



Nantahala Hiking Club Newsletter

nantalahikingclub.org

Second Quarter 2023

“Keep ever clear the trails that lead to mountaintops.” — Rev. A. Rufus Morgan, Club Founder



The New Rock Gap Shelter



Franklin A.T. Celebration 2023



President's Message

By Victor Treutel

2023 ushered in a great accomplishment for the Nantahala Hiking Club—the rebuild of the Rock Gap Shelter. Originally built in 1965, this tired, old shelter had seen better days. Our volunteers tore it down in November of last year and began building the new structure. It was completed



in February, just in time for thru-hiker season. This accomplishment is an incredible testament to our club and what we give back to the hiking community. To all our volunteers who swung hammers, dug holes, poured concrete, drilled a myriad of screws and toted tons of supplies to the site, I want to offer a heartfelt thank you. The team was led by Phillip Rogers and Ed Sams and assisted by dozens of trail maintainers, Forest Service personnel and Oconaluftee Job Corps students. Undoubtedly, this shelter will serve the next generation of hikers who, because of our efforts, want to climb the mountaintops.

Due to an increase in building material costs, the funding by the National Park Service did not cover all the costs. The club took over \$2,200 from our general fund to ensure the shelter was completed. At the March club meeting and on social media we asked for donations from the public as well as local businesses. As of March 16, we have received over \$700 from online donations, \$300 from the March club meeting (including \$40 from the program presenter, Nancy East) and a very generous donation from Outdoor 76 of \$800. We also received confirmation from the NC Tag Grant office that we could apply for additional funding. This is money coming from individuals who pay for Appalachian Trail license plates (which we highly recommend). Due to the generosity of our community, it appears that the club will be fully covered for any and all expenses for building the shelter.

Later this year, with slightly less fanfare, we will undertake the replacement of the Wesser Bald privy. A “dirty job” but someone needs to do it. And, as usual, our maintainers will continue to hit the trail every Wednesday to ensure the trail is clear. If you find yourself wanting to give back, please come and join us. We meet at the NHC Clubhouse (173 Carl Slagle Road, Franklin) every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Wear long pants, bring a pack with your lunch, plenty of water and any medication you might take. Each trip will begin with a safety briefing and training for newcomers.

Don't be intimidated; we all started from scratch. There are duties for all skill levels and you get to work with a GREAT group of people who, as our founder, Rev. A. Rufus Morgan said, "keep ever clear the open trails that lead to the mountaintops."

In July, the club holds its annual election of officers/board of directors. If you are interested in serving in a leadership role, please send me an email: president@nantahalahikingclub.org.

Over the weekend of March 10, the southern AT clubs (Georgia through Virginia), US Forest Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, National Park Service and numerous other partners met at Lake Junaluska, NC to share our plans for the next year. There were great discussions around funding, trail usage, bear encounters, training, planning, shelters, natural resources, volunteerism and overall trends. It was a great event where all the shared partners of the AT meet to ensure we are working together in the most efficient manner possible.

One topic was that of bear/hiker encounters which were up last year. It is always possible that a hiker will see a bear on the AT, but a lot of the encounters last year were disturbing in that bears were not being scared off by human presence. Sadly, bears are finding easy food at shelters and campsites. If these trends continue, we might see more areas open to bear hunting, which is a very sad thought. The Standing Indian area was opened for bear hunting last year for the first time in 50 years.

Ultimately, the pressure is on the hikers to ensure their food is not accessible by bears. There are many methods and products, with the most effective being a hard, plastic food canister. However, hikers do not like this solution as the canister is cumbersome and takes a lot of room in their packs. Many use a tree hang where their food is suspended from a tree, although we had reports this past year of bears getting those. Some clubs have installed bear boxes—heavy metal boxes that are unopenable by a bear—at their shelters. NHC has not undertaken this yet because of the cost, difficulty of locating them (they weigh upwards of 300 pounds) and maintenance requirements (many hikers seem to think they are trash receptacles). We continue to evaluate how we can help the situation as are the USFS and the ATC. Hopefully, 2023 is a year of answers to ensure that bears are not killed simply for doing bear things (eating).



Welcome

...to our newest members!!!

