fog was also a major factor, with very limited visibility...not the day for views I had planned. So we gathered around the maps and discussed our options. We decided on a little 5-mile trek on the AT out and back to climb Hightop from the south.

It was my first walk in the snow in some time, so it was a treat. We trudged along the AT with Bailey leading the way. At the

summit, we searched to find the rock outcropping, but finally did to see that the visibility had increased from 20 feet to 50 feet. Again not the visibility I was looking for! We paused for a quick bite and chatted with some of the fabulous trail maintenance volunteers. They were happy to share our cookies as thanks for their hard work.

The day was warming up. We encountered less snow and fog as we descended. Back at Swift Run Gap, the Drive to the north was open again. To celebrate that, we drove to Elkton to have some hot chocolate and snacks at a diner. We decided that we need to continue to check out the other diners in Elkton on future hikes as part of the public service component of the PATC.

As a final note, my minivan was totaled later this day, so these fine folks had the privilege of joining me in the last Briarly van hiking transport. Look for a hybrid for me in the future--and I need a new PATC sticker!! Look for another chance for me to lead you up to Hawksbill in the near future...it will be worth it!

Gene Whitaker hiked up to Hawksbill on Cedar Run Trail, saw snow, but no hikers.

Dec. 1: Trail maintenance

Leader James Groves fell ill so could not lead this expedition. However, John and Thomas Brandt spent time looking for trail maintainers and walked some of the Appalachian Trail north of the Rockfish Gap entrance station. They saw no significant maintenance needs. John Shannon used loppers and saw to widen a passage way (not on the Appalachian Trail) on the other side of the Pacific.

Dec 8: Wildcat Ridge to Chimney Rocks.

Reported by Hike Leader Lindsay Brown
A hike of 8 miles out and back from Wildcat Ridge parking lot following the AT and Rip Rap trail out to Chimney Rock for a nice lunch spot with great views. Hikers included Leon Gorman (and Bailey), Dan Ralston, Iva Gillet and Eric Bredo. It was a cool but sunny day, so the chocolates didn't melt before lunch.

Dec. 22: Ragged Mt.

Reported by John Shannon

What if they held a hike and people came? Iva Gillett wanted to lead the postponed hike up Hawksbill, but again frozen water thwarted her plans by closing Skyline Drive. There was a threat of rain on a cold day, so she chose to go to Ragged

Mountain Reservoir to warm people up for power shopping.

At the junction for the upper loop trail, Connie Wright, on one of her few opportunities to hike with us, decided to stay on the main route. Iva and I reminisced on the day we were going the opposite direction in the snow with Stephanie Goodell, missed a turn in the snow and found that a GPS was actually useful. We studied a large tree, well away from the water and wondered if the beaver which had started gnawing it was young and stupid or senile.

After a cookie break, Eric Bredo cut a small tree across the trail with a compact saw, which did not lock in position and cut him also. While waiting for us, Connie had read all about the trail and was appointed expert. Later there was a moment that AARP magazine would call experience, not senility. Lindsay Brown and I decided that the old road everyone else had taken was not our trail, but we needed to follow the leader to avoid having people scattered. After catching up with the others who wondered what had happened to the trail, we also offered the opinion born of experience, that we did not want to take the time required for a shortcut to find our trail, but instead the quick route of walking back to the previous junction.

An interesting sight further along was some equipment which Iva identified as used for drilling a well. The well would be on top of a ridge, with the reservoir down the hill. There were suggestions that condos and/or high-end shops were planned; i.e., those selling carbon fiber trekking poles instead of aluminum. This was a situation involving water supply and trails, but water expert John Brandt was not with us. Back at the parking lot, we pulled out our lunches, supplemented by cookies and chocolate babka.

Dec. 29: Doyles River-Jones Run

Reported by John Shannon

Jere Bidwell enticed Julie Shuren and Melanie Brede+Gracie to take their first hike with this group. John Brandt was eager to put some miles on a family vehicle which had been sitting idle so he transported three humans and a dog. At Rockfish Gap we met Barbara Martin, and Michael Seth at Browns Gap where a cool breeze gave rise to plan B, which was Doyles River-Jones Run circuit instead of the planned Lewis Peak expedition which we feared would be exposed to the wind. After heading north on the AT, but before we headed down Doyles River, Karen Ramsey turned back for afternoon

activities. Lunch was at the bottom of Doyles River Trail, and had fruit pie, chocolate and a fruit bread which Marian Styles gave a thumbs down. There were some other hikers on the trail that day which was not as cold as we feared in the morning. The new hikers especially enjoyed the sights on what was a pleasant day.

Dec. 31: Finishing the year right

Reported by John Shannon

New Year's Eve was a pleasant winter day with a temperature of 55° or more. After strong winds and ice since John Brandt's trail inspection at the beginning of the month, I decided to look for damage on the Appalachian Trail near Rockfish Gap and was joined by Marian Styles. While she raked leaves from waterbars, I cut part of a fallen tree so it could be moved off the trail by one or two people. Later we found another tree about head high which we cut, so we can report we removed blowdowns.

