

# The Register

The Online Volunteer Newsletter for the Appalachian Trail

*A publication of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – Spring 2006*

## Sidehill

*By Hawk Metheny and Robert Proudman*

When the first issue of *The Register* was published in April 1978, President Jimmy Carter had just signed the 1978 Appalachian Trail Bill amending the 1968 National Scenic Trails Act. The legislation provided federal funding to purchase lands for the Trail and, according to the newsletter, brought “new responsibilities to the civilian volunteers who have created and nurtured the Appalachian Trail” to manage the Trail as a national resource.

Those responsibilities are encompassed in the term stewardship, meaning “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.” Now that most of the land-acquisition phase is completed, we turn to a new era of Trail stewardship, one where we will be further protecting the Trail and its surrounding lands and entrusting each of you to continue to care for the Trail as you have done so consistently and so well.

As we turn to the technology of the Internet as a communications tool, we hope to reach out to those of you who were faithful readers of *The Register* and to the stewards of the future. This new format will allow us to reach a wider audience, provide more diverse content, and eliminate printing and mailing costs. We plan to publish four times a year, once in each season, and invite your contributions and comments at **TheRegister@appalachiantrail.org**.

Our theme for this issue, our first one since the Fall of 2004, is “Spring Clean-up.” The content is broader, with “traditional” articles on blowdowns, mice, and privies, but also on environmental monitoring, invasive species, and NPS “Vital Signs.”

In parallel with the critical spring Trail work now taking place, and the new life and growth that appears in the spring, ATC continues its growth into a new and stronger organization. A summary of progress on our restructuring includes:

- Meetings of all four Regional Partnership Committees (RPCs) – New England, Mid-Atlantic, Virginia, and Deep South – have been held, with representatives of maintaining clubs, led by dynamic volunteer chairs, and working closely with ATC's four regional directors. They assessed a full range of activities and issues: ATC's Trail crew and ridgerunner programs; boundary monitoring and maintenance; work-skills and conservation training; and activism on numerous fronts, from responding to agency policies to wind-towers and highway encroachments.
- The new Stewardship Council – a diverse group that includes research scientists, land-trust activists, and traditional Trail volunteers – convened in March in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The Council reviewed restructuring issues, including major new initiatives in education and community outreach. A reassignment of a Trail section from the Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech to the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers – previously endorsed by the VA-RPC – was approved, as was AMC-Berkshire Chapter's

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revised Local Management Plan, following its review and endorsement by the New England RPC.

- And finally, the new Board of Directors met in March at the Len Foote Hike Inn in the north Georgia mountains. Smaller than the former Board of Managers, the new Board is now meeting four times yearly to closely monitor ATC's growth and fulfillment of its self-described goal, to do "more with more."

This is an exciting time for ATC, and it has – and will have – plenty of challenges. However, together we venture into a bold future of stewardship, education, and outreach by building on our greatest asset and foundation: Our Trail clubs and legions of dedicated volunteers! To quote a former regional representative, "Thanks for all you do for the Appalachian Trail."

*The Register is published by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for the volunteer stewards of the Appalachian Trail and its corridor, their federal and state agency partners, and others interested in the stewardship of the A.T. That simple statement launches the rebirth of The Register in an electronic format. We hope that this new format will provide timely communication with all those who nurture the Trail.*

**Hawk Metheny**, Stewardship Council Chair

**Robert Proudman**, Director of Conservation Operations

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## Maintainer's Tips

### Blowdown Basics

Springtime is *blowdown removal time*. One vital task that maintainers perform each spring is hiking their Trail section, assessing and removing the accumulated winter's blowdowns. General direction from *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance* is: "Cut and clear all blowdowns to reestablish adequate clearance for hikers. (Blowdowns are large, uprooted, or broken trees that, generally, fall down across the trail during storms.)"

Blowdowns, also called windthrow or deadfalls, block the trail tread and obstruct a hiker's passage. However, they can be an opportunity to encourage hikers and to discourage unauthorized uses. Before you cut a chunk out of that log, consider *whether* to cut and *where* to cut. Where the Trail is on an old woods road, clear only an 18-inch width, not berm-to-berm. Near trailheads and road crossings, or where unauthorized ATV use is an issue, consider leaving some blowdowns less than knee-high – shaving (flattening) the top side to indicate to hikers where to step across. For taller blowdowns, cut a section 18 to 24 inches wide, not 4 to 6 feet. A wide chunk can be an unwitting invitation to unauthorized uses, resource damage, and more future work for you.