Frank & Georgann Farrell
Franklin, NC

Nicole Lui
Franklin, NC

Dan Miller
Murphy, NC

Scott & Amy Manshack
Franklin, NC

Kelsey Orr
Winter Park, FL

Terry Matern
Altamonte Springs, FL

Mary Pat & Dennis James
Franklin, NC

Randolph & Katherine Horne
Franklin, NC

Kim Keelor
Franklin, NC

Cathy Conner
Franklin, NC

Andrew Graham
Otto, NC

Brooke Gillespie
Sylva, NC

Martha DeHart
Athens, GA

Bill Johnson
Mount Dora, FL

Pamela & Vern Tubbs
Franklin, NC

Michael & Linda Punicki
Franklin, NC

Gail McDiarmid
Franklin, NC

Rob Gasbarro
Franklin, NC

Paige & Andrew Selking
Franklin, NC

New Member Orientation

Please mark your calendars for April 27th at 5:00 p.m. when our next New Member Orientation is scheduled at Outdoor 76. All new members will receive a personal invitation from Membership Chair Lynn Meyers. And...new members receive their first beer on us! All NHC members are welcome to attend. There is a cash bar along with snacks for everyone. This is always a fun time to mingle, meet the volunteer leaders for our many projects and get information on club events. We hope to see you!

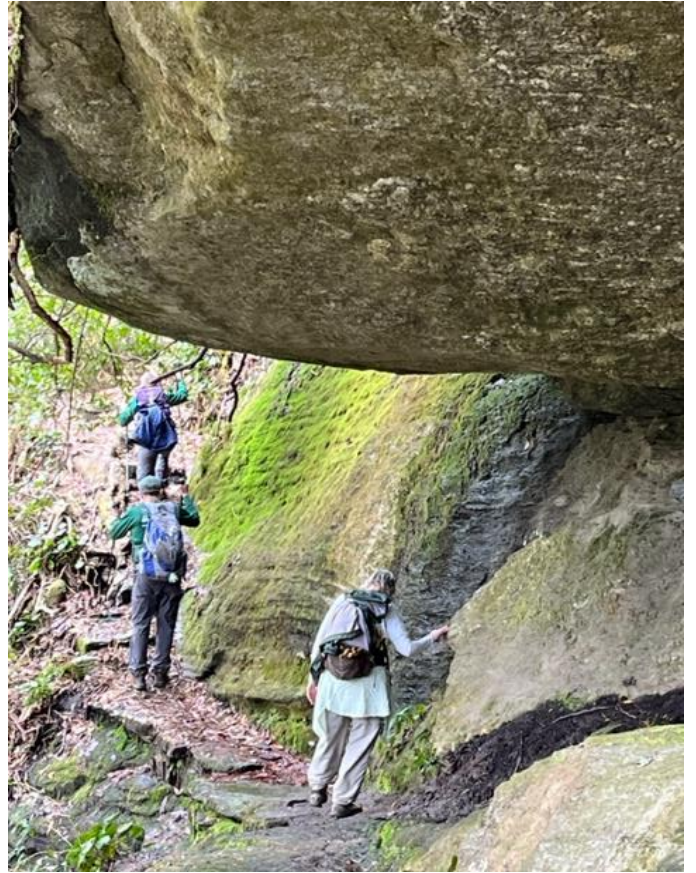


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Photos are from 2022 New Member Orientation

Chatooga River Trail Hike 03/11/2023

Leader: Robert Barnable



2023 Franklin A.T. Celebration
 March 20 - April 22, 2023
 FIRST DAY OF SPRING - EARTH DAY

Saturday, March 25, 1 pm - 5 pm
 Hiker Bash
 At Currahee Brewing Co.

Friday, March 31, all weekend long
 29th Anniversary Hiker Fest
 At Three Eagles Outfitters

Saturday, April 1
 12 - 2 pm NHC's Thru Hiker Chow Down
 At Lazy Hiker Brewing Co.
 3 pm Hiker Hunger Games & Gooder Grove's Groovy Gathering
 At Gooder Grove Hostel

Friday, April 7, 6 pm
 AT110 Fest
 At The Rathskeller Coffee Haus & Pub

Saturday, April 8
 NHC's Easter on the Trail
 Trail Magic

Friday, April 14, 5 pm
 Food, Flix & Brews
 At Outdoor 76 with Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy

Friday, April 21, 11 am - 3 pm
 Happy Trails to You
 At Gracious Plates on Main

Saturday, April 22, 6 pm
 Outdoor Music Jam & Gear Exchange
 At Lazy Hiker Brewing Co.