While walking further north to reach somewhere near the middle of the section, we removed small branches, cut a few twigs, and noticed garlic mustard priming itself for spring growth. We returned to Rockfish Gap, drove to McCormick Gap, raked out water bars, had lunch and declared success.

Jan. 5: South River Falls - Something for everyone

Reported by John Shannon

Iva Gillett announced that she would lead a hike to South River Falls, and John Shannon raised the question of which variation of the hike, with some clearly after the 4.4-mile version, some happy that there was a 7-mile hike, and some saying why bother with 7 miles when there were 10. With a majority of the club's hike leaders present, there was the question of who was in charge-no, they were not all claiming to be in charge, but thinking someone else was going to make decisions.

There was a cold start with many standing around under breezy, overcast skies waiting while others shuttled cars. When the drivers returned, Marian Styles and others were in near freefall down the hill, but there were some stops to regroup. The stream, and the falls at the bottom, had some ice cover. Some snacked at the falls, others waited for the sightseers before climbing up.

After regrouping at a fire road, Lindsay Brown found that this was not quite his day off when he decided he should ensure he knew where he and other 7-mile hikers should go. Valerie Lopez, Marian, Eric

Bredo and I headed off because we planned either a 10-mile or a swift hike, but supposedly off-duty leader Valerie went back to ensure others knew which turns to make and which not to make. The fast foursome stopped for anti-oxidants and a visit to the South River cemetery where a record of childhood deaths showed that the good old days were not always so good.



It's winter-South River Falls

Further on, instead of just hearing about change from aspiring presidents, we saw change; namely, the absence of a car body. It had been seen in past years, sitting and waiting for a new engine to leave the wilderness but was no longer visible. Our next historic site was the Pocosin Mission where Eric found a mysterious brass body with valves which still turned. The 7-mile hikers met us there to add to hypotheses about the nature of the brass object. Dan Ralston identified it as possibly a lubricating control valve from a tractor. After looking at this piece of National Park cultural heritage, we replaced it for others to ponder.

We pushed on, and the Appalachian Trail was a decision point. Lindsay Brown tried to sell a seat in his car at a very reasonable price, but was rebuffed by a request for a refund by Eric, who decided to have an extra 3 miles at no extra cost. So Lindsay, Ken Jobe, Leon & Bailey Gorman, and Rita Keiffer headed home after their 7 miles.

During the last 3 miles, the fast foursome stopped to clear the worst of a tree which blocked the trail, and finished in cool conditions after getting warm in the middle of the day.

And the designated leader? She kept people alive with goldfish crackers, and THREE types of cookies. She ensured a new hiker had hike that was comfortable rather than an endurance feat for her. As promised, Iva had her new vehicle but only one passenger.

Top 10 hiking stories for 2007

After years on the trails, there are still things to learn. On the Cedar Run trail in August, water expert Marian Styles discovered a new rock slide, thanks to some people who were splashing in the obscure pool.

Dr. Google, sociologist. Wondering why women were getting into Jere Bidwell's car and avoiding his, John Shannon discovered the googlenope "All the girls loved my Camry."

Hiking can be hazardous. Standing in a parking lot, Lee Buttles dropped an apple, which was transformed into applesauce by a truck ambling through the lot.

You can find a friend in Washington. Leon Gorman found new companion Bailey at the Washington area Lab Rescue.

Ice cream makes the hike. Kerwin Lebeis upgraded his rating of the Ramseys Draft hike with multiple stream crossings after a stop for ice-cream in Churchville.

Where there's smoke, prevent a fire. In June, during our St. Marys River/Bald Mountain hike, John Brandt rolled a large, smoldering log a considerable distance into a water-filled depression to prevent a forest fire.

Technology can beat the weather: In February, concerns about global warming were pushed aside by concerns about ice. On a hike up Chimney Hollow Trail, strap on studded soles for his boots enabled John Shannon to walk normally on ice while regular boots slipped.

Advances in trails. The South District SNP, like other districts, now has its own trail crew for AT rehab projects, thanks to Mark Gatewood Southern Shenandoah Valley Chapter PATC.

Fighting them here because they are here. In 2007, some club members continue to try to control invasive plants. Hours of pulling garlic mustard in spring, numerous assaults on oriental bittersweet later. Michael Seth had to remember while in Asia that some plants were natives there, not invaders.

Why you want a trained hike leader. In October, Jere Bidwell led a hike to Big Schloss. With a long drive and long hike, a dinner stop was appropriate, but where? Cracker Barrel was rejected for lack of beer, fast food not wanted, local restaurants had long lines. The leader chose Denny's; no lines, beer available, and a senior citizen menu for everyone except the leader.

Hike stories and other news items can be submitted to:
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