Your ideas for future maintainer's tips are welcome. Work safe and have fun!

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## (Careful) Spring Cleaning

Spring is here! Gotta get out on the Trail. It's a good day to visit the tool cache, sharpen blades, see what needs to be replaced. Hmm, smells musty in here. Oh, no, there's a shredded glove in the corner and mouse poop all over the floor. Better grab a broom and ...

**Stop!** Those mouse droppings may contain the virus that causes hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), a rare but potentially deadly disease. Sweeping out a storage shed, cabin, privy, or shelter may cause particles of the virus to get into the air where they are breathed in, the most common method of infection.

The virus is shed in the urine, droppings, and saliva of infected deer mice and white-footed mice and can survive up to three days at normal room temperatures and longer at colder temperatures. It is killed by exposure to sunlight.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), most of the 416 cases of HPS diagnosed in the U.S. since May 1993 (when it was first identified) have occurred west of the Mississippi, however, twelve cases have been reported in the Trail states of Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina.

In June 1993, an A.T. thru-hiker became critically ill with HPS he apparently contracted in Virginia. He recovered after being hospitalized for several weeks, much of the time on life support. Investigators subsequently tested mice from various shelters and hostels along the Trail in Virginia where the hiker had stayed – HPS antigens were found in about half of them.

The CDC [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/noframes/generalinfoindex.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/noframes/generalinfoindex.htm) provides detailed information on hantavirus, its symptoms and treatment, and how to avoid exposure. Prevention recommendations include:

- **Sealing rodents out** of closed buildings.
- **Airing out buildings** that have been closed for at least 30 minutes before entering.
- **Keeping structures clean** – clean up food waste promptly, dispose of trash appropriately, and store food in rodent-proof containers.
- **Do not sweep or dust** if there is evidence of rodents – use disinfectant or bleach solution to clean.

Clean-up advice from the CDC:

- Wear rubber or other protective gloves.
- Use a spray bottle filled with household disinfectant or a ten-percent bleach solution (1½ cups bleach to 1 gallon of water) to gently but thoroughly wet any dead rodents, visible droppings, and the surrounding surfaces.
- Wait five minutes, wipe the area clean using paper towels, then mop or wipe again using the disinfectant/bleach solution.
- Double-bag cleaning materials (and dead rodents) and carry out and deposit in a waste receptacle; or, bury or burn on site, if appropriate.
- Disinfect the gloves before removing them.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

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From the National Center for Infectious Diseases

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/noframes/treating.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/noframes/treating.htm)

There is no specific treatment, cure, or vaccine for hantavirus infection. Infected individuals are treated for severe respiratory distress in an intensive care unit. Seek immediate medical assistance if you have symptoms of fever, deep muscle aches, and severe shortness of breath, and may have been exposed to rodents.

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## Moldering Privy Primer

ATC, the National Park Service, and the Forest Service all recommend proper “cat-holing” (see: [www.blm.gov/education/lnt/packing/cathole2.htm](http://www.blm.gov/education/lnt/packing/cathole2.htm)) as the preferred technique for disposal of human waste by users of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Privies are provided only at overnight sites where the concentration of use makes cat-holing impractical. At several locations where moldering privies have replaced pit privies, the site impacts and amount of disturbed area from inappropriately deposited waste have greatly decreased, leading to better public health and a better experience for visitors.

Moldering privies are a relatively new, and still experimental, type of backcountry sanitation facility. Pioneered by the Green Mountain Club in the 1990s, they are now in place at several A.T. overnight sites.

“Moldering” means slow, relatively cool, continuous composting in which native soil microorganisms decompose human waste in the presence of oxygen, over time. A bulking agent, such as shavings, bark, or leaves, is added by users to the waste pile to aerate it and prevent compacting. Redworms may be added to the pile to accelerate composting, where authorized. Oxygen/airflow is the key ingredient (missing in many pit privies) that allows composting to occur.

In contrast to a traditional pit privy (a riser and outhouse structure over a hole dug to varying depths), a moldering privy is built on a screened crib located above ground. A double-crib design may be used, allowing the riser to be moved laterally and waste to be deposited in the second crib, giving the material in the first crib more time to fully decompose. “Fully decompose” means that the composting process is complete, resulting in a reduced amount of compost to be surface-spread, buried, or removed from the site for final disposal.