Made possible by a grant from the Franklin/Watauga TDC and Town of Franklin TBA

ATmile110.com

Easter on the Trail Saturday, April 8th

Thanks to everyone who has volunteered to participate in this year's event, which is just over a week away. This is a reminder, particularly for those unable to participate in the actual event, to consider donating colored hardboiled eggs and/or fresh fruit. To ensure that these items are fresh for the hikers to enjoy, they can only be dropped off at the Clubhouse on Carl Slagle Road on Saturday, April 8th as close to 8:30 a.m. as possible. Please contact Elena Marsh with any questions: 828-369-8915 or by email at marsh67@frontier.com. Thank you!



Thru-Hiker Chow Down Thru the Years

The NHC Thru-Hiker Chow Down has been an annual event during Franklin's Walking with Spring Celebration since 2015, excepting 2020 and 2021 due to COVID. It started as an idea I had after finishing our section hike of the AT. We wanted to do something for the thru-hikers and knew they loved to eat. We did not want to do food on the trail since many folks think that is getting out of hand and some hikers learn to depend on it which is not a good thing.

From the beginning, we partnered with the Lazy Hiker Brewery. The first year in 2015, the brewery was not even open to the public. It was very cold that year so we also offered hot beverages. Hot dogs were cooked outside and all the food was served inside the brewery taproom. It may have been cold outside, but the vibes were warm inside as we served about 50 thru-hikers.

In 2016, the Lazy Hiker Brewery was open and we decided to hold the Chow Down in the Lazy Hiker Yard. The weather cooperated and the Yard proved to be a great place to hold the Chow Down. That year we served 40 thru-hikers.

In 2017, we also held the Chow Down in the Lazy Hiker Yard. We served 76 thru-hikers. In 2018, weather forced us inside the brewery. We set up tables in the back room with all the food and the thru-hikers ate in the taproom. We served 60 thru-hikers.

In 2019, we had our biggest year to date, serving about 75 thru-hikers. We again returned to the Yard for the event. Last year, 2022, we were able to gather together and it was great to be outside in the Yard again. We served about 85 thru-hikers. We invited our Trail Ambassadors to come and socialize too. It was a fun event, as usual!

By the time you read this newsletter, the 2023 Thru-Hiker Chow Down, held on April 1, 2023, will be in full readiness mode, actually happening, or all over. Either way, I am sure it will be successful and also full of fun. This will be my last year as lead volunteer of the annual Chow Down. When I mentioned this at the March NHC meeting, Gail McDiarmid came up and volunteered to be the new Chow Down lead. I can tell her that the biggest problem will be finding jobs for all the NHC members who want to help! I look forward to being on the sidelines next year! Thanks to each and every one of you who volunteer every year!

My contact information is Sharon Van Horn (828) 369-1983 or email sev51@gmail.com.



2018 NHC Chow Down Volunteers



2022 NHC Chow Down Volunteers



Extra Fun on Chow Down Day!

On April 1 from noon to 3 pm, the Mountain Muse Band (formerly Rainbows End) will host a Ceilidh (Celtic jam) at the Lazy Hiker to coincide with the Chow Down. So get ready for some fun, lively music in addition to the fun of Chow Down. Any musician or singer who knows Celtic tunes is encouraged to participate. This is NOT a performance...it's a JAM for fun, practice and learning. Celtic dancing is also encouraged and there may be some folks teaching a few dances.



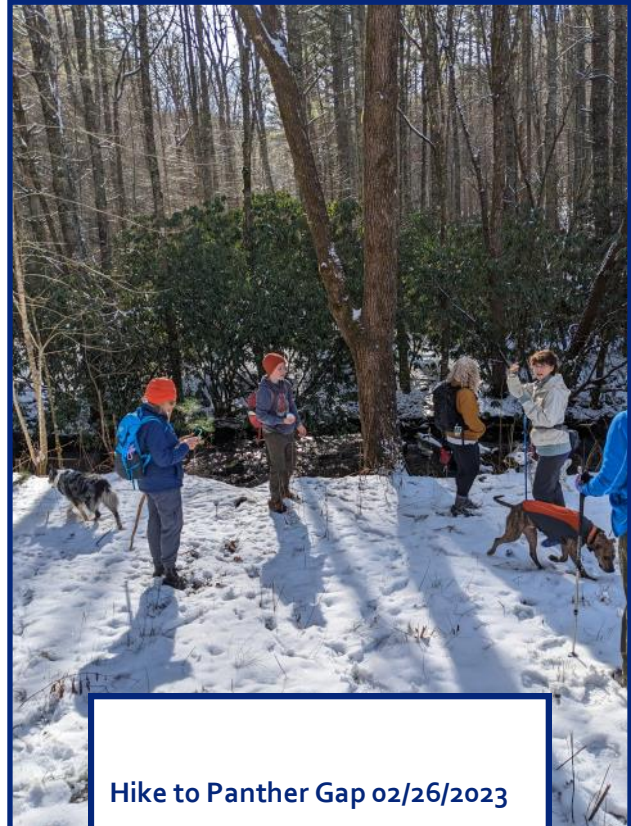
(Mountain Muse includes NHC Members Katharine Brown & Marie Dunkle.)