To learn more, see the *Backcountry Sanitation Manual*, developed by ATC and the Green Mountain Club, at: [www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward)

[**Note:** Information in the manual was compiled from 1997–2001. Efforts are underway to develop a standardized design that addresses questions about construction, structural stability, accessibility, and aesthetics, and to determine the biological makeup of the finished “compost.” Stay tuned for updates.]

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## Sawyer Safety Training

2005 was another successful year, as 145 Appalachian Trail volunteers were certified to remove blowdowns and fell trees using chain saws or crosscut saws. 569 sawyers have been certified since 2003, thanks to club leadership and ATC, USFS, and NPS support. Kudos to all sawyers for their perfect safety records!

Valid First Aid/CPR certifications are required for sawyers. Once again this year, ATC will reimburse maintaining-club members up to \$65 for those courses. At the direction of the clubs, ATC also will provide personal protective equipment.

You can view frequently asked questions, instructions, and current certification courses, along with terrific training opportunities in trail maintenance, environmental monitoring, and other essential outdoor skills, at [www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward/](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward/)

## Check your certifications

Sawyer certifications are valid for three years. If you were certified in 2003, your certification expires on that date this year. Be sure your certification is valid before using a chainsaw or crosscut saw on the Appalachian Trail. Current First-Aid/CPR certification also is required.

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## Trail Clubs

### Alternative Labor Source

By Joe Chavez, past president of the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club

The Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club (NBATC) maintains a 91-mile section of the A.T. in Central Virginia, managed in a long-lasting, synergistic partnership with the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service to the benefit of the Trail.

Like most maintaining clubs, NBATC has used numerous sources of labor for trail work – members and their families, Konnarock crews, Boy Scouts, skilled nonmembers, and agency employees have all contributed. Club labor is often sufficient for routine projects, but it is sometimes in short supply for larger, more labor-intensive projects, particularly during the work week.

We were faced with one such project last year – the shelter at Bobblet's Gap needed a new roof and a new privy. The project required, among other things, digging a 6' x 7' x 8' privy hole, removing the old privy, hand-carrying heavy roofing and lumber for a quarter mile, and moving a large quantity of rock and dirt to build a ramp, making the new structure accessible. Having used prison labor in the past with good results, the Forest Service suggested this somewhat unusual labor source for Bobblet's Gap. It seemed like a good fit.

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A group of young men from a work camp in Virginia provided the necessary help. Placement into a work camp is an earned privilege and a source of pride within the work crew. Their work exemplified that pride. While they performed their labor under armed guard, that did not dampen their enthusiasm.

Any initial concerns about using men from a work camp were dispelled once the work began. Club volunteers, both women and men, felt at ease the entire time. The young men were courteous and well-spoken, displayed a most cooperative attitude, and were willing to learn. Their work days included travel time from the work camp, so actual time on the project was as little as 3–4 hours per day. They were eager workers and accomplished a lot in that time frame. However, projects with a long walk to the work site may not benefit as much from this source of labor.

Using work-camp crews requires good initial communications between the maintaining club and the camp administration. There are formal rules, as well as informal common-sense “rules,” that should be followed to ensure success.

The help received from the crew was an important part of the success of the Bobblet’s Gap project. If your club has a labor-intensive project, you may want to consult with your agency partners on this potential source of help.

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## Battling Invasives on Earth Day

Earth Day, which was founded in 1970 by Senator Gaylord Nelson (also a champion of the Appalachian Trail) is held annually on April 22 and has become a popular day for environmental events. Last year, the Mountain Club of Maryland took on a project on Earth Day to remove invasive plants and replace them with native trees and shrubs. The project was funded in part by the LL Bean Grants to A.T. Clubs program.

Buildings had been razed on the site and the rocky land was graded and seeded with grasses. A variety of invasive exotic species had already become established – tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), multiflora rose, mile-a-minute, oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, Japanese barberry, Japanese honeysuckle, crown vetch and garlic mustard.

While several people became specialists at pulling up garlic mustard, others took on multiflora rose. One member put his chainsaw certification to use on autumn olive shrubs and privet hedge.