NHC Hiking Adventures



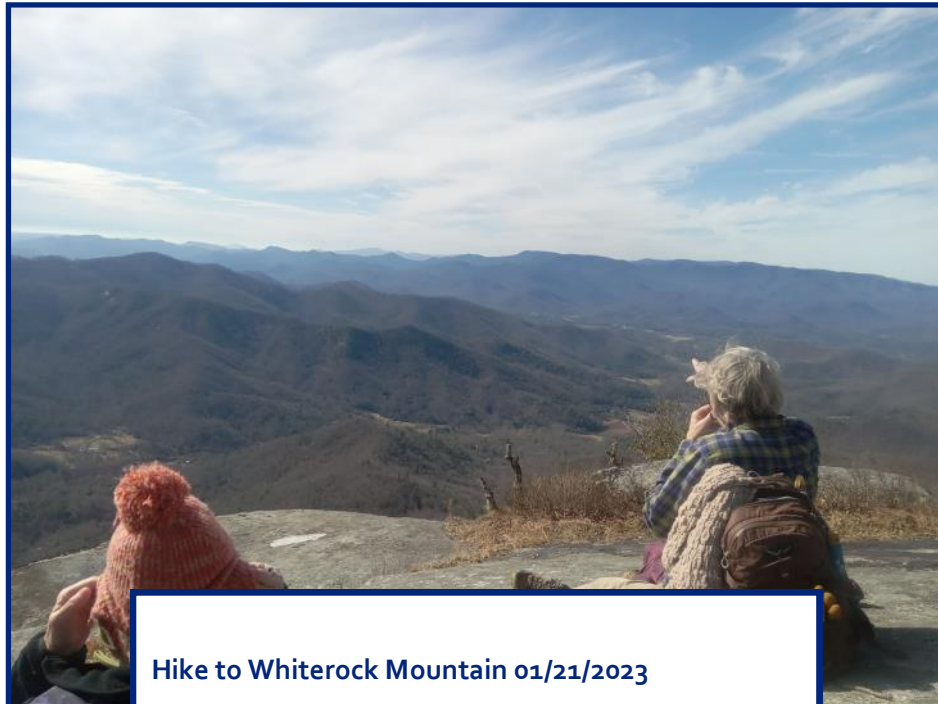
Hike to Ranger Falls 03/11/2023

Leader: Debi Gedling



Hike to Panther Gap 02/26/2023

Leader: Katharine Brown



Hike to Whiterock Mountain 01/21/2023

Leader: Robert Barnable



Hike to Rabun Bald 02/04/2023

Leader: Laura Lauffer



Hike to Gibson Bottoms 02/06/2023

Leader: Debi Gedling



A Day in the Life of a Trail Ambassador

By Kelly Motter

On Thursday, March 16, I did a patrol to Siler Bald Shelter and back. I took two liters of water, lunch, a water filter, saw, PPE, garbage bags, Nalgene bottle for glass and my ten essentials. I sent a text to my emergency contact, letting him know when I was starting, direction, miles hiking and ETA. I also turned on my Spot device and made sure it was working.

What a beautiful sunny day to be out on the trail! My first stop was Moore Creek campsite. I checked out the log book and it appears that the mice had a nice warm spot to stay this winter. I replaced the logbook and added a few pencils. I “donned” my Dog Poop Bags and began a sweep of the sites. These sites were clean with very little trash! Back on the trail, as I was crossing the creek, I picked up some TP in the water.

My journey continued as a thru-hiker and his dog walked past me. The dog was off leash and I said, “Oh, you don’t have your dog on a leash?” This was, perhaps, not my best opening line but the hiker said very harshly, “You ever try to hike with a dog on a leash?” I let the conversation drop at that point. If only he knew that there were four more thru-hikers with dogs behind him and ALL of them were on leash.

I found one small blowdown on the trail and spent a few minutes removing it before meeting Atlas and Compass. Atlas was just a cute young puppy and Compass was a very polite backpacker from St. Louis. We would pass each other three more times that day as they took time to rest and I cut an additional three blowdowns. I stopped at Panther Gap and removed glass from the fire ring when I heard quite a commotion behind me. I waited. Five section hikers on Spring Break from, of course, St. Louis were on their way to Siler Bald for the night. I did warn them of the upcoming rain but

they were aware of the weather issues and were prepared.

I did run into three slack packers who I hiked back with for a while. They stopped at Moore Creek and one replenished his water bottle. Without filtering, he took a big swig of water! I told him that just a few hours before I had removed toilet paper from the creek.

My hike out was fairly uneventful as many of the hikers had taken a zero day in Franklin. Once home, I sent a text to my emergency contact and entered hours in Better Impact. What a wonderful, fulfilling day as I interacted with 25 hikers and removed five pounds of trash from the trail.

Hiking in Hawaii

By David Stearns

I started hiking in my mid-twenties on Oahu in Hawaii in 1974. The Hawaiian Trail and Mountain Club scheduled a hike every Sunday somewhere on the island. According to their website, they still do. They would meet at the Iolani Palace in downtown Honolulu at 8:00 a.m. every Sunday morning. After a few months, I became a hike leader. There was no formal training. If you were a good hiker and a responsible person, you could lead hikes.

At the end of the very first hike I led, which was a four mile loop on the windward side of Oahu, a lady came up to me and said, "I can't find my daughter!" After panicking I jogged the entire four miles (I was wearing shorts) and found the young girl at the end of the hike. She had gone off on a side trail with two of the members to explore. We made a stretcher out of ponchos and branches. Experienced hikers always carried a machete when they hiked. Trails would be overgrown in six weeks (weeks, not months) if the fresh vegetation was not cut back. As was often the case, the stream in the valley was the trail. Between rain and streams, if you didn't want to get wet, you should stay home or go to Waikiki. If you ever have to carry someone out on a stretcher, you need a minimum of six people: four to carry and two to rotate and be there to hold the stretcher as it is passed down over elevation changes in the trail. When the injured hiker recovered he threw us a 13 course dinner at a Chinese restaurant with a toast and the end of every course. But that's another story!



Rock Gap Shelter Rebuild—Part 2

by Victor Treutel

This is a continuation of my article appearing in the last newsletter. If you recall, the old shelter looked like this before we tore it down:



Our volunteers then began laying out the new shelter.



Logistics were a nightmare as we needed to get tools, concrete, timbers, lumber and building hardware to the site. With a little motorized help and a lot of people power we got things done.





6,000 pounds of concrete, 3,000 pounds of concrete block and mortar, 3 tons of gravel, 4,000 pounds of logs and lumber. Oh boy, it was a chore. We called on the students of the Oconaluftee Job Corps to help with the load.



We poured concrete footings and built a retaining wall in the cold of December.





Then we started building the structure.



We always seemed to be working in the rain.



And then the sun came out!



The first visitor was Davinci, who started in Georgia the previous February, went to Maine and was heading back. He was on mile 4,300 and was the first to enjoy our labors.



The roof went on and, as with most every other day, it rained.



It was all worth it though, because she is BEAUTIFUL!



Because of our amazing volunteers, hikers will be enjoying the new Rock Gap Shelter for generations!



For press coverage on the replacement of Rock Gap Shelter, see the following:

<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2023/03/08/appalachian-trails-rock-gap-shelter-in-franklin-replaced/69978056007/>

<https://publisher.etype.services/Franklin-Press/e-paper-regular-edition/5A8306C2FB0BAEBB>

NHC Awarded NC AT License Plate Grant Funds for 2023

Those of you that have paid extra for Appalachian Trail license plates will be happy to know that some of that money is coming back to the NHC. Each year, funds from the license plate program are made available to organizations in NC that support the Appalachian Trail. The NHC applies for funds from the grant each year. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy administers the disbursement and monitoring of those funds.