White pines were planted in dry, rocky sites or on the edge where the tree-of-heaven had been cut last year. Serviceberry went on the drier sites and wild raisin, redbud, or witch hazel where the soil was better.

We planted several basswood trees in moist soil with redbuds nearby, as they often grow naturally. Swamp chestnut oak, cranberry viburnum and red (or swamp) maple went in low, swampy areas.

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By 4 pm, happy homes had been found for 94 new plants, which were tagged with blue tape so we could find them again. We had several new brush piles of multiflora rose, autumn olive and privet, and four extra-large trash bags full of garlic mustard. We plan to periodically revisit the site and continue to remove unwelcome invaders.

By Jesse Dobbs (*excerpted with permission from Hiker High Points, newsletter of the Mountain Club of Maryland*)

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## LL Bean Grants

The LL Bean Grants to A.T. Clubs program, primarily underwritten by the outdoor retailer for more than 20 years, provides financial support to ATC's affiliated Trail clubs and their volunteers for projects related to Trail and facility construction, Trail maintenance, visitor services, and public education.

A total of \$21,460 in grants to 14 Trail clubs is being awarded this year for a number of projects, including several to improve sanitation at overnight sites, and to purchase tools and safety equipment. The following grants were awarded:

### Club Project

#### **Maine Appalachian Trail Club**

Griphest equipment and materials to build tent platforms and a tool shed for the Maine Trail Crew.

#### **Dartmouth Outing Club**

Purchasing a wheeled litter for a local volunteer fire department to assist with medical evacuations from the Trail and elsewhere.

#### **Appalachian Mountain Club**

Purchasing two stainless-steel composting bins for backcountry privies and contributing toward a study to determine the effectiveness of composting waste at backcountry sites.

#### **Green Mountain Club**

Converting an existing privy to a "Beyond the Bin" composting design and contributing toward a study to determine the effectiveness of composting waste at backcountry sites.

#### **AMC-Connecticut Chapter**

Converting a pit privy to a moldering privy at a shelter site and repairing a broken well shaft at another overnight site.

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<b>Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club</b>	Repairing a fire-damaged privy and purchasing brushcutters and chain saws.
<b>Wilmington Trail Club</b>	Materials to rebuild a shelter.
<b>York Hiking Club</b>	Purchasing a power trimmer and harness.
<b>Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club</b>	Funds to design a brochure attracting new members and purchase a copier to save on printing costs.
<b>Mountain Club of Maryland</b>	Treadway repairs to eliminate a muddy section and resulting “braided trails” and planting native plants and shrubs in an area with a history of encroachments.
<b>Potomac Appalachian Trail Club</b>	Funds to develop and print corridor-monitoring pamphlets to distribute to Trail neighbors.
<b>Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club</b>	Purchase shin guards.
<b>Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club</b>	Purchase parts for mower.
<b>Smoky Mountains Hiking Club</b>	Purchase maintenance tools and safety equipment.

The deadline for 2007 applications is October 2, 2006. Guidelines and an application form are available on the Web at [www.appalachiantrail.org/grantstoclubs](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/grantstoclubs)

## Monitoring Updates

### Tracking Wildlife

By Val Stori, ATC New England Associate Regional Representative

Twelve volunteers have received training in wildlife tracking provided by Keeping Track®, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire community participation in the long-term stewardship of wildlife habitat. The eight-day training session, held a year ago, was sponsored by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s New England Regional Office with the hope that the trained volunteers will establish monitoring transects on A.T. lands to observe, record, and monitor wildlife tracks and sign to provide us with information on the presence or absence of sensitive species. We plan to use this information to assess the health of our lands, to assess the wildlife value of our lands, and to aid in further habitat conservation.

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Following the training, Kathy Wohlfort and Stephanie McCaull (volunteers from the Upper Valley of Vermont/New Hampshire) and I poured over maps to locate areas of potentially suitable habitat for tracking our target species, which fall into several categories:

- Rare, threatened, or endangered;
- Keystone species (those having very great impacts on their community relative to their abundance);
- Area-sensitive carnivores (mammals that require a large home range).

We drew lines on topographic maps along river and stream corridors, wetland complexes, and terrain gaps within a large Forest Legacy tract adjacent to A.T. lands.

Since then, we have made several trips into the woods, laying out our final transect and taking inventory of all tracks and sign, finding evidence of area-sensitive carnivores, such as black bears, and keystone species, such as moose and beaver.

Bears mark trees by deliberately clawing the bark to communicate with other bears visually and by scent. They also will bite tree trunks to communicate with others. The trees most often marked by bears in our transect are white birch and balsam fir.

Moose, on the other hand, don't mark trees – they bark them. Moose strip bark from red, mountain, and striped maple, and mountain ash by angling their head and scraping their teeth over the surface of the bark. Trees are barked in late fall and early spring when other nutrients are unavailable. Barking provides moose with water, food, and nutrients such as calcium from the bark and sap. These “barkings” are not to be confused with rubbings, which occur for two reasons. Bucks rub or thrash trees for the same reasons that bears mark trees – to leave a sign and scent on trees indicating their sexual status. Bucks also rub their antlers against trees to shed their velvet.

In the fall, we found bear and moose scat, along with bear-marked trees, moose rubs, and moose browse. On the northern end of the wetland complex, moose and bear make frequent visits, evident in the amount of browsed vegetation, herd paths, and scat.

Unfortunately, the snow pack this winter has been very thin, if not nonexistent, and we have not recorded tracks of any of our target species. We hope to find fisher, mink, and otter tracks within the transect. These species are good indicators of the relative health of the habitat.

Smarts Mountain and neighboring Moose Mountain are both important habitat for black bear and moose. Food is abundant on both ridges – A.T. lands that are under federal ownership. The Forest Legacy tract that abuts the A.T. corridor provides terrific core habitat for both species, providing them with winter habitat and lowland wet meadows for early season foods. ATC tracking volunteers will continue to monitor the Smarts Mountain transect and will be making headway in monitoring another transect on Moose Mountain.

For more information, visit [www.appalachiantrail.org/environmentalmonitoring](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/environmentalmonitoring)

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## Photopoint Monitoring on Moosilauke

As part of an ongoing Trail-wide effort to monitor and manage rare and endangered plant species on the Appalachian Trail, the New England Regional Office's volunteers and staff will undertake an exciting new project to monitor and protect rare species in New Hampshire this summer. ATC, along with the Dartmouth Outing Club, will establish permanent photopoint monitoring locations on the summit of Mount Moosilauke.

Mount Moosilauke is the southernmost extension of the White Mountains and supports a number of rare alpine species. This rarity is due to limited habitat availability outside the White Mountains and the species' natural fragility being exacerbated by shallow soils, exposure, and recreation impacts.

Recreation impacts will be determined and documented through this project. Because Moosilauke is a large and open summit, permanent plots will be established to sample portions of a population. These plots will be established in areas where land managers want to monitor recreation impacts on important areas or populations. Sites with various levels of impact will be selected. For example, plots will be set up in areas with and without scree walls, near educational signs, at prominent view points, *etc.* The photopoint data then will be analyzed to help land managers determine the best methods for protecting alpine species.

Anyone interested in learning more about the project, or volunteering to help, should contact Val Stori at [vstori@appalachiantrail.com](mailto:vstori@appalachiantrail.com).

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## Invasive Species on the A.T.

If you have walked on the Appalachian Trail in, say, the last five or 10 years, you have probably seen, if not noticed, any of a number of plants that are commonly referred to as invasive species. Invasive species, both animal and vegetable, are by definition those that invade habitats to which they are not native. Once introduced in a new habitat, they compete for and consume resources so successfully that native species are often suppressed to a point of localized rarity or even extinction. But the changes that can be wrought by invasive species are often far greater than just different leaves in the greenery. Indeed, whole ecosystems can be dramatically transformed. Soil chemistry and microbiology, available light, nutrient cycling, and food webs all can be detrimentally altered by a single invasive species.

There is strong evidence that overall biodiversity, often an indicator of ecosystem health, is negatively affected where invasives are prevalent. So, while we may simply notice that there seem to be more plants of a certain kind on a stretch of Trail, the implications for other species in a given habitat may be far more serious. Perhaps therein lies the question of whether we should actively manage (eradicate) invasive species where they are found or whether they are merely part of a larger evolutionary process.

What complicates the matter further is the means by which invasive species are introduced to new habitats. Undoubtedly, humans have played a major role in broadening the distribution of many plants and animals beyond their original native areas. Of course, some invasive species

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were spread inadvertently, some in the guts and fur of animals, some as stow-aways aboard the unstoppable caravan of commercial freight shipping throughout the continent. Many more, however, are the result of being consciously taken from one location and put elsewhere.