The NHC received notification from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that our applications for funds from the 2023 NC AT License Plate Grant were approved. This funding helps support critical NHC community and hiker outreach efforts such as Trail Ambassadors, Thru-Hiker Chow Down, activities with local schools and participation in local festivals.

In addition to community outreach activities, some of the funds will be used for trail maintenance equipment and supplies.

In total, NHC will receive \$5,000 to support our activities in 2023.

NHC Program Update

By Pam Addleton

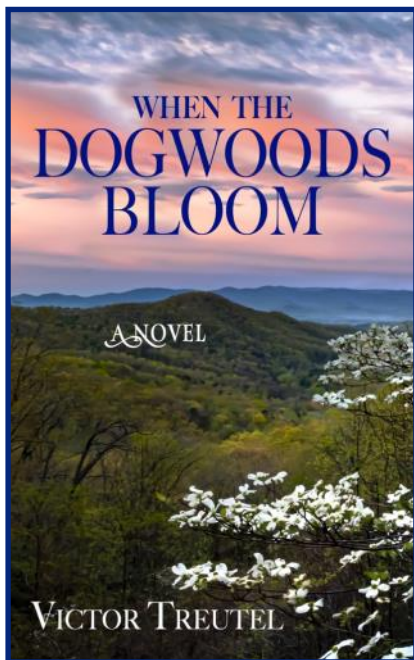
This year's NHC programs are jam-packed with fresh picks from our vibrant community of experts, educators and achievers!

Through 2023, the NHC, the Macon County Public Library and the Franklin Appalachian Trail Community Council (FATCC) will co-sponsor the "Walking With Spring" series. What this means to you is that when you participate in NHC programs this year, you get the best of our thru-hiker community every month. An added bonus for all program participants is a lucky draw at a free raffle valued at \$20-\$30 at each program meeting. A lucky winner already won a free signed copy of Nancy East's *Chasing the Smokies' Moon* at our March 9th program!

This program update is a spring festival of topics and I'll look for you here:

April 13, 6:00 pm, Macon County Public Library

NHC's own Victor Treutel gives us poignant insights about his newly released book, *When the Dogwoods Bloom*. While on a local photography shoot, he discovered the story of Tsali, who was born in the Smokies in the late 1700's. Tsali saved the Cherokee Nation. Victor retraced Tsali's life as much as possible and then fictionalized the details in the writing of this historical novel that will invoke laughter, tears and possibly change your life.



May 11, 6:00 pm, Tartan Hall, First Presbyterian Church

A grateful annual fund-raising spaghetti dinner will be free for all and donations graciously welcome

at Tartan Hall, First Presbyterian Church, 45 Church Street, Franklin, NC. No scheduled program will be at the usual Macon County Public Library location.

June 8, 6:00 pm, Macon County Public Library

Jen and Greg Seymour are avid international hikers who own Chica & Sunsets Hostel in Franklin. They thru-hiked the AT, the 500 mile Camino de Santiago, Bartram, Colorado, Ice Age and Foothills Trails. They are gear experts, avid bloggers and have self-published over 8 books on Costa Rica, backpacking and living life outside the box. Take a review of their expertise and passion on their various online portals. This is a program you must join...to win the free raffle!



Please introduce yourself to me so that I can cast a spring gaze on you and your lucky raffle ticket. Remember: To win the free raffle at monthly program meetings, you must be present to even get the chance!

Future program topic suggestions are encouraged and for information contact Pam Addleton at 12treehouse@gmail.com.

Corporate Sponsorship

Last fall, the NHC's Board of Directors voted to establish a Corporate Sponsorship program. The intent of this program is to foster local partnerships and to provide additional funding for club projects, i.e. rebuilding the Rock Gap Shelter. To date, we have been blessed with four sponsorships, raising over \$1,500 for the club. We are indebted to these outstanding organizations for their generosity and support of our mission to "keep ever clear the open trails that lead to the mountaintops." *Rev. A. Rufus Morgan—Club Founder.*

For information on corporate sponsorship of the Nantahala Hiking Club, please check out our website: <https://www.nantahalahikingclub.org/sponsor/>

Manshack Insurance Agency
Amy Manshack Owner/Agent
409 Georgia Road
Franklin, NC 28734
828-524-6461
www.beingthere4u.com



Manshack Insurance Agency
Scott Manshack Owner/Agent
1509 Highlands Road
Franklin, NC 28734
828-524-1200
www.shackinsures.com



Glen Choga Lodge
Doug & Terri Matern
50 Choga Lodge Road
Topton, NC
828-321-3249
www.glenchogalodge.com



Outdoor 76
35 E. Main Street
Franklin, NC
828-349-7676
www.outdoor76.com



Hike to Coweeta Hydrological Lab 02/15/2023

Leader: Sandi Hawk

The Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association and Visit Johnson City
Hosts the Appalachian Trail Vista Event

August 4-7, 2023

Wild & Free in Tennessee

The Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association and Visit Johnson City - will host the in-person Appalachian Trail Vista 2023 program in the beautiful Johnson City, Tennessee area, with hikes, excursions, workshops and entertainment at the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) campus. The event is four days, Friday through Monday for a gathering with hundreds of hiking and outdoor enthusiasts!

The A.T. Vista is the rebranded ATC Biennial program, somewhat streamlined but keeping most of the exciting activities. It's been since the summer of 2017 that we've been able to gather, spend time on the trail, learn, and socialize. This inaugural A.T. Vista program is being planned to carry on the great camaraderie of kindred spirits that cherish the Appalachian Trail and being outdoors.

Come to Tennessee!
Mark your calendars for August 4-7, 2023

Affordable on-campus rooms and delicious and healthy buffet meals will be available onsite. The local Johnson City area offers lots of wonderful dining opportunities including a variety of vegetarian and ethnic options, as well as excellent local breweries. If you opt to reside on campus in the dormitory system, you can arrive as early as Thursday evening and stay through Tuesday morning, as program activities begin on Friday, August 4 and extend through Monday, August 7.

Nearby vacation homes, hotels, campgrounds, and RV and camping will also be available.

Programming includes over 40 hikes, of which many will be on the Appalachian Trail, and the remainder using many of the hiking areas that are within an hour's drive from the Johnson City area. There are nearly 35 workshops expected, and over ten exciting excursions. Evening entertainment includes concerts and opportunities to meet other attendees. An opening session and reception are scheduled for Friday night, August 4.

Early Registration for the inaugural A.T. Vista program will open in January and regular registration will open in May. Visit www.atvista2023.org for the details.

Access to certain activities will have limited spaces, so register early to join the fun!

You can also sign up to get the A.T. Vista monthly newsletter, with the latest information about the event and the programming.

We are still seeking volunteers to assist in implementing many of the 2023 activities.

View the various A.T. Vista 2023 volunteer position needs and sign up today. Go to the atvista2023.org website and select the "Volunteer" tab.

Additional volunteer opportunities include **Hike Leaders, Workshop Assistants, and Excursion Chaperones!** We need volunteers to lead or co-lead hikes, chaperone one of the many fun excursions, or provide assistance during a workshop session. (You don't need to be from the area to volunteer in any of these roles!) If any of these opportunities interest you, email us at atvista2023@gmail.com or sign-up online at www.atvista2023.org

This inaugural A. T. Vista program is sponsored by The Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association, Visit Johnson City, and the Committees of the A.T. Vista program representing many A.T. Clubs along the Appalachian Trail. A.T. Vista is a marketing program of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that provides an opportunity for kindred spirits to come together to hike, learn, and play in local communities near the Appalachian Trail.

Want to be a sponsor or exhibitor?

Are you a business that wants to increase your reach to a targeted audience by being a part of the A.T. Vista 2023 program? Check out our Sponsor and Exhibit program opportunities at www.atvista2023.org.

Note that, based on the conditions of COVID-19 at the time of this program, appropriate CDC, state, and venue guidelines will be in place.

HISTORY of the A.T. Vista

In the past, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) sponsored trail-wide gatherings, known as Biennials; the last one was held at Colby College in Maine during the summer of 2017.

A task force was organized by ATC to review options for future Bi-ennial-like programs based on the new requirements for ATC business meetings and the impact of organizing these events with local trail clubs. The ATC Biennial program was rebranded to A.T. Vista to continue to offer an extended weekend event to include hikes, workshops, excursions, and entertainment as parts of the program and to expand the event organizing for more collaboration.

During 2021, the A.T. Vista program was initiated as part of the 100th Anniversary of the Benton MacKaye article which involved dispersed hiking trips along the entire Appalachian Trail. For the summer of 2023, we eagerly anticipate your arrival at the inaugural in-person A.T. Vista!

A.T. Vista Committee

atvistainfo@gmail.com



Trail Maintenance at Burningtown

Photographer: Kelsey Orr