This has occurred with some animal species: The largemouth bass, native in the southern United States, was carried far and wide as a result of its popularity among sport fishermen. Many plants now common throughout the U.S. became so as a result of their desirability as landscape or ornamental plants. Such is often the case with an even more menacing phenomenon – that of the exotic invasives. Exotics, or aliens, are species that have been introduced from ecosystems that are entirely isolated and have evolved separately. Many of these have the most devastating effect on local ecosystems because the local system has evolved without any way of dealing with these species.

While there are many instances of invasives on Trail lands from Georgia to Maine, a Trail-wide effort to deal with the problem – a daunting task for sure – has yet to be devised. There are several localized efforts at monitoring and eradicating invasives, and the National Park Service dispatches a control team every year to tackle some of the more troublesome infestations. As the natural heritage (rare, threatened, and endangered species) program on the Appalachian Trail continues to gain momentum and support, invasives are likely to become a high priority. Keep watching ATC's website for more information.

The following organisms were part of a "100 Least Wanted" list published in National Geographic magazine. Some of the names are familiar villains, but some might just surprise you. Many can be found along the Appalachian Trail. (Source: *National Geographic Magazine*, March 2005, pp 114-115.)

Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*)  
Purple Loosestrife (*Cecropia peltata*)  
Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*)  
Asian long-horned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*)  
Gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*)  
Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*)  
Privet (*Ligustrum robustum*)  
Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)  
Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)  
Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)  
Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)  
Domestic cat (*Felis catus*)  
Gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

## Along the Trail

- Congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to each of the 5,528 volunteers whose work benefited the Appalachian Trail between October 1, 2004, and September 30, 2005. Our annual report to the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service compiles information provided by the 30 Trail-maintaining clubs and other A.T. volunteers. A total of 195,733 hours were reported, including work hours, time spend in meetings involving Trail management, and travel time to and from work or meetings. Using the 2005 rate of \$18.04 per hour for volunteer time (as estimated by Independent Sector [www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html) a nonpartisan coalition of charities, foundations, corporations, and individuals) those hours are valued at more than \$3.5 million.

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- **ATC** and the **Dartmouth Outing Club (DOC)** were selected to receive awards for alpine stewardship projects this year from the **Guy Waterman Alpine Stewardship Fund** [www.watermanfund.org](http://www.watermanfund.org) named in memory of the late climber and outdoors writer. The Fund selected a photomonitoring project on Mount Moosilauke in New Hampshire (see related article) and DOC's Mount Moosilauke Alpine Steward program for awards. In addition to educating hikers, and performing some trail maintenance during the hiking season, the steward will assist with the photomonitoring project.
- In December, **Potomac Appalachian Trail Club** President Tom Johnson and ATC Executive Director Dave Startzell signed a two-year agreement whereby PATC will operate and manage the ATC-owned hostel located adjacent to the Appalachian Trail in Virginia. Vern Conaway, a PATC volunteer, A.T. thru-hiker, and chair of the Bears Den Management Committee, is looking forward to a productive relationship with ATC in managing this 66-acre property, whose facilities can be used by individuals or groups. Visit [www.bearsdencenter.org](http://www.bearsdencenter.org) or call 540-554-8708 for information and availability.
- The **Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club**, celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, held the 11th annual Trailfest in Hot Springs, N.C., April 21–23. Music, food, games, a river rafting/cleanup trip, a basic trail-maintenance workshop, and an invasive-species workshop were among the many activities enjoyed by attendees. As a special dedication to the Appalachian Trail, granite A.T. logos are being installed in the sidewalks throughout town. More information is at [www.trailfest.net](http://www.trailfest.net).

## Side Trails

### Helping Hands

**Carolina Mountain Club (CMC)** members came to the rescue in December when the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in North Carolina was closed due to a major ice storm that caused extensive damage to trees and left the park littered with limbs and debris. The club's volunteers, many of them wielding chainsaws (and certified through ATC's sawyer training program), cleared five miles of hiking trails and helped park staff clean roads and around structures.

### A.T. Hikes Make the Grade

**Trails.com** ([www.trails.com/toptrails-2005.asp](http://www.trails.com/toptrails-2005.asp)) has released its ranking of the top 100 U.S. trails for 2005, based on more than 10 million Web site "hits" for trail information and downloads and ratings submitted by users. Twenty A.T. hikes (including Springer Mountain and Katahdin) are listed, six ranked in the top 20. In the top ten are The Pinnacle in Pennsylvania, Springer Mountain to Hightower Gap in Georgia, and the entire Pennsylvania section of the Trail.

### Robert B. Williams Conservationist Award

After nearly 12 years of outstanding service to the Appalachian Trail community, Bob Williams retired from his position as ATC's Director of Land Trust programs at the end of December.

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Bob and his wife Dorlyn thru-hiked the Trail together in 1991, and Bob completed a solo thru-hike in 1993. They moved to Harper's Ferry early in 1994 and came to ATC as volunteers. Devoted to the Trail and its protection, Bob volunteered for the Land Trust full-time for several months, then stepped up to act as interim administrator when his predecessor departed. He became Land Trust Administrator in November 1994.

Imaginative, persistent, and unfailingly positive, Bob pulled deals together – leveraging partners and engineering financial arrangements with the patience of a monk and the deft balance of an acrobat. Executive Director Dave Startzell once called him “the Pied Piper” for his ability to recruit volunteers. Under his leadership, ATC protected wilderness lands and viewsheds essential to the Trail experience. His legacy leaves ATC poised to step up to a new scale of land conservation.

In recognition of his dedication to the Trail and its ideal of volunteer engagement, the Robert B. Williams Conservationist Award will be awarded annually for an outstanding volunteer contribution to ATC's conservation programs. Recipients receive a certificate, a one-year membership, and a selection of items from ATC's Ultimate A.T. Store.

The 2005 award was presented in December to John Fletcher and Karl Hartzel. That dynamic duo completed the GPS referencing of the Trail in September, providing ATC with highly accurate data for mapping and numerous other Trail-management and recreation purposes. Fletcher, ATC information assistant who took unpaid leave, and Hartzell, a frequent ATC volunteer from Corvallis, Oregon, dedicated more than 1,000 hours to the project.

### Trails Day Planning

**National Trails Day** is June 3<sup>rd</sup> – a great opportunity to increase your club's visibility, recruit new members and volunteers, and benefit the Appalachian Trail. Visit the **American Hiking Society** (AHS) [www.americanhiking.org/events/ntd/index.html](http://www.americanhiking.org/events/ntd/index.html) to register club events and receive free NTD posters and a banner. A 2006 Event-Organizers Manual to assist in your planning can be downloaded there as well. AHS also is seeking nominations for its Volunteer of the Year award. One person will be selected from each of nine regions and an overall winner will be chosen. A number of A.T. volunteers have been nominated by their clubs and honored in past years.

### Vital Signs Report

The Appalachian Trail **Vital Signs Report** has been released and is available to download as a very large PDF at [www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/netn/downloads/APPA\\_report\\_vsSummary\\_NETN\\_01302006.pdf](http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/netn/downloads/APPA_report_vsSummary_NETN_01302006.pdf). The report is one of the first steps in a new era of protecting and managing the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. It identifies eleven critical indicators of the environmental health of the Trail and describes many of the challenges of managing and conserving the natural resources of a linear, 2,175-mile-long resource that spans the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to Georgia. More importantly, it begins to reveal the potential for the Appalachian Trail to serve as a continental environmental-monitoring transect for the Appalachian Mountains.

# The Register

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Appalachian Trail Park Manager Pam Underhill's introductory cover letter states: "Monitoring the Appalachian Trail can serve to engage and educate the general public, as well as national legislators and policy-makers, about important trends in our natural environment." The report highlights the importance of collaboration and cooperation among federal and state agency partners and private, nongovernmental organizations and citizens to the long-term success of efforts to build and sustain an environmental-monitoring program for the Trail.

## Maintainer Items at "The Ultimate A.T. Store"

If you're not an ATC member, you might not know about a special "down and dirty" volunteer's T-shirt the staff and licensee American Backcountry developed last fall. You can see the artwork (and buy one) on line at [www.atctrailstore.org](http://www.atctrailstore.org), where, of course, you can also find the standard reference books and an A.T. maintainer's window or bumper decal. If you can't find what you're looking for or just don't like shopping on the Internet, please call 1-888-AT STORE weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. ET, and someone will help you out right away